


# Business Education and the Development of Employability Competencies among Undergraduates: Evidence from Tertiary Institutions in Anambra State, Nigeria

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p><b>Keywords:</b> <i>Business education; employability skills; undergraduates; tertiary institutions; curriculum development; Nigeria</i></p> <p><i>Received: 29, Jan. 2026</i> <i>Revised: 26, Feb. 2026</i> <i>Accepted: 27, Feb. 2026</i></p> <p>©2026 Author(s): This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the <a href="https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/">Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International</a></p> 	<p><i>The growing demand on work-ready graduates in Nigeria has brought issues that undergraduate business education often results in the imbalance of knowledge that may restrict the employability skills. The consistency of the curriculum material with the actual skill improvement is therefore very fundamental in graduate preparedness. The research used a descriptive cross-sectional survey design to determine the level of business education knowledge and employability skills among 103 undergraduate students in Anambra state in Nigeria. The overall age of participants was 15-17 years (51, 49.5-percent), female (72, 69.9-percent) and students studying at universities (81, 78.6-percent). The data were gathered online through Google Forms, and a structured questionnaire was adopted that included demographics, business knowledge, and employability skills, which were assessed with 4-point Likert scales. Descriptive statistics, robust M-Estimators, and non-parametric correlations (spearman rho = 0.604, p = 0.01) were included in the analyses. Voluntary participation, confidentiality and anonymous responses were ensured in ethical procedures, hence offering reliable evaluation of knowledge and competencies among the undergraduates. The knowledge of business education was unequal with the highest scores on accounting practices (Mean = 3.48) and marketing strategies (Mean = 3.17) and lower scores on management principles (Mean = 1.80) and business ethics (Mean = 1.63). The competencies and skills in employability were relatively high, particularly time management (Mean = 3.23), communication (Mean = 3.09), adaptability (Mean = 3.05), and teamwork (Mean = 3.03); collaborative skills were low (Mean = 1.66). The correlation of Spearman showed the moderate-strong positive correlation between business knowledge and employability (0.604, p &lt; 0.01). The research concludes that the content of the curriculum and real-world skill-building programs are essential in equipping graduates with work preparation skills. The recommendations also involve specific interventions to strengthen areas of knowledge that are weaker and to enhance collaborative competencies thus facilitating holistic development of employability in undergraduates..</i></p>

## INTRODUCTION

In modern competitive labour markets, the university degree in itself does not secure a job anymore. There is a growing expectation that higher education institutions, and those that provide business education programmes in particular, must provide undergraduates with skills that go beyond theoretical understanding in order to increase employability. According to research in Nigeria, there are high differences between the content of the curriculum and the expectations of employers, which leads to graduates who often fall short of the necessary skills in the workplace (Ore, 2023). In the case of business education undergraduates, this gap is manifested in the fact that their exposure to practical skills is limited (such as digital literacy, communication, teamwork, and problem-solving) (competencies that are commonly known to be important keys to career success) (Akeke, Atah, and Bessong, 2023; Jamilu, Paris, and Sambo, 2024).

Business education programmes are developed to equip learners with the discipline specific knowledge and skills to work in the fields of management, administration, entrepreneurship, and other related fields. Nevertheless, in cases whereby the curricula focus more on theory rather than practice, graduates may not be able to keep up with the dynamic needs of employers in formal and informal job markets (Ore, 2023). In particular, professional communication, analytical thinking, ethical judgment, and adaptability to technological change are also competencies that are more and more often mentioned as contributors to graduate employability (Akeke et al., 2023; Okoro et al., 2025).

This view is supported by empirical research on business education in Nigeria. Studies that evaluated employability competencies necessary to graduate business education students found that computing and accounting competencies are especially useful in finding employment (Akeke et al., 2023). Similarly, the studies of work-integrated learning programmes indicate that applied activities, including internship and industry cooperation, would assist in employability by enhancing communication, teamwork, and problem-solving abilities (Jamilu et al., 2024; Onyiorah, 2023). Although these insights are there, there are still important challenges. Most business education programmes are characterized by a lack of employability skills inclusion in the curriculum, a lack of industry collaboration, and absence of practical trainings. Research has indicated that the instructional strategies and content of curricula often do not contribute to workplace preparedness and indicate that education experiences and expectations of the labour market do not align (Ore, 2023; Onyiorah, 2022).

Scholars have promoted a competency-based curriculum as a solution to the ongoing discrepancy between the skills of graduates and employer expectations due to the need to promote practical skills development, experiential learning, and industry interaction (Ikegbusi et al., 2022; Ofozoba et al., 2025). These strategies combine work placements with active learning strategies and continuous skills evaluation, which allow students to develop both discipline-specific knowledge and transferable competencies required in the modern workplaces. Implementation of information and communication technologies (ICT) as pedagogical aids also positively affects the engagement and learning outcomes of students, promoting innovativeness and preparing them to the workplace (Ikegbusi, 2016; Ikegbusi and Egwu, 2024a). Research suggests that the association of curriculum design with professional learning communities and in-service training results in not only knowledge acquisition but also the capacity of students to skillfully apply the knowledge in practice (Ikegbusi and Egwu, 2024b; Ikegbusi and Eziamaka, 2018). Competency-based curricula may improve employability and reduce graduate unemployment, as well as equip students with skills to operate more effectively in changing workplace conditions by making educational experiences more aligned with employer requirements and responsive to the dynamic needs of the contemporary labour markets (Ofozoba et al., 2025; Ikegbusi et al., 2025).

This research has been motivated by the frustrating gap between the skills developed by business education undergraduates and the demands of the employers in the labour market. Even though business education programmes are intended to equip students with practical and analytical skills, evidence has indicated that most graduates in Nigeria lack the necessary employability competencies including effective communication, problem-solving, teamworking, and digital literacy (Ore, 2023). Surveys of employers and graduate tracings conducted in Anambra State, in particular, demonstrate high rates of underemployment and lengthening of job-search durations, which means that existing training might fail to equip students with the demands on the job market (Akeke, Atah, and Bessong, 2023). In addition, existing studies tend to discuss the outcomes of employability at the national or institutional level, and little research is conducted about the distinct socioeconomic and industrial realities of tertiary institutions in Anambra State. This loophole deprives policymakers of the capacity to customize curriculum changes that are based on local labour markets. Studies of work-based learning among business education students have found a positive outcome on employability, but the research question of the degree of such implementation or testing remains open in Anambra

State (Jamilu, Paris, and Sambo, 2024). Thus, the proposed study aims at building contextualised evidence regarding the role of business education in cultivating employability competencies among undergraduates in Anambra State to inform actionable knowledge and skills on the part of academic institutions, employers, and education policymakers.

### Research questions

1. What business education knowledge have undergraduates acquired in tertiary institutions in Anambra State?
2. What employability competencies do undergraduates possess in tertiary institutions in Anambra State?
3. What is the relationship between business education and the development of employability competencies among undergraduates in tertiary institutions in Anambra State?

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Business education has increasingly received recognition as a core of employability skills that are essential in the modern dynamic labor market. The current literature stresses that in addition to the acquisition of theoretical knowledge, the business education curriculum should instill transferable skills, including communication, problem-solving, teamwork, adaptability, and ethical reasoning (Doo & Park, 2019). It is indicated by empirical evidence that competency-based and practice-oriented curricula increase student preparedness to work by correlating the outcomes of learning with the demands of the workplace (Jackson, 2015). It has been demonstrated that experiential types of learning, such as internships, project-based learning, and simulation, contribute immensely to the ability of graduates to transfer their business knowledge to real-world settings.

Also, digital competence and adaptability are now one of the key employability qualities, particularly in the face of the rapid change in technology and the changing workplace (OECD, 2023). Subsequent studies show that business programmes with entrepreneurship education encourage creativity, self-efficacy, and recognition of opportunities, thus supporting employability and self-employment opportunities (Nabi et al., 2017). However, it is stated that there is still a gap between the content of the curriculum and the requirements of the labor market, especially in developing economies, since there is a low level of industrial cooperation and focusing on soft skills (Brown & Nwaokokorom, 2025). The literature culminates on the view that when properly aligned with the cultivation of competencies of employability and experiential learning, effective business education will be core to improving the employability of undergraduates.

Employability competencies need to be developed in undergraduates to be able to make sure that graduates are job-ready and can adapt to the modern demands of the labor market. An analogous empirical study established that a match to curricula and practical experiences, including project-based learning and field experience, significantly enhances the capacity of students to convert theoretical learning into professional practice (Odimegwu & Igwe, 2020). On the same note, it has been shown that climate-change education and context-specific real-life learning in Anambra State can enhance decision-making, resilience, and adaptive competencies in students, which highlights the significance of integrating modern societal concerns into the learning process (Oramah et al., 2025; Akanwa et al., 2024).

In contrast, the research devoted to the issues of female professional practitioners emphasizes that the barriers to practicability and participation in practical learning may suppress the evolution of skills and employment preparedness (Ifediora et al., 2020). Besides, the investigations of green maintenance in property management have shown that innovative and sustainability-oriented practices promote problem-solving and critical-thinking abilities among students (Anyakora et al., 2025). Together, these papers promote structured, competency-based curriculums, real world

engagement, and exposure to real world challenges as essential processes to developing the employability competencies of undergraduates.

## METHODOLOGY

This study used descriptive cross-sectional survey design to test the correlation between business education knowledge and employability competencies among undergraduates in higher institutions in Anambra State, Nigeria. The cross-sectional research method was suitable as it enabled collecting data at one time and therefore effectively giving a picture of what students know and can do (Creswell & Creswell, 2023; Ikegbusi, 2022). The population involved in the study included undergraduate students pursuing business-related programmes in the universities, colleges of education and polytechnics located in the state. The purposive sampling method was used to identify the relevant institutions and within institutions, stratified random sampling was used to attain proportional representation by gender, age, and type of institution.

One hundred and thirty-three respondents were involved. The data was collected using online Google forms, allowing the respondents to fill the questionnaire online at their own free will. The strategy enabled a wider institutional coverage and reduced physical contact, which aligns with current digital research guidelines (Evans & Mathur, 2018). The structured questionnaire was divided into three sections. Section I involved demographic data, such as age, gender, and type of institution. Section II was measuring business education knowledge, meaning knowledge on the principles of business management, accounting skills, marketing skills, entrepreneurial business planning, and consciousness of business ethics and professionalism. The answers were rated using a 4-point Likert scale (1, poor; 4, excellent). Section III was a measurement of employability skills, including effective communication, collaborative skills, teamwork, time management, and adaptability to work technologies on a 4-point Likert scale.

Data were filtered against completeness and then analyzed. Respondents knowledge and competencies were summarized using descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, skewness, and kurtosis). M-estimators (Huber, Tukey, Biweight, Hampel, and Andrews Wave) were used to measure strong central tendencies, which consider outliers. Percentiles and the hinges of Tukey also depicted the distribution and dispersion of knowledge and competencies. Normality tests with Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk statistics showed that there were significant deviations ( $p < 0.05$ ) thus warranting the adoption of non-parametric methods. Spearman Rank-Order Correlation and Kendall Tau-b coefficient were used to test relationship between knowledge of business education and the employability competencies, which offers valid correlation measures with non-normal data. IBM SPSS version 28 was used to perform analyses. There was a strict adherence to ethical standards. The purpose of the study was explained to the participants, and their participation was voluntary. Information recorded through Google Forms was anonymised and thus privacy was observed.

## RESULTS

**Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents**

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percent (%)	Valid Percent (%)	Cumulative Percent (%)
<b>Age (years)</b>	15–17	51	49.5	49.5	49.5
	18–21	27	26.2	26.2	75.7
	22–24	25	24.3	24.3	100.0
<b>Gender</b>	Male	31	30.1	30.1	30.1
	Female	72	69.9	69.9	100.0
<b>Institution Type</b>	College of Education	21	20.4	20.4	20.4

	Polytechnic	1	1.0	1.0	21.4
	University	81	78.6	78.6	100.0
<b>Total Respondents</b>		103	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table 1 indicates that nearly half of the respondents (49.5%) are aged 15–17 years, with 26.2% aged 18–21 and 24.3% aged 22–24. Females constitute the majority (69.9%), and most respondents are university students (78.6%), reflecting a predominantly young, female, and higher education-based sample.

**Table 2: Business Education Knowledge Acquired by Undergraduates in Tertiary Institutions in Anambra State**

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
				Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
Understanding of business management principles	103	1.80	1.271	1.065	.238	-.770	.472
Knowledge of accounting practices	103	3.48	.726	-1.014	.238	-.370	.472
Understanding of marketing strategies	103	3.17	.901	-.928	.238	.097	.472
Knowledge of entrepreneurial business planning	103	3.11	.839	-.205	.238	-1.554	.472
Awareness of business ethics professionalism	103	1.63	1.111	1.345	.238	.070	.472
Valid N (listwise)	103						

Table 2 shows that respondents scored highest in accounting practices (Mean = 3.48) and marketing strategies (Mean = 3.17), while understanding of business management principles (Mean = 1.80) and awareness of business ethics (Mean = 1.63) were lower. This suggests uneven acquisition of business education knowledge among undergraduates.

**Table 3: Employability Competencies Possessed by Undergraduates in Tertiary Institutions in Anambra State**

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
				Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
Effective communication in professional settings	103	3.09	1.077	-.946	.238	-.405	.472
Collaborative skills in projects	103	1.66	1.142	1.306	.238	-.061	.472

Teamwork competence in work situations	103	3.03	.944	-.986	.238	.263	.472
Ability to manage time priorities	103	3.23	1.077	-1.152	.238	-.101	.472
Adaptability to new workplace technologies	103	3.05	.922	-.786	.238	-.133	.472
Valid N (listwise)	103						

Table 3 reveals that undergraduates demonstrate strong time management (Mean = 3.23), effective communication (Mean = 3.09), adaptability (Mean = 3.05), and teamwork (Mean = 3.03). However, collaborative project skills are relatively low (Mean = 1.66), indicating uneven development of employability competencies among students.

**Table 4: M-Estimators for Business Education Knowledge and Employability Competencies**

	Huber's M-Estimator <sup>a</sup>	Tukey's Biweight <sup>b</sup>	Hampel's M-Estimator <sup>c</sup>	Andrews' Wave <sup>d</sup>
Business education knowledge	12.8806	12.9042	13.0199	12.9050
Employability competencies	14.6804	15.1293	14.7341	15.1304

- a. The weighting constant is 1.339.
- b. The weighting constant is 4.685.
- c. The weighting constants are 1.700, 3.400, and 8.500
- d. The weighting constant is 1.340\*pi.

Table 4 shows that employability competencies have higher robust central tendency estimates than business education knowledge across all M-Estimators. This suggests that, even when accounting for outliers, undergraduates demonstrate stronger employability competencies relative to their mastery of business education knowledge.

**Table 5: Percentiles and Tukey's Hinges for Business Education Knowledge and Employability Competencies**

	Percentiles						
	5	10	25	50	75	90	95
Weighted Business education Average(De finition 1)	9.0000	10.0000	10.0000	13.0000	15.0000	18.6000	20.0000
Employability competencies	5.0000	8.0000	13.0000	15.0000	17.0000	19.0000	20.0000
Tukey's Hinges			10.0000	13.0000	15.0000		
Business education knowledge			13.0000	15.0000	17.0000		
Employability competencies							

Table 5 shows that employability competencies generally have higher percentile scores than business education knowledge, particularly at the median (15 vs. 13) and upper quartiles. Tukey's hinges further indicate that the interquartile range of employability competencies (13–17) exceeds that of business education knowledge (10–15), reflecting stronger and more consistent skill acquisition among undergraduates.

**Table 6: Tests of Normality for Business Education Knowledge and Employability Competencies**

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov <sup>a</sup>			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Business education knowledge	.141	103	.000	.920	103	.000
Employability competencies	.172	103	.000	.916	103	.000

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Table 6 indicates that both business education knowledge and employability competencies significantly deviate from normality ( $p < 0.05$ ) according to the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests. This suggests that non-parametric or robust statistical techniques may be more appropriate for subsequent analyses to account for non-normal data distributions. Given the non-normal distribution of both variables, Spearman's Rank-Order Correlation is the most appropriate for testing the relationship between business education knowledge and employability competencies.

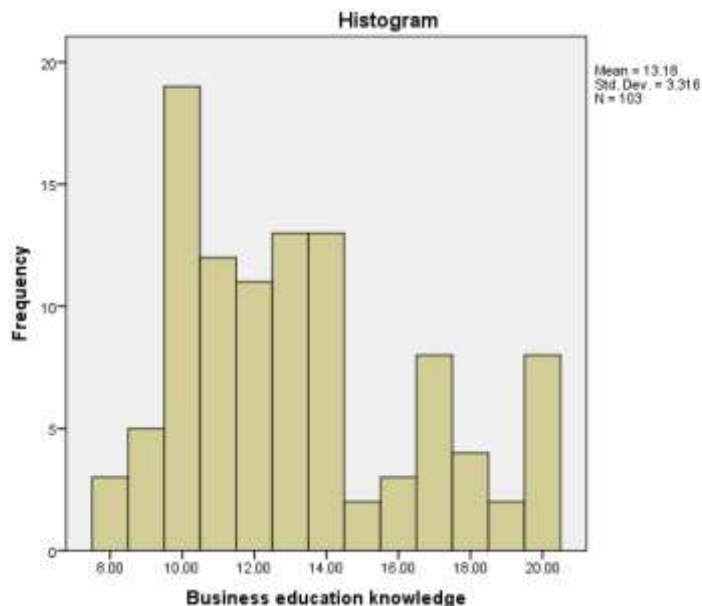
**Table 7: Correlation between Business Education Knowledge and Employability Competencies**

		Business education knowledge	Employability competencies
Kendall's tau_b	Business education knowledge	1.000	.494**
		.	.000
		103	103
Employability competencies	Employability competencies	.494**	1.000
		.000	.
		103	103
Spearman's rho	Business education knowledge	1.000	.604**
		.	.000
		103	103
Employability competencies	Employability competencies	.604**	1.000
		.000	.
		103	103

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

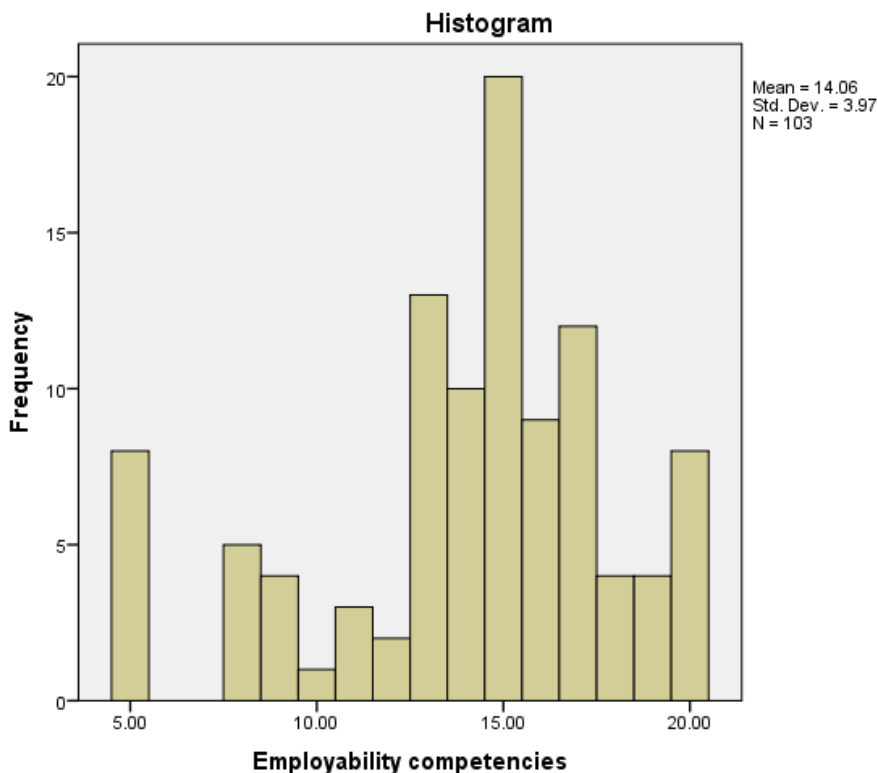
Table 7 shows a positive and significant relationship between business education knowledge and employability competencies. Kendall's tau-b ( $\tau = 0.494$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ) and Spearman's rho ( $\rho = 0.604$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ) indicate a moderate to strong correlation. Since  $p < 0.01$ , the null hypothesis that business education knowledge does not significantly relate to employability competencies is rejected.

This implies that undergraduates with higher business education knowledge tend to possess stronger employability competencies, highlighting the importance of curriculum content in developing work-ready graduates in tertiary institutions.



**Figure 1: Distribution of Business Education Knowledge among Undergraduates**

Figure 1 shows that business education knowledge scores among undergraduates are moderately skewed to the right, with most respondents scoring between 10 and 14. A few students achieved higher scores near 20, indicating variability and the presence of higher-performing outliers in knowledge acquisition.



**Figure 2: Distribution of Employability Competencies among Undergraduates**

Figure 2 shows that employability competencies scores are slightly skewed to the left, with most respondents scoring between 13 and 16. A few students scored as low as 5 and as high as 20, indicating variation in competency acquisition, with a concentration of students demonstrating moderate to high employability skills.

## DISCUSSION

Table 1 is based on the demographic profile that shows that the largest proportion of respondents was young adults aged 15–17 years (49.5 per cent), with the majority of the respondents being girls (69.9 per cent) and university students (78.6 per cent). This trend is in line with the research conducted by Chinweoke-Ogah (2023), who examined business educators in Nigeria but also reported that female students were the majority of respondents at the university level when evaluating the relevance of curriculum, hence depicting gender imbalances in some Nigerian tertiary settings.

Regarding knowledge on business education (Table 2), participants scored higher in accounting practices (Mean=3.48) and marketing strategies (Mean=3.17) and relatively lower in management principles (Mean=1.80) and business ethics awareness (Mean=1.63). Conversely, a systematic review of the dimensions of employability by Tong and Gao (2022) has highlighted that employability is strengthened by professional knowledge, generic competencies, and career management together. Their results suggest that unequal knowledge acquisition can limit the multi-dimensional results. The noticed gap between the technical (accounting/marketing) and the less developed (ethics and principles) domains supports the evidence of the potential emergence of competency gaps in the workplace under the influence of misaligned curriculum.

The results of employability competencies (Table 3) demonstrate strong average scores in time management (Mean=3.23), effective communication (Mean=3.09), adaptability (Mean=3.05), and teamwork (Mean=3.03), whereas there are significant low scores in collaborative skills (Mean=1.66). These results are consistent with the study by Osmani et al. (2025), who found communication, problem-solving, and teamwork to be significant in graduate marketability, but there was an apparent disconnection between educational performance and employer demands, especially in the areas of collaboration and interpersonal skills.

Table 4 with robust central-tendency statistics and Table 5 with percentile comparisons clearly show higher employability competence scores compared to business knowledge scores, even after eliminating outliers. According to Jackson (2013), greater business knowledge is ideally associated with greater competencies, but in practice evidence often shows a gap between theory and practice, particularly in soft-skill acquisition, which is explained by the limitations of the curriculum. They can be assessed through normality tests (Table 6) that indicate that both variables are not normally distributed, which explains the use of non-parametric methods of analysis (Spearman correlation). Associated studies also urge adoption of powerful procedures to support non-normal data in competency and employability research.

Table 7 indicates that there is a considerable positive Spearman correlation (0.604,  $p < .01$ ) between business education knowledge and employability competencies, which indicates that more subject knowledge increases employability skills. This finding is echoed by Qenani et al. (2014), who discovered that good educational background has a positive impact on perceived employability and career confidence among business students.

## CONCLUSION

The current research investigated how business education knowledge correlated with the development of employability competencies in tertiary institutions undergraduate students in Anambra State in Nigeria. It was found that the students had better developed accounting practices and marketing strategies as compared to their achievements in business management principles and

business ethics awareness indicating an uneven distribution of business knowledge. As a competencies of employability, the respondents showed significant strengths in terms of time management, effective communication, adaptability and teamwork, whereas collaborative project competencies were relatively low, highlighting inequalities in skill development.

The strong statistical tests and non-parametric correlation tests proved that there is a significant positive relationship between business education knowledge and employability competencies, so it is possible to suggest that business knowledge gives students better employability skills. These findings reinforce the importance of business education curricula as a means of training work-ready graduates and show the need of specific interventions that would strengthen less strong knowledge domains and teamwork skills. Therefore, tertiary institutions are an area where curriculum content must be developed, and practical skills-building exercises need to be implemented, and new pedagogical methods need to be introduced to guarantee a comprehensive development of employability skills in undergraduates.

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