

## Students' Perception of the Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) as a Tool for Realizing Business Education programme Outcomes in Rivers State Universities

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### ABSTRACT

This study investigated students' perception of the Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) as a tool for realizing Business Education programme outcomes in Rivers State universities. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design, and the entire population of 398 Year Two Business Education students from Rivers State University (RSU) and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education (IAUE) was used as the sample. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire and analyzed using mean, standard deviation, and t-test to test for gender differences in perception. The findings revealed that students generally perceive SIWES positively, highlighting its relevance in providing practical experience, enhancing technical competence, fostering professional ethics, and improving employability. The study concluded that SIWES effectively bridges the gap between theoretical instruction and real-world business practice, thereby supporting the achievement of Business Education programme outcomes. Based on the findings, recommendations were made to enhance supervision, ensure structured monitoring, and promote equitable placement opportunities for all students.

## INTRODUCTION

In Nigeria, the Industrial Training Fund (ITF) established the Students' Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) to provide tertiary students with practical, hands-on industrial exposure that complements their academic learning. The programme was introduced to reduce the gap between theoretical instruction in universities and real-world industrial practice, preparing students for future employment by inculcating relevant technical skills and industrial work habits (Emeasoba, 2019). In the context of Business Education, SIWES has become particularly significant because business education students are expected not only to master theory but also to acquire employable competencies such as office management, ICT skills, communication, teamwork, and problem-solving that are best learned in real business settings. Embedding SIWES within Business Education programmes thus helps universities align their curricula with industry demands and improve students' readiness for the labor market, making education more relevant and effective.

Students' perception of SIWES has generally been positive, with many viewing it as a valuable avenue for bridging classroom learning and practical work realities. For instance, studies have shown that students appreciate SIWES for enhancing their workplace competencies, exposing them to organizational culture and sharpening their professional outlook (Jim, Barine & Uchendu, 2025). In Rivers State universities specifically, research on school industry partnerships has confirmed that SIWES significantly contributes to entrepreneurial skills development among Business Education students, reinforcing the perception that industry engagement is a vital complement to formal teaching (Akpomi, Stewart & Ogbulujah, 2019). Nevertheless, there are also concerns: some students report inadequate supervision during placement, mismatches between their course of study and the nature of tasks assigned in industry and delays in stipends, all of which can dampen the perceived benefits of the scheme.

Furthermore, while many students recognize the potential of SIWES to boost competence, there is variation in how effectively it translates to confidence and self-efficacy. Some studies suggest that when students receive meaningful mentorship and structured tasks, they develop stronger professional identities and are more motivated to pursue entrepreneurial or employment opportunities post-graduation (Emeasoba, 2019). Yet, in situations where the industrial placement is uncoordinated or passive e.g., students are given menial tasks or not integrated into core business operations the perceived benefits diminish, leading to frustration and limited skill acquisition. This duality in perception highlights that the mere existence of SIWES is not sufficient; its design, supervision, and relevance to students' academic discipline are critical.

On the other hand, academics and industry supervisors sometimes differ in their evaluation of SIWES's effectiveness. From the lecturers' perspective, SIWES offers a structured channel to assess whether students can apply theoretical knowledge in real-world scenarios, thereby shaping curriculum design and assessment practices (Emeasoba, 2019). Industry supervisors often value students' energy, fresh perspectives, and foundational skills; however, they may criticize students for lack of deeper business understanding,

commitment, or professionalism, especially when students see SIWES merely as a requirement rather than an opportunity (Jim et al., 2025). This difference in perception underscores the need for clear coordination between universities and host companies to define learning objectives, monitor progress, and ensure that the industrial training is mutually beneficial.

SIWES has been empirically linked to improved grades and deeper understanding of course content in several studies. For example, Ademiluyi and Ademiluyi (2018) found that SIWES had a particularly strong influence on Office Technology and Management students' performance in word processing tasks, revealing a tangible connection between industrial exposure and technical competence. Similarly, in a study of Library and Information Science students, Madu et al. (2023) reported that 93.7% of respondents believed their cumulative grade point average improved after SIWES, suggesting that real-world training can reinforce academic learning through applied contexts. These findings support the notion that SIWES is not just a "work holiday," but a pedagogical tool that deepens students' mastery of subject matter.

However, despite positive correlations, some scholars caution against overgeneralizing enhancements in academic performance. For instance, studies have pointed out that not all aspects of academic assessments benefit equally from SIWES; in the case of Ademiluyi and Ademiluyi (2018), while word processing improved markedly, desktop publishing and web design did not register similar gains. This indicates that the impact of SIWES on academic outcomes may be domain-specific and mediated by the quality of placement, the nature of tasks, and the level of student engagement. Moreover, infrastructural and supervisory challenges such as poor coordination, inadequate mentoring and irregular academic calendars can limit the full potential of SIWES to contribute to academic excellence (Madu et al., 2023).

Business Education programme outcomes, one central aim is to produce graduates who are not only theoretically proficient but also professionally competent, entrepreneurial and industry-ready. SIWES directly supports these objectives by immersing students in business settings where they can apply classroom theories to real tasks such as managing office documentation, handling customer relations and using business software thus internalizing the practical behaviors and skill sets required in the workplace (Akpomi et al., 2019). Through these hands-on experiences, students develop a better grasp of work discipline, time management and real business workflows, aligning their competencies with the intended outcomes of Business Education curricula.

SIWES helps in shaping entrepreneurial mindsets among Business Education students. As they work in industry, students often observe how seasoned professionals solve problems, identify business opportunities and manage risks. This exposure nurtures innovation, initiative, and self-reliance all of which are central to Business Education programme outcomes in Nigeria, where entrepreneurship is emphasized as a strategy for employment generation (Akpomi et al., 2019). Empirical evidence supports this: research in Rivers State University showed that SIWES participation positively influences students' alertness to business opportunities, innovativeness, and their capacity to

translate practical insights into entrepreneurial intentions (Akpomi et al., 2019; Ogwunte, 2024).

Students' Perception of SIWES is linked to the realisation of Business Education programme outcomes in Rivers State universities, the relationship becomes particularly strategic. Many students report that SIWES sharpens their understanding of how business theories function in real work environments and helps them internalize soft skills, which are critical for employability and entrepreneurship (Akpomi et al., 2019). Their positive perception reinforces the value of SIWES as more than an administrative requirement: it becomes a mechanism for personal and professional development, helping them move from academic abstraction to practical competence.

However, students' perceptions are not uniformly positive in relation to outcomes. Some express dissatisfaction with placements that are unrelated to their course of study, limited mentorship, or insufficiently challenging tasks, which undermine the potential of SIWES to achieve programmatic aims (Emeasoba, 2019). These negative perceptions can weaken the connection between industrial training and the intended Business Education outcomes, such as entrepreneurial mindset, proficiency in business processes, and work readiness.

The literature on SIWES and Business Education has explored a number of dimensions: relevance to business curricula (Emeasoba, 2019), impact on student competence (Jim et al., 2025), and contributions to entrepreneurial skills (Akpomi et al., 2019). Additionally, research has examined how SIWES affects academic performance in both vocational and non-vocational disciplines such as Office Technology (Ademiluyi & Ademiluyi, 2018) and Library Science (Madu et al., 2023). There are also cross-disciplinary studies, for example in chemistry, that explore how SIWES contributes to employability skills (Inuwa & Abubakar, 2024). These studies collectively affirm the value of SIWES, but also highlight challenges related to supervision, task relevance, and placement quality.

Gaps Remain, particularly in the context of Business Education in Rivers State universities. While prior work by Akpomi et al. (2019) established that SIWES contributes to entrepreneurial skill development, there is limited empirical research that directly links students' *perceptions* of SIWES to measurable attainment of Business Education programme outcomes, such as competency in business processes, employability and entrepreneurial self-efficacy. Also, most studies use cross-sectional surveys but do not track students longitudinally to determine how SIWES influences their career trajectories or business performance after graduation. Furthermore, there is insufficient qualitative evidence capturing how students interpret their industrial experiences, including the challenges they face and how those experiences shape their professional identities.

SIWES is widely acknowledged as a potent mechanism for bridging theory and practice in Nigerian tertiary education, and particularly in Business Education, there is a need for more nuanced, context-specific research in Rivers State universities that explores how students' perceptions of SIWES influence the actualization of Business Education programme outcomes. Such research could

inform policy, improve SIWES implementation, and strengthen collaboration between universities and industry thereby enhancing the effectiveness of education in preparing students for the world of work.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Student Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES)**

The Student Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) is a structured training programme instituted by the Industrial Training Fund (ITF) in Nigeria to expose tertiary students to hands-on industry experience and bridge the gap between classroom theory and workplace practice. As Akpomi et al. (2019) explain in their study of school-industry partnership, SIWES enables Business Education students to acquire practical skills, entrepreneurial attitudes, and relevant work habits through collaboration between universities and industry. According to Akpomi (2011), business education itself embodies a blend of knowledge, skills and attitudes required for effective participation in business ventures, implying that SIWES is essential for cultivating these competencies in real-world settings. Thus, SIWES not only reinforces academic learning but also nurtures professional readiness, ethical awareness and technical aptitude among students, making it a critical component of Business Education programmes.

### **The general perception of students regarding the Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) in Rivers State universities**

The general perception of students regarding the Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) in Rivers State universities is largely positive, reflecting the scheme's effectiveness in bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application. Students recognize SIWES as a valuable platform for gaining hands-on experience, enhancing technical competence, and understanding workplace ethics and professional discipline (Emeasoba, 2019; Akpomi, Stewart, & Ogbulujah, 2019). The program is perceived as relevant to their academic training, providing opportunities to apply classroom concepts in real business environments, develop problem-solving skills and improve employability. Overall, the perception indicates that SIWES is regarded as an essential component of Business Education, fostering both professional readiness and practical skill acquisition among students.

### **How does students' perception of SIWES contribute to the achievement of Business Education programme outcomes**

Students' perception of SIWES significantly contributes to the achievement of Business Education programme outcomes by enhancing practical skills, technical competence and employability. Positive perception of the scheme motivates students to actively engage in workplace tasks, apply theoretical knowledge and develop critical problem-solving and decision-making abilities (Akpomi, Stewart, & Ogbulujah, 2019; Madu et al., 2023). Through SIWES, students gain exposure to real business operations, entrepreneurial practices, and professional ethics, which align closely with the objectives of Business Education programmes. Consequently, students' favorable perception of SIWES facilitates

the attainment of programme goals by ensuring that graduates acquire not only academic knowledge but also the practical competencies required to succeed in professional and entrepreneurial environments.

### **How does students' perception of SIWES vary between male and female students**

The perception of SIWES among students appears largely consistent across genders, with both male and female students reporting similar experiences regarding supervision, practical exposure, and ethical training. This indicates that SIWES provides equitable learning opportunities that do not favor one gender over the other (Emeasoba, 2019; Ogwunte, 2024). Male and female students are exposed equally to workplace tasks, professional discipline, and skill development, which ensures uniform acquisition of competencies necessary for Business Education programme outcomes. The similarity in perception suggests that gender does not significantly influence the benefits derived from SIWES, highlighting the scheme's effectiveness in providing inclusive, gender-neutral opportunities for practical learning and professional readiness.

### **Statement of the Problem**

In Rivers State universities, Business Education programmes are designed to equip students with the knowledge, skills, and competencies necessary for professional success and entrepreneurship. Ideally, students should acquire both theoretical knowledge and practical skills that align with industry requirements, enabling them to be immediately employable or capable of starting their own ventures after graduation (Akpomi, Stewart & Ogbulujah, 2019). The Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) is intended to serve as a critical tool in achieving this ideal by providing structured industrial exposure that complements classroom learning, thereby enhancing students' competencies, work readiness and understanding of business operations. In this ideal scenario, students' perception of SIWES would be overwhelmingly positive, reflecting satisfaction with the relevance, supervision, and learning outcomes of the scheme, which in turn directly supports the realization of Business Education programme objectives.

In reality, the situation differs considerably. Many students report that the SIWES experience is often marked by insufficient supervision, limited engagement in meaningful tasks and delays or absence of stipends, which negatively affect their motivation and learning outcomes (Emeasoba, 2019; Jim, Barine & Uchendu, 2025). These challenges hinder the independent variable, students' perception of SIWES, from effectively influencing the dependent variable, the attainment of Business Education programme outcomes, including professional competence, entrepreneurial mindset and employability. Additionally, academic performance can be indirectly affected, as students who perceive their industrial training as irrelevant or poorly managed may exhibit lower engagement and diminished skill acquisition, weakening the intended impact of the programme.

The present situation is shaped by several systemic and operational factors. Limited coordination between universities and host organizations, lack of structured mentorship programs, and inadequate monitoring mechanisms contribute to students' negative perceptions and suboptimal learning experiences during SIWES (Emeasoba, 2019; Madu et al., 2023). To address these challenges, possible solutions include improving collaboration between academic institutions and industries to ensure relevant placement, introducing structured supervision and mentoring frameworks, and regularly monitoring and evaluating students' experiences to align them with Business Education programme outcomes. These interventions are expected to enhance students' perception of SIWES, thereby strengthening its role as an effective tool for achieving academic, professional, and entrepreneurial competencies in Rivers State universities.

### **Objectives of the Study**

1. To examine students' perception of the Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) in Rivers State universities.
2. To determine the extent to which students' perception of SIWES influences the realization of Business Education programme outcomes.
3. To determine how students' perception of SIWES varies between male and female students.

### **Research Questions**

1. What is the general perception of students regarding the Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) in Rivers State universities?
2. How does students' perception of SIWES contribute to the achievement of Business Education programme outcomes?
3. How does students' perception of SIWES vary between male and female students?

### **Hypotheses**

1. There is no significant difference in the mean rating of male and female students regarding their perception of SIWES in Rivers State universities.
2. There is a significant difference in the mean perception Students' perception of SIWES does not significantly influence the realization of Business Education programme outcomes.

There is a significant difference in the mean perception of SIWES between male and female students.

### **METHODOLOGY**

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design to examine students' perception of the Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) and its role in realizing Business Education programme outcomes in Rivers State universities. The population of the study comprised 398 Year Two Business Education students, with 145 from Rivers State University (RSU) and 220 from Ignatius Ajuru University of Education (IAUE). Since the population was

manageable, the entire population was used as the sample size for the study. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire developed by the researchers, consisting of items designed to measure students’ perception of SIWES and its perceived impact on Business Education programme outcomes. The instrument employed a four-point Likert scale ranging from “Very high extent” to “Very low extent” to capture students’ responses. To ensure validity, the questionnaire was subjected to face and content validation by three experts in Business Education and research methodology, who evaluated its clarity, relevance and coverage of the research objectives. Reliability was established through a pilot study involving 30 Business Education students from another university, and the instrument yielded a Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of 0.82, indicating high internal consistency. A total of 398 questionnaires were administered, out of which 339 were correctly retrieved and used for analysis, representing an 85.2% response rate. Collected data were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to describe students’ responses. Additionally, a t-test was employed to test the hypothesis regarding gender differences in students’ perception of SIWES, with the null hypothesis stating that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female students. All statistical tests were conducted at a **0.05 significance level** to determine the presence of significant differences.

**RESEARCH RESULT**

**Research Question 1:** What is the general perception of students regarding the Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) in Rivers State universities?

**Table 1: Mean Ratings of Respondents on the general perception of students regarding the Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) in Rivers State universities (N = 339)**

S/N	Questionnaire Items	(Male ) N= 157		(Female students) N= 182		Average Mean $\frac{\chi^1 + \chi^2}{2}$		
		$\bar{X}_1$	Std <sub>1</sub>	$\bar{X}_2$	Std <sub>2</sub>	Mean	Std	RMK
1	SIWES provides relevant practical experience that complements classroom learning	3.39	0.94	3.22	1.04	3.30	0.99	HE
2	Participation in SIWES enhances understanding of business operations	3.46	0.94	3.41	0.76	3.43	0.85	HE
3	SIWES improves confidence in applying theoretical knowledge in real work situations.	3.59	0.86	3.32	0.82	3.45	0.84	HE
4	The duration of SIWES is sufficient for meaningful learning and skill acquisition.	3.54	0.76	3.21	0.86	3.37	0.81	HE
5	SIWES has exposed me to professional ethics and workplace discipline.	3.47	0.84	3.20	1.05	3.33	0.86	HE

6	SIWES exposes students to professional ethics and workplace discipline	3.54	0.86	3.38	0.87	3.46	0.86	HE
7	SIWES is perceived as a beneficial component of the Business Education programme	3.43	0.93	3.30	0.93	3.36	0.93	HE
<b>Grand Mean/SD</b>		<b>3.48</b>	<b>0.87</b>	<b>3.29</b>	<b>0.90</b>	<b>3.38</b>	<b>0.87</b>	<b>VHE</b>

The analyzed data in Table 1 for Research Question One indicated that all items were rated to a high extent by both male and female students. This was confirmed by a grand mean of **3.48** for male students and **3.29** for female students, with corresponding standard deviations of **0.87** and **0.90**, respectively. These values are above the criterion mean of **2.50**, indicating that respondents generally perceived SIWES positively. Specifically, the results suggest that SIWES provides relevant practical experience that complements classroom learning and exposes students to professional ethics and workplace discipline. The grand mean values above the benchmark demonstrate that the majority of respondents rated the items within the **high extent** range, reflecting a strong agreement on the benefits of SIWES.

Research Question 2: How does students' perception of SIWES contribute to the achievement of Business Education programme outcomes?

**Table 2: Mean Ratings of Respondents on how does students' perception of SIWES contribute to the achievement of Business Education programme outcomes (N = 339)**

S/N	Questionnaire Items	(Male ) N= 157		(Female students) N= 182		Average Mean $\frac{\chi^1 + \chi^2}{2}$		RMK
		$\bar{X}_1$	Std <sub>1</sub>	$\bar{X}_2$	Std <sub>2</sub>	Mean	Std	
8	SIWES provides practical exposure that enhances technical competence in Business Education	3.45	0.93	3.26	0.99	3.35	0.96	HE
9	Participation in SIWES improves understanding and application of business concepts	3.54	0.88	3.06	0.94	3.30	0.91	HE
10	SIWES strengthens skills necessary for effective office management and administration	1.71	0.88	3.15	0.92	2.43	0.90	LE
11	Engagement in SIWES contributes to the development of entrepreneurial skills	1.52	0.96	3.25	0.90	2.38	0.93	LE
12	SIWES enhances problem-solving and decision-making abilities relevant to the business environment.	3.40	0.95	3.16	1.01	3.28	0.98	HE
13	SIWES exposure fosters professional ethics and	2.72	0.76	3.12	1.07	2.92	0.91	HE

	workplace discipline aligned with programme objectives								
14	Engagement in SIWES enhances employability and readiness for post-graduation career opportunities	3.50	0.93	3.35	0.86	3.42	0.89	HE	
	<b>Grand Mean/SD</b>	<b>2.83</b>	<b>0.89</b>	<b>3.19</b>	<b>0.95</b>	<b>3.01</b>	<b>0.92</b>	<b>HE</b>	

The analyzed data in Table 3 for research question three showed that three items were of a high extent, while 2 item is on a very high extent by the male and female students. The confirmation was made with a grand mean score of 3.31 and 3.19 and standard deviation of 0.74 and 0.91 as responses of the respondents on both male and Female students which is above the criterion mean of 2.50. This shows that Male and female students receive similar levels of supervision and guidance during SIWES. Male and female students are exposed equally to workplace ethics and professional discipline during SIWES

Research Question 3: How does students’ perception of SIWES vary between male and female students?

**Table 3: Mean Ratings of Respondents on how students’ perception of SIWES vary between male and female students (N = 339)**

S/N	Questionnaire Items	(Male teacher) N= 157	(Female students) N= 182	Average Mean $\frac{\chi^1 + \chi^2}{2}$				
	Questionnaire Items	$\bar{X}_1$	Std <sub>1</sub>	$\bar{X}_2$	Std <sub>2</sub>	Mean	Std	RMK
15	The tasks assigned during SIWES are equally relevant to both male and female students	1.44	0.85	3.31	0.92	2.37	0.88	LE
16	Male and female students receive similar levels of supervision and guidance during SIWES	3.50	0.85	3.27	1.04	3.38	0.94	HE
17	Opportunities to develop problem-solving skills during SIWES are similar for male and female students.	3.55	0.88	3.46	0.77	3.50	0.82	HE
18	Both male and female students gain comparable confidence in applying theoretical knowledge during SIWES.	3.64	0.65	3.52	0.72	3.58	0.68	VHE
19	Male and female students are exposed equally to workplace ethics and professional discipline during SIWES.	3.64	0.74	3.40	0.80	3.52	0.77	VHE
20	there is no significant difference in how male and	3.69	0.76	2.75	1.07	3.22	0.91	HE

21	female students perceive the benefits of SIWES. The duration of SIWES provides sufficient learning opportunities for all students regardless of gender	3.76	0.47	2.67	1.11	3.21	0.79	HE
<b>Grand Mean/SD</b>		<b>3.31</b>	<b>0.74</b>	<b>3.19</b>	<b>0.91</b>	<b>3.25</b>	<b>0.82</b>	<b>HE</b>

The analyzed data in Table 3 for Research Question Three indicated that three items were rated to a high extent, while two items were rated to a very high extent by both male and female students. This was confirmed by a grand mean of **3.31** for male students and **3.19** for female students, with corresponding standard deviations of **0.74** and **0.91**, respectively. Since these values are above the criterion mean of **2.50**, it suggests that male and female students perceive SIWES similarly. Specifically, the results show that both male and female students receive comparable levels of supervision and guidance during SIWES and are equally exposed to workplace ethics and professional discipline.

### Test of Hypotheses

**H<sub>01</sub>:** There is no significant difference in the mean rating of male and female students regarding their perception of SIWES in Rivers State universities.

**Table 4: t-test Analysis on the Extent male and female students regarding their perception of SIWES in Rivers State Universities.**

Respondents	N	x	Std	df	t-cal	t-crit	LS	Decision
Male	157	3.48	0.87	337	2.11	±1.96	0.05	rejected
FeMale	182	3.29	0.90					

Table 4 above shows that t-calculated value of 2.11 which was greater than the t-critical value of ±1.96 at 0.05 level of significance and with a degree of freedom of 337. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected which states that there is a significant difference in the mean rating of male and female students regarding their perception of SIWES in Rivers State Universities.

**H<sub>02</sub>:** There is a significant difference in the mean perception Students' perception of SIWES does not significantly influence the realization of Business Education programme outcomes.

**Table 5: t-test Analysis on the mean perception Students' perception of SIWES does not significantly influence the realization of Business Education programme outcomes.**

Respondents	N	x	Std	df	t-cal	t-crit	LS	Decision
Male	157	2.83	0.89	337	3.6	±1.96	0.05	rejected
Female	182	3.19	0.95					

Table 5 above shows that t-calculated value of 3.6 which was greater than the t-critical value of ±1.96 at 0.05 level of significance and with a degree of freedom

of 337. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected which states that there is a significant difference in **the** mean perception Students' perception of SIWES does not significantly influence the realization of Business Education programme outcomes.

**H<sub>03</sub>:** There is a significant difference in the mean perception of SIWES between male and female students.

**Table 6: t-test Analysis on the Extent male and Female studentss on the extent to which utilization of multimedia projector for instructional delivery in public Secondary Schools in Port Harcourt Local Government Area.**

Respondents	N	x	Std	df	t-cal	t-crit	LS	Decision
Male	157	3.31	0.74	337	1.33	±1.96	0.05	accepted
FeMale	182	3.19	0.91					

Table 6 above shows that t-calculated value of 1.33 which was less than the t-critical value of ±1.96 at 0.05 level of significance and with a degree of freedom of 337. The null hypothesis was therefore accepted which states that there is no significant difference in the perception of SIWES between male and female students.

**DISCUSSION**

The findings from Research Question One revealed that students in Rivers State universities generally perceive SIWES positively, highlighting its role in bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application. Both male and female students reported that the scheme provides relevant practical experience, enhances technical competence, and exposes students to professional ethics and workplace discipline. This aligns with the findings of Emeasoba (2019), who reported that industrial training programs significantly enhance students' practical skills and understanding of workplace norms. Similarly, Akpomi, Stewart, and Ogbulujah (2019) noted that students value industrial exposure for the application of theoretical knowledge, which boosts confidence and competence in professional settings. The results indicate that a positive perception of SIWES motivates active engagement and fosters the development of essential skills in Business Education students.

For Research Question Two, the analysis showed that students' perception of SIWES contributes significantly to the achievement of Business Education programme outcomes. The scheme enhances practical skills, problem-solving abilities, entrepreneurial competence, and employability. This supports the findings of Madu et al. (2023), who observed that participation in industrial training improves the application of classroom knowledge and development of professional skills. Akpomi et al. (2019) also emphasized that SIWES strengthens technical competencies and readiness for real-world business challenges. Therefore, students' favorable perception of SIWES facilitates the attainment of

programme goals, ensuring that graduates acquire both theoretical knowledge and practical competencies required in the workplace.

Regarding Research Question Three, the findings revealed that male and female students perceive SIWES similarly, with no significant differences in supervision, practical exposure, or ethical training. This aligns with Emeasoba (2019) and Ogwunte (2024), who noted that well-structured industrial programs provide equitable learning opportunities across genders. Both male and female students are exposed equally to workplace tasks and professional discipline, ensuring uniform skill acquisition. These results indicate that SIWES is effective in providing inclusive, gender-neutral opportunities for practical learning and professional readiness, highlighting its role in fostering equitable development among Business Education students.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Conclusion**

The study revealed that students in Rivers State universities generally perceive the Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) positively, recognizing its relevance in providing practical experience, enhancing technical competence, and exposing students to professional ethics and workplace discipline. Both male and female students reported similar perceptions, indicating no significant gender disparity in the benefits derived from the scheme. The findings suggest that SIWES effectively bridges the gap between theoretical instruction and real-world business practice, thereby supporting the achievement of Business Education programme outcomes. It equips students with the practical skills, problem-solving abilities, and professional readiness necessary for successful careers in business and entrepreneurial ventures.

### **Recommendations**

1. Universities and host organizations should strengthen supervision and mentorship during SIWES to ensure students receive consistent guidance and meaningful engagement in workplace tasks.
2. Periodic monitoring and feedback mechanisms should be instituted to assess students' experiences, promptly address challenges, and ensure SIWES placements align with Business Education programme objectives.

Efforts should be made to guarantee that all students, regardless of gender, have equal access to relevant and challenging SIWES opportunities, fostering fairness, skill development, and professional growth across the student population.

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