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PREDICTORS OF GRADUATES EMPLOYABILITY OF PRE-SERVICES SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHERS IN UNIVERSITY OF ILORIN, KWARA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper examined predictors of graduates' employability of pre-services Social Studies teachers in University of Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria. Level of awareness of the social skills and challenges of acquiring the skills were specifically examined. Descriptive survey type was used because of researcher inability to cover all the faculties in University of Ilorin. Undergraduates of University of Ilorin constituted the population. 160 respondents were sampled using purposive and simple random sampling techniques. 40 respondents were selected each from 100 level to 400 level in the Department of Social Sciences Education in the University of Ilorin. Questionnaire titled "Predictors of Graduates Employability of Pre-Services Social Studies Teachers in Univeristy of Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria (PGEPSSTUIKSN)" was used to collect data. The PPMC correlation coefficient value of the instrument was 0.61. Tables, frequency counts, percentage and mean rating were used for answering demographic data and 2 research questions respectively. Results revealed that many respondents were aware only interpersonal social skills while the majority of them were unaware of the other types of social skills as predictors of employability. This implies that the respondents 'awareness 'level of types of social skills for employability was very low. Similarly, the result also revealed that the respondents did not have challenge of acquiring interpersonal social skills but they were grossly deficient in other types of social skills. It was recommended that acquisition of social and practical skills is paramount to students and emphasis should be more on soft skills of problem-solving, accountability, empathy and basic communication.

Keywords: Awareness, Challenges, Predictors, Employability, Pre-service-Social StudiesTeacher.

Introduction

Social Studies is an integrated subject that draws upon contents of social science disciplines for the purpose of enhancing good citizenship. The primary objective of Social Studies is to assist the young populace to be informed and reasonable in decisions-making. This means to be a good citizen one must be skillful in integrative and value-based knowledge so as to be active in taking rightful decisions about societal needs (University of People Education, 2021). The Acquisition of

functional social skills is sacrosanct in achieving the broad and specific goal of Social Studies. This is owing to the fact that social skills are talents and character traits that are propagated in Social Studies with aim of assisting an individual to effectively navigate social situations. Social skills are associated with contents of Social Studies because of its emphasis on socialization. Human beings undergo socialization from cradle till death. Therefore, human beings require social skill for the whole life time.Socialskills are germane in Social Studies because they are personal and soft characteristics required of individual for meaningful social interaction, and interpersonal business relationship.

Doyle (2018) observed that social skills are prerequisite trainings for prospective learners to learn in order to tackle day-to-day working challenges and demands. Dollarhide (2020) also observed that university graduates require stronger social skills such as self-esteem and self-confidence to support their employability. Similarly, Doyle (2018) described graduate self-control, risk-taking, innovativeness, change oriented, persistency, innate qualities effective ingredients require for employability. These submissions are pointing to the significant of social skills in the life of graduates. Preservice teachers' awareness of the social skills is important forbetter internalization. Low knowledge and awareness about social skills may have adverse effect on graduates' employability. Preservice teachers may not attach importance to the social skills because they often look very soft and abstract in nature. This may have.

The New York Times (2020) observed that learning social skills is difficult in a situation where learners lack awareness and exposition to the group dynamic culture, struggling with mental illness and absence of positive role model. This implies thatpre-service teachers may have some challenges of awareness social skills and in acquiring them for functional employability later in life.Dollarhide (2020) also opined that graduates would be unfit for industrial functionality if their self-esteem and self-confidence are low. Jayasingha and Suraweera (2020) highlighted more on factors that could affect graduates'employability such as degree classification; professional qualifications, English proficiency, IT skills, training and experience, and soft skills.

Several studies have been conducted in the area of social skills acquisition for examples, Jayasingha and Suraweera (2020) examined analysis of the factors affecting the graduates' employability in case of Rajarata University of Sri Lanka. They found out that there is a significant relationship between soft skills on graduate employability. Sharma, Goswami and Gupta (2016)

also examined social skills impact on academic achievement and other aspects of life in India. Their finding concluded that a child behaves positively, maintains good relationships with others and performs better in academic achievement because of his or her dexterity in social skills in school. More so, Eleby (2009) examined the impact of a student's lack of social skills on their academic skills in High School. The finding showed that students in high schools do not have tools (academic and social skills) needed to enjoy educational success in high school and beyond. Several literatures on social skills have shown appreciable efforts of foreign writers with little or no records from local authors in Nigeria. Besides there are more areas to be explored in social skills and employability of graduates in Nigeria. This gingers the researchers' interest in examining predictors of graduates' employability of pre-services Social Studies teachers in University of Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria. The study specificallyexamined the pre-services Social Studies teachers level of awareness of social skills and the challenges they encounter in the process of acquiring them.

Concept of social skills has assumed numerous usages. Indeed Editorial Team (2021) described social skills as soft or interpersonal skills. The softness of the social skills bothers on personal qualities, intangible and non-technical skills, it could be less academic but more grounded in applicants' general attitude and personality. Indeed Editorial Team (2021) opined that some social educators may see no reason to teach soft skills since they are personal and less academic but it is more required to be taught for graduate uprightness in job. Kir, Sarpong, Dazagbyilo and Boukari (2021) also described soft skills as non-academic but essential requirement and predictor for employment. Awareness and benefit of social skills for graduates' employability cannot be overemphasized. Ganesha and Sinnoor (2021) opined that 80% of students may lose focus and drop interest in acquiring given required skills. This may be responsible for their poor level of awareness about the benefit of such skills. Laskaraki, Aristotle and Rachanioti (2021) opined that that individuals frequently face inadequacies in the social aspects of work life. This further confirms inadequacy of social skills in an individual despite its benefits for employability. Indeed Editorial Team (2021) highlighted some benefits of social skills for employability to include ability to communicate ones idea clearly and effectively, having better and potential relationship, ability to navigate some tricky social conditions, being considered for job opportunities and the feeling happier. Harappa Education (2021) further observed that social skills are concern about individuals being emphatic to acknowledge others and

capable of helping them to navigate through difficult situation at a work place. This is the quality graduates need to excel in business beyond the acquisition of class of degree and certificate. Various explanations have been offered about typology of social skills, for example Indeed Editorial Team (2021) identified six types of social skills which include effective communication, conflict resolution, active listening, empathy, relationship management and respect. Harappa Education (2021) also identified five examples of social skills to be exhibited in a working place. These include being vulnerable (appearing honest and trustworthy), being attentive (paying attention to other people feeling), being inquisitive (asking right question to create safe space for interpersonal pleasant and unpleasant communication), being empathetic (sharing and celebrating in ones' sadness and happiness respectively) and being gratitude (showing appreciation for supports enjoyed from other colleagues). Similarly, Master in Special Education Degree Programme Guide (2022) identified another five types of social skills which are interpersonal, problem-solving, accountability, basic communication, and empathy and rapport skills.

The deficits in acquiring all types social skills according to Master in Special Education Degree Programme Guide (2022) are manifested in the following ways (i) interpersonal skills is hindered to learn when an individual isstruggling to ask accurate and simple questions, (ii) an individual is deficient in problem-solving skills when it is difficult for him or her to learn how to identifying root causes of problem, recognizing mistake and resolving conflict, (iii) deficiency in accountability skill is also evident in an individual inability learn how to accept blame and dealing constructive feedback, (iv) problem of learning basic communication skill for an individual arise when they cannot use verbal and nonverbal cues (nodding, smile, gesture, polite and courtesy words) to communicate and finally (v) individual' inability to overcome some cognitive, behavioural and health condition during learning could hamper their social dexterity of empathy and connection with other people. Ganeshal and Sinnoor (2021) opined that students with learning disabilities, emotional disturbance, mental retardation and hyperactivity disorder may not be socially empathetic. All these challenges are worthy to be taken care of in the process of giving entreprencurial training for pre service teachers in order to be socially equipped for employability at graduate. Indeed Editorial Team (2021) suggested that for social skills to be improved in an individual, getting feedback, setting goals, finding resources and identify areas of practices must be the target.

The objectives of this study are to; Examine the pre-service Social Studies teachers level of awareness of the social skills as predictors of employability based on the types of social skills; Examine challenges of acquiring social skills as predictors of pre-service Social Studies teachers employability based on gender.

Statement of the Problem

Employability is among numerous challenges facing the Social Studies graduates in Nigeria. It becomes an issue when graduates lack social skills to cope within working environment. Akingbade (2021) opined that several employment and social interventions and strategies such as National Directorate of Employment initiated by Federal government and Ready Set Work (RSW) of Lagos State government and many others deployed in Nigeria have not achieved their desired objective to improve graduate's employability.Many graduates lament collapse of personal business or being relieved of their appointment in their working place. Already the problem of Covid-19 is additional burden for graduates' employability. Hosain, Mustafi and Parvin (2021) observed that the recent global pandemic has adverse effect on graduate employment generation. They believe that external natural, political and economic conditions are also responsible for changes in graduates' employability. Hooley (2020) opined that there is uncertainty about the detriment of Covid-9 pandemic on graduates'. employment. On the other hands Kir, Sarpong, Dazagbyilo and Boukari (2021) opined that shortage of soft skills among the graduates is their major predicament for employability. Mezhuodi, Alighamdi, Aljunaid, Krichna and Dustegor (2021) observed that improvement on curriculum for new competence in social skills should be watch words in the process of tackling employment for viable employability. This shows that sparsity of vacancies in unemployment is not only issue to be addressed in the society but to examine the gap between potential graduates' skills and the skills the employers are seeking for. Several Social Studies classes have been giving significant attention to only cognitive and practical components skills with little emphasis on social skills for future employability of pre-service Social Studies teachers. This affects the graduate's ability to secure job or do well in their job practices.Several foreign studies about social skills have expressed nature and importance of social skills to learners but much has not been done to look at the issues of learners'awareness of the skills and inherent challenges they have in acquiring the skills for sustenance of the employability. This thus is the gap this study is trying to fill.

Research Questions

RQ¹: What is the awareness level of pre-service Social Studies teachers on selected types of Social Skills as predictors of their employability?

RQ²: What are the challenges of acquiring social skills as predictors of pre-service Social Studies teachers employability?

Methodology

The study investigated predictors of graduates' employability of pre-services Social Studies teachers in University of Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria. A descriptive survey research method was employed for the study. Due to researcher's inability to cover all the faculties in University of Ilorin, descriptive survey research type was considered suitable and relevant. The population for the study consisted of all undergraduates in the University of Ilorin. The target population was pre-service Social Studies teachers in the Department of Social Sciences Education, Faculty of Education, University of Ilorin. The study adopted sample size of 160 pre-service Social Studies teachers using purposive and simple random sampling techniques. 40 pre-service Social Studies teachers were selected in eachof 100 level to 400level of the Social Sciences Education Department in Faculty of Education, University of Ilorin. Researcher-designed questionnaire titled "Predictors of Graduates Employability of Pre-Services Social Studies Teachers in University of Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria (PGEPSSTUIKSN)" was used for data collection. The instrument consisted of three sections of A, B and C. Section A sought personal information of pre-service Social Studies teachers, section B focused on preservice Social Studies teachers awareness of types of social skills and section C focused on challenges of acquiring social skills as predictors of pre-service Social Studies teachers employability. Rating scale of "aware" and "not aware" were used for section B, while four-point Likert's scale of strongly agree (SA), agree (A), disagree (D) and strongly disagree (SD) constitute the response rubrics for section C.

The content validity of this instrument used in the study was ascertained through three experts from test and measurement, psychology of education and Social Studies education in Department of Social Sciences Education, Faculty of Education, University of Ilorin. Their corrections were used for the final draft of the instrument. The reliability of the instrument was gotten by administering the instrument twice on a different sample of respondents at an interval of two weeks.

Data obtained were subjected to PPMC yielding correlation coefficient of 0.61, hence, the instrument was adjudged reliable. Out of 160 questionnaires distributed, 120 were able to be retrieved for the analysis. Data were analyzed using tables, frequency counts and percentage for answering demographic data, and the research question 1 while mean rating was used to answer the research question 2.

Results

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents Based on Levels

Levels	Frequency	Percentages
100	24	20.0
200	28	23.3
300	44	36.7
400	24	20.0
Total	**120**	**100.0**

Result on Table 1 indicates the distribution of the respondent based on levels. The results show that respondents were equally represented at 100 and 400 levels with 20.0% each, while 23.3% and 36.7% of the respondents were for 200 and 300 levels respectively. This shows the highest percent of the respondents was recorded at 300 level.

Analysis of Research Questions

Research Question 1: What is the awareness level of pre-service Social Studies teachers on selected types of Social Skills as predictors of their employability?

Table 2: Percentage Distribution of pre-service Social Studies teachers awareness level on selected types of Social Skills as predictors of their employability.

S/N	Types of social skills for employability	Non-Awareness		Awareness		Total	
		F	%	F	%	F	%
1	Ability to relate interpersonally.	26	21.7	94	78.3	120	100
2	Ability to solve problem	100	83.3	20	16.7	120	100
3	Ability to be accountable	88	73.3	32	26.7	120	100
4	Ability to be empathetic and connect others	91	75.8	29	24.2	120	100
5	Ability to communicate verbally and non-verbally	95	79.2	25	20.8	120	100

The result in Table 2 shows the percentage distribution of awareness data of pre-service Social Studies teachers on selected types of Social Skills as predictors of their employability. According to the types of social skills in items 1 to 5. Result however revealed that 78.3% of the respondents are aware of the social skills in item 1 while 21.7% are unaware of it. The majority of the respondents are unaware of types of social skills as predictors of their employability in items 2, 3, 4, and 5. This implies that the awareness level of the pre-service teachers about types of social skills they need to acquire for employability is very low.

Research Question 2: What are the challenges of acquiring social skills as predictors of pre-service Social Studies teachers' employability.

Table 3: Mean Response to some challenges of acquiring social skills as predictors of pre-service Social Studies teachers' employability.

S/N	Statement	N	Mean	SD
1	Inability to learn how to ask accurate questions is my difficult in interpersonal skills.	120	2.00	1.08
2	Inability to learn how to ask simple questions is my difficult in interpersonal skills.	120	1.90	0.87
3	Inability to learn how to identify root causes of problem is my difficult in problem solving skills.	120	2.98	0.84
4	Inability to learn how to recognizing mistake is my difficult in problem solving skills.	120	2.70	1.17
5	Inability to learn how to resolve conflict is my difficult in problem solving skills.	120	2.70	1.17
6	Inability to learn how to accept blame is my difficult in accountability skill.	120	3.25	0.76
7	Inability to learn how to deal with constructive feedback is my difficult in accountability skill.	120	2.98	0.84
8	Inability to learn how to use verbal cues is my problem in basic communication skill.	120	3.4	0.74
9	Inability to learn how to use non-verbal cues is my problem in basic communication skill.	120	2.92	0.84
10	Inability to learn how to overcome some cognitive and, behavioural issues is my difficult in dexterity of empathy and connection with other people.	120	3.38	0.89
11	Inability to learn how to overcome some health issues during learning is my difficult in dexterity of empathy and connection with other people.	120	3.4	0.74

Results in Table 3 shows the Mean response of respondent to some challenges of acquiring social skills as predictors of pre-service teachers' employability. From the statements, corresponding items 1 and 2 have responses lesser than 2.5 which is the average (midpoint) of the scale, while statements corresponding to items 3,4, 5,6,7,8,9,10, and 11 have mean responses greater than 2.5. These imply that pre-service teachers disagree with the items 1and 2 as social skills challenges

that predict their employability. This shows that pre-service Social Studies teachers did not have problems of interpersonal social skills in terms of how to ask accurate and simple questions. However, they agreed with the items3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11 as social skills challenges that predict their employability.This implies they have difficulties in acquiring social skills of problem-solving, accountability, basic communication, empathy and rapport with other people. This explicitly shown that pre-service Social Studies teachers are deficient in social skills of identifying root cause of a problem, recognizing mistake, resolving conflict, accepting blame, dealing with constructive feedback, using verbal and non-verbal cues to communicate and overcoming some cognitive, behavioural andhealth issues to be empathetic and connecting with others.

Discussion of Findings

Given the facts that, the focus of this study was toward preservice teachers' awareness of social skills and their challenges of acquiring them as predictors for graduates' employability. The results of the findings showed that interpersonal skills are widely aware by the preservice Social Studies teacher. This is good enough because awareness of interpersonal social skills contributes a lot to the building of interpersonal relationship in business and makes it more profitable and well connected. Preserving and managing relationship, seeking help and cooperation should manifest in the attitudes of graduates desiring to build interpersonal skills. This is in line with the observation of Sharma, Goswami and Gupta (2016) that a child behaves positively, maintains good relationships with others and performs better in academic achievement because of his or her dexterity in social skills in school. However, their lack of awareness of other social skills of problem-solving, basic communication, accountability, empathy and rapport with other people is bane of their deficits in social skills for employability. It can be inferred from the forgoing that awareness of concepts is a good predictor and germane in addressing difficult of learning such concept.

Therefore, awareness of problem-solving as social skill will result in good performance of graduates in an employment. Ability to identify the root cause of grievance, mistake and courage to resolve the issues between the customers and businessmen will enhance stable business relationship. This is also paramount among the colleagues in a given office. It thus becomes a challenge as evident in the result of this study which is in line with the submission of Master in Special Education Degree Programme Guide (2022) that social skills of problem-solving emerge as a result of individual

difficulties in learning how to identify the root causes of problem, recognizing mistake and resolving conflict.

More so non-awareness of the basic communication as a powerful social skill will undermine graduates' performance in job. They need to be acquainted in the use of communication tools to drive others social skills for better performance. The graduates' poor in being attentive in listening and to be friendly, polite and assertive in response are attributes of poor communication skills. This may hinder them in good management of business and resolving differences in interrelationship and so on. This is supported by submission of Master in Special Education Degree Programme Guide (2022) that deficit in social skill occurs in a situation an individual cannot use verbal and nonverbal cues to communicate effectively.

In addition, prospective graduates for job is expected to be aware that accountability is social skill to venture into for optimum performance in business. This has been the bane of preservice teachers learning social skills for employability. Many graduates have been found wanting of this type of skill in their business administration. The finding of this study under this segment in which preservice teachers were not aware of accountability as social skill thus responsible for their poor knowledge inaccepting blame and dealing with constructive feedback. Accountability is not limited to accurate management of account record but how accountable in acceptance of fault and constructive criticism to do better. This is in line with Indeed Editorial Team (2021) suggestion that improvement of social skills is connected with the ability to get feedback.

Thirdly, the results of the finding indicated that preservice teachers had challenge in being emphatic with others. Consideration of others feeling in working place is as paramount as putting recipes in food, being empathetic will build respect and unconditional relationship and rapport with others. This is what employers want from employees for business to move on. This is in line with the observation of Master in Special Education Degree Programme Guide (2022) that some cognitive, behavioural and health condition during learning could hamper learning of social dexterity of empathy and connection. This is a hint to identify some peculiar problems of an individual that could obstruct his or her sense of empathy. This buttresses opinion of Ganeshal and Sinnoor (2021) that learning disabilities, emotional disturbance, mental retardation and hyperactivity disorder may hinder students to be socially empathetic.

Conclusion

Though interpersonal skills are widely aware by the preservice Social Studies teacher, majority of them not aware of other tangible social skills such as problem-solving, accountability, empathy and communication. This implies that the awareness level of the pre-service teachers about types of social skills they need to acquire for employability is very low. This is also contributing factor to the various challenges they have in acquiring social skills in areas of problem-solving, accountability, empathy and communication.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that the school authority should make both acquisition of social and practical skills paramount in the course of entrepreneurship training for students. Soft skills in problem-solving, accountability, empathy and basic communication need to intensified by the Social Studies and entrepreneurship educators to enhance students' awareness of the skills at one hand and removing the likely difficulties they may have in learning them at other hand.

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