

UNIVERSITY UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS' SKILLS ACQUISITION AND SELF-SUFFICIENCY IN THE ERA OF UNCERTAINTIES IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study examined the relationship between university undergraduate students' skills acquisition and self-sufficiency in Nigeria, particularly during times of uncertainty. Using a quantitative research design, 2 research questions guided the study and 1 hypothesis was proposed. The sample of the study was made up of 200 undergraduate students (120 from University of Uyo and 80 from University of Port Harcourt) selected using simple random sampling technique for the population. The author designed an instrument titled "University Undergraduate Students' Skills Acquisition and Self-Sufficiency Questionnaire (UUSSASQ). The results indicated that skills such as Information Technology (IT), typing, baking, tailoring, and hairdressing are crucial in fostering self-sufficiency among university undergraduate students. Analysis revealed a significant correlation between the skills acquired by students and their ability to be self-reliant in a challenging economic environment. As students acquire more skills, their capacity to become economically independent improves. This highlights the importance of integrating practical skill development into university curricula, particularly in Nigeria's current socio-economic context. The study concludes by recommending among others; the expansion of entrepreneurial training and experiential learning to better equip students for self-employment and independence and Universities should incorporate mandatory skill acquisition courses (e.g., IT, entrepreneurship, vocational training) into academic programmes to equip students with practical competencies for self-employment.

Keywords: Entrepreneurial Training, Nation-Building, Self-Sufficiency Skills Acquisition, and Socio-Economic

Introduction

Being self-sufficient means having the means to take care of oneself without help from others. This idea is applicable at the individual, societal, and financial levels, among other circumstances. To put it personally, self-sufficiency is the ability to look for one's own needs, including emotional, physical, and financial needs. Self-sufficiency highlights the significance of having the knowledge and tools necessary for people to successfully manage their life on their own without outside assistance. This can include self-reliance and emotional resilience in addition to practical abilities such as cooking, budgeting, and housekeeping.

In terms of economy, the ability of a country to generate enough goods and services to meet its own requirements and lessen reliance on imports is sometimes referred to as self-sufficiency. To achieve agricultural self-sufficiency, for example, a nation must cultivate enough food on its own soil without importing any more, both economic stability and national security may benefit from this. Promoting independence and resiliency, communities or neighbourhoods must cooperate with each other. This is known as community self-sufficiency. This can take the form of regional food production, cooperative enterprises, and resource sharing, all of which build a network of support that improves the community's general well-being. Achieving self-sufficiency at home involves a variety of practical steps that can enhance your independence and reduce reliance on external resources.

Graduates in particular and youngsters in general with the necessary skills and knowledge for self-employment and self-sufficiency are the nation's biggest concern. Self-sufficiency is the full utilization of a society's own resources and autonomy in decision-making (Isaac, 2011). Additionally, it refers to self-assurance, dependence on one's natural and human resources, and the ability to determine one's own goals. Individuals who depends more on themselves or their own abilities and resources, and less on others, to manage their human and material resources is said to be self-reliant. People become independent when they are able to obtain and make use of the necessities of life, such as wholesome food, appropriate clothing, a safe place to live, medication, transportation, and useful education (Ofoye, 2010). The objectives business studies are to link expertise and expertise to the national economy, prepare students for additional business studies training, acquire fundamental office skills, give those who do not want to pursue further training the orientation and fundamental abilities they need to begin working in the field, and to offer fundamental business knowledge that individuals can utilize today and in the future (Ofoye, 2010).

In order for a nation like Nigeria to be economically independent, it is necessary to diversify the economy and to inspire young people to pursue self-employment or entrepreneur through favorable policy that support business programmes and environments that would promote skill acquisition, entrepreneurship, and independence. It is impossible to overstate the importance of skill acquisition in the rapidly expanding economic areas. A skill can be thought of as a talent or aptitude that an individual possesses and can be learned via practice, training, observation, and deliberate personal experiences. On the other hand, skill acquisition is the creation of a new technique, skill, or method of doing things that is typically acquired through instruction or experience. Many have claimed that learning new skills is the key to ending acute poverty and hunger since it opens doors for launching and managing one's business, which leads to the creation of jobs and fostering constant income while fostering independence and self-sufficiency (Isaac, 2011). Self-sufficiency has been thought of as being effectively treated through skill acquisition. The overall concept is that in addition to their usual academic programme or curriculum, students should receive skills training in the appropriate sector that strikes a balance and practice, which are required by business. According to Gambari (2011), effective youth engagement is essential to the fight against hunger and poverty, the reduction or elimination of unemployment and underemployment in society, and the reduction of crime. He acquisition of skills by young people should be handled as a matter of urgent national concern, given that our basic education has failed to produce the desired results and has been associated with negative outcomes like armed robbery, militancy, kidnapping, and a host of others.

A capacity to perform successfully is known as a skill and is developed via practice and expectation. A skill is a practical knowledge and the capacity to carry out a task that can be learned or acquired in a learning environment such as a school or training facility. According to Olowu and Aliyu (2015), skills are the capacity to carry out intentional motions required to finish or master a specific task. A person's capacity to complete a given activity and accomplish a specific goal is made possible by their skill, which is a learned response that is frequently the product of specific training. Agomuo (2014) also provided a list of some of the abilities that professionally-trained managers need to possess in order to succeed in a business setting, including discretion, good time management, and organizing skills, confidence in computer software and Information Technology (IT), accuracy and keen detail-orientation, the capacity to remain composed and diplomatic under pressure, and self-motivation. When possessed, these abilities make a professionally-trained office manager employable (Agomuo, 2014). For instance, the abilities and knowledge gained from typing on a typewriter translate to computer keyboarding. Keyboarding proficiency is now required in practically every element of our culture. For our educational system to evolve sustainably through computer training aimed at preparing students for some specific abilities that will make them relevant in today's office and

for self-reliance, people need to continually experience a keyboard instruction. According to Mbah and Umurhurhu (2016), all students, especially those studying business, should be familiar with computers and typing because they have automated many managerial tasks and made them simpler. The students also have the following skills such as; baking, cloth making and hair dressing among others.

Doringer, (2020) and Scott and Ivala, (2019) opined that graduates from higher education institutions should be exposed to experiential learning that will enable them to make significant contributions to nation-building, arguing that, the essence of higher education is to develop human capital, (i.e., knowledge and skills acquired from education or through practical experience) which could then translate to societal development. In congruence, Sansone et al., (2021) posited that the global economy requires graduates that are equipped with a range of transversal skills and entrepreneurial competencies that will enable them to succeed in any practically productive enterprise. These entrepreneurial competencies; according to Canton (2021) include the capacity to think constructively, solve problems creatively and communicate effectively. The foregoing suggests that graduates require both academic credentials and a range of fundamental skills in order to succeed in the job market. Hence, the overarching challenge herein is to identify the drivers of entrepreneurial skills acquisition amongst university students. This will offer insights for policies aimed at improving levels of entrepreneurship in academic settings, especially in the Nigerian university context.

Statement of the Problem

The problem in this study is that many university graduates in Nigeria, particularly in the face of uncertainties, lack the necessary skills for self-sufficiency and employment. Despite their academic qualifications, students often fail to acquire practical skills that are crucial for self-employment, entrepreneurial career and independence in a challenging economy. This situation contributed to high and alarming rates of unemployment rates, poverty, and dependence on external resources, highlighting the urgent need to identify and promote skill acquisition programmes that can equip students with the skills and competencies needed for self-sufficiency and national development.

Purpose of the Study

The aim of the study is to examine the relationships between university students' skills acquisition and self-sufficiency in the era of uncertainties in Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to examine:

1. the level of skills acquired by students from two universities students for self-sufficiency in the era of uncertainties in Nigeria.
2. the extent to which skills acquired by students from two universities influence self-sufficiency in the era of uncertainties in Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study.

1. What is the level of skills acquired by students from two universities for self-sufficiency in the era of uncertainties in Nigeria?
2. To what extent does skills acquired by students from two universities influence self-sufficiency in the era of uncertainties in Nigeria?

Research Hypothesis

1. The skills acquired by students from two universities do not significantly influence self-sufficiency in the era of uncertainties in Nigeria.

Method

The research adopted a quantitative research design in which a structured questionnaire was used for data collection. The area of the study was Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State and Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State. The population of this study was made up of all the Business Education students in University of Uyo and University of Port Harcourt. The population stood at 253 students for the 2018/2019 school session in University of Uyo and 147 students for the 2018/2019 school session in University of Port Harcourt. The sample of the study was made up of 200 students (120 from University of Uyo and 80 from University of Port Harcourt) using simple random sampling technique. The author developed an instrument titled "University Undergraduates Students' Skills Acquisition and Self-Sufficiency Questionnaire (UUSSASQ). The instrument was a four-point adjusted Likert scale. The scale ranged from: Strongly Agree (SA) – 4 points, Agree (A) – 3 points, Disagree (D) – 2 points, and Strongly Disagree – 1 point respectively. To find out the reliability of the instrument, copies of questionnaire were administered on 20 students who were not part of the sample size selected for this study but were found to be equivalent to the research groups under investigation. The reliability co-efficient value was 0.84. The author in alliance with two trained research assistants, visited the schools selected for the study and, distributed the questionnaire and retrieved the same day from the respondents and this accounted for a 100 percent return rate. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics of Mean, Standard Deviation and Inferential statistics such as Pearson's Product Moment Correlation (PPMC). The hypothesis was tested at .05 level of significance.

Results of the Study

Research Questions 1

What is the level of skills acquired by students from two universities for self-sufficiency in the era of uncertainties in Nigeria?.

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation on the Level of Skills Acquired by Students from two Universities for Self-Sufficiency.

Two Universities for Self-Sufficiency.						
S/N	Skills acquired by students from two Universities for Self-Sufficiency	Students.				
		UNIUYO (120)		UNIPORT(80)		Remark
		$\bar{X}$	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD	
1	Information Technology (IT)	2.80	1.07	2.61	1.15	Agreed
2	Computers and Typing	3.05	1.20	3.40	0.78	Agreed
3	Baking	2.50	0.65	2.53	0.68	Agreed
4	Cloth Making	3.14	1.10	2.95	1.05	Agreed
5	Hair Dressing	2.80	0.75	3.20	1.14	Agreed
	Mean summation $\sum \bar{X} / \sum SD$	14.29	4.77	14.69	4.80	
	Aggregate $\bar{X} / SD$	2.86	0.95	2.94	0.96	

Table 1 showed the mean scores and standard deviation of skills university students should acquire to be self-sufficiency in both University of Uyo and University of Port Harcourt. Both students agreed to items 1 to 5 of the skills university students should acquire to be self-sufficiency in both Universities. This is because; the mean scores are all above the criterion mean score of 2.5. This is an indication that there are various skills university students should acquire to be self-sufficiency in the era of uncertainties in Nigeria.

Research Questions 2

To what extent do skills acquired by students from two universities influence self-sufficiency in the era of uncertainties in Nigeria?

Table 2: How Skills acquired by students from two universities influence self-sufficiency in the era of uncertainties in Nigeria.

Variables	N	$\sum X$	$\sum Y$	$\sum X^2$	$\sum Y^2$	$\sum XY$	r-cal
Skills acquired by university students (X)	200	151.83	149.33	588.19	670.30	642.65	0.612
Self-sufficiency (Y)	200						

Table 2 shows that the correlation coefficient between skills university students acquired and self-sufficiency in the era of uncertainties in Nigeria is (r-cal = 0.612). This value shows that a relationship exists between skills University students acquired and self-sufficiency in the era of uncertainties in Nigeria. This implies that as the skills university students acquired is on the increase, self-sufficiency in the era of uncertainties in Nigeria also increases.

Hypothesis Testing

Research Hypothesis

1. The skills acquired by students from two universities do not significantly influence self-sufficiency in the era of uncertainties in Nigeria.

Table 3: Pearson's Correlation between Skills Acquired by Students from two Universities and Self-Sufficiency in the era of Uncertainties in Nigeria.

Variables	N	df	r-cal	Sig. level	P-Value	Decision
Skills acquired by students (X)	200	198	0.612	0.05	0.000	Rejected
self-sufficiency (Y)	200					

The result in Table 4 shows that r-value of 0.612 at significant level of 0.05, yielded p-value of 0.000. Since the p-value of 0.000 is less than 0.05 significance level, the null hypothesis was rejected. This implies that there was a significant relationship between Skills University students acquired and Self-sufficiency in the era of uncertainties in Nigeria.

Discussion

Information Technology (IT), Computers and Typing, Baking, Cloth Making and hair dressing are some of the Skills University students acquired helped to be self-sufficiency in the era of uncertainties in Nigeria. This assertion is supported by Ezebgbe, Eskay and Anyanuou (2012) in Akpan, Usip and Uko (2015) posited that entrepreneurial skills in Information and Communication Technology are more acceptable among the youths as university students form the majority of the youths. Skills University students acquired showed significant relationship to self-sufficiency in the era of uncertainties in Nigeria. University students will like to acquire skills to use in the future. This will eventually help them to be self-sufficient. This study has provided enough reason to encourage university students to have skills acquisition as it shows that skill acquisition significantly relates with self-sufficiency needed in the era of uncertainties in Nigeria.

Conclusion

The study examined the relationship between skill acquisition and self-sufficiency among university students in Nigeria amidst economic uncertainties. Findings revealed that students from the University of Uyo and the University of Port Harcourt acquired various skills, including Information Technology (IT), computer and typing, baking, cloth making, and hairdressing, which contribute to self-sufficiency. There is a significant positive correlation between skill acquisition and self-sufficiency, indicating that as students acquire more skills, their ability to become economically independent increases. The study therefore stated that is a practical skill development in reducing unemployment, fostering entrepreneurship, and enhancing national development.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made;

- i. Universities should incorporate mandatory skill acquisition courses (e.g., IT, entrepreneurship, vocational training) into academic programmes to equip students with practical competencies for self-employment.
- ii. The government and private organizations should provide funding, training facilities, and incentives (e.g., grants, low-interest loans) to encourage students to engage in skill acquisition programmes.
- iii. Universities should create entrepreneurship centres where students can access training, mentorship, and resources to develop and commercialize their skills while still in school.
- iv. Educational institutions and policymakers should organize workshops, seminars, and media campaigns to sensitize students on the benefits of skill acquisition for self-sufficiency and economic resilience.
- v. Partnerships between universities and industries should be strengthened to ensure that skill training aligns with market demands, improving graduates' employability and entrepreneurial success.

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