

ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION AND GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT GENERATION IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN BAYELSA STATE

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ABSTRACT

The Federal Ministry of Education mandated the inclusion of entrepreneurship education in the curricula of tertiary institutions in Nigeria through regulatory bodies like the National Universities Commission (NUC), National Board for Technical Education (NBTE), and National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) starting from the 2007/2008 academic session. This decision was made in response to the need for graduates to be equipped with entrepreneurial skills to enhance their employment opportunities and contribute to economic development. It is believed that for a student to fully benefit from entrepreneurship education, they must develop proficiency in these key competencies to successfully navigate the challenges of starting and running a business. Additionally, fostering these competencies can also lead to increased self-confidence, creativity, and adaptability in the face of uncertainty in the business world. The lack of sustainable employment pathways raises questions about the effectiveness of the current educational system in preparing students for the demands of the labour market and addressing the region's economic challenges. It is in this light that this project is set. This study therefore is designed to investigate the relationship between entrepreneurship education and graduate employment generation in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State. To achieve this, the study investigated randomly selected students from the state tertiary institutions. Using structured questionnaire from the respondents, the study discovered that there is a strong and positive relationship that exist between graduate employment and acquisition of entrepreneurial skills in Bayelsa state. Hence, among others, the study suggested that Business education programs in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State should place a greater emphasis on developing risk management competency among students to better prepare them for the job market. Also, the management of tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State should collaborate with industry partners to help students develop financial literacy competency to enhance their chances of creating employment opportunities after graduation.

KEY WORDS: *Opportunity Recognition Competency, Innovative Competency, Risk Management Competency, Business Planning Competency, Financial Literacy Competency, Networking Competency.*

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INTRODUCTION

The introduction of entrepreneurship education in Nigeria's educational system has proven to be essential in addressing the issue of unemployment among graduates. By equipping students with the necessary skills to start their own businesses, they are able to become self-reliant and even create job opportunities for others. This initiative is crucial in a country where many graduates struggle to secure traditional employment opportunities despite their qualifications. The Federal Ministry of Education mandated the inclusion of entrepreneurship education in the curricula of tertiary institutions in Nigeria through regulatory bodies like the National Universities Commission (NUC), National Board for Technical Education (NBTE), and National Commission for Colleges of

Education (NCCE) starting from the 2007/2008 academic session. This decision was made in response to the need for graduates to be equipped with entrepreneurial skills to enhance their employment opportunities and contribute to economic development.

According to Akinyele and Bolarinwa (2018), entrepreneurship education can be used as a catalyst for employment creation, poverty eradication, national growth, and security. After all, this has remained the major instrument for national development for many countries of the world. However, entrepreneurship education is discussed in this study in light of variables that include opportunity recognition competency, innovative solutions competency, risk management competency, financial literacy competency, business planning competency, and networking competency. It is believed that for a student to fully benefit from entrepreneurship education, they must develop proficiency in these key competencies to successfully navigate the challenges of starting and running a business. Additionally, fostering these competencies can also lead to increased self-confidence, creativity, and adaptability in the face of uncertainty in the business world.

Opportunity recognition competency refers to the ability to find openings—particularly in the business setting—and brainstorm innovative ideas to establish or grow a business (Guo et al., 2016). It also reflects entrepreneurial alertness (Bagheri, 2017). Identifying the right opportunity is vital for enabling start-up companies to multiply (Ozgen & Baron, 2017). Both the ability and the competency to recognise opportunities are resources that only a few people possess (Kim et al., 2018). Opportunity recognition competency is a crucial component of entrepreneurship education. It refers to an individual's ability to identify potential business opportunities in diverse environments (Kreuzer et al., 2021). Graduates equipped with this skill are more likely to pursue entrepreneurial ventures, which can lead to job creation and increased employment generation in their communities. By fostering this competency, educational institutions can empower students to think critically and analytically about market needs. This can ultimately contribute to economic growth and development by encouraging innovation and new business creation.

Labo et al. (2024) defined innovative solutions competency as the ability to think creatively and develop unique approaches to solving complex problems in various industries. This skill is essential for staying competitive in a rapidly changing business landscape and driving continuous improvement within organisations. Yusof and Jamaluddin (2017), in this regard, stated that the curriculum of study is one of the important factors that influence the development of innovative solutions competency among students. They emphasised the importance of incorporating hands-on learning experiences and real-world projects into the curriculum to enhance students' problem-solving skills and creativity. This approach can better prepare students to meet the demands of today's dynamic job market and contribute to overall economic growth. This competency enables graduates to develop creative and original ideas to tackle existing problems or meet market demands. The ability to innovate not only enhances the employability of graduates but also contributes to economic growth by fostering the development of new products and services (Chimekwele, 2024). Thus, entrepreneurship education that emphasises innovation equips learners with the skills needed to create and sustain employment opportunities.

Literature review reveals a dearth of studies examining the direct relationship between risk-taking competency and firm performance, with mixed findings reported. For instance, Al-Mamun and Faizal (2017) found a negligible effect of risk-taking competency on microenterprise performance, prompting further investigation into the specific factors that may mediate this relationship in the context of entrepreneurship education in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State. Risk management competency is vital for anyone venturing into entrepreneurial activities. This competency involves the ability to assess, evaluate, and mitigate risks associated with business decisions. Graduates who possess strong risk management skills are better prepared to navigate the uncertainties of the business environment (Akhigbe & Onuoha, 2020). Understanding how risk-taking competency influences graduate employment generation can provide valuable insights for curriculum

development and policy-making to enhance the impact of entrepreneurship education on economic growth and job creation in the region.

Financial literacy competency is crucial for graduates aiming to succeed in the business world. It encompasses the understanding of financial principles, including budgeting, investment, and cash flow management. A strong foundation in financial literacy enables entrepreneurs to make sound financial decisions, ensuring the sustainability of their ventures (Dewi, Febrian, Effendi, Anwar, and Nidar, 2020). By promoting financial literacy within entrepreneurship education, institutions can help graduates manage their resources effectively, thereby increasing their prospects for employment generation. Hogarth and Hilgert (2022) revealed that financial knowledge is worthless if it is not applied (experience), and that financially literate people had experience to bridge between knowledge and skills. Financial skills according to Priyadharshini (2017) relate to an individual's ability to make financial decisions based on information to minimize the possibility of becoming entangled in financial problems. Consequently, it is essential for entrepreneurship education programs to not only focus on imparting financial knowledge but also provide opportunities for practical application and experiential learning. This will enable graduates to develop the necessary skills to effectively manage their resources and make informed financial decisions in real-world business scenarios.

Business planning competency involves the capacity to create comprehensive business plans that outline goals, strategies, and operational plans. A well-crafted business plan serves as a roadmap for entrepreneurs, guiding them toward successful business ventures. Epelle, Orlu and Okparanta (2017) defined business planning competency as the ability to anticipate challenges, identify opportunities, and make strategic decisions that drive business growth. This skill is essential for entrepreneurs seeking to secure funding, attract investors, and ultimately achieve long-term success in their ventures. When graduates are trained in business planning, they are better equipped to launch their enterprises, which can contribute to job creation within their local economies. Thus, integrating business planning into entrepreneurship education is essential for enhancing employment opportunities. Furthermore, Ogwunte and Ile, (2017) found that businesses that engage in thorough business planning are more likely to survive and thrive in the competitive market. This highlights the importance of incorporating business planning into entrepreneurship education to ensure the sustainability and success of new ventures.

. This study seeks to highlight the critical link between entrepreneurship education and the competencies that facilitate employment generation. By focusing on opportunity recognition, innovative solutions, risk management, financial literacy, business planning, and networking, this research aims to illuminate how these elements work together to enhance the employability of graduates in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The issue of unemployment among graduates of tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State has reached alarming proportions, underscoring a critical problem in the region's education-to-employment transition. Despite a growing number of graduates each year, many are unable to find suitable jobs, leading to a significant portion of the educated youth being idle. This disconnection between education and the job market creates a sense of hopelessness among graduates, exacerbating social issues such as poverty, crime, and the brain drain, where talented individuals seek opportunities abroad rather than in their home state. The lack of sustainable employment pathways raises questions about the effectiveness of the current educational system in preparing students for the demands of the labour market and addressing the region's economic challenges.

The challenges contributing to graduate unemployment in Bayelsa State are multifaceted. First, the local economy is characterised by a scarcity of industries and job opportunities, limiting the options available for fresh graduates. Second, there exists a significant gap between the skills imparted through academic programs and the competencies needed by employers in various sectors. Many graduates find themselves ill-prepared for the realities of the workforce, lacking

practical skills and experience that are vital in today's competitive job market. Additionally, the rigid structure of tertiary education often emphasises theoretical knowledge at the expense of entrepreneurial skills and innovative thinking. This disconnect hinders graduates from exploring alternative pathways, such as self-employment, ultimately contributing to the rising unemployment rates.

Entrepreneurship education emerges as a vital strategy to combat unemployment among graduates by empowering them to create their own job opportunities. By integrating entrepreneurship training into the curriculum, educational institutions can equip students with essential skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and financial management. This knowledge encourages graduates to identify market gaps and develop viable business ideas, fostering a mindset geared towards innovation and self-sufficiency. Moreover, gaining insights into business operations allows students to actively engage in entrepreneurship, rather than merely seeking employment within existing firms. Promoting an entrepreneurial culture not only enhances individual employability but also drives economic development in Bayelsa State, as graduates become catalysts for job creation and innovation in their communities. It is against the foregoing backdrop that this study aims to explore the relationship between digital marketing and customer retention investigated the relationship between entrepreneurship education and graduate employment generation in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study investigated the relationship between entrepreneurship education and graduate employment generation in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State. Specifically, the objectives of the study were to:

1. Determine the relationship between opportunity recognition competency and graduate employment generation in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State.
2. Ascertain the relationship between innovative solutions competency and graduate employment generation in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State.
3. Ascertain the relationship between risk management competency and graduate employment generation in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State.
4. Examine the relationship between financial literacy competency and graduate employment generation in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State.
5. Examine the relationship between business planning competency and graduate employment generation in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State.
6. Ascertain the relationship between networking competency and graduate employment generation in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the relationship between opportunity recognition competency and graduate employment generation in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State?
2. What is the relationship between innovative solutions competency and graduate employment generation in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State?
3. What is the relationship between risk management competency and graduate employment generation in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State?
4. What is the relationship between financial literacy competency and graduate employment generation in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State?
5. What is the relationship between business planning competency and graduate employment generation in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State?
6. What is the relationship between networking competency and graduate employment generation in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State?

RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

The following hypotheses were formulated and tested at the 0.05 level of significance.

- H₀₁:** There is no significant relationship between opportunity recognition competency and graduate employment generation in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State.
- H₀₂:** There is no significant relationship between innovative solutions competency and graduate employment generation in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State.
- H₀₃:** There is no significant relationship between risk management competency and graduate employment generation in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State.
- H₀₄:** There is no significant relationship between financial literacy competency and graduate employment generation in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State.
- H₀₅:** There is no significant relationship between business planning competency and graduate employment generation in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State.
- H₀₆:** There is no significant relationship between networking competency and graduate employment generation in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Review

The study is informed by the Human Capital Theory that was proposed by Gary Becker in 1964. The study was anchored on the Human Capital Theory due to its emphasis on the role of education, training, and experience in enhancing individual productivity and economic growth. This theory will provide a solid framework for understanding how entrepreneurial competencies can be developed and leveraged for business success.

Human Capital Theory

Becker's theory of human capital, introduced in 1964 posits that individuals invest in their human capital, such as education and training, to increase their productivity and earning potential. The Human Capital Theory has also been widely used to explain the relationship between education and economic outcomes. This theory underscores the significance of skills and knowledge acquired through investments in education, training, and experience to enhance an entrepreneur's productivity. This theory suggests that entrepreneurs who heavily invest in human capital often strive for business growth. Research by Zainol et al. (2018) and Wuttapan (2017) has corroborated that human capital contributes to the development of entrepreneurial competencies, crucial for achieving business success. For instance, opportunity recognition competency, as noted by Man et al. (2002), is bolstered by an entrepreneur's ability to leverage prior knowledge and experiences to identify and exploit opportunities.

The present study investigates the relationship between entrepreneurship education and graduate employment generation in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State, while the human capital theory opines that investing in education and training can enhance an individual's skills and knowledge, leading to increased productivity and innovation in the workplace. By implication, the relevance of the Human Capital Theory to this study lies in its emphasis on how entrepreneurship education can contribute to the development of human capital, ultimately impacting employment generation and economic growth in Bayelsa State. This theoretical framework helps to understand how investing in education and training for aspiring entrepreneurs can lead to positive outcomes for both individuals and the society as a whole.

Conceptual Review

Entrepreneurship Education

Entrepreneurship education is viewed by Shuaibu, Koa and Stevenson (2020) as an attempt to create value through recognition of business opportunities, communicative, and management skills to mobilize human, financial and material resources necessary to bring a project to function. Entrepreneurship education is seen as the process of creating something different with value by

devoting the necessary time and effort, assuming the accompanying financial, psychological, and social risk, and receiving the resulting rewards of monetary and personal satisfaction (Hisrich et al., 2017). Entrepreneurship Education is a learning process that prepares people to be responsible and enterprising individuals. It helps people develop the skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary to achieve the goals they set out for themselves (IGI Global, 2022).

Dimensions of Entrepreneurship Education

A. Opportunity Recognition Competency

Competence is the integration and combination of knowledge and skills that can be observed and measured which contributes to enhanced performance, and ultimately lead to entrepreneurial success (Al Mamun & Fazal, 2018). Opportunity recognition competency refers to the ability to identify and evaluate viable business opportunities that can create value in the marketplace. This skill is fundamental for entrepreneurship education, as it equips graduates with the mindset and tools to analyze gaps in the market, emerging trends, and potential areas for innovation (Agumadu et al., 2022).

In Bayelsa State, where economic diversification is critical, training students to recognize opportunities can address the region's high unemployment rate. Entrepreneurs with this competency can identify pressing societal challenges and develop tailored solutions, thereby contributing to job creation and economic growth (Umar et al., 2018). For example, students might explore opportunities in the state's agricultural, tourism, and oil-rich industries, leveraging local resources to develop sustainable ventures.

B. Innovative Solutions Competency

Innovative solutions competency involves the ability to develop creative and practical responses to identified problems or market needs. This skill is particularly vital in entrepreneurship education, as it encourages students to think outside the box and approach challenges with a problem-solving mindset (Kuratko, 2019). In the context of Bayelsa State, where infrastructural and socio-economic barriers often hinder development, fostering innovative thinking can lead to groundbreaking solutions that stimulate employment and growth. For example, students might develop renewable energy solutions to tackle power shortages or design technology-driven platforms for agricultural marketing.

C. Risk Management Competency

Risk management competency enables entrepreneurs to identify, assess, and mitigate potential risks in their ventures. This skill is critical in entrepreneurship education, as the uncertainty inherent in starting and running a business requires graduates to make informed decisions under pressure. Yayuk et al. (2019) discovered that risk-taking competence did not significantly impact micro-enterprise performance, yet failed to delve into other dimensions of entrepreneurial competencies or consider the role of intervening variables like commitment.

In Bayelsa State, where the business environment can be volatile due to political, economic, and environmental factors, equipping students with risk management skills is essential for building resilient enterprises. For instance, students can learn to anticipate financial risks, regulatory changes, or supply chain disruptions and develop strategies to navigate them effectively.

D. Financial Literacy Competency

Financial literacy competency involves understanding and managing financial resources effectively, a fundamental aspect of entrepreneurship education. This skill ensures that graduates can budget, forecast, and allocate resources efficiently, critical for the survival and growth of any business. Financial Literacy is viewed as a critical element for encouraging financial inclusion, consumer protection and ultimately, financial solidness and capability especially among young people (CBN, 2015). Financial literacy has many objectives differ depending on perspective, but in each case

can contribute to better financial decisions, and in the end improve welfare (Kaiser & Menkhoff, 2017). Majorly, the role of financial literacy is to enable and ease access to formal financial services. If individuals use formal financial services, they are regarded as being financially included.

In Bayelsa State, where access to capital and financial knowledge is limited for many aspiring entrepreneurs, fostering financial literacy can bridge this gap. Students equipped with this competency can make sound financial decisions, secure funding, and sustain their ventures over time. Rieger (2020) defined financial literacy as a person's competency for managing money. Integrating financial education into the curriculum through practical activities, such as creating business models and financial plans, is essential. Students can also benefit from training in accounting software, tax regulations, and financial analysis. By mastering these skills, graduates are better prepared to manage cash flows, reduce wastage, and achieve profitability.

E. Business Planning Competency

Business planning competency involves the ability to develop detailed strategies for launching and managing a business. Entrepreneurs with strong competencies can sense and seize market opportunities and optimize resources to create economic value (Nabiswa & Mukwa, 2017). A comprehensive business plan serves as a roadmap, outlining objectives, market strategies, operational plans, and financial projections. This competency is vital for entrepreneurship education, as it ensures that graduates can approach business creation systematically and strategically (Epelle et al., 2017). In Bayelsa State, fostering this skill is critical for empowering graduates to navigate the competitive business landscape and secure funding from investors or financial institutions.

F. Networking Competency

Networking competency involves building and maintaining relationships with individuals and organizations that can provide resources, support, or opportunities for growth. This skill is a cornerstone of entrepreneurship education, as success in business often hinges on the strength of one's professional connections. Abidur-Rahman et al. (2016) found that networking competency had a relationship with non-financial performance but suggested further investigation into entrepreneurial competencies in different business types and rural areas. Similarly, Al-Mamun et al. (2019) discovered a negative effect of networking competency on microenterprise performance but neglected to consider other competency dimensions or the role of entrepreneurial commitment. In Bayelsa State, where access to resources can be constrained, teaching students how to network effectively can open doors to partnerships, mentorships, and funding opportunities.

Employment Generation

Employment generation refers to the creation of job opportunities within an economy, often as a result of new or expanded businesses, government initiatives, or investments in various sectors. It is a critical factor in addressing unemployment, poverty, and social inequality, fostering economic stability and individual empowerment. In regions like Bayelsa State, where unemployment poses significant socio-economic challenges, employment generation plays a pivotal role in ensuring sustainable development. By providing stable income sources, it enhances the standard of living and reduces the dependency on government aid or informal economic activities.

Furthermore, employment generation promotes societal well-being by fostering dignity, purpose, and productivity among the workforce. It helps combat issues such as youth restiveness, which is common in areas with limited job opportunities. When individuals are gainfully employed, they contribute positively to their communities, strengthening social cohesion and reducing crime rates. Thus, employment generation is not just an economic goal but a foundation for holistic societal progress.

Akhuemoukhan et al. (2013), examine the impact of entrepreneurship education on employment generation in Nigeria. They employed an econometric analysis using a secondary quantitative data to draw conclusion. The study discovered that entrepreneurship is well-developed it would be an effective tool for poverty reduction, employment generation, fast-track the realization of universal primary education and promoting gender equality. In addition, Anam, Iba and Aregbe (2014), examine the impact of entrepreneurial education on Productive employment and sustainable poverty reduction in Cross River State using 60 beneficiaries of the Central Bank of Nigeria Entrepreneurial Development Center in Calabar. The findings established that there is a significant relationship between entrepreneurial education and employment creation as well as poverty reduction in the state.

RESERACH METHODOLOGY

The study adopted the correlational research design. The research design is considered suitable for this study, since it investigates the relationship between entrepreneurship education and graduate employment generation in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State.

The population of this study consisted of 399 students of business education from three tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State. They include Niger Delta University Yenagoa, Federal University Otuoke, and Isaac Jasper Boro College of Education.

POPULATION OF THE STUDY

S/N	Tertiary Institutions	Population
1.	Niger Delta University	187
2.	Federal University, Otuoke	134
3.	Isaac Jasper Boro College of Education	78
	Total	399

Source: HOD’s Office of the Tertiary Institutions (2025).

The sample size is comprised of 399 students of business education from three tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State. The census sampling technique was used to select the respondents because the sample size was considered small and manageable by the researcher.

The instrument for data collection was a self-structured 49-item questionnaire titled; Entrepreneurship Education and Graduate Employment Generation Questionnaire (EEGEGQ), which was used as a yardstick for measuring the relationship between entrepreneurship education and graduate employment generation in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State.. The questionnaire was divided into two sections A & B. Section “A” covered respondent’s demographic information while section “B” covered the instructions guiding the filing of the instrument and the items of the instrument. Section B was structured under two parts: Part I and II. Part I comprised of the variables of the independent variables, which was structured under seven clusters: cluster one covered items on opportunity recognition competency, cluster two covered items on innovative solutions competency, cluster three covered items on risk management competency, cluster four covered items on financial literacy competency, cluster five covered items on business planning competency, and cluster six covered items on networking competency. Conversely, Part II comprised of the variables of the dependent variable – employment generation.

The items of the questionnaire were rated on a four (4) point Likert scale, of: Strongly Agree (SA) = 4 points; Agree (A) = 3 points, Disagree (D) = 2 points; and Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1 point, with a mean criterion of 2.5 (Details in Appendix B).

The Pearson’s Product Moment Correlation was used to answer the research questions and Linear Regression Analysis was used to test the null hypotheses at the 0.05 significance level. The data analyses were carried out using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 24.

DATA PRESENTATION, RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Analyses of Data

Research Question One: What is the relationship between opportunity recognition competency and graduate employment generation in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State?

Table 1: PPMC analysis on the relationship between opportunity recognition competency and graduate employment generation in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State

			Opportunity Recognition Competency	Graduate Employment Generation
Opportunity Recognition Competency	Recognition	Pearson Correlation	1	0.63**
		Sig. (2-tailed)		0.00
		N	300	300
Graduate Employment Generation	Employment	Pearson Correlation	0.63**	1
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.00	
		N	300	300

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 1 shows the relationship between opportunity recognition competency and graduate employment generation in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State. The result revealed that opportunity recognition competency has a strong relationship with graduate employment generation in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State ($r = 0.63$), with r within the range of $r \geq \pm 0.60$ to ± 0.79 . The implication of the result is that the chances of business education students' with opportunity recognition competency to generate employment after graduation are strong.

Research Question Two: What is the relationship between innovative solutions competency and graduate employment generation in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State?

Table 2: PPMC analysis on the relationship between innovative solutions competency and graduate employment generation in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State

			Innovative Solutions Competency	Graduate Employment Generation
Innovative Solutions Competency	Solutions	Pearson Correlation	1	0.79**
		Sig. (2-tailed)		0.00
		N	300	300
Graduate Employment Generation	Employment	Pearson Correlation	0.79**	1
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.00	
		N	300	300

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 2 shows the relationship between innovative solutions competency and graduate employment generation in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State. The result revealed that innovative solutions competency has a strong relationship with graduate employment generation in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State ($r = 0.79$), with r within the range of $r \geq \pm 0.60$ to ± 0.79 . The

implication of the result is that the chances of business education students' with innovative solutions competency to generate employment after graduation are strong.

Research Question Three: What is the relationship between risk management competency and graduate employment generation in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State?

Table 3: PPMC analysis on the relationship between risk management competency and graduate employment generation in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State

			Risk Management Competency	Graduate Employment Generation
Risk Management Competency	Management	Pearson Correlation	1	0.85**
		Sig. (2-tailed)		0.00
		N	300	300
Graduate Employment Generation	Employment	Pearson Correlation	0.85**	1
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.00	
		N	300	300

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 3 shows the relationship between risk management competency and graduate employment generation in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State. The result revealed that risk management competency has a very strong relationship with graduate employment generation in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State ($r = 0.85$), with r within the range of $r \geq \pm 0.80$ to ± 1.00 . The implication of the result is that the chances of business education students' with risk management competency to generate employment after graduation are very strong.

Research Question Four: What is the relationship between financial literacy competency and graduate employment generation in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State?

Table 4: PPMC analysis on the relationship between financial literacy competency and graduate employment generation in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State

			Financial Literacy Competency	Graduate Employment Generation
Financial Literacy Competency	Literacy	Pearson Correlation	1	0.59**
		Sig. (2-tailed)		0.00
		N	300	300
Graduate Employment Generation	Employment	Pearson Correlation	0.59**	1
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.00	
		N	300	300

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 4 shows the relationship between financial literacy competency and graduate employment generation in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State. The result revealed that financial literacy competency has a moderate relationship with graduate employment generation in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State ($r = 0.59$), with r within the range of $r \geq \pm 0.40$ to ± 0.59 . The implication of the result is that the chances of business education students' with financial literacy competency to generate employment after graduation are moderate.

Research Question Five: What is the relationship between business planning competency and graduate employment generation in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State?

Table 5: PPMC analysis on the relationship between business planning competency and graduate employment generation in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State

Correlations

			Business Planning Competency	Graduate Employment Generation
Business Planning Competency	Pearson Correlation		1	0.93**
	Sig. (2-tailed)			0.00
	N		300	300
Graduate Employment Generation	Pearson Correlation		0.93**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.00	
	N		300	300

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 5 shows the relationship between business planning competency and graduate employment generation in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State. The result revealed that business planning competency has a very strong relationship with graduate employment generation in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State ($r = 0.93$), with r within the range of $r \geq \pm 0.80$ to ± 1.00 . The implication of the result is that the chances of business education students' with business planning competency to generate employment after graduation are very strong.

Research Question Six: What is the relationship between networking competency and graduate employment generation in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State?

Table 6: PPMC analysis on the relationship between networking competency and graduate employment generation in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State

Correlations

			Networking Competency	Graduate Employment Generation
Networking Competency	Pearson Correlation		1	0.54**
	Sig. (2-tailed)			0.00
	N		300	300
Graduate Employment Generation	Pearson Correlation		0.54**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.00	
	N		300	300

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 6 shows the relationship between networking competency and graduate employment generation in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State. The result revealed that networking competency has a moderate relationship with graduate employment generation in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State ($r = 0.54$), with r within the range of $r \geq \pm 0.40$ to ± 0.59 . The implication of the result is that the chances of business education students' with networking competency to generate employment after graduation are moderate.

Hypothesis One: There is no significant relationship between opportunity recognition competency and graduate employment generation in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State.

Table 7: Regression analysis on the relationship between opportunity recognition competency and graduate employment generation in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State

Model Summary		Parameters	Coefficients	
		R-value (R)	0.63 ^a	
		R Square (R ²)	0.39	
		Adjusted R Square	0.39	
		Std. Error	1.82	
ANOVA Estimate		Df	F-ratio	P-value
Regression		1	190.66	0.00 ^b
Residual		298		
Coefficient Estimates		Variables	t-values	P-values
Constant		Intercept	9.26	0.00
Opportunity Recognition Competency		(X ₁)	13.81	0.00

a. Dependent Variable: Graduate Employment Generation

b. Predictors: (Constant), Opportunity Recognition Competency

Table 7 shows that the linear regression coefficient (R) was 0.63, indicating a strong and a significant relationship between opportunity recognition competency and graduate employment generation in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State. R² of 0.39 indicated a 39% contribution to graduate employment generation by opportunity recognition competency among business education students in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State. The significance of the linear regression coefficients (R) values was accounted for by opportunity recognition competency (t = 13.81, p = 0.00 < 0.5). The implication of this result is that there is significant relationship between opportunity recognition competency and graduate employment generation in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State (F = 190.66, df = 298, p < 0.05). Consequently, null hypothesis one was rejected at the 0.05 level of significance.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant relationship between innovative solutions competency and graduate employment generation in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State.

Table 8: Regression analysis on the relationship between innovative solutions competency and graduate employment generation in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State

Model Summary		Parameters	Coefficients	
		R-value (R)	0.79 ^a	
		R Square (R ²)	0.62	
		Adjusted R Square	0.62	
		Std. Error	1.44	
ANOVA Estimate		Df	F-ratio	P-value
Regression		1	484.80	0.00 ^b
Residual		298		
Coefficient Estimates		Variables	t-values	P-values
Constant		Intercept	10.30	0.00
Innovative Solution Competency		(X ₁)	22.02	0.00

a. Dependent Variable: Graduate Employment Generation

b. Predictors: (Constant), Innovative Solutions Competency

Table 8 shows that the linear regression coefficient (R) was 0.79, indicating a strong and a significant relationship between innovative solutions competency and graduate employment generation in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State. R^2 of 0.62 indicated a 62% contribution to graduate employment generation by innovative solutions competency among business education students in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State. The significance of the linear regression coefficients (R) values was accounted for by innovative solutions competency ($t = 22.02$, $p = 0.00 < 0.5$). The implication of this result is that there is significant relationship between innovative solutions competency and graduate employment generation in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State ($F = 484.80$, $df = 298$, $p < 0.05$). Consequently, null hypothesis two was rejected at the 0.05 level of significance.

Hypothesis Three: There is no significant relationship between risk management competency and graduate employment generation in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State.

Table 9: Regression analysis on the relationship between risk management competency and graduate employment generation in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State

Model Summary		Parameters	Coefficients	
		R-value (R)	0.85 ^a	
		R Square (R^2)	0.71	
		Adjusted R Square	0.71	
		Std. Error	1.24	
ANOVA Estimate		Df	F-ratio	P-value
Regression		1	745.33	0.00 ^b
Residual		298		
Coefficient Estimates		Variables	t-values	P-values
Constant		Intercept	4.94	0.00
Risk Management Competency		(X_1)	27.30	0.00

a. Dependent Variable: Graduate Employment Generation

b. Predictors: (Constant), Risk Management Competency

Table 9 shows that the linear regression coefficient (R) was 0.85, indicating a very strong and a significant relationship between risk management competency and graduate employment generation in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State. R^2 of 0.71 indicated a 71% contribution to graduate employment generation by risk management competency among business education students in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State. The significance of the linear regression coefficients (R) values was accounted for by risk management competency ($t = 27.30$, $p = 0.00 < 0.5$). The implication of this result is that there is significant relationship between risk management competency and graduate employment generation in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State ($F = 745.33$, $df = 298$, $p < 0.05$). Consequently, null hypothesis three was rejected at the 0.05 level of significance.

Hypothesis Four: There is no significant relationship between financial literacy competency and graduate employment generation in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State.

Table 10: Regression analysis on the relationship between financial literacy competency and graduate employment generation in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State

Model Summary		Parameters	Coefficients	
		R-value (R)	0.59 ^a	
		R Square (R ²)	0.35	
		Adjusted R Square	0.35	
		Std. Error	1.87	
ANOVA Estimate		Df	F-ratio	P-value
Regression		1	160.84	0.00 ^b
Residual		298		
Coefficient Estimates		Variables	t-values	P-values
Constant		Intercept	11.83	0.00
Financial Literacy Competency		(X ₁)	12.68	0.00

a. Dependent Variable: Graduate Employment Generation

b. Predictors: (Constant), Financial Literacy Competency

Table 10 shows that the linear regression coefficient (R) was 0.59, indicating a moderate and a significant relationship between financial literacy competency and graduate employment generation in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State. R² of 0.35 indicated a 35% contribution to graduate employment generation by financial literacy competency among business education students in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State. The significance of the linear regression coefficients (R) values was accounted for by financial literacy competency (t = 12.68, p = 0.00 < 0.5). The implication of this result is that there is significant relationship between financial literacy competency and graduate employment generation in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State (F = 160.84, df = 298, p < 0.05). Consequently, null hypothesis four was rejected at the 0.05 level of significance.

Hypothesis Five: There is no significant relationship between business planning competency and graduate employment generation in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State.

Table 11: Regression analysis on the relationship between business planning competency and graduate employment generation in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State

Model Summary		Parameters	Coefficients	
		R-value (R)	0.93 ^a	
		R Square (R ²)	0.87	
		Adjusted R Square	0.87	
		Std. Error	0.84	
ANOVA Estimate		Df	F-ratio	P-value
Regression		1	2004.48	0.00 ^b
Residual		298		
Coefficient Estimates		Variables	t-values	P-values
Constant		Intercept	14.09	0.00
Business Planning Competency		(X ₁)	44.77	0.00

a. Dependent Variable: Graduate Employment Generation

b. Predictors: (Constant), Business Planning Competency

Table 11 shows that the linear regression coefficient (R) was 0.93, indicating a very strong and a significant relationship between business planning competency and graduate employment generation in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State. R^2 of 0.87 indicated a 87% contribution to graduate employment generation by business planning competency among business education students in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State. The significance of the linear regression coefficients (R) values was accounted for by business planning competency ($t = 44.77, p = 0.00 < 0.5$). The implication of this result is that there is significant relationship between business planning competency and graduate employment generation in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State ($F = 2004.48, df = 298, p < 0.05$). Consequently, null hypothesis five was rejected at the 0.05 level of significance.

Hypothesis Six: There is no significant relationship between networking competency and graduate employment generation in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State.

Table 12: Regression analysis on the relationship between networking competency and graduate employment generation in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State

Model Summary	Parameters	Coefficients	
	R-value (R)	0.54 ^a	
	R Square (R^2)	0.29	
	Adjusted R Square	0.29	
	Std. Error	1.96	
ANOVA Estimate	Df	F-ratio	P-value
Regression	1	122.94	0.00 ^b
Residual	298		
Coefficient Estimates	Variables	t-values	P-values
Constant	Intercept	14.66	0.00
Networking Competency	(X_1)	11.09	0.00

a. Dependent Variable: Graduate Employment Generation

b. Predictors: (Constant), Networking Competency

Table 12 shows that the linear regression coefficient (R) was 0.54, indicating a moderate and a significant relationship between networking competency and graduate employment generation in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State. R^2 of 0.29 indicated a 29% contribution to graduate employment generation by networking competency among business education students in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State. The significance of the linear regression coefficients (R) values was accounted for by networking competency ($t = 11.09, p = 0.00 < 0.5$). The implication of this result is that there is significant relationship between networking competency and graduate employment generation in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State ($F = 122.94, df = 298, p < 0.05$). Consequently, null hypothesis six was rejected at the 0.05 level of significance.

Summary of Findings

The major findings of the study are presented thus:

1. There is a strong and a significant relationship between opportunity recognition competency and graduate employment generation in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State.
2. There is a strong and a significant relationship between innovative solutions competency and graduate employment generation in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State.
3. There is a very strong and a significant relationship between risk management competency and graduate employment generation in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State.
4. There is a moderate and a significant relationship between financial literacy competency and graduate employment generation in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State.
5. There is a very strong and a significant relationship between business planning competency and graduate employment generation in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State.

6. There is a moderate and a significant relationship between networking competency and graduate employment generation in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State.

Discussion of Findings

The study investigated the relationship between entrepreneurship education and graduate employment generation in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State, as such; the discussion of the outcomes of this study is presented in paragraphs, addressing each of the research questions and hypotheses combined.

The result in Table 1 revealed that opportunity recognition competency has a strong relationship with graduate employment generation in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State. Furthermore, the result of hypothesis one indicated that there is significant relationship between opportunity recognition competency and graduate employment generation in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State. The findings are consistent with the findings of Obereh and Aruoren (2021), which revealed that opportunity recognition has a positive significant influence on self employment of universities graduate. It is also supported by the findings of Wagbara and Idumange (2023), which revealed that there is no significant difference in the mean response of male and female students on the extent to which opportunity recognition competency is required for job creation. The study concluded that business education students in tertiary institutions should be trained to understand opportunities and make plans so that they can create jobs.

The result in Table 2 revealed that innovative solutions competency has a strong relationship with graduate employment generation in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State. Furthermore, the result of hypothesis two indicated that there is significant relationship between innovative solutions competency and graduate employment generation in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State. The above findings are corroborated by the findings of Okpalaojiego (2021) *which revealed that* incorporating new technology into their businesses to promote efficiency, providing employment opportunities, addressing environmental and social-economic challenges, and availing themselves of innovative competitions, among other things.

The result in Table 3 revealed that risk management competency has a very strong relationship with graduate employment generation in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State. Furthermore, the result of hypothesis three indicated that there is significant relationship between risk management competency and graduate employment generation in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State. This finding is corroborated by the study by Akpotohwo et al. (2016) which reveals that managerial skills such as the ability to adopt basic steps in setting up a business, plan and coordinate business resources, take decisions as due, set up appropriate business plans, determine risks and risk management, and the ability to appraise employees' performance are required by business education students for self-sustainability. The findings by Labo et al. (2024) also support the findings of this study, it revealed that risk-taking competencies positively influence SME performance. Specifically, moderate risk-taking fosters innovation and growth opportunities, while effective networking enhances access to resources and support.

Table 4 revealed that financial literacy competency has a moderate relationship with graduate employment generation in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State. Furthermore, the result of hypothesis 4 indicated that there is significant relationship between financial literacy competency and graduate employment generation in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State. The study by Kasimu and Jamilu (2024), which revealed that a moderate level of financial literacy among students, with significant positive correlations between financial literacy and entrepreneurial competencies. Specifically, financial literacy was found to improve students' capacity to identify business opportunities and enhance their financial management skills. Adewumi et al. (2023) also found that pattern and level of financial literacy include understanding of financial decision, management of money and implementation of financial decision. SMEs' financial literacy, required for effective entrepreneurial decision, includes knowledge on profitability, cash management skills and knowledge on investment with accompanied challenges, such as bad financial behaviour, financial

irresponsibility and lack of basic education. The study makes a genuine case for the prioritization of the importance of financial literacy skills and knowledge for clear cut entrepreneurial decision-making and growth

The result in Table 5 revealed that business planning competency has a very strong relationship with graduate employment generation in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State. Furthermore, the result of hypothesis five indicated that there is significant relationship between business planning competency and graduate employment generation in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State. These results are consistent with the findings of Ajonbadi et al. (2016) which revealed that there is a need for effective planning in Nigerian SMEs for better performance and growth.

The result in Table 6 revealed that networking competency has a moderate relationship with graduate employment generation in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State. Furthermore, the result of hypothesis six indicated that there is significant relationship between networking competency and graduate employment generation in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State. These results are consistent with the findings of Labo et al. (2024), which revealed that networking competencies positively influence SME performance. Also Usman and Umogbai (2023) revealed that that relationship competence, and networking competence, had significant and positive effect on competitiveness. The study concludes that entrepreneurial competence (relationship competence and networking competence) can be considered a potent factor in manufacturing small and medium enterprises competitiveness (in terms of business understanding, organizational responsiveness and market share) as they have potentials for enhancing the firms competitiveness through creating a conducive atmosphere for identifying opportunities across the marketplace and develop viable opportunities. Dauda et al. (2023) revealed that entrepreneurial networking skills had a significant and positive influence on the growth of small and medium plastic manufacturing enterprises in Nigeria at $p < 0.05$.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the relationship between entrepreneurship education and graduate employment generation in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State. The study revealed, among other things, that there is a positive, very strong, and significant relationship between the variables of the independent variable—entrepreneurship education (opportunity recognition competency, innovative solutions competency, risk management competency, financial literacy competency, business planning competency, and networking competency)—and the dependent variable—graduate employment generation—among business education undergraduates in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State.

Based on the findings, the study concluded that entrepreneurship education plays a crucial role in preparing business education undergraduates for creating job opportunities for themselves and others in Bayelsa State. The results suggest that integrating entrepreneurship education into the curriculum of tertiary institutions can greatly enhance graduate employment rates and contribute to economic development in the state. As a matter of urgency, policymakers and educational institutions in Bayelsa State should prioritize the inclusion of entrepreneurship education in the business curriculum to ensure that graduates are equipped with the necessary skills to become successful entrepreneurs and job creators.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are proffered:

1. The management of tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State should prioritize and enhance opportunity recognition competency development among business education undergraduates through practical and experiential learning opportunities.
2. Business educators should incorporate practical, hands-on experiences into the curriculum to further strengthen students' ability to apply innovative solutions in real-world situations so that they are better prepared for the demands of the job market upon graduation.

3. Business education programs in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State should place a greater emphasis on developing risk management competency among students to better prepare them for the job market.
4. The management of tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State should collaborate with industry partners to help students develop financial literacy competency to enhance their chances of creating employment opportunities after graduation.
5. The management of tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State should collaborate with industry partners should be established to provide real-world experiences that enhance students' understanding and application of business planning concepts to better prepare them for the workforce.
6. Business education undergraduates in Bayelsa State should focus on improving their networking competency through participating in networking events, workshops, and building professional relationships to increase their chances of securing employment after graduation.

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