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RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EMPLOYABILITY COMPETENCIES AND CAREER CERTAINTY OF FINAL YEAR BUSINESS EDUCATION STUDENTS IN PUBLIC TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN ANAMBRA STATE

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the relationship between employability competencies and career certainty of final year business education students in tertiary institutions in Anambra State. The study was guided by two research questions and two null hypotheses. The study adopted a correlational research design. The population comprised 319 final year students from public tertiary institutions in Anambra State. There was no sampling. The entire population was used as the population was manageable. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire. Validation of the instrument was carried out by three experts, all from Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. The study utilized a direct method of questionnaire administration. Pearson Product-Moment Correlation was used to analyze the research questions. Linear regression was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The study found that there is a relationship between employability competencies and career certainty of Business Education students. The study concluded that employability competencies enhance career certainty by aligning skills with industry demands and fostering clarity in career choices. This bridges the gap between education and employment by ensuring smooth transitions and informed career planning of business education students. The study recommended that administrators of educational institutions should continuously update Business Education curricula to include industry-relevant skills and ensure they align with current job market demands. Universities should offer robust career counseling services that could help students make informed decisions, focusing on matching their competencies with available job opportunities in the market.

Keywords: Employability Competencies, Career Certainty, Business Education, Final Year Students, Public Tertiary Institutions, Anambra State.

Introduction

Nigeria is a country that has been endowed with abundant human, mineral and material resources, which could be used for the nation's development. Despite the abundant resources that could be used for human and national development, many of its citizens are still unemployed because the government

is yet to maximally utilize these resources to generate employment opportunities for the people. Hence, many of the citizens seem not to be certain about the career path to be chosen and this makes career uncertainty a huge challenge to people (students inclusive). The National Bureau of Statistics has noted that unemployment rate in Nigeria stood at 5.0 percent in fourth quarter (Q4) of 2023. According to the Punch Newspaper (2024), unemployment in Nigeria will continue to increase due to the continuing inflow of job seekers into the job market. Unfortunately, this situation seems to be increasing despite the abundance of the human and material resources in the country.

The current economic situation revealed that the management and utilization of human and material resources have not translated into significant economic opportunities for the majority of Nigerians (students inclusive). According to Uzohuo (2022), another factor contributing to the high unemployment rate in Nigeria is the misalignment between the education system and the labour market demands, despite having the human resources (intellectuals). Many students graduate every year without the requisite skills demanded by employers (Adebayo, 2019). There seems to be a significant mismatch between what is being taught in schools and the skills required in industries, leading to a large number of unemployed graduates (Uzohuo, 2023).

Unfortunately, business education students are not exempted from the challenges of unemployment in the country. Business education programme is meant to equip students with the necessary skills for labour market as Puad, Mohamad and Rashid (2023) pointed out that it equips individuals with practical skills needed in the labour world which showed that the importance of business education cannot be relegated to the background.

Business education programme aims at teaching students the principles and practices related to the field of business and technology application. It encompasses areas such as finance, marketing, management and entrepreneurship (Nwagwu, 2020). The programme aims to equip learners with both theoretical knowledge and practical skills that are essential for effective participation in the business world, thereby preparing them for various career paths in the corporate sector. Business education as a programme is designed to inculcate in individuals the competencies necessary to survive in an environment (Obidile & Onwugbufor, 2024). More so, business education also involves practical training and skills development relevant to specific business careers (Akinpelu, 2021). It is an education that equips students with the ability to understand and manage their financial resources, including budgeting, investing and financial planning. Business education helps to offer direct employment opportunities which lead to career certainty.

Career certainty refers to an individual's confidence and clarity about their chosen

career path and their future professional goals (Olowookere & Alao, 2020). It is the degree to which an individual's career choices align with their long-term professional aspirations and values (Adebayo, 2019). In addition, career certainty signifies the level of confidence an individual has in making informed and committed decisions regarding their career direction (Obiwuru, 2021). More so, career certainty is crucial for students as it provides them with a clear sense of direction in their professional journey, allowing them to make informed decisions about their education and career paths (Akinpelu, 2021). It enhances their motivation and commitment, encouraging them to develop relevant skills that align with their career aspirations (Nwagwu, 2020). Furthermore, having a solid understanding of their career goals helps students navigate challenges in the job market, as they are better prepared to seize opportunities and adapt to changes in their chosen fields (Okafor & Ugwu, 2019). Ultimately, career certainty fosters a proactive approach to personal and professional development which could enhance Employability competencies.

Employability competencies have been defined by so many authors. Emeh (2014) referred to employability competencies as the set of abilities, knowledge and personal attributes that make an individual suitable for employment and effective in the workplace. Employability competencies are versatile skills that are not specific to a particular job but are essential across various industries and roles, such as communication, teamwork and problem-solving (Ogunleye, 2017). The relationship between employability competencies and career certainty is complex and multifaceted. Employability competencies could directly influence career certainty by providing individuals with the skills and knowledge needed to navigate the job market and achieve their career goals (Okoye & Edokpolor, 2021). The development of these competencies could enhance career confidence, direction clarity, professional identity and job market awareness. Dave (2017) opined that employability competencies such as communication skills, problem-solving abilities and technical skills contribute to career confidence. Individuals who possess these skills are more likely to feel assured in their ability to succeed in their chosen career paths. In Nigeria, Eze and Nnamdi (2020) noted that graduates with strong employability competencies seem to exhibit higher levels of career confidence, which in turn positively influence their career certainty.

However, in Anambra State, no known empirical evidence has been conducted to the knowledge of the researchers in this regard especially as it concerns Business Education male and female students. As male and female students may experience varying levels of career confidence and access to industrial opportunities which could influence how their competencies contribute to their career certainty. It therefore becomes important to empirically ascertain the

relationship between employability competencies and career certainty of male and female business education students in public tertiary institutions in Anambra State.

Statement of the Problem

Career certainty is important for every graduating student including business education students. This certainty provides business education students with the confidence to pursue their career paths with determination and focus. Knowing that their education and training could equip them with the necessary skills and knowledge to secure employment can significantly reduce anxiety and uncertainty about life. Having employability competencies could play a critical role in widening the range of job opportunities of graduating students. However, despite the importance of the possession of employability skills and the recognized importance of having industrial knowledge, unemployment among graduating students (business education students inclusive) in Nigeria continues to rise. This could be as a result of uncertainty of their career path or inadequate possession of employability competencies which could individually or jointly influence the employment opportunities of graduates.

Unfortunately, career certainty among graduates of business education students in Nigeria has become a mirage because many students lack a clear understanding of the job market and the competencies required for employment. As a result, many students cannot boast of being certain of their employment after graduation. This uncertainty has become a major source of concern for educators and policymakers alike. Observations indicate that while some students possess employability competencies, they often lack the career certainty needed to navigate the job market and achieve their career goals. This mismatch between employability competencies and career certainty of students ultimately undermines their potential and the economic growth of the nation. Hence, it is worrisome to stakeholders in education. It is on this backdrop that this study sought to ascertain the relationship between employability competencies and career certainty of business education students

Purpose of the Study

The study sought to determine:

1. The relationship between employability competencies and career certainty of final year male business education students in public tertiary institutions in Anambra State.
2. The relationship between employability competencies and career certainty of final year female business education students in public tertiary institutions in Anambra State.

Research Questions

This study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the relationship between employability competencies and career certainty of final year male business education students in public

tertiary institutions in Anambra State?

2. What is the relationship between employability competencies and career certainty of final year female business education students in public tertiary institutions in Anambra State?

Hypotheses

The following null hypothesis were tested at 0.05 level of significance

1. There is no significant relationship between employability competencies and career certainty of final year male business education students in public tertiary institutions in Anambra State.
2. There is no significant relationship between employability competencies and career certainty of final year female business education students in public tertiary institutions in Anambra State.

Methods

The study adopted a correlational research design. The population comprised 319 final year students from public tertiary institutions in Anambra State. The tertiary institutions used are those offering business education. According to the tertiary institutions' Personnel Office (2024), there were 135 final year students in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, 11 final year students in Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, 106 final year students in College of Education, Umunze and 67 final year students in Nwafor Orizu College of Education, Nsugbe. Census sampling technique was used as the population was manageable. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire had two sections; Sections A and Section B. Section A sought information on the demographic variables of the respondents. Section B was divided into two subsections. Subsection I dealt on employability competencies. Subsection II dealt on Career Certainty. Employability competencies had 27 items structured on a four (4) point scale ranging from Strongly Agree (SA) – 4, Agree (A) – 3, Disagree (D) – 2, and Strongly Disagree (SD) – 1 while Career certainty has 17 items and is also structured on a four (4) point scale of Strongly Agree (SA) – 4, Agree (A) – 3, Disagree (D) – 2, and Strongly Disagree (SD) – 1. Validation of the instrument was carried out by three experts from Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. The instrument was subjected to trial test and Cronbach Alpha method was used to determine the reliability and the reliability coefficients ascertained were 0.82 and 0.81 for Employability Competencies and Career Certainty respectively. These values indicated that the instrument was reliable. The study utilized a direct method of questionnaire administration. The questionnaire was distributed and collected with the help of research assistants. Pearson Product-Moment Correlation was used to analyze the research questions while Linear regression was used to test hypotheses.

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Results

Research Question One: What is the relationship between employability competencies and career certainty of final year male business education students in public tertiary institutions in Anambra State?

Table 1: The relationship between employability competencies and career certainty of final year male business education students

Variables	N	Employability Competencies	Career Certainty	Remark
Employability Competencies	129	1.00	.799**	Strong Relationship
Career Certainty	129	.799**	1.00	

Table 1 shows the relationship between employability competencies and career certainty of final year male business education students in public tertiary institutions in Anambra State. The results revealed that the r-value was 0.799 with a sample size of 129 final year male business education students. This indicates a strong relationship between employability competencies and career certainty of final year male business education students in public tertiary institutions in Anambra State.

Research Question Two: What is the relationship between employability competencies and career certainty of final year female business education students in public tertiary institutions in Anambra State?

Table 2: The relationship between employability competencies and career certainty of final year female business education students

Variables	N	Employability Competencies	Career Certainty	Remark
Employability Competencies	190	1.00	.754**	Strong Relationship
Career Certainty	190	.754**	1.00	

Table 2 shows the relationship between employability competencies and career certainty of final year female business education students in public tertiary institutions in Anambra State. The results revealed that the R-value was 0.754 with a sample size of 190 final year male business education students. This shows that there is a strong relationship between employability competencies and career certainty of final year female business education students in public tertiary institutions in Anambra State.

$H0_1$: There is no significant relationship between employability competencies and career certainty of final year male business education students in public tertiary institutions in Anambra State.

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Table 3: The relationship between employability competencies and career certainty of final year male business education students

Variables	N	Employability Competencies	Career Certainty	Sig.	Remark
Employability Competencies	129	1.00	.799**	.000	Significant
Career Certainty	129	.799**	1.00		

Table 3 shows the test of hypothesis one on the relationship between employability competencies and career certainty of final year male business education students in public tertiary institutions in Anambra State. The results revealed that the R-value was 0.799 with a p-value of 0.000 which is below the 0.05 level of significance. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected while the alternative hypothesis was retained. This indicated that there is strong relationship between employability competencies and career certainty of final year male business education students in public tertiary institutions in Anambra State.

$H0_2$: There is no significant relationship between employability competencies and career certainty of final year female business education students in public tertiary institutions in Anambra State.

Table 4: The relationship between employability competencies and career certainty of final year female business education students

Variables	N	Employability Competencies	Career Certainty	Sig.	Remark
Employability Competencies	190	1.00	.754**	.000	Significant
Career Certainty	190	.754**	1.00		

Table 4 shows the test of hypothesis two on the relationship between employability competencies and career certainty of final year female business education students in public tertiary institutions in Anambra State. The results revealed that the R-value was 0.754 with a p-value of 0.000 which is below the 0.05 level of significance. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected. This shows that there is a significant relationship between employability competencies and career certainty of final year female business education students in public tertiary institutions in Anambra State.

Discussion of Findings

The results of research question one and test of hypothesis one revealed that there is strong relationship between employability competencies and career certainty of final

year male business education students in public tertiary institutions in Anambra State. In support of these findings, Nurzunah and Shazaitul (2022) found that employability competencies such as teamwork, adaptability and technical skills, equip male students with the tools necessary to navigate the labour market, enhancing their confidence in career decisions. Okoye and Uchechi (2021) also found that male students are often encouraged to exhibit independence and leadership in career development, benefit significantly from acquiring these competencies, which clarify their career aspirations and pathways. Furthermore, Ekpe, Nzemeka, Ofeimun and Adelaiye (2021) findings affirmed that the exposure to practical training and entrepreneurial skills embedded in Business Education curricula ensures that male students align their abilities with industry needs, thereby solidifying their career certainty. This highlights how employability competencies can boost career certainty among male students, particularly in fields emphasizing self-reliance and competitiveness. Conversely, Adamu and Eze (2019) revealed that career certainty among final-year, male students might not solely depend on employability competencies. The author's maintained that external factors such as societal expectations, economic realities and cultural norms often influence male students' career decisions. Additionally, Nwankwo and Alade (2021) revealed that institutional limitations such as inadequate infrastructure and poor implementation of employability training may undermine the development of employability competencies, reducing their impact on career certainty. In conclusion, while employability competencies significantly enhance career certainty among final-year male Business Education students, broader socio-economic and institutional factors also play crucial roles in shaping their career outcomes.

The results of research question two and test of hypothesis two revealed that there is strong relationship between employability competencies and career certainty of final year female business education students in public tertiary institutions in Anambra State. In agreement with these findings, Anitha and Rajandran (2019) found that employability competencies, such as problem-solving, adaptability and interpersonal skills, provide female students with the confidence and capability to pursue defined career paths. Also, Normala, Abdul and Yahya (2016) found that female students often encounter societal challenges that could limit their career progression, but possessing strong employability skills help them overcome these barriers and identify opportunities that align with their aspirations. Additionally, Maripaz, Ombra and Shuki (2013) found that business education curricula in tertiary institutions often emphasize entrepreneurial skills and practical training, which equip female students with the self-assurance and clarity needed to make informed career decisions. This alignment of skills and career certainty highlights the pivotal role of employability competencies in empowering female students. Conversely, Adamu and Eze

(2019) found that factors beyond employability competencies could also influence the career certainty of female students. Societal expectations, family roles and cultural norms may overshadow the influence of competencies, as female students often face pressure to prioritize traditional roles over career ambitions. Saniuk, Caganova and Saniuk (2023) findings showed that economic constraints and limited job opportunities in certain industries also create uncertainties, regardless of their skill levels. Moreover, the quality of employability training in public tertiary institutions may vary, with some programs providing insufficient preparation for real-world challenges. These challenges may limit the extent to which employability competencies alone determine career certainty among female students. In conclusion, while employability competencies significantly contribute to career certainty for final-year female Business Education students, socio-cultural and institutional factors also play critical roles in shaping their career trajectories.

Conclusion

From the study, it could be concluded that, employability competencies enhance career certainty of Business Education students by aligning their skills with industry demands and fostering clarity in their career choices. Employability Competencies such as graphic design, digital marketing and programming skills could empower students to navigate the labor market as they could help to bridge the gap between education and employment by ensuring smooth transitions and informed career planning of business education students.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Administrators of educational institutions should continuously update Business Education curricula to include industry-relevant skills such as graphic design, digital marketing and programming skills, among others, ensuring they align with current job market demands.
2. Universities should offer robust career counseling services that could help students make informed decisions, focusing on matching their competencies with available job opportunities in the market.
3. Institutions should regularly assess the effectiveness of their curricular training and make necessary adjustments to ensure students are developing the right competencies to succeed in the labor market.

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