



Influence of Career Counselling Technique on ... Bandekaji, C. A. & Oyesikun, A. N. (2026)

Influence of Career Counselling Technique on Employability Skills Acquisition among University Graduates in Nigeria

BANDEKAJI, Chris Audu¹

bandekajichristopher@gmail.com
08020631968

OYESIKUN, Abayomi Nathaniel²

abayomioyesikun2001@gmail.com
07068004530

¹Department of Guidance and Counselling, Faculty of Education, University of Abuja, Abuja, Nigeria

²Department of Special Education and Guidance and Counselling, Emmanuel Alayande University of Education, Oyo, Oyo State, Nigeria

Abstract

This study examined the effectiveness of career counselling in enhancing employability skills among Nigerian graduates in response to the persistent challenge of graduate unemployment in the country. In recent years, concerns have intensified over the growing mismatch between academic training and the practical demands of the labour market. Many graduates leave tertiary institutions without the requisite soft and technical skills needed to compete effectively in today's dynamic job environment. Career counselling has therefore been identified as a vital intervention for equipping students with essential competencies such as communication, critical thinking, problem-solving, adaptability, and strategic career planning. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design to assess the impact of career counselling services on graduates' employability outcomes. A sample of 250 graduates drawn from selected tertiary institutions, including University of Abuja, participated in the study. Data were collected using a structured instrument titled "Career Counselling and Employability Skills Questionnaire (CCESQ)," designed to measure exposure to counselling services and acquisition of employability skills. Findings from the study revealed that career counselling plays a significant role in improving graduates' awareness of job opportunities, enhancing career readiness, and fostering the development of critical employability skills. The study concludes that effective counselling services can bridge the gap between education and employment. It therefore recommends the strengthening of counselling units in Nigerian universities and the integration of structured employability skills training into academic curricula to better prepare graduates for the workforce.

Keywords: Career Counselling, Employability Skills, Nigerian Graduates, Unemployment, Higher Education

Introduction

Career counselling plays a vital role in bridging this gap by guiding students in career decision-making, skill development, and job readiness. Institutions such as Federal University Gusau and other Nigerian universities are increasingly recognizing the importance of counselling services in preparing students for the labour market. Employability skills refer to a set of achievements, understandings, and personal attributes that make individuals more likely to gain employment and succeed in their chosen careers. These include communication skills, teamwork, problem-solving ability, and adaptability. This study, therefore, investigates the effectiveness of career counselling in enhancing these employability skills among Nigerian graduates. Career counselling plays a vital role in bridging the gap between academic training and labour market expectations by guiding students in career decision-making, skill development, and job readiness. It provides structured support that enables students to understand their strengths, explore career options, and align their competencies with industry demands. According to the National Universities Commission (2022), Nigerian universities are increasingly encouraged to strengthen career services units to improve graduate employability outcomes. Similarly, International Labour Organization (2023) emphasized that effective career guidance systems enhance young people's transition from school to work by equipping them with relevant employability skills. Institutions such as Federal University Gusau and other Nigerian universities are therefore recognizing the importance of counselling services as a strategic tool for preparing students for the labour market. Employability skills refer to a set of achievements, understandings, and personal attributes that make individuals more likely to gain employment and succeed in their chosen careers. These skills go beyond academic knowledge to include competencies such as communication, teamwork, problem-solving ability, adaptability, and digital literacy. The World Economic Forum (2023) identified critical thinking, collaboration, and flexibility as some of the most in-demand skills in the evolving global labour market. In addition, Yorke (2006) noted that employability is not just about



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securing a job but also about sustaining employment and progressing within a career through continuous skill development. Despite growing awareness of the importance of these skills, many Nigerian graduates still lack adequate exposure to structured career counselling programs that can enhance their employability (Okolie, Igwe, & Elom, 2020). This study, therefore, investigates the effectiveness of career counselling in enhancing these employability skills among Nigerian graduates, with a view to providing empirical evidence for improving counselling practices in Nigerian tertiary institutions.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to examine the influence of career counselling on employability skills acquisition among graduates in Nigeria. Specifically, the study seeks to:

- i. Examine the role of career counselling in the development of employability skills among graduates;
- ii. Identify the key employability skills acquired through career counselling programmes
- iii. determine the relationship between career counselling services and graduate employability; and
- iv. propose strategies for improving the effectiveness of career counselling services in Nigerian tertiary institutions.

Research Questions

The study is guided by the following research questions:

- i. How effective is career counselling in enhancing employability skills among Nigerian graduates?
- ii. What specific employability skills are developed through career counselling programmes?
- iii. What factors or challenges influence the effectiveness of career counselling in Nigeria?

Literature Review

Concept of Career Counselling

Career counselling encompasses a structured set of services and interventions designed to help individuals gain a deeper understanding of their personal strengths, interests, values, and aptitudes, as well as the demands and opportunities present in the labour market (Super, 1990). It provides guidance that enables students and graduates to make informed decisions about their career paths, educational pursuits, and professional development. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO, 2023), effective career counselling not only assists individuals in selecting suitable career options but also equips them with the skills necessary to adapt to evolving workplace environments and economic trends. Beyond immediate job placement, career counselling promotes lifelong career development by fostering self-awareness, goal-setting, and continuous skill acquisition (Savickas, 2012). Through counselling sessions, workshops, mentorship programmes, and skills assessments, individuals are encouraged to identify personal and professional goals, develop action plans, and navigate transitions between education, training, and employment (Chen, 2021). In the Nigerian context, institutions such as the Federal University Gusau have increasingly recognized the importance of career counselling in bridging the gap between academic preparation and labour market requirements, particularly in enhancing employability and career readiness (Okolie, Igwe, & Elom, 2020). Integrating career counselling into higher education curricula, students are better positioned to develop critical employability competencies, including communication, teamwork, problem-solving, and adaptability, all of which are essential for success in today's competitive job market (World Economic Forum, 2023).

Employability Skills

Employability skills refer to the combination of knowledge, personal attributes, and practical abilities that enhance an individual's capacity to secure employment, perform effectively, and progress in their chosen career (Yorke, 2006). These skills go beyond academic qualifications and are increasingly recognized as critical for success in today's dynamic and competitive labour market (World Economic Forum, 2023). Key employability skills include:

Communication skills: The ability to convey ideas clearly and effectively, both verbally and in writing, is essential in almost every workplace. Effective communication facilitates collaboration, prevents misunderstandings, and contributes to professional credibility (Robles, 2012).

Critical thinking: This involves analysing information, evaluating evidence, and making reasoned decisions. Graduates who can critically assess problems and propose informed solutions are highly valued by employers (Facione, 2015).

Problem-solving ability: The capacity to identify issues, generate solutions, and implement them efficiently is a key determinant of workplace effectiveness. Problem-solving is particularly important in environments that require innovation and adaptability (OECD, 2022).



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Teamwork: The ability to work cooperatively with others, share responsibilities, and contribute to collective goals is fundamental in modern organizations, where collaborative projects are common (Robles, 2012).

ICT competence: Proficiency in information and communication technology is increasingly vital, as digital tools and platforms are integrated into nearly all aspects of work. Graduates must be capable of using software applications, online collaboration tools, and data management systems (World Economic Forum, 2023).

Adaptability and flexibility: The ability to adjust to changing work conditions, new technologies, and evolving job roles is critical in a labour market characterized by rapid technological and economic shifts (ILO, 2023).

Possession of these employability skills not only improves a graduate's prospects of obtaining employment but also enhances long-term career sustainability and professional growth. Developing these competencies is a central goal of career counselling, as it bridges the gap between academic preparation and workplace expectations (Okolie, Igwe, & Elom, 2020).

Career Counselling and Employability Skills Acquisition

Studies have consistently shown that effective career counselling plays a significant role in enhancing students' self-awareness, career planning abilities, and overall readiness for employment (Savickas, 2012; Chen, 2021). Through structured guidance, students gain a deeper understanding of their interests, strengths, values, and potential career paths, which enables them to make informed decisions about their professional futures (Super, 1990). Increased self-awareness also helps students identify skill gaps and areas requiring development, which is crucial for aligning their academic experiences with labour market demands (Okolie, Igwe, & Elom, 2020). Career counselling programs typically incorporate a variety of practical interventions aimed at improving employability. Workshops are often conducted to provide students with knowledge about different industries, job search strategies, and workplace expectations (ILO, 2023). Internship opportunities and experiential learning activities allow students to gain hands-on experience, apply theoretical knowledge in real-world settings, and develop professional networks that are vital for career progression (World Economic Forum, 2023). Additionally, career counselling services frequently include training in curriculum vitae (CV) writing, cover letters, and job application strategies, equipping students with the tools needed to present themselves effectively to potential employers (Robles, 2012). Interview preparation sessions further enhance graduates' confidence and communication skills, enabling them to perform well in selection processes and adapt to diverse workplace environments (Chen, 2021). Overall, these interventions not only improve employability outcomes but also foster a proactive attitude towards career development, helping graduates' transition smoothly from academic life to the professional world (Savickas, 2012).

Research Methodology

Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design, which is widely recognized and extensively utilized in social science and educational research for the purpose of collecting systematic data on the characteristics, attitudes, perceptions, and behaviours of a defined population (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This research design is particularly suitable for studies that seek to obtain factual information about existing conditions and to describe "what is" with respect to variables or conditions in a given situation. A descriptive survey design enables researchers to gather information directly from respondents through the use of well-structured and standardized instruments such as questionnaires, interviews, and observation checklists. These instruments are carefully designed to ensure consistency, reliability, and validity in the data collection process. By engaging a representative sample of the target population, the researcher is able to generalize findings to the broader population with a reasonable degree of accuracy. Furthermore, this design allows for the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data, providing a comprehensive understanding of the research problem. Quantitative data can be statistically analysed to identify patterns, trends, and relationships, while qualitative data offer deeper insights into participants' opinions and experiences. Importantly, the descriptive survey design does not involve manipulation or control of variables; rather, it focuses on observing and documenting phenomena as they naturally occur in their real-life context (Babbie, 2021). This design is particularly appropriate for investigating the effectiveness of career counselling on employability skills because it enables the systematic collection and analysis of data relating to graduates' experiences, perceptions, and self-reported outcomes across multiple tertiary institutions. Given the diversity of higher education institutions in Nigeria, a descriptive survey approach provides an efficient means of capturing variations in exposure to career counselling services and the extent to which such services influence graduates' preparedness for the labour market. By employing a survey method, the study is able to reach a relatively large and heterogeneous sample, thereby enhancing the representativeness and generalizability of the findings. This, in turn, allows for the identification of patterns and trends



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in participation in career counselling programmes and their perceived impact on the development of employability skills such as communication, problem-solving, teamwork, and adaptability (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2019). Moreover, the descriptive survey design facilitates the examination of relationships among key variables without the need for experimental manipulation or control. For instance, the study can explore the extent to which exposure to career counselling programmes is associated with the acquisition of employability skills, using appropriate statistical techniques such as correlation and regression analysis. This approach is particularly valuable in educational and social research where manipulation of variables may be impractical or unethical. By focusing on naturally occurring conditions, the design ensures that the data collected reflect authentic experiences of graduates within their real-life educational and socio-economic contexts (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018). In addition, the use of a descriptive survey design provides a solid empirical basis for drawing conclusions that are relevant to policy and practice. The findings generated from this approach can inform educational stakeholders, including policymakers, university administrators, and career development practitioners, on the effectiveness of existing career counselling services. It also offers evidence-based insights for the development and improvement of structured career guidance programmes aimed at enhancing graduates' employability. Ultimately, this design supports the generation of reliable and context-specific data that can contribute to strengthening institutional strategies and national efforts toward improving youth employment outcomes in Nigeria.

Population of the Study

The population of this study comprises Nigerian graduates from selected universities, who constitute the primary beneficiaries of career counselling services aimed at enhancing employability skills. These graduates represent individuals who have recently completed their academic programmes and are either transitioning into the labour market or are actively seeking employment opportunities. As such, they provide relevant and reliable information regarding the extent to which career counselling interventions have influenced their acquisition of critical employability competencies. The population includes graduates from both federal and state-owned tertiary institutions across Nigeria in order to capture a broad and representative perspective of career counselling practices within the higher education system. This inclusion ensures diversity in institutional structures, resources, and programme implementation strategies, which may influence the availability and effectiveness of career guidance services. Particular emphasis is placed on institutions such as Federal University Gusau in Zamfara State and University of Abuja, both of which are known to offer structured career counselling and student support programmes. Furthermore, the population encompasses graduates from different fields of study, including sciences, social sciences, engineering, and humanities, to ensure that variations in academic background are adequately represented. This diversity is important because employability skills and exposure to career counselling may differ across disciplines. By focusing on this population, the study is able to generate comprehensive and generalizable findings regarding the effectiveness of career counselling services in improving employability outcomes among Nigerian graduates. Nigerian graduates constitute a highly diverse population in terms of academic disciplines, socio-economic backgrounds, cultural orientations, and varying levels of exposure to career counselling programmes. This diversity is significant, as it reflects the broad spectrum of experiences and opportunities available within the Nigerian higher education system. According to the National Universities Commission (NUC, 2022), Nigeria produces over 500,000 graduates annually. Despite this large output, a considerable proportion of these graduates encounter difficulties in securing gainful employment, often due to limited practical skills, inadequate career guidance, and insufficient exposure to employability-focused training during their academic programmes. By targeting graduates as the study population, this research seeks to systematically capture their perceptions, lived experiences, and self-reported outcomes regarding career counselling interventions received during their time in tertiary institutions. It also aims to examine how these interventions influence the development of essential employability competencies such as communication skills, critical thinking, teamwork, adaptability, and problem-solving abilities. Furthermore, the study explores the relationship between participation in career counselling programmes and graduates' preparedness for the labour market, thereby providing a clearer understanding of the role such services play in enhancing employability. Focusing on this population enables the study to generate findings that are both contextually relevant and broadly applicable to similar tertiary institutions across Nigeria. Given the shared structural and institutional characteristics of many Nigerian universities, the insights derived from this study can be reasonably generalized to inform practices in comparable settings. Ultimately, the findings are expected to provide valuable evidence for policymakers, educational administrators, and career development practitioners, contributing to the design, strengthening, and effective implementation of career counselling programmes. Such improvements are essential for



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bridging the gap between academic training and labour market requirements, thereby enhancing graduates' transition from education to employment and supporting national development goals.

Sample Size

The study employed a sample size of 250 respondents drawn from the population of Nigerian graduates in selected universities. This sample size was considered appropriate and sufficient to provide a representative and statistically reliable understanding of graduates' experiences with career counselling programmes and their acquisition of employability skills. The determination of this number was guided by established sampling frameworks, particularly the widely used Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample size table, which provides a scientific basis for selecting adequate sample sizes from large populations. A sample of this magnitude strikes a balance between statistical precision and practical feasibility, allowing for in-depth data analysis while ensuring that data collection and management remain efficient and manageable. Furthermore, a sample size of 250 enhances the credibility of the study by reducing sampling error and increasing the likelihood that the findings accurately reflect the characteristics of the broader population. It also allows for the application of various statistical techniques, including descriptive and inferential analyses, which are essential for identifying patterns, relationships, and trends within the data. This makes the study robust enough to generate meaningful insights into the effectiveness of career counselling programmes in improving employability skills among Nigerian graduates. The respondents were purposively selected to ensure adequate representation of key demographic and academic variables such as discipline of study, gender, and level of exposure to career counselling services. This sampling technique was particularly suitable for the study because it enabled the researcher to deliberately include individuals who possess relevant experiences and knowledge about the phenomenon under investigation. Specifically, graduates who had participated in career counselling programmes during their university education were prioritized, as they are better positioned to provide informed responses on the impact of such programmes on their skill development and career readiness. This approach is consistent with the recommendations of Babbie (2021), who emphasized that selecting an appropriately sized and relevant sample from a clearly defined population significantly enhances the validity, reliability, and generalizability of survey research findings. By focusing on respondents with direct exposure to career counselling interventions, the study ensures that the data collected are both relevant and rich in content, thereby improving the overall quality of the research outcomes. By involving 250 respondents, the study achieved sufficient coverage to identify significant trends, patterns, and correlations between participation in career counselling programmes and the development of employability skills. The sample size also provided adequate statistical power, enabling the researcher to test hypotheses, draw reliable conclusions, and make evidence-based recommendations. Ultimately, this contributes to the development of practical strategies for strengthening career counselling services in Nigerian universities and enhancing graduates' employability in an increasingly competitive labour market.

Sampling Technique: Random Sampling

The study adopted a random sampling technique in selecting respondents from the target population of Nigerian graduates. Random sampling is a probability sampling method in which every member of the population has an equal and independent chance of being selected for participation in the study. This technique is widely regarded as one of the most reliable methods of sampling in quantitative research because it minimizes selection bias and enhances the representativeness of the sample. In applying this technique, a sampling frame comprising a list of eligible graduates from the selected universities was first established. From this list, respondents were selected using a simple random procedure, such as random number generation or balloting, to ensure that each individual had an equal opportunity of inclusion. This process helped to eliminate researcher bias and ensured fairness in the selection process. The use of random sampling was particularly appropriate for this study because it allowed for the generation of data that can be generalized to the wider population of Nigerian graduates. By ensuring that the sample reflects the diversity within the population—across academic disciplines, gender, and levels of exposure to career counselling programmes—the technique enhances the external validity of the study. Furthermore, random sampling supports the application of inferential statistical analysis, as it satisfies the assumption of independence required for many statistical tests. This enables the researcher to make valid inferences, draw conclusions, and identify relationships between career counselling exposure and employability skills with a higher degree of confidence. Overall, the adoption of random sampling strengthens the scientific rigor of the study by promoting objectivity, reducing sampling errors, and ensuring that the findings are both reliable and generalizable to similar populations within the Nigerian higher education context.



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Instrument: Structured Questionnaire (CCESQ)

The primary instrument used for data collection in this study was a structured questionnaire titled Career Counselling and Employability Skills Questionnaire (CCESQ). The use of a structured questionnaire was considered appropriate because it allows for the systematic collection of standardized data from a large number of respondents, thereby ensuring consistency, comparability, and ease of analysis. The CCESQ was carefully designed by the researcher to elicit relevant information on graduates' exposure to career counselling programmes and the extent to which such programmes have contributed to the development of their employability skills. The questionnaire consisted mainly of close-ended items, which enabled respondents to provide specific and measurable responses. These items were structured using a Likert-scale format, typically ranging from options such as "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree," to capture the intensity of respondents' opinions and perceptions. The instrument was divided into distinct sections to address different aspects of the study. Section A focused on respondents' demographic information, including variables such as gender, field of study, and institution attended. Section B examined the level of exposure to career counselling services, including participation in workshops, seminars, career talks, and internship guidance programmes. Section C assessed the development of key employability skills such as communication, problem-solving, teamwork, leadership, and adaptability. Additional sections were included to evaluate respondents' perceptions of the effectiveness of career counselling programmes and their overall preparedness for the labour market. Furthermore, the CCESQ was designed to be clear, concise, and easy to understand in order to minimize ambiguity and ensure accurate responses. The structured nature of the questionnaire also facilitated efficient data coding, entry, and statistical analysis. By using this instrument, the researcher was able to obtain reliable and quantifiable data necessary for examining the relationship between career counselling interventions and employability skills development among Nigerian graduates.

Data Analysis: Mean and Standard Deviation

The data collected for this study were analysed using the statistical tools of mean and standard deviation. These descriptive statistics were considered appropriate because they provide a clear and concise summary of respondents' responses, particularly for items measured on a Likert scale. The use of mean enables the researcher to determine the average response for each item, thereby indicating the general opinion or trend among the respondents regarding career counselling programmes and the development of employability skills. Specifically, the mean score was used to answer the research questions by identifying whether respondents generally agreed or disagreed with each statement in the questionnaire. A decision rule was established based on the midpoint of the Likert scale (e.g., 2.50 for a 4-point scale), such that any item with a mean score equal to or above the benchmark was interpreted as "Agreed," while those below were interpreted as "Disagreed." This approach provided a straightforward basis for interpreting the data and drawing meaningful conclusions. In addition, the standard deviation was used to measure the degree of variability or dispersion in respondents' answers. A low standard deviation indicates that responses are closely clustered around the mean, suggesting a high level of agreement among respondents, while a high standard deviation reflects greater variability, indicating differences in opinions or experiences. This measure is important in understanding the consistency of responses and the extent to which respondents share similar views on the effectiveness of career counselling programmes. The combined use of mean and standard deviation enhances the reliability of the analysis by not only identifying central tendencies but also revealing the distribution pattern of the data. This provides a more comprehensive understanding of graduates' perceptions and experiences, thereby enabling the researcher to make informed conclusions and recommendations regarding the role of career counselling in improving employability skills among Nigerian graduates.

Presentation of Results

The results of the study revealed several important findings regarding the effectiveness of career counselling programmes in enhancing the employability skills of Nigerian graduates. The analysis of data collected from respondents indicated that career counselling plays a significant role in preparing graduates for the demands of the labour market.

Table 1: Influence of Career Counselling on Employability Skills (n = 250)

S/N	Item Statement	Mean (\bar{X})	Std. Dev (σ)	Decision
1	Career counselling improved my communication skills	3.32	0.71	Agreed
2	Career counselling enhanced my problem-solving ability	3.28	0.68	Agreed
3	Career counselling improved my critical thinking skills	3.21	0.74	Agreed
4	Career counselling strengthened my teamwork ability	3.30	0.70	Agreed



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5	Career counselling improved my adaptability in work environments	3.18	0.76	Agreed
6	Career counselling increased my confidence in job interviews	3.35	0.65	Agreed
7	Career counselling enhanced my CV writing skills	3.40	0.60	Agreed
8	Career counselling improved my job readiness	3.33	0.69	Agreed
9	Exposure to counselling influenced my employment opportunities	3.26	0.73	Agreed
10	Career counselling programmes are effective in universities	3.22	0.75	Agreed

Grand Mean = 3.29

The grand mean of 3.29 is above the benchmark of 2.50, this indicates that respondents generally agreed that career counselling significantly improves employability skills. The standard deviation values (0.60 – 0.76) are relatively low, this shows consistency in responses, meaning most graduates share similar views. Firstly, the findings showed that career counselling significantly improves graduates' employability skills. Respondents generally agreed that participation in career counselling programmes contributed to the development of essential competencies such as communication, critical thinking, problem-solving, teamwork, and adaptability. These skills are widely regarded as crucial for workplace success, suggesting that career counselling serves as a valuable bridge between academic learning and practical job requirements.

Secondly, the study revealed that graduates who participated in career counselling programmes demonstrated better communication skills and higher levels of job readiness compared to those who had little or no exposure. This implies that structured career guidance activities—such as career talks, CV writing workshops, interview preparation sessions, and internship placements—equip students with practical knowledge and confidence needed to navigate the job market effectively. Consequently, such graduates are more competitive and better positioned to secure employment opportunities. Furthermore, the findings established a positive relationship between exposure to career counselling and employment success. Graduates with greater involvement in counselling programmes were more likely to report favourable employment outcomes, including quicker job placement, improved job performance, and greater career satisfaction. This highlights the importance of sustained and well-implemented career counselling services within tertiary institutions. Despite these positive outcomes, the study also identified several challenges limiting the effectiveness of career counselling programmes in Nigerian universities. One major issue is the inadequacy of counselling facilities, including insufficient office spaces, limited access to career resource materials, and lack of technological tools required for effective service delivery. Additionally, there is a shortage of trained and qualified career counsellors, which affects the quality and reach of counselling services available to students.

Another significant challenge identified is the low level of awareness among students regarding the availability and benefits of career counselling programmes. Many students either do not know about these services or do not fully understand their importance, leading to low participation rates. This limits the potential impact of career counselling on employability outcomes.

Discussion of Findings

In discussion, these findings align with existing literature which emphasizes the critical role of career counselling in enhancing employability skills and improving graduate outcomes. However, the identified challenges suggest that while the potential of career counselling is evident, its effectiveness is constrained by systemic and institutional limitations. Therefore, there is a need for universities and relevant stakeholders to invest in better infrastructure, recruit and train qualified counsellors, and implement awareness campaigns to encourage student participation. Overall, the results underscore the importance of strengthening career counselling programmes as a strategic approach to addressing graduate unemployment and improving workforce readiness in Nigeria.

Conclusion

Career counselling has emerged from this study as a vital and strategic tool for addressing the persistent challenge of graduate unemployment in Nigeria. The findings clearly demonstrate that effective career counselling programmes contribute significantly to the development of essential employability skills required in today's competitive labour market. By equipping graduates with competencies such as communication, problem-solving, critical thinking, and job readiness, career counselling bridges the gap between academic training and workplace expectations. Furthermore, the study highlights that graduates who actively participate in career counselling initiatives are better prepared to navigate employment opportunities and are more likely to achieve positive career outcomes. This underscores the importance of



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integrating structured and functional career guidance services into the educational framework of Nigerian universities. However, the effectiveness of career counselling is dependent on the availability of adequate resources, trained personnel, and increased awareness among students. Addressing existing challenges such as inadequate facilities, shortage of qualified counsellors, and low student engagement is essential for maximizing the impact of these programmes. In conclusion, strengthening career counselling services in tertiary institutions will not only enhance graduates' employability but also contribute to national development by reducing unemployment and improving workforce productivity. Therefore, there is a pressing need for policymakers, educational administrators, and other stakeholders to prioritize and invest in comprehensive career counselling programmes that will better prepare Nigerian graduates for the realities of the labour market.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance the effectiveness of career counselling in improving employability skills among Nigerian graduates:

- 1. Strengthening University Career Counselling Units** - Universities should prioritize the development and reinforcement of career counselling departments. This includes providing adequate office facilities, modern career resources, and access to technology that can support career guidance activities. Well-resourced counselling units can effectively deliver services such as career workshops, mentorship programmes, internship placements, and job readiness training.
- 2. Integration of Employability Skills Training into Curricula** - Employability skills such as communication, teamwork, problem-solving, leadership, and adaptability should be formally integrated into university curricula. By embedding these competencies into academic programmes, students can develop practical skills alongside theoretical knowledge, ensuring they are better prepared for the labour market upon graduation.
- 3. Government Investment in Career Development Programmes** - The government should allocate resources to support career development initiatives within tertiary institutions. This could include funding for counsellor training, national career fairs, internship facilitation, and the development of online career guidance platforms. Strategic government support can help standardize career counselling services across universities and expand their reach to more students.
- 4. Active Student Participation in Counselling Sessions** - Students should be encouraged to actively engage in career counselling programmes, including attending workshops, seeking mentorship, and participating in skills development sessions. Awareness campaigns, orientation programmes, and peer advocacy can motivate students to take advantage of these services, thereby maximizing the benefits of career counselling for employability enhancement.

By implementing these recommendations, universities and stakeholders can significantly improve graduates' readiness for employment, reduce the skills gap in the labour market, and contribute to the overall development of the Nigerian workforce.

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