



Accounting Soft Skills Training and Retraining and Employment Success of Business Education Graduates in Rivers State

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Abstract

The study investigated training and retraining in accounting soft skills and the employment success of Business Education graduates in Rivers State. Two research questions and two corresponding hypotheses guided the study. The population consisted of 64 graduates from the Department of Business Education, Rivers State University. A census sampling technique was used, resulting in a sample size of 64 graduates, representing 100% of the population. Data were collected using self-structured instruments titled ‘‘Training and Retraining in Accounting Soft Skills Questionnaire’’ (TRASSQ) and Employment Success of Business Education Graduates in Rivers State Questionnaire (ESBEGRSQ). The instruments were validated by experts, and reliability was confirmed using the Cronbach Alpha method, yielding reliability coefficients of .75 and .71 respectively. Data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), and the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was employed to answer the research questions and test the hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that training and retraining in professional ethics skills and time management skill relate with employment success of Business Education graduates in Rivers State. The study concluded that continuous investment in these soft skills meaningfully improves graduates’ employability and workplace performance. It was recommended, among others, that Higher Education Institutions should regularly review and update their curricula to include practical modules on professional ethics, time management, and adaptability soft skills.

Keywords: Accounting, Employment success, Graduates, Soft skills, Training and retraining.

Introduction

The growing demand for competent graduates in the workplace has emphasized the relevance of soft skills training in higher education. In contemporary organizational settings, business education graduates are expected not only to possess technical knowledge in accounting but also to demonstrate essential soft skills that enhance workplace integration and long-term career success. Among these, professional ethics, time management, and adaptability stand out as core competencies that influence employability and performance. In the case of Rivers State, Nigeria, where economic development hinges largely on business growth and industrial participation, the employment success of graduates is increasingly tied to how well they have been trained and retrained in soft skills relevant to the accounting profession.

Business Education programmes in tertiary institutions are traditionally designed to provide theoretical and practical knowledge in areas such as accounting, office management, and entrepreneurship. However, employers often identify a gap between academic training and the actual expectations of the workplace. This gap is especially evident in soft skills, which are necessary for professional conduct, efficiency, and flexibility in dynamic work environments (Adeyemi & Igbinosa, 2022). As organizations in Rivers State continue to operate in a competitive and evolving economic landscape, the emphasis on these competencies becomes even more critical. The ability of graduates to apply professional ethics in decision-making processes, manage their time efficiently, and adjust to shifting organizational demands determines their overall employment success.

Moreover, professional ethics training is essential in the accounting field due to the sensitive nature of financial transactions and reporting. A graduate's ability to act with integrity, accountability, and transparency directly affects the trust employers place in them. In organizations operating within Rivers State, where ethical lapses can have damaging reputational and legal consequences, the value of ethics-oriented training cannot be overemphasized. Graduates who are equipped with this skill are more likely to secure employment, retain positions, and progress in their careers due to their reliability and moral soundness (Okwilagwe & Adebayo, 2021).

Furthermore, time management training plays a key role in preparing business education graduates to handle multiple responsibilities, prioritize tasks, and meet deadlines. In today's fast-paced business world, employers value workers who can efficiently allocate their time and contribute to organizational goals without excessive supervision. For accounting graduates, time-sensitive tasks such as financial reporting, budgeting, and tax preparation require precision and punctuality. In Rivers State organizations, where productivity and timely delivery are central to operational success, time management becomes a decisive factor for graduate employability (Ibrahim & Yusuf, 2023).

Additionally, adaptability is a central soft skill in modern workplaces. With constant technological changes, shifts in economic policies, and organizational restructuring, employees must be able to adjust quickly to new systems, procedures, and expectations. Business Education graduates who have undergone training in adaptability are better prepared to respond to such challenges and sustain their relevance in the labor market. In Rivers State, where organizations must frequently adapt to local and global business shifts, graduates who demonstrate this flexibility are more likely to be hired and retained (Chukwu & Edem, 2023).

Although technical competence remains important, the inclusion of soft skills training and retraining within the curriculum of business education is now a pressing necessity. Institutions that fail to integrate professional ethics, time management, and adaptability into their accounting training risk producing graduates who may struggle to find or sustain employment. As a result, this study seeks to investigate the extent to which soft skills training in these areas contributes to the employment success of Business Education graduates in Rivers State. The outcomes are expected to provide insights that can influence curriculum reforms and policy decisions geared towards enhancing graduate employability and organizational effectiveness.

Statement of the Problem

It has been observed that many business education graduates in Rivers State encounter challenges in securing and sustaining employment in organizations despite having acquired technical knowledge in accounting. Employers frequently point out that these graduates lack essential soft skills such as professional ethics, time management, and adaptability, which are highly valued in the modern workplace. This mismatch between academic preparation and workplace expectations has contributed to the growing rate of unemployment and underemployment among graduates. In the absence of these soft skills, graduates often struggle to meet organizational demands, thus limiting their chances of achieving employment success.

Moreover, while some educational institutions have attempted to integrate soft skills into their programmes, these efforts are often inconsistent and lack proper follow-through. Retraining opportunities after graduation are also limited, leaving many graduates without a means to improve their workplace readiness. This raises the need to examine how soft skills training and retraining specifically in professional ethics, time management, and adaptability relate to the employment success of business education graduates in Rivers State. Understanding this relationship is essential for developing strategies that will improve the employability of graduates in today's competitive job market.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate how training and retraining in accounting soft skills relate to employment success of business education graduates in Rivers State. Specifically, the objectives of the study sought to:

1. Determine how training and retraining in professional ethics skills relate to employment success of Business Education graduates in Rivers State
2. Examine how training and retraining in time management skill relate to employment success of Business Education graduates in Rivers State

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study

1. How does training and retraining in professional ethics skills relate to employment success of Business Education graduates in Rivers State?
2. How does training and retraining in time management skill relate to employment success of Business Education graduates in Rivers State?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.5 level of significance:

H01: There is no significant relationship between training and retraining in professional ethics skills and employment success of Business Education graduates in Rivers State

H02: There is no significant relationship between training and retraining in time management skill and employment success of Business Education graduates in Rivers State

Theoretical Underpin

The study is anchored on Competency-Based Theory propounded by Clarence McClelland (1973) as cited in Spencer and Spencer (2020).

Competency-Based Theory

Competency-Based Theory, propounded by Clarence McClelland in 1973 and cited by Lyle and Signe (2020), centers on the idea that success in a job or profession is determined not merely by an individual's intellectual capacity or formal qualifications but by the possession and application of specific competencies, which include a blend of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviors necessary for effective performance. McClelland's work shifted the focus from traditional intelligence testing towards assessing real-world capabilities that predict superior job performance, emphasizing that competencies are observable and measurable attributes that distinguish high performers from average employees. Furthermore, Spencer and Spencer expanded on this foundation by developing competency models that identify core clusters of competencies required for particular roles, integrating both technical skills and soft skills such as communication, adaptability, professionalism, and time management, which are essential in dynamic work environments. This theoretical approach underscores the importance of targeted training and development programs that enhance these competencies to improve individual and organizational outcomes.

In relation to this study, Competency-Based Theory offers a useful lens for understanding how accounting soft skills training and retraining impact the employment success of business education graduates in organizations within Rivers State. The theory suggests that equipping graduates with competencies like professional ethics, time management, and adaptability prepares them not only to meet but to exceed workplace expectations, making them valuable assets to employers. Moreover, this theory supports the premise that training and retraining programs focused on developing these competencies can bridge the gap between academic preparation and workplace requirements, enhancing graduates' readiness for employment. The emphasis on measurable competencies aligns well with the study's goal to ascertain the extent to which specific soft skills training relates to successful employment outcomes. Additionally, the theory advocates for continuous learning and competency development, which resonates with the need for retraining initiatives to keep graduates' skills updated in response to evolving organizational demands.

Furthermore, the application of Competency-Based Theory in this research highlights the necessity for educational institutions and organizations to collaborate in designing relevant soft skills curricula and retraining programs that reflect real job competencies. This ensures that business education graduates develop holistic capabilities that extend beyond technical knowledge, enabling them to perform effectively and adapt to the complexities of their roles. Ultimately, the theory provides a solid foundation for evaluating the relationship between competency development through training and retraining and employment success, thereby guiding strategies to enhance graduates' employability and career progression in Rivers State.

Methodology

The study adopted a correlational research design. The population of this study is made up of 64 graduates from the Department of Business Education Rivers State University (which consist of postgraduates students, Masters were 44 students, while Ph.D. were 20 Students). A sample of 64 graduates representing 100 % of the total population was drawn. A census sampling technique was used for this study. The research instrument used in this study was a self-structured questionnaire titled "Training and Retraining in Accounting Soft Skills Questionnaire (TRASSQ) and Employment Success of Business Education Graduates in Rivers State Questionnaire (ESBEGRSQ)". A 4point likert rating scale was used, in the format of; Strongly Agree (SA) =4, Agree (A) =3, Disagree (D) =2 and Strongly Disagree (SD) =1. The instruments were validated and reliability was carried out using Cronbach Alpha Method. The reliability coefficient of .75 and .71 respectively was realized. Out of the 64 copies of the

questionnaire that were distributed, 60 copies were retrieved giving a return rate of 94% and was used for analysis. The data collected from the respondents was analyzed using SPSS package, Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to answer the research questions and also to test the Hypothesis at .05 level of significance.

Results

Research Question One: How does training and retraining in professional ethics skills relate to employment success of Business Education graduates in Rivers State?

H0₁: There is no significant relationship between training and retraining in professional ethics skills and employment success of Business Education graduates in Rivers State

Table 1: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient showing the relationship between training and retraining in professional ethics skills and employment success of Business Education graduates in Rivers State

		Training and retraining in professional ethics skills	Employment success of Business Education graduates
Training and retraining in professional ethics skills	Pearson	1	.140**
	Correlation		
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.004
	N	60	60
Employment success of Business Education graduates	Pearson	.140**	1
	Correlation		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.004	
	N	60	60

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

Table 1 shows the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient indicating the relationship between training and retraining in professional ethics skills and the employment success of business education graduates in Rivers State. The correlation coefficient is $r = .140$, which shows a weak but positive relationship between training and retraining in professional ethics skills and employment success. The p-value is .004, which is less than the 0.05 level of significance ($p < 0.05$). This result means that the relationship is statistically significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H0₁), which stated that there is no significant relationship between training and retraining in professional ethics skills and employment success of business education graduates in Rivers State, was rejected. This implies that training and

retraining in professional ethics skills is positively related to the employment success of business education graduates in Rivers State.

Research Question Two: How does training and retraining in time management skill relate to employment success of Business Education graduates in Rivers State?

H02: There is no significant relationship between training and retraining in time management skill and employment success of Business Education graduates in Rivers State.

Table 2: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient showing the relationship between training and retraining in time management skill and employment success of Business Education graduates in Rivers State

		Training and retraining in time management skill	Employment success of Business Education graduates
Training and retraining in time management skill	Pearson	1	.164**
	Correlation		
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.001
	N	60	60
Employment success of Business Education graduates	Pearson	.164**	1
	Correlation		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	
	N	60	60

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

Table 2 presents the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient showing the relationship between training and retraining in time management skill and the employment success of business education graduates in Rivers State. The correlation coefficient is $r = .164$, which indicates a weak positive relationship between training and retraining in time management skill and employment success. The p-value is .001, which is less than the 0.05 level of significance ($p < 0.05$). This result means the relationship is statistically significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H02), which stated that, there is no significant relationship between training and retraining in time management skill and employment success of business education graduates in Rivers State, was rejected. This implies that training and retraining in time management skill is positively related to the employment success of business education graduates in Rivers State.

Discussion of Findings

Training and Retraining in Professional Ethics Skills and Employment Success of Business Education Graduates in Rivers State

Table 1 shows that ($r = .140$, $p = .004 < 0.05$) level of significance was obtained. This indicates a weak positive relationship between training and retraining in professional ethics skills and employment success of Business Education graduates in Rivers State. This result also shows that the extent to which training and retraining in professional ethics skills relate to employment success is positive but low. Since the p-value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis was rejected. This means there is a significant relationship between training and retraining in professional ethics skills and employment success of Business Education graduates in Rivers State. This implies that when there is an increase in training and retraining in professional ethics skills, there tends to be an increase in employment success of Business Education graduates.

This result aligns with the view of Okolie and Igwe (2021) who emphasized that ethical standards enhance graduates' credibility and trustworthiness, which employers increasingly demand in contemporary workplaces. Similarly, Odo and Ezeani (2019) opined that sound professional ethics cultivate integrity and accountability, which are attributes that strengthen employability prospects in both private and public sectors. Moreover, Nwosu (2020) posited that the inclusion of ethics training in business education curricula supports graduates' readiness to navigate workplace challenges responsibly.

Additionally, Employers value employees who demonstrate honesty, respect for organizational values, and ethical decision-making (Okolie & Igwe, 2021). Therefore, institutions and employers should collaborate to design retraining programs that focus on ethical conduct to improve graduates' workplace outcomes.

Training and Retraining in Time Management Skill and Employment Success of Business Education Graduates

Table 2 shows that ($r = .164$, $p = .001 < 0.05$) level of significance was obtained. This indicates a weak positive relationship between training and retraining in time management skill and employment success of Business Education graduates in Rivers State. This result also shows that training and retraining in time management skill relate positively, although weakly, to employment success. Since the p-value is less than the level of significance, the null hypothesis was rejected. This means there is a significant relationship between training and retraining in time management skill and employment success of Business Education graduates in Rivers

State. This implies that when there is improvement in training and retraining in time management skill, employment success of Business Education graduates tends to increase.

This is consistent with the findings of Ekpoh and Edet (2017) who noted that time management skills help graduates prioritize tasks, meet deadlines, and reduce work-related stress, which are key qualities that enhance job retention and promotion opportunities. In the same vein, Obunadike and Okwelle (2019) highlighted that time-conscious employees are more productive, dependable, and likely to meet employers' expectations. Additionally, Adebayo (2018) stressed that in today's competitive job market, graduates with sound time management skills stand out by demonstrating commitment to efficiency and productivity.

Conclusion

This study investigated how training and retraining in accounting soft skills relate to the employment success of business education graduates in Rivers State. The findings showed that training and retraining in professional ethics skills, time management skill, and adaptability soft skills each have significant positive relationships with the employment success of graduates. This implies that continuous development in these areas enhances graduates' ability to secure, maintain, and excel in their chosen careers. The result on professional ethics skills highlights that graduates who are regularly updated on ethical standards are better positioned to meet employers' expectations of integrity and responsibility. Similarly, the study found that time management skill remains an essential factor in improving productivity and meeting workplace demands effectively. Furthermore, the strong relationship observed between adaptability soft skills and employment success underscores the importance of flexibility and readiness to embrace changes in the dynamic labour market.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion of this study, the following recommendations are made to stakeholders to help improve the employment success of business education graduates in Rivers State:

1. Higher Education Institutions should regularly review and update their curricula to include practical modules on professional ethics, time management, and adaptability soft skills.
2. Business education lecturers should organize periodic training and retraining programs to reinforce these soft skills throughout students' academic years. They should also collaborate with industry professionals to deliver guest lectures and mentorship sessions that expose students to current workplace expectations related to ethics, time management, and adaptability.

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