

ASSESSMENT OF INFLUENCE OF GENDER, AGE AND AREA OF SPECIALISATION ON LAGOS TERTIARY INSTITUTION STUDENTS' CHOICE OF BUSINESS EDUCATION AS A COURSE OF STUDY

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Abstract

This article focused on the influence of gender, age and department on the distribution of students that enrolled to study business education in tertiary institutions within mainland local government area of Lagos State, Nigeria. The design used for the study is descriptive survey design. A 17-item instrument was used for data collection after validation by business education experts. Cronbach alpha was used to find the internal consistency of the data. The alpha coefficient was found to be 0.7, it was therefore found useful for the study. Three research questions were raised to guide the study. The descriptive statistics used were frequencies and percentages. Findings indicate that there is a huge disparity in enrolment into business education study between male and female business education students, with female business education students having 69.1% and the male counterpart having a percentage of 30.9. The business education students are heavily clustered within the ages of 21-25years. Accounting students formed more than 80.0% of the business education students. It was therefore recommended that there is need for career guidance for secondary students who are potential candidate at the higher institution most especially those in the social science class that are likely to choose career in business education.

Key words: Assessment, Gender, Age, Area of specialization.

1.1 Introduction

Education is a means of equipping a person with necessary tools for survival in our society. The National Policy on Education (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2012) also identifies the importance of education in national integration and development. It states that education is an instrument for national integration and development and that it enhances worth development both for individuals and for the entire society. The issue of equal access to education for all citizens of the nation irrespective of tribe, religion or class was also emphasised in the policy statement. The policy states, "there is need for equality of education opportunities to all Nigerian children irrespective of any real or imagined disabilities each according to his or her ability" (Federal Republic of Nigeria 2012). The focus of this research has to do with assessment of differences observed in enrollment in business education at the tertiary institutions across gender, age and area of specialization.

Business Education is a programme that equips its recipients with the necessary knowledge, skills and attitude that will enable him succeed in whatever business endeavor he may engaged in. Akume (2002) defined Business Education as a programme designed to prepare individuals for gainful employment as semi-skilled workers in occupations that are not generally considered professional by the society. This definition implied that Business Education is

Vocational Education, since Vocational Education is also seen as education designed to prepare skilled personnel at lower levels of qualification for one or a group of occupations, trades or jobs. According to Aliyu (2002), people view business education from the micro point of view rather than the macro point of view. Aliyu (2002) maintained that business education is relevant in our socio-economic and political lives, as a nation in this century.

Aluwong (2007) observed that business education is education for general knowledge of business practices. It could be deduced from this definition that business education is education about business and not for business if it is meant to give general knowledge of business practices. According to Amoor (2009), worldwide, governments are doubling their efforts in promoting vocational Business Education in tertiary institutions, with a very firm and strong belief that skill formation enhances productivity and sustains competitiveness in the global economy. This is in agreement with Aina, (2014) who noted that in recent years, the debate on the knowledge-economy has drawn more attention of governments to Vocational (Business) and Technical Education. Kochhar (2015) posited that business education graduates are articulate, competent and versatile as entrepreneurs as well as capable of occupying middle and high level executive positions in government and commercial organizations.

Business Education as a major area of vocational education in Nigeria, is critical to the development of higher-order thinking skills needed by the youth to function effectively in their entrepreneurial and educational careers right after graduation. According to Ohiwerei (2013) business education prepares the mind, the brain, and the physical body of individuals toward positive contribution to development of societies. Business education therefore can be described as a major engine for improving core values of development. Research findings and observations has shown sharp differences in enrolment distributions generally, especially at the tertiary institutions across the globe. This calls for the attention of relevant stakeholders, including educational researchers and policy makers.

1.2 Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the Social Impact Theory (SIT). Social Impact theory (SIT) is a theory that uses mathematical equations to predict the level of social impact created by specific social situations. Latané (1981) described social impact as a phenomenon in which people affect one another in social situations. Through daily experiences such as embarrassment, persuasion, humor, and a plethora of other experiences, one can see the number of situations that are governed by the presence and actions of others. The impact can not only be observed visually, it also alters forces within the target such as thoughts, attitudes, incentives and physiological state. Latané (1981) noticed that social impact was governed by three laws that can be translated into mathematical equations. These rules are social forces, psycho-social law and multiplication/division of impact.

The first rule of social forces claims that when social forces function within a social structure, the result is social impact. Latané explained this interaction as $I = f(SIN)$. That is, social impact is affected by strength (S), immediacy (I) and number of people (N). This theory postulates that the greater the number of sources of social impact in a social situation, the greater the impact would be. Thus, the equation $I = f(SIN)$ describes social impact as a multiplicative function based on the number of people acting on the target. Within this equation, the strength (S) is a measure of how much influence, power, or intensity the target perceives the source to possess. The amount of influence, power, or intensity is often determined through factors such as age, social class, whether or not a previous relationship had existed, or anticipation of a future relationship existing. Immediacy (I) takes into account how

recent the event occurred and whether or not there were other intervening factors. The number of people (N) is the number of sources exerting social influence on the target. Therefore, $I = f(SIN)$ equation illustrates that there is more social impact when higher status individuals are the source, when the action is more immediate, and when there are a greater number of sources.

The second rule that governs social impact is psychosocial law. The psychosocial law states that the most significant difference in social impact will occur in the transition from 0 to 1 source and as the number of sources increases, this difference will level out. The equation Latané uses for this law is $I = sn^t$. That is, some power (t) of the number of people (n) multiplied by the scaling constant (s) determines social impact. Latané applied this theory to previous studies done on imitation and conformity as well as on embarrassment. The third rule of social impact is multiplication/divisions of impact. This rule states that the strength, immediacy, and number of targets play a role in social impact. That is, the more strength and immediacy and the greater number of targets in a social situation causes the social impact to be divided amongst all of the targets. The equation that represents this division is $I = f(1/SIN)$. This rule relates to diffusion of responsibility, in which individuals feel less accountable as the number of people present increases. In emergency situations, the impact of the emergency is reduced when more people are present.

The social impact theory is both a generalizable and a specific theory. For example, the psycho-social law can be used to predict instances of it uses on set of equations, which are applicable to many social situations' conformity, imitation and embarrassment. However, Nwogu A. (2011) opined that the theory is falsifiable as well. It makes predictions through the use of equations; the equations may not be able to accurately predict the outcome of social situations. While Social Impact theory explores social situations and can help predict the outcomes of social situations, it also has some shortcomings and questions that are left unresolved. This theory was found to be useful for the study because it stressed the change in behavior that one person causes in another, intentionally or unintentionally, as a result of the way the changed person perceives themselves in relationship to the influencer. Students' perception may influence others to imitate them depending on their relationship with such students. In addition, the theory emphasized the role of conformity and imitation which play vital role in career decision making of students. Social Impact theory explores social situations and can help predict the outcomes of social situations that can affect a young persons' classroom experience, academic performance, subject choice and well-being.

1.3 Conceptual Review

Recent studies by Odu (2016) and Longe, F. (2012) about the rural women's lives in Nigeria and other Africa countries indicate that most parents refused to send their daughters to school with the belief that it was not a worthwhile investment. They believed that girls would get married, leading to the loss of all the money invested on them. Most parents regarded this investment as a waste of money. Ogunswaju (2014), explains that socialization in our societies is patriarchal in nature and this gives boys an initial advantage of having basic knowledge in the sciences because of their earlier exposure to intuitive tendency. This implies that discrimination begins at the earliest age within the family and preference for sons is the norm. In many countries especially in Sub-Saharan countries, women are still under-represented in institutions of learning, which of course has implications in their representation in labour force.

According to UNESCO International institute for Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (2020), universal access to higher education, devoid of discrimination and exclusion, is the cornerstone of the right to education. However, there has been an unfair distribution of education opportunities and this represents a drawback to achieving sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 and the other SDGs. Universal access to education is in line with

SDG 4 (Goal4.3) which envisages that by 2030 we must “ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university”. It is therefore imperative that policymakers and educational institutions and researchers ensure that all students, irrespective of characteristics (gender, age, area of specialization) have equal and equitable opportunities to be educated. This however, is still far from reality. There has been a sharp disparity in enrollment (which gives access to the required education) across students’ characteristics such as gender, age and area of specialization. In particular, for business education courses, there seems to be gender differences among students in their interests and area of specialization to participate in real-life learning tasks required to become entrepreneur and lifelong learners upon graduation.

The word *gender* usually refers to as a social construct that establishes and differentiates status and role between men and women particularly in the way they contribute to, participate in and are rewarded by the economy as well as most social institutions (Okoye & Arimonu 2016). Although women constitute a high percentage of students in business education across the globe, that these same women seem not to have the interests to participate in real-life learning is quite unimpressive. As such, gender differences among business education students is not just an issue that is attributed to Nigeria alone, but global phenomenon. Studies conducted by Bertrand (2018); Bertocchi and Bozzano (2019) and Cavaglia et al (2021) all confirmed gender differences in enrolment in University education. Also in a study conducted in thirty-six (36) OECD countries (OECD, 2019), thirty (30) out of the thirty-six (36) countries had more female undergraduates than males. Particularly in the UK, there are 1.31 women enrolled in undergraduate degrees for every man (HESA, 2019). A study carried out by Mead (2023) showed a higher percentage of women (71%) who intend to enroll in university compared to their male counterparts (56%).

The trend in Nigeria however seems to be at variance with the above. A few studies conducted in Nigeria earlier in the century showed lower female enrollment in universities when compared to the male counterparts. Okolo (2001) reported higher male enrollment across universities in Nigeria compared to their female counterparts. Though, there was an increase in female enrollment at the time, the differences in favour of male enrolment still existed. Adeyemi and Akpotu (2004) also conducted a study on the trend and pattern of enrollment across gender in Nigerian universities. In the study, findings indicated a gap between males and females also in favour of males across universities in Nigeria. In another study by Mukoro (2013) on enrollment between years 2003 and 2008; across the six (6) years studied, male enrollment was higher. Also, Masanja (2010) Women participation in Science, Mathematics and Technology Education is lower than their male counterparts.

Age and areas of specialization were also seen to influence choice of programmes in tertiary institutions. Yoshida (2020) discovered that overaged students in the lowest SES level (boys) were more likely to demonstrate worse enrolment patterns than their female counterparts. Also Introduction of National Policy of Education in Nigeria witnessed an increase in enrollment of primary school age children by 19.1 percent between 1999 and 2002. Owino and Odundo (2016) found that selection of area of specialization was determined by personal interests, parental guidance, career guidance and influence of lecturers. This corroborate Tskati, Diamini and Masuku (2016) whose study revealed that students’ interest, department’s image, sex and professionals were predictors for the choice of agriculture option offered by colleges in Swaziland.

1.4 Statement of the Problem

There is an obvious gender disparity in enrolment in business education particularly differences in their balance. By implication, male students tend to enroll more in accounting education

while more female prefers Office Technology and Management (OTME). This is because society believes that male would make a better Accountant while female will make a better Secretary and receptionist which has not been proven true. This appalling situation suffixed with the current very poor participation of women in the accounting department and men in the OTME department, tend to generate the fear as to whether women are still a part of the national development and integration.

This study, therefore, is a response to this challenge and is faced with problems of identifying the major causes of disparity in the choice of business education programme across gender, age and area of specialization.

1.5 Objectives of the Study

The major aim of the study is to examine the disparity in the choice of business education programme across gender, age and area of specialization. Specific objectives of the study are:

- i. to examine gender disparity in enrolment into the business education programme;
- ii. to assess disparity in enrolment into the business education programme across age groups; and
- iii. to examine and investigate disparity in enrolment into the business education programme across areas of specialization of the students.

1.6 Research Questions

- i. What is the percentage distribution of business education students by gender?
- ii. What is the percentage distribution of business education students by age?
- iii. What is the percentage distribution of business education students by departments?

1.7 Significance of the Study

The results of this study will be greatly beneficial not only to professionals in the teaching sector, but also to all stakeholders in diverse fields of education. Some of the major beneficiaries of the findings of this study will include: students, teachers, parents, policy planners, educational researchers

1.8 Scope and Delimitation of the Study

The study is restricted to the perception of gender, age and areas of specialisations of business education students in Federal College of Education and Yaba College of Technology in Lagos state.

2.1 Methodology

This study adopted survey research design. The population of the study consisted of all the final year business education students of Federal College of Education (Technical), Akoka and Yaba College of Technology. Purposive sampling technique was adopted for selecting subjects for the study based on their availability and willingness to participate in the study. Questionnaire was developed to elicit responses from respondents for data collection. The questionnaire was on the four-point Likert-type questions, with a choice of Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2) and Strongly Disagree (1). The instrument was pilot-tested to ensure its reliability. Twenty copies of the questionnaire were administered on respondents who will not be part of the main study. The 17-item instrument was accepted as good and reliable since they have a reliability coefficient of 0.7. To guarantee the content validity of the instrument, the researcher consulted and checked the items with two other experts in the field, corrections

were made to the observations. The instruments were administered by two research assistants. The data collection exercise lasted for two weeks. The data collected was analysed using statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 22.0.

3.0 Results and Discussion

3.1 Research Question One: What is the percentage distribution of business education students by gender?

Table 1: Distribution of business education students across gender

Gender	Number	Percent
Male	21	30.4
Female	47	68.1
Total	68	98.6

The Table 1 above depict that there are more female students in business education within the studied sample; with female students having the percentage of 69.1% while the male business education students made a 30.9 percent of sample. This indicates wide difference in number of male and female students on the enrolment of business education programme.

3.2 Research Question Two: What is the percentage distribution of business education students by age?

Table 2: Distribution of business education students across age

Age	Frequency	Percent
16-20years	8	8.7
21-25years	43	62.3
26-30years	17	24.6
Total	68	95.7

Table 2 above indicates that the business education students are heavily clustered within the age group of 21-25years; followed by ages 26-30 years while 16-20 years' group form the least group.

3.3 Research Question Two: What is the percentage distribution of business education students by area of specialisation?

Table 3: Distribution of business education students across area of specialization

Department	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Accounting	58	84.1	85.3
OTME	10	14.5	14.7
Total	68	98.6	25.8
Total	68	95.7	100

Table 3 above indicates a very wide disparity between business education students in the department of Accounting and those of Office Technology and Management Education

(OTME). The percentages are 85.3 and 14.7 respectively which is ratio 6:1 in favour of accounting programme.

4.0 Discussion

The concern of this study are distribution of business education students by gender, age and area of specialisation. This gave rise to three research questions. The first research question centres on percentage distribution of business education students by gender, the result presented in table 1 reveals that there is a wide gap in percentages of female and male business education students with females more than double the percentage of their male counterparts. This data raises serious concern because studies in other areas such as sciences and engineering have always indicated a higher enrolment of males than females. The likely explanation for this is the belief on this part of the world especially in Nigeria that business education is a female domain.

The findings of this study is at agreement with the study conducted in thirty-six (36) OECD countries (OECD, 2019), where thirty (30) out of the thirty-six (36) countries had more female undergraduates than males. It is also in agreement with the finding of a study conducted in the UK, where findings show that there are 1.31 women enrolled in undergraduate degrees for every man (HESA, 2019). Also in a study carried out by Mead (2023), a higher percentage of women (71%) intend to enroll in university compared to their male counterparts (56%). The findings of this study however is at variance with other studies earlier conducted in Nigeria. Okolo (2001) reported higher male enrollment across universities in Nigeria compared to their female counterparts. Though, there was an increase in female enrollment at the time, the differences in favour of male enrolment still existed. Adeyemi and Akpotu (2004) also conducted a study on the trend and pattern of enrollment across gender in Nigerian universities. In the study, findings indicated a gap between males and females also in favour of males across universities in Nigeria. In another study by Mukoro (2013) on enrollment between years 2003 and 2008; across the six (6) years studied, male enrollment was higher. Also, Masanja (2010) Women participation in Science, Mathematics and Technology Education is lower than their male counterparts. It is interesting that findings of this study disagrees with the findings of the earlier studies in Nigeria but agrees with those of the western countries such as UK. The most likely explanation for the trend as earlier mentioned has to do with people's belief in Nigeria that business education generally is seen as female domain. Change in mindset can bring about the desired change in trend.

The second research question focuses on percentage distribution of business education students by age. The percentages ranked from 65.2% for students within 21-25years, to 25.8% for students within 26-30years and the least which is 9.1% for students within 16-20years. The common age bracket of graduation from secondary school in Nigeria is between 15 and 17 years; the concern now is what the students are doing before admission into tertiary institution. This may be the issue of suitability for admission into desired tertiary institution and preferred choice of course. On the long run the students can now pick any course that comes around after a long period of waiting. In other words, there is the likelihood that most of the students enrolling in business education had probably spent years after their secondary schools opting for their so called lucrative course such as medicine, engineering or law and failed repeatedly. The third research question is pivoted on percentage distribution of business education students by department. An interestingly wide gap was seen in two departments within the study sample. Accounting department had higher percentage of 85.3% as against OTME department with 14.7%. This shows we have more students in accounting than OTME. Could this be because of the general opinion in the society about accounting? The general of opinion of students is

that accounting as career is juicier in term of career opportunities financial security and society acceptability.

Age and areas of specialization were also seen to influence choice of programmes in tertiary institutions. Yoshida (2020) discovered that overaged students in the lowest SES level (boys) were more likely to demonstrate worse enrolment patterns than their female counterparts. Also Introduction of National Policy of Education in Nigeria witnessed an increase in enrollment of primary school age children by 19.1 percent between 1999 and 2002. Owino and Odundo (2016) found that selection of area of specialization was determined by personal interests, parental guidance, career guidance and influence of lecturers. This corroborate Tskati, Diamini and Masuku (2016) whose study revealed that students' interest, department's image, sex and professionals were predictors for the choice of agriculture option offered by colleges in Swaziland. Igbiniedion (2011) observed that students enrolled in secretarial studies (now called Office Technology and Management in Nigeria) were predominantly women.

5.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

Findings of this study showed sharp disparities in enrolment of students into business education programmes across gender, age and area of specialization. There is the need for career guidance for secondary students who are potential candidate at the higher institution most especially in business education by the school counsellors. There should be dedicated programmes put in places for this purpose by different stakeholders such as clubs and associations, churches and mosques as well as community based organisations and non-governmental organisations. Students should be rightly guided on choice of career at the early age. Government should put policy in place that will encourage young people to pursue career in business related subject. Parents have major roles to play in studying and observing areas of interest of their children and wards as this would enhance informed guidance.

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