



INFLUENCE OF MARKETING AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS ON THE PROVISION OF SELF-EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES AMONG BUSINESS EDUCATION POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS

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Abstract

This study examined the influence of marketing and communication skills on the provision of self-employment opportunities among business education postgraduate students. The study employed a descriptive survey research design. The participants were 171 business education postgraduate students who were self-employed as at the time the study was conducted. The instrument employed for data collection was a structured questionnaire, which was validated by two experts in business education. The data collected from the respondents was analyzed using descriptive statistics such as mean (X), standard deviation (SD) and t-test. The findings revealed that marketing skills has influence in providing self-employment opportunities among business education postgraduate students. The findings also showed that communication skills have influence in providing self-employment opportunities among business education postgraduate students. The findings also revealed that there is no significant difference between male and female business education postgraduate students as regards the influence of marketing and communication skills in providing self-employment opportunities. Based on these findings, the author of this study recommend, among others, that entrepreneurial skills (more specifically marketing and communication skills) should be emphasis among students as this will help them to engage in entrepreneurial careers and lifelong learning upon graduation.

Keywords: *Communication Skills, Marketing Skills, Postgraduate Business Education Students, Self-Employment Opportunities.*

Introduction

The plight faced by graduates in Nigeria and the struggle to contribute meaningfully to the nation's economic development through self-employment, has triggered The need to a reassessment the purpose of educational training. This has led to a concerted effort to integrate entrepreneurship education into Nigerian schools, recognizing its pivotal role in fostering economic empowerment and job creation. This intervention is particularly crucial in the current precarious situation where graduates often lack self-reliance and predominantly dependent on traditional employment opportunities such as job search or paid employment opportunities. The alarming rate of unemployed graduates engaging in anti-social activities such as militancy, criminality, thuggery, cultism, prostitution, and human trafficking has become a growing concern among stakeholders in the educational sub-sector, government officials, and corporate organizations. These entrepreneurship workshops aim to address the pressing need for self-employment and independence among jobless graduates.

Today, Nigeria is faced with the alarming incidence of poverty, unemployment, corruption, among others, despite its abundant natural resources. According to the National Bureau of statistic (2022), 63% of persons living within Nigeria (133 million people) are multi-dimensionally poor, the report by dataphyte (2023) revealed that Nigeria's unemployment rate stood at 4.1% in the first



quarter of 2023. Umukoro (2015) opined that pervasive poverty persists among both the employed and unemployed individuals in Nigeria. The ongoing population growth, overreliance on crude oil, and the expansion of education system have created a significant disparity between job opportunities and the growing number of job seekers. To bridge this gap, the Federal government of Nigeria has implemented various policies on entrepreneurship education and skills acquisition programmes at different levels (Morrison, Agusiobo & Obocha, 2016).

Countries such as Malaysia, Indonesia, Brazil, and India have made rapid progress, Nigeria has struggled to achieve similar strides due to a weak connection between knowledge and development, as well as between the private and public sectors of the economy. This challenge may stem from a lack of adequate skills such as marketing, communication skills among many others and a deficient entrepreneurial culture within the educational system, particularly among graduates of business education in Nigeria. Proficiency in marketing is a pivotal factor influencing the success or failure of a business. These crucial skills encompass communication, creativity, leadership, self-motivation, organizational acumen, salesmanship, personal attributes, and more. Marketing, defined as the amalgamation of activities, institutions, and processes involved in creating, delivering, and exchanging value-added products and services, plays a significant role in catering to customers, clients, partners, and society at large.

Concerning the importance of marketing skills, Ajaero (2009) emphasizes the fundamental principle that "If you cannot sell, you will be sold." Ezeanwu (2010) further underscores that entrepreneurs must possess technical, business management, and personal skills within the realm of marketing to ensure the availability and affordability of their products to customers. For business education students, acquiring these marketing skills is imperative for fostering self-reliance. According to Scarborough (2011), marketing involves the generation and provision of desirable goods and services to clients. A study conducted by Eze *et al.*, (2016) in Delta State revealed that business education graduates, particularly in the context of self-employment, necessitate moderate marketing skills. Another study by Akpotohwo *et al.*, (2016) in Bayelsa State focused on the skills essential for self-sustainability among Business Education students in Nigeria. Their findings emphasized that effective business operation hinges on marketing abilities, and a deficiency in these skills could hinder students' ability to establish a firm post-graduation. The impact of communication skills on the creation of self-employment opportunities for postgraduate students in business education is substantial. Proficiency in communication is a vital asset that can significantly influence an individual's ability to navigate the entrepreneurial landscape. Here's an exploration of how communication skills contribute to the provision of self-employment opportunities among business education postgraduate students:

A nation producing a higher number of graduates capable of sustaining and supporting themselves will experience a decrease in the count of unemployed and underemployed individuals. Education, especially tertiary education with a focus on entrepreneurship, plays a crucial role in a nation's economic development. The greater the number of young graduates who can be self-sufficient and self-employed, the more effectively poverty and unemployment and underemployed, propelling the nation toward greater self-sufficiency at an accelerated pace. Entrepreneurship involves embarking on a business venture distinct from seeking paid employment. It entails organizing business opportunities and mobilizing human and material resources to exploit identified prospects (Ama, 2016; Akanwa & Akpanabia, 2018). Throughout history, various professions have interpreted entrepreneurship in diverse ways. For instance, Mwasalwiba (2018) viewed entrepreneurship as the process of creating new or alternative values by dedicating the necessary time, assuming associated financial, psychological, and social risks, and reaping benefits in the form of the highest level of personal happiness.



Globally, there is a growing focus and concern on entrepreneurship development through education (for example, Peterman & Kennedy, 2003; Edokpolor & Somorin, 2017; Edokpolor, 2020; Ile & Edokpolor, 2020; Otache, Edokpolor & Kadiri, 2022; Edokpolor & Imeokparia & Osifo, 2023; Otache, Edokpolor, Sani & Kadiri, 2023). Extensive efforts have been made through research, the introduction of entrepreneurship courses, and programmes in educational institutions and entrepreneurship research centers to cultivate both an entrepreneurial spirit and entrepreneurial culture. It is crucial to intensify these efforts to mobilize and enhance entrepreneurial activity, benefiting individuals, governments, and society as a whole. The alleviation of poverty has become a paramount concern for many governments and institutions, particularly in developing countries where extreme poverty is prevalent and widespread. Morrison, *et al.*, (2016) asserted that entrepreneurship education serves as a potent means of equipping individuals to be economically and socially functional by engaging in various forms of employment based on developed skills. Entrepreneurship education is seen as catalyst to imparting entrepreneurial skills, encompassing the strategies needed for the success of graduates, especially young entrepreneur in their post-school endeavors.

Business education holds diverse meanings for different individuals. It can be viewed as an educational programme designed to equip students with requisite knowledge and skills for entry into and progression within the business sector. The understanding of business education has evolved over time, as reflected in the various definitions provided by authors and scholars attempting to clarify its essence. According to Ohiwere (2017), business education is a course that not only prepares students for job entry and advancement within the business realm but also equips them to intelligently manage their business affairs and function effectively as consumers and citizens in a business-oriented economy. When appropriately designed, well-prepared, and harmonized, business education is a source of pride, constituting an educational program that involves the acquisition of skills, knowledge, and competencies to make the recipient proficient. It serves as an overarching framework encompassing various business programmes, including marketing, business administration, secretarial studies, and accounting. Likewise, Amaewhule (2018) suggested that business education encompasses the knowledge, attitudes, and skills essential for all individuals to proficiently manage their businesses and economic systems. Atakpa (2019) emphasized that business education embodies vocational knowledge and skills necessary for employment and progression in a diverse array of business careers.

Statement of the Problem

In Nigeria, many graduates emerge from tertiary institutions annually, facing the harsh reality of unemployment and struggling for survival. A significant number of these graduates resort to criminal activities such as armed robbery, prostitution, kidnapping, and thuggery due to the lack of job opportunities. Entrepreneurship, as highlighted in a 2002 report by the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, has a substantial impact on both the economy and society, with entrepreneurial activity being statistically linked to national economic growth. Recognizing its merits and contributions to economic development, it becomes imperative to impart and promote entrepreneurship among business education students at all levels of education, fostering a spirit of resourcefulness among the youth. Uzo (2015) asserted that the rising number of unemployed graduates can be attributed to a deficiency in acquiring entrepreneurial skills. Despite the incorporation of entrepreneurship education into school curricula, the persisting problem suggests that it has not fully addressed the issue. It is disconcerting to observe that many business education graduates lack the skills or initiative to secure gainful employment or establish their own businesses. Despite claims of practical skills, the prolonged pursuit of paid employment indicates a shortfall in



the relevant skills needed for entrepreneurship. The root of this problem lies in the fact that Nigerian business education graduates are not adequately trained and skilled for self-reliance; rather, they are conditioned to depend solely on white-collar jobs for sustenance. Consequently, a considerable number of business education graduates from Nigerian universities find themselves unemployed or not engaged in self-employment. Beyond theoretical knowledge, they lack the practical skills necessary for self-dependence. This underscores the critical need to instill entrepreneurial skills in these students, making them not only employable but also capable of self-employment. It is on this note that the author of this study examined the influence of marketing and communication skills on the provision of self-employment opportunities among business education postgraduate students.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the influence of marketing and communication skills on the provision of self-employment opportunities among business education postgraduate students. Specifically, the study sought to examine:

1. the influence of marketing skills on the provision of self-employment opportunities among business education postgraduate students.
2. the influence of communication skills on the provision of self-employment opportunities among business education postgraduate students.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study,

1. To what extent does marketing skills influence the provision of self-employment opportunities among business education postgraduate students?
2. To what extent do communication skills influence the provision of self-employment opportunities among business education postgraduate students?

Research Hypothesis

The following null hypotheses were tested at a 0.05 level of significance.

Research Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference between male and female business education postgraduate students as regards the influence of marketing and communication skills in providing self-employment opportunities.

Method

Research Design

This study adopted the descriptive survey research design. Survey research design has a great relevance of adoption when a researcher intends to describe existing conditions and induce reasons for their prevalence.

Population and Sample

The study population comprised 340 business education graduates who are currently self-employed. The proportionate sampling technique was used to select 171 respondents for this study.



Data Collection Instrument

A structured questionnaire was used as instrument for collection of data. The questionnaire is titled, “marketing and communication skills and the provision of self-employment opportunities among business education postgraduate students”. The respondents responded to the item statements in the instrument, using a four-point rating scale, ranging from: Very High Extent (VHE)=4, High Extent (HE)=3, Low Extent (LE)=2, and Very Low Extent (VLE)=1.

Validation and Reliability of Data Collection Instrument

The questionnaire was validated by experts in the field of business education. The reliability and the internal consistency were confirmed and established and were calculated using the Cronbach’s alpha before they were administered on respondents. The calculation yielded a coefficient value of 0.73.

Data Collection Procedure

The instrument was administered to the respondents personally by the researcher, with the help of two trained research assistants to administer the instrument in other to facilitate ease and high rate of return.

Data Analysis

—The data collected from the respondent was analyzed using descriptive statistics such as mean (X), standard deviation (SD) and t-test. The X was used to answer the research questions and the SD was used to determine the extent to which the responses of respondents were clustered around or deviated from the X responses. The decision rule for the research questions was based on any calculate mean equal to, or greater than 2.50 means that the respondents agreed to a very high extent with the research questions raised; while any calculated X less than 2.50 means that respondents disagreed to a very low extent with the research questions raised. Also, any SD value between 0.00 and 0.96 showed that respondent’s responses are very close, which means that their responses were clustered around the X. Furthermore, the p-value was used in taking the decisions on the research hypothesis. If the p-value is less than or equal to 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected, but if otherwise, the null hypothesis is not rejected.

Result

Answering Research Questions

Research Question 1: To what extent does marketing skills influence the provision of self-employment opportunities among business education postgraduate students?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation on the extent to which marketing skills influences the provision of self-employment opportunities among business education postgraduate students

S/N	Marketing skills.	<i>X</i>	<i>SD</i>	Remark
<i>To what extent does:</i>				
1.	ability to determine the extent to which product will sell influence employment opportunity	3.47	.77	High Extent
2.	ability to determine current trends in sales of products influence employment opportunity	3.17	.74	High Extent
3.	knowledge of seasonal fluctuation of goods, influence employment opportunity.	3.24	.80	High Extent
4.	familiarity with various aspects of sales and salesmanship influence employment opportunity.	3.52	.65	High Extent
5.	ability to determine and interpret factors which extent of and strength of competition in the market influence employment opportunity.	3.16	.65	High Extent
6.	skills in consumer behaviour appreciation influence employment opportunity.	3.15	.83	High Extent
7.	skills in advertising channels and process influence employment opportunity.	3.20	.79	High Extent
8.	ability to determine what customers need and shortage of such goods will influence employment opportunity.	3.08	.94	High Extent
9.	ability to determine availability of goods/raw materials for product and shortage of finished goods influence employment opportunity.	3.00	.99	High Extent
		3.45	.84	High Extent

Table 1 above shows that the mean responses ranged from 3.00 to 3.52 while the standard deviation ranged from .65 to .99. The table shows that all the mean scores are above the mean score of 2.50 which is the mean score for decision making. The table revealed that the respondents agreed to all the nine items on the influence of marketing skills among postgraduate students' employment opportunities. Since the cluster mean is 3.22 and it is above the criterion mean value of 2.50, it shows that marketing skills influence the provision of self-employment opportunities among business education postgraduate students.

Research Question 2: To what extent do communication skills influence the provision of self-employment opportunities among business education postgraduate students?

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation on the extent to which marketing skills influences the provision of self-employment opportunities among business education postgraduate students

S/N	Communication skills	X	SD	Remark
To what extent does:				
10	oral communication skills influence employment opportunity	3.25	.77	High Extent
11	public speaking skills, and presentation skills influence employment opportunity	3.13	.93	High Extent
12	ability to listen, understanding and speaking clearly, influence employment opportunity?	3.30	.79	High Extent
13	ability to write appropriately for different audiences influence employment opportunity?	3.15	.84	High Extent
14	ability to present information clearly to groups influence employment opportunity?	3.11	.90	High Extent
15	ability to persuading & negotiating effectively influence employment opportunity?	3.13	.82	High Extent
16	ability to understand the needs of customers/ clients, influence employment opportunity?	3.24	.80	High Extent
17	ability to share information & proposing ideas influence employment opportunity?	3.89	.85	High Extent
18	ability to logically summarize information or data influence employment opportunity?	3.14	.87	High Extent
		3.45	.84	High Extent

Table 2 above shows that the mean responses ranged from 3.11 to 3.89 while the standard deviation ranged from .77 to .93. The table shows that all the mean scores are above the mean score of 2.50 which is the mean score for decision making. The table revealed that the respondents agreed to all the nine items on the influence of communication skills on postgraduate students' employment opportunities. Since the cluster mean is 3.45 and it is above the criterion mean value of 2.50, it shows that communication skills influence the provision of self-employment opportunities among business education postgraduate students.

Testing Research Hypothesis

Research Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference between male and female business education postgraduate students as regards the influence of marketing and communication skills in providing self-employment opportunities.

Table 3: t-test of the difference between male and female business education postgraduate students as regards the influence of marketing and communication skills in providing self-employment opportunities

variables	N	X	SD	df	t-value	p-value	Decision
Male	88	1.7195E2	10.08687	169	1.424	1.56	Not significant
Female	83	1.6935E2	13.67072				

The result of table 3 shows that the degree of freedom of 1691 has a t-value of .424 and a p-value of .156. Since the p-value of .156 is higher than the alpha value of .05, the null hypothesis is retained. This means that there is no significant between entrepreneurial skills acquired by male and female business education postgraduates' employment opportunities.

Discussion

The analysis of the research questions raised in the study and the hypotheses revealed some interesting findings that are worth discussing based on some relevant literature either to corroborate or contradict the findings. They are discussed in the following paragraphs.

The findings from research question one revealed that marketing skills influence the employment opportunity of business education graduates. This finding is in line with that of *Eze et al., (2016)*, who conducted a study in Delta State to examine the entrepreneurial skills needed for self-employment by business education graduates. Findings included that business education graduates in require moderate marketing skills for self-employment. He emphasized that management skills of an establishment can be learned as managers are not born but made. He further maintained that the management should look out for candidate with potential skills and develop them. The findings also corroborate with the study conducted by *Akpotohwo et al., (2016)* who investigate the skills required by Business Education students in Nigeria for self-sustainability and obtained a sample size of 180 students from the business education unit. According to the findings of the study, marketing abilities are necessary for effective business operation, and a lack of marketing abilities will impact students' ability to start a firm after graduation. Marketing was seen as consisting of all profitable human activities undertaken by the firm towards the creation of goods and services. Argument among Nigerian traders is that successful entrepreneurship in trading occupation simply depends on talent and luck". They believe that programmed training in marketing skilled is irrelevant for success in trading activities. This view is rooted in ignorance because education and training can promote individual initiative and marketing competencies.

The findings from research question one revealed that communication skills influence the employment of business education graduate as supported by the finding of (*Ihmeideh et al., 2010*) postulated that any graduate who is getting ready to start their chosen career, he or she should take the opportunity in any activities that developed communication skills in a wider and complete aspect so that communication skills can be fully developed as they need to put in effort to develop their communication skills to be able to succeed in their chosen profession. The finding strongly supports the study of *Elving and Hansma (2008)* who carried out interview research between management and employees. The most important conclusion drawn was that the success of the dissemination and adaptation of organizational change significantly depend upon communicative and informative skills of managers at all levels, and that of (*Lewis, 2000*) and *Bennebroek-Gravenhorst (2006)* who found that along with the role of management on the contribution of the workforce to the impending



change, distribution of information and actual communication regarding the need for the change and the objectives of the modification in business organization are also critical. More also the finding is in line with the finding of Leonsis, (2010) and Miller, (2006) Employers expect that frontline employees are cheerful and positive in the face of any situation and portrait the image of the organization to the outside world.

The analysis of the hypothesis clearly shows that there is no significant difference between entrepreneurial skills acquired by male and female business education graduates on employment opportunity. The variation in the mean responses of male and female business education graduates may be due to their peculiar demands and orientation towards entrepreneurial skills. This trend may have possibly influenced their responses to the instruments that were administered to them.

Conclusion

This study has indeed examined the influence of marketing and communication skills on the provision of self-employment opportunities among business education postgraduate students. Based on the findings from the study, it is therefore concluded that Marketing Skills marketing skills influence the provision of self-employment opportunities among business education postgraduate students and communication skills influence the provision of self-employment opportunities among business education postgraduate students.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Entrepreneurial skills should be integrated in school curriculum as this will help to encourage young people to start their own business.
2. The education system should provide the skills profiles required by the labour market to enhance employability of young people after graduation
3. Due to the socio-cultural diversity inherent in developing countries like Nigeria, entrepreneurial policies that are unique and indigenous to the respective states should be vigorously pursued.
4. Given the likelihood of challenges, government should offer incentives such as “tax holiday”, and adequate protection from foreign competitors, as well as patent rights to urge more desire for innovation.
5. Furthermore, it is not enough to merely encourage entrepreneurship. The spirit of entrepreneurship among Nigerian youths should be promoted through seminars.

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