Acquisition of digital footprint skills and employability potentials of business education graduates in Rivers state University

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Abstract

In recent times, the quest for online activities has generated a lot of concerns. Digital footprint is at the front burner of this whole episode. Stakeholders, educators and employers of labour had questioned the relationship these digital footprints have on graduate's employability potentials. It is against this premise that this study examines the acquisition of digital footprint skills and employability potentials of Business Education graduates in Rivers State Universities. Two research questions and two hypotheses guided the study. The study adopted a correlational research design. The population consists of 212 MED students in the department of Business Education, Rivers State University. There was no sampling as the entire population was used for the analysis of the study. The instrument for data collection was researchers designed instrument titled "Digital Footprints Skills and Employability Potentials Questionnaire (DFSEPQ)". The instrument was subjected to face and content validation by two experts in Business Education and Measurement and Evaluation. The Cronbach Alpha statistics was used to determine the reliability of the instrument and the general coefficients index of 0.82% was obtained. The data collected were processed with the use of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The research questions and hypotheses were answered and tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMCC).The findings revealed among others that employability potentials depend on digital literary skills acquisition. Based on this, the study recommended among others that university students before graduation should acquire digital safety skills cum digital security skills so that they can protect what they share and post online.

Introduction

In today's job market scenario, having an online presence is essential. Education is preparing students to be digitally literate in order to successfully navigate the global market. Literally, acquisition simply means the learning or developing of a skill. Skills acquisition is the ability to be trained in a particular task or function. The internet has pervasively penetrated our everyday life. Because of the technological and global competiveness in the workplace, it is therefore, incumbent on graduates to acquire more complex skills. Consequently, this shift will definitely reshape and re-align the skills university graduates need to access job opportunities. In consonance, Longridge, Hooley & Stanton (2019) hoped that, graduates now find out information and work online, fill in online application forms, and reach out for help through our online networks. This online appearance is known as digital footprints.

Online activity is an integral part of our lives. What we do or say online influences our reputation and integrity; hence, we all have a digital footprint. Digital footprints according to Boudaie, Nargresian & Nik, (2019) [3] is the electronic trail we knowingly or unknowingly leave behind each time we access the internet or other electronic devices. Carr (2019) [4] posited that digital footprints comprises of all the online data that is associated with you, from photos and text posts on social media platforms to aggregated information about your browsing, and he referred to it as "Online ghost". Digital footprints can be active or passive (TALCO, 2020) [19]. These online activities affect employability of Higher Education Graduates to a large extent, as (Okiridu & Ogwunte; 2019) assert that the acceptance of e-learning in instructional delivery of Business Education will contribute to new knowledge because it will enhance exchange of ideas, practice and opinion among student.

Employability is a multi-dimensional concept, and there is need to distinguish between factors relevant to obtaining a job and factors relevant to the preparation for work (Cranmer, 2006) [5]. Morley (2001) [15] asserted that employability is not just about students making deposits in a bank of skills.

For Kulkarni & Chachadi (2014) [12], employability can be viewed as the reward for somebody who is employable. While graduate employability refers to the collection of a series of abilities graduates can obtain employment and succeed in their career (Tomlinson, 2012; Harvey, 2002) [8]. Admittedly, University graduates, especially, Business Education graduates need to be abreast with the global demands of a complex and competitive workplace. They need to be technology savvy so as to flow in a technologically-oriented environment. They need to be digitally literate as they enter the workforce (Weiner, 2011; Jones & Flamingan, 2006) [23]. An Important fundamental aspect of being digitally literate involves being aware of and managing ones digital footprint. Wang, Fang & Guo, 2016; Azucar, Marango & Settanni (2018) [22, 2] have it that currently, employers are increasingly using social media, not just for announcing the vacancies, but to access information about candidates.

However, employers are increasingly using online activities to project opportunities, screen candidates and even hunt qualified employees. The increased competitiveness of the graduate labour market means that graduates are advised to think carefully about their post-university. Longridge, Hooley & Staunton (2019) [13], stated further that the digital footprint forms part of the capital that an individual brings when they apply for a job. Digital footprint can affect your employability to a large extent. Lowenthal, Dunlap & Stitson (2016) [14] remarked that recruitment is becoming more prevalent with employers admitting to looking at a candidate online profile before an interview, and this could affect the way an employer views a candidate. Unfortunately, this online ghost can come back to haunt, especially if recruiters stumble on something that reflects poorly on one's character and conduct. Therefore, leaving a positive digital footprint can be very beneficial to graduates and their future job opportunities. This paper investigated the relationship between acquisition of digital footprint skills and graduate employability using digital footprint skills such as; digital literacy skills and digital safety Skills.

Digital Literacy skill and employability potentials
Literacy is more than being able to read and write. Literacy today, as Koltay (2011) [11] explained, "involves visual, electronic, digital forms of expression and communication. Digital literacy is an important and evolving concept having influence on the status of current and future workforce as the labour market is being transformed globally (Vrana, 2016) [21]. Furthermore, that it is directly related to graduates employability. Digital literacy gives higher educational graduates the affordances and limitations of the internet and also how to strategically surf the internet. Given the changing and complex nature of the workplace, as Kayii & Okiridu (2020) [10] is of the view that soft skills are intangible, non-academic and internalizes skills, which are in emotional intelligence that are difficult to quantify, they are intra and interpersonal skills needed for building relationships, increasing distinguishability and creation of opportunities for advancement as graduates need to acquire this skill so as to be abreast with the nifty gritty of their online activities, hence, managing their digital presence (digital footprints) is of essence.

Digital safety skills and employability potentials
University graduates should be aware that their digital footprint is a trait of their life. This implies that as they acquire digital literacy skill, there is also need for them to acquire digital safety skills. Being safe online means having the knowledge to identify the potential risks and are also conscious of personal security while browsing, sharing or surfing the internet. Students should be encouraged to avoid posting or doing anything that is not useful. Davidson (2016) [6] famously said that "when you write the story of your life, do not let anyone else hold the pen". This implies that graduates can control their activities online. Erdley (2013) [7] warned that graduates seeking job must guard against potentially dangerous digital baggage, meaning that digital foot print can be tracked and used against someone; consequently the acquisition of digital skills is sacrosanct.

Statement of the problem
Graduate employability status seems to be of great concern to educators, stakeholders and even students. In today's job scenario, having an online presence is a sine qua non, to remain relevant in the global village. Employers are making concerted efforts to use online activities to create employment opportunities and screen candidates. Apparently, literature abounds in digital footprints and graduate employability. However, there seems to be scanty literature on acquisition of digital footprint skills and employability potentials. Hence, this has spurred the researchers to investigate on the acquisition of digital footprint skills and employability potentials of Business Education graduates in Rivers State University.

Purpose of the Study
The study examined the relationship between acquisition of digital footprint skills and employability potentials of Business Education graduates in Rivers State University. In specific terms, the study:
1. Determine the relationship between digital literacy skill acquisition and employability potentials of Business Education graduates in Rivers State University
2. Determine the relationship between online security skills acquisition and employability potentials of Business Education graduates in Rivers State University.

Research Questions
The following research questions guided the study
1. What is the relationship between the acquisition of digital literacy skills and employability potentials of Business Education graduates in Rivers State University?
2. What is the relationship between the acquisition of online safety skills and employability potentials of Business Education graduates in Rivers State University?

Hypotheses
The following hypotheses guided the study
1. There is no significant relationship between the acquisition of digital literacy skills and employability potentials of Business Education graduates in Rivers State University.
2. There is no significant relationship between the acquisition of online security skills and employability potentials of Business Education graduates in Rivers State University.

Methodology

The paper adopted a correlational research design. The population consists of 212 Business Education students in Rivers State University. Due to the manageable size of the population, there was no sampling as the entire population was used for analysis of the study. The instrument for data collection was a researcher's designed instrument titled "Digital Footprint Skills and Employability Potentials Questionnaire (DFSEPQ). The Cronbach Alpha statistics was used to determine the reliability of the instrument and the general coefficients index of 0.82% was obtained. The data collected were processed with the use of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Research questions and hypotheses were answered and tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMCC).

Research Question 1: What is the relationship between digital literacy skills and employability potentials of Business Education graduates in Rivers State University?

Table 1: Relationship between the digital literacy skills and employability potentials of Business Education graduates in Rivers State University

(n=212)				
Variable	**∑X**	**∑X**	**∑XY**	**r**
Digital literacy skills	13137	837489	986954	0.92
Employability potentials (Graduates)	15564	1167812		

r-critical = 0.946

Table 1 shows a calculated 'r' value of 0.92 that means there is a positive relationship between digital literacy and employability potentials of Business Education graduates in Rivers State Universities.

Research Question 2: What is the relationship between digital security skills and employability potentials of Business Education graduates in Rivers State University?

Table 2: Relationship between the digital security skills and employability potentials of Business Education graduates in Rivers State University

(n=212)				
Variable	**∑X**	**∑X**	**∑XY**	**r**
Digital security skills	12177	725441	915930	0.86
Employability potentials (Graduates)	15564	1167812		

r-critical = 0.946

Table 2 shows a calculated 'r' value of 0.86 which means there is a positive relationship between digital security and employability potentials of Business Education graduates in Rivers State Universities.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between digital literacy skills and employability potentials of Business Education graduates in Rivers State University?

Table 3: Relationship between digital literacy skills and employability potentials of Business Education graduates in Rivers State University

(n=212)				
Variable	**∑X**	**∑X**	**∑XY**	**r**
Digital literacy skills	13137	837489	986954	0.92
Employability potentials (Graduates)	15564	1167812		

In table 3 the calculated 'r' of 0.92 is greater than the r-critical of 0.1946. This is an indication that the relationship is significant and the null hypothesis which states that there is no relationship between digital literacy and employability potentials of Business Education graduates in Rivers State Universities is rejected in order to retain the alternate.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship between digital security skills and employability potentials of Business Education graduates in Rivers State University?

Table 4: Relationship between the digital security skills and employability potentials of Business Education graduates in Rivers State University

(n=212)				
Variable	**∑X**	**∑X**	**∑XY**	**r**
Digital security skills	12177	725441	915930	0.86
Employability potentials (Graduates)	15564	1167812		

Table 4 shows that the calculated 'r' value of 0.86. This result is greater than the r-critical of 0.1946. Hence the relationship is significant, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between digital security and employability potentials of Business Education graduates in Rivers State Universities is rejected and the alternative upheld.

Discussion of findings

Digital Literacy skill and employability potentials

This study revealed that acquisition of digital literacy skills accounts to a greater proportion of the changes in the level of employability potentials among Business Education graduates in Rivers State University. This is in line with the view of (Amaewhule, Okiridu, & Nwoko: (2019) that teaching is tedious and rigorous, hence it needs timing and planning so that goals and objectives can be achieved, further advocate for the adoption of e-mentoring in the inculcation of the digital soft skills, which will involve the sequencing a number of activities in which the teacher and students interact in the same way. Pirzada (2013) that acquisition of digital literacy skills can be an interpreter of employability.

Online safety skills and employability potentials

The study showed that acquisition of online security skills to a large extent determined the changes in employability potentials of Business Education graduates in Rivers State University. This is in consonance with Lowenthal; Dunlap & Stitson (2016) [14] that creating a digital presence and a corresponding digital footprint is important, but warned that university graduates should also acquire online security skills of what they share and post on the internet. Similarly, Okiridu (2014) is of the view that security had not been a major issue in processing system when time sharing paradigm emerged, but it is easy to ease a file. So it is advisable to be security conscious to have antivirus and utility software that recovers date, application of username and password.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, it is recommended that:
1. That university students before graduation should acquire digital literacy.
2. That university students before graduation should acquire security safety skills in order to protect what they share and post online.

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