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## INFLUENCE OF EXTRACURRICULAR INVOLVEMENT ON GRADUATE EMPLOYABILITY

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### ABSTRACT

This study examined the influence of extracurricular involvement on graduate employability in Ibadan Metropolis, Nigeria. Three research questions were raised to guide this study. The descriptive survey research design of the ex-post facto type was used and the multi-stage sampling technique was adopted. The sample size comprised 385 Master's degree students of the University of Ibadan who were previously or currently employed and 50 employers in Ibadan Metropolis, Nigeria. Two sets of questionnaires were used for this study. Frequency counts, simple percentage, mean, standard deviation and t-test were used to analyze the data in this study. The findings revealed that graduates involve themselves in volunteering activities, sports, student unionism, religious activities, drama, music, catering, tailoring, cream production, comedy show and barbering. It was found that graduates frequently participated in religious activities while on campus more than any other extracurricular activities. The findings of the study also showed that employers perceived extracurricular involvement as a factor influencing graduate employability to a moderate extent. There was no significant difference between the perception of public and private organization employers on the extent to which extracurricular involvement influences graduate employability. Based on these findings, the study recommended that higher institutions should maintain extracurricular activities in their budget. Management of higher institutions need to communicate and promote the value of extracurricular activities.

**Keywords:** Extracurricular involvement, Graduate employability, Employment, Higher education, Nigeria



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## INTRODUCTION

Global concern has erupted because the present undergraduate curriculum is not producing graduates with the kind of professional and lifelong learning skills required to prosper in their career. This limitation has put pressure on higher institutions to improve graduate employability by ensuring that learning experiences translate into a satisfying transition to the labor market (Pitan, 2016). When quality education results through an improved curriculum, millions of people who receive education would definitely acquire skills that would get them out of poverty, improve their status, mobility and decision making, which will in turn boost national and regional development. Generally, given the current economic conditions, quality education in Nigeria has been ignored with higher education the worse hit in terms of effective management, quality control and provision of sufficient resources for effective teaching and learning. Even though efforts have been made to advance higher education quality in the past one decade, it is apparent that little success has been achieved.

More worrisome is the lack of soft skills among Nigerian graduates, which has rendered them unemployable. While it is important for higher education institutions to produce graduates, the products of these schools must master the skills or competencies for employment and satisfy employer requirements. Employers frequently complain that some of these graduates, who are professionally or technically qualified, seem unemployable because they lack the essential skills or competence required on the job. Lack of requisite skills create a gap in their knowledge which must be filled to make them suitable to vie for the few vacancies available (Sodipo, 2014).

Ogwo (2010) defined employability as the capability to gain meaningful employment, sustain the employment and to get new employment if needed. She said that a mismatch exists between the teaching in higher institutions and labor market needs and emphasized that students must be given life-skills, because employers want curriculum designed to promote conceptual and creative thinking, self-awareness, sense of career direction, and emotional intelligence.

In their respective studies Akerele and Opatola (2004) and Boateng and Ofori-Sarpong (2002) on the labor market for tertiary graduates in Nigeria and Ghana, it was found that, aside from suitable qualifications, graduates need other qualities such as effective communication skills, good personal and social skills, technical and managerial skills, analytical skills and so on, as emphasized by employers.

Given the high competition in the market and high cost of on-the-job training, employers want candidates who are ready to perform very well on their jobs. Unfortunately, employers reported that graduates lack essential skills for employability. In South Africa, many graduates were found to lack soft skills, work readiness and experience (Pauw, Ooshuizen, & Westhuizen, 2006). Pauw et al. (2006) also stated that at the beginning of their careers, several graduates lack requisite skills such as communication skills, time management and creative thinking. Employers reported that current graduates lack basic skills to complete simple assignments which depicts that certification is a mere formality rather than an indication of good accomplishment (Boateng & Ofori-Sarpong, 2002).

Several undergraduates consider engagement in extracurricular activities as a waste of time. Therefore, they doubt whether extracurricular activities can really enhance their future employability. Extracurricular activities confer a range of benefits to participants.



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They help to foster people skills and the experience of handling certain situations; help to develop the soft skills of people which ultimately lead to improved overall performance in both academic and non-academic activities (Kumarasinghe & Udeshika, 2015). Employers do not need the theoretical knowledge of candidates, but their practical knowledge for handling problems in real world situations. They search for fresh graduates who can contest in this dynamic competitive world and expect fresh graduates to have the ability to do things that require knowledge or skills obtained from their non-academic activities.

Many schools look for ways to cut their expenditures; to do this, they usually eliminate expenditure on extracurricular activities (Parrino, 2003). In fact, extracurricular activities seem to be the first thing that schools leave out following budget cuts. Schreiber and Chambers (2002) reported that extracurricular activities are usually dropped in an environment favoring student academic achievement. This study, therefore, aims at ascertaining the influence of extracurricular involvement on graduate employability, in order to curtail the worrisome trend of graduate unemployment in Ibadan Metropolis, Nigeria.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions were generated specifically to guide this study:

1. What are the types of extracurricular activities graduates involve themselves in the course of studying?
2. What are the perceptions of employers on the extent to which extracurricular involvement influence graduate employability?
3. Is there any significant difference between the perception of public and private organizations' employers on the extent to which extracurricular involvement influences graduate employability?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Kinash (2015) explained the similarities and differences between extracurricular activities and co-curricular activities. Both involve student recreational or leisure pursuits that happen outside their regular curriculum. The activities taking place beyond the classroom or e-learning include club or society membership, sports, and student leadership. While extracurricular activities are separate from the formal learning program, higher institutions put co-curricular activities in line with formal institutional education so that such activities are part of the overall learning experience (Kinash, 2015).

Previous studies indicated that extracurricular involvement enhances employability skills (Astin, 1993; Brennan, 2004; Eide & Ronan, 2001; Stuart, Lido, Morgan, & May, 2008; Hsien-Hsien, Hsien-Yuan, Sandra & Tze-Li, 2013; Keenan, 2010; Kumarasinghe & Udeshika, 2015). Engaging in student-to-student interaction produced positive effects on student cultural awareness, leadership development, and academic development with an increase in critical thinking and problem solving skills (Astin, 1993). Engagement in extracurricular activities helps to enhance the mental well-being of young people by decreasing stress, keeping them fit, and improving feelings about their appearance (Daley & Leahy, 2003). It was shown that the self-perception of those engaged in extracurricular activities was higher than those who did not (Daley & Leahy, 2003).



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Kaufman and Gabler (2004) found that activities such as music and dance, public service, interscholastic team sports and student government all improved US students' likelihood of college admission. These activities provide hands-on skills and training, alongside opportunities for increasing self-esteem and investing in school life. By participating in extracurricular activities, youths can learn skills such as team work and leadership, and these may be helpful in other parts of their lives (Wilson, 2009).

According to Ramesh, Mann, and Parrot (2014) mathematics students can enhance employability skills by implementing relevant extracurricular activities throughout their degree programs. Ramesh et al. (2014) stated that student feedback on the activities has been very positive and the implementation appeared to have enhanced their employability outcomes. Tchibozo (2007) found that participation in extracurricular activities developed the employability skills emphasized by employers. Students are able to develop their soft skills by involving in formal and informal activities, such as organizing seminars, workshops and conferences (Syakir, 2009). Huang and Chang (2004) found that involvement in extracurricular activities also led to an increase in cognitive skills.

Shahiri and Adnan (2015), however, in their study on the effect of extracurricular activities on graduate employability using the Cox Proportional Hazard Model, established that extracurricular activities do not have significant effect on graduate employability.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### ***Research Design***

A quantitative research design was adopted in this study. Specifically, the descriptive survey research design of the ex-post facto type was used in this study. This design was used to assess the influence of extracurricular involvement on graduate employability in Ibadan Metropolis, Nigeria. This design was considered suitable for this study because it gives the researchers the chance to do the study without interfering with the variables.

### ***Population and Sampling***

The population of this study comprised 2014/ 2015 and 2015/ 2016 Master's degree students in 12 Faculties of the University of Ibadan who were previously or currently employed and employers of labor (employees' bosses, consultants and Human Resource Managers) in Ibadan Metropolis, Nigeria. These Faculties are: Arts, Science, Education, Law, Technology, Social sciences, Agriculture and Forestry, Dentistry, Veterinary Medicine, Basic Medical Sciences, Clinical Sciences, and Public Health. All the faculties account for 84 departments.

Multi-stage sampling technique was used in this study. Through the use of simple random sampling technique, six (6) faculties (Agriculture and forestry, Arts, Education, Science, Social Sciences and Technology) were randomly selected from thirteen (13) faculties in the University of Ibadan in the first stage, which represents 46% of the faculties in the University of Ibadan. Using simple random sampling technique, 42% of the departments in the selected faculties were drawn in the second stage. Hence, thirty-five (35) departments were drawn from 6 selected faculties of the University of Ibadan.



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Due to inadequate information about Master's degree students in 35 departments drawn from 6 selected faculties of the University of Ibadan who were previously or currently employed, we used accidental sampling technique. In the third stage, accidental sampling technique was used to select 11 respondents who were previously or currently employed from each of the 35 departments drawn from 6 selected faculties. The sample size of Master's degree students who were previously or currently employed in this study comprised 385 respondents (Check appendix to see how the sample size of 385 respondents was determined through the formula used by Smith, 2013).

We contacted potential respondents who were previously or currently employed. We did this by going to various departments in search of those who were previously or currently employed for their participation in this study. This was done until we obtained at least 385 respondents willing to participate in this study. To gather information from employers on how extracurricular involvement affects graduate employability, employers, consultants and human resource managers were randomly selected from 20 organizations (both public and private sector).

### ***Research Instruments***

We developed two sets of questionnaires based on literature review in order to collect useful data for this study and they are:

1. Extracurricular Involvement Questionnaire for Graduate Students (EIQGS) which comprised two sections. Section A gathered information on the demographic characteristics of the graduates and it consisted of 4 items while section B elicited information about the extracurricular activities graduates involve themselves during their studies and it consisted of 13 items.
2. Extracurricular Involvement on Graduate Employability Questionnaire for Employers (EIGEQE) which comprised two sections. Section A was used to collect information on the demographic characteristics of the employers and it consisted of 7 items while section B was used to gather information about the influence of extracurricular involvement on graduate employability from employers and it consisted of 15 items. All the items in section B were rated on a 4-point Likert-type scale of 'To a large extent' (4points), 'To a moderate extent' (3points), 'To a low extent' (2 points) and 'Not at all' (1point).

### ***Validity and Reliability of the Instrument***

The drafted instruments for the study were validated by experts in Educational Management and an expert in Educational Evaluation. Their suggestions and ideas were incorporated in the final draft of the questionnaire before administration. The Cronbach's alpha value obtained was .938 for the Extracurricular Involvement on Graduate Employability Questionnaire for Employers (EIGEQE) which confirmed that the instrument was reliable. The Extracurricular Involvement Questionnaire for Graduate Students (EIQGS) seeks factual information which cannot be frequently changed by the respondents. Hence, the instruments were reliable.

### ***Data Collection Procedure***

Data were obtained from the responses of the participants through the instruments given to them by the researchers with the help of two trained research assistants, after due permission from the authorities of the departments and organizations involved in the study.



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## ***Data Analysis Method***

After collecting data, we applied descriptive statistics such as mean, frequency counts, simple percentage, standard deviation and inferential statistics such as *t*-test to analyze the data based on the research questions.

## **RESULTS**

***Research Question 1:*** What are the type of extracurricular activities graduates involve themselves in course of studying?

The following Table 1 shows the types of extracurricular activities graduates adopted in the course of studying.

Table 1

*Types of extracurricular activities graduates adopted in the course of studying*

Types of Extracurricular Activities Adopted by Graduates in Course of Studying



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S/N	Extracurricular	Yes	No	Frequently	Occasionally	NA
1	Volunteering	170(44.2%)	215(55.8%)	95(24.7%)	75(19.5%)	215(55.8%)
2	Sport	117(30.4%)	268(69.6%)	40(10.4%)	77(20%)	268(69.6%)
3	SUG	134(34.8%)	251(65.2%)	79(20.5%)	58(15.1%)	248(64.4%)
4	Religion activities	238(61.8%)	147(38.2%)	205(53.2%)	35(9.1%)	145(37.7%)
5	Drama	57(14.8%)	328(85.2%)	23(6%)	35(9.1%)	327(84.9%)
6	Music	1(0.3%)	384(99.7%)	1(0.3%)	1(0.3%)	383(99.5%)
7	Catering service	1(0.3%)	384(99.7%)	1(0.3%)	1(0.3%)	383(99.5%)
8	Tailoring	1(0.3%)	384(99.7%)	1(0.3%)	1(0.3%)	383(99.5%)
9	Cream production	1(0.3%)	384(99.7%)	1(0.3%)	1(0.3%)	383(99.5%)
10	Comedy show	1(0.3%)	384(99.7%)	1(0.3%)	1(0.3%)	383(99.5%)
11	Bag making (Ankara) Barbering	1(0.3%)	384(99.7%)	1(0.3%)	1(0.3%)	383(99.5%)
12	None of the above	1(0.3%)	384(99.7%)	1(0.3%)	1(0.3%)	383(99.5%)
13		33(8.6%)	352(91.4%)	-	-	-

Note: Keys → NA – Not Applicable, SUG – Students Union Government. Source: Field Work, 2016

Graduates who were previously or currently employed were asked what type of extracurricular activities they involved themselves in the course of studying. As can be seen in Table 1, only 44.2% of the sampled graduates participated in volunteering activities, 30.4% in sporting activities, 34.8% in student unionism, 61.8% in religious activities and 14.8% in drama. Only 0.3% participated in music, catering, tailoring, cream production, comedy show, bag making (Ankara) and barbering. Some 8.6% of the graduates did not participate in any of the extracurricular activities in the course of studying. Table 1 also shows that 24.7% of the graduate frequently participated in volunteering activities, 10.4% frequently participated in sports, 20.5% frequently participated in student union government, 53.2% frequently participated in religious activities, 6% frequently participated in drama and only 0.3% frequently participated in music, catering, tailoring, cream production, comedy show, bag making (Ankara) and barbering.



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We can therefore infer that graduates involve themselves in volunteering activities, sports, student unionism, religious activities, drama, music, catering, tailoring, cream production, comedy show and barbering. And among those graduates who engaged in one or more extracurricular activities, most of them frequently participated in religious activities while on campus than any other extracurricular activities. However, only 0.3% of these graduates engaged in entrepreneurship. That is, *1 in every 385*. Table 1 provides complete details of this analysis.

**Research Question 2:** What are the perceptions of employers on the extent to which extracurricular involvement influences graduate employability?

Table 2 shows the responses of employers on the extent to which extracurricular involvement influences graduate employability.

Table 2

*Employers' Rating on Extent of Extracurricular Involvement Influence on Graduate Employability Skills*

S/N	ITEMS	GE	ME	LE	NA	InD	Mean	SD
1	Communication skills	30(60%)	19(38%)	1(2%)	-	-	3.58	0.54
2	Interpersonal skills	29(58%)	21(42%)	-	-	-	3.58	0.50
3	Decision making skills	23(46%)	26(52%)	1(2%)	-	-	3.44	0.54
4	Critical thinking skills	24(48%)	22(44%)	4(8%)	-	-	3.40	0.64
5	Leadership skills	31(62%)	13(26%)	5(10%)	1(2%)	-	3.48	0.76
6	Emotional intelligence skills	20(40%)	23(46%)	7(14%)	-	-	3.26	0.69
7	Information Technology skills	22(44%)	22(44%)	6(12%)	-	-	3.32	0.68
8	Presentation skills	25(50%)	19(38%)	6(12%)	-	-	3.38	0.70
9	Problem solving skills	23(46%)	23(46%)	3(6%)	1(2%)	-	3.36	0.70
10	Entrepreneurial skills	20(40%)	22(44%)	8(16%)	-	-	3.24	0.72
11	Analytical skills	15(30%)	32(64%)	3(6%)	-	-	3.24	0.56
12	Numeracy skills	12(24%)	24(48%)	13(26%)	1(2%)	-	2.94	0.77
13	Technical skills	17(34%)	21(42%)	10(20%)	2(4%)	-	3.06	0.84
14	Creative and innovative skills	27(54%)	20(40%)	3(6%)	-	-	3.48	0.61
15	Personal development	25(50%)	19(38%)	5(10%)	-	1(2%)	3.41	0.67

Weighted mean = 3.34

Note: Keys → GE – To a great extent, ME – To a moderate extent, LE – To a less extent,

NA – Not at all, InD – Indifferent, SD- Standard deviation. Source: Field Work, 2016.

Table 2 shows that employers rated Communication skills (Mean = 3.58, SD = 0.54) and Interpersonal skills (Mean = 3.58, SD = 0.50) as the employability skills that can be influenced by extracurricular involvement of graduate to a great extent.





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Table 2 also shows that the employers scored Decision making skills (Mean = 3.44,  $SD = 0.54$ ), Critical thinking skills (Mean = 3.40,  $SD = 0.64$ ), Personal development (Mean = 3.41,  $SD = 0.67$ ), Leadership skills (Mean=3.48,  $SD=0.76$ ) Creative and Innovative skills (Mean = 3.48,  $SD = 0.61$ ), Emotional intelligence skills (Mean = 3.26,  $SD = 0.69$ ), Entrepreneurial skills (Mean = 3.24,  $SD = 0.72$ ), Analytical skills (Mean = 3.24,  $SD = 0.56$ ), Presentation skills (Mean = 3.38,  $SD = 0.70$ ), Numerical skills (Mean = 2.94,  $SD = 0.77$ ), Information Technology skills (Mean = 3.32,  $SD = 0.68$ ), Creative and Innovative skills (Mean = 3.48,  $SD = 0.61$ ) and Technical skills (Mean = 3.06,  $SD = 0.84$ ) as employability skills that extracurricular involvement of graduates can influence to a moderate extent.

The employers' rating shows that extracurricular involvement of graduates contributes to the employability skills (except for Communication skills and Interpersonal skills) to a moderate extent. In all, a weighted average of 3.34 indicates that extracurricular involvement influences graduate employability to a moderate extent. Table 2 gives detailed information.

**Research Question 3:** Is there any significant difference between the perception of public and private organizations' employers on the extent to which extracurricular involvement influences graduate employability?

Table 3 gives the results for t-test for significant difference between the perception of public and private organizations' employers.

Table 3

*Test of Significant Difference between Perception of Public and Private Organizations' Employers on the Extent of Extracurricular Involvement Influence on Graduate Employability*

<b>Types of organisation</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>DF</b>	<b>t-value</b>	<b>Sig(t)</b>	<b>Remark</b>
Public	17	50.059	5.092	48	-0.036	0.971	Not significant
Private	33	50.121	6.097				

*Note:* Not Significant at 0.05 level of significance.

Table 3 shows that private organizations' mean score (Mean = 50.121) is higher than the mean score of the public organizations (Mean = 50.059). The observed difference in the mean scores, however, is not significant ( $t_{(48)} = -0.036$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ). This implies that there is no significant difference between the perception of public and private organisations' employers on the extent to which extracurricular involvement influences graduate employability. Table 3 provides detailed information.

### DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study showed that graduates involve themselves in volunteering activities, sports, student unionism, religious activities, drama, music, catering, tailoring, cream production, comedy show and barbering.



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It was also revealed that most of the graduates frequently participated in religious activities while on campus than any other extracurricular activities.

This study showed that extracurricular involvement influences graduate employability to a moderate extent. This finding is consistent with many previous studies (Astin, 1993; Brennan, 2004; Daley & Leahy, 2003; Eide & Ronan, 2001; Huang & Chang, 2004; Kaufman & Gabler, 2004; Keenan, 2010; Tchibozo, 2007; Stuart et al., 2008; Syakir, 2009; Hsien-Hsien et al., 2013; Ramesh et al., 2014; Kumarasinghe & Udeshika, 2015; Wilson, 2009) which reported that extracurricular involvement enhances graduate employability. However, the finding of this study is inconsistent with the study of Shahiri and Adnan (2015) who found that extracurricular activities had no significant effect on graduate employability.

It was also discovered in this study that there is no significant difference between the perception of public and private organizations' employers on the extent to which extracurricular involvement influences graduate employability.

### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The problem of graduate employability skills in Nigeria is extremely worrisome. Employers and even the general public are complaining that the pool of graduates being churned out by higher institutions do not possess the requisite skills for employment. This study, therefore, set out to ascertain whether extracurricular involvement influences graduate employability in Ibadan Metropolis, Nigeria.

Based on the findings of this study, graduates involve themselves in volunteering activities, sports, student unionism, religious activities, drama, music, catering, tailoring, cream production, comedy show and barbering. And among those graduates who engaged in one or more extracurricular activities, most of them frequently participated in religious activities while on campus than any other extracurricular activities. The study also revealed that employers perceived that extracurricular involvement influences graduate employability to a moderate extent. There is no significant difference between the perception of public and private organizations' employers on the extent to which extracurricular involvement influences graduate employability.

In the view of these findings, the following recommendations were made to enhance graduate employability:

1. Higher institutions should not leave out extracurricular activities from their budget. They should invest enough funds, and encourage students to involve themselves, in extracurricular activities to enhance graduate employability skills.
2. Management of higher institutions must ensure that the value of engaging in extracurricular activities is communicated and promoted in higher institutions because this will help to enhance graduate employability.



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## APPENDIX

### ***Determination of sample size without population***

The formula for determining sample size without population is  $(Z\text{-score})^2 \times \text{Standard Deviation} \times (1\text{-Standard Deviation}) / (\text{margin of error})^2$

When using this method, confidence level corresponds to a Z-score.

For this study, we used a 95% confidence level – the Z-score of 95% confidence level has a Z-score of 1.96, standard deviation is 0.5, and a margin of error is + or - 5%. All these numbers were plugged into the aforementioned formula.

$$((1.96)^2 \times .5(.5)) / (.05)^2$$

$$(3.8416 \times .25) / .0025$$

$$.9604 / .0025$$

$$384.16$$

Hence, 385 respondents were used for this study (Smith, 2013).