Jher Vol. 31 No. 1 September, 2024, pp. 146 – 159

Entrepreneurial Readiness of Business Education Students in Public Universities in South-East Nigeria

Ezechukwu, Lynda C; Ugwoke, Ernest O; Anaele, Edmund O; Babalulu, Muhammadu M; Enyum, Ekuma J; Iheagwam, Blessing N; Uzuagu, Anthonia U.
Department of Business Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka
Corresponding Author: chineze.ezechukwu@unn.edu.ng

Abstract

This study focused on entrepreneurial readiness of undergraduate Business Education students in public universities in South-East Nigeria. Entrepreneurial readiness of the students was based on four indicators.Population comprised 277 final-year Business Education students in all public universities in South-East Nigeria. Questionnaire was used for data collection.Entrepreneurial readiness scores (ERS) were measured using four indicators: entrepreneurial career choice preference, intention, attitudes, and skills. Five research questions and four hypotheses guided the study. Data were analyzed using mean and t-test at a 0.05 level of significance. The indicators and ERS were interpreted based on real limits of numbers. The results indicate that the students had mean scores of 5.71, 5.62, 5.50 and 6.07 for entrepreneurial career choice preference, intention, attitudes and skills, respectively and were 'ready' with an ERS of 5.73. The ERS of the students did not differ significantly based on gender, having a parent/guardian entrepreneur, currently owning/managing a business (business experience), or academic ability level. It was therefore recommended, among others, that an entrepreneurship-friendly environment and provisions should be made available to enable the Business Education students to translate their entrepreneurial readiness into viable enterprises.

Keywords: Entrepreneurial, Readiness, Career, Choice, Preference, Attitude, Family, Intention

Introduction

Business Education is one of the study options provided under technical and vocational education, having entrepreneurship development as one of its core aspects/objectives. It is an academic programme, which is aimed at imparting its recipients with the requisite attributes such as knowledge, skills, and attitudes to become gainfully employed in the world of work (Amesi & Sobere, 2023; Oche et al., 2021). Business education has also been described as a discipline which is geared towards equipping the students with knowledge and employability skills, to enable them to create or acquire jobs (Oguejiofor, 2020).Business Education is defined thus academic and vocational programme which provides knowledge, skills and experiences that will enable its students to create and

manage businesses or to become effective business educators. It is an entrepreneurship-related discipline.

Business Education students are individuals pursuing higher education in the field of business, aiming to acquire the knowledge, skills and competencies needed to succeed in the world of business (Ezeabii et al., 2019). The students are exposed to skills in office practice, bookkeeping, accounting, sales management, business communication, word processing and advertising (Oluwadare et al., 2022). According to the National Universities Commission (NUC, 2014) curriculum document, Business Education students are trained to become effective business teachers, as well as high-calibre professionals in business establishments. This agrees with the tenets of entrepreneurship education which also aims at getting its students ready to engage in entrepreneurial activities after graduating from the university. Business education students are considered to have an advantage over other students in the university, who are only exposed to the compulsory university general Entrepreneurship courses (Ezeabii, & Ohagwu, 2019). Despite this seeming advantage, low levels of entrepreneurial skills and intention, which are crucial for entrepreneurial readiness, have been reported among business education graduates (Edet & Udida, 2019).

Readiness for any given vocation or career path is defined by Villares and Brigman (2018) as possessing requisite cognitive, and social skills or experiences, which can facilitate the transitioning from school into the workplace, and enable the individual to succeed in the chosen career path. In addition, readiness is defined as having the intention, personal beliefs, motivation, abilities, and behaviours that make for building a career that that meets the expectations of the individual (Azhenov et al., 2023). Measures of students' readiness are also employed in assessing the effectiveness of educational programmes (Perera et al., 2018). In the context of this study, entrepreneurial readiness means that an individual has the requisite entrepreneurial choice, intention, attitudes, and skills to successfully pursue an economically viable entrepreneurial activity or career.

Students, especially when close to graduation, are faced with a major decision regarding career choice, either to seek employment in an organization or to become self-employed (Azhenov et al., 2023; Longva, 2018). Entrepreneurial career choice preference refers to the decision to opt for self-employment rather than seek employment after graduation (Bae et al., 2014). Thus, the entrepreneurial career choice preference of students is an important indicator as to whether they are inclined to pursue entrepreneurship after graduation or not.

Entrepreneurial intention has to do with a person's desire to own or set up a business enterprise, which might be at some point in the future, as a part-time engagement or side attraction (Bae et al., 2014; Otache et al., 2021). It is the possession of the objective or plan to launch a business firm, which reflects the extent to which an individual seriously considers becoming an entrepreneur (Lee et al., 2022). Entrepreneurial intention, which is a

precursor to entrepreneurial behaviour, is shaped by attitudes which are in turn shaped by beliefs that certain behaviour will lead to favourable outcomes (Ajzen, 1991; Lee et al., 2022).

Entrepreneurial attitude refers to the personal dispositions and traits that are required for engaging and succeeding in entrepreneurial activities. It is a measure of how a person thinks and feels about entrepreneurship (Amofah & Saladrigues, 2022). According to Amofah and Saladrigues (2022), attitudes may be categorized as instrumental (regarding whether the behaviour is perceived as enjoyable) or affective (regarding whether the behaviour is perceived as beneficial). Attitudes are shaped by beliefs that certain behaviours will lead to favourable outcomes, and the attitude an individual has towards behaviour is a predictor of intention towards such behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). Thus entrepreneurial attitude is a predictor of entrepreneurial intention, which in turn predicts actual entrepreneurial behaviour (Banning & Chinta, 2019).

Entrepreneurial skills are the capabilities that are requisite for an individual to successfully develop original, viable and valuable entrepreneurial projects, products or services (Jardim, 2021). They are regarded as core competencies that are inculcated into the operation of business ventures, which can steer businesses towards success through accurate perception of opportunities and proper usage of resources (Ngele & Nzelibe, 2023). Entrepreneurial skills are essential for an entrepreneurship career or venture creation and occupy a vital place in the journey from being entrepreneurial to becoming a successful entrepreneur (Olorundare & Kayode, 2014). According to Olorundare and Kayode (2014), entrepreneurship traits include the ability to take calculated risks; ability to formulate effective venture teams; evolvement of creative and problem-solving skills; as well as fundamental skills in formulating feasible and sustainable business plans.

Despite the increasing awareness and attention given to entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship education in recent times, there seem to be existing gaps between the entrepreneurial training of students and the eventual translation of this education into the creation of new business ventures by the students after graduation. Business Education students have not been proven to be any better as studies have suggested that the job-seeking mindset still persists in the graduates as they continue to search for not-readily-available white-collar jobs after leaving the university (Edokpolor & Muritala, 2018). According to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2024), the combined rate of unemployment and underemployment of university graduates, including Business Education graduates, as of the third quarter of the year 2023 was reported to be 17.3%, which is quite high. Lack of entrepreneurial intention, attitude and skills by graduates may be a major contributor to the problem of unemployment in Nigeria since the possession of these entrepreneurship prerequisites would enable the graduates to create jobs rather than roaming the streets looking for non-existing jobs. More so, earlier studies

have shown that only a very low percentage of graduates aspire to start up their own businesses upon graduation. This underscores the need to ascertain the current situation regarding the entrepreneurial readiness of Business Education students, being in an entrepreneurship-related discipline.

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of the study was to assess the entrepreneurial readiness of Business Education students in public universities in South-East Nigeria. Specifically, the study determined levels of Business Education students in public universities based on the following indicators of readiness:

1. career choice preference level
2. intention level
3. attitude level
4. skills level
5. readiness score

Research Questions

What are the entrepreneurial readiness levels of Business Education students in public universities based on the following indicators of readiness:

1. career choice preference level?
2. intention level?
3. attitude level?
4. skills level?
5. readiness score?

Research Hypotheses

There is no significant difference between entrepreneurial readiness mean ($\bar{x}$) scores of Business Education students based on the following:

$H0_1$: gender

$H0_2$: having parent/guardian entrepreneur

$H0_3$: business experience

$H0_4$: academic ability level

Methodology

***Design of the Study*:** The study adopted the descriptive survey study design to assess the entrepreneurial readiness of undergraduate Business Education students in public universities in South-East Nigeria.

***Area of the Study*:** The study was carried out in South-East Nigeria, which comprises Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo States. South-East Nigeria is one of the six geopolitical zones in Nigeria, and is predominantly inhabited by the Igbo speaking Nigerians. The study was conducted in all the (seven) public universities (Federal and State) that offer Business Education programme.

***Population for the Study*:** The study population comprised all 277 final year Business Education students in the above-mentioned seven universities. The entire population was used for the study; no sampling was done because of the manageable size of the population. The population consisted of males (29.11%) and females (70.89%); those who do not have an entrepreneur parent/guardian (22.07%) and those who do (77.93%); those who do not presently own/manage a business (44.60%) and those who do (55.40%); and those at low (20.19%) and high (79.81%) academic ability levels.

***Instrument for Data Collection*:** A seven-point scale questionnaire was used for data collection. It covered the specific objectives and demographic information. Development of items was based on literature review.Questionnaire items response options were assigned numerical values

as follows: highly agree (HA) = 7, agree (A) = 6, slightly agree (SA) = 5, undecided (U) = 4, slightly disagree (SD) = 3, disagree (D) = 2, and highly disagree (HD) = 1 (for positively worded items and reverse-coded as for negatively worded items). The instrument was face-validated by five experts in Business Education.The instrument was also trial-tested prior to the actual study by administering 30 copies to Business Education students outside the study area. Data collected were analyzed and yielded an overall Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of 0.94.

***Data Collection Method*:**A total of 277copies of the questionnaire were administered hand to respondents, in their classrooms, with the help of a trained research assistant in each of the seven institutions. Out of 277 questionnaires administered only 213 were retrieved.This represents 77 percent response rate.

***Data Analysis Techniques*:** Data were analyzed using mean and t-test at a 0.05 level of significance. The mean responses of the respondents were interpreted based on real limits of numbers as follows: 6.50 - 7.0 = HA; 5.50 - 6.49 = A; 4.50 - 5.49 = SA; 3.50 - 4.49 = U; 2.50 - 3.49 = SD; 1.50 - 2.49 = D and 1.00 - 1.49 = HD (for positively worded items and the reverse was the case for negatively worded items). The entrepreneurial readiness score (ERS) was determined as the overall mean of the students' mean scores in entrepreneurial career choice preference, intention, attitude and skills. The ERS was also interpreted based on real limits of numbers as follows: 6.50 - 7.0 = highly ready (HR); 5.50 - 6.49 = ready (R); 4.50 - 5.49 = slightly ready (SR); 3.50 - 4.49 = undecided (U); 2.50 - 3.49 = slightly not ready (SNR); 1.50 - 2.49 = not ready (NR) and 1.00 - 1.49 = highly not ready (HNR). The t-test was employed to test the null hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Table 1: Mean Responses on Entrepreneurial Career Choice Preference Indicator of Entrepreneurial Readiness

S/N	Indicators of career choice preference	$\bar{X}$	SD	Remark
1.	I prefer entrepreneurship as a career option	6.38	0.82	A
2.	I prefer starting my own business rather than seek for a job	6.28	0.90	A
3.	I consider entrepreneurship as a desirable career option	6.20	1.03	A
4.	I would rather be my own boss than have a secure job	6.26	1.03	A
5.	I would rather found a new company than be the manager of an existing one	5.70	1.24	A
6.	I will choose to be an entrepreneur to have freedom at work	6.02	1.28	A
7.	I will choose a career as an employee in an organization (R)	3.13	1.70	SA
	Cluster mean	5.71	0.62	A

$\bar{X}$= mean, SD = standard deviation, HA = highly agree, A = agree, SA = slightly agree, U = undecided, SD = slightly disagree, D = disagree, HD =highly disagree, R = reverse-coded

Table 1 describes the responses relating to entrepreneurial career choice preference (ECCP). The students' mean response was highest for the statement "I prefer entrepreneurship as a career option" ($\overline{X} = 6.38$), and lowest for the reverse-worded statement "I will choose a career as an employee in an organization" ($\overline{X} = 3.13$). The cluster mean score of the respondents for ECCP is 5.71. This indicates that the respondents "Agree" to the items in the table. The standard deviation of the items ranged from 0.82 - 1.70 showing that respondents were not too far from one another in their responses.

Table 2: Mean Responses on Entrepreneurial Intention Indicator of Entrepreneurial Readiness

S/N	Indicators of Entrepreneurial Intention	$\overline{X}$	SD	Remark
1.	I am determined to create a business venture after graduation from the university	6.40	0.89	A
2.	I am saving money to start my own business	5.93	1.18	A
3.	I am searching for business start-up opportunities	5.98	1.09	A
4.	I spend time learning about starting a business firm	5.94	1.16	A
5.	I already have a business plan for my own business	5.87	1.15	A
6.	I do not see myself becoming an entrepreneur (R)	4.83	2.08	SD
7.	I have never given much thought to starting and owning a business enterprise (R)	4.86	2.09	SD
8.	I do not have plans to launch my own business (R)	5.15	2.01	SD
	Cluster mean	5.62	0.83	A

$\overline{X}$= mean, SD = standard deviation, HA = highly agree, A = agree, SA = slightly agree, U = undecided, SD = slightly disagree, D = disagree, HD =highly disagree, R = reverse-coded

Table 2 describes the responses relating to entrepreneurial Intention (EI). The students' mean response was highest for the statement "I am determined to create a business venture after graduation from the university" ($\overline{X} = 6.40$), and lowest for the reverse-worded statement "I do not see myself becoming an entrepreneur" ($\overline{X}$=4.83). The cluster mean score of the respondents for EI is 5.62. This indicates that the respondents "Agree" to the items in the table. The standard deviation of the items ranged from 0.89 - 2.01 showing that the respondents were not too far from one another in their responses.

Table 3: Mean Responses on Entrepreneurial Attitudes Indicator of Entrepreneurial Readiness

S/N	Indicators of Entrepreneurial Attitudes	$\overline{X}$	SD	Remark
1.	Being an entrepreneur would give me great satisfaction	6.58	0.73	HA
2.	Looking out for business opportunities really excites me	6.14	1.08	A
3.	I am eager to have my own business	6.36	0.94	A
4.	Brainstorming for new solutions to problems is something I really enjoy doing.	5.95	1.11	A
5.	Lack of financial means does not stop me becoming an entrepreneur	5.23	1.66	SA
6.	An unsupportive climate will not hinder my	5.31	1.64	SA

Table 3 continued

	entrepreneurship			
7.	A career as an entrepreneur is totally unattractive to me (R)	5.06	1.99	SD
8.	Amongst various options, I would rather be anything but an entrepreneur (R)	3.83	2.31	U
9.	Being an entrepreneur implies more disadvantages than advantages to me (R)	5.00	2.09	SD
10.	I would abhor stressful situations at work (R)	3.61	1.97	U
11.	I am willing to take investment risks even if I might lose	5.76	1.30	A
12.	I pay attention to details and accuracy	6.23	0.92	A
13.	Problems I encounter do not distract me from achieving my goals	5.98	1.21	A
14.	I easily recognize and handle my own emotions	5.98	1.06	A
	Cluster mean	5.50	0.66	A

$\bar{X}$= mean, SD = standard deviation, HA = highly agree, A = agree, SA = slightly agree, U = undecided, SD = slightly disagree, D = disagree, HD =highly disagree, R = reverse-coded

Table 3 describes the responses relating to entrepreneurial Attitudes (EA). The students' mean response was highest for the statement "Being an entrepreneur would give me great satisfaction" ($\bar{X} = 6.58$), and lowest for the reverse-worded statement "I would abhor stressful situations at work" ($\bar{X} = 3.61$). The overall mean score of the respondents for EA is 5.50. This indicates that the respondents "Agree" to the items in the table. The standard deviation of the items ranged from 0.73 - 2.31 showing that respondents had some level of disparity in their responses.

Table 4: Mean Responses on Entrepreneurial Skills Indicator of Entrepreneurial Readiness

S/N	Indicators of Entrepreneurial Skills	$\bar{X}$	SD	Remark
	I possess the ability to:			
1.	identify business opportunity around me	6.25	0.79	A
2.	write a detailed business plan/feasibility report	5.83	1.08	A
3.	develop network with people from different backgrounds	5.94	0.92	A
4.	work cooperatively with others	6.35	0.76	A
5.	generate new business ideas easily	6.06	1.02	A
6.	practically start a business	6.16	0.93	A
7.	identify different ways of getting things done with limited resources	6.02	0.95	A
8.	lead a business organization	6.23	0.96	A
9.	market my ideas in form of products or services	6.12	1.01	A
10.	be decisive when making important decisions	5.91	1.24	A
11.	create and come up with new ideas	6.16	0.91	A
12.	proffer solutions to business problems	6.15	0.91	A
13.	negotiate my terms with others	6.04	0.91	A
14.	perform multiple tasks	5.88	1.21	A

Cluster mean	6.08	0.61	A

$\bar{X}$ = mean, SD = standard deviation, HA = highly agree, A = agree, SA = slightly agree, U = undecided, SD = slightly disagree, D = disagree, HD =highly disagree

Table 4 presents the responses relating to entrepreneurial Skills (ES). The students' mean response was highest for the statement "I possess the ability to work cooperatively with others" ($\bar{X}$ = 6.35), and lowest for the statement "I possess the ability to write a detailed business plan/feasibility report" ($\bar{X}$ = 5.83). The overall mean score of the respondents for ES is 6.08. This indicates that the respondents "Agree" to the items in the table. The standard deviation of the items ranged from 0.76 - 1.24 showing that respondents were not too far from one another in their responses.

Table 5: Entrepreneurial Readiness Score (ERS) of Respondents

S/N	Clusters of Entrepreneurial Readiness Indicators	$\bar{X}$	SD	Remark
1.	Entrepreneurial Career Choice Preference	5.71	0.62	Agree
2.	Entrepreneurial Intention	5.62	0.83	Agree
3.	Entrepreneurial Attitudes	5.50	0.66	Agree
4.	Entrepreneurial Skills	6.07	0.61	Agree
	Total mean (Entrepreneurial Readiness Score)	5.73	0.53	Ready

$\bar{X}$ = mean, SD = standard deviation

Table 5 presents the entrepreneurial readiness score (ERS) of respondents. The ERS (i.e. overall mean) of the respondents is 5.73. The Table further revealed that the respondents had mean scores of 5.71, 5.62, 5.50 and 6.07 in entrepreneurial career choice preference, intention, attitudes and skills respectively. The standard deviations of the indicators and ERS ranged from 0.53 - 0.83 showing that values were not too far from one another.

Table 6: t-test Results Comparing Entrepreneurial Readiness Scores of Respondents based on Demographic Characteristics

Variables	Categories	n*	ERS	SD	t	df	p	Decision
Gender	Male	62	5.68	0.49	.917	211	.360	Accept $H0_1$
	Female	151	5.75	0.55				
Parent/ guardian entrepreneur	No	47	5.70	0.50	-.454	211	.651	Accept $H0_2$
	Yes	166	5.74	0.54				
Own/ managing a business	No	95	5.72	0.55	-.121	211	.904	Accept $H0_3$
	Yes	118	5.73	0.51				
Academic ability level	Low	43	5.74	0.54	.280	211	.780	Accept $H0_4$
	High	170	5.72	0.53				

n = number of respondents; * Total number of respondents in each case (N) = 213; ERS = entrepreneurial readiness score; SD = standard deviation; t = t-statistic; df = degrees of freedom; p = p-value; significance level = 0.05

Table 6 presents the results of the test of hypotheses. The results show that there was no significant difference ($p > 0.05$) in the entrepreneurial readiness of the students based on gender ($H0_1$), having a parent/guardian entrepreneur ($H0_2$), currently owning or managing a business ($H0_3$), and academic ability level ($H0_4$). Therefore, all the null hypotheses are accepted.

Discussion

The overall positive inclination of Business Education students towards entrepreneurship as a career option, as reflected in their high mean scores for most items, implies that the students desire self-employment. This has implications for their future career paths and their potential contribution to economic growth and job creation. The finding of this study regarding entrepreneurial career choice preference agrees with the reports of other researchers (Ahmed et al., 2021; Lidovolo & Iravo, 2016). Lidovolo and Iravo (2016) reported a significant entrepreneurial career choice preference among polytechnic students in Kenya. They conceptualized that entrepreneurial culture (comprising early exposure to entrepreneurship, and role models), individual preference (comprising desire for profit, desired independence, desired way of life) and individual capabilities (comprising entrepreneurial skills and self-efficacy) were factors affecting the number of students who opt for entrepreneurship as a career.

The findings on the entrepreneurial intention of Business Education students highlight the respondents' proactive and forward-thinking mindset in pursuing entrepreneurship. This bodes well for the future of entrepreneurship, as these students may become the driving force behind innovative business ventures and economic growth. Similar to the findings of this study, Kurniawati et al. (2020) reported high entrepreneurial intention among undergraduate students, which stimulates them for an entrepreneurial career. Moreover, the study of Ugwu and Ugwu (2012) revealed ethnicity as a factor that significantly affected entrepreneurial intention, such that the respondents who were of Igbo ethnicity were shown to have higher entrepreneurial intention scores compared to those of Tiv ethnicity. This could also explain the result of this present study since it was carried out in southeast Nigeria which is predominantly of Igbo ethnicity, and notable for a long history of entrepreneurship and an innate enterprising culture.

The students' positive entrepreneurial attitude as observed in this study is important as favourable attitudes are often considered a precursor of entrepreneurial behaviour and intention (Ajzen, 1991). The finding suggests a favourable inclination towards entrepreneurial endeavours among the respondents. Such positive attitudes are crucial for nurturing and encouraging the growth of

entrepreneurs in society. Several studies have reported a positive connection between entrepreneurial attitudes, intention and behaviour (Kolapo et al., 2023).

The result of this study on entrepreneurial skills indicates a self-perceived proficiency in the identified entrepreneurial skills. Such self-assessment is crucial for individuals considering entrepreneurship as it provides them with confidence and a foundation to build upon. This observation, however, is in contrast with Edokpolor and Muritala (2018), who said that most educated graduates in Nigeria were lacking in the skills that would enable them to confidently engage in entrepreneurial activities in life.

The observed entrepreneurial readiness score (ERS) of Business Education students, which indicated that the students are entrepreneurially "ready", is an interesting finding. It suggests that, on average, the respondents possess the social, knowledge and mental capital (Pardiman & Abs, 2020) for entrepreneurship ventures. It further implies that the students possess the attitudes and skills sets needed to identify business opportunities and to engage them profitably (William & Rodhiah, 2022). These entrepreneurial-ready students thus make up a pool of emerging entrepreneurs, with the potential to create jobs in the near future and contribute to national economic development. The students are therefore an important asset for the nation in the light of the current high level of unemployment National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2024). Others studies, such as Samsudin et al. (2016) reported a moderate level of entrepreneurial readiness in University students in Malaysia, while Savellano (2022) reported a high level of readiness in students in the Philippines.

The findings further indicated that the students' entrepreneurial readiness does not vary significantly based on the gender of the students, implying that males do not necessarily have higher entrepreneurial readiness than females. Similarly, Adeniyi et al. (2024) found no gender difference in the entrepreneurial readiness of students of TVET colleges in Lagos, Nigeria. In contrast, some empirical studies have reported that male students generally have a higher inclination or intention to form a new business than females (Hutasuhut et al., 2021). In addition, having a parent/guardian entrepreneur or not, did not affect the ERS of the students. This finding agrees with that of Göksel and Aydintan (2011) who reported no significant influence of family business on individuals' entrepreneurial tendencies. However, on the contrary, Lingappa et al. (2020) and Kusumojanto et al. (2021) opined that the family plays a pivotal role in shaping the entrepreneurial attitudes and intentions of individuals.

Similarly, whether one presently owned or managed a business did not significantly impact the students' entrepreneurial readiness. This finding is in contrast with Ugwu and Ugwu (2012), who reported students' business backgrounds to be a positively significant predictor of entrepreneurial intention. The finding of this study thus suggests that other factors, such as education, training, personal traits, and

experiences, might play a more influential role in shaping the students' readiness for entrepreneurship (Kusumojanto et al).

Finally, the ERS of students with high academic ability levels did not differ significantly compared to those with low academic ability. The academic ability/performance of students has been positively associated with their mental health, well-being and eventual career success (Wang & Sheikh-Khalil, 2014). However, similar to the findings of this study, Panda and Arumugam (2023) found no significant direct impact of entrepreneurial intention on the academic performance of university students. Since the entrepreneurial readiness of the students did not vary based on academic ability level, it implies that students can develop entrepreneurial competencies irrespective of their academic ability levels.

Conclusion

This study provides an assessment of the entrepreneurial readiness of university undergraduate Business Education students and also provides some basis for future research in this area. Based on the findings, the study concludes that undergraduate Business Education students in Southeast Nigeria, are entrepreneurial-ready. The students possess an appreciable level of the requisite entrepreneurial career choice preference, intention, attitudes and skills. Thus, the Business Education students make up a potential pool of emerging entrepreneurs. This indicates an enormous human capital that could be harnessed to drive economic growth, innovation, and job creation.

Recommendations

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

1. government should improve infrastructure such as good road networks and constant electricity supply, among others, to harness the entrepreneurial readiness of the students.
2. Targeted interventions and relevant start-up incentives should be provided by corporate organizations, non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders to enable the students to translate their entrepreneurial readiness into actual business enterprises.
3. students should take practical steps towards translating their readiness into start-ups by developing business proposals with which they can apply for available grants from relevant funding organizations.
4. tertiary institutions should increase awareness of students on available start-up grants and provide coaching/ mentoring programmes that prepare students to write successful grant proposals.

References

Adeniyi, A.O., Gamede, V., & Derera, E. (2024). Individual entrepreneurial orientation for entrepreneurial readiness. *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, 11; 264 https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-024-02728-9

Ahmed, U. A., Aktar, M. A., & Bakar, A. S. A. (2021). Graduate's perception towards entrepreneurial career choice: Role of university and family. *Jurnal Aplikasi Manajemen, Ekonomi dan Bisnis*, 5(2); 29-39.

Ajzen, I. (1991). The theory of planned behaviour. *Organizational Behaviour and Human Decision Process*, 5(4); 32-55.

Amesi, J., & Sobere, M. A. (2023). Business education curriculum implementation and skills acquisition among students in tertiary institutions in Rivers State. *Nigerian Journal of Business Education*, 10(2); 30-38.

Amofah, K., & Saladrigues, R. (2022). Impact of attitude towards entrepreneurship education and role models on entrepreneurial intention. *Journal of Innovation and Entrepreneurship*, 11; 36 https://doi.org/10.1186/s13731-022-00197-5

Azhenov, A., Kudysheva, A., Fominykh, N., & Tulekova, G. (2023) Career decision-making readiness among students' in the system of higher education: Career course intervention. *Frontiers in Education*, 8; 1097993. doi: 10.3389/feduc.2023.1097993

Bae, T. J., Qian, S., Miao, C., & Fiet, J. O. (2014). The relationship between entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial intentions: A meta-analytic review. *Entrepreneurship: Theory and Practice*, 38(2); 217-254. https://doi.org/10.1111/etap.12095

Banning, K., & Chinta, R. (2019). Attitudinal and structural determinants of entrepreneurial intentions of women. *Business, Management and Economics Research*,5(2); 26-32.

Do Paço, A., Ferreira, J., Raposo, M., Rodrigues, R. G., & Dinis, A. (2011). Entrepreneurial intention among secondary students: Findings from Portugal. *International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Small Business*, 13(1); 92-106. https://doi.org/10.1504/IJESB.2011.040418

Dohse, D., & Walter, S. G. (2010). The role of entrepreneurship education and regional context in forming entrepreneurial intentions. *Document de treball de l'Institutd'Economia de Barcelona*, 2010(18); 1-33. http://hdl.handle.net/10419/59753

Edet, A. D., & Udida, U. F. (2019). Business education programs curriculum contents and acquisition of employability skills among graduates of universities in Cross River State, Nigeria. *European Journal of Education Studies,* 5(10); 76-90.

Edokpolor, J. E., & Muritala, T. A. (2018). Developing entrepreneurial skills and lifelong learning for career self-efficacy among business education students in federal universities in south southern Nigeria. *International Journal of Educational Benchmark*, 9(2); 61-77.

Ernawati, N. A. B., & Ganefri, A. Y. (2019). Entrepreneurship career choice and its influencing factors among the graduates of diploma in fashion and design from university of Padang, Indonesia. *International Journal of Innovative Technology and Exploring Engineering*, 8(7S2); 344-349.

Ezeabii, I. C., & Ohagwu, G. C. (2019). Challenges to the developments of instructional packages for business education programme in universities in south-east Nigeria. *International Journal of Vocational and Technical Education Research,* 5(1); 13-22.

Ezeabii, I. C., Chibuike, V. C., & Udeh, S. O. (2019) Influence of social media on academic performance of business education students of public universities in south-east states of Nigeria. *British Journal of Education,* 7(2); 81-90.

Georgescu, M-A., & Herman, E. (2020). The impact of the family background on students' entrepreneurial intentions: An empirical analysis. *Sustainability*, 12; 4775. https://doi.org/10.3390/su12114775

Göksel, A., & Aydintan, B. (2011). Gender, business education, family background and personal traits; A multi-dimensional analysis of their effects on

entrepreneurial propensity: Findings from Turkey. *International Journal of Business and Social Sciences*, 2(13); 35-48.

Hutasuhut, S., Thamrin, T., & Aditia, R. (2021). Factors affecting students' entrepreneurial intentions and their differences based on gender, tribe, and parents' occupation: A cross-sectional study. *F1000Research*, 10; 438. https://doi.org/10.12688/f1000research.52047.1

Jardim, J. (2021). Entrepreneurial skills to be successful in the global and digital world: Proposal for a frame of reference for entrepreneurial education. *Education Sciences*, 11(7); 356. https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci11070356

Kolapo, M. O., Aboluwodi, D., Nomlala, B. C., & Latiff, A. A. (2023). The influence of attitudes and behaviours on business students' entrepreneurial intention in South Africa. *Journal of Entrepreneurship Education*, 26(2); 1-14.

Kurniawati, T., Siwi, M. K., Syofyan, R., & Rahmiyanti, S. (2020). Entrepreneurial education influence on entrepreneurial character and entrepreneurial intention. *Advances in Economics, Business and Management Research*, 152; 436-443.

Kusumojanto, D. D., Wibowo, A., Kustiandi, J., & Narmaditya, B. S. (2021). Do entrepreneurship education and environment promote students' entrepreneurial intention? the role of entrepreneurial attitude, *Cogent Education*, 8(1); 1948660, DOI: 10.1080/2331186X.2021.1948660

Lee, S., Kang, M-J., & Kim, B-K. (2022). Factors influencing entrepreneurial intention: Focusing on individuals' knowledge exploration and exploitation activities. *Journal of Open Innovation: Technology, Market, and Complexity,* 8(3); 165

Lidovolo, P. M., & Iravo, M. (2016). Factors influencing the choice of entrepreneurship as a career among youth polytechnics students in Vihiga County, Kenya. *International Journal of Economics, Commerce and Management*, 4(5); 954-1009.

Lingappa, A. K., Shah, A., & Mathew, A. O. (2020). Academic, family, and peer influence on entrepreneurship intention of engineering students. *Sage Open*, 10(3–4); 2158244020933877. https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244020933877

Longva, K. K. (2018). Hope for the future? Students' attitudes towards entrepreneurship, innovation, and international mobility. In: Hogset, H., Berge, D. M. & Dale, K. Y. (Eds), *Detregionale i detinternasjonale: fjordantologien*. Universities for laget. https://doi.org/10.18261/9788215031224-2018-14

Malebana, M. J., & Swanepoel, E. (2014). The relationship between exposure to entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial self-efficacy. *Southern African Business Review*, 18(1); 1-26.

National Bureau of Statistics (2024). *Nigeria Labour Force Statistics Report (Q3 2023)*. National Bureau of Statistics, Abuja, Nigeria. Retrieved from: https://nigerianstat.gov.ng/elibrary/read/1241455

Ngele, A. N., & Nzelibe, C. (2023). Developing entrepreneurial skills for small and medium scale enterprises (SMEs). *Journal of Global Social Sciences*, 4(14); 147-163.

Oche, P., Ukabi, B., & Odey, M., (2021). The role of business education in repositioning the ailing global economy caused by covid-19 pandemic. *International Journal of Research in Education and Sustainable Development,* 1(4); 46-57.

Oguejiofor, S. (2020). Integrating e-commerce in business education curriculum for global competitiveness. *Nigerian Journal of Business Education*, 7(1); 27-34.

Olorundare, A. S., & Kayode, D. J. (2014). Entrepreneurship education in Nigerian

universities: A tool for national transformation. *Asia Pacific Journal of Educators and Education*, 29; 155–175.

Oluwadare, A. A., Omidiji, S. A., & Awe, O. H. (2022). Business education curriculum development and implementation in Nigeria: Problems and prospects. *Nigerian Journal of Business Education,* 9(2); 123-130.

Othman, N., & Othman N. H. (2015). Relationship between entrepreneurial intentions and entrepreneurial career choice behavior among university students. *Journal of Business and Economics*, 6(1); 179-186.

Panda, S., & Arumugam, V. (2023). Exploring the mediating effect of personality traits in the relationship between entrepreneurial intentions and academic performance among students. *Plos One*, 18(11); e0293305. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0293305

Pardiman, P., & Abs, M. K. (2020). Entrepreneurial readiness: What are the roles of entrepreneurial education, environment and student's mindset? *Technium Social Sciences Journal*, 11(1); 339-354. https://doi.org/10.47577/tssj.v11i1.1483

Perera, M. A., Fernandes, T., & Paniker, P. (2018). Career readiness: A survey on effectiveness of learning employability skills at university level. *International Journal of Engineering Technologies and Management Research*, 5(11); 86-106. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.2281404.

Samsudin, N., Jalil, N. A., Wahid, H. A., Yahaya, R., & Jizat, J. E. M. (2016). Students' readiness, motivation and attitude towards entrepreneurship. *International Business Education Journal*, 9(1); 50-57

Samuel, R., Bergman, M. M., & Hupka-Brunner, S. (2013). The interplay between educational achievement, occupational success, and well-being. *Social Indicators Research*, 111(1); 75-96. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-011-9984-5

Savellano, J. N. (2022). Level of readiness of BS entrepreneurship students of Neust towards business implementation. *International Journal of Innovative Science and Research Technology*, 7(11); 116-1163.

Serino, L., & Buccino, G. (2019). Entrepreneurial intentions among Italian students: The role of gender. *International Journal of Academic Research Business and Social Sciences*, 9(3); 1309–1326.

Shah, I. A., Amjed S., & Jaboob, S. (2020). The moderating role of entrepreneurship education in shaping entrepreneurial intentions. *Journal of Economic Structures*, 9; 19. https://doi.org/10.1186/s40008-020-00195-4

Ugwu, F. O., & Ugwu, C. (2012). New venture creation: Ethnicity, family background and gender as determinants of entrepreneurial intent in a poor economy. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Contemporary Research in Business*, 4(4); 338-357.

Villares, E., & Brigman, G. (2018). College/career success skills: Helping students experience postsecondary success. *Professional School Counseling*, 22; 1-8. https://doi.org/10.1177/2156759X19834444

Wang, M. T., & Sheikh-Khalil, S. (2014). Does parental involvement matter for student achievement and mental health in high school? *Child development*, 85(2); 610-625. https://doi.org/10.1111/cdev.12153

William, W., & Rodhiah, R. (2022). Analysis of factors that influence student readiness entrepreneurship in Jakarta. *Budapest International Research and Critics Institute-Journal*, 5(3); 22346- 22353.