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INSTITUTIONAL ENTREPRENEURIAL SUPPORT AND GREEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP AMONG BUSINESS EDUCATION STUDENTS IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN CROSS RIVER STATE

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Abstract
The main purpose of this research was to investigate the predictive relationship between institutional entrepreneurial support and green entrepreneurship among business education students in tertiary institutions in Cross River State. Two specific objectives were raised, two research questions were asked, and two null hypotheses were formulated and tested at the 0.05 level of significance. Related literature was reviewed. This study adopted the predictive correlational research design, and the population consisted of 763 business education students from three Universities in Cross River State, from which a sample of 385 was drawn using the hat and draw method of simple random sampling technique. A structured questionnaire titled Institutional Entrepreneurial Support and Green Entrepreneurship Questionnaire (IESGEQ) comprising 37 items was developed, validated and used for data collection. The IESGEQ was developed on a five-point scale of very great extent (VGE), great extent (GE), moderate extent (ME), little extent (LE) and very little extent (VLE). The instrument was tested for reliability using Cronbach's Alpha statistics, and it produced a reliability coefficient of 0.84, which indicated that the instrument was reliable. Data collected after administration of the study questionnaire were analysed using simple linear regression to answer the research questions and also test the hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance. From the data analysed, the study found that business incubators and business mentoring significantly predict green entrepreneurship among business education students in tertiary institutions in Cross River State. Sequel to the findings of this study, the study recommends that the university management should

provide business incubators and ensure that these facilities are optimally utilised in developing green entrepreneurial behaviours among business education students.

Keywords: Institutional entrepreneurial support, green entrepreneurship, business education students

Introduction

Worldwide warming and pollution are the most serious challenges to civilization. These risks, which stem from rising temperatures, diminishing resources, and a decline in biodiversity, have recently heightened global awareness of environmentally conscious and ecologically friendly behaviours (Bertossi & Marangon, 2022; Shayan *et al.,* 2022). This trend is currently gaining popularity in Africa, with Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) actively encouraging learners to engage in Green Entrepreneurship (GE) for an environmentally friendly future (Amankwah & Sesen, 2021). Green entrepreneurship comprises implementing environmentally conscious methods into business operations, which are crucial for the preservation of the environment (Yi, 2021). This type of entrepreneurship entails recognising and seizing possibilities based on ecologically sound, healthy, and green principles (Ye *et al.,* 2020). Green entrepreneurship, which focuses on maintaining ecosystems, decreasing forest loss, and improving the general health of the environment, is growing in prominence as an essential aspect of the path to sustainability.

Several nations' colleges and universities throughout the globe are working to ensure the future of humanity by encouraging environmentally friendly habits within learning environments and in the corporate world. Generation Y, particularly students, will be expected to make contributions to an environmentally friendly future. Learners who receive a lot of input in the educational setting during every aspect of the educational process are undoubtedly at a potential advantage for the young people of today to compete well in the corporate sector (Purwati *et al.,*2022). Entrepreneurship classes, seminars, presentations by famous entrepreneurs, online simulations, and other ways can help youngsters develop and shape their entrepreneurial goals (Al-Jubari, 2019). Such assistance must additionally encompass components that train and encourage learners to tackle ecological problems by supporting them to create creative approaches that foster ecological awareness (Yi, 2021), as well as recognising possibilities for business (Barba-Sanchez *et al.,* 2022; Gómez, 2022).

In the past few years, the corporate landscape has seen a transformational transition, with businessmen widely recognising the importance of balancing economic ambitions with caring for the planet. This movement heralds the rise of green entrepreneurship, an innovative and progressive strategy for companies that aim to balance profit with environmental sustainability. Contrary to typical profit-driven approaches, environmentally conscious businesses prioritise longevity, social prosperity, and conservation of the environment. This paradigm changes stem from a rising recognition that traditional corporate behaviours, which are frequently associated with diminishing resources and damage to the environment, are not sustainable amid rising worldwide concerns. Enterprises must now reconsider their strategy, adopting an integrated approach that not only ensures monetary prosperity but also benefits the environment. Green entrepreneurial activity, then, is a deliberate break from business as

usual, ushering in a period in which financial sustainability exists alongside commitment to the environment (Cooperrider & Selian, 2021; Makarona & Kavoura, 2019).

The rise in green enterprise is driven by an unparalleled increase in ecological consciousness. Changes in the climate, decreasing resources, and degradation are becoming unavoidable occurrences, forcing people, organizations, and governments to reconsider what they do in crafting a better tomorrow. This increased knowledge has spread to buying habits, investment desires, and regulations, resulting in an atmosphere in which environmentally responsible choices are not only desired but also mandated. Responsible business ownership is more than just a fad; it is a critical need in today's industry. As communities throughout the globe cope with the consequences of global warming, limited supplies of resources, and pollution, corporations are becoming recognized as critical stakeholders in the search for lasting remedies (Gurtu, 2020; Hummels & Argyrou, 2021). The importance of green business can be seen in a variety of areas:

For starters, organizations that prioritize ecological sustainability have a greater chance of satisfying current customer needs. A conscious clientele continually searches for goods and offerings that correspond with green ideals, resulting in an investor demand for green firms. The change in customer behaviour highlights the financial upside associated with green entrepreneurial activity, as enterprises that prioritize ecological problems frequently see increased customer devotion and sales (George & Schillebeeckx, 2022). Second, entrepreneurial sustainability allows for an early reaction to changes in regulations and growing norms. Governments and international organizations are imposing strict ecological limits, requiring corporations to change their operations or face criminal penalties. Organizations that practice ethical enterprise can not only cope with current requirements but also place themselves as innovators in recognizing and meeting emerging ecological standards (Rosário *et al.,* 2022; Zhao *et al.,* 2021). Third, due to the interrelated structure of the global market, firms must evaluate the future viability of how they operate. Green business, which emphasizes resourcefulness and ethical behaviour, reduces the risks of exhaustion of resources, business interruptions, and damage to reputation. This foresight adds to enterprises' general strength and lifespan in a period of ecological uncertainty (Nyström *et al.,* 2019; Settembre-Blundo *et al.,* 2021).

In an age of increased climate consciousness and recognition of the critical need for a green economy, the contribution of higher education institutions in promoting mindful corporate practices has grown in importance (Hariram *et al.,* 2023; Indarto *et al.,*2023). Higher education institutions play an important role in promoting GE efforts by serving as hubs for generation, creativity, and the cultivation of talent. Odei and Anderson (2021) note the growing need for colleges and universities to offer solutions to social concerns, including environmentalism, through their third purpose endeavours, such as encouraging entrepreneurial endeavours.

This position is important since educational institutions can give future entrepreneurs the tools, expertise, and relationships they need to start and sustain green businesses. Many investigations have emphasized the significance of higher education assistance for entrepreneurial activity worldwide (Yi, 2021), but few have particularly addressed the environmental aspect. For instance, multiple research studies have investigated the influence of universities' accelerator and incubator programmes on the growth of startups (Bogatyreva *et al.,* 2019; Grinevich *et al.,* 2019), although these frequently lack a special focus on the conservation of the environment. This gap is crucial since entrepreneurial green behaviour

necessitates a distinct set of abilities, expertise, and funds related to climate policies, research, and ethical business conduct, all of which can be obtained through the educational institution's third mission activities. Some of these efforts include business incubation and business mentorship.

Business incubation is an evolving method involving creation and assistance for businesses that fosters the productive growth of young businesses by supplying businessmen with specific assets (National Business Incubators Association [NBIA], 2014) that have the potential to improve conservation in the financial, ecological, and social dimensions. (Wang *et al.,* 2017). It is an everchanging procedure that combines facilities and services, advancement assistance structures, and specialized knowledge to avert collapse and guide newly formed businesses toward success and long-term viability (Ahmed *et al.,* 2022; Muhammad, 2023; Pathan, 2022; Khan *et al.,* 2021). In the classical sense, an incubator is an actual building where entrepreneurs and fledgling businesses can rent space for a certain time. An incubator allows businesses to get involved as members of a vibrant complex full of active, fresh businesses while also lowering their costs of creation. Incubators can offer tenants four types of assistance: shared workspace, shared company assistance offerings, business training, and internal as well as external connections (Main *et al.,* 2016).

The essence, according to Acharya and Chandra (2024), is the goal to improve the efficacy, profitability, and overall expansion of businesses. According to Hewitt and Rensburg (2020), the fundamental goal of business incubators should be to assist startups in overcoming basic business difficulties such as financial understanding, access to leasing premises, staffing, entry into the market, and developing expertise. Different kinds of company incubators, operated by governments, educational institutions, non-governmental organizations, and industry professionals, assist businessmen with beginning requirements such as workplaces, initial capital, offering services, and consultation for domain names, permits, and patents (Ali *et al.,* 2020). Other assistance services include innovative guidance (Villares et al., 2020), research and development facilities, and small-scale production facilities (Azadnia *et al.,* 2022), connecting possibilities, and entrepreneurial education initiatives (Li et al., 2020; Yusubova *et al.,* 2019). A recent investigation by Rahardja (2023) uncovered that incubators' capacity to link entrepreneurs to appropriate connections and assets is critical during the period of incubation. Rahardja (2023) went on to say that the structure of incubation relationships, as well as the interaction between accelerators and educational institutions, all have an impact on nurturing aspiring entrepreneurs. The learning component is also seen as the foundation of incubation success, with a focus on education to assist startups in growing and developing. Entrepreneurial incubators supplement training by offering implicit expertise, connections, and real-time guidance that lessons in schools cannot match.

Business mentorship is another form of institutional assistance for green entrepreneurship. Business mentoring is a relationship between a qualified and a novice, someone who offers vital information, direction, and assistance in tackling the challenges and dangers that businessmen often encounter while also helping to ensure the general survival and long-term health of small-scale enterprises in an ever-changing market environment (Prastyaningtyas *et al.* 2023; Mackie & Mujadi, 2025). Business mentoring is important because it can provide entrepreneurs with guidance, information, and direct assistance, assisting them in overcoming any challenges along their business path (Raharjo et al., 2023). Skilled mentors can be a source of motivation, helping to identify market possibilities as well

as offering guidance on successful leadership styles (Robinson, 2022; Zaheer *et al.,* 2022; Zheng, Ahsan, & DeNoble, 2020). Beyond the teaching of academic knowledge, mentorship encourages a dynamic interchange where practical advice is shared, adding to the entrepreneur's overall development. Muh *et al.* (2023). Mentors play an important role in creating an entrepreneurial attitude, fostering perseverance, and improving entrepreneurs' entire business aptitude as they navigate the complexity of the corporate environment by providing personalized guidance and relying on their own life experiences. In essence, mentorship becomes a pillar of entrepreneurial success, producing a mutually beneficial connection that pushes both the mentor and the apprentice towards progress and success.

Numerous investigations have found that mentoring methods are critical for the sustainability of businesses. Tshehla *et al.* (2021) investigate the relationship between mentorship and the success of aspiring businessmen at Telkom, South Africa. This study investigated whether mentoring assists in addressing unemployment and the decline of youth entrepreneurship in Tshwane. The researchers used a qualitative approach, conducted informal conversations with mentors and young mentees from the Telkom mentorship database and analyzed the data with ATLAS. ti 8.0. According to the research, mentoring benefits both mentors and entrepreneurs, with significant benefits from the public and private sectors. The findings support the positive influence of mentorship for young entrepreneurship, emphasizing three important themes: characteristics that contribute to success, issues that impede advancement, and the function of mentorship.

Similarly, Mwamba *et al.* (2021) researched entrepreneurial techniques to boost mentorship at Zambia's Kwame Nkrumah University and investigated approaches to improve business coaching among undergraduates. This study examined the existing condition of mentorship and identified improvement measures. The study used a pragmatic research framework and a combination of methodologies using a contemporaneous triangulation design, with a simple random sample for students, random drawing for lecturers, and purposeful selection for administrators. Data from interviews and surveys were examined using frequency tables and graphs. The data revealed that most students understood the value of mentorship and wanted entrepreneurial abilities. The report suggests modifying syllabi to promote diverse mentoring, developing a policy on education, and building resource centers.

These findings support the importance of mentorship in developing sustainable company procedures. Despite the increasing relevance of universities' third mission activities, which are geared toward green entrepreneurship, studies regarding students' green entrepreneurial behaviours are scarce. Several investigations indicated that educational institutions continue to provide insufficient educational necessities and facilities for the development of green entrepreneurship among students (Colichi, 2021; Cortés, 2021; Dolinar, 2021). Despite these efforts, the problem of a lack of future-thinking and eco-friendly entrepreneurs persists. If not addressed, this scenario will impede progress toward environmentally friendly development goals, especially in Cross River State. This study was conducted considering these circumstances.

Purpose of the study.

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the predictive relationship between institutional entrepreneurial support and green entrepreneurship among business education students in tertiary institutions in Cross River State. Specifically, the study sought to determine the extent to which:

1. Business incubators predict green entrepreneurship among business education students
2. Business mentoring predicts green entrepreneurship among business education students

Research questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. To what extent do business incubators predict green entrepreneurship among business education students
2. To what extent does business mentoring predict green entrepreneurship among business education students

Hypotheses

H_{01}. Business incubators do not significantly predict green entrepreneurship among business education students

H_{02}. Business mentoring does not significantly predict green entrepreneurship among business education students

Methods

This study employed a predictive correlational research design. The choice of this design is informed by the study's investigation of the predictive relationship between institutional entrepreneurial support and green entrepreneurship among business education students in tertiary institutions in Cross River State. This research design was further considered suitable because it informed the choice of the analytical tool for this study. The study population consisted of 763 students, comprising 455 400-level and 318 300-level students, with 159 from the University of Calabar, 533 from the University of Cross River State, and 71 from the University of Education and Entrepreneurship, Akamkpa, Cross River State. The choice of this category of students was because they have been exposed to the theoretical and practical components of innovative entrepreneurial courses and, therefore, adjudged fit to participate in the study. Using the hat and draw method of the simple random sampling method, a sample of 385 (50.45%) was selected from the population. The sample was chosen by writing numbers on pieces of paper, mixing them completely, and putting them in a box. The first ten papers were chosen at random by the researcher, who then documented them. To ensure that every member of the population had an equal chance of being chosen without bias, the previously selected papers were put back into the box and thoroughly mixed once more. Until 385 participants were chosen at random to make up the sample, the practice was repeated. A 37-item structured questionnaire titled Institutional Entrepreneurial Support and Green Entrepreneurship Questionnaire (IESGEQ) was developed, validated by experts in Business Education as well as Measurement and Evaluation at the University of Calabar and used for data collection. The IESGEQ was developed on a fivepoint scale of very great extent (VGE), great extent (GE), moderate extent (ME), little extent (LE) and very little extent (VLE). The IESGEQ had three sections, namely Section A, Section B, and Section C. Section A and B had 10 items each, developed to measure each of the independent sub-variables, while Section C had 17 items developed to measure the dependent variable.

The instrument was tested for reliability by administering it to 40 respondents who were not part of the research population but possessed characteristics similar to those of the study participants. Data obtained after its administration was analysed using Cronbach's

Alpha statistics, and it produced a reliability coefficient of 0.84, which indicated the instrument was reliable and therefore measured what it was designed to measure consistently. Data collected after administration of the study questionnaire were analysed using simple linear regression to answer the research questions and also test the hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance. For the null hypotheses, a null hypothesis was retained if the P-value was ≥ .05 level of significance, but if the P-value was ≤ .05 level of significance, the null hypothesis was rejected. Out of 385 distributed copies of the study instrument, 383 copies were returned.

Result

Research question 1: To what extent do business incubators predict green entrepreneurship among business education students

Table 1: Simple Linear Regression of the prediction of green entrepreneurship among business education students by business incubators

Model	R	r-square	Adjusted R-square	St. Error of the estimate
1	.867	.751	.751	3.224

a. Predictor variable: Business incubators

b. Criterion variable: Green entrepreneurship

Table 1 shows the coefficient of determination, R2 of .751, which implies that a 75.1 per cent variation in the dependent variable (green entrepreneurship) is predicted by the explanatory variable (business incubators). This suggests that other variables might account for the remaining 24.9 per cent of the variance in the criterion variable. Based on Table 1, it is predicted that a per cent increase in green entrepreneurship is associated with an 86.7 per cent improvement in business incubation, other things being equal. The result suggests that business incubators predict green entrepreneurship among business education students.

Research question 2: To what extent do business incubators predict green entrepreneurship among business education students

Table 2: Simple Linear Regression of the prediction of green entrepreneurship among business education students by business mentoring

Model	R	r-square	Adjusted R-square	St. Error of the estimate
1	.904	.817	.817	2.764

a. Predictor variable: Business mentoring

b. Criterion variable: Green entrepreneurship

Table 2 shows that the coefficient of determination, R2, of .817, which implies that an 81.7 per cent variation in the dependent variable (green entrepreneurship) is predicted by the explanatory variable (business mentoring). This suggests that other variables might account for the remaining 18.3 per cent of the variance in the criterion variable. Based on Table 2, it is predicted that a per cent increase in green entrepreneurship is associated with a 90.4 per cent improvement in business mentoring, other things being equal. The result suggests that business mentoring predicts green entrepreneurship among business education students.

Hypothesis 1: Business incubators do not significantly predict green entrepreneurship among business education students.

Table 3: Simple Linear Regression of the prediction of green entrepreneurship among business education students by business incubators.

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Means Square	F	Significant Level
Regression (X)	11932.050	1	11932.050	1148.184	.00b
Residual (Y)	3949. 000	308	10.392		
Total	15881.050	381			

N = 381; Critical F = 3.92

Table 3 presents the results of linear regression of the prediction of green entrepreneurship among business education students by business incubators. The result shows that the calculated F-value of 1148.184 is greater than the Tabulated F-value of 3.87, with degrees of freedom of 1 and 308 at the 0.05 level of significance. The result shows that the p-value of .00 is less than the 0.05 alpha level. Therefore, the null hypothesis, that business incubators do not significantly predict green entrepreneurship among business education students, is rejected. The study concludes that business incubators significantly predict green entrepreneurship among business education students in tertiary institutions in Cross River State.

Hypothesis 2: Business mentoring does not significantly predict green entrepreneurship among business education students.

Table 4: Simple Linear Regression of the prediction of green entrepreneurship among business education students by business mentoring.

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Means Square	F	Significant Level
Regression (X)	12977.693	1	12977.693	1698.560	.00b
Residual (Y)	2903. 356	308	7.640		
Total	15881.050	381			

N = 381; Critical F = 3.92

Table 4 presents the results of linear regression of the prediction of green entrepreneurship among business education students by business mentoring. The result shows that the calculated F-value of 1698.560 is greater than the Tabulated F-value of 3.87, with degrees of freedom of 1 and 308 at the 0.05 level of significance. The result shows that the p-value of .00 is less than the 0.05 alpha level. Therefore, the null hypothesis, that business mentoring does not significantly predict green entrepreneurship among business education students, is rejected. The study concludes that business mentoring significantly predicts green entrepreneurship among business education students in tertiary institutions in Cross River State.

Discussion

The finding on the first hypothesis indicates that business incubators significantly predict green entrepreneurship among business education students in tertiary institutions in Cross River State. This outcome is consistent with Rahardja's (2023) discovery that incubators help startups connect with important networks and resources during the incubation process. The learning component is also viewed as the foundation of incubation performance, with an emphasis on training and coaching to assist startups in growing and developing. This study's findings agree with Ahmed *et al.* (2022), Muhammad (2023), Pathan (2022), and Khan *et al.* (2021), who believe that business incubation is an evolving procedure which

offers an array of facilities and services, aid for development frameworks, and expert guidance necessary for avoiding failing and directing incubated firms on an upward trajectory of growth and long-term survival. The findings of this study are as described because the mentor-mentee connection is extremely fulfilling and beneficial to both sides. Mentors frequently learn about themselves while instructing others, and they form satisfying business connections with their mentees. As well, mentees gain from their mentors' advice, experience, and skills. The mentor's skills can be invaluable to a new entrepreneur, offering a path for achievement and assisting them in making the best use of the assets they have. Establishing an organization can be a lonely and difficult path, so having somebody to talk to who knows the difficulties and hurdles may be quite helpful.

The finding on the second hypothesis shows that business mentoring significantly predicts green entrepreneurship among business education students in tertiary institutions in Cross River State. The findings of this study support Tshehla *et al.'s* (2021) claim that mentorship has a major impact on adolescent entrepreneurship, highlighting three primary themes: variables leading to achievement, variables impeding advancement, and the value of tutelage. This study's findings are consistent with those of Mwamba *et al.* (2021), who discovered that most learners understood the value of mentorship and desired abilities to be entrepreneurs. This study's findings are consistent with those of Raharjo *et al.* (2023), who believe that the importance of mentoring stems from its ability to provide businesspeople with advice, expertise, and direct assistance, assisting them in overcoming various challenges along the company's path.

Furthermore, incubation programmes provide conditions for companies to establish relationships with a large network of competitors, consultants, and funders. Connectivity is important since it leads to possible alliances, financing opportunities, and useful initiatives. Additionally, becoming part of a network of people with common interests develops a feeling of encouragement and companionship among businesspeople. Furthermore, startup help in incubators comprises both tangible and technical assets. These assets can include workspace, broadband access, and even specialized machinery. Moreso, easily accessible assets enable entrepreneurs to focus on their primary activity instead of logistical concerns. Finally, affiliation with a respected incubator increases a startup's credibility in the eyes of clients, financiers, and collaborators. This improved credibility can be transformative for emerging businesses seeking to differentiate their presence in crowded sectors.

Conclusion

This study's findings show that company incubation and mentoring strongly predict green entrepreneurship among business education students at tertiary institutions in Cross River State. These findings underscore the importance of sustainability-driven entrepreneurial education. Studying innovative green businesses helps to improve analytical, organizational, and social abilities, as well as management and connecting talents. Learners are taught to recognize and address issues, collaborate in groups, assess risks, and successfully interact with others in a variety of contexts, including adopting strategic approaches, and design organizational mechanisms to experiment and transform good ideas into reality. Fostering an entrepreneurial mindset prepares students for the uncertain and unpredictable world they will contribute to rebuilding. The findings of this study suggest that universities must provide courses, infrastructure, and opportunities to generate a future crop of businesspeople who will be able to cope with the changing business world.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the study recommends that:

1. The university management should provide business incubators and ensure that these facilities are optimally utilised in developing green entrepreneurial behaviours among business education students
2. The university management should partner with leading entrepreneurs in delivering mentorship services to entrepreneurs aspiring to engage themselves in green businesses.

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