



**NIGERIAN ONLINE JOURNAL OF
EDUCATIONAL SCIENCES AND
TECHNOLOGY**

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**DEPLOYMENT OF EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS AMONG FRESH GRADUATES
IN BUSINESS EDUCATION**

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To cite this article:

Adeogun, A. S, Kadri, K, O. & Adegoke, M. M(2023). Deployment of employability skills among fresh graduates in business education. *Nigerian Online Journal of Educational Sciences and Technology (NOJEST)*, 5 (2), 92-106

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Article Infor

Article History

Received:
21 May 2023

Accepted:
September 2, 2023

Keywords

social media tools,
addiction, academic
achievement

Abstract

This study examined the deployment of employability skills among fresh graduates in business education at Adeniran Ogunsanya College of Education. Two research questions and three hypotheses guided the study. Descriptive survey design was adopted. The whole population was one hundred fresh graduates in Business Education. The sample of the study consisted of 100 fresh graduates in Business Education. A questionnaire titled "Deployment of Employability Skills Questionnaire (DESQ)" was used to collect data. The instrument was validated by three experts. A reliability estimates of 0.8 was gotten using Chrombach Alpha technique. Data were analyzed using mean, standard deviation for research questions and independent t-test for hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. Results revealed that fresh graduates in Business Education have high levels of employability skills and the extent of deployment of these skills is significant. Furthermore, the female fresh graduates have higher level of deployability skills compared to the males. Therefore, it was suggested that employability skills should be set as priority in college practical courses and special programmes should be organized for female fresh graduates to help train them to acquire and deploy more advanced employability skills.

Introduction

Business Education is a term that encompasses several methods used to teach students the fundamentals of business practices. The main objectives of business Education are helping students to gain knowledge on what business is by teaching them various business-related subjects.

Teaching students how to deal with finances, taxes, and other business-related issues. In a dynamic world of continuous changes, there is a need for continuous improvement both socially, economically and business wise. This improvement is still in progress, as more individuals are continuously trained to fit into the fast-changing society to also contribute immensely to the economic, (Eugene, Beneth, Ndidigitive and Eliachi, 2020) development of one's nation.

This is only possible when the trained individuals (graduate), and in the long run possess the necessary skill for effective progress in the society. Thus, for fresh graduates to overcome the challenges and thrive in a dynamic society, they ought to have some skills developed in them and these skills can be referred to as employability skills. Research has proven that the quality of the workforce is greatly improved by including employability skills in the curriculum (Setu and Setin, 2013, as cited in Sarfraz, Hewege and Rafendran, 2018). According to Orji (2013) employability skills consist of Self-esteem, self-confidence development of interpersonal skills and ability to cope with the real world of work. These skills are developed in school during presentation, group assignment and assigning leadership roles among students. Thus, students develop employability skills through learning activities (Learner, 2012 as cited in Chukwurah and Akpo, 2019). Nabi (2013) opined that graduating students must have an appreciable level of these skills to become employable.

These employability skills are the skills employers of labour in the field of business education are targeting before employing fresh graduates from Business Education department from any faculty of Education in the country. Employability skills are skills and personal mannerisms acquired by fresh graduates for them to be employable in their field and to remain employed such as communication skill, problem-solving skill, leadership skills, personal management skill, time management skill, among others. Saad and Majid (2014) put forward that young graduates entering

the workforce make themselves valuable to their organization by utilizing those employability skills they possess and which are required by the teaching service in particular and marketing firms and organizations generally.

These employability skills can also be referred to as the ‘transferable skills’ required by an individual to make themselves employable (Desai and Ramisetty-Mikler, 2017). Geel (2014) posited that employability skills as those skills employers deem necessary for the successful functioning of newly appointed graduates in the work environment. Yorke and Knight (2006) defined employability skills as a set of achievement-skills, understanding and personal attributes that make graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations, which benefits themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy” thus according to Hillage and Pollard as cited in Geel (2014) asserted that employability of an individual depends on how their skills i.e. knowledge, skills and attitude are used and displayed, deployed, coupled with the presentation of those skills to potential employers and settings of the labour market. This indicates that the employability skills of fresh graduates can only be valuable when available in them and adequately deployed. Employability skills according to Leroux and Lafleur as cited in Agrawal and Dasgupta (2018) can be grouped into three namely;

- a) **Academic skills** – Critical thinking, communication skills, and problem solving.
- b) **Team Work Skills** – Leadership skills, learning skill, interpersonal skill, and respect for elders.
- c) **Personnel Management Skills** – Positive Attitude, Goal setting, Initiative, and Self-Esteem.

Priorities are given to higher order of thinking skills and personal qualities by employers while finding competent workers (saludin and Salahudin, 2014, as cited by Agrawal and Dasgupta,

2018). This implies that employability skills are of paramount importance in the job seeking market. Gender is a psychological term and a cultural construct developed by society to differentiate between behavioural, emotional, and mental attributes of female and male (Okorie, 2016). Pearson Education (2003) views gender as the state of being a male or female. Thus, gender can be seen as personal attributes including behavior, attitude, and skills designed by the society to differentiate between male and female. Employability itself is a gender environment, as it is a socio-cultural construct (Ahi, 2004) as cited in Louse, 2009).

This study further examined the influence of gender on deployment of employability skill. Theoretically, the outcome of this study will give credence to the theory of John Dewey, which states that students learn best by interaction with the environment and active participation with the school curriculum. In essence, students ought not to be passive but active during learning, through hands-on activities, which help them to understand reality from different point of view and to take responsibility of their learning.

Skills acquisition among Business Education students will be helpful if, teachers would always utilize practical method of instruction that can help the students concretize what they learn and apply it in real life situation. Likewise, student-teacher relationship and provision of instructional materials enhance employability skills acquisition among Business Education students (Chukwurah and Akpo, 2019), which include computers among others.

Chowdhury and miah (2019) carried out a study on perceptions of students and employers regarding employability skills for entry-level positions in marketing and sales. Managers prioritized skills such as planning, organizing ability, experience, professionalism, type of major courses taken, and positive attitude towards work. Desai and Kamisetty-Mikler (2017) asserted that all students perceive themselves as having employability skills.

Dania, Bakar, and Mohammed (2014) asserted that vocational students had a moderately high level of employability skills, which was influenced by students' self-perception, their level of industrial training and their participation in career development activities. Thus, students with a positive self-concept have high employability skills. Similarly, Akpan (2012) revealed that there were relationships between the teacher quality, teaching methods, workshop equipment, instructional materials and the employable skills acquired by students.

Despite the rigorous practical courses undergone by fresh graduates, they still find it difficult to reflect these skills in the labour market. Could this be that students have the necessary skills but find it difficult to apply it in real life situations? An attempt to answer this question is the reason why this research work was carried out.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study therefore was to determine:

1. The level of acquisition of employability skills among fresh graduates in Business Education.
2. The extent of deployment of employability skills among fresh graduates in Business Education.

Research Questions

As a guide to this study, two research questions were stated as follows:

- (1) What is the level of acquisition of employability skills among fresh graduate students in Business Education?
- (2) What is the level of deployment of employability skills among fresh graduate students in Business Education?

Hypotheses

For this study, three research hypotheses were stated in line with research questions.

Ho1: There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of female and male fresh graduate students in Business Education and their level of acquisition of employability skills.

Ho2: There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of female and male fresh graduate students in Business Education and extent of deployment of employability skills.

Ho3: Improvement of employability skills has no significant difference among male and female among fresh graduate students in Business Education.

Methodology

The study employed survey research design. The population of the study consists of all graduates in Business Education at Adeniran Ogunsanya College of Education, Otto/Ijanikin, Lagos. There were one hundred (100) respondents from Business Education. The simple random sampling data was designed from literature review and adapted from Desai and Ramisetty-Mikler (2017). The questionnaire was divided into (3) three sections: Section 'A' elicits information on demographics of students; Section 'B' consists of employability skills and Section 'C' extracts information on the students' extent of deployment of employability skills.

The instrument was validated by three experts, one from Business Education department and two from Measurement and Evaluation. The experts made correction based on clarity of statement, the inter-relatedness of the items to the interest of the study and overlapping of items among others. The questionnaire was distributed to the respondents via online forum. For reliability test, the instrument was administered to twenty (20) fresh graduates in Business Education. Their ratings were subjected to split-half reliability, using Chronbach Alpha technique. The overall reliability

coefficient was 0.82, which shows that the instrument is reliable. Data collected was analyzed using mean, standard deviation, and t-test.

Data Analysis

The data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics, mean, standard deviation and t-test.

Findings and Discussions

Table 1: Gender of Fresh Graduates

Subject	Number	Percentage (%)
Male	65	65
Female	35	35
Total	100	100

The data on the table one above shows that one hundred (100) respondents were selected for the study. Sixty-five (65) respondents, representing 65% were male fresh Graduates and thirty-five (35) representing 35% were female fresh Graduates.

Hypothesis One

There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of female and male fresh Graduates students in Business Education on their level of acquisition of employability skills.

Table 2: t-test analysis of difference in the mean ratings of male and female fresh Graduates students in Business Education on their level of of Employability skills.

Business	Equal variance assured	Sig.	MD	SD
Education		.770	-1.06g	3.643
	Equal variance not assured	.767	-1.06g	3.582

P < 0.05 - Significant.

Table: 2 revealed that the mean rating of the female Graduate students is 4.20 with a standard deviation of 0.67 while the mean rating of the male Graduate students is 5.12 and a standard

deviation of 0.45. The t-calculated is 2.206 which is greater than the t-tabulated of 0.035 and therefore significant at 0.05 level of significance. The null hypothesis is therefore rejected. This indicates that female fresh Graduate students in Business Education has lesser level of availability of employability skills compared to the male fresh Graduate students in Business Education.

Hypothesis Two

There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of female and male fresh Graduate students in Business Education on their level of deployment of employability skills.

Table 3: t-test analysis of difference in the mean ratings of male and female fresh Graduate students on their extent of deployment of employability skills.

Business Education	Equal Variances Assured	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std.Enor Difference
	Equal Variances not assured	.785	-1.072	3.823
		.792	-1.093	3.742

P < 0.05 - Significant.

Table: 3 revealed that the mean rating of the female Graduate students is 4.31 with a standard deviation of 0.48 while the mean rating of the male Graduate students is 5.62 and a standard deviation of 0.42. The t-calculated is 2.226 which is greater than the t-tabulated of 0.032 and therefore significant at 0.05 level of significance. The alternative hypothesis is therefore accepted. This indicates that male fresh Graduate students in Business Education has higher extent of deployment of employability skills than female fresh Graduate students in Business Education.

Hypothesis Three

Improvement on employability skills has no significant influence among fresh Graduate students in Business Education.

Table 4: Correlation of improvement of Employability Skills among female and male graduate students in Business Education.

Business	Equal Variances Assured	Sig.	MD	SD
	Education			
		.768	-1.072	3.852

Correlation is significant at 0.01 level of significance (2-tailed).

Table 4 shows the probability associated with the calculated value $r (.638)$ is 0.000. This implies that there exists a significant moderate positive influence of availability of employability skills on deployment of employability skills among fresh Graduate students in Business Education since the probability value of 0.000 is less than 0.05 level of significance.

Discussion

The result presented in Table 2 indicates that there is a significant difference in the mean rating of female and male fresh Graduate students in Business Education on their level of improvement in employable skills. Therefore, the males have higher employability skills. The female has the mean of 4.20 (standard deviation of 0.67), while the males have the mean of 5.12 with a standard deviation of 0.45. This result agrees with Idaka and Uzoechi (2016) as they observed that gender has significant influence on employability skill acquisition, in favour of male students. This result negates the findings of Mond, Ahmad (2019) who opined that there was no significant difference in employability skills scores between men and women. The result in table 3 reveals that there is a significant difference in the mean rating of female and male fresh Graduate students in Business Education on their extent of deployment of employability skills, in favour of the males. This result agrees with Uzoechi (2015, as cited in Idiaka and Uzoechi, 2016) who found that male students were better than their female counterparts in employability skills acquisition in terms of communication skills, planning and organization, self-management, decision making and

computer skill. This result negates the findings of Guardian (2013) who reported that there are no differences between male and female students in their employability skills in terms of all the sub-variables. The result in table 4 showed that there is a significant moderate positive influence of availability of employability skills among fresh Graduate students in Business Education.

Conclusion

Based on these findings, it was concluded that fresh Graduate students in Business Education has a high level of improvement of employability skills and that there is high potential in employable skills that can be tapped, cultivated and developed in order to solve the problem of unemployment, become utility staff in organizations and eventually be the game changer for their respective employers. As they display uncommon skills in the manner, they handle their roles.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, it is recommended that:

1. Employability skills should be given a priority in colleges of Education; by creating core courses at various levels to help students acquire these skills before graduation, to produce experts that will be competent and resourceful anywhere, they find themselves.
2. More so, female fresh Graduate should be given a special programme where they can be trained to be more skilled in having and deploying these employability skills, to catch up with their male counterparts and with the demanding society.

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