



INVESTIGATION OF THE EFFECT OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION ON ENTREPRENEURIAL COMPETENCIES AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS: A STUDY OF SELECTED INSTITUTIONS IN OGUN STATE.

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Abstract

Entrepreneurship education is widely recognized as a catalyst for developing entrepreneurial competencies among university students. This study investigates the impact of entrepreneurship education on competencies such as innovation, risk-taking, and business management among students from selected Nigerian universities. A quantitative survey design was employed, with 320 respondents drawn from three institutions. Results revealed a significant positive relationship between exposure to entrepreneurship education and the development of entrepreneurial competencies. The findings highlight the need for curriculum enrichment and practical engagement in entrepreneurship programs to bridge the gap between theory and practice.

Keywords: entrepreneurship education, entrepreneurial competencies, Nigerian universities, student entrepreneurship, experiential learning.

Introduction

Entrepreneurship is regarded as the backbone and engine of economic development (Ogunmokun, 2018). Entrepreneurship is therefore defined as the practice of seeking and recognizing opportunities within the environment and transforming them by creative and innovative means into marketable products or services thereby creating value and wealth for the individual as well as the society (McEwen, 2013). Entrepreneurship education has been recognized as an effective approach in fostering entrepreneurial mindsets (entrepreneurial intention) and competencies in university students, particularly in developing economies such as Nigeria (Akinyemi & Onikoyi, 2018). Considering the growing level of youth unemployment and the economic instability of the nation, equipping students with entrepreneurial skills becomes essential for national development (Nwachukwu & Uzoegwu, 2020). Entrepreneurial competencies—such as creativity, opportunity recognition, and risk management—are essential for successful business ventures (Adebayo & Kolawole, 2019). Empirical research by Kaya *et al.* (2019) proves that both entrepreneurial support and self-management-related skill teaching increase the possibility of future entrepreneurial activities, which reinforces the necessity of establishing entrepreneurship education courses in universities. This study examines how

entrepreneurship education contributes to developing these competencies among university students.

Statement of the Problem

Entrepreneurship has been recognized as a key factor in economic growth, job creation, and innovation in the fast-paced global economy of today. In Nigeria, where joblessness among young people has remained a pressing challenge, entrepreneurship education has been integrated into university curricula with the aim of equipping students with the skills, knowledge, and mindset necessary to become successful entrepreneurs. Despite all of these efforts, the nation still has high graduate unemployment rates coupled with a noticeable gap between entrepreneurial intentions and actual business start-ups.

Numerous studies Olatunji and Ogunyomi (2020); Ibrahim and Mohammed (2022) have indicated that despite the prevalence of entrepreneurship education, its efficacy in cultivating critical entrepreneurial competencies—namely innovation, risk-taking, leadership, and business management—exhibits considerable variation among institutions. Entrepreneurship education often lacks practical exposure, mentorship, and real-world application, remaining predominantly theoretical in nature. . This prompts inquiries on the efficacy of existing educational programs in cultivating entrepreneurial competencies that provide concrete entrepreneurial results among university graduates.

Furthermore, there is still little and inconsistencies in empirical data regarding the true impact of entrepreneurship education programs on students' competences at Nigerian universities, despite the fact that these programs are growing. Therefore, an in-depth investigation that not only evaluates how much entrepreneurship education improves entrepreneurial competencies but also pinpoints gaps and areas for development is desperately needed. By examining the impact of entrepreneurship education on students' entrepreneurial competencies at particular universities, this study aims to close this knowledge gap and offer data-driven insights to educators, policymakers, and curriculum creators.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study is to investigate the effect of entrepreneurship education on the development of entrepreneurial competencies among university students in some selected universities in Ogun state, Nigeria. The specific objectives are to:

- i. examine the extent of entrepreneurship education exposure among university students.
- ii. assess the level of entrepreneurial competencies (innovation, risk-taking, leadership, and business management) among university students in Ogun State.
- iii. determine the relationship between entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial competencies.

Research Questions

- i. What is the level of entrepreneurial competencies developed by university students?
- ii. Is there a significant relationship between entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial competencies?



Literature Review

University Education

University education is more than the next level in the learning process; it is a critical component of human development worldwide (Glavič 2020). It provides not only the high-level skills necessary for every labor market but also the training essential for teachers, doctors, nurses, civil servants, engineers, humanists, entrepreneurs, scientists, social scientists, and a myriad of other personnel (Ziprebo & Obi, 2024). It is these trained individuals who develop the capacity and analytical skills that drive local economies, support civil society, teach children, lead effective governments, and make important decisions which affect entire societies (McGrath & Yamada, 2023).

An educated populace is vital in today's world, with the convergent impacts of globalization, the increasing importance of knowledge as a main driver of growth, and the information and communication revolution (Zhang et al., 2022). Knowledge accumulation and application have become major factors in economic development and are increasingly at the core of a country's competitive advantage in the global economy (Nelaeva & Nilssen, 2022). The combination of increased computing power, diminishing prices of hardware and software, improvement of wireless and satellite technologies, and reduced telecommunication costs has all but removed the space and time barriers to information access and exchange (Bhattacharyya et al., 2023).

Entrepreneurship Education

Entrepreneurship education emerged abroad in the 1980s and the 1990s. In 1989, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) held an international symposium on Education for the twenty-first century, in which Colin put forward the concept of entrepreneurship education, namely, career ambition and pioneering skills education (Lee, 2023). Entrepreneurship is a comprehensive concept that is not only a mere creation business, but also a way of life and thinking for students (Kuratko, 2005). Entrepreneurship is a complex social activity that requires a higher practical ability. The effectiveness and value of experiential learning is practically beyond debate in entrepreneurial education (Mandel & Noyes, 2016). Gibb (2011) argues that development of the entrepreneurial mindset requires learning by doing, conversion of knowledge into problem-solving methods.

Teaching methods for entrepreneurship education are not static, but dynamic, and may change with the constant use of social media as part of the learning experience (Chawinga, 2017). Ratten and Usmanij (2021) argue that entrepreneurship education is an experiential learning that needs to be embedded with key learning objectives in the curriculum to increase student engagement, and that a hybrid learning approach such as case studies and business plan competitions is needed. Neck and Greene (2011) believe that entrepreneurship is a way of thinking and behaving, and entrepreneurship courses, different from other theoretical courses, need to apply practice in course content, such as carrying out competitions, simulating entrepreneurship, and reflective practice. On this basis, entrepreneurship education in universities is divided into three dimensions: entrepreneurial teaching, business plan competition, and entrepreneurial practice support.



Entrepreneurial Competence

Entrepreneurial competence is defined as “the ability to take action on opportunities and ideas and turn them into value for others. According to Laguía et al. (2019), entrepreneurship stimulates the establishment of jobs and contributes positively to economic development, supporting and demonstrating the essentiality of promoting entrepreneurial activity; universities are representative. Furthermore, social psychological perspectives have made significant contributions to studying the antecedents that drive a person to act, and the theory of planned action (TAP) is the most frequent theoretical construction used to predict entrepreneurial intentions. Through teamwork, communication, self-confidence, and innovation capacity, university students' business entrepreneurship skills show a medium or regular level in teamwork and communication skills, while self-confidence and innovation were adequate. In summary, the students demonstrated a positive attitude towards business entrepreneurship (Casimiro et al., 2019).

Uku and Marge (2017) argued that society is improved not only by entrepreneurship but by entrepreneurial individuals with knowledge, attitudes, and skills to identify and exploit opportunities, create value, and orient toward action. Generally, competence is the ability to successfully solve problems of reality, challenges, and opportunities (Barth et al., 2007). Therefore, this study argues that the entrepreneurial competence of university students includes both entrepreneurial skills and entrepreneurial knowledge and spirit. Hu and Xu (2015) concludes that entrepreneurial attitude and knowledge have a significant impact on entrepreneurial intention, while entrepreneurial competence does not have a significant impact on entrepreneurial intention.

Related study on Entrepreneurship Education and Entrepreneurial Competencies

Entrepreneurship education aims to provide students with knowledge, skills, and motivation to engage in entrepreneurial activities (Osakwe & Eromosele, 2021). According to Ali, Rauf, and Nassar Ahmad (2024), entrepreneurial competencies encompass a combination of knowledge, skills, and personal attributes that enable effective venture creation and growth. Studies have shown that practical-oriented curricula significantly enhance students' entrepreneurial readiness (Eze & Nwankwo, 2019).

Olatunji and Ogunyomi (2020) argued that most Nigerian universities focus on theoretical aspects, limiting students' exposure to real-world business scenarios. However, initiatives like mandatory entrepreneurship courses and university establishments have begun bridging this gap (Ibrahim & Mohammed, 2022). Empirical findings by Umeh and Anene (2021) demonstrated that students who engaged in experiential learning, such as business simulations and internships, developed stronger competencies than those who only participated in classroom learning.

Methodology

A descriptive survey research design was adopted for this study. The population consisted of final-year students from three selected universities offering entrepreneurship education in Ogun State (Olabisi Onabanjo University, Federal University of Agriculture, and Babcock University). A stratified random sampling technique was used to select 358 respondents. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire developed from previous validated



instruments (Adebayo & Kolawole, 2019). The questionnaire measured key entrepreneurial competencies across four domains: innovation, risk-taking, leadership, and business management. Responses were measured on a 5-point Likert scale: 5 = Strongly Agree, 4 = Agree, 3 = Neutral, 2 = Disagree, 1 = Strongly Disagree.

Results and Discussion

Data Presentation and Analysis

A total number of 358 copies of questionnaires were administered to the respondents and 320 (91.4%) were returned and found usable for the analysis. The analysis was carried out using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 26 for windows.

Table 1: Breakdown of Questionnaire Administration

Questionnaire Distribution		
Particulars	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Completed and Usable copies of questionnaires	320	91.4
Not returned/Declined filling	38	8.6
Total	358	100.0

Source: Author's Computation, 2024; underlying data from Field Survey.

Table 1 provides a descriptive analysis of the administered copies of the questionnaire. From the 358 copies of the questionnaire distributed 320, which sums up to 91.4% of the respondents were duly completed and found usable for the analysis. Approximately 8.6% of the copies administered were not returned and some were incompletely filled, hence judged as invalid and unusable for the analysis. The key entrepreneurial competencies across the four domains: innovation, risk-taking, leadership, and business management as measured by the questionnaire were investigated.

Table 2: Detailed Analysis of Respondents' Responses on Entrepreneurship Competencies (N = 320)

Item	Question	5 (SA)	4 (A)	3 (N)	2 (D)	1 (SD)	Mean	SD
A. Innovation Competency								
1	I can develop new and creative business ideas.	130 (40.6%)	140 (43.8%)	25 (7.8%)	15 (4.7%)	10 (3.1%)	4.14	0.22
2	I am skilled in identifying market gaps.	125 (39.1%)	135 (42.2%)	30 (9.4%)	20 (6.3%)	10 (3.1%)	4.08	0.22
3	I apply innovative strategies to solve business problems.	120 (37.5%)	140 (43.8%)	30 (9.4%)	20 (6.3%)	10 (3.1%)	4.02	0.22
B. Risk-Taking Competency								
4	I am willing to take calculated business risks.	110 34.4%	145 (45.3%)	35	20 (6.3%)	10 (3.1%)	4.02	0.22
5	I feel confident in making decisions under uncertainty.	105 (32.8%)	140 (43.8%)	40 (12.5%)	25 (7.8%)	10 (3.1%)	3.95	0.21
6	I am comfortable with potential losses when pursuing business goals.	100 (31.3%)	135 (42.2%)	45 (14.1%)	30 (9.4%)	10 (3.1%)	3.89	0.21
C. Leadership Competency								
7	I can effectively lead and manage a business team.	120 (37.5%)	140 (43.8%)	30 (9.4%)	20 (6.3%)	10 (3.1%)	4.06	0.22
8	I am skilled in resolving team conflicts.	115 (35.9%)	135 (42.2%)	35 (10.9%)	25 (7.8%)	10 (3.1%)	4.00	0.22
9	I can delegate tasks appropriately within a team setting.	110 (34.4%)	140 (43.8%)	40 (12.5%)	20 (6.3%)	10 (3.1%)	3.84	0.21
D. Business Management Competency								
10	I can manage business finances effectively.	115 (35.9%)	135 (42.2%)	35 (10.9%)	25 (7.8%)	10 (3.1%)	4.00	0.22
11	I understand the principles of marketing and sales.	120 (37.5%)	130 (40.6%)	35 (10.9%)	25 (7.8%)	10 (3.1%)	4.02	0.22
12	I am able to plan and execute business operations efficiently.	115 (35.9%)	135 (42.2%)	35 (10.9%)	25 (7.8%)	10 (3.1%)	4.10	0.22
E. Relationship Between Entrepreneurship Education and Competencies								
13	Entrepreneurship education has improved my entrepreneurial skills.	130 (40.6%)	140 (43.8%)	25 (7.8%)	15 (4.7%)	10 (3.1%)	4.14	0.23
14	The entrepreneurship program is relevant to practical business needs.	125 (39.1%)	135 (42.2%)	30 (9.4%)	20 (6.3%)	10 (3.1%)	4.08	0.22
15	I feel more prepared to start my own business after the course.	130 (40.6%)	135 (42.2%)	25 (7.8%)	20 (6.3%)	10 (3.1%)	4.11	0.23



Discussion

The study aimed to investigate the effects of entrepreneurship education on entrepreneurial competencies such as Innovation, Risk-Taking, Leadership, and Business Management among university students in Ogun state. Responses from 320 participants across selected universities provided rich insight.

Innovation Competency: Findings of this study show high agreement that entrepreneurship education has improved students' innovative abilities. Specifically, 84.4% of respondents (SA + A) affirmed their ability to develop new and creative business ideas (Mean = 4.14, SD = 0.22) with an average of mean and standard deviation (Mean = 4.08, SD = 0.22). This aligns with findings by Adebayo and Kolawole (2021), who noted that well-structured entrepreneurship programs foster innovation through idea incubation and project-based learning.

Risk-Taking Competency: The majority of respondents (79.7%) agreed they are now more willing to take calculated risks (Mean = 4.02, SD = 0.22) with an overall Risk-taking competency of average mean and standard deviation (Mean = 3.95, SD = 0.21). This suggests a shift toward entrepreneurial courage, echoing Olalekan and Akinrinlola (2020), who stressed that experiential learning modules in entrepreneurship courses help students build risk tolerance.

Leadership Competency: Approximately 81.3% of students expressed confidence in their leadership skills (Mean = 4.06, SD = 0.94), notably in team management and conflict resolution. University students in Ogun State affirmed a relative moderately high leadership competency with average mean and standard deviation (Mean = 3.97, SD = 0.94). This result supports findings by Nwachukwu *et al.* (2019), who reported that leadership competency is one of the strongest gains from university entrepreneurship programs.

Business Management Competency: A strong 78.1% of respondents indicated mastery of business management principles (Mean = 3.96, SD = 0.98), especially in finance, marketing, and operational planning. These findings corroborate with Adeyemo & Eniola (2023), who highlighted that management competency is essential for successful business start-ups.

Relationship Between Entrepreneurship Education and Competencies:

Overall, 84.4% of respondents felt their competencies improved through entrepreneurship education (Mean = 4.14, SD = 0.89). This strengthens the argument that entrepreneurship education meaningfully contributes to students' entrepreneurial readiness, aligning with Ibrahim & Mohammed (2022).

Conclusion

Overall, this study highlights that entrepreneurship education is instrumental in nurturing entrepreneurial competencies among university students. However, to achieve holistic competency development, entrepreneurship education programs should be restructured to include more experiential and real-world business exposure. Addressing challenges like funding, mentorship, and infrastructure is also key to optimizing the effectiveness of entrepreneurship education in Nigeria.



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