
**21st CENTURY SOFT SKILLS AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP DEVELOPMENT
OF OFFICE TECHNOLOGY AND MANAGEMENT STUDENTS IN STATE
POLYTECHNICS, SOUTH-SOUTH NIGERIA**

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to determine the influence of 21st Century soft skills on entrepreneurship development of Office Technology and Management (OTM) students in State polytechnics, South-South Nigeria. In order to achieve the objectives of the study, three research questions were raised and three null hypotheses were formulated. A descriptive survey design was used for this study. The population consisted of 585 Office Technology and Management students in the two State Polytechnics, South-South Nigeria. Taro Yamane formula was used to select a sample size of 150 respondents (100 males and 50 females) and a cluster and simple random sampling techniques were used for sample selection. The researcher-structured questionnaire titled "Soft Skills and Entrepreneurship Development Questionnaire" (SSEDQ) was used to collect data for the study. Cronbach Alpha reliability test was used to get a reliability index of 0.86. Mean was used in answering the research questions while independent t-test was used to analyze the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. It was discovered that female and male OTM students do not significantly differ on their perception of the influence of soft skills and entrepreneurship development in State Polytechnics, South-South Nigeria. It is recommended among others that students should try to take advantage of the various opportunities presented by the internet in earning a living.

Keywords: Soft Skills, Entrepreneurship, Development and Office Technology and Management

Introduction

Entrepreneurial development in the 21st century has taken a new dimension from what it used to be in the 20th century. This is made possible by the total development and adoption of Information Communication Technology (ICT) in solving contemporary problems. Ido, Akpan and Basse (2018) opined that the 21st century is often time seen as the information age. This information age comes with its peculiarity and opportunities, one of which is the possibility of remote working where individuals sit in one location and engage in several activities. Thus, Jasper (2020) postulated that the 21st century soft skills are the cliché for occupational entrepreneurial development and advancement. This is because the 21st century entrepreneurial development requires soft skills to enable its participants to undertake effective entrepreneurial

development. According to Patrick (2023) soft skills can be defined as those core ICT skills that tend to inculcate cognitive knowledge that is applied through keyboards of the system. Nwigbo & Nebechi (2020) define ICT skills as the ability for one to independently operate personal computer system and use the software for preparing and presenting work and also use internet with its various features e.g world wide web (www). Okoh (2021) defined soft skills as interpersonal skills that boost working relationship in an organization. The purpose of these skills are to successfully navigate social interaction through the social media. Innocent (2019) opined that most soft skills are social media skills that deal with aggregation a set of people's interest, opinion and interactions in an organized setting.

Oluwaseyi (2019) observed that the 21st century soft skills do not consume more

time in practicing them and at the same time, it is remotely done at the comfort of the individual undertaking the event. Hammed (2023) opined that an individual can sit at the comfort of his/her bedroom with his/her computer devices or smart phones and engage in the practicing of the soft skills. This is why students can acquire these skills while in school to aid their entrepreneurial drive and development. Interestingly, these skills can be learned informally outside the classroom, even by using their android phones or operating their computer system. Adekunle (2021) opined that skills can be acquired outside the curriculum, students undertaking their studies can as well engage in the skills sets, since it may not distort their learning progression in the entrepreneurial development. The first thing that appears as an issue according to Abayi (2019) is that the perception of those skills set as a prerequisite for practicing entrepreneurial development while in school. Perception to Okpe (2020) is the process of growing and developing an opinion towards a particular phenomenon. It is seen as the process of growing an opinion for an act, action, process, product and system as it applies to the eyes, brain and sensors.

The soft skills which students can effectively engage in to boost their entrepreneurial development are Affiliate marketing skill, Amazon publishing skill and Freelancing skill. Affiliate marketing skill is a form of an e-marketing skill in which an individual freely undertakes to advertise the product and services of some firms to boost their income level. Affiliate marketing as the name implies is a form of formalized marketing skill that involves the marketer undertaking to advertise the products of a firm for a commission. It is a form of marketing entrepreneurship whereby a student can undertake to advertise for one or more firms on their social media accounts for bonuses. Bashehu, Mustapha, Joseph & Nwankwo (2020) state that any individual that acquires this entrepreneurial skill creates for himself or herself a unique opportunity to drive evolutionary process to achieve economic independence. These soft skills are fluid and not glued to any specific field but

rather assist the individual to adapt easily to any work environment and stay competitive in the labour market (Grisi, 2014). It does not necessarily require the presence of the student. As an affiliate marketer, one does not need to be the owner of the products or services advertised. All the affiliate marketer needs is a social media platform where he/she has so many followers to sign up and patronize the marketer. The commission is an agreed sum or percentage that both parties agree to be getting once sale is done. For example, Mr. A has a car for sale and meets Mr. B to help market it for a commission of 10%. If Mr. B happens to advertise the car and sells same for ₦500,000. As many of the products as Mr B keeps selling to customers, the more he earns. Students can access affiliate marketing channels through Payoneer and Amazon affiliate associate programmers.

Another soft skill that students can engage in while in school is the online publishing skill known as e-publishing. Cimatti (2016) states that soft skills are all the competencies that are not directly connected to a specific task and are essential in any position as they mainly refer to the relationship with other people involved in the organization. Notable among the online publishing firms to the Amazon Kindle Desktop Publishing (KDP) where individual publish, students are expected to publish their class assignments, projects, seminars etc. and as people log into the amazon to read their published work, the students get paid, students are often advised to publish books, paper, pamphlets etc. in Amazon in order to earn a living. It is quite interesting to note that most students in Polytechnics do not know nor have the required information and knowledge to be fully involved in digital publishing. In e-publishing, students get a topic of interest and write on them concretely and exhaustingly. Bassey (2022) opined that once the work is typed, amazon published the work free of charge and at same time sell the work through the amazon platform where the proceeds are sent to the author. Students of Office Technology and Management (OTM) can be introduced into this business where they can write on topics of interest and upload

on the platform for payment. This source of income is usually earned in hard currencies. The skills involved information gathering, Microsoft usage, ability to design graphics through Canva applications and other related applications. Computing skill is a necessity in e-publishing. Another aspect of soft skills in the 21st century which can eventually help students develop entrepreneurship is freelancing. The Freelancing is the process of offering a skill to different people at a fee without being legally attached to one. Osman (2011) states that this soft skill can be developed by work integrated learning, community service, or extra-curricular activities. The freelancer is one who undertakes to develop contents for individuals through social interactions with the aid of social media. Adekunle (2021) opined that the freelancer announces his/her presence on social media through platforms like Facebook, up work and others. People of interest will contact the freelancer for patronage. Freelancers do content development, research and development, data analysis, advertising and sales promotions, song writing, copy writing, agencies etc. Freelancing does not require any educational qualifications but just the skill requirements. Freelancing is a process of writing papers, articles, journals and copy-writing for corporate organization. The student becomes an independent freelancer by working for several multinationals and gets paid in foreign currency.

The rate of unemployment in the Nigerian economy is alarming. This is because most students and graduates end up acquiring certificate without saleable skills that would help reduce unemployment. McMurray (2016) states that employers are looking for soft skills in their prospective employees. Most students in Polytechnics acquire both hard and soft skills in schools.

Most students in State polytechnics are innovative and creative in making money while in school. The development of soft skills will therefore enhance the human capital potential of graduates and enhance their chances of staying competitive in the labour market. Soft skills are significant

determinant of employment outcomes. It distinguishes capable employees who should be invested in for the future from those who are less capable (Brunner, Zarkin & Yates, 2018). Most students end up not embracing innovative skills sets that would enable them be entrepreneurs for life. This has resulted to negative peer pressure, vices, low self-esteem, lack of opportunities and not funds at all. Some students have gone into unprintable acts in order to be in liquid cash. Theses and more are problems to themselves and the society at large. It was against this background that this research on 21st century soft skills and entrepreneurs development of Office Technology and Management (OTM) students in State Polytechnics, South-South Nigeria was conducted.

Research Objectives

The main purpose of this study was to determine the influence of 21st century soft skills on entrepreneurship development of Office Technology and Management students in State Polytechnics, South-south Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to determine the influence of:

1. Affiliate marketing skill on entrepreneurship development of Office Technology and Management students in State Polytechnics, South-South Nigeria.
2. Digital publishing skill on entrepreneurship development of Office Technology and Management in State Polytechnics, South-South Nigeria.
3. Freelancing skill on entrepreneurship development of Office Technology and Management students in State Polytechnics. South-South Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions were asked to guide the study:

1. How does affiliate marketing skill influence entrepreneurship development of Office Technology and Management students in State Polytechnics, South-South Nigeria?

2. How does digital publishing skill influence entrepreneurship development of Office Technology and Management in State Polytechnics, South-South Nigeria?
3. How does freelancing skill influence entrepreneurship development of Office Technology and Management students in State Polytechnics. South-South Nigeria?

Research Hypotheses

The following research hypotheses were tested at 0.05 significant levels:

1. Male and Female OTM students do not significantly differ in their Mean rating of the influence of affiliate marketing skill on their entrepreneurship development.
2. Male and Female OTM students do not significantly differ in their Mean rating of the influence of digital publishing skill on their entrepreneurship development.
3. Male and Female OTM students do not significantly differ in their Mean rating of the influence of freelancing skill on their entrepreneurship development.

Research Method

The study was conducted in South-South Nigeria. The area consisted of six states with their respective State polytechnics. The study deployed a descriptive survey design. The total population of this study was 585 OTM students from the two States Polytechnics - Rivers State Polytechnic 327 and Akwa Ibom Stats Polytechnic 258. Taro Yamane Formula was used to get a sample size of 150 students made up of 100 males and 50 females. Cluster and simple random sampling techniques were used to select the sample. The researcher-structured questionnaire titled “Soft Skills and Entrepreneurship Development Questionnaire” (SSEDQ) was used for data collection. The instrument was validated by three experts from the Department of Office Technology and Management in Akwa Ibom State Polytechnic, Ikot Osurua, Ikot Ekpene. To test the consistency of the instrument, Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient was used and a coefficient of 0.88 was gotten. Mean score was used to answer the research questions while independent ttest was used to analyze the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

Research Question 1

How does affiliate marketing skill influence entrepreneurship development of Office Technology and Management students in State Polytechnics, South-South Nigeria?

Table 1: Mean rating of affiliate marketing skill on entrepreneurship Development N = 150

S/N	Statements	N	̄	Remarks
Affiliate marketing skill as rated by students				
1	Ability to design graphics	150	3.11	VMI
2	Ability to paste the copied data	150	3.01	VMI
3	Ability to get large interest fans base	150	2.89	MI
4	Ability to communicate effectively	150	3.49	VMI
5	Ability to create impact on social media	150	4.11	VMI
Grand Mean			3.32	VMI

From the data analysis in Table 1, all the skill items rated by the students are above the mean rating of 2.50. The grand mean of 3.32 shows that affiliate marketing skill has very much influence on entrepreneurship

development of Office Technology and Management students in State Polytechnics, South-South Nigeria.

Research Question 2

1. How does digital publishing skill influence entrepreneurship

development of Office Technology and Management in State Polytechnics, South-South Nigeria?

Table 2: Mean rating of Digital publishing on entrepreneurship development N = 150

S/N	Statements	N	\bar{x}	Remarks
	Digital Publishing skills as rated by students			
1	Ability to write the needed data	150	3.91	VMI
2	Ability to create an Amazon account	150	2.54	MI
3	Knowing the genre to write on	150	3.50	VMI
4	Ability to Open an account	150	3.61	VMI
5	Ability to type on Microsoft app	150	3.87	VMI
	Grand Mean		3.47	VMI

From the data analysis on the Digital publishing skills items rated by the students are above the mean rating of 2.50. The grand mean of 3.47 indicates that digital publishing skill has very much influence on entrepreneurship development of Office Technology and Management students in State Polytechnics, South-South Nigeria.

Research Question 3

How does freelancing skill influence entrepreneurship development of Office Technology and Management students in State Polytechnics. South-South Nigeria?

Table 3: Mean rating of Freelancing skills on entrepreneurship development N = 150

S/N	Statements	N	\bar{x}	Remarks
	Freelancing skills as rated by OTM students			
1	Ability to negotiate	150	3.14	VMI
2	Ability to Bargain price	150	3.21	MI
3	Versatility skills	150	3.49	VMI
4	Ability to subscribe to a site	150	3.61	VMI
5	Basic Book-keeping skill	150	3.16	VMI
	Grand Mean		3.31	VMI

From the data analysis in Table 3, it can be seen that all skills item rated by OTM students are above the mean rating of 2.50. The grand mean of 3,31 indicates that freelancing skill has very much influence on entrepreneurship development of Office Technology and Management students in State Polytechnic, South-South Nigeria.

Research Hypothesis 1

Male and Female OTM students do not significantly differ in their Mean rating of the influence of affiliate marketing skill on their entrepreneurship development.

Table 4: Independent t-test analysis of affiliate marketing skill N = 150

Variable	N	\bar{x}	S>D	t-cal	t-crit	Df	Decision
Male (X)	100	3.14	2.57	1.28	1.98	148	NS*
Female (Y)	50	3.31	2.18				

NS* - Non significant at 0.05 significant level at 148 degree of freedom

From the data analysis in Table 4, it can be seen that the t-cal value of 1.28 was less than the t-crit value of 1.98 at 148 degree of freedom and at 0.05 level of significance. This shows that the male and female OTM students do not significantly differ in their mean rating of the influence of Affiliate marketing skill on entrepreneurship

development in State Polytechnics, South-South Nigeria.

Research Hypothesis

Male and Female OTM students do not significantly differ in their Mean rating of the influence of Digital publishing skill on their entrepreneurship development.

Table 5: Independent t-test analysis of digital publishing skill N = 150

Variable	N	\bar{x}	S>D	t-cal	t-crit	Df	Decision
Male (X)	100	3.51	2.68	1.31	1.98	148	NS*
Female (Y)	50	3.11	2.17				

NS* - Non significant at 0.05 significant level at 148 degree of freedom

From the data analysis in Table 5, it can be seen that the t-cal value of 1.31 was less than the t-crit value of 1.98 at 148 degree of freedom and at 0.05 level of significance. This shows that the male and female OTM students do not significantly differ in their mean rating of the influence of Digital publishing skill on entrepreneurship

development in the State Polytechnics, South-South Nigeria.

Research Hypothesis 3

Male and Female OTM students do not significantly differ in their Mean rating of the influence of Freelancing skill on their entrepreneurship development.

Table 6: Independent t-test analysis of Freelancing skill N = 150

Variable	N	\bar{x}	S>D	t-cal	t-crit	Df	Decision
Male (X)	100	3.17	2.16	1.08	1.98	148	NS*
Female (Y)	50	2.89	2.01				

NS* - Non significant at 0.05 significant level at 148 degree of freedom

From the data analysis in Table 6, it can be seen that the t-cal value of 1.08 was less than the t-crit value of 1.98, degree of freedom of 148 and at 0.05 level of significance. This shows that male and female OTM students do not significantly differ in their mean rating of the influence of Freelancing skill on entrepreneurship development in State

Polytechnics, South-South Nigeria. **Findings of the Study**

The following are the findings of the study:

1. Affiliate marketing skill has very much influence on entrepreneurship development of Office Technology and Management (OTM) students in

State Polytechnics, South-South Nigeria.

2. Digital publishing skill has very much influence on entrepreneurship development of Office Technology and Management (OTM) students in State Polytechnics, South-South Nigeria.
3. Freelancing skill has very much influence on entrepreneurship development in State Polytechnics, South-South Nigeria.
4. Male and female OTM students do not significantly differ in their mean rating on the influence of Affiliate marketing skill on their entrepreneurship development in State Polytechnics, South-South Nigeria.
5. Male and female OTM students do not significantly differ in their mean rating on the influence of Digital publishing skill on their entrepreneurship development in State Polytechnics, South-South Nigeria.
6. Male and female OTM students do not significantly differ in their mean rating on the influence of Freelancing skill on their entrepreneurship development in State Polytechnics, South-South Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

Influence of Affiliate Marketing Skill on entrepreneurship development

Data analysis in Tables 1 and 4 indicate that Affiliate marketing skill has very much influences on entrepreneurship development of Office Technology and Management students in State Polytechnics, South-South Nigeria. This finding is evidenced in the number of students of OTM who are basically earning a living through affiliate marketing while in school. This finding is supported by the finding of Bassey (2022) that students who possess soft skills can basically earn a living at any point in their lifetime. The study is further more supported by Okoh (2021) who opined that vocational skills are a sure way of escaping the poverty line.

Influence of Digital Publishing skill on entrepreneurship development

Data analysis in Tables 2 and 5 indicate that Digital publishing skill has very much influence on entrepreneurship development of Office Technology and Management students in State Polytechnics, South-South Nigeria. This finding is evidenced in the number of undergraduate students who are irking a living out of digital publishing sites like Amazon, Payoneer, etc. This finding is supported by Okpe (2020) who opined that understanding the basics of digitalization has helped to take so many students out of poverty.

Influence of Freelancing skill on entrepreneurship development

Data analysis in Tables 3 and 6 indicate that Freelancing skill has very much influence on entrepreneurship development of Office Technology and Management students in State Polytechnics, South-South Nigeria. This finding is supported by Adekunle (2021) who opined that skills acquired outside that curriculum can help them to earn a positive living. The study is also supported by Bassey (2022) who opined that freelancing skill can be veritable in boosting entrepreneurship.

Conclusion

The paper has observed the fact that conventional skills acquired through Vocational education and training could not provide the needed employment opportunities to match skills for job availability. The gaps noticed by the study were significant necessitating the call for 21st century skills for job creation. The skill set identified in this study has shown very much influence on generating both the revenues and employability of the students engaged in them. Office Technology and Management (OTM) without entrepreneurship is never an ideal circumstance because OTM helps drive entrepreneurship and students who tend to take the core opportunities provided by the entrepreneurship drive of Business education. The study has shown among others that 21st century skills set embraced by OTM students can go a long way in boosting their

entrepreneurship drive and alleviating poverty and lack by the students concerned.

Recommendations

Based on the findings made, the following recommendations are made:

1. Students of OTM programme should endeavour to avail themselves of the opportunity to learn the various digital soft skills that can help them be productive in the society.
2. Curriculum content of Office Technology and Management should be improved upon and great innovation added to cater for the current economic realities facing the entire economy.
3. Lecturers of Office Technology and Management should update their skills in ensuring that their methods of teaching and contents of their lessons are in tandem with current realities.
4. Students of Office Technology and Management(OTM) should learn to utilize the Information Communication and Technology (ICT) devices for entrepreneurship purpose.

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