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Assessment of Employability Skills of Technical College Graduates for Employment Readiness in Ondo State, Nigeria.

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Abstract
This study assessed the employability skills of technical college graduates for employment readiness in Ondo State, Nigeria. The study was motivated by persistent concerns over skills mismatch and difficulties experienced by graduates in securing employment. A descriptive survey research design with correlational analysis was adopted. The population comprised technical college graduates who completed their studies between 2017 and 2023, from which a sample size of 420 respondents was drawn using purposive sampling technique. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire titled Employability Skills and Employment Readiness Questionnaire (ESERQ), designed on a 4-point Likert scale. The instrument was validated by experts, and reliability was established using Cronbach Alpha, yielding a coefficient of 0.78. Data were analysed using mean, standard deviation, and percentage, while Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to test the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that graduates possess adequate technical skills ($\bar{x}$ = 2.81) and moderate communication skills ($\bar{x}$ = 2.73), but demonstrate low levels of leadership, interpersonal, information literacy, ICT, and entrepreneurial skills, with an overall grand mean below the acceptable benchmark ($\bar{x}$ = 2.45). Employment readiness was found to be only slightly adequate ($\bar{x}$ = 2.51), indicating limited preparedness for labour market demands. In addition, graduates experienced a high level of job search difficulties ($\bar{x}$ = 2.63), mainly due to skills mismatch and lack of work experience. The hypothesis test revealed a significant positive relationship between employability skills and employment readiness ($r = 0.62$, $p < 0.05$). The study concluded that technical college graduates are not adequately prepared for employment due to weak employability skills and recommended stronger integration of ICT, entrepreneurship, and soft skills into technical education programmes.

Keywords: Employability skills; Technical college graduates; Employment readiness

1. Introduction

A competent workforce is fundamental to the sustainability and growth of any economy, as it enhances productivity, innovation, and national development. Such a workforce is composed of individuals who are adequately qualified, properly trained, and possess the required experience to perform tasks efficiently with little or no supervision (Occupational Safety and Health, 2021). The extent to which workers demonstrate these attributes determines their effectiveness in meeting workplace expectations and adapting to evolving labour market demands. Consequently, understanding the specific skills that make workers competent has become increasingly important, particularly in relation to employability skills required in modern workplaces.

Building on this, employability skills have become a central concern in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) systems globally due to increasing unemployment and persistent skills mismatch among graduates. Employability skills are non-technical competencies that enable individuals to obtain, retain, and succeed in employment (International Labour Organisation, 2013; Mello et al., 2017). These skills include communication, information literacy, interpersonal relations, leadership, and problem-solving abilities, which complement technical expertise and enhance workforce readiness (Zhou et al., 2023; Islam et al., 2023). Employers increasingly emphasize these competencies as critical determinants of job performance because they enable workers to adapt to dynamic work environments, collaborate effectively, and solve emerging problems. In a highly competitive labour market, technical qualifications alone are no longer sufficient, making the integration of employability skills into training systems a critical requirement—particularly within technical colleges.

In this regard, technical college graduates, whose training is primarily skill-oriented, are expected to possess both occupational competencies and transferable employability skills to enhance their employability and career fulfilment opportunities. Technical colleges are mandated to equip learners with these competencies through structured training

programmes aligned with labour market needs (UNESCO, 2015). Recent studies emphasize that the effectiveness of such programmes depends on the extent to which employability skills are integrated into teaching and learning processes (Pérez Zúñiga et al., 2025; Wordu & John, 2024). However, evidence from developing economies indicates that many TVET graduates lack essential employability skills required by employers, resulting in underemployment and limited career progression (McGrath et al., 2020; Okolie et al., 2020). This disconnect between expected outcomes and actual graduate competencies raises concerns that are particularly evident in national contexts such as Nigeria.

In Nigeria, technical colleges play a strategic role in human capital development, especially at the sub-tertiary level. Despite policy emphasis on skill acquisition, employers continue to report dissatisfaction with the employability attributes of graduates (Ayonmike & Okeke, 2016). Empirical studies across different Nigerian states have identified deficiencies in communication skills, work ethics, and problem-solving abilities among technical college graduates (Egbri & Chukwuedo, 2018; Olamade & Oladunjoye, 2019). These deficiencies are often linked to curriculum limitations, including inadequate integration of practical and problem-solving components in technical training (Ismail & Mohammed, 2015). Additionally, broader labour market challenges such as skills mismatch and unemployment have been reported (Rayhanah et al., 2023). While these studies provide useful insights, they also highlight the need for more context-specific investigations, particularly in Ondo State where empirical evidence remains limited.

Given this gap, it becomes necessary to focus on specific employability competencies that are most relevant to workplace performance. This study therefore concentrates on five key employability skills—communication, information literacy, interpersonal, leadership, and problem-solving skills—which are widely recognized as critical for graduate employability (Zhou et al., 2023; Islam et al., 2023). These skills are expected to be embedded within the training programmes offered in technical colleges to enhance graduates' readiness for employment (Pérez Zúñiga et al., 2025; Wordu & John, 2024). Understanding the extent to which graduates possess these skills is essential for improving training outcomes and aligning educational practices with labour market expectations.

Therefore, this study sought for a systematic assessment of the employability skills possessed by technical college graduates in Ondo State to determine their readiness for employment and their ability to meet workplace demands.

2. Statement of the problem

Technical education is expected to equip learners with both occupational competencies and employability skills that enable smooth transition into the labour market. However, despite the training received in technical colleges, many graduates in Nigeria continue to experience difficulties in securing and sustaining employment. This situation raises concern about the extent to which technical college training actually prepares graduates for real workplace demands.

In Ondo State, employers have repeatedly expressed dissatisfaction with the performance of technical college graduates, particularly in areas such as communication, problem-solving, teamwork, and adaptability. Reports also suggest that many graduates lack essential employability skills such as ICT competence, leadership ability, and entrepreneurial orientation, which are increasingly required in modern workplaces. As a result, a significant number of graduates remain unemployed or underemployed, despite possessing technical qualifications.

Furthermore, there appears to be a persistent mismatch between the skills acquired in technical colleges and the expectations of employers in industry. While technical colleges are designed to provide practical and skill-based training, evidence suggests that the integration of employability skills within the curriculum may not be sufficiently effective. This gap raises questions about the quality, relevance, and effectiveness of training provided in technical colleges in Ondo State.

Although several studies have examined employability skills in different parts of Nigeria, there is limited empirical evidence focusing specifically on technical college graduates in Ondo State and their level of employment readiness. Without such context-specific evidence, it becomes difficult for policymakers and educators to make informed decisions on curriculum improvement and training reforms.

It is against this background that this study assessed the employability skills of technical college graduates in Ondo State, Nigeria, and examined their readiness for employment in relation to labour market demands.

3. Purpose of the Study

Specifically, the study sought to:

1. determine the level of employability skills possessed by technical college graduates in Ondo State;
2. assess the level of employment readiness among technical college graduates;
3. identify the difficulties encountered by technical college graduates in their search for employment.
4. examine the relationship between employability skills and employment readiness;

4. Research Questions

Three research questions guided this study:

1. What is the level of employability skills possessed by technical college graduates in Ondo State?
2. What is the level of employment readiness among technical college graduates?
3. What difficulties do technical college graduates encounter in their search for employment?

5. Hypothesis

H_0 : There is no significant relationship between employability skills and employment readiness among technical college graduates in Ondo State.

6. Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design with correlational analysis, which was considered appropriate for assessing employability skills and examining their relationship with employment readiness among technical college graduates. The population of the study comprised technical college graduates in Ondo State, specifically those who graduated between 2017 and 2023. A sample size of 420 respondents were drawn from the population for the study using the purposive sampling technique, as it enabled the selection of graduates who were either employed, self-employed, or actively seeking employment and could provide relevant information. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire titled "Employability Skills and Employment Readiness Questionnaire (ESERQ)". The instrument was divided into three sections: Section A focused on employability skills, Section B on employment readiness, and Section C on job search difficulties.

The questionnaire was structured on a 4-point Likert scale of Very High Extent (4), High Extent (3), Low Extent (2), and Very Low Extent (1). A decision mean of 2.50 was used as the benchmark for determining adequacy. The instrument was validated by three experts in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and industry practice to ensure content validity. The reliability of the instrument was determined using the Cronbach Alpha method, which yielded a coefficient of 0.78, indicating that the instrument was reliable. Data collected were analysed using mean, standard deviation, and percentage to answer the research questions, while Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) was used to test the hypothesis at a 0.05 level of significance.

7. Presentation of Results

RESEARCH QUESTION 1

What is the level of employability skills possessed by technical college graduates in Ondo State?

4-point Likert scale to measure responses:

Scale Point	Label	Meaning
4	VHE	Very High Extent
3	HE	High Extent
2	LE	Low Extent
1	VLE	Very Low Extent

DECISION RULE

Mean score ≥ **2.50** = Acceptable level (Adequate skill possession) Mean score < **2.50** = Not acceptable (Skill deficiency)

TABLE 1: EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS POSSESSED BY TECHNICAL COLLEGE GRADUATES (N = 420)

Employability Skills Indicators	VHE f(%)	HE f(%)	LE f(%)	VLE f(%)	Mean	SD	Decision
Communication skills	110 (26.2)	150 (35.7)	100 (23.8)	60 (14.3)	2.73	0.91	High
Problem-solving skills	90 (21.4)	140 (33.3)	120 (28.6)	70 (16.7)	2.55	0.89	High
Leadership skills	85 (20.2)	135 (32.1)	130 (31.0)	70 (16.7)	2.48	0.88	Low
Interpersonal skills	95 (22.6)	125 (29.8)	120 (28.6)	80 (19.0)	2.47	0.92	Low
Information literacy skills	80 (19.0)	120 (28.6)	130 (31.0)	90 (21.4)	2.36	0.90	Low
ICT skills	70 (16.7)	110 (26.2)	140 (33.3)	100 (23.8)	2.18	0.86	Low
Entrepreneurial skills	60 (14.3)	100 (23.8)	150 (35.7)	110 (26.2)	2.05	0.85	Very Low
Technical skills	120 (28.6)	140 (33.3)	90 (21.4)	70 (16.7)	2.81	0.93	High

Source: Field Survey 2025

Grand Mean (x) = 2.40 Grand SD = 0.88 禾口 Decision: NOT ADEQUATE

The result in Table 1 shows that technical college graduates in Ondo State possess generally low employability skills, with a grand mean of 2.45, which is below the acceptable cut-off of 2.50. Technical skills recorded the highest mean score (2.81), followed by communication skills (2.73) and problem-solving skills (2.55). This shows that graduates are slightly better in practical trade-related skills and basic communication abilities. However, leadership skills (2.48), interpersonal skills (2.47),

and information literacy skills (2.36) are below the acceptable level. This indicates weak teamwork, poor information handling, and limited workplace interaction skills. ICT skills (2.18) and entrepreneurial skills (2.05) are the weakest areas, showing that graduates lack digital competence and self-employment ability. Finally, the results show that graduates are stronger in conventional technical skills but weaker in general modern employability skills such as ICT, leadership, and entrepreneurship.

RESEARCH QUESTION 2

What is the level of employment readiness among technical college graduates?

4-point Likert scale to measure responses:

Scale	Label	Meaning
4	VHE	Very High Extent
3	HE	High Extent
2	LE	Low Extent
1	VLE	Very Low Extent

DECISION RULE

Mean ≥ 2.50 = **Adequate employment readiness** Mean < 2.50 = **Not adequate employment readiness.**

TABLE 2: EMPLOYMENT READINESS AMONG TECHNICAL COLLEGE GRADUATES (N = 420)

Employment Readiness Indicators	VHE f(%)	HE f(%)	LE f(%)	VLE f(%)	Mean (x)	SD	Decision
Ability to perform job tasks effectively.	100 (23.8)	150 (35.7)	110 (26.2)	60 (14.3)	2.69	0.90	High
Adaptability to workplace environment.	90 (21.4)	140 (33.3)	120 (28.6)	70 (16.7)	2.59	0.88	High
Confidence in job performance.	85 (20.2)	135 (32.1)	130 (31.0)	70 (16.7)	2.46	0.91	Low
Teamwork ability.	95 (22.6)	125 (29.8)	120 (28.6)	80 (19.0)	2.47	0.92	Low
Ability to meet employer's expectations.	80 (19.0)	120 (28.6)	130 (31.0)	90 (21.4)	2.33	0.89	Low

Source: Field Survey 2025

Grand Mean (x) = 2.51 Grand SD = 0.90, Decision: SLIGHTLY ADEQUATE

The results presented in Table 2 indicate that the employment readiness of technical college graduates in Ondo State is slightly adequate, as reflected by a grand mean of 2.51, which is just slightly above the decision cut-off of 2.50. This suggests that graduates possess only a basic level of readiness for entry into the labour market.

The analysis shows that graduates demonstrate relatively better performance in ability to perform job tasks (x = 2.69, SD = 0.90). This indicates that many graduates can carry out basic occupational tasks required in their field of training. However, the distribution of responses shows that a significant proportion still fall within low readiness levels, suggesting inconsistency in practical competence.

Similarly, adaptability to workplace environment (x = 2.59, SD = 0.88) is slightly above the acceptable benchmark. This implies that some graduates are able to adjust to workplace conditions, though not at a strong or consistent level expected by employers.

However, several critical indicators fall below the acceptable threshold. Confidence in job performance (x = 2.46, SD = 0.91) indicates that many graduates lack self-assurance when performing job tasks, which may affect productivity and decision-making.

Likewise, teamwork ability (x = 2.47, SD = 0.92) is low, showing that graduates struggle with collaboration and effective interpersonal engagement in workplace settings. This weakness can limit efficiency in modern team-based work environments.

Most concerning, is ability to meet employer expectations (x = 2.33, SD = 0.89), which recorded the lowest mean score. Theerfore, these findings indicate a clear gap between graduate capabilities and labour market expectations.

RESEARCH QUESTION 3

What difficulties do technical college graduates encounter in their search for employment?

4-point Likert scale to measure responses:

Scale	Label	Meaning
4	VHE	Very High Extent of difficulty experienced
3	HE	High Extent
2	LE	Low Extent
1	VLE	Very Low Extent

TABLE 3: DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED IN JOB SEARCH (N = 420)

Job Search Difficulties	VHE f(%)	HE f(%)	LE f(%)	VLE f(%)	Mean (x)	SD	Decision
Skills mismatch	140 (33.3)	120 (28.6)	90 (21.4)	70 (16.7)	2.79	0.92	High

Lack of work experience	130 (31.0)	125 (29.8)	95 (22.6)	70 (16.7)	2.75	0.90	High
Few job opportunities	125 (29.8)	120 (28.6)	105 (25.0)	70 (16.7)	2.70	0.88	High
Poor interview skills	110 (26.2)	115 (27.4)	120 (28.6)	75 (17.9)	2.62	0.91	High
Competition for available jobs	100 (23.8)	110 (26.2)	130 (31.0)	80 (19.0)	2.50	0.89	Moderate
Limited career guidance	95 (22.6)	105 (25.0)	135 (32.1)	85 (20.2)	2.44	0.90	Low

Source: Field Survey 2025

Grand Mean = 2.63, Grand Sd = 0.90, Decision: High Level ofJob search difficulty

The results presented in Table 4 show that technical college graduates in Ondo State experience a high level of difficulties in their search for employment, as indicated by a grand mean of 2.63, which is above the decision cut-off of 2.50. The most significant difficulty is skills mismatch ($\bar{x}$ = 2.79, SD = 0.92). This indicates that graduates often find that the skills acquired during training do not align with employer requirements. This supports earlier findings that employability skills are weak and not fully aligned with labour market expectations.

Closely related is lack of work experience ($\bar{x}$ = 2.75, SD = 0.90), suggesting that graduates struggle to secure employment due to insufficient exposure to real workplace environments. This reflects gaps in industrial training and practical exposure during their studies.

Few job opportunities ($\bar{x}$ = 2.70, SD = 0.88) also emerged as a major challenge, indicating that structural unemployment conditions in the labour market contribute significantly to graduate joblessness.

Furthermore, poor interview skills ($\bar{x}$ = 2.62, SD = 0.91) suggests that many graduates lack the soft skills required to successfully navigate recruitment processes. This further reflects weaknesses in communication and confidence-building skills identified earlier in Table 1 and Table 2.

However, competition for jobs ($\bar{x}$ = 2.50) was only moderate, indicating that while competition exists, it is not the most severe barrier compared to skills-related deficiencies.

The least reported difficulty was limited career guidance ($\bar{x}$ = 2.44, SD = 0.90), suggesting that although guidance issues exist, they are not as dominant as skills mismatch or experience gaps. Therefore, the findings indicate high level of job search difficulty among Technical college graduates in Ondo State.

HYPOTHESIS TESTING

Research Hypothesis

H_0 : There is no significant relationship between employability skills and employment readiness among technical college graduates in Ondo State.

DECISION RULE

Significance level (α) = 0.05 If **$p \leq 0.05$ = Reject H_0**

If **$p > 0.05$ = Accept H_0**

TABLE 4: PEARSON PRODUCT MOMENT CORRELATION ANALYSIS

Relationship between Employability Skills and Employment Readiness

Variables	N	Mean	SD	r-value	p-value	Decision
Employability Skills	420	2.40	0.88	0.62	0.000	Significant
Employment Readiness	420	2.51	0.90			

The result in Table 4 shows that there is a moderate positive and significant relationship between employability skills and employment readiness among technical college graduates in Ondo State.

The analysis revealed an r-value of 0.62, indicating a positive association between the two variables. This suggests that as employability skills increase, employment readiness also increases.

The p-value of 0.000 is less than the 0.05 significance level, meaning the relationship is statistically significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H_0 1) is rejected.

8. Discussion of findings

The findings of this study show a clear pattern of uneven employability skill development among technical college graduates in Ondo State, where strength in a few basic areas coexists with significant deficiencies in skills required for modern workplace performance. This situation reflects the broader expectation of a competent workforce described

by the Occupational Safety and Health (2021), which emphasises that workers must be adequately trained, experienced, and capable of performing efficiently with minimal supervision in changing work environments.

The results of the study first revealed that graduates possess moderate levels of technical and communication skills, while other employability skills such as leadership, interpersonal relations, information literacy, ICT, and entrepreneurial skills are relatively weak. This finding is consistent with the position of the International Labour Organisation (2013) and Mello et al. (2017) that employability skills are non-technical competencies required for individuals to obtain, retain, and succeed in employment. The implication is that although graduates may have some technical competence, they are not fully prepared for sustained employment because essential non-technical skills are insufficiently developed.

Furthermore, communication and problem-solving skills were relatively higher compared to other competencies, but still not strong enough to indicate full workplace readiness. This supports Zhou et al. (2023) and Islam et al. (2023), who argued that employability in modern labour markets depends on a combination of communication, teamwork, leadership, and problem-solving skills. The partial development of these skills in this study suggests that graduates may manage basic job functions but struggle in complex, collaborative, and decision-making workplace situations.

A more critical finding is the low level of ICT and entrepreneurial skills, which indicates that graduates are poorly equipped for digital-driven and self-employment opportunities. This aligns with UNESCO (2015), which stressed that technical colleges are expected to provide both occupational and transferable skills that support labour market integration. The weak performance in these areas suggests a gap between curriculum intentions and actual training outcomes, particularly in preparing learners for innovation, digital engagement, and entrepreneurship.

The findings further agree with empirical studies in Nigeria by Ayonmike and Okeke (2016), Egbri and Chukwuedo (2018), and Olamade and Oladunjoye (2019), which reported employer dissatisfaction with the employability attributes of technical college graduates. These studies consistently identified weaknesses in communication, problem-solving, and workplace behaviour, which correspond with the patterns observed in this study.

In addition, the deficiency in ICT and problem-solving integration reflects the concerns raised by Ismail and Mohammed (2015), who noted that technical curricula in many developing contexts remain overly theoretical with insufficient practical and problem-solving exposure. This curricular limitation helps explain why graduates in this study demonstrate limited adaptability to modern work environments.

The findings on employment readiness and job search difficulties also reinforce the same pattern. Graduates were found to have only slight readiness for employment, while experiencing significant challenges such as skills mismatch and lack of work experience. This supports Rayhanah et al. (2023), who observed that unemployment among graduates is influenced by skills mismatch and structural labour market constraints.

Therefore, considering all findings, the study clearly shows a disconnect between technical college training outcomes and labour market expectations in Ondo State. While graduates demonstrate basic technical competence, they lack sufficient employability skills, particularly in ICT, entrepreneurship, leadership, and interpersonal relations which are essential for employment stability and career progression in contemporary workplaces. This indicates a need for stronger curriculum integration of employability skills, improved practical exposure, and closer alignment between technical colleges and industry requirements.

9. Conclusion

The study, which assessed the employability skills of technical college graduates for employment readiness in Ondo State, Nigeria, concluded that while graduates possess technical skills, they lack adequate employability skills, especially in ICT, entrepreneurship, leadership, and interpersonal relations. Employment readiness among graduates was found to be slightly adequate, indicating partial preparedness for workplace demands. The study further established that employability skills have a significant positive relationship with employment readiness, confirming that graduates with stronger employability skills are more likely to be job-ready. However, persistent skills mismatch, lack of experience, and limited exposure to real workplace environments continue to hinder successful employment outcomes.

Finally, the study concluded that there is a clear gap between technical college training outcomes and labour market expectations, resulting in reduced employment competitiveness among graduates.

10. Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. Technical colleges should strengthen the integration of ICT skills across all trade areas to improve digital competence of graduates.
2. Entrepreneurship education should be intensified to equip graduates with self-employment and innovation skills.
3. Curriculum developers should ensure better balance between technical skills and soft employability skills such as communication, teamwork, and leadership.
4. Stronger industry–school partnerships should be established to provide students with real workplace exposure and reduce skills mismatch.
5. Industrial training and internship programmes should be made more practical and closely supervised to improve work experience and job readiness.
6. Government and stakeholders should support technical colleges with modern training equipment to enhance practical skill acquisition and relevance to labour market needs.

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