

# Students' Perception of Business Education As A Stimulant For Employment Generation, Poverty Reduction And Sustainable Development In Nigeria

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## Abstract

*This study was conducted to determine the perception of students on role of business education in employment generation, poverty reduction and sustainable development in Nigeria. The study had three research objectives, questions and null hypotheses respectively. It adopted the survey research design and the population of the study was made up of all the 146 NCE II and III students who registered in the Department of Business Education, FCT College of Education, Zuba-Abuja, in 2023/2024 academic session. The entire population was used because it was manageable. A four-point rating scale questionnaire was used for the data collection. Mean scores with benchmark of 2.50 was used to answer the research questions, while t-test was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The findings of the study revealed that the respondents believed that Business Education is a potent tool for employment generation, poverty reduction and sustainable development in Nigeria and there were no significant differences in the mean responses of the respondents. The study concluded that Business Education is a discipline that is required for solving some of the social problems bedeviling Nigeria and reposition the country to the path of progress. Finally, the study among others, recommended that the study of Business Education should be encouraged to create more jobs for Nigerians, reduce poverty and enhance sustainable development in Nigeria.*

**Keywords:** Business education, Entrepreneurship education, Stimulant, Employment generation, Poverty reduction, Sustainable development.

## INTRODUCTION

Unemployment and poverty are among the most serious challenges confronting the Nigerian society. They contribute to under-utilisation of resources and low productivity. They also make life unbearable thereby having negative impacts on sustainable development. Francis (2021) reported that unemployment is a situation in which a person who is capable and willing to work at a prevailing pay rate becomes involuntarily idle because he could not get a suitable work to do. A deduction from Gidado and Akaeze (2015) showed that disequilibrium between demand and supply, structural factors which could be change in methods of production or technology, poor access to information and seasonal outlook of production may be responsible for unemployment. In addition to these, unemployment may also be caused by wrong government policies, poor school curriculum, inadequate skills and insecurity.

Unemployment is the greatest problem Nigeria is facing and it portrays a negative image of the country in the community of nations (Nwabufo, 2020). The reality on ground showed that

unemployment is on the increase in Nigeria. According to Ugwuanyi et.al (2015) the National Bureau of Statistics stated that in years 2009, 2010 and 2011, the rate of unemployment in Nigeria were 19.7%, 21.1% and 23.9% respectively. Furthermore, Mshelia and Ibrahim (2018) reported that it remained 23.9% in 2012. It should be noted that O’Nell (2024) gave lower figures which may be informed by the decision of the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) to change the methodology for determining the rate of unemployment in Nigeria. Under this criterion, a person is only recognised as being unemployed if they are not working for at least one hour in a week for pay or profit. It could therefore be seen from O’Nell (2024) that unemployment rate for 2004 was 3.56%, 2009 (3.75%), 2014 (3.96%), 2019 (5.21%), and 5.71% in 2020. The rate slowed down to 5.39 in 2021, 3.83 in 2022 and 3.07% in 2023. But it is important to note that the Nigeria Economic Summit Group (2024) related that the unemployment rate for the first quarter of 2024 stands at 5.3% as against 5.0% in the fourth quarter of 2023. This increase may be because of the twin policies of the Federal Government (withdrawal of fuel subsidy and floating of Naira) which are inflicting hardship on the citizens and forced some entrepreneurs to either close down or operate below capacity leading to laying-off of some staff.

Nigeria is among the poorest countries of the world. According to World Bank Group (2024), Nigeria is next to India in terms of world largest poor population. Poverty is seen as one of the greatest development challenges confronting Nigeria. This is because majority of Nigerians cannot comfortably afford to provide for their basic needs (food, clothing and shelter) (Okafor et.al, 2019). The authors further reported that 50% of Nigerians are living in poverty. Furthermore, Okeke-Ezeanyanwu and Nedum-Ogbede (2023) stated that poverty is an alarming and devastating issue in Nigeria and because the country is seen as the richest nation in Africa, it may sound ironical to point out that 80% of her citizens are languishing in poverty. Poverty is caused by some factors among which are mismanagement of resources, poor economic policies and poor infrastructural facilities (Mamman, 2010). According to Olaitan in Mamman (2010), poverty comes up when a person has little or no access to income and wealth. Okonjo-Iweala in Enyi (2020) also stated that poverty has to do with failure in terms of having capacities like adequate nourishment, healthy living and acquisition of skills for participation in economic and social life. This corroborated Mamman (2010) who pointed out that poverty manifested itself through high rate of crises, crime, child labour, unemployment, poor health and insecurity. Others include voicelessness, food insecurity and social exclusion as well as low level of literacy and income. According to Iroanya (2024), poverty can be absolute or relative. Absolute poverty is also called extreme poverty and it comes up when households find

it difficult to make provision for basic needs. This is manifested through chronic hunger, inability to access health care, safe drinking water and sanitation, inability to provide education for some or all of the children and lack of rudimentary shelter. In the case of the relative poverty, it is based on an income below a given national average which makes it difficult or a person to enjoy access to cultural goods, entertainment, recreation, quality health, education and other things that are preconditions for upward mobility. This implies that relative poverty is based on a standard or parameter. It therefore deals with a situation in which a person lacks the resources for enjoying a standard of living that is customary in the society. From the foregoing, it is obvious that poverty is an unfortunate and dehumanising situation which stops people from attaining their potentials and actualising their dreams. Based on these, Mamman (2010) reported that poverty restricts human freedom, dignity and self-respect which consequently hinder human development.

Sustainable development focuses attention on the needs of the present as well as making provision for those of the future generations by setting a national goal that is expected to among others enhance proper management of available resources. (Kren-Ikidi & Emmanuel, 2017). It was also the view of Osuorji and David (2017) that it is a development that does not compromise the capability of the future generation to meet their own needs while satisfying the needs of the present generation. Furthermore, Sokyese, et.al (2018) reported that sustainable development is a way of improving on the range of opportunities that make it possible for individuals and communities to realise their full potentials and aspirations over a sustainable period while maintaining resilience of the economic, social and environmental system. A look at all the views revealed that sustainable development is all about long lasting development that will make the current inhabitants of a society and those that will come in future to enjoy quality lifestyle. In line with these, Machar, et.al, (2023) believed that sustainable development deals with planning that enhances positive improvement in socio-economic, cultural, political and environmental lives of a nation for the advantage of the present and the generations to come in future.

To eradicate or ameliorate the problems of unemployment and poverty in the society and also attain a sustainable level of development in Nigeria, functional education is a key. This is because Adamu (2015) stated that it enables the recipients to acquire the requisite skills that are necessary for effecting the positive change of moving from bad to good and stimulating the overall development of the society. To make this goal a reality, acquisition of business education skills is a pre-requisite. This owes to the fact that it was designed to make the recipients to become self-reliant, self-dependent and have opportunity for getting job in both

the public and private sectors. As put forward by Mshelia (2016), objectives of business education include; educating individuals for and about business, provision of learning experience that will make the learners to make judicious socio-economic decisions, preparing people for self-employment, provision of career information, human resource development, enhancing economic development, developing work habit and attitude, acquisition of managerial skills as well as production of competent teachers. Nwafor (2014) was of the opinion that business education is a discipline which equips students with knowledge in the fields of accounting, secretarial technology, commerce, co-operative, economics, marketing/distributive education and management so as to become self-employed or get paid employment after graduation. This definition highlighted the different skills that products of business education are exposed to. It is however worthy of note that business education is not restricted to these areas. This is because it also equips the recipients with entrepreneurial skills (entrepreneurship education). To Ezeonwurie (2016), business education is an academic discipline that equips its recipients with the needed skills, competences, understanding, knowledge and attitude for performing creditably as workers in industries and civil service as well as proprietors of businesses. This implies that the discipline makes the learners to be competent in their chosen careers. Furthermore, Adejare (2020) was of the view that the curriculum of business education was designed to equip students with skills and knowledge that are needed in the world of work by instilling marketable skills, knowledge and attitudes that are required for employment and advancement in business and related occupations in the students.

This study is anchored on the human capital theory in education popularised by Schultz (1961) and Becker (1964). The theory is based on the premise that education and training are direct investment in people's knowledge, skills and capabilities which will lead to increase in their productivity and subsequently enhance their economic earnings and value. The implication of this is that the knowledge, skills and competences acquired in business education have the potentials for employment generation due to increased productivity and the improved economic earnings (income) could lead to poverty reduction. On a final note, these conditions would ultimately lead to sustainable development.

#### Statement of the Problem

Unemployment and poverty are serious challenges confronting Nigeria. Government at all levels as well as development partners have floated different policies and programmes aimed at addressing these problems head-on. Notably among these are the National Directorate of Employment, Youth Entrepreneurship Support (YES), Youth Enterprise With Innovation in

Nigeria (YOUWIN), N-POWER, Operation Feed the Nation, Green Revolution, Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP), poverty alleviation programmes at the Federal and States levels, NYSC Foundation, Subsidy Reinvestment Programme (SURE-P) and trade money. Despite these attempts, the problems persist. This is because the policies and programmes seem to be palliatives in nature. In addition to this, the society continues to wallow in underdevelopment. Education leads to progressive and lifelong skills for personal and societal growth and development. Wakjissa (2010) was also of view that education is a social institution for improving social life and institutions like politics, family, economy and culture. The curriculum of business education was crafted to achieve these goals. There is therefore, the need to determine the role of business education in enhancing employment generation, poverty reduction and sustainable development in Nigeria.

### **Research Objectives**

The objectives of the study are to determine:

- i. The role of business education in employment generation in Nigeria
- ii. The role of business in poverty reduction in Nigeria.
- iii. The role of business education in stimulating sustainable development in Nigeria.

### **Research Questions**

- i. What are the roles of business education in employment generation in Nigeria?
- ii. What are the roles of business education in poverty reduction in Nigeria?
- iii. What are the roles of business education in stimulating sustainable development in Nigeria?

### **Research Hypotheses**

Ho<sub>1</sub>: There is no significant difference between the mean responses of male and female students on the roles of business education in employment generation in Nigeria.

Ho<sub>2</sub>: There is no significant difference between the mean responses of male and female students on the roles of business education in poverty reduction in Nigeria

Ho<sub>3</sub>: There is no significant difference between the mean responses of male and female students on the roles of business education in stimulating sustainable development in Nigeria.

### **METHODOLOGY**

This study utilized the survey research design which is taken to be appropriate for the study because Nworgu (2015) stated that it is a design that focuses on collection of information which systematically describes the manner, characteristics or facts about a given population. The study was conducted at FCT College of Education, Zuba-Abuja and the population of the study composed of all the 146 NCE II and NCE III students that registered in the Department of Business education, FCT College of Education, Zuba-Abuja in 2023/2024 academic session. The entire population was used because it was not large. The data were collected with the aid of a 33-item self-designed, structured, four-point rating scale questionnaire. The instrument was validated by three experts. It was also pilot-tested using the split-half method. The data collected during the pilot study were analysed with the use of Spearman-Brown formular which

gave rise to reliability co-efficient of 0.80. This result was adjudged as being appropriate for research purpose. The instrument was administered on the respondents by the researcher who pleaded with them to respond and immediately return them. The questionnaire items and the weighted means were analysed using mean scores and the benchmark mean for accepting or rejecting a questionnaire item and the weighted mean was 2.50. The hypotheses were also tested using the t-test at 0.05 level of significance. The decision rule was that any item or weighted mean whose mean score was equal to or greater than 2.50 would be accepted and vice versa. Furthermore, any null hypothesis whose p-value was equal to or greater than 0.05 would be retained and rejected if less than 0.05.

**Result**

Research Question one: *What are the roles of business education in employment generation in Nigeria?*

The data collected for answering this research question were presented in table 1

Table 1: Mean Responses of Students on the Role of Business Education in Employment Generation in Nigeria

<b>Business education could leads to employment generation because it equips the recipients with skills for:</b>			
S/N	ITEM	Mean( $\bar{x}$ )	Decision
1	establishing business centres	2.99	Accepted
2	establishing private schools, vocational and skills acquisition centres	3.23	Accepted
3	establishing accounting and auditing firms	3.12	Accepted
4	organising workshops, seminars and conferences	3.29	Accepted
5	setting up consultancy firms	3.07	Accepted
6	engaging in buying and selling (wholesale and retail trade)	3.21	Accepted
7	publishing books in the area of business education	2.91	Accepted
8	establishing marketing firms	3.23	Accepted
9	using practical skills to produce products like shoes, bags, snacks, soaps and disinfectants	3.06	Accepted
10	becoming advertising agents	3.19	Accepted
11	setting up internet cafes	3.01	Accepted
12	establishing computer based test (CBT) centres	3.24	Accepted
13	marketing themselves for easy employment	3.16	Accepted
	weighted mean	3.13	Accepted

Source: field work; 2024

The data presented in table 1 revealed that business education is a stimulant to employment generation in Nigeria. This is because the mean scores for all the items in the table and the weighted mean were not below the benchmark mean of 2.50. This implies that the respondents were of the view that business education has the potentials for generating all the jobs that were stated in the table.

Research Question two: *What are the roles of business education in poverty reduction in Nigeria?*

The data collected for answering this research question were presented in table 2

Table 2: Mean Reponses of Students on the Role of Business Education in Poverty Reduction in Nigeria

<b>Business education is a stimulant to poverty reduction because it :</b>			
S/N	ITEM	Mean( $\bar{x}$ )	Decision
1	leads to employment generation	2.92	Accepted
2	leads to wealth creation	3.20	Accepted
3	encourages risk bearing due to acquisition of risk management skills	3.19	Accepted
4	leads to self-reliance	3.23	Accepted
5	enables people to be able to provide for their basic needs	3.21	Accepted
6	leads to redistribution of income	2.99	Accepted
7	leads to development of enterprise culture	3.07	Accepted
8	enables people to afford quality education	2.83	Accepted
9	provides students with information on access to business finance for investment	3.02	Accepted
10	leads to youth empowerment	3.26	Accepted
11	leads to Women empowerment	3.06	Accepted
	weighted mean	2.80	Accepted

Source: field work; 2024

Table 2 presented the responses of the respondents regarding the role of business education in poverty reduction in Nigeria. It could be seen from table that respondents accepted that business education is a stimulant to poverty reduction in Nigeria. This is based on the fact that the mean scores for all items in the table as well as the weighted mean were greater than the bench mark mean of 2.50

Research Question three: *What are the roles of business education stimulating sustainable development in Nigeria?*

The data collected for answering this research question were presented in table 3

Table 3: Mean Reponses of Students on the Role of Business Education in stimulating Sustainable Development in Nigeria

<b>Business education is a stimulant to sustainable development in because it:</b>			
S/N	ITEM	Mean( $\bar{x}$ )	Decision
1	leads to acquisition of managerial skills	3.02	Accepted
2	leads to acquisition of financial management skills	2.92	Accepted
3	leads to acquisition of budgeting skills	2.99	Accepted
4	leads to acquisition entrepreneurial skills	3.19	Accepted
5	leads to innovation and creativity	3.21	Accepted
6	leads to human capital development	3.23	Accepted
7	leads to acquisition of teaching skills	3.09	Accepted
8	leads to acquisition of Information and Communication Technology skills	3.06	Accepted
9	leads to acquisition of time management skills	3.26	Accepted
	weighted mean	3.11	Accepted

Source: Field work; 2024

The information presented in table 3 showed the responses of the respondents with regards to the role of business in stimulating sustainable development in Nigeria. The table revealed that the respondents were of the opinion that business education could enhance sustainable development in Nigeria. This is because the mean scores for all the items in the table and the weighted mean were within the accepted margin ( $\bar{x} \geq 2.50$ ).

Null hypothesis one

$H_{01}$ : *There is no significant difference between the mean responses of male and female students on the roles of business education in employment generation in Nigeria.*

Table 4: Summary of t-test Analysis on Mean Responses of Male and Female Students on the Role of Business Education in Employment Generation in Nigeria

S/N	Group	N	$\bar{x}$	SD	Df	t-value	p-value	Decision
1	Male	42	2.70	0.46	144	0.123	0.903	Retained
2	Female	104	2.69	0.44				

Source: Fieldwork, 2024

Table 4 presented the summary of the t-test analysis of the mean responses of male and female students on the role of business education in employment generation in Nigeria. The table showed that there was no significant difference between the mean responses of the male and female students. This is because the p-value of 0.903 was greater than the alpha level of 0.05. The hypothesis was therefore retained.

Null hypothesis two

$H_{02}$ : *There is no significant difference between the mean responses of male and female students on the roles of business education in poverty reduction in Nigeria*

Table 5: Summary of t-test Analysis on Mean Responses of Male and Female Students on the Role of Business Education in Poverty Reduction in Nigeria

S/N	Group	N	$\bar{x}$	SD	Df	t-value	p-value	Decision
1	Male	42	2.86	0.34	144	0.336	0.738	Retained
2	Female	104	2.84	0.32				

Source: Fieldwork, 2024

The summary of the t-test analysis of the mean responses of male and female students on the role of business education in poverty reduction in Nigeria was presented in table 5 above. From the table, it could be seen that there was no significant difference between the mean responses of the male and female students. This is because the p-value (0.738) > the alpha level (0.05). Based on this, the hypothesis was retained.

Null hypothesis three

$H_{03}$ : *There is no significant difference between the mean responses of male and female students on the roles of business education in stimulating sustainable development in Nigeria.*

Table 6: Summary of t-test Analysis on Mean Responses of Male and Female Students on the Role of Business Education in Stimulating Sustainable Development in Nigeria

S/N	Group	N	$\bar{x}$	SD	Df	t-value	p-value	Decision
1	Male	42	2.81	0.36	144	0.155	0.877	Retained
2	Female	104	2.80	0.35				

Source: fieldwork, 2024

Table 6 showed the summary of the t-test analysis of the mean responses of male and female students on the role of business education in stimulating sustainable development in Nigeria. It is obvious from the table that the mean responses of the male and female students do not

significantly differ. This is due to the fact that the alpha level (0.05) < the p-value (0.877). This condition thus, led to the retention of the hypothesis.

## DISCUSSION

The findings in relation to research question one showed that business education leads to employment generation in Nigeria. The test of null hypothesis one also revealed there was no significant difference between the mean responses of male and female students regarding the role of business education in employment generation. These findings confirmed the views reported by Udoh (2010) which stated that business education equips the learners with employability skills. The author also reported that the discipline provides them with self-reliance opportunities leading to establishment of business centres, private vocational schools and establishment of consultancy firms. The findings also corroborated the opinions reported by Sani (2010) which in addition to the aforementioned stated that business education creates opportunities in buying and selling and engagement in telecommunication business. The findings were also in line with the position of Gidado and Akaeze (2015) which stated that Distributive/marketing education which is a component of business education can reduce youth unemployment in Nigeria through encouraging the recipients to be engaging in provision of educational, consultancy and commercial services. Furthermore, the study supported Enyi (2020) who was of the view that the beneficiaries of business were prepared to become job creators and employers of labour.

In the case of the research question two, the findings revealed that business education is a stimulant to poverty reduction in Nigeria. The test of null hypothesis two also revealed that there was no significant difference between the mean responses of male and female students regarding the role of business education in poverty reduction in Nigeria. These findings supported the opinion of Okafor et.al (2019) which stated that business education is a proper education/tool for poverty alleviation. This owes to the fact that it provides the students with skills for self-reliance. The findings also supported the view of Enyi (2020) which pointed out that business education can eradicate poverty because it curbs rural-urban migration, generates employment opportunities, creates wealth and makes the recipients to be better off financially. In addition to these, the findings were in line with the conviction of Folorunso and Adebayo (2018) which pointed out that business education reduces poverty in the society. The study also affirmed the findings of Ezeonwurie (2021) which revealed that business education has the prospect for alleviating poverty since it can among others enable the students to do well in business, take up teaching as a career, become producers and suppliers of goods and services and provide jobs for themselves and other people in the society.

As for the research question three, the findings revealed that business education is a stimulant to sustainable development in Nigeria. The test of null hypothesis three also revealed that there was no significant difference between the mean responses of male and female students regarding the role of business education in sustainable development in Nigeria. The findings corroborated the opinion of Amasa (2012) which stated that students and graduates of business education were trained for enhancing sustainable development. The findings were also in line with view of Idele and Mgbeafulike (2018) which pointed out that Information and Communication Technology skills (acquired in Office Technology and Management) lead to national development because they affect all sectors of the society due to their nature of general applicability. The findings also supported the position of Folorunso and Adebayo (2018) which stated that there is a relationship between business education and sustainable development. This is because it leads to human resource development, development of productivity and economic growth. It also prepares the beneficiaries for gainful employment and sustainable livelihood, productive teaching as well as self and paid employments which consequently enhance national development. In addition to these, the findings supported the view of Ogbaga et.al (2021) which pointed out that business education provides skills that are capable of enhancing sustainable economic development. These skills, knowledge and competences are acquired in the areas including but not limited to entrepreneurship, management, marketing, accounting, ICT, business law, career development, communication, computation, economic and personal finance.

## **CONCLUSION**

Unemployment and poverty are twin problems that are having devastating effects on Nigerians. Efforts have been made to nip them in the bud by government at all levels in Nigeria as well as development partners. All these prove to be abortive because they are palliative in nature. Education is therefore is as a key that can open the way for reducing or eradication these problems. In the light of the foregoing, business education is seen as a discipline that is needed for solving the problems of unemployment and poverty as well as other social problems bedevilling Nigeria. It also has the potential for repositioning the country to the path of progress, thereby enhancing a sustainable development that will take care of the needs, wants and expectation of the present and future generations.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the findings of the study and the conclusion, which was drawn, the following recommendations were suggested:

1. The study of business education should be encouraged in order to create more jobs for Nigerians, reduce poverty and enhance sustainable development in Nigeria.
2. The entrepreneurship education component of business education should be made a compulsory subject right from the secondary level of education.
3. There should be adequate funding of business education in Nigeria.
4. There should be proper management and monitoring of the utilization of available fund that is voted for business education programme.
5. Government should be utilizing the outcome of research in business education.
6. Researchers should be submitting their research reports to the government.
7. There should be school-industry collaboration.

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