



Gender Disparity in The Benefit of Entrepreneurship Education and Graduate Employability in Public Tertiary Institutions in Lagos State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study examined gender disparity in the benefits of entrepreneurship education and graduate employability in public tertiary institutions in Lagos State, Nigeria. Data were collected from 400 graduates (54.3% male, 45.8% female) using a descriptive survey design. An independent t-test was conducted to assess gender differences in entrepreneurship education and graduate employability. The results revealed a statistically significant gender disparity in entrepreneurship education benefits, favouring males ($p = 0.000, < 0.05$). However, no significant gender difference was observed in graduate employability ($p = 0.111, > 0.05$). The findings suggest that while males derive greater benefits from entrepreneurship education, this advantage does not directly translate into higher employability outcomes, potentially due to systemic labour market barriers. The study recommends more integrative approach to linking practical entrepreneurship education to employability enhancement and addressing external gender biases in employment policies. Limitations, including geographic focus and sample size constraints, were noted. Future studies should explore the interplay of entrepreneurship education and employability on a broader context.



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INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship education has become a cornerstone of educational policy worldwide, acknowledged as a critical tool for fostering graduate employability especially in regions grappling with high unemployment rates (Anosike, 2019). In Nigeria, particularly in Lagos State, the integration of entrepreneurship curricula into tertiary institutions seeks to mitigate youth unemployment by equipping graduates with skills for self-employment and job creation (Anosike, 2019). This strategic response is to train graduates with self-reliance skills (Ubogu, 2020). Despite this intention for advancements, research addressing gender disparities in the benefits of entrepreneurship education and employment outcomes has received limited scholarly attention. Research suggests that male and female graduates might experience the benefits of entrepreneurship education differently due to societal, cultural, and institutional factors (Afolabi & Ajala, 2023). This study focuses on Lagos State as it hosts a significant proportion of Nigeria's public tertiary institutions and graduates. By

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examining the gendered impacts of entrepreneurship education, the study sheds light on whether systemic barriers or programmatic designs influence the employability outcomes of male and female graduates. The findings are expected to inform policies aimed at improving the inclusivity and effectiveness of entrepreneurship education.

Lagos State is Nigeria's economic powerhouse, attracting significant youth populations who face unemployment challenges despite academic qualifications. The introduction of entrepreneurship education into tertiary curricula aligns with global best practices for enhancing graduate employability (Rashid, 2019). However, Lagos' gendered labour market dynamics raise questions about the equity of benefits derived from such education. Prior studies identified societal norms and stereotypes as key contributors to employment inequality in Nigeria (Okunade et al., 2023). For instance, while women may excel in entrepreneurial endeavours due to skills acquired, their ventures often remain small-scale due to financial and social constraints (Ode, Shitu & Adegbe, 2023). On the other hand, male graduates might benefit more from labour market opportunities even when they lack entrepreneurial intentions. This dichotomy underscores the need for a detailed understanding of how entrepreneurship education impacts employability across genders.

The rationale for this study stems from the growing emphasis on entrepreneurship education as a solution to youth unemployment and the persistent gender gaps in employability outcomes. Understanding these dynamics will provide a basis for designing interventions that promote equity in both educational and labour market outcomes.

The objective of this study is twofold. First, it seeks to identify which gender benefits more from entrepreneurship education in relation to graduate employability within public tertiary institutions in Lagos State, Nigeria. Second, it aims to examine the differences between male and female graduates in the extent of these benefits, thereby providing insights into gender-related outcomes of entrepreneurship education on employability.

This study is guided by two null hypotheses. The first posits that there is no significant benefit associated with gender in entrepreneurship education and graduate employability in public tertiary institutions in Lagos State, Nigeria. The second suggests that there is no significant difference between male and female graduates in the benefits derived from entrepreneurship education with respect to employability.

THEORETICAL LITERATURE

Entrepreneurship Education

Entrepreneurship education is recognized as a driver of economic growth and innovation (Rashid, 2019). It fosters critical skills such as creativity, risk-taking, financial literacy, problem-solving, and resilience, all of which are essential for self-reliance and job creation (Shamsuddin, Arome & Aminu, 2018). In Nigeria, its introduction has been widely lauded as a policy innovation to address graduate unemployment. However, studies often generalize its impacts without disaggregating data by gender.

Gender Disparities in Benefits

Research indicates that women tend to benefit more from entrepreneurship of small-scale ventures but face unique challenges in leveraging entrepreneurial skills, such as limited access to capital and societal expectations (Ode et al., 2023). In contrast, men may experience smoother transitions into employment due to entrenched gender norms and preferences in hiring practices (Edet, 2020). These disparities necessitate gender-sensitive analyses to uncover the specific needs and barriers faced by male and female graduates.

Despite the growing body of literature on entrepreneurship education, few studies have examined its gender-specific benefits in Nigeria. Existing research tends to focus on overall outcomes without considering how gender interacts with systemic barriers to affect employability (Gazi et al., 2024). This study fills this gap by providing empirical evidence on gender disparities in entrepreneurship education benefits and employability outcomes in Lagos State.

METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive survey research design to explore the gender disparities in the benefits of entrepreneurship education and graduate employability in public tertiary institutions in Lagos State, Nigeria. The design was chosen to allow for the collection of data that captures respondents' perceptions and experiences, providing a quantitative basis for comparing gender-specific outcomes.

Population and Sample

The population of the study consisted of graduates from public tertiary institutions in Lagos State who had completed entrepreneurship education as part of their curriculum. A stratified random sampling technique was used to ensure the inclusion of participants across four different institutions and gender groups. A total of 400 respondents were selected, representing a proportional sample of the graduate population in these institutions.

Instrumentation

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire designed to measure two primary constructs of the study's variables; Benefits of Entrepreneurship Education and Graduate Employability. The questionnaire was validated through expert review and a pilot test, yielding a reliability coefficient of 0.87 using Cronbach's alpha, indicating high internal consistency.

Data Collection Procedure

Data collection was carried out over a period of two months. Participants were approached in person and via online platforms where they were briefed on the study's objectives and assured of confidentiality. Consent was obtained before administering the questionnaire.

Data Analysis

Data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics.

1. **Descriptive Statistics:** Means, standard deviations, and frequencies were calculated to summarize the data and describe the general trends.
2. **Inferential Statistics:** Independent t-tests were used to test the hypotheses regarding gender differences in the benefits of entrepreneurship education and graduate employability. Levene's test for equality of variances was conducted to ensure the validity of t-test assumptions.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was obtained from the Lagos State University Faculty of Education Ethics Committee. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were informed of their rights to withdraw at any stage without any repercussions. Data confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the study.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Research Hypothesis 1

There is no significant benefit between gender in entrepreneurship education and graduate employability in public tertiary institutions in Lagos State, Nigeria. To test this hypothesis, data collected was on the benefit between gender in entrepreneurship education and graduate employability in public tertiary institutions in Lagos State, Nigeria were subjected to descriptive statistics and the results of the analysis are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of gender in the benefit of entrepreneurship education and graduate employability in public tertiary institutions in Lagos State, Nigeria

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Benefits of Entrepreneurship Education	Male	217	26.4101	8.24242	.55953
	Female	183	30.0601	9.41892	.69627
Graduate Employability	Male	217	24.8894	7.71703	.52387
	Female	183	23.6940	7.11633	.52605

Source: Researchers' Computation, 2024

From Table 1, the result on the proportion of respondents by gender reveals that 54.3% of 217 respondents are males while 45.8% of 183 respondents are females. This is an indication that the proportion of male respondents is more than female. This is represented on the pie chart as:

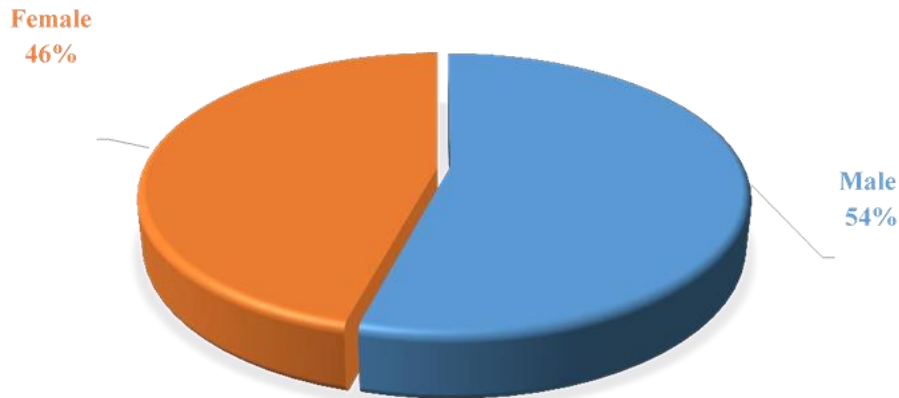


Figure 1. Pie chart showing the distribution of respondents by gender

Research Hypothesis 2

There is no significant difference between gender (male and female) in the benefit of entrepreneurship education and graduate employability in public tertiary institutions in Lagos State, Nigeria.

To test this hypothesis, Independent t-test was used. Data collected on benefit of entrepreneurship education and graduate employability in public tertiary institutions in Lagos State, Nigeria were subjected to Independent t-test and the descriptive statistics as well as the results of the analysis are presented in Table 2

Table 2. Independent t-statistics of significant difference between male and female in the benefit of entrepreneurship education and graduate employability in public tertiary institutions in Lagos State, Nigeria

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	T	Df	p- value	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
Benefits of Entrepreneurs hip Education	3.517	.061	-4.133	398	.000	-3.64997	.88319	-5.386	-1.9137
Graduate Employability	3.224	.073	1.599	398	.111	1.19541	.74754	-.2742	2.66503

Source: Researchers' Computation, 2024

Tables 2 present the difference between male and female in the benefit of entrepreneurship education and graduate employability in public tertiary institutions in Lagos State, Nigeria. From Table 2, it can be observed that there is a statistically significant difference in the benefit of entrepreneurship education between male and female in public tertiary institutions in Lagos State, Nigeria [$t(df = 398) = -4.133; \rho = 0.000 < 0.05$]. There is a difference in the results between male and female ($M = 26.41; SD = 8.24$). The mean differences (mean difference = -3.64, 95% CI: -5.39 to -1.91). Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference between male and female in the benefit of entrepreneurship education in public tertiary institutions in Lagos State, Nigeria was rejected.

Table 2 also revealed the research's findings about the gender disparity in graduate employability in public tertiary institutions in Lagos State, Nigeria. The independent samples t-test conducted with a two-tailed shows ($t(398) = 1.599, \rho = 0.111 > 0.05$). The table shows no statistically significant gender difference in scores, with male ($M = 24.89; SD = 7.72$) scoring relatively higher than female ($M = 69.24; SD = 13.15$). The means showed no significant difference (beta squared = .073; mean difference = 1.19, 95% CI: -.27 to 2.67). This does not reject the null hypothesis, which held that there is no significant gender difference in graduate employability in public tertiary institutions in Lagos State, Nigeria.

Discussion

The study revealed a statistically significant difference in the benefits of entrepreneurship education, favouring female graduates ($\rho = 0.000 < 0.05$). This finding supports previous research by Ode et al. (2023), who argued that women often leverage entrepreneurship education for small-scale business ventures. Women's higher mean scores suggest they may engage more actively in entrepreneurial opportunities, potentially due to a lack of alternative employment options.

Contrary to the benefits derived from entrepreneurship education, no significant gender difference was found in graduate employability ($\rho = 0.111 > 0.05$). This aligns with findings by Edet (2020), who noted that systemic labour market biases often negate educational advantages for women. Male graduates' relatively higher employability scores, although not statistically significant,

may reflect societal expectations that prioritize men in formal employment sectors (Afolabi & Ajala, 2023).

The observed higher benefits for females may reflect differences in learning preferences and application of entrepreneurial skills, as also suggested by Gazi et al. (2024). Nevertheless, societal norms and employer biases, as emphasized by Afolabi and Ajala (2023), continue to impede equitable employment outcomes. These findings highlight the need for more targeted interventions that address external factors affecting employability.

Limitations and Implications for Further Studies

This study is limited in scope to public tertiary institutions in Lagos State, which may not fully capture the dynamics in other Nigerian regions or private institutions. The reliance on self-reported data which may introduce response bias also limits the ability to track long-term effects of entrepreneurship education across different regions and types of institutions.

Future research should consider:

1. Conducting longitudinal studies to explore the sustained impacts of entrepreneurship education on employability.
2. Expanding the geographic and institutional focus to include private institutions and informal education training programs could provide more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing employability outcomes across genders.
3. Investigating the interplay of other variables, such as socioeconomic background, in shaping the benefits of entrepreneurship education.

Recommendations

To maximize the potential of entrepreneurship education, policymakers should design gender-sensitive curricula that bridge the gap between education and employment. This could include industry partnerships for internships and mentorships. Additionally, addressing labour market inequalities through policy reforms is crucial for ensuring equitable employability outcomes. Financial institutions should create gender-inclusive funding mechanisms to support entrepreneurial ventures initiated by graduates.

CONCLUSION

Entrepreneurship education has the potential to mitigate unemployment and promote self-reliance among graduates. However, this study highlights significant gender disparities in its benefits and a lack of corresponding employability outcomes, while females appear to derive more benefits from entrepreneurship education, these advantages do not translate into higher employability due to systemic barriers in labour market. Addressing these barriers, enhancing the practical application of employability training with strategies to combat gender biases in the labour market, are critical for ensuring equitable outcomes. These efforts will not only benefit individual graduates but also contribute to Nigeria's broader economic development goals.

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