

## Gender Education and Skill Development Among Students in the Department of Educational Management in Public Universities in Cross River State, Nigeria

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### Abstract

This study investigated the influence of gender education, gender-sensitive educational practices, and access to skill development opportunities on students' professional competence in the Department of Educational Management in public universities in Cross River State, Nigeria. The descriptive survey research design was adopted, and a stratified random sample of 334 undergraduate students was drawn from the two universities. The researcher-developed instruments titled: Gender Education Scale (GES) and the Skill Development and Professional Competence Inventory (SDPCI) which were subjected to Cronbach's Alpha reliability analysis, yielding reliability coefficients of 0.84 for GES and 0.87 for SDPCI, indicating strong internal consistency. The data collected with these instruments were analyzed using descriptive statistics, ANOVA, and regression analysis. The findings revealed that gender education significantly enhances students' skill development, gender-sensitive educational practices positively affect managerial skill acquisition, and access to skill development opportunities strongly predicts students' professional competence. The study concludes that integrating gender education, inclusive teaching practices, and structured skill development platforms is critical for producing competent, career-ready graduates in educational management. The study recommends curriculum reforms, gender-responsive instructional strategies, and increased practical learning opportunities to enhance students' professional preparedness.

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### **Background to the Study**

The persistent gender disparity in education and skill development remains a pressing challenge in Nigeria, particularly within higher education institutions. In public universities, female students often face systemic barriers that limit their access to quality educational resources and skill acquisition opportunities, including societal expectations, inadequate mentorship, and unequal access to professional training programs (Adams & Uzoigwe, 2023). These barriers not only affect the academic performance of students but also hinder the cultivation of essential managerial and professional competencies required for leadership roles in educational management. Studies have shown that despite policy frameworks advocating for gender equality in education, practical implementation often falls short, leaving a significant gap between male and female students in terms of career readiness and employable skill sets (Ekanem & Uzoigwe, 2023). This inequality is compounded by limited institutional support structures that fail to adequately address the unique learning needs of female students, thereby perpetuating cycles of underrepresentation in leadership positions within the education sector.

Moreover, the lack of targeted skill development programs exacerbates the challenge of gender inequity in educational management, undermining students' capacity to compete effectively in the labor market. Research indicates that students in public universities often graduate without the practical and managerial competencies necessary for professional advancement, with female students disproportionately affected due to fewer opportunities for mentorship, internships, and participation in co-curricular programs (Inah, Ekpang, & Uzoigwe, 2024). The deficiency in gender-sensitive instructional strategies further limits engagement and retention in courses critical for skill acquisition, leading to lower confidence levels and reduced employability among female students. This scenario underscores the urgent need for empirical studies that explore the intersection of gender, education, and skill development in Nigerian universities, with a focus on identifying strategies to bridge the gender gap and enhance the overall professional preparedness of students in the Department of Educational Management in public universities across Cross River State.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Gender disparities in access to quality education and skill development opportunities remain a serious concern in public universities in Cross River State, particularly within the Department of Educational Management. Male and female students do not benefit equally from learning opportunities, access to academic support systems, leadership training, mentorship, and practical skill acquisition platforms. Female students, in particular, continue to face structural, cultural, and institutional constraints that limit their participation in leadership-oriented activities, decision-making processes, and professional development programmes. These challenges manifest in unequal classroom engagement, limited exposure to managerial competencies, weak confidence development, and restricted access to employable skills, thereby undermining academic growth and professional preparedness.

In addition, the absence of structured, gender-responsive educational policies and coherent skill development frameworks within the department have further intensified the problem. Existing curricula and training programmes largely emphasize theoretical knowledge while neglecting practical, entrepreneurial, and managerial skill acquisition that prepares students for real-world professional demands. This gap has resulted in graduates who are academically qualified but insufficiently equipped with relevant competencies for leadership, innovation, and effective educational management practice. The lack of institutional mechanisms to mainstream gender equity into teaching, learning, and skill development processes continues to widen the gender gap, creating long-term implications for workforce readiness, leadership representation, and sustainable development in the education sector.

### **Empirical Literature Review**

Several studies have shown that gender education significantly shapes students' skill development by influencing their attitudes, motivation, and access to professional learning resources. For instance, Okeke and Adebayo (2020) reported that when gender concepts are embedded in university curricula, female students show improved analytical and communication skills, closing the traditional performance gap with male peers. Similarly, Olorundare and Nwobu (2019) found that students exposed to gender awareness courses demonstrated stronger interpersonal and problem-solving skills compared to those without such exposure. In research examining tertiary education programmes, Ibrahim and Bello (2021) observed that gender-inclusive learning environments enhance students' confidence in engaging with complex academic and managerial tasks, thereby supporting the development of critical employability skills.

In studies focused on education management programmes, gender education has also been linked with enhanced leadership competencies. A study by Musa and Ojo (2022) found that students who received structured gender education were more likely to take on leadership roles in project activities and academic associations. Adeleke and Tunde (2021) reported that gender-conscious instruction positively affected students' decision-making capabilities and team coordination. Furthermore, Olaniyan (2020) showed that gender education reduced stereotype-related barriers that often limit female students' participation in skill-intensive assignments, enabling a more balanced acquisition of managerial competencies among both male and female students. The impact of gender-sensitive educational practices on managerial skill acquisition is also well documented. For example, Chukwu (2021) found that the implementation of participatory teaching methods and equitable instructional strategies in educational management courses significantly improved students' organizational and planning skills. Likewise, Adeyemi and Okafor (2022) highlighted that gender-responsive classroom practices, such as collaborative group work and role-sharing, enhanced students' task management and conflict resolution abilities. In a comparative study, Banjo and Samuel (2023) reported that students in gender-sensitive learning environments outperformed their counterparts in traditional classrooms in areas of leadership planning, delegation, and administrative decision making.

Research has also demonstrated that support systems designed to address gender imbalances can strengthen managerial skill acquisition. According to Eze and Kalu (2020), mentoring programmes that emphasize gender equity led to improvements in students' supervisory and strategic planning skills. Ajayi and Williams (2022) found that when instructors consciously adopt inclusive feedback practices, students, especially females, show increased competency in project coordination and educational administration tasks. Okoro and Abiola (2019) similarly revealed that when educational interventions account for gender differences in learning, students display higher adaptability and innovation in managerial functions.

Regarding access to skill development opportunities, studies suggest a strong link between participation in practical training and professional competence. Umeh and Obi (2021) reported that students who engaged in internships and workplace simulations developed higher administrative and communication skills critical for careers in educational management. In a study on experiential learning, Kanu and Chima (2020) found that access to workshops and seminars significantly improved students' preparedness for professional duties, including planning, evaluation, and leadership. Research by Sanni and Rafiu (2019) also highlighted that students with regular opportunities for hands-on skill development exhibited superior self-management and organizational competencies.

The relationship between access to skill development opportunities and professional competence is further supported by evidence on co-curricular engagement. Ajiboye and Oladimeji (2023) observed that students participating in leadership clubs, conferences, and professional networks demonstrated more refined communication, analytical thinking, and administrative effectiveness. Olukoya and Fagbemi (2022) found that equitable access to training platforms fosters not only technical abilities but also professional confidence, positively influencing employability outcomes. Similarly, Afolabi and Yusuf (2021) revealed that students with broader exposure to skill development platforms performed better in evaluative assessments of institutional planning and resource management.

Empirical studies examining combined effects of gender education, gender-sensitive practices, and access to skills support the interconnectedness of these factors in promoting professional competence. Adetunji and Omolade (2024) found that students exposed to integrated gender-informed instruction and practical skill workshops exhibited significantly higher performance in leadership and administrative proficiency assessments. Olusanya and Ibrahim (2023) reported that female students with both gender education and access to co-curricular skills programmes were more likely to demonstrate competence on par with male peers. Oyetunji and Akinwande (2022) similarly concluded that equitable skill access coupled with gender-responsive practices leads to enhanced managerial competency across gender groups in educational management programmes.

Existing studies on gender education and skill development in higher education have largely focused on general student populations, with limited attention to discipline-specific contexts such as the Department of Educational Management. Most empirical works emphasize broad

gender equity outcomes without systematically examining how gender education directly influences concrete managerial and professional skill development among students preparing for leadership roles in education. There is also a noticeable gap in research that integrates gender education, gender-sensitive educational practices, and access to skill development opportunities within a single analytical framework, leading to fragmented understanding of their combined effects. Furthermore, few studies adopt a context-specific focus on public universities in Cross River State, Nigeria, despite the unique socio-cultural and institutional dynamics that shape gender relations and learning experiences in the region. This present study therefore fills these gaps by providing empirical, department-specific, and context-based evidence on how gender education and structured skill development mechanisms jointly shape students' professional competence in educational management.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study is anchored on Bandura's Social Learning Theory, propounded by Albert Bandura in 1977, which emphasizes that learning occurs within a social context through observation, imitation, and modeling of behaviors, attitudes, and skills. The central assumption of the theory is that individuals acquire knowledge not only through direct experience but also by observing others and internalizing their behaviors, reinforced by social feedback and consequences. Bandura posited that cognitive, behavioral, and environmental factors interact dynamically to shape learning outcomes, meaning that learners are active participants who can reflect, emulate, and adapt behaviors based on observed models. In the context of gender education and skill development among students in the Department of Educational Management, this theory is highly applicable because it highlights the importance of role models, mentorship, peer interactions, and participatory learning in fostering competence. By observing effective leadership practices, problem-solving strategies, and professional behaviors in both male and female mentors or peers, students can develop critical managerial skills, confidence, and professional dispositions necessary for educational management, while also addressing gender disparities by promoting equal access to observational and practical learning experiences.

Empirical studies have provided support for the application of Bandura's Social Learning Theory in educational contexts, particularly in relation to skill development and gender inclusion. For instance, Ekanem and Uzoigwe (2023) investigated the influence of peer modeling and mentorship on students' skill acquisition in educational management programmes in Nigerian universities using a descriptive survey design. The study sampled 320 students through stratified sampling and utilized a structured questionnaire analyzed with mean and standard deviation. The findings revealed that students who were exposed to role models and interactive learning environments demonstrated significantly higher levels of managerial and leadership skills. The study concluded that observational learning and social interaction significantly enhance students' competencies, thereby affirming the core assumptions of Social Learning Theory.

Similarly, Ayang, Uzoigwe, and Egbai (2025) examined gender-inclusive learning practices and their effect on students' professional skill development in higher institutions. Adopting a correlational research design, the study involved 410 respondents and employed regression analysis for data analysis. The results indicated that exposure to diverse role models, inclusive classroom participation, and collaborative learning significantly predicted students' skill development irrespective of gender. The authors concluded that learning through observation, imitation, and social reinforcement plays a crucial role in bridging gender gaps and enhancing competence among students. These findings collectively validate the relevance of Bandura's Social Learning Theory in explaining how gender education can influence skill development through social interaction and modeled experiences.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The main objective of this study was to examine the influence of gender education on skill development among students in the Department of Educational Management in public universities in Cross River State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought:

1. To examine the influence of gender education on skill development among students in the Department of Educational Management in public universities in Cross River State, Nigeria.
2. To assess the effect of gender-sensitive educational practices on managerial skill acquisition among students in the Department of Educational Management.
3. To evaluate the relationship between access to skill development opportunities and students' professional competence in the Department of Educational Management.

### **Research Questions**

The following research were raised to guide the study:

1. How does gender education influence skill development among students in the Department of Educational Management in public universities in Cross River State, Nigeria?
2. What is the influence of gender-sensitive educational practices on managerial skill acquisition among students in the Department of Educational Management?
3. What is the relationship between access to skill development opportunities and students' professional competence in the Department of Educational Management?

### **Research Hypotheses**

The following hypotheses were formulated to guide the study:

1. Gender education has no significant influence on skill development among students in the Department of Educational Management in public universities in Cross River State, Nigeria.
2. Gender-sensitive educational practices have no significant influence on managerial skill acquisition among students in the Department of Educational Management.
3. Access to skill development opportunities has no significant relationship with students' professional competence in the Department of Educational Management.

## **Methodology**

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design, which was considered appropriate for examining gender education and skill development among students in the Department of Educational Management in public universities in Cross River State, Nigeria. This design enabled the systematic collection, analysis, and interpretation of data from a representative sample, thereby allowing valid generalizations to be made about the study population. The target population comprised all undergraduate students in the Department of Educational Management in the two public universities in Cross River State, namely the University of Calabar (Federal) and the University of Cross River State (State), with an estimated population of 2,840 students. A stratified random sampling technique was employed to draw a sample of 350 students, representing approximately 12.3% of the population. Stratification was based on levels of study and gender to ensure proportional representation across academic levels and both male and female students, thereby enhancing the reliability and generalizability of the findings.

Data for the study were collected using two researcher-developed instruments: The Gender Education Scale (GES) and the Skill Development and Professional Competence Inventory (SDPCI). Each instrument contained 30 items carefully aligned with the study's specific objectives. To ensure content and construct validity, the instruments were reviewed by three experts in Educational Management, Gender Studies, and Measurement and Evaluation. Based on their recommendations, necessary modifications were made to improve clarity, relevance, and alignment with the study variables and conceptual framework. A pilot test was conducted using 25 students from Departments of Educational Management in public universities outside Cross River State. The instruments were subjected to Cronbach's Alpha reliability analysis, yielding reliability coefficients of 0.84 for GES and 0.87 for SDPCI, indicating strong internal consistency.

The instruments were structured in three sections: Section A focused on demographic information; Section B contained items on gender education and gender-sensitive educational practices; while Section C consisted of items on skill development opportunities and students' professional competence. The questionnaires were administered both physically and electronically to accommodate students' accessibility and preferences and to improve response rates. Trained research assistants assisted in the distribution and collection of the instruments across lecture halls and departmental platforms over a four-week period. Of the 350 questionnaires distributed, 334 were correctly completed and returned, representing a 95.4% response rate. Responses were rated on a four-point Likert scale of Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1). A criterion mean score of 2.50 was adopted as the benchmark for decision-making. Mean scores equal to or above 2.50 indicated positive influence of gender education, effective gender-sensitive practices, and adequate access to skill development opportunities, while mean scores below 2.50 indicated negative influence, ineffective practices, and inadequate access. This methodological approach ensured the generation of valid, reliable, and contextually relevant data for assessing gender education and skill development among students in the Department of Educational Management in public universities in Cross River State, Nigeria.

## Results

### Research Question One

How does gender education influence skill development among students in the Department of Educational Management in public universities in Cross River State, Nigeria?

**Table 1:** Respondents' mean ratings and standard deviation on the influence of gender education on skill development among students in the Department of Educational Management in public universities in Cross River State (n = 334)

S/N	Influence indicators	n	Mean	S.D.	Decision
1	Gender education enhances students' confidence in skill acquisition	334	3.31	0.68	SA
2	Gender education promotes equal participation in academic activities	334	3.28	0.71	A
3	Exposure to gender education improves leadership skill development	334	3.35	0.66	SA
4	Gender education reduces stereotypes that limit students' learning opportunities	334	3.22	0.74	A
5	Gender education supports the development of communication skills	334	3.26	0.70	A
6	Gender education enhances students' problem -solving abilities	334	3.30	0.69	SA
7	Gender education improves teamwork and collaborative skills	334	3.24	0.72	A
8	Gender education strengthens students' managerial competence	334	3.27	0.71	A
9	Gender education promotes equitable access to learning resources	334	3.19	0.75	A
10	Gender education enhances students' readiness for professional roles	334	3.33	0.67	SA
	Grand mean score	334	3.28	0.70	A

**Source:** Fieldwork, 2025

The results in Table 1 show that respondents acknowledged the positive influence of gender education on skill development among students in the Department of Educational Management in public universities in Cross River State. The grand mean score of 3.28, which falls within the "Agree" (A) category, indicates that the majority of respondents perceived gender education as a significant contributor to students' skill development. The highest-rated items include improvement in leadership skills ( $X = 3.35$ ), enhancement of professional readiness ( $X = 3.33$ ), and increased confidence in skill acquisition ( $X = 3.31$ ), suggesting that gender education plays a strong role in building students' competence and preparedness for professional responsibilities. Other key areas such as teamwork, communication, and problem-solving were also positively rated, reflecting broad developmental benefits. The standard deviation values, ranging from 0.66 to 0.75, indicate a moderate level of agreement

among respondents. Overall, the findings demonstrate that gender education significantly contributes to the development of cognitive, managerial, and professional skills among students in the Department of Educational Management.

### Research Question Two

What is the effect of gender-sensitive educational practices on managerial skill acquisition among students in the Department of Educational Management?

**Table 2:** Respondents' mean ratings and standard deviation on the effect of gender-sensitive educational practices on managerial skill acquisition among students in the Department of Educational Management in public universities in Cross River State (n = 334)

S/N	Effect indicators	N	Mean	S.D.	Decision
1	Gender-sensitive teaching methods improve students' leadership abilities	334	3.34	0.67	SA
2	Inclusive classroom practices enhance students' planning and organizational skills	334	3.29	0.70	A
3	Equitable participation opportunities strengthen students' decision-making skills	334	3.31	0.69	SA
4	Gender-responsive mentoring improves students' supervisory competence	334	3.26	0.72	A
5	Gender-sensitive feedback practices enhance managerial confidence	334	3.28	0.71	A
6	Collaborative learning environments promote coordination and teamwork skills	334	3.33	0.68	SA
7	Gender-sensitive instructional strategies improve students' administrative skills	334	3.24	0.73	A
8	Fair task allocation strengthens students' resource management abilities	334	3.27	0.70	A
9	Gender-responsive classroom interactions improve conflict management skills	334	3.22	0.74	A
10	Gender-sensitive practices enhance students' readiness for managerial roles	334	3.36	0.65	SA
	Grand mean score	334	3.29	0.70	A

**Source:** Fieldwork, 2025

The results in Table 2 indicate that respondents generally agreed that gender-sensitive educational practices have a positive effect on managerial skill acquisition among students in the Department of Educational Management in public universities in Cross River State. The grand mean score of 3.29, which falls within the "Agree" (A) category, shows that these practices are perceived as significant contributors to students' managerial development. The

highest-rated items include readiness for managerial roles ( $X = 3.36$ ), improvement in leadership abilities ( $X = 3.34$ ), and promotion of coordination and teamwork skills ( $X = 3.33$ ), suggesting that gender-sensitive practices strongly enhance leadership and organizational capacities. Other areas such as planning, supervision, decision-making, and administrative competence were also positively rated, indicating broad managerial benefits. The standard deviation values, ranging from 0.65 to 0.74, reflect a moderate level of consensus among respondents. Overall, the findings demonstrate that gender-sensitive educational practices play a critical role in strengthening managerial skills and professional preparedness among students in the Department of Educational Management.

### Research Question Three

What is the relationship between access to skill development opportunities and students' professional competence in the Department of Educational Management?

**Table 3:** Respondents' mean ratings and standard deviation on the relationship between access to skill development opportunities and students' professional competence in the Department of Educational Management in public universities in Cross River State ( $n = 334$ )

S/N	Relationship indicators	N	Mean	S.D.	Decision
1	Access to internships enhances students' professional competence	334	3.35	0.66	SA
2	Participation in workshops and seminars improves students' managerial competence	334	3.32	0.68	SA
3	Access to practical training strengthens students' leadership skills	334	3.30	0.69	SA
4	Skill development programmes improve students' communication competence	334	3.28	0.70	A
5	Exposure to professional training enhances students' decision-making ability	334	3.31	0.67	SA
6	Access to mentoring programmes improves students' administrative competence	334	3.27	0.71	A
7	Participation in co-curricular activities enhances students' teamwork skills	334	3.29	0.69	A
8	Skill acquisition opportunities strengthen students' problem-solving competence	334	3.33	0.68	SA
9	Professional development opportunities improve students' career readiness	334	3.34	0.66	SA
10	Access to skill development opportunities enhances overall professional competence	334	3.38	0.64	SA
	Grand mean score	334	3.32	0.68	A

**Source:** Fieldwork, 2025

The results in Table 3 reveal a strong positive relationship between access to skill development opportunities and students' professional competence in the Department of Educational Management in public universities in Cross River State. The grand mean score of 3.32, which falls within the "Agree" (A) category, indicates that respondents generally perceived access to skill development platforms as a major contributor to students' professional competence. The highest-rated items include overall enhancement of professional competence ( $\bar{X} = 3.38$ ), improved career readiness ( $\bar{X} = 3.34$ ), and enhancement of internship-based competence ( $\bar{X} = 3.35$ ), suggesting that experiential and practical learning opportunities play a critical role in shaping students' professional preparedness. Other indicators such as leadership development, problem-solving ability, communication competence, and teamwork were also positively rated, reflecting the broad impact of skill development access. The standard deviation values, ranging from 0.64 to 0.71, indicate a moderate level of agreement among respondents. Overall, the findings demonstrate that equitable access to structured skill development opportunities significantly strengthens students' professional competence and readiness for effective practice in educational management.

### Hypothesis One

Gender education has no significant influence on skill development among students in the Department of Educational Management in public universities in Cross River State, Nigeria.

$H_{01}$ : Gender education has no significant influence on skill development among students in the Department of Educational Management in public universities in Cross River State, Nigeria.

**Table 4:** One-way ANOVA analysis of the influence of gender education on skill development among students in the Department of Educational Management (n = 334)

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F-cal	F-crit	Sig. (p)	Decision
Between Groups	41.28	2	20.64	15.73	3.00	0.000	Reject $H_0$
Within Groups	434.16	331	1.31				
Total	475.44	333					

**Source:** Fieldwork, 2025

The result of the one-way ANOVA presented in Table 4 shows that gender education has a statistically significant influence on skill development among students in the Department of Educational Management in public universities in Cross River State, Nigeria. The calculated F-value ( $F_{\text{cal}} = 15.73$ ) is greater than the critical F-value ( $F_{\text{crit}} = 3.00$ ) at the 0.05 level of significance, and the significance value ( $p = 0.000$ ) is less than 0.05. This indicates that the null hypothesis is rejected. The finding therefore establishes that gender education significantly influences students' skill development, implying that variations in gender education exposure lead to significant differences in students' levels of skill acquisition, professional competence, and preparedness for educational management practice.

### Hypothesis Two

Gender-sensitive educational practices have no significant influence on managerial skill acquisition among students in the Department of Educational Management.

**Table 5:** One-way ANOVA analysis of the influence of gender-sensitive educational practices on managerial skill acquisition among students in the Department of Educational Management (n = 334)

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F-cal	F-crit	Sig. (p)	Decision
Between Groups	38.64	2	19.32	14.89	3.00	0.000	Reject H <sub>0</sub>
Within Groups	429.78	331	1.30				
Total	468.42	333					

Source: Fieldwork, 2025

The result of the one-way ANOVA presented in Table 5 indicates that gender-sensitive educational practices have a statistically significant influence on managerial skill acquisition among students in the Department of Educational Management in public universities in Cross River State, Nigeria. The calculated F-value (F-cal = 14.89) is greater than the critical F-value (F-crit = 3.00) at the 0.05 level of significance, and the significance value (p = 0.000) is less than 0.05. This implies that the null hypothesis is rejected. The finding therefore confirms that variations in gender-sensitive educational practices significantly affect students' managerial skill acquisition, influencing their leadership capacity, administrative competence, decision-making ability, and readiness for managerial responsibilities in educational management practice.

### Hypothesis Three

Access to skill development opportunities has no significant relationship with students' professional competence in the Department of Educational Management.

**Table 6:** Regression analysis of the relationship between access to skill development opportunities and students' professional competence (n = 334)

Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	Std. Error of the Estimate	F-cal	F-crit	Sig. (p)	Decision
1	0.68	0.46	0.45	0.49	281.52	3.87	0.000	Reject H <sub>0</sub>

Source: Fieldwork, 2025

The regression analysis in Table 6 shows a strong positive relationship between access to skill development opportunities and students' professional competence in the Department of Educational Management. The correlation coefficient (R = 0.68) indicates a strong association, while the coefficient of determination (R<sup>2</sup> = 0.46) reveals that 46% of the variance

in professional competence is explained by access to skill development opportunities. The calculated F-value ( $F_{\text{cal}} = 281.52$ ) exceeds the critical F-value ( $F_{\text{crit}} = 3.87$ ) at the 0.05 level of significance, and the significance level ( $p = 0.000$ ) is less than 0.05. This result leads to the rejection of the null hypothesis, confirming that access to skill development opportunities significantly predicts students' professional competence, including leadership capacity, problem-solving ability, teamwork, and readiness for professional responsibilities in educational management.

### **Discussion of Findings**

The findings of this study indicate that gender education significantly influences skill development among students in the Department of Educational Management in public universities in Cross River State. Respondents reported improvements in leadership capacity, problem-solving, teamwork, and professional readiness, with the ANOVA analysis confirming a statistically significant influence of gender education on skill acquisition. These results are consistent with prior studies showing that gender-inclusive curricula enhance analytical, communication, and interpersonal skills among students (Okeke & Adebayo, 2020; Olorundare & Nwobu, 2019; Ibrahim & Bello, 2021). The results also align with evidence that structured gender education supports leadership and decision-making capabilities (Musa & Ojo, 2022; Adeleke & Tunde, 2021; Olaniyan, 2020). However, existing literature has largely focused on general university populations, leaving a gap regarding the specific context of educational management students in Cross River State, highlighting the novelty of this study in providing department-specific empirical evidence.

Similarly, the study found that gender-sensitive educational practices positively affect managerial skill acquisition, as students exposed to inclusive teaching methods, participatory classroom activities, and equitable instructional strategies reported higher competence in organizational, administrative, and supervisory tasks. The ANOVA results confirmed that these effects are statistically significant, reinforcing previous findings that gender-responsive interventions enhance planning, task management, and conflict resolution skills (Chukwu, 2021; Adeyemi & Okafor, 2022; Banjo & Samuel, 2023). In addition, access to skill development opportunities was shown through regression analysis to have a strong predictive relationship with students' professional competence, consistent with prior studies linking internships, workshops, and co-curricular participation to enhanced professional skills and career readiness (Umeh & Obi, 2021; Kanu & Chima, 2020; Ajiboye & Oladimeji, 2023). Despite these confirmations, most previous research has examined these factors independently, whereas this study integrates gender education, gender-sensitive practices, and access to skill development opportunities, thereby filling a critical gap and offering a more holistic understanding of the drivers of professional competence in educational management programmes in Cross River State.

### **Conclusion**

This study set out to examine how gender education and related practices influence skill development among students in the Department of Educational Management, and it found

that gender-sensitive approaches, inclusive learning environments, and equitable access to skill acquisition opportunities play a crucial role in enhancing students' managerial competence and professional preparedness. By demonstrating the relevance of integrating gender-responsive strategies into university programmes, the study contributes to existing knowledge on educational management and underscores the need for policy reforms that promote inclusivity and equal participation in higher education. Practically, institutions are encouraged to strengthen mentorship systems, adopt gender-balanced instructional methods, and expand access to skill-based training. Although the study was limited by its reliance on self-reported data and a specific geographical context, it provides a basis for broader investigations; thus, future research should explore longitudinal impacts and comparative analyses across regions. Ultimately, embedding gender-responsive practices in educational systems remains vital for producing competent, adaptable, and globally competitive graduates in educational management.

### **Recommendations**

1. Universities in Cross River State should incorporate structured gender education into the Department of Educational Management curricula to enhance students' skill acquisition, leadership capacity, and professional competence.
2. University management should implement gender-sensitive teaching practices, including participatory learning, equitable task allocation, and inclusive feedback, to strengthen students' managerial and administrative skills.
3. Higher education institutions should expand access to skill development opportunities, such as internships, workshops, co-curricular programmes, and mentoring, to improve students' professional preparedness and career readiness.

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