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YOUTH EMPLOYABILITY AND THE PROBLEM OF UNEMPLOYMENT IN NIGERIA; AN EVALUATION OF THE GRADUATE INTERNSHIP SCHEME (GIS) IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

One of the biggest problems Nigeria faces in recent times is the high level of youth unemployment. To address this, the Nigerian federal government framed and implemented the Graduate Internship Scheme (GIS) in 2012. The main objective of the GIS programme is to drive youth unemployment down by providing employability skills, work experience and opportunity to create business through internship placement, career development and entrepreneurship skills training. However, after a decade of the GIS programme, the problem of youth unemployment in Nigeria remains high. Armed with this observation, this study evaluated the outcome of the GIS programme to uncover the performance of the programme in terms of serving its objectives. To this end, this study surveyed participants of the GIS programme. The data collected showed that GIS has a poor outcome.

Keywords: *Unemployment, Youth Employment, Graduate Internship Scheme.*

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1. INTRODUCTION

The increasing rate of youth unemployment is a topical issue in Nigeria today. According to Adebisi & Oni (2012) the increase in the rate of unemployment in Nigeria is a result of

insufficient youth development programmes, lack of vital employable skills, poor training systems and inadequate training materials and equipment (facilities) for usage. Work experience is essential to enhance the employability of young people. Employability results from several factors – a foundation of core skills, access to quality education, obtainability of training opportunities, motivation, ability and support to take advantage of opportunities for continuous learning, and recognition of acquired skills. In 2012, a clinical study and analysis of various surveys on the employability skills of Nigerian youths was carried out by the Nigerian government alongside a series of one-to-one interactions. The result of the study showed that some of the challenges of unemployment are the acute absence of practicable workplace skills, experience and entrepreneurship skills. As a result of this, the government initiated the Graduate Internship Scheme (GIS) programme to provide Nigerian youths with employability skills. However, more than 10 years after the initiation of the GIS programme, youth unemployment remains a topical issue among both policymakers and academia.

The failure of the GIS programme to reduce youth unemployment raises the question- to what extent have the employability skills of young people been enhanced as a result of the Graduate Internship Scheme? To what extent has the Graduate Internship Scheme enabled work experience among graduates? Has the Graduate Internship Scheme influenced graduates to create their businesses? This study sets out to provide answers to these questions. Our a-priori expectations are: (i) There is no significant relationship between the Graduate Internship Scheme and the employability skills of young people. (ii) There is no significant relationship between Graduate Internship Scheme and work experience. (iii) There is no significant relationship between Graduate Internship Scheme and business creation.

2. GRADUATE INTERNSHIP SCHEME

With the increasing graduate unemployment rate in Nigeria, the Federal Government initiated the Graduate Internship Scheme (GIS) in 2012 as a component of the Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme, SURE-P. Introduced in the aftermath of the January 2012 national protest against the attempt to remove the subsidy on petrol, the GIS is meant to check the growing rate of graduates' unemployment by providing employability skills, work experience and opportunities to create businesses through career development and entrepreneurship skills training.

The Graduate Internship Scheme, GIS, was launched in 2012 as a social safety net component of the Federal Government Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme (SURE –P) to create opportunities for Nigerian graduates to be attached to reputable public and private organisations to be trained and mentored for one year on a monthly Federal Government stipend of N18, 000 and to undergo entrepreneurship training while exiting the programme.

The GIS scheme which was implemented by the Federal Ministry of Finance provided fresh graduates with short-term employment opportunities to sharpen their skills and gain working experience and enhance their employability, with a target to employ about 50,000 unemployed youth in the 36 states of the Federation and Abuja in the first phase before the end of 2013 and about 1,000 beneficiaries would come from each of the states, with the number of participants to be raised to 100,000 in the next phase (Abu, 2015).

To be eligible to be selected to participate in the GIS scheme, interested firms must be legal entities registered with the Corporate Affairs Commission, CAC, with evidence of value-added tax (VAT) registration and tax clearance certificates, in addition to the provision of a mentoring plan for each intern (Abu, 2015). Prospective interns must be Nigerian graduates aged between 18 and 40 years, who must have either completed the mandatory National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) or have collected the exemption certificate from the relevant authorities.

Organisations interested in taking interns are expected to set selection criteria for each position, while the electronic system would automatically send them a list of qualified graduates from where the organisations would choose their preferred candidates. Interns' area of study and state of residence are matched to firms/organisations on a first-come-first-served basis. The selected candidates would be notified and invited to the organisation for documentation. Interns are provided with orientation training to prepare them for the tasks of the workplace. Interns who demonstrate virtues of industry, exemplary conduct and commitment to diligent service during their internship period stand a chance to be hired permanently.

The core objective of the GIS is to enhance the employability of up to 50,000 graduates through the internship programme that would reduce the vulnerability of unemployed graduates and build a manpower base towards attaining the national development agenda. The GIS programme would cost the nation N900m monthly and the figure is based on the N18,000 monthly stipends to be paid to about 50,000 graduates that will benefit from the scheme in the 2013 fiscal year (Abu, 2015). Speaking during an interactive session with chief executive

officers of companies in the private sector, the former Minister of Finance, Dr Ngozi Okonjo Iweala, stated that the programme was part of the government's tripod strategy towards addressing youth unemployment in Nigeria (Okwudili & Emmanuel, 2014). The tripod strategy, Okonjo-Iweala noted, was anchored on the realisation that the government acknowledged the fact that it could not solve the unemployment problems alone (Okwudili & Emmanuel, 2014). This strategy has three layers because we recognize that the challenge is a multi-dimensional one and the key to solving unemployment lies with the private sector which is why a major policy priority is the creation of an enabling environment for businesses to thrive and employ people.

The official report on GIS indicated that the programme is capable of mitigating poverty and unemployment in Nigerians if the effort is channelled towards creating an enabling environment through the provision of basic amenities in both rural and urban areas (Okeke & Ngoradi, 2017). Unemployment among Nigerian youth between the ages of 15 to 24 in 2016 stood at 12.48 per cent. Another report by Eke (2016) while quoting Fitch International, asserted that Nigeria recorded its worst poverty rate in 2016; jumping from 60 per cent in 2015 to 72 per cent in the second quarter of 2016. This is a clear indication that the SURE-P scheme has not fairly reduced poverty and unemployment among Nigerian youth.

According to the Graduate Internship Scheme Project Implementation Unit, The GIS has planned to implement the programme by establishing a web-based monitoring and evaluation system, and maintaining a database of unemployed graduates- the database is meant to store the data of potential interns that could be matched to the skills required by various organisations, Intensive sensitization and advocacy visits to States and Firms in Nigeria, and Training of Interns.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

The target population of this study consisted of beneficiaries of the programme. The total population is 41,161 which is the total number of beneficiaries of the programme as of 2016 as stated by the Project Director, Mr Dennis Chukwu on 5th September 2016.

Questionnaires and secondary data are the instruments that were used in this study. The questionnaires have been sent via emails with the aid of the Google form to beneficiaries of the GIS programme. In designing the questionnaire, the researchers adopted several questionnaires previously used to address similar research topics. These questionnaires are the ones designed

and used by Qubati & Tammim (2021) and Eurobarometer (2010). The instrument has been called the Career Benefits of Graduate Internship Scheme Questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of items that covered various aspects of the GIS, employability skills, work experience and business creation. The instrument had 47 items, separated into five sections. The first section is called demographic information, and it consists of 4 questions. The second section has been named Graduate Internship Scheme, and it consists of 17 questions with a Likert scale of four points (1= Strongly Disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Agree, and 4= Strongly Agree). The third section has been named Acquired employability skills, and it consists of 11 questions, with a Likert scale of four points (4= Too Much, 3= Much, 2= Little, and 1= Very Little) to measure the extent the internship helped the graduates to gain the determined employability skills. The fourth section has been named Work experience, with a Likert scale of four points (1= Strongly Disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Agree, and 4= Strongly Agree), developed around the employability skills to measure how the skills have enabled the work experience of beneficiaries. The last session has been named Business Creation with a Likert scale of four points (1= Strongly Disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Agree, and 4= Strongly Agree) to measure how the internship programme influenced beneficiaries to create their businesses. The questionnaire was designed to obtain the perceptions that beneficiaries had regarding their internship experience and its influences on their employment attainment and career development. Questionnaires are used to measure quality and are a common tool used in research studies (Allen & Seaman, 2007). The Likert scale is used to obtain individuals' perceptions and feelings about a service or interaction (Allen & Seaman, 2007).

The questionnaires were administered online with the aid of Google Forms. The online survey is considered a viable method of data collection in this study, considering the availability of the e-mail accounts of Participants. An e-mail including the link was sent to Participants asking them to participate in the survey. The link was available for one month and subsequent reminders to increase the response rate. The Secondary data can give more insight into specific information on the impact of GIS in the area of the study.

4. TECHNIQUES OF DATA ANALYSIS

Pearson's Correlation Coefficient a statistical method used to measure the strength and the direction of the relationship between two variables was used to test the three null hypotheses. For the Decision Rule in the hypotheses testing, a correlation coefficient with a value between – 0.1 to – 0.3 or 0.1 to 0.3 denotes a weak coefficient between the variables; a correlation

coefficient with a value between – 0.4 to – 0.5 or 0.4 to 0.5 denotes moderate coefficient between the variables; a correlation coefficient with a value between – 0.6 to – 0.7 or 0.6 to 0.7 denotes high coefficient between the variables; a correlation coefficient with a value between – 0.7 and above or 0.1 and above denotes very strong coefficient between the variables; a correlation coefficient with a value of – 1 shows that there is a perfectly negative correlation between the variables while a correlation coefficient with a value of '1' shows that there is a perfectly positive correlation between the variables; a correlation coefficient of '0' means that the two variables are not related. Furthermore, if the p-value is lesser than the 0.01 level of significance, the null hypothesis is rejected; if the p-value is higher than the 0.01 level of significance, the null hypothesis is accepted. The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) was sustainably used for the data analysis.

5. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the demographic data of respondents, provides answers to the research questions and tests the null Hypothesis. In the online survey, 388 responses were recorded. Table 1 below shows the demographic spread of the sample population.

Table 1: Analysis of Respondents by Age

Age range	Frequency	Percentage(%)
25-30	110	28.4%
31-36	216	55.7%
37-42	59	15.2%
Above 43	3	0.8%
	388	100%

Source: Online Survey, 2023

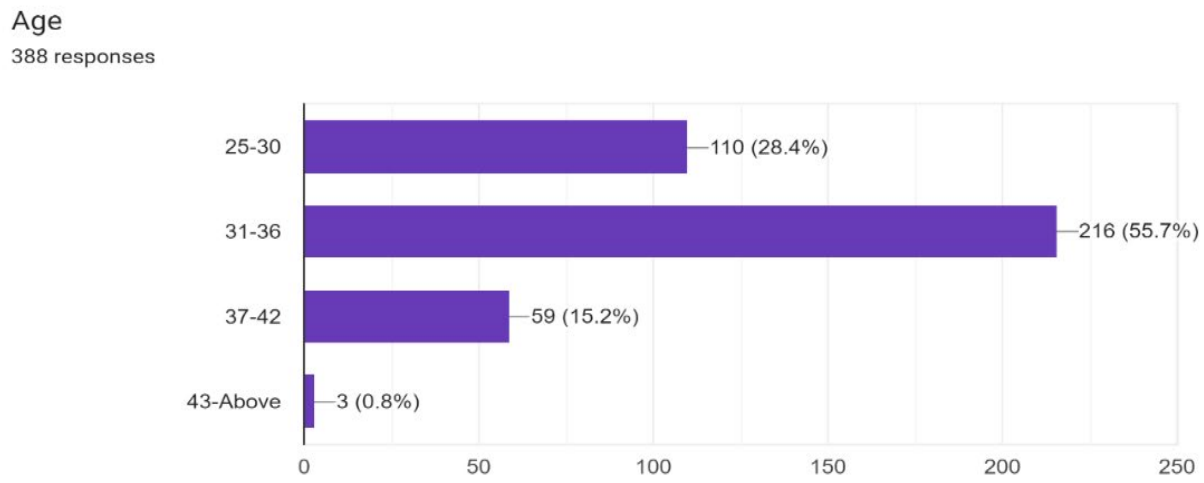

Fig 1: Analysis of Respondents by Age

Table 1 showed that the respondents who were within the age range of 25-30 were 110 representing 28.4% of the total respondents. Those respondents between the ages of 31-36 were 216 representing 55.7% of the total respondents, and those within the age range of 37-42 and above 43 were 59 and 3 respectively, representing 15.2% and 0.3% respectively. This implied that the 216 respondents that are within the age range of 31-36 formed a greater proportion of the respondents for the study. Table 2 showed that Male and Female respondents were 227 and 161 representing 58.5% and 41.1% .

Table 2: Analysis of Respondents by Sex

Sex	**Frequency**	**Percentage(%)**
Male	227	58.5%
Female	161	41.5%
	388	100%

Source: Online Survey, 2023

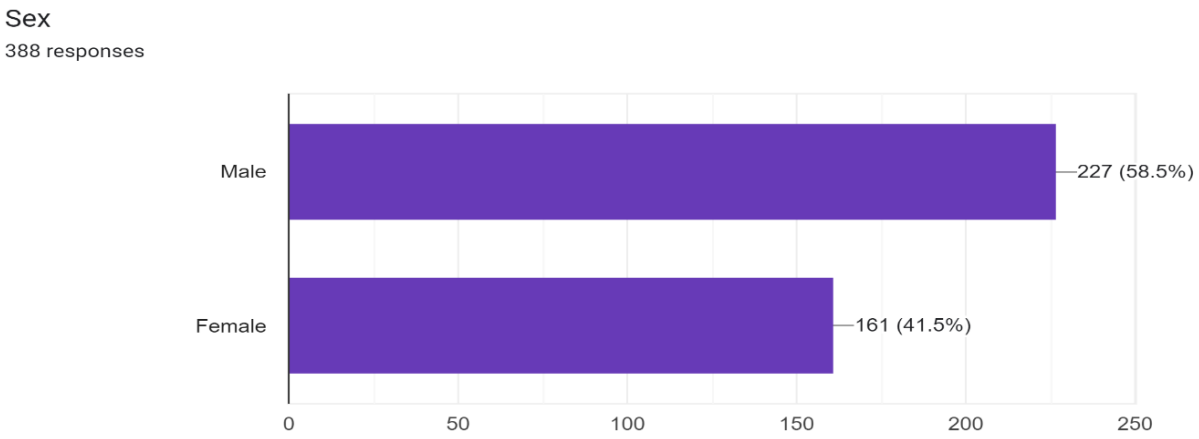

Table 3 shows the distribution of the respondents according to their years of experience after graduation in the GIS programme. The respondents who have graduated from the GIS training below 7 years were 125 representing 32.2%. Those who graduated 8-9 years ago were 208 representing 53%, and those who graduated 10-11 years were 55 representing 14.2% respectively. This implied that the respondents (208) who graduated 8-9 years ago formed the greater proportion (53%) of the respondents for the study.

Table 3: Analysis of Respondents by Years after Graduation from GIS

Duration	**Frequency**	**Percentage(%)**
Below 7 years	125	32.2%
8-9 years	208	53.6%
10-11 years	55	14.2%
	388	100%

Source: Online Survey, 2023

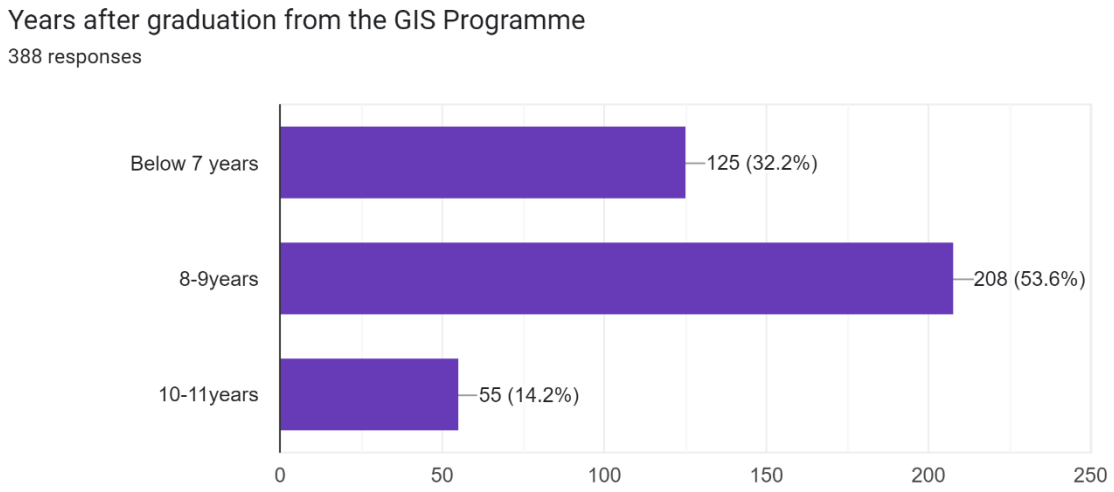

Fig 3: Analysis of Respondents by Years after graduation from GIS

Table 4 shows the distribution of the respondents (academic field) by which they were deployed to their areas of specialization in the GIS programme. The respondents that specialized in Administration were 66 representing 17%. Those in Social Sciences were 135 representing 34.8%. The respondents in Natural Sciences and Education were 35 and 78 respectively, representing 9% and 20.1% respectively. More so, respondents in Arts, Engineering and Others were 24,48 and 2 respectively, representing 6.2%, 12.4%, and 0.5% respectively. This implied that Social Sciences (34.8%) constituted the larger proportion of respondents studied.

Table 4: Analysis of Respondents by Course of Study

Specialization	**Frequency**	**Percentage(%)**
Administration	66	17%
Social Sciences	135	34.8%
Natural Sciences	35	9%
Education	78	20.1%
Arts	24	6.2%
Engineering	48	12.4%
Others	2	0.5%
	388	100%

Source: Online Survey, 2023

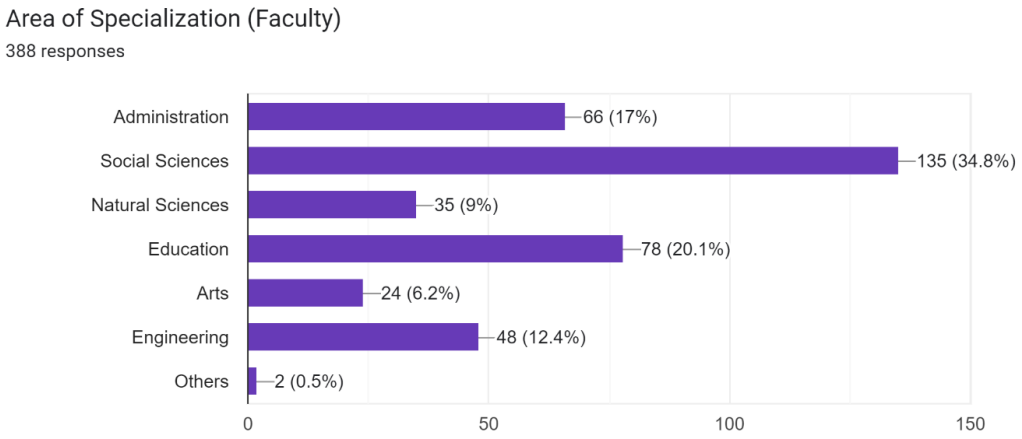

Figure 4: Analysis of Respondents by Area of Specialization

6. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Research Question One: To what extent have the employability skills of young people been enhanced as a result of the Graduate Internship Scheme (GIS)?

To answer research question one, seventeen questionnaire items were generated for GIS benefits and 11 questionnaire items for the acquired employability skills.

As shown in Table 5, the verbal evaluation of GIS benefits has been mentioned to clarify the degree to which the graduates have responded among the statements of the Graduate Internship Scheme benefits.

Table 5 Evaluation of Graduate Internship Scheme Benefits

Point	Evaluation
1	Strongly Disagree
2	Disagree
3	Agree
4	Strongly Agree

Table 5 shows the descriptive statistics related to the Graduate Internship Scheme benefits by beneficiaries of the programme. As shown in the table, item (7) which states (GIS improved

my ability to effectively communicate) was ranked the first one (Mean=3.79, SD=0.41) while item (14) which states (GIS developed my ability to have good relationships with others) was ranked the last (Mean=3.40, SD=0.51).

Table 6: Descriptive Statistics of Graduate Internship Scheme Benefits

Graduate Internship Scheme	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
GIS has provided me with an advantage in securing employment after graduation	3.74	0.47	388
GIS has contributed to my career advancement	3.49	0.53	388
GIS provided me with opportunities for increased responsibilities at work	3.64	0.48	388
GIS enhanced my ability to transition into my employer's organization	3.53	0.50	388
GIS improved my ability to function effectively within teams	3.55	0.52	388
GIS improved my ability to define, analyze, and solve technical problems	3.56	0.51	388
GIS improved my ability to effectively communicate	3.79	0.41	388
GIS increased my understanding of professional responsibilities	3.50	0.54	388
GIS increased my understanding of social responsibilities	3.62	0.52	388
GIS increased my understanding of ethical responsibilities	3.68	0.46	388
GIS increased my confidence in my capabilities in doing my job tasks	3.57	0.50	388
GIS developed my interpersonal skills	3.41	0.53	388
GIS developed my ability to have good relationships with others	3.40	0.51	388
GIS increased my respect for diversity and understanding of cultural differences	3.43	0.51	388
GIS contributed to my overall career development	3.48	0.50	388
GIS was positive for me	3.49	0.52	388
Based on the GIS i would recommend that graduates obtain internship experience before seeking a job	3.53	0.51	388
Graduate Internship Scheme	**3.56**	**0.50**	

Online Survey, 2023

Acquired Employability Skills

As shown in Table 7, the verbal evaluation of acquired employability skills has been mentioned to clarify the degree to which the graduates have responded to the statements of the acquired employability skills.

Table 7 Evaluation of Acquired Employability Skills

Point	Evaluation
1	Nothing
2	Too little
3	Much
4	Too much

Table 8 shows the descriptive statistics of the employability skills that the graduates have acquired during the enrolment of the Graduate Internship Scheme. As shown in the table below, Communication skills are most acquired (Mean=3.67, SD=0.51). However, the least acquired skills were language skills (Mean=2.14 SD=1.12).

Table 8: Descriptive Statistics of Acquired Employability Skills

Acquired Employability Skills	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Team work skills	3.55	0.53	388
Sector Specific skills	3.56	0.53	388
Communication skills	3.67	0.51	388
Computer skills	3.65	0.52	388
Ability to adapt and act in new environment	3.60	0.54	388
Good reading and writing skills	3.54	0.52	388
Analytical and problem-solving skills	3.50	0.53	388
Planning and organizational skills	3.23	0.45	388
Decision making skills	3.46	0.54	388
Good with numbers	2.88	1.15	388
Language skills	2.14	1.12	388
Acquired Employability Skills	**3.34**	**0.63**	

Online Survey, 2023

Research Question Two: To what extent has the Graduate Internship enabled work experience among graduates?

To answer research question two, 11 questionnaire items were developed around the employability skills set on how those skills have enabled the work experience of beneficiaries.

Table 9: Evaluation of Work -Experience

Point	Evaluation
1	Strongly Disagree
2	Disagree
3	Agree
4	Strongly Agree

Work Experience Enabled

Table 10 shows the descriptive statistics of Work experience. As displayed in the table, all the skills have shaped the work experience of beneficiaries. The sector-specific skills were ranked as the highest. (Mean=3.65, SD=0.52). Communication skills came in the second rank of importance (Mean=3.63, SD=0.53). The skill of being good with numbers was ranked the least important skill (Mean=2.49, SD=1.17).

Table 10: Descriptive Statistics of Work Experience

Work Experience	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Teamwork skills	3.47	0.54	388
Sector Specific skills	3.65	0.52	388
Communication skills	3.63	0.53	388
Computer skills	3.43	0.62	388
Ability to adapt and act in a new environment	3.52	0.83	388
Good reading and writing skills	3.52	0.52	388
Analytical and problem-solving skills	3.41	0.71	388
Planning and organizational skills	3.52	0.53	388
Decision-making skills	3.55	0.55	388
Good with numbers	2.49	1.17	388
Language skills	2.55	1.24	388

Online Survey, 2023

Research Question Three: Has the Graduate Internship Scheme influenced graduates to create their own businesses?

In order to answer research question three, four questionnaire items were developed to ascertain if the GIS influenced beneficiaries to own businesses.

Table 11 shows the descriptive statistics of Business creation. As displayed in the table, you were able to gain access to soft loans to start your own business as a result of the GIS career development and entrepreneurship skills training Programme was ranked as the highest. The GIS programme provided capital to start up your own business ranked the least (Mean=1.47, SD=0.59).

Table 11:Descriptive Statistics of Business creation

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
The lectures from the GIS Career Development and Entrepreneurship Skills Training built your capacity on how to create your own business	3.59	0.50	388
The GIS programme provided capital to start up your own business	1.47	0.59	388
You were able to gain access to soft loans to start your own business as a result of the GIS career development and entrepreneurship skills training Programme	3.77	0.43	388
You have been able to sustain your own business as a result of the participation in the GIS career development and entrepreneurship skills training	1.58	0.55	388

Online Survey, 2023

6.1 Statistical Test and Interpretation of Test of Hypothesis One

Table 12: Pearson Correlations Coefficient

		IV1	DV1
IV1	Pearson Correlation	1	.240**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	388	388
DV1	Pearson Correlation	.240**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	388	388

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

H01: There is no significant relationship between the employability skills of young people and the Graduate Internship Scheme.

Decision Rule

From the table above, the Pearson's Correlation Coefficient is 0.240. The Decision Rule is that, a correlation coefficient with a value between – 0.1 to – 0.3 or 0.1 to 0.3 denotes a weak coefficient between the variables; a correlation coefficient with a value between – 0.4 to – 0.5 or 0.4 to 0.5 denotes moderate coefficient between the variables; a correlation coefficient with a value between – 0.6 to – 0.7 or 0.6 to 0.7 denotes high coefficient between the variables; a correlation coefficient with a value between – 0.7 and above or 0.1 and above denotes very strong coefficient between the variables; a correlation coefficient with a value of – 1 shows that there is a perfectly negative correlation between the variables while a correlation coefficient with a value of '1' shows that there is a perfectly positive correlation between the variables; a correlation coefficient of '0' means that the two variables are not related. Furthermore, if the p-value is lesser than the 0.01 level of significance, the null hypothesis is rejected; if the p-value is higher than the 0.01 level of significance, the null hypothesis is accepted.

Thus, our hypothesis which states that "There is no significant relationship between the employability skills of young people and the Graduate Internship Scheme" is therefore rejected as there is a weak relationship between the two variables and a p-value lesser than 0.01 level of significance.

6.2 Statistical Test and Interpretation of Test of Hypothesis Two

H02: There is no significant relationship between work experience and Graduate Internship Scheme.

Table 13: Pearson Correlation Correlations

		IV2	DV2
IV2	Pearson Correlation	1	.255**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	388	388
DV2	Pearson Correlation	.255**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	388	388

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Decision Rule

From the table above, the Pearson's Correlation Coefficient is 0.255. The Decision Rule is that, a correlation coefficient with a value between – 0.1 to – 0.3 or 0.1 to 0.3 denotes a weak coefficient between the variables; a correlation coefficient with a value between – 0.4 to – 0.5 or 0.4 to 0.5 denotes moderate coefficient between the variables; a correlation coefficient with a value between – 0.6 to – 0.7 or 0.6 to 0.7 denotes high coefficient between the variables; a correlation coefficient with a value between – 0.7 and above or 0.1 and above denotes very strong coefficient between the variables; a correlation coefficient with a value of – 1 shows that there is a perfectly negative correlation between the variables while a correlation coefficient with a value of '1' shows that there is a perfectly positive correlation between the variables; a correlation coefficient of '0' means that the two variables are not related. Furthermore, if the p-value is lesser than the 0.01 level of significance, the null hypothesis is rejected; if the p-value is higher than the 0.01 level of significance, the null hypothesis is accepted.

Thus, our hypothesis which states that "There is no significant relationship between work experience and Graduate Internship Scheme" is therefore rejected as there is a weak relationship between the two variables and a p-value lesser than 0.01 level of significance.

6.3 Statistical Test and Interpretation of Test of Hypothesis Three

H03: There is no significant relationship between business creation and Graduate Internship Scheme.

Table 14: Pearsons Coefficient Correlations

		IV3	DV3
IV3	Pearson Correlation	1	.496**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	388	388
DV3	Pearson Correlation	.496**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	388	388

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Decision Rule

From the table above, the Pearson's Correlation Coefficient is 0.496. The Decision Rule is that, a correlation coefficient with a value between – 0.1 to – 0.3 or 0.1 to 0.3 denotes a weak coefficient between the variables; a correlation coefficient with a value between – 0.4 to – 0.5 or 0.4 to 0.5 denotes moderate coefficient between the variables; a correlation coefficient with a value between – 0.6 to – 0.7 or 0.6 to 0.7 denotes high coefficient between the variables; a correlation coefficient with a value between – 0.7 and above or 0.1 and above denotes very strong coefficient between the variables; a correlation coefficient with a value of – 1 shows that there is a perfectly negative correlation between the variables while a correlation coefficient with a value of '1' shows that there is a perfectly positive correlation between the variables; a correlation coefficient of '0' means that the two variables are not related. Furthermore, if the p-value is lesser than the 0.01 level of significance, the null hypothesis is rejected; if the p-value is higher than the 0.01 level of significance, the null hypothesis is accepted.

Thus, our hypothesis which states that "There is no significant relationship between business creation and Graduate Internship Scheme" is therefore rejected as there is a moderate relationship between the two variables and a p-value lesser than 0.01 level of significance.

7. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This research work found a relationship between the Graduate Internship Scheme and employability skills of graduates in Nigeria with a Pearson Correlation Coefficient at 0.240 and having a p-value lesser than 0.01 level of significance which shows that there a significant relationship between both variables. The study discovered that the Graduate Internship Scheme was able to horn the employability skills of Graduates in Nigeria as several skills set were acquired during the internship programme. GIS is created to ensure that youths are attached as apprentices in reputable public/private firms for a period of one year where the skills of such individuals will be sharpened as well as boost their chances of becoming self-employed. The finding of this research is been collaborated by Akomolafe & Adegun (2009) as they found that employers in the labour market perceive graduate employability as the most important. In this regard, they emphasize that graduate readiness for work is critical as it requires graduates to possess skills, knowledge, attitudes, and commercial understanding to make meaningful contributions to achievement of organizational objectives. This is in line with what Winkelman (2002) and Johnson & Ferej (2007) said that apprentice training developed general, portable skills because the graduates experienced less unemployment spell in the transition to their first-time employment than the non-apprentices. This also is in line with what US Department of Labour (2012) found, that youths get taught skills in the work place, they train for an occupation learning from real professionals, acquiring industrial-specific as well transferable skills. The skills acquired are related to the ones required for employment. A considerable number of research studies discovered that there is a gap between higher learning institutions and the industry and that employability skills are needed to bridge the gap (Baah-Boateng, 2014; Robert, 2014, World Economic Forum, 2014; Pellizari & Fichen, 2017). It is therefore expected that once graduates have skills and competences, they should be able to access employment and contribute to economic development. Based on the human capital perspective, human beings are expected to develop skills rapidly when they invest meaningfully on human capital (Mseleku, 2019).

This research work found a relationship between the Graduate Internship Scheme and Work Experience enablement of graduates in Nigeria with a Pearson Correlation Coefficient at 0.255 and having a p-value lesser than 0.01 level of significance which shows that there a significant relationship between both variables. The study discovered that the Employability skills of the Graduate Internship Scheme were able to shape the work experience of Graduates which have

translated into job opportunities. This is collaborated by the statement made by the a Project Director of the Scheme and Director of Abusanigo Global Concept, a consulting firm based in Abuja, Mr. Orumah where he stated that 41, 161 graduates have benefitted from the scheme and thousands of them having secured jobs already (Otaru, 2016). Mseleku (2019) in a study in South Africa revealed that lack of work experience is one of the major factors leading to graduate unemployment. As evidenced from the insights of HR staff members interviewed, to some degree, the study attributed the growing graduate unemployment in the lack or no relevant work experience among graduates. Based on the HR participants perspectives, most jobs advertised by employers in different fields required at least some level of relevant work experience. Unfortunately, most new graduates do not have the required work experience. Blackwell et al. (2001) indicates that even though the role of internship may be doubtful, there is a strong correlation between work experience and graduates' ability to find employment and to earn reasonable income. Nattrass (2002) found that inexperience is a major problem for youth graduates to access employment because employers prefer to recruit experienced candidates. Correspondingly, the study conducted by Pauw et al. (2008) indicated that graduate unemployment grows because most employers prefer to employ older candidates with relevant work experience which leaves the majority of new graduates jobless. Thus, the education and training system is questionable as graduates remain unemployed despite having completed higher education. In the study that was conducted in Malaysia, Hassan (2018) found that the growing graduate unemployment is due to the lack of adequate training opportunities in most universities which implies a lack of work readiness among graduates. This result is baffling; it is against the premise of human capital theory. Based on the human capital theory, through education and training, people can become productive in economic and social life and thus contribute to economic growth (Winters 2014). These results are not new as previous research also showed some links between internships and work experience for graduates. For instance, previous research evidence shows that internship provides an opportunity for graduates to gain work experience by which they get exposed to hands-on work that directly relates to their qualifications (Akomolafe & Adegun, 2009; Supraptono et al., 2018). Likewise, in the study that was conducted by Klein & Weiss (2011), it was found that one of the benefits of internships to graduates is the smooth transition from "graduate" status to "employee" status. In this regard, meaningful participation in the internship programme is an investment in human capital as it contributes to development. Although the findings of this study are consistent with those of the previous studies, our study indicate that the degree to which the Graduate Internship Scheme provide graduates with relevant work experience is weak despite that the programme is

believed to provide some level of work experience to graduates. For instance, some interns perform tasks which are not related to their qualifications. This evidence therefore suggest that the GIS needs some improvement particularly with regards to the placement of graduates into relevant departments. The role of internship in equipping graduates with work experience can be analyzed from a human capital perspective where it is believed that any form of capacity building towards human constitute human capital (Hage, 2017).

The research work also found out a moderate relationship between the Graduate Internship Scheme and business creation for beneficiaries in Nigeria with a Pearson Correlation Coefficient at 0.496 and having a p-value lesser than 0.01 level of significance which shows that there a significant relationship between both variables. The Graduate Internship Scheme through the Career Development and Entrepreneurship Skills Training provided avenues where beneficiaries are trained on Entrepreneurship and Business creation. The study found out that some beneficiaries were able to create their own businesses through the capacity building and access to soft loans. Some of the beneficiaries have been able to sustain those businesses till date. This is collaborated by the statement made by the a Project Director of the Scheme and Director of Abusanigo Global Concept, a consulting firm based in Abuja, Mr. Orumah where he stated that many beneficiaries have secured credit facilities and grants to expand the businesses they set up using GIS stipends while many others have also set up cooperative associations some of which have transformed into Small and Medium Enterprises (Otaru, 2016). Quinn (2008) and Katz (2013) in their studies found out that through capacity building, trainees learn about operating in a business environment and begin to establish their business networks, including suppliers and clients which they may take with them once they set up their enterprise.

8. CONCLUSION

The study assessed the impact of the Graduate Internship Scheme on Youth employability in Nigeria with the major aim of ascertaining if the employability skills of young people have enhanced as a result of the Graduate Internship Scheme; if graduates have work experience as a result of the Graduate Internship Scheme; if graduates have created their own businesses as a result of the Graduate Internship Scheme.

The major findings indicated that there is a weak relationship between the Graduate Internship Scheme and the employability skills of graduates in Nigeria with a Pearson Correlation of 0.240

and a p-value lesser than 0.01 level of significance which shows that there is a significant relationship between both variables. The study discovered that the Graduate Internship Scheme was able to hone the employability skills of Graduates in Nigeria as several skill sets were acquired during the internship programme.

The finding also indicated a weak relationship between the Graduate Internship Scheme and Work Experience enablement of graduates in Nigeria with a Pearson Correlation at 0.255 and a p-value lesser than 0.01 level of significance which shows that there is a significant relationship between both variables. The study discovered that the Employability skills of the Graduate Internship Scheme were able to minimally shape the work experience of Graduates which has translated into some job opportunities.

The finding finally indicated a moderate relationship between the Graduate Internship Scheme and business creation for beneficiaries in Nigeria with a Pearson Correlation at 0.496 and a p-value lesser than 0.01 level of significance which shows that there is a significant relationship between both variables. The Graduate Internship Scheme through the Career Development and Entrepreneurship Skills Training provided avenues where beneficiaries are trained on Entrepreneurship and Business creation. The study found out some beneficiaries were able to create their own businesses through capacity building and access to soft loans. Some of the beneficiaries have been able to sustain those businesses to date.

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that the Graduate Internship Scheme has minimally contributed to the employability skills, work experience and business creation of beneficiaries in Nigeria. This means that fewer beneficiaries of the Graduate Internship Scheme are employed, can be employed anywhere in Nigeria where their areas of specialization are demanded and can own and own businesses that would optimally take them out of poverty and give them the power to control resources which, will, in turn, enable them to help others economically.

The objectives of the study have been positively achieved, the questions of the study have been answered, and also the hypotheses have been rejected, as the findings proved that the internship scheme minimally provided the graduates with the employability skills and work experience required for the world of work. Few graduates strongly agreed and agreed that the internship has provided them with an advantage in securing employment after graduation.

Inspite of the Graduate Internship Scheme, it is seen that to a greater extent, the research work has unravelled that the programme was only able to minimally hone the employability skills and provided work experience for the beneficiaries. This is evident in the rising numbers and percentage of youth unemployment in Nigeria currently at 42.5% according to the National Bureau of Statistics.

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