

University of Ibadan Undergraduates' Level of Employability Skills

Tolulope Victoria Gbadamosi

Department of Arts and Social Sciences Education,
Faculty of Education, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria

Abstract: This paper assesses the level of employability skills acquired by university undergraduate students in their respective final year of study. This study adopted a mixed-method research approach. This study used 120 final-year students and 20 employers of labours using a multiple-stage sampling procedure. Employability Skills Questionnaire ($r = 0.77$), Stakeholder's Perception of Students' Employability Skills Questionnaire ($r=0.75$); and interview guide of students' perception of the level of acquired employability skills were used to collect data. Findings reveal that the students possess a relatively low level of employability skills with a weighted mean of 2.48. Specifically, the students demonstrated a high level of personality and adaptability skills (2.67) and communication skills (2.65), teamwork and leadership skills are moderately possessed (2.47) there is a low level of Information Communication and Technology skills (2.37) and Problem Solving and Analytical Skills (2.22) and so on. From the findings, it is recommended that higher education curriculum and extra-curriculum should design to equip learners with the various employability skills expected from university graduates by employers. Also, students should be informed or enlightened on the necessity of having specific employability skills to prepare them for the World of work.

Key words: Employment • Employer • Employability • Higher Education and Word of Work.

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria is blessed with a huge amount of materials and human resources. Human resources are characterized by able men and women that are expected to contribute to the development of the nation. However, despite the abundant human resources, Nigeria is characterized by a high rate of unemployment with its attendant results such as mental stress, loss of self-esteem, kidnapping, cultism, terrorism, intolerance, prostitution, high rate of communal crisis, youth restiveness, hired killings and assassination, drug and human trafficking among others.

Typical of most less developed countries, Nigeria has encountered huge expansions in youth unemployment rates over the previous decade, with a normal pace of 21.73 percent somewhere in the range of 2014 and 2017. The quantity of jobless youth at 6 million or 33.1 percent of absolute unemployed Nigerians in 2017 was practically twofold of the quantity of 2012 and this was addressing the biggest jobless age bunch in Nigeria. The unemployed populace in Nigeria is additionally expanded with the number of underemployed young people, significantly bigger while adding the number of unemployed youths [1]. In Nigeria, the public unemployment rate is 32.5 percent as of March 2021, while this figure is projected to increase further in 2022, yet the strength of undergraduate enlistment and graduate dealings are developing quickly [2].

Corresponding Author: Dr. Tolulope Victoria Gbadamosi, Department of Arts and Social Sciences Education,
Faculty of Education, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria.

Ahimie and Agbogidi [3] uncovers that the issue of high unemployment and low employability for youth results from inadequacies in the supply and demand sides. Its contributory factor incorporates a broken instructive framework reflected in an inability to give market important information and skills to prospective youth job-seekers and poor lecturer training among others [4, 5]. Obanya, Pai [6] further states mismatch between education and the world of work, structural factors, cultural factors, get rich quick syndrome lack of political will, skewed budgetary allocations, corruption and overdependence on oil revenue and neglect of agricultural sectors [5]. He further states poorly coordinated intervention programmes, poor social infrastructure and un-conducive enabling environment, un-favourable government reforms and un-favourable terms and conditions placed on jobs. Additionally, the labour market in Nigeria is portrayed by a critical mismatch between skills requested by businesses owners and skills acquired by these youthful forthcoming specialists which have prompted an increment in youth unemployment rates [6, 7] Besides, Nigerian youths who were able to acquire few attractive employability skills are likewise faced with an absence of quality companies or organizations to ingest them, a circumstance exasperated by imperfect and conflicting monetary arrangements.

Meanwhile, several efforts of government in tackling the problems of youth unemployment are the National Directorate of Employment (NDE), the Poverty Alleviation Programme (PAP), National Poverty, Eradication, Programme (NAPEP), Subsidy Re-investment and Empowerment Programme (SURE-P) and Youth Enterprise with Innovation in Nigeria YOUWIN [7]. Some of the interventions were hindered by poor implementation and being short term in nature, it lacked continuity with minimal or no result [3, 4]. However, education has being proven and suggested to be a proven weapon for fighting unemployment [8]. Yorke [9] reported that education has over whelming potential to develop a nation and Nigeria releasing this, as embraced on various programmes to improve the quality of education with different policies. Education improves the development of any society and the youth who occupies significant position in such country should be properly educated in other to improve the society.

As a result, the Nigerian education system and curricula seem to have undergone critical changes. Undergraduates ought to be placed on industrial attachments, teaching practice for a significant duration of at least one semester through practicum or temporary jobs to improve their procurement of work-related skills [10]. Employability skills are now and then implanted in extra-curricular exercises; express aid for discovering graduate work, work-coordinated learning and entire of-programme activities [10, 4, 19]. Reforms in education are expressed by Obanya [6] that curriculum is concerned with educational down to earthiness and a worthy objective of higher education could be the development of the skills needed for leadership roles in today's highly competitive economy.

Accordingly, one significant interest that has pulled in broad daylight debate in numerous nations everywhere in the world has focused on the connection between higher education and the world of work. There is a resurgence of labour interests, supported by the extending emergency in the human resources undertaking. Higher education is generally seen as a seedbed of progress or cultural change in any country. Therefore, the focal objective of advanced education is to set up undergraduates for profitable employment in their transition. Such work can be paid or self-produced business. This infers that there is a relationship between school and employment; however, the association isn't programmed [11].

Employability refers to the attributes of individuals that enable them to be able to acquire and manage employment. Employability skills are an umbrella term for a bunch of exceptionally alluring, adaptable abilities that transform you into an appealing competitor or worker. They can be characterized as a bunch of abilities employers need from employees [6, 21]. There are numerous employability skills such as problem-solving, oral communication, adaptability, collaboration or teamwork, resource management, organizational skills, written communication, technology use, information use and certain personality traits [20, 22]. Employability skills are pivotal to job seekers and undergraduate students in their final year of study are expected to have been equipped with employability skills related to their field of study to a significant level [9]. Explains that employability is more extensive arrangement of skills and characteristics that will enable a graduate to be fruitful all through their working life. In this day and age employers are requesting skills from graduates which are outside the branch of knowledge of study in Higher Education.

In reality, some employers have put less significance on graduates' genuine discipline certificates for the more generic skills which they have procured. Subsequently, human resource managers at large see graduate's accomplishments identified with the subject order as fundamental yet not adequate for them to be employed. Accomplishments beyond the extracurricular exercises, for example, work insight, interns and association in clubs and societies are viewed as having equivalent significance in this context as the information and experience gained through academic study [12]. Louise, Lemma and Witness [13] attests that higher education institutions are ostensibly liable for assisting undergraduates with acquiring the abilities, information and characteristics expected of them in the underlying phases of their career and for guaranteeing students' capacity to adjust to changing labour force needs. Hence, employability skills development should become a nationwide agenda at the university level.

Uncovers that employability skills have gotten basic in the current day in Nigeria because of the predominant unemployment circumstance. This is because higher institutions are outfitting students with business-related skills that are not pursued by managers of work. This thusly underscores the need to upgrade learners' employability skills in Nigerian universities. The higher education curriculum in its current structure is lacking in upgrading students' employability skills. Research demonstrated that the degree of securing of employability skills of undergraduates was altogether low in terms of possession of teamwork skills, planning skills, information and communication technology skills, problem-solving skills, analytical skills, leadership skills, critical thinking and initiative skills. Among others, the investigation suggested that higher education ought to consistently refresh its curriculum to satisfy the needs of the work market [14, 20]. Oresanya *et al.* [15] reiterated the cogent cause of graduates in Nigeria absence of employability skills was because of no consolidating employability skills in the educational plan of Nigerian higher institutions.

In any case, in Nigeria research has revealed that numerous graduates at the beginning level of work are not furnished with the employability skills required by employees and consequently they are not prepared to go into the workforce [16]. The basic view of the businesses is that higher education establishments particularly universities in Nigeria ought to equip their students with abilities to go after business and accomplishment in the work environment. Thusly, there is a need for those institutions to have an educational plan perspective change for each programme offered from giving the students just technical abilities and outfits them with employability skills, Robinson and Garton [17]. This study is premised on structural unemployment theory.

Overtime, many fresh graduates of universities seems to have no or low employability skills and this has relatively leads to unemployment, since most of them do not have the wide requirement of the world of employment. Institutions do not appear to be preparing their students effectively. Moreover, for the growing number of graduates who establish their own work and manage multiple roles, the distinction between knowledge acquired in the university and being work ready is reportedly alarming.

Higher education institutions are responsible for helping students to gain the skills, knowledge and attributes required of them in the initial stages of their careers and for ensuring students' ability to adapt to changing workforce needs. Therefore, it is important that individual seeking for employment must have some abilities and skills before applying for employment.

Studies revealed that the lack of employability skills of graduates can be traced to the level of related knowledge acquired by the students while in higher institution. Many graduates have remained unemployed because of low employability skills. However, some of the studies failed to examine the level of acquired employability skills of undergraduates through individual student's perception on the level of employability skills acquired by the undergraduates through individual student's perceptions and stakeholders. Thus, this study bridged the gap by assessing the perception of undergraduate final year students, employers and stakeholders on the level of employability skills acquired in the university.

Specifically, the study provides answer to the research question.

What is the level of employability skills among final year students of the University of Ibadan?

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Design: This study adopts a mixed- methods (QUAN? qual) research design.

Population and Sample: The population of this study comprises final year undergraduate students in the University of Ibadan, employers of labour and educational stakeholders such as Junior and Senior Lecturers, Ministry Educationists, Administrators and Non Academics. This study adopted the multiple stage sampling procedure. A total number of four faculties were randomly selected from 16 faculties. Two departments were selected from each faculty using simple random sampling technique. Ten students were randomly selected from each department using simple random sampling which makes the total of 80 students. Also, a total number of 20 employers of labour were used in this study using convenience sampling from each of the 5 stratified groups of educational stakeholders. Also, 10 students were interviewed to enhance quantitative data.

Instrumentation: University of Ibadan Final Year Undergraduate Students' Employability Skill Questionnaire (UIFYUSESQ) is a self-constructed instrument which consists of two sections. Section A deals with demographic information of the respondents while section B covers the level of employability skills among final year students with 25 items. It examines five employability skills, which are communication skill, information communication and technology skill, personality and adaptability skill, problem-solving and analytical skill and team work and planning skill. The instrument was rated on a four-point rating scale of Always = 4 points, Sometimes = 3 points, Rarely = 2 points, Never = 1 point. Its reliability coefficient of 0.77 was obtained using Cronbach Alpha.

Data Analysis: The descriptive statistics of frequency count, percentage, mean, median, standard deviation and weighted mean was used to analyse quantitative data while thematic approach was used to analyse qualitative data to complement information got from quantitative data. The average mean of each skill is obtained and computed to obtain the average mean for the employability skills to determine skills that are highly possessed by the final year students and those that are at a low level. Skills with average mean and above are assumed to be highly possessed by the students while those below the employability skills average mean are assumed to have low possession among the students.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Question 1: What is the level of employability skills among final year students of the University of Ibadan?

The presentation of employability skills among final year students is presented in tables 1 to 5 while overall employability skills among final year students is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: The Level of Communication Skills among Final Year Students

Communication Skill	Always F (%)	Sometimes F (%)	Rarely F (%)	Never F (%)	Mean	Std. Dev
I speak good English in line with verbs and subjects agreements.	119 (76.8)	32 (20.8)	2 (1.3)	2 (1.3)	2.73	.550
I ask questions to understand the points of view of others.	108 (69.7)	40 (25.8)	5 (3.2)	2 (1.3)	2.64	.612
I am an active listener in conversations, paying more attention to the speaker than to myself.	115 (74.2)	34 (21.9)	5 (3.2)	1 (0.6)	2.70	.563
I don't just obtain needed information; I also make used them accurately.	97 (62.6)	46 (29.7)	9 (5.8)	3 (1.9)	2.53	.696
I can read, comprehend and use written materials, including graphs and images.	112 (72.3)	33 (21.3)	7 (4.5)	3 (1.9)	2.64	.663
Average mean					2.65	

Table 2: Level of Information Communication and Technology skills among final year students

Information Communication and Technology skills	Always F (%)	Sometimes F (%)	Rarely F (%)	Never F (%)	Mean	Std. Dev
I have basic ICT soft skills training.	104 (67.1)	38 (24.5)	10 (6.5)	3 (1.9)	2.57	.703
I can observe and record data using at least one of the computer software such as Ms Word, Excel, SPSS and Power-Point.	77 (49.7)	65 (41.9)	12 (7.7)	1 (0.6)	2.41	.662
I can use search engine appropriately to fetch information system.	111 (71.6)	36 (23.2)	6 (3.9)	2 (1.3)	2.65	.620
I take online courses on sites like Udemy or Coursera.	52 (33.5)	60 (38.7)	33 (21.3)	10 (6.5)	1.99	.901
I read industry blogs, websites and magazines to stay updated.	68 (43.9)	62 (40.0)	17 (11.0)	8 (5.2)	2.23	.842
Average mean					2.37	

Table 3: Level of Problem Solving and Analytical skills among final year students

Problem Solving and Analytical skill	Always F (%)	Some times F (%)	Rarely F (%)	Never F (%)	Mean	Std. Dev
I recognize the human and interpersonal dimensions of problem to assess situations.	94 (60.6)	51 (32.9)	5 (3.2)	5 (3.2)	2.51	.715
I find it difficult to identify the root cause of a problem.	25 (16.1)	46 (29.7)	55 (35.5)	29 (18.7)	1.43	.974
I check to see if a solution works in order to act on opportunities for improvement.	99 (63.9)	40 (25.8)	5 (3.2)	11 (7.1)	2.46	.862
I like to look beyond my job duties to other areas in which I can provide solutions.	83 (53.5)	53 (34.2)	13 (8.4)	6 (3.9)	2.37	.799
I understand the role of conflict in a group to reach conclusion on difficult issues.	82 (52.9)	50 (32.3)	15 (9.7)	8 (5.2)	2.33	.854
Average mean					2.22	

Table 4: Level of Personality and Adaptability skills among final year students

Personality and Adaptability skills	Always F (%)	Some times F (%)	Rarely F (%)	Never F (%)	Mean	Std. Dev
I feel good about myself and I am confident.	135 (87.1)	12 (7.7)	5 (3.2)	3 (1.9)	2.80	.586
I deal with people, problems and situations with honesty integrity and personal ethics	121 (78.1)	24 (15.5)	7 (4.5)	3 (1.9)	2.70	.648
I can set goals and priorities balancing work and my personal life.	116 (74.8)	31 (20.0)	5 (3.2)	3 (1.9)	2.68	.634
I am a consummate professional; presenting an air of confidence and maturity.	108 (69.7)	37 (23.9)	7 (4.5)	3 (1.9)	2.61	.668
I like to maintain a positive attitude through both words and actions.	110 (71.0)	30 (19.4)	7 (4.5)	8 (5.2)	2.56	.806
Average mean					2.67	

Table 5: Level of Team work and Leadership skills among final year students

Team work and Leadership skills	A f (%)	S f (%)	R f (%)	N f (%)	Mean	Std.Dev
I can work as part of a team and cope with uncertainty.	116 (74.8)	31 (20.0)	7 (4.5)	1 (0.6)	2.69	.587
I am respectful and supportive to the thoughts, opinions and contributions of others in a group.	118 (76.1)	24 (15.5)	10 (6.5)	3 (1.9)	2.66	.688
I like working independently because; I find it difficult to tolerate people in a group.	29 (18.7)	67 (43.2)	36 (23.2)	23 (14.8)	1.66	.950
I am goal-driven and when given the opportunity can motivate and lead others to success.	110 (71.0)	39 (25.2)	3 (1.9)	3 (1.9)	2.65	.620
I am open, respond constructively to change, learn from my mistakes and accept feedback.	113 (72.9)	34 (21.9)	7 (4.5)	1 (0.6)	2.67	.593
Average mean					2.47	

Table 6: Summary of Level of employability skills among final year students

S/N	Employability skills	Average mean	Remark
1.	Communication skills	2.65	High level
2.	Information Communication and Technology skills	2.37	Low level
3.	Problem Solving and Analytical skills	2.22	Low level
4.	Personality and Adaptability skills	2.67	High level
5.	Team work and Leadership skills	2.47	Moderate level
	Employability Skills Average mean	2.48	

The findings reveal how often the students exhibit employability skills. The overall employability skills are an average mean of 2.48. The information in ‘Table 6’ reveals that most of the final year undergraduate students have a high level of personality and adaptability skills (2.67) and communication skills (2.65). The table also reveals a low level of information communication and technology skills (2.37) and problem-solving and analytical skills (2.22). Teamwork and leadership skills are moderate among the students.

Qualitative Data: In order to obtain comprehensive information about the level of employability skills among final year students, interview sessions were conducted to support the quantitative data gathered. Ten final year students were randomly selected from faculties which are faculty of Education, Law, Animal Science, Economics, College of Medicine, etc. Findings from the qualitative data analysis revealed that most of the final years understand the concept of employability skills.

Employability Skills Possessed by the Students: Common employability skills the interviewees admitted that they possess include Communication skills, Interpersonal skills, ICT skills and good relationship skills, while most of them acknowledge lack of leadership skill, teamwork skills and problem-solving skills. This finding is in line with the quantitative result that University of Ibadan final year students have high Communication skills and Personality and Adaptability skills

but possess moderate Team work and Leadership skills and low Problem Solving and Analytical skills. It is only Information Communication and Technology skills that negates the quantitative findings because most of the students claimed to possess ICT skill which had low rate in quantitative data analysis results.

University Is Fairly Preparing Undergraduates for Employment: In another vein, according to a 500 level student from faculty of Agriculture, the students concurred that *“higher institution actually help us because apart from our course of study we can source for opportunities and make us think above board and do things in a unique way.* Another student supporting the assertion said, *“Coming to school itself is a way to make us employable. Activities we engaged in make us employable.”* (female, 24 years).

However, some of the students rated the university average in the area of producing employable graduates.

A final year student from the faculty of Technology said *“From my experience in U.I, I can say we are doing average because we have ETR courses, IT and programs that can help us develop more skills”.* Likewise, a 600 level student from College of medicine said, *“Higher institutions participate averagely because there are areas untouched by institutions which are valuable to employers.”*

Higher Education Not Fully Supportive of Preparing Undergraduate to Be Employable: While from the response of a 400 level Art students, some of the students felt that *“Higher Education generally are not fully supportive to students because most things done in school are not much effective in helping students to be employable. Also, higher education concentrates on some skills and failed to even address some skills at all.*

Most of the students frankly stated that they have not really acquired all the required employability skills. As pointed out by a final year student in Law who said, *“I haven't acquired most of these skills, I can use computer averagely but generally I don't have much employability skills.”* *“I can say I have acquired employability skills on an average scale”* says a final year Economics student. A final year student declared that as students, they should not expect the university to teach them everything needs to be employable in the labour market. The student said, *“If I am to grade it I will say, it is 50% because they expect us to go beyond what is taught in school.* This statement revealed that most students have not realized that they are supposed to compliment the effort of the university and not to depend solely on what they learn in classes if they really desire to possess all round employability skills.

Discussion of Findings: Most of the final year undergraduates exhibit a high level of personality, adaptability and communication skills, but a moderate level of teamwork and leadership skills. This is in line with the findings of the [18, 21] that employability skills have become very imperative in the present day in Nigeria. Obanya, Pai [6], Gbadamosi and Ajayi [8] also reported in separate studies that youths develop soft skills such as creativity, interpersonal, goal-getting skills to prepare them for the future. Research indicated that the level of acquisition of students' employability competence was low in terms of possession of planning skills, information and communication technology skills, problem-solving skills, analytical skills, leadership skills, critical thinking and initiative skills [20, 23].

The finding is corroborated by Omoniwa and Adedapo [4], Ogbuanya *et al.* [10] and Oresanya *et al.* [15] that the labour market in Nigeria is portrayed by a critical mismatch between skills requested by business owners and skills acquired by these youthful forthcoming specialists, which have prompted an increment in youth unemployment rates. The finding also in line with Asuquo and Inaja [12] and Oresanya *et al.* Employers often complain that some of the Nigeria graduates though professionally or technically qualified are unemployable, they lack essential skills [15]. Thus they demonstrated poor work ethics, self-management skill, lack time management skill. The findings are in connection with higher institutions because, they are not doing excellently well in equipping students with needed employability skills. Some programme contents of most tertiary education in Nigeria are either not updated or not relevant to work place issues.

Moreover, in the qualitative data, some students interviewed claimed that they did not have adequate employability skills and reported that university curriculum not fully supportive of preparing undergraduate for workplace.

CONCLUSION

The study has shown that the final year students possess a moderate level of employability skills. They exhibited a high level of communication, personality and adaptability skills but not enough to prepare the undergraduates for the demand of the industry. Higher education that is saddle with the responsibility to develop learners is not contributing buoyantly to students' acquisition of employability skills. Therefore, there is an urgent need for developing the employability skills of undergraduates. They are needed for graduates to get employment as their certificate is for eligibility for most jobs application. The university education is not encouraging excellence, creativity but rather focus on certification which makes many graduates lacking some of employable skills.

Recommendations: Base on the findings, the researcher makes the following recommendations.

- There should be total overhauling of the University curriculum by incorporating the skills needed for the 21st century workplaces. These are communication and information literacy, adaptability skills, team work and interconnected skills, global awareness and leadership skill among others.
- Cognitive learning should not be over-emphasized, rather, the cognitive, psychomotor and affective domains should be promoted in the university curriculum. By given learners opportunity to solve problems, research, plan and organize, innovative and inventive and devise new ways of doing things by making relevant to the needs of the society.
- Undergraduates should be given opportunity to transfer, as well as apply knowledge, behaviors and skills acquired in their various course of studies to solve real-life problems.
- The potential of various disciplines should be enhanced to prepare students for the world of work. For instance, social studies, economics, agricultural science to promote honesty, hard working. Integrity, communication and social skills, accountability and development of personal commitment and responsibility among others.
- Lecturers should also adopt activity-based instructional strategies such as service learning, modelling, cooperative learning to give students opportunity to connect classroom with real life situation.
- Higher education activities and programmes should be designed in a way that equips students with the various employability skills expected from university graduates by employers.
- Activity-based and enterprising courses should be compulsory for students of all departments before completing their degree years.
- Educational stakeholders should be aware that producing employable graduates is a collective duty of every stakeholder. Parents, industry, government and curriculum planners should collaborate in university education.

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