

ENTREPRENEURIAL AND DIGITAL SKILLS NEEDED TO STEM THE TIDE OF YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Unemployment occurs where citizens find it difficult to secure a job to earn a living. The tide of unemployment has become a popular phenomenon in Nigeria. Many active Nigerians are dreaming of moving out of the country to seek greener pastures as a result of unemployment, poverty, insecurity, infrastructural deficit, poor standard of living among others. The dimension of youth unemployment in Nigeria is becoming worrisome and has taken its toll on the economy. This situation requires urgent attention. The study discussed causes of unemployment among Nigerian youths and how entrepreneurial and digital skills could help in reducing it. Descriptive research design was used to carry out the study. The population for the study comprised ninety (93) registered members of Association of Business Educators (ABEN), Oyo State Chapter. This study covered the whole population. Mean and standard deviation was used to analyse the research questions while formulated hypotheses were tested with t-test statistic. Findings from the study revealed that Nigerian youths needs entrepreneurial and digital skills to reduce unemployment. The study concludes that there is a compelling need to reduce the rate of youth unemployment to the acceptable global standard. The study recommends that the government and other stakeholders should work together in confronting the menace of unemployment through establishment of appropriate platforms for youth employment and empowerment.

Key Words: *Entrepreneurial skills, digital skills, Youth, Unemployment, Business Education*

Introduction

Unemployment is a state of being unable to secure a job needed to earn a living. An unemployed person usually depends on another for his/her needs. Many able bodied persons including youths are unable to find jobs in different countries around the globe including Nigeria. Obviously, unemployment has become an important issue worldwide. Advanced and developing nations have been addressing this problem through different strategies. Large number of youths in Nigeria are migrating to other countries due to unemployment, poor economic condition and educational purposes. Youth unemployment rate in Nigeria is reported at 42.5 per cent in 2020, with underemployment rate at 22.8 per cent (National Bureau of Statistics Nigeria, 2022). For instance, most of the migrants caught in Libya during the protracted Mediterranean migrant crisis were identified as Nigerians. The rate of youth unemployment in Nigeria is alarming and unacceptable, hence this underscore why it must be addressed. However, some nations are promoting skill acquisition to re-position their citizens for increased employment opportunities and economic development. Zemtsov (2020) remarked that global high rate of unemployment has made entrepreneurial development inevitable.

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According to Dau and Cuervo-Cazurra (2014), entrepreneurship is the creation of new businesses by well-focused individuals who combine efforts to invent products of economic value. Entrepreneurship is the ability of a person or group of individuals to discover business opportunities and utilize it for the benefit of the society to achieve profitable goals (Ijov, 2021). In other words, entrepreneurship is the desire and capacity of an individual to find business opportunities and utilize the scarce resources for profit motives (Ogundele, 2013). It is the process of inventing new things through concentration of time and efforts not minding the associated financial and social risks to achieve profitable goals. Entrepreneurs are the first individuals to identify new resources and assess their potential economic value. They are successful in actualizing these opportunities in economic terms and expanding the employment prospects open to young people (Boudreaux, Nikolaev and Klein, 2019).

Entrepreneurship education could help to diminish unemployment among Nigerian youths by teaching them how to identify and nurture important entrepreneurial traits, abilities, and actions. Essential entrepreneurial skills, such as creativity, innovation, swift decision-making, and risk-taking, are useful to everyone, especially individuals interested in initiating and expanding personal businesses. These skills are useful in workplaces, household management, daily life endeavours, and the society in general. Entrepreneurship offers a reliable means of income for the employees and employers (Kraus, Palmer, Kailer, Kallinger & Spitzer, 2018). Researchers have established the relevance of entrepreneurship in reduction of unemployment. Chiekezie, Nzewi and Erhinmwionose (2016) conducted a research on entrepreneurial skills acquisition and job creation in Benin City, Nigeria. The study indicates that entrepreneurial skills acquisition plays a crucial role in generating employment opportunities. The study emphasized the need to promote entrepreneurial skills acquisition in order to empower young people to effectively utilize local environmental resources. Ezeh and Ekemezie (2015) investigated the entrepreneurial skills needed for self-reliance and sustainable development by students of tertiary institutions in South-East, Nigeria. The research shows that entrepreneurial skills such as; creativity, innovative, financial, and managerial skills are required for self-reliance and sustainable development. The research affirmed that it is essential to prioritize entrepreneurship education in order to ensure that beneficiaries gain more marketable skills and comprehend strategies for establishing a business.

Acquisition of digital skills by youths is another means of securing employment. These digital skills are embedded in some courses in business education such as marketing, accounting and word processing. Digital Marketing Institute (2024) submitted that digital marketing skills, such as social media marketing, search engine marketing, digital analytics, mobile, email and content marketing, strategic planning marketing, social selling marketing, pay-per-click marketing, and video creation marketing, give students the chance to find employment immediately after graduation. Digital skills are the ability to create, manage, and successfully complete a task using technologies. The abilities shown in utilizing digital devices, online communication tools, and networks to obtain and handle information are generally referred to as digital skills. Digital skill is also the capacity to use digital tools, such as computers and smart phones, and software applications to manage valuable information.

According to Igbokwe (2012), business education offers students the knowledge, abilities, skills, and attitudes necessary to function in the business sector as manufacturers or buyers of products and services. Adequate skill development courses are included in business education which provides the recipients with the necessary skills they need to become employable and owners of their own businesses. In line with this, Aina (2018) maintained that

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recipients of business education programmes are expected to acquire many business skills that are sufficient for self-reliance and self-employment. To support this, Eze, Ezenwa for and Igberaharha (2016) assessed the entrepreneurial skills needed for self-employment by graduates of business education in Delta state. The study revealed that accounting, office technology, management, marketing, entrepreneurial skills are highly required by business education graduates for self-employment in Delta state.

Ordu and Abdulkarim (2020) opined that recipient of business education programme have every opportunity to acquire skills relating to the various areas of business such as accounting, entrepreneurship, office technology and management, marketing, and management if guided appropriately. Digital skill training is taught in business education to prepare the graduates for digitalization and globalization. Therefore, Business Education is a potential instrument for entrepreneurial and digital skill acquisition which can be effectively employed to stem the tide of youth unemployment in Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

In Nigeria, many young people are moving overseas based on factors such as; unemployment, underemployment, job security, desire for better living conditions, prospecting for higher pay, education, escaping harsh economic conditions and better working environment among others. This situation has become an issue of national discourse in Nigeria. The rate of youth unemployment in Nigeria is high and require serious attention. Many graduates of educational institutions find it difficult to either secure job or create their own businesses as a result of inadequate entrepreneurial and digital skills among others. This situation is not good enough for youth development because it has led to frustration and increase in crime rate among Nigerian youths. The consequence of youth unemployment is that it could lead to underdevelopment and social and economic crises because the future and survival of any nation depends on its youthful and working population. Therefore, this study investigated the causes of unemployment in Nigerian and determined the entrepreneurial and digital skills that could be imparted to the youths through business education to stem the tide of unemployment.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised for the study:

- 1. What are the entrepreneurial skills needed to stem the tide of youth unemployment?
- 2. What are the digital skills needed to stem the tide of youth unemployment?

Hypotheses

Hypotheses formulated and tested for the study at 0.05 level of significance were:

- 1. There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of both male and female business educators on the entrepreneurial skills to stem the tide of youth unemployment.
- 2. There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of both male and female business educators on the digital skills needed to stem the tide of youth unemployment.

Methodology

The researcher adopted a descriptive survey research design. The area covered by the study is Oyo State, Nigeria. The population for this study comprised ninety-three (93) registered members of Association of Business Educators of Nigeria (ABEN), Oyo State Chapter. The whole population was used for the study, therefore, no sampling was made. The instrument used for the study was a structured questionnaire designed to elicit response from the respondents. The

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instrument was on 4-point Likert rating scale of Strongly Agree – 4, Agree – 3, Disagree – 2 and Strongly Disagree – 1. The instrument for the study was validated by two experts in business education. The research instrument was subjected to pilot test on 20 Business Educators in Osun State. The reliability coefficient for the instruments was 0.81 using Cronbach Alpha Coefficient Reliability method. Data collected from respondents were analysed by using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions while t-test statistic was used to test the two null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The decision rule for the analysis was that mean of 2.50 and above was regarded as “Agree” while mean below 2.50 was regarded as “Disagree”.

Results

Research Question 1: What are the entrepreneurial skills needed to stem the tide of youth unemployment?

Table 1: Mean score of respondents on the entrepreneurial skills needed to stem the tide of youth unemployment.

S/N	Item Statement	X ₁ n ₁ =25	SD ₁	X ₂ n ₂ =68	SD ₂	XG	SDG	Decision
1	Ability to solve business problems	2.51	0.74	3.50	0.82	2.57	0.75	Agree
2	Ability to develop business plans	3.43	0.82	2.84	0.74	3.06	0.76	Agree
3	Ability to recognize business opportunities	2.70	0.70	3.73	0.65	3.43	0.62	Agree
4	Ability to coordinate people to achieve business goals	3.63	0.67	3.83	0.84	2.78	0.71	Agree
5	Ability to introduce innovations into business	2.90	0.54	2.62	0.58	3.21	0.66	Agree
6	Ability to create new methods of doing things	3.05	0.69	2.89	0.72	3.16	0.79	Agree
7	Ability to develop new business ideas	2.55	0.86	2.75	0.63	2.65	0.68	Agree
8	Ability to take risks	3.80	0.81	2.81	0.75	3.09	0.54	Agree
9	Ability to adopt SWOT analysis in business	3.63	0.94	3.32	0.68	2.94	0.82	Agree
10	Self-confidence	3.22	0.77	3.17	0.75	3.20	0.75	Agree
	Grand Mean/Standard Deviation	3.13	0.75	3.15	0.72	3.14	0.74	Agree

Key: X= mean, SD = standard deviation

Table 1 indicates that all the 10 items were rated agreed by respondents having mean of 2.57 to 3.43. This result revealed that entrepreneurial skills are highly useful for stemming the tide of youth unemployment.

Research Question 2: What are the digital skills needed to stem the tide of youth unemployment?

Table 2: Mean score of respondents on the digital skills needed to stem the tide of youth unemployment in Nigeria.

S/N	Item Statement	X ₁ n ₁ =25	SD ₁	X ₂ n ₂ =68	SD ₂	XG	SDG	Decision
1	E-mail marketing skills	3.45	0.80	3.50	0.84	3.48	0.82	Agree
2	Social media marketing skills	2.90	0.67	2.66	0.75	2.78	0.71	Agree
3	Search engine marketing skills	3.60	0.74	3.84	0.77	3.72	0.76	Agree
4	Content marketing skills	2.72	0.50	3.15	0.83	2.94	0.67	Agree
5	Pay-per-click marketing skills	2.80	0.72	3.50	0.58	3.15	0.65	Agree
6	Video creation marketing skills	3.05	0.84	3.01	0.82	3.03	0.83	Agree
7	Data base marketing skills	3.51	0.89	2.75	0.76	3.13	0.83	Agree
8	Spreadsheet computing skill	3.75	0.66	3.06	0.85	3.41	0.76	Agree
9	Ability to use accounting software packages	2.68	0.09	3.14	0.85	2.91	0.47	Agree
10	Ability to use block-chain technology	3.82	0.69	3.52	0.87	3.67	0.78	Agree
11	Cloud computing skills	2.69	0.83	2.67	0.82	2.68	0.83	Agree
12	Data computing skills	3.11	0.65	3.30	0.78	3.21	0.72	Agree
13	Artificial intelligence skill	3.54	0.55	2.67	0.95	3.11	0.75	Agree
14	Electronic data interchange skill	2.78	0.81	2.72	0.84	2.75	0.83	Agree
15	Big data technology skill	2.66	0.62	3.45	0.66	3.06	0.64	Agree
16	Robotic application skill	2.60	0.88	2.87	0.64	2.74	0.76	Agree
	Grand Mean/Standard Deviation	3.10	0.68	3.11	0.79	3.11	0.74	Agree

Key: X = mean, SD = Standard Deviation

Table 2 shows that all the 16 items with mean of 2.74 to 3.48 were rated agreed by respondents. This indicates that knowledge of digital skills could help to stem the tide of youth unemployment.

Test of Hypotheses

Ho₁: There is no significant difference between the mean scores of female and male business educators on the entrepreneurial skills needed by youths to stem the tide of overseas emigration in Nigeria.

Table 3: Summary of t-test analysis of the opinion of female and male business educators on the entrepreneurial skills needed to stem the tide of youth unemployment in Nigeria

Group	N	X	SD	Df	P	t-cal	t-critical	Decision
Female	25	3.13	0.75	91	0.05	0.35	1.70	Not significant
Male	68	3.15	0.72					

The result in Table 3 shows that the t-calculated value of 0.35 is less than the t-critical table value of 1.70 at 0.05 level of significance and 91 degree of freedom. Therefore, the hypothesis was not rejected

Ho₂: There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of female and male business educators on the digital skills needed to stem the tide of youth unemployment in Nigeria.

Table 4: Summary of t-test analysis of the response of female and male business educators on the digital skills needed to stem the tide of youth unemployment in Nigeria.

Group	N	X	SD	Df	P	t-cal	t-critical	Decision
Female	25	3.10	0.82	91	0.05	0.43	1.70	Not significant
Male	68	3.11	0.57					

The result in Table 4 reveals that the calculated value of 0.43 is less than the t-critical table value of 1.70 at 0.05 level of significance and 91 degree of freedom. The hypothesis was affirmed.

Discussion of Findings

Findings on research question one revealed that entrepreneurial skills are strongly needed for stemming the tide of youth unemployment. This study concurs with the study of Egberi and Alabi (2023) which confirmed that entrepreneurial and digital skills are needed by youth to improve their employability and self-reliance. These findings are also in line with the study carried out by Gyamfi (2014) which established that there is a cogent relationship between entrepreneurship education and the percentage of students that eventually become self-employed. Findings on research question two red that digital skills are needed by youth to stem the tide of youth unemployment. The findings of this study further agreed with Mordi (2023) who affirmed that digital accounting and digital marketing skills are essential for business education graduates to be self-employed and secure employment in the digital era.

The findings on hypotheses tested in this study indicates no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female business educators on the entrepreneurial skills needed by youth to stem the tide of unemployment in Nigeria. Also, the findings revealed no significant difference in the scores ratings of male and female business educators on the digital skills needed by youth to stem the tide of unemployment in Nigeria.

Conclusion

Unemployment is a serious issue that is affecting many nations and the causes of unemployment in nations are not the same. In Nigeria, youth unemployment persists due to factors such as; lack of entrepreneurial skills, lack of digital skills, economic downturn, folding-up of many industries among others. The rate of youth unemployment in Nigeria is increasing yearly and urgent steps needed to be taken. There is a compelling need to reduce the rate of youth employment to the acceptable global standard. Therefore, Business Education could provide succor to the youth unemployment through impartation of entrepreneurial and digital skills. This paper believes that the challenges of youth unemployment is surmountable if given adequate attention.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of this study:

1. Entrepreneurial skills acquisition should be strengthened in all educational institutions through collaboration of all stakeholders to equip graduates for job creation and employment.
2. Teaching and learning of digital skills should be enhanced in the curriculum of educational institutions to stimulate job creation and greater job opportunities for Nigerian youths.
3. Entrepreneurship agencies in Nigeria should be supported with relevant policies that will help in motivating young entrepreneurs to nurture their businesses to maturity.

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