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## Exploration of Entrepreneurship and Employability Skills Needed for Poverty Alleviation: Evidence from Oyo State, Nigeria

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**ABSTRACT:** *This study focused on the exploration of entrepreneurship and employability skills needed for poverty alleviation in Oyo State. The study answered two research questions and tested two null hypotheses in line with the stated objectives. The target population of the study comprised two hundred and seven (207) 300Level and 400Level students in the Department of Educational Management in University of Ibadan, Nigeria. No sampling was done as the population is neither too small nor dispersal. Data were collected using a self-designed questionnaire titled “Questionnaire on Entrepreneurship and Employability Skills needed for Poverty Alleviation (QEESPA)”. Findings reveal that Soft skills are needed for poverty alleviation in Ibadan North Local Government area of Oyo State, Nigeria (mean = 3.22, SD = 0.71) and there was no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female respondents regarding business skills and poverty alleviation in Ibadan North Local Government area of Oyo State, Nigeria ( $t_{205} = 1.191, P > 0.05$ ). Based on the findings made, it is concluded that business and soft skills are essential for reducing poverty in Oyo State Nigeria, specifically in the Ibadan North Local Government Area and society s affected by absence or lack of these skills. Based on the conclusion drawn, it is recommended, among others, that appropriate government agencies should launch a vigorous awareness campaign to educate the public on the value of acquiring business skills.*

**KEYWORDS:** entrepreneurship, employability, skills, poverty

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### INTRODUCTION

The modern economic growth of a country today recognises entrepreneurship as a key element. Today, the literature generally acknowledges its crucial role in shaping national economies. According to specialists in the industry, entrepreneurship is seen as a driver of economic expansion,

job creation, and wealth accumulation (Henry, 2018). The European Commission (2015) also had the same opinion and added that entrepreneurship is a key contributor to innovation, competitiveness, and the economic strength of a modern nation. In addition, they stress the value of business education in the growth of entrepreneurial attitudes and skills, notably in the improvement of entrepreneur competencies. Entrepreneurship is not all about teaching people how to create business, however it involves encouraging the creativity mind set of someone to spot and create solution to economy problems around him or her whereby the solution will as well generate income for the economy (Ojo & Uwagwu, 2020).

On their agendas, many governments prioritise entrepreneurial education. These governments rely heavily on entrepreneurship education to foster the growth and development of the sector, which is essential to their economic prosperity. It's a novel idea that stands for students' personal growth in terms of practical skills and competences, in addition to receiving high-quality instruction. According to the European Commission (2015), it is also referred to as a novel teaching approach that encourages students' inventive spirit, abilities, and attitudes, helping them find suitable careers and develop into qualified company owners after graduation.

However, the strategy did not succeed in achieving its objectives, most likely because universities were unable to fulfil the required admission ratio for the programmes since programmes in the social sciences continue to draw more applicants as a result of societal expectations (Imam, 2016). Many industrialised countries see the emergence of entrepreneurs favourably as a major policy goal, and entrepreneurship is given centre stage, especially when it comes to concerns of graduate unemployment and economic development. This is due to the fact that it enhances the country's wealth by fostering industrialisation, opening up new markets, and generating employment possibilities. It also boosts productivity, which results in a fairer distribution of money and a greater quality of life for the general public (Jahanshahi, Nawaser, Khaksar, & Kamalian, 2015). In light of the aforementioned, various entrepreneurial development programmes have been launched in Nigeria throughout the years, including the National Directorate of Employment (NDE), the National Poverty Eradication Program (NAPEP), and most recently, Youth with Innovation (YOUWIN). Due to inadequate execution and the failure to significantly lower the growing rate of unemployment, particularly among young people and recent graduates, many of these programmes were unsuccessful. The objectives an individual set for themselves and the expected results of activities done will thus be greatly influenced by how they see various components of an entrepreneurial programme as a student or professor. The study's goal is to explore the entrepreneurial and employability skills required for reducing poverty in Kwara State, Nigeria.

### **Statement of the Problem**

In order to encourage students to embrace entrepreneurship as a vocation or to pursue entrepreneurial aspirations, entrepreneurship education in universities aims to instil entrepreneurial skills and attitudes in learners (Middleton, 2014). Although colleges in Nigeria now provide entrepreneurial education as a mandatory degree, graduate unemployment and ambitions for white collar professions have been rising consistently. But research by Aja-Okorie and Adali (2014) and Adebayo and Kolawole (2018) has shown that entrepreneurship education has a favourable impact on university students' entrepreneurial inclinations in Nigeria. So, it's possible that Nigerian university students are developing entrepreneurial intents. In particular, entrepreneurship education is a systematic

process that should encourage participants to think critically in order to produce original and imaginative company concepts (Sadeghi, Mohammadi, Nosrati, & Malekian 2016). In order to close the knowledge gap between theory and practise, researchers like Adebayo and Kolawole (2018), Dirk, and Papadimitriou (2015) have called for a revision of the content of university entrepreneurship curricula. They have placed a special emphasis on the formation of entrepreneurial intentions. In order to reduce poverty in Nigeria, it is necessary to determine if entrepreneurship curriculum material fosters critical thinking and the creation of entrepreneurial innovations.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The main purpose of the study is to explore entrepreneurship and employability skills needed for poverty alleviation in Oyo State. The study will specifically examine:

1. Soft skills needed for poverty alleviation in Ibadan North Local Government area of Oyo State, Nigeria
2. Business skills needed for poverty alleviation in Ibadan North Local Government area of Oyo State, Nigeria

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided the study.

1. What are the soft skills needed for poverty alleviation in Ibadan North Local Government area of Oyo State, Nigeria?
2. What are the business skills needed for poverty alleviation in Ibadan North Local Government area of Oyo State, Nigeria?

### **Research Hypotheses**

The following research hypotheses are formulated and were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

**H<sub>01</sub>:** There is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female respondents regarding soft skills and poverty alleviation in Ibadan North Local Government area of Oyo State, Nigeria

**H<sub>02</sub>:** There is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female respondents regarding business skills and poverty alleviation in Ibadan North Local Government area of Oyo State, Nigeria

### **METHODOLOGY**

The design of the study was descriptive survey research. The population of the study was made up of 207 300Level and 400Level students in the Department of Educational Management in University of Ibadan, Nigeria. The entire population of 207 respondents was used because it is neither too small or dispersal. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire tagged: "Questionnaire on Entrepreneurship and Employability Skills needed for Poverty Alleviation (QEESPA)". The questionnaire was structured on a 4-point Likert scale. The questionnaire was validated and verified by experts in measurements and evaluation. The instrument had a reliability index of 0.81. Percentage, mean, standard deviation and independent samples t-test were used to analyse the data gathered from the respondents.

## RESULTS

**Research Question One:** What are the soft skills needed for poverty alleviation in Ibadan North Local Government area of Oyo State, Nigeria?

**Table 1: Mean and standard deviation of responses on the soft skills needed for poverty alleviation in Ibadan North Local Government area of Oyo State, Nigeria**

S/N	Item Statements	$\bar{X}$	SD	Remark
1.	Flexibility	3.20	0.97	Agreed
2.	Collaboration skill	3.54	0.50	Agreed
3.	Persuasive skill	3.08	0.62	Agreed
4.	Honesty	3.51	0.64	Agreed
5.	Public speaking skill	3.02	0.78	Agreed
6.	Humility	3.22	0.86	Agreed
7.	Open-mindedness	3.04	0.62	Agreed
8.	Enthusiasm	3.15	0.75	Agreed
9.	Empathy	3.31	0.58	Agreed
10.	Flexibility	3.15	0.75	Agreed
<b>Weighted average</b>		<b>3.22</b>	<b>0.71</b>	<b>Agreed</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 1 revealed that the respondents agreed that soft skills are needed for poverty alleviation in Ibadan North Local Government area of Oyo State, Nigeria: Flexibility (mean = 3.20), Collaboration skill (mean = 3.54), Persuasive skill (mean = 3.08), Honesty (mean = 3.51), Public speaking skill (mean = 3.02), Humility (mean = 3.22), Open-mindedness (mean = 3.04), Enthusiasm (mean = 3.15), Empathy (mean = 3.31) and Flexibility (mean = 3.15). All the 10 items have their standard deviation ranged from 0.50 to 0.97 which are below the fixed value of 1.96. This means that the responses of the respondents were not too wide spread, the responses are slightly clustered to the mean. On the overall, the data analyzed in Table 1 revealed that soft skills are needed for poverty alleviation in Ibadan North Local Government area of Oyo State, Nigeria (mean = 3.22, SD = 0.71).

**Research Question Two:** What are the business skills needed for poverty alleviation in Ibadan North Local Government area of Oyo State, Nigeria?

**Table 2: Mean and standard deviation of responses on the business skills needed for poverty alleviation in Ibadan North Local Government area of Oyo State, Nigeria**

S/N	Item Statements	$\bar{X}$	SD	Remark
1.	Team management Skills	3.11	0.64	Agreed
2.	Analytical Skills	2.57	0.90	Agreed
3.	Negotiation Skills	3.12	0.68	Agreed
4.	Secretarial Skills	3.00	0.95	Agreed
5.	Sales and Marketing Skills	3.04	0.58	Agreed
6.	Financial Management Skills	3.16	0.67	Agreed
7.	Leadership Skills	2.96	0.90	Agreed
8.	Communication Skills	3.12	0.68	Agreed
9.	Business management skill	3.00	0.95	Agreed
10.	Networking Skill	3.04	0.58	Agreed
<b>Weighted average</b>		<b>3.01</b>	<b>0.75</b>	<b>Agreed</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 2 revealed that the respondents agreed that business skills are needed for poverty alleviation in Ibadan North Local Government area of Oyo State, Nigeria: Team management Skills (mean = 3.11), Analytical Skills (mean = 2.57), Negotiation Skills (mean = 3.12), Secretarial Skills (mean = 3.00), Sales and Marketing Skills (mean = 3.04), Financial Management Skills (mean = 3.16), Leadership Skills (mean = 2.96), Communication Skills (mean = 3.12), Business management skill (mean = 3.00) and Networking Skill (mean = 3.04). All the 10 items have their standard deviation ranged from 0.58 to 0.95 which are below the fixed value of 1.96. This means that the responses of the respondents were not too wide spread, the responses are slightly clustered to the mean.

On the overall, the data analyzed in Table 1 revealed that business skills are needed for poverty alleviation in Ibadan North Local Government area of Oyo State (mean = 3.01, SD = 0.75).

### Test of Hypotheses

The three null hypotheses of the study were tested using independent samples t-test at 0.05 level of significance. The summary of the test of hypotheses are presented in Tables 3 to 4 as follows:

H<sub>01</sub>: There is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female respondents regarding soft skills and poverty alleviation in Ibadan North Local Government area of Oyo State, Nigeria

**Table 3: Summary of t-test of the difference between the mean responses of male and female respondents regarding soft skills and poverty alleviation in Ibadan North Local Government area of Oyo State, Nigeria**

Group	N	Mean	SD	t-cal	Df	p-value	Decision
Male	86	3.29	0.21	2.826	205	0.006	NS
Female	121	3.38	0.12				

Source: Field survey, 2023

P>0.05

The data in Table 3 revealed that there are 86 male respondents and 121 female respondents in Ibadan North Local Government area of Oyo State, Nigeria. The responses of male and female respondents indicated that soft skills are needed for poverty alleviation in Ibadan North Local Government area of Oyo State, Nigeria ( $\bar{X} = 3.29$ ; SD = 0.21) and ( $\bar{X} = 3.38$ ; SD = 0.12). Their responses are close to the mean as the standard deviations are very low. The table revealed that there was no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female respondents regarding soft skills and poverty alleviation in Ibadan North Local Government area of Oyo State, Nigeria ( $t_{205} = 2.826$ , P>0.05). Therefore, the null hypothesis that states that there is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female respondents regarding soft skills and poverty alleviation in Ibadan North Local Government area of Oyo State, Nigeria was not rejected. This implied that there is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female respondents regarding soft skills and poverty alleviation in Ibadan North Local Government area of Oyo State, Nigeria.

H<sub>02</sub>: There is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female respondents regarding business skills and poverty alleviation in Ibadan North Local Government area of Oyo State, Nigeria

**Table 4: Summary of t-test of the difference between the mean responses of male and female respondents regarding business skills and poverty alleviation in Ibadan North Local Government area of Oyo State, Nigeria**

Group	N	Mean	SD	t-cal	Df	p-value	Decision
Male	86	3.32	0.18	1.191	205	0.236	NS
Female	121	3.36	0.16				

Source: Field survey, 2023 P>0.05

The data in Table 4 revealed that there are 86 male respondents and 121 female respondents in Ibadan North Local Government area of Oyo State, Nigeria. The responses of male and female respondents indicated that business skills are needed for poverty alleviation in Ibadan North Local Government area of Oyo State, Nigeria ( $\bar{X} = 3.32$ ;  $SD = 0.18$ ) and ( $\bar{X} = 3.36$ ;  $SD = 0.16$ ). Their responses are close to the mean as the standard deviations are very low. The table revealed that there was no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female respondents regarding business skills and poverty alleviation in Ibadan North Local Government area of Oyo State, Nigeria ( $t_{205} = 1.191$ ,  $P > 0.05$ ). Therefore, the null hypothesis that states that there is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female respondents regarding business skills and poverty alleviation in Ibadan North Local Government area of Oyo State, Nigeria was not rejected. This implied that there was no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female respondents regarding business skills and poverty alleviation in Ibadan North Local Government area of Oyo State, Nigeria.

### Summary of findings

The following are the summary of the major findings of the study based on Research Questions:

1. Soft skills are needed for poverty alleviation in Ibadan North Local Government area of Oyo State, Nigeria (mean = 3.22,  $SD = 0.71$ ).
2. Business skills are needed for poverty alleviation in Ibadan North Local Government area of Oyo State, Nigeria (mean = 3.01,  $SD = 0.75$ ).
3. There was no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female respondents regarding soft skills and poverty alleviation in Ibadan North Local Government area of Oyo State, Nigeria ( $t_{205} = 2.826$ ,  $P > 0.05$ ).
4. There was no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female respondents regarding business skills and poverty alleviation in Ibadan North Local Government area of Oyo State, Nigeria ( $t_{205} = 1.191$ ,  $P > 0.05$ ).

### DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Findings on research question one and hypothesis one shows that Soft skills are needed for poverty alleviation in Ibadan North Local Government area of Oyo State, Nigeria. These skills include Flexibility, Collaboration skill, Persuasive skill, Honesty, Public speaking skill, Humility, Open-mindedness, Enthusiasm and Empathy. The findings agree with Chibunna (2018) who posited that acquisition of soft skills by managers of small and medium scale enterprises enhances their business acumen and thereby making them to have a comprehensive knowledge of business.

Findings on research question two and hypothesis two shows that Team Management Skills, Analytical Skills, Negotiation Skills, Secretarial Skills, Sales and Marketing Skills, Financial Management Skills, Leadership Skills, Communication Skills, Business management skill, Networking Skill etc. are the Business skills are needed for poverty alleviation Ibadan North Local Government area of Oyo State, Nigeria. This agrees with Onoh (2016) that self-employed persons need to acquire business skills to progress in business. He emphasized that the possession of this skill will consolidate and enhance their businesses as well as eliminate early failure.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the study's findings, it can be concluded that business and soft skills are essential for reducing poverty in Oyo State Nigeria, specifically in the Ibadan North Local Government Area. Society is affected by absence or lack of these skills. The skills might function as a set of operating rules for individuals already employed in the industry and a training programme for newbies. Knowledge about entrepreneurship and employability skills that are necessary for reducing poverty has been provided by the study. In order to effectively reduce poverty, students must integrate all of the skills mentioned or highlighted there.

## Recommendations

On the basis of the study's findings, the following recommendations are made:

1. Appropriate government agencies should launch a vigorous awareness campaign to educate the public on the value of acquiring business skills.
2. Small- and medium-business owners should try to develop soft skills that will improve the calibre of their goods and services.

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