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DEVELOPMENT OF LEADERSHIP SKILL THROUGH INTERNSHIP AS PERCEIVED BY BUSINESS EDUCATION STUDENTS IN UNIVERSITIES IN ANAMBRA STATE

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Abstract
This study focused on the development of leadership skills through internship as perceived by business education students in universities in Anambra State. One research question guided the study while one null hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance. The study adopted descriptive survey research design. The population of the study consisted of 619 business education students in the three universities offering the programme. The entire population was used for the study. A structured questionnaire was the instrument used for data collection. The reliability of the instrument was established using Cronbach's alpha and it yielded an overall coefficient of 0.81. Mean and standard deviation were used to analyse data to answer the research question and determine the cohesiveness or otherwise of respondents' mean rating. t-test was used to test the null hypothesis. The findings of the study revealed that the students perceive internship as a model for the development of leadership skills. However, the result shows that male and female business education students differ significantly in their mean ratings regarding how they perceive the development of leadership skills in internship. Based on the finding, it was concluded that business education students perceive internship as a model that will increase leadership skill development. Consequently, it was recommended among others that there is need for a structured leadership skill acquisition programme for business education students.
Keywords. Business education, leadership skills, internship.

Introduction

Education is regarded as an instrument for imparting knowledge and abilities from one person to another with the aim of producing a generation who will be useful to themselves and the society. Education provides knowledge and skills to the students as well as shaping their behaviour. Educationalists and policy makers in the universities are recently paying a closer attention to that type of education systems that focus on making graduates to be useful upon graduation. That is why education system has shifted from theoretical aspect to practical aspect in the ever-dynamic world. For this reason, agricultural education, business education, technical education, entrepreneurship education and so on was introduced in universities curriculum to help the students to be self reliant and self-employed upon graduation without waiting for the white-collar jobs which may not be available at the point of graduation. However, this study is focused on business education.

Business education is the type of education that impact both innovative and creative skills in their learners. Business education is a design field of study for the development of skills, attitudes, aptitude as well as creation of awareness, competencies and efficiency in the

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office work and business world. Shaibu et, al. (2020) business education is a veritable tool that is used to alleviate social vices in every sphere of life. Shaibu, et al. further stressed that business education is a diverse discipline that is included in all levels of educational delivery system such as primary, secondary, and post secondary. Obi (2021) business education as a discipline is expected to expose its recipients to diversity curricula; hence, it is that type of education that inculcates in its recipients' attitudes, knowledge, skills, values that is required in the business world. It should be a means of producing healthy, literate, self-driven citizens for employability and self- reliant globally for sustainable development in the changing world. Amesiet al. (2022) business education has been recognized as a course of study that equips its students with different skills that are necessary for job placement in business related careers and for self employment. Dambo and Wokocha (2021) business education is a programme of study put together for the empowerment of learners with requisite skills needed to function in the world of work. Amesi and Allison (2022) conducted a study on assessment of digital skills acquired by university business education students for employability in Rivers State and the findings revealed that university business education students in Rivers State University and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education acquired audio-visual content creation skills and software skills for employability in Rivers State. Iwuoha, et al. (2021) carried out a study on entrepreneurial skill acquisition required by business education graduates for employment generation in Imo State and the findings of the study revealed that entrepreneurs skill of planning, communication,management, goal setting, problem solving, risk bearing among others are needed foremployment generation by business education graduates. Business education plays an important role in the growth and development of Nigeria economy. It develops and enhances student's attitudes in workplace situations upon graduation. Business education is an academic programme designed to provide learning situations for acquiring skills and these skills are made possible through the knowledge and experience gained from the classroom and internship.

Internship is a process in which business education students are involved in practical work situations, enabling them to establish leadership skill development goals. Internship programmes provide learning opportunities for business education students to experience leadership skill development and activities associated with creative and innovative skills. Bender (2020) internships expose students to discipline-specific knowledge. An internship can help a student develop professionalism, leadership skills, and interpersonal skills. Additional soft skills, such as attitude and work ethic, along with the technical hard skills necessary for a profession, are in demand today (Gale et al., 2017 as cited in Bender, 2020). Thompson, et,al.(2021)Internships are a form of experiential learning whereby students can apply and practice their skills in a professional setting while gaining career and life experience. Haddad-Adaimi,et,al. (2022) internship is integral to many undergraduate degree programs that require practical skill application. Internship programme gives the students an opportunity to experience how the theory works in the real life and many organizations also prefers graduates with training experience.

Business education students' internship programme in universities in Anambra State comes under the student industrial work experience scheme (SIWES). SIWES is a compulsory six months programme for all business education students. Each university in Anambra state has a SIWES unit with a director and other staff charged with the responsibility of coordinating students' industrial training which comes in the second semester of the 300 level. It is expected that the experience will be of immense benefits to business education students but it appears that the students are not benefitting as expected due to some challenges that plagued the system. The challenges include placement of students without giving credence to the relevance of the

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workplace to their course of studies, attitude of the students in the programme, assigning courses to the students during the period of the programme and inadequate supervision among others. The students on their part believe that internship programme is all about getting practical learning experiences fulfill academic requirement and have something to beef up the resume. Isibor andOkara (2020) conducted a study on the assessment of effectiveness of SIWES undertaken by technical college students in Delta and the result revealed that technical and vocational student acquired various skills to little extent during industrial attachment. Auru and Wakili (2020) carried out a study on the effect of students' industrial work experience scheme on students' readiness for world of work and the result indicated that SIWES does have some positive impact on students. According to Ojokuku et al. (2015) SIWES prepares students to contribute to the productivity of their employers and national development immediately after graduation and as well creates enabling environment where they can develop and enhance their personal attributes such as critical thinking, creativity, initiative, resourcefulness, time management, presentation skills, interpersonal skills and leadership skills amongst others.

Leadership skills are the strengths and abilities individuals demonstrate that help them oversee processes, guide initiatives and steer their employees towards the achievement of goals. Leadership skills are the tools, behaviours, and capabilities that a person needs in order to be successful at motivating and directing others. It is the ability to help people grow in their own abilities. Leadership skills are the skills required to engage with, motivate, and persuade people to buy-in to a vision, objective, or goal.Oke (2019) averred that leadership skills are abilities that motivate, instruct and offer guidance, enable students to collaborate, solve problems or succeed at assigned responsibilities. Dahar et al. (2016) opined that leadership skills are essential in taking thoughtful decisions about organization's mission and goals and properly allocate resources to achieve them by the executives. The authors outlined valuable leadership skills to include the ability to delegate, inspire and communicate effectively. Neva et al. (2014) asserted that universities and higher education institutions focused on developing students' leadership skills as a means of preparing them for the job market. Bolanle (2019) carried out a study on principals' leadership skills and school effectiveness: the case of South Western Nigeria and the findings revealed that there was a significant relationship found between principals' leadership skills and school effectiveness. Emeasoba et al. (2020) conducted a study on the organization and leadership skills required of business education students for job performance in universities in south east, Nigeria and the findings of the study showed that there is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female business education lecturers on the identified organisation and leadership skills required of business education students for job performance.Isibor *et al* (2020) carried out a study to explore issues and challenges of leadership skill among early career doctors in Nigeria using a mixed-method approach: charting study. Findings from the study shows that91.1% of the ECDs perceived leadership skills as essential skills needed by a doctor while 44.1% of them were yet to be formally trained on medical leadership. Almalki et al. (2016) conducted a study to analyze existing leadership skills of undergraduate engineering students in central Florida. Findings of the study revealed that undergraduate engineering students lack the visionary leadership skills compared to directing including cultivating leadership styles. Sucharitha et al.(2018) conducted a study on perception of the impacts of a national internship program on leadership skills among medical interns in Chennai and findings from the study show that the respondents admitted they were deficient in the understanding of leadership traits as it was not required of them as medical undergraduates. They perceived that internship period provided them multiple platforms to develop leadership skills such as demonstrating personal qualities, working with others, goal setting and delivering

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services individually thereby overcoming a training gap in the undergraduate programme. Radu, et.al. (2017) opined that men's leadership skills are more powerful and more important than women's skills or vice versa, but it is clear that gender differences do exist and people should capitalize on them.

Business education students in universities in Anambra State, Nigeria to be used in this study consist of males and females. Therefore, gender is taken into consideration in determining the development of leadership skills through internship as perceived by business education students in universities in Anambra State. According to World Health Organisation (WHO, 2017), gender is seen as the result of socially constructed ideas about the behavior, actions and roles a particular sex performs. Gender is a term used to exemplify the attributes that a society or culture constitutes as "masculine" or "feminine" (Albalawi, 2019). A lot of research has been carried out on the outcome of internship in different fields of learning but little or no effort has been given to the development of leadership skills through internship as perceived by business education students. Thus, development of leadership skills through internship as perceived by business education students in universities in Anambra State, Nigeria has not been fully researched on. This makes it imperative to conduct this study in order to provide empirical evidence for objective remedial actions by relevant stakeholders.

Statement of the Problem

Internship is a programme designed to bridge the gap between theory and practice. All universities in Anambra State, Nigeria provide the internship programme in line with SIWES regulation to allow students to gain practical skills in their respective fields of study. However, it appears that many students are not benefitting from the programme as expected due to several challenges in its execution, ranging from not assigning students in the organization related to their discipline, inadequate supervision of the students by both institution and industrial supervisors among others to students' use of the period as a period of writing carryover. Based on these challenges, students perception regarding internship seems not to be met as most of them return back to the campus without improvement in the acquisition requisite skills, hence the need for this study.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to examine the development of leadership skills through internship as perceived by business education students in universities in Anambara State, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research question guided the study:

1. What are the perceptions of business education students regarding development of leadership skills during internship?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

1. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female business education students regarding their perception on development of leadership skills during internship.

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Methods

Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study which was carried out in Anambra State, Nigeria. The population of 619 business education students was used for the study using census survey sampling. Instrument for data collection was a 12 item four- point response option questionnaire ranging from Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). The instrument was validated by three experts, two in the field. of business education and one in educational measurementand evaluation from Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. To establish the reliability of the instrumentsthe researcher administered it to 20 business education students of Enugu State University. The resulting responses were used to obtain the measure of internal consistency of the instrument using cronbach Alpha and it yielded reliability co-efficient of 0.81. The instrument was administered to the study population in their schools personally by the researchers with the help of three research assistants, using on the spot method to facilitate a high response rate. Out of the 619 questionnaires, 617 copies of the questionnaire (representing 97 percent) were retrieved and used for the data analysis.

Results

***Research Question 1*:** What are the perceptions of business education students regarding development of leadership skills during internship?

Table 1

Mean and Standard Deviation on Development of Leadership Skills before Internship

SN	Item Statements	Mean	SD	Remark
1	I perceive internship as building ability to learn to use diplomacy in handling difficult task	3.38	.830	Agree
2	I perceive internship as building ability to learn to follow directives	3.12	.851	Agree
3	I perceive internship as building ability to learn to give cear direction	3.44	.704	Agree
4	I perceive internship as building ability to learn to take responsibility for decision	3.14	.920	Agree
5	I perceive internship as building ability to learn to becomfortable being a member of a group	3.03	.900	Agree
6	I perceive internship as building ability to earn to be a good listener	3.26	.752	Agree
7	I perceive internship as building ability to learn to be a good team leader	3.33	.716	Agree
8	I perceive internship as building ability to learn to be flexible and dynamic in handling issues	3.21	.778	Agree
9	I perceive internship as building ability to learn to lead discussions	3.35	.743	Agree
10	I perceive internship as building ability to learn to listen carefully to opinions of group/team member	3.21	.868	Agree
11	I perceive internship as building ability to learn to take responsibility for actions	3.19	.751	Agree
12	I perceive internship as building ability to learn to cooperate and work in a group	3.25	.770	Agree
	Aggregate	3.23	.733	Agree

Note. SD = standard deviation

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The results of Table 1 show the mean responses on the business education students' perception of the development of leadership skills during internship. The table shows that the mean responses range from 3.03 to 3.44, while the standard deviation range from 0.706 to 0.920. The mean results depict that the students agree with all the 12 items of leadership kills development during internship. The aggregate mean of 3.23 indicates that the students perceive internship as a model for the development of leadership skills before their placement.

Table 2
The t-test on Gender difference about Development of Leadership Skills in Internship

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	df	t-value	p-value	Decision
Male	121	3.21	.696	351	.275	.784	Not significant
Female	496	3.24	.751				

Data shown in Table 2 represent the results of the t-test about the difference between male and female business education students' perception of development of leadership skills in internship. The table shows the difference in mean perception between male (M = 3.21) and female (M = 3.24) is not significant (t = 0.275, p = 0.784). This means that the null hypothesis is not rejected. Thus, there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female business education students regarding their perception on development of leadership skills in internship.

Discussion of Findings

The result of the data analysis in respect of research question 1 as presented in table 1 showed the response of business education students' perception of development of leadership skills in internship in Anambra State. The findings reveals that the mean results for four items of development of leadership skills during internship correspond to agree, while the mean results for the rest seven items of development of leadership skills during internship correspond to disagree. The aggregate mean of 2.40, therefore, indicates that the students do not perceive increase in their development of leadership skills during the internship. This finding conforms to the study of Bolanle (2019) which found that there is a significant relationship between principals' leadership skills and school effectiveness. In line with this, Isibor *et al* (2020) found that 91.1% of the ECDs perceived leadership skills as essential skills needed by a doctor while 44.1% of them were yet to be formally trained on medical leadership. About three out of every 10 (23.6%) of surveyed ECDs that have ever held leadership positions in a medical setting encountered major leadership challenges during the experience due to their lack of training on leadership skills development. Also Almalki, et.al. (2016) found that undergraduate engineering students lack the visionary leadership skills compared to directing including cultivating leadership styles. This assertion is validated by the research result of *Sucharitha, et,al.* (2018) which established that the respondents admitted they were deficient in the understanding of leadership traits as it was not required of them as medical undergraduates and also they perceived that internship period provided them multiple platforms to develop leadership skills such as demonstrating personal qualities, working with others, goal setting and delivering services individually thereby overcoming a training gap in the undergraduate programme. Blackwell and Cummins (2017) result indicated that students did perceive to have gained the intended leadership skills as related to the four practical and four adaptive skills set forth by the programme curriculum.

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Recommendation

Based on the findings and conclusion of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Leadership skill development programmes are highly recommended to become an integral part of training programmes in universities in Anambra State, Nigeria.
2. Business education students should be periodically assessed on leadership skills development during their training as a means of achieving optimum results.

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