



Research Article

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Students Variables and the Development of Employability Mastery on Undergraduates Business Education Students in Federal Universities in Southern Nigeria

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Abstract

The study examined Students Variables and the development of employability mastery on undergraduates Business Education Students in Federal Universities in Southern Nigeria. Two research questions and two null hypotheses were developed to direct the investigation in order to fulfil the study's objectives. For the study, a survey research design was used. 440 students in their final year of business study made up the population. Data were gathered using a 20-item survey called the "Students Variables and the Development of Employability Mastery' Scale" (SVDEM). Using the Cronbach Alpha statistical method, the instrument's internal consistency was determined, and the result was a 0.95 overall reliability coefficient. In order to analyze the data and provide answers to the study questions, mean (X) and standard deviation (SD) were used. The independent t -test was used to evaluate the null hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance. The findings from data analysis showed that students' variables significantly influenced the development of employability mastery with High Influence (HI). While the test of hypotheses revealed that, there is no significant difference in the mean rating of the positive and negative respondents on the influence of students' attitudes and students' interest in the development of employability mastery. Based on the study's findings, it was suggested, among other things, that school management should offer opportunities to spark students' interest in vocational courses that will improve their growth of employability mastery before graduation.

Keywords: Students' variables, development, employability mastery and Business Education

1. Introduction

Admission into Business Education programmes in Nigerian universities keep increasing annually, yet the number of those who gain employment upon graduation remains acutely paltry. The reason

for this may be unconnected with the absence of employment opportunities, but lack of employability mastery among the graduates. Edet (2018) observed that, it is disturbing to witness graduates of a skill endowed programme like Business Education joining the band wagon of “unemployed” when a well-articulated programme of this magnitude with options in Accounting Education, Marketing Education, Office and Technology Education (OTM) and Management Education holds employment prospects for its graduates in sectors such as but not limited to; education, financial, industrial, manufacturing, distributing, managerial setting as well as information and communication technology. This ugly trend is at variance with the programme objective of imparting its students with employability mastery, knowledge, attitude and competencies necessary for entry into employment (Okute & Olom, 2012). Oduma (2012) further stressed that Business Education graduate employability mastery are essential in office occupations especially in the public sector among the employers of labour.

Government and non-government groups have worked to make sure that graduates of business education programs have the employability skills essential to work for themselves without having to wait for government white-collar positions. For instance, business education has programs that help people develop their knowledge, skill, and understanding of how to engage in vocational activities. Students are also permitted to participate in industrial training programs, but the issue of inadequate employability skill development still exists. According to the researchers, the lack of development of employability mastery on undergraduate business education students in Federal Universities in Southern Nigeria may be caused by those students' variables, including attitudes and interests of the students towards learning.

2. Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study was to ascertain students' variables on the development of employability mastery on undergraduates Business Education Students in Federal Universities in Southern Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to ascertain the influence of:

1. Attitude on the development of employability mastery on undergraduates Business Education Students in Federal Universities in Southern Nigeria
2. Interest on the development of employability mastery on undergraduates Business Education Students in Federal Universities in Southern Nigeria

3. Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions

1. What is the influence of attitude on the development of employability mastery on undergraduates Business Education Students in Federal Universities in Southern Nigeria?
2. What is the influence of interest on the development of employability mastery on undergraduates Business Education Students in Federal Universities in Southern Nigeria?

4. Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were developed and evaluated at a significance level of 0.05.

Ho₁: The mean rating of students with positive and negative attitudes does not significantly differ in terms of their responses to the students' attitudes toward the development of employability mastery

Ho₂: The mean ratings of students with high and low interest in the advancement of employability mastery do not significantly differ from one another.

5. Review of Related Literature

5.1 Theoretical Framework of the study

This study's framework is the Human Capital Theory, which Theodore William Schultz initially proposed in 1961. He said that funding the creation of human capital through education, training, and other initiatives offers graduates access to options and opportunities they might not otherwise have. The main thrust of William Schultz's theory is that knowledge and skill are types of capital that come about as a direct outcome of deliberate investment. Investment in people is implied by his concept of human capital. William equated the acquisition of industrial tools to the growth of knowledge and competence. He said that investments in human capital should concentrate on aiding people in obtaining education because knowledge and skill are what determine one's capacity to perform productive job. According to him, enhancing these qualities boosts human productivity, which in turn generates positive rate of return. In agreement with the present studies, an entrepreneurial ability is a function of human capital development. Therefore, as a requirement to improve performance of individuals, training in the relevant mastery is important to increase production. Therefore, appropriate training on competencies in entrepreneurship indices such as innovation, marketing plan, record keeping, creativity, negotiating and the likes would simulate an individual's propensity to embark on a business venture. The implication of this theory to the study is that, business educations which focus in training individuals to acquire knowledge, mastery, and competencies related to business job creation and sustenance can be said to have achieved its mandates of if graduates are employable at the end of the educational pursuit. Again, the individual could become self-reliant when they are able to create job opportunity for themselves or acquire those mastery that are needed in the labour market.

5.2 Conceptual Framework of the study

5.2.1 Employability Mastery

Along with subject/discipline knowledge, students are assisted in developing the professional qualities that employer's value, known as employability mastery (Atah, Bessong and Fidel, 2017). According to Ahmed in Atah and Abeng (2019), employability mastery is the transferable skill that a person must possess in order to be "employable in the world of labor." The term employability mastery, according to Yorke in Atah and Chukwurah (2019), refer to the mastery and technicalities that can facilitate obtaining, holding and succeeding in graduate-level job-placement. Martin (2008) noted that gaining employability mastery should be seen as a continuum of learning that supports job progression, not just entry into the workforce.

5.2.2 Students' Variables

Student variables are traits that students possess and can only be deduced through direct observation and various types of psychological testing. These factors have the potential to either support students in acquiring the employable skills they need to operate successfully in society or to obstruct their efforts in doing so. The variables for the students in this study are their interest in and attitude toward learning.

5.2.3 Students' interest and Development of Employability Mastery

Student interest describes the level of focus, curiosity, optimism, and passion that student's exhibit when learning or receiving instruction. Rea (2007) believed that students who are very interested in a particular topic of study will develop the necessary skills to grasp employability on or before the end

of the university program of study. He emphasized further that a student's interest can maintain their focus, motivate them to work hard, and aid in their learning Uchendu, Akuegwu, & Nwafor (2016) study revealed Showed relative significant of interest on students' employability mastery development. Uchendu (2015) study revealed that the extent of university undergraduate students' mastery development for employability is significantly low after graduation.

5.2.4 *Students Attitude and Development of Employability Mastery*

A person's attitude may be a good or negative assessment of others, things, events, actions, ideas, or pretty much everything in a given context. The growth of students' employability mastery and willingness to study are influenced by their attitudes toward learning (Bakar and Rashid, 2012). Negative attitudes must be changed if students are to continue their education past the minimum requirements. Positive or negative attitudes students have toward learning can have a lasting impact on how they view education. Their learning philosophy has an impact on both their level of schooling and their motivation to build employable mastery. (Bakar and Rashid, 2012). Attitude of undergraduate students used in this study attempt to explain the different dispositions to employability mastery development among graduates of business education. In their study on the factors impacting students' growth of employability mastery, Abraham and Daniel (2018) discovered that graduates of universities' employability mastery is influenced by attitude. In his research, James (2019) found that youth employability mastery development is influenced by interest, attitude, and self-concept. In light of the aforementioned situation, the researcher makes the assumption that student characteristics like attitude and interest may be to blame for the underdevelopment of employability mastery among undergraduate business education students at Federal Universities in Nigeria.

6. Methodology

6.1 *Design of the Study*

The design adopted for this study was a survey research design. A survey research design was used due to the study's focus which was to obtain and analyse data from the entire population. Specifically, the design was used to obtain and analyse the data from the entire population of final year undergraduate business education students concerning their perceived influence of students' variable on the development of employability mastery.

6.2 *Area of the Study*

This study was restricted within the limit of Students Variables and the development of employability mastery on undergraduates Business Education Students in Federal Universities in Southern Nigeria. Notably, the Southern Nigeria consists of the mix-language speaking part of Nigeria. The zone houses six states which include: Bayelsa, Edo, Delta, Akwa-Ibom, Cross River and Rivers State. This zone is bounded on the east by Anambra, Imo, Abia, Ebonyi and Enugu States, to the west by Ondo State, to the North by Kogi and Benue States. The Southern Nigeria is known for its political consciousness and unity in pursuit of their political motives. The Southern is committed and enterprising especially in commerce and is well known as oil producing states. More so, the Southerners are known for their commitment in agricultural products such as cassava, plantain, banana, yam, rice, and vegetables. Again, the zone is blessed with cash crops like oil palms, rubber and cocoa. The zone is further blessed with mineral deposits like the crude oil, and gas found in Delta, Bayelsa, Cross River and Rivers States respectively. Importantly, each of these states houses a Federal Universities that offers business education except River State University and Delta State. The researchers' choice of the research area for the study was because of the researchers is convenience and to equally take

advantage of the wider population in the zone. Since the geographical zone is housing leading tertiary institutions in the country the result of the study could be used for generalization.

6.3 Population of the Study

Four hundred forty (440) undergraduate business education students from all Federal Universities in Southern Nigeria that provide business education programs up to final year made up the study's population (2020–2021 academic session). These Federal Universities include University of Calabar, University of Uyo, Federal University Otuoke in Bayelsa and University of Benin. The population of the study is shown in table 1 below. Furthermore, the choice of using final year business education students is because these students have been exposed to both theoretical and practical components of business education curriculum content.

Table 1: Distribution of the Population

University	Population
University of Calabar, Calabar	145
University of Uyo, Akwa Ibom State	091
University of Benin , Edo State	150
Federal University Otuoke in Bayelsa	054
Total	440

Source: Field work (2021)

6.4 Sample and Sampling Technique

The entire population of four hundred and forty-four (440) Business Education students identified as the population of the study was studied. This decision is in line with Nwana (2008) who posited that it is best to study the entire population or greater number of the population especially where the population spread is reachable. It is on this note that the researchers decided to adopt the population and study same without sampling. More so, it is better to have the entire population studied in order to get a better result (Nwana, 2008). Hence, the population (440) is adopted meaning that no sampling was conducted.

6.5 Instrument for data Collection

The "Students Variables on the Development of Employability Mastery" Scale, a four-point response questionnaire, was the study's main tool (SVDEM). The researchers created the questionnaire following a thorough examination of the literature. The survey is divided into two portions (A and B). In Section A, the respondent's biographical information was sought after. Section B has 20-items total. The respondents were asked to check one of four response options: Very High Influence (VHI = 4 points), High Influence (HI = 3 points), Low Influence (LI = 2 points), or Very Low Influence (VLI = 1 point), depending on how much they agreed with each statement.

6.6 Validation of the Instrument

The study instrument was put through validation in order to determine its validity. Three specialists, including one (1) from the Department of Science Education at Ebonyi State University Abakaliki and two (2) from the Business Education departments at Ebonyi State University Abakaliki and University of Calabar, were provided the instrument to validate it successfully. The study's instrument, goal, research questions, and research hypotheses were all presented to the experts. The items were

examined during the validation process for appropriateness, clarity, applicability, and relevance. Following validation, the instrument was changed to reflect the thoughts or contributions of the experts regarding the instrument's applicability in attaining the study's objectives. Amendments were made in line with the suggestions and incorporated in the final copy of the questionnaire.

6.7 Reliability of the Instrument

Twenty (20) undergraduate students studying business education at Ebonyi State University in Southern Nigeria received the 20-item test. This kind of trial testing made use of the Cronbach Alpha method. Cluster-based data collection and analysis produced an overall dependability co-efficient of 0.95. As a result, it was decided that the instrument was trustworthy for the investigation.

6.8 Method of Data Collection

The researchers administered four hundred and forty (440) copies of questionnaire on the respondents with the help of four (4) research assistants who were trained for this purpose. The choice of the research assistants was based on their institutions of domiciliation. Each of the research assistants was attached to the sampled Federal universities in South-South geopolitical zone. Direct delivery and retrieval method was adopted in the administration and retrieval of the questionnaire instrument to ensure a high rate of returns. However, out of 440 copies of the questionnaire administered to the respondents, a total of 411 copies were correctly filled and retrieved, representing 93.4% of returning rate. Data collected from the 411 copies were analysed to answer the research questions and test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

6.9 Method of Data Analysis

To get the answers to the study questions, the data were analysed using the mean and standard deviation. By calculating the mean of the nominal value assigned to each option, the level of agreement or disagreement was ascertained. This was determined using a 4-point rating scale, with a 2.50 mean score. By summing the nominal values of the rating scales and dividing by the same number of cases, 2.50 was arrived at.

$$\text{Thus: } \frac{4+3+2+1}{4} = \frac{10}{4} = 2.50$$

Therefore 2.50 were used as the bench mark for the decision rule. Any item in the instrument with a mean score of 2.50 and above was agreed as High Influence (HI) of students' variable on the development of employability mastery. Any item with the mean score below 2.50 was disagreed. Similarly, the hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance using independent t-test. The decision was based on the utilization of the p-values. If the p-value is less than p(0.05), then, the hypothesis is rejected and otherwise.

7. Results

7.1 Research Question One

What is the influence of attitude on the development of employability mastery on undergraduates Business Education Students in Federal Universities in Southern Nigeria?

The data providing answer to the above research question are presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Mean Rating of Responses of respondents on influence of students attitude on the development of employability mastery on undergraduates Business Education Students in Federal Universities in Southern Nigeria (n = 411)

S/N	Influence of attitude on the development of:	N	\bar{X}	SD	Decision
1	Computer operation mastery	411	3.96	0.93	HI
2	Money and banking mastery	411	3.46	1.07	HI
3	Managerial mastery for employability	411	3.68	1.08	HI
4	Modern office work mastery	411	4.41	1.21	HI
5	Self-reliance mastery for employability	411	3.26	1.41	HI
6	Emotional control mastery for employability	411	3.65	1.38	HI
7	Strategic planning and organizing mastery	411	3.55	1.33	HI
8	Self-management mastery for employability	411	3.50	1.38	HI
9	Initiative mastery for employability	411	3.30	1.51	HI
10	Ethical mastery for employability	411	3.55	1.47	HI
	Grand Mean		3.53	1.28	HI

Notes: \bar{x} = Mean; HI = High Influence

According to the results shown in Table 2, the grand mean of 3.53 indicated that undergraduate business education students were in agreement that attitude has a significant impact on how employability mastery is developed among undergraduate business education students in federal universities in Southern Nigeria. The study reveals that items 1 through 10 received mean scores over the cut off value of 2.50. This demonstrates that business education students have come to the conclusion that attitude is a student variable that affects the growth of employability mastery on undergraduate business education students in federal universities in Southern Nigeria. The standard deviations for all of the questions 1 through 10 are all within the same range, showing that the respondents' mean assessments are consistent.

7.2 Research Question Two

What is the influence of interest on the development of employability mastery on undergraduates Business Education Students in Federal Universities in Southern Nigeria?

The information in Table 3 below answers the study question mentioned above.

Table 3: Mean Rating of Responses of respondents on influence of students interest on the development of employability mastery on undergraduates Business Education Students in Federal Universities in Southern Nigeria (n =411)

S/N	Influence of interest on the development of:	N	\bar{X}	SD	Decision
11	Cost accounting mastery for employability	411	3.33	1.54	HI
12	Auditing and investigation mastery for employability	411	3.79	1.56	HI
13	Modern technologies mastery for employability	411	3.51	1.62	HI
14	Leadership mastery for employability	411	3.26	1.71	HI
15	Computer network mastery for employability	411	3.88	1.66	HI
16	Consumer behaviour mastery for employability	411	3.70	1.75	HI
17	Spreadsheet processing mastery for employability	411	3.44	1.81	HI
18	Advertising mastery for employability	411	3.25	1.84	HI
19	Sale management mastery for employability	411	3.77	1.84	HI
20	Retail and wholesale management mastery	411	2.71	2.12	HI
	Grand Mean		3.46	1.65	HI

Note: \bar{x} = Mean; HI = High Influence

According to the results shown in Table 3, the grand mean of 3.46 indicated that business education students generally agreed that student interest has a significant impact on how well undergraduate business education students in Federal Universities in Southern Nigeria develop their employability mastery. The mean scores for all of the items from 11 to 20 were higher than the cut off value of 2.50. This demonstrates that Business Education students in Federal Universities have acknowledged that student variables such as interest have an impact on how employability mastery is developed among undergraduate Business Education students in Southern Nigerian Federal Universities. The standard deviations for all of the questions 11–20 fall within the same range, demonstrating that the mean evaluations of the respondents are uniform.

Ho₁: The mean rating of students with positive and negative attitudes does not significantly differ in terms of their responses to the students' attitudes toward the development of employability mastery

Table 4: Independent t-test of Mean Ratings of students with positive and negative attitude in term of their responses on the influence of attitude on the development of employability mastery

Items	Category of Respondents	N	Mean	SD	Df	t-cal	Alpha	P-val	Decision
1	Positive	181	3.9282	.42207	409	-.677	0.05	.499	NS
	Negative	230	3.9913	1.19676					
2	Positive	181	3.4144	.55739	409	-.927	0.05	.354	NS
	Negative	230	3.5130	1.34369					
3	Positive	181	3.6740	.50425	409	-1.87	0.05	.852	NS
	Negative	230	3.6943	1.38697					
4	Positive	181	3.3867	.64519	409	-.468	0.05	.640	NS
	Negative	230	3.4435	1.52528					
5	Positive	180	3.1833	.90606	409	-1.04	0.05	.296	NS
	Negative	230	3.3304	1.70651					
6	Positive	181	3.5967	.85491	409	-7.20	0.05	.473	NS
	Negative	230	3.6957	1.69342					
7	Positive	181	3.5249	.63743	409	-.434	0.05	.664	NS
	Negative	230	3.5826	1.69758					
8	Positive	181	3.4475	.69423	409	-.792	0.05	.429	NS
	Negative	230	3.5565	1.74682					
9	Possible	181	3.2376	.84585	409	-.850	0.05	.396	NS
	Negative	230	3.3652	1.87528					
10	Positive	181	3.4696	.69555	409	-1.041	0.05	.299	NS
	Negative	230	3.6217	1.86685					
	Positive	181	26.910	10.401	409	-.827	0.05	.407	Not Sign
	Negative	230	27.332	10.652					

Note: Level of Significance = 0.05; NS = Not Significant; S = Significant.

According to Table 4 results of the t-test analysis, there is no statistically significant difference between the mean ratings of the respondents who gave positive and negative responses regarding the influence of students' attitudes on the growth of employability mastery in Federal Universities in Southern Nigeria. This is so that it is clear from data in Table 4 that the p-val of .407 is higher than 0.05.

Since the p-values for every item are higher than p(.05), it follows that the null hypothesis, which claimed that there is no discernible difference between the mean ratings of the positive and negative respondents on the influence of attitude on the growth of employability mastery, is supported.

Ho₂: The mean ratings of students with high and low interest in the advancement of employability mastery do not significantly differ from one another.

Table 5: Independent t-test of mean Rating of students with high and low interest on the influence of students' interest on the development of employability mastery

S/N	Interest of responders	N	Mean	SD	Df	t-cal	Alpha	p-val	Decision
11	High	166	3.3012	.68286	409	204	0.05	.839	NS
	Low	245	3.3510	1.92462					
12	High	166	3.7711	.62910	409	-.231	0.05	.812	NS
	Low	245	3.8122	1.96210					
13	High	166	3.5241	.66699	409	.059	0.05	.945	NS
	Low	245	3.5061	2.03780					
14	High	166	3.1566	.75449	409	-.069	0.05	.950	NS
	Low	245	3.3306	2.13117					
15	High	166	3.8554	.58533	409	-.063	0.05	.851	NS
	Low	245	3.9020	2.10352					
16	High	166	3.6506	.66849	409	-.183	0.05	.677	NS
	Low	245	3.7347	2.20074					
17	High	166	3.3675	.69012	409	-.416	0.05	.935	NS
	Low	245	3.4980	2.28435					
18	High	166	3.2410	.63418	409	-.019	0.05	.713	NS
	Low	245	3.2653	2.32921					
19	High	166	3.7530	.44636	409	-.368	0.05	.940	NS
	Low	245	3.7959	2.36591					
20	High	166	2.6506	1.05525	409	-.075	0.05	.400	NS
	Low	245	2.7510	2.61601					
	High	166	34.861	14.152	409	-.407	0.05	0.403	NS
	Low	245	35.823	15.112					

Note: Level of Significance = 0.05; NS = Not Significant; S = Significant

According to the results of the t-test analyses shown in Table 5 above, there is no statistically significant difference between the mean ratings of students with high and low interest in the influence of students' interest on the growth of employable mastery. This is so that it is clear from data in table 5 that the p-value of 0.403 is higher than 0.05. The fact that p(0.403) is greater than p(0.05) suggests that there is no statistically significant difference between the mean ratings of low and high regarded respondents for the influence of student interest on the growth of employability mastery. Consequently, the null hypothesis is kept.

8. Discussion of the Findings

Influence of attitude on the development of employability mastery on undergraduates Business Education Students in Federal Universities in Southern Nigeria

According to the study's findings, there is a High Influence (HI) of student attitude on the growth of employable mastery among undergraduate business education students in Federal Universities in Southern Nigeria. The results support James' (2019) assertion that students' attitudes and self-perceptions influence their acquisition of employability mastery. According to Bakar & Rashid (2012), a student's attitude toward learning can be influenced by their capacity and eagerness to learn as well as the growth of employable mastery. They also observed that students' attitudes about learning, whether positive or bad, influence their views on education throughout their lives. Students' learning attitudes influence both their level of education and their willingness to gain employable mastery (Bakar and Rashid, 2012).

According to the results of the tested hypotheses, there is no discernible difference between the mean ratings of students who have a good attitude and those who have a negative attitude when it comes to their perceptions of how attitude affects the growth of employability mastery. The results

are consistent with those of Abraham and Daniel (2018), who found that students' attitudes about academics have an impact on how well they develop employability skills in Nigerian universities.

Influence of students' interest on the development of employability mastery on undergraduates Business Education Students

The results of this study regarding the second research question revealed High Influence (HI) of student interest on the development of employability mastery on undergraduate business education students in Federal Universities in Southern Nigeria. The results are in line with those of Uchendu, Akuegwu, and Nwafor (2016), who claimed that students' development of employability skills is significantly influenced by their areas of interest. The level of focus, curiosity, and zeal that student's exhibit when learning or being taught is referred to as their level of interest. Rea (2007) believed that students who are very interested in a particular topic of study will develop the necessary skills to grasp employability on or before the end of the university program of study. He emphasized further that students' interest can keep them engaged, motivate them to work hard, and aid in their learning.

The results of the tested hypotheses revealed that among graduates of business education, there is no statistically significant difference between students with high and low interest in developing employability expertise. Adeboye (2017) highlighted that interest has a major influence on the development of employable mastery among business education students in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. The findings refuted Adeboye (2017)'s conclusions.

9. Conclusion

According to the study's findings, students' interest and attitude both had a significant impact on the development of employability skill on undergraduate of business education students in Federal Universities in Southern Nigeria. In order to develop the employable mastery before their graduates, business education must consider their academics seriously.

10. Recommendations

The study's findings led the researchers to make the following recommendations:

1. Business education students should adopt a positive attitude toward the subjects they study in order to gain the necessary mastery for the development of employability skills.
2. The management of the school should offer pupils opportunities to spark their interest in vocational programs that will increase their desire to acquire employable expertise.
3. Business education students should have confidence in their abilities when they graduate, as this will lead to the development of employable mastery.

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