

# Research Article Effect of Undergraduate Business Students' Entry Characteristics on Academic Success

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The purpose of this study is to explore the effects of undergraduate business students' entry characteristics (West African Senior Secondary Certificate Examination (WASSCE), Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination (SSSCE), General Certificate of Education (GCE) ordinary level certificate, and matured entry) on academic success in terms of cumulative grade point average (CGPA), competencies (soft skills), acquired, and overall academic performance. Through a cross-sectional survey, 382 final year business students were selected from two universities in Ghana to participate in the study. Academic records of the students were obtained and complementary primary data were collected from these same respondents through questionnaire administration. Data were analyzed using PLS–SEM. The only statistically significant results the study established were that WASSCE has a positive relationship with competences and overall academic performance, and mature entry also had a negative relationship with competence. The study recommended revisions to the current admission criteria as universities need to entrench individualized curricula to cater the diversity occasioned by the variety of entry qualifications students. While direct applicants (e.g., applicants with WASSCE) may follow the current curriculum, bridging courses may be necessary to bring the mature applicants to the level of the direct applicants to ensure parity of knowledge.

# 1. Introduction

Achieving sustainable development goals (SDGs) 4 and 10, which promote equal access to quality education at all levels and reduce inequalities, may be challenging or impossible if the education system is not effectively managed. Beyond attaining excellent academic performance, education is expected to build the learners' competencies. Therefore, the consequences of not achieving these SDGs are apparent. First, citizens may not have the opportunity to develop their skills to become useful to themselves and their countries. This may perpetuate poverty as unskilled individuals cannot secure lucrative employment or trade. As such, there is a continuous admonishment to uphold these goals by the universities [1]. It is even worth noting that some 9 years before the establishment of the SDGs, universities were identified as significant stakeholders possessing the capacity to engineer the attainment of the SDGs as foreseen by Cheesman [2] that institutions of higher learning are expected to play a crucial role in national development initiatives.

In their quest to achieve these SDGs, the management of institutions of higher learning has relied on previous academic results in admitting students into university programs. This is a global trend [3, 4]. It has been argued that the criteria of candidates who are admitted to pursue various programs at the university have a relationship with the development of their competencies [5]. This argument has triggered the general belief that students with superior entry characteristics (i.e., requirements for admission into any academic program in an educational institution) would have superior academic performance. Accordingly, many prospective students are often denied entry into tertiary institutions because of their entry characteristics. Thus, many students in Ghana terminate their education after the secondary level, which affects the development of human capital for sustainable human development. The current admission policy suggests that students' academic achievement is a factor in their entry characteristics.

For instance, the Ghana Tertiary Education Commission (GTEC), since the early 2000s to date has set standards for

admitting various qualifications such as the West African Senior Secondary Certificate Examination (WASSCE), Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination (SSSCE), General Certificate of Education (GCE), Advanced Business Certificate Examination (ABCE) holders, and additional admission pathways such as those created for mature applicants in Ghana [6]. WASSCE and SSSCE are specific to senior secondary schools in the West African subregion. They are standardized tests supervised by the West African Examination Council and written by senior high school students to climax the senior high school education. These certificates are not terminal but a means to enter tertiary education and is considered comparable to GCE. The certificate was referred to as SSSCE but is now known as WASSCE. Even though students no longer write the SSSCE, some still use it to apply for entry into institutions of higher learning.

Per the criteria established by the GTEC for entry into a university in Ghana, applicants with SSSCE should obtain grades from A to D in three elective subjects, three core subjects including English language and mathematics, science, or social studies cumulating into an aggregate of 24 or better. For WASSCE, applicants should obtain grades from A1 to C6 in three elective subjects and English language, mathematics, science, or social studies, cumulating into an aggregate of 36 or better. In both cases, however, a nonscience major applicant may use the grade in social studies if it is better than the grade in science. Restrictions through the institution of quotas have resorted to control the admission of students with specific entry characteristics. The GTEC has a policy that the admission of applicants who come through the mature entrance examination (MEE) (aptitude test for applicants who are at least 25 years old) for a given academic year should not exceed 10% of total admissions for public tertiary educational institutions and 20% for private tertiary educational institutions [7] which has since been revised to 5% and 20% public and private tertiary institutions, respectively. However, the overemphasis on examination qualifications as entry criteria into institutions of higher learning is not only limiting access to education but flouting the fundamental human rights of unsuccessful desirous applicants.

Employing criteria that gauge the applicant's aptitude and focus mainly on prior examination achievement for a chosen program of study makes admission to institutions of higher learning challenging and competitive [3]. This hinders improving the quality of education, access to better lives, and reducing inequalities. Mainly, university admissions in Ghana have remained competitive, allowing only a small percentage of those who apply to gain entry. In 2017, the University of Cape Coast received 13,188 applications but could admit only 5,785 [8]. Similarly, in 2018, the University of Ghana received 51,321 applications but admitted only 12,000 [9]. However, to achieve SDGs 4 and 10 of equal access to quality education, there may be the need for a reflection and possible adoption of what Kobina [10] intimated 3 years before the establishment of the SDGs that institutions of higher learning should consider the social background of applicants in addition to the traditionally accepted admission criteria (previous examination performance). This reconsideration could be substantiated if the relevance or irrelevance of the current entry characteristics to the overall purpose of education which is to produce excellent students and develop their competencies or skills, are adequately brought to bear. Therefore, the effect of entry characteristics on educational outcomes ought to be established.

Empirically, some studies have discovered that the strongest predictor of university achievement was students' entry qualifications to gain admission [11-13]. In support of the argument, Wadda et al. [14] and Bush [15] stressed a strong correlation between entry characteristics and academic achievement. However, there is credible contradictory evidence [16] that there is no connection between students' entry qualifications and subsequent academic achievement. For example, Emaikwu [17] and Mlambo [18] established no significant effect of entry qualification on academic performance. Even though earlier work of Ringland and Pearson [19] subtly conceded that there is only a minor impact of students' entry characteristics on their university results. Emaikwu [17] contends that previous performance is not a determiner of current performance, perhaps because of maturity-related cognitive development. Jackson et al. [20] argued there is no connection between entry qualification and academic success in the university and that students with weak passes who gain admission when supported can perform better. Another piece of evidence opposing the first two stances further suggests a negative relationship between entry qualification and academic performance [21–23]. However, recent empirical evidence affirmed the capacity of students' entry characteristics to impact their future academic performance [24-26]. Hence, the raging and unresolved controversy on entry qualification and academic performance.

The literature has explored the relationship between entry characteristics and academic performance; most studies involved pretertiary students and focused on subject specialities such as science, agriculture, and English. What is not clear from previous studies is how such a relationship exists in the context of business education. Given their uniqueness in university admission, these prior findings may not be relevant in discussing the phenomenon among business students. Unlike the sciences (medicine, nursing, medical laboratory, etc.) that strictly consider students with a science background for admission, students enrolled on the business programs such as management, Human Resource Management, finance, procurement, and even accounting may not have strictly read business as a course in senior high school. They sometimes switch from the general arts, sciences, or home economics in senior high to read business programs at the university. Again, these studies conceptualized academic performance as cumulative grade point averages (CGPA) without considering other conceptions of academic performance, such as the competencies developed in the student.

The study's contribution is to explore how the preceding empirical narrative may apply to business students, given their uniqueness, while going beyond just grades to consider real academic achievement, such as competencies being developed by business students in the university. Therefore, the study will specifically explore if:

- (1) There is a statistically significant influence of university business students' entry characteristics on the competencies developed in the university.
- (2) There is a statistically significant influence of university business students' entry characteristics on the CGPA obtained.
- (3) There is a statistically significant influence of university business students' entry characteristics on the total academic performance.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. The theoretical underpinning of the study is presented to establish the principles upon which the study thrives. Also presented are the methods through which the study was conducted, highlighting the processes and diagnostics that give credence to the result that follows suit. Consequently, a comprehensive discussion sets the premise for the study's onward conclusion and recommendations.

# 2. Theoretical Underpinning: Human Capital Theory

The empirical works of Schultz [27], Becker [28, 29], and Mincer [30] serve as the foundation of the human capital theory. The theory typically believes that individuals, households, organizations, and governments must first invest in education to build people's human capital, which shapes knowledge, skills, attitudes, and other competencies. Such investment would be done in the form of money and time. Second, developing human capital and competencies is anticipated to result in financial gains for people and households. Organisations and governments, respectively, enjoy their benefits in the form of productivity and economic growth. Becker [29, p. 19] rightly said, "schooling raises earnings and productivity primarily by providing knowledge, skills, and a way of analyzing problems."

The theory further explains that persons with high IQ and grades tend to invest more in formal education than those with low IQ and grades partly because of their chances of successfully completing their training and developing whatever human capital. Besides, given that governments usually subsidize university education, they would prefer funding education of individuals who can be successful. Hence some criteria are employed to identify individuals, worthy of such financial investment. It is believed that those with previous high grades would likely become successful. Accordingly, the entry characteristics are considered a significant determinant of the academic output (skill development or academic grades).

2.1. Conceptual Framework. From the initial presentation, the outlook of the study is summarized in the diagram. From Figure 1, the literature indicates a relationship between entry characteristics and academic performance. Academic performance, however, can be expressed into main domains. First, it is conceptualized as the student's CGPA. Second, it embodies competencies reflecting actual skills students develop upon enrolling in an educational program. The influence of entry



FIGURE 1: Conceptual framework.

characteristics on the subvariables of academic performance (CGPA and competence) is further explored in addition to the composite measure of academic performance. Consequently, three major hypotheses were tested:

- (1) There is no statistically significant effect of university business students' entry characteristics on the total academic performance.
- (2) There is no statistically significant effect of university business students' entry characteristics on the competencies developed in the university.
- (3) There is no statistically significant effect of university business students' entry characteristics on the CGPA obtained.

# 3. Methods

3.1. Sample and Procedure. A cross-sectional survey was employed to execute the study examining the capacity of students' entry characteristics to predict their academic performance. The population comprised all final year business students in universities in Ghana. They formed the unit of analysis given that they had ample time in the university to exhibit their actual performances because they had spent at least seven semesters in the school at the time of data collection. This means that whatever intended competencies to be developed in the students may have reached their final stages, making them ideal for the study. Systematic cluster sampling technique was employed to recruit the respondents. First, University of Cape Coast (UCC) and Wisconsin International University College (WIUC) were selected as clusters because they were willing to offer the academic records (which were considered confidential) of the students targeted at the time.

For this reason, final year business students in these two institutions of higher learning participated in the study. Notwithstanding this scope limitation, the respondents from these two institutions were considered appropriate for the estimation and subsequent testing. This position is premised on the variety of business programs UCC offers and the high number of enrollments it records yearly. WIUC is also considered the largest private university college in the country regarding enrollment and facilities. All the students whose academic records UCC and WIUC provided were considered for participation. The inclusion criterion to select participants was based on the completeness of the academic records

TABLE 1: Construct reliability and average variance explained.

Construct	Dijkstra–Henseler's rho ( $\rho_A$ )	Jöreskog's rho ( $\rho_c$ )	CA ( $\alpha$ )	AVE	
COMP	0.9543	0.9550	0.9475	0.6807	
CGPA	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	
T_PERF	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	
Mature	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	
SSSCE	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	
WASSCE	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	
O' Level	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	

TABLE 2: Discriminant validity: HTMT.

Construct	COMP	CGPA	Mature	SSSCE	WASSCE	O' Level	T_PERF
СОМР							
CGPA	0.0095						
Mature	0.5658	0.0389					
SSSCE	0.1479	0.0089	0.0294				
WASSCE	0.6548	0.0568	0.7682	0.2252			
O' Level	0.0785	0.0078	0.0169	0.0050	0.1296		
T_PERF	0.8488	0.5332	0.4731	0.1211	0.5492	0.0568	

obtained, that is, any student who had an incomplete assessment in any course was eliminated. Eventually, 485 qualified students participated in the study and were all considered for the study. Items were distributed to all 485; responses were obtained from 382 students (79% response rate).

Ethical clearance was sought from the institution review board, University of Cape Coast, to undertake the survey. The researchers sought permission from the necessary authorities (i.e., head of departments) to gather data. The purpose of the study was explained to the respondent, and instructions were clearly communicated to them. The questionnaires were given to the respondents by the researchers in person on the days of data collection. Students were preinformed of the exercise by their respective heads of departments. During the process, ethical considerations were upheld. Students were allowed to participate voluntarily. Again, due to the nature of data gathered to include students' unique identities, confidentiality was highly regarded and ensured in the process.

3.2. Measures. Data were gathered on three variables: students' entry qualifications, CGPA, and competencies. Students' entry qualifications and CGPA were provided by student records sections of UCC and WIUC after official requests and correspondences had been transacted between the researchers and the institutions. The CGPA was a measure that already existed as the CGPA of the students. While the entry qualifications were information that already existed due to the qualification category students had upon applying to the university. Data on competencies students possessed were sought through an adapted questionnaire. The questionnaire was closed ended with three Sections – A, B, and C. Section A focused on demographics (respondence sex, age, program of study, area of specialization, and mode of study). Section B comprised the entry characteristics/qualifications the respondents used in securing

admissions, Section B examined the respondents' learning styles, and Section C measured the students' level of competence attained during their 4-year degree program in their respective universities. Items measuring competencies were sourced from Randy Garrison et al. [31, 32]. The competencies were measured based on items respondents indicated about their competencies development on a scale of 1–5.

In analyzing the partial least squared structural equation model, the reliability and validity of the model were established and evaluated. Then, to estimate the reflective measurement of the model's outer loadings, the study assessed composite reliability, average variance extracted (AVE), and discriminant validity, presented in Tables 1 and 2 and Figure 1. The variables as presented were all single-item constructs apart from competence. Hence, the validity and reliability diagnostics of the measures would apply to only competencies, which is a latent construct [33].

The composite reliability was assessed using Dijkstra– Henseler's rho ( $\rho_A$ ), Jöreskog's rho ( $\rho_c$ ), and Cronbach's Alpha ( $\alpha$ ). They were all above the 0.7 thresholds, indicating the presence of composite reliability. The AVE scores were also above 0.5, as shown in Table 1, indicating convergent validity. Table 2 presents the discriminant validity using the HTMT criterion, which has power over Fornell and Larcker's [34] criteria [35]. Table 2 shows discriminant validity between all the constructs based on the cross-loadings based on the threshold proposed by Gold et al. [36]. All the HTMT estimates were above the maximum 0.9 thresholds. Having satisfied the diagnostics criteria, it was appropriate to rely on the outcome of the structural equation model. The study examined the model's predictive abilities and relationships between the model components.

3.3. Data Analysis. The data gathered were coded and entered in SPSS (26), where all incomplete data were filtered

TABLE 3: Demographic characteristics of the respondents.

Variables	Subscale	Frequency	Percent (%)	
Corr	Male	213	55.8	
Sex	Female	169	44.2	
	Below 20	7	1.8	
	21-25	275	72	
Age (in years)	26-30	71	18.6	
	31-35	15	3.9	
	Above 35	14	3.7	
	Mature entry	33	8.6	
Entury about attaniation	SSSCE	3	0.8	
Entry characteristics	WASSCE	330	86.4	
	O' Level	16	0.3	

out using frequency and percentage. The demographic characteristics of the respondents were equally analyzed with frequencies and percentages. PLS–SEM statistics was also used to analyze all the relationships that have been hypothesized. PLS–SEM, being a rigorous nonparametric statistical tool, afforded the opportunity to, beyond establishing existing relations among the variables, perform a concurrent diagnostic exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis of the variables' outer model, or measures [37]. The outcome of the results is therefore presented subsequently.

3.4. Demographics of Respondents. The biodata provided by the respondents were analyzed to describe the demographic characteristics of the respondents. Table 3 summarizes the demographic characteristics of the final year business students who participated in the study. The dominance of male respondents may partly be explained by the observation of Atuahene and Owusu-Ansah [7] that access to postsecondary education in Ghana tends to favor male candidates. Most (n = 275, 72.0%) of the participants were within the 21-25 years age bracket, with few of them being below 20 years (n = 7; 1.8%) and yet some others above 35 years (n = 14; 3.7%). The average age of entry into a university in Ghana hovers around 20 years. Therefore, for a typical 4-year program, students in the final year may not be beyond 25 years. Accordingly, it could be said that the 100 (26.2%) participants above 25 years may have acquired some postschooling experiences from work or other engagements, which may be relevant contributors to improving their competencies or soft skills and overall success in university education.

Most (n = 330; 86.4%) of the respondents in the study got admission into the universities through the West African Senior School Certificate Examinations. Students who gained admission with General Certificate Examination–Ordinary Level (GCE O' Level accounted for 4.1% (16) of respondents registered in the study. However, the mature examination entry route was found to be the second most dominant (n = 33; 8.6%) entry behavior, the respondents used to gain admission to the universities. The use of a mature entry examination is considered when an applicant has work experience in addition to having met the other qualification specified by the admission board of the institutions however, this restricted admission mode, which explains why it accounted for less than 10%.

#### 4. Results

The study's results, which are presented in either tables or figures, are sequenced. The results of the test on the hypotheses generated for exploration were done. To check if the path coefficients of the inner model depicting the effect of entry qualification on academic performance compositely, entry qualification, and competence and entry qualification and CGPA are significant or not, bootstrapping procedure was run. The path coefficient, sing a two-tailed *t*-test with a significance level of 5%, should be significant if the t-statistics is larger than 1.96. Table 4 presents the bootstrapping and effect size results for the model.

4.1. There Is a Statistically Significant Effect of University Business Students' Entry Characteristics on Total Academic Performance. The results, as presented in Table 4, indicate that concerning the effect of entry characteristics and academic performance compositely, WASSCE as an entry qualification recorded a significant relationship with academic performance ( $\beta = 0.4359$ , t (382) = 4.7803, and p < .05). This means that WASSCE is the only entry qualification significantly predicting academic performance. In contrast, the other entry characteristics (mature = -0.1392 SSSCE = -0.0270 O' Level = -0.0027) had no significant influence with their p values higher than the 0.05 threshold.

4.2. There Is a Statistically Significant Effect of University Business Students' Entry Characteristics on the Competencies Developed in the University. Considering entry qualification and competence, both mature entry ( $\beta = -0.1777$ , t (382) = -2.1996, p < .05) and WASSCE ( $\beta = 0.4977$ , t (382) = 5.4701, p < .05) had significant relationship. While, mature entry was negatively related, WASSCE was positively related. However, O' Level had no significant influence on the competencies developed by students in the university. This means that mature entry and WASSCE entry qualification are relevant predictors of students' competence.

4.3. There Is a Statistically Significant Effect of University Business Students' Entry Characteristics on the CGPA Obtained. As presented in the table, mature entry (0.0159), SSSCE (0.0075), WASSCE (0.0709), and O' Level (0.0017) as entry qualifications all had positive but insignificant influence on students' CGPA. This means that it did not matter the student's entry qualification when determining or predicting the CGPA of a student.

4.4. Predictive Power. As illustrated in Figure 2 and Table 2, the  $R^2$  (0.309) was used to determine how the four entry characteristics explain variance in academic performance. It was revealed that the coefficient of determination for the four entry characteristics compositely explained 30.9% of the variance in the student's academic performance. Again, the coefficient of determination between the four entry characteristics and competence and CGPA recorded an  $R^2$  of 0.428, indicating that entry characteristics explain 42.8% of

Effect	Path coeff.	Standard bootstrap results					
		SE	<i>t</i> -Value	p Value	$R^2$	Cohen's $f^2$	
Mature→T_PERF	-0.1392	0.0841	-1.6544	0.0984	0.3086	0.0098	
$SSSCE \longrightarrow T_PERF$	-0.0270	0.0387	-0.6975	0.4856		0.0009	
WASSCE $\longrightarrow$ T_PERF	0.4359	0.0912	4.7803	0.001		0.0901	
O' Level $\longrightarrow$ T_PERF	-0.0027	0.0175	0.1566	0.8756		0.0001	
Mature→COMP	-0.1777	0.0808	-2.1996	0.0281	0.4280	0.0194	
SSSCE→COMP	-0.0401	0.0496	-0.8099	0.4182		0.0024	
O' Level $\longrightarrow$ COMP	-0.0192	0.0188	-1.0224	0.3069		0.0006	
WASSCE→COMP	0.4977	0.0910	5.4701	0.001		0.1419	
Mature→CGPA	0.0159	0.0988	0.1606	0.8724	0.0033	0.0001	
SSSCE→CGPA	0.0075	0.0347	0.2162	0.8288		0.0000	
WASSCE→CGPA	0.0709	0.1053	0.6740	0.5005		0.0017	
O' Level→CGPA	0.0017	0.0197	0.0861	0.9314		0.0001	

TABLE 4: Bootstrapping results and effect size of structural model.

Significance is p < 0.05, effect size ( $f^2$ ) (no effect is  $f^2 < 0.02 =$ ; small effect is  $f^2 = 0.02 - 0.14$ ; medium effect is  $f^2 = 0.15 - 0.34$ ; large effect is  $f^2 > 0.34$ ).



FIGURE 2: Model depicting the effect of entry characteristics on academic performance. "\*" suggest significance at p < 0.05 and "\*\*\*" suggests significance at p < 0.01.

the variance in students' competence. The coefficient of determination in the relationship between the predictors and students' CGPA was  $R^2 = 0.003$ . The entry characteristics explained only a 0.3% variation in students' CGPA, proving the model had predictive relevance.

4.5. *Effect Sizes.* Regarding the effect of entry characteristics on competence, WASSCE recorded the highest path loading of 0.498, mature entrance followed with a loading of 0.178,

SSSCE, and O' Level entry qualification followed with path loading of 0.040 and 0.019, respectively. This indicates that WASSCE and mature entrance are better predictors of students' competences as they all recorded path loadings greater than 0.1. Further analysis to determine the effect of entry characteristics on students' CGPA, all the path loadings were less than 0.1. This means that the four entry qualifications (WASSCE, SSSCE, mature entrance, and O' Level) are not predictors of students' CGPA as the path loadings for entry characteristics on CGPA recorded 0.071, 0.008, 0.002, and 0.0016 for WASSCE, SSSCE, O' Level, and mature entrance, respectively.

#### 5. Discussion

The overall impression from the study is that entry characteristics can either be relevant or irrelevant antecedents to academic performance. As it has been identified in detail concerning the entry characteristics and their influence on academic performance, the study showed that WASSCE as an entry characteristic had a significant positive association with competence and total performance of the students. This corroborates some earlier studies [11-15, 26], which found that students' entry qualifications into universities contributed significantly to their academic performance. This suggests that depending on the WASSCE qualification of an individual in the university, their academic success in terms of competence can be gauged and thus consistent with the studies of Alhajraf and Alasfour [13], which found that students' entry qualifications into the tertiary level predict a level of academic achievement at university. The negative association between mature entry and competence development also corroborates with some empirical studies [21, 22]. This further suggests that those highly considered mature students were less likely to develop their competencies. The insignificant relationship between the WASSCE, SSsCE, O' Level, MEE, and CGPA, as well as among the competence and total performance of the student, corroborate the earlier studies [16-18].

What is further established in the study is the inconsistent manner in which entry qualifications affect success in the university. Even though the study established entry qualifications significantly affected students' performance, the majority of the entry qualifications affected academic success at the university. For example, the study established that only WASSCE affected students' total performance of the four entry qualifications. This appears to suggest that for success in total performance at the university level of education, students with WASSCE entry qualifications are superior. This means that such students will likely develop and achieve better job-related skills. This may connect to the fact that university education today is very much rooted in technology, and since the relatively younger generation (an essential characteristic of students with WASSCE entry qualifications) is technologically savvy, they may have control and take advantage to succeed. They may lack relevant job experiences, which may have to be entrenched in their curricula.

Mature entry qualification and WASSCE had a greater effect on acquiring the relevant competencies required for job success. Irrespective of their entry qualifications, the undergraduate students mainly concentrated on the requirements of job opportunities but not academic prowess. This may be a sign that they focus on developing employable skills (i.e., soft skills) at the expense of building CGPAs to capacitate them for further academic studies. The end product is the parochial development of the student and the significant lapses in the totality of their development. As a result, none of the entry modes is superior in determining students' CGPA. Mature entry qualification came in prominently on skills for job acquisition probably because a critical requirement of coming through that admission route is having worked for some time. For that matter, some job-related skills development would be possessed before enrollment. Students with mature entry qualifications may need more academic but not professional skills to complement the already built repertoire of experiences. They will need professional skills to the extent that it updates their already garnered wealth of experiences; for that matter, their curriculum can be more academic. These findings suggest differentiated curricula insofar as the development of job-related skills and CGPA building are concerned with students' various entry qualifications.

Other entry qualifications (SSSCE and O' Level) did not record any statistically significant effects on academic success, that is, competence, CGPA, and total performance. It should be noted that the most prominent of the entry qualifications to tertiary institutions in Ghana, where the study was conducted in the WASSCE, accounts for at least 80% of admissions conducted to universities in the country. Accordingly, it influenced the population and sampling, pooling the greatest proportionate share of the total study sample and thereby having the power to influence the results. This is only for emphasis and does not in any way invalidate the results obtained. WASSCE has replaced SSSCE and O' Level as national examinations in Ghana to assess students for job placement and entry to tertiary education institutions, whilst GTEC has placed a 10% and 20% ceiling on total admissions in any academic year for entry into public and private universities or colleges, respectively, insofar as mature entry applicants are concerned.

# 6. Conclusion and Implications of the Study

From the findings of this study, it is conclusive that the relationship between entry characteristics and academic performance cannot be regarded as absolute. While some entry characteristics may have a significant positive relationship with academic outcomes, others may have significant negative relationship. Sometimes there are no relationships at all. Therefore, this raises caution to universities in applying entry characteristics as admission criteria to maximize the gains of upholding SDGs 4 and 10. As a result, entry qualifications and, by extension, WASSCE qualifications, having been identified to affect students' academic success significantly, could continually be applied when selecting students to enroll on business programs in the university. Again, given that older individuals with mature entry have the least likelihood of attaining the necessary competencies, upon their admission, they should be given extra support and training that will place them on a pedestal, enabling them to succeed like other candidates.

Finally, the study's outcome (largely showing an insignificant relationship among the predictors and dependent variables) draws attention to the need not to discriminate against any student with the minimum entry qualification for admission to tertiary institutions. This is mooted with particular reference to the mature applicants (the bulk of whom seek admission for entry into business-related programs) for whom a specific quota is established, thereby limiting the chances of potential students. Subsequent adjustments may be necessary to emphasize and entrench individualized curricula to cater for the diversity occasioned by the variety of entry qualifications students bring on board for scholarship and academic success.

## **Data Availability**

Data are available on request.

## **Additional Points**

*Study Limitations*. The study applied a quantitative approach to gathering data and analyzing them. A close-ended questionnaire limits the information respondents could have given regarding the questions asked. This would have given extra output that may supplement what has been obtained. Even though this does not necessarily undermine the authenticity of the current study, it is suggestive that a mixed method that applies both qualitative and quantitative approaches could be adopted to cover the weaknesses of each approach.

# **Conflicts of Interest**

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

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