



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

***MEDIATING EFFECT OF SELF-EFFICACY ON RELATIONSHIP
BETWEEN SELECTED VARIABLES AND EMPLOYABILITY AMONG
UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN NORTH-EASTERN NIGERIA***

BABA KACHALLA WUJEMA

FPP 2021 9



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By

BABA KACHALLA WUJEMA

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia, in
Partial Fulfilment of the Requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

May 2021

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my late parents, my late son and to my siblings for their concern, caring and support for the successful completion of this study.



Abstract of a thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfilment of the requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Chairman : Roziah Binti Mohd Rasdi, PhD
Faculty : Educational Studies

University education is assumed to be the key element of human resource development. Hitherto, the present education system in Nigeria is well known for its inability of producing graduates with essential and generic skills; henceforth the incessant surge in the problems of youth unemployment and graduate employability. Nigeria has one of the highest rate of unemployment figures, that is around 36% in 2019 as against 36.5% in 2018 in the world and that the graduates of Nigerian universities had the hardest hit by the menace of unemployment. Various studies had been conducted to investigate graduate employability in Nigeria with focus on the university graduates. However, studies that focuses on employability among university students are limited.

The objectives of the study is to determine the level of university student's employability in Nigeria. The objective of the study is to determine the mediating effect of self-efficacy on the relationship between selected factors (emotional intelligence, career development learning, generic skills, work experience, degree subject knowledge and understanding skills, entrepreneurial orientation and ICT acceptance) and employability among university students in (University of Maiduguri, Yobe State University Damaturu, Federal University Gashua, ATBU, Bauchi, Gombe State University and MAUTECH, Yola) North Eastern Nigeria. The study has used CareerEDGE model on employability, then self-efficacy served as the mediating variable. Additionally, two more variables were included in the CareerEDGE model and they are ICT acceptance and entrepreneurial orientation, while social cognitive theory and self-regulation theory served as their theories.

The present study employed a quantitative approach with correlational research design. In addition, it adopted a cross-sectional survey using structured questionnaires in data collection. The data for this study was obtained from 264 respondents through a self-administered questionnaire. Undergraduate students in North Eastern Nigeria were

selected through a simple random sampling procedure from a total population of 2109. Six (6) universities in North Eastern Nigeria were selected for the study. The descriptive analysis part deals with the respondent's responses, and this was done with IBM SPSS version 23 software, while inferential analysis was employed to determine the relationships between the independent variables and dependent variable, the mediating role of self-efficacy in the relationship, and whether the predictor variables can significantly predict undergraduate students' employability. To achieve this, Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) using Analysis of Moment Structures (AMOS) software was employed to analyse the data. Interestingly, the study has revealed that perceived usefulness, risk taking, innovativeness and proactiveness have a significant influence on employability among undergraduate students of universities in North-Eastern Nigeria. Further, it showed that emotional intelligence, generic skills and degree subject knowledge and understanding skills have a significant influence on employability among undergraduate students in North Eastern Nigeria. As a whole, the study found that career development learning is the factor that enables undergraduate students to make career decisions which greatly influences their employability. However, the mediation test revealed that, self-efficacy mediates relationship with work experience, while other variables did not mediate the relationship with self-efficacy. The implications of this study is that university students in Nigeria will need to have the knowledge, skills, technical skills, technological know-how, as well as communication skills, and a good understanding of their career skills, because that will in no small measure ameliorate their likelihoods of getting employment in the Nigerian labour market.

Based on the findings, it was suggested that government should also resuscitate the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) and Poverty Eradication Programme (PEP), so that they should provide training opportunities to our jobless graduates which will enable them to be employable in the labour market. Future studies should also include other parts of CareerEDGE model which the present study has not included, they include; self-esteem, self-confidence and reflection and evaluation. Therefore, including other components of CareerEDGE model would give wider coverage in understanding employability among university students.

Abstrak tesis yang disampaikan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi syarat untuk ijazah Doktor Falsafah

**KESAN PENGANTARAAN EFIKASI-KENDIRI TERHADAP HUBUNGAN
ANTARA PEMBOLEH UBAH TERPILIH DAN KEBOLEHPASARAN
PELAJAR UNIVERSITI DI TIMUR-LAUT NIGERIA**

Oleh

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Pendidikan universiti merupakan elemen utama dalam pembangunan sumber manusia. Marcapada ini, sistem pendidikan Nigeria kurang menghasilkan graduan dengan kemahiran penting dan generik; oleh itu, masalah pengangguran dan kebolehpasaran pelajar sarjana muda semakin meningkat. Nigeria mempunyai kadar pengangguran tertinggi di dunia, iaitu 36% pada tahun 2019 berbanding 36.5% pada tahun 2018. Oleh itu, lulusan univeristi Nigeria terkesan akan kadar pengangguran ini. Pelbagai kajian telah dilakukan untuk menyiasat kebolehpasaran graduan universiti di Nigeria. Walaubagaimanapun, kajian khusus mengenai kebolehpasaran dalam kalangan pelajar universiti adalah terhad.

Objektif utama kajian ini adalah untuk menentukan tahap kebolehpasaran pelajar universiti di Nigeria. Objektif kajian ini adalah untuk menentukan kesan pengantaraan efikasi-kendiri terhadap hubungan antara faktor-faktor yang dipilih (kecerdasan emosi, pembelajaran pembangunan kerjaya, kemahiran generik, pengalaman kerja, kemahiran pengetahuan dan pemahaman subjek pembelajaran, orientasi keusahawanan dan penerimaan teknologi maklumat dan komunikasi (ICT)) dan kebolehpasaran di kalangan pelajar universiti di University of Maiduguri, Yobe State University Damaturu, Federal University Gashua, ATBU, Bauchi, Gombe State University and MAUTECH, Yola di Timur-Laut Nigeria. Kajian ini menggunakan model CareerEDGE mengenai kebolehpasaran, dan efikasi-kendiri yang berfungsi sebagai pemboleh ubah pengantaraan. Selain itu, dua lagi pemboleh ubah ditambah dalam model CareerEDGE, iaitu penerimaan ICT dan orientasi keusahawanan, sementara teori kognitif sosial dan teori peraturan sendiri berfungsi sebagai teori tersebut.

Kajian ini menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif dengan reka bentuk penyelidikan korelasi. Di samping itu, kajian ini menggunakan tinjau selidik keratan rentas beserta soal selidik berstruktur dalam pengumpulan data. Data untuk kajian ini diperoleh

daripada 264 responden melalui soal selidik yang dikendalikan sendiri. Pelajar sarjana muda di Timur Laut Nigeria dipilih melalui prosedur pensampelan rawak mudah daripada jumlah penduduk seramai 2109 orang. Enam (6) universiti di Timur Laut Nigeria dipilih untuk kajian ini. Bahagian analisis deskriptif mengkaji tindak balas responden menggunakan perisian IBM SPSS versi 23, sementara analisis inferensi digunakan untuk menentukan hubungan antara pemboleh ubah bebas dan pemboleh ubah bersandar, peranan pangantaraan efikasi-kendiri dalam hubungan tersebut, dan adakah pemboleh ubah peramal dapat meramalkan kebolehpasaran pelajar sarjana muda secara signifikan. Untuk mencapai matlamat ini, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) menggunakan Analisis Struktur Moment perisian (AMOS) telah digunakan untuk menganalisis data. Menariknya, kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa anggapan kebolehgunaan, pengambilan risiko, daya pembaharuan dan proaktif mempunyai pengaruh yang signifikan terhadap kebolehpasaran di kalangan pelajar sarjana muda universiti di Timur-Laut Nigeria. Selanjutnya, dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa kecerdasan emosi, kemahiran generik dan kemahiran pengetahuan dan pemahaman subjek pembelajaran mempunyai pengaruh yang signifikan terhadap kebolehpasaran dalam kalangan pelajar sarjana muda di Timur-Laut Nigeria. Secara keseluruhan, kajian ini mendapati bahawa pembelajaran pembangunan kerjaya adalah faktor yang membolehkan pelajar sarjana muda membuat keputusan kerjaya yang sangat mempengaruhi kebolehpasaran mereka. Namun demikian, ujian pangantaraan mendapati bahawa efikasi-kendiri menjadi pengantara hubungan dengan pengalaman kerja, sementara pemboleh ubah lain tidak menjadi pengantara hubungan dengan efikasi-kendiri. Implikasi dari kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa pelajar universiti di Nigeria perlu memiliki pengetahuan, kemahiran, kemahiran teknikal, pengetahuan teknologi, serta kemahiran komunikasi, dan pemahaman yang baik mengenai kemahiran kerjaya mereka, kerana ini berkemungkinan tidak akan mempengaruhi peluang mendapat pekerjaan di pasaran kerja Nigeria.

Berdasarkan dapatan kajian ini, disarankan agar kerajaan pemerintah memulihkan kembali Program Direktorat Pekerjaan Nasional (NDE) dan Program Pembasmian Kemiskinan (PEP), supaya dapat memberikan peluang latihan kepada lulusan university yang menganggur supaya mendapat pekerjaan. Kajian pada masa hadapan boleh merangkumi bahagian lain model CareerEDGE yang tidak termasuk dalam kajian ini, iaitu keyakinan diri, harga diri, keyakinan diri serta refleksi dan penilaian . Oleh itu, penggunaan komponen lain dari model CareerEDGE akan memberi liputan yang lebih luas dalam memahami kebolehpasaran dalam kalangan pelajar universiti.

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Thank you.

This thesis was submitted to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia and has been accepted as fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. The members of the Supervisory Committee were as follows:

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AMOS	Analysis of Moment Structure
ATBU	Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University Bauchi State Nigeria
AVE	Average Variance Expected
CDL	Career Development Learning
CFA	Confirmatory Factor Analysis
CR	Composite Reliability
DSKS	Degree Subject Knowledge and Understanding Skills
DV	Dependent Variable
EDA	Exploratory Data Analysis
EFA	Exploratory Factor Analysis
EMP	Employability
EDP	Employability Development Profile
EI	Emotional Intelligence
EO	Entrepreneurial Orientation
GS	Generic Skills
HE	Higher Education
HEA	Higher Education Authority
HEI	Higher education Institutions
HR	Human Resource
HRD	Human Resource Development
IT	Information Technology
ICT	-Information and Communication Technology
IQ	Intelligence Quotient
IV	Independent Variable

MAUTECH	Modibbo Adama University of Technology
NBS	National Bureau of Statistics
NDE	National Directorate of Employment
NAPEP	National Poverty Eradication Programme
PAP	Poverty Alleviation Programme
PEU	Perceived Ease of Use
PU	Perceived Usefulness
RMSEA	Root Mean Square Error of Approximation
SCT	Social Cognitive Theory
SPE	Self Perceived Employability
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social science
SURE-P	Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme
SD	Standard Deviation
TAM	Technology Acceptance Model
UK	United Kingdom
UNIMAID	University of Maiduguri Borno State Nigeria
US	United State
USEM	Understanding Skills Efficacy Metacognition
WE	Work Experience
YOUWIN	Youth Enterprise with Innovation in Nigeria

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The main purpose of this study is to determine the mediating effect of self-efficacy on the relationship between selected factors and employability among university students in North-Eastern Nigeria. This chapter consists of the following; background of the study, university education and employability in Nigeria, undergraduate student's employability challenges in Nigeria, statistics of unemployment in Nigeria, employability from the human resources perspectives, theoretical foundation of human resources development, statement of the problem, objectives of the study, significance of the study, scope of the study, assumptions of the study, conceptual and operational definitions of terms and chapter summary.

Background of the Study

Employers are nowadays gradually turning to universities with the ultimate expectation of securing undergraduate students who are well-informed and talented with relevant technical skills, analytical skills, literacy skills and have qualities required to excel in a position/environment from the commencement of employment. Mansour & Dean (2016), & Pitan (2016) expressed that the ability of universities to produce students with high employability talents like effective communication and literacy skills, interpersonal skills in order to fulfil the requirements of the 21st century employment market locally and internationally. The rapidly changing patterns in the employment market are due to innovation, globalization and demographic changes which led to the implication that it is no longer satisfactory for undergraduate students to pursue a university degree qualification (Oliver, 2015; Adedokun, 2019). The most relevance of the employment market was that university students have abilities and highlights which are important to contend and team up in a powerful knowledge economy and contribute meaningfully to the employment market, predominantly graduates (Newton & Expert, 2015).

Furthermore, preparing undergraduate students by means of the appropriate talents, know-how and skills for specific skillsets in the universities, which is not only beneficial for career progression, but also useful for employment in an organization (Nilson & Hopkins, 2017). Furthermore, employability alone may not be sufficient for undergraduate students in universities, as the students are also required to have technological skills, career development learning, emotional intelligence and generic skills to boost their chances of employment especially after graduation (Līce, 2017). Nevertheless, it is a well-known fact that the idea of employability is greater than a student's ability. On the other hand, to be employable, an undergraduate student must possess knowledge, attitude, and talent. Undergraduate students who are admitted in the universities require competence, skills and knowledge which promote different types of talent that would enhance their level of employment in the global market industry (Nilsson, 2017; Olojuolawe & Amin, 2019).

In addition, apart from securing employment in the global market, discrepancy amongst the supply of inclusive employability expertise among undergraduate students and the corresponding demand for relevant skills are usually the main issue of concern, as most of universities nowadays continue to produce potential graduates that can be engaged by the employment market (Mansour et al., 2016).

University Education and Employability in Nigeria

The goal of commencing universities is to prepare youths for the labour market. This was carried-out by having a justifiable work by means of improving technical skills and capability in a chosen field, and life skills such as problem solving and analytical skills, effective communication and literacy skills, interpersonal and team skills. Normally, university education is presumed to be the key element of human resource development. Though, the existing education system in Nigeria is well known for its inability of producing graduates with necessary and generic skills; henceforth the continuous surge in the problems of youth unemployment and graduate employability. Unspecified number of graduates were unable to acquire relevant employment requirements of the labour force and were therefore unsuccessful in their quest in retaining and securing a job (Sodipo, 2014).

This employability challenge has been attributed to inadequate funding of universities, out-of-date curricular, interference by various external entities, incompetency in managing the universities and inadequate or lack of qualified staffing. The aforementioned factors have eventually generated an issue for employers in filling the job vacancies, even with the high level of youth unemployment in the country (Sodipo, 2014). In Nigeria, concern was brewing among the populace on the need for a qualitative university education and its significance to universities curriculum especially to national development.

The present-day labour market policies and the changes in education have prompted most of the universities under increasing pressure on the need to produce employable graduates, although being criticize the fact that the method employed has little or no significance at all on both the economic and social needs of their countries (Rufai & Rasheed, 2015), which subsequently leads to the production of unemployable graduates.

Undergraduate Student's Employability Challenges in Nigeria

In the developing world, majority of unemployment which occurs because of inadequate technical and competency skills are mostly found among school age children especially adolescences show lost potential for transformation in the nation's economy. It has been shown that, there are many developing regions in the world with high unemployment rate among high school aged children as a result of inadequate talents and these include Southeast Europe (22.6%), North Africa (26.6%) and the Middle East (24.0%) (Deshmukh, 2017). For instance in Nigeria, Mohammed et al. (2020) mention that the insurgency, civil agitation, political thuggery and kidnapping in Nigeria was as at its

highest, as most of the youths were not ready to acquire the technical and competency skills, consequently, these situations have brought about a surge in unemployment figures.

The increase in unemployment rate may be attributable to the nature of data about youths. Data about school age children unemployment in Nigeria also indicated that the percentage is around 19% in the first quarter of 2016, 25% in the second and third quarter of 2016, respectively. The percentage of youth unemployment increased from 25.2% to 33.1% in 2017, but recorded a decline in the year 2018. That is to 32.8%. Meanwhile, in the year 2019, the percentage of youth unemployment was 36%. The trend of youth unemployment is shown in Figure 1.1 (Okolie et al., 2020b).

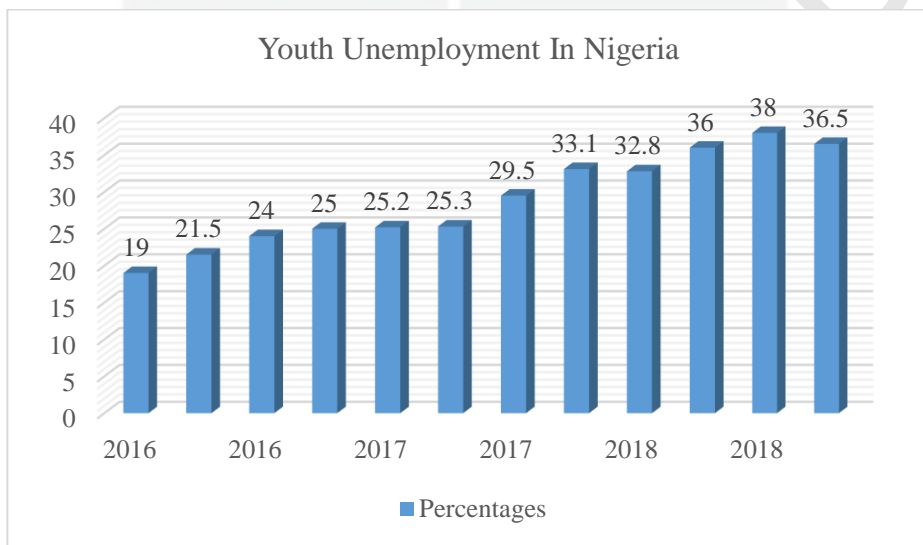


Figure 1.1: Showing Youth Unemployment in Nigeria
(Source: Okolie et al., 2020c).

Consequently, the fluctuation in youth unemployment statistics in Nigeria as stated in the figure above was as a result of government’s inability to provide the youths with aptitudes, knowledge and career development skills which will facilitate their employment programs. Agencies such as National Directorate of Employment, National Poverty Eradication Programme and Poverty Alleviation Programme were established with the aim of providing technical and competency skills which would enhance the chances of employment in the country, and this led to repercussion, thereby causing social vices like prostitutions, cultism, boko haram, thuggery, prostitutions, and kidnapping. Whereas intervention programmes like the National Directorate of Employment by the government if harnessed properly, will facilitate, and curb unemployment situations and eventually will reduce the country’s unemployment figures, respectively. The said interventions above are aimed at fostering productivity through valuable knowledge sharing and skills development, human resource

development, training of youths for employment and acquisition for economic growth and social development (Agwu, 2019; Muyideen, 2020; Olojuolawe et al., 2019).

Statistics on Unemployment in Nigeria

Nigerian population is presently at 190 million and thus, the unemployment rate of 23.10 percent in third quarter of 2018 increased from 18.8 percent in third quarter of 2017 as can be seen in Figure 1.3 (Olawoyin, 2018; Oludayo et al., 2019). This quarterly rise in the population of unemployment among youth/ school age children has call for a concern among practitioners and researchers and these led to inquiries about procedures to anticipate the social demise. Tule et al. (2018) observed that Central Bank of Nigeria is perceived to be in charge for efforts of the government in explaining and taking measures to decrease unemployment.



Figure 1.2: Statistics of Unemployment in Nigeria
(Source: Okolie et al., 2020c).

Raifu (2019) has advocated that, reducing exchange rate and foreign Direct Investment is seen as an avenue for reducing unemployment in the country and he further asserts that, increasing industrial capacity would be disadvantageous in the areas of attracting employment. In contradiction to this, Nwaka et al. (2015) in a study demonstrated the short and long term effects of trade openness on unemployment, whereby the long term trade openness significantly results in unemployment, but not in the short term. Consequently, the government’s unfamiliar exchange strategies are considered from for future studies.

Equally, Adu et al. (2019) appeared in a broad investigation where most of the manufacturing industries in Nigeria has negatively affected unemployment rate, subsequently indicating that industrialised segment yields have little contribution in the

area of unemployment sector in the country. Tule et al. (2016) were of the view that emphasis was given to youths unemployment and means through which under employment issues would be determined so as to enable higher enrolment of school age children into universities (Osakwe et al., 2015; Oludayo et al., 2019).

Thus, as for school age children, the unemployment situation in North Eastern Nigeria and a matter of concern, and Figure 1.3 shows that states like Yobe and Borno are experiencing the highest percentage of unemployment, and as a result they are able to enrol into universities to acquire knowledge, skills and attributes which facilitate their employment. Likewise, Gombe and Bauchi states are also having high unemployment rates. The graph in Figure 1.4 shows that Borno, Gombe and Yobe states have unemployment rates exceeding 40% while Adamawa and Bauchi exceed 30%. Only Taraba state showed an unemployment rate below 20%.

Moreover, a recent statement by NBS has demonstrated that, the South-South region has a concentration of about 16.7 million which is the second-biggest workforce in the country. The region has the highest rate of unemployment of 32% just prior to the end of second quarter from last quarter 2018 and first quarter of 2019, respectively. The North West Zone recorded the highest underemployment rate of 27% for the quarter under review. Whereas for the North-Western region, a total of 15.9 million estimated to be the labour force, within which, almost 4.32 million among them were underemployed. Thus, the South-Western part of the country has about six states which includes Oyo, Osun, Ondo, Ekiti, Lagos and Ogun. More so, the NBS statement demonstrated that the region had registered the most abridged unemployment rate of 14% as seen in Figure 1.3 (Adebayo et al., 2020).

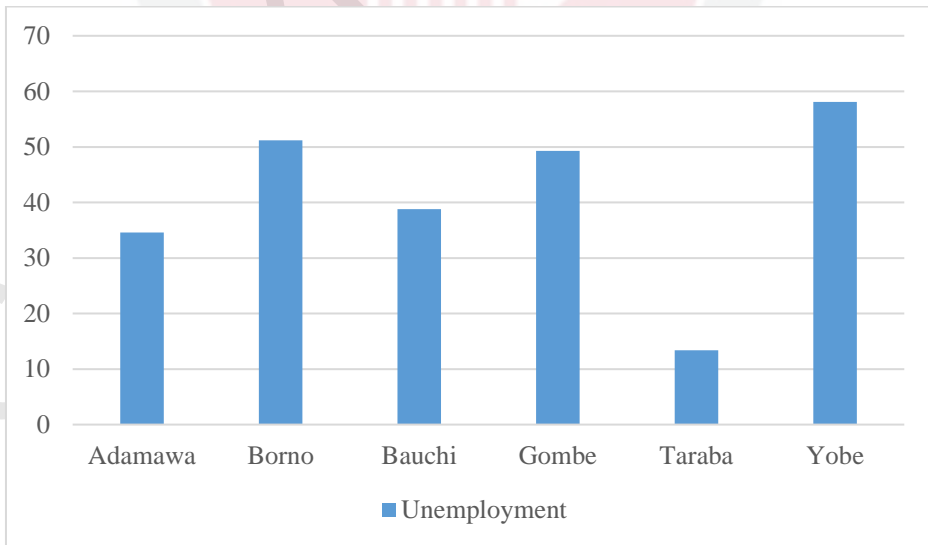


Figure 1.3: Unemployment among the workforce in North Eastern Nigeria
(Source: Anyanwu and Duru, 2020).

Employability from the Human Resources Development perspectives

Human resource development (HRD) in a wider perspective improves the level of learning and facilitates organizational change to improve performance and build capacity especially at undergraduate students, team and organizational levels (Moore & Khan, 2020; McLean & McLean, 2001). HRD practices, for instance, conducting training and improving development activities have been found to build human resources and are connected to representatives particularly undergraduate students who are studying in the universities, their impression of employability and organizational performance (Veld et al., 2015; Moore et al., 2020).

Majority of the researchers examining employability of young people have focused on undergraduate students' employability (e.g. Pham & Jackson, 2020; Clarke, 2018), employment market (Crisp & Powell, 2017; Moore et al., 2020), or becoming more aware of one's level of employability that motivates undergraduate students to enhance their technical skills, competency, career development skills and subsequently establishes career identity (Fugate et al., 2004). Moreover, employability was part of HRD in its quest of providing knowledge, skills and attributes that enables individual mainly students with the capabilities that would boost the prospect of employment and organizational development. This has also demonstrated that youngster's particularly undergraduate students have a duty which would empower them to increase their aptitudes, skills and knowledge to enhance employability (Insa et al., 2016).

Additionally, HRD has significant key terms such as training and development, mentoring, and networking that are established to build individuals especially undergraduate students who are yet to be employed, with employability talents and expertise. Training and development that concerns with organizational activity is aimed at improving the performance of individuals and groups in organizational setting (Subodh, 2021). Mentoring, a situation whereby new and inexperienced undergraduate students are attached with students who are knowledgeable, and would subsequently improve the employability among students who are still undergoing various skills and knowledge acquisition in university (Smith & Comyn, 2004). It is a known fact that, building social capital through networking opportunities has also been found to improve undergraduate students' level of employability by providing a medium through which future employment contacts would be built (Varekamp et al., 2015), and the employability for those students who are yet to complete their studies at universities (Batistic & Tymon, 2017; Moore et al., 2020).

Human Resources Development

The discipline of HRD includes: (1) psychological theory, (2) economic theory, and (3) systems theory. Consequently, psychological theory captures the core human aspects of developing human resources as well as the socio-technical interplay of humans and systems. Economic theory captures the core issues of the efficient and effective utilization of resources to meet productive goals in a competitive environment. Systems theory captures the complex and dynamic interactions of environments, organizations,

process, group, and individual variables operating at any point of time and over time (Swanson, 2001).

The HRD theory has three core components which are viewed as three (3) legged stools. The legs represent the theory domains, and the stool's foundation represents the full coordination of the three segments of HRD (Swanson, 2001). The stool is firmly supported by host organisations, and ethics ensures that integrity of HRD and the organisation is sustained as illustrated in Figure 1.4 (Swanson, 2001).

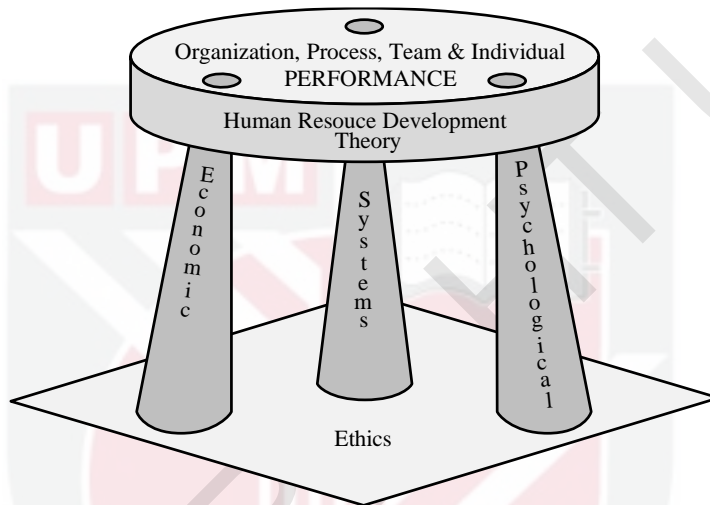


Figure 1.4: Framework on Human Resource Development
(Source: Swanson, 2001).

Higher institutions of learning particularly universities were constantly observed as a core interest in HR as they lead to the development of skills, knowledge and attitudes of HR and other fields, that likewise improve the employability talents among university undergraduate students. Consequently, universities are known for planning activities and offering knowledge sharing that enhances undergraduate students' skills for their future profession. Hence, a platform to development and progress is provided (Pouratashi, 2019).

Acquiring knowledge in universities usually gives attractive skills and abilities, which are pertinent to work performance, and likewise is a verifiable truth that students who are equipped with knowledge, would be able to weave into employment and daily livelihood (Siraye et al., 2018). In order to succeed in the workplace, it is important to enhance acquisition of communication skills, competency and generic skills, that focus on the knowledge acquired by undergraduate students through higher education to be successful at work and facilitate employment opportunities (McLean & McLean, 2001). Apart from knowledge acquired, university students are perceived to have attained

theoretical knowledge that would empower them to work competently in the working environment, with both sets of skills for progress (Siraye et al., 2018).

Human capital requires individuals to be equipped with relevant knowledge, skills and ability for employability (Debrulle et al., 2014) as quoted in Kato (2020). Human capital influences employability in unleashing human talents and development. This is achievable by providing continuous education and training at the institutional level for students and organization's employee to maintain competitiveness of organizations. Therefore, the discussion on connection with HRD and employability especially on aspects of knowledge, skills and training levels of workforce must be raised (Wuttaphan, 2017).

Additionally, the theoretical basis of performance improvement theory of Swanson (1999) has stated that Economic Theory is one of the three important theories (Human Capital Theory, Scarc Resource Theory and Sustainability Theory), which can improve a firm's performance apart from Psychology Theory and System Theory. Human Capital Theory in Economics Theory concluded that the consequence of labour maximization by organizations can accumulate employees' or rather undergraduate students' knowledge, skill, and ability that improve employee or the students' capability. The well-known three-legged stools in HRD theory is a theory for improving performance and level of employability particularly by which ethics place the foundation and groundwork that can affect the success of HRD (Wuttaphan, 2017).

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of establishing university education is to prepare young people for the labour market; to have sustainable employment by enhancing technical skills and competence in a chosen field, and life skills such as problem solving and analytical skills, effective communication and literacy skills and interpersonal skills. Globally, university education is perceived to be the core of human resource development. However, the current education system in Nigeria does not produce graduates with these generic and essential skills; hence the continuous increase in the problem of graduate employability and youth unemployment (Abiodun-Oyebanji & Omojola, 2018). Nevertheless, available literature on management of university education in Nigeria is filled with the fact that Nigerian education has failed to meet expectations, which include to produce the skilled manpower who are employable, productive, and self-reliant (Ogungboyega, 2019; Onyeike & Onyeagbako, 2014). This implies that relevant skills are required for performing effectively on the job.

Nigeria has one of the highest rate of unemployment figures, which is 36% in 2019 compared to 36.5% in 2018 (Okolie et al., 2020b) worldwide and that the graduates of Nigerian universities had the hardest hit by unemployment (Okolie et al., 2020b). In Nigeria, as of 2019, there are 174 universities, including federal, state, and privately owned. These universities offer admission to 2 million prospective students and graduate about 600 000 each year (Aririah, 2021). However, the government of Nigeria has in the past established various agencies with the ultimate aim of absorbing the above-

mentioned graduates. The agencies are the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), National Directorate of Employment (NDE) and Graduate Internship Scheme (GIS) which is designed to equip both the students (while studying) and graduates with the necessary skills, knowledge in order to acquire the talent which enables them to boost their career and be relevant in labour market. In view of the above, the present study aims to examine the mediating effect of self-efficacy on the relationship between selected factors and employability among university students in North-Eastern Nigeria.

Various studies had been conducted to investigate graduate employability in Nigeria with focus on university graduates (Pitan, 2016; Aloysius, 2019; Oludayo & Ibidunni, 2019). However, studies that focus on employability among university students are limited (Pitan & Muller, 2019; Pitan et al., 2020). Hence, one of the gaps that calls for the present study. Globally, various employability models have been developed to explain skills and personal qualities required by students to be employed. However, models developed to explain employability among Nigerian youths with the focus on university students are limited. Thus, the present study aims to fill this gap.

Research Questions

The research questions of this study are as follows:

1. What is the level of employability among undergraduates in North Eastern Nigeria?
2. What are the levels of entrepreneurial orientation, emotional intelligence, work experience, career development learning, generic skills, degree subject knowledge understanding, ICT acceptance, and employability among undergraduate students in North Eastern Nigeria?
3. What are the relationships between entrepreneurial orientation, degree subject knowledge, generic skills, career development learning, work experience, ICT acceptance and Emotional Intelligence on Employability among Undergraduate Students?
4. How does self-efficacy mediate the relationships of work experience, generic skills, degree subject, knowledge, skills and understanding, career development learning, entrepreneurial orientation, and ICT skills acceptance with employability?

Objective of the Study

General Objectives

The overall objective of this study is to examine the factors explaining employability among university students in North-Eastern Nigeria via the mediation effect of self-efficacy.

Specific objectives are as follows:

1. To determine the level of employability among undergraduate students of universities in North-Eastern Nigeria.
2. To determine the level of entrepreneurial orientation, emotional intelligence, work experience, career development learning, generic skills, degree subject knowledge understanding, ICT acceptance and employability among students in North-Eastern, Nigeria.
3. To determine the relationship between entrepreneurial orientation, degree subject knowledge, generic skills, career development learning, work experience, ICT acceptance and Emotional Intelligence on Employability among Undergraduate Students of Universities in North-Eastern, Nigeria.
4. To determine the mediating role of self-efficacy on the relationship between entrepreneurial orientation, degree subject knowledge, generic skills, career development learning, work experience, ICT acceptance and emotional intelligence and employability among undergraduate students of Universities in North-Eastern Nigeria.

Significance of the Study

University education in Nigeria is important for developing human capital in the form of relevant manpower training, abilities, attitudes and market skill, so that upon graduation, graduates will be able to make a successful transition to become productive workers. Universities are not able to predict or guarantee job opportunities in students' fields of interest, but are expected to contribute to the employability of their graduates by developing attributes and capabilities that maximise their chances of finding or creating meaningful work (Masood, 2021; St Jorre & Oliver, 2018).

Among the importance of employability include that students are well-equipped to be absorbed in their chosen vocation. Focusing on employability helps universities to attract and retain high quality students and maintain a competitive advantage in the global market. More so, it enables university students to be conversant especially in the areas of transferable skills as well as higher-order thinking skills and personal attributes,

because that will successfully produce the needed success in the work environment (Pool et al., 2007; Lowden et al., 2011). This study is anticipated to determine the relationship between selected predictors and employability in the context of university students.

At the end of the present study, it will enable those in the helm of affairs of education sector to decide the appropriate policy to be adopted in facilitating efficiency in the area of university education. Moreover, the outcome of this present study will assist educational administrators in Nigeria to recognise employability talents such as problem-solving skills, communication skills, career development skills and interpersonal skills, which are critical to employability of students upon graduation. Likewise, the study will inform curriculum planners in Nigeria on means through which they can improve the curriculum for university students. Therefore, this will facilitate the planners to have a focus on the necessary skills required to be included in the curriculum of university students (Abiodun-Oyebanji, 2015).

It is anticipated that the outcome of this study will reveal essential predictors of employability among students in universities. The outcome of this study will enable the government to ascertain the current issues among university graduates in the Nigerian labour market, thereby, devising suitable strategies for employability. Additionally, it is hoped that most Nigerian university students especially from government universities, are able to assist the government to perform a viable plan and formulate policies which is geared toward inculcating self-assurance in identifying suitable careers in the chosen industry.

The outcome of this study will also assist human resource practitioners in objectively identifying organisational needs by detailing taxonomies of the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that are necessary for each job (Lockyer & Scholarios, 2007; Soderquist et al., 2010). Moreover, the outcome of this study will enable human resource practitioners in understanding career planning, on-the-job training, development programs, work place learning and individual graduate development as in the case of university student.

The facts enclosed in this study will assist parents and guardians to have a better understanding on the need to improve the level of knowledge and skills acquisition for their children particularly students in universities, to boost their level of employment upon graduation.

The outcome of the study will contribute theoretically to the body of knowledge, since, social cognitive theory, self-regulatory theory and CareerEDGE model were developed to clarify employability among youths that usually concentrates on university students. The study will also assist in linking this gap by developing and endorsing an existing employability model which is able to describe employability among university students. Additionally, in view of the one-sided approach to the study of employability in Nigeria focusing only on graduates, this study would address this gap, henceforth focusing on university students. The present study will also confirm those employability predictors impacting university students in Nigeria. Therefore, students, researchers, career services

unit and academic staffs of the universities in Nigeria will find the outcome of this study useful and a real source of reference materials.

Scope of the Study

This study is intended to cover six (6) universities which are located in North-Eastern states of Nigeria namely MAUTECH Adamawa State, ATBU Bauchi State, University of Maiduguri Borno State, Gombe State University Gombe State, Yobe State University and Federal University Gashua in Yobe State. The focus is on employability among university students. In addition, the study will also include mediating effect of self-efficacy on the relationship between selected factors (entrepreneurial orientation, ICT acceptance, career development learning, emotional intelligence, generic skills, degree subject knowledge and understanding skills, work experience). Not all aspect of employability is included in this study, the study only dwells on the above-mentioned factors. Employability is studied in terms of employability among university students rather than employability of the existing workers in the organizations.

Accordingly, the researcher's reason for selecting these faculties was because most of the programmes offered in these selected universities differ. Hence, there is need to choose students from programmes offered similar by all the six universities under the study. However, students selected from these three faculties are also likely to relatively have the skills about issues related to employment. Also, knowledge from Agriculture, Engineering and Management is considered as a catalyst for employability. Furthermore, sampling of only these three faculties are controlled for issues such as time, resources and convenience.

Assumptions

This study has deliberated on a little number of assumptions. It is a well-known fact that, the level of confidence exhibited by the students in the areas of skills, knowledge, attributes and abilities has enable them to distinguish their universities as the best (Qenani et al., 2014). Undergraduate students who are actively engaged in training, acquiring internships and part-time work experiences, and improving skills and competencies, will develop a stronger self-efficacy compared to others (Koloba, 2017; Sin et al., 2016).

In Nigeria, a major issue of unemployment among school leavers was not the aspect of concern, but rather lack of employability aptitudes (Okunuga et al., 2018; Pitan, 2016; 2017). The exogenous variables considered in this study are acknowledged as essential based on several reviewed literatures which are seen to be enhancing employability among undergraduate students. This study takes responsibility that most of the investigation of the associations between the carefully chosen predictors, employability and self-efficacy as the mediating variable do assist in cognizance of employability among undergraduate students in the Nigerian context.

Finally, it is also assumed that the instrumentations of this study which were developed in other contexts are appropriate for use in this study involving undergraduate students in North Eastern Nigeria. For instance, the CareerEDGE Model (Pool et al., 2007) items which were used in the context of the UK were assumed to be applicable in the Nigerian context. On the other hand, to confirm its appropriateness, validation was conducted.

Conceptual and Operational Definition of the Terms

The essential terms used in this study are defined in order to give a clear understanding on the context of this study.

Employability

Employability is not only about getting a job, but it is rather more than that, therefore priority and emphasis are said to be less on employ and more on ability (Okafor et al., 2019). Employability is seen as the ability of undergraduate students to have skills and knowledge which enables them to improve their career and be employed.

Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy, as a personal judgment of "how well one can execute courses of action required to deal with prospective situations"(Rumjaun & Narod, 2020). This refers to students having the confidence to effectively overcome challenging tasks.

Career development learning

Career development learning is typically known to assist people with building up their mindfulness, opportunity awareness and career management skills (Bridgstock et al., 2019). This refers to university students having the knowledge and skills of what to do especially upon graduating from university.

Work experience

Work experience can be referred to as what the undergraduate students irrespective of all ages would learn during their internship programmes and prior to their graduation, that would enhance their experience and skills, and also boost their chances of employment (Tymon, 2013). Work experience refers to undergraduate students having the ability to explain relevant working experience to potential employers.

Generic skills

Generic skills are regarded as "skills which can support study in any discipline, and which can conceivably be moved to a range of settings, in higher education or the working environment" (Pool et al., 2007). This refers to undergraduate students having the capability of applying analytical skills to situations.

Degree subject knowledge, understanding and skills

Ability of undergraduate students to acquire the knowledge, skills and attributes which will enable them to have the degree of qualification and which subsequently lead to employment after graduation (Washer, 2007). This refers to undergraduate students improving the level of their academic performance so that it will be in line with their career aspirations.

Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence is defined as the manner in which individuals perceive, process, manage and utilize information that pertains to their emotions (Goleman, 2006). This refers to the ability of undergraduate students to manage their emotions and that of others effectively.

Entrepreneurial orientation

Entrepreneurial orientation is the degree of proactiveness, innovativeness and risk-taking in an organization's behavior (Clercq et al., 2013). This refers to a situation where undergraduate students adopt a very direct and competitive posture.

ICT acceptance

This refers to undergraduate students learning a new task with the assistance of computer (Afari-Kumah & Achampong, 2010). Medium through which university students obtain knowledge and abilities through the computerized source and this strikingly encourage their likelihoods for work.

Chapter Summary

This study focuses on the mediating effect of self-efficacy on the relationship between selected factors and employability among university students. To summarise, the chapter begins with the background information about employability, more so about university

education, the statistics of unemployment in Nigeria and followed by theoretical foundation of human resource development. Additionally, statement of the problem portraying the gaps, research objectives, significance of the study, scope of the study and assumptions of the study were comprehensively discussed in this chapter.

This chapter continued by describing the conceptual and operational definitions of terms used on the endogenous, exogenous variables and mediating variable, which are employability, self-efficacy, generic skills, degree subject knowledge and understanding skills, entrepreneurial orientation, emotional intelligence, ICT acceptance, work experience and career development learning.



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The student was born on June, 29th 1972 in Kusun, Geidam Local Government Area of Yobe State, Nigeria. Started his formal education with Kirikassama Primary School in 1979, and completed his Primary Education in 1985, from where he proceeded to Government Day Secondary School, Maiduguri from 1986 to 1991 where he obtained his West African Examination Council (WAEC) Certificate. Then proceeded to University of Maiduguri to pursue his Diploma in Adult Education from the year 1994 and completed in the year 1996 and same year, the candidate proceeded to pursue his Degree programme through Nigerian Direct Entry Enrolment and graduated in the year 1999, Bachelor of Education (Adult Education) and proceeded for his National Youth Service Corps in the year 2000 and completed in July 2001. He took an appointment with Yobe State Teaching Service Board as Education Officer in the year 2001 and worked for two years, he then got another appointment with Yobe State College of Administrative and Business Studies as a Lecturer in the year 2003. Served as Lecturer, Departmental Examination Officer, and Acting Head of Department of Mass Education and Community Development of the afore-mentioned institute. His quest for knowledge and higher education made him to secure admission at the prestigious Universiti Putra Malaysia to undergo PhD programme in the Department of Professional Development and Continuing Education, Faculty of Educational Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia in the year 2015. Presently under the Supervision of Associate Prof. Dr. Roziah Binti Mohd Rasdi, the present Head of Department.

LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

A Conference paper on the Title; Developing Undergraduate Students Employability through Career Development Learning. Paper presented at the 5th International Conference Educational Research and Practice 22 & 23 October 2019.

Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences, 11(3), 1228-1251. Title; Examining the Mediating Effect of Self-efficacy on the Relationship between Work Experience, ICT Acceptance and Employability among Undergraduate Students in Nigerian Universities.

A Paper Submitted for the AHRD International Research Conference in Asia & The 13th Conference of The Asian Regional Association for Career Development which will be held online on 16 - 18 November 2021; Examining the Relationship Between A Component of CareerEDGE Model, Entrepreneurial Orientation and Employability among University Students in Nigeria.

Unpublished Journal article Submitted with Pertanika Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities with Title; Investigating the Relationship between Career Development Learning, Entrepreneurial Orientation and Employability of University Students in Nigeria.



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