

## **Dissonance in Employability Social Skills of Social Studies Undergraduates and The World of Work in Nigeria**

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**ABSTRACT:** *The study considered the need for Social Studies undergraduates to be equipped with good social skills that will enable them to become gainfully employed, sustain meaningful employment and build a career for themselves. To achieve this, the study investigated the level of employability social skills possessed by undergraduates in Nigeria using Social Studies undergraduates in the Delta State University, Abraka as a springboard. Survey research design with simple random sampling technique was employed for the study. The population of the study comprises of the seven hundred and thirty two (732) undergraduate Social Studies students of 100 to 400 levels, from which a sample size of fifty (50) students was drawn. A self-report designed questionnaire was the instrument for data collection; data collected was analyzed using simple percentages and t-test. Findings of the study shows that Social Studies undergraduates of Delta State University have a good level of social employability skills such as communication skills, empathy skills and skills of understanding group behaviour. However, the findings also showed that participants do not possess critical employability social skills such as interpersonal, problem solving, conflict resolution and creative survival skills that are needed in a working environment. The t-test analysis showed that there is no significant difference in the level of social skills between male and female undergraduate students. The study therefore recommended that Social Studies Education should be harnessed to imbibe social skills into Social Studies undergraduates to make them employable and develop a career for themselves.*

**KEYWORDS:** dissonance; undergraduates; social skills; employability; social studies

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### **INTRODUCTION**

The rising rate of unemployment around the world poses a serious challenge for present day youths; as a matter of fact, unemployment has become a national emergency and a political problem in Nigeria. According to the Nigeria's National Bureau of statistics, the unemployment rate in the first half of 2020 stood at 27.1 percent (Trading Economics 2021). The unemployment rate will keep increasing because as young Nigerians transit through various levels and forms of education into the world of work, they are increasingly

faced with the hurdles of becoming gainfully employed and developing their careers after school. Experience has shown that a huge number of undergraduates in Nigeria lack prerequisite social skills needed to explore issues, opportunities and people. Ejoh (2020) revealed that the rise in the rate of unemployment in Nigeria is worsened by lack of appropriate skills. Similarly, the International Labour Organization (ILO) (2017) asserted that high level of education with no corresponding skills is the leading cause of unemployment among youths.

Yigit (2008) affirmed that many individuals do not possess suitable social skills that are vital to interaction and relationship among individuals. Insufficient Social Skills can lead to negative results such as aggression, misunderstanding, rancour, bad blood and unemployment. From personal observation many of the young graduates from Nigerian higher institutions of learning are deficient in Social Skills, they may have the cognitive knowledge but lack the skills of acting out this knowledge, because the school, home and the society are not providing the practical experience that is needed. For instance many parents shutdown their wards when trying to express their views, while decisions are forced on them without giving the young people explanations as to why those decisions were taken. Lecturers are equally bossy; they oppress abuse student's rights and even disrespect their students who dare not challenge them. So how do we now expect this same set of young people with an oppressive, battered, abusive and shutdown childhood experience to display social skills and etiquettes of emotional capacity, politeness, cooperation and honesty?

Consequently, it is a glaring fact that there is crisis in global learning and our young people are not being prepared well enough for the labour and market place of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Education for All (EFA) (2012). This global crisis in learning has affected how undergraduates acquire Social Skills which are essential for survival in the work place. Kwok (2003) affirmed that there is an urgent need for higher institutions to continuously update the social skills of students, as a result of the rapid changes in the economy and the labour market. Abelha et al (2020) also substantiated the necessity of developing employability and competence skills of undergraduates. The study highlighted the role of higher institutions of learning in promoting these skills and recommended that higher educational institutions should show serious concern about upgrading the level of employability social skills of their graduating students. Due to this gap in social skills, there exist the need to ascertain the level of employability social skills possessed by undergraduates in Nigeria in order to assist them in the generation and sustainability of employment.

Indeed, Career Guide (2019) described social skills as interpersonal skills which are utilized in communicating with people in the school, work organization or any social structure. They also referred to social skills as soft skills which can be in the form of verbal or non-verbal expression. Norozy and Beheshtifar (2013) portrayed social skills as the ability to interact effectively with others and they express those attitudes, behaviours

considered as norms, accepted and expected in a civilized setting. Cubukcu (2018) pointed out that social skills are those invisible skills needed by people to become successful in their chosen careers, these skills are important in career success because they are needed to get along with other people. Chubukcu identified examples of social skills which can make people employable to include skills of empathy, listening, staying positive, cooperation skills and many others.

Similarly, Canover (2015) portrayed social skills as interpersonal skills in the work place and described the process of using them as socialization. Good interpersonal skills enable people to work with all kinds of humans and professionals such as colleagues, clients, friends, customers and managers. Social Skills are indeed crucial during the hiring process as it shows the capacity of the applicant in achieving business targets through good relationship with other people. It will also demonstrate how fit and effective the applicant will be able to display company culture and quality. Examples of Social Skills are skills of effective communication, empathy, listening, cooperation, conflict resolution, relationship management, respect and curtesy and understanding skills.

Gokmen and Omer (2017) pointed out that social interactions are highly significant to human life. Possessing good Social Skills will contribute to quality lifestyles of individuals and society, by making it possible for them to express themselves and understand each other thereby making them employable. Furthermore, as university graduates leave their families and immediate environments to new places in the course of their lives, social skills are significantly required to change their behaviour, perception and thinking. In as much as they will meet new people, Social Skills will help them to cope and survive. Therefore, equipping undergraduates with social skills through educational pedagogy will assist them in forming new alliances, building and sustaining successful careers as well as maintaining good professional relationships. Thus social skills are critical and profitable to people's careers by widening their network of interactions and relationships, thereby creating new ideas and better opportunities.

Social Studies as a course of study is committed to the analysis of human associations and interactions among individuals who live within societies (Atubi 2020). Social Studies involves studying human beings in various ways through understanding how they relate with their environments to how the society as a whole function. Social Studies is an indispensable aspect of modern day education and it is connected to all aspects of life. Jekayinfa (2017) described Social Studies as an intellectual field of enterprise that studies humans in their social groups and called Social Studies "science of society". This science can give a deeper analysis of what is responsible for societal problems and events to social skills, behaviour and competences that are needed by undergraduates in today's modern world of work.

Social Studies also help to shape lives, impact society and explore how individuals behave, think or feel in different circumstances (Muritala, Isiaka & Yusuf, 2019). Nisbelt (2019)

maintained that a social science discipline is any branch of science that deliberate extensively on human behaviour in its social and cultural forms, they are concern with social connections of learning and the importance of social order to societies Hence Social Studies as one of the social science disciplines is equal to the task of delivering plausible employability social skills to young people.

### **Social Studies and Social Skills**

Gokmen and Omer (2017) identified four categories of Social Skills that can be adopted from Social Studies, they include; survival skills, problem solving skills, peace skills of conflict resolution and interpersonal/communication skills. The skills of survival mean the ability to obey laid down rules and directions, listening skills and skills of making informed decisions during critical situations. Similarly, problem solving skills are needed by people to take responsibilities, decisions and the skills to discover original, rare and creative solutions to problems. Peace and conflict resolution skills is the ability to resolve differences, skills to say “I am sorry”, persuasive skills and approaches in resolving conflict. Finally, interpersonal skills involve the ability to collaborate and work with others successfully, skills of empathy, skills of sharing ideas and the ability to start and sustain relationships.

Accordingly, equipping Social Studies undergraduates with employability social skills is of utmost necessity for their personal and career development, because it will build their attitude towards forming better alliances and relationships that can bring about a more meaningful, successful and a fulfilled life (IES, 2013). These trainings can be done in groups using classroom/lecture room environments with well-planned Social Studies curriculum. Each course in a semester or session will be the focus on learning a new social skill, strategies such as role playing, lecture guided instructions, skills modelling and others can be adopted. Practical trainings can also allow for proper communication and cooperation skills among course mates.

### **Problem Statement**

The high global rates of unemployment have escalated and exposed the vulnerability of youths to job crisis, unemployment, inequalities in the labour market, poor transition from school to work and high insulation from the labour market (Cavero & Ruiz, 2016). We are in a difficult period in the global labour market and graduates of Social Studies are not exempted. They need Social Skills to stand above their peers in the world of work, but unfortunately these skills, majority of undergraduates do not possess. Although Social Studies is supposed to help prepare its undergraduates with Social Skills, undergraduates come out of tertiary educational institutions without imbibing these skills. This has created relationship problems and unemployability status, thereby making it difficult for companies and businesses most especially those of the private sectors to employ and keep them. Furthermore, it has resulted in a huge number of Social Studies graduates becoming unemployable in a modern world that is continually expanding in social interactions and building relationships across the globe. In addition, Gresham, Cook, Crew and Kern (2004)

reported that measuring the extent of social skills acquired by people through learning have recorded little or no studies and literature; in Nigeria, such studies are nonexistent. Therefore, the study investigated the extent of employability social skills possessed by Social Studies undergraduates of Delta State University, Abraka .

**Research questions 1:** what is the level of interpersonal and communication skills of Social Studies undergraduates of Delta State University?

**Research questions 2:** what is the level of problem solving skills of Social Studies undergraduates of Delta State University?

**Research questions3:** what is the level of conflict resolution skills of Social Studies

undergraduates of Delta State University?

**Research questions4:** what is the level of survival skills of Social Studies undergraduates of Delta State University?

**Research Hypothesis:** There is no significant difference in the level of employability social skills between male and female Social Studies undergraduates.

### **Research Procedure**

The researcher made use of survey research design for the study; the population comprise of the seven hundred and thirty two (732) Social Studies undergraduates of the Delta State University, Abraka, from which a sample of fifty (50) students was drawn. The permission of the departmental board of studies and that of the respondents were sought before the study was carried out. Simple random sampling was used to choose twenty five (25) males and twenty five (25) female students to give a balance of sex, respondents were between 18-24 years old. A self Report Questionnaire was used as the instrument of data collection titled “Social Skills Questionnaire (SSQ). The instrument was properly validated and reliability determined by Cronbach Alpha that produced a reliability coefficient value of 0.73, thus the instrument was deemed reliable. In order to be able to ascertain the level of social skills possessed by participants, the researcher personally assembled the fifty respondents together in a lecture hall and educated them on the nature of the research, the researcher explained to them, the need for honest and truthful responses as each questionnaire will be treated as anonymous for the objective of the study to be achieved. The instrument was administered directly on respondents, all fifty (50) copies of questionnaire were filled and collected simultaneously; thereafter data was analyzed using simple percentage and t-test.

## RESULTS

**Table 1:** Interpersonal/communication skills among respondents

S/N	Items	Agree %	Disagree %
1	I can start a deep conversation with someone I met for the first time	43.1	56.9
2	I can develop empathy for people in a sorry situation	65	35
3	I can partner in a team to achieve a goal without hitches	44.5	55.4
4	I can speak clearly and people who listen to me can understand effortlessly	87.5	12.5
5	I can understand all written information	43.3	52.7

Items 2 and 4 reveals that the percentage of (Agree) is above the decision point of 50%, this implies that more than half of the respondents have empathy and communicative skills, while items 1, 3 and 5 fall below the benchmark of 50%, the implication is that majority of respondents lack conversational, cooperative and understanding social skills.

**Table 2:** Problem solving skills among respondents

S/N	Items	Agree %	Disagree %
1	I can work on written materials by solving problems with them	39.1	60.9
2	I can solve problems simply by reasoning them through	22.7	77.3
3	I can combine different fragments of information and deduce conclusion from the fragments	32	68
4	I can quickly approximate the demerit and merits of a potential action	14.5	85.5
5	I can understand the nature of a problem by deducing it myself	26.8	73.2

The table shows that all items 1-5 (Agree), fall below the decision point of 50%, the implication is that more than half of the respondents lack problem solving skills, their resourcefulness will be negatively affected and developing their career will be a huge burden on them.

**Table 3:** Conflict resolution skills of respondents

S/N	Items	Agree %	Disagree %
1	I can understand conflicting materials and information without meeting someone else	24	76
2	I can sense when a situation is wrong or when it will eventually go wrong	24.5	75.5
3	I can persuade people to resolve conflict and solve problems	48.2	51.8
4	I am confident and have self-control	55	45
5	I understand people and group behaviour very well	81.7	18.3

Item 1 and 2 reveals that just a quarter of the students can resolve conflicting materials and information and have an idea about a bad situation, but item 3 and 4 revealed that about an average of respondents have persuasive skills to resolve issues as well as have self-control, however item 5 shows that a huge number of the respondents actually understand people and group behaviour.

**Table 4:** Survival skills of respondents

	Items	Agree %	Disagree %
1.	I will be able to use logic to determine the strength and the weaknesses of an idea	27.7	72.3
2.	I can figure out a creative, original and rare solutions to problems	7.3	92.7
3.	I can listen patiently to somebody talking for 30 minutes without talking back	49.1	50.9
4.	I never shy away from issues that I don't understand	30.8	69.2
5.	I always find solution to difficult and challenging tasks	51.1	48.9

Table 4 showed that the possession of survival skills by respondents is low when we look at the percentage of item 1-4, but item 5 results of 51% revealed that respondents have a significant skill of facing tough and challenging situations.

**Table 5:** Summary of t-test analysis of male and female level of social skills

Social Skills	N	X	Sd	Df	t-cal.	t-cri.	Decision
Male	25	2.06	0.92	48	1.48	1.96	Accept
Female	25	2.27	0.83				

Table 5, clearly show that calculated value of 1.48 is below the critical value of 1.96 this means there is no significant difference in the employability social skills of male and female social studies undergraduates of the Delta State University.

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Findings revealed that more than half of the participants have good empathy skills, listening skills and can communicate well. Similarly the findings show that their skill of understanding group behaviour is high. These findings are in disagreement with Yigit, (2008) and EFA, (2012) who posited that many young individuals do not possess suitable social skills and that the crisis in global learning is responsible for the lack of social skills expressed by the youths. However, it is worthy to note that this disagreement only affect few of the skills that were studied.

In contrast, findings on other skills uncovered the fact that Social Studies undergraduates do not possess appreciable levels of conversational, problem solving, conflict resolution and survival skills. Other skills that they have low level of, are co-operational, logical and that of critical judgement. These include their inability to identify a bad situation or ability to judge whether a situation can eventually go wrong. These findings are in conformity with Yigit (2008), EFA (2012), Cavero & Ruiz, (2016) and Goken & Omer, (2017). These studies exposed the vulnerability of youths to job crisis and unemployment due to their non-possession of the requisite social skills needed to access gainful employment.

Thirdly the hypothesis tested revealed that there was no significant difference between male and female respondents level of social skills. Thus the study concluded by aligning with Atubi (2020), Jekanyifa, (2017), Nisbelt, (2019) and Ejoh (2020) who maintained that the social studies is good in nurturing social skills because it help's to instil social behaviour and cultural ethics. Hence this study recommended the following.

1. That the use of Social Studies through educational pedagogy is crucial in equipping undergraduates with social skills in order to harmonize the dissonance in social skills and the world of work.
2. Emphasis should be placed on acquisition of social skills such as interpersonal, problem solving, co-operational, conflict resolution skills and others during the educational training of Social Studies trainees in Nigeria.
3. Social Studies lecturers should take the inculcation of social skills through Social Studies seriously for better employment opportunities.

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