

Predictive Effects of Knowledge, skills, Understanding and Attitude on Graduate Employability in South West, Nigeria

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Abstract. This study is designed to establish the relationship, composite and relative effects of knowledge, skills, understanding and attitude on graduate employability in south-west, Nigeria. Descriptive research design of correlational type was employed to investigate the relationship that exists between the independent variables and dependent variable. The employers of university graduates in south west, Nigeria were used. 518 participants out of which 422 are males and the rest 95 are females were involved in study. Secondary data were collected and used for the study using the information from the APAFORM (Annual Performance Form) of the concerned university graduates records file. Correlation and multiple regression analysis were used to analyze the three research questions that were raised at 0.05 levels of significances. The result revealed significant correlation, composite effect and relative contributions with skills as the most potent predictor ($B = 0.416$, $t = 7.924$, $p < 0.05$) followed by attitude ($B = 0.319$, $t = 4.194$, $p < 0.05$) followed by knowledge ($B = 0.207$, $t = 4.373$, $p < 0.05$) and finally followed by understanding ($B = 0.183$, $t = 3.319$, $p < 0.05$) in that order. Based on the findings of this study, it was recommended that skills acquisition of university graduates is very important for employability and to retain the job gained. Also, that curriculum planner should lay emphasis on practical aspect of each profession during teaching-learning exercise. Also, that both formative and summative assessment of the learners should be properly done so as to showcase those that are capable in theory,

practical and both theory and practical simultaneously in each professional programme so as to help the employers to put round pegs into round holes as the case may be.

Keywords: Knowledge, Skills, Understanding, Attitude, Graduate, Employability

1. Introduction

One of the most aching challenges confronting Nigeria today is the issue of unemployment. It has become so severe that policy-makers, parents and youths, especially graduates alike are having sleepless nights over it. The issue has been in the front burner of national discourse in recent years. The unemployment question is even aggravated by the increasing number of graduates being turned out annually by tertiary institutions made up of Universities, Polytechnics, Monotechnics and Colleges of Education, about 322 in all excluding Technical Colleges (Educational and Employability Survey Report, 2014). Ajiboye, Oyebanji and Awoniyi (2013) defined unemployment as the share of the labour force that is without work but available and seeking employment. It could also be seen as an economic condition in which individuals seeking jobs remain unhired (Eurostat, 2013). The rate of unemployment in Nigeria has assumed an alarming dimension. It had steadily risen from 21% in 2010 to 23.9% in 2011, though the economy has been growing in an average of 7% per annum (National Bureau of Statistics, 2012).

More worrisome is the problem of graduate employability, which has rendered many Nigerian graduate unemployable. This is because, while it is one thing for tertiary institutions to produce graduates, it is another for the products of these schools to meet up with employers' requirements, skills or competences for employment. Employers of labour often complain that some of these graduates though professionally or technically qualified are unemployable, in that they lack the requisite, essential skills or competencies needed in the job or for sustainable employment. These skills create a gap in their knowledge which must be filled to make them suitable to compete for few, existing vacancies that crop up from time to time (Sodipo, 2014).

As stated by McNair (2003), graduate employability has increased in importance because of the changing nature of the graduate labour market, mass participation in higher education, pressures on student finance, competition to recruit students and expectations of students, employers, parents and government.

According to British council 2014, employability can be defined as the possession of relevant knowledge, skills and other attributes that facilitate the gaining and maintaining of worthwhile employment. Employability is about the development of a range of attributes and skills at university that can be transferred into situations beyond university study. Graduate employability is multifaceted and entails career management skills, academic performance and labour market awareness. This view is supported by Pool & Sewell (2007) that employability goes beyond just gaining employment. It is about being capable of getting and keeping fulfilling work (an individual's capacity and willingness to become and remain attractive in the labour market). Teamwork, effective communication, adaptability to change, positive and flexible attitudes, continuous learning, self-confidence, willingness to take risks and commitment to personal excellence are all characteristics linked to employability skills (Pool & Sewell, 2007).

The concept of employability affects both individuals and society at large. Employability

has been subjected to many studies and is at the center of discussion in this study. Many governments, universities, employers and other stakeholders have given various suggestions on increasing graduate employability. Despite these extensive developments and evidence of innovative practices to increase employability within universities, employability still remains to be a complex and problematic area without much clarity or complete direction (Rae, 2007).

Graduates' employability is a set of achievements, skills, understanding and personal attributes that makes graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations, which benefits themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy' (Mantze Yorke, 2006). It is also defined as a set of attributes, skills and knowledge that all labour market participants should possess to ensure they have the capability of being effective in the workplace to the benefit of themselves, their employer and the wider community (CBI, 2011). Graduate employability means that higher education graduates have the developed capacity to obtain and/or create work. Furthermore, employability means that institutions and employers have supported the knowledge, skills, attributes, reflective disposition and identity that graduates need to succeed in the workforce (Hinchliffe & Jolly, 2011; Holmes, 2013; Knight & Yorke, 2004; Yorke, 2006; Yorke & Knight, 2006).

These factors are referred to the employable skills necessary for getting, keeping and being successful in a job. These are the skills and attitudes that enable employees to get along with their colleagues, to make critical decisions, solve problems, develop respect and ultimately become strong ambassadors for the organization. The skills required includes: Interpersonal skills which used to interact with people, participate effectively as members of a team, negotiate, satisfy customers, make decisions, manage time and work effectively with colleagues. Communication skills have to do with verbal and in writing. Writing clearly and succinctly, demonstrates good vocabulary and listening actively and critical thinking skills is ability to solve problems and make decisions is a huge

asset to employers. This also includes ability to effectively plan and organize creative thinking are innovative and inventive and are more likely to devise new ways of doing things that add value to the work environment. Furthermore, having the right attitude towards work and the organization you work for. Employers look for people who are open to learning and embrace change. Such a person will be more successful than the person who is afraid of learning and resistant to changes in the organization, while self-management skills is self-motivation, self-confidence, self-control-skills that are used to manage personal feelings and how people react to challenges and problems both at work and in their private lives and presentation skill is needed for presenting information clearly and effectively in the work place. This includes business plans, reports, minutes etc. The leadership skill which is ability to influence others towards the achievement of a goal and IT skills have to do with acquiring basic IT skills and being familiar with the computer, open a wide range of employment opportunities and increase marketability in workplaces. It also involves understanding of numerical data, statistics and graphs. It is also a part of making decisions and reasoning. According to Bridgestock (2009) employability skills refers to the abilities required to proactively navigate the working world and successfully manage the career building process based on attributes such as lifelong or continuous learning and adaptability. Employability skills are very important in enhancing employability. They are skills that are directly pertinent to obtaining and maintaining work. According to Bridgestock (2009) employability skills are grouped into four categories and described as follows:

Understanding and graduate employability as parts of what a graduate is expected by employers to have to have an understanding in the following areas these are business and customer awareness which is the understanding of a business markets of their employer, their customers and the challenges that they face. This aspect of business and customer awareness is important to an employer as the opinions of this new graduate employed will add value to their organization.

Knowledge and graduates' employability as stated by the CBI (2011) is that 'graduates should have a basic knowledge of the key drivers for business success – including the importance of innovation and taking calculated risks – and the need to provide customer satisfaction and build customer loyalty'. Trought (2017) viewed that specific knowledge can be developed on one's chosen industry sector by reading newspapers, journals and newsletters from professional bodies.

This will not only help graduates with their employability skills, but will help them have better understanding of their classroom lectures and assignment they have learnt while in school. The industry knowledge will be more apparent in the conversations the new graduates will have about their sector and the responses they will give in interviews. The best way to gain an insight into an industry is to gain work experience. Work shadowing, internships and placements all provide opportunities for graduates to not only understand the industry but to see if they want to work in it. As a result, they will gain an insight into how companies manage the users' experience and build brand loyalty. They can develop this knowledge by reflecting on their own experiences with companies. Customer retention is important for businesses as without customers there is no business.

Knowledge of Information Technology (IT) is transforming, disrupting and reshaping all industries. No organization is isolated from the rapid changes taking place within the technology sector, but it's the resounding ripples and waves that affect all industries as well. The dramatic advances in technology are causing industries to question their purpose in the future. An example of this is the retail banking sector. 'There are so many different ways that you can make payments these days; you can pay by email, by Paypal and you can pay by your mobile phone, but all of that relies on the same plumbing and predominately it's the banks that provide that plumbing. As graduates they will be expected to be information technology literate by the employer. The employers will want to see how the graduate can use technology to improve their processes or add value to their role. There is

therefore the need for students to continually update their information technology skills, undertake short courses to learn about new technologies and new ways of performing tasks. The application of information technology involves the ability to demonstrate basic information technology skills, including the familiarity with word processing, spreadsheets, file management and email.

Attitude and graduates' employability-businesses continually face challenging, demanding and transforming landscapes, and so workforces need to manage and respond accordingly. Companies increasingly realise that the attitudes of their employees plays an important role in determining an individual's response to a situation or to other people. Employers are looking for attitudes like personal attributes or character, positive attitude i.e. a 'can do' approach, good work-ethics and the willingness to learn, good personal presentation, honesty and integrity, reliability, time keeping and personal organization, team working, collaboration and cooperation, flexibility, commercial awareness and Customer focus and business etiquette skills.

2. Statement of the Problem

There was strong argument among sub-group of Nigeria populace most especially the employers of labour, educators and researchers concerning the employability of university graduates in South west, Nigeria and the trust that people have for university education in Nigeria in terms of quality of education in the universities. Some school of thought believed that there is nothing wrong with graduates' employability in Nigeria whereas some other school of thought believed that a lot is wrong with graduates' employability. And that university graduates are not employable due to quality of education received by them when in school. Some are of opinion that the graduates are not sound academically, theoretically and practical wise while some are saying that those that are grammatically sound are not good in practical and those that are sound in practical are not sound grammatically. As a results of this argument the researcher embark on this study

since employability of the graduates is an integral of part of quality of education received and which can be measured in the world of works in line with this the employers of labour were considered as the respondents to avoid self-reported information from graduates. Since no one will be bias against him/herself and to actually view the opinion of employers of labour. Thus the researcher is determine to use attitude, skills, understanding and knowledge has perceived by the employers of labour to establish the relationship between these independent variables and the dependent variable among the graduates in south west, Nigeria.

3. Purpose of the Study

The study is designed to examine the relationship between the skills, attitude, knowledge and understanding on graduates' employability in South west, Nigeria. Also, it is meant to highlight both the composite effect and relative contribution of each of these variables on graduates' employability in South west, Nigeria.

4. Significance of the Study

Ascertaining the composite and collective relationship between skills, attitude, knowledge and understanding on dependent variable (graduates employability) in South west, Nigeria will challenge respective stakeholders to appropriately maximize the use of these variables to promote graduates employability in south west in Nigeria. Also, to determining appropriate employability factors and their correct use will go a long way in enhancing graduates employability. When this is done, both lecturers and graduates will be satisfied, huge sums of money spent by parents in sponsoring their children/wards will not be in vain and government's primary objective to produce future patriots who are educationally and technologically sound will be easily realized.

5. Research Questions

The following research questions guide the course of this study:

- (i) Are there significant relationships among the independent variables (skills, attitude, knowledge and understanding) and dependent variable (graduates employability)?
- (ii) What is the composite contribution of the independent variables to the dependent variable?
- (iii) What is the relative contribution of the independent variables to the dependent variable?

6. Methodology

Descriptive research design of correlational type was employed to investigate the relationship that exists between (knowledge, skills, understanding and attitude) predictor variables and (graduate employability) criterion variable. The population for this study consists of the university graduates who had completed the mandatory one year National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) programme. Secondary data were retrieved from the records of individual used in this study. The performance of university graduates from various employers based on Annual Performance Form (APAFORM) filled on each of university graduate by the Directors of each department in the various working places were randomly sampled by the researcher and a sample of 517 employees were obtained from the personnel department of each establishment

used for the study based on the predetermined criteria such as knowledge, skills, understanding, and attitude. The reasons for considering these four factors to the best of knowledge of researcher are that these factors are germane to university graduates employability. The sample consisted of 422 males and 95 females. The average age of the participants is 30.63 years and with standard deviation of 2.96 years. Data were collected on the basis of the subgroups involved in the study. The subgroups were male and female and category, knowledge, skills, understanding and attitude. Data collected were then analyzed using bivariate correlation and multiple linear regression analysis at $\alpha = 0.05$ level of significance.

7. Results

Research Question 1: Are there significant relationships among the independent variables (Knowledge, skills, understanding and attitude) and (dependent variable) graduates employability?

The result from Table1 depicts the test of significant correlations among independent variables (knowledge, skills, understanding and attitude) and (dependent variable) graduates employability.

Table1: Summary of Test of significant Correlations among knowledge, skills, understanding and attitude of the Respondents

Variable	Mean	SD	(r)	Sig. P	Remark
Knowledge	20.31	4.09	0.264	0.000	S
Skills	20.63	2.91	0.289	0.000	S
Understanding	22.41	2.35	0.351	0.000	S
Attitude	30.21	0.84	0.198	0.000	S
Graduates employability	37.50	0.92	1.000	-	-

NB: ** Significant at $P < 0.01$ * Significant at $P < 0.05$

The results from Table1 showed that graduates employability had significant correlation with knowledge ($r = 0.264, p < 0.05$), skills ($r = 0.289, p < 0.05$), understanding ($r = 0.351, p < 0.05$) and attitude ($r = 0.198, p < 0.05$) of the respondents.

Research Question 2: What is the composite contribution of the independent variables to the dependent variable?

TABLE 2: Summary of Regression Analysis of the Combined Prediction of University Graduate Employability by the Four Independent Variables

R	R-Square	Adjusted R-Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
0.701	0.49	0.48	0.95274

Analysis of Variance

Source of Variation	Sum of Square	Df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Regression	118.570	4	29.64	32.64	0.000*
Residual	2280.154	512	0.908		
Total	2398.723	516			

*Significant at $p < 0.05$

Table 2 shows the prediction of all the four independent variables to the dependent variables. That is, graduates employability correlated positively with the four-predictor variables. The Table2 also shows a coefficient of multiple correlations (R) of 0.701, and a multiple R square of 0.49. This means that 49% of the variance in the graduates’ employability is accounted for by all four predictor variables, when taken together. The significance of the

composite contribution was tested at $p < 0.05$ using the F- ratio at the degrees of freedom (df= 4, 512). The table also shows that the analysis of variance for the regression yielded a F-ratio of 32.64 (significant at 0.05 level). This implies that the joint contribution of the independent variables to the dependent variable was significant and that other variables not included in this model may have accounted for the remaining variance.

Research Question 3: What is the relative contribution of the independent variables to the dependent variables?

TABLE 3: Relative Contribution of the Four Independent Variables to the Dependent Variable (Test of Significance of the Regression Coefficients)

Variables	Unstandardized coefficient	Standardized coefficient		T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Constant	8.710	1.015		8.580	.000
knowledge	.207	.047	.178	4.373	.000
skills	.416	.053	.325	7.924	.000
understanding	.183	.063	.153	3.319	.010
attitude	.390	.093	.171	4.194	.000

** Significant at $P < 0.01$ and * $P < 0.05$

Table3 reveals the relative contribution of the four independent variables to the dependent variable, expressed as beta weights. The partial correlation coefficients of knowledge, skills, understanding and attitude have positive relationship with graduates’ employability. The positive value of the effects of knowledge, skills, understanding and attitude are actually determined by positive reinforcement of these four variables. Using the standardized regression coefficient to determine the relative contributions of the independent variables to the explanation of the dependent variable skills (B = 0.416, $t = 7.924$, $p < 0.05$) is most potent contributor to the prediction followed by attitude (B = 0.319, $t = 4.194$, $p < 0.05$) followed by knowledge (B = 0.207, $t = 4.373$, $p < 0.05$) and

finally followed by understanding (B = 0.183, $t = 3.319$, $p < 0.05$) in that order.

8. Discussion of the Findings

Research question one was on relationship between independent variables and dependent variable. The results shown in Table 1 revealed that there was significant correlation between independent variables and dependent variable. There was significantly positive correlation between employability of university graduates and the independent variables. The finding of the study supported Pool & Sewell (2007) they found significant positive relationship between skill and employability of university graduates. In related vein, Sodipo (2014) also found

significant correlation between employability of university graduates on Knowledge, skills, understanding and attitudes of the university graduates. Yorke & Night, (2006) corroborating with the above findings demonstrated that a significant relationship existed between independent variables and employability of university graduates.

The result in relation to research question 2 shows that, the joint contribution of the independent variables predict employability of university graduates among employers of labour in south west, Nigeria. The finding of this study supported Bridge and Stock (2009) that found significant positive relationship between Knowledge, skills, understanding and attitudes of the university graduates. This means that Knowledge, skills, understanding and attitudes variables are most important than any other factors in predicting the university graduate employability of the participants.

The result in relation to research question 3 shows that, the relative contribution of each of these independent variables on university graduate employability among the participants in the study, skill made the most significant relative contribution to the prediction of university graduate employability followed by attitude; knowledge and finally followed by understanding in that order. This shows that skill as a factor appears as the most potent contributor to university graduate employability. This means that skill acquisition and process variables are most important than any other factors in predicting the university graduate employability of the participants. This finding corroborates Yorke (2006) and Holmes (2013) who discovered that, skill, attitude, knowledge and understanding of university graduate factors have significant impact on university graduate employability. Also, this finding is in line with the finding of Hinchleffe & Jolly (2011) who found that skill, attitude, knowledge and understanding as factors are more significant in predicting university graduate employability in south west, Nigeria.

9. Conclusion

Considering the findings of this study, it was concluded that there was significant relationship

between the independent variables and the dependent variable. The finding of the study shows that there was joint effect of the independent variables on the dependent variable. This suggests that independent variables are critical variables that determine university graduate employability. The independent variables relatively contributed to the variation of university graduate employability. The significant relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable implies that these variables enrich the tendency of stakeholders to improve quality of university education. Skill has shown to have the most potent significant effect on the university graduate employability.

10. Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study the following recommendations were made that:

Curriculum planners should prepare and built in these four factors into each professional programme so as to make the university graduates employable. Since these four factors are germane to graduates employability.

Government should provide free and compulsory education to all citizens with or without social family support.

In addition government should provide basic learning infrastructures to enhance university graduate employability.

Graduates enlightenment on issues of skill, attitude, knowledge and understanding could be done regularly, as this would enhance university graduate employability and it will go a long way to allow university graduates to be aware of what is required of them to retain their job if opportune to get one.

Lecturers should be told to adopt pedagogy that will promote skill, attitude, knowledge and understanding of curriculum content and that learners should be evaluated from time to time on both theory and practical aspects of their profession.

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