Higher Education and Youth Employability in Oyo Metropolis, Oyo State of Nigeria

‡‡‡‡*Oladele Adeyi Ojediran, Gbadebo Salako & Oludayo Fatimo Olaoye*

Abstract
This study examined the impact of higher education on youth employability in Oyo metropolis, focusing on three institutions in Oyo metropolis: Emmanuel Alayande University of Education, Ekiti State University affiliated program with Emmanuel Alayande University, and the Federal College of Education (Special), Oyo. Using a descriptive survey, data was collected from 200 respondents selected through simple random sampling. The research instrument, Higher Education and Youth Employability in Oyo metropolis Questionnaire (HEYEOMQ), featured both open- and closed-ended questions. The analysis employed frequency counts, percentages, and chi-square tests to assess the impact of higher education on youth employability in Oyo metropolis. Findings revealed that while higher education enhances cognitive skills and technical knowledge, graduates often face challenges of skills mismatches and limited job opportunities. The study recommends curriculum reforms to align academic programs with industry needs; stronger collaborations between academia and industry, and improved career services. These strategies, alongside practical trainings and industry partnerships, are crucial to better preparing graduates for the job market, addressing the skills gap, and improving employment prospects in Oyo metropolis.

Keywords: Curriculum, employability, higher education, youth, skill

Introduction

Higher education is crucial for both individual and national development, driving economic growth, social progress, and innovation. It equips individuals with specialized knowledge and skills, boosting employability, earning potential, and quality of life.

‡‡‡‡ Department of Economics Education, Faculty of Social Science Education Emmanuel Alayande University of Education, Oyo, Oyo State.
Correspondence: deleojediran@gmail.com

DOI: https://doi.org/10.60787/eaued-jms.vol2no1.41

Nationally, an educated workforce enhances economic competitiveness by adapting to industry demands and technological advancements. Aithal and Maiya (2023) viewed that higher education institutions contribute to national progress by conducting research that leads to technological innovations and policy solutions. These institutions are hubs for critical thinking, where ideas and technologies emerge, directly impacting sectors like healthcare, agriculture, and engineering, thus driving overall national development.

Higher education fosters social cohesion and civic engagement by creating informed, active citizens Altaany & Abdelbary (2024). Graduates are more likely to participate in democratic processes, volunteer, and engage in community service, which strengthens democratic institutions and promotes social stability. Through critical thinking and ethical reasoning, higher education develops responsible citizens who contribute positively to society. Universities and colleges, as cultural melting pots, encourage mutual respect and assimilation, enriching the educational experience and preparing students for a globalized world. Exposure to diverse viewpoints and intercultural competence is essential for addressing global challenges and promoting international cooperation.

Furthermore, youth employability is vital for Nigeria's economic development and stability, given its large youth population. Equipping young people with the necessary skills and knowledge to enter the workforce is crucial for leveraging this demographic dividend. According to Cruz and Ahmed (2018) said that high youth employability rates drive economic growth by reducing dependency ratios and boosting productivity. Employed youth contribute to the economy through consumption, taxes, and social contributions. However, high youth unemployment in Nigeria remains a significant challenge, leading to increased poverty, social unrest, and migration. Addressing this requires targeted policies focused on skills development, vocational training, and entrepreneurship.

Improvement in youth employability in Nigeria can mitigate adverse effects and foster a stable, prosperous society. Youth employability is crucial for harnessing the innovation and entrepreneurial potentials that young people bring to the economy (de

O Silva, et al., 2024). With their creativity and adaptability, young Nigerians drive new business ventures and technological advancements. Supporting youth entrepreneurship can create new industries and job opportunities, diversifying the economy and reducing dependence on oil revenues. Policies promoting access to finance, mentorship, and business development services are essential for nurturing this entrepreneurial spirit among the youth.

More so, improving youth employability in Nigeria enhances global competitiveness. A skilled workforce is crucial for attracting foreign investment and integrating into global value chains Hollweg (2019). Nigerian youth, equipped with relevant skills, can drive growth in sectors like information technology, manufacturing, and services, essential for economic diversification. Investing in youth employability is both a social imperative and a strategic economic necessity for Nigeria.

Higher education in Nigeria is widely recognized as a critical driver of individual and national development, yet its potential to enhance youth employability remains largely untapped. Despite the proliferation of higher education institutions, there is a persistent disconnect between the skills imparted by these institutions and the demands of the labour market. Nigerian universities, colleges, and polytechnics often emphasize theoretical knowledge at the expense of practical skills and vocational training, leaving graduates ill-equipped to meet the needs of employers. This skills mismatch has contributed to high rates of youth unemployment and underemployment, with many graduates unable to secure jobs that align with their qualifications. The resulting frustration and wasted potential not only hinder individual progress but also weaken Nigeria's ability to harness its demographic dividend for economic growth and social stability.

Compounding this issue is the deteriorating quality of higher education in Nigeria, characterized by inadequate funding, outdated curricula, and insufficient infrastructure. These challenges limit the ability of educational institutions to foster critical thinking, problem-solving, and innovation-skills that are essential for thriving in a rapidly evolving global economy. As a result, many Nigerian graduates enter the job market unprepared, while employers struggle

to find candidates with the requisite skills. This misalignment between higher education and labour market needs not only worsens youth unemployment but also stifles Nigeria's economic diversification and global competitiveness. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive and holistic investigation of Nigerian's educational system, including policy, funding and curriculum reforms in order to ensure that graduates skills and knowledge correlate with the current demand of modern labour market.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to examine the impact of higher education on youth employability, while the specific objectives are to:

i. investigate the role of higher education in equipping youth with the necessary skills, knowledge and competencies.
ii. identify the factors that influence the impact of higher education on youth employability.

Research Hypotheses

The three hypotheses tested are as follow:

H1: Higher education does not have a significant impact on youth employability;
H2: Higher education does not significantly equip youths with necessary skills, knowledge, and competencies.
H3: There is no significant factor which influence the impact of higher education on youth's employability.

Literature Review

Empirical Review

Economic studies suggest that higher education offers societal benefits beyond those to individuals, accelerating economic growth (Seetanah and Teeroovengadum, 2019). Bojadjieva, Cvetanoska, Kozheski, Mujčinović, and Gašparović (2022) argued that higher education builds skills essential for adapting to technological changes, with educated individuals more capable of applying new

technologies. Al-Braizat (2016) emphasized the role of higher education in youth development and achieving sustainable development goals. He concluded that higher education is fundamental to personal development and should be continuously reviewed and improved.

Chan (2016) studied that higher education is the key to knowledge acquisition, contributing to economic growth by fostering innovation and enhancing graduates' skills. It signals students' abilities, increasing their competitiveness in the job market. However, many economies struggle to harness these benefits, resulting in higher youth unemployment rates compared to other age groups.

Bal-Domańska (2022) examined that poor macroeconomic performance and lack of growth are key factors behind high youth unemployment, which is more affected by cyclical trends than adult unemployment. Caroleo, Ciociano, and Destefanis (2017) examined that the relative size of the youth population significantly affects cross-country youth unemployment rates. They also discovered that macroeconomic shocks impact youth unemployment differently, with more rigid labor markets leading to higher unemployment rates. Benson (2019) studied that youth unemployment has lasting negative impacts, with affected individuals often trapped in low-paying, sporadic jobs. They concluded that these youths rarely fully recover from unemployment's adverse effects, despite some human capital catch-up.

In another development, Michoń, (2018). investigated that demographic and education shocks affect young and adult employees differently. While adults and more educated individuals generally have higher employment rates, changes in population age structure are positively related to youth unemployment but not to adult unemployment. Sironi (2018) observed that youth unemployment rates have risen relative to adult rates, with the recent recession widening this gap. They noted that youths with lower education and skills were most negatively impacted, as jobs requiring fewer skills were taken by more experienced and educated individuals, including older workers.

Tafere and Chuta (2020) explored that youth unemployment arises from challenges in transitioning from school to work. They highlight that youth unemployment rates in Europe have reached up to 30%, significantly higher than the 10% for older adults. They suggested that reducing youth unemployment requires policies promoting work-related curricula and reforms in education and professional development. They emphasized the importance of continuous, life-long professional development to help young people make informed choices, not only during their initial education and transition to employment but throughout their entire working lives.

Bojadjieva., Cvetanoska., Kozheski., Mujčinović., & Gašparović, 2022) used a microeconomic approach to analyze youth employment determinants in developing countries, focusing on labour demand, supply, and market functioning. For labour demand, increased productivity and entrepreneurship are crucial. On the supply side, education quality, skills, and equal access are key. He emphasis that effective labour market functioning, including information availability, hiring transparency, and regulation, is essential for successful school-to-work transitions. Alam and de Diego (2019) argued likewise regarding the importance of good quality higher education and acquired skills of young people during their educational process.

The European Commission (2007) proposed initiatives to bridge education and employment, aiming to reduce youth unemployment and boost employability. By empowering young people and creating conditions for skill development, their work capacity and societal participation are enhanced. This is crucial for the socio-economic development of the European Union (EU), especially amid globalization, knowledge-based economies, and aging populations. The study discussed that youth unemployment (ages 15-24) remains a major concern, with no significant reduction achieved over the past 25 years despite increased educational attainment.

The EU Youth Strategy (2010-2018) affirmed the need for equal access to quality education, training, and lifelong learning. It stressed the importance of supporting young people's transition from education to the labour market and reducing early school leaving.

Researchers have focus on several gaps in the study of youth unemployment and the role of higher education. Bojadjieva et al. (2022) and Tafere & Chuta (2020) note a disproportionate focus on developed economies, leaving regions like Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia underexplored despite high youth unemployment rates. Furthermore, studies such as Caroleo et al. (2017) and Bal-Domańska (2022) focused on macroeconomic factors, while Bojadjieva et al. (2022) and Alam & de Diego (2019) emphasized microeconomic aspects, yet there is a lack of integrated research combining both perspectives. The effectiveness of policies like those by the European Commission (2007) and the EU Youth Strategy (2010-2018) remains understudied, particularly in developing countries and over the long term.

Further gaps include the long-term impacts of youth unemployment, as highlighted by Benson (2019), with limited research on how higher education can mitigate these effects across socio-economic groups. The role of technology and innovation in higher education, as mentioned by Bojadjieva et al. (2022), is also underexplored, particularly in preparing youth for a rapidly evolving job market. Lastly, Tafere and Chuta (2020) stress the importance of lifelong learning, but there is insufficient research on how higher education institutions can integrate continuous professional development to ensure graduate employability. Future research on youth unemployment and higher education should prioritize developing countries, where unique challenges and opportunities differ from developed economies. Studies should integrate macro-micro analyses, combining economic growth and labour market rigidity with education quality and skills mismatch, to comprehensively understand the issue. Policy evaluation and adaptation are crucial, assessing the long-term impacts of existing policies on employability and economic growth. Furthermore, research should explore how higher education fosters resilience, adaptability, and skill development, while integrating technology and innovation into curricula to meet labour market demands. Emphasizing lifelong learning and professional development within higher education programs is also essential for sustained employability and career progression.

Overview of Higher Education in Nigeria

Nigeria's higher education system comprises universities, polytechnics, and colleges of education. Universities, both public and private, offer comprehensive undergraduate and postgraduate programs across various disciplines, emphasizing theoretical and research-based education. Polytechnics focus on technical and vocational training, providing diploma and higher national diploma programs with practical skills. Colleges of education specialize in training teachers for primary and secondary schools, awarding the Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) and bachelor's degrees in education (National Universities Commission, NUC, 2021).

Public institutions dominate Nigeria's higher education, with federal and state governments operating most universities, polytechnics, and colleges of education. These institutions are generally more affordable but face challenges like underfunding, overcrowding, and inadequate facilities, impacting education quality. Private institutions, though fewer, expand access to higher education and often offer better infrastructure and resources due to higher tuition fees. They include privately funded universities, polytechnics, and colleges of education, providing alternative options to fill gaps left by public institutions (Ogunyinka & Okeke, 2020).

The higher education sector in Nigeria has seen significant growth in student enrolment over the past decades. According to the NUC (2021), student enrolment in Nigerian universities rose from 1.2 million in 2010 to over 2 million in 2020. By 2022, over 90% of the 2.1 million students across 260 universities were enrolled in public universities, with private institutions accounting for less than 7% (NUC, 2021). As of 2023, approximately 2.5 million students are enrolled in Nigerian tertiary institutions, with universities hosting over 1.8 million undergraduates and around 242,000 postgraduates (Nelson-Ogbaeja., Ogba., & Ogbaeja 2024). However, graduation rates remain a concern due to inadequate funding, strikes, and infrastructural deficiencies (NUC, 2021). In 2018, the overall graduation rate for Nigerian universities was about 50%, with variations across institutions and programs (Adeyemi & Akpotu, 2020). Polytechnics and colleges of education have also experienced enrolment growth, though at a slower pace than universities. The

demand for higher education in Nigeria continues to rise, driven by a growing youth population and increased recognition of the value of tertiary education for personal and professional development Adewolu Ogwo (2024).

Diversity in Nigerian higher education is marked by regional, gender, and socio-economic disparities. Students from southern Nigeria are more likely to attend higher education institutions than those from the north due to differences in educational infrastructure and cultural attitudes (Onwuameze, 2013). Gender disparities persist, though female enrolment has increased, rising from 39% in 2010 to 43% in 2020 (British Council, 2012). Socio-economic factors also play a critical role, with students from wealthier backgrounds more likely to access and complete higher education. Private institutions, often more expensive, have a higher proportion of affluent students, highlighting the socio-economic divide in education access (Fredua Kwasi-Agyeman, 2020).

Barriers and Obstacles to Youth Employability

i. Educational Quality and Relevance

The quality of education in Nigeria often falls short of equipping students with the skills needed for the job market. Outdated curricula, insufficient practical training, and a lack of alignment with industry needs are major factors that hinder graduates' employability.

ii. Limited Access to Vocational and Technical Training

Vocational and technical education, which can provide critical skills for employment, is underdeveloped and underfunded in Nigeria. As a result, many youths are not exposed to the practical skills that are in high demand in the job market, leading to a mismatch between education and employment needs (Aluoch, 2021).

iii. Economic Instability and Lack of Job Creation

Nigeria's economy faces significant challenges, including fluctuations in oil prices, inflation, and political instability, which contribute to limited job creation. This economic environment makes it difficult for young people to find stable employment, particularly in the formal sector (Udo & Edo, 2012).

iv.Inadequate Career Counselling and Job Placement Services

Many Nigerian educational institutions lack robust career counselling and job placement services. Without proper guidance and support, students and graduates struggle to navigate the job market and secure employment that aligns with their qualifications (Emeh, 2012).

v. Social and Gender Inequalities

Discrimination and social barriers, such as gender biases, regional disparities, and socio-economic inequalities, further complicate the employment prospects for Nigerian youth. Women, in particular, face greater challenges in accessing education and employment opportunities, which limits their participation in the workforce (World Bank, 2019).

Methodology

Research Design

The study uses a case study as the strategy of investigation. Questionnaires were used to collect information from the respondents as the use of questionnaires is the best practice of data collection as far as primary data is concerned. Questionnaires well-structured are used to allow the same type of information to be collected from a large number of people in the same way and for the data to be systematically analysed quantitatively. Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected for analysis.

Population of the study

This study is conducted in three institutions in Oyo metropolis. Hence the population of the study comprises of the members of three institutions. These institutions are Emmanuel Alayande University of Education, Oyo, the Ekiti State University in affiliation with Emmanuel Alayande University of Education, Oyo and Federal College of Education (Special), Oyo. Emmanuel Alayande University of Education, Oyo has 73, Ekiti State University in affiliation with Emmanuel Alayande College of Education has 60 students while and Federal College of Education (Special) has 67 students

Sample and Sampling Techniques

The study adopts simple random sampling selection procedure to select members who were offered questionnaires with structured questions to fill. From the list of members of these institutions, seventy-three (73) questionnaires were given out to respondents in Emmanuel Alayande University of Education and they were completed and returned. In Ekiti State University in affiliation with Emmanuel Alayande University of Education, sixty (60) questionnaires were given out and fully completed and returned while in Federal College of Education, sixty-seven (67) questionnaires were given out, fully completed and returned. Therefore, a total of 200 questionnaires were completed and returned for the purpose of analysis. Information sought and collected from the respondents through the questionnaires include socio-economic characteristics of the respondents, basically their age, sex, income level, number of households, educational attainment and so on.

Instrumentation and Data collection

The instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire tagged was used to collect primary data for the study. The questionnaire was of four (4) points: (i) Strong Agree (SA) (ii) Agree (A) (iii) Disagree (D) (iv) Strongly Disagree (SD). The instrument consisted of two (2) section A and B, Section A dealt with the demographic information which section B dealt with the variables i.e higher education and youth employability in Oyo metropolis.

In order to avoid discrepancy and pit-fall the validity of the instrument was ensuring by given it to expert in the Department of Economics in the three (3) institutions. They made necessary corrections on the items and their input were incorporated in the final draft of the instrument. The questionnaire was assessed using the test-retest method to established the reliability of the instrument at 0.75 level. To test for the overall higher education and youth employability in Oyo metropolis by different groups and also to ascertain if any significant difference existed the simple percentage and chi-square parameter were computed.

There was a total of fifteen (15) question items. The respondents were instructed to tick the option of their choice on each question. The completed copies of the questionnaire were collected from all the respondents on the spots.

Data Analysis Technique

The data collected for analysis involves both quantitative and qualitative, hence two types of statistical techniques were used in analysing the data. These are descriptive statistics involving frequency counts and percentages and inferential statistics, mainly chi-square. In order to have the background information of the respondents of these institutions, we examined the socio-economic characteristics of respondents using frequency counts and percentages. The variables of interest include age, sex, income level, and educational level. Frequency counts and percentages of role of higher education in equipping youth with necessary skills, knowledge, and competencies that are in demand in the modern labour market in Oyo metropolis. Finally, a chi-square analysis the factors that influencing the impact of higher education on youth employability on these variables are significant or not. In carrying out the analysis, Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS) statistical software was employed in computing different statistics used in the study. The choice of SPSS was informed by its advantages of handling primary data effectively over other statistical software.

Results of findings

The analysis of data carried out by the study is mainly in two parts. The first is the analysis of the socio-economic characteristic of the respondents. Second is the measure of the significance of the effects of digitalization on employment, productivity and price dynamics.

Socio-Economic Characteristics of the Respondents

The table below summarizes the result of the analysis of the socio-economic characteristics of respondents in the institutions of the study population.

Table 1.1 Sex Distribution of Respondents

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Male	75	37.50
Female	125	62.50
Total	**200**	**100**

Source: Authors Computation, (2024)

The table above indicated distribution of respondents by gender in a sample of 200 participants. Male comprises of 75 (37.50%) while female comprises of 125 (62.50%). This representation ensures a gender approach in examine the impact of higher education on youth employability.

Table1.2 Age Distribution of Respondents

Age	Frequency	Percentage
Below 15 year	44	22
16-20 years	76	38
21-25 years	65	32
Above 26 years	15	8
Total	**200**	**100**

Source: Authors Computation, (2024)

This table above revealed a diverse age distribution among 200 respondents in the study. The majority, 38%, fall within the 16-20 age group, while 22% are below 15 years. A smaller percentage includes individuals aged above 26 years (8%) and those between 21-25 years are 32%

Test of Hypotheses
Analysis on impact of higher education on youth employability.

Research Hypothesis
HO_1: Higher education does not have a significant impact on youth employability.

Table 1.3 X^2–Test Analysis Showing impact of higher education on youth employability.

Responses/Questions	SA	A	D	SD	Agreed	Disagreed	Total
Q1	90	26	48	36	16(118)	84(81.2)	200
Q2	74	44	34	48	18(118)	82(81.2)	200
Q3	104	18	28	50	22(118)	78(81.2)	200
Q4	80	64	32	24	44(118)	56(81.2)	200
Q5	64	30	54	52	4(118)	106(81.2)	200
Total	**412**	**182**	**196**	**210**	**594**	**406**	**1000**

Group	Size	Degree of Freedom	X^2 Cal	X^2 Tab	Remark
Agreed	594				Reject Null Hypothesis
Disagreed	406	04	26.59	9.49	

Significant at 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Source: Authors Computation, (2024)

The decision rule is that if X^2-calculated is greater than the tabulated value, then we reject the null hypothesis ($H0_0$) and accept the alternative hypothesis. Therefore, from the table 1.3, since the calculated value (26.59) is greater than the tabulated value (9.49). Hence, the null hypothesis (HO) is rejected; this means that there is significant difference between higher education and youth employability is accepted.

Research Hypothesis

$H0_2$: Higher education does not significantly equip youths with necessary skills, knowledge, and competencies.

Table 1.4 X^2–Test Analysis showing that higher education equipping youths with necessary skills, knowledge, and competencies.

Responses/Questions	SA	A	D	SD	Agreed	Disagreed	Total
Q6	20	32	59	89	52(98.6)	148(101.4)	200
Q7	48	33	45	74	81(98.6)	119(101.4)	200
Q8	102	20	30	48	122(98.6)	78(101.4)	200
Q9	82	66	31	21	148(98.6)	52(101.4)	200
Q10	65	25	67	43	90(98.6)	110(101.4)	200
Total	**317**	**176**	**232**	**275**	**493**	**507**	**1000**

Group	Size	Degree of Freedom	X^2 Cal	X^2 Tab	Remark
Agreed	493				Reject Null Hypothesis
Disagreed	507	04	110.89	9.49	

Significant at 0.05 level (2-tailed)
Source: Authors Computation, (2024)

Table 1.4 indicates analysis of authors on the role of higher education in equipping youth with necessary skills, knowledge, and competencies that are in demand in the modern labour market. The calculated value (HO_2) is rejected; this means that there is significant of higher education in equipping youth with necessary skills, knowledge, and competencies that are in demand in the modern labour market is accepted.

Research Hypothesis: 3

$H0_3$: Factors that influencing the impact of higher education does not enhance youth employability.

Table 1.5 X^2–Test Analysis On the factors that influencing the impact of higher education on youth employability.

Responses/Questions	SA	A	D	SD	Agreed	Disagreed	Total
Q11	51	63	47	39	114(105.4)	86(94.6)	200
Q12	46	65	49	40	111(105.4)	89(94.6)	200
Q13	55	61	43	41	116(105.4)	84(94.6)	200
Q14	43	51	64	42	94(105.4)	106(94.6)	200
Q15	45	47	64	44	92(105.4)	108(94.6)	200
Total	**240**	**287**	**267**	**206**	**527**	**473**	**1000**

Group	Size	Degree of Freedom	X^2 Cal	X^2 Tab	Remark
Agreed	527				Reject Null Hypothesis
Disagreed	473	04	9.58	9.49	

Significant at 0.05 level (2-tailed)
Source: Authors Computation, (2024)

Table 1.5 shows the degree of freedom to be 4. X^2, calculated value was (9.58) and the tabulated value for X^2 (0.05) was 9.49. Since the calculated value i.e. 9.58 was greater than tabulated value i.e (9.49). Therefore, null hypothesis H0 is rejected, this means that there are significant factors that influencing the impact of higher education does not enhance youth employability is accepted.

Discussions of finding

The study's first hypothesis, which tested the impact of higher education on youth employability, revealed a significant relationship between the two variables. This finding is consistent with the works of Seetanah and Teeroovengadum (2019), who argued that higher education accelerates economic growth by providing societal benefits beyond individual gains. Similarly, Chan (2016) emphasized that higher education fosters innovation and enhances graduates' skills, making them more competitive in the job market. The rejection of the null hypothesis in this study supports the assertion that higher education plays a critical role in improving youth employability, as evidenced by the calculated chi-square value (26.59) exceeding the tabulated value (9.49). However, the study also highlights the challenges many economies face in harnessing these benefits, as noted by Chan (2016). Despite increased educational attainment,

youth unemployment remains a persistent issue, particularly in regions with poor macroeconomic performance and rigid labour markets (Bal-Domańska, 2022; Caroleo et al., 2017). This emphasized the need for targeted policies to bridge the gap between education and employment, as suggested by the European Commission (2007) and Tafere and Chuta (2020).

The second hypothesis examined the role of higher education in equipping youth with the skills, knowledge, and competencies demanded by the modern labour market. The findings, which rejected the null hypothesis (X^2-cal = 110.89 > X^2-tab = 9.49), align with Bojadjieva et al. (2022), who argued that higher education builds essential skills for adapting to technological changes. Alam and de Diego (2019) also emphasized the importance of quality education and skill acquisition during the educational process. The study's results suggested that higher education institutions in Oyo metropolis are effectively equipping youth with relevant skills, although continuous improvements are necessary to keep pace with evolving labour market demands.

The third hypothesis explored the factors influencing the impact of higher education on youth employability. The rejection of the null hypothesis (X^2-cal = 9.58 > X^2-tab = 9.49) indicates that several factors significantly enhance the role of higher education in improving employability. This finding resonates with the microeconomic approach of Bojadjieva et al. (2022), who identified labour demand, supply, and market functioning as critical determinants of youth employment. On the demand side, increased productivity and entrepreneurship are essential, while on the supply side, education quality, skills development, and equal access play pivotal roles. Effective labour market functioning, including transparency in hiring and regulation, is also crucial for successful school-to-work transitions.

The study's findings also align with Michoń (2018), who noted that demographic and education shocks affect youth and adult employees differently. While higher education generally improves employment rates, structural issues such as population age dynamics and labour market rigidity can disproportionately impact youth unemployment. This highlights the need for comprehensive policies

that address both educational and macroeconomic factors, as suggested by the EU Youth Strategy (2010-2018) and Tafere and Chuta (2020).

Conclusion

Higher education in Nigeria affects youth employability through enhanced cognitive skills, technical knowledge, and critical thinking. Institutions integrating practical training and industry-relevant coursework better prepare students. Key factors include curriculum relevance, industry partnerships, and institutional support aligning with industry needs. Regularly updated curricula, incorporating industry feedback, relevant certifications, and practical training, greatly enhance graduate employability (Garwe, 2015). This alignment equips students with job-market skills, improving employment chances. Collaboration among government, educational institutions, and industry is crucial for creating a framework addressing job market complexities.

Government policies supporting educational funding, industry partnerships, and employment initiatives are crucial for effective collaboration. Continuous improvement in higher education is essential for enhancing employability and addressing job market needs. Institutions must commit to curriculum development, integrating employer feedback, new technologies, and adapting to industry trends.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations can be proffered:

There should be aligned educational programs with the needs of the industry. This alignment ensures that graduates possess skills employers require, bridging the gap between education and employment. By Incorporating practical training and soft skills into the curriculum is crucial for enhancing graduate employability. Internships, apprenticeships, and hands-on projects let students apply theoretical knowledge in real-world settings.

There should be the strengthening industry partnerships for enhancing employability, as these collaborations provide students

with practical experiences and job opportunities. Internships are particularly valuable, offering students the chance to apply their theoretical knowledge in real-world settings, gain professional experience, and build a network of industry contacts. Educational programs must stay relevant to job market needs. Universities should regularly seek employer feedback on curriculum and skills. The government should establish career services offices to track graduate employment and provide job search assistance.

References

Adeyemi, K. & Akpotu, N. (2020). Gender analysis of students' enrollment in Nigerian universities. *Higher Education*, 48(3), 361-378

Adewolu Ogwo, A. (2024). Higher Education, skills development and students' preparedness for employability: A case study of the University of Lagos, Nigeria (towards a sustained practice approach with the triple helix model of innovation*)* (Doctoral dissertation, UCL (University College London)).

Aithal, P. S., & Maiya, A. K. (2023). Innovations in higher education industry-shaping the future. *International Journal of Case Studies in Business, IT, and Education (IJCSBE)*, *7*(4), 283-311.

Alam, A., & de Diego, M. E. (2019). *Unpacking school-to-work transition: Data evidence and synthesis*. Scoping Paper 02, Office of Global Insight and Policy, UNICEF.

Al-Braizat, H. (2016). Youth education and its role in achieving sustainable development. *International Journal of Research in Social Sciences*, *6*(3), 356–367.

Altaany, H. M., & Abdelbary, O. (2024). Civic education and its role in social stabilization: A comprehensive review. *Pakistan Journal of Criminology*, *16*(3).

Aluoch, J. R. J. (2021). *The extent to which technical and vocational education and training institutions prepare their graduates for the labour market in Kenya* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Eldoret).

Bal-Domańska, B. (2022). The impact of macroeconomic and structural factors on the unemployment of young women and men. *Economic Change and Restructuring*, *55*(2), 1141-1172.

Benson, V. N. (2019). Youth unemployment among graduates of tertiary institutions in Kenya. The case of Africa inland church Jericho, *Africa Journal*, 4(1), 10-24

Bojadjieva, D. M., Cvetanoska, M., Kozheski, K., Mujčinović, A., & Gašparović, S. (2022). The impact of education on youth employability: The case of selected Southeastern European Countries. *Youth & Society*, *54*(2_suppl), 29S-51S.

British Council. (2012). *Gender in Nigeria report 2012: Improving the lives of girls and women in Nigeria*. Retrieved fromhttps://www.britishcouncil.org

Caroleo, F. E., Ciociano, E., & Destefanis, S. (2017). Youth unemployment, labour-market institutions and education: A cross-country analysis. In *Young People and the Labour Market* (pp. 13-30). Routledge.

Chan, R. Y. (2016). Understanding the purpose of higher education: An analysis of the economic and social benefits for completing a college degree. *Journal of Education Policy, Planning and Administration,* 6(5), 1-40.

Cruz, M., & Ahmed, S. A. (2018). On the impact of demographic change on economic growth and poverty. *World development*, *105*, 95-106.

Daniel, J. (2012). Making sense of MOOCs: Musings in a maze of myth, paradox, and possibility. *Journal of Interactive Media in Education*, 2012(3).

de O Silva, F., Espuny, M., Costa, A. C., Anaya, Y. B., Faria, A. M., Santos, G., & de Oliveira, O. J. (2024). Drivers for entrepreneurship education: Harnessing innovation for quality youth employment and income generation. *Quality Innovation Prosperity/Kvalita Inovácia Prosperita*, *28*(1).

Emeh, I. E. J. (2012). Tackling youth unemployment in Nigeria; The Lagos state development and empowerment programmes initiatives. *Afro Asian Journal of Social Sciences*, 3(3), 1-30.

European Commission. (2007). Promoting young people's full participation in education, employment and society, *Brussels.*

Fredua Kwasi-Agyeman (2020) Public funding of higher education and student access: A comparative study of two public universities in Africa, *Journal of Comparative and International Higher Education*, 12(6S1)

Garwe, E. C. (2015). Quality assurance in higher education in Zimbabwe. *Quality Assurance in Education*, 23(1), 20-30.

Hollweg, C. H. (2019). Global value chains and employment in developing economies. *Global Value Chain Development Report*, *2019*, 63.

Michoń, P. (2018). The story of misleading rates and omitted demographic changes. The post-crisis youth employment in 33 European countries. *Prace naukowe uniwersytetu ekonomicznego we Wrocławiu*, (510), 125-139..

National Bureau of Statistics (NBS). (2021). *Labor Force Statistics: Unemployment and Underemployment Report (Q4 2020)*. Retrieved from https://www.nigerianstat.gov.ng

National Universities Commission (NUC). (2021). *Statistics on Nigerian universities*. Retrieved from https://www.nuc.edu.ng

Nelson-Ogbaeja, S. A., Ogba, O. C., & Ogbaeja, N. I. (2024). Perception of Ebonyi state university undergraduates of the unbundling of mass communication programme in Nigerian universities. *International Journal of Sub-Saharan African Research*, *2*(1), 59-70.

Ogunyinka, E. K., & Okeke, B. C. (2020). Funding higher education in Nigeria: A way forward. *African Educational Research Journal*, 8(3), 453-460.

Onwuameze, N. (2013). Educational opportunity and inequality in Nigeria: Assessing social background, gender and regional effects. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 4(14), 15-24.

Seetanah, B., & Teeroovengadum, V. (2019). Does higher education matter in African economic growth? Evidence from a PVAR approach. *Policy Reviews in Higher Education*, *3*(2), 125-143.

Sironi, M. (2018). Economic conditions of young adults before and after the Great Recession. *Journal of family and economic issues*, *39*(1), 103-116.

Tafere, Y., & Chuta, N. (2020). The Unrealised Promise of Education: The Challenge of School to Work Transition in Ethiopia. Oxford Department of International Development (ODID), 1-20

Udo, A. B., & Edo, E. C. (2012). Economic development and unemployment in Nigeria: An empirical analysis. *Nigerian Journal of Economic and Social Studies*, 54(1), 1-17.

World Bank. (2019). *Nigeria Economic Update: Jumpstarting Inclusive Growth*. Washington, DC: World Bank.