

Business Education Students' Perception of Social Entrepreneurship Opportunities for Sustainable Economy of Nigeria

by

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Abstract

Empowering Business Education students to solve the social, economic and environmental challenges of the twenty-first century demands for proper students' perception of entrepreneurship opportunities in the society. Therefore, this study was carried out to examine Business Education students' perception of social entrepreneurship opportunities for sustainable economy of Nigeria. The study raised and answered one related research question and also formulated and tested three relevant research hypotheses. The descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study comprised all final-year Business Education students in public universities and public colleges of education in Lagos State, Nigeria. The sample size for this study consisted of one hundred and five (105) final-year students of Business Education randomly selected from the two sampled tertiary institutions. The research instrument used was structured questionnaire. The reliability coefficient of the validated questionnaire using Cronbach Alpha method was 0.85. The research questions and hypotheses data were analysed using mean and t-test statistical tools respectively. The results, among others, showed that Business Education students had proper perception of social entrepreneurship opportunities in the communities. However, female students were found to have better perception than the male counterparts did. In addition, university

students had better perception than the students did at the college of education. Therefore, it was recommended, among others, that more innovative and experiential approaches should be employed for teaching and learning of both commercial and social entrepreneurship content of Business Education curriculum at tertiary education levels, with greater focus on the students from colleges of education for achieving sustainable economy in Nigeria.

Key Words: Business Education, Students' Perception, Social Entrepreneurship Opportunities, Sustainable Economy.

Introduction

The prevalence of unemployment problem and its associated crises are posing serious challenges for developing countries, especially Nigeria. Some of these problems have been threats to people all over the nation. There are accelerating cases of poverty, school drop-outs, armed robbery, human trafficking, kidnapping, and assassinations as well as poor waste management in different parts of Nigeria. It has been the utmost concern of the Nigerian government as well as the world leaders from various countries of the world to find solutions to these problems. Effort at searching for solutions to the aforementioned problems, especially in the developing countries, led to the gathering of the world leaders in the New York at the United Nations conference on 25th September, 2015 to adopt the 2030 agenda for sustainable development (Edward and Joanne, 2017). The sustainable development goals include to end extreme poverty and hunger, as well as to promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all, among others (Nwokike, Ezeabii & Jim, 2018). The emphasis of the National Policy on Education (2014) in Nigeria has been on qualitative, comprehensive and functional education that is relevant to the needs of the society. The goals of education in Nigeria as stated in the NPE (2014) specifically are promotion of functional education for skill acquisition, job creation and poverty

reduction. It is on these philosophy and goals of education that Business Education programme, especially at the tertiary level, based its aims and objectives. Primary among the aims of Business Education programme at tertiary education level is a complete development of the individuals to become effective business teachers and high caliber professionals in business establishments (National Universities Commission, 2018).

Business Education students are expected to become competent teachers that can effectively impart business competences in the learners as well as competent business owners, who create employment opportunities for others. Despite these laudable expectations of Business Education programme in Nigeria, some findings showed that many Business Education graduates are unemployed (Ekpenyong and Edokpolor, 2015; Edokpolor and Owenbiugie, 2017). As a vocational education, Business Education curriculum basically focuses on empowering the recipients with entrepreneurial competences to fight poverty, unemployment, and solve other social, economic and environmental problems in the society. Sustainability of the Nigerian economy can only be achieved when the best mechanism and policies are put in place to adequately proffer lasting solutions to challenges in our communities. Moses and Olokundun (2014) stated that understanding the business environment is the key before any successful entrepreneurship accomplishment can be recorded. In other words, the perception of students on entrepreneurship education determines their intentions towards practicing entrepreneurship at graduation (Olokundun, 2017).

Perception, as defined by Given (2008), is the process of understanding the reality of things or situations through senses, leading to behaviour and actions. McDonald (2012) also opined that perception is the individual's awareness and interpretation of the situation in the environment that stimulate decision-making and actions. Ou (2017) buttresses that perception, from its latin origin *perceptio* or *percipio* means to receive, collect, take action of possession, and understand through the mind or senses. Smeets and

Brenner (2001) argued that perception and actions are inseparable. In other words, the decision or action of an individual is greatly influenced by his/her view or perception of the situation at hand. Bansal, Garg and Sharma (2019) maintain that ability to perceive or recognize opportunities for sustainable development lies in the knowledge of entrepreneurship education received by the individuals. Adam, Jibrin and Lukman (2017) argued that Business Education programme would deliver innovative entrepreneurship opportunities that can empower the recipients for sustainability of the Nigerian economy provided the programme be adequately implemented. The type of entrepreneurship that can bring about sustainable development in Nigeria must also have positive social and environmental impact on the communities.

The main aim of sustainable development is to balance our economic, social and environmental needs (Ukairo, 2017). Ediagbonya (2013) advocated that entrepreneurship education has the potential to empower students and graduates with competences required for job creation, self-reliance, and sustainability of the economy of any nation. Mahendra, Djatmika and Hermawam (2017) affirmed that entrepreneurship education has the potency of influencing learners for entrepreneurship intention and engagement. Aladejebi (2018) emphasizes the need to ensure quality teaching and learning of entrepreneurship education before students can be influenced positively to have the intention, and to actually start running businesses. Ediagbonya (2013) portrays entrepreneurship as the readiness and capability of an individual to establish or run a business venture successfully. Akudolu (2010) also explains the concept of entrepreneurship education as acquisition of competences that enable a learner to understand and explore opportunities centred on tackling some life challenges. Aladejebi (2018) found out that teaching and learning of entrepreneurship education had positive influence on the ability of students to identify business opportunities as well as intention of students to start business enterprises after graduation. The study carried out by Afolabi, Kareem and Okubanjo (2017) came up with the findings that entrepreneurship education has the potentials of empowering the youth to become entrepreneurs

after graduation. Agbonlabor (2016) defines an entrepreneur as someone who perceives an opportunity and makes conscientious effort through risk taking to establish a business venture basically for profit maximisation. Ediagbonya (2013) emphasizes having entrepreneurial mind-set, profit-making, acquiring management skills for running businesses, manpower development, career development, acquisition of risk management skills, identification of new business opportunities, and economic growth as the objectives of entrepreneurship education. Ediagbonya (2013) identified economic empowerment and development, self-employment and poverty eradication as part of the goals of entrepreneurship education. Ilyas (2019) explains that entrepreneurship, fundamentally speaking, is all about creating values for the owner and it is centred on economic impact whereas social entrepreneurship is all about creating values for others and centres on making social and environmental impact, alongside economic gains. Therefore, achieving sustainable economy in Nigeria requires more of social and environmental impacts than economic impact because the problems to solve are present in the communities. Ogbo, Igwe, Ezeobi, Modebe and Ume (2019) recognize the sustainable impact that social entrepreneurship would have on the Nigerian economy provided other stakeholders play supporting roles in its implementation. Truran (2014) defined social entrepreneurs as people who use their current and in-built business skills to address opportunities and social challenges in their immediate environment.

Social entrepreneurship in this study is referred to as a selfless entrepreneurship strategy, effort and undertaking geared towards production of social solutions. That is, identifying social problems, creating methods of solving them and designing an action plan to execute the solution identified. Mohammed and Ndulue (2017) described social entrepreneurship as any innovative initiative that focuses on solving social problems, sustaining social value and reducing poverty with or without financial gains. OECD (2011) in Moses and Olokundun (2014) explained social entrepreneurship as identification of social problems in the communities and employment of ground-breaking strategies to solve the problems either in

short-term or long-term basis. Ogunyemi (2012) emphasised that social entrepreneurship creates employment and self-employment opportunities for the less privileged, the poor, the homeless, physically and mentally challenged people in the communities. Oghojafor, Aduloju and Olowokudejo (2011) maintained that social entrepreneurship has the potential of solving the problems of unemployment, poverty, prostitution, human trafficking, and gangsterism pervading the Nigerian society today. Iwueke and Nwaiwu (2014) commented that attaining sustainable development in Nigeria through education needs students who think creatively to turn social problems to entrepreneurship opportunities in the society. Madu and Yusuf (2015) also maintained that social entrepreneurship complements the effort of government to provide social amenities and rapid development in the communities. Iyortsuun (2015) noted the scarcity of information and researches on social entrepreneurship and suggested there should be policies to institute it in developing countries, Nigeria inclusive. In contrast to business and commercial entrepreneurship, which majorly seeks profit and financial gains for the individual, social entrepreneurship, focuses on creating social and environmental impacts in the communities while still making economic gains (Marting and Osberg, 2007).

Apart from the fundamental competences of accounting, marketing, office technology and management that are very pronounce in Business Education curriculum in Nigeria, some other social competences are also essential in this twenty-first century. These social competences include: ability to recognize a social need in the community; ability to develop a passion and compassion on the socially-excluded or the deprived in the community; ability to develop a compelling proposal or action plan to meet the identified needs, as well as creative use of the minimal resources to accomplish the mission. Other values that are also very essential include: socio-moral motivation, personal credibility and integrity, cooperation and stimulating the development of other people, problem-solving skills, good communication skills, leadership skills, risk-taking ability, networking and teamwork, innovation, perseverance, and such others (Rodrigo, Michelle, Kaisu, Kim, and Francisco, 2017;

Osman, Ladhani, Findlater and Mickay, 2017).

The social entrepreneurship education complementary to business or commercial entrepreneurship education in order to achieve holistic development of Business Education students to solve the twenty-first century challenges in the nation. The combination of these values in Business Education students would empower them to adequately turn every problem to business opportunity while solving societal problems. A Business Education graduate cannot just fold the hands under the excuses of ‘no jobs’ when many people are roaming the streets of Lagos for lack of functional skills and competences for self-employment. Business Education graduates can organize tutorial classes for the school drop-outs at a reasonable fee; they can also train the physically-challenged on some entrepreneurship skills that will change their status from being street beggars to job creators themselves. Business Education graduates can also gather other unemployed graduates that have no entrepreneurship skills and train them on some computer programming or digital marketing packages that can provide them jobs in a company or make them to become self-employed. Turning the waste on the street of Lagos to money-making venture through recycling the waste is another entrepreneurship opportunities that Business Education students and graduates can explore. Iyortsuun (2015) found out that collaboration and partnership between institutions of higher learning and notable Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) or Social Enterprises that could engender innovative solutions to the societal pressing problems were almost none-existent in Nigeria. Linan, Rodriguez-Cohard and Rued-Cantuche (2005) cited in Afolabi, Kareem and Okubanjo (2017) found out that perceived social norms and self-efficacy were responsible for the entrepreneurial intention of students in two different Spanish universities. These findings suggest the need to ensure the social entrepreneurship perception of Business Education students in the course of empowering them as catalysts for achieving the sustainable development of the Nigerian economy.

Statement of the Problem

The cases of social, economic and environmental challenges facing

the Nigerian economy, most especially, demand for innovative entrepreneurship education that can sufficiently address the challenges. The prevalence of Business Education graduates unemployment in spite of their exposure to the entrepreneurship content of the curriculum is also a major concern to the various stakeholders. Many graduates of Business Education prefer seeking for ready-made employment or remaining unemployed to creating jobs through solving societal problems (Ekpenyong and Edokpolor, 2015; Edokpolor and Owenvbiugie, 2017). The inability to secure paid employment often compel many unemployed graduates to engage in several nefarious activities such as kidnapping, armed robbery, assassination, or create unbearable situations such as poverty, hunger, lack of productive employment, and decent work shortfall in the country. Providing solutions to these challenges led to the inclusion of social entrepreneurship education content and instructional strategies in the curriculum of Business Education programmes (National Business Education Association, 2013). It is therefore doubtful whether Business Education students have the right perception of the social entrepreneurship opportunities that can be explored by graduates for both job creation and the sustainability of the Nigerian economy. In the light of the above, this study sought to assess Business Education students' perception of social entrepreneurship opportunities for sustainable economy of Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework

The theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) by Ajzen (1991) is adapted for this study. The theory (TPB) identifies three unique elements that influence the intention and behaviour of an individual especially in terms of entrepreneurial behaviour. These three elements are attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioural control. It is argued in the theory that one of these three elements or all the three can influence either the entrepreneurial intention or behaviour of an individual.

This theory (TPB) is related to this study on the basis of perceived behavioural control as an element. Since any of these three elements

can influence the entrepreneurial intention or behaviour of an individual, this study therefore agrees with the theory of TPB by Ajzen (1991) that students’ perception of social entrepreneurship education can influence their intention and behaviour towards its practices. This study also support the argument of the theory of TPB that self-efficacy and ability (otherwise referred to as components of knowledge in this study) can influence students’ perception towards the economic, social, and environmental impact of social entrepreneurship education in the society. It is assumed that right perception of social entrepreneurship opportunities by Business Education students would lead to their intention and behaviour of as commercial entrepreneurs, social entrepreneurs, and green entrepreneurs, among others in this twenty-first century era (TPB, 1991). Any form of inadequacy in the outcome is traceable to the students’ perception or the knowledge of entrepreneurship or social entrepreneurship acquired through Business Education programme. The Conceptual Model for this study is therefore illustrated in the diagram below:

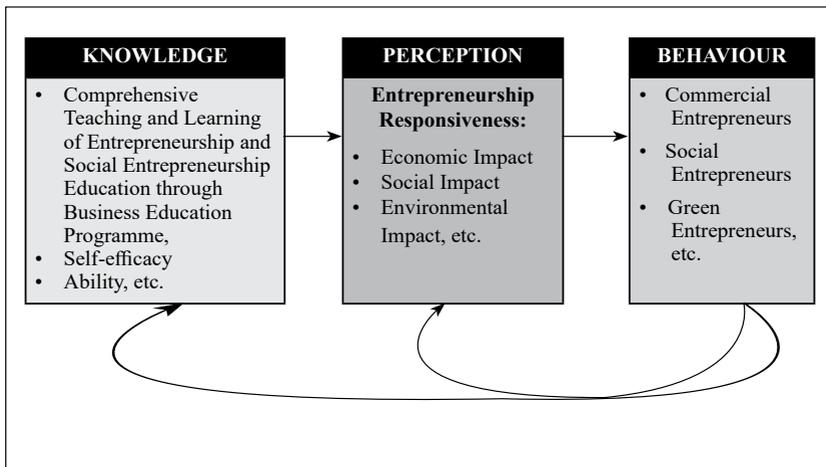


Fig. 1: *Conceptual Model of Social Entrepreneurship Empowerment of Business Education Students for Sustainable Development*

Adapted from the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) by Ajzen (1991)

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to assess the perception of Business Education students on social entrepreneurship opportunities for sustainable economy of Nigeria.

Research Question

The following research question guided the study:

- i. What is the perception of students of Business Education on social entrepreneurship opportunities for sustainable economy of Nigeria?

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested in the study:

- i. There is no significant difference between the perception of male and female Business Education students on social entrepreneurship opportunities in Nigeria.
- ii. There is no significant difference between the perception of Business Education students in accounting and office technology management options on social entrepreneurship opportunities in Nigeria.
- iii. There is no significant difference between the perception of Business Education students from University and College of Education on social entrepreneurship opportunities in Nigeria.

Methodology

The study adopted the descriptive survey design. The rationale for survey design is in its efficacy to describe frequency distribution of certain characteristics of a population as well as elicit opinion of respondents in a study. It entails collecting data from a defined population through the use of questionnaire (Maduekwe, 2011). The population of the study comprised all final-year Business Education students of public Universities and public Colleges of Education

in Lagos State. The sample size for this study consisted of one hundred and five (105) final-year Business Education students from University of Lagos, Akoka, Lagos and Adeniran Ogunsanya College of Education, Ijanikin, Lagos. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire, validated by some experts from both within and outside business education. The reliability coefficient of the instrument using Cronbach Alpha was 0.85. The data collected from the respondents were analyzed using pie-chart, bar-chart, mean and t-test statistical tools. Pie-chart, bar-chart and mean were used to analyse the data for the research question while t-test was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance at relevant degrees of freedom using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The decision rule was based on any calculated mean scores equal to, or greater than 2.50 as agreed, while any calculated mean scores less than 2.50 was regarded as disagreed. Furthermore, the value (p) was used in taking the decisions on the hypotheses. If the p-value is less than or equal to 0.05, the null hypotheses is not retained, but if the p-value is greater than 0.05, the null hypotheses is retained.

Result/Findings

The instrument was administered to 105 respondents. Below is the summary of the composition of students' response by gender and area of specialisation.

Fig. 2: A Bar-Chart Showing Distribution of Sampled Respondents by Gender (%)



Figure 2: above showed the distribution of sampled respondents by gender. The figure shows that majority of the respondents were females (64.8%) while 35.2% were males.

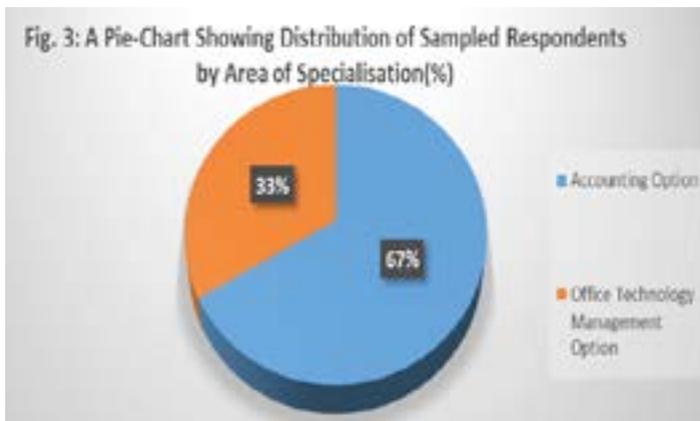


Figure 3 above showed the distribution of sampled respondents by area of specialisation. The figure shows that students from Accounting Option (67%) were more than students from Office Technology Management Option (33%). This shows that the interest of Business Education students was more in Accounting than Office Technology Management.

Research Question: What is the perception of students of Business Education on social entrepreneurship opportunities for sustainable economy of Nigeria?

Table 1: Perception of Business Education Students on social entrepreneurship opportunities for sustainable economy of Nigeria

S / N	Perception of Business Education Students on Social Entrepreneurship Opportunities	Mean (N = 105)	Remark
1.	Ensuring food security in a community.	2.76	Agreed
2.	Solving youth unemployment problems in the community.	3.06	Agreed
3.	Setting up free-of-charge or low-fee tutorial centers for school dropouts in the community.	2.83	Agreed
4.	Establishing a business enterprise for empowering and employing the physically-challenged in the community.	2.78	Agreed
5.	Collecting and recycling wastes as a profit-making business in the community.	2.85	Agreed
6.	Setting up a vocational training centres for skills acquisition by unemployed youths at very low charges.	2.98	Agreed
7.	Setting up social enterprises in the rural communities to address social and environmental problems with minimum profit.	2.85	Agreed
8.	Taking solving social problems as a career with minimum profit.	2.79	Agreed

The results presented on table 1 show that the majority of the respondents agreed that ensuring food security in a community; solving youth unemployment problems in the community, setting up

free-of-charge or low-fee tutorial centers for school dropouts in the community, establishing a business enterprise for the empowering and employing the physically-challenged in the community, collecting and recycling wastes as a profit-making business in the community, setting up a vocational training centres for skills acquisition by unemployed youths at very low charges, setting up business enterprises in the rural communities to address social and environmental problems with minimum profit and solving social problems as a career with minimum profit were perceived social entrepreneurship opportunities for sustainable economy of Nigeria.

Hypothesis One: There is no significant difference between the perception of male and female Business Education students on social entrepreneurship opportunities in Nigeria.

Table 2: T-test for Gender Difference in Perception of Business Education Students on Social Entrepreneurship Opportunities in Nigeria.

Specialization	N	Mean	SD	df	t-test	Sig
Male	37	21.46	4.82			
				103	-2.26	0.03*
Female	68	23.68	4.81			

$$t = -2.26, df = 103, p < 0.05^*$$

It was found that perceptions of Business Education students that were males (Mean =21.46, Sd = 4.82) and female students (Mean = 23.68, Sd = 4.81) with a mean difference of -2.21, the difference was found significant; as shown in Table 2. This was ascertained as the sig value was less than 0.05 level of significance ($t = -2.26, p = 0.03$). Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected. This implies gender factor influence business education students' perception of social entrepreneurship opportunities. Specifically, female students had better perception of social entrepreneurship opportunities.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant difference between the

perception of Business Education students in accounting and office technology management options on social entrepreneurship opportunities in Nigeria.

Table 3: t-test for difference in perception of Business Education students in accounting and office technology management options on social entrepreneurship opportunities in Nigeria.

Specialization	N	Mean	SD	df	t-test	Sig
Accounting	70	22.90	5.00			
				103	0.14	0.98
Office Technology Management	35	22.89	4.78			

$t = 0.14, df = 103, p > 0.05$

It was found that perceptions of Business Education students in Accounting Cohort (Mean = 22.90, Sd = 5.00) and Office Technology Management (Mean = 22.89, Sd = 4.78) with a mean difference of 0.14 but the difference was not significant; as shown in Table 3. The non-significance was ascertained as the sig value was greater than 0.05 level of significance ($t = 0.14, p = 0.98$). Therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected. This implies both students in accounting and office technology management cohort shared similar perceptions on the favourable scope of social entrepreneurship opportunities in Nigeria.

Hypothesis Three: There is no significant difference between the perception of Business Education students from University and College of Education on social entrepreneurship opportunities in Nigeria.

Table 4: t-test for difference in the perception of Business Education students from University and College of Education on social entrepreneurship opportunities in Nigeria.

Institution	N	Mean	SD	df	t-test	Sig
University	52	24.21	4.19	103	2.81	0.006
College of Education	53	21.60	5.24			

$t = 2.81, df = 103, p > 0.006$

The results presented on table 4 showed the perception of business education students from University (Mean =24.21, Sd = 4.19) and College of Education (Mean = 21.60, Sd =5.24) with a mean difference of 2.61. Also, the difference was statistically significant as the sig value was less than 0.05 level of significance ($t = 2.81, p = 0.006$). So, the null hypothesis was rejected. This implies business education students from both University and College of Education have different perceptions on social entrepreneurship opportunities in Nigeria. Specifically, University students have higher favourable perception than College of Education students.

Discussion of Results

The results in figures 2 show that there were more of female than male students in Business Education programme at tertiary level in the sampled institutions in Lagos State, Nigeria. This discovery has implications of having imbalance gender ratio of business teachers

and entrepreneurs in the future of Nigeria. The results in figure 3 also reveal that students in the Accounting option were more than students in the Office Technology Management option of Business Education programme of the sampled institutions. There is also a discovery of a gross non-availability of Marketing option of Business Education programme in the sampled institutions. If this trend continues without urgent intervention, the Nigerian economy would experience dearth of Marketing teachers in the secondary schools as well as limited marketers entrepreneurs in the nearest future. The three major specialisations in Business Education programme at the tertiary level must be accorded equal relevance and importance by the institutions.

The findings in table 1 show that students of Business Education programme in the selected tertiary institutions in Lagos State had correct and commendable perceptions about social entrepreneurship opportunities, which they can explore after graduation. This finding is similar to the result of the study carried out by Aladejebi (2018) that entrepreneurship had positive impact on the ability of students to recognize entrepreneurship opportunities in the communities. More than fifty percent of the students respondents show expected knowledge of social, economic, and environmental impact they can make through entrepreneurship involvement in the communities. This discovery also buttresses the finding of Mahendra, Djatmika and Hermawam (2017) that entrepreneurship education had the potency of influencing learners for entrepreneurship intention and engagement. According to Ajzen (1991) theory of planned behaviour (TPB), there is a great possibility of Business Education students exploring all the identified opportunities to enhance the sustainability of the Nigerian economy. It is therefore required of the stakeholders of Business Education programme to be functionally and financially involved in the effective implementation of entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship education in the pursuit of achieving the sustainable development goals (SDGs) 2030 in Nigeria.

The results in table 2 establish that gender factor influences the perception of Business Education students about social entrepreneurship opportunities. Specifically, female students had

better perception of entrepreneurship opportunities than male counterparts did. According to the claim of the Ajzen (1991) theory of planned behaviour, there is likelihood of having more female social entrepreneurs in the future than the male. It appears that male students were still sticking to the commercial or business entrepreneurship idea only, because it mainly focuses on economic gains. As future husbands, fathers and family breadwinners, male students might be feeling that social entrepreneurship might not lead to wealth generation. This is an aspect Business Educators teaching social entrepreneurship should practically and experientially demonstrate in order to convince more male students of the job creation, wealth creation, economic rewards, and societal sustainability impact of social entrepreneurship education in this twenty-first century.

The findings in table 3 prove that area of specialization does not influence students' perception about social entrepreneurship opportunities. However, the findings in table 4 evidently show that students of Business Education at the university has better perception of social entrepreneurship opportunities to be explored than their college of education students counterparts. The stakeholders especially at the college of education should make further conscientious effort to implement the ideal teaching and learning of social entrepreneurship education in the institutions. Based on the findings, the study has the following conclusions.

Conclusions

The perception of Business Education students of tertiary institutions about social entrepreneurship opportunities was found to be averagely commendable. However, gender factor has influence on students' perception; female gender had better perception of social entrepreneurship opportunities than the male counterparts did. Students of Business Education at college of education had lesser perception of social entrepreneurship opportunities than the university students. Marketing option was not available for the students of Business Education at the selected university and college of education in Lagos State.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and the conclusions made in this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. The management of tertiary institutions should make effort at improving the perception of Business Education students in general, and male students in particular, concerning social entrepreneurship opportunities in the communities in Lagos State.
2. The management of tertiary institutions and other stakeholders, especially in the colleges of education, should make sure that knowledge and skills of social entrepreneurship form an integral component of Business Education curriculum to improve students' abilities to identify and turn social, economic and environmental problems to social entrepreneurship opportunities for sustainability in Lagos State.
3. Tertiary institutions management in Lagos State should make further effort to enhance the teaching and learning of Office Technology aspect of Business Education programme in order to attract more students into the course option.
4. The stakeholders of tertiary institutions should implement Marketing option of Business Education programme for the acquisition of marketing competences necessary for enhancing social entrepreneurial behaviour among the students.

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