

Self-Awareness Skills and Academic Performance of Undergraduate Business Education Students in Rivers State Universities

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Abstract

This study examined the relationship between self-awareness skills and academic performance of undergraduate Business Education students in Rivers State universities. Three objectives, three research questions, and three null hypotheses guided the study. A correlational research design was adopted. The population of the study comprised 1,766 students, from which a sample of 400 respondents was selected using simple random sampling. Data were collected using two structured questionnaires titled Self-Awareness Skills Questionnaire and Academic Performance Questionnaire. The instruments were validated by experts and tested for reliability using Cronbach Alpha, which yielded coefficients of 0.84 and 0.81. A total of 389 completed copies of the questionnaire were used for analysis. Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to answer the research questions and test the hypotheses at a 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that emotional awareness skills had a positive but low relationship with academic performance. Strength's recognition skills showed a stronger positive relationship with academic performance. Self-reflection skills also had a positive but low relationship with academic performance. All the relationships examined were statistically significant. The study concluded that self-awareness skills are related to students' academic performance, with strengths recognition skills showing the highest contribution. Based on the findings, it was recommended that lecturers should include activities that help students manage their emotions, guide students to identify and apply their strengths in learning tasks, and encourage regular self-reflection practices to support improved academic performance.

Keywords: *Self-Awareness, Skills, Academic Performance, Business Education, Students*

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Background to the Study

Students' ability to understand themselves can shape how they approach their studies, manage challenges, and achieve desired learning outcomes. Self-reflection skills refer to the ability of an individual to examine their own thoughts, actions, experiences, and learning processes in a deliberate and structured manner. Emotional awareness skills refer to the capacity of an individual to recognise, identify, and understand one's own emotions as well as the emotions of others in interpersonal and professional contexts. This construct is closely related to the broader framework of emotional intelligence, which encompasses self-awareness, self-regulation, social awareness, and relationship management. According to Onoja et al. (2024), self-awareness, which includes the ability to engage in self-reflection and recognise one's emotional states, is a foundational component of effective entrepreneurial and organisational behaviour. Understanding one's thoughts and feelings helps individuals improve behaviour, decision making, and personal growth over time.

Emotional awareness is understood not merely as passive recognition of feelings but as an active cognitive process through which individuals interpret emotional cues to inform decision-making and social interaction. Emotional awareness constitutes the perceptual foundation upon which empathy and prosocial behaviour are built. Emotional awareness has been linked to students' capacity to regulate learning behaviours, manage academic stress, and sustain motivation across challenging tasks. Okojie (2025) underscored the role of metacognitive practices, including self-reflection and self-regulation, in shaping the academic experiences of international students, suggesting that awareness of one's emotional and cognitive states is integral to effective learning. Awareness of personal emotions and abilities helps individuals understand themselves better and improve how they respond to different situations.

Strength's recognition skills denote the ability of an individual to identify, articulate, and strategically deploy personal competencies, talents, and positive attributes in academic, professional, and social domains. This construct is grounded in the positive psychology tradition, which emphasises the development of human potential through the systematic identification of what individuals do well rather than focusing exclusively on deficits. Within Nigerian higher education discourse, the concept has gained traction as institutions increasingly seek to cultivate graduates who possess not only technical knowledge but also a clear understanding of their own capabilities and areas for growth. According to Owhoeke et al. (2025), contemporary pedagogical approaches should equip students with the capacity to question assumptions, confront complex issues, and engage in self-reflection as a means of identifying personal and professional strengths. Strength's recognition is not a static act of self-assessment but a dynamic, iterative process through which learners continuously refine their understanding of their own competencies in relation to evolving academic and labour market demands. According to Chijioke and Omofowa (2025), experiential learning processes enable students to develop resilience through self-reflection and feedback, thereby sharpening their ability to recognise both strengths and areas requiring improvement. The act of recognising one's strengths, therefore, is conceptualised as both a metacognitive skill and a

motivational resource that sustains engagement in challenging learning environments. Recognising personal abilities alongside thoughtful self-review helps individuals improve their actions, decisions, and overall development.

Self-reflection skills refer to the deliberate and systematic process through which individuals examine their own thoughts, feelings, behaviours, and learning experiences in order to derive meaning, evaluate progress, and inform future action. This construct occupies a central position in educational psychology and is closely associated with metacognition, which Flavell (1979) originally described as "thinking about thinking." Self-reflection is understood as a higher-order cognitive activity that enables learners to monitor their comprehension, evaluate the effectiveness of their strategies, and adapt their approaches accordingly. According to Okojie (2025), self-reflection is one of the core metacognitive practices through which learners develop awareness of their own cognitive processes and regulate their learning behaviour. Self-reflection is not merely retrospective contemplation but an active, goal-directed process that mediates the relationship between learning effort and academic outcomes. According to Uko et al. (2025), self-evaluation activities encourage students to reflect on their learning processes and develop metacognitive skills. Self-reflection is both a product and a facilitator of evaluative practices in educational settings, enabling students to internalise standards of quality and take ownership of their academic development. According to Joy et al. (2025), critical thinkers are characterised not only by their analytical abilities but also by their willingness to turn the lens of inquiry upon their own assumptions, biases, and reasoning processes. Self-reflection serves as a bridge between critical thinking and personal development, enabling individuals to align their actions with their values and aspirations. The ability to review one's own actions and learning processes can influence how well a student understands tasks, completes assignments, and achieves better results.

Academic performance refers to the extent to which a student has achieved specified educational goals, typically measured through examination scores, grade point averages, course completion rates, or standardised assessment outcomes. It is a composite construct that reflects the interplay of cognitive ability, motivational orientation, instructional quality, and environmental factors. Academic performance is frequently operationalised as scores obtained in teacher-made or standardised tests administered at the end of an instructional period. According to Etim (2017), academic performance is the scores obtained by students in a commerce performance test administered after exposure to the instructional intervention. Abigail (2025) academic performance is understood as both a dependent variable shaped by affective and motivational antecedents and a contributor to students' subsequent self-perceptions and psychological well-being. Uko et al. (2025) performance is best understood as a multidimensional construct encompassing both cognitive attainment and dispositional responses to learning. Student learning outcomes often reflect how well individuals understand course content, apply knowledge, and meet expected academic standards. Student outcomes are often shaped by the quality of instruction, learning experiences, and the relevance of course content to real-world practice.

Business Education is a field of study concerned with the preparation of individuals for careers in business, commerce, and related occupations through the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and dispositions relevant to economic activity, organisational management, and entrepreneurial endeavour. According to Wagbara (2024), Business Education extends beyond the acquisition of business skills, as it also prepares graduates for roles in teaching. In addition, graduates are equipped to function in various areas of the business sector, including management, marketing, finance, and entrepreneurship. Business Education encompasses both the pedagogical dimension, which addresses the methods and processes of teaching business subjects, and the vocational dimension, which equips learners with competencies for employment, self-employment, and economic participation. According to Ow hoeke et al. (2025), Business Education must evolve to incorporate innovative pedagogical strategies that prepare students for dynamic and unpredictable economic environments. Their conceptualisation positions Business Education not merely as a curricular programme but as a mechanism for human capital development that responds to shifting economic realities.

Business Education students are individuals enrolled in formal programmes of study at secondary or tertiary levels whose curriculum is oriented towards the acquisition of knowledge and skills in business, commerce, accounting, management, marketing, and related disciplines. According to Innocent (2025), undergraduate Business Education students are individuals enrolled in bachelor's degree programmes that include areas such as accounting, management, marketing, office management and technology, and entrepreneurship. Business Education students are found in colleges of education, polytechnics, and universities, where they pursue qualifications that prepare them for teaching roles in business subjects or for direct entry into commercial and entrepreneurial activities. Ow hoeke et al. (2025) described Business Education students in Nigerian tertiary institutions as learners who are expected to develop not only disciplinary knowledge but also professional skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and self-reflection, which are considered essential for success in an era of economic uncertainty. Chijioke and Omofowa (2025) similarly characterised these students as active participants in experiential learning processes who are required to develop entrepreneurial mind-sets and demonstrate resilience through reflective practice.

Statement of the Problem

In recent years, attention has been given to factors that can improve students' academic performance in universities, especially in programmes such as Business Education where both knowledge and personal skills are required. Despite this attention, many undergraduate students still record unsatisfactory academic outcomes, which may be linked not only to teaching methods or learning resources, but also to personal abilities such as understanding one's emotions, recognising personal strengths, and engaging in self-reflection. Self-awareness skills are important in helping students manage their learning, make informed decisions, and respond effectively to academic challenges. Emotional awareness can help students control stress and remain focused, strengths recognition can guide them in using their abilities effectively, while self-reflection can support continuous improvement in learning. However, it

appears that many students may not fully develop or apply these skills during their studies, which may affect their academic performance.

Although several studies have examined academic performance from different perspectives, limited attention has been given to how specific aspects of self-awareness relate to the performance of undergraduate Business Education students. As a result, there is a lack of clear understanding of whether emotional awareness, strengths recognition, and self-reflection have any meaningful relationship with students' academic outcomes. The problem of this study therefore lies in the need to understand how self-awareness skills are related to academic performance among undergraduate Business Education students in universities. Without such understanding, efforts to improve students' performance may not fully address important personal factors that influence learning. This study was therefore designed to examine the relationship between emotional awareness skills, strengths recognition skills, self-reflection skills, and academic performance among undergraduate Business Education students.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the relationship between emotional awareness skills and academic performance of undergraduate Business Education students in Rivers State universities?
2. What is the relationship between strengths recognition skills and academic performance of undergraduate Business Education students in Rivers State universities?
3. What is the relationship between self-reflection skills and academic performance of undergraduate Business Education students in Rivers State universities?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses formulated were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. there is no significant relationship between emotional awareness skills and academic performance of undergraduate Business Education students in Rivers State universities.
2. There is no significant relationship between strengths recognition skills and academic performance of undergraduate Business Education students in Rivers State universities.
3. There is no significant relationship between self-reflection skills and academic performance of undergraduate Business Education students in Rivers State universities.

Method

This study adopted a correlational survey research design. The study was carried out in Rivers State, Nigeria. Rivers State is located in the South-South geopolitical zone of the country and hosts public universities that offer Business Education programmes. The population of the

study comprised 1,766 Business Education students in Rivers State universities. This included 392 students from Rivers State University, and 1,374 students from Ignatius Ajuru University of Education. These population figures were obtained from the Departments of Business Education in the selected universities. To determine the sample size, Taro Yamane's formula was employed, resulting in a sample size of 326 respondents. In accordance with Nwankwo (2013), who recommended using a sample size larger than the minimum derived from statistical formulas to improve representativeness, a total of 400 respondents was selected for the study. A simple random sampling technique was adopted to ensure that each student had an equal chance of being included in the sample. Data for the study were collected using two structured questionnaires titled Self-Awareness Skills Questionnaire (SASQ), and Academic Performance Questionnaire (APQ). The instrument was divided into three sections: Section A: Personal and demographic information of respondents. Section B: Items measuring emotional awareness skills, strengths recognition skills, and self-reflection skills. Section C: items measuring academic performance indicators which is the second questionnaire titled Academic Performance Questionnaire (APQ). Responses were measured using a four-point rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA) = 4 points, Agree (A) = 3 points, Disagree (D) = 2 points, and Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1 point. The instrument was subjected to face and content validation by three experts, two from Business Education and one expert from Measurement and Evaluation. The experts validated the items to ensure clarity, relevance, and adequacy in measuring the intended variables. Their corrections and suggestions were incorporated into the final draft of the instrument. The reliability of the instrument was established using the Cronbach Alpha method. A pilot test was conducted on Business Education students in Imo State University. The responses were analyzed, which yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.84 for the first instrument and a reliability coefficient of 0.81 for the second instrument. 400 copies of the questionnaires were administered, and 389 copies of the completed questionnaires were retrieved and used for the data analysis. The data collected were analysed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) to answer the research questions and test the hypotheses at a 0.05 level of significance. The null hypotheses were retained when the p value is greater than the level of significance, that is above 0.05, and rejected when the p value is lower than the level of significance.

Results

Research Question 1: What is the relationship between emotional awareness skills and academic performance of undergraduate Business Education students in Rivers State universities?

1. There is no significant relationship between emotional awareness skills and academic performance of undergraduate Business Education students in Rivers State universities.

Table 1: Summary of Pearson's Product Moment Correlation on the relationship between emotional awareness skills and academic performance of undergraduate Business Education students in Rivers State universities.

		Emotional Awareness Skills	Academic Performance
Emotional Awareness Skills	Pearson Correlation	1	.277
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000
Academic Performance	Pearson Correlation	.277	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	
	N	389	389

The result from Table 1 showed the summary of Pearson's Product Moment Correlation on the relationship between emotional awareness skills and academic performance of undergraduate Business Education students in Rivers State universities. The result showed that the relationship between emotional awareness skills and academic performance was positive and low ($r = 0.277$). The r-squared value of 0.0767 showed that emotional awareness skills contributed about 7.67% to the observed variance in academic performance of undergraduate Business Education students in Rivers State universities. The p-value (.000) showed that there is a significant relationship between emotional awareness skills and academic performance of undergraduate Business Education students in Rivers State universities. The null hypothesis (H_0) was rejected at the .05 level of significance.

Research Question 2: What is the relationship between strengths recognition skills and academic performance of undergraduate Business Education students in Rivers State universities?

1. There is no significant relationship between strengths recognition skills and academic performance of undergraduate Business Education students in Rivers State universities.

Table 2: Summary of Pearson's Product Moment Correlation on the relationship between strengths recognition skills and academic performance of undergraduate Business Education students in Rivers State universities.

		Strengths Recognition Skills	Academic Performance
Strengths Recognition Skills	Pearson Correlation	1	.540
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000
Academic Performance	Pearson Correlation	.540	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	
	N	389	389

The result from Table 2 showed the summary of Pearson's Product Moment Correlation on the relationship between strengths recognition skills and academic performance of

undergraduate Business Education students in Rivers State universities. The result showed that the relationship between strengths recognition skills and academic performance was positive and moderate ($r = 0.540$). The r-squared value of 0.2916 showed that strengths recognition skills contributed about 29.16% to the observed variance in academic performance of undergraduate Business Education students in Rivers State universities. The p-value (.000) showed that there is a significant relationship between strengths recognition skills and academic performance of undergraduate Business Education students in Rivers State universities. The null hypothesis (H02) was rejected at the .05 level of significance.

Research Question 3: What is the relationship between self-reflection skills and academic performance of undergraduate Business Education students in Rivers State universities?

1. There is no significant relationship between self-reflection skills and academic performance of undergraduate Business Education students in Rivers State universities.

Table 3: Summary of Pearson's Product Moment Correlation on the relationship between self-reflection skills and academic performance of undergraduate Business Education students in Rivers State universities.

		Self-Reflection Skills	Academic Performance
Self-Reflection Skills	Pearson Correlation	1	.264
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000
Academic Performance	Pearson Correlation	.264	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	
	N	389	389

The result from Table 3 showed the summary of Pearson's Product Moment Correlation on the relationship between self-reflection skills and academic performance of undergraduate Business Education students in Rivers State universities. The result showed that the relationship between self-reflection skills and academic performance was positive and low ($r = 0.264$). The r-squared value of 0.0697 showed that self-reflection skills contributed about 6.97% to the observed variance in academic performance of undergraduate Business Education students in Rivers State universities. The p-value (.000) showed that there is a significant relationship between self-reflection skills and academic performance of undergraduate Business Education students in Rivers State universities. The null hypothesis (H03) was rejected at the .05 level of significance.

Discussion

The findings from Table 1 relating to research question 1 provided meaningful insight into the relationship between emotional awareness skills and academic performance among undergraduate Business Education students. The analysis showed a positive yet low relationship between these two variables ($r = 0.277$), with emotional awareness skills

accounting for approximately 7.67% of the changes seen in academic performance. Despite the low strength of this relationship, the p value of .000 indicates that this link is statistically significant. This finding led to the rejection of the null hypothesis, confirming that emotional awareness does relate to how well students perform in their studies. Ononye et al. (2022), who looked at emotional intelligence and academic results among university students in Nigeria. Their study, which focused on Business Administration and Marketing students at Delta State University, found that emotional intelligence had a positive and meaningful connection with academic performance ($\beta = 0.260, p = 0.000$). This finding matches the result from Table 1, as both show that students who better understand and manage their feelings tend to do better in their schoolwork. Ononye et al. (2022) noted that emotional skills serve as personal resources that help students handle the pressures of university life, which in turn supports their learning and achievement. This backs up the idea that emotional awareness, even if its direct effect appears small, plays a real part in student success.

Similarly, Kior et al. (2025) who studied Business Education students in Colleges of Education across North-Central Nigeria, specifically looked at how emotional intelligence affects achievement in business statistics. Kior et al. (2025) results showed that emotional intelligence significantly influenced both academic achievement and student attitudes toward the subject. There is a strong relationship between the two studies as they both looked at students' emotional skills and performance. Furthermore, Kior et al. (2025) concluded that helping students build their emotional intelligence can lead to better results in their courses. This directly supports the finding from Table 1 that emotional awareness skills relate to academic performance, and it suggests that teachers should pay attention to these skills when planning their lessons.

The findings from Table 2 relating to research question 2 shows that strengths recognition skills have a positive and moderate relationship with academic performance ($r = 0.540$). This means that students who are better at identifying what they are good at tend to perform better in their studies. The r-squared value of 0.2916 tells us that strengths recognition skills explain about 29.16% of the differences seen in academic performance among the students. The p-value of .000 confirms that this link is statistically significant, and so the null hypothesis was rejected. Ekwonye et al. (2025), studied how recognising and using one's main strengths shapes the college experience for undergraduate students. Ekwonye et al. (2025), found that when students identify and apply their personal strengths, they are better able to handle life challenges, build good relationships, and succeed in their academic work. This is in agreement with the findings in Table 2 as both show that knowing one's own strengths is linked to doing well at university. Ekwonye et al. (2025) explained that students who use their strengths are more likely to feel capable and confident, which in turn helps them perform better in their courses.

Also, Wonu et al. (2025), explored the factors that help students achieve top grades in mathematics. The above study results showed that students who earned first class honours often used effective study strategies and had a strong sense of their own abilities. While their study did not directly measure strengths recognition, the findings point to the same idea. Students who understand what they are good at are more likely to organise their study time

well and stay motivated. Wonu et al. (2025) noted that knowing one's personal strengths helps students build the resilience and focus needed for high level performance. This supports the result from Table 2, as it shows that self-awareness, including recognising one's strengths, plays a meaningful role in academic success.

The findings from Table 3 relating to research question 3 show that self-reflection skills have a positive but low relationship with academic performance ($r = 0.264$). This means that students who think about their own learning and behaviour tend to do slightly better in their studies, but the link is not very strong. The r-squared value of 0.0697 tells us that self-reflection skills explain only about 6.97% of the differences seen in academic performance among the students. The p value of .000 confirms that this link is still statistically significant, and so the null hypothesis was rejected. Akpomi and Ikpesu (2021), who studied the reflective practices among business educators in universities, the focused-on teachers rather than students, the findings are still useful here. Akpomi and Ikpesu (2021) found that reflective thinking, reflective practice, and reflective learning all had a weak statistical association with teaching effectiveness. This matches the finding from Table 3, because both show that reflection related skills have a positive but low level of connection with the outcome being measured. Akpomi and Ikpesu (2021) noted that reflection does play a part in improving performance, but it is not the strongest factor on its own. This supports the idea that self-reflection skills matter for academic work, even if their direct effect appears small.

Oguguo et al. (2024) examined the impact of self-evaluation strategy on mathematical achievement among undergraduate students, this corresponds with self-evaluation is closely related to self-reflection, as both involve students looking at their own understanding and performance. The results showed that students who used self-evaluation strategies performed better in mathematics compared to those who did not. The finding supports the result from Table 3, because it shows that when students take time to reflect on their own learning, they tend to achieve better results. Oguguo et al. (2024) explained that self-evaluation helps students identify what they have understood and where they still need to improve, which then guides their study efforts.

Conclusion

The findings of the study show that self-awareness skills are positively related to academic performance among undergraduate Business Education students. Emotional awareness skills showed a positive but low relationship with academic performance, indicating that students who are more aware of their emotions tend to perform slightly better, although the level of influence is limited. Strengths recognition skills recorded a stronger relationship with academic performance, showing that students who are able to identify and make use of their strengths are more likely to achieve better academic outcomes. Self-reflection skills also showed a positive but low relationship, suggesting that the ability to assess one's own learning and behaviour contributes to performance, though to a lesser extent. The results further indicate that all the relationships examined are statistically significant, which means that emotional awareness, strengths recognition, and self-reflection skills each have a meaningful

link with academic performance. Among these variables, strengths recognition skills stand out as having the highest contribution, while emotional awareness and self-reflection make smaller contributions. The study shows that self-awareness skills are important factors in students' academic performance. While all the components examined have a role to play, the ability to recognise personal strengths appears to have a stronger influence. These findings suggest that efforts to improve students' self-awareness, especially in recognising and applying their strengths, may support better academic outcomes.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of the study:

1. Lecturers should include simple activities that help students recognise and manage their emotions during learning, to support better focus and classroom engagement.
2. Lecturers should guide students to identify their personal strengths and apply them in academic tasks, to improve their learning outcomes.
3. Lecturers should encourage students to engage in regular self-reflection activities, such as learning journals or feedback reviews, to improve their academic progress.

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