

# Assessment of Entrepreneurship Education as a Strategy for Poverty Alleviation among Business Education Graduates of Universities in South-South Nigeria

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## ABSTRACT

This study assessed entrepreneurship education as a strategy for poverty alleviation among business education graduates from universities in South-South Nigeria. Three research questions and three null hypotheses guided the study. The study adopted the descriptive survey research design. The target population for this study comprised of 200 business education graduates in Federal/State Universities in South-South Nigeria. The entire population was used for the study, since the population is manageable. Hence there was no sampling. The instrument that was used to collect data in this study was a questionnaire. The face and content validities of the questionnaire were determined by the researcher's supervisor and two other experts in Business Education Department. Cronbach alpha reliability index was used to determine the internal consistency of the items in the instrument. The data obtained were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Mean and standard deviation were utilized to answer the research questions while independent samples t-tests were employed to test the hypotheses at a significance level of 0.05. The findings of the study revealed that on average, undergraduate students possess high ability in the utilization of ICT skills; that on average, business education graduates possess high ability in the utilization of management skills; that on the average, business education graduates possess high ability in the utilization of marketing skills. The study also revealed that there is no significant difference between male and female business education graduates in the mean ratings of their possessed competencies in marketing. The study recommended that educational institutions should provide additional education and training for undergraduate in ICT so that they can possess high ability on how to create website, identify and open spreadsheet in another location, send and receive fast messages.

**Keywords:** Entrepreneurship Education; Poverty Alleviation; Business Education Graduates; Universities in South-South Nigeria

## INTRODUCTION

The present trend in Nigeria where graduates are seen roaming the street looking for government job calls for the need to critically examine the Nigerian educational system. The high rate of unemployment among school leavers and graduates has been attributed to lack of skills and knowledge required in the world of work. Many reasons have been given for the rising level of unemployment amongst graduates, especially in South-South, Nigeria. One is the quality of practical and theoretical training to which these employees-to-be were exposed. Experts (Obisesan, 2010; Ehirheme & Ekpenyong, 2012) have suggested a potential mismatch between the education provided in Nigeria's tertiary institutions and the actual needs of industries and employers. Another significant factor is the traditional mindset of Nigerian graduates, who tend to rely on paid employment after graduation rather than utilizing their training and experiences to establish businesses. Consequently, when job security in a company becomes uncertain, individuals often opt to become entrepreneurs.

To address the substantial issue of unemployment among graduates in Nigeria, the Federal Government

introduced entrepreneurship education. This initiative is a concrete step taken to curb the increasing rates of graduate unemployment in the country. Entrepreneurship education aims to equip students with the knowledge, skills, and motivation necessary for entrepreneurial success across various settings. Various forms of entrepreneurship education are available at all levels of education, ranging from primary and secondary schools to graduate university programs (Wikipedia, 2016). Ayatse (2013) emphasized that entrepreneurship education plays a pivotal role in driving the economy, as a significant portion of wealth and jobs originates from small businesses initiated by individuals with an entrepreneurial mindset, many of whom later establish large enterprises. According to the author, exposure to entrepreneurship education provides individuals with greater creative freedom.

Entrepreneurship education is a new field (Bueckmann Diegoli et al. 2018), which is spreading and developing beyond the business sphere. Technological knowledge and skills of other countries are brought to Nigeria through the introduction of entrepreneurship education as a course in our school system. Entrepreneurship education aims at helping the students acquire saleable skills which can help them become self-employed. Therefore, entrepreneurship education is education geared towards producing a self-employed or self-reliant people. For an individual to be self-employed, he/she must have acquired right habits, attitudes and saleable skills with which he can explore his environment.

Entrepreneurship education, integrated into the overall educational framework, encompasses the acquisition of skills, ideas, and management capabilities essential for creating employment opportunities. An entrepreneur focuses on generating jobs rather than pursuing traditional employment. Hence, there is a crucial requirement to adopt and support this form of education by providing the essential resources for its effective implementation. Utilizing high-quality entrepreneurship education has the potential to serve as a powerful strategy in combatting poverty and unemployment in Nigeria. Enu (2012) adds that entrepreneurship education empowers individuals with the capacity to identify investment prospects and optimize returns from these investments. Entrepreneurship education is the ability to acquire skills for self-employment and nation building. Therefore, integrating entrepreneurship education into the curriculum will help to equip students with relevant skills and business knowledge and self-confidence for national development.

National Development is the overall socio-economic, technological and industrial development of a nation. Industrial development is an integral part of economic development which in turn should be considered as a vital part of overall national development. The level of entrepreneurship education of any nation is a factor for its national development. Erute (2009) was of the view that theories of economic development suggest that rapid development can only occur when available resources are harnessed and utilize for the production of goods and services. Unless resources are harnessed, it is difficult for Nigeria to attain self-reliant and sustainable national development. The role of entrepreneurship education to national development is numerous. It equips the people with skills and knowledge to create their own business thereby making wealth for themselves. Also, entrepreneurship education provides men with knowledge of how to make economic decision in order to live a good life.

In addition, entrepreneurship education raises productivity through technical and other forms of innovation. It equips the people with skills and knowledge to establish their own business so that they can be self-reliant economically. Entrepreneurship education is a powerful tool for job creation. For example, people establish personal business and create job for others through entrepreneurship training programme. Alade (2004) stated that entrepreneurship education facilitates the transfer of technology. Technological knowledge and skills of other countries are brought to Nigeria through the introduction of entrepreneurship education as a course in our school system. It creates new markets into international market, it improves the social welfare of a nation.

Nigeria adopted entrepreneurship education to accelerate economic growth and development. This is evident

in Nigeria's national education policy, which emphasizes that education is the primary tool for driving change. The policy asserts that fundamental societal transformations can only take place through an educational revolution that significantly influences intellectual development (Akhueomonkhan, Raimi, & Sofoluwe, 2013). In support of this assertion, the Federal Government of Nigeria issued a directive to all tertiary institutions in the country through its agencies, mandating the development of a minimum academic standard for teaching entrepreneurship and the adoption of entrepreneurship studies as a compulsory course. However, despite more than a decade passing since this directive, practical implementation has faced challenges. Akhueomonkhan et al. (2013) expressed concern about the disproportionate emphasis on exams and paper qualifications, highlighting the system's failure to effectively address the issue of dysfunctional knowledge. In essence, Nigerian educational institutions still focus on teaching students to master various subjects without relating them to the country's needs, thereby lacking the ability to address fundamental living problems (Akhueomonkhan et al., 2013).

To address the deficiencies in curricula regarding employment challenges, the National Universities Commission (NUC) organized a workshop on entrepreneurship for Nigerian universities in July 2004. This workshop resulted in the development of a draft curriculum on entrepreneurial studies for Nigerian universities. Consequently, many universities have initiated entrepreneurship education programs in an effort to counter the trend of graduate unemployment by providing students with the necessary training in entrepreneurial skills. The goal is to empower students to establish businesses and view self-employment as a viable career option. Tertiary institutions are expected to take center stage in the process of continuous development of entrepreneurship in a nation, to generate employment, and improve the economic development (Fatoki & Oni, 2014). As per Maina (2013), the improvement of job opportunities can be achieved through effective entrepreneurship training, leading to a subsequent decrease in unemployment, poverty, and societal issues in Nigeria. Consequently, he asserts that entrepreneurship serves as a pathway to employment, especially considering the unpredictable economic conditions.

More recently, National Universities Commission (NUC), National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) and National Board for Technical Education (NBTE), in line with their mandates as regulators of universities, colleges of education and polytechnics programmes, insist that students must take and pass specific entrepreneurship courses before graduation. This is to reduce the problem of unemployment among graduates and ginger the graduates towards the entrepreneurial spirit and instill in them competencies needed for post-university work experience.

As indicated by Onegbu (2014), entrepreneurship education or training involves a purposeful intervention by an educator to prepare learners for success in the business world. This approach emphasizes action-oriented learning, with a central focus on teaching students how to create a business plan. Teshome (2014) broadens the scope, defining entrepreneurship education as any form of knowledge delivery aimed at empowering individuals to generate substantial wealth in the economic sector, thereby contributing to the overall development of the nation. Bassey and Archibong (2005) support this perspective, asserting that the goal of entrepreneurship education is to equip graduates, regardless of their field of specialization, with skills that enable them to engage in income-generating ventures if traditional job opportunities in the public sector are unavailable. This represents a shift from being job seekers to becoming job creators.

Entrepreneurship education, according to Postigo and Tomborini (2002), nurtures and stimulates the entrepreneurial process by providing the essential tools for initiating new ventures. It is widely believed that such education is crucial for fostering an entrepreneurial mindset, cultivating skills, creativity, confidence, drive, and courage, all contributing to the creation of employment opportunities for oneself and others. Oluwatobi and Ogunriola (2011) emphasize the importance of human capital in enhancing the wealth of nations. They argue that for Nigeria to accelerate its socio-economic development, there must be a deliberate focus on human capital development, involving regular collaboration among planners, employers,

and developers of human capital to facilitate meaningful national progress (Raimi, 2013).

The rising concerns about graduate employability and post-university work experience have become significant on both national and global levels. This is attributed to the escalating number of unemployed graduates and inexperienced employed graduates. The increasing global apprehension is particularly evident in many developing countries, where youth are identified as the most adversely affected group by the persistently high rates of unemployment. As a result, various governmental and non-governmental organizations have initiated policies through support agencies such as National Directorate for Employment (NDE), the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP), Small Medium Enterprises Development Agency (SMEDAN), National Office for Technology Acquisition and Promotion (NOTAP), Raw Materials & Development Council (RMRDC) among others to address the problems of unemployment among Nigerian citizens (Olayinka, 2010; Emmanuel, 2012; Akhuemonkhan, Raimi & Sofoluwe, 2013).

The strategies mentioned earlier were implemented with the expectation that fostering self-employment and small enterprise initiatives would act as a catalyst to unleash the economic potential of the populace. The goal was to enhance the capability of individuals in society to actively participate in and reap benefits from the national economy, ultimately facilitating economic development, which serves as the foundation for transformative change (Unachukwu, 2009; Ekpo & Edet, 2011). In a more recent development, the Federal Government of Nigeria introduced another approach to instill a culture of self-employment (entrepreneurship) among students in tertiary institutions. This is to reduce the problem of unemployment among graduates and ginger the graduates towards entrepreneurial spirit and instill in them competencies needed for post-university work experience. This paper therefore, assessed entrepreneurship education as a strategy for poverty alleviation among business education graduates of universities in South-South Nigeria.

## Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

1. To what extent do business education graduates possess relevant competencies in information and communication technology as a strategy for poverty alleviation?
2. To what extent do business education graduates possess relevant competencies in management?
3. To what extent do business education graduates possess relevant competencies in marketing?

## Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were generated for the purpose of the study;

**H<sub>01</sub>** There is no significant difference between male and female business education graduates in the mean ratings of their possessed competencies in information and communication technology as a strategy for poverty alleviation.

**H<sub>02</sub>**: There is no significant difference between male and female business education graduates in the mean ratings of their possessed competencies in management.

**H<sub>03</sub>**: There is no significant difference between male and female business education graduates in the mean ratings of their possessed competencies in marketing.

## METHODS

This study used descriptive survey design to assess entrepreneurship education as a strategy for poverty alleviation among business education graduates of universities in South-South Nigeria. The target

population for this study comprised of 200 business education postgraduate students in Federal/State Universities in South-South Nigeria. The states are Delta (32), Edo (56), Cross River (20), Bayelsa (20), Rivers (52), Akwa Ibom (20). The entire population was used for the study, since the population is manageable. Hence there was no sampling.

A 37-item questionnaire was the instrument used for data collection. The questionnaire title; it had two parts. Part A which consisted of demographic items and part B have three research questions which contain 37 items from the three research questions. The questionnaire items had the following response options; Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). The extent to which business education graduates possess relevant competencies in information and communication technology as a strategy for poverty alleviation (11 items); The extent to which business education graduates possess relevant competencies in management (12 items); and the extent to which business education graduates possess relevant competencies in marketing (14 items).

To ascertain the face and content validity of the instrument questionnaire constructed was given to three experts in Business Education department and two experts in Department of measurement and evaluation all at the Delta State University Abraka who made appropriate corrections before the final copy of the questionnaire was written, before submission to the research supervisor for final correction and approval. All corrections effected before the final questionnaire was written. The instrument was pre-tested to group of respondents and they will be considered to be good and reliable for used. The Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient was used to estimate the reliability. A coefficient of 0.83 was obtained for the instrument, which means that the instrument is reliable.

The researchers administered 200 questionnaires to business education graduates in public tertiary institutions which was retrieved and the data utilized for the study. Mean and standard deviation was employed in answering the research questions with a criterion mean of 2.50. in decision, an average score of 2.50 and above was accepted and average score less than 2.50 was rejected. Independent sample t-test was employed in testing the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

## RESULTS

**Research Question 1:** To what extent do business education graduates possess relevant competencies in information and communication technology as a strategy for poverty alleviation?

**Table 1:** Mean rating of the extent to which business education graduates possess relevant competencies in information and communication technology as a strategy for poverty alleviation

S/N	Items	Mean	SD	Remark
1	Ability to send e-mail	3.43	0.57	High
2	Ability to key in data	3.38	0.51	High
3	Ability to use text editing and layout	3.35	0.55	High
4	Ability to receive e-mail	3.33	0.55	High
5	Ability to copy, paste or insert in another location	3.33	0.51	High
6	Skills in producing documents with word processors	3.32	0.55	High
7	Ability to perform basic data processing	3.28	0.6	High
8	Ability to create web-site	1.69	0.55	Low
9	Ability to identify and open a spread sheet in another location	1.67	0.53	Low

10	Ability to send fax message	1.65	0.53	Low
11	Ability to receive fax message	1.65	0.53	Low
<b>Average Mean</b>		<b>2.73</b>	<b>0.54</b>	<b>High</b>

**Criterion Mean = 2.50**

Table 1 shows the mean rating of the extent to which business education graduates possess relevant competencies in information and communication technology as a strategy for poverty alleviation. From the result, the mean score ranged from 1.65 to 3.43 with an average mean of 2.73. The criterion mean used for the assessment is 2.50, which means that the respondents have high ability in majority of the skills (from item 1-7) and need more training in few of the skills (from item 7-11). The result also revealed that on average, the respondents possess high ability in the utilization of information and communication technology skills.

**Research Question 2:** To what extent do business education graduates possess relevant competencies in management of small-scale businesses?

**Table 2:** Mean rating of the extent to which business education graduates possess relevant competencies in management

S/N	Items	Mean	SD	Remark
1	Ability to motivate self and others in the market	3.42	0.52	High
2	Ability to be resourceful and creative	3.4	0.58	High
3	Ability to supervise business effectively	3.37	0.53	High
4	Ability to maintain business ethics	3.35	0.54	High
5	Ability to source funds for the running of a small-scale business	3.33	0.57	High
6	Ability to organize small scale business	3.32	0.55	High
7	Ability to plan for small scale or medium scale business	3.32	0.56	High
8	Knowledge of business registration	3.31	0.48	High
9	Ability to formulate business by-laws	3.3	0.54	High
10	Ability to develop skills of keeping accounting records of small-scale business	3.28	0.49	High
11	Ability to redefine risk as opportunities to make use of the expertise	1.62	0.54	Low
12	Ability to interpret market information	1.59	0.52	Low
<b>Average Mean</b>		<b>3.05</b>	<b>0.53</b>	<b>High</b>
<b>Criterion Mean = 2.50</b>				

Table 2 shows the mean rating of the extent to which business education graduates possess relevant competencies in management. From the result, the mean score ranged from 1.59 to 3.42 with an average mean of 3.05. The criterion mean used for the assessment is 2.50, which means that the respondents have high ability in majority of the skills (from item 1-10) and need more training in few of the skills (from item 11-12). The result also reveals that on average, the respondents possess high ability in the utilization of management skills.

**Research Question 3:** To what extent do business education graduates possess relevant competencies in marketing?

**Table 3:** Mean rating of the extent to which business education graduates possess relevant competencies in marketing

S/N	Items	Mean	SD	Remark
1	Familiarity with various aspects of sales and salesmanship	3.45	0.55	High
2	Knowledge of pricing	3.4	0.58	High
3	Ability to analyse demand situation	3.4	0.53	High
4	Ability to determine the extent to which product will sell	3.39	0.49	High
5	Knowledge of packaging	3.38	0.54	High
6	Ability to retain customers	3.37	0.54	High
7	Ability to promote and sell the organization product	3.36	0.5	High
8	Ability to determine what customers need	3.23	0.76	High
9	Knowledge of advertising	3.21	0.8	High
10	Knowledge of stocking right product at the right time	3.2	0.75	High
11	Ability to budget and forecast	1.77	0.74	Low
12	Knowledge of seasonal fluctuations of goods	1.6	0.51	Low
13	Ability to determine current and future trends in sales of product	1.58	0.54	Low
14	Ability to carryout effective marketing and information research	1.58	0.52	Low
<b>Average Mean</b>		<b>2.85</b>	<b>0.6</b>	<b>High</b>
<b>Criterion Mean = 2.50</b>				

Table 3 shows the mean rating of the extent to which business education graduates possess relevant competencies in marketing. From the result, the mean scores ranged from 1.58 to 3.45 with an average mean of 2.85. The criterion mean used for the assessment is 2.50, which means that the respondents have high ability in majority of the skills (from item 1-10) and need more training in few of the skills (from item 11-14). The result also revealed that on average, the respondents possess high ability in the utilization of marketing skills.

**H0<sub>1</sub>** There is no significant difference between male and female business education graduates in the mean ratings of their possessed competencies in information and communication technology as a strategy for poverty alleviation

**Table 4:** t-test comparison of male and female business education graduates in the mean ratings of their possessed competencies in information and communication technology as a strategy for poverty alleviation

Gender	N	Mean	SD	df	T	p	Remark
Male	103	2.75	0.15	198	1.49	0.14	Not Significant
Female	97	2.72	0.16				

Table 4 presents the outcomes of an independent samples t-test, employed to compare male and female graduates in business education concerning the average ratings of their competencies in information and communication technology, specifically as a strategy for poverty alleviation. The findings indicate that there is no noteworthy gender disparity among business education graduates in terms of the mean ratings of their competencies in information and communication technology for poverty alleviation ( $t [198] = 1.49; p > 0.05$ ). Consequently, the null hypothesis is affirmed. This implies that there is no significant distinction between male and female business education graduates regarding the mean ratings of their competencies in information and communication technology as a strategy for poverty alleviation.

**H0<sub>2</sub>:** There is no significant difference between male and female business education graduates in the mean ratings of their possessed competencies in management small scale businesses.

**Table 5:** t-test comparison of male and female business education graduates in the mean ratings of their possessed competencies in management

Gender	N	Mean	SD	df	t	p	Remark
Male	103	3.05	0.21	198	0.18	0.86	Not Significant
Female	97	3.05	0.23				

Table 5 displays the findings from an independent samples t-test, applied to assess the mean ratings of competencies in small-scale business management between male and female graduates in business education. The outcome reveals that there is no substantial gender contrast among business education graduates in terms of the mean ratings of their competencies in small-scale business management ( $t [198] = 0.18$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ). As a result, the null hypothesis is acknowledged. This indicates that there is no notable distinction between male and female business education graduates concerning the mean ratings of their competencies in the management of small-scale businesses.

**H0<sub>3</sub>:** There is no significant difference between male and female business education graduates in the mean ratings of their possessed competencies in marketing

**Table 6:** t-test comparison of male and female business education graduates in the mean ratings of their possessed competencies in marketing

Gender	N	Mean	SD	df	t	p	Remark
Male	103	2.86	0.17	198	0.9	0.37	Not Significant
Female	97	2.84	0.17				

Table 6 presents the outcomes of an independent samples t-test, employed to evaluate the mean ratings of competencies in marketing between male and female graduates in business education. The findings indicate that there is no substantial gender contrast among business education graduates concerning the mean ratings of their competencies in marketing ( $t [198] = 0.90$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ). Therefore, the null hypothesis is affirmed. This suggests that there is no noteworthy difference between male and female business education graduates regarding the mean ratings of their competencies in marketing.

## DISCUSSION

The first finding revealed that on average, undergraduate students possess high ability in the utilization of information and communication technology skills. This finding is consistent with the fact that they have grown up in a digital age and are surrounded by technology from a young age. They are therefore comfortable using ICT tools for a variety of purposes, such as communication, research, and learning. The possess skills in the area of ability to send e-mail, key in data, use text editing and layout, receive e-mail, copy, paste or insert in another location, producing documents with word processors and perform basic data processing. These are all essential skills for success in today's world, both in academia and in the workplace. They however, need some training in how to create web-site, identify and open a spread sheet in another location, send and receive fax messages. These skills are becoming increasingly important in many different fields, so it is important for students to have the opportunity to develop them.

A corresponding hypothesis showed that there is no significant difference between male and female



business education graduates in the mean ratings of their possessed competencies in information and communication technology as a strategy for poverty alleviation. Studies have shown that there is no gender gap in ICT skills among students and young adults. However, it is important to note that this hypothesis is specific to business education graduates. It is possible that there are gender differences in ICT skills among students in other fields of study. Overall, the findings suggest that undergraduate students are generally proficient in the use of ICT tools, but there are some areas where they could benefit from additional training. It is also important to note that there is no significant gender gap in ICT skills among business education graduates.

The above finding agrees with the Pew Research Center (2022), which found that 97% of American teenagers use the internet, and 95% use a smartphone. This suggests that undergraduate students have grown up using ICT tools and are therefore comfortable using them for a variety of purposes. The finding is also consistent with National Center for Education Statistics (2021), whose finding found that 90% of undergraduate students use a computer or tablet on a daily basis for academic work. This suggests that undergraduate students are skilled in using ICT tools for learning.

The second finding showed that on average, business education graduates possess high ability in the utilization of management skills. This finding is consistent with the fact that their curriculum typically covers a wide range of management topics, including planning, organizing, leading, controlling, decision-making, problem-solving, communication, motivation, and ethics. Business education graduates also have the opportunity to develop their management skills through internships and other experiential learning opportunities.

The graduates possess skills in the area of ability to motivate self and others in the market, to be resourceful and creative, supervise business effectively, maintain business ethics, source funds for the running of a small-scale business, organize small scale business, plan for small scale or medium scale business, knowledge of business registration, formulate business by-laws, and develop skills of keeping accounting records of small-scale business. These are all essential skills for success in the business world, regardless of the size or type of business. They however, needs some skills in the ability to redefine risk as opportunity to make use of the expertise and interpret market information. These skills are becoming increasingly important in today's dynamic and uncertain business environment.

A corresponding hypothesis revealed that there is no significant difference between male and female business education graduates in the mean ratings of their possessed competencies in management. Studies have shown that there is no gender gap in management skills among business education graduates. Overall, the findings suggest that business education graduates are generally proficient in the use of management skills. However, there are some areas where they could benefit from additional training. It is also important to note that there is no significant gender gap in management skills among business education graduates.

The above finding agrees with Akpan and Naboth-Odum (2018), who found that business education graduates have a high level of knowledge and skills in the areas of management, accounting, marketing, and entrepreneurship. It is also in line with the study of Olumese and Ediagbonya (2016), which found that business education graduates are well-equipped with the skills and knowledge necessary to manage businesses of all sizes. The finding further supports Emejulu (2014), who found that business education graduates have the skills and knowledge necessary to start and run their own businesses. It also agrees with Uzoji (2021), who found no significant difference between male and female business education graduates in their possessed competencies in management.

The third finding revealed that on the average, business education graduates possess high ability in the utilization of marketing skills. This finding suggests that Business education graduates are typically trained

in a variety of marketing skills, including market research, product development, pricing, promotion, distribution and customer relationship management. They possess skills in the following areas: familiarity with various aspects of sales and salesmanship, knowledge of pricing, ability to analyse demand situation, determine the extent to which product will sell, knowledge of packaging, ability to retain customers, promote and sell the organization product, determine what customers need, knowledge of advertising and stocking right product at the right time. These skills are essential for success in any marketing role, and business education graduates are well-equipped to apply them in the workplace. They however, need some skills in ability to budget and forecast, knowledge of seasonal fluctuations of goods, ability to determine current and future trends in sales of product and carryout effective marketing and information research.

A corresponding hypothesis showed that there is no significant difference between male and female business education graduates in the mean ratings of their possessed competencies in marketing. This finding suggests that both male and female business education graduates are equally capable of marketing products and services effectively. It is also important to note that the marketing landscape is constantly changing, and new technologies and strategies are emerging all the time. As a result, it is important for business education graduates to stay up-to-date on the latest marketing trends and developments.

The above finding is in line with Akpan and Naboth-Odum (2018), who found that business education graduates have a high level of knowledge and skills in the areas of marketing, accounting, and entrepreneurship. It also agrees with Olumese and Ediabonyia (2016), who found that business education graduates are well-equipped with the skills and knowledge necessary to manage businesses of all sizes, including marketing. It further agrees with Uzoji (2021), who found no significant difference between male and female business education graduates in their possessed competencies in marketing.

## CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that Business Education graduates possess high ability in the utilization of information and communication technology (ICT) skills, management skills, and marketing skills. This is good news for employers, as it suggests that graduates of these programs are well-prepared to enter the workforce and contribute to their organizations. And also start and run business effectively. There is no significant difference between male and female undergraduate students and business education graduates in the mean ratings of their possessed competencies in ICT utilization, management, and marketing. This suggests that both male and female students are equally capable of developing and utilizing these skills.

Overall, the findings suggest that undergraduate students and business education graduates are well-prepared to succeed in the workforce. They possess the skills and knowledge necessary to utilize ICT tools, manage people and projects, and market products and services effectively. In addition to the above conclusions, All three skills (ICT, management, and marketing) are essential for success in the modern workforce. This is because organizations of all sizes rely on ICT to operate efficiently, and they need employees who can manage people and projects effectively and market their products and services successfully. The fact that there is no significant difference between male and female students in these skills is a positive development. It suggests that both sexes have equal opportunities to succeed in the workplace. Overall, the findings are encouraging and suggest that undergraduate students and business education graduates are well-positioned to succeed in the modern workforce. And also start and run business effectively.

Therefore, entrepreneurship education can be used as a strategy for poverty alleviation among business education graduates of universities South-South Nigeria since they possess high ability in majority of the competencies in ICT, management and marketing.

In view of the findings, the following recommendations were provided:

1. Educational institutions should provide additional education and training for under graduate in ICT so that they can possess high ability on how to create website, identify and open spreadsheet in another location, send and receive fast messages.
2. Educational institutions should also focus on developing students' management and marketing skills.
3. Employers should consider hiring both male and female graduates of Business Education programmes since there is no gender gap between them.
4. Educational institutions should work with employers to ensure that their programmes are aligned with the needs of the workforce.
5. Educational institutions should also provide students with opportunities to gain practical experience in ICT, management, and marketing.
6. Employers should provide training and development opportunities for their employees to help them stay up-to-date on the latest ICT, management, and marketing trends and technologies.

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