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INFLUENCE OF SALES EXPOSURE AND MENTORSHIP QUALITY ON START-UP INCOME OF STUDENT ENTREPRENEURS

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Abstract

This study examined the influence of sales exposure and mentorship quality on the start-up income of Bachelor of Science in Entrepreneurship students of Makilala Institute of Science and Technology. The study was anchored on Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory and Becker's Human Capital Theory and employed a quantitative-correlational design with a descriptive-predictive approach. A total of 150 BS Entrepreneurship students who had implemented their business plans and engaged in actual selling activities served as respondents. Data were collected using a researcher-made questionnaire measuring sales exposure, mentorship quality, and start-up income. Descriptive statistics, including mean and standard deviation, were used to determine the levels of the variables, while multiple linear regression analysis was employed to identify significant predictors of start-up income. Results revealed that the levels of sales exposure, mentorship quality, and start-up income were all high, indicating that these variables were often manifested among the student entrepreneurs. Sales exposure was evident through active participation in selling activities, satisfactory sales volume, and the application of basic market strategies. Mentorship quality was characterized by strong mentor support and availability, adequate knowledge and expertise, and moderate networking and linkage facilitation. Start-up income results showed positive income growth during the business implementation period, although reinvestment capacity and attainment of targeted income goals were relatively constrained. Regression analysis indicated that both sales exposure and mentorship quality significantly influenced start-up income. However, mentorship quality emerged as the stronger predictor of start-up income, explaining a substantial portion of the variance in students' income performance. The findings underscore the critical role of experiential selling activities and high-quality mentorship in enhancing the financial outcomes of student-led ventures. The study recommends strengthening off-campus sales exposure, institutionalizing structured mentorship programs, and enhancing mentors' capacity to facilitate external linkages to improve start-up income sustainability among entrepreneurship students.

Keywords: entrepreneurship education, experiential learning, mentorship quality, sales exposure, start-up income.

Introduction

Entrepreneurship education is important in shaping the competencies, mindset, and behavior of students toward business creation and sustainability (Fayolle & Gailly, 2015). In the Philippines, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), through Memorandum Order No. 18, series of 2011, mandates higher education institutions offering the Bachelor of Science in Entrepreneurship program to provide experiential learning components that allow students to design, implement, and market their business ideas. This experiential approach strengthens students' practical skills and business acumen by immersing them in real entrepreneurial processes.

One of the most essential learning strategies in entrepreneurship education is sales exposure, which involves actual selling, marketing, and customer engagement. Neck and Greene (2011) argued that entrepreneurship education becomes more effective when students actively participate in creating, marketing, and selling products. Rae (2017) likewise emphasized that entrepreneurial learning is strengthened when students are exposed to real market activities that develop self-confidence, adaptability, and customer-handling skills.

Another important determinant of entrepreneurial success is mentorship quality. Mentorship provides personalized guidance, feedback, and technical support that help students translate business concepts into practical strategies (St-Jean & Audet, 2012). High-quality mentorship has been associated with entrepreneurial competence, opportunity recognition, confidence, and early business performance (Karimi et al., 2020; Sanchez-Garcia et al., 2018). In student ventures, mentors may serve as faculty advisers, practitioners, or institutional partners who support learners in managing uncertainty, refining decisions, and improving venture outcomes.

In the Philippine context, entrepreneurship students are commonly required to implement business plans through product selling, exhibits, bazaars, and community-based market activities. However, many studies on entrepreneurship education focus on entrepreneurial intention, self-efficacy, and attitudes rather than measurable financial outcomes. There remains a need for empirical evidence on how experiential learning factors, particularly sales exposure and mentorship quality, influence start-up income among student entrepreneurs.

At Makilala Institute of Science and Technology, BS Entrepreneurship students implement business ventures as part of their academic training. They engage in selling activities inside and outside the campus and receive guidance from faculty mentors. While these activities provide rich learning experiences, systematic evaluation of how sales exposure and mentorship quality affect students' early business income remains limited. Thus, this study determined the influence of sales exposure and mentorship quality on the start-up income of BS Entrepreneurship students of Makilala Institute of Science and Technology.

Specifically, the study sought to describe the respondents' profile in terms of age, gender, capital invested, family business background, and venture type; determine the level of sales exposure in terms of sales participation, sales volume, and market strategy; determine the level of mentorship quality in terms of mentor support and availability, knowledge and expertise, and networking and linkages; determine the level of start-up income in terms of income

growth; and identify which between sales exposure and mentorship quality best predicts start-up income.

Method and Materials

This study used a quantitative-correlational research design with a descriptive-predictive approach. This design was appropriate because the study measured the relationship and predictive influence of sales exposure and mentorship quality on start-up income without manipulating the variables. The predictive component was used to identify which independent variable significantly forecasted start-up income among student entrepreneurs.

The study was conducted at Makilala Institute of Science and Technology, located in Concepcion, Makilala, Cotabato, Philippines. The locale was selected because the institution offers the BS Entrepreneurship program and integrates classroom instruction with experiential learning activities such as business plan implementation, market exposure, product commercialization, and faculty-guided venture development.

The respondents were 150 BS Entrepreneurship students who had completed business plan implementation and participated in actual selling ventures. Purposive sampling was employed based on the following criteria: the respondents were enrolled in or recently completed the BS Entrepreneurship program, had engaged in product selling or business plan implementation, and had received guidance from a faculty mentor or adviser during the implementation period.

A researcher-made survey questionnaire was used to gather data. The instrument contained four parts: demographic profile, sales exposure, mentorship quality, and start-up income. Sales exposure was measured using three indicators: sales participation, sales volume, and market strategy. Mentorship quality was measured using mentor support and availability, knowledge and expertise, and networking and linkages. Start-up income was measured through income growth. Responses were rated using a five-point Likert scale. The instrument underwent expert validation and pilot testing among BS Entrepreneurship students who were not included in the main study. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, with .70 as the acceptable threshold (Taber, 2018).

Data were collected after securing institutional permission. The researcher coordinated with faculty mentors and instructors to identify qualified respondents. The questionnaire was administered online through Google Forms. Respondents were informed about the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, confidentiality, and their right to withdraw at any time. Completed responses were checked, coded, cleaned, and encoded for statistical analysis.

Mean and standard deviation were used to describe the levels of sales exposure, mentorship quality, and start-up income. Multiple linear regression analysis was used to determine the significant predictors of start-up income. All statistical tests were interpreted at the 0.05 level of significance.

Results/Findings

Table 1 presents the profile of the 150 respondents. All respondents were within the 19-35 years old age group. The majority were female (70.7%), while 29.3% were male. More than half invested below PHP 5,000, suggesting that most student-led

ventures were small-scale and operated with limited capital. Most respondents had no family business background, indicating that formal entrepreneurship education played an important role in initiating venture experience. Food-related ventures were the most common, followed by handicrafts, cosmetics or personal care, beverages, and clothing or apparel.

Table 1. Profile of the Respondents

Profile Variable	Category	Frequency (%)
Age	19-35 years old	150 (100.0%)
Gender	Male	44 (29.3%)
	Female	106 (70.7%)
Capital invested	Below PHP 5,000	76 (50.7%)
	PHP 5,001-PHP 10,000	45 (30.0%)
	PHP 10,001-PHP 20,000	20 (13.3%)
	PHP 20,001-PHP 30,000	7 (4.7%)
	Above PHP 30,000	2 (1.3%)
Family business background	Yes	52 (34.7%)
	No	98 (65.3%)
Venture type	Food	101 (67.3%)
	Beverages	6 (4.0%)
	Handicrafts	25 (16.7%)
	Cosmetics/Personal Care	14 (9.3%)
	Clothing/Apparel	4 (2.7%)

Table 2 shows that the overall level of sales exposure was high ($M = 3.93$, $SD = 0.74$). This indicates that sales exposure was often manifested among the student entrepreneurs. Market strategy obtained the highest category mean ($M = 4.09$), followed by sales participation ($M = 3.92$) and sales volume ($M = 3.77$). These results imply that students were actively involved in product promotion, customer engagement, inventory handling, and basic selling activities. However, participation in multiple sales fairs or exhibits within or outside the campus obtained the lowest mean, suggesting that students' exposure to broader market environments may still be expanded.

Table 2. Level of Sales Exposure of BS Entrepreneurship Students

Indicator	Mean	SD	Description
Sales participation	3.92	0.82	High
Sales volume	3.77	0.79	High
Market strategy	4.09	0.82	High
Overall mean	3.93	0.74	High

The high level of sales exposure supports the perspective that entrepreneurial learning is strengthened through concrete experience. Students who personally handle customer transactions,

participate in planning sales activities, interact with buyers, and adjust market strategies are able to connect classroom-based concepts with actual market realities. The findings also suggest that digital and blended selling approaches were strongly practiced, as students utilized social media and combined in-person and online selling to promote their ventures.

Table 3 presents the level of mentorship quality. The overall mean of 3.96, with a standard deviation of 0.85, was described as high. Knowledge and expertise obtained the highest mean ($M = 4.07$), followed by mentor support and availability ($M = 4.00$) and networking and linkages ($M = 3.81$). This result indicates that mentors generally provided adequate support, guidance, and technical knowledge during business implementation. However, networking and linkages recorded the lowest category mean, suggesting that mentor-facilitated external connections with clients, suppliers, and support agencies could still be improved.

Table 3. Level of Mentorship Quality of BS Entrepreneurship Students

Indicator	Mean	SD	Description
Mentor support and availability	4.00	0.89	High
Knowledge and expertise	4.07	0.91	High
Networking and linkages	3.81	0.89	High
Overall mean	3.96	0.85	High

The findings show that mentors were approachable, provided timely feedback, motivated students to persevere despite challenges, and helped improve students' confidence in making business decisions. These results affirm that mentorship quality is a valuable educational support mechanism in student entrepreneurship. While mentors demonstrated strong knowledge and support, the relatively lower score for networking and linkages indicates the need to institutionalize partnerships that can connect student ventures to external markets and enterprise development agencies.

Table 4 presents the level of start-up income. The overall mean of 3.73, with a standard deviation of 0.75, was described as high. This indicates that start-up income growth was often manifested among the respondents. The highest item was the overall experience of positive income growth during the project duration ($M = 3.96$). Meanwhile, reinvestment of income and achievement of targeted income goals both obtained the lowest mean scores ($M = 3.65$), although still interpreted as high. These findings suggest that student ventures experienced positive income growth but still faced limitations in expansion and reinvestment capacity.

Table 4. Level of Start-Up Income of BS Entrepreneurship Students

Indicator	Mean	SD	Description
Income growth	3.73	0.75	High

The positive income results imply that experiential venture implementation helped students generate revenue and improve financial outcomes over time. However, the relatively lower scores on reinvestment and income target achievement suggest that student ventures may have been constrained by limited

capitalization, short implementation periods, and the small scale of operations. These results highlight the need for stronger financial planning, reinvestment guidance, and access to broader selling opportunities.

Table 5 presents the results of the multiple regression analysis. The model was statistically significant, $F(2, 147) = 86.06, p < .001$. The model produced an R^2 of .54, indicating that sales exposure and mentorship quality jointly explained 54% of the variance in start-up income. Individually, sales exposure significantly influenced start-up income ($\beta = .18, t = 2.74, p = .007$). Mentorship quality also significantly influenced start-up income ($\beta = .62, t = 9.35, p < .001$) and emerged as the stronger predictor.

Table 5. Significant Predictors of Start-Up Income

Predictor/Model	Beta	t	p-value	Remarks
Sales exposure	.18	2.74	.007	Sig.
Mentorship quality	.62	9.35	.000	Sig.
Model R^2	.54			
F-value	86.06		.000	Sig.

The regression results show that both experiential selling and mentorship support contributed to students' income performance. Sales exposure enhanced income by giving students practical experience in selling, customer engagement, inventory management, and market strategy. However, mentorship quality had a stronger effect, suggesting that students' income-generating capacity was greatly influenced by the quality of guidance, feedback, business expertise, and support they received during implementation. Thus, while direct selling experience is important, structured and high-quality mentoring appears to be more decisive in improving the financial outcomes of student-led ventures.

Discussion

The findings affirm Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory, which explains that learning occurs through concrete experience, reflection, conceptualization, and active experimentation. In this study, sales exposure served as the concrete entrepreneurial experience that allowed students to test business ideas, interact with customers, adjust strategies, and learn from actual market conditions. The high level of sales exposure suggests that student entrepreneurs were able to transform academic concepts into practical competencies.

The findings also support Becker's Human Capital Theory, which emphasizes that investments in education, training, and guidance increase productivity and performance. Mentorship quality represented an important form of human capital development. Through mentor support, technical knowledge, and guidance, students became more confident in making business decisions and improving venture performance. The stronger predictive effect of mentorship quality indicates that students may generate better income outcomes when experiential learning is supported by structured guidance.

The relatively lower result for networking and linkages suggests an area for improvement in the entrepreneurship program. While faculty mentors provided support and expertise, connecting student entrepreneurs with external organizations, suppliers, customers, and enterprise development agencies may further strengthen

venture sustainability. This is especially important because start-up income was positive but reinvestment capacity remained constrained. Stronger linkages may help students access wider markets, resources, and technical assistance.

Conclusion

This study concluded that sales exposure, mentorship quality, and start-up income among BS Entrepreneurship students of Makilala Institute of Science and Technology were all high. Students were actively involved in selling activities, applied basic market strategies, and experienced positive income growth during business implementation. Mentors also provided strong support, guidance, and expertise that helped students manage challenges and improve business decisions.

Regression analysis revealed that both sales exposure and mentorship quality significantly influenced start-up income. However, mentorship quality emerged as the stronger predictor. This means that while actual selling experience contributes to income growth, the quality of mentorship is more important in enhancing students' income-generating capacity. The combined influence of sales exposure and mentorship quality explained a substantial portion of start-up income, confirming the importance of experiential learning and guided support in entrepreneurship education.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that student entrepreneurship programs may become more effective when actual market exposure is paired with structured, accessible, and competent mentorship. Strengthening both components can enhance the sustainability and financial performance of student-led ventures.

Recommendations

Makilala Institute of Science and Technology may strengthen experiential learning by expanding students' exposure to off-campus selling activities, trade fairs, community-based markets, and partnerships with local government units, cooperatives, and private organizations. These activities may provide students with broader market experiences and real selling environments.

The Entrepreneurship Department may institutionalize a structured mentorship program with clear mentoring schedules, defined mentor roles, consultation mechanisms, and mentoring performance evaluation. Mentor development may also focus on networking facilitation, market linkage-building, and financial coaching.

Faculty mentors may continue providing strong technical and motivational support while increasing efforts to connect student entrepreneurs with suppliers, customers, business organizations, and support agencies. These linkages may help students improve market access and income-generating opportunities.

BS Entrepreneurship students may actively seek diverse selling opportunities beyond the campus and strengthen market observation, customer feedback gathering, and reinvestment planning. They may also maximize mentor guidance not only for daily business operations but also for long-term venture improvement.

Future researchers may examine other factors that influence start-up income, such as capital structure, pricing strategy, innovation capability, financial literacy, and digital marketing adoption. Similar studies may also be conducted in other higher education institutions or through a longitudinal design to determine the long-

term effect of sales exposure and mentorship on entrepreneurial performance.

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