

INFLUENCE OF ACADEMIC FACTORS ON THE EMPLOYABILITY OF GRADUATES IN ILORIN SOUTH LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF KWARA STATE

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Abstract

The phenomenon of unemployment among Nigerian graduates is a function of level of employability. This study examined the influence of academic factors on the employability of graduates in Ilorin South Local Government Area. The research-design adopted was a descriptive survey method. Multi-stage sampling technique was used to sample respondents across various disciplines in Ilorin-south Local Government Area. A researcher's designed questionnaire was used for the study. The instrument used was subjected to a test retest method and found to have a reliability coefficient of 0.76 using Cronbach's alpha. Data were analysed using mean rating, the independent t-test and One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) at 0.05 level of significance. Findings revealed that graduates were unemployed as a result of their laziness towards academic activities in school, involvement in examination malpractices, and poor curriculum implementation in tertiary institutions. There was no significant difference in the influence of academic discipline on the employability based on gender as well as educational level of graduates. It was concluded that unemployment among graduate was caused by their inability to be creative in their world. The implication of this study is that most graduates are unable to create jobs for themselves. Based on this, it was recommended that undergraduates in tertiary institutions should prepare for the competitive world of work by acquiring the technical, soft skills and academic factors that would increase their employability.

Key Words: Employability, Graduate Youths, Academic Discipline, entrepreneur.

Introduction

Graduate unemployment has been a global challenge which has reached the climax in the contemporary society. It is a problem that every society is facing, most especially the developing country like Nigeria under the present economic downturn. It is a social problem that affects many individuals in the entire society and this has changed a severe undesirable consequences on the nationwide economy in addition to the living condition of the populace. The problem tends to be increasing, due to the increase in the turning out of graduates by different higher institutions without corresponding increase in the provision of employment opportunities. Expressing concern on graduates' unemployment Edinyang, Odey and Gimba (2015) stated that

the more worrisome is the issue of graduate unemployment, which has made many Nigerian graduates unemployable. They concluded that it is one thing for higher institutions to produce graduates yearly and it is another thing for them to meet up with employers' requirements, skills or competences which are needed for securing and sustaining employment. Similarly, Balogun (2015) was of the opinion that graduates unemployment is one of the fundamental problems confronting African continent today to the extent that it deters some countries in realizing their economic magnitude and developmental ambitions, but has retained them as a nation without work progression community.

In recent times, it is noted that the goals of tertiary education are thus far yet to be attained in Nigeria particularly in relation to the issue of unemployed graduates who keep on wandering the streets of Nigeria in search of well-paid jobs afterwards graduation. In other words, unemployment remains a chief challenge for Nigerian graduates who have spent a lot of resources to obtain tertiary education in a broad range of Universities, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education that are spread across the length and breadth of Nigeria (Educational and Employability Survey Report, 2014).

Generally, the concept of unemployment is a broad term that is not characterized by a singular definition as there are diverse scholarly opinions and perspectives on the exact meaning of unemployment. For instance, Ajiboye, Oyeboji and Awoniyi (2013) advanced that unemployment is the segment of the workable labour force in a nation or state that are yet to secure employment after the conclusion of specified form of training or education. In other words, unemployment is a relative term that refers to individuals who lack a paid job and are looking for a work in one sector or another. Unemployment or joblessness is a situation when people are without job for a certain period of time. Thus, the unemployment rate is the percentage of the number of unemployed in relation to the number of gainfully employed people in the labour force of a nation (Adebayo, 2014). According to Oppong and Sachs (2015) graduate unemployment is defined as the amount of degree holders (graduate and post graduate) in a given economy who are capable and willing to work, but unable to find jobs. This definition according to them established graduate unemployment as a specific type of unemployment among people with academic degree from higher institution working zero hour and earning zero income. In similar perspective but limited to graduates of universities and polytechnics, Eneji, Maifa, and Weiping (2013); Akinyemi and Ikunomore (2012) defined graduate unemployment to include students graduated from the universities and polytechnics who are seemingly fit and prepared to work, but could not find a job or discriminated by experience. In these categories of people are fresh and young tertiary institution graduates, retrenched graduates seeking re-engagement and those who are underemployed or on disguised employment.

Graduate unemployment has been a key issue to the Nigeria economy in the present day labour market. Surprisingly, Balogun (2016) has hinted that over 300,000 graduates have been produced every year from various tertiary institutions in Nigeria,

yet they do not get jobs. The attendant consequence of it is that, graduate unemployment is one of the most critical developmental problems facing Nigeria. Hence, graduate unemployment is a nationwide problem that has associated with wide range of challenges. Predictably, statistical evidence from the study of Eneji et al (2013) shows that graduates unemployment rate stood at 60% of the Nigeria labour available in the market. Just closely, the World Bank in 2018 via its representative Prof. Foluso Okunmadewa remarked that unemployment rate in Nigeria is at 22%, while the youth unemployment rate is 38%, but in reality, 80 percent of Nigerian youths are unemployed, with secondary school graduates mostly found among unemployed rural population accounting for about half of this figure, while university and polytechnic graduates make up the rest (Adeboyega, Okesina & Mustapha, 2016). The National Bureau of Statistics (2018) indicated that a total of 52 million citizens within the economically active population of Nigeria is jobless and this figure consisted mostly of newly qualified university graduates. The NBS (2019) indicated that Nigeria has a youth population of approximately 80 million, comprising 60 per cent of the total population. However, about sixty-four (64) million of Nigerian youths are unemployed, while one million six hundred thousand (1.6 million) are underemployed. Evidence abound from the figure signifies that Nigeria is incapacitated with the provision of employment opportunities for the graduates who underwent rigorous training in various field or specialization.

Various factors have been identified in literature to be responsible for the worrisome rate of unemployment in Kwara State in particular and Nigeria at large. For instance, Eneji et al (2013) attributed the causes of unemployment in Nigeria to factors such as rapid growth of population resulting to outstripping supply of jobs in the market, rapid growth of labour force arising from rural-urban migration in terms of push/pull factors, lack of employable skills, cultural barriers, lack of awareness, lack of vibrant manufacturing sector (industries, factories) and massive corruption (Eneji et al, 2013). Various causal factors of graduate unemployment have also been identified in a plethora of studies (Chartered Institute of Personnel Management of Nigeria (CIPMN), 2016; Oluyomi & Adedeji, 2012).

Specifically, the Chartered Institute of Personnel Management of Nigeria (CIPMN, 2016) identified some factors that predisposed tertiary institution graduates to unemployment in the country. These were lack of national employment policy, sub-optimal quality of graduates, educational system not tailored and aligned to industry need and inappropriate educational curricula. Others are poor political governance, poor setting of policy direction, inconsistent government policy and harsh business environment. Besides, in recent decades, the Nigeria economy has not achieved any significant diversification and the country's tertiary education system has witnessed a ponderous admission overload of students, resulting into massive over supply of higher education graduates. This lack of synergy between the production of graduates and employment opportunities underscore the complexity of the graduate unemployment issue in Nigeria (Oluyomi & Adedeji, 2012).

The increase in unemployment has many consequences for the individual and the generality of the society. Viewed seriously, Madoui (2015) opined that beyond the deprivation of salary, graduate unemployment entails removal from the indispensable socializing effect of work. It undermines the self-esteem of the affected persons and raptures them from social ties and relationship. Hence, in Nigeria and other developing nations, the unemployed graduates are characterized by shame, boredomness and hardship. With the concurrent marginalization from the world of work, the unemployed graduates have been put in a state of worklessness and made to become dispossessed persons with no income value in the society.

They are perpetually unhappy with themselves in the world of material consideration (Adawo, Essien & Ekpo, 2012). Also, they suffer social exclusion and lack social recognition which often make friends and relations to regard them as liabilities in the society. These destroy morals and break social relationship (Asmare & Mulate, 2014) which paves way for disaggregation of social bond and instability in the level of social order in a country. Thus, the accelerated level of non-conforming behaviours among the unemployed graduates has culminated into unpleasant social vices which have suffocated the entire Nigeria's environment. Generally, the phenomenon of unemployment among Nigerian graduates is a function of the level of employability of graduates. Employability as a factor in graduate employment has been defined by various authors. In this sense, therefore, employability is the degree or extent to which a graduate is able to secure employment after graduation from school or a period of formal training. Schreuder and Coetzee (2011) also averred that employability constitutes a sense of self-directedness or personal agency in retaining or securing a job or form of employment.

Hillage and Pollard (2008) view employability as capability of a graduate to secure and maintain an initial employment and to obtain new one if the need arises. Likewise, Harvey and Bowes (2008) posited that employability is the ability of graduates to gain employment in line with the acquired training and remuneration that is commensurate with the standard of the graduates. From another standpoint, Kamal (2006) noted that employability is the ability of a graduate to possess and exhibit vital qualities that are required by employers in order to function maximally in an organisation. The degree of employability of a graduate is a function of certain factors among which are self-belief, ability to secure and retain employment, ability to improve productivity and income-earning prospect of individuals (Bezuidenhout, 2011).

Similarly, Griesel and Parker (2009) noted that employers' perceptions about the quality of the graduates they employ, their employability and general work readiness are prime determinants of the employability of graduates. More so, the employability of graduates has been linked to the competence of graduates in the application of essential employability skills, that is, the knowledge, attributes and attitudes that will enable students to obtain, maintain and change jobs (Pitan, 2016b). Furthermore, academic-related factors have been identified in extant literature to be significant correlates of graduate employability. For instance, Pitan (2016a) found

that academic skills played a significant role in graduates' employability. In the same vein, Edinyang, Odey and Joseph (2015) reported that academic factors had a significant influence on graduate employability in Nigeria. In the light of the foregoing, therefore, and in view of the fact that graduate unemployment is rife and pervasive in Ilorin South Local Government Area, the present study seeks to investigate the influence of academic factors on employability of graduates in Ilorin South Local Government Area.

Graduate unemployment is one of the contemporary social issues in Kwara State. More so, the personal observation of the researcher reveals that many graduates in Ilorin South Local Government Area are either underemployed with low pay or roaming about the streets in search of non-existent white-collar jobs after graduation. Consequently, the rate of crime among graduates in Ilorin Metropolis has taken a worrisome dimension. For instance, the researcher observed many unemployed graduates in Ilorin South Local Government Area are perpetrators advance free fraud or cybercrime, drug dealing and prostitution. Thus, the worrisome trend of graduate unemployment may be as result of the low employability of graduates. Hence, several studies have indicated that a broad spectrum of factors such as personality dispositions, availability and accessibility of career guidance services, possession of employable skills, academic-related factors and a host of others influence the employability of graduates in Nigeria and other countries. Specifically, Oluwajodu (2013) examine level of graduate unemployment in South African. The outcome of the study revealed that graduate unemployment is at high level due to inability of some graduates to meet the employers need in the labour market labour. Lokewise, Ponge (2013) investigated graduate unemployment and employability in Kenya. The study discovered that lack of employability skills responsible for graduate unemployment. Adeyemo, Ogunleye and Adenle (2010) carried out a survey of factors determining the employability of science and technology graduates of polytechnics and universities in the Nigerian labour market. The result of the finding revealed that the major factors determine Ajiboye et'al (2013) investigated the influence of higher education on employability as perceived by lecturers of university of Ilorin. Adekanbi, Ajadi and Subair (2015) examined the required and possessed university graduate employability skills from the perception of the Nigerian employers. Longe (2017) investigated causes, consequences and remediable approaches for graduate unemployment in Nigeria.

However, it has glaring that past literatures mentioned with respect to graduate employability were conducted outside the study area and they did not include academic factors as part of factors influencing graduate employability. Thus, in view of this identified gap in literature, the problem of this study is to investigate the influence of academic factors on the employability of graduates in Ilorin South Local Government Area.

The main purpose of this study is to investigate the influence of academic factors on the employability of graduates in Ilorin South Local Government Area. Specifically, the study seeks to investigate:

- a. Factors influencing employability of graduates in Ilorin South LGA.
- b. Whether academic discipline has influence on employability of graduate youths in Ilorin South LGA.

Research Questions

The following research question was raised to guide the conduct of the study.

1. What are the factors influencing employability of graduates in Ilorin South LGA?

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were postulated to be tested in the study.

H₀₁: There is significant influence of academic discipline on employability of graduate youths in Ilorin South LGA.

Methodology

The target population was graduates in Ilorin-south Local Government Area. The study sample size was two hundred (210) graduates across all the eleven wards in the Local Government Area using random sampling technique. The respondents were drawn from various places like mosques, churches, club houses, societies, local mall etc. A researcher-designed instrument was used for data collection. The instrument was subjected to a test re-test method and found to have a reliability coefficient of 0.76 using Cranach's alpha. The data collected were analysed using the percentage, mean and standard deviation, the t-test and One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Answering of Research Questions

Research Question: Is there any influence of academic discipline on the employability of graduate youths in Ilorin South LGA?

Given that the questionnaire items were structured on a four Likert scale response-type, items whose mean scores were closed to 4.0, 3.0, 2.0 and 1.0 were remarked Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree and Strongly Disagree respectively. However, responses on both strongly agree and agree were blended together as agreed, while disagree and strongly disagree were blended as disagree, since $4 + 3 + 2 + 1 = 10$, this $10/4 = 2.5$. Thus, mean item greater than 2.5 is remarked as agreed, while mean items less than 2.5 is remarked disagreed. This is presented in Table 2.

Table 1: Mean Analysis on the Factors Influencing Graduates Employability

S/N	Factors Influencing Employability	Mean	Std. D.	Rank	Remark
1	Graduate youths are unemployed as a result of lack of employability skills.	3.19	3.83	1 st	Agreed
2	Graduate youths could not get employed as a result of worsen in their quality.	3.15	.94	2 nd	Agreed
3	Poor curriculum implementation in tertiary institutions results to unemployment among graduate youths.	2.84	3.15	3 rd	Agreed
4	Due to violence, graduate youths could not get employment after their university education.	2.69	1.02	4 th	Agreed
5	Graduate youths could not secure employment as a result of their poor class of degree in the university.	2.64	1.07	5 th	Agreed
6	inconsistent government policy and harsh business environment	2.62	1.01	6 th	Agreed
7	Inadequate practical training and inelastic labour absorptive capacity in both the private and public sectors as causal factors of graduate unemployment.	2.62	.98	6 th	Agreed
8	Lack of proper orientation results to graduate youths' unemployment.	2.52	.99	8 th	Agreed
9	Graduate youths could not be employed because of their emotional intelligence.	2.28	.94	9 th	Disagree
10	Lack of effective communication in English language leads to unemployment graduate youths.	2.23	1.11	10 th	Disagree

As shown in Table 2, ranked 1st, 2nd, and 3rd up to 8th were the factors responsible for graduates' unemployment. Thus, graduate youths are unemployed as a result of their lack of employability skills, worsen graduate quality, poor curriculum implementation in tertiary institutions, due to violence, poor class of degree in the university, inconsistent government policy and harsh business environment and Inadequate practical training and inelastic labour absorptive capacity in both the private and public sectors as causal. However, rankedth9 and 10th were disagreed upon as influence of academic discipline on the employability of graduate youths. Therefore, lack of proper orientation results to graduate youths' unemployment and lack of effective communication in English language leads to unemployment graduate youths were disagree upon as the influence of academic discipline on the employability of graduate youths.

Hypotheses Testing

The hypotheses postulated were tested using independent Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) at 0.05 level of significance.

Hypothesis: There is significant influence of academic discipline on employability of graduate youths in Ilorin South LGA.

Table 2: ANOVA Summary of the Difference in the Influence of Academic Discipline on the Employability of Graduate Youths based on their academic discipline

Variables	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Remark
Between Groups	473.808	3	157.936	4.455	0.00	Rejected
Within Groups	3757.510	106	35.448			
Total	4231.318	109				

*Insignificance at $p > 0.05$

As shown in Table 4, the F-value of 4.455 with a p-value of 0.00 when computed at 0.05 alpha level. Since the p-value of 0.00 obtained is less than 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis two is not retained. Thus, this implies that there is no statistically significant difference in the influence of academic discipline on the employability of graduate youths. ($F_{(3, 108)} = 4.455, p > 0.05$).

Discussion of Findings

Finding from this study revealed that graduate youths were unemployed as a result of lack of employability skills such as emotional intelligent skill, interview skill, interpersonal communication and many more, the worsen quality of graduates, and poor curriculum implementation in tertiary institutions among others. This finding is in line with Oluyomi and Adedeji (2012) who revealed that tertiary education system has witnessed a ponderous admission overload of students, resulting into massive over supply of higher education graduates, this lack of synergy between the production of graduates and employment opportunities underscore the complexity of the graduate unemployment issue in Nigeria.

In another report by Chartered Institute of Personnel Management of Nigeria (CIPMN) (2016) stressed that various causal factors of graduate unemployment have also been identified in a plethora of studies. Specifically, the Chartered Institute of Personnel Management of Nigeria (CIPMN, 2016) identified some factors that predisposed tertiary institution graduates to unemployment in the country. These were lack of national employment policy, sub-optimal quality of graduates, educational system not tailored and aligned to industry need and inappropriate educational curricula (Oluyomi & Adedeji, 2012).

The last finding of this study revealed that there was a statistically no significant difference in the influence of academic discipline on the employability of graduate youths in Ilorin South LGA. This finding however is in contrary with Bhorat and Visser (2010) who discovered that university graduates with a professional focus on engineering and medicine secured employment faster than graduates with history or a more general field of study. Nevertheless, enrolment within the professional field of study remains low. According to Oluwajodu (2013), this may be due to students' selection of their courses, whether they actually receive guidance from parents or

lecturers when making their decisions and subject learners take at school which limit their supply options.

In a like manner, Edinyang, Odey and Joseph (2015) found that academic discipline has a significant influence on graduate employability in Calabar, Cross River State of Nigeria. They stressed that graduates of certain disciplines have higher chances of getting employed than their counterparts in some other fields. In this regard, it follows that a graduate of Education/Economics, for example, has a greater advantage than a graduate of pure economics because the former can perform the duties of an economist and of an educationist at the same time.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that graduate youths were unemployed as a result of their laziness towards academic activities in school, involvement in examination malpractices, poor curriculum implementation in tertiary institutions among others in Ilorin South LGA. More so, there was a statistically no significant difference in the influence of academic discipline on the employability of graduate youths in Ilorin South LGA.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion in this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Undergraduates in tertiary institutions should prepare for the competitive world of work by acquiring the technical, soft skills and academic factors that would increase their employability in the labour market which may increase their chances of securing gainful employment during job interviews.
2. Guidance and counsellors should provide counselling interventions to boost the level of employability among graduates.
3. Policy makers should design the curriculum of tertiary institutions to cater for the academic factors that may play a role in the employability of graduates.

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