

Walden University

College of Management and Human Potential

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Abstract

Employers' Strategies Adopting Support for Nigerian Higher Education Institutions

Enhancing College Graduates Employability

by

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MBA, University of Cumbria, 2014

BSc, University of Lagos, 1988

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

In Nigeria, employers face the challenge of recruiting and retaining a competent workforce. Most college graduates cannot perform basic office tasks. The problem is that employers in service organizations are failing to adopt strategies to support Nigerian higher education institutions to enhance graduate employability. The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore the strategy an employer in a service organization adopts to support Nigerian higher education institutions in enhancing college graduate employability. The stakeholder theory underpinned this study. Five managers and five graduate employees using purposeful sampling were interviewed in a service organization in Lagos, Nigeria. Data were analyzed using pattern matching logic after triangulation of emerging themes from interviews and triangulating the themes with internal and external organizational artifacts. Research results showed that employers have not supported higher education institutions in enhancing the employability of graduates. A potential positive social change is that the study's findings could help establish impactful collaboration between higher education institutions and employers in the service sector to boost graduate employability and minimize college graduate unemployment.

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Dedication

I am dedicating this long and arduous venture to the Almighty God who has assisted me every step by surrounding me with helpers of destiny too innumerable to mention. I hope I can appreciate them enough because I know I cannot repay you adequately.

I also dedicate this dissertation to my late parents, Chief & Chief Mrs. G. B. O Atoro, who did their very best to clear the pathway for my education and, more importantly, established me on how to build excellent and enduring relationships with God and people. I appreciate the two great fathers who loved and cared for me, like their biological children, Papa Richard Oyewole Ogunsola and Senator Olabiyi Durojaiye. How wonderful would it have been for these great men to witness my graduation ceremony? Although you have all gone to be with the Lord, this project is dedicated partly to you all. Thank you all for standing firm behind my thoughts, values, and beliefs in becoming an agent for social change. Finally, I dedicate this project to my fantastic grandson, Prince Olufemi Oladeji Bizuneh Tamrat Ogunsola, and my darling husband, Olawale Idowu Ogunsola, for your understanding and support throughout this journey.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Organizations require employees who can demonstrate core technical skills needed to work in their field, soft skills, positive attitude, and self-drive to contribute to organizational performance (Okolie et al., 2019). In Nigeria, organizations face a critical challenge in getting work-ready graduates to work with (Jacob et al., 2021; Nwajiuba et al., 2020; Okolie et al., 2021). After graduation, they cannot perform essential office functions such as filing documents, using Microsoft office on computers, client services, letter writing, leadership, and presentation skills (Omoniwa & Adedapo, 2017; Pitan, 2016). Researchers have concluded that graduate unemployment is a significant human resource challenge in Nigeria (Babalola & Oni, 2021; IseOlorunkanmi et al., 2021; Obor & Kayode, 2022). The graduate employment challenge is not related to job availability but a lack of employability skills (Okunuga & Ajeyalemi, 2018; Pitan, 2016, 2017). Employability skills are essential skills, dispositions, and personal qualities that enable employees to perform their workplace functions (Römgens et al., 2020). These skills include communication, supervisory and leadership, critical thinking, teamwork, problem-solving, and time management.

Private sector and state governments set up universities and other higher education institutions (HEIs) on an increasing basis to absorb higher school leavers in Nigeria (Iruonagbe et al., 2015), producing unprepared and unemployable graduates (Obor & Kayode, 2022), leading to higher unemployment (Kessy, 2020; Olabiyi, 2021). Studies have identified several factors as to why colleges fail to produce competent graduates. For example, Ekechukwu (2019) reported the consequences of decades of

underfunding in Nigerian universities. Ogunnubi and Okeke-Uzodike (2016) explored bad governance's impact on Nigeria's education sector. Ogunode et al., (2022a) found that low-quality lecturers contributed to poor graduate preparedness in Nigerian HEIs. Osoba et al. (2021) identified poor learning environments as challenging for higher institutions to produce employable graduates. Graduate employability challenges affect graduates, making them incapable of earning a living; it affects employers in terms of the high turnover of employees, the replacement cost of human resources, and the social problem of unemployment.

Unprepared college graduates perform sub-optimally at work, creating executive stress and poor organizational results (Adejare et al., 2020; Babalola, 2021; Omoniwa & Adedapo, 2017). Moreover, researchers have called for a future study on how employers can assist colleges in enhancing the quality of graduates by strengthening students' learning experience and preparing them for a competent work-life experience (Ayodele et al., 2020; Babalola & Oni, 2021; Ezeani, 2018). The study focused on understanding employers' strategies to support HEIs in enhancing Nigerian graduate employability.

Background of the Study

HEIs are responsible for producing employable graduates for the labor market (Kayode et al., 2015; Teng et al., 2019; Velasco, 2012). However, meeting the demand for competencies in the workplace is a significant challenge confronting college graduates of the 21st century, especially with the rapid changes of fourth industrial era economies (Butum & Nicolescu, 2019). According to Römogens et al. (2020), employability is an individual's ability to gain, maintain, or replace employment within a

reasonable time. Employers expect graduates to possess employability skills, which include communication, collaboration, organizing, coordinating, leading, problem-solving, innovation and enterprise, organization and planning, self-management, learning capabilities, and computer proficiency (Kenayathulla et al., 2019). What undermines employability may be different from country to country, such as lack of exposure to the work environment, funding problems, and poor educational policies (Leonardi et al., 2018); the consequences are similar, leading to unemployment, underemployment, poverty, youth restiveness, and crime (Axelrad et al., 2018). The lack of graduate employability skills has created a gap between graduate work readiness and employers' expectations (Chigbu & Nekhwevha, 2022).

Scholars have investigated the skill mismatch and how to improve graduate employability to match employers' needs in developing and developed countries (Abas & Imam, 2016; Nabulsi et al., 2021). Research also established that graduates of specific courses are more prepared for work than others. For example, Ofosuhene (2022) found that business course graduates were more employable than graduates with a degree in education.

In a literature review and analysis of graduate employability in developed countries, Bowers-Brown and Harvey (2004) discovered that graduate unemployment was linked to admitting more students than can be sufficiently grounded to achieve economic benefits. Although the high tuition helped better prepare graduates with some essential employability skills in writing, presenting, communicating, and teamwork, the

graduates needed more specific employability skills like interpersonal, critical thinking, and soft skills (Mainga et al., 2022).

World Economic Forum (2020) identified the need for HEIs to prepare graduates with employability skills mentioned above. Moreover, studies found that most employers in developed countries invest in reskilling and retraining graduates to enhance the workforce quality and make more profit (Allas et al., 2020) despite the better work readiness curricula. The implication is that employers' investment in employee development positively impacts the overall performance of organizations (Manzoor et al., 2021).

Within developing countries, Asomaning et al. (2021) and Winful et al. (2022) found that the graduates lacked basic employability skills like computer usage, communication, self-management, and exposure to work experience. Outside of classroom inadequacies, Asomaning et al. found that the graduates needed a better attitude toward job opportunities, buttressing the employability challenge in developing countries. The statistic shows that due to a lack of employability skills, about 10% of their graduates get jobs after a year of graduation, and it will take about 10 years for a graduate to be correctly employed after graduation (Institute of Statistical, Social and Economic Research, n.d.). Like other West African countries, scholars confirmed that over 70% of college graduates in Nigeria cannot perform basic tasks of filing documents, answering phones professionally, writing official letters, providing client services, and using office equipment like printers, scanners, and projectors (Okolie et al., 2019;

Olorunfemi, 2021). Thus, employers sack most college graduates within 6 months of engagement (Nwajiuba et al., 2020).

Until recently, attention has always been on graduate unemployment in Nigeria without exploring the root cause (Dada & Ojetunde, 2020; Kayode et al., 2015). Scholars have established that graduates do not get jobs because they lack employability skills and not because there are no jobs (Okunuga & Ajeyalemi, 2018; Pitan, 2017). Thus, researchers have explored the concept, causes, and negative impact of college graduate unemployability on organizations' performances (Hwang, 2017; Ibikunle et al., 2019).

According to Olorunfemi (2021), graduate unpreparedness accounts for 40% percent of unemployment in Nigeria. Nwajiuba et al. (2020) and Engelhart and Mupinga (2020) suggested poor educational curricula, which exclude what employers desire, may contribute to unemployment among Nigerian graduates. Additionally, scholars have confirmed that Nigerian HEIs have limited capacity to prepare graduates for work due to inadequate funding (Nwajiuba et al., 2020), outdated curricula, poor learning environment (Okolie et al., 2019), low quality of lecturers (Okolie et al., 2020a), poor attitude of students to learning, poor policies on education (Nwajiuba et al., 2020), and a lack of mentoring and work learning opportunities from the stakeholders (Adebakin et al., 2015). Moreover, Okolie et al. (2020a) found that Nigeria's HEIs focus more on content knowledge and less on generic and softer skills (Okunuga & Ajeyalemi, 2018; Pitan, 2017). Thinking that having more HEIs will alleviate graduate unemployment, the private sector and government set up colleges rapidly in Nigeria; however, they produce more

unprepared and unemployable graduates (Obor & Kayode, 2022), leading to a higher unemployment level (Kessy, 2020).

Several authors have explored the challenges identified and suggested educational curricula updates to include employability skills and inclusion of industry experienced teachers in the academic (Winterton & Turner, 2019). Embedding employability skills will connect graduate work readiness to employers' needs (Okolie et al., 2020b) and provide opportunities for mentoring, internship, attitude development, and other employability skills (Yao & Tuliao, 2019), but will require collaboration between colleges and employers (Ezeani, 2018; Nwajiuba et al., 2020; Okolie et al., 2019) and stakeholders' engagement (Winterton & Turner, 2019).

Overall, Nigeria HEIs need to adapt to the changing needs of employers by embedding employability skills like soft skills, critical thinking skills, self-management, leadership, entrepreneurship, and a positive attitude into their curricula and prepare graduates for the unpredictable future. Overcoming the challenge of graduate employability is a shared responsibility of all stakeholders (Babalola & Oni, 2021; Ferns et al., 2019), which includes educators, graduates, employers, and the government. However, understanding the specific strategies employers can adopt to support HEIs better has not been researched. Exploring Nigerian graduate unemployability through a qualitative study of how employers could better support Nigerian HEIs to enhance graduate work readiness could provide an in-depth understanding of how employers and Nigerian HEIs come to understand, relate to, and manage graduate employability challenges.

Problem Statement

College graduate unemployment in Nigeria has increased in the last 3 decades (Aminu, 2019). The increase in graduate unemployment is because Nigerian universities and other HEIs are not producing competent graduates to meet the expectations of employers (Jacob et al., 2021; Nwajiuba et al., 2020; Okolie et al., 2021; Okunuga & Ajeyalemi, 2018; Omoniwa & Adedapo, 2017; Pitan, 2016). Anah et al. (2017) and Olabiyi (2021) also confirmed that over 70% of college graduates produced by Nigerian universities are unemployable.

The general problem was that most Nigerian college graduates in the labor market are unemployable (Adejare et al., 2020; Omoniwa & Adedapo, 2017). The specific problem is that service organizations fail to adopt strategies to support Nigerian HEIs to enhance graduate employability (Nwajiuba et al., 2020; Otache, 2022).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore the strategies service organizations adopt to support Nigerian HEIs in enhancing college graduate employability. The single case study research design is appropriate as it enables me to explore the complexity of a case and provide a rich description and understanding of the phenomenon. (Yin, 2018). Using a single case study method helped understand how the quality of education impacts graduate readiness for employment and demonstrate an understanding of employers' perspectives about the value and contributions of graduates in the workplace. Furthermore, it explained why employers should support HEIs in enhancing graduates' employability. Employers are the end users of college graduates

and are more affected by the performance of graduates than other stakeholders (Mainga et al., 2022). Unemployable graduates affect the performance of organizations.

Researchers have called for the support of employers in enhancing (Babaloba & Oni, 2021; Nwajiuba et al., 2020; Otache, 2022). Therefore, the phenomenon of interest was strategies adopted by a service organization to support Nigerian higher institutions in enhancing the employability of graduates.

Research Question

What strategies do service organizations adopt to support Nigerian HEIs in enhancing the employability of college graduates?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework that grounded this study was Edward Freeman's (1984) stakeholder theory. The theory emphasizes that to produce value, businesses must consider and include the requirements and interests of all of their stakeholders (Nwajiuba et al., 2020). The theory also describes employers' success regarding the value they deliver to most other stakeholders (Freeman et al., 2020). Therefore, successful employers create projects that impact positively and significantly other stakeholders.

Agwu (2019) described a stakeholder as an individual or group that can impact or be impacted by an institution's action, plan, or initiative. Stakeholders include shareholders, employees, vendors, customers or clients, the government, and society. Stakeholder theory views the ethical and moral values of managers and employees of organizations as essential ingredients in driving organizational performance (Harrison et al., 2015). Therefore, in adopting stakeholder theory, employers' focus should shift from

profit-oriented to the triple bottom line, which covers the three “Ps” of business sustainability - people, planet, and profit (Lariviere & Smit, 2022).

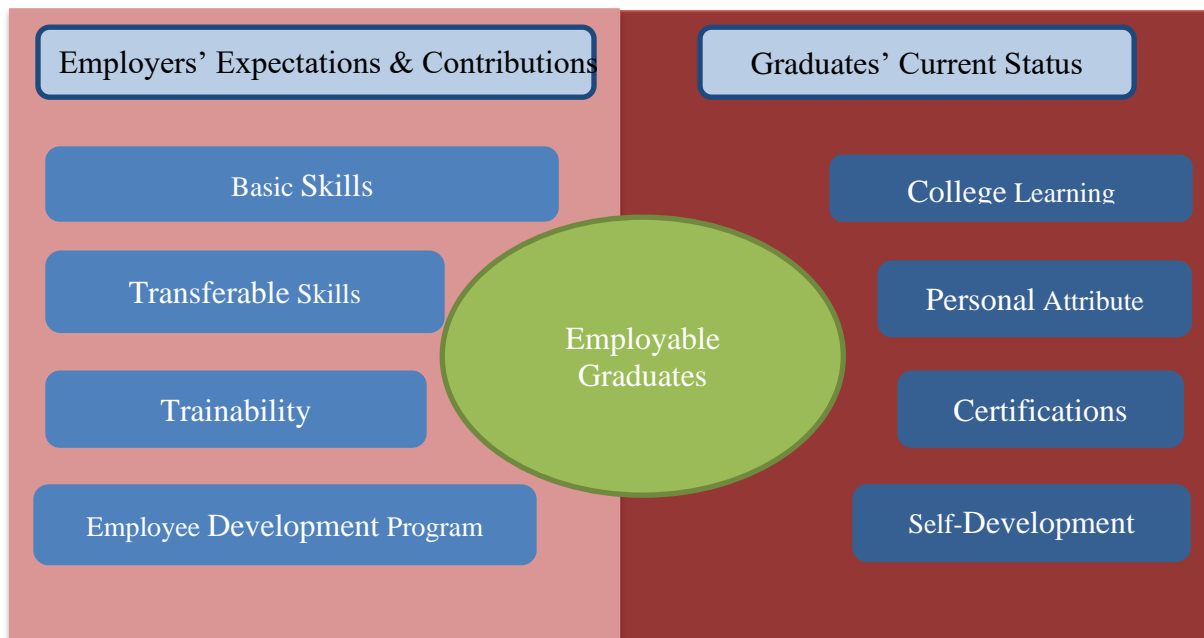
This theory views the relationship between stakeholders as mutually beneficial (Donaldson & Preston, 1995), and stakeholder theory suggests that higher education should closely interact with employers (Langrafe et al., 2020). Specifically, it proposes an enhanced partnership and dialogue between higher education providers and employers, especially in terms of informing the nature of the higher education qualifications offered and shaping the legitimate expectations of employers (Jongbloed et al., 2008). Using stakeholder theory to ground this research established the role of higher institutions in preparing students for the workplace and how other stakeholders related to promoting the common goal of producing employable graduates.

A stake confers ownership and a shared responsibility, which involves partaking in the gains and pains of being of a larger entity (Donaldson & Preston, 1995). Therefore, the stake mentality creates a relationship between the quality of educational attainment and labor market outcomes. Additionally, the theory recognizes that no stakeholder is more important than the other (Freeman et al., 2020). Employers engage employees to render services that meet their business standards, then remunerate, develop, and motivate employees. The theory demands responsible employers to serve stakeholders’ interests, including the broader community housing the HEIs and graduate students, thus achieving a positive balance between the quality of educational attainment and employability and labor market outcomes.

Moriarty (2014) demonstrated that the foundation of stakeholder theory rests on the accountability of organizations to all stakeholders and that their different interests aim to achieve a common goal. Under stakeholder theory, all must work together to create an enabling environment for HEIs to function effectively. Nwajiuba et al. (2020) explored what is needed to improve higher education quality and graduate employability in Nigeria using the stakeholders' theory as their theoretical foundation. Nwajiuba et al. found that the low involvement of the private sector in graduate readiness was a critical factor in the graduate employability challenge in Nigeria. The researchers suggested a collaboration of HEIs, government, and employers that graduate employability in Nigeria needs to improve. Also, Rook and Sloan (2021) used stakeholder theory to explore the role of work integrated learning in enhancing graduate employability. The researchers confirmed the need for collaboration between the industry and HEIs.

Positive change can be achieved when all stakeholders recognize their role in the system and work toward policy and educational curricula implementation (Nwajiuba et al., 2020). Roloff (2008, as cited in Nwajiuba et al., 2020) affirmed the importance of stakeholder collaboration. Therefore, employers' involvement in graduate employability requires a structure that calls for social responsibility. Stakeholder theory focuses on balancing the interests of all the stakeholder groups (Moriarty, 2014). Developing a conceptual framework based on stakeholder theory helped to identify ways in which employers served the interest of internal and external stakeholders, specifically in supporting HEIs to prepare students better to meet the expectations of employers.

Using a single case study approach allowed the researcher to recognize the study of Legg-Jack and Ndebele (2022), who postulated the significance of collecting in-depth data from research participants who have experienced the phenomenon. In a qualitative single case study, the researcher should consider alternative perspectives to avoid presenting only one side of a story and must display sufficient evidence (Legg-Jack & Ndebele, 2022). A case study's peculiarity allows for an in-depth exploration of the research subject from the participants by collecting data from their locations (Rashid et al., 2019). I needed to ensure the convenience and safety of participants, and the interview questions were composed engagingly to draw participants' interest (Yin, 2009). The conceptual framework facilitated an understanding of what employers thought about the value of graduates in the workplace and how organizations could enhance graduates' productivity. The conceptual framework illustrated in Figure 1 offers a logical structure of how the concepts connect the principles to help visualize how ideas in this study relate to one another within the theoretical framework through data collection and analysis.

Figure 1*The Conceptual Diagram for Employability*

Note. This conceptual framework for employability demonstrates the employers' expectations of basic skills graduates should possess and employers' plans to empower unprepared graduates. The figure also reflects graduates' current status and what they need to acquire to work in organizations. The framework identifies how filling the gap between the two stakeholders' perceptions and reality could produce employable and competent graduates.

Nature of the Study

This qualitative single case study explored strategies service organizations adopted to support Nigerian HEIs in enhancing the employability of college graduates. A qualitative approach was suitable because it was required to engage with research

participants via conducting in-depth interviews to obtain data on their experiences and beliefs and other necessary information to explore the phenomenon. Quantitative design was inappropriate as it confined the researcher to existing conceptual models to confirm a hypothesis(es) to understand better the situation and statistical relationship between the variables (Barroga & Matanguihan, 2022). A qualitative single case study is an established tool for a deeper investigation, understanding, and appreciation of an inquiry in a real-world setting (Rashid et al., 2019; Yin, 2009). Moreover, a qualitative single case study focuses on how a specific process interacts with a phenomenon, the nature of the interaction, why the interaction occurs, the different stages of exchange, and the available resources to support these interactions (Rashid et al., 2019), thus helping to obtain in-depth data on the phenomenon being examined. Also, a single case study research design enabled me to explore the complexity of a case via multiple types and sources of information (Yin, 2018).

The key concepts the researcher described in the study included employability, employers, and graduates. *Employability* means having skills and personal attributes that position graduates to gain employment and be successful wherever they work with their skills (Römgens et al., 2020). *Employers* are people or businesses that engage one or more people to work for them for wages or salaries and, in most cases, are interested in enhancing the capability of graduate workers (Jansen et al., 2021). *Graduates* are people who have completed a course of study, training, or a degree in higher institutions, and they are critical resources in managing organizations to achieve sustainability (Purcell et al., 2019).

I explored one service organization in Lagos, Nigeria. Service organizations in Nigeria render professional, technical, and financial services to clients. Service organizations include financial services providers like commercial, investment, microfinance banks, insurance companies, telecommunication companies, management consulting organizations, and medical and other professional service organizations. Service organizations in Nigeria are well-structured and require more college graduate employees than other industry sectors where high school leavers can work (Obor & Kayode, 2022). Therefore, conducting this research in any organization in the service sector provided in-depth data to answer the research question, and the approach can be applied in other settings. I collected data through semi-structured Zoom interviews and document reviews from the participants' offices. Using a naturalistic setting permitted me to relate closely with the participants, feel, see, perceive, discern, and encourage them to share their experiences (Boyko, 2013). The study participants included the head of human resources and managers (heads/supervisors) of four significant departments who work directly with and supervise graduates. Data triangulation was achieved from interviews and internal and external artifacts in this case study research to understand the phenomenon better and test for consistency (Campbell et al., 2020). Artifacts reviewed included human resource documents like the firm's HR policies and programs for employing, inducting, training, and evaluating graduates' performance. Specifically, I interviewed the managers to provide in-depth information, allow for more screening, assist in capturing verbal and non-verbal cues, and capture their emotions and experiences (Adler et al., 2019). I audio-recorded the semi-structured interviews with my

iPhone and transcribed the interview data with Microsoft 365. To achieve data completeness, I used notes and journals to document contextual information during the research process to supplement the primary data from the interview transcripts (Phillippi & Lauderdale, 2018).

The interview guide contained open-ended questions to allow study participants to express their opinions and offer details in this qualitative study. Document analysis is a way of gathering and reviewing relevant documents that relate to the phenomenon, giving more meaning to the topic and complimenting other methods (Bowen, 2009). The documents reviewed included secondary data on the firm's HR policies and programs for employing, inducting, training, and evaluating graduates' performance. The data collection started at the initial stage with 10 participants who were all firm employees and increased until data saturation was achieved (Saunders et al., 2018). Data from the interviews and document analysis were analyzed using Yin's (2009) five analysis phases and their interactions. The data analysis started with compiling data from interview transcripts of managers and graduate employees' relevant human resourcedocuments, including journals and memos. The data were then disassembled into codes using NVivo 14 software.

Codes are words or phrases with meanings (Mattimoe et al., 2021). The codes were grouped into categories to create themes related to the research question (Saldana, 2021). I reassembled the themes to identify patterns that emerged and interpreted them. Finally, I wrote the conclusion. The conclusion included a call for future research and the need to extend the current study.

In this study, I adopted Yin's pattern-matching logic. According to Yin (2018), pattern matching involves comparing a predicted theoretical pattern with an observed empirical pattern. The underlying assumption is that humans make sense of the world by comparing what they observe externally to internal mental models (Suomala & Kauttonen, 2022). Pattern-matching will help readers retrace my thought processes and understand how I arrived at the conclusions. Application of the pattern-matching logic in this study resulted in a more rigorous and structured research process and write-up because it required systematic planning, conceptualization, and detailed documentation throughout the research.

Definitions

I have defined the following terms used in the study.

Employability. Employability is possessing skills and character traits that enable graduates to secure jobs and succeed in their respective fields (Römgens et al., 2020). Römgens et al. (2020) claimed that a person's employability is based on their capacity to effectively carry out their task regarding understanding, abilities, and dispositions.

Employability skills. These skills might be characterized as the employability-enhancing knowledge and learning that graduates require (Okolie et al., 2019). Employability skills can be taught (Liu et al., 2022), especially in colleges, acquired in the offices through training or understudying of an experienced manager (Römgens et al., 2020), and developed by organizations as part of employees' empowerment and evaluation program (Kornelakis & Petrakaki, 2020). According to Kenayathulla et al. (2019), communication, collaboration, organizing, coordinating, leading, problem-

solving, innovation and enterprise, organization and planning, self-management, learning capabilities, and composition are employability skills.

Employees. Employees work for another person or an organization for a reward or consideration (Boon et al., 2019). According to Boon et al. (2019), employees' rewards could be fixed or variable in terms of salaries, wages, or commissions for full-time, part-time, temporary, or seasonal. Employees are essential stakeholders in the success of organizations, and good employees drive and are driven by the direction of organizations (Purc & Laguna, 2019). Employees want to be appreciated, recognized and find purpose at work.

Employers. Employers are individuals or organizations who hire one or more persons to work for them in exchange for pay or salaries and, in most situations, are motivated to improve the abilities of graduate employees (Gautier et al., 2022; Jansen et al., 2021). Employers expect employees to deliver good results to the organization's bottom line (Cakir & Adiguzel, 2020).

Employment. Emudainohwo (2021) stated that employment is being engaged and paid to work for another person or entity. Employment is usually between two parties where one is engaged in specific tasks for an agreed consideration over a defined period. The terms of employment state the duties and responsibilities of employees and the employer; the relationship between these two classes of stakeholders influences organizational performance (Davidescu et al., 2020).

Graduates. Graduates are individuals who have completed a program of study, training, or a degree at an institution of higher learning. They are essential resources in

managing organizations to achieve sustainability (Purcell et al., 2019). In addition, graduates typically work as middle-level managers in many firms instead of lower-level officials (Gjerde & Alvesson, 2020).

Stakeholders. Stakeholders are people or entities that can affect or be affected by the decisions and direction of organizations (Cano et al., 2021). According to the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict 2015 report as cited in Nwajiuba et al. (2020), “Anyone or any group that can have an impact on or be impacted by an organizational activity, plan, or initiative is a stakeholder” (p. 360).

Stakeholders are divided into two classes: internal and external stakeholders. Internal stakeholders are the people working within the organizations. They comprise employees, managers, and shareholders. External stakeholders are clients, suppliers, governments, and society (Ferro-Soto et al., 2018). Stakeholders for the proposed study include graduates, employers, HEIs, parents, governments, and communities.

Strategies to drive employability. Employers can use these techniques to increase the employability of their workforce (Ma'dan et al., 2020). Ma'dan et al. (2020) cited some employability strategies, including improving teaching methods, updating the curriculum, and strengthening university-industry collaboration. In addition, Nwajiuba et al. (2020) explored how effective stakeholder engagement could help drive positive social change in graduate employability.

Assumptions

Assumptions are unexamined statements made by the researcher that specific elements of the research are understood to be true (Paul & Elder, 2019). In most cases,

assumptions are not validated but only assumed to exist and are connected to the researcher's viewpoint (Elder & Paul, 2002). I have identified four assumptions for this study. The first assumption is that the research participants are experienced and mature professionals in human resources and graduate supervision. By this, I mean that participants have good knowledge of the phenomenon and have in-depth inexperience of the study topic to explain each research question and proffer reasonable solutions.

The second assumption is that making the interview process and participants comfortable will make obtaining objective data easier. Simplifying the research process makes the data collection stage seamless, and participants may find it easier to be more open and receptive and offer detailed responses to research questions. Participants may find it easier to provide answers that prompt more follow-up and unwritten questions to provide rich data.

The third assumption is that participants fully understand the concept of employability based on their experience over the years the managers have worked with graduate employees and various blogs and television and radio news about the efforts of Nigerian higher institutions to address graduate employability challenges (Romgen et al., 2020). A good understanding of the phenomenon and related elements guarantees that participants will be better able to react appropriately to interview questions (Moser & Korstjens, 2018), thus saving time and resources and hastening the member-checking phase. The fourth assumption is that study participants will answer the research questions honestly without bias in their responses. Researchers' response bias can significantly impact the study findings and affect the study's credibility.

Scope and Delimitations

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies an employer can adopt to enhance Nigerian college graduate employability. A conceptual framework to guide the study was based on stakeholder theory. Data were collected through interviews and document analysis. The participants were heads of human resources, managers supervising graduates, and graduates of a service organization. Participants were selected using a purposive selection method to help the researcher choose appropriate research settings for the participants and study participants and design the activities that provided relevant responses to research questions and objectives.

Documents used for analysis was collected from the selected organization. Only stakeholder theory was used in this study; consensus theory, employability theory of Yorke and Knight (2004), and human capital theory were excluded. Stakeholder theory was selected because it focuses on balancing the interests of all the stakeholder groups aligned with the purpose of this study (Moriarty, 2014). The scope determined the confines of this study. The scope outlined particular characteristics of the study's research issue and the rationale behind the vital target selection. Also, the scope of the study addressed potential transferability through member checking and conducting a thick and rich description of the findings.

According to Ross and Zaidi (2019), delimitations refer to inclusion and exclusion clauses of the research study arising from the limitations in the scope of the study set by the researcher. Delimitations helped to narrow the study, streamline the scope to make it more manageable, and create relevance to what I was trying to establish (Theofanidis &

Fountouki, 2018). In this study, I limited the problem to what employers and managers could do and excluded other stakeholders' involvement that can positively impact graduate employability. I have excluded other stakeholders like government, parents, and higher education because scholars have explored the role of different stakeholders. Also, the study did not explore organizations outside of the service industry because college graduate employability does not significantly impact the overall performance of other sectors in Nigeria (Pitan, 2016). I limited the participants to heads of human resources and managers supervising the graduates because these groups of managers work directly with, supervise, and evaluate the graduates' performances, as well as train them. The purposive selection of managers with profound experiences of the phenomenon helped to obtain in-depth data that can be transferred and generalized in other settings.

Member checking was used to ensure the transferability of the study findings. By member checking, I returned the data obtained to research participants to check for accuracy and get them to validate the results with participants' responses during the data collection stage (Brear, 2019). Member checking is a validation technique that helps to enhance trustworthiness and establish external validity (Brear, 2019). Member checking was appropriate for my study to secure participants' anonymity since participants could edit any area that seemed to expose them in any way. Additionally, member checking helped preserve the contextual integrity of the data, engendering the trust and confidence of readers and users of the study outcome (Johnson et al., 2020).

Limitations

A study's limitations are its flaws or weaknesses that the researcher cannot control, which may impact the outcomes and conclusions of the research (Ross & Zaidi, 2019). The challenges of this study included limiting the study's generalizability, which could result from conducting the research with only one service organization out of over 250 service organizations in the country (Finelib.com, n.d.). A further limitation was exploring only one organization in Lagos state, one out of 36 states in Nigeria, because the experience of the selected organization may not sufficiently represent the experience of service organizations in other states. Additionally, the time allocated to students to complete the study may inhibit the number of in-depth interviews conducted. Finally, there was the challenge of managing my bias throughout the research, especially in controlling my negative experiences working with these college graduates over 3 decades.

Significance of the Study

The results of this study may make it easier to comprehend the idea of college graduates' unemployment and contribute to developing solutions to this societal issue. In addition, this study will pioneer in-depth research on what employers can do to enhance graduate employability in Nigeria, thus contributing to the literature. Also, the result of this study may indicate a deeper understanding of graduate employability from stakeholders' perspectives. Specifically, it helps employers pursue strategies to drive productivity and improve organizational performance through graduate employability projects.

Significance to Practice

The study could lead to a final resolution to the general management issue and a reduction in layoffs and poor productivity. Furthermore, the study may also be significant in encouraging employers to play an active role in partnering with the educational and vocational sectors to prepare Nigerian graduates for the world of work (Okolie et al., 2020a). In addition, the outcome of this study may help higher institutions adopt a better curriculum incorporating employability skills into the existing program, thus preparing graduates for life after school (Okolie et al., 2020a).

Higher institutions may also be challenged to improve their human resources management by hiring competent and experienced lecturers and organizing refresher courses to boost lecturers' deliverables (Rafiei & Davari, 2015). Moreover, the improved HRM could cover how college lecturers' performances will be evaluated against the job descriptions and general syllabuses periodically (Rafiei & Davari, 2015). Additionally, the study's outcome may be used to advocate for improved government funding to aid HEIs in preparing college students for work (Chiwandire & Vincent, 2019). Finally, conducting this research exposed the researcher to new ways of handling graduate employment challenges in their firm and helped them apply the HRM and graduate empowerment strategies identified from the data collected. Such application will assist them in being more absorbing of college graduates' attitudes to work. Although Adebayo and Ayegbusi (2017) explored how public-private partnerships with the government could drive employment in Nigeria, the researchers confirmed that a lack of an enabling environment frustrated the success of such partnerships at both state and national levels.

Thus, this study explored strategies an employer as an end-user of these college graduates adopts to support higher institutions in enhancing HEIs to produce work-ready graduates.

Significance to Theory

A good study's theoretical contribution is a crucial aspect of research (Palmatier et al., 2018). Studies contribute to our knowledge of a selected topic in a dissertation or academic community and improve our understanding of how the world works (Abdulai & Owusu-Ansah, 2014). Therefore, this study may extend the stakeholders' theory or lead to the generation of a new theory that connects different stakeholders in specific and unique ways. For example, during the research process, I identified some critical relationships between graduates and employers and between employers and higher institutions, creating a unique and proven way of relating among the stakeholders. Also, the study's findings may contribute to our understanding of career advancement and how to prepare university students for meaningful employment.

This study will particularly pioneer studies on employers' strategies to enhance college graduate employability in Nigeria, contributing new knowledge. Additionally, themes generated from data analysis signified the need to amend or shelve some aspects of existing theories. For example, the stakeholders' theory posits that companies must take into account and integrate all of their users' needs into their activities to produce worth and uphold corporate social responsibility, comply with business ethics (Fares et al., 2021), and implement principles of fairness across all stakeholders; research has established that the level of interaction between stakeholders in Nigeria is low (Eboreime et al., 2022; Edomah et al., 2021). Therefore, it may be possible that interaction between

the stakeholders does not necessarily align with the position and dictates of stakeholders' theory.

Significance to Social Change

This research has the potential to contribute to positive social change.

Unemployment impacts society negatively (Antipova & Momeni, 2021). The parents of unemployed graduates develop psychological distress and mental health issues due to the stress of caring for graduates who should be working and earning income (Batic-Mujanovic et al., 2017; Oriji, 2021). Moreover, a lack of skills leads to the inability to secure employment and, worst still, to retain employment. Being out of a job creates graduate idleness, leading to youth restiveness, violence, and crime (Chan, 2019). The graduate employment challenge also increases unemployment in the country (Olabiyi, 2021).

Thus, the study can impact Nigerian society by stirring employers to engage more with college graduates and giving them opportunities to develop themselves. Engaging with graduates will reduce unemployment and attendant social problems. Second, gainfully employed graduates can meet their personal and social needs, become helpful through employment or self-employment, and add value to other people in communities. Third, the study's outcome may be a tool to fight financial hardship and poverty, family tensions, and social isolation resulting from graduate unemployment. Fourth, the study's outcome could create awareness among college graduates and youths of the need to invest positively in themselves and become more severe in their studies, thus boosting self-esteem and self-motivation.

Finally, employers can use the study's outcome to develop graduate training, programs, and projects that will enable college graduates to hone employability skills. An example of such an employability project is setting up a graduate finishing school to prepare graduates for gainful employment and reduce staff turnover and loss of jobs. Ultimately, empowered and employed graduates are not likely to embrace brain drain. Retaining college graduates in employment and within the country minimizes loss of skills, loss of ideas and innovation, loss of revenue from income taxes, and loss of technical know-how (Serdyukov, 2017).

Summary and Transition

Chapter 1 explained the research problem as an understanding of what employers do to support graduate employability in Nigeria. The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore strategies an employer adopts to support Nigerian HEIs in enhancing college graduate employability to help contribute to organizations and society. I grounded the study in stakeholder theory to justify the researcher's interest in filling the gap for exploring employers' interest in enhancing the competence of the graduate stakeholder. Data triangulation was achieved through interviews and internal and external artifacts to minimize study bias and give more meaning to the phenomenon. Chapter 2 will review the literature.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The specific research problem is what strategies an employer in service organizations adopts to support Nigerian HEIs in enhancing college graduate employability (Nwajiuba et al., 2020; Otache, 2022). The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore strategies an employer in service organizations adopts to support Nigerian HEIs in enhancing college graduate employability. According to Davidescu et al. (2020) and Piwowar-Sulej (2021), a competent workforce contributes to the survival and sustainability of organizations in any country.

Getting work-ready college graduates is arduous for most employers, making employability a global human resource challenge in developing and developed countries (Jonbekova et al., 2021; Mainga et al., 2022). Specifically, researchers identified that college graduates in Nigeria lack the skills employers require to function optimally in a corporate environment (Nwajiuba et al., 2020). The challenges confronting graduate work readiness are many. The challenges include poor preparation by higher institutions due to a lack of robust educational curricula that embed employability skills required by the employer and poor and outdated pedagogical components (Babalola & Oni, 2021; Nwajiuba et al., 2020; Okolie et al., 2020b). Another challenge is inadequate funding of education (Zezeza, 2018), poor quality of university lecturers (Okolie et al., 2019), poor learning environment (Ekechukwu, 2019), and poor transition from school to work life (Pavlin, 2020; Wyonch, 2019).

In this chapter, I review current, pertinent, peer-reviewed research and seminal papers from various sources that could provide a distinct perspective on my proposed

topic. This literature review chapter covers the literature search strategy, conceptual framework, a review of literature relating to graduate employability, and a synthesis of studies on employers' perspectives on college graduate employability. I will discuss employability theories and synthesize existing studies on skills and capabilities development and issues undermining graduate employment. Finally, I will identify the strategies an employer in service organizations might adopt to enhance Nigerian graduate employability.

Literature Search Strategy

The literature review search strategy included peer-reviewed articles and evidence from EBSCOhost, ProQuest Central, ResearchGate, Emerald, ScienceDirect, Sage Research Method Online, SpringerLink, and SAGE Premier databases. The search also included Google Scholar, Refseek, and Science.gov. I concentrated the literature search on recent peer-reviewed journal articles published from 2018 to 2022 and relevant seminal work to identify carefully selected pertinent concepts to my research topic.

The keywords and phrases searched included *employment, employability, college graduates, graduate employability, graduate employment, unemployment, employers and employability, employee challenges of organizations in Nigeria, college graduate unemployability in Nigeria, and graduate employability in West Africa*. I also searched for articles relating to my research design and approach using terms like *qualitative research design, qualitative study, semi-structured interviews, open-ended interviews, focus groups, qualitative single case studies, and qualitative research triangulation*.

By restricting the literature to peer review journals published in the last 5 years, I obtained the most recent studies on employers' strategies to enhance Nigerian college graduate employability. Additionally, I gleaned from some seminal works older than five years and relevant online and hardcopy books. I also used appropriate conference materials and other papers recommended by others, such as classmates and instructors, articles recommended by university lecturers, and critical literature cited from some of the articles I read. The peer-review status of selected articles was checked through the library database of Ulrichs web global serial direct website using the Boolean terms and the publishers' website of articles.

The websites of governments, countries, organizations, and higher institutions were also checked. I also accessed statistical data from relevant official websites such as employment statistics in Nigeria, Nigeria Bureau of Statistics, Nigeria Budget Office websites on the annual budget for the country, and other relevant and credible websites of universities.

Conceptual Framework

This qualitative study was guided by the tenets of Edward Freeman's stakeholder theory. Researchers who adopted the employability framework include Dedehouanou (2022) and Turkson et al. (2021). Stakeholder theory stipulates that an organization should create value for all stakeholders, taking care of the interest of all persons who can be affected by or affect the actions and directions of the organization (Donaldson & Preston, 1995). Proper stakeholder engagement implies that employers' focus should not be limited to shareholders and profitability but ensure that all stakeholder groups benefit

from the sustainability and profitability of an organization. According to Donaldson and Preston (1995), stakeholder theory asserts that the success of an organization hinges on the value it delivers to its stakeholders. Such matters can come in diverse forms, including corporate social responsibility programs that improve society. It will be a win-win game for all stakeholder groups, implying that employers benefit from empowered and competent graduate employees, employees become more valuable and marketable, and society improves.

Researchers like Freudenreich et al. (2020) have used the seminal work of Donaldson and Preston on stakeholder theory. Freudenreich et al. explored the detailed application of the stakeholder value creation framework to make a case for business models supporting sustainability. Sustainability involves conducting business in a manner that improves lives and does not negatively impact any stakeholder (Kujala et al., 2022). Adopting stakeholder theory shifts employers' focus from profit-oriented to the triple bottom line, which covers the three "Ps" of business sustainability - people, planet, and profit (Lariviere & Smit, 2022). The most valuable part of the stakeholder theory is the benefit it delivers to the helpless just by being a stakeholder. Graduate employee benefits from the value created by employers. The critical part of stakeholder theory assumes mutual stakeholder relationships in which stakeholders are both beneficiaries and co-producers of value in collaborative value-creation processes (Freudenreich et al., 2020). Employers are stirred to act responsibly, and employees respond positively by adding to the organization's value.

Mutually beneficial stakeholder relationships allow universities and students to engage more with external stakeholders, especially employers and industry experts, and develop partnerships and trust with end-users and communities to strengthen their commitment to providing employable graduates (Chew et al., 2021). Freudenreich et al. (2020) argued that the concept and analysis of value creation through business models that adopt the stakeholder theory must be extended concerning different types of value created with and for various stakeholders. Employers will be motivated to have a competent workforce by collaborating with HEIs and the student body to produce work-ready graduates (Ferns et al., 2019; Nettleton et al., 2008; Tamrat & Ababa, 2019).

Researchers confirmed that embedding the stakeholder theory in organizational management impacted all stakeholders positively. Specifically, employers invest in employees' development, creating a mutually beneficial relationship (Nwajiuba et al., 2020; Rook & Sloan, 2021). Rook and Sloan (2021) engaged stakeholder theory to explore how bringing together four classes of stakeholders, including academics, students, professionals, and career advisors, in driving work-integrated learning in undergraduate degrees influenced graduate employability. Rook and Sloan found that the students' stakeholder group significantly needed an understanding of graduate readiness and employability skills. Rook and Sloan emphasized that applying stakeholder theory in driving academic curricula could strengthen the opportunities for undergraduates to acquire enhanced employability.

Researchers have critiqued the stakeholder theory. For example, Freeman et al. (2020) identified the need for more research in applying stakeholder theory to understand

what counts as the total performance of a business. Freeman et al. underscored the challenge of comprehensively accounting for all stakeholders in day-to-day operations instead of limiting it to accounting for investors only and explaining actual stakeholder behavior. Furthermore, treating all stakeholders is challenging (Murphy et al., 2015). The framework offered in this study and the purpose of the study logically relates to ways that aid in understanding how companies might maximize the potential of graduate employees (Davidescu et al., 2020). Using the stakeholder theory as the theoretical background will help set the boundary for collecting relevant data by focusing on specific concepts connected to the phenomenon and defining the researcher's viewpoint in analyzing and interpreting the data (Grant & Osanloo, 2014).

The stakeholders' theory by Edward Freeman (1984) will serve as the foundation for this investigation. According to this notion, companies must enhance value to their stakeholders (Thornock, 2016). Stakeholder theory also emphasizes that to produce value, businesses must consider and include the requirements of all of their stakeholders (Nwajiuba et al., 2020). A stakeholder is an individual or group that can impact or be impacted by an institution's action, plan, or initiative (Agwu, 2019). This study's stakeholders include employers, college graduates, HEIs, parents, organizational managers, leaders, governments, and society.

Nigerian HEIs have widely embraced the conceptualization of the stakeholder theory as a management tool for developing organizational strategy and driving business sustainability (Ashworth, 2019).

Although research established that employers would be motivated to have a competent workforce by collaborating with HEIs and the government to enhance the quality of college graduates (Ferns et al., 2019; Nettleton et al., 2008; Tamrat & Ababa, 2019), only a few HEIs in Nigeria have embedded employability skills like communication, teamwork, and time management into their curricula (Abe & Kasumu, 2022; Ajufu, 2019; Galeotti et al., 2022).

Adopting the stakeholders' theory will help understand and appreciate the critical role of employers in supporting HEIs to produce work-ready graduates to aid in running sustainable organizations and contributing to society. Additionally, the stakeholder theory will address the ethical and moral values of managers and employees of organizations (Harrison et al., 2015). Based on the stakeholder theory, researchers have confirmed the positive impact of employers in developing employees (Rook & Sloan, 2021). Nwajiuba et al. (2020) explored what is needed to improve higher education quality and graduate employability in Nigeria using the stakeholders theory as their theoretical foundation.

The stakeholders theory relates to my study approach in that, to achieve success, organizations must identify the factors and values that bring the principal stakeholders together. Essentially, managers can achieve profits, motivate employees, and benefit society by recognizing that their company's values and relationships with core stakeholders are vital to success (Pfajfar et al., 2022). The same approach will be applied in the study.

The theoretical framework offered in this study and the purpose of the investigation logically relate to ways that aid in understanding how companies might

maximize the potential of graduate employees (Davidescu et al., 2020). In this qualitative case study, the theoretical background will help coordinate the data collection strategy, analysis, and reporting of findings to address the research objectives (Sutton & Austin, 2015), thereby highlighting the significance of employers in improving graduate employability.

An issue yet to be addressed is designing a business model that incorporates how employers allocate resources equitably among the stakeholders, especially on the class of stakeholders (employees) that impacts an organization's profitability. The critical statements inherent in the selected conceptual framework include the following:

- Education impacts employment.
- Stakeholder theory stipulates that an organization should create value for all stakeholders, and this involves taking care of the interests of all persons who can be affected by or affect the actions and directions of the organization (Donaldson & Preston, 1995).
- Stakeholder theory asserts that the success of an organization hinges on the value it delivers to its stakeholders (Donaldson & Preston, 1995).
- The stakeholder value creation framework supports business sustainability.
- Sustainability involves conducting business that improves lives and does not negatively impact any stakeholder (Kujala et al., 2022).
- Adopting stakeholder theory shifts employers' focus from profit-oriented to the triple bottom line, which covers the three "Ps" of business sustainability - people, planet, and profit (Lariviere & Smit, 2022).

- Mutually beneficial stakeholder relationships allow universities and students to engage more with external stakeholders, especially employers and industry experts, and develop partnerships and trust with end-users and communities to strengthen their commitment to providing employable graduates (Chew et al., 2021).
- The concept and analysis of value creation through business models that adopt the stakeholder theory must be extended concerning different types of value created with and for other stakeholders (Freudenreich et al., 2020).
- Applying stakeholder theory in driving academic curricula could strengthen the opportunities for undergraduates to acquire enhanced employability (Rook & Sloan, 2021).
- Possessing skills does not always guarantee the graduates' success in the labor market, and universities have often neglected this.

Therefore, the interview protocol was developed to obtain rich data on how the selected organization's human resource activities support HEIs and intentionally add value that improves the employability of the employee stakeholder group in their organization, as posited by the stakeholder theory. The artifacts collected from the organization corroborated the interview data.

Employability Theories

According to Kivunja (2018, p. 45), a theory is a “statement or collections of assertions backed up by data and intended to explain occurrences.” The theory is a lens for new knowledge, providing structure, clear vision, and direction for a study (Grant &

Osanloo, 2014). Several theories exist to guide employability. The employability theories are applied in different approaches to explain the impact of strategic stakeholders' engagement on the overall performance of organizations (Rook & Sloan, 2021). I described four theories and grounded the study in one. The employability theories include the consensus theory of employability, human capital theory, the theory of employability by Yorke and Knight (2004), and Edward Freeman's stakeholders' theory (1963).

Consensus Theory

The consensus theory (CT) focuses on what social groups share and believe (Bufacchi, 2021). Plato and Rousseau (1953, 1997), cited in Martin (2014), promoted institutional frameworks that uphold social consensus and are credited with beginning the existentialist philosophy of consensus theories. Emile Durkheim's functionalism, the first systematic sociological consensus theory, asserted that all normative institutions are vital to advancing society (Malik & Malik, 2022). Consensus theory is a sociological and political theory that suggests that a society or group agrees on beliefs and values through communication and negotiation (Bufacchi, 2021). Based on the articles of Malik and Malik (2022) and Bufacchi (2021), consensus theory ensures that social order is maintained not through coercion or force but through the shared goals and values of the group.

McDonald (2019) argued for the many critical components of CT, including that societies consist of individuals with their beliefs, values, and goals. These individuals interact with one another and communicate to agree on the importance and ideas that will guide their society (McDonald, 2019). This communication and negotiation process helps

to create a sense of shared identity and purpose within the group. Concerning this study, Nigeria, like many other societies worldwide, consists of several individuals and entities who constantly interact to enable the smooth running of society (Chirkov, 2020). These individuals and entities include the government, learning institutions, young people, and the business community. The government must empower the learning institutions to educate their populace through policies and funding. The university, in return, is expected to graduate the best-educated people whom the business community and organizations can then engage.

For CT to hold, each entity and individual must interact with one another and communicate to agree on the importance and ideas that will guide their society (McDonald, 2019). Another critical component of CT is that social order is maintained not through force or coercion but through the shared values and beliefs of the group (Makbere et al., 2022). In other words, individuals within a society are more likely to follow the rules and norms of their community if they believe in and support those rules and standards. This sense of shared belief and commitment helps to create a stable and functional society. There are structures and values to enhance and promote shared belief (DiMaggio, 2019). However, the social order consensus and shared belief cannot hold if there is a belief in the non-beneficial relationship between the parties involved. For instance, while the universities benefit from the student fees and education costs, the graduates cannot reap the benefits of their education due to their unemployability.

Many graduates are frustrated, and they take to crime and other antisocial behaviors, which is against the constructs of CT (Hwang et al., 2021). There are several

scathing criticisms of CT. One of the main criticisms is that it does not consider societal power imbalances. Some individuals or groups may have more power and influence than others, making reaching a consensus difficult. Additionally, CT may not always be realistic when there are fundamental differences in beliefs or values between different groups within a society. Despite these criticisms, CT remains an essential and influential sociology and political science perspective. It highlights the importance of effective communication and negotiation in maintaining social order and suggests that societies can function when individuals work together toward shared goals and values (McDonald, 2019).

Consensus theory's educational component is debatable because of the assumption that enhancing human capital by including transferable skills in the curriculum will guarantee graduates' employability and hasten career growth (Ajufo, 2019; Selvadurai et al., 2012). The theory speaks against the non-inclusion of employability skills in the curricula and implementing it through appropriate pedagogy. The non-inclusion could lead to dissatisfied learners who are not employable in the labor market. The tenet of CT emphasizes that all members of a specific society affirm its standards, values, laws, and procedures and that the scarcity of conflict is the optimum condition of humanity. Researchers that used CT to underpin their studies include Skela-Savič et al. (2017) to explore improvement in the healthcare system. Also, Thomas et al. (2018) applied CT to aid organizational learning and sustainable innovation. These studies used CT to emphasize maximizing togetherness in formulating strategies and policies to cultivate shared beliefs to improve society.

Human Capital Theory

Gary Becker's human capital theory revolutionized how economists think about education and workforce participation (Becker, 1962). Traditionally, education was seen as a form of consumption, providing personal fulfillment and enjoyment to the individual. However, Becker's theory viewed education as an investment in human capital, similar to how businesses invest in physical means such as machinery. According to Becker, the benefits of human capital investment go beyond the individual, as it also brings economic benefits to society. He argued that individuals who invest in their education are more productive and earn higher salaries, leading to increased economic output and higher living standards. In their study, Winterton and Cafferkey (2019) noted that Becker also recognized that human capital investment is not limited to formal education but can include on-the-job training and other skill development forms. Becker proposed that these investments should be taxed differently than regular consumption, as they have long-term economic benefits (Winterton & Cafferkey, 2019).

The theory of human capital has significantly impacted monetary policy, creating education tax credits and expanding funding for vocational training programs (Matashu, 2022). Relating it to the study topic, human capital theory suggests that to address unemployment, the relevant stakeholders, including employers, should ensure that Nigerian graduates are employable. The approach has also influenced how companies think about employee training and development, with many organizations now offering ongoing learning opportunities to their employees (Dachner et al., 2021). Overall, Becker's human capital theory has played a crucial role in shaping our understanding of

the role of education in economic development and the importance of investing in human potential.

According to the human capital hypothesis, each employee has a set of talents or abilities that they may develop or accumulate through education and training, positioning them for increased responsibility and reward (Kareem & Hussein, 2019). Therefore, human capital is significant in setting an organization for competitive advantage (Kareem & Hussein, 2019). Furthermore, human capital development is critical to sustainable human resources (Piwowar-Sulej, 2021). Mitchell et al. (2013) explored the role of human capital development on organizational performance. Mitchell et al. found a significant link between corporate success and human capital development. Furthermore, investments in employees' knowledge, skills, talent development, and overall competence should include sound formal education, periodic training in relevant courses, and opportunities for continuous on-the-job education (Mitchell et al., 2013).

Nabulsi et al. (2021) established that businesses that invest in their workforce's human capital experience higher levels of innovation, productivity, and customer happiness. Workers with more knowledge and skill levels are better equipped to adjust to shifting market conditions and develop innovative solutions to issues. They are also likely to be driven and involved in their work, which could result in higher production and a favorable effect. The study also discovered a link between human capital development and employee retention since staff members are more inclined to stay with a company that supports their professional advancement. As a result, hiring and training expenses may be lower, and the staff may be more seasoned and steadier. The study by

Nabulsi et al. (2021) emphasized the significance of investing in human capital for businesses seeking to increase performance and prevail in a cutthroat industry. Nwosu's (2019) research also referenced the human capital theory on the entrepreneurial techniques the younger generation in Anambra State, Nigeria, required to start their businesses after finishing their undergraduate degrees.

Employability Theory of Yorke and Knight

Yorke and Knight (2004) proposed the employability theory. The theory established that employability results from people's schooling, training, accomplishments, and comprehension of personal talents to be competent in work and professional life (Yorke, 2006). The theory was developed when Western employability literature concentrated on the skills that help graduates find employment (Mainga et al., 2022). The model of employability is a theoretical approach that aims to comprehend the elements that affect a person's capacity to find and keep a job. According to Yorke and Knight (2004), employability is not a fixed trait but a dynamic and complex process influenced by personal and external factors. According to Gerryts and Maree (2019), employability extends to adapting and continuously developing employability skills in response to changing circumstances. Individuals who demonstrate flexibility, adaptability, and a willingness to learn are perceived as employable (Yang et al., 2019).

According to Yorke and Knight (2004), three main elements contribute to an individual's employability: personal attributes, transferable skills, and career management strategies. Personal qualities refer to an individual's unique characteristics, such as personality, values, and work ethic (Duckworth et al., 2019). Skills and expertise in

various vocations, including problem-solving, collaboration, and teamwork, are transferable (Nägele & Stalder, 2017). Finally, career management strategies refer to individuals' actions to manage their careers, such as networking, seeking new opportunities, and developing a clear career direction (Bagdadli & Gianecchini, 2019). One of the critical implications of the theory of employability is that individuals need to take an active role in managing their careers (Weerasombat, 2022). Managing one's career means proactively developing one's skills and knowledge and seeking opportunities to help one advance one's career. To do this effectively, Yorke and Knight (2004) argued that individuals need to have a precise comprehension of their strong points and soft spots and be able to identify the areas where they need to improve.

Huang et al. (2022) also noted that external factors, such as the economic and social context, significantly impact an individual's employability. For example, during times of economic downturn, it may be more difficult for individuals to find employment, regardless of their skills and qualifications (Gagné et al., 2022). Therefore, the theory of employability offers a helpful foundation for comprehending the intricate and continuous process of finding and keeping a job. Furthermore, employability theory emphasizes the significance of personality differences and transferable abilities and the necessity for people to manage their careers actively (Römgens et al., 2020). Linking the focus of the theory of employability to the graduate unemployability challenge means that graduates must play a significant role in ensuring they build on their qualifications and skills to remain relevant in the workplace (Römgens et al., 2020).

Several factors can contribute to graduate unemployability, as outlined by the theory. One is the misalignment of graduates' abilities and credentials with the demands of companies (Vandeplas & Thum-Thysen, 2019). It is sometimes challenging for fresh graduates to obtain work since they have limited ability and expertise, which are not in great demand in the labor market (Vandeplas & Thum-Thysen, 2019). The lack of career management strategies on the part of the graduate is another challenge. Even if they have the necessary skills and qualifications, they may struggle to find employment if they are not proactive in seeking opportunities and networking. The inability to secure a job can be especially true in a competitive job market with many other qualified candidates, like in Nigeria, where more graduates are being released in the labor market, with fewer job opportunities being created (Ogunode et al., 2022b).

External factors, such as the state of the economy and the availability of jobs in Nigeria, have contributed to graduate unemployment (Uddin, 2021). During times of economic downturn, for example, fewer job openings may be available, making it more difficult for graduates to find employment. Graduate unemployability is a complex issue influenced by various personal, skills-related, and external factors (Hwang, 2017). The theory of employability recognizes that addressing the graduate employability challenge requires both developing transferable skills and career management strategies and addressing external factors contributing to the difficulty in finding employment.

Incorporating employability into curriculum and instruction was the goal of employability theory. To help science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) academic institutions develop different effective interventions that include

professional skills, McGunagle and Zizka (2020) and others have used employability theory to illustrate their research. The employability abilities that are desperately lacking in the STEM fields were examined from employers' viewpoints. Damoah et al. (2021) also investigated Ghanaian employers' perspectives on graduate employability.

Employers anticipate that educational establishments will equip graduates with the information they need to handle the expectations, upheavals, and uncertainties they may encounter in the workplace. Yorke and Knight (2004) formulated the hypothesis to fix the challenges of graduate employability in the UK in the 2000s.

Stakeholders' Theory

Stakeholder theory posits that company leaders must understand, engage, and be responsible for all stakeholders (Donaldson & Preston, 1995; Goyal, 2022). Workers, investors, consumers, users, manufacturers, lenders, authorities, and society are just a few examples of stakeholders. Furthermore, companies must constantly go further than their investors and interests to include, safeguard, and positively influence individuals who can have an impression on and be impacted by the company's operations (Freudenreich et al., 2020). Two tenets of the stakeholders' theory include the agency principle and managing externalities (Goyal, 2022). According to the agency concept, a company's management is a company representative and, as such, has obligations to shareholders and investors (Retolaza et al., 2019). Externalities focus on how a group that does not profit from a company's operations may experience issues due to those actions (Stoelhorst & Vishwanathan, 2022). In light of stakeholder theory, externalities imply that every

individual who must pay the expenses of other constituents is entitled to become a shareholder.

The importance of stakeholder theory to employability lies in the fact that it recognizes the value of all stakeholders to a company's success. When a company considers its employees' needs, it is more likely to retain talented staff and foster a positive work environment. A good work environment can lead to increased productivity and a better reputation, which can, in turn, lead to better financial performance. By treating employees well, a company can also improve its reputation as an excellent workplace, attracting and retaining top talent and improving its overall competitiveness.

In addition to benefiting employees, stakeholder theory also emphasizes the importance of considering the needs of other groups, such as customers and suppliers. By treating these stakeholders well, a company can build solid relationships and improve its reputation in the marketplace. A positive image can increase sales and a more secure customer base, ultimately contributing to the company's financial success. In conclusion, the importance of stakeholder theory to employability is that it acknowledges the importance for all stakeholders to be happy for a firm to succeed. By considering the needs of employees, customers, suppliers, and other groups, a company can create a positive work environment, build strong relationships, and improve its financial performance.

According to the stakeholders' approach, employers have obligations not just to their investors but also to their consumers, distributors, staff, societies, and the ecosystem. Unfavorable results can result from a company's failure to consider these

stakeholders' requirements and interests. One negative outcome is low graduate employability, particularly in developing countries (Osmani et al., 2019). There are several ways stakeholder theory can be linked to low graduate employability in developing countries like Nigeria. For example, if a business is not providing adequate training and development opportunities for its employees, it can lead to a lack of skilled and qualified workers.

Unpreparedness can make it difficult for recent graduates to find employment, as they may need the necessary skills or experience to compete in the job market. Additionally, if a business is not actively working to create employment opportunities within the community, it can contribute to a lack of job openings for graduates. Putting a ceiling on employment can be particularly problematic in developing countries with limited job prospects outside the formal sector.

Furthermore, when business organizations do not engage with local schools and universities to ensure their workforce is prepared for the future, it can contribute to low graduate employability since most skills employers require would have been excluded from the curricula. According to Nwajiuba et al. (2020) and Okolie et al. (2020b), adopting a stakeholders' engagement will significantly improve graduate employability in Nigeria. Therefore, the tenets of the stakeholders' theory could provide a robust platform for employers' involvement in enhancing Nigerian college graduates' employability in organizations. Rook and Sloan (2021) explored how stakeholders' understanding and harmony could strengthen college graduate employability. Rook and Sloan found that while other stakeholder groups had the same perspectives with slightly competing

knowledge on how stakeholders can maintain graduate attributes, the student stakeholder group demonstrated an apparent lack of comprehension of graduate attributes and employment prospects. Grounding the study in stakeholders' theory, Oliver (2015) explored how work-integrated learning could prepare students for the workplace, emphasizing students' experience and commitment to self-improvement through the opportunities employers give to learn basic skills while in college.

Consequently, using the stakeholders' theory to inform interview questions could aid in getting detailed information from study participants. Based on the Stakeholders theory, researchers have confirmed the positive impact of employers in developing employees (Rook & Sloan, 2021). Therefore, adopting the stakeholders' approach will help understand and appreciate the critical role of employers and graduates in running sustainable organizations and contributing to society. Thus, this study was grounded on the stakeholder theory of Edward Freeman (1963) to give direction to it.

Explanation of Key Concepts

In this section, I have highlighted the essential keywords and concepts identified during the literature review to help readers better understand this study. An explanation of these concepts before the proper literature review section could help readers understand the direction and purpose of the study. The ideas have been selected based on the meaning they created during my review of the articles. I have synthesized relevant peer-reviewed articles to explain these concepts. The critical concepts are college graduates, employers, employability, employability skills, employability and

employment, perspectives of graduate employability, and factors influencing employability.

College Graduates

People who have earned a post-secondary degree from an accredited school are considered college graduates (National Center for Education Statistics, 2023). Zajacova and Lawrence (2021) defined college graduates as individuals who have completed any postsecondary education level, including associate's degrees and certificate programs. Chen and Bahr (2021) described college graduates as individuals who have completed a specific group of postsecondary education, such as a master's degree or doctorate. Regardless of the definition, it is agreed that college graduates have completed some postsecondary education beyond high school. This education typically includes coursework in a specific field of study and may involve practical training and research. College graduates are often highly sought after by employers due to their advanced knowledge and skills, which are often considered to be valuable assets in the workforce.

There is a common perception that college graduates have a higher employability rate than those without a college degree. This perception is based on Bouchrika's (2020) observations that college graduates have a higher median income, higher lifetime earnings, and better job security. Bouchrika's (2020) assertion is generally true, as college graduates often have the knowledge and skills valued in the workforce (Finley, 2021). However, many factors can influence a person's employability, including their primary course of study, the job market, and experience level. A college degree can improve a person's employability by allowing them to gain knowledge and skills in their field of

study (Gauthier, 2020). In addition, college courses often include a mix of theoretical and practical components, which can help graduates develop critical thinking, problem-solving, and communication skills valued by employers (Gauthier, 2020).

Additionally, a college degree can signal to employers that a candidate is dedicated and motivated to succeed in their career. It is important to note that while a college degree may improve a person's employability, it is not a guarantee of employment (Capone et al., 2021). Factors such as the job market and experience level can also affect their employability (Capone et al., 2021). It is always a good idea for job seekers to be proactive in their job search and to consider ways to gain experience and build their skills to increase their employability (Capone et al., 2021).

A college degree is a helpful asset that can increase a person's employment in Nigeria (Fashiku, 2016). However, there might not always be enough employment available to match the demand from college graduates due to the competitive nature of the labor market in Nigeria (Fox & Gandhi, 2021). Employment shortages can make it difficult for college graduates to get jobs, especially in specialized disciplines or businesses (Capone et al., 2021). In addition, other elements may also affect Nigerian college graduates' capacity to find employment. For instance, some colleges and universities in Nigeria may offer less quality education than other schools, impacting graduates' skill sets and knowledge. Additionally, some employers could place more importance on on-the-job training and real-world experience than a degree.

According to academics like Atitsogbe et al. (2019), college graduates have a broader set of abilities, including problem-solving, information exchange, and critical

thinking, making them more adaptable to a range of employment. As a result, they may be more employable than non-college graduates, who could have specific skills but may need to be more flexible (Atitsogbe et al., 2019). However, the link between a college education and employability is complicated. As Bennett (2019) and Cheng et al. (2021) contended, the connection between education and employability is more nuanced than a straightforward assertion that college graduates are more employable than others would imply. Additionally, other elements may influence employability, such as the individual's personal qualities and the quality of the college or university (Bennett, 2019).

Employability

Employability is the ability to get and retain employment, which extends beyond certificates and securing, keeping, and making sense of a job (Nikunen, 2021). According to Kessy (2020), possessing pertinent information, abilities, and other qualities that make it easier to get and keep a meaningful job is referred to as being employable.

Employability was described by Engelhart and Mupinga (2020) as the knowledge, beliefs, and behaviors employees require to find and keep a job. Employability does not ensure work. According to Fajaryati et al. (2020), being employable enhances the likelihood that unemployed people will find suitable employment. Oliver (2015) defined employability as the capability of learners and graduates to identify, procure, make adjustments, and consistently improve their skills, conceptions, and individual qualities. Oliver emphasized that increasing one's work readiness increases the likelihood of finding and generating new paid and additional labor that is more rewarding, increasing the working population, creating a better society, and creating a better economic system.

Oliver believes that with students' willingness to make meaning of their education, they should be able to get good jobs.

Ezeani (2018) identified significant factors confronting graduates' employability in Nigeria: a lack of skills, poor funding, poor curricula, and poor governance and educational policies. According to Misra and Khurana (2017), employability challenges are not limited to developing countries; they are a global phenomenon affecting the global economy. The interview protocol has been designed to include questions related to the factors confronting graduates' employability in Nigeria and employers' strategies to minimize the challenges. The researcher evaluated the themes generated from analyzing all data sources against factors identified by previous researchers.

Employability Skills

Employability refers to abilities, knowledge, and attitudes required to obtain and sustain employment, central to Tomlinson and Nghia's (2020) work. Tomlinson and Nghia (2020) contended in their research that companies highly value employability skills for people succeeding in the workforce. They also explored how crucial it is for training and education programs to focus on establishing employable skills. Tomlinson and Nghia (2020) argued that courses that emphasize acquiring these abilities could assist people in developing the information and self-assurance required for success in the work market. The research of Tomlinson and Nghia (2020) emphasized the value of employability skills in the current workforce and the necessity for education and training programs to emphasize cultivating these skills. According to Engelhart and Mupinga's (2020) study, effectiveness in the modern workforce requires employability skills. Their

research centered on the employability skills companies appreciate the most and how Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) courses may help students acquire them.

Engelhart and Mupinga's (2020) study's critical findings included that Employers value various skills beyond technical skills and knowledge. These skills include communication, problem-solving, and teamwork. Engelhart and Mupinga argued that TVET programs should focus on developing employability skills and technical skills for graduate students to be fully employable and approachable by employers. TVET programs can help prepare students for success in the job market. Engelhart and Mupinga (2020) also suggested that experiential learning, such as internships and apprenticeships, can effectively develop employability skills. Engelhart and Mupinga's (2020) research emphasized the importance of employability skills in the modern workforce and TVET programs' role in helping individuals develop these skills.

Employability and Employment

There are many definitions of employment, depending on the author's perspective. According to economist John Maynard Keynes, employment is not so much a matter of hiring men as buying the goods and services that these men produce (Skousen, 2015). Sociologist Max Weber described employment as a regular activity performed in exchange for payment within a professional organization or for a person who pays for an agreed service (Carranza et al., 2020). Management theorist Peter Drucker defined employment as "the process of getting work done through people" (Turriago-Hoyos et al., 2016, p. 4). Additionally, Labor economist David Autor described employment as the

state of having a paid job or occupation (Autor et al., 2022). Generally, these definitions highlight that employment involves the exchange of labor for payment and is typically carried out within a professional context.

Employment is a broad topic with various factors affecting it. Many factors can influence employment, including economic, social, and individual characteristics (Wang et al., 2020). Economic conditions, such as the state of the economy, unemployment, and the demand for certain goods and services, can all impact employment (Chetty et al., 2020). For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, businesses cut back on hiring, leading to higher global unemployment (Chetty et al., 2020). According to Dibeh et al. (2019), education and skills are also significant determinants of employment. An individual's education and skills can influence their employability. Individuals with higher levels of education and specific skills in demand may be more likely to find employment (Bouchrika, 2020).

Personal characteristics, such as an individual's work ethic, reliability, and personality, can influence employment (Acikgoz, 2019). Employers may be more likely to hire individuals they perceive as responsible and motivated (Acikgoz, 2019). Government policies, such as laws regulating employment and labor practices, can also impact employment. For example, policies that raise the minimum wage or increase worker protections may affect the number of job openings available.

Employability and employment are related, as skills can increase the chances of finding and keeping a job (Römgens et al., 2020). However, employment could also be influenced by factors such as the job market, the economy, and discrimination (Neumark,

2018). Intuitively, one anticipates that increasing employability opens the door to desirable positions. Nevertheless, employability enhances the likelihood that jobless people will find gainful employment, according to Fajaryati et al. (2020). Therefore, a saturated job market, poor economy, and workplace discrimination have minimal effects on well-rounded graduates (Chigbu & Nekhwevha, 2022). Studies analyzed how working full-time and part-time could help students prepare for the workforce (Okolie et al., 2020a). According to Jackson and Tomlinson (2020), working while in college is a terrific method for undergraduates to build skills beneficial in the job market and get worthwhile experience. Students who take part-time jobs learn time management skills since they must juggle work and school commitments.

Working and studying allow students to develop professional networks and learn new teamwork and customer service skills (Adebakin et al., 2015). Being a full-time employee in college can be more difficult because it requires more advanced time management and prioritization skills. However, it might also present greater chances for career advancement and making more money. Getting a job can help undergraduates prepare for the working world, whether full-time or part-time.

Stakeholders anticipate that a few elements will be essential for meaningful work that effectively qualifies college graduates for the workforce. For instance, Irwin et al. (2022) examined the quantity, kind, and setting of graduates' work experience. Irwin et al. stated that for a considerable amount of time—not below three months in a school year—students have to be exposed to the world of work; this engagement must take the form of industrial training or volunteering and must be related to academics or

extracurricular activities. However, in a country like Nigeria, business owners might be able to provide a statement of internships to graduates who have not participated in any work-learning programs (Lillis, 2010)). Obtaining work experience can challenge students in developing countries like Nigeria (Lillis, 2010). Students have limited opportunities to gain work experience (Chand & Deshmukh, 2019).

Businesses in these countries may not have the resources to take on interns or may not have established programs to provide students with work experience (Chand & Deshmukh, 2019). Furthermore, even if opportunities exist, students may face competition from more experienced workers seeking employment (Lei & Yin, 2019). A lack of internship opportunities can make it difficult for students to stand out and secure positions. Further, cultural and societal norms may also play a role in students' availability of work experience. In some cases, students may be expected to focus solely on their studies and may not be encouraged to seek work experience (Nilsson, 2019).

Employers

Employers are individuals or organizations who hire one or even more persons to take a job with them in exchange for pay or compensation and, in most situations, are motivated to improve employees' abilities (Gautier et al., 2022; Jansen et al., 2021). Employers anticipate their staff members contributing positively to the business's bottom line (Cakir & Adiguzel, 2020). Organizations have a significant impact on how employable degree holders are. By offering job opportunities, providing on-the-job training, and supporting career development, employers can help college graduates develop the skills and experience needed to succeed in the workforce (Römgens et al.,

2020). One of the ways employers can influence the Employability of college graduates is by offering job opportunities in various fields. Exposure to various work opportunities allows college graduates to gain experience in different industries and build a diverse skill set. Employers can also provide on-the-job training and mentorship to help college graduates learn the skills and knowledge needed to excel in their roles. In addition, employers can support the career development of college graduates by offering opportunities for advancement and professional development (Römgens et al., 2020).

Employers' support can include providing access to professional development courses or offering leadership training programs (Tejan & Sabil, 2019). By investing in the career growth of their employees, employers can help college graduates build the skills and experience needed to advance in their careers. Additionally, employers can significantly influence the employability of college graduates (Römgens et al., 2020). By providing job opportunities, on-the-job training, and support for career development, employers can help college graduates succeed in the workforce and reach their full potential.

Aliu and Aigbavboa (2020) investigated how Nigerian employers perceive graduates' employability. They found that although graduates were willing to learn, employers were not satisfied with their prior work experience; they were not exposed to essential functions. The graduates had little technical expertise and skills in communication necessary to handle industry responsibilities successfully. Damoah et al. (2021) explored the performances of employees in Ghana. The researchers found that

critical thinking skills, among other employability skills, were lacking in Ghanaian graduates.

Unemployability has also been a significant concern in Bangladesh; Chowdry (2020) found that it was one of the factors that kept Bangladesh one of the least developed developing countries. According to Selvadurai et al. (2012), acquiring transferable skills will increase human capital, guarantee graduates' competitiveness, and hasten professional and personal success.

Concept of Employability

Römgens et al. (2020) used several disciplines to define the concept of employability. Römgens et al. (2020) emphasized that while different scholars have defined employability separately, all interpretations are related and lead in the same direction— toward being equipped for the workforce. According to Römgens et al. (2020), employability has been central to higher education agendas in many Western countries. Employers are shifting their position from competence-based recruitment to hiring that considers innate skills and on-the-job learning. Römgens et al. (2020) research contributes to understanding society in the current globally competitive knowledge economy, marked by the reality of fast-paced change that occurs every day; the importance of employability is crucial to all stakeholders, including policymakers and scholars. Buttressing the need for employers' involvement in graduate preparedness as researched by scholars such as Jackson et al. (2016), Mainga et al. (2022), and Nwajiuba et al. (2020), Römgens et al. examined the competence-based approaches to

employability to emphasize focusing on employees' learning and development in the workplace.

Although employability has received much criticism for its ambiguity, vagueness, and precision, all of these definitions saw it as a critical mediator between workers and employers and a key factor in graduate professional success (Römgens et al., 2020). As a result, several studies have attempted to explain employability from various angles and contexts. Römgens et al. (2020) explored the input-output relationship between universities and colleges and the output provided to businesses using an integrative approach to employability. It is possible to combine the viewpoints of diverse sectors to generate a rich understanding of employability within the confines of my research by employing an integrative approach to describe employability. The requirement for HEIs to educate undergraduates about the workforce while students develop their abilities to stay valuable and beneficial to enterprises is one of two key aspects to note regarding Römgens et al. (2020) that concur with my yearnings.

Römgens et al.'s research is relevant to my study because it adopted an interdisciplinary approach to the phenomenon, bringing insight into academics and the workplace. The study also researched how various employers and other stakeholders have played their part in enhancing graduate employability. Another strength of the study is that the researcher clearly stated the literature focus (Western world) study, which made it easier for me to decide the extent of the applicability of its findings to my research. Most scholars who conducted literature analysis and concept papers kept the sources of their investigations private; for example, Cheng et al. (2021) and Suleman (2018).

Römgens et al. (2020) explicitly emphasized the role of HEIs in preparing students for the workplace, where students must develop skills that require employers to collaborate with HEIs to drive work readiness curricula and policymakers to design structures and policies that support graduate employability. The limitation of the research is that the researcher used studies on the Western world, which could undermine generalizability, especially in a place like Nigeria, which I explored. Also, the study was not empirical, involving interviews and other forms of data collection for triangulation to allow obtaining in-depth information about the practical experience of people of the phenomenon. Finally, Römgens et al. did not indicate the number of articles reviewed to report their findings. Still, by the number of articles on their reference list, the researcher has comprehensively explored studies on employability.

Arévalo and Contreras (2020) described employability as a complicated social concept that may be categorized according to the leading players and the subject of their attention. As a result, academics have asked for more comprehensive definitions and methodologies for employability study that may provide a comprehensive framework for delineating and examining the concept (Camara et al., 2015; Suleman, 2018). A globally acceptable definition should apply to all levels of national development without regard to the development levels of the research location and the participants.

At every level—personal, institutional, corporate, and governmental—Employability is crucial. For instance, the Scottish government described employability as a combination of individual, intellectual, and cultural influences and processes that train students to obtain, maintain, and make progress in time work in their abilities for

Scotland; A Lifelong Skills Strategy (2007; as cited in Crawford & Irving, 2009).

According to Rich (2015), quoted in Mawson and Haworth, 2018, employability is "the ability to get, stay, and thrive in occupations you want - either now or in the coming years as the competition has increased" (p. 102). Using the framework, Mawson and Haworth (2018) emphasized that employability should include information, abilities, and cultural connections. Mawson and Haworth (2018) stressed that companies place a high value on employability skills in learners' employment, urging universities to consider these abilities when evaluating graduates' readiness for the workforce.

Most researchers conducted their studies in advanced countries and derived definitions of employability from a Western point of view (Fajaryati et al., 2020). Authors confirmed that employability means the degree of work readiness organizations anticipate college graduates to possess to enhance productivity (Cheng et al., 2021; Chigbu & Nekhwevha, 2022).

Additionally, many academic institutions and other institutions of higher learning are integrating employability skills into their curricula (Kornelakis & Petrakaki, 2020). The definitions have a lot in common and are particularly strong when they discuss skills and the role of universities in generating fruitful graduates who can satisfy the demands and aspirations of businesses. While different scholars have defined employability separately, all interpretations are related and lead in the same direction— toward being equipped for the workforce. The obvious flaw in those definitions is that they tend to downplay employer feedback and their specialized roles in promoting graduate employability.

These studies referenced employers in passing, but none used employers as the cornerstone for developing employable skills in their definitions. As a result, the purposes and their justifications likely need to address the research issue for my study correctly. Since employers are the final users of these work-ready graduates, the researcher has discovered a mismatch between the responsibility of businesses in determining employment and employability. Moreover, the experience, understanding, interpretation, and implications of employability could differ from country to country depending on various factors, including the economy, government, and society.

Employability Skills

The entire concept of employability correlates with skills. Employability skills make an individual more attractive to potential employers (Osmani et al., 2019). According to Osmani et al. (2019), skills can be categorized into three groups: technical abilities, interpersonal abilities, and behavioral abilities. Technical skills refer to the specific knowledge and abilities required to perform a particular job or task (Fajaryati et al., 2020). Technical skills are often specific to a particular industry or profession. They can include programming skills, knowledge of a specific software application, or proficiency in a unique tool or equipment. Personal skills refer to an individual's unique characteristics or traits, such as their ability to communicate effectively, work well in a team, or manage their time effectively (Fajaryati et al., 2020). These skills are essential in any job, as they help an individual to work effectively with others and to achieve their goals.

A person's behavioral talents include their capacity for social interaction and situational flexibility. (Fajaryati et al., 2020). These skills can include things like leadership, problem-solving, and conflict resolution. According to Osmani et al. (2019), graduates need employability skills to succeed in the job market. The authors discovered a discrepancy between graduates' talents and the skills employers seek while reviewing the literature. Osmani et al. (2019) suggested that universities must focus on developing these skills in their students to prepare them for the workforce better.

Although scholars have identified diverse skills that fit into employers' templates for graduate employability, there is yet to be a globally acceptable list of what employers expect graduates to possess to gain and retain employment. My exposure to these studies allowed me to dig deeper into the concept of employability and identify the uniqueness of employers' expectations in developed and developing countries.

Employability and Education

Good education prepares people for work, business, entrepreneurship, and leadership and helps graduates acquire the skills required to achieve other personal and societal goals (Jiménez et al., 2015). According to Adebakin et al. (2015), Jackson et al. (2016), Oraison et al. (2019), and Xing et al. (2019), it is the responsibility of colleges and other HEIs to prepare students for the workplace. However, scholars ask if HEIs still prepare students for jobs (Chamorro-Premuzic & Frankiewicz, 2019). Although employers have not stipulated standard percentile to certificates or degrees possessed by employees, employers will request the educational qualifications of recruits during the hiring process. Ali and Jalal (2018) and Hur et al. (2019) stated that academic

qualifications play a significant role in most jobs. The employment type determines the degree or course of study of the incoming employee employers want to hire. The implication is that higher educational levels should secure better jobs, among other benefits; getting good jobs with a reasonable degree aligns with the expectation of employers that educational institutions prepare people for work. However, researchers, including Bonnie et al. (2015), found that the quality of education does not determine employment. A higher degree sometimes does not guarantee job satisfaction (Solomon et al., 2022). Recently, employers have given little consideration to the certificates or degrees of recruits and place significance on work experience and other innate skills graduates possess (Fuller et al., 2022). However, researchers have identified that factors hindering higher institutions' output impact graduate employability more than other functions performed by higher institutions. For instance, inadequate funding slows the hiring of competent and industry-experienced lecturers (Okolie et al., 2019). At the same time, outdated curricula do not cover the employability skills required to cope with the complexities of the current workplace (Babalola & Oni, 2021).

Employability describes a person's capacity to find and keep a job and grow in their profession (Abelha et al., 2020). On the other hand, education is understanding the world, skills, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors across several learning modes, according to Martin-Páez et al. (2019). It can occur officially in places like a school or casually through encounters like travel or employment (Martin-Páez et al., 2019). Education can be more general and cover various topics, although it is typically centered on a single domain of discourse. Education should provide people with the knowledge, skills, and

productivity necessary to contribute to society (Martin-Páez et al., 2019). Good education gives people the knowledge and skills to pursue their goals and succeed in their personal and work development. It also assists them in developing their analytical reasoning and problem-solving skills (Martin-Páez et al., 2019). Through the descriptions of both employability and education, both variables are connected.

Scholars have defined education over the years, including John Dewey, an American philosopher and educational reformer, who defined education as "the process of living and not a preparation for future living." (Dewey, 1986, p. 246). He thought that rather than just preparing students for a future career or position, education should be centered on assisting people in acquiring the information and skills they need to live whole and comfortable lives in the present. Paulo Freire, a Brazilian philosopher and educational theorist, described education as a weapon to gain and retain freedom (Freire, 2018). He argued that education should empower individuals to critically analyze and transform their world rather than simply imparting knowledge or skills. A British philosopher, Michael Oakeshott defined education as "the acquisition of understanding." (Franco, 2021, p. 174). He believed that education should be focused on helping individuals develop the ability to think critically and reflectively rather than simply memorizing facts or acquiring specific skills. Finally, John Locke, an English philosopher, summarized education as the art of cultivating the mind through all forms of learning (Dai & Li, 2020). He believed that education should focus on helping individuals develop the mental capacities and abilities necessary for thinking, learning, and understanding. From all these descriptions and arguments on education, it could be

deduced that education involves passing knowledge for a more significant personal or community benefit. Consequently, education informs most of the decisions taken today.

Education primarily prepares graduates for the workforce through systematic instruction, practical experiences, and a conducive environment (Pantuvo et al., 2022). However, Babalola and Oni's (2021) findings showed that higher institutions in Nigeria could not deliver quality education to meet the standard required for meaningful jobs due to poor curriculum. Yusuf et al. (2018) suggested that colleges embed employability skills into the curriculum.

Employability skills, also known as "soft skills" or "transferable skills," are abilities that apply to a wide range of jobs and industries (Sokhanvar et al., 2021). Employers highly value these skills because they help employees adapt to new roles and responsibilities, work well in teams, and effectively communicate with others. According to Sokhanvar et al. (2021), employability skills include communication, problem-solving, time management, leadership, interpersonal skills, adaptability, creativity, and teamwork. Many colleges and universities have recognized the importance of helping their students develop employability skills and have begun incorporating them into their curricula (Okolie et al., 2019). HEIs' work-ready strategies have taken many forms, such as offering courses specifically focused on developing employability skills, integrating employability skills into existing courses, and offering the chance to obtain practical experiences like work placements (Cheng et al., 2021; Kornelakis & Petrakaki, 2020). Others are co-op or service-learning initiatives, enticing students to participate in leisure activities to develop and showcase their abilities (Pavlov & Trofimov, 2018). According

to Yusuf et al. (2018), schools and universities will be able to better equip their graduates for success in the profession and make them stand out to potential employers by incorporating employability skills into their curricula.

A person's education level significantly determines employment (Higgs et al., 2019). It equips people with the experience, skills, and aptitudes required for professional success. Employers seek people with the necessary support and learning to complete their work obligations in today's highly competitive global marketplace. Acquiring specific information and skills is one critical way education affects employability. More advanced degrees, such as bachelor's or master's, frequently give students a more thorough knowledge of their study topics. This greater comprehension may result in the growth of sophisticated capabilities widely prized by organizations (Higgs et al., 2019).

Qizi (2020) argued for the role of education in enhancing a person's transferable skills. According to Qizi, teaching aids in acquiring transferrable abilities that could be utilized in various workplace settings and industrial sectors. Qizi identified critical thinking, problem-solving, and communication as transferable skills highly appreciated by employers. Organizations value such skills highly since they are essential to employee effectiveness in every position. According to Abad-Segura et al. (2020), Education can also be necessary for employability as it promotes networking and the formation of new relationships. People can develop friendships and connections with professors, students, and other experts in their industry, which may be very helpful for their profession (Abad-Segura et al., 2020). These connections can serve as a gateway with job possibilities, career guidance, and support services while they pursue their professional.

In this study, the education system in Nigeria is a factor contributing to the high levels of unemployability since the quality of graduates churned out of the learning institutions does not match the expected output by the labor market (Nwajiuba et al., 2020 Okolie et al., 2019; Okolie et al., 2021). As such, exploring the state of education and factors contributing to such poor education standards is vital in answering the research questions and fulfilling the purpose of this study.

Impacts of Education and Factors of Employability in Nigeria

Dewey (1986), cited in Matthews (2020), defined education as "the process of living and not a preparation for future living." (p. 246). Dewey believed that education extends beyond preparing students for a future career or position but is centered on assisting people in acquiring the information and skills they need to live whole and comfortably. According to Martin-Páez et al. (2019), education should give people the knowledge, skills, and productivity they need to pursue their goals and develop their analytical reasoning and problem-solving skills to contribute positively to society.

Nigeria's first higher institution – Yaba College of Technology, a polytechnic, was founded in 1947 in Lagos (Yabatech, n.d). The University of Ibadan, the first federal university under the affiliation of the University of London, followed Yaba College in 1948 (University of Ibadan, n.d). In April 1959, the colonial government constituted the Ashby Commission to investigate and report Nigeria's human resources needs for twenty years (1960-1980). The report had a comprehensive manual for funding and sustaining the education sector. Between 1960 and 1980, Nigeria's HEIs grew from two to fifteen universities and six other institutions (Statista, n.d). Under the Nigerian University

Commission, these institutions produced employable graduates who got good jobs. The government-funded education and gave bursaries to students. Other organizations and communities supported brilliant students. The lecturers were well-trained, remunerated, and motivated. The educational curricula were upgraded as necessary (Adeyemi, 2011).

Education is vital for the economic development of Nigeria (Onwioduokit, 2020). Between 1960 and 1980, Nigeria witnessed a quantitative expansion of educational opportunities and qualitative improvement in the type of education (Cameron & Cameron, 2006). Consequently, education contributed significantly to Nigerian economic development (Jelilov et al., 2016). However, at the expiration of the Ashby (1960-1980) report, the federal government reduced its support to the education sector. Coupled with the civil unrest destabilizing the academic calendar (Eribo, 1996), there was poor educational output. According to Eribo (1996), the inefficiencies of federal HEIs led to the emergence of private universities in the 1990s. Today, there are 79 private universities in Nigeria (Statista, n.d).

Nigeria's HEIs are yet to achieve meaningful success and growth, and the quality of education has continued to decline (Meek et al., 2009). Since HEIs cannot force the government to perform their functions, HEIs are incapacitated to train, remunerate, and motivate their lecturers. The option was to seek the help of employers for funding, internships, employers' training packages, and scholarships for brilliant students. Despite the decline in the quality of education, the number of HEIs continues to rise in Nigeria (Abati, 2022). Consequently, the country suffers from the highly educated but not employable syndrome (Obor & Kayode, 2022).

Challenges facing HEIs in Nigeria include outdated curricula, poor funding, incessant breaks in academic sessions due to strikes, and student unrest (Abati, 2022; Nwajiuba et al., 2020). In addition, due to the inability of graduates to get jobs with a first degree, most graduates further their education by getting an additional degree, with no noticeable difference in skills acquisition (Obor & Kayode, 2022). Some identified factors that can improve graduate employability include effective government policies, programs, and projects for education; HEIs to revamp their admission process and update their curricula to cover courses to enhance employability; and graduates should invest in themselves through self-development programs. (Okolie et al., 2019).

Although few private HEIs produce competent graduates, private institutions constitute 16% of HEIs (Abati, 2022) and are costly to afford (Statista, n.d). Inaccessibility to student loans and scholarships further worsens access to quality education (Salmi & D'Addio, 2021). At the same time, shareholders expect managers and leaders to recruit skilled workers for business sustainability and profitability ((Polman & Bhattacharya, 2016), Nigerian higher institutions, government, graduates, and society expect employers to provide on-the-job training and development of their staff (Okolie et al., 2021).

Amidst all the recommendations to enhance graduate employability, employers' support ranked highest (Otache, 2022). Few colleges have collaborated with corporate organizations (Okolie et al., 2021). However, employers believe HEIs and the government are responsible for preparing graduates for work. Very few organizations support schools as part of corporate social responsibilities but not on a scale to make a

meaningful change (Otache, 2022). Scholars also suggested significant improvement in the government's annual educational budgets to decrease the drop-out student population and increase the stock of skilled human capital in the country (Onwusa, 2021). Due to poor output from HEIs, employers found it challenging to recruit well-prepared graduates (Okolie et al., 2019). As a result, few privileged graduates benefit from the quality education of private colleges and financial backing for stronger self-development. Nonetheless, they relocate out of the country for better opportunities (Onah et al., 2022).

Employability programs designed by higher institutions in Nigeria to curb graduate unemployability include skills acquisition, entrepreneurship, employment promotion, labor-based works, higher institution–industry linkages (HE-ILs), and employment counseling. Institutions have discovered that these employability programs can only succeed through the support of the private sector. However, the response rate from the private sector has not been encouraging (Jackson & Bridgstock, 2021). Research has not identified the extent to which employers should support higher institutions and at what phase of students' education employers should support. Should such support be directed to specific students or general funding to higher institutions? Finally, should employers' support to higher institutions be based on the industry sector or the same backing of all industries? Strategies employers should adopt to support Nigerian higher education to improve the quality of graduates, the amount and the time of support, and how they channel the support are issues yet to be addressed by the literature.

Global Perspectives of Employability

Fakunle and Higson (2021) concluded that the global perspective on employability emphasizes the significance of cultural, economic, and political factors in determining job possibilities and outcomes. In different global regions, employability is influenced by various factors that can vary significantly (Pauceanu et al., 2020). For example, economic conditions and the availability of jobs in a particular region can majorly impact an individual's employability. Individuals may have more opportunities to secure gainful employment in areas with strong economies and high employment levels (Pauceanu et al., 2020). In contrast, in regions with weaker economies and higher levels of unemployment, individuals may face more significant challenges in finding work (Wanberg et al., 2020).

Cultural factors can also affect employability (Jayachandran, 2021). In some regions, cultural norms and expectations may shape the types of jobs considered suitable for individuals and the expectations and requirements for those jobs (Jayachandran, 2021). For example, in some cultures, specific positions may be regarded as more prestigious or desirable than others, affecting an individual's employability. Additionally, some jobs are gendered in some regions (Jayachandran, 2021). Political factors can also impact employability (Kalecki, 2021). For example, governments in different areas may have other policies and priorities that can affect employment opportunities and outcomes (Kalecki, 2021). For example, government policies on education, training, and employment can influence an individual's employability. Additionally, political

instability or conflict in a region may create challenges for individuals seeking employment (Kalecki, 2021).

Given the complex and multifaceted nature of employability, HEIs must consider the world when deciding how to best educate students for the workforce. Preparing students for the workplace may involve assessing the economic, cultural, and political factors shaping employment opportunities in different regions and tailoring education and training programs to meet students' needs. By doing this, universities may contribute to ensuring their graduates are ready for the broad and quickly evolving global labor market.

Graduate Employability

Graduates must have what it takes to get a job if they must get employed.

Graduate employability is the potential of a graduate (those who have finished a degree course at a HEI) to find and perform effectively in work (Abelha et al., 2020). Many students consider their employability when choosing their learning course and considering their employment prospects after graduation (Abelha et al., 2020). The quality of the educational establishment, the applicability and depth of the skills and competencies acquired, and an individual's personality attributes and characteristics, such as business acumen, communication prowess, and problem-solving skills, are just a few of the many variables that can affect a graduate's employability.

Employability, which goes beyond credentials and the capacity to get, maintain, and understand a job, is the capacity to find and keep employment (Okolie et al., 2019). According to Kessy (2020), being employable is defined as having the knowledge, skills, and other attributes that simplify obtaining and maintaining a meaningful position.

Engelhart and Mupinga (2020) explained employability as people's skills, attitudes, and behaviors to find and keep a job. According to Fajaryati et al. (2020), employability increases the likelihood that unemployed people will find suitable employment.

Employability does not guarantee work. However, it depends on the stakeholder's perspective of education. For instance, employers are more inclined towards skills and capabilities as a determinant of graduate employability (Nwajiuba et al., 2020). On the other hand, higher learning institutions responsible for producing the best students may view knowledge and concept grasp as the best way to gauge employability (Nwajiuba et al., 2020).

Factors Influencing Employability

Different factors influence graduates' employability. For example, Tentama and Abdillah (2019) examined the impact of academic achievement and self-concept on graduates' employability. Tentama and Abdillah (2019) suggested that self-concept and academic success may affect graduates' employability. Grades measure academic success and other academic metrics students obtain while attending school. According to Tentama and Abdillah (2019), academic success is a significant determinant of employability since employers may see excellent grades as a sign of a candidate's intelligence, dedication, and learning capacity. Employability may also be impacted by one's self-concept or how one views themselves. For example, positivity about oneself may lead to more self-assurance in one's skills and a more vital ability to sell oneself to companies as a competent prospect. Tentama and Abdillah (2019) generally proposed

that self-concept and academic accomplishment may be significant criteria to consider when evaluating graduates' employability.

Also, government policies and funding could impact employability. According to the review by Sumanasiri et al. (2015), the government has a role to play in supporting the employability of graduates. Government policies and funding can significantly impact the employability of graduates, both directly and indirectly. The government can now support employability by funding education and training programs. Well-funded undergraduate education can help individuals gain the skills and knowledge needed to be competitive in the job market (Blough, 1968). The government can also indirectly support employability through policies promoting economic growth and stability. For example, policies that help small businesses and entrepreneurship can create job opportunities for graduates. Overall, Sumanasiri et al. (2015) suggested that the government has a crucial role in supporting graduates' employability through policies and funding that promote education, training, and economic growth.

Organizations' disposition to graduate development through training, internship placements, and other social responsibility programs will aid graduate employability (Cheng et al., 2021). According to Cheng et al. (2021), Nwajiuba et al. (2020), and Okolie et al. (2020), employers have a significant stake in the employability of higher education graduates since they rely on a skilled and qualified workforce to meet the needs of their organizations. Therefore, organizations often look to HEIs to secure a competent workforce to provide them with the necessary talent (Okolie et al., 2022). Therefore, employers must clearly understand what they value in potential employees and the factors

contributing to employability. One of the key considerations for employers is a candidate's academic qualifications (Cheng et al., 2021; Fisher et al., 2021). However, studies have established that academic qualifications do not guarantee employee work readiness (Chigbu & Nekhwevha, 2022).

Nevertheless, Velasco (2012) established that many employers still hunt for candidates who have completed a degree program from a reputable institution and have obtained good grades. To many organizations, a higher GPA indicates a candidate's ability to learn and succeed in a structured environment. However, research countered the relevance of graduates' grades in determining job fit (Schinske & Tanner, 2014).

In addition to academic qualifications, employers may also value relevant work experience (Cheng et al., 2021; Velasco, 2012). Such work-learning experiences include internships, co-op programs, and part-time jobs that allow candidates to apply their knowledge and skills in a real-world setting (Anjum, 2020; Schnoes et al., 2018). Employers may also seek candidates with transferable skills, such as problem-solving, communication, and teamwork, which can be applied to various job roles (Galbraith & Mondal, 2020).

Professional development is another factor that may interest employers (Ho et al., 2022). Candidates who have engaged in training programs or obtained certifications may be seen as more committed to learning and more adaptable to new challenges. Attitudes and motivations are also important considerations for employers. Proactive, motivated, and positive candidates may be more likely to succeed in the workplace. Although cultural fit should not undermine diversity, it is another important factor for employers

(Hofmans & Judge, 2019). Organizations often look for candidates who align with their values and will fit the company culture well. Building a solid professional network can also benefit employability, providing access to job opportunities and support in the job search process.

Employers have a significant stake in the employability of higher education graduates. They value candidates with strong academic qualifications, relevant work experience, transferable skills, and a commitment to professional development. They also look for candidates who are a good fit for the culture and values of their organization and who have a robust professional network. Understanding these factors can help HEIs prepare their students for success in the job market. Ultimately, employers and organizations will impact graduate employability due to their requirements, training programs, and initiatives to meet such needs (Cheng et al., 2021).

Perspectives of Graduate Employability

The various viewpoints and aspirations of other stakeholders for employability have been studied. For instance, Nwajiuba et al. (2020) used the stakeholders' perspective to look at how stakeholders behaved. Nwajiuba et al. (2020) stated that various stakeholders have opinions on students' employability. Nwajiuba et al. (2020) named students among the stakeholders. Most are worried about finding work after finishing school. They want to ensure they possess the abilities and information required to succeed in the employment market. According to Nwajiuba et al. (2020), the primary stakeholder is the students. Cheng et al. (2021) concluded that students are expected to enhance their employability through various initiatives, such as gaining practical

experience through internships, co-op programs, or part-time jobs related to their field of study.

Working learning can help them develop skills and knowledge that employers value. Students can also build their professional network by attending industry events, joining professional organizations, and connecting with alumni or professionals. In addition, they are expected to develop skills such as communication, problem-solving, and teamwork that are valuable in any job. These skills can be acquired through coursework, extracurricular activities, or volunteering. Other stakeholders have also availed career development resources such as career fairs, job search workshops, and resume and cover letter writing assistance. Students can take advantage of these resources to improve their employability. Nwajiuba et al. (2020) believed that stakeholders should work together to enhance the employability of graduates.

Another core stakeholder Nwajiuba et al. (2020) identified is the learning institutions. Universities are concerned with the employability of their graduates because it reflects on the quality of the education they provide (Nwajiuba et al., 2020). Universities may also be motivated by the potential for increased funding or prestige if their graduates are successful in the job market. However, the job market is constantly changing, and it can be difficult for universities to keep up with the skills and knowledge that are in demand (Teng et al., (2019). Constant changes can make it challenging for universities to prepare graduates for the job market. Universities in Nigeria are further subjected to limited resources, such as funding or faculty, to provide students with the necessary skills and experiences to be employable (Jacob et al., 2020). In addition,

universities in Nigeria do not have strong partnerships with industry, which can make it difficult for them to stay informed about the needs of employers (Okolie et al., 2019). Without this knowledge, it can be challenging for universities to prepare graduates for the job market.

Rook and Sloan (2021) viewed employers as significant stakeholders in graduate employability. Employers are interested in hiring well-prepared graduates with the skills and knowledge needed to succeed (Packer, 2022; Wallis, 2021), a position supported in the Harvard Business Review journal by Fuller et al. (2022) that the demand by employers for employability skills is rising. Unexpectedly, Fox (2018) and Hart Research Associates (2016) discovered that employers are more interested in college graduates' preparedness for work than the graduates are willing to acquire skills to make them get and retain jobs. The disparity in the perception of employers to graduate work readiness and graduates' disposition toward employability skills could affect the role employers want to play in supporting graduate employability (Mainga et al., 2022).

Employers may also be interested in building relationships with universities to find and hire the best candidates. To improve employability, contemporary employers provide internships and co-op programs (Succi & Canovi, 2020). These programs give students practical experience and opportunities to develop skills employers value. Nwajiuba et al. (2020) contended that employers offer training and development programs for new graduates to help them adjust to the workplace and develop the skills needed for their jobs.

The government is another crucial stakeholder in graduate employability, according to Nwajiuba et al. (2020). They may be interested in the employability of graduates because it affects the country's overall economic health. Governments may also have policies in place to support the employability of graduates, such as funding for education or training programs. In addition, society benefits when graduates can find employment and contribute to the economy.

Employability is a global phenomenon (Misra & Khurana, 2017). According to Misra and Khurana, employability is a global phenomenon that affects people worldwide seeking employment after completing their education. In today's globalized economy, there is competition for jobs both within a country and globally (Misra & Khurana, 2017). As a result, regardless of where they live, individuals need to possess the information and abilities required to compete in the employment market. Colleges and other academic facilities are essential in preparing students for employment. They must ensure learners finish with the knowledge and skills necessary in today's global employment market. Being work-ready can be challenging, as the job market's needs can change rapidly and vary depending on the region. However, universities that can adapt and provide students with the necessary skills and experiences will better prepare them for success in the global job market.

Employability in Nigeria

Understanding employability is now a subject of discussion in Nigeria. Nigeria ranks among the highest unemployment levels in the world, and it has been getting grimmer recently (Ossai & Okokoyo, 2022). Nevertheless, the current unemployment

rate, projected to be 42 percent at the most recent National Bureau of Statistics report, is more concerning (NBS, 2022). This rate is nearly 9% more than the unemployment rate in the United States. The youth problem of unemployment unquestionably may be attributed to two main factors. First, the common belief regarding youth unemployment is a lack of work opportunities (Ossai & Okokoyo, 2022). Secondly, on the macroeconomic level, the scarcity of job vacancies is a causal factor. Yet, many companies lament the difficulties in filling entry-level positions with qualified people, according to Ossai and Okokoyo (2022).

Organizations in Nigeria are searching for professional abilities and qualifications, which, according to Okolie et al. (2019), many fresh graduates lack despite the time spent on high and post-secondary schooling. According to Ayoade et al. (2020), school curricula, at most, only equip graduates for higher education; they do not train them for the work environment's demands. Beyond completing a university degree, obtaining employment requires developing the necessary skills (Babalola, 2021). Unfortunately, in Nigeria's transition from education to work, creating skill sets or getting personal and professional skills is not yet a daily requirement (Babalola & Oni, 2021). After completing their tertiary degree, young people are reluctant to undertake work-readiness programs because of the negative pressure against vocational training within the country (Ayoade et al., 2020). According to Nwajiuba et al. (2020), one of the leading causes of poor graduate employability in the nation is the absence of cooperation between educational institutions and companies.

It is challenging for the parties to assume responsibility for the situation and generate a collaborative action plan because they function in distinct areas and do not have deep connections or collaborations. In addition, a compelling value proposition may not exist for some organizations to establish workforce development programs for most university students and their potential employees since most operate on a short to medium-term basis (Ayoade et al., 2020). More importantly, graduates lack sufficient desire and motivation to be prepared for the workforce. So, how do we overcome these obstacles so that young people, educators, and business leaders can succeed together? What concrete measures could increase employability?

Nigeria is experiencing a crisis of employability. According to Olabiyi (2021), the employability dilemma in Nigeria is defined by a contradiction where there is a high graduate unemployment rate despite a considerable number of job openings in the nation. Olabiyi (2021) lists several causes for this contradiction, such as a lack of soft skills and real-world experience among college graduates and a mismatch between their knowledge and skills and the needs of the labor market. In addition, the fact that the educational system frequently fails to prepare pupils for the needs of the labor market is one of the main factors contributing to Nigeria's employability dilemma (Okolie et al., 2019). As such, employability in Nigeria is a complex topic that has not yet been addressed through adequate policies to improve it or through bodies of research to find the gaps or challenges in their apparent education system.

Graduate Unemployability in Nigeria

Unemployment is a significant issue in Nigeria, especially among fresh graduates. According to the International Labor Organization (ILO, 2022), the youth unemployment rate in Nigeria was 24% in 2019 and is estimated to be around 33% in 2022. The youth unemployment rate is significantly higher than the overall unemployment rate, estimated at approximately 14% in the same year (ILO, 2022). Some of Nigeria's foremost contributors to high unemployment rates are youth in employability.

According to Markjackson et al. (2021), graduate unemployment is a significant issue in Nigeria, with many college graduates struggling to find employment after completing their studies. The authors argued that one of the leading causes of this problem is the disconnect between tertiary institutions and job market needs. One of the main ways tertiary institutions contribute to graduate unemployability in Nigeria is by failing to prepare students for the demands of the workforce. As a result, many college graduates in Nigeria lack the practical skills and knowledge necessary for success in the job market, making it difficult for them to find employment.

In addition, Markjackson et al. (2021) argued that tertiary institutions often do not adequately expose students to real-world work experiences or provide internships and other practical learning opportunities, which can further limit their employability. Another factor contributing to graduate unemployability in Nigeria is the lack of job opportunities in certain sectors. While there may be many job openings in specific industries, there may be a lack of opportunities in other sectors, creating a bottleneck for college graduates trying to enter the workforce. Overall, graduate unemployability is a

complex issue in Nigeria that is driven by a variety of factors. It will be necessary to address these underlying issues and implement targeted solutions to address the problem and improve the employability of college graduates in Nigeria. The answers could include reforms to the education system to better prepare students for the workforce and initiatives to improve access to job opportunities and support college graduates as they enter the job market.

Graduate Employability in the West African Context

Graduate employability in West Africa is a complicated problem that depends on several variables. On the one hand, employers seek skilled workers who can add value to the goals and objectives of their organizations (Hubschmid-Vierheilig et al., 2019). On the other hand, employers face several challenges when recruiting graduates from West Africa, making it difficult to find suitable candidates for their job openings (Igwe et al., 2021a). One significant challenge employers face when recruiting graduates from West Africa is employees' lack of access to job opportunities (Odame et al., 2021).

Many graduates are unaware of the available job openings in the region, so they may miss out on opportunities to secure employment. A lack of information about job openings can be particularly problematic for graduates seeking employment in industries not well-represented in their local job market (Odame et al., 2021). Another challenge employers face when recruiting graduates from West Africa is a lack of relevant experience (Igwe et al., 2021a). Many graduates in the region have not had the opportunity to gain practical experience in their field of study, making it difficult to demonstrate their skills and abilities to potential employers (Igwe et al., 2021a). The lack

of experience can also make it difficult for graduates to secure employment in industries that require practical skills and knowledge (Igwe et al., 2021a). In addition to these challenges, employers in West Africa often face competition from international companies that can offer more competitive salaries and benefits packages (Liu-Farrer & Shire, 2021). As a result, local employers can find it difficult to attract top talent, as graduates may be more inclined to pursue employment opportunities abroad. Despite these challenges, there are several strategies employers in West Africa can use to increase their chances of attracting and retaining top talent. One approach is to invest in training and development programs that help graduates gain the necessary skills and experience to succeed in the workforce (Nwajiuba et al., 2020).

Employers can also work with universities and other educational institutions to identify and recruit the best and brightest graduates in the region (Nwajiuba et al., 2020). Finally, employers can consider offering competitive salaries and benefits packages to attract top talent and improve their chances of long-term employee retention (Nwajiuba et al., 2020). Graduate employability in West Africa is thus a complex issue that is influenced by a variety of factors. However, employers can increase their chances of attracting and retaining top talents in West Africa by investing in training and development programs, collaborating with educational institutions, and offering competitive salaries and benefits packages.

Employability in Togo is influenced by career adaptability and self-efficacy (Atitsogbe et al., 2019). According to Atitsogbe et al. (2019), graduates with higher career adaptability and self-efficacy are likelier to perceive their employability status

objectively and align with what employers need. The study focused on university students and job seekers in Togo. The study's findings imply that acquiring adaptability and self-efficacy skills may be crucial for anyone looking for a job in Togo and other West African countries.

While unemployability is a challenging issue in West Africa, each nation has its version of the calluses and the strategies needed to address them. In Nigeria, it is mainly tributary to a lack of economic opportunities, a growing population that the economic growth cannot match, and an education system that focuses on passing the education level rather than instilling skills and competencies. Many nations within the region, such as Ghana, may have a comparatively superior education system, but it is still faced with unemployment challenges (Winful et al., 2022). Consequently, unemployability within the region is a complex topic that should only be addressed individually.

Impact of Employability on Employment

Employment is a broad concept defined in various ways by different peer-reviewed articles. For example, ILO defines employment as "work that is carried out in exchange for payment, whether wages, salary, commission, or piece rates" (ILO, 2020, p. 2). The United States Bureau of Labor Statistics (n. d) defines employment as "work for which one is paid or has the opportunity to work." According to Cascio and Aguinis (2019), essentially, employment involves the exchange of labor for money and other benefits in kind, with the employer and employee agreeing to specific terms and conditions that aid meaningful work and help employees produce positive results. Employment might be defined as contributing to production (Hodder, 2020). Overall,

these definitions and explanations highlight that employment typically involves the exchange of labor or service for payment. It can occur within various contexts, such as within a firm or on the open market. However, irrespective of the quality of remuneration and other benefits the employer provides in consideration for agreed services, employee performance is predicated upon their skills and competence, among other work-readiness factors (Zhenjing et al., 2022).

According to Abelha et al. (2020), employability is a complicated construct that describes a person's capacity to find and keep a job and grow in their profession. In their systematic literature review, Abelha et al. identified several factors contributing to employability, including education. In addition, Abelha et al. noted that education is an essential predictor of employability, citing that those with higher education levels are typically more employable than those with lower education levels.

In linking employability to employment, some subtopics emerged as essential to a better understanding of that concept. Furthermore, it could be relevant to the stakeholders of graduate employability, especially employers. The subtopics are skills, knowledge, work experience, attitudes, and values.

Skills, Experience, and Attitude

Abelha et al. (2020) identified skills and knowledge as crucial contributors to employability. Employability skills include technical skills, knowledge related to specific fields, and soft skills such as communication, problem-solving, and teamwork. Abelha et al. (2020) found that work experience is an essential predictor of employability, with those who have more work experience being more likely to be employed and advance

their careers. Abelha et al. (2020) suggested that an individual's attitudes and values can affect their employability. Personal values include a positive attitude, a strong work ethic, and a commitment to continuous learning. Abelha et al. (2020) confirmed that employability is a multifaceted concept influenced by various factors, including education, skills and knowledge, work experience, and attitudes and values. Therefore, individuals can increase their chances of employment and career advancement by focusing on these factors.

Stakeholders' Perspectives on Graduate Employability in Nigeria

In developing countries, graduate employability has become a significant challenge that affects many sectors (Mgaiwa, 2021), and employers are worried about how to get and retain a competent workforce. Nwajiuba et al. (2020) conducted qualitative research using interviews and observation to collect data from representatives of public and private organizations, education agencies, and members of non-governmental organizations in Nigeria to evaluate the roles of the major stakeholders in higher education. Nwajiuba et al. grounded their study in stakeholder theory to drive the need for all key stakeholders to collaborate to enhance graduate employability in Nigeria. The researchers summarized their findings and suggested that one way to improve graduates' knowledge, employability, and skills is HEI–industry–government collaboration. Nwajiuba et al.'s study is relevant to my research because it was empirical, used qualitative methods, collected rich data, and based their work on my selected theory. Additionally, the study was conducted in Nigeria and covered vital stakeholders.

The research confirmed that many graduates in Nigeria decide to seek further education to improve their chances of finding employment upon graduation (Borishade et al., 2021). However, the issue is that adding many degrees does not guarantee employability as long as the certificates are obtained from the same country with existing challenges in the education sector (Okolie et al., 2021). High unemployment rates among graduates result from the divergence between the competencies and resources offered in postsecondary learning and the labor market demands. Students may feel that their schooling has not fully prepared them for this, which might be a demotivating factor and dissatisfaction. The employability of graduates is more important to employers than many certificates since it can significantly impact their organizational performance, image, and prosperity (Nwajiuba et al., 2020).

By delivering essential and appropriate programs, facilitating chances for inquiry-based learning, and cultivating connections with companies, universities may aim to increase the employability of graduates. Employers likewise have a stake in graduate employability since they depend on qualified staff to advance their companies. Employers in Nigeria frequently complain that locating suitable applicants for job vacancies is difficult, which raises questions about graduates' employability (Nwajiuba et al., 2020). Employers can cooperate with educational institutions to assist in building curricula and give students hands-on learning opportunities to solve this issue, or they can engage in human resource development for new workers.

The government also influences the employability of graduates in Nigeria. The government may implement measures and programs to enhance the educational system

and boost graduates' employability. For instance, they can spend money on technical and vocational education to give people the skills they need for in-demand employment. In addition, they might reward companies that hire and train new graduates with incentives such as tax rebates.

Employers' Perspective on College Graduates in Nigeria

In Nigeria, employers often have specific expectations and preferences when hiring college graduates (Olabiyi, 2021). These expectations and intentions can vary depending on the industry and the particular job, but some common themes emerge. One of the primary things that employers look for in college graduates in Nigeria is a solid academic background (Omoniwa & Adedapo, 2017). Employment criterion typically includes a good GPA and a degree from a reputable institution. Employers also often look for candidates who have completed internships or other practical experience (Noah & Aziz, 2020), as this can demonstrate practical knowledge and skills that can be valuable in the workplace. In addition to academic and practical experience, employers often value soft skills such as communication, teamwork, and problem-solving. These skills can be challenging to teach and are often considered critical for workplace success.

College graduates who demonstrate strong communication skills, the ability to work well in a team, and the ability to think critically and solve problems are often more attractive to employers. Another factor employers often consider when hiring college graduates in Nigeria is compatibility with the company culture (Igbinovia & Popoola, 2016). Cultural fit includes employees' personalities, values, and goals. Therefore, employers often look for candidates who align with their company's values and will fit

the rest of the team well. However, Nigeria's employability crisis is heightened by factors other than cultural fit. According to Olabiyi (2021), the employability crisis in Nigeria is characterized by a paradox where there is a high graduate unemployment rate despite a large number of job openings in the country. Olabiyi (2021) cited several factors contributing to this paradox, including a lack of real-world experience and soft skills among college graduates and a mismatch between their knowledge and skills and the demands of the work market.

One of Nigeria's leading causes of the employability crisis is that the education system often does not prepare students for the job market demands (Okolie et al., 2019). As a result, many college graduates in Nigeria lack the practical skills and knowledge necessary for success in the workforce, making it difficult to find employment (Okolie et al., 2019). The absence of employment prospects in several areas is another reason causing the employability issue in Nigeria, especially in areas with the most graduates (Aminu, 2019). While there may be many job openings in specific industries, there may be a lack of opportunities in other sectors, creating a bottleneck for college graduates trying to enter the workforce. Aminu (2019) describes this situation as a job-education mismatch problem. As a result, the employability crisis in Nigeria is a complicated problem caused by many factors. Addressing the employability challenge of college graduates in Nigeria will be achieved by looking into the underlying issues to implement targeted solutions. Solving employability issues could include reforms to the education system to better prepare students for the workforce and initiatives to improve access to job opportunities and support college graduates entering the job market.

Modern firms provide cooperative programs and internships to increase employability (Succi & Canovi, 2020). Nigeria is not an exception. These courses provide students with real-world experience and the chance to gain generic skills. Furthermore, according to Nwajiuba et al. (2020), companies provide training and development programs for recent graduates to aid in their adjustment to the workplace and develop the skills necessary for their jobs.

Employer Perspective on Skills Development in Nigeria

There are numerous complaints about the competence of Nigerian graduates by employers. Stakeholders have left graduate preparedness to the government and HEIs (Asiyai, 2015). In their explanation, Nwajiuba et al. (2020) expressed the need for HEIs and employers' collaboration. As a result of the inability of graduates to demonstrate the skills required, most often, employers prefer to hire college graduates who studied abroad or few graduates who are competent enough to perform essential office functions (Giolando, 2016).

Aliu & Aigbavboa (2020) discovered that employers have always anticipated that HEIs will implement more excellent methodical instruction and learning approaches, open courseware, and other employability-related initiatives in light of the dramatic rise in policy attempts to incorporate employability goals throughout higher education implementation. However, are employers conscious of the peculiar challenges confronting HEIs in Nigeria? In developing countries, for example, the United Kingdom, according to the Department for Business, Innovation, and Skills. (2011), graduate

preparedness has been at the heart of the system; the educational system brings HEI, the government, and the private sectors together to prepare well-rounded graduates.

Private trusts and other organizations also sponsor the education of less privileged and disadvantaged students (Wyness, 2017). The UK and other developed countries have financial aid to assist students in school. Suspitsyna (2012) acknowledged the impact of The United States at the federal level Free Application for Federal Student Aid. Pollard et al. (2019) conducted an intensive literature of reports and articles. Pollard et al. (2019) confirmed the role of the United Kingdom government in enhancing the quality of UK graduates through the effective administration of student loans and scholarships and how it has assisted disadvantaged students. Britton & Gruber (2019) identified that the UK government's organized system finances student education finance through the Student Loans Company. In Canada, education is at the regional level. For example, Ontario has the Ontario Student Assistance Program, which support student tuition and scholarship (Rouf, 2019).

Nigeria students in the '70s to late '80s had good study experience regarding good funding and scholarships. Chuta (1992) examined the role of the Nigerian government in funding the education of Nigerians studying in Nigeria and abroad in the early 70s to 90s. Chuta's (1992) study was supported by the research of Woodhall (1992), who explored the quality of education and student academic experience in developing countries using Nigeria and Tanzania as case studies. Chuta and Woodhall explored the Nigerian official gazette decree 12 of 1988. However, the quality of Nigerian education has declined since

the early 90s when the government neglected the education sector through poor funding (IseOlorunkanmi et al., 2021).

Research shows that the Nigeria national budget for education was often disbursed to higher institutions too late to serve a good purpose and has significantly contributed to the deplorable state of Nigerian education (Ahmodu et al., 2022). The funds have often been tampered with through corruption (Hoffmann & Patel, 2021; Ugoani, 2016). While developed nations have increased their budget for education (Drayton et al., 2022), the Nigerian funding for education has declined (Dimunah, 2017).

Since insufficient government funding and lack of meaningful private sector support stifle graduate preparedness, scholars found that employers have craved for HEIs to embed employability skills into the education curricula on a scale that students and their parents/sponsors can afford (Chidinma & Idoghor, 2020)—bolstering the position of Nigerian employers, Aliu and Aigbavboa, 2020. confirmed that employers have advocated for a longer term of practical training for students, increased industry-university cooperation, and curriculum improvements emphasizing communication skills, interpersonal skills, critical thinking, and knowledge of technology and information.

Consequently, employers are left with incompetent yet academically qualified graduates. However, according to Aliu and Aigbavboa, 2020, although employers acknowledge the critical role of relevant experience, work placements, and volunteer activities as hugely valuable in building individuals' transferable abilities, few organizations corroborate with HEI and students to offer those work-readiness strategies to college students. Additionally, most companies feel that a college education is

necessary for some positions. However, they believe that degrees have a minimal long-term impact on graduates' employability (Aliu & Aigbavboa, 2020). Employers thus assume that most educational institutions are focusing on the unimportant while ignoring the significant challenges of fostering employability among their graduates.

Larger employers are prepared to offer extra training and provide more graduates with the specialized knowledge and competencies needed when joining the organization (Aliu & Aigbavboa, 2020). Retraining graduates frequently implies that the field of a graduate's certificate is much less significant than certain traits and abilities graduates might exhibit (Aliu & Aigbavboa, 2020). Nwajiuba et al. (2020) claimed that most companies think graduates typically have excellent academic and practical competence. There are various opinions, nevertheless, on the broader mindsets, traits, and abilities these graduates hold (Nwajiuba et al., 2020). Employers view internship opportunities, professional experience, and occupational affiliations as essential to improving graduates' employability. The need for work experience is evident throughout all business types and industries (Aliu & Aigbavboa, 2020).

An employee or a graduate may possess all these requirements, including internship, industrial attachments, and work placements, and still be considered incapable if the work experience from these initiatives needs to be longer to equip the prospective employees for a role (Okolie et al., 2021). Therefore, employability is a concept that touches various stakeholders, including employers, the government, universities, and society. The role of employers in developing strategies to improve graduate

employability must be addressed. As such, employers' perspectives on skills development as a way to enhance employability would help address some of the research objectives.

Environmental Factors Influencing Graduate Employability in Nigeria

The Nigerian educational environment in terms of school infrastructure, societal influence, family support, political terrain, and personal drives of graduates could be critical factors affecting college graduates' employability in Nigeria. Babalola and Oni (2021) and Obidike (2017) identified the uncondusive learning environment, including dilapidated classrooms with poor ventilation and lighting. Corruption and poor evaluation of the activities of most colleges have encouraged neglect of the primary duties of higher institutions (Onwujekwe et al., 2020). Additionally, recently, core stakeholders like parents, educational sponsors, organizations, and regulators are beginning to show interest in what higher institutions do to prepare students for the workplace (Chigbu & Nekhwevha, 2022). Furthermore, poverty has driven many Nigeria college students to do odd jobs, providing them with money for self-sustenance (Gordon & Cui, 2018; Last, 2014), especially in a country like Nigeria that has no provision for student loans or financial aid (Salmi & D'Addio, 2021). Working full-time while in college, especially in fields unrelated to their course of study, could cause students to drift away from the primary purpose of attending school. Social media has also been found to be a distraction to quality listening and active class participation (Koessmeier & Büttner, 2021).

Contrary to parents supporting undergraduates while in school, most college students work to support their poor parents (Conway et al., 2021). Such students are unwilling to do internships or schemes that prepare them for the marketplace.

Researchers and economists should have paid more attention to these factors as everyone focused on unemployment, which could result from a lack of employability skills instead of its cause. Until recently, there were no research studies or advocacies on Nigeria's actual causes of unemployment. In their recent study on how the conducive environment created by several stakeholders could enhance the quality of college graduates in Nigeria, Nwajiuba et al. (2020) explored the perspectives of stakeholders like the government, employers, students, and learning institutions on graduate employability. The researchers (Nwajiuba et al.) emphasized employers' need to collaborate with higher institutions to improve curricula and create a better learning environment.

However, researchers have focused more on employers' involvement than other stakeholders. It will be valuable to consider the impact of political instability in Nigeria, where several projects, including educational projects and policies, get abandoned with changes in government, and such modifications/project abandonment could frustrate the activities and strategies of employers in supporting educational institutions (Mehmood et al., 2021; Terfa & Akiri, 2019).

Although Okolie et al. (2020) supported the assertions of Nwajiuba et al. (2020a) regarding stakeholder engagement to drive graduate employability, proper coordination of these stakeholders is necessary for college graduate unemployment to continue to rise in Nigeria and affect the service industry sector more than other sectors. Active involvement of employers as the users of the final output (graduates) could be the first drive for different stakeholders to act responsibly in alleviating most of these

environmental challenges. Under the abovementioned scenarios, employers' strategies could enhance the quality of college graduates available for gainful employment.

Higher Learning Institutions' Approach to Graduates' Employability

The primary goal of educational institutions is to make it easier for people to transfer information for individual and societal success (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020). By providing graduates with knowledge about a particular vocation, universities are expected to prepare graduates to find employment in the labor market (Hansen, 2021). However, because of the challenges of insufficient funding, lecturers' incompetence, constant change in government, and outdated curricula of the universities in Nigeria, graduates find it challenging to get a job and retain it. (Okolie et al., 2020a). Universities have sections to address the graduates' lack of employability (Galeotti et al., 2022). Colleges need structured careers departments to provide students access to these programs (Bridgstock et al., 2019). McGunagle and Zizka (2020) noted that universities with career departments significantly impact their institution's functional outcome and commitment to graduate employability. Careers departments have been able to connect most students to internship opportunities and work placement opportunities through collaboration with employers. Exposing graduates to a work-related environment bridges the gap between the skills for employability required by employers and graduates (McGunagle & Zizka, 2020).

Higher learning institutions in Nigeria, such as the University of Ibadan, have adopted flexible alternative learning sources to allow their students to seek labor market experience while also in school (Olutola & Olatoye, 2020). Through computer-based

testing and e-learning protocols, major universities in the country have experienced more flexible schedules (Olutola & Olatoye, 2020). Flexible education schedules enable outgoing students to sharpen their skills and improve their employability once they graduate. However, while many efforts exist to enhance graduate employability, management challenges still affect higher education learning. Challenges such as the rampant strikes by the Academic Staff Union of Universities have derailed any effort by the Universities to improve their graduate employability.

Other critical challenges confronting HEIs include a need for industry-experienced lecturers (Sanchi et al., 2022). Industry-experienced lecturers understand the transferable skills that graduate employees require to work meaningfully and add value to organizations. However, most Nigerian higher institutions, except the private higher institutions that charge higher tuition, need help to afford the remuneration of industry-experienced teachers (Okolie et al., 2019). Furthermore, incompetent academic lecturers must be equipped through educational training, conferences, and seminars to deliver quality service (Adejare et al., 2020). Scholars found that most lecturers are not remunerated and do non-academic jobs to supplement their incomes (Okolie et al., 2020a). Finally, the outdated Nigerian curricula must be updated to improve the poor learning environment (Okolie et al., 2019).

The current employability drive of higher institutions aligns with the Stakeholder theory, seeking employers' support to strengthen the challenged educational institutions. Focusing on balancing the interests of all the stakeholder groups (Moriarty, 2014) to develop a conceptual framework will help identify ways employers could serve the

interests of higher institutions and graduates. Buttressing the call by researchers for collaboration between higher education colleges and employers (Ezeani, 2018; Nwajiuba et al., 2020; Okolie et al., 2019) and stakeholders' engagement (Winterton & Turner, 2019), very few higher institutions have teamed up with industry-experts through the internship program in few undergraduate professional courses like accounting, insurance, and engineering. To drive college graduate employability in Nigeria, key stakeholders agreed that overcoming the challenge of graduate unpreparedness should be a shared responsibility of HEIs, the government, graduates, the private sector, and society (Babalola & Oni, 2021; Ferns et al., 2019). Shared responsibility to enhance graduate employability aligns with the human capital theory.

Nigerian employers seem to tilt more toward human capital perspectives to employability. The human capital theory posits that stakeholders must individually invest and improve themselves through education and training (Fitzsimons, 1999). Under the human capital theory, stakeholders do not expect another stakeholder to help improve them. A stakeholder is not mandated to produce value by contributing to other shareholders considered weaker. Although only some organizations support graduate employability projects under their CSR initiatives (Galeotti et al., 2022), most employers in Nigeria believe that each stakeholder must know their responsibilities toward improving their skills (Nwajiuba et al., 2020). Among their other duties, HEIs should prepare graduates for employment; the government should provide funds for education, while students should apply all they learn in school and further develop their innate abilities to become more employable (Nwajiuba et al., 2020). Against the stakeholder

tenet, employers do not willingly support Nigerian HEIs to enhance college graduate employability (Otache, 2022).

Additionally, higher institutions must compete with limited funding from the relevant authorities, making them opt for the cheapest options, thus affecting graduate employability improvement efforts (Olutola & Olatoye, 2020). Such perspectives are essential in addressing institutions' main strategies to tackle employability challenges.

Effects of Unemployability on Organizational Performance

Unemployability or the inability of individuals to demonstrate the skills required to contribute meaningfully to employment could significantly affect organizational performance (Awang-Hashim et al., 2022). When many employees are unemployed or underemployed, organizations may struggle to attract and retain top talent, leading to a decline in productivity and competitiveness. One of the main effects of unemployability on organizational performance is a reduction in the quality and skills of the workforce (Markjackson et al., 2021). When organizations cannot attract and retain qualified employees, they may be forced to settle for lower-quality candidates or hire employees who are not fully qualified for the positions they are filling. Hiring incompetent employees leads to a decline in the overall quality and productivity of the workforce, as these employees may not have the necessary skills or experience to perform their jobs effectively. Unemployability can also lead to increased staff turnover and a higher rate of absenteeism among employees (Sender et al., 2021). In addition, employees who cannot secure stable employment may be more likely to switch jobs or take time off work due to

financial or personal issues. This can lead to disruptions in the work environment and a decline in overall productivity.

In addition, unemployability may lead to a decline in employee morale and motivation (Ukah & Atah, 2021). Employees who cannot find or maintain employment may feel demotivated and disengaged, decreasing productivity and overall organizational performance. Generally, the effects of unemployability on organizational performance are significant, leading to a decline in the quality and workforce skills, increased turnover and absenteeism, and a decline in employee morale and motivation (Liu & Liu, 2022). It is, therefore, important for organizations to address issues of unemployability to maintain a solid and productive workforce. Furthermore, unemployability requires employers to invest more time training and developing inadequately prepared graduates (International Labour Office, 2010). Investing to enhance the skills of unskilled graduates could lower the morale of well-grounded college graduates who obtained their degrees from foreign higher institutions, increase executive stress, and cause low organizational productivity that negatively affects overall organizational performance (Wang et al., 2020).

Employers' Strategies for Enhancing Employability in Nigeria

Irrespective of the current graduate employability in Nigeria, employers can do something to minimize the challenge. According to Jackson and Bridgstock (2021), several strategies can enhance graduate employability, including providing practical, hands-on learning opportunities. Jackson and Bridgstock (2021) argued that experiential learning opportunities, such as internships, co-op programs, and work placements, can enhance graduate employability. In addition, concentrating on co-curricular and

additional activities enables learners to use their skills and expertise in natural world environments, which can assist in adequately equipping them for the demands of the employment market (Jackson & Bridgstock, 2021). Jackson and Bridgstock also suggested that co-curricular and extra-curricular activities, such as clubs, societies, and sports teams, can enhance graduate employability. Furthermore, employers can help by supporting such initiatives through institutional partnerships (Jackson & Bridgstock, 2021).

Employability skills and activities can provide students with essential skills, such as leadership, teamwork, and problem-solving, which can be valuable in the workforce. Additionally, providing support and guidance for job searching, Jackson and Bridgstock (2021) argued that universities can play a role in helping students transition from education to employment by providing support and guidance for job searching. Employers could support graduate employability through career counseling services, resume writing workshops, and networking events. Encouraging paid work experience could be a valuable tool to drive employability. Jackson and Bridgstock suggested that paid work experience can enhance graduate employability. Paid work can provide students with valuable practical experience and help them develop skills such as time management and responsibility, which could benefit the workforce.

Overall, many strategies can be effective in enhancing graduate employability. By combining these approaches, universities and other educational institutions can better prepare students for success in the job market. However, studies proved that employers might not be willing to invest in unprepared graduates because of the fear of losing

trained graduates to other organizations (PwC, 2022). Nevertheless, employers still need to invest in upskilling their workforce for business sustainability.

Addressing employability in Nigeria requires a collaborative approach from all stakeholders. As essential stakeholders, employers have been upping their efforts on training and development. Many Nigerian universities today have more employer representatives (Aliu & Aigbavboa, 2020). Companies and their authorized representatives believe that HEIs should increase their efforts to tackle employability throughout their course offerings, according to Aliu and Aigbavboa, 2020). However, most employers in Nigeria are assertive that HEIs do not do enough to meet the demands of businesses and rarely think of the economy when issuing courses. That is why some courses are irrelevant within the Nigerian economic context, thus rendering those partaking in them unemployable.

Aliu and Aigbavboa (2020) also noted the potential conflict between employers and learning institutions. They observed that while good behavior is more visible at the program, school, or organizational unit, there exists a perception that there is still a lack of coordinated approach to enhance employability throughout HEIs. It frequently seems that employer-HEI relationships depend more on the individuals than the mechanism.

More benefits from relating directly with graduates have made employers in Nigeria lean more towards offering training directly to their potential employees rather than collaborating with universities and other learning institutions to enhance employee skills. Since Nigeria's schooling institutions might not always equip graduates with particular abilities and information that a business requires (Ayodele et al., 2020),

organizations, through coaching their staff, ensure a workforce with the specialized skills and knowledge needed to suit their demands (Knight et al., 2019). Furthermore, businesses could discover that training their staff members enables their organization to customize the training to their unique industries and business demands, which might not be covered in conventional training materials (Ayodele et al., 2020).

Many companies have graduate and internship programs where they train potential employees by allowing them to experience a workplace environment while also studying (Nwajiuba et al., 2020). According to Bradberry and De Maio (2019), this strategy has proven successful in many countries. Understanding the strategies Nigerian employers have adopted to support HEIs in enhancing graduate employability and their success could further reduce the unemployment of graduates.

Social Change Implication of Graduate Unemployability

Graduate unemployability has implications for social change. Teaching and development programs aim to prepare people with what it takes to solve problems and contribute positively to themselves, others, families, organizations, economies, and society (Howells, 2018). Unemployed graduates constitute social problems, while competent hands are valuable social assets. In general, graduate unemployability can have significant implications for individuals and society. For individuals, high rates of graduate unemployability can lead to financial insecurity, frustration, and a sense of hopelessness (Ehinomen & Afolabi, 2015). Being unemployable can have negative impacts on graduates' mental and physical health, as well as their overall well-being (Pharr et al., 2012).

At the societal level, graduate unemployability could have significant consequences. High graduate unemployment rates can contribute to social trust and cohesion erosion. It could also have adverse economic effects, leading to a waste of human capital and reduced productivity. However, Sage (2019) suggested that unemployment could create social change. In particular, the experience of unemployment might lead individuals to re-evaluate their priorities and seek new opportunities for personal and professional growth, leading to new skills and knowledge and a greater sense of purpose and meaning in life.

Sage (2019) argued that the experience of unemployment could also lead to social change at the societal level. A high unemployment rate can create frustration and discontent among the general population, leading to social unrest and a desire for change. By contributing to graduate employability, employers contribute to positive social change.

Key Debates and Controversies

Like any critical topic, employability has attracted controversies. Studies have identified that unemployability affects people, organizations, and society (Antipova & Momeni, 2021; Yamada & Lavador, 2018). Awang-Hashim et al. (2022), Markjackson et al. (2021), and Nwajiuba et al. (2020) concluded that the causes and effects of graduate unemployability differ from country to country. Also, some studies demonstrated that college graduates of developed nations perform better at work than most graduates from developing nations (Hatayama et al., 2020). At the same time, some writers believe that graduate unemployability exists in all parts of the world.

Some critiques within the educational sector in Nigeria see discussions about graduate unemployability as an indictment on the government (Obor & Kayode, 2022). Nwajiuba et al. (2020) opined that the government could influence employability through policies and funding. Still, Nigerian universities have been forced to implement cost-saving measures and initiatives in their curriculum due to inadequate funding from the government. Moreover, some researchers believe the main problem is the need for more good jobs for fresh college graduates. All graduates can be absorbed if there are sufficient job openings in Nigeria (Ogunode et al., 2022b)

There is a dimension to employability that has not been explored. That is the role that lack of employability skills in graduates plays in suppressing entrepreneurs' business ideas and growth strategies. Businesses stagnate or shut down due to incompetent employees (Igwe et al., 2021b). Poor human resources could lead to waste and threaten sustainability. Organizations require human capital to manage clients, services, expenses, and goodwill (Dachner et al., 2021). Going by the number of studies on the graduate employability challenge in Nigeria, there is no controversy about its negative impact on unemployment and social problems like crime, violence, and poverty. Although researchers recommended the involvement of organizations in students' academic journey to enhance their work readiness, employers expect HEIs to take responsibility for graduate academic and technical readiness.

In contrast, they expect graduates to invest in developing other skills graduates require to become employable (Otache, 2022). Employers have yet to be involved in supporting HEIs to improve the quality of graduates. Scholars found that few employers

carry out their CSR initiatives through short internship spaces for very few undergraduates and other higher institution students (Nwajiuba et al., 2020), not necessarily to support HEIs in enhancing graduate employability. The current stakeholders' consensus is how and what each stakeholder group, especially the employers who are the end users of these graduates, could do to support Nigerian higher institutions in enhancing the quality of graduates (Nwajiuba et al., 2020).

Summary and Conclusions

Chapter 2 described the literature search strategy and the stakeholder theory conceptual framework that grounds the study. The stakeholder theory offers a particular lens for examining employers as key stakeholders in improving graduates' employability. Chapter 2 provided a thematic literature review of employability, employers' perspectives, employability theories, employability factors, and employers' strategies to enhance graduates' skills. Chapter 3 presents the methodology.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore strategies service organizations adopt to support Nigerian HEIs in enhancing college graduate employability. Chapter 3 includes the research design and rationale, the role of the researcher, procedures for selecting the research participants, and the data collection plan highlighting the instruments for data collection and analysis. Chapter 3 also addresses the trustworthiness issues and explains the study's reliability and validity.

The research design and rationale state the research question that guides the study defines the employability and other concepts relevant to the research topic, and justifies the choice of a single case study. I briefly explain five research traditions and the rationale for a single case study method. I outline the research design, sampling method, process, tool, and locations for data collection, discuss my role as a researcher, and discuss the researcher-produced data collection instruments. Finally, I address the trustworthiness issues, including credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, and ethical procedures. Chapter 3 concludes with a summary of the research methodology.

Research Design and Rationale

The research question guiding this qualitative single case study was: What strategies do service organizations adopt to support Nigerian HEIs in enhancing the employability of college graduates? The study was qualitative because the approach aligns with the purpose of the research, which was to obtain an in-depth understanding of experiences, phenomena, and context under real-world conditions and offers data that

represent the views and perspectives of the participants in the study (Yin, 2018). Specifically, using qualitative design allows the researcher to ask questions and obtain data that numbers cannot present to comprehend the human experience (Guest et al., 2013). I engaged with research participants by conducting in-depth interviews with the human resources professional, managers working directly with the college graduates, and graduate employees to obtain data on their experiences and other necessary information to explore the phenomenon.

The quantitative method confines the researcher to existing theoretical models to confirm a hypothesis(es) and the relationship between the variables (Barroga & Matanguihan, 2022). Quantitative methods use statistical analyses to identify trends and linkages (Opie, 2019). Qualitative studies are more concerned with comprehending and characterizing a behavior in its original context than quantitative methods, conducted to causal links between variables (Opie, 2019). This study is not about causation. Therefore, the quantitative approach is not viable.

Five qualitative methods were considered for this study. The options included grounded theory, phenomenology, narrative inquiry, ethnography, and case study. The grounded theory leads to the analysis of the components of categories codes and constructs from its components, examining the specifics to understand the whole of the studied phenomenon, usually in new ways. The grounded theory leads to the analysis of the components of categories, codes, and constructs from its components, examining the specifics to understand the whole of the studied phenomenon, usually in new ways (Charmaz, 2006). The main feature of grounded theory is developing new theories

through collecting and analyzing data about a phenomenon (Kempster & Parry, 2014). The objective of my study was not to create new theories, making grounded theory unsuitable for my research.

Phenomenology has its roots in philosophy, history, psychology, sociology, and anthropology. It aims to explore the essence of an experience of a phenomenon for a person or group of people (Mihalache, 2019). Although data collection is through purposive sampling, the data could be skewed by the descriptions or perceptions of the researcher (Sultan, 2019). The narrative inquiry seeks to answer questions relating to the lived life experience of the narrator, what a particular situation is like for the narrator, what the role of the narrator is in the phenomena under study, and what it is like to live or work under certain conditions, and what difficulties the narrator has encountered (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Data are obtained through field notes, journal records, interview transcripts, observations, storytelling, letter writing, autobiographical writing, documents, and artifacts (Esin et al., 2013).

The narrative study is limiting in terms of getting in-depth and corroborative data. Moreover, narrative studies are subject to participant bias (Jahan et al., 2016). Additionally, using the narrative approach for the study may not allow for obtaining deeper, more intractable, and more significant concerns from a relatively good number of selected industry representatives (Ntinda, 2019). According to Hoey (2014), researchers use ethnography to explore the description of moments of the participant's everyday experience, sharing a story about the time, explaining in detail when it happened, and obtaining their favorite memory. It is a methodology for descriptive studies of cultures

and people (Hoey, 2014). Data collection in ethnography involves photographs, interviews, journals, field observations, and investigating histories. The unique feature of an ethnographic study is the need for the researcher to be involved in fieldwork study of the daily interaction of the subject to obtain reasonable interpretation, understanding, and representation required to do rigorous research (Ellis et al., 2011).

A case study approach focuses on how a particular process interacts with a phenomenon, the nature of the interaction, why the interaction occurs, the different stages of exchange, and the available resources to support these interactions (Rashid et al., 2019), thus helping to obtain in-depth data on the phenomenon examined. A case is an event or entity, such as a person or a collection of people (Campbell, 2015). The case study can be single or multiple depending on the number of locations or organizations included in the research – one or more (Yin, 2018). The single case study research design was appropriate for my study as it enables the researcher to explore the complexity of a case via multiple types and sources of information (Yin, 2018). Data collection tools involve semi-structured interviews and reviewing secondary data related to the research topic (Crowe et al., 2011). The approach helped create a holistic review of data using a range of tools, which could have been impossible with other standalone techniques (Hyett et al., 2014). Additionally, using the case studies method reduced my bias by giving room to the diversity of perspectives of participants purposefully selected across a chosen field (Crowe et al., 2011).

A single case study design includes exploring a phenomenon within some particular context, in a specific setting, and collecting data through various sources. To

overlay and interpret the research data, researchers employ a single case study approach in which the same interview questions are asked of numerous subjects in various contexts (Yin, 2018). Because a single case study analysis enables researchers to explore the phenomenon from multiple angles thoroughly and conduct an in-depth study of a single professional firm with goodwill in Nigeria, it was ideal for this study (Rashid et al., 2019). Moreover, the single case study method proves suitable because careful participant selection enables the completion of findings despite time, budget, and accessibility constraints (Benoot et al., 2016). In this instance, the viewpoints of senior managers of a service organization were considered. Exploring a service organization provided a more nuanced and thorough understanding of the phenomenon. It helped identify patterns, commonalities, and variations that may not be apparent when studying an organization that does not necessarily engage college graduates (Rashid et al., 2019).

In this study, I explored the strategies a service organization adopts to support Nigerian higher institutions in enhancing college graduate employability in their real-life settings, making a single case study approach suited for this qualitative research. The case study research method enabled me to examine the research subject and better understand the social and cultural influences that might be at play in the phenomenon under study (Yin, 2018). Also, a single case study presents the opportunity to examine a phenomenon in-depth from various angles within the same setting, which can improve the validity and dependability of the study results (Yin, 2018). For example, this study was based on the opinions (regarding graduates' employability) of the experienced head of human resources who recruits employees for the firm and managers who work directly

with the graduates. In addition, a single case study could help to increase the transferability of findings (Rashid et al., 2019) because studying a single case from different contexts can help determine if a particular study's conclusions are applicable or relevant to other situations or populations.

Role of the Researcher

The role of the researcher is critical in a qualitative study (Billups, 2019; Sutton & Austin, 2015). The researcher is responsible for collecting sufficient and clean data and managing the apparatus used to collect the data (Fusch & Ness, 2015). As a primary researcher, my duties included planning the research, locating participants, conducting interviews, gathering clean and interpreting data, analyzing and validating data, and reporting themes and concepts (Sanjari et al., 2014). I ensured validity by keeping a detailed log of data collection activities and maintaining filed notes and a journal. My role as the researcher also included crafting interview questions that elicited the responses to produce appropriate data, agreeing on the convenient interview venue, and organizing the devices for recording the data.

Participants' safety, privacy, and confidentiality throughout their participation in the research were my responsibilities, and I communicated the confidentiality strategy to participants in writing (Surmiak, 2020). I used pseudonyms instead of participants' names to protect participants' identities. Participants' opinions regarding the study were also respected.

I followed ethical rules in the study (Taquette & Borges da Matta Souza, 2022). Yin (2018) contended that researchers need to be conscious of their viewpoints and

consider how their views might affect their choices when doing their research. I sent an individual invite and the informed consent forms to each participant. I ensured that participants understood the contents of the informed consent and correctly agreed to show they knew the consent procedure and were willing to participate. The participants knew how long their participation would take, the data types to be collected, and how data would be used. Additionally, Walden University (n.d-a.) mandates the researcher to inform the participants of the possible risks and benefits, which were well communicated to them, allowing them to understand how I would manage such risks. Participants also need to know their rights to exit from the research.

The researcher remained independent of the study (Busetto et al., 2020). I had no personal or professional relationship with the service organization or participants for the study. Also, my experience working with unemployable graduates, which could lead to bias, distorting data collection, analysis, and study results, and leading to wrong conclusions, was managed. I separated myself from the study and the participants throughout the study process. and shared the interview transcript with each participant for feedback.

Additionally, I followed the guidelines established by Walden University's Institutional Review Board, adhered to the interview protocol, followed all guidelines, and documented all research processes and procedures. To increase the dependability and validity of the study findings, I managed biases as they occurred and exercised due care in handling the relationship with the respondents (Pannucci & Wilkins, 2010; Quintão et al., 2020).

Methodology

Data were collected from the head of human resources, who directs the firm's recruiting, training, and other employment matters, four managers supervising graduate employees, and five graduates in a service organization. Data were collected through interviews and document analysis until data saturation was achieved. Good qualitative research must explore a phenomenon and provide an in-depth analysis that answers the research question (Aspers & Corte, 2019). This methodology section contains participant selection logic, instrumentation, and procedures for recruitment, participation, and data collection.

Participant Selection Logic

According to Marshall and Rossman's (2016) recommendations, participants must be qualified, informed about the research issue, and willing to contribute their viewpoints. The sampling strategy for this single case study was a purposive selection of a service organization. Using purposive sampling enabled me to select experienced participants who contributed richly and plentifully to the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The population for this study was five managers and five graduate employees of a service organization consisting of one human resource professional, four managers who supervise graduates, and five graduates recommended by each manager as employable or until saturation is reached.

The human resource managers must possess at least 5 years of work experience in recruitment, training, and other employment matters. Organizations promote performing administrative/human resource staff to the human resource manager level after three to

five years of excellent performance (Park & Faerman, 2019). Thus, the researcher believes that an HR manager with an additional 5 years in human resources functions like recruitment, training, and HR management is in an excellent position to provide rich data on the topic of this study. Managers must have worked directly with and oversaw graduates' activities for at least three years. Performing employees could be promoted to managers after 3 to 5 years of working experience in an organization (Park & Faerman, 2019). Thus, I thought managers with an additional 3 years as graduate supervisors would have gathered sufficient experience in their graduates' employability. Managers working with the graduates and monitoring their attitude to work, learning pace, compliance with HR and other organizations' policies, and evaluating the graduates' performance are the eligible groups to participate in this study. Data were collected from the recommended graduates to share their perspectives about employability and their experience working with the organization. The data from graduates was used to corroborate data collected from the five managers.

I approached the human resources manager of a service organization to participate in the research using the Nigerian directory and search engine database, also called Finelib.com (Finelib, n.d.). I requested access to the qualified organization's website using the firm's public member directory. Finelib.com contains pertinent information about companies and their businesses. The database contains more than 100 service organizations eligible for selection to participate. Every organization's profile includes the purpose, activities, management, executive council, finance and accounting, contact details, and an overview of the company. I emailed the selected organization's

representative, signifying my interest in collecting data from the human resource manager and other managers supervising graduates (See Appendix B). Once a service organization was identified, I emailed the human resource professional and the four managers with the informed consent form. I invited them to participate in the study. They participated and replied to my email with “I consent.” Although by considering the similarities and differences of at least two cases, cross-case analysis will enhance transferability and increase the generalizability of the research results (Crowe et al., 2011), the study’s objective was to conduct an in-depth exploration of the complex phenomenon within a specific context and contribute to knowledge and theory. Moreover, there is no literature on employers’ strategies to enhance Nigerian college graduate employability; thus, this study needed to be empirically rich to contribute meaningfully to the literature. The specific context here is understanding how a service organization supports Nigerian HEIs to enhance college graduate employability.

Instrumentation

Data collection instruments commonly used in qualitative studies include interviews, observations, focus group discussions, and document reviews (Busetto et al., 2020). The data collection instruments for research included interview protocols for semi-structured interviews and audio recorders to record the virtual interviews. The second qualitative instrument was the publicly available archival documents on human resources and employee development programs maintained by the selected organization. I also maintained memos and journals to record observations and essential events and support my reflections (Birt et al., 2016). Audio recording of interviews helped me objectively

capture full details of what participants said, assisted in reconciling transcripts with participants' voices, and minimized likely bias (Hill et al., 2022). I used audio recordings of interviews to improve the rigor and validity of qualitative research (Rutakumwa et al., 2020).

The researcher collected available archived data of hard/soft copies of HR procedural manuals, induction manuals, training handouts, performance evaluation charts, and other related items on employee development for review. Analyzed secondary data was used to triangulate the data generated during the interviews. Using multiple data sources provided an invaluable advantage to the single case study because the weaknesses and strengths of each source improved the overall quality of the data collected (Yin, 2018) and increased the study's rigor (Johnson et al., 2020). For example, while the interview questions were designed to answer the research question, documents provided a consistent, reliable, authentic, and verifiable data source.

The instruments I used to collect data were researcher-produced and sufficient to help participants comprehensively answer the research questions. In addition to preparing the interview devices, I conducted semi-structured pilot interviews to study the occurrence from the participants' perspectives. The pilot interview questions were a part of the interview protocol designed to capture the questions and participants' responses to gain a broad understanding of employers' strategies to support graduate employability.

According to Knott et al. (2022), interviews are a versatile qualitative data collection instrument researchers use to allow participants to explain their understanding and interpretation of a phenomenon and the world around them in their own words. Such

semi-structured interview questions are conversational, guided by an established interview process, and recorded using a recording device or by taking written notes during or after an interview (Yin, 2018).

Having an informal discussion with respondents in their private offices and convenient places helped them express their opinions freely (Yin, 2018), and adopting the semi-structured method of interviewing created room for the emerging thoughts of the interviewees. Semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to have and document the connection between specific pieces of evidence and other relevant issues (Knott et al., 2022; Yin, 2018). However, collecting data from participants' offices could induce stress bias due to the fatigue of combining the research interviews with their official workload. Another bias is the tendency for participants to give socially desirable responses. Here, respondents selected responses based on what they believed to be socially acceptable. Participants responded in a way that resulted in a more significant proportion of "preferred" than correct answers. Data collected from the interviews was transcribed verbatim in preparation for data analysis. I used NVivo 12 to transcribe interview data. I used verbatim transcription to ensure that my data represented participants' responses without the researcher's input or interpretation. Based on the recommendation of Sutton and Austin (2015), I read the output at the end of my transcription and crosschecked with the audio recording to correct the wrong interpretation of respondents' accents or spelling errors.

I did not envisage any ethical concerns arising from my involvement in the service industry because I adhered strictly to the interview guide. See Appendix A for the

interview questions. Through these qualitative data collection methods, researchers have accessed the thoughts and feelings of research participants, and the data have enhanced an understanding of people's interpretations and meanings of their experiences (Barrett & Twycross, 2018; DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019; Okolie et al., 2020a; Sutton & Austin, 2015).

Another source of data collection, which was a secondary source for this study, included human resource policies, recruitment policies and procedures manual, induction manual, training programs and calendar, annual financial budget for training and employee development, and employee performance evaluation documents. Since these were existing documents within the organization and not created for my research, it enhanced the study's credibility. However, the researcher exercised caution when relying on documents because organizations develop documents for different reasons.

Many qualitative study scholars in the past have adopted interviews, document analysis, and other data collection tools to collect data to address employability issues. For instance, Okolie et al. (2020a) used semi-structured interview questions to explore why Nigerian higher education institutions need help teaching generic skills that could help graduates get and keep jobs. Nwajiuba et al. (2020) used interviews to examine how to improve higher education quality and graduate employability in Nigeria. Also, Suleman and Laranjeiro (2018) in Portugal used semi-structured interviews to explore the relationship between the perception of graduates' skills and the employers' anticipative and remedial strategies to address employability issues in their case study research.

Owen (2014) used interviews to collect data from relevant constituents and document analysis of all related official policy documents associated with Georgia Tech's pre-employment background check policy and program to examine the history and experiences of Georgia Institute of Technology's adoption of background check policy.

Ngulube (2020) used document analysis to examine the extent to which the undergraduate economics curriculum in South Africa equips graduates with employability skills by collecting data from six undergraduate economics study guides and advertisements from the Sunday Times for four consecutive years.

Using primary and secondary data collection for this case study allowed the lines of inquiry that made the finding more convincing, valid, and accurate. Combining interviews and documents led to an in-depth understanding of employers' strategies to support higher education institutions in enhancing graduate employability. Okolie et al. (2019) used multiple qualitative data collection sources, including interviews, focus group discussions, observations, and document analysis, to provide insight into the challenge of Nigerian higher education institutions in producing work-ready graduates and the disposition of employers to unemployability in Nigeria. Data from the interviews gave an in-depth exploration of the research question and provided quality insight into implementing the research findings (Hall & Harvey, 2018; Yin, 2018). Possible weaknesses and biases of interview participants were corroborated by other sources, including analysis of documents related to employers' programs created to improve the quality and productivity of employees.

I established content validity by triangulating data from interviews and document analysis. Campbell et al. (2020) and Yin (2009) defined triangulation as using multiple methods to collect data to reveal shared perspectives and realities of the sources and establish consistency of research findings. Noble and Heale (2019) found that triangulation is also used to increase the credibility and validity of research findings. Denzin (2010) identified four types of triangulations: data, methods, investigator, and theory. Data triangulation was established by collecting data through interviews and document analysis. Methods triangulation was achieved through member checking, allowing participants to review my interview transcripts to confirm that they accurately reflect their views and opinions to reduce the biases and personal perceptions of the researcher.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

This section covers how the research participants were recruited, who the participants were, the criteria for their selection, and the tools that were used to collect primary and secondary data for the study.

Recruitment

A service organization that can provide relevant data that meets my study's objective and answers the research question was selected for this study. However, the organization was communicated with after I obtained IRB approval to collect data. Once IRB approval was granted, I requested the organization to authorize me to recruit and conduct a Zoom interview with the head of human resources and managers of at least eight departments who supervise college graduates and five graduates recommended as

employable by the managers in the organization. Although I started data collection with the human resources and four other managers, I opened my application for more participants to make it easier to increase the number of participants during the research until I achieved data saturation. The organization also agreed to provide relevant human resources and other documents I needed for data analysis from the study participants and other non-participating sources or departments within the organization. Those recruited for this study included ten service organization managers and graduate employees consisting of one human resource professional, four managers supervising graduates, and five graduates. I sent invites in Appendix C by email with the research topic, purpose, and the qualifications of participants I needed for the research. I attached a copy of my IRB-approved consent form to the participants in the organization.

Getting the organization to work with me was established by obtaining a letter of cooperation (Appendix D) from the organization. The letter of cooperation between the organization and me stated that the organization understands the purpose of the research and will be ready to give me all the information, documents, and participants I require for the study. The cooperation letter also protected the confidentiality of records and research participants. Interview dates were set up with the participants over email but took place virtually via Zoom.

Participation

The participating managers included one human resource professional, managers supervising graduates, and five employable graduates. The human resource manager must have five years of experience in employee recruitment, training, evaluation, or

development. The managers supervising graduates must have worked with graduates for at least three years. The participants for the study were managers and graduates who provided rich and sufficient data to answer the research questions and fulfill the purpose of the study (Yin, 2018). In addition to explaining the interview questions, the participants provided relevant human resource documents and information based on the approval granted by the organization to the researcher. The interviews with the participants lasted for one week.

Data Collection

Once approval by IRB #(08-04-23-1056893) and the organization's cooperation were resolved, I began the data collection with a field study that guided me in modifying my interview questions. I was the sole data collector using semi-structured interviews to obtain in-depth information via Zoom (Kallio et al., 2016). The interview protocol was designed to include questions relating to the employability factors identified in the conceptual framework. Table 1 shows the linkage between interview protocol and elements of employability.

Table 1*Linking Factors of Employability to Data Collection Instrument*

| | Critical statements inherent in the selected conceptual framework (CF) | How CF will be tested in study |
|---|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | Education impacts employment. | How does higher education learning impact employment? |
| 2 | An organization should create value for all stakeholders, and this involves taking care of the interest of all persons that can be affected by or affect the actions and directions of the organization | How should employers support Nigerian higher education institutions to enhance the quality of graduates they produce for the workplace and society? |
| 3 | The success of an organization hinges on the value it delivers to its stakeholders | In what ways do the values the organization add to its stakeholders, significantly higher institutions and graduates, contribute to the success and sustainability of your organization? |
| 4 | Value creation framework supports business sustainability | Can the organization highlight the specific ways and strategies to create value for its internal and external stakeholders? |
| 5 | Conducting business in a manner that improves lives and does not negatively impact any stakeholder. | How can the organization add value to stakeholders without undermining the interest of any of the stakeholders? |
| 6 | Adopting stakeholder theory shifts employers' focus from profit-oriented to the triple bottom line, which covers the 3 "Ps" of business sustainability - people, planet, and profit. | How does the organization balance adding value to its people, its place of business operation, and maintaining profitability? |
| 7 | Mutually beneficial stakeholder relationships allow universities and students to engage more with external stakeholders, especially employers and industry experts, and develop partnerships and trust with end-users | How does the organization partner with higher institutions to help them produce employable graduates? |

| | | |
|----|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | and communities to strengthen their commitment to providing employable graduates. | |
| 8 | The concept and analysis of value creation through business models that adopt the stakeholder theory must be extended concerning different types of value created with and for other stakeholders | What business model can the organization implement to add value to all stakeholders who can impact and be impacted by the organization's operations? |
| 9 | Applying stakeholder theory in driving academic curricula could strengthen the opportunities for undergraduates to acquire enhanced employability | How can the organization support HEIs to improve the curricula to produce high-quality graduates who are employable? |
| 10 | Possessing skills does not always guarantee the graduates' success in the labor market, and universities have often neglected this. | What other qualities and skills should graduates possess to succeed in the workplace? |

Note: This table demonstrates how the researcher tested the critical elements of the conceptual framework in the study through the interview questions addressed to the participants.

Then, data was collected via Zoom at an agreed-upon time between the researcher and the participants. I also collected and reviewed human resource-related documents related to the study's scope and objective. Such semi-structured interviews enabled me to use follow-up questions to probe further into any response needing clarification.

The follow-up questions helped recover significant information, reduced the loss of valuable data (Young et al., 2018), allowed for more screening, and captured verbal and non-verbal cues and their emotions and experiences (Adler et al., 2019). Each participant was interviewed once, and the interview lasted 35- 45 minutes in their privacy

using my interview protocol in Appendix A. The interviews started with a question that allowed participants to be comfortable with me, and I closed with another question that prompted them to add any other valuable details. I also informed them that the interview needed to be audio recorded. Participants were also told that they were free to exit the process anytime during the research.

The second secondary data source included internal artifacts (Tripathy, 2013). Documents collected for analysis included human resource policies and procedures, recruitment policies and procedures manual, induction manual, training programs, costs, and calendar, annual financial budget for training and employee development, and employee performance evaluation documents. According to Bowen (2009), document analysis is a qualitative data source in which the researcher interprets documents to give voice and meaning to a subject of interest. Kayesa and Shung-King (2020) confirmed that a well-executed document analysis could strengthen a research study. I analyzed internal and external artifacts from the firm's human resource and employee development and related matters to triangulate interview data. This approach explored their businesses' strategies to increase graduates' productivity as an employer implementing employability tactics.

To achieve data completeness, I used notes and journals to document contextual information during the research process to supplement the primary data from the interview transcripts (Phillippi & Lauderdale, 2018). The data collection continued with more managers within the organizations until data saturation was achieved. Saturation is achieved when interviewing additional participants without further insights (Guest et al.,

2020). Data collection from all participants lasted one week. Participants exited the study once they completed their role in the research. I established a friendly but professional relationship with the participants, making it easy for me to go for likely follow-up to collect more data. Also, since the letter of cooperation obtained before the study started indicated the organizations' willingness to provide documents and explanations I needed for the study, conducting more interviews was easier. Interview responses were audio recorded using my iPad and transcribed for analysis using NVivo 14.

Data was encrypted for confidentiality and safety, backed up in a USB, and secured in a locked safe (See interview protocol in Appendix A). All research-related data was safeguarded following the recommendation of Sutton and Austin (2015). Sutton and Austin (2015) suggested that the participants be categorized and the organization's name marked with aliases in a passcode-protected document. In addition, I coded the participant's name and details to maintain confidentiality. All hard copies of the documents collected were stored in a locked cabinet to be accessed by the researcher only. I intend to destroy all data after five years.

Data Analysis Plan

Researchers must choose a suitable approach before proceeding with the data analysis procedure (Neale, 2016). Converging data from all sources and data analysis was initiated from the start of data collection (Miles et al., 2014). Conducting data analysis with data collection progressed simultaneously to increase rigor in research (Nowell et al., 2017). In conducting the data analysis, I was an instrument, making judgments about coding and recontextualizing the data. Therefore, I performed data analysis with the data

collection process to enhance thoroughness and prevent the buildup of unanalyzed data (Nowell et al., 2017). The data analysis started with compiling data from all sources, including journals and memos. To prepare data for analysis, I evaluated all available data to determine what was worth investigating, following specific analytical techniques, coding the interview responses, and interpreting findings (Yin, 2018). Evaluating data worth investigating requires the researcher to read the transcripts and the documents to be analyzed thoroughly (Lester et al., 2020).

In this research, the analytical technique I adopted was Yin's pattern-matching logic. According to Yin (2018), pattern matching involves comparing a predicted theoretical pattern with an observed empirical pattern. The underlying assumption is that humans make sense of the world by comparing what they see externally to internal mental models (Suomala & Kauttonen, 2022). Pattern-matching will enable readers to retrace my thought processes and understand how I arrived at the conclusions. Applying the pattern-matching logic resulted in a more rigorous and structured research process. It required me to do systematic planning, conceptualization, and detailed documentation of research activities throughout the research (Yin, 2018). The overriding factor was determining the extent to which the empirically based pattern matches the prediction.

In a single case study, a successful matching implies the acceptability of the original explanation (Suter, 2012). Scholars, including Saldana (2021) and Daugherty (2021), have used Yin's five-step analysis in a case study with data collection from semi-structured interviews and archival document analysis; they found the steps valuable in reaching their conclusion. Yin's (2018) five stages of the data analysis process included

gathering the data, dividing the data up among groups, assembling the data into themes, evaluating all the information, and generating the results. Because the data included verbal interviews, I transcribed the audio interview data. Then, I had other secondary data and journals before proceeding to data coding, categorizing codes, creating themes, and identifying patterns.

Transcription

I used a verbatim transcription for data collected through interviews for the data analysis. Verbatim transcription converts every word, tone, and hesitation—including filler words like "um" and "ah"—to be recorded as it is spoken (Kowal & O'Connell, 2014). In addition, every relevant movement and action was noted to ensure the participants' emotions were recorded. Verbatim transcription guarantees the absence of prejudice. To achieve speed and completeness in the transcription, I used NVivo 14 to transcribe and analyze the semi-structured interviews and other data. According to DeFranco and Laplante (2017), NVivo is a program that assists researchers in organizing, analyzing, and visualizing qualitative data, such as interview transcripts, open-ended survey replies, and other unstructured text documents. NVivo is helpful because it can analyze video, audio, literature, and manuscripts.

Furthermore, NVivo saved time as I imported many files (Interviewees' transcripts) and the summary of document review simultaneously, allowing many sources to be coded and brought together in a single node. The advantage of using NVivo was that I uploaded my notes, journals, and secondary data for coding, and it helped generate ideas to identify patterns and themes in research material (Walden University, n.d-b.)

using simple processes. The NVivo software displays the most frequent words, which is valuable to the study in determining the first and second-cycle codes and can group words that ordinarily take time with Excel coding.

Coding

Codes are concise and detailed labels or keywords that summarize the contents of each unit (Miller, 2023). I established a method for the data coding procedure that captured ideas, responses, and experiences documented from the interview data. Codes were assigned to specific answers or words significant to the research topic and question (Yin, 2018). Data from the interview recordings of all participants and document analysis were the primary sources for data analysis. The objective was to search for and identify common threads (themes) that extend across an entire interview per participant or set of interviews with different participants (DeSantis & Noel-Ugarriza, 2000; as cited in Vaismoradi et al., 2013). I analyzed all data using an open coding method to generate specific and relevant codes. Later, data points identified with the same code were clustered under broad themes, ensuring data integrity from the data collected.

Themes

Once codes had been created from all data sources, the codes were reviewed to find and extract essential themes, allowing for more straightforward analysis and comprehension. In discerning potential themes, the researcher ensured that data points identified with the same code were grouped under broad categories. Grouping codes into categories involved reviewing the themes and categories to see the story behind the data that have been grouped to create the categories. When I completed assembling the data

into themes, the next stage was evaluating all the information, assigning meaning, and defining the themes.

Patterns

After themes had been created across the participants, I translated the themes into a commonplace language meaningful to an ordinary reader and relevant to my research question (Mihas, 2023). Different participant data can provide insights regarding the value, strength, and justification for employers' involvement in graduate employability. After identifying codes and themes from the data of all participants, the next step was to collect and categorize repeating patterns and themes across all participants and other data sources to arrive at a statement or rhyme that synthesized the significance and meanings of the research (Mihas, 2023). Then, I checked if the synthesis related to my research topic and question. Any information that appeared irrelevant to the research question was set aside for usefulness in the future or eventually trashed because I found it irrelevant throughout the study.

The next stage involved reexamining the data points under each theme to confirm they fit logically into the pattern serving as the basis of the theme created. Then, I created a thematic map to visually reflect the data themes' connections. The final step in the analysis was to create a formal report that documents the processes of making the themes, including examples and quotes from the data. The steps were repeated until I addressed the research question and potential validity threats to the findings, and I generated the results.

Triangulation

Researchers employ triangulation to interpret research regarding the main topic and avoid biases (Heale & Forbes, 2013). In this study, I used data triangulation for the semi-structured interview and document analysis data sets because the research established the benefits of gathering at least two data sets applying a similar approach (Heale & Forbes, 2013). Triangulation helped develop a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon and increased the credibility and validity of research findings (Farquhar et al., 2020).

Discrepant Data

There could be cases of discrepant data during analysis (Roberts et al., 2007). In an attempt to produce a comprehensive result of findings, it is possible to encounter some negative cases that fail to conform to the emerging interpretive generalizations or patterns that do not support patterns (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Scholars suggest paying attention to such discrepant cases and actively identifying such exceptions to uncover alternative explanations and stories behind such discrepant data (McPherson & Thorne, 2006). McPherson & Thorne (2006) suggested that critical attention to discrepant data can deepen our expectations about the value such data could yield and enhance the credibility of our findings and the ultimate use of our empirical conclusions. At the reporting stage, I reported on all the themes in the final discussion section of the manuscripts. There was no discrepant data.

Data Interpretation

Completing data analysis leads to an interpretation of data at the interpretation stage. I compared the themes and patterns from the data analyzed. I also evaluated the findings from the research against information and conclusions from existing literature that I have read and my research question. Evaluating the result of the study to similar studies helped validate the research. Further, I linked the study outcome to the tenet of stakeholder theory. The emphasis of stakeholder theory is to have a structure that takes care of the interest of all stakeholders, distributing strength across all classes rather than leaving the weaker class in their weak state. In contrast, the strong stakeholder group gets more vigorous. I used a research log and a codebook using the coding analysis toolkit (CAT) to coordinate and record all information to back up the data analysis procedures.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Yin (2018) asserted that qualitative research needs to be trustworthy. According to Newcomer (n. d), the concepts offered must make sense for a qualitative study to be trustworthy, given the data collection, analysis, and interpretation. The arguments must be compelling and supported with sound reasoning and ample evidence. Newcomers (n. d) concluded that the whole research process, from the research question to implications, must be truly transparent and open to critical thinking by the reader. Lincoln and Guba (1985) set four criteria for qualitative studies to demonstrate trustworthiness: credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability. Therefore, I utilized several data sources, including collecting information from several sources such as Zoom interviews and document analysis.

Using the interview technique improved the dependability of this qualitative single case research. Interviews made understanding the study questions more thoroughly and complexly easier. In addition, I followed a standardized study design. Doing so guaranteed the data collection accuracy and the findings' comparability across different situations.

Credibility

According to Nowell et al. (2017), credibility is the measure of truth in a study and the researcher's ability to handle all the complexities to prove that the investigation is correct and accurate. Lincoln and Guba (1985) defined credibility as confidence in the truth of a study's findings, which helps improve the internal validity of the research through triangulation, member checking, and peer debriefing. Using pattern-matching logic as the technique for data analysis, I demonstrated the similarity between the empirical and the predicted pattern results to help strengthen the validity of the case study (Yin, 2018). I ensured an audit trail and kept a journal throughout the data analysis process to ensure credibility further. In addition, I was the one who collected data in the initial study, and I remained the lead researcher throughout the study. To build credibility, I employed two strategies: triangulations and member checking.

Triangulation

Triangulation involves using several sources of information to provide different viewpoints on the studied topic, including interviews, document analysis, and proper documentation (Opie, 2019). According to Yin (2018), triangulation of data means converging data collected from different sources to determine the consistency of research

findings. Lincoln and Guba (1985) established that triangulation means using multiple data from various sources to present an understanding of findings. Opie (2019) also promoted negative case analysis, which entails seeking evidence that contradicts the general pattern or themes found in the data or cases that do not fit those themes.

Member Checking

Member checking was employed by discussing the results with the study participants and getting their input on the precision and thoroughness of the data (Birt et al., 2016). The objective of adopting member checking was to establish a report's validity and to provide an opportunity to confirm that what has been transcribed for data analysis represents participants' responses during data collection. Member checking helped build trust with the participants and enhanced the trustworthiness of the findings.

Transferability

According to Yin (2009), transferability means external validity, and it is the extent to which the results from a case study can be analytically generalized to other situations that were not part of the original research. Buttressing, Eldh et al. (2020) defined transferability, or external validity, as the extent to which research findings may be applied to various locations, populations, or circumstances. Nowell et al. (2017) referred to Transferability as the generalizability of inquiry. Transferability is critical to fulfilling the objective of applicability of qualitative research to the broader concept while retaining their context-specific worth or using other respondents (Rashid et al., 2019). To make the results more transferable, the researcher must describe the study's methodology and provide sufficient details of the fieldwork context for readers to

determine if the study result is applicable in other settings (Tenny et al., 2022). Using some instances that are diverse in certain pertinent elements is one method for obtaining transferability, or the capability to generalize findings from one case to another when carrying out numerous case studies (Crowe et al., 2011). My strategy to establish external validity in this single case study research was to use verbatim transcripts and conduct a thick and rich description of the findings.

According to Stake (1994), the approach in a thick description is to provide a detailed account of the field experience with sufficient evidence showing detailed description and interpretation of situations, including the context in which that behavior occurs. Lincoln and Guba (1985) described a thick description of a phenomenon as a way of achieving external validity, otherwise known as transferability. By thick description, I went beyond surface appearances to include social relationships' context, detail, emotion, and webs. The research also presented the significance of an observation, event, or behavior. Ponterotto (2006) stated that thick description includes voices, feelings, actions, and meanings. Ponterotto confirmed that providing a detailed description of a subject will allow study users to evaluate the degree to which the study's findings and conclusions can be transferable to other settings and people. Additionally, to strengthen transferability, I provided a table of the step-by-step data analysis procedures so that readers and future researchers can follow the same plan.

Dependability

Dependability is another critical sub-concept in research trustworthiness. According to Nowell et al. (2017), dependability refers to data stability. Lincoln and

Guba (1985) concluded that dependability is used to prove that the findings are consistent and could enable future researchers to repeat a study, calling dependability the trust in trustworthiness. To achieve dependability, Tobin and Begley (2004, cited in Nowell et al. (2017), suggested that researchers should ensure the research process is logical, traceable, and documented. According to Morse et al. (2002), the purpose of achieving dependability is to minimize errors and biases by confirming the findings. I used the audit inquiry technique to accomplish this.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) stated that the audit inquiry entails using an independent researcher to review the audit process and details to evaluate the study's accuracy, analysis, findings, interpretations, and conclusions. The audit trail report could lead to the generation of additional data or other modifications in the research process to strengthen the results. I also employed triangulation to establish dependability. Here, I needed to reason my argument on data collection, and the data was consistent with the argument. Therefore, I followed strict research procedures to ensure the study's findings can be trusted. Furthermore, I devised a clear and consistent study process to ensure the results are tenable and reproducible. I incorporated many data sources (interviews and document analysis) to enhance the study's reliability. The coherent themes reported across the transcripts from all the data sources further ensured dependability (Nowell et al., 2017).

Confirmability

According to Tobin and Begley (2004), cited in Nowell et al. (2017), confirmability means establishing that the researcher's interpretations and findings have been derived from the data collected, thus requiring the researcher to demonstrate how

the researcher arrived at the conclusions and interpretations. Lincoln and Guba (1985) stated that confirmability is the degree of the researcher's neutrality to the data, proving that data have been generated from respondents and not affected by the researcher's bias or personal interest. Further, Guba and Lincoln (1989), cited in Nowell et al. (2017), stated that confirmability is established when credibility, transferability, and dependability are achieved. Koch (1994), cited in Nowell et al. (2017), recommended that researchers highlight with markers the reasons for the theoretical, methodological, and analytical choices they made throughout the entire research so that readers and users can understand the basis for decisions. Confirmability, also known as internal validity, shows how precisely and with little external influence a study's conclusions represent the phenomenon being studied (Mohajan, 2018).

The researcher's role in this qualitative research as part of the research process and personal experiences of working with graduates for over three decades could influence the research process and results. Therefore, acknowledging the influence of the researcher's biases and assumptions helped me reflect upon how such biases could be minimized to ensure the study's findings are trustworthy and reliable, starting from the research question formulation through analysis and conclusion. The potential influence of the researcher's biases could include drawing research question(s) based on experience instead of the literature reviewed by the researcher. The actual influence of the researcher's experience includes suppression of data that do not align with the researcher's opinion and beliefs.

Yin (2018) established that researchers should be aware of the subtle influences of interview reflexivity because it minimizes the methodological threats created by the conversational tone. Holmes (2020) suggested that reflexivity is the concept that researchers should acknowledge and disclose in their research, emphasizing that researchers must seek to understand their part in the research or influence it because reflexivity informs the researcher's positionality. According to Olmos-Vega et al. (2022), reflexivity is "a set of continuous, collaborative, and multifaceted practices through which researchers self-consciously critique, appraise, and evaluate how their subjectivity and context influence the research processes." (p. 242).

In qualitative research, ensuring confirmability is essential since it helps to ensure that a study's findings are trustworthy and reliable (Mohajan, 2018). My research question was clear and precise. A clear and well-defined research question helped ensure that the study was focused and relevant and that the findings accurately addressed the research question (Nowell et al., 2017). In addition, I employed member checking and kept a reflexive journal to document the daily logistics of the research, methodological decisions, and rationales and to record my reflections on values, interests, and insights about myself as a human instrument (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Member checking entailed sending the transcripts to the participants, ensuring they received them, and requesting them to analyze the results and give feedback on their accuracy. Member checking helped ensure the findings accurately reflect the participants' experiences and perspectives.

Ethical Procedures

Qualitative researchers must comply with ethical conduct to safeguard participants and themselves (Taquette & Borges da Matta Souza, 2022). Walden University mandates that all research doctoral students obtain approval from the University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) before data collection and analysis. Before research involving human subjects may begin, all respondents must obtain informed consent (Swedan et al., 2020). I commenced the study after approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Walden University. After gaining IRB approval, I emailed qualified participants to outline the study's terms of reference. I explained the research to respondents and reviewed reasonable standards, such as how they planned to reach their aim and present their case (Yin, 2018).

The signed informed consent form included the researcher's name and affiliation with Walden University. I requested the individual's permission by asking them to type "I agree" in the email reply to indicate participants' voluntary intent and willingness to participate in the study. I complied with the IRB's ethical standards using the approved informed consent form from Walden University. Participants were told that they could withdraw from the study by letter, video chat, or mail before publishing their findings. If they stay out of the research, I will not include their data in the analysis, conclusions, or report. Further, Swedan et al. (2020) concluded that subjects should not experience undue pressure or compulsion to participate in a study.

By adopting Yin's (2018) recommendations on ethical procedures, the study followed the highest ethical standard, and I have accepted full responsibility for the

scholarship, professionalism, and use of the appropriate methodology. Ethical concerns included all aspects of the research design, ranging from the research objectives and research question, handling internal and external validity and methods, and paying particular attention to ethical issues in analyzing secondary data (Tripathy, 2013). According to Guillemain et al. (2018), adhering to ethical standards will help the researcher design and implement appropriate strategies to address the issue of participants' privacy and confidentiality of their views and build trust in the researcher-participant relationship.

In line with the articles of human rights, Assembly (1948) and Constantin (2018), I prioritized humanely treating the research participants concerning respecting their rights, values, needs, and safety. There was strict adherence to ethical standards and conduct concerning protecting the participants to reduce possible risks. I adopted the following measures to safeguard participants:

- Transparency. I discussed and documented my research objective, data collection method, and research use and gave them a hard copy to ensure that participants understood the research clearly.
- Informed Consent. In addition to writing "I agree" in the email I sent to participants, I securely obtained and documented written approval from my participants through the completion, signing, and returning of the informed consent form.
- Institutional Review Board (IRB) Approval. I obtained Walden University IRB approval.

- Interview Protocol. I informed the participants of the interview protocol other data collection instruments, and other research steps that included them.
- Member Checking. I gave each participant a copy of the transcript of their data to confirm the correctness and address their feedback.
- Communication. I communicated in writing to participants how I would achieve their data confidentiality and protect their identity regarding the research.
- Responsibility of participants. I informed participants that it is their responsibility to protect their identity further.

In qualitative research, ethical issues cut across all phases, but they are more pronounced during the data collection phase because the data collection stage involves interaction between the researcher and human participants (Sanjari et al., 2014).

Therefore, ethical concerns to address before and during data collection included:

- The selected organization's approval to conduct the study using the business premises of the firm,
- Respect for the organization's property and privacy,
- Independence of the researcher and participants,
- Disclosure of how to manage harmful information and
- Freedom of participants to exit the research at any time in the research process.

Summary

Chapter 3 covered the research design and rationale for choosing a qualitative single case study design to explore the research question, the role of the researcher, and the methodology. I used the research design to establish alignment among the purpose of

the study, the research question, and the data collection technique and analysis. In addition, the researcher described the data collection methods for conducting the research and its design, the population selection, the importance of ethics in research, and the clarity on how participants were selected. Participants were selected based on their work experience with the chosen organization and in-depth knowledge of employability and its ongoing challenges. The data analysis design identified themes that enhanced the understanding that employers support Nigerian higher education institutions in improving the employability of college graduates. Chapter 4 contains the research findings.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore the strategies an employer in a service organization adopts to support Nigerian HEIs in enhancing college graduate employability. The research question was: What strategies do service organizations adopt to support Nigerian HEIs in enhancing the employability of college graduates?

Chapter 4 covers the research setting, demographics of study participants, data collection, data analysis procedures, evidence of trustworthiness, and the study results. This chapter ends with a summary and transition.

Pilot Study

I conducted a pilot study to mitigate interview challenges and learn how to minimize possible interaction biases. The pilot study involved recruiting a human resource professional already known to me from my professional network of the Society of Women Accountants in Nigeria with a similar background as stated in my population. I emailed the consent form to them, asked interested persons to reply by writing “I consent,” and selected one person. I conducted the pilot study interview via telephone. The interview steps included practice interviews to yield logistic and feasibility insights. After working on the pilot volunteer’s interview questions, I completed a post-interview debriefing via phone. The debriefing involved asking the participants whether the questions were understandable and comfortable. The pilot also helped determine the time needed for each interview so the study’s consent form accurately estimated the study’s

time commitment. I did not report the results of the pilot anywhere in this study because the purpose of the pilot was only to give me practice and logistical insights.

Research Setting

I partnered with a private service organization in Lagos, Nigeria, for this study. The research settings were participants' offices and private places considered convenient by participants. Although the selected organization had several branch and zonal offices in Lagos, I interviewed heads of department and human resource managers from the head office. The participants were purposefully selected. Each manager supervising the graduate employees oversees, trains, and evaluates the performances of the graduate employees.

Each manager ensures adherence to HR policies, employee development projects, and corporate social responsibility projects and reports exceptions to the organization's management for remedial action. I did not interview participants from the branch offices because of the proposed sample size of 10 participants. Also, some of the managers at the branches did not meet the selection criteria. Additionally, I reached data saturation after 10 participants. I collected documents for review at the head office.

Demographics

I invited five managers and five graduate employees to participate in the study. All invited managers accepted the invitation and were interviewed. No additional manager was interviewed because I reached saturation. Also, the first five managers each recommended an employable and performing graduate for the interview. Five managers held senior management positions, while one was also a member of the organization's

board of directors. Participants were only required to furnish their working experience (in years) and gender to maintain anonymity. They were also assigned numerical identifiers as P1 ... P10 (see Table 2).

Table 2

Participants Demographics

| Participants (P) | Level | Experience |
|------------------|---------------|------------|
| P1 | Snr manager | 21 years |
| P2 | Snr manager | 19 years |
| P3 | Snr manager | 12 years |
| P4 | Snr manager | 9 years |
| P5 | Snr manager | 22 years |
| P6 | Supervisor | 6 years |
| P7 | Supervisor | 5 years |
| P8 | Supervisor | 5 years |
| P9 | Supervisor | 4 years |
| P10 | Jnr associate | 3 years |

Data Collection

I collected data from 10 participants who met the criteria for inclusion in this case study. Inclusion criteria specified that participants must have experience with the phenomenon. For example, the human resource manager must possess at least 5 years of recruiting, training, and employee empowerment. In comparison, other managers must have at least 3 years of supervising, training and evaluating graduates. The supervisors recommended five graduates who qualified as employable graduates.

The participants received invitations from the researcher after being informed by the partner organization. The participants returned the consent forms via email. Further confirmation was made to ensure that participants were eligible to participate. During the confirmation phase, one participant who did not meet the study criteria was disqualified and replaced by another graduate employee. Zoom interviews were conducted in line with IRB approval. For the study's secondary data, the documents used for document analysis were as stated in the letter of cooperation (see Appendix D). The two data collection techniques provided a sufficient sample to achieve data saturation and answer the research question. There were no technical difficulties except for rescheduling the interview sessions with one of the managers who needed to attend a prolonged official meeting. Also, two other participants took more time than planned.

I conducted Zoom interviews with all 10 participants. I started each interview by appreciating the participant and presenting a brief overview of the study. Each interview was conducted with an open mind to mitigate personal bias. The interviews were conducted in the morning before work or after closing to be free from interference and interruption. Being senior managers helped the participants achieve some flexibility in their timing for the interviews. All graduate employees opted for after the closing hours. Participants were informed of data collection recording devices, including iPad and iPhone recording apps. The interviews were done with the interview protocol (see Appendix A). For data enrichment, I used probes and follow-up questions to give a richer explanation during the interview.

Virtual interviewing enabled free and open information sharing and captured detailed experiences of participants' understanding of graduate employability and the strategies their organization is adopting or could be adopting to support Nigerian HEIs in enhancing graduate employability. In addition to the audio recording of the interview responses, I recorded my observations and participants' nonverbal cues like "hahh" and "uhm" during the interviews in my field notes. To make my data more meaningful, I recorded my overall perceptions of each participant in my field notes at the end of each interview. The average interview length was 40 minutes.

The audio recordings were transcribed using Microsoft Office 365 and saved in Microsoft Word. After the transcription, I listened to the audio and revised transcripts because the Nigerian accents affected some words and phrases in the transcripts. I also added reflective notes to the transcribed interviews. The transcribed data were sent to the participants for member checking to review, verify, and confirm that the transcription of their interview responses represented their views during the interview. Participants could also reflect on and amend the transcripts to define the data collected during interviews. Two participants made minor revisions to the transcript. The transcriptions of the interview responses were uploaded into NVivo 14 for Windows for data analysis management.

The second data source was human resource supporting documents, downloadable materials from the organization's website, and statutory audit financial statements of the service organization to confirm some critical remarks made by participants. The documents I reviewed were collected from the head of human resources before the

interviews. Documents collected included the HR policies, induction manual, training materials, annual calendar and schedules, copies of letters of employment, the annual budget for employee development, copies of employee quarterly evaluations, sample copies of employees' provisional letters of employment, letter of confirmation, letters of promotion, and samples of queries given to erring staff.

Data Analysis

Immediately upon completing the interviews, I used Microsoft Office 365 to transcribe the recording. However, due to the Nigerian accent, the transcripts were cleaned. The cleaning was done by comparing the audio from the recorded interviews with a line-by-line comparison. The transcripts were also perused to understand the trends in terms of similarities and differences among participants' responses, looking for information that indicated no success and those responses that offered unique details about the phenomenon.

Document Analysis

Materials collected as secondary data sources and reviewed in this study included human resource and employee development documents and other publicly available information relevant to my research. I managed these documents before the interviews, which helped to restructure my interview questions and proffered follow-up questions to strengthen the interview questions. The materials enabled me to gather additional ideas and evidence to support the primary data collected through the interviews. The process of document analysis also helped me to gain an understanding of the meaning of the

documents and to expand on the information the documents provided. I used document analysis to achieve data triangulation and to establish credibility.

Based on the purpose of my study, I collected the organization's human resource policies and programs highlighting procedures for employing fresh and experienced graduates, induction manual, annual training calendars, training manuals, sample offer letters (provisional and confirmation), letter of promotion, employee's performance evaluation, and evidence CSR projects undertaken by the organization. Table 3 is a summary of the document review. I defined the document reflecting on the elements that align with what the organization does to support Nigerian HEIs in enhancing college graduate employability and how improving graduate employees is interpreted within the organization.

Table 3

Document Analysis

| Document collected | Purpose of review | Key elements discovered |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| The firm's HR policies and programs | To highlight the procedures for recruiting employees | Recruitment is centralized, competence is key to employment, trainable graduates are considered, experience is critical to employee placement, and performance determines promotion and remuneration. |
| Induction manual | To understand how new employees are settled and absorbed into the organization | New employees are trained, exposed to the culture of the organization, and self-development drives and employees are well-prepared for their roles. |
| Training calendars | To understand the nature, regularity, and consistency of staff training | The organization runs general training twice a year. Training programs are also organized based on departmental needs. Specialized |

| | | |
|----------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | | training and conferences are also organized for outstanding and promising employees. |
| Training manuals | To evaluate the richness and appropriateness of training to employee performance and improvement | Strategy session annual training, budget, sales and marketing, time management, teamwork, proposal writing, resilience, self-development strategy, IT efficiency, due diligence, etc training manuals. |
| Sample offer letter (provisional and confirmation) | To see how the organization communicates its expectations to employees | Jobs Description, job title/designation/position, breakdown of remuneration, terms of employment, expectations, who the employee reports to, annual leave and other holidays, employment benefits, probation and confirmation period, acceptance of the offer of employment. |
| Letter of promotion | To understand the modality for employee promotion. | Diligence in current role, exceeding expectations, new job title, job enrichment, higher responsibility, improved remuneration and staff allowances, more training, and opportunity for future promotion. |
| Employees' performance evaluation record | To understand how the organization measures the impact of induction, training, promotion, and other development packages on employees' performance. | Organization assigns job functions to trained employees and measures performance monthly, employees are retrained to boost performance, employee managers evaluate graduate employees working under them and report to the organization, and employee performance over four quarters determines employee retention, promotion, or relief of duty. |
| Staff handbook | To explore how the organization structured employee matters to guide their conduct within themselves and the organization. | The staff handbook contains employee relationships with the organization and within themselves, employee entitlements, the organization's policies, sanctions, and penalties for non-compliance to policies. |

| | | |
|-------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| CSR projects undertaken | To examine what the organization does to support the development of community, students of higher institutions, college graduates, higher education institutions and other stakeholders. | The organization has training programs for undergraduates in all courses; graduates of any course are offered internship/work-learning opportunities. They also provide scholarships to brilliant indigent federal government higher education institutions undergraduates. |
|-------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

I made copies of the documents to identify and highlight the key elements that easily reflect the unit of meaning. To ensure the trustworthiness of the documents, I corroborated the records with the interview questions that generated complimentary responses. Reliability was established by validating that the papers are dependable and transferable - linking the information on the document to their website and publicly available information on the Nigerian Corporate Affairs Commission website.

I checked for biases by confirming the information on the documents with the opinions of managers and graduate employees and asking follow-up questions that produced corroborative evidence. Finally, I asked questions that helped determine the background of the documents, the stages of designing and implementing the records, and how they might contribute additional insights. The summary of the document review was uploaded into the NVivo for data coding and analysis.

Once interview data were transcribed entirely with resultant clean data, the interview texts were emailed to the participants for review and member checking. Additionally, I permitted the participants to reflect and revise the transcript where necessary, although no participant made any significant alteration. I familiarized myself

with the data, assigning two days for review before uploading them to NVivo 14 for analysis.

Uploading the data into NVivo 14 enabled me to ensure order, create a container for my codes, and identify theme classifications. I opened a new project to analyze the data from the ten interviews and imported the ten transcribed interviews verbatim from each participant file into the NVivo files. Also, I uploaded the summary page of the document analysis. I conducted NVivo coding by assigning headings for significant interview responses as regular text. The significant terms from the interview responses and document review were dropped under each code in the container. Upon completing data coding, I exported all the codes to an Excel sheet, grouped similar codes into five clusters, and created an appropriate theme that emerged from each cluster. Through the process of categorizing similar codes, I was able to interpret data and develop emerging themes. The five themes were imported back into the NVivo 14, and similar codes were dropped inside each theme. The outcome revealed relevant themes I used to answer the research question and relate to the conceptual framework of stakeholder theory. Table 4 shows the themes and the category of codes under each theme.

Table 4

Themes and Codes from Participant's Responses

| Themes | Codes |
|------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| The reality of graduate employability challenge in Nigeria | Causes of the graduate employability problem Family negative influences Failure of government at all levels Failure of the education system Financial limitations of organization |

| | |
|--------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Graduates' lack of skills Graduates' wrong attitude and unpreparedness Inadequacy of the curriculum Misconceptions about the problem Scale of the problem |
| Graduate competency in service | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communication of employers' expectations Promotions within the organization Recruitment criteria |
| Employee performance upskill programs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appraisal and performance evaluation of graduates Equal opportunity for career development Graduates' engagement and inclusiveness Graduates' expectations Reward and welfare of employees |
| Creating value for all stakeholders and sustainability | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Corporate social responsibilities Prioritizing customer satisfaction Regulatory compliance Sustainability of the organization Value creation by employers and employees Care and empathy for employees |
| Current tools to enhance graduate performance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborations with other bodies Direct engagement with higher institutions by management staff Financial intervention and Program sponsorship Graduates' training programs Induction program for new employees Investment in graduates' development Organization's feedback system Provision of a conducive environment for work Relationships within the organization Staff development program |

The data analysis technique used for this study was pattern matching Yin (2018). Pattern-matching analysis requires comparing or matching a pattern of the collected data with a pattern defined before data collection (Yin, 2014). I generated themes from the data that were compared with the predicted themes using pattern matching to present the final themes. The themes were used to answer the research question based on how participants explained the phenomenon and the strategies their organization currently adopts to support graduate employees and HEIs to improve the quality of graduates. The initial coding of themes changed several times as I reviewed and read the data. After identifying themes based on the general approach, I used the pattern-matching analytical technique to lay the foundation for the case study analysis. According to Yin (2018), pattern matching is an effective technique for analyzing case study data. The meaning of themes generated from pattern matching is interpreted inductively to derive findings and propose recommendations from the study.

From the data analysis, I identified five themes that I interpreted inductively to derive findings and propose recommendations from the study. These five themes constituted the results of the qualitative single case study. There were no discrepant cases in the data. The data analysis process allowed me to engage myself with the entire scope of the study deeply. Being involved in all facets of the study made classifying and coordinating trends straightforward. The conclusions obtained from trends noted in this study are the foundation for guidance for successful standards and the motivation for expanding this study topic as subsequent exploration.

These patterns and trends afforded additional insight into code using NVivo software. No new information emerged after 10 interviews (five managers and five graduates), achieving saturation. Therefore, no further interviews were needed. The five themes that emerged are:

- Theme 1: The reality of graduate employability challenge in Nigeria
- Theme 2: Graduate competency in service organizations
- Theme 3: Employee performance upskill programs
- Theme 4: Creating value for all stakeholders and sustainability
- Theme 5: Current tools to enhance graduate performance

Figure 2

Themes for the Graduate Employability Strategies Adopted by a Service Organization

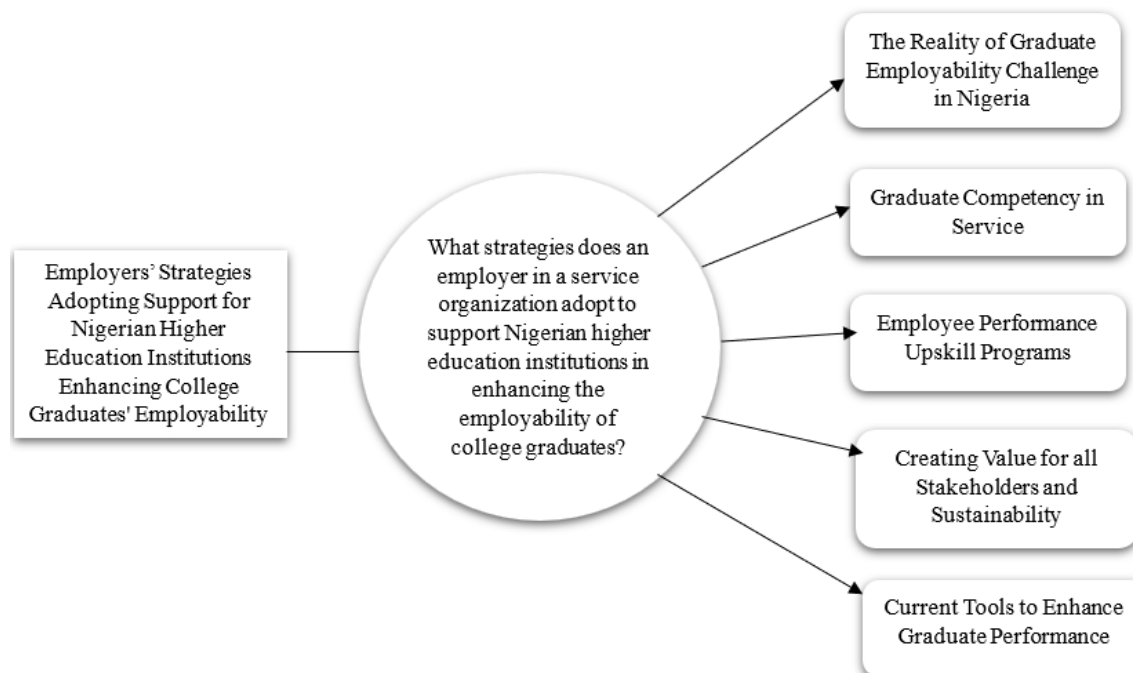


Figure 2 is a diagrammatic representation demonstrating the five themes originating from the participant's responses to the interview protocol designed to answer the research question.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Yin (2009) established four key elements critical to establishing the accuracy and trustworthiness of a qualitative study. These are credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. In the previous chapter, I presented necessary measures to address Methodological and study design limitations to ensure that this study is credible and adds to the literature on service employers' perspective on graduate employability in Nigeria. In this section of Chapter 4, I describe trustworthiness issues using four criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

The findings of this study might contribute to the awareness and advocacy in the area of education curricula review, graduate preparedness improvement, development, and training of new organizational leaders, thereby augmenting the study's validity. The data collection must be exhaustive enough to ensure that reliability and validity are present in a study. The participants were assured of getting a copy of their transcript for review and confirmation, which comforted them and encouraged them to disclose pertinent information to enrich the study. Ensuring data saturation is reached is a crucial component of qualitative research. Reaching data saturation within a study positively impacts the study's validity (Saunders et al., 2018). When additional data does not produce new insights, the researcher has reached data saturation (Saunders et al., 2018).

While in the member-checking phase, I allowed my study participants to confirm responses, add additional information, and withdraw any data they deemed imprecise. In doing so, this may enhance the study's validity and affect additional ideas. When the result of additional ideas gets introduced, a thorough analysis is probed with participants before the data starts to repeat. Reliability is essential because it diminishes the probability of bias, an objectionable feature of a study due to its penchant for tainting study outcomes.

Credibility

Credibility means the accuracy of how the results represent the participants' perceptions and experiences. Credibility measures the assurance other researchers can place on the certainty with which the original researcher analyzed the data collected (Nowell et al., 2017). Thus, the data collection and analysis are the core for establishing credibility rather than the procedures followed in gathering that data (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). I enhanced credibility by adopting multiple data sources. Once the data was gathered from each participant, it was thoroughly examined to get an accurate and total view of each case through member checking. I achieved credibility by adhering to the specific guide during the data collection phase and subsequent analysis. Before analysis, I listened to the audio recording to ensure the accuracy of the transcription.

Transferability

Transferability is the applicability of the study findings to practice, policy, and future research (Tenny et al., 2022). Transferability also refers to the ability to implement a study's outcomes under a different framework or environment or its applicability to

other sampling populations (Eldh et al., 2020). Assigning qualitative research to other studies or applying the findings of a study to other conditions or situations indicates the extent of the study's validity (Yin, 2018). To achieve transferability, I maintained a rigorous data collection process, adhering to the interview protocols, following the same procedures with each participant, and complying with the protocols outlined in this study.

Defining the research processes clearly and strictly following the procedure provides an opportunity for future researchers who may want to transfer the results of this study to a different setting to decide its applicability for their scenario, making it easier to duplicate the processes and efforts followed in this study. I also adopted a thick and rich detailed description of the findings recommended by Tenny et al. (2022). Additionally, exact quotes from the participants' response data were included in the reports to enhance their transferability.

Dependability

Dependability refers to the data's stability and the study's reliability (Morse et al. (2002). Combining the interpretation and findings simultaneously with data gathering and documentation is vital to assuring a study's validity (Nowell et al., 2017). In addition to dependability, the results of a study must also include the capacity to repeat the premise of the study in similar or different contexts. To establish dependability, I documented the entire research process. Furthermore, I engaged in member checking with participants to ensure the correctness of participants' feedback. Member checking involved sending follow-up emails to participants for review, and responses agreed with what was transcribed for the study without additional data. The reliability element in a qualitative

study is established when the process of a study can be duplicated with the alignment of its elements (Yin, 2018).

During member-checking, I forwarded the interview transcripts to participants for review and verification of the feedback they provided during the interview. In addition to maintaining the integrity of reliability and dependability, another element that requires researcher consideration is the element of bias in the research process. Member checking is an essential tool to mitigate bias. Member checking helps reaffirm participant feedback, reducing researcher bias because participants can authenticate the correctness and completeness of what was answered.

Confirmability

Confirmability is the extent to which other researchers agree with the current study's findings (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). The study must establish that the researcher's interpretations and findings were derived from the collected data. Significantly, the authenticity of an investigation is achieved and recognized as it promotes the furtherance of a new study, arriving at the same conclusions when repeated and producing a similar result (Guba and Lincoln (1989), cited in Nowell et al. (2017). Developing a sound and feasible study is founded upon the researcher's ardent pursuit to select the right participants, appropriate tools, and methods and secure new insight using an applicable theory (Tickle-Degnen, 2013).

To achieve confirmability, I reported the research limitations and potential bias. I asked questions aligned with the study topic, recorded the procedures in this study, and stated the research findings. The method used by one researcher needs to be designed and

documented so that the study can be repeated, yielding the same outcomes from the participant's point of view without any bias from the researcher (Lincoln and Guba (1985). To further enhance confirmability, I was neutral while recruiting and communicating with participants, collecting and analyzing data, and during member checking to eliminate any lack of objectivity.

Results

The findings of the research question are summarized. I organized the study result section by themes. The themes generated were deduced from reviewing the transcripts and document analysis. The findings are reflected throughout the results, providing richer details and a sound basis for validating the themes. The themes are relevant to the study's purpose and directly related to the research question.

The research question was: What strategies do service organizations adopt to support Nigerian higher education institutions in enhancing the employability of college graduates? I analyzed each response carefully with conscious self-reflection. I adopted a reflexivity attitude in turning written data into findings and conclusions to ensure that the results from the data were not a researcher's predisposition. The five themes generated from participants' responses are summarized below:

- Theme 1: The reality of graduate employability challenge in Nigeria
- Theme 2: Graduate competency in service organizations
- Theme 3: Employee performance upskill programs
- Theme 4: Creating value for all stakeholders and sustainability
- Theme 5: Current tools to enhance graduate performance

Theme 1: The Reality of Graduate Employability Challenge in Nigeria

When asked about the understanding of participants about the concept of graduate employability, nine of the 10 participants established the criticality of the concept, the cause of the problem, and how employability affects the number of graduates who get employed after graduating from higher education institutions. Participants expressed that graduate employability is a critical issue in Nigeria. P1 said, "This is very interesting because it's something that we have been discussing over time, even in my organization, because it is a major challenge and the misconception of that word." P1 added that graduate employability is always misconstrued as the non-availability of jobs instead of the non-availability of competent graduates to fill job vacancies. P1 stated, "The mindset of people is towards unavailability of job, but that is totally wrong." P2 said, "In Nigeria, it has been an issue for quite a while." P3 said, "I discovered that our graduates are not employable, so it is a major challenge." P6 added, "In my experience, I have discovered that most of the graduates we have these days lack the training and skill set."

P5 expressed the pains of employers amidst the challenge of getting competent graduates to work in their organization. P5 said:

A whole number of graduates show up either for the interview or for the job, they do not have the competence, skills, or personality that make them fit into the work environment, and it is a very painful dilemma. Because as employers of labor, we are constrained.

Thus, the first theme that emerged from the data collection was the reality of the graduate employability challenge. Having established the reality of the graduate employability

challenge, all participants linked the graduate employability challenge to the failure of Nigerian higher education institutions to adequately prepare students for the workplace. Eight of the 9 participants (who established the criticality of the concept) specifically identified poor and outdated curricula incapable of preparing students for work. P2 stated:

Among the factors is the faulty curricula operated at our various higher institutions. In my opinion, the curriculum is not tailored towards meeting industry expectations; therefore, when these graduates are turned out, or they find themselves like a fish outside the water, they hardly fit into.

P1 said, "It has been long due for them to review the curriculum". P6 stated:

The training they have gotten in school does not match the skill required in the workplace, which has made most organizations spend more money in retraining and retraining again for them to fit in.

According to P1, "We have openings here in my organization. However, we have not found the right people to fit such openings. Isn't that sad?" Other participants identified graduates' unwillingness to learn. P3 stated, "The other thing is that the graduates are not ready to learn." P4 also supported the position of P3 by stating that "Most graduates frown at learning after leaving school." An uncommon response was from P9, who stated that:

Most of the graduates are not so very particular about the courses they want to study or the field they will go into after graduating, they just want to go to the university, some also do not have a mind of their own, they

want to go to school because their friends are going. Some also want to read a particular course because their friends are reading that course.

P9 concluded, "The bottom line is there are jobs there, employability is lacking." Finally, a point on ignorance of what employability is and the skills and competence employers expect was made by a participant. P10 said, "Most of us did not know what employability is and what employers expect us to have. When I got to this organization, I understood all these skills and their relevance in the workplace." However, P5 concluded, "It is an interesting topic, something we are interested in because as a stakeholder in this business, something that affects us deeply, and it is an issue we deal with every day.

Theme 2: Graduate Competency in Service Organization

When questioned about the need for graduate preparedness for work, P1 declared that the graduates were poorly prepared regarding the skills and attitudes required to cope in the service industry. The participant said that the situation is worsened by the ignorance of the graduates as to the skills organizations, especially service organization, requires to work. P6 said, "To be sincere, we lack understanding of the real world" To support this statement, P10 added, "My experience in that aspect is that I have discovered that most graduates of recent times need training to enable them function. What we have gotten in school does not match the skill required in the workplace."

P1 said, "I will tell you sincerely, most Nigerians are not seeing employability as a problem." In a follow-up question to understand the impact of graduate skills and work-readiness in the service organization, P1, and P4 explained the nature of service organization and the core skills required by graduates to work. P1 said:

Something is really wrong with the system, so the universities are sending out bad graduates to society. So, we take it up there and will start trying to refine it, and I agree with you that this is challenging for us.

P7 concluded that the service industry is peculiar in needing graduates with strong communication skills, soft skills, team playing, and readiness to meet people.

Considering the skills requirement and the need to serve customers, P5 explained the recruitment procedure. According to P5:

When we interview people, it is not a question of screening them, it is also a matter of gauging their interest and fully explaining to them what we do and what we aspire to do so that they do not come in here and waste their time thinking they made a mistake. We try to be as clear and detailed as possible in the hiring process because it is 2-way. We are trying to evaluate. Furthermore, they are also trying to evaluate us and want to ensure they make an informed decision.

Additionally, P5 declared, "To be competent to play in the field, therefore, we assumed that they would need to be properly trained to fit into the work structure that we have."

P1, P2, P3, P4, and P9 interviews were notable for their emphasis on graduate skills and competence in service organizations. P2 spoke about aligning the graduates' certificates and what the graduate employees can do. P2 stated, "Unfortunately, in many cases, the certificates are not backed up with the requisite knowledge." P2 emphasized the importance of training graduates for the service industry, stating, "Otherwise, these graduates will find themselves like a fish outside the water."

To prepare fresh graduate employees for work, P5 said:

Our industry requires a motivated and well-equipped workforce with the kind of customers we serve - the small and medium enterprises and individuals. Some requirements are very technical skills, and some are soft skills because you find out that if you have very technical people but do not know how to relate with other human beings, you know to have a functional organization. So, we engage in a very involving training program. In addition to the week-long induction program, we have a yearlong program calendar, which is a mixture of bringing external people in to train, subscribing to external training programs, and leveraging enough competencies by getting the thought leaders within the business to come and talk to employees.

To confirm the assertion of P3, a participant testified to improvement in personal performance. P10 said:

It's been a wonderful experience; I will say that now I know better. Although I am still learning on the job, I know better. I know how to express myself more, I can express myself more. I can talk to anyone, but before now, I usually felt I could not do this, but now I feel I have improved.

Theme 3: Employee Performance Upskill Programs

Being an organization that hinges more on graduates with skills and competence to be sustainable and remain competitive, the third theme that materialized from

participants' responses was that of the investment of the organization in upskill programs designed to improve graduate employee performance. P4 highlighted some training programs that help graduate performance in the response:

We have regular in-house Knowledge sharing sessions every week. We tag it as KSS. So, it is a training program set up to educate and transfer knowledge and identify areas of knowledge gap. So, this helped to bring up the individuals who lack this skill set to gain the required knowledge through this section. Secondly, new employees have what we call a new employee induction program, more like a graduate training program, where new employees are required to undergo a compulsory classroom training session.

P1 stated, "We do much training internally, externally, locally, and foreign. It costs much money, but we do not spare because we know what we stand to gain in the long run."

P5 said, "The nature of a service organization is such that you cannot do anything with being prepared for the job unless you have a previous experience." P2, P3, P8, and P10 emphasize that intensive training sustains their workforce. P6 said, "And sometimes, some of this training goes as long as three months, six months or more before they (graduate employees) can fit into the system." P2 said it takes about 2 years for graduate employees to prepare for work. P2 added:

In all honesty, because of the peculiarity of the environment, very few of them get confirmed within six months. We then have to extend, maybe by three months or so, but by and large, they will eventually get confirmed

and, maybe, in another year or two. Everyone is trained to assume a higher position.

P1, P2, P3, P5, and P7 also discussed the role of mentoring in improving the quality of graduate employees. P5 said, "Graduate employees are trained to assume a higher position in the organization and thus fit into the organization's succession plan," P10 said that the training programs, relationship with the manager, and job experience have led to improvement and personal development. P1's contribution is worthy of note:

And to the glory of God, I will say this, even beating my chest. Some graduates who have passed through this organization are heading some organizations today as managing directors because of the training they underwent while working with us. And I will always say this, with all the programs we have on the ground when we bring our graduates in here, we train them from Ground Zero to the top of their career in the system, giving them appropriate training, direction, and guidance on how to build a career in the system.

P3 and P4 agreed that training graduate employees is expensive and challenging but rewarding to the organization. P4 said, "Meeting the demand of today's customers requires re-preparation of the current caliber of graduates." However, five participants emphasized the willingness of graduate employees to embrace training and development designed to improve employee quality. P3 said, "I see myself as their coach, so I spend time training, teaching, and correcting their work until they improve." P1, P2, P3, and P4

said most graduate employees are more interested in salary and monetary benefits right from the start. P1 stated:

But the most surprising thing is that when these people come on board during the interview, they are all concerned about the take-home pay.

These are people who have no experience. But their major concern is how much you are going to pay them. They do not even have a career dream."

Finally, four participants spoke about the importance of monthly performance evaluations to motivate and strengthen some graduate employees for improved performance. P10 said, "I look forward to the quarterly performance evaluation; knowing that my team will achieve the target and get some reward is encouraging to my group. We also work harder to get more wins."

Theme 4: Creating Value for All Stakeholders and Sustainability

In examining how the organization creates value for internal and external stakeholders, all the participants spoke about the organization's involvement across all stakeholder groups. Two of the 10 participants could not define the degree of engagement and the number of benefits their organization provides to external stakeholders. Two respondents also indicated "no idea" when asked about the specific contribution of their organization to external stakeholders. P1, P2, and P5 declared that the organization pays more attention to employees and customers than other stakeholder groups. P1 said:

We create an appropriate working environment for all staff and ensure that everything that is required of us as an organization working in this environment, we comply with all regulations and do that without any

situation. We also fulfill our tax obligations to the government. However, we pay more to our employees and focus on our customers by designing products that meet their needs, post profit to maximize shareholders' returns, and motivate the employees who serve them customers.

P5 said:

The whole idea would be to get people equipped. To deliver better service, if the customers are happy and pay whatever we charge, we operate efficiently, minimizing loss. So, I think it is another way of saying that we focus on internal efficiency in what we do, focus on customer service, and be sure that whatever we do, we are very mindful of each stakeholder because you cannot focus on one to the detriment of the other, but ultimately the shareholders.

P2 said, "And we do it with the consciousness of the environment at the back of our mind." According to P3, "We take all stakeholders into consideration, ensuring that our employees are well motivated and empowered, customers are satisfied, do CSR in the community, pay taxes to the government, and give to undergraduate and graduate internship opportunities and so on." P4 added:

And then, we impart the community through the credit we give to the community's people. They use it to support their businesses, and then they can add value to the community. We also fix roads and do other community projects.

P3 said, "Our treatment of customers makes it impossible for competitors to snatch our customers; happy customers translate to good bottom line, which helps our organization add value to the community, colleges, graduates, and undergraduates."

P3 added:

I am a living testimony of the graduate improvement program of this organization; I was allowed to learn. I did not know how to use a computer and do many things when I joined, but with many trainings and seminars, and the support and mentoring of my senior managers, I have come this far and able to train others, bring in customers and contribute to the organization.

Later in the interview, P5 said:

We interact with higher institutions, we do workshops and training sessions, and when people are in between sessions, we can have people for three months and something for as long as a year on internship programs. We also adopt brilliant indigents and offer sponsorship opportunities to undergraduates. Regarding influencing their curriculum development, we do not have more say than when you listen to them (the higher institutions); they listen to you with good attention.

However, P2 said:

As an organization, I am not aware of a formal arrangement in that direction yet, but I know our CEO, at his level, goes from time to time to visit campuses, organizes training, and workshops. I think he is also

involved in career talks and other ways of improving institutions' curricula. However, I am unaware of any particular package as an organization." Explaining how the organization contributed positively to the community.

P1 said:

We do community development. I will tell you this for free, where our head office is presently located, our road was bad for so many years. We championed the cause to fix the road. Also, in this neighborhood, at a point, there were challenges in the area regarding power; we had to go out there and purchase our transformer so as not to tamper with what the communities have. That project cost us a lot of money.

All participants said the organization pays all taxes and fulfills its obligation to all regulatory authorities.

Theme 5: Current Tools That Enhance Pool of Employable Graduate Employees

From the interview discussions, 6 of the 10 participants mentioned two tools repeatedly that they said are effective in improving the performance and number of graduate employees. The first tool is graduate inclusiveness in organizational decision-making, and the second is the internship and educational sponsorship opportunities the organization grants to students of higher institutions. Eight participants said the organization allows all graduate employees to contribute to decision-making and partake in the weekly KSS. The organization also encourages graduate employees to suggest new

ideas that could help serve customers better and improve overall productivity. However, P10 had a different experience. P10 said:

There is nothing I can do when I speak up concerning things and remain the same; there is nothing I can do. So, in my way, I try as much as possible to contribute, but when my contribution is not acted on, meaning my contribution does not carry any weight, so I keep to myself; I just go back to my shelf. But I try as much as possible to do what I can when it comes to my job; I do it very well.

Further, on graduate inclusiveness, 9 participants said the organization's feedback and reward system encourages graduate employees' active participation and has improved employee performance. P3 responded:

Our feedback system here is good; it encourages improvement, inclusion, and hard work. Also, there is this reward system that always works. My organization always recognizes those who are performing. And they reward them to encourage them to do more. Moreover, to stir low performers to step up.

P7 said, " Here, you are allowed to develop products, present them to management, and drive it to the market."

Concerning the internship program, P1 said:

Although we do not currently have a partnership with many universities, there is this partnership with some higher institutions where we train and conduct workshops. We also have an open door for internships for

undergraduates and graduates. And I will tell you, we had some cases whereby students who came here for an internship, we eventually gave them permanent employment. We also allow National Youth Service Corps members; as I speak, we should have only 5-6 corpsers in this system. Again, some NYSC members may be confirmed for employment after their service if they perform well; we retain them.

Summary

Chapter 4 included the research setting, participants' demographics, data collection method, and data analysis processes using Yin's (2018) pattern-matching. The chapter also contained procedures adopted to ensure the reliance and credibility of the data collected in the study. I provided evidence of the trustworthiness of the study results through triangulation and data saturation from interviews and documentary reviews. I used a qualitative single case study design and two data sources that included interviews with participants purposefully selected from a service organization in Nigeria and documentary reviews to answer the research question. Data were collected from 10 participants in a virtual interview using two sets of semi-structured, open-ended interview questions.

Using the NVivo 14 for Microsoft Office to analyze the data produced five major themes related to the research question and the conceptual framework used in the research. The first theme established the reality of the graduate employability challenge. The second theme highlighted the role of graduate competency in a service organization. The third theme identified the strategies adopted by the organization to enhance the

employability of graduate employees. The fourth theme is how the organization creates value for all stakeholder groups. The fifth theme encompassed how graduate inclusiveness and internship opportunities help build a competent workforce for the organization. Chapter 5 will consist of the interpretation of findings, limitations of the study, implications, recommendations from the result of the study, and conclusions.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore the strategies a service organization adopts to support Nigerian HEIs in enhancing college graduate employability. Through this study, I present the strategies a service organization engages to support Nigerian HEIs to enhance the quality of graduates produced for employment. The target population was experienced human resource professionals, managers who recruited and supervised graduate employees, and graduate employees who were considered to have improved over time due to training and development in the selected service organization. This single case study explained why employers should support HEI in enhancing graduates' employability. Service organizations need to improve the quality of fresh graduates for the graduates to add value to the organization. Employers are the end users of college graduates. Hence, the scarcity of employable graduates impacts the performance of service organizations (Mainga et al., 2022).

Understanding how a service organization onboards, improves, empowers, and includes graduate employees and relates with HEIs is vital in determining what strategies are needed to support HEIs in enhancing graduate employability. Surprisingly, this study's results provided a different perspective, unlike the literature findings, which excluded what employers did to support HEIs to improve graduate employability. Eight of the 10 participants admitted that their organizational activities indirectly support graduate employability. Most employees have improved in skills and competence due to training and developmental processes embedded in their work structure. They also indicated interest in discovering the strategies that directly support HEIs.

Additionally, the study participants declared that the organization does not have specific written policies or strategies to support HEIs. However, by providing opportunities for internships, holiday jobs, and scholarships to disadvantaged graduates, they believed that the organization supports graduate employability. Four participants emphasized that their organization invests in staff development to implement a succession plan.

Managers believe every graduate employee must be quickly prepared for the manager role. Also, two participants stated their awareness of the CEO's involvement in partnering with an NGO to conduct employability workshops and adopt brilliant indigent undergraduates by funding their higher education. However, two other participants declared that the HEIs need to contact organizations for direct support to enhance the quality of graduates they produce. Collectively, the participants emphasized that graduates need help to enhance their employability. Stakeholders could be willing to support Nigerian HEIs in enhancing graduate employability if HEIs publicly reach out to all stakeholders instead of blaming the government. This chapter outlines the study's limitations, the implications for positive social change, the recommendations for future research, and the conclusion.

Interpretation of Findings

The interpretation of the findings based on participants' responses during interviews, the field notes, and a review of other research findings is discussed. The findings from this study confirmed that service organizations have strategies in place to improve the employability of graduates working with them. Also, top executives in these

organizations are involved in activities that support Nigeria HEIs in enhancing the quality of college graduate employability. The general problem was that most Nigerian college graduates in the labor market are unemployable (Adejare et al., 2020; Omoniwa & Adedapo, 2017). Service organizations need help to recruit and retain college graduates. In this study, I uncovered the main challenge of college graduate unemployability and how it impacts recruitment, onboarding, and the cost of retraining and retaining graduates. Five themes emerged from the interviews and document review process. The findings from the study highlight the role an organization's managers play in enhancing the employability of graduates securing employment opportunities in a service organization.

This study also identified various support systems in the organization that influence graduate employees' engagement and improvement in the workplace. Failure to improve graduate employees negatively impacts their productivity and the organization's overall performance. For an organization to be competitive in its current business landscape, its quality of human capital must be considered. Organizations must consistently have the right people in the right roles, and such employees need to be improved and imbibed in the right cultures. The nature of delivery and relationship with customers in a service organization necessitates employees with soft and relational skills and essential employability skills of writing official letters, making presentations, reporting on official activities with colleagues and customers, and responding to emails and other correspondences within and outside the organization.

The 10 participants had a good understanding of the phenomenon. They agreed to the first theme of Nigeria's reality of the graduate employability challenge. The participants agreed that the organization's support for graduate employability through graduate employee training, empowerment programs, graduate employee inclusiveness, job enrichment, and supporting HEIs by funding indigent students can help enhance college graduate employability.

Additionally, by creating opportunities for internships and participation at workshops on higher institutions' campuses, organizations assist HEIs to improve their education curricula and enhance the quality of graduates. Managers' speech at campus workshops and seminars indirectly speaks to curricula update, stating the skills employers expect graduates to possess. All participants declared that the organization's graduate employee improvement strategies positively impact graduate performance. These findings are consistent with research demonstrating that organizations' supporting HEIs in graduate preparedness is an influential stakeholder strategy for enhancing college graduate employability (Nwajiuba et al., 2020). However, two participants thought that their organization needed to demonstrate the efficacy of directly supporting HEIs and that the organization's initiatives needed better coordination, documentation, and improvement in scale to make a tangible contribution to the topic.

The second theme centered on characterizing the attributes of employable graduates and the role of a competent workforce in contributing to the overall growth and sustainability of organizations. Participants confirmed that the time and energy managers require to train graduate employees and bring them up to an average level of being useful

within the first two years puts pressure on managers and, in most cases, affects the relationship between managers and graduate employees. Managers saddled with upskilling graduate employees and their existing work schedules are not likely to have a balanced work life.

While most managers stated that they find ways to relate with employees in a manner that encourages good relationships, some graduate employees confirmed that it took them some time to appreciate what their manager was trying to achieve. Graduates felt the managers were not patient with them. Participants confirmed that the training programs, relationship with the manager, and job experience have led to improvement and personal development. A significant number of participants appreciated the role of mentoring in improving the quality of graduate employees and training graduate employees to assume a higher position in the organization to fit into the organization's succession plan. It is a strategy that prepares the next generation of leaders and industry experts willing to give back through the teaching and mentoring of higher institution students and college graduates.

Based on the third theme, employee performance upskills programs require funding. I agree with the participants that the cost of retraining graduates through local and foreign training to make them fit into their roles could be very exorbitant. However, the reward of such investment has helped to create employees who are well motivated, adequately prepared for higher roles, and can transition to other departments or positions within the organization. Moreover, such investments can improve the organization's succession plan and reduce graduate unemployment. One study that supports this strategy

is by Sung and Choi (2014), who observed that a well-structured and fully implemented employee development plan supports the probability that the right people with the right skills, capabilities, and attitudes are available when the organization requires them. Cakir and Adiguzel (2020) have emphasized an effective database of talents as key to creating an enduring and sustainable competitive advantage. Cakir and Adiguzel established that organizations must budget for graduate empowerment and be attentive to the next generation of leaders who can take over the mantle of effective leadership.

Business owners and shareholders need assurance about the next leaders and managers who will develop, grow, and sustain the organization. This ideology is corroborated by the responses from some participants that their organization has a well-structured graduate employee development initiative that not only accommodates graduates but develops them to positively impact customers' businesses, the organization, the community, themselves, and the country. The on-campus educational workshop and seminar, internship and holiday job opportunities given to undergraduates and students of higher institutions, and the adoption of brilliant undergraduates, support HEIs in improving the quality of graduates.

Supporting HEIs is one of the ways organizations can create value for the educational stakeholder group (Okolie et al., 2020b). HEIs need to contact external stakeholders apart from the government for support. When participants were asked how their organization creates value for the HEIs stakeholder group, they emphasized placing much strength and focus on empowering internal stakeholders. They cited employee improvement since the higher institutions have failed to prepare graduates for work,

shifting the responsibility to organizations to equip graduate employees. Responses from participants confirmed that their organization is willing to support HEIs.

Nonetheless, Nigerian HEIs do not contact external stakeholders like industry experts to teach relevant topics and skills employers consider relevant to employment, organizations for internships, and student sponsorship. Others are funding infrastructure such as buildings, laboratories, and other equipment to prepare students for work. Not reaching out to the stakeholders limits stakeholders' awareness of the HEIs' graduate employability challenge.

Previous studies prove organizations are interested in hearing directly from HEIs other than designing projects that will create an avenue of reaching out to HEIs and supporting them (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020). HEIs need to seek specific support from the private sector instead of waiting for organizations to come up with what they think could benefit students through their CSR initiatives. Organizations defray their budget on social responsibility through free workshops, seminars, and training programs organized on HEI campuses (Dahan & Senol, 2012). Organized support addressing higher institutions' specific academic or technical needs does more than entertain students on campus. It allows serious-minded students to connect with empowered graduates for mentoring, managers, and employers who can provide internship opportunities and sponsorship. When organizations strategize ways to address the issues concerning graduate employability directly or indirectly, they are helping to improve graduate employees. They are also creating talents for the organizations and raising graduate employees who, if allowed, can mentor students while in college and devise

strategies to get involved with their alma mater to collaborate with their organization. By positively impacting stakeholders, the selected organization creates value for all stakeholders and ensures business sustainability, which is the fourth theme.

Theme five established the current tools the organization engages to enhance graduate performance. Although most participants mentioned two tools repeatedly that they said are effective in improving the performance and number of graduate employees. The first tool is graduate inclusiveness in organizational decision-making, and the second is the internship and educational sponsorship opportunities the organization grants to students of higher institutions. Other suggested strategies include collaborations with other non-government educational bodies, direct engagement with higher institutions by management staff, financial intervention, program sponsorship, graduates' training programs, and relationships within the organization. Essentially, participants reiterated the need for organizations to devise strategies to support HEIs directly to enhance the quality of graduates released into the labor market.

The gap between the HEIs and employers contributes to the continued decline in the quality of higher education (Ogunode et al., 2022b). Communication and collaboration between HEIs and employers are vital to creating a lasting relationship that can resolve the issue of graduate unemployability and unemployment. Therefore, strategizing ways to inspire organizations and the private sector to support HEIs can help develop an improved curriculum, a database of industry-experienced lecturers, and the financial support needed to enhance graduate employability. However, society and other

stakeholders believe the government, above others, should be held accountable for decadence in the Nigerian educational sector (Ogunode et al., 2022b).

In the research of Mainga et al. (2022), participants noted that collaboration between HEIs and employers is critical in graduate preparedness and facilitates upskilling graduates. Their research pointed out that employers who supported HEIs in preparing students for work do not need to invest in graduate basic skills; they spend much less time onboarding the graduates, find it easier to work with fresh graduates through the environment and organizational culture, and there is less stress on managers who supervise graduates. Six of the 10 participants disclosed that collaboration between employers and HEIs catalyzed students' preparation for work. The results revealed how students develop rapport and create a unique partnership with employers and managers by building a mentoring and coaching relationship. However, this relationship can be difficult to achieve outside campus meetings with those employers. A particularly encouraging feature of this collaboration is the unique opportunity that workshops, internships, and work-learning programs afford undergraduates and universities to access the required skills and competence for success in a working environment and the opportunity to meet and connect with different people in various organizations.

Conversely, two participants declared their indifference, claiming that only a few students had the opportunity to relate with employers during the campus visit. Irrespective of which stakeholder initiates students' drive for work, employers' strategies to create awareness of what skills are required and opening their doors to students and graduates for skills and experience acquisition can minimize the level of graduate

unreadiness for the world of work. Surprisingly, most participants were exposed to on-campus workshops, seminars, and internship opportunities. They could share their experience of relating to employers while in school and thus contribute to the importance of work-learning opportunities. One participant noted that the first interaction with the workplace was after graduation, and the first day in the workplace was an extraordinary experience – fidgeting.

Researchers have posited that to enhance the quality of graduates, Nigerian HEIs need to be supported by other stakeholders (Nwajiuba et al., 2020; Otache, 2022). Employers of college graduates need to become responsible leaders and managers through strategic CSR designed to help HEIs improve graduates' employability (Okolie et al., 2019). The findings by Okolie et al. (2019) were supported by the responses of my study participants, who confirmed the many benefits of employer support to HEIs to enhance the quality of graduates and impact all stakeholders

Thus, the findings of researchers and participants' responses in this study align with the position of the stakeholder theory that value must be exchanged among the stakeholders. Further, Moriarty (2014) demonstrated that the foundation of stakeholder theory rests on the accountability of organizations to all stakeholders and that the objective of their different interests aims to achieve a common goal. Under stakeholder theory, all stakeholders work together to create an enabling environment for all concerned to function effectively.

Limitations of the Study

Limitations are weaknesses in research that the researcher cannot control. This study had some limitations. The first limitation is conducting the study from a single organization. Incorporating findings from one case study into other settings will be challenging. Thus, when considering a wider population relevant to this study, the smaller sample size may integrate only the results for some of the population.

Additionally, the organization selected for this study is peculiar regarding the need for human resources, and the experiences of research participants may have differing views on the experience of participants from another business sector. Furthermore, limiting data collection to managers and graduate employee stakeholder groups without including the perspectives of HEIs makes the result one-sided. There is the risk of the researcher and the study participants' biases, which may influence the research outcome.

Lastly, though unplanned, the participants selected for this study fall under the same age bracket, and most of them were foundational staff of the organization. This is also a potential limitation, given that most participants shared similar experiences. A broadened scope with a diverse team of participants has implications for the validity of the study findings. As a result of the participants' homogeneity, I reached saturation by the eighth interviewee. However, this does not invalidate the study's methodology, as Fusch and Ness (2015) posited that six interviewees are sufficient to reach saturation without necessarily undermining the study's rigor. Nevertheless, I extended the data collection to ten interviewees to mitigate any illogical generalizations attributable to a

small group of participants in this single case study (Saunders et al., 2018). I also triangulated the data with a document review.

Recommendations

Study participants underscored the critical role of HEIs in producing graduates with basic skills that meet employers' expectations. They noted that HEIs will produce better graduates if employers, governments, and society support them. However, HEIs must be ready to speak up and solicit the support of stakeholders. Many participants asserted that engaging with organizations helps them understand what they require, builds mutual trust, and creates opportunities to update the curricula. While eight participants in this study agreed with the assertion of Okolie et al. (2021), two participants hesitated about accepting the collaboration, viewing such a relationship as a way of shifting responsibility from HEIs to organizations that are already carrying undue financial burden of heavy corporate taxes and self-funding of infrastructure like electricity, good roads, and security that should have been provided by government which is consistent with the research of Hagood (2019), whose findings show that supporting HEIs creates an additional financial burden on organizations.

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that employers support HEIs to help minimize the organization's cost of retraining graduate employees, remain competitive, align with the succession plan strategy, and help reduce graduate unemployment. Employers should also establish a relationship with HEIs and have specific strategies to enhance graduate employability. Such employer-HEI relations should encapsulate communicating with HEIs clearly regarding the expected skills and

competence that graduates should possess. Three participants in this study said they were unaware of employability skills until they started working and gaining new learning.

Although there are specific skills for specific sectors, basic skills should be shared with HEIs and embedded in the curricula.

Despite some participants expressing job satisfaction and success due to their inclusion in decision-making at the departmental and organizational level, it is not ideal to restrict them to involvement in internal activities. Participants mentioned that Nigerian HEIs need to reach out to employers for support. Thus, an organization with 100 graduate employees will likely have access to at least 25 HEIs. They can reach out to those schools without waiting for the colleges to seek assistance. Trained graduate employees can be a channel for organizations to corroborate with HEIs, at least with their alma mater. Using trained graduates' connections can be extended to other institutions through student union bodies, then to the National Association of Nigerian Students until the corroborative initiative reaches the Nigerian Universities Commission. Additionally, well-trained graduate employees can become mentors and coaches to students and fresh graduates. Organizations should involve graduate employees in their support initiatives for HEIs to drive graduate preparedness.

Few participants reported awareness of the CEO's involvement in partnering with an NGO to support HEIs through employability seminars, workshops, and sponsoring of indigent students. It was surprising that educational support should be limited to the personal pursuit of the CEO and a few managers instead of being anchored at the organizational level. If the CEO supports HEIs to enhance graduate employability, and

managers, supervisors, and other employees support the same initiative, it will not be limited to individual interests. However, it should be a corporate concern drawing the attention and interest of shareholders and all stakeholders.

Another avenue for employers to pursue mutually beneficial partnerships with HEIs is to leverage the relationships of business owners with their higher institutions (Alma Mater). Each employer should develop a keen interest in improving the quality of education and graduates of their alma mater. A participant recommended engaging the highest gathering of employers and business executives in Nigeria through the Institute of Directors platform to connect with their alma mater in the spirit of giving back to society. Having a unified body of employers of labor to communicate to HEIs the inability of college graduates to perform basic tasks, the skills they are expected to possess, and how employers can support HEIs to enhance the quality of graduates could be a welcome development that can create collaboration between the stakeholders.

Future research should consider multiple case studies from diverse business sectors cutting across manufacturing, service, and trading to generalize study findings. Also, the sample size should come from a broader population relevant to the study to incorporate the findings of the entire population. Additionally, such a study must be conducted from different states in Nigeria as the quality of education, employers-HEIs relationship, the attitude of graduates to learning, and self-development may be different from one state to another. Further, research participants could be drawn from a non-homogenous population where participants will be people with varying working years of

experience who can share their perspectives from different maturity levels and exposure to different situations and circumstances.

Although the current study collected qualitative data, a more robust study can combine the two data types – qualitative and quantitative. Mixed method research benefits from the comprehensive, expressible characteristic of qualitative data and the generalizable, externally valid quantitative data insights. The strengths of one data source offset weaknesses inherent in the data of the other design. Finally, future studies should encapsulate all classes of stakeholders, significantly HEIs stakeholder groups for balanced perspectives. Engaging different levels of higher education lecturers in qualitative interviewing will most likely produce a more detailed and well-balanced research result.

The responsibility and the rights of each stakeholder are well highlighted. Stakeholders need to communicate their needs to sources where they can be helped, as this will facilitate mutual support among stakeholders. Stakeholder theory should be embedded into the reins of business operations, helping all stakeholders to understand the need to be socially responsible, and this practice should be all-inclusive within each organization.

Implications of Social Change

The social implications of this research extend to strategies employers adopt to support HEIs in enhancing graduate employability. The potential implications include how employers impact students, yet-to-be-employed graduates, graduate employees, and managers to make a difference in society by preparing and improving people's relevance

and usefulness. In addition to the role of the employer selected in this study, the study may provide information to many employers, HEIs, graduates, governments, and parents to act instead of blame-gaming. By identifying the perspectives of employers and graduate employees, HEIs could design strategies to address challenges confronting the efficient preparation of students for the workplace. Identifying the causes of knowledge and skills deficits and how they negatively impact Nigerian graduates' performance can help promote change in the current complex and ever-changing business environment.

Moreover, the strategies for sustainable business stipulate mutual benefits for all stakeholders, as posited by the stakeholder theory. Therefore, future planning initiatives stirring core stakeholder engagement are expedient and healthy. The graduate employability challenge is critical and requires each stakeholder to intervene unbiddenly. This study can create an avenue for a concerted effort among stakeholders, including the government, to act more socially. Graduate employability focuses on the usefulness and positive impact of current graduates' and future leaders' knowledge, skill sets, and related attributes required to function effectively in the marketplace (Abelha et al., 2020; Babalola & Oni, 2021; Martin-Páez et al., 2019). These studies provided evidence of the importance of empowering graduates to become productive in their current roles and prepare them for leadership. Such awareness may stimulate graduate employees' drive for self-development and deeper involvement in organizational activities that promote employee empowerment. Thus, the stakeholder theory symbolizes the basis for employers supporting HEIs in enhancing college graduates' usefulness.

Driven by stakeholder theory, this study creates an awareness of the role of all stakeholders in driving the concept of graduate employability, and the interwovenness of activities that drive graduate preparedness is a wake-up call to all and sundry to support and create an environment of productivity and success. Some graduate employee participants viewed managers' training, coaching, and grooming efforts to develop graduates as being too hard on graduate employees. In contrast, managers thought they were stressed trying to train graduates. Therefore, this research can foster positive social change by advocating that a robust manager-employee relationship, facilitated through a well-crafted and seamlessly implemented training and development program, can hasten the learning process and improve the quality of graduates.

Indeed, Bharadwaj (2023) argued that a good manager-employee relationship offers the graduate employee a platform for new learning and development opportunities that promote social change necessary for improving graduate performance at work. Meanwhile, this improvement in skills and competence of graduates directly impacts other employees, organizational overall performance, government, and the ultimate good of society. To enlarge the opportunities for more positive social impact, participants in this study recommended that it would be valuable for trained graduates to mentor and coach fresh graduates in addition to the regular supervision by managers. Such old-new graduate relationships would create a good rapport, trust, and respect and engender positive outcomes faster than without a second coach. Likewise, the relationship will minimize the supervising manager's stress, speed up new graduates' learning process, and reduce graduate redundancy and unemployment rates.

Beyond the benefits of skills and job retention, Bharadwaj (2023) posited that partnerships between mature and fresh graduates and managers and graduate employees can promote critical thinking about the social issues in the community that otherwise may be difficult to achieve without such collaborations. Moreover, the level and the speed of experience interchange between the parties has implications for long-term social change. Additionally, graduates and managers cultivate social responsibility, strengthen interpersonal skills, and support more robust networks within the organization and families (Hardin-Ramanan et al., 2018), contributing to positive social change.

While literature exists on graduate incompetence and why most Nigerian college graduates cannot fit into organizational roles, limited studies have identified the prerequisite skills employers expect graduates to possess. This study identified basic skills, core employability skills, and attitudes graduates should possess to work in service organizations. Understanding these requirements can drive higher education curricula to change and help students seek additional self-help sources like internships and holiday jobs. Ultimately, it will drive the attitude change of graduates to employment and the workplace as a unique system.

Three participants reiterated their unawareness and lack of understanding of the concept of employability, which explains why many people have misinterpreted the meaning of employability to mean lack of jobs (unemployment). A high unemployment rate can create frustration and discontent among the general population, leading to social unrest and a desire for change. In this study, I have provided detailed definitions with explanations of employment and employability, and this would draw people's and non-

employer stakeholder groups' attention to the phenomenon. A deeper understanding of employability and what stakeholders can do to contribute to and address graduate employability can help reduce the impact of unemployment among graduates, thus contributing positively to social change.

This study will add to the body of literature and would be valuable to other researchers, doctoral students, college students, and some HEIs lecturers leaving it on the internet. However, most of the stakeholders who need to effect positive change may not read it; those who need and read it may be hindered from acting on the recommendations due to the protocol involved in driving a positive change or their lack of academic power to obtain the necessary approval to implement a positive change.

The researcher planned to engage in advocacy, the only way to justify my energy and passion for this topic. Specifically, I intend to raise funds from corporate organizations and clients to organize workshops and TV discussions that will include a representative from each stakeholder group to discuss the graduate employability challenges and how the group can work together. The advocacy will extend to seeking the support of designated authorities to amend the HE curricula. I will solicit how organizations can factor in strategies to enhance graduate employability, and finally, the research findings may help in policy formulations on stakeholders' involvement in education in Nigeria. Raising awareness of this social issue will spread beyond Nigeria's shore, and all stakeholders will act more positively.

The data collection method using interviews offers some social change because using interviews as a data collection method helped to obtain detailed explanations,

explore research subjects' opinions, behavior, experiences, and phenomena, and therefore helped to understand the topic better. Since the interview questions were open-ended, participants provided in-depth information. Further, this study offers avenues for future studies, creating opportunities for in-depth knowledge by exploring the topic from different environments, sectors, participant criteria, and a different methodology. *Calling for future studies is a call to action on ways the phenomenon can be improved in the future based on my results, which* contributes to a positive social change. Social benefits also accrue to the researcher; the knowledge gained from this research is valuable to my professional practice. I have gained a deeper understanding from the perspectives of the two classes of participants interviewed and documents collected for review during this study so much that I can teach it and easily apply the new knowledge to benefit the people concerned. The study will be valuable to professional practice and organizational leaders and managers.

Conclusion

Graduate employability is about producing college graduates who can add value to themselves, their families, organizations, and society. Organizations' success hinges mainly on the quality of their workforce; hence, they need to be intentional about improving graduate employees' performance, as it is one of the strategies to develop capacity for organizational resilience. In this qualitative single case study on employers' strategies for supporting HEIs, I examined the strategies an employer in a service organization adopts to support Nigerian HEIs in enhancing the employability of college graduates.

The emerging themes from participants' responses aligned with stakeholder theory. The participating graduates and managers had a good understanding and acknowledged the value of graduate employability. They equally accepted that employers should support HEIs and graduates in enhancing employability. The study also highlighted a recurring observation from the interviews and document review, demonstrating that graduate employee improvement strategies positively impacted graduates, HEIs, and community partners. Five themes were identified from the study findings: the reality of the graduate employability challenge in Nigeria, graduate competency in service organizations, employee performance upskill programs, creating value for all stakeholders and sustainability, and current tools to enhance graduate performance.

The Nigerian government must commit to adequate higher education sector funding and monitor fund utilization. Likewise, Nigeria's HEIs must devise all means to engage with all stakeholders to get the resources required to deliver excellent results and accept responsibility for their outputs. The Ministry of Education must design and implement policies to drive improved curricula, including the private sector and non-governmental organizations in teaching and other supports, and more accountability from the HEIs. An understanding of strategies employed by organizations supporting HEIs should stimulate all stakeholders, informing everyone to live up to their responsibilities, enhancing graduate employability, and restoring confidence in the quality of higher education in Nigeria.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol for Managers

Participant Pseudonym: H RPM**Participant Code:** HRA _____**Interview Date** _____ **Total Time** _____

| What to do | What to say – Script 1. |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Welcome participant and introduce the interview session with greetings and introduce self. 2. Give participant a copy of the consent form to go over the contents, and ask him if there are questions and or concerns. If he raises questions or questions, address them before proceeding. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> A. Good day Mr. / Mrs. xxxx, My name is Olufolake Ogunsola, currently a doctoral student in PhD Management of Walden University. I am conducting research on Employers’ Strategies to Enhance Nigerian College Graduates’ Employability. B. Thank you for agreeing to and honoring the invitation to participate in this study. I really do appreciate. Before we start the interview, please here is the copy of your signed consent form for your record. C. I believe you have read and understood the content of the agreement in the informed consent form. Please If you have any questions or concerns, I will be happy to provide clarifications on them before the start of the interview. |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Turn on the recorder 4. Introduce participant(s) with the coded identification and note date and time in the journal. 5. Begin interview with question #1, and follow through to the last question. 6. During interview, observe non-verbal cues and paraphrase as appropriate. 7. Ask follow up questions – probe questions for more depth | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Can you please tell me what you know about graduate employability in Nigeria?2. How should employers support Nigerian higher education institutions to enhance the quality of graduates they produce for the workplace and society 3. In what ways do the values the organization add to its stakeholders, significantly higher institutions and graduates, contribute to the success and sustainability of your organization? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In what ways has this organization improved the |

| | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 8. End interview. Discuss member checking with participant(s). 9. Thank the participant(s) for their participation in the interview. Give contact numbers to participants for follow up questions and concerns if need be | <p>skills and competence of graduate employees? Please, feel free to make some narratives?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Can the organization highlight the specific ways and strategies to create value for its internal and external stakeholders? 3. How can the organization add value to stakeholders without undermining the interest of any of the stakeholders? 4. How does the organization balance adding value to its people, its place of business operation, and maintaining profitability? 5. 6. What business model can the organization implement to add value to all stakeholders who can impact and be impacted by the organization's operations? 7. What is the relationship between you as a manager and the graduate employees? 8. How does the organization partner with higher institutions to help them produce employable graduates? 9. What other qualities and skills should graduates possess to succeed in the workplace? 10. Is there anything you want to share with me about the topic we have been discussing? |
| <p>Wrap up the interview and thank the participant for sharing his experience and time.</p> | <p>Thanks for sparing time to share your experiences with me. In the next 2 days, I will transcribe the interview data and</p> |

| | |
|--------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | return to you for a review of the process to ensure the correctness of the interview data. |
| Agree the time for follow-up member checking interview | I would appreciate we agree on a convenient time at most 30 minutes to meet and review the recordings and interpretations of interview. |

Appendix B: Interview Protocol for Graduate Employees

Date:

Time:

Interviewee Code #:

Location of Interview:

| Parts of the Interview | Interview Questions |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Introduction | <p>Good afternoon, I am Olufolake. Thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to have this interview with you. Your response will assist me to obtain a quality data for my proposed dissertation topic.</p> <p>As I earlier informed you, I am a doctoral student at Walden university, and preparing to write my dissertation. The purpose of this interview is to have your input about how employers can enhance graduate employability in Nigeria. I am sure you or someone you know have experience working with our graduates. This interview may last about 45-60 minutes. After the interview, I will be examining your answers, transcribe them, and prepare them for analysis.</p> <p>This interview will be guided by the consent form and the content of the invite sent to you earlier on. I hope you find this location comfortable.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you have any questions? • Are you ready to start? |
| Question 1: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is your understanding of graduate employability? |
| Question 2: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will you describe the workplace? Can you share some experiences with me? |
| Question 3: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does higher education learning impact employment? |
| Question 4: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can you explain your disappointment or satisfaction in the human resource structure of this organization? Pls tell me few instances when you have been disappointed or satisfied? |

| | |
|-------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Question 5: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can you describe the feedback system for the graduate employees in this firm? |
| Question 6: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can you explain the difference between who you were when you first joined this organization, and who you are now, in terms of skills and competences? |
| Question 7: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can you describe your contribution to this organization? Can you mention some specific assignments you executed that have added to the bottom line of this organization? |
| Question 8: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can the organization support HEIs to improve the curricula to produce high-quality graduates who are employable? |
| Question 9: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there anything you want to share with me about the topic we have been discussing? <p>Thank you for your time, and I will be in touch with as soon as the report is ready.</p> |

These interview guides were adapted from Walden University's qualitative interview guide

Appendix C: Invitation Letter to Participants

Dear XXXXXXXX,

My name is Olufolake Ogunsola, and I am a doctoral student at Walden University and working on my doctoral dissertation research to complete a Doctor of Philosophy Management degree. I am conducting this doctoral research study to explore and gain an improved understanding of (Employers' Strategies to Enhance Nigerian College Graduates' Employability). I am requesting your kind participation in the study. I respect your time and ask you to please read this email and attached consent form to decide whether you will participate in the study. Your participation in the study will help advance new insights into the (the purpose of this study which is to explore strategies an employer adopts to support Nigerian higher education institutions in enhancing college graduate employability).

Your participation in the study will consist of a 45-60 minutes interview. The research is purely for academic purposes and all information discussed or shared with me will be treated as confidential and protected. If you feel you understand the study well enough to decide, please review the attached consent form before deciding to participate in this study. If you would like to participate, please follow the instructions at the end of the consent form. I am looking forward to answering any questions or concerns that you may have and discuss further details of my research. You can contact me at (+1 646 409 1149 or via email olufolake.ogunsola@waldenu.edu).

Thank you for your time,

Olufolake Ogunsola
Doctor of Philosophy Management Candidate
Walden University

Appendix D: Letter of Cooperation

<<Name of Organization>>
<<Address of Organization>>
<<Date>>

Dear Olufolake Ogunsola,

Based on my review of your research proposal, I permit you to conduct the study entitled “Employers’ Strategies to Support Nigerian Higher Education Institutions in Enhancing College Graduate Employability” within the <<**Name of Organization**>> and collect related documents. As part of this study, I authorize you to: contact potential participants in the human resources and related departments via provided telephone numbers and email addresses; conduct face to face interviews or via online platforms like Skype or Zoom at the participants’ convenience and timing outside official work hours; collect relevant documents required for your study, and follow-up member-checking and results from dissemination through email addresses of participants. Individuals’ participation will be voluntary and at their discretion.

We understand that our organization’s responsibilities include providing names and contacts of potential participants for your study. However, the potential participants’ acceptance to participate is solely the participants’ decision and communication via a consent form. We reserve the right to withdraw from the study at any time if our circumstances change.

I understand that the student will not be naming our organization in the doctoral project report that is published in ProQuest.

I confirm that I am authorized to approve research in this setting and that this plan complies with the organization’s policies.

I understand that the data and documents collected will remain entirely confidential and may not be provided to anyone outside of the student’s supervising faculty/staff without permission from the Walden University IRB.

Sincerely,

<< Full Name of firm representative>>
<<email address>>