

**Lecturer Factors and Institutional Support Services as Correlates of Employability of
Economics Undergraduates in Oyo State, Nigeria**

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Certification

This is to certify that Omowunmi Olubunmi OKUNNIYI with matriculation number LCU/PG/005182 completed the research project "Lecturer Factors and Institutional Support Services as Correlates of Employability of Economics Undergraduates in Oyo State, Nigeria" in the department of Arts and Social Science Education, Faculty of Education, Lead City University, Ibadan, Nigeria, for the award of Master of Science Education (MSc Ed) Degree in Economics Education.

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Dedication

This research is dedicated to Almighty God, who has sustained me throughout this academic journey, to the memory of my late father, and to all Economics undergraduates striving for excellence.

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Acknowledgement

My heartfelt gratitude goes to the leadership of Lead City University, a distinguished institution whose invaluable contributions have greatly shaped the realization of my academic aspirations. I sincerely appreciate the various institutions, sources, libraries, and resources that supported my research journey throughout this thesis.

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"Even though the above institutions and persons have assisted in the process of this research work, I alone stand responsible for the errors, if any is found in the work".

Abstract

Graduate unemployability remains a critical challenge in Nigeria, often attributed to a disconnect between academic training and labour market demands. This study explored the relationship between lecturer factors, institutional support services, and the perceived employability of Economics undergraduates in public and private universities in Oyo State adopting a descriptive survey design. The population of the study is 408, however, the study sampled 372 final-year Economics students from eight universities which were available. The research adopted Human Capital and Social Cognitive Career Theories. Data was collected using an adapted Economics Undergraduates' Perceived Employability Questionnaire (EUPEQ $\alpha = 0.0831$) and analyzed using descriptive statistics, t-tests, and multiple regression. The findings indicated a high overall perception of employability among students ($\bar{x}=4.21$), who also rated the support provided by lecturer competence and mentorship ($\bar{x}=3.75$) and institutional services like career guidance and curriculum relevance ($\bar{x}=3.51$) as high. Regression analysis revealed that lecturer factors and institutional support services together had a significant combined influence on employability ($F_{(2,369)} = 22.54, p < .001$), explaining 10.9% of its variance. However, a closer look at the individual predictors showed that only lecturer factors were a significant independent predictor ($\beta=0.380, p<.001$), while institutional support services were not. The study also found significant differences based on demographics, with female students and those from private universities demonstrating a higher perception of employability. The research concluded that students' perceptions of their employability are predominantly influenced by the lecturer's competence and mentorship. Based on these findings, the study recommended that universities invest in continuous lecturer professional development, promote robust mentorship programmes, and fundamentally re-evaluate their institutional support services to better meet student needs. Furthermore, it suggested implementing gender-sensitive and equity-focused initiatives to foster an inclusive environment that enhances all students' employability perceptions.

Keywords: Employability, Lecturer Factors, Institutional Support Services, Economics Undergraduate

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Table of Contents

Content

	Page
Title page	
Certification	ii
Dedication	iii
Acknowledgement	iv
Abstract	vi
Table of Contents	vii
List of Tables	xi
List of Figure	xiii
List of Appendices	xiv

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1	Background to the Study	1
1.2	Statement of the Problem	12
1.3	Aim and Objectives of the Study	13
1.4	Research Questions	14
1.5	Hypotheses	15
1.6	Significance of the Study	16
1.7	Scope of the Study	18
1.8	Limitation of the Study	18

1.9	Operational Definition of Terms	19
	Endnotes	22

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1	Conceptual Review	29
2.1.1	Graduate Employment Crisis	29
2.1.2	Graduate Employability	34
2.1.3	Undergraduate's Perception of their Employability	38
2.1.3.1	Labour Market Awareness	39
2.1.3.2	Students' Field of Study	41
2.1.3.3	Self-awareness	44
2.1.4	Lecturer Factor	45
2.1.4.1	Lecturer Competence	46
2.1.4.2	Lecturer Mentorship	49
2.1.5	Institutional Support Services	51
2.1.5.1	Career Guidance Activities	51
2.1.5.2	Relevance of Economics Curriculum	53
2.2	Theoretical Framework	56
2.2.1	Human Capital Theory by Gary Becker (1964)	56
2.2.2	The Social Cognitive Career Theory	61

2.3	Review of Empirical Studies	64
2.3.1	Lecturer Factors and Undergraduates' Perception of Employability	64
2.3.1.1	Lecturer Competence and Undergraduates' Perception of Employability	65
2.3.1.2	Lecturer's Mentorship and Students' Perception of Employability	68
2.3.2	Institutional Support Services and Undergraduates' Perception of Employability	71
2.3.2.1	Career Guidance Activities and Undergraduates' Perception of Employability	71
2.3.2.2	Curriculum Relevance and Undergraduates' Perception of Employability	76
2.3.3	Influence of Gender on Undergraduates' Perception of Employability	79
2.4	Conceptual Model	86
2.5	Summary of Gap in Literature Reviewed	87
	Endnotes	89
Chapter Three: Methodology		
3.1	Research Design	98
3.2	Population of the Study	98
3.3	Sample and Sampling Techniques	100
3.4	Description of the Research Instrument	101
3.5	Validity of Research Instrument	102
3.6	Reliability of the Research Instrument	103

3.7	Method of Data Collection	104
3.8	Method of Data Analysis	104
3.9	Ethical Approval	104
	Endnotes	106
Chapter Four: Results and Discussion of Findings		
	Instrument Response Rate	107
4.1	Demographic Data Analysis	108
4.2	Presentation of Data	110
4.2.1	Presentation of Answers to Research Questions	110
4.2.2	Test of Hypotheses	122
4.3	Discussion of Findings	128
	Endnotes	136
Chapter Five: Conclusion		
5.1	Summary of Findings	139
5.2	Conclusion	141
5.3	Recommendations	142
5.4	Contribution to Knowledge	143
5.5	Suggestion for Further Studies	144
	Bibliography	145
	Appendix	158
	Biodata	166
	The University Compliance Certification	169

List of Tables

Table	Title	Page
3.1	Population Size	100
3.6	Reliability Statistics for Constructs	103
4.1	Demographic Data Analysis	108
4.2.1a	Perceived Employability Status of Economics Undergraduates in Oyo State, Nigeria	110
4.2.1b	Summary of the extent of Employability Perception Status of University Students in Oyo State, Nigeria	113
4.3.2a	Extent at which Universities in Oyo State are Supporting their Students in Developing Employability Through Lecturer Factors (Lecturer Competence, and Mentorship)	114
4.3.2b	Summary of the Extent at which Universities in Oyo State are Supporting their Students in Developing Employability Through Lecturer Factors (Lecturer Competence, and Mentorship)	117
4.3.3a	Extent at which University Students in Oyo state are Engaged with Institutional Support Services (Career Guidance Activities and Relevance of Economics Curriculum)	118
4.3.3b	Responses on Institutional Support Services (Career guidance Activities and relevance of economics curriculum) of Respondents	121
4.4	Summary of Regression Analysis joint effects of lecturer factors and institutional support services on employability of Economics Undergraduates	122

4.5	Regression Analysis of Relative Effect of Lecturer Factors and Institutional Support Services on Employability of Economics Undergraduates	123
4.6	Summary of T-Test Showing Gender Differences on Perceived Employability of Economics Undergraduates	125
4.7	Summary of T-test Showing Differences in Perceived Employability Based on University Type	127

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List of Figure

Figure	Title	Page
2.1	Conceptual Model for the Study	86

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List of Appendices

Appendix	Title	Page
1.	Reliability Statistics	158
2.	Economics Undergraduates' Perceived Employability Questionnaire (EUPEQ)	162

Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 Background to the Study

The standard of living and economic strength of a country depend on its employable and employed population. High dependency rates, common in developing countries like Nigeria, can negatively impact economic value. The severe employment crisis, marked by high unemployment and limited job opportunities, affects both the economy and individuals^{1,2}. To be employable, individuals must possess critical thinking, problem-solving, communication, adaptability skills, including resilience to stay relevant in the labour market; which is known as their employability. For Nigerian undergraduates, acquiring these skills is crucial for post-graduation employment. Universities are vital in providing this knowledge and developing the labour force. If universities fall short, their graduates may struggle to find jobs. Hence, employability hinges on the relevance of graduates' skills to the labour market and the fulfillment of key internal and external factors.

Undergraduates with strong employability skills are more likely to excel in their careers and secure jobs quickly after graduation^{3,4}. These skills shaped by university curriculum, policies, and opportunities, significantly impact graduate employability and, consequently, the country's economic conditions.

Employability is a broad notion with many facets, but it is commonly understood as the ability to find and keep fulfilling employment. Employability, more broadly defined, is the ability to move independently within the labour market to realize potential through long-term

employment; it is the possession of a skill set, knowledge, understanding, and personal qualities that increase an individual's likelihood of selecting and securing successful careers^{5,6,7}. Therefore, an undergraduate's employability can be defined as their ability to acquire the knowledge, abilities, and other personal traits like attitudes necessary to be competitive, seek out jobs, and land jobs after graduation^{8,9,10}. Employability skills development throughout undergraduate studies is crucial for career development, as it increases the likelihood that a student will find a suitable job following graduation^{9,11}. As a result, the importance of employability education and skills has increased for both universities and students.

Economics is a vital field of study that plays a crucial role in understanding and addressing the complexities of societal issues, as it provides insights into how resources are allocated, how markets function, and how policies can be designed to promote economic growth and social welfare³. Graduates in economics contribute significantly to society by equipping themselves with analytical skills that enable them to assess economic trends, evaluate the impact of government policies, and make informed decisions that can lead to improved living standards and enhanced quality of life for individuals and communities¹². They can work in various sectors, including government, finance, education, and non-profit organizations, where they apply their knowledge to tackle pressing issues such as poverty, unemployment, inflation, and inequality. However, a lack of well-equipped graduates in economics can lead to detrimental consequences for society, including poor policy formulation, ineffective resource management, and an inability to respond adequately to economic challenges, ultimately hindering sustainable development and exacerbating social disparities. Without

skilled economists, societies may struggle to implement strategies that foster economic stability and growth, resulting in a cycle of inefficiency and missed opportunities for progress.

Employability skills are needed to equip employees to carry out their duties effectively and efficiently. These skills are career foundation blocks, including interpersonal, communication, problem-solving, customer relations, office practice, and competency skills. Nevertheless, there appears to be a persistent mismatch between employers' expectations and the abilities of undergraduates¹³. When graduates do not possess these skills, their perception of employability is already defeated even before graduation. Some studies have suggested the factors such as outdated curriculum content, institutional services, poor human resource management, gender, course of study, lecturer competence, lecturer mentorship, self-directed learning, networking opportunities, financial constraints and skills mismatch influence the acquisition of employability skills among students^{4,11,14,15,16,17}. In the context of this study, labour market awareness, field of study, and self-awareness are the three measures of Economics undergraduates' perception of their employability.

Labour market awareness encompasses students' ability to understand and recognize employment prospects while equipping themselves with the knowledge to navigate career pathways effectively¹⁸. In the Nigerian labour market, characterized by dynamic economic conditions, students must possess a solid grasp of labour market trends to position themselves advantageously. This awareness includes the ability to find and evaluate information that supports career development, such as future job trends, emerging roles, and the skills they demand¹⁹. Understanding the changing nature of life and work roles, and recognizing the

importance of accessing reliable, up-to-date, and accurate career-related information, are critical competencies. A well-informed perspective on the relationship between work, society, and the economy further enhances their readiness to adapt to transitions and leverage opportunities for personal and professional growth. Despite predictions of rapid shifts in the labour market and skills requirements, lecturer competence, lecturer mentorship, self-directed learning, networking opportunities, industrial training, financial constraints, and industry requirements such as shifting skills landscape, growing emphasis on soft skills, changing industry requirements, technological advancements, and increasing globalization and competition, research on university students' perceptions of these dynamics remains sparse. Most existing studies focus on insights into skill development, and labour market dynamics. However, the continual rise in graduate unemployment, employability skills, labour market requirements and adoption of artificial intelligence necessitates students' awareness and understanding of the demands of the labour market ^{3,20}.

The field of study plays a crucial role in shaping students' perceptions of employability, as it directly influences their confidence in securing jobs and their alignment with labour market demands²¹. In Southwest Nigeria, a significant challenge arises from the mismatch between the skills imparted through specific academic programmes and the competencies required in the workplace^{22,23}. Students often perceive employability more favourably when their field of study includes industry-relevant training, such as in technical and vocational education, which equips them with both technical and soft skills like communication, teamwork, and decision-making which employers increasingly prioritize to adapt to evolving job requirements²⁴. This disconnect not only diminishes confidence but also compels many to work outside their areas

of specialization, exacerbating feelings of under-preparedness²². Addressing this requires revising curricula to include employability-focused learning and fostering stronger collaborations between academia and industry to enhance job market relevance and perceptions of employability among graduates. The relationship between students' fields of study and their perceptions of employability highlights significant trends and challenges²³. Studies indicate that students from professionally oriented disciplines, such as engineering, medicine, and business, often report higher levels of perceived employability compared to those from arts and humanities. This disparity is influenced by the perceived relevance of certain fields to the labour market and employers' preferences for specialized skills associated with technical disciplines. While existing research highlights the importance of labour market awareness and practical experiences in shaping employability perceptions, there is limited understanding on how field of study impacts undergraduate employability outcomes²⁴. Studying the impact of field of study on employability can fill the gap in understanding how economics as a discipline pressure student for the labour market, understanding discipline-specific strengths, weaknesses, and industry relevance, ultimately informing curriculum development, career guidance, and industry partnerships.

In this study, the last measure of employability to be considered is self-awareness. Self-awareness is a critical component of human development, particularly for university students, as it underpins the skill to understand their abilities, strengths, weaknesses, values, and career aspirations¹⁸. This awareness fosters reflective practices that help students critically assess their skills, align personal and professional goals, and enhance decision-making, confidence, and adaptability which are key attributes for employability. Gaining required knowledge helps

strengthen self-awareness, enabling students to apply academic knowledge in real-world settings, build confidence, and clarify career aspirations²⁶. Students who are self-aware are better able to control their emotions, explain their strengths and shortcomings demonstrate self-discipline and are able to navigate through the nitty-gritty to secure employment after graduation¹⁸. Incorporating self-awareness as a measure of employability, this study can provide insights into how undergraduates understanding of their strengths, weaknesses and career aspirations influence their preparedness for the labour market, which is particularly relevant given the increasingly dynamic and competitive nature of modern employment landscapes.

Several factors have been identified as determinants of university students' perception of their employability in Nigeria. Among these are skills mismatch, lack of transferable skills, insufficient work experience, outdated curriculum, inadequate emphasis on entrepreneurial education, employer discrimination, inefficient distribution of human resources, inadequate institutional support services and the country's economic challenges^{6,8}. This study, however, will focus on two of these factors: lecturer factor and institutional support services. Although studies exist on students' perception of employability and some of the aforementioned determinants shows that there is a notable lack of empirical research on the influence of lecturer factor and institutional support services (particularly, in terms of the curriculum) on the employability perception of undergraduates in Southwest Nigeria.

Lecturer factor encompasses the knowledge, skills, and pedagogical approaches educators employ to facilitate student learning¹⁰. In this study, lecturer factor is examined in relation to

lecturer competence (content competence and delivery competence) and lecturer mentorship which collectively shape students' perceived employability.

Lecturer competence which encompasses both content mastery and delivery proficiency is a critical determinant of effective teaching and student employability readiness. Content competence refers to a lecturer's depth of subject knowledge, ability to critically engage with material, and adapt pedagogy to diverse learning needs, all of which directly influence students' academic achievement and skill acquisition^{11,26}. Studies highlight that lecturers with strong content expertise enhance students' critical thinking and problem-solving abilities, which are vital for workforce adaptability^{27,28}. However, gaps persist, particularly in integrating emerging technologies into content delivery, as many lecturers prioritize traditional methods like written assessments over innovative approaches such as peer review or digital tools²⁹. Delivery competence, on the other hand, involves the strategic use of verbal and non-verbal communication, classroom management, and emotional intelligence to foster engagement and comprehension^{30,31}. Research highlight the link between lecturers' self-efficacy in delivery and student outcomes, where confident, well-prepared lecturers create inclusive environments that mirror workplace dynamics^{27,32}. Yet, challenges remain in low- and middle-income contexts, where limited ICT literacy and professional development hinder optimal delivery³³. Together, content and delivery competencies shape students' perceptions of their employability by bridging academic instruction with real-world applicability³⁴.

Mentorship provides valuable guidance, support, and networking opportunities, fostering professional development and skills acquisition that directly translate to improved career

prospects and job productivity²⁶. Lecturers' guidance and mentorship approach play a pivotal role in shaping undergraduates' perceptions of their employability in today's dynamic job market. As literature demonstrates, lecturer competence directly influences learning effectiveness, which extends to students' professional confidence and career readiness. In the Nigerian context, where graduate unemployment remains a pressing issue, mentorship will align undergraduates with life and the labour market expectations³⁵.

Effective mentorship encompasses the lecturer's ability to model professional behaviours, provide career guidance, and facilitate industry-relevant skill development³⁶. Nigerian economics students who experience quality mentorship tend to develop stronger professional identities and better understand labour market expectations. However, challenges such as large class sizes and limited faculty-student interaction often hinder personalized mentoring in many Nigerian universities³⁵. Integrating technology in teaching, presents an opportunity to enhance mentorship despite these structural constraints³⁷. Strengthening lecturer-student engagement through structured mentorship programmes and curriculum-aligned employability skills development could significantly improve Nigerian economics undergraduates' career prospects in the job market and self-perception of their employability. Beyond lecturer-student engagement through mentorship, institutional support services such as career guidance and counseling services and curriculum relevance, play a pivotal role in shaping undergraduates' employability perceptions and bridging the gap between academia and the labor market.

Career guidance and counselling services are important in preparing undergraduates with the knowledge, skills and confidence required to navigate the complexities of the labour market. These services offer structured support through career advice, skills assessments and job search strategies, helping students align their academic training with professional goals³⁵. For economics undergraduates, access to effective career counselling may significantly influence their perceptions of employability, facilitating a smoother transition from education to meaningful employment. Career guidance and counseling services are a core of the university education, comprising activities that improve upon self-actualization, opportunity awareness, decision learning and experiential learning³⁸. The positive influence of career guidance through counseling activities on students' employability and a perception of that have been stressed in literature. Literature have recommended the integration of career guidance education into the school curriculum from first year^{13,39}. This stems from the observations that undergraduates are either not aware or not well informed about the requirements of employability²³. Many of them do not realise the need for career services and do not independently give their future careers any active thought until their final year.

In the same light, career guidance assists students to understand the labour market, and to reflect on their interests, ambitions, abilities and qualifications^{13,40,41}. After acquiring so much knowledge, understanding and skill at university, students need guidance on the best way to describe their achievements to potential employers and to explain how they will be of benefit, when writing applications and their Curriculum Vitae (CVs), as well as when attending interviews. Therefore, training students is of limited benefit if they are unable to find a market

to promote their developed employability, particularly given the high levels of uncertainty and competition in the job market³⁹.

The last index under institutional support services to be discussed in this work is the relevance of economics curriculum. Institutional support through curriculum relevance plays a pivotal role in shaping the quality of higher education and students' preparedness for the workforce¹⁹. A well-structured curriculum ensures the alignment of academic content with industry demands, incorporating relevant theoretical knowledge, practical skills, and emerging trends in the field. It serves as a blueprint for learning, guiding lecturers in delivering up-to-date and applicable knowledge while providing students with a clear pathway to acquiring competencies valued by employers. An effective curriculum integrates experiential learning opportunities, such as internships, project-based assessments, and industry collaborations, which bridge the gap between classroom instruction and real-world application⁴².

Additionally, a dynamic curriculum undergoes periodic reviews and updates to reflect labour market changes, technological advancements, and global standards, ensuring graduates remain competitive. Institutional support in curriculum design also involves stakeholder engagement, including input from employers, academic experts, and alumni, to ensure the programme's relevance and responsiveness to labour market needs^{43,44,45,46}. When curricula are robust, flexible, and industry-aligned, students gain confidence in their skill sets and career prospects. This, in turn, positively influences their perception of employability, as they recognize their qualifications meet employer expectations.

Furthermore, exposure to practical, career-oriented learning experiences within the curriculum enhances students' self-assurance in transitioning from academia to the professional world, reinforcing their belief in their readiness for employment^{46,47,48}. Coupled with lecturer factors and institutional support services, other factors such as gender, institutional type and economic dispositions, predict the employability perceptions of undergraduates^{47,48}.

A pressing problem in graduate employment is that the labour market is not gender neutral. This has been demonstrated repeatedly in the literature, with women typically being at a disadvantage. This highlights the need to study issues related to employability from a gender perspective, beyond including sex as a mere control variable. Conflicting results on gender and perception of employability which may be due to cross-cultural differences⁴⁹. Research on gender differences in employability perceptions presents nuanced findings that vary across contexts and disciplines. While some studies have found no significant gender differences in students' perceptions of work readiness, more recent studies reveal important distinctions^{19,23}. Others demonstrate that gender and year of study interact significantly in shaping students' employability beliefs, with male students generally expressing greater confidence^{47,50}. These findings indicate that non-academic preparation for graduate life varies by gender, suggesting that traditional employability measures may not capture the full spectrum of career readiness⁵¹. The apparent contradictions in these findings may stem from methodological differences, with some studies focusing on specific competencies while others examine broader self-perceptions.

The Nigerian context introduces additional complexity to these gender dynamics. While global studies show mixed results, local research consistently reveals gender gaps in employability perceptions, particularly in male-dominated fields like economics. Female students often demonstrate stronger career awareness and planning skills yet face structural barriers that undermine their confidence in labor market success⁵².

The employability of graduates is a critical concern for both individuals and the broader economy, particularly in developing countries like Nigeria, where high unemployment rates and limited job opportunities persist⁵³. As the standard of living and economic strength are closely tied to the employable population, it is essential for universities to equip students with the necessary skills and competencies that align with labor market demands⁵⁴. The growing disconnects between the skills acquired in higher education and the expectations of employer's highlights the urgent need for a reevaluation of educational practices and support systems within institutions³. Understanding the interplay between institutional support services, lecturer factors, and students' self-perceptions of employability is vital for developing effective strategies to bridge this gap, hence, this study.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The persistent challenge of graduate unemployment in Nigeria continues to raise concerns about its potential impact on the nation's economic growth and social stability. This alarming trend suggests a fundamental disconnect between university training and the evolving demands of the labour market. While existing literature acknowledges the importance of employability skills, a critical gap remains in understanding how specific institutional factors

within the unique Nigerian educational landscape collectively influence students' perceptions of their career readiness. Previous studies have often examined employability factors in isolation, focusing separately on lecturer competencies or institutional support services. This approach fails to address the interconnectedness of these factors and their combined effect. A paradox is evident in fields like Economics, where, despite educational advancements aimed at developing key skills, graduates still face substantial employment challenges. This study aims to address this research gap by investigating how the interplay between lecturer factors and institutional support services shape the employability perceptions of Economics undergraduates in public and private universities in Oyo State. By examining this correlation, the research seeks to provide actionable insights for universities to better equip students for a dynamic employment landscape.

1.3 Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study is to investigate the influence of lecturer-related factors and institutional support services on the employability of Economics undergraduates in Oyo State, Nigeria.

The objectives are to:

- i. ascertain the perceived employability of Economics undergraduates in Oyo State, Nigeria.
- ii. examine the extent to which universities in Oyo state are supporting their students in developing employability through lecturer factors (content competence, delivery competence) and mentorship.

- iii. ascertain the extent to which Economics undergraduates in Oyo state engage with institutional support services (career guidance activities and curriculum relevance).
- iv. determine the combined effect of lecturer-related factors and institutional support services on the employability of Economics undergraduates.
- v. examine the relative influence of lecturer-related factors (content competence, delivery competence and mentorship) and institutional support services (career guidance activities and curriculum relevance) on the perceived employability of Economics undergraduates in Oyo State.
- vi. determine the difference in the perceived employability of economics undergraduates across gender.
- vii. determine the difference in the perceived employability of economics undergraduates in private and public university.

1.4 Research Questions

The following research questions will guide the study:

1. What is the perceived employability status of economics undergraduates in Oyo State, Nigeria?
2. What is the extent to which universities in Oyo state are supporting their students in developing employability through lecturer factors (content competence, delivery competence) and mentorship?

3. What is the extent to which Economics undergraduates in Oyo state engage with institutional support services (career guidance activities and curriculum relevance)?

1.5 Hypotheses

The following hypotheses will be tested:

H₀₁: There will be no significant combined effects of lecturer-related factors (content competence, delivery competence and mentorship) and institutional support services (career guidance activities and curriculum relevance) on the employability of Economics undergraduates.

H₀₂: There will be no significant relative influence of lecturer-related factors (content competence, delivery competence and lecturer mentorship) and institutional support services (career guidance activities and curriculum relevance) on the perceived employability of Economics undergraduates in Oyo State.

H₀₃: There will be no significant gender difference in the perception of employability of economics undergraduates in Universities, Oyo State, Nigeria

H₀₄: There will be no significant institutional type difference in the perception of employability of economics undergraduates in Universities, Oyo State, Nigeria.

1.6 Significance of the Study

The findings of this research will be of great significance to students, parents, lecturers, higher education institutions, policymakers, and future researchers.

The study's conclusions will give students a competitive edge in their job search and enable them to satisfy changing employer and labour market demands. This could significantly lower the employment rate for recent graduates. Graduates with employability skills gained through Lectures' competence and efficient institutional support services are likely to have an advantage over those without in a competitive labour market.

The study will raise the standard of higher education, ensure it stays current by addressing the demands of employers, students, lecturers, and society. It specifically will improve students' employability by focusing on labour market awareness, field of study, and self-awareness. The research highlights the importance of effectively utilizing lecturer factors such as competence, mentorship and making support services like career guidance activities easily accessible.

Institutions can use these findings to better prepare students for the workforce by enhancing internship and job placement programmes, improving career services, and modifying human resource procedures. Ultimately, these efforts may lead to better employment outcomes and a stronger alignment between graduates' skills and market demands.

Policymakers will benefit from this study because it shows where university education is not fully preparing students for the job market. It points out how curriculum relevance and

support services like career guidance can be improved to help students gain skills employers want. By understanding which factors affect how students see their chances of getting a job, policy makers can guide universities to better support students and close the gap between what is taught and what the real job-market needs. This ensure graduates are more job-ready and can contribute positively to the economy.

By investigating how different components like institutional support and lecturer factors affect undergraduate's perceptions of their employability, the study fills an important gap in literature. Unlike previous research that often studies these factors separately or focuses on actual employability, this study uniquely examines how these elements together influence students' views. This is especially crucial given the high youth unemployment rates and the urgent need for practical ways to boost employability. Given the high rates of youth unemployment and the demand for practical employability-boosting measures, the study contributes valuable new insights to education and career development by offering fresh perspectives on how these factors influence students' readiness for the labour market.

Finally, the study's significance extend its possible impact to future research. The study's significance and impact will be highlighted if its contents are referenced and serve as the basis for further research. Additionally, the study might stimulate more research into the precise processes by which employability perceptions are influenced by institutional support and lecturer factors. It lays the groundwork for investigating best practices and creating plans to enhance graduate employment results, enhancing theoretical knowledge and real-world applications in higher education.

1.7 Scope of the Study

This study is delimited contextually and geographically. Contextually, the study explored the correlation between lecturer factors and institutional support services and their impact on the perception of employability among economics undergraduates in Oyo state, Nigeria. It includes both public and private universities in the region. The variables examined in the study were lecturer factors and institutional support services as the independent variables, perception of employability as the dependent variable while gender and type of university served as moderating variables. Lecturer factor was measured using lecturer competence and lecturer mentorship, while institutional support services were assessed based on career guidance services and curriculum. The perception of employability was evaluated using labour market awareness, field of study, and self-awareness as the indices. Geographically, the study includes all universities in Oyo state, Nigeria. Population wise, the scope includes all 400 level students in the universities that offer economics as a course of study in Oyo state Nigeria. The choice of the 400 level students is because they are at the peak of their study in the university and are ready for the labour market. Methodology employed the descriptive survey design which includes the use of one research instrument. Data gotten from the study were subjected to descriptive and inferential statistics for the questionnaires.

1.8 Limitation of the Study

There were some limitations encountered during the course of the study. A major one was the delay in obtaining essential data from some of the sampled universities as they were reluctant to provide the requested information. The researcher intended to use all the private and public

universities in Oyo State, however, some universities do not offer economics as a course of study which were therefore excluded from participating in the study. Despite the constraints, the study's findings are considered valid.

1.9 Operational Definition of Terms

Employability: this refers to the extent to which Economics undergraduates in Oyo State possess the skills, knowledge, attitudes, and professional attributes that make them capable of securing and sustaining meaningful employment after graduation.

Perception of Employability: This refers to Economics undergraduates' self-assessment of their readiness for employment and their confidence in securing jobs upon graduation. It represents how students perceive the adequacy of the training, guidance, and support they receive from lecturers and their institution in preparing them for the labour market.

Labour Market Awareness: this refers to the knowledge of Economics undergraduates on the requirements of the labour market especially for their field of study.

Field of Study: this refers to the course studied by students which is Economics. The field of study defines the academic context within which lecturer factors and institutional support services influence students' employability development.

Self-awareness: This is the ability for economics undergraduates to understand their capabilities, strengths, weaknesses, values, and career aspirations in relation to employability requirements.

Undergraduates: these are 400-level Economics students enrolled in public and private universities in Oyo State, Nigeria. These students form the primary population under investigation, as they are nearing graduation and have been sufficiently exposed to both lecturer inputs and institutional support services that influence their employability.

Employment: this refers to the actual job placement and work engagement of Economics graduates that align with their field of study.

Lecturer Factors: Lecturer factors are the professional attributes, instructional competencies, and mentorship roles of Economics lecturers that contribute to students' employability. Lecturer factors are measured through two main dimensions: lecturer competence and lecturer mentorship which jointly influence how students acquire relevant knowledge, skills, and labour market awareness.

Lecturer Competence: Lecturer competence, as it applies to this study, entails the ability of Economics lecturers to deliver high-quality teaching that combines deep subject knowledge (content competence) with effective pedagogical delivery (delivery competence).

Content Competence: this refers to a lecturer's depth of Economics knowledge and capacity to align course content with labour market requirements. It ensures that students are equipped with relevant and up-to-date economic theories, quantitative tools, and policy analysis skills that employers value.

Delivery Competence: this relates to the teaching effectiveness of lecturers, particularly their use of interactive and practical teaching methods that make learning applicable to real-world

situations. In relation to employability, delivery competence helps bridge the gap between academic learning and workplace expectations by promoting experiential and applied learning.

Lecturer Mentorship: this refers to the guidance, career advice, and professional development support provided by Economics lecturers to students. Effective mentorship fosters students' confidence, self-awareness, and understanding of career pathways, thereby improving their preparedness for employment and lifelong learning.

Institutional Support Services: these are the resources, facilities, and services provided by the university that are designed to enhance students' employability. In this study, they are operationalized through curriculum relevance and career guidance activities that help Economics students connect academic learning with the demands of the job market.

Career Guidance Activities: this refer to the career development programs and initiatives offered by universities, such as CV writing workshops, internship placements, interview training, and employability seminars., these activities are viewed as vital institutional efforts that shape undergraduates' career readiness and awareness of job opportunities.

Curriculum Relevance: this refers to the extent to which the Economics curriculum reflects the skills and knowledge currently demanded by employers in Nigeria. Ensuring that what students learn in class is aligned with real-world applications and employability outcomes.

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Chapter Two

Literature Review

This chapter presented the review of several literatures on the lecturer factors, institutional support services and economics undergraduates' perception of employability variables of the study that would better help understand the research. The chapter was discussed under the followings sub-headings:

2.1 Conceptual Review

2.1.1 Graduate Employment Crisis

2.1.2 Employability

2.1.3 Undergraduates' Perception of their Employability

2.1.3.1 Labour Market Awareness

2.1.3.2 Students' Field of Study

2.1.3.3 Self-awareness

2.1.4 Lecturer Factor

2.1.4.1 Lecturer Competence

2.1.4.2 Lecturer Mentorship

2.1.5 Institutional Support Services

2.1.5.1 Career Guidance Activities

2.1.5.2 Relevance of Economics Curriculum

2.2 Theoretical Framework

2.2.1 Human Capital Theory by Gary Becker (1964)

2.2.2 The Social Cognitive Career Theory

2.3 Review of Empirical Studies

2.3.1 Lecturer Factors and Undergraduates' Perception of Employability

2.3.1.1 Lecturer Competence and Undergraduates' Perception of Employability

2.3.1.2 Lecturer Mentorship and Undergraduates' Perception of Employability

2.3.2 Institutional Support Services and Undergraduates' Perception of Employability

2.3.2.1 Career Guidance Activities and Undergraduates' Perception of Employability

2.3.2.2 Curriculum Relevance and Undergraduates' Perception of Employability

2.3.3 Influence of Gender on Undergraduates' Perception of Employability

2.4 Conceptual Model

2.5 Summary of Gap in Literature Reviewed

2.1 Conceptual Review

2.1.1 Graduate Employment Crisis

The graduate employment crisis in Nigeria has reached a critical point, demanding immediate attention from all stakeholders. Driven by educational and socio-economic challenges, this crisis has been escalating over recent decades. Nigeria's increased access to tertiary education has led to a surge in the number of graduates entering the labour market. However, this influx of educated workforce has not been met with a corresponding increase in job opportunities. As a result, there is a widening gap between the number of graduates seeking employment and the number of available jobs that match their qualifications. This disparity is a pressing concern, particularly as it affects a significant number of highly educated individuals in the country¹.

A major contributor to this crisis is the misalignment between the skills taught in academic institutions and the labour market requirements. Nigerian universities and polytechnics largely focus on theoretical knowledge, with less emphasis on the practical and technical skills that employers highly value in contemporary industries. In today's rapidly evolving global economy, competencies such as critical thinking, problem-solving, digital literacy, and technical expertise are essential for graduates to meet the demands of employers^{2,3}. The lack of focus on these skills in Nigerian educational curricula makes it difficult for graduates to secure meaningful employment, as they are not adequately prepared to contribute to the workforce in ways that align with industry needs.

In addition to shortcomings within the education sector, Nigeria's economic environment exacerbates the challenges faced by graduates. Economic instability, manifested in declining industrial productivity, underinvestment in key sectors, and inconsistent policies, has hindered the creation of sufficient job opportunities. To address this, strategic interventions are needed to stimulate job creation, enhance industrial capacity, and diversify the economy. These measures are not just beneficial, but crucial for the future of our country⁴. The social consequences of graduate unemployment extend beyond economic losses. High rates of unemployment among graduates contribute to social instability, manifested through increased poverty, rising crime rates, and a growing sense of disillusionment among young people⁵. However, it's important to remember that as educated youth remain unemployed, their potential to contribute to innovation, national development, and economic progress remains untapped. Recognizing this potential can inspire hope and optimism, motivating us to address the challenges and pave the way for national growth and development.

Addressing the graduate employment crisis in Nigeria requires a multi-faceted approach involving educational reforms and strategic economic planning. First, the education system must prioritize the development of practical and employable skills. This can be achieved by revising curricula to emphasize skills training, technical education, and entrepreneurship, all of which can equip graduates with the tools needed to meet the demands of the modern labour market. Additionally, internship programmes, industrial placements, and business partnerships can provide students with real-world experience, allowing them to bridge the gap between academic theory and practical application¹. Integrating critical thinking into Nigeria's educational curriculum would further help develop the cognitive abilities of

graduates, allowing them to approach problems innovatively and adapt to various professional environments⁶.

Simultaneously, there is a pressing need for government action to create a conducive economic environment for job creation⁷. This can be achieved through industrial revitalization, investments in infrastructure, and promoting policies that stimulate private sector growth. By focusing on economic diversification, particularly in sectors such as technology and manufacturing, the government can open new avenues for employment. The example of Germany's dual vocational education and training system, which combines classroom learning with hands-on training in industries, offers a potential model for Nigeria. This system could be adapted to the Nigerian context by partnering with local industries to provide practical training, and by aligning the curriculum with the needs of the job market. Such a system would improve graduates' employability and provide industries with a steady supply of skilled workers⁸.

Public-private partnerships should also be encouraged to stimulate innovation, increase investment in emerging sectors, and enhance the job readiness of graduates. The National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA) has made significant strides in fostering digital literacy and job creation within the technology sector. NITDA's initiatives include training programmes, funding for tech startups, and policy advocacy to create a conducive environment for the tech industry. Expanding such initiatives and ensuring they reach a larger proportion of the youth population can help alleviate some pressure on the labour market⁶. Collaboration between the public and private sectors can create a synergy that

benefits graduates and employers by facilitating a smoother transition from education to employment.

Therefore, the graduate employment crisis in Nigeria requires urgent and sustained attention from educational institutions and the government. Educational reforms focusing on practical skills, technical training, and critical thinking will better prepare graduates for the labour market demands. At the same time, economic policies that promote industrial growth and diversification will create the conditions necessary for sustainable job creation. By addressing these challenges comprehensively, Nigeria can harness the potential of its educated youth and pave the way for national growth and development.

Progress and Challenges in Educational Attainment and Employability in Nigeria

Over the past three decades, Nigeria has made remarkable progress in educational attainment, with a growing number of citizens obtaining tertiary qualifications. This reflects a national commitment to education as a key driver of socio-economic development⁹. However, this progress has not translated into improved employment outcomes for many graduates. A significant issue lies in the disconnect between the academic training provided by tertiary institutions and the practical skills required in the labour market. Many curricula remain outdated, emphasizing theoretical knowledge over practical competencies and industry relevance¹.

In the 1980s, a university degree was often synonymous with guaranteed employment. Today, the situation is vastly different. Over 1.5 million candidates take the Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME) annually, with around 40% gaining admission to

universities while others enroll in polytechnics and colleges of education¹⁰. This graduate surge has outpaced the creation of skilled job opportunities, leading to high unemployment rates. Data from the Nigerian Bureau of Statistics (2024) shows that 53.4% of Nigerian youths, including graduates, are unemployed. The situation is further exacerbated by a persistent dichotomy between Bachelor of Science (BSc) and Higher National Diploma (HND) holders, with employers often favouring the former¹¹.

The modern labour market demands a workforce equipped with diverse skills, yet many Nigerian graduates fall short in areas critical to employability. For instance, the National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA) reports that 85% of Nigerian graduates lack essential digital skills. This gap limits their competitiveness in high-demand sectors like data analysis, web development, and digital marketing^{6,12}. Additionally, graduates' research and development skills remain underdeveloped, reducing their ability to contribute to innovation and efficiency in both local and global industries³. The lack of critical thinking and problem-solving abilities, essential for addressing complex challenges in the workplace, further compounds the employability crisis. Surveys indicate that approximately 60% of graduates lack these competencies¹³. Leadership and adaptability, increasingly sought by employers, are also areas where many Nigerian graduates need improvement despite efforts by institutions to promote leadership through extracurricular activities¹.

Efforts to address these challenges have seen the Nigerian government implement various initiatives to bridge skills gaps and reduce youth unemployment. Programmes such as Digital Economy Centres (DEC), Youth Enterprise with Innovation in Nigeria (YouWIN!), and N-

Power focus on digital literacy, entrepreneurship, and vocational training¹². Global initiatives, such as the Google Africa Developer Scholarship (GADS) and the Andela Technical Leadership Programme, have also provided participants with technical skills and industry exposure. While these interventions are commendable, more must be done to align Nigeria's educational system with the demands of the labour market.

Drawing inspiration from global best practices, Nigeria could benefit from adopting models like Germany's Dual Education System or Switzerland's Vocational Education and Training (VET) programme, which combines theoretical learning with practical work experience⁸. By modernizing curricula, fostering partnerships between academic institutions and industries, and investing in robust skills development programmes, Nigeria can better prepare its graduates for the demands of the 21st-century job market¹⁴.

The challenges of graduate employability require coordinated efforts across government, academia, and the private sector. By addressing the root causes of the skills gap and ensuring that education systems are responsive to market needs, Nigeria can transform its youthful population into a dynamic workforce, driving economic growth and national development.

2.1.2 Graduate Employability

Employability is a concept that has been discussed widely; even though many authors have different definitions of what it may be, a common ground can be found as to what it is and what it is not. The concept of employability has been employed to describe the objectives of the economic strategies promoted by major supranational institutions and labour market policies at national, regional, and local levels. Employability is defined as a lifelong,

university-wide process that applies to all students regardless of their academic level, programme, or mode of study, encompassing a complex interplay of knowledge, skills, behaviours, attributes, and attitudes designed to foster success not only in employment but in life more broadly, while explicitly making these components clear to students to support their continuous development, yet it is not merely about preparing students for jobs, adding extra modules to curricula, compromising academic rigour, being solely the responsibility of career services, or being reducible to any single quantitative measure¹⁵.

Typically, employability refers to the expectation that university graduates will secure good and high-income jobs after graduation¹⁶. Employability is the capability to move self-sufficiently within the labour market to realize potential through sustainable employment. For the individual, employability depends on the knowledge, skills, and attitudes they possess, the way they use these assets and present them to employers and the context (personal circumstances and labour market environment) within which they seek work¹⁷.

Other authors define employability as the ability of a graduate to get a satisfying job, stating that job acquisition should not be prioritized over preparedness for employment to avoid a pseudo measure of individual employability^{17,18}. Although it is argued that employability is not a set of skills, but a range of experiences and attributes developed through higher-level learning, thus employability is not a 'product' but a process of learning¹⁷. According to these authors, the employability of individuals depends on their knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Moreover, they argue that employability is linked to career management skills or how individuals mobilize, present, and update their resources in the context of the job market.

There are numerous terms for employability skills; they are often used interchangeably with terms such as soft skills, generic skills, 21st-century skills, transferable skills, and holistic competencies. Some authors use holistic competencies as an umbrella term inclusive of different types of generic skills (e.g., critical thinking, problem-solving skills, positive values, and attitudes (e.g., resilience, appreciation for others) which are essential for students' life-long learning and whole-person development^{19,20}

Therefore, students employability is seen as students' being aware of and equipped with the necessary skills to succeed in job searches, perform required duties upon employment, and remain flexible in the labour market, emphasizing the importance of experiential learning and career guidance activities in developing transferable skills that align with the evolving demands of the workplace^{20,21}. Graduate employability, focused on how higher education equips graduates to meet the needs of the labour market, has become a central feature of universities' missions and branding.

Employability is a multifaceted concept encompassing various skills, including technical, non-technical, and soft skills²². Developing employability skills is crucial in preparing graduates for the workforce, enhancing their productivity and competitiveness in the job market. Employers worldwide emphasize the importance of technical, communication, leadership, and interpersonal skills, as well as self-development, employability, and adaptability²³. Research has shown that employability skills are critical in addressing unemployment challenges, particularly among youth²⁴. Industrialization has been identified as a key driver of economic growth and development, and employability skills development is crucial in this regard²⁵.

Graduate employability, which means that a graduate is prepared to enter the workforce after graduation, is a graduate's ability to land and succeed in a job that requires a university degree²⁶. It includes a variety of skills, knowledge, and personal qualities that make a graduate appealing to employers and capable of performing well in the workplace, such as communication, critical thinking, adaptability, and relevant professional experience acquired during their studies. Graduate employability is generally understood to be the collection of skills and abilities that a graduate can acquire to land a desired job and advance in their career.

Graduate employability refers to the ability of graduates to secure and maintain employment by leveraging their skills, knowledge, and attributes to meet the demands of the labour market. It is a multifaceted concept that extends beyond mere job acquisition, encompassing the continuous development of competencies that enable individuals to adapt to evolving workplace requirements¹⁷. In Nigeria, where unemployment remains a significant socio-economic challenge, graduate employability is critical for economic growth and development. Employment involves a formal agreement between an employer and an employee, where the latter provides services in exchange for compensation²⁷. However, employability goes further, focusing on graduates' preparedness to contribute meaningfully to the workforce, particularly in economics, where analytical and practical skills are paramount²⁸.

Despite the importance of these dimensions, several factors hinder graduate employability, particularly in developing economies like Nigeria. Significant barriers include misalignment between educational outputs and labour market demands, insufficient practical training, and limited industry collaboration²⁹. Additionally, structural issues such as weak governance,

inconsistent policies, and a challenging business environment exacerbate the problem³⁰. For instance, in Southwest Nigeria, the high student-lecturer ratio in universities often limits the quality of education and practical exposure, further diminishing graduates' employability prospects³¹. Addressing these challenges requires a concerted effort from educational institutions, policymakers, and industry stakeholders to align curricula with market needs, enhance practical training opportunities, and foster partnerships that bridge the gap between academia and the workplace³².

2.1.3 Undergraduate's Perception of their Employability

An undergraduate's perception of their employability is defined as their belief that the skills, knowledge, and experiences acquired through their studies will enable them to secure a job upon graduation. This perception is influenced by various factors, including the perceived relevance of their degree, exposure to career guidance services, internship opportunities, curriculum relevance, lecturer competence, market demand for their field, and their self-assessment of key employability skills^{33,34}. Exploring the student perspective of graduate employability is crucial because their views are not widely known and can strategically influence organizational performance theory^{30,35}.

Undergraduates often hold varied perceptions regarding their readiness for the workforce. Many students recognize the importance of essential employability skills such as communication, teamwork, and problem-solving, which they perceive as critical for securing entry-level positions. However, a notable gap often exists between students' self-assessment of their skills and the expectations of employers, particularly concerning personal

management skills like initiative and risk-taking³⁶. This discrepancy highlights a potential gap between educational outcomes and industry requirements.

While students may feel confident in their academic knowledge, they often underestimate the importance of the soft skills and practical experiences that employers highly value²⁷. This can result in a false sense of readiness for the labour market. To address these perception gaps, universities must promote institutional opportunities that enhance student employability. In this study, this concept is explored by focusing on three key measures of student's perception of employability, which are labour market awareness, their field of study, and their self-awareness of their skills and abilities. By examining these three measures, this research aims to provide a deeper understanding of how undergraduates perceive their own employability.

2.1.3.1 Labour Market Awareness

A labour market, which can function locally, regionally, nationally, or internationally, is a system that connects employers with available workers. Numerous factors impact labour markets, such as shifts in consumer preferences, worldwide competition, technological developments, and governmental actions like laws, policies, and regulations³⁴. National minimum wages, employment equality laws, and work-hour restrictions are examples of how these factors can affect employment rights, occupations, and job availability. Labour market awareness is when the skills and experience offered by people looking for work matches what the employer needs and both parties are in agreement on the wages, hours and conditions, everyone is happy. Labour market awareness is the ability to find and use information about the labour market to help with career development. It can help people find jobs, change

careers, or decide what education to pursue. Employability is the ability of a worker to meet the needs of the labour market³⁷.

Labour market information assists people from various walks of life in making informed decisions. It raises their awareness of occupations or industries, for example, and can help make important decisions about study and training, one's first job, or the next career step. Labour market awareness is an essential tool, whether in looking for education, searching for a job, or considering a career change³⁸. Labour market awareness assists to find out many different things, including job trends, the skills employers are looking for, which industries are hiring, where jobs are located, and areas of job growth or decline. These will help you to identify what skills and abilities are essential for work and what skills job seekers might require in future. Labour market outcomes of undergraduates' choice of subject are important for public policy and for students. Policy interest is indicated by the prominence of 'employability' in public discourse³⁹. Young people in low-income countries such as Nigeria are finding it difficult to make a successful school-to-work transition. This is exacerbated by high unemployment and uncertainty in the labour market. Being aware of the jobs available and the skills required to become relevant in the market is paramount for undergraduates. There has been significant research into employers' perceptions of the employability skills of business-related graduates, including valuable insight into the types of skills required⁴⁰. Multiple studies indicate students' awareness of the advantages of gaining employability skills in particular those related to communication and teamwork^{38,39,40}.

The constantly changing society poses numerous challenges for college students to be well-adapted for their personal well-being and career success. An ever-changing environment requires them to be adaptable to identify and take advantage of career opportunities^{17,41}. Therefore, launching social practices and strengthening the social adaptability of college students can improve their employability and help alleviate the current pressure of difficult employment for college students.

2.1.3.2 Students' Field of Study

The field of study refers to the specific academic discipline or area of specialization that undergraduates pursue during their higher education⁴². It encompasses the theoretical knowledge, practical skills, and competencies that students acquire in their chosen discipline, which are often aligned with specific career paths or industries. Fields of study can range from science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) to social sciences, humanities, and vocational disciplines. Each field has its unique curriculum, learning outcomes, and relevance to the labour market, which collectively shape the employability prospects of graduates⁴³. The field of study a graduate chooses has a big impact on their employability, which means that the particular field they choose has a direct impact on their chances of finding a job after graduation²⁷. Some fields are generally thought to have better employment prospects and higher job market demand than others; in other words, the knowledge and skills acquired in a particular field can influence the types of jobs a graduate is qualified for and how easily they can secure employment in that area. However, both efficacy beliefs and outcome expectations are mediated by students' explorations of self and career,

including their perceptions of whether and how their study programmes relate to their future careers. Students' exploration of their future careers has been linked to their perceptions of study and programme relevance⁴⁴. Indeed, employability perceptions related to programme relevance and career exploration could potentially vary across gender. Students' confidence that their degree programmes were preparing them for employability and graduate life appears to lessen as they progress through their programmes, potentially in line with their growing awareness of labour market opportunities, competition and their own abilities.

While certain fields of study may be perceived as having higher employability due to their alignment with industry demands, the employability of graduates ultimately depends on their ability to develop and demonstrate a combination of technical and soft skills that are valued by employers⁴⁵. By addressing the challenges and opportunities associated with different fields of study, higher education institutions can enhance undergraduates' perceptions of employability and prepare them for successful careers in a rapidly changing world²⁴. This requires a holistic approach that integrates academic training with practical experience, fosters partnerships with industry stakeholders, and promotes a culture of continuous learning and adaptability across all fields of study.

The choice of a field of study is often influenced by personal interests, career aspirations, societal expectations, and labour market trends, making it a critical determinant of a student's academic and professional trajectory¹⁷. The relationship between field of study and employability is a critical area of research, as it highlights how different academic disciplines influence graduates' ability to secure and retain employment. Employability, in this context,

refers to the combination of skills, knowledge, and attributes that make graduates attractive to employers⁴⁶.

Certain fields of study, such as STEM disciplines, are often associated with higher employability due to their alignment with industries experiencing rapid growth and demand for skilled professionals⁴⁷. Conversely, fields like humanities and social sciences may face challenges in demonstrating direct relevance to specific industries, leading to perceptions of lower employability among graduates⁴⁸. However, employability is not solely determined by the field of study; factors such as the quality of education, practical training, and the ability to transfer skills across contexts also play a significant role²⁶. Undergraduates' perceptions of employability are heavily influenced by their field of study, as they often associate their academic discipline with specific career outcomes²⁷. For instance, students in STEM fields may perceive themselves as having higher employability due to the demand for technical skills in industries such as engineering, information technology, and healthcare⁴⁹. On the other hand, students in humanities and social sciences may express concerns about their employability, particularly if they perceive a lack of clear career pathways or opportunities for practical application of their skills¹⁷.

These perceptions are often shaped by societal narratives, labour market trends, and the availability of role models in their chosen fields, which can either reinforce or challenge their confidence in their employability prospects⁴³. The alignment between field of study and labour market demands is a key factor influencing undergraduates' perceptions of employability⁵⁰.

In Nigeria, for example, fields such as engineering, medicine, and computer science are often perceived as having higher employability due to their direct relevance to industries with significant growth potential²⁵. Conversely, fields like history, philosophy, and fine arts may be viewed as less employable, despite the transferable skills they offer, such as critical thinking, communication, and creativity⁵¹. This misalignment between academic training and labour market needs can lead to a sense of uncertainty among undergraduates, particularly in fields where career pathways are less defined or where opportunities for practical experience are limited⁸⁰. The role of practical training and industry exposure in shaping undergraduates' perceptions of employability is also significant⁵².

2.1.3.3. Self-awareness

Self-awareness is a powerful tool for personal growth, particularly for university students²⁹. It empowers them to identify their strengths, weaknesses, values, and career goals, fostering reflective practices⁵³. These practices enable students to assess their skills, align their personal and professional objectives, and cultivate decision-making, confidence, and adaptability - crucial qualities for employability.

Acquiring relevant knowledge enhances self-awareness, allowing students to apply theoretical concepts in practical settings, build confidence, and clarify their career aspirations³⁵. Students with high self-awareness can manage their emotions, articulate their strengths and weaknesses, demonstrate self-discipline, and navigate the job market effectively, ultimately leading to successful employment and professional achievement⁴⁵. Recent debates about graduate preparedness for the workplace also emphasize the psychological, cultural and identity

capitals that help graduates negotiate a difficult labour market and workplace conditions⁴⁰. It is, therefore, useful to understand how students feel prepared for and connected with graduate life more generally. Literature suggests that the perceived employability of students globally and is impacted by gender and year of study⁴¹. This may be relevant for the generation of graduates, Generation Z or Millennial, who are more likely than previous generations to seek work-life balance. Adaptability is the ability to adjust to social institutions and coordinate behavior to fit the social environment is a crucial factor for students to gain a sustainable competitive edge in knowledge and competence⁵⁴. Previous research on the employability of college undergraduates has confirmed this. Notably, most related academic efforts have been made in general and career adaptability^{29,54}. All these efforts contribute to making potential employees-undergraduates- more self-aware and prepared for the workplace.

Students occasionally fail to grasp the significance of having employable skills for a smooth transition from school to the workplace⁵⁵. Lack of knowledge makes students less likely to try to obtain them, which is crucial. They contend that it is critical to teach students the value of having employable skills and help them develop the capacity to recognize their abilities.

2.1.4 Lecturer Factors

Lecturer factors encompass a broad range of professional and personal attributes that collectively shape higher education's teaching and learning experience. These factors include among others professional qualifications, teaching experience, research engagement, content mastery, and delivery competence⁵⁶. In this study, aspects of Lecturer factors which are of interest and considered are Lecturer's content competence, delivery competence and Lecturer's mentorship and support.

2.1.4.1 Lecturer Competence

Lecturer competence is one of the most significant determinants of quality higher education and student employability. In contemporary academic discourse, lecturer competence is broadly conceptualized as comprising two fundamental dimensions: content competence (expertise in subject matter) and delivery competence (effectiveness in pedagogical methods)⁵⁷. These competencies are not mutually exclusive but interdependent, collectively shaping students' learning experiences and subsequent transition into the labour market. Research consistently demonstrates that students taught by highly competent lecturers exhibit superior academic performance, enhanced critical thinking abilities, and greater confidence in applying their knowledge to real-world scenarios⁵⁸. This relationship between lecturer competence and student outcomes is particularly crucial in employability, as employers increasingly seek graduates with technical expertise and adaptable skills.

The importance of lecturer competence extends beyond mere knowledge transmission. Competent lecturers serve as role models, mentors, and facilitators of professional development, helping students bridge the gap between academic learning and workplace requirements⁵⁹. Their ability to contextualize theoretical concepts within practical applications significantly influences students' perceptions of their career readiness. Moreover, in an era of rapid technological advancement and evolving industry demands, the role of lecturers in preparing students for the

dynamic job market has never been more critical⁶⁰. This section establishes the foundational understanding of lecturer competence as a multifaceted construct directly impacting educational quality and, by extension, graduate employability.

Content Competence

Content competence represents the cornerstone of effective teaching in higher education. It encompasses a lecturer's comprehensive mastery of their subject area, including up-to-date knowledge of theoretical frameworks, practical applications, and emerging trends within their discipline⁶¹. A lecturer with strong content competence possesses factual knowledge and the ability to critically analyze and synthesize information, making complex concepts accessible to diverse learners. This depth of understanding enables lecturers to anticipate and address student misconceptions, adapt their teaching to various learning styles, and foster higher-order thinking skills essential for professional success. The manifestation of content competence extends to curriculum development and instructional design. Lecturers must continuously update course materials to reflect industry practices and technological advancements⁶². For instance, in fields like measurement and evaluation, where methodologies and tools evolve rapidly, lecturers must maintain cutting-edge knowledge to ensure students acquire relevant, marketable skills⁵⁴. Research indicates that students perceive lecturers with strong content expertise as more credible and inspiring, enhancing their learning engagement and motivation⁶³. However, challenges persist, particularly in developing nations where limited access to recent publications, inadequate professional development opportunities, and heavy

teaching loads may hinder lecturers' ability to maintain and enhance their content competence⁶⁴.

Delivery Competence

While content competence provides the "what" of teaching, delivery competence addresses the "how" - the pedagogical skills that make knowledge transmission effective and engaging. Delivery competence encompasses a broad range of skills, including clear verbal communication, effective use of non-verbal cues, classroom management strategies, and the ability to create inclusive learning environments⁵⁷. Research in educational psychology emphasizes that even the most knowledgeable lecturers may fail to impact student learning if they lack proficiency in delivering content in an accessible and stimulating manner⁵⁸.

The digital transformation of education has added new dimensions to delivery competence. Modern lecturers must utilize various technological tools - from learning management systems to interactive multimedia - to enhance student engagement and facilitate learning modalities⁶⁰. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the importance of technological pedagogical skills, as many lecturers struggled to adapt to online teaching environments⁵⁴. Studies show that students value lecturers who can skillfully blend traditional teaching methods with innovative digital approaches, often leading to more comprehensive learning experiences⁶⁴. Furthermore, delivery competence includes the lecturer's ability to provide constructive feedback, facilitate discussions, and create opportunities for active learning - all of which contribute significantly to students' professional confidence and perceived employability⁶⁴.

2.1.4.2 Lecturer Mentorship

Lecturer mentorship and guidance are critical components in shaping undergraduates' perceptions of their employability. Effective mentorship encompasses career-focused support and psychosocial assistance, which foster a conducive learning environment. According to the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, mentorship that emphasizes career development significantly enhances students' confidence in their job prospects, leading to increased academic productivity and better preparation for future employment opportunities⁶⁵. Career-focused mentorship involves guiding students in navigating their academic and professional paths. This type of support has been shown to correlate with a 1.8-fold increase in publication output and a 2.3-fold improvement in grant acquisition among mentees. Such statistics underscore the importance of lecturers actively engaging with students to help them develop essential skills and knowledge directly applicable to their future careers, thereby enhancing their employability.

In addition to career guidance, psychosocial support from lecturers plays a vital role in shaping students' perceptions of their employability. Research indicates this support is linked to a 32% higher programme persistence rate and reduced student attrition⁶⁵. By creating a supportive and encouraging atmosphere, lecturers can significantly influence students' commitment to their studies and their overall belief in their employability, which is crucial for their long-term success in the job market. The relationship between mentorship and perceived employability is further explored in research, highlighting the significance of formal mentoring in enhancing self-perceived employability among university students⁶⁶. Their

findings reveal a statistically significant positive association between mentoring and employability perceptions, emphasizing the importance of psychological-emotional support as a key mentoring function. This suggests that mentorship's emotional and psychological aspects can be just as impactful as traditional career guidance, reinforcing the need for a holistic approach to mentorship.

Moreover, mentoring duration, frequency, and mentor-mentee compatibility have been posited as critical moderators of the relationship between mentorship and employability perceptions⁶⁴. Long-term and frequent interactions with compatible mentors yield the best outcomes, indicating that the quality of the mentoring relationship is essential for maximizing its effectiveness. This insight is particularly relevant for educational institutions seeking to enhance their mentorship programmes and improve students' perceptions of their employability.

Conversely, the phenomenon of mentorship malpractice poses significant challenges to effective mentorship in academia^{33,67}. The study categorizes various forms of malpractice that can hinder mentees' career trajectories, including exploitative behaviours and inadequate support. Such malpractice not only stunts professional growth but also perpetuates inequalities within mentorship systems, particularly affecting marginalized groups. Addressing these issues through comprehensive intervention frameworks, such as regular mentorship evaluations that assess both the mentor's and mentee's satisfaction and progress, can help ensure that mentorship remains a valuable resource for enhancing undergraduates'

perceptions of employability, ultimately leading to a more equitable and supportive academic environment.

2.1.5 Institutional Support Services

Generating employment is a major challenge for a developing country. The labour force survey shows high unemployment rates; most of them are youth (fresh graduates), and the long-term unemployment rate (one year or more) is also higher. In the next few years, the government's goal is to create jobs for more than 15 million people by 2023²⁵. The employment generation will be the major factor in reducing poverty, improving people's lives, and reaching the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. In order to create an enabling environment, the government needs to take policy steps. It should be invested in education from childhood to old age to create the human capital needed for a rapidly evolving global economy. Quality infrastructure needs to be built for it to connect both domestically and worldwide, and it needs to establish the right ecosystem for private investment, especially for small businesses and entrepreneurs³³. Institutional support can be of two types: financial and non-financial. Scholarships, grants, allowances, or stipends are forms of financial assistance that a graduate student can receive from an institution or the government of a country. Also, the institution or government may provide some incentives or non-financial support to help graduate students move forward and build their careers.

2.1.5.1 Career Guidance Activities

Career guidance activities (CGA) encompass all programs that provide students with the necessary career information, advice, and guidance. These initiatives are designed to help

students develop self-awareness, opportunity awareness, and crucial skills in decision-making and career transitions. Such activities include practical training on Curriculum Vitae (CV) and job application preparation, job search strategies and interview skills, effective self-presentation and communication, as well as career self-management and professional work etiquette²⁵.

This approach, sometimes referred to as career education, is widely supported in the literature^{33,68}. The argument is that after acquiring knowledge and skills in their fields of study, it is essential for students to receive assistance on how to effectively communicate their achievements and their benefits to prospective employers through applications, CVs, interviews, and job searches⁶⁸.

These activities offer numerous benefits; they can enhance students' employability and career prospects, develop transferable skills and knowledge relevant to the workforce, and foster career adaptability, optimism, and confidence. Furthermore, they provide opportunities for students to reflect on their strengths, weaknesses, and career goals, ultimately supporting a smoother transition from education to employment⁶⁹.

Overall, career guidance is an essential component of employability programs in higher education institutions (HEIs), providing students with the skills, knowledge, and experiences necessary to succeed in the workforce. However, despite these clear benefits, a significant challenge remains: many students do not actively engage with their future career plans or seek guidance until it is too late. This highlights a critical need for universities to adopt more

strategic approaches that ensure student engagement with career education from the onset of their university experience⁷⁰.

2.1.5.2 Relevance of Economics Curriculum

The curriculum is the foundational framework that shapes economics students' academic journey and professional preparedness, directly influencing their perceptions of employability⁷¹. A well-structured economics curriculum must balance theoretical knowledge with practical applications, ensuring students acquire both technical competencies (e.g., econometric analysis, policy evaluation) and transferable skills (e.g., critical thinking, data interpretation) demanded by employers⁷¹. However, the persistent disconnect between curriculum content and industry needs that are evident in employer complaints about graduates' inability to apply theoretical knowledge, underscores the urgency of curriculum reform. In Nigeria, where economics was introduced as a secondary school elective in 1966, outdated pedagogical approaches and insufficient instructional materials have further exacerbated this gap⁷². Effective curriculum development must, therefore, prioritize active learning strategies, such as case-based projects and industry simulations, which foster student engagement and bridge academic and professional contexts.

The evolution of curriculum design in economics education must respond to dynamic labour market demands, particularly in developing economies⁷². Studies highlight that curricula emphasizing 21st-century skills such as problem-solving, teamwork, and digital literacy align more closely with employer expectations^{71,73}. For instance, integrating experiential learning modules (e.g., internships, capstone projects) into economics programmes has enhanced

students' practical competencies and employability confidence^{71,74}. However, challenges persist: inadequate resources, rigid curricular structures, and limited industry collaboration often hinder effective implementation. The Fourth Industrial Revolution necessitates curricula incorporating emerging trends like data analytics and behavioural economics, ensuring graduates remain competitive⁷⁵.

Their curricular experiences profoundly shape economics undergraduates' perception of employability. When curricula emphasize real-world relevance through updated content, technology integration, and employer partnerships, students perceive their education as a direct pathway to career success¹³³. Conversely, curricula lacking innovation or practical alignment fosters skepticism about job readiness as seen in global cases where graduates demonstrated skill mismatches⁷¹. For example, Nigerian economics students exposed to participatory teaching methods (e.g., debates on current economic policies) demonstrate heightened confidence in their analytical and communication skills, key attributes for employability. Addressing these disparities requires a collaborative approach: universities, policymakers, and industries must co-design curricula that reflect contemporary economic challenges and opportunities. By doing so, institutions can transform economics education into a catalyst for employability, equipping students with degrees and the ability to thrive in evolving professional landscapes.

Recent studies underscore the transformative potential of innovative curriculum models in enhancing graduate employability across disciplines. In health sciences, demonstrate how competency-based curricula with clinical immersion significantly improve graduates' job

placement rates, suggesting similar applications for economics programmes⁷⁶. The Education 4.0 framework offers particular relevance, advocating for curricula integrating digital literacy modules and industry micro-credentials to address skill gaps in data-driven fields like economics. This aligns with findings in marketing education, where philosophy-driven curriculum redesigns emphasizing experiential learning boosted employability skills by 40%⁷². The Malaysian case study further validates this, proving that curriculum-employability outcomes vary significantly by discipline - a crucial consideration for economics programmes balancing quantitative rigour with soft skill development⁷⁷. These insights collectively argue for discipline-specific curriculum innovations that marry academic rigour with labour market responsiveness.

2.2 Theoretical Review

2.2.1 Human Capital Theory by Gary Becker (1964)

Economists use the term human capital to refer to individual qualities that are thought to benefit the production process. It includes the knowledge, abilities, know-how, health, and education of the employees. Human capital significantly impacts individual earnings. Throughout childhood and early adulthood, research shows that investments in human capital yield significant financial returns.

Over the past few years, intangible assets have gradually gained attention. Human capital is the most crucial component of intangible assets. The human capital theory is one well-known framework for developing educational human resources. Gary Becker was an economist who developed the Human Capital Theory. His book, *Human Capital: A Theoretical and Empirical Analysis, with Special Reference to Education*, published in 1964, laid the groundwork for understanding the economic value of investing in education and training. He developed the theory in the early 1960s⁷⁸. In his research, Schultz highlighted the significance of education and skills and human capital's role in economic growth and development⁷⁷. It believes that human capital is the difference between individuals due to education, vocational training, and work experience.

According to the human capital theory, spending on education and training increases people's productivity, skills, and knowledge, benefiting both the individual and society⁷⁹. Enhancing human capital which in turn propels economic growth and development, requires education and professional development. The theory emphasizes the value of ongoing professional

development for educators in the context of educational human resource development to improve their efficacy and skill sets and better prepare students for the workforce.

Accordingly, human capital in the context of this study, the lecturer is one of the key components of human development (undergraduates). Through talent cultivation, the nation's economic value, technological advancements, and human needs can be linked, and human capital can then be used to create higher-quality jobs⁸⁰. According to him, human capital is the expertise, experience, and knowledge gained through investing in people. Knowledge-rich human capital, abilities, and dispositions can also increase a company's economic worth. However, in the past, elites were the only ones who could afford university education. However, the public's access to higher education has grown over the past few decades. This increases the level of international competition for university graduates⁷⁸.

Human capital theory is about humans increasing their productivity and efficiency through a greater focus on education and training. It is the study of human resources, it talks about the development of economic value (employability skills) from how individuals (graduates) function as a society (labour market). Investing in human capital lets you see growth measured through your staff's abilities, values, and skillset⁸¹. Education and training are viewed as investments that yield returns in the form of higher productivity and earnings. Individuals and organizations invest in education and training based on a rational calculation of the expected benefits and costs. The primary outcome of education and training is enhancing skills and knowledge, which increases individual productivity. There is a direct link between human capital development and economic growth; higher education and skills

lead to more remarkable economic development. Human Capital Theory is supported by extensive empirical research showing the positive correlation between education, training, and economic outcomes. The theory has significantly influenced education policies worldwide, emphasizing the importance of investing human capital for economic development⁸². It highlights the need for continuous professional development, aligning well with modern educational practices emphasizing lifelong learning.

Relevance to the influence of educational human resources development on undergraduates' perception of employability, emotional intelligence, and satisfaction points to a framework for analyzing how investing in undergraduates can enhance students' skills, including personal and skill development, mentorship, career development and institutional policies support these choices, which is crucial for effective learning and human resource management⁸². Human Capital Theory suggests that professional development leads to higher productivity and job satisfaction for students who have the skills and knowledge they need to succeed academically and pursue their career goals. When students feel competent, their perception of their skills increases. This is particularly important among economics undergraduates, where targeted human resource development programmes can address their challenges and improve their overall self-perception of employability⁸³.

The theory underlines the need for policymakers to invest in human resource development initiatives that support continuous professional and career development for students. By prioritizing human resource development, universities in Southwest Nigeria can create an

environment that fosters growth, emotional well-being, self-awareness and efficacy, ultimately leading to better student educational and career outcomes⁷⁷.

In the context of the present study, in educational institutions, Human Capital Theory suggests that students' investment in skill development and personal management is crucial for increasing human capital. Meanwhile, institutions invest in lecturers and institutional support practices to support students' development (employability perception). Adequate staffing, comprising academic and support staff with requisite competence and experience, is essential for providing students with quality education and guidance. This, in turn, enhances students' human capital, making them more employable and productive in the labour market.

Relevance of Human Capital Theory to Students' Employability

The human capital theory emphasizes education, training, and skill development as critical factors that enhance individual productivity and contribute to societal and economic growth. Pioneered by Gary Becker and further developed by Schultz, this theory posits that human capital (skills, knowledge, experience, and health) is an essential resource in fostering both individual and collective advancement⁸². Applying this theory to higher education offers valuable insights into how investments in educational resources and professional development influence undergraduates' perceptions of their employability.

Education is a central element of human capital theory, as it equips individuals with the capabilities required to function effectively in the labour market. Educational institutions play a pivotal role in shaping students' readiness for employment by fostering the acquisition of relevant knowledge and skills⁸². This is especially pertinent for undergraduates, whose

perceptions of their employability are influenced by their institutions' quality of education, mentorship, and career development opportunities. When students acquire the necessary competencies and confidence to meet labour market demands, their self-perception of employability improves significantly⁸⁴.

Research has demonstrated that investments in human capital lead to positive economic outcomes, such as increased productivity and higher earnings⁸⁵. Institutions prioritizing human resource development contribute to these outcomes by providing a conducive learning environment, access to skilled educators, and programmes supporting career readiness. For example, mentorship and practical training initiatives tailored to the specific needs of undergraduates are essential in preparing students for professional success. In regions such as southwest Nigeria, these measures are significant in addressing local labour market challenges and ensuring graduates possess the skills to compete effectively.

In addition to academic and professional training, human capital theory highlights the importance of fostering emotional intelligence and self-management skills among students. Educational institutions that invest in the professional development of their staff and provide structured student support programmes create an ecosystem that enhances students' learning experiences. This, in turn, positively impacts their ability to navigate workplace challenges and adapt to evolving industry demands. Such practices underscore institutions' need to align their policies and resources to cultivate human capital.

The theory also provides a framework for understanding the broader implications of human capital development on employability. It emphasizes the need for educational institutions to

improve staffing, resource allocation, and student-centred initiatives continuously. These efforts ensure that graduates are well-prepared to contribute meaningfully to economic development and societal progress. For instance, targeted investments in faculty expertise and support services enhance the quality of education and boost students' confidence in their abilities, thereby improving their employability.

2.2.2 The Social Cognitive Career Theory

This study is equally anchored on the Social Cognitive Career Theory, a framework to explain the processes through which individuals develop career interests, make choices, and achieve performance outcomes⁸⁶. Rooted in Bandura's concept of triadic reciprocity, Social Cognitive Career Theory posits a dynamic, reciprocal interplay between personal factors, environmental influences, and overt behaviour. At the heart of Social Cognitive Career Theory are three core constructs: self-efficacy, which reflects students' confidence in mastering tasks relevant to their careers; outcome expectations, which involve beliefs about the results of their efforts; and goal setting, which guides motivation and persistence⁸⁵. These personal determinants are situated within contextual and experiential factors such as support systems and barriers, with students' learning experiences playing a pivotal mediating role. The theory emphasized the relationship between self-referent thought and social processes in guiding human behaviour.

In mapping the variables of this study onto the Social Cognitive Career Theory framework, the independent variables are conceptualized as critical contextual affordances within the academic environment. Lecturer factors, encompassing competence and mentorship, represent proximal sources of efficacy information that provide mastery experiences, vicarious learning,

and verbal persuasion. Institutional support services, such as career guidance and a relevant curriculum, function as more distal contextual factors that shape positive outcome expectations and reinforce self-efficacy. The dependent variable, perceived employability, is theorized within the Social Cognitive Career Theory choice model as the cognitive precursor to concrete career choice goals, representing a student's confidence and intention to secure employment⁸⁷. Furthermore, the model accommodates the moderating variables of gender, positioned as a person input, and university type, conceptualized as a broader contextual affordance that may alter the availability or impact of the primary independent variables.

The selection of Social Cognitive Career Theory is justified by its unique integration of person and environmental variables, moving beyond theories that examine these factors in isolation⁸⁸. It provides a robust lens for interpreting the hypothesized relationships within the specific context of economics education in the study location. The theory offers a coherent mechanism for explaining how proximal supports from lecturers and distal supports from the institution correlate with students' employability perceptions by building their confidence and shaping their expectations of career success⁸⁷.

Applying Social Cognitive Career Theory to Economics students' employability allows this study to explore how both interpersonal lecturer qualities and institutional support services collectively shape perceptions of job readiness. In the context of higher education, lecturer factors serve as key social influences that build or diminish students' career-related self-efficacy and expectations, while institutional supports provide the structured environment that helps students understand labour market demands. These personal and contextual factors

interact continuously to foster or hinder students' readiness for employment⁶⁹. The theory's emphasis on cognitive and environmental variables offers a solid foundation for analyzing the correlations that ultimately drive graduates' successful integration into the workforce.

Relevance of Social Cognitive Career Theory to Students' Employability

Social Cognitive Career Theory is particularly relevant for understanding economics students' employability as it provides a coherent framework for examining how lecturer factors and institutional support services shape career development processes. Lecturer competence and mentorship function as proximal sources of efficacy information, directly enhancing students' self-efficacy by strengthening their confidence in understanding economic concepts and applying them in practical contexts. This development of self-efficacy, in turn, strengthens positive outcome expectations and motivates students to pursue clear, attainable employment goals aligned with their field of study⁸⁹.

Curriculum relevance and career guidance services serve as crucial environmental supports that further reinforce this process. A market-aligned curriculum ensures students acquire contemporary, relevant skills, building their belief that their education effectively prepares them for available jobs. Career guidance supplements this by providing essential labour market information and planning assistance, supporting the formation of realistic expectations and intentional career goals. These institutional factors collectively operate as contextual affordances that help students translate academic learning into employability competencies.

By integrating these personal and environmental elements, Social Cognitive Career Theory highlights the dynamic interaction between self-referent beliefs and external supports in shaping employability perceptions. The theory offers a powerful lens to evaluate how lecturer factors and institutional services function as correlates of economics undergraduates' readiness to meet labour market demands. Its comprehensive approach enables a nuanced analysis of the mechanisms through which educational experiences influence students' transition from academic preparation to successful workforce integration.

2.3 Review of Empirical Studies

2.3.1 Lecturer Factors and Undergraduates' Perception of Employability

A recent study provides critical insights into how lecturer characteristics differentially impact student attainment in resource-constrained settings⁸⁹. Their Ghanaian study reveals that lecturers' professional qualifications and pedagogical adaptability significantly influence students' academic performance as a precursor to employability confidence. Notably, lecturers who employed participatory methods (e.g., group problem-solving) mitigated socioeconomic barriers, fostering skills like collaboration and resilience that align with employer demands. However, the study underscores a gap: while lecturer competence improved test scores, its direct effect on employability perceptions remained unexamined. This aligns with findings from Nigeria, where lecturers' ethical conduct (e.g., fairness, punctuality) correlated with students' self-efficacy, suggesting an indirect pathway to employability⁷⁵. These studies collectively highlight the need for context-specific frameworks linking lecturer traits to career readiness.

Another Saudi Arabian study offers a novel lens on how lecturers' technological self-efficacy during emergency remote teaching shaped student engagement which is a proxy for employability skill development. Lecturers who leveraged interactive platforms (e.g., breakout rooms, gamification) not only sustained attention but also cultivated digital literacy and self-directed learning, traits prioritized in post-pandemic labour markets⁷⁴. However, the narrative data revealed disparities: lecturers resistant to technology adoption inadvertently reinforced students' anxieties about workforce readiness. This complements previous emphasis on adaptability as a lecturer competency, extending it to digital contexts.

A Nigerian study establishes a robust correlation between lecturers' professional ethics (e.g., integrity, accountability) and students' academic performance⁶⁷. This ethical modeling, observed through punctuality, fair assessment, and mentorship appears to cultivate students' workplace professionalism, a core employability dimension. Previous findings echo this, finding that lecturers in Ghana who demonstrated equitable treatment of students enhanced marginalized learners' aspirations⁸⁹. However, another study contradicts this narrative, showing that during crises, ethical obligations expand to include digital inclusivity (e.g., accommodating connectivity disparities). These studies converge on a thesis: lecturers serve as implicit career role models, with their ethical and professional behaviors shaping students' perceptions of industry norms⁹⁰.

2.3.1.1 Lecturer Competence and Undergraduates' Perception of Employability

The literature review on the influence of lecturer competence on effective learning, focusing on two key variables: content competence and delivery competence⁹¹. Content competence

refers to the lecturer's mastery of the subject matter, which is essential for providing accurate and in-depth knowledge to students. The study found that lecturers who possess strong content competence are better able to answer students' questions and clarify complex concepts, leading to enhanced student understanding and engagement. On the other hand, delivery competence encompasses the methods and strategies employed by lecturers to convey information effectively. The review highlights that lecturers who utilize diverse teaching techniques, such as interactive discussions and multimedia resources, can create a more engaging learning environment. Overall, the findings suggest that institutions should prioritize the development of both content and delivery competencies among lecturers to foster effective learning outcomes.

The perspectives of students regarding lecturers' teaching competencies in Tanzanian universities, emphasizing the impact of these competencies on the teaching and learning process was studied⁵⁸. The study identifies content competence as a critical factor, as students expressed a preference for lecturers who demonstrate a deep understanding of their subjects and can relate theoretical concepts to real-world applications. This mastery not only enhances the credibility of the lecturer but also instills confidence in students regarding the knowledge they are acquiring. Additionally, the study highlights the significance of delivery competence, noting that students respond positively to engaging and interactive teaching methods that facilitate active learning. Lecturers who employ varied instructional strategies, such as group work and practical demonstrations, are perceived as more effective in promoting student engagement and comprehension. The research underscores the necessity for universities to

invest in professional development programmes that enhance both content and delivery competencies among lecturers, ultimately improving the overall quality of education.

The relationship between lecturer competence and students' employability perceptions operates through multiple pathways. Firstly, content-competent lecturers ensure students acquire current, industry-relevant knowledge and skills that align with employer expectations⁵⁴. Students who recognize that their learning directly connects to real-world applications develop greater confidence in their career prospects. Secondly, delivery-competent lecturers employ teaching methods that mirror workplace scenarios, such as case-based learning, simulations, and project-based assessments, which help students visualize their transition from academia to the profession⁵⁶.

Research demonstrates that students taught by highly competent lecturers exhibit stronger self-efficacy beliefs regarding their professional capabilities⁵⁷. This is particularly evident when lecturers explicitly incorporate employability skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and communication into their teaching. Conversely, when students experience outdated teaching methods or perceive gaps between curriculum content and industry needs, they may doubt their readiness for employment⁶⁰. The cumulative effect of these experiences shapes students' overall perception of how well their education has prepared them for the job market, making lecturer competence a pivotal factor in employability development.

Another study examined instructors' test construction competencies and their implications for teaching and learning in Tanzanian universities, shedding light on the importance of both content and delivery competencies⁵⁸. The study reveals that lecturers with strong content

competence are better equipped to design assessments that accurately reflect course objectives and measure student learning effectively. This alignment between assessment and learning outcomes is crucial for ensuring that students are evaluated fairly and comprehensively. Furthermore, the research emphasizes the role of delivery competence in the context of assessment, as effective communication of assessment criteria and timely feedback are essential for student success. Lecturers who can clearly articulate expectations and provide constructive feedback help students understand their strengths and areas for improvement. The findings suggest that enhancing both content and delivery competencies among lecturers is vital for improving educational quality and fostering a more effective learning environment in higher education institutions. Collectively, these studies highlight the critical need for ongoing professional development and support for lecturers to strengthen their competencies in both content knowledge and instructional delivery.

2.3.1.2 Lecturers' Mentorship and Students' Perception of Employability

National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine conducted an extensive empirical review titled *The Science of Effective Mentorship in STEMM*, which examined the multifaceted role of mentorship in promoting academic success and career persistence in Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics, and Medicine (STEMM) fields⁵⁹. The study aimed to identify evidence-based mentorship practices and their effects on diverse student populations, particularly those from underrepresented groups. Utilizing a comprehensive analysis of longitudinal and cross-sectional data, the research demonstrated that effective mentorship significantly enhances academic outcomes, such as degree completion, publication productivity, and retention rates. Moreover, it underscored the importance of

psychosocial support, which contributes to mentees' sense of belonging, identity affirmation, and psychological well-being. Findings also revealed that underrepresented students often face disparities in mentorship access and quality, exacerbating systemic inequalities. The study concluded that structured, culturally responsive, and intentional mentorship practices are crucial for advancing equity in STEMM education. It recommended the implementation of institutional strategies, such as formalized mentor training programmes (e.g., Entering Mentoring), feedback systems, and recognition frameworks like the Presidential Awards for Excellence in Science, Mathematics, and Engineering Mentoring (PAESMEM), to promote inclusive mentorship ecosystems. These findings reinforce the value of mentorship not just as a relational practice but as a strategic intervention to foster diversity and excellence in STEMM.

This research provide robust empirical evidence on the relationship between formal mentoring and perceived employability among university students through a large-scale quantitative study ($N = 1,023$)⁶⁴. Their findings demonstrate a statistically significant positive association between mentoring and self-perceived employability after controlling for demographic and institutional variables (age, gender, academic field, university ranking), reinforcing mentoring's value in career preparedness. Notably, the study advances existing literature by identifying psychological-emotional support as the most impactful mentoring function surpassing career guidance, academic support, and role modelling in enhancing employability perceptions. The research further establishes that mentoring duration, frequency, and mentor-mentee similarity moderate this relationship, suggesting that long-term, frequent mentoring with compatible mentors yields optimal employability outcomes. Methodologically, the study

strengthens credibility through psychometrically validated instruments (16-item employability scale and 25-item mentoring scale) and rigorous statistical controls. While the China-specific context limits generalizability, the findings align with global employability theories while offering localized insights into Asian higher education systems. The authors' recommendation for structured mentoring programmes resonates particularly with developing economies where formal career guidance systems are nascent. Future research could build on this work by incorporating qualitative dimensions to explore how cultural factors shape mentoring effectiveness in collectivist societies like China.

Another groundbreaking study exposes the under-researched phenomenon of mentorship malpractice in academia and its detrimental effects on mentees' career trajectories⁶⁵. Through systematic categorization, the author identifies six distinct malpractice types: active forms (hijackers who appropriate mentees' work, exploiters benefiting from unequal labour exchange, and possessors exerting excessive control) and passive variants (bottleneck mentors causing delays, country clubbers offering superficial engagement, and world travelers providing inconsistent availability). The research reveals a tripartite etiology of malpractice stemming from: (1) lecturer-level factors (burnout, deficient training), (2) institutional failures (weak policies, inadequate oversight), and (3) systemic issues (hierarchical power structures, toxic academic cultures).

The study demonstrates severe career consequences for mentees, including stunted professional growth due to missed networking/publication opportunities and enduring psychological trauma that undermines future career resilience. Notably, it evidences how

malpractice perpetuates inequality marginalized groups face compounded disadvantages when mentorship systems fail. While identifying formidable barriers to reform (entrenched power dynamics, resource constraints, institutional inertia), the study proposes a comprehensive intervention framework. This framework includes mandatory mentor training programmes to ensure mentors are equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge, whistleblower protections for mentees to encourage reporting of malpractice, quantifiable mentorship evaluation metrics to assess the effectiveness of mentorship, and cultural transformation initiatives to revalue ethical mentoring and change the prevailing attitudes towards mentorship.

2.3.2 Institutional Support Services and Undergraduates' Perception of Employability

2.3.2.1 Career Guidance Activities and Undergraduates' Perception of Employability

Another study aimed to explore the relationship between career preparedness constructs (career self-efficacy, outcome expectations, exploration, and planning) and academic achievement during middle school years, while also examining the moderating effects of gender and geographic location⁹³. The population consisted of middle school children in Portugal, specifically focusing on those from northern and central regions. Participants were selected through a legal approval process from the Portuguese Directorate General of Education, with written consent obtained from institutional principals, teachers, and caregivers. The final sample included 429 children, comprising 207 (48.3%) girls and 222 (51.7%) boys, with a majority (69.5%) from northern Portugal. The sample was characterized by a medium-low socioeconomic status. Data analyses were conducted using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (IBM SPSS, version 22.0). The study employed various

statistical methods, including correlational and regression analyses, to assess the relationships between career and academic variables.

Results indicated positive associations between career exploratory outcome expectations and academic achievement trends over time. Gender and geographic location were found to moderate these associations, while career planning negatively impacted academic achievement. The study underscores the importance of integrating career development with academic achievement strategies in educational settings. It calls for further research to deepen understanding of the dynamics between these processes and to develop interventions that support children's career preparedness and academic success⁶⁶.

Another study investigated the integration of career training and mentoring programmes into the curriculum of higher education institutions in Nigeria to enhance students' career development and employability. The research is driven by specific objectives and questions to identify existing career training and mentoring programmes, examine their implementation within the educational framework, and explore the constraints that hinder effective execution. The study underscores the critical need for higher education institutions in Nigeria to restructure their curricula to include career training and mentoring programmes, thereby equipping students with the necessary skills and competencies to thrive in the competitive job market. The collaboration between educators and industry professionals is essential to ensure that the curriculum aligns with the demands of the labour market, ultimately enhancing the employability of graduates. A qualitative research design was adopted, focusing on a sample population that included twenty-one higher education teachers and twelve industry executives,

all with over ten years of experience in their respective fields. This diverse sample was selected to provide a comprehensive understanding of the current state of career training within Nigerian higher education. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews, with eighty-seven percent of participants interviewed in person and thirteen percent via telephone. The interviews were recorded with the consent of the participants, ensuring that their responses remained anonymous and confidential. Thematic analysis was employed to analyze the data, following a systematic process that involved familiarizing with the data, coding, identifying themes, and producing a report.

The study's findings revealed a significant gap in the availability of structured Career Training and Mentoring programmes within the participating institutions. Participants indicated that no specific programmes are designed to enhance students' employability, which challenges their career development. The insights provided by the industry executives highlighted the necessity for collaboration between educational institutions and industry stakeholders to create a more effective framework for career training. The study concluded that the lack of structured Career Training and Mentoring programmes limits students' exposure to essential skills and knowledge required for professional growth. It emphasized integrating these initiatives into the higher education curriculum to better prepare students for the workforce. The research advocates for a strategic approach to curriculum development that includes Career Training and Mentoring as a fundamental component, ultimately fostering a more employable graduate population in Nigeria and a brighter future for the country's workforce⁹⁴.

In a similar study, the primary objective was to investigate the influence of practical teaching on enhancing students' employability within vocational education settings. The study was driven by several important questions, such as how vocational education students' employability is affected by practical teaching, which particular competencies are most strongly associated with increased employability, and how instructors and students view the efficacy of practical teaching approaches today. Using a quantitative design, the study's primary tool for collecting data was a questionnaire, which made it possible to collect data from a specific population methodically and made statistical analysis of the correlations between variables easier. Students at a vocational undergraduate college in GX City, China, as well as full-time practice teaching instructors and managers, were the study's target participants. After removing responses that took less than 120 seconds, 287 valid responses were obtained from the 296 students who took the survey. Additionally, the teachers were given a questionnaire to collect their opinions regarding practical instruction. Two separate questionnaires, one for students and one for teachers, made up the data collection tool. They were intended to evaluate different facets of practical teaching, such as instructional strategies, sources of instructional materials, and perceived efficacy in fostering employability skills⁵.

Regression and correlation analyses were used to examine the connections between the identified competencies such as communication, teamwork, professional ability, and practical skills and the improvement of employability. The analysis sought to ascertain the importance of these variables in forecasting employability outcomes. Employability enhancement and practical teaching were positively correlated, with the eight identified competencies accounting for 65.1% of the variation in employability outcomes. According to the regression

analysis results, students' employability improved most significantly in terms of professional ability, practical skills, and communication. Students also voiced doubts about the efficacy of the current evaluation techniques and the adequacy of internship opportunities. Strengthening practical teaching in vocational education is essential for improving students' employability, highlighting the need for enhanced practical teaching programmes, better internship opportunities, and a more integrated approach to teaching that combines theoretical knowledge with practical application. The findings underscore the importance of aligning educational practices with industry requirements to better prepare students for the workforce³⁶.

In another study, to adequately prepare students for the ever-changing and intricate labour market, higher education is essential. Assisting students in acquiring employability competencies helps them acquire the knowledge and abilities needed to meet the demands of their new jobs and ease their transition to the workforce. Employability competencies support students' financial success and well-being. Universities and colleges provide career coaching programmes to help students improve their employability skills. Even though employability competencies are crucial, there are few empirical studies on the effects of these coaching programmes. By investigating the connection between career coaching and the development of employability competencies, the current study seeks to close that gap.

A two-study design based on a multiple-methods approach was used to gain more insight into how coaching in higher education contributed to the development of students' employability. Data were collected at higher education institutions in the Netherlands and Belgium via student surveys ($n=491$) and interviews with coaches ($n=9$). Quantitative data showed a significant positive relationship between coaches' autonomy support and the development of

students' employability competencies. The interviews provided in-depth, detailed findings on how coaches support students in their learning process. Coaching sessions became most effective by encouraging students to engage in trial and error and stimulating (self-) reflection. Taken together, results show that (career) coaching in higher education has the potential to support students' development of employability competencies, which will, in turn, foster their transition to the workplace³⁶.

2.3.2.2 Curriculum Relevance and Undergraduates' Perception of Employability

The integration of a robust curriculum in education is crucial for enhancing students' academic performance and shaping their perceptions of employability. This empirical review synthesizes findings from various studies, focusing on the impact of instructional materials on undergraduate students' performance in Economics and how curriculum design influences their employability perceptions in the job market. Instructional materials serve as vital tools in the teaching and learning process, facilitating better understanding and retention of knowledge. Previous research has explored the impact of these materials across different educational levels and subjects; however, limited studies have specifically addressed their effects on undergraduate Economics education, curriculum design, and the implications for students' perceptions of employability.

A noteworthy study sought to investigate the effects of instructional materials on the academic performance of undergraduate students in Economics within the Jos-North Local Government Area of Plateau State, Nigeria⁷³. The study employed a quasi-experimental design involving 149 students from two institutions, one public and one private, to assess the effectiveness of improvised instructional materials compared to conventional teaching

methods. The researchers utilized a non-equivalent control group design, where students were divided into experimental and control groups. The experimental group was taught using instructional materials aligned with a well-structured curriculum, while the control group received traditional instruction. The Economics Students' Achievement Test (ESAT) was developed and administered to measure students' performance before and after the intervention.

The empirical evidence presented underscores the critical role of instructional materials and curriculum design in improving academic performance among undergraduate students in Economics and shaping their perceptions of employability. As educational stakeholders seek to enhance teaching methodologies, the integration of effective instructional materials within a robust curriculum should be prioritized to foster better learning outcomes and prepare students for successful careers. Future research should continue to explore this area, examining various subjects and educational contexts to further validate these findings and their implications for employability perceptions among undergraduates.

The transition of economic sectors to a knowledge-driven framework is essential for attracting foreign investment and enhancing labour productivity. However, in Malaysia, there exists a significant mismatch between workforce demand and talent supply, primarily due to low graduate employability linked to the inadequate quality of higher education. To address this pressing issue, conceptual framework was proposed that illustrates the perception of graduates regarding the impact of curriculum design, curriculum vision, operationalization of the

curriculum vision, curriculum delivery, and curriculum evaluation on employability competency⁷³.

The study involved a sample of 299 employed graduates who provided insights into how various aspects of curriculum design influence their employability. Utilizing Smart Partial Least-Squares (SmartPLS) version 3 software, the researchers evaluated the hypotheses derived from the survey. The findings revealed a positive and significant relationship between curriculum design and employability competency, indicating that well-structured and effectively implemented curricula can enhance graduates' readiness for the job market.

This study contributes important insights into the implementation of effective curriculum design, emphasizing the need to strike a balance between practical and theoretical components in both private and public Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). By aligning curriculum design with the skills and competencies demanded by employers, educational institutions can better prepare graduates for the workforce, ultimately addressing the talent supply issue and improving overall employability. The implications of this research highlight the necessity for continuous evaluation and adaptation of curricula to meet the evolving needs of the labour market, ensuring that graduates possess the requisite skills to thrive in a competitive environment.

A recent study highlighted a significant shift in the objectives of Higher Education (HE) towards the inclusion of employability as a core goal⁹⁴. Successfully integrating employability into HE requires a transformation in teaching, learning, and assessment (TLA) methods, which should be embedded in the strategic framework of Higher Education Institutions

(HEIs). This necessitates a focus on revising curriculum design and assessment methods to not only incorporate employability but also to prepare for digital transformation (Education 4.0) and internationalization. Moreover, any development plan for HEIs must recognize the critical importance of employability. To align with national standards and adapt to the changing job market, every academic programme must equip students with the essential skills, knowledge, and experiences needed for career success. Institutions have a responsibility to create opportunities for all students, regardless of their backgrounds or capabilities, to gain insights into the world of work and enhance their employability prospects.

2.3.3 Influence of Gender on Undergraduates' Perception of Employability

In a study aimed at investigating the perceptions of employment prospects among black male and female final year students at a South African University of Technology, researchers sought to understand how gender and field of study influence these perceptions. The study posed critical research questions regarding the positivity of students' perceptions as beneficiaries of employment policies, the differences in perceptions across various fields of study, and the attribution of these perceptions to internal or external factors. A quantitative, cross-sectional design was employed, surveying a sample of 198 students from ICT, Accounting, and Human Resource Management programmes using a self-report Likert-type scale questionnaire. Data analysis involved descriptive statistics and reliability analyses to ensure internal consistency, revealing significant differences in perceptions based on gender and field of study. Findings indicated that males were more likely to attribute their employment prospects to luck, while females emphasized the importance of qualifications. Additionally, HR students expressed lower confidence in their job prospects compared to their

counterparts in ICT and Accounting. The study underscores the necessity of understanding these perceptions to inform policies aimed at mitigating graduate unemployment in South Africa⁷².

In a study to assess the gender differences in enhancing students' employability skills, a theoretical framework was employed to guide the research. The study highlights the potential differences in students' inclination toward developing employability skills, their level of involvement in extracurricular activities (ECAs), and their intention to become self-employed. Descriptive characteristics and associations between gender and level of skills, the level of students' involvement in ECAs and their intention to become self-employed were investigated. Stratified random sampling was used to collect data from degree groups. Data from 359 university students was collected using a questionnaire.

The results indicate that all students display average levels of core skills. However, male, and female students differ significantly in their core competencies, with males displaying higher levels of core competencies than females. In addition, the results from the chi-square test indicate a significant association between gender and the level of participation in ECAs. Moreover, as students face two career choices between paid and self-employment, males are likelier to choose self-employment than female students. Further analysis indicates that the contribution of degree programmes, parents' background, and students' experience in doing business are factors that affect their employability. The study's theoretical framework highlights gender differences in employability skills, engagement in ECAs and intention to become self-employed considering the stated factors. As regards policy and practical

relevance, higher learning institutions are recommended to consider gender differences as they develop relevant ECAs in order to enhance students' employability skills equally regardless of their gender⁷¹.

Another empirical study aimed to investigate the self-perceived employability of undergraduate business students in Australia, focusing on the influence of gender and year of study on their perceptions. The research was guided by specific questions regarding the relationship between students' self-awareness, programme relevance, and their confidence in employability as they progressed through their academic programmes. A quantitative research design was adopted for the study. The study engaged a substantial population of 6,004 students from multiple universities, ensuring a diverse sample that could provide insights into demographic differences. Data collection was facilitated through an established, SCCT-based formative self-measure of perceived employability, which generated personalized profile reports for participants. The analysis employed SPSS version 25, utilizing exploratory factor analysis to identify key employability factors and MANOVA to assess group differences across gender and year of study.

The findings revealed significant differences in self-awareness and perceived programme relevance, with female students demonstrating higher levels than their male counterparts. Additionally, the study found that student's confidence in their degree programme's ability to prepare them for employability tended to decline as they advanced through their studies, likely due to increased awareness of labour market challenges. However, it's important to note that the study was limited to undergraduate business students in Australia, and the findings

may not be generalizable to other student populations or countries. The conclusions drawn from this research underscore the necessity for higher education institutions to enhance clarity regarding the relevance of learning tasks and adopt a data-driven approach to career development activities, aiming to better equip students for the competitive job market^{95,96}.

Another 2019 study, uniquely designed to empirically investigate the self-perceived employability (SPE) of final-year university students in South Africa, focused on the interaction effects of gender and field of study⁹⁸. The research was guided by specific objectives and questions that explored how these demographic factors influence students' perceptions of their employability in a context marked by significant social inequalities. Employing a purposive sampling design, the study targeted 402 final-year students from two predominantly black universities, ensuring representation across four major disciplines: Management Studies, Education, Law, and Science and Agriculture. A structured questionnaire was utilized as the primary instrument for data collection, allowing respondents to rate their perceived employability on a five-point Likert scale. The data analysis, conducted using factorial analysis of variance (ANOVA), revealed significant implications for universities.

The results showed that male students exhibited higher self-perceived employability than their female counterparts, with Education students reporting the highest levels of SPE overall. Notably, the interaction between gender and field of study did not yield significant effects, suggesting that while both factors independently influence employability perceptions, their combined impact is less pronounced. These findings underscore the need for universities to

implement targeted interventions that enhance students' confidence and awareness of labour market realities, particularly for female students. This approach could effectively address the broader issues of gender inequality in the South African employment landscape⁹⁴.

Equally another study aimed to investigate the influence of business education curriculum content, gender, and self-efficacy on the acquisition of employability skills among university graduates in Cross River State, Nigeria⁹⁵. Guided by two research questions and corresponding hypotheses, the survey research design was employed, targeting a population of 987 business education graduates from the University of Calabar (UNICAL) and Cross River University of Technology (CRUTECH) between the academic sessions of 2007/2008 and 2014/2015. A purposive sampling technique was utilized to select a sample of 200 graduates, and data was collected using a validated four-point scale questionnaire titled 'Curriculum Content, Gender, Self-Efficacy and Acquisition of Employability Skills Questionnaire' (CCGSEAESQ), which demonstrated a reliability estimate of .72 to .84 through Cronbach Alpha. The data analysis involved calculating means and standard deviations for research questions, while independent t-tests were conducted to test the hypotheses at a .05 level of significance.

The findings revealed significant differences in the acquisition of employability skills between male and female graduates exposed to the business education curriculum, as well as between graduates with high and low self-efficacy. The study concluded that gender and self-efficacy play crucial roles in the effectiveness of business education curriculum content in

enhancing employability skills, suggesting that educators should consider these factors in their teaching approaches to better cater to the distinct needs of male and female students⁹⁵.

Another similar study investigated the self-perceived employability skills of senior students and recent graduates in engineering programmes, focusing on the influences of gender, age, and employment status. The research was guided by specific questions aimed at determining whether statistically significant differences existed in the self-perceived levels of employability skills among different demographic groups. Utilizing a quantitative design, the study collected data through an online questionnaire administered to a stratified sample of 505 participants from ITM's College of Engineering in Colombia. The sample was representative of the student population, which included a notable gender disparity, with only 12.2% of the enrolled students being women. The data collection instrument comprised closed-ended questions that quantified participants' perceptions of their employability skills, allowing for a comprehensive analysis of the relationships between the variables.

The results indicated that while men reported higher means in self-perceived employability skills compared to women, these differences were not statistically significant. However, a significant disparity was observed between employed and unemployed respondents, with the former demonstrating higher perceived skills across various employability dimensions. The study concluded that the perceived employability of individuals is influenced by complex socio-demographic factors, underscoring the persistent gender gap in STEM fields. These findings highlight the necessity for targeted interventions to enhance the employability of women in engineering and related disciplines. The research contributes to the broader

discourse on employability in STEM by emphasizing the subjective nature of skill perception and the critical need for policies that support women's career advancement in these areas⁹⁵.

In a recent study examining Moroccan undergraduates' perspectives on the significance of soft skills for employment, researchers aimed to quantify student responses regarding their awareness and valuation of these skills in relation to future careers⁹⁸. The research focused on identifying essential soft skills and exploring potential gender differences in perceptions. Utilizing a quantitative design, the study employed a structured questionnaire distributed among a representative sample of undergraduates, ensuring that insights gathered were relevant and meaningful. The findings revealed that communication, time management, work ethics, and a positive attitude were among the most valued soft skills, with notable gender disparities; female students placed a higher importance on these skills, particularly time management and willingness to learn. The study concluded that integrating soft skills training into Moroccan higher education is crucial for enhancing student employability. Future research could further explore these findings by incorporating perspectives from recruiters and educators, as well as employing mixed methods for a more comprehensive understanding of soft skills' significance in education and employment⁹⁸.

2.4 Conceptual Model

The conceptual model for this study shows the relationship among the independent variables (Lecturer Factors and Institutional Support Services), the dependent variable (Undergraduate's Perception of Employability) and moderating variables (Gender and Institution Type). The conceptual model is represented in the Fig 2.1

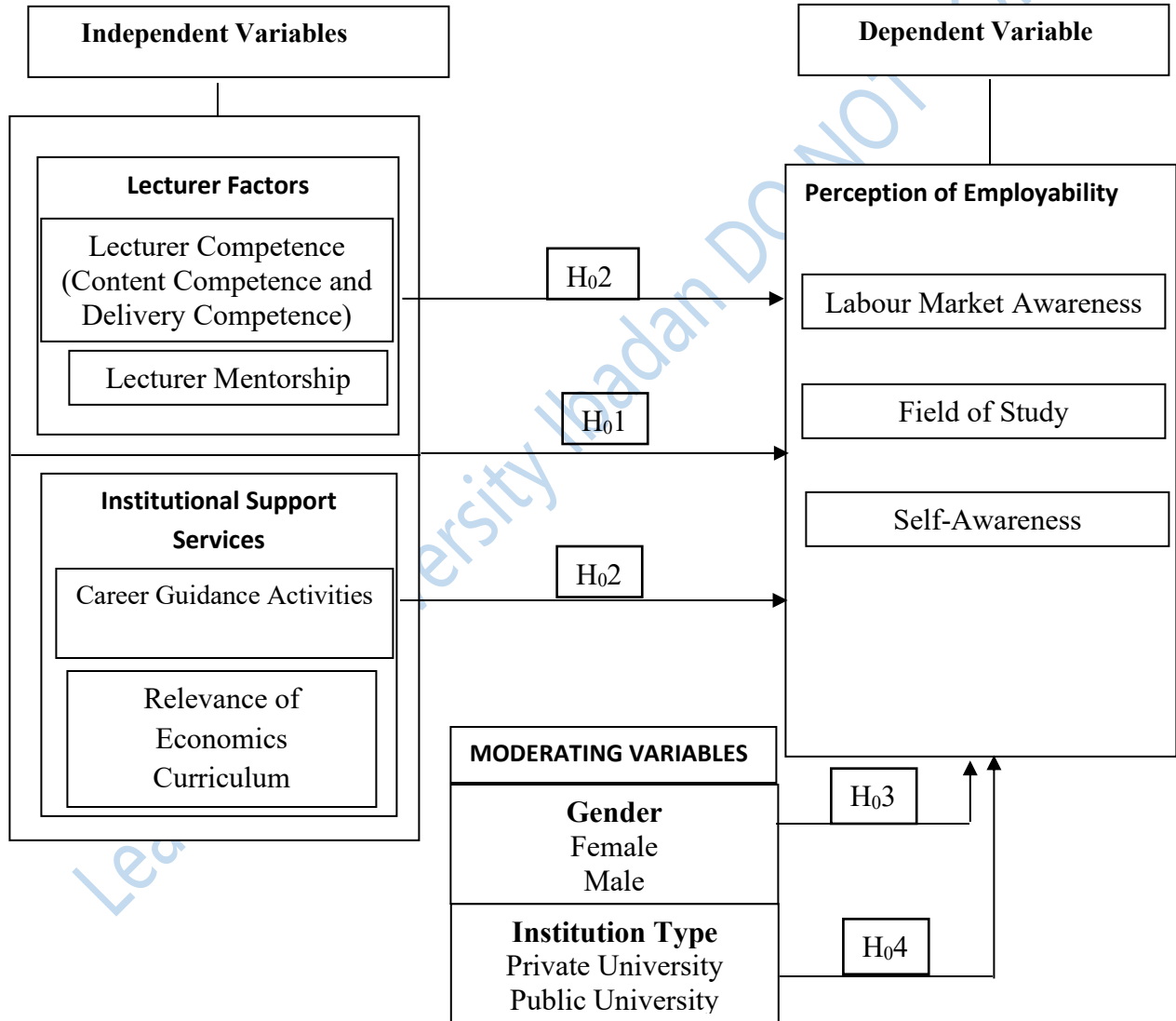


Figure2.1: Conceptual Model for the Study

Source: The Researcher, 2025

The conceptual model in Fig 2.3 depicts that the first independent variable; lecturer variable will be measured with two sub-variables (lecturer competence and lecturer mentorship) and the second independent variable; institutional support services with two sub-variables (career guidance activities and relevance of economics curriculum), while the dependent variable; undergraduates perception of employability will be measured along three sub-variables (labour market awareness, field of study and self-awareness). Gender will be measured at two levels (female and male). The arrows indicate the direction of the relationship to be tested. It also shows that the first hypothesis will test the joint significance of the independent variables on the dependent variable. It also indicates that the second hypothesis tests the relative contribution of the independent variables on the dependent variable while the third hypothesis tests the moderating effect of gender on the dependent variable; undergraduates' perception of employability.

2.5 Summary of Gap in Literature Reviewed

Several studies and theories were reviewed in this study. The relationship between lecturer factors, institutional support and undergraduates' perception of employability has been a subject of interest among researchers. From the perspective of human capital theory, investments in education and training can enhance individuals' employability by equipping them with valuable skills and knowledge^{77,99}. In this regard, the effectively harnessing and managing lecturer factors in educational institutions, such as a favorable lecturer competence and personality, can contribute to better academic outcomes and increased employability.

Institutional support services, such as career guidance activities and curriculum, also play a crucial role in shaping economics education undergraduates' employability. Research has

demonstrated that career guidance activities can enhance students' self-awareness, enabling them to make informed career choices^{83,100}. Similarly, work experience has been found to improve students' employability prospects by providing them with practical skills and exposure to the labour market⁸³.

The perception of employability among economics education undergraduates is influenced by various factors, including labour market experience, field of study, and self-awareness. Studies have shown that students with prior labour market experience tend to have a more positive perception of employability¹⁰⁰. Similarly, students in fields with high labour market demand, such as economics, tend to perceive themselves as more employable. Self-awareness, which involves understanding one's strengths, weaknesses, and career goals, is also a critical factor influencing employability perception^{30,100}. Furthermore, research has highlighted the moderating role of gender in the relationship between human resources utilization, institutional support services, and employability perception, with males and females exhibiting different employability perceptions and expectations^{99,5}.

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Chapter Three

Methodology

This chapter is a description of procedures that were used in carrying out the study. These are discussed under the following sub-headings: Research Design, Population of the study, Sample and Sampling Procedures, Research Instrument, Validity of Research Instrument, Reliability of the Instrument, Method of Data Collection, and Method of Data Analysis.

3.1 Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive research design of the survey type. This quantitative research design aimed to systematically describe the characteristics, behaviours, or opinions of a specific population through the collection of survey data. This was considered suitable because it aimed to accurately describe a population situation or phenomenon¹. The descriptive survey design was deemed appropriate for this study as it facilitates the systematic collection, analysis of data and interpretation of the relationship that exists between the independent and the dependent variables in this study.

3.2 Population of the Study

The population of the study comprised all thirteen (13) universities in Oyo State, consisting of five (5) public universities and eight (8) private universities. However, some of these universities do not offer Economics as a course of study. Therefore, the research

focused only on the universities offering Economics, giving a total study population of 408 respondents.

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Table 3.1: Population size: 400 Level Economics students of eight Public and Private Universities in Oyo State

(n = 408)

S/N	Names of Universities		Year of Establishment	No of 400 Level Economics Students Sampled
1	Ajayi	Crowther	2005	35
	University, Oyo			
2	Dominican	University,	2016	4
	Ibadan			
3	Kola Daisi	University,	2016	6
	Ibadan			
4	Precious	Cornerstone	2017	3
	University, Ibadan			
5	Lead City	University,	2005	60
	Ibadan			
6	Dominion	University,	2019	6
	Ibadan			
7	University of Ibadan		1948	100
8	Ladoke	Akintola,	1990	194
	University of Technology			
Total				408

Source²

3.3 Sample and Sampling Techniques

The study covered eight public and private universities located in Oyo State, with a specific focus on 400-Level Economics students who served as the respondents. The rationale for selecting 400-level students is because they were at the peak of their study and were soon

to enter the labour market. A total enumeration sampling method was employed to include all available 400-level students from the Economics departments of the participating universities. This process ensured the inclusion of every student in the target group without random selection. The approach resulted in a sample of 408 respondents, however, 372 who were accessible and willing to participate in the study made the final sample. Universities that did not offer economics as a course of study were not included in the sample.

3.4 Description of the Research Instrument

An adapted questionnaire titled Economics Undergraduates' Perceived Employability Questionnaire (EUPEQ) was used to collect data for the study.^{3,4,5,6} The questionnaire consisted of four sections (A to D). Section A contains items on demographic characteristics of respondents which included age range, gender, university type, course of study and present level.

Section B consisted of fifteen (15) items aimed at gathering responses on the economics undergraduate' self-perceived employability. The items under this section were formulated around three sub-scales namely, labour market awareness, field of study, and self-awareness of undergraduates. Examples of items under the three indices: I am knowledgeable about the current trends and demands of the labour market in my field of study; I believe that my field of study provided me with relevant skills and knowledge for the workforce and I am aware of the requirements of my future career.

Section C consists of ten (10) items on lecturer factors. The two indices that are measured under lecturer factors are lecturer competence (content and delivery competence) and lecturer

mentorship, which covers five (5) items each. Examples of the items in this section are: My Economics Lecturers demonstrate a deep understanding of the course content they teach in the classroom and My Economics Lecturers are easily approachable and accessible for academic advice.

The last section, D, had 10 items, which were used to determine the extent to which students receive institutional support services from their universities. The items were framed around two indicators of career guidance activities and relevance of economics curriculum. Examples of the items here are: My university organizes workshops on CV writing, interview skills, networking, and professional etiquette; and My university ensures regular review and updating of economics curriculum. All the items from section B to C were answered on a 5-point Likert Scale ranging from Strongly disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5).

3.5 Validity of Research Instrument

The Economics Undergraduates' Perceived Employability Questionnaire (EUPEQ) that was used for the study was subjected to face and content validity. This was to ensure that items evaluated on the instruments are representative and adequate for measuring a particular construct⁷. The researcher's supervisor and an expert in data analysis assisted in vetting the questionnaire, to critically examine and determine the sustainability of the items used in measuring the variables included in the study. The items were being examined to make sure that they were in line with the objectives of the study. The structure and the language of the questionnaire were modified in the light of their corrections. All other corrections,

suggestions, and ideas of the researcher's supervisor were incorporated into the final production of the research instrument.

3.6 Reliability of the Research Instrument

The Economics Undergraduates' Perceived Employability Questionnaire (EUPEQ) underwent a pilot test involving twenty (20) 400-Level economics undergraduates from one private and one public university that were not part of the final sample for the study. Cronbach's Alpha was used to determine the reliability. The reliability analysis for the 35 items yielded a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.831, indicating that the instrument has a high degree of internal consistency. For the three individual subscales, the reliability coefficients are presented in Table 3.6

Table 3.6: Reliability Statistics for Constructs

Construct	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Lecturer Factors (Competence & Mentorship)	10	0.821
Institutional Support Services (Career Guidance & Relevance of Curriculum)	10	0.780
Perceived Self Employability (Labour Market Awareness, Students' Field of Study & Self Awareness)	15	0.892

3.7 Method of Data Collection

Before administration of the research instruments, an introduction letter obtained from the researcher's department was submitted to each of the institutions to be sampled which allowed the researcher gain access to the respondents. The researcher with the support of two (2) trained research assistants administered the questionnaire (which included informed consent and confidentiality assurance) to the sampled population in public and private universities in Oyo State. The purpose of the study was explained to the respondents. The researcher was there with the research assistants to enable the respondents to ask questions and obtain clarifications on items they found unclear.

3.8 Method of Data Analysis

Data collected were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics of frequency, simple percentage, mean, and standard deviation were used to provide answers to the research questions. Inferential Statistics of Multiple Regression analysis and t-test was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. All results are presented in tables.

3.9 Ethical Approval

The researcher obtained letters of introduction from her institution, Lead City University to formally request permission from the selected schools to conduct the study. Informed consents were sought and obtained from all participants, and participation was entirely voluntary. Respondents were provided transparent information about the purpose of the study

and the use of the data after which they were assured that the study is strictly for academic purposes, and that all information provided will be treated with strict confidentiality.

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Endnotes

¹M. Saunders; P. Lewis & A. Thornhill, *Research Methods*, Pearson, 2023.

²Student Affairs Unit for Universities, 2025.

³F. Francis, **An assessment of human resource utilization on organizational growth and development of Adamawa State Polytechnic Yola.** *Arts and Social Sciences Journal*, 09(05), 2018, <https://doi.org/10.4172/2151-6200.1000419>

⁴A. Rothwell & J. Arnold, **Self-Perceived Employability: Development and Validation of a Scale,** *Personnel Review*, 36(1), 2007, 23-41. <https://doi.org/10.1108/00483480710716704>

⁵M.T. Tessema, J. Craft & S. Subhani, **Assessment of HR Development and Utilization: A Conceptual Framework,** *International Journal of Managerial Studies and Research*, 3(3), 2015, 32-43

⁶A. Shomotova & A. Ibrahim, **Validation of measurement scales for undergraduate students' self-perceived employability and university commitment in the United Arab Emirates,** *Education + Training*, 65(8/9), 972-992. <https://doi.org/10.1108/ET-01-2023-0021>

⁷S. Shafie, F. A. Majid, S.M. Damio, & T.S, Hoon, **Evaluation on the Face and Content Validity of a Soft Skills Transfer of Training Instrument.** *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 10(10), 2020, 1054-1065

Chapter Four

Results and Discussion of Findings

This chapter presents the results from the statistical analysis of the data collected from the questionnaire. It also consists of the discussion of the findings. The sub-headings in the chapter include:

Instrument Response Rate

4.1 Demographic Data Analysis

4.2 Presentation of Data

4.2.1 Answers to Research Questions

4.2.2 Test of Hypotheses

4.3 Discussion of Findings

Instrument Response Rate

This represents the number of questionnaires that were administered, retrieved and validated and the percentage of responses. Four hundred and eight (408) questionnaires were administered to the respondents on the field, three hundred and eighty-seven (387) were retrieved, three hundred and seventy-two were valid and used for analysis. Thus, the percentage of responses was 91.2% based on the number of valid copies of the retrieved questionnaires.

4.1 Demographic Data Analysis

Table 4.1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Variables	Values	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age Range	15–19 years	44	11.8%
	20–24 years	160	43.0%
	25 years and above	168	45.2%
Gender	Female	240	64.5%
	Male	132	35.5%
University Type	Public	256	68.8%
	Private	116	31.2%
Name of Institution	LAUTECH	181	48.7%
	UI	84	22.6%
Course of Study	Lead City	59	15.9%
	Dominion	6	1.6%
	Ajayi Crowther	30	8.1%
	Precious Cornerstone	3	0.8%
	Kola Daisi	5	1.3%
	Dominican	4	1.0%
	Economics	345	92.8%
	Economics Education	27	7.2%
		372	100.00

Source: Researcher's Fieldwork, 2025

Table 4.1 shows the frequency distribution of the demography of 400 level students in the sampled universities according to age range, gender, university type, name of institution and course of study. From the table, a total of 372 Economics undergraduates from universities in Oyo State, Nigeria, participated in the study.

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4.2 Presentation of Data

4.2.1 Research Questions

Research Question One: What is the Perceived Employability Status of Economics

Undergraduates in Oyo State, Nigeria?

Table 4.2.1a: Perceived Employability Status of Economics Undergraduates in Oyo State, Nigeria

S/N	Item	SA(%)	A(%)	N(%)	D(%)	SD(%)	Mean
1	I am knowledgeable about the current trends and demands of the labour market in my field of study	100 (26.9)	189 (50.8)	48 (12.9)	32 (8.6)	3 0.8)	3.97
2	I am aware of the key employers and industries in my field of study	104 (28)	208 (55.9)	48 (12.9)	12 (3.2)	-	4.1
3	I understand the skills and qualifications required by employers in my field of study	144 (38.7)	196 (52.7)	32 (8.6)	-	-	4.30
4	I am informed about the job market outlook and prospects in my field of study	116 (31.2)	196 (52.7)	52 (14)	8 (2.2)	-	4.13
5	I believe that my knowledge of the labour market will enhance my employability prospects	164 (44.1)	176 (47.3)	32 (8.6)	-	-	4.36
Total		124.9 (33.6)	193.0 (51.9)	45.6 (12.3)	12.8 (3.4)	0.6 (0.2)	4.17
Field of Study							
6	I believe that my field of study provided me with relevant skills and knowledge for the workforce	164 (44.1)	184 (49.5)	20 (5.4)	4 (1.1)	—	4.36
7	I am confident that my field of study will lead to good job prospects	200 (53.8)	156 (41.9)	12 (3.2)	4 (1.1)	—	4.48
8	I believe that my field of study is in high demand by employers in industries	152 (40.9)	168 (45.2)	48 (12.9)	4 (1.1)	—	4.25
9	I believe that my field of study provided me with a competitive edge in the labour market	144 (38.7)	176 (47.3)	44 (11.8)	4 (1.1)	4 (1.1)	4.21

10	I am satisfied that my field of study aligns with my career goals and aspirations	172 (46.2)	160 (43.0)	40 (10.8)	—	—	4.35
	Total	166.4 (44.8)	168.8 (45.4)	32.8 (8.8)	3.2 (0.9)	0.8 (0.2)	4.31
Self-Awareness							
11	I am aware of the requirements of my future career	152 (40.9)	180 (48.4)	40 (10.8)	—	—	4.30
12	I am aware of the organizational culture and standards in my chosen field of study	100 (26.9)	232 (62.4)	40 (10.8)	—	—	4.16
13	I have the knowledge of what is expected of me in terms job specifications in my future profession	132 (35.5)	180 (48.4)	52 (14.0)	4 (1.1)	4 (1.1)	4.16
14	I understand the work ethics of various organizations in my career path	92 (24.7)	200 (53.8)	76 (20.4)	4 (1.1)	—	4.02
15	I am aware of the skills which are in high demand from potential employers in my profession	92 (24.7)	220 (59.1)	56 (15.1)	4 (1.1)	—	4.07
	Total	113.8 (30.6)	202.4 (54.4)	52.8 (14.2)	2.4 (0.6)	0.8 (0.2)	4.14
Weighted Mean = 4.21							

Source: Researcher's Fieldwork, 2025

KEY: Strongly Agree = 5, Agree = 4, Neutral = 3, Disagree = 2, Strongly Disagree = 1

Decision Rule: Mean value 1.00-1.80 is very low-level agreement, 1.81-2.60 is low agreement, 2.61-3.40 is moderate or neutral agreement, 3.41-4.20 is high agreement, and 4.21-5.00 is very high

On Table 4.2.1a, students seem especially attuned to what the labour market demands. The highest-rated items in this dimension show that many understand what employers expect ($\bar{x}$

=4.30) and believe that knowing the labour market boosts their employability ($\bar{x} = 4.36$). Encouragingly, over 90% say they are aware of the key skills required and who the major employers are. Equally, about 13% remain unsure or unaware of current job market trends, pointing to the need for better career information and guidance services. The Table also indicates that confidence is even stronger when it comes to how relevant students believe their field of study is to employment. This dimension recorded the highest mean of 4.35. Nearly all respondents (over 95%) agree that their course equips them with relevant skills and that it prepares them for employment opportunities ($\bar{x} = 4.48$). Still, a small group (12.9%) expressed uncertainty about the actual industry demand for their qualifications, which suggests a gap in how labour market realities are being communicated.

The third index, self-awareness ($\bar{x} = 4.14$), shows that most students understand and recognize their own skills, knowledge, and abilities as well as the market demands. It shows that they recognize the unique characteristics and transferable skills that they could bring to the job market. Nearly 90% are aware of long-term career demands, and over 80% understand which skills are currently in demand. However, about 20% of respondents, admit they are not clear on typical organizational work ethics. This could reflect a lack of real-world experience or insufficient exposure to workplace environments during their education.

Table 4.2.1b: Summary of The Extent of Employability Perception Status of University Students in Oyo State, Nigeria

Item		SA(%)	A(%)	N(%)	D(%)	SD(%)	Mean
Labour Market Awareness		124.96(33.6)	193.0 (51.9)	45.6 (12.3)	12.8 (3.4)	0.6 (0.2)	4.17
Field of Study		166.4 (44.8)	168.8 (45.4)	32.8 (8.8)	3.2 (0.9)	0.8 (0.2)	4.31
Self-Awareness		113.8 (30.6)	202.4 (54.4)	52.8 (14.2)	2.4 (0.6)	0.8 (0.2)	4.14

Overall Weighted Mean = 4.21 Very High

Source: Researcher's Fieldwork, 2025

KEY: Strongly Agree = 5, Agree = 4, Neutral = 3, Disagree = 2, Strongly Disagree = 1

Decision Rule: Mean value 1.00-1.80 is very low-level agreement, 1.81-2.60 is low agreement, 2.61-3.40 is moderate or neutral agreement, 3.41-4.20 is high agreement, and 4.21-5.00 is very high

Table 4.2.1b, offered a detailed insight into how undergraduates perceive their employability. The analysis presents the employability status of university students in Oyo State across three key indices: labour market awareness (mean = 4.17), field of study (mean = 4.31), and self-awareness (mean = 4.14). Using the given decision rule, labour market awareness and self-awareness, fall within the "high agreement" range (3.41-4.20), while field of study was very high. The overall weighted mean (4.21) places the general employability perception in the "very high agreement" category. The overall employability status of Economics university students in Oyo State is very high, reflecting strong confidence in their labour market awareness, field of study relevance, and self-awareness. This indicates that most of the students believed that they were well-prepared for the labour market.

Research Question Two: What is the extent at which universities in Oyo state are supporting their students in developing employability through lecturer factors (Lecturer competence and mentorship)?

Table 4.3.2a: Extent at Which Universities in Oyo State Are Supporting their Students in Developing Employability Through Lecturer Factors (Lecturer Competence, and Mentorship)

S/N	Item	SA(%)	A(%)	N(%)	D(%)	SD(%)	Mean
My Economics Lecturers:							
16	Demonstrate a deep understanding of the course content they teach in the classroom	156 (41.9)	144 (38.7)	56 (15.1)	12 (3.2)	4 (1.1)	4.17
17	Explain and simplify difficult concepts effectively and clearly	156 (41.9)	152 (40.9)	48 (12.9)	12 (3.2)	4 (1.1)	4.19
18	Use appropriate teaching methods to enhance student's understanding	124 (33.3)	168 (45.2)	56 (15.1)	16 (4.3)	8 (2.2)	4.03
19	Are well organized and prepared in delivering course contents	36 (9.7)	116 (31.2)	84 (22.6)	40 (10.8)	96 (25.8)	2.88
20	Use relevant examples and illustrations to support their teaching for better understanding of students	128 (34.4)	192 (51.6)	48 (12.9)	4 (1.1)	-	4.19
Total		120.2 (32.3)	154.4 (41.5)	60.8 (16.3)	16.8 (4.5)	22.4 (6.0)	3.93
Economics Lecturers' Mentorship							

21	Provide guidance on career paths for economics graduates	112 (30.1)	164 (44.1)	72 (19.4)	16 (4.3)	8 (2.2)	3.95
22	Are easily approachable and accessible for academic advice	24 (6.5)	124 (33.3)	80 (21.5)	24 (6.5)	120 (32.3)	2.75
23	Act as role models and demonstrate professional personalities that I can emulate	132 (35.5)	152 (40.9)	72 (19.4)	4 (1.1)	12 (3.2)	4.04
24	Encourage and support my participation in employability and professional development opportunities	52 (14.0)	132 (35.5)	88 (23.7)	32 (8.6)	68 (18.3)	3.18
25	Mentor me on how to apply academic knowledge in real life situations	136 (36.6)	164 (44.1)	52 (14.0)	16 (4.3)	4 (1.1)	4.11
Total		106.7 (28.7)	149.3 (40.2)	70.7 (19.0)	17.3 (4.7)	28.0 (7.5)	3.78
Weighted Mean							3.75

Source: Researcher's Fieldwork, 2025

KEY: Strongly Agree = 5, Agree = 4, Neutral = 3, Disagree = 2, Strongly Disagree = 1

Decision Rule: Mean value 1.00-1.80 is very low-level agreement, 1.81-2.60 is low agreement, 2.61-3.40 is moderate or neutral agreement, 3.41-4.20 is high agreement, and 4.21-5.00 is very high

The analysis of Table 4.3.2a shows that students generally view their Economics lecturers as competent, particularly in terms of content knowledge and delivery. A large majority of respondents agreed that their lecturers demonstrate a deep understanding of course content ($\bar{x} = 4.17$), explain difficult concepts clearly ($\bar{x} = 4.19$), and use appropriate teaching

methods to enhance understanding ($\bar{x} = 4.03$). The use of relevant examples also received strong approval ($\bar{x} = 4.19$), further reinforcing students' confidence in their lecturers' teaching ability. However, not all aspects of delivery were rated equally. Only 40.9% of students agreed that their lecturers are well organized and prepared for class, while 36.6% disagreed. This area had the lowest mean score among the competence items ($\bar{x} = 2.88$), indicating inconsistency in how well lectures are structured and presented.

In the area of mentorship, students gave generally positive responses. Most agreed that their lecturers serve as professional role models ($\bar{x} = 4.04$) and provide helpful guidance on applying academic knowledge to real-life situations ($\bar{x} = 4.11$). Career path guidance was also rated fairly well ($\bar{x} = 3.95$). Access to academic support outside the classroom appears to be a major weakness, with only 39.8% of students finding their lecturers approachable for academic advice, while 38.8% disagreed ($\bar{x} = 2.75$). Support for employability and professional development opportunities was moderate ($\bar{x} = 3.18$). While students commend their Economics lecturers for strong subject mastery and clear instruction, there are evident gaps in organization, accessibility, and structured mentorship.

Table 4.3.2b: Summary of The Extent to which Universities in Oyo State Are Supporting Their Students in Developing Employability Through Lecturer Factors (Lecturer Competence and Mentorship)

Item	SA (%)	A (%)	N (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Mean
Lecturer Competence	120.2 (32.3)	154.4 (41.5)	60.8 (16.3)	16.8 (4.5)	22.4 (6.0)	3.89
Mentorship Support	106.7 (28.7)	149.3 (40.2)	70.7 (19.0)	17.3 (4.7)	28.0 (7.5)	3.61
Overall Weighted Mean						3.75

Source: Researcher's Fieldwork, 2025

KEY: Strongly Agree = 5, Agree = 4, Neutral = 3, Disagree = 2, Strongly Disagree = 1

Decision Rule: Mean value 1.00-1.80 is very low-level agreement, 1.81-2.60 is low agreement, 2.61-3.40 is moderate or neutral agreement, 3.41-4.20 is high agreement, and 4.21-5.00 is very high

From the analysis in Table 4.3.1b economics undergraduate students' perceptions on lecturer factors: their economics lecturers' competence and mentorship support. Lecturer competence received a mean score of 3.89 (high), indicating that students generally view their lecturers as knowledgeable, effective in simplifying concepts, and using relevant teaching methods. Mentorship support had a mean of 3.61 (high), suggesting students perceive reasonable guidance in professional development and real-world application of knowledge, though encouragement for employability opportunities was moderate (mean=3.18). The overall weighted mean (3.75) confirms a high level of agreement, reflecting students' positive perception of their lecturers' teaching competence and mentorship, albeit with room for improvement in structured career guidance and instructional consistency. In conclusion, the results regarding research question two imply that economics lecturers' competence and mentorship support in Oyo State are high. Therefore, while economics lecturers in Oyo State

are generally effective in content delivery and mentorship, enhancing organised preparation and active employability support could further strengthen students' academic and professional readiness.

Research Question Three: What is the extent to which Economics undergraduates in Oyo state engage with institutional support services (career guidance and relevant economics curriculum)?

Table 4.3.3a: Extent at which University Students in Oyo state are Engaged with Institutional Support Services (Career Guidance Activities and Relevance of Economics Curriculum)

S/N	Career Activities	Guidance	SA (%)	A (%)	U (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Mean
My University:								
26	Has a functional career or employability services unit that assigns students to faculty or industry mentors		28 (7.5)	128 (34.4)	120 (32.3)	48 (12.9)	48 (12.9)	3.11
27	Organizes workshops on CV writing, interview skills, networking, and professional etiquette		68 (18.3)	156 (41.9)	80 (21.5)	56 (15.1)	12 (3.2)	3.57
28	Makes arrangement for career fairs, employer presentations and industry visits		24 (6.5)	140 (37.6)	104 (28.0)	52 (14.0)	52 (14.0)	3.09
29	Provides me with opportunities for internships and job shadowing		40 (10.8)	176 (47.3)	104 (28.0)	36 (9.7)	16 (4.3)	3.51
30	Provides career guidance services that are tailored to the specific needs of		60 (16.1)	180 (48.4)	104 (28.0)	20 (5.4)	8 (2.2)	3.71

economic students							
Total		44.0 (11.8%)	156.0 (41.9%)	102.4 (27.5%)	42.4 (11.4%)	27.2 (7.3%)	3.40
Relevant Curriculum		Economics					
31	Provides economics curriculum that covers topics that are applicable to real life economic problems	100 (26.9)	204 (54.8)	60 (16.1)	4 (1.1)	4 (1.1)	4.05
32	Ensures emphasis on entrepreneurship education and skill development within the economics programme	92 (24.7)	224 (60.2)	48 (12.9)	4 (1.1)	4 (1.1)	4.07
33	Ensures regular review and updating of economics curriculum	36 (9.7)	172 (46.2)	80 (21.5)	16 (4.3)	68 (18.3)	3.25
34	Ensures that the economics curriculum provides students with the knowledge and skills needed in the labour market	48 (12.9)	192 (51.6)	52 (14.0)	20 (5.4)	60 (16.1)	3.39
35	Ensures that the economics curriculum includes fieldwork, excursion and research projects that enhance learning	36 (9.7)	180 (48.4)	84 (22.6)	24 (6.5)	48 (12.9)	3.36
Total		62.4 (16.8)	194.4 (52.3)	64.8 (17.4)	13.6 (3.7)	36.8 (9.9)	3.62
Overall Weighted Mean							3.51

Source: Researcher's Fieldwork, 2025

KEY: Strongly Agree = 5, Agree = 4, Neutral = 3, Disagree = 2, Strongly Disagree = 1

Decision Rule: Mean value 1.00-1.80 is very low-level agreement, 1.81-2.60 is low agreement, 2.61-3.40 is moderate or neutral agreement, 3.41-4.20 is high agreement, and 4.21-5.00 is very high

Findings related to institutional support services on Table 4.4.1a reveal mixed perceptions among students regarding the availability and effectiveness of career and employability support. Although initiatives like workshops on CV writing and career readiness activities were acknowledged (60.2%), the existence of a functional Career Services Unit (41.9%), career fairs (44.1%), and tailored career guidance ($\bar{x} = 3.710$) received moderate ratings. Similarly, opportunities for internships and job shadowing were moderately acknowledged ($\bar{x} = 3.505$), pointing to partial access and unequal implementation across institutions.

On curriculum relevance, students strongly agreed that their programme addresses real-life economic problems ($\bar{x} = 4.054$) and places significant emphasis on entrepreneurship and skills development (84.9%, $\bar{x} = 4.065$). However, curriculum updating ($\bar{x} = 3.247$), labour market alignment ($\bar{x} = 3.398$), and incorporation of experiential learning such as fieldwork and soft skills training ($\bar{x} = 3.355$) were rated moderately. This suggests the presence of foundational support structures but require further strengthening the execution and consistency of institutional support services and curriculum responsiveness to enhance employability outcomes.

Table 4.3.3b: Summary of Students Responses on Their Engagement with Institutional Support Services (Career Guidance Activities and Relevance of Economics Curriculum)

Item	SA (%)	A (%)	N (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Mean
Career Guidance	44.0 (11.8)	156.0 (41.9)	102.4 (27.5)	42.4 (11.4)	27.2 (7.3)	3.40
Relevance of Economics Curriculum	62.4 (16.8)	194.4 (52.3)	64.8 (17.4)	13.6 (3.7)	36.8 (9.9)	3.62
Overall Weighted Mean=3.51 (High)						

Source: Researcher's Fieldwork, 2025

KEY: Strongly Agree = 5, Agree = 4, Neutral = 3, Disagree = 2, Strongly Disagree = 1

Decision Rule: Mean value 1.00-1.80 is very low-level agreement, 1.81-2.60 is low agreement, 2.61-3.40 is moderate or neutral agreement, 3.41-4.20 is high agreement, and 4.21-5.00 is very high

The analysis on Table 4.4.1b of institutional support services reveals that Economics undergraduates in Oyo State perceive career guidance activities with moderate agreement (mean=3.40) while, engagement with relevant Economics curriculum had higher agreement (mean=3.62). The overall weighted mean (3.51) falls within the high agreement range, suggesting that while institutional support is reasonably adequate, targeted improvements in career mentorship and curriculum dynamism could enhance student preparedness. The results imply that students engage highly with institutional support services, recognising curricular strengths but identifying gaps in career services. Universities should prioritize structured

mentorship, industry collaborations, and periodic curriculum reviews to better align with labour market demands.

4.2.2 Test of Hypotheses

H₀₂: There will be no significant combined effects of lecturer-related factors (content competence, delivery competence and mentorship) and institutional support services (career counseling and relevance of economics curriculum) on the employability of Economics undergraduates.

Table 4.4: Summary of Regression Analysis of Joint Effect of Lecturer Factors and Institutional Support Services on Employability of Economics Undergraduates

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.330 ^a	0.109	0.104	5.61697

a. Predictors: (Constant), Institutional Support, Lecturer Factors

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1422.390	2	711.195	22.542	0.000 ^b
	Residual	11642.083	369	31.550		
	Total	13064.473	371			

a. Dependent Variable: Employability

b. Predictors: (Constant), Institutional Support, Lecturer Factors

Source: Researcher's Fieldwork, 2025

Table 4.4 is the regression analysis testing the hypothesis that there is no significant combined effect of lecturer-related factors (content competence, delivery competence, and mentorship) and institutional support services (career counselling and curriculum relevance) on the employability of Economics undergraduates. The results revealed a statistically significant regression model, $F_{(2, 369)} = 22.54$, $p < .001$, indicating that the combination of lecturer-related factors and institutional support significantly predicted employability. The

model accounted for approximately 10.9% of the variance in employability, $R^2 = 0.109$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.104$, with a standard error of the estimate of 5.62. Given this result, the null hypothesis (H_{01}) was rejected. This suggests that lecturer-related factors and institutional support services, taken together, significantly influence the perceived employability of Economics undergraduates in Oyo State.

H_{02} : There will be no significant relative influence of lecturer-related factors (content competence, delivery competence and lecturer mentorship) and institutional support services (career counseling and relevance of economics curriculum) on the perceived employability of Economics undergraduates in Oyo State.

Table 4.5: Regression Analysis of Relative Effect of Lecturer Factors and Institutional Support Services on Employability of Economics Undergraduates

Model	Coefficients ^a				
	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	Std. Error				
	B		Beta	t	Sig.
1 (Constant)	50.234	2.114		23.758	.000
Lecturer Factors	.422	.073	0.380	5.754	.000
Institutional Support	-.082	.065	0.083	-1.263	.207

a. Dependent Variable: Employability

Source: Researcher's Fieldwork, 2025

On Table 4.5, hypothesis two posited that there would be no significant relative influence of lecturer-related factors (content competence, delivery competence, and mentorship) and institutional support services (career counselling and curriculum relevance) on the perceived employability of Economics undergraduates in Oyo State. The multiple regression was conducted to assess the contribution of each predictor. The intercept (constant) term ($B =$

50.234, $SE = 2.114$, $t = 23.76$, $p < .001$) indicates that when all predictor variables are zero, the baseline employability score would be 50.234 - this serves as the reference point for the model. Lecturer factors demonstrated a statistically significant positive influence ($B = 0.422$, $SE = 0.073$, $\beta = 0.380$, $t = 5.754$, $p < .001$), suggesting that for every one-unit increase in lecturer factors, employability increases by 0.422 units when holding institutional support constant. The standardized coefficient ($\beta = 0.380$) confirms this as a moderate effect size. Institutional support showed a non-significant negative relationship ($B = -0.082$, $SE = 0.065$, $\beta = -0.083$, $t = -1.263$, $p = 0.207$), with the negative unstandardized coefficient indicating a slight inverse trend that failed to reach statistical significance.

The model statistics ($F_{(2,369)} = 22.54$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .109$) confirm that while the overall model is significant, only 10.9% of variance in employability is explained by these predictors. The t-statistics (23.76 for intercept, 5.754 for lecturer factors, -1.263 for institutional support) measure how many standard deviations each coefficient is from zero, with lecturer factors showing strong evidence against the null hypothesis. The standard errors (2.114 for intercept, 0.073 for lecturer factors, 0.065 for institutional support) indicate the precision of these estimates - smaller values suggest more reliable coefficient estimates.

Based on the regression coefficients, H_{02} is partially rejected. There is a significant relative influence of lecturer-related factors on perceived employability. However, institutional support services do not exert a statistically significant independent effect when both predictors were considered simultaneously. This suggests that while both variables

matter in combination, lecturer-related factors are the stronger and more consistent predictor of employability outcomes among Economics undergraduates in Oyo State.

H₀₃: There will be no significant gender difference in the perception of employability of economics undergraduates in Universities, Oyo State, Nigeria.

Table 4.6: Summary of T-Test Showing Gender Differences on Perceived Employability of Economics Undergraduates

		Group Statistics									
		Gender	N		Mean		Std. Deviation		Std. Error Mean		
Employability	Female		240		64.1000		5.92		.38244		
	Male		132		61.5758		5.62		.48884		
Independent Samples Test											
		Levines Test for Equality of Variance					t-test for equality of Means				
						Sig. (2tail ed)	$\bar{x}$ Dif f	Std. Error Diff.	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		
		F	Sig.	t	df				Lower	Upper	
Employability	Equal variances assumed	2.557	.111	4.004	370	.000	2.52	.6304	1.2846	3.7639	
	Equal variances not assumed			4.067	282.44	.000	2.52	.6207	1.3025	3.7460	

Source: Researcher's Fieldwork, 2025

Table 4.6 presents the independent samples t-test conducted to examine gender differences in perceived employability among Economics undergraduates in universities in Oyo State. The results showed that female students ($M = 64.10$, $SD = 5.92$, $SE = 0.38$, $n = 240$) reported significantly higher employability perceptions than male students ($M = 61.58$,

SD = 5.62, SE = 0.49, n = 132), $t(370) = 4.00$, $p < .001$, with Levene's test confirming homogeneity of variance ($F = 2.557$, $p = 0.111$). The mean difference was 2.52, SE difference = 0.63, 95% CI [1.28, 3.76], representing a moderate effect size (Cohen's $d \approx 0.44$). Therefore, the null hypothesis (H_{03}) was rejected, indicating a statistically significant gender difference in perceived employability in favor of female students that remains consistent whether assuming equal variances ($t = 4.004$) or not ($t = 4.067$). These results confirm that female Economics undergraduates in Oyo State report statistically significant higher levels of perceived employability than their male counterparts. The narrow confidence interval suggests precise estimation of this gender gap, while the small standard errors (0.38 for females, 0.49 for males) indicate good reliability of the mean estimates. The larger sample size for females ($n = 240$) against 132 for males, may contribute to the smaller standard error observed in that group. This pattern may reflect gender-specific experiences in economics education or differing perceptions of career preparedness that warrant further investigation into potential sociocultural or institutional factors driving this disparity.

H₀₄: There will be no significant institutional type difference in the perception of employability of economics undergraduates in Universities, Oyo State, Nigeria.

Table 4.7: Summary of T-Test Showing Differences in Perceived Employability Based on University Type

		Group Statistics								
University Type		N		Mean		Std. Deviation		Std. Error Mean		
Employability	Public	256		62.6289		5.83423		.36464		
	Private	116		64.4741		5.98035		.55526		
Independent Samples Test										
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variance				t-test for equality of Means				
								95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		
		F	Sig.	t	df	p	$\bar{x}$ Diff	Std. Error Diff.	Lower	Upper
Employability	Equal variances assumed	2.671	.103	-2.80	370	.005	-1.85	.6581	-3.1394	.55112
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.78	217.35	.006	-1.85	.6643	-3.1545	-.53596

Source: Researcher's Fieldwork, 2025

Table 4.7 presents an independent samples t-test carried out to determine whether employability perceptions differed significantly by type of institution among Economics undergraduates in universities in Oyo State. Results indicated that students in private universities (M = 64.47, SD = 5.98, SE = 0.56, n = 116) reported significantly higher perceived employability than those in public universities (M = 62.63, SD = 5.83, SE = 0.36, n = 256), $t(370) = -2.80$, $p = .005$, with Levene's test showing homogeneity of variance ($F =$

2.671, $p = .103$). The mean difference was -1.85, SE difference = 0.66, 95% CI [-3.14, -0.55], representing a small-to-moderate effect size (Cohen's $d \approx 0.31$). The null hypothesis (H_{04}) was rejected, suggesting that type of university significantly influences employability perceptions, favoring private university students with consistent results whether assuming equal variances ($t = -2.80$, $df = 370$) or not ($t = -2.78$, $df = 217.35$). Therefore, indicating a statistically significant institutional difference in perceived employability in favor of private university students that remains consistent whether assuming equal variances ($t = -2.80$) or not ($t = -2.78$). These results confirm that Economics undergraduates in private universities in Oyo State report statistically significant higher levels of perceived employability than their public university counterparts. The confidence interval [-3.14, -0.55] suggests precise estimation of this institutional gap, while the standard errors (0.36 for public, 0.56 for private) indicate good reliability of the mean estimates despite the smaller private university sample size ($n = 116$ vs. $n = 256$ for public). This pattern may reflect differences in curriculum delivery, industry linkages, or career support services between institution types that warrant further investigation. The observed effect ($d \approx 0.31$), while modest, suggests private institutions may provide certain advantages in employability preparedness that could be examined through qualitative studies of institutional practices and student experiences across university types.

4.3 Discussion of Findings

The first research question sought to assess the perceived employability status of economics undergraduates in Oyo State, Nigeria. Data revealed an overall positive perception, with students demonstrating strong labour market awareness and confidence in their field of study's relevance. This aligns with previous studies, which argued that self-perceived employability is a decisive predictor of career success, as students who view their skills as marketable are more proactive in job-seeking behaviours^{1,2}. However, this confidence may be somewhat inflated, reflecting more of a psychological coping mechanism than an accurate

self-assessment. In the face of structural unemployment, such optimism might serve as a survival strategy rather than an indicator of true career readiness. However, about fifteen percent of the respondents remained uncertain about job market trends, while 20.4% lacked clarity on workplace ethics, suggesting gaps in career preparedness, which aligns with existing findings^{1,3}. This could suggest that while students are exposed to theoretical economic content, practical workplace dynamics are underemphasized in their training. It is likely that students equate academic success with employability, without adequately understanding the soft skills demanded by employers.

The optimism in employability perceptions may partly reflect Nigeria's high youth unemployment rate (33.3% in 2023), which could motivate students to overestimate their readiness in a competitive job market which aligns with studies on 'survival bias's in developing economies⁴. Beyond this survival biases, this reflects a cultural valorisation of degrees in Nigeria, where simply holding a university certificate is historically equated with job readiness, a mindset university must actively challenge through explicit labour market education. One practical implication is the need to embed employability modules or capstone projects into the curriculum that actively simulate job market scenarios, thereby reducing the disconnect between credentialism and competency.

Notably, private university students reported higher employability, likely due to smaller class numbers and more industry contacts, indicating differences in career readiness between institution types. This disparity highlights the risk of creating a bifurcated higher education system, where employability becomes increasingly stratified along institutional

lines. Such inequality may not only reflect access to resources but also signal deeper systemic biases in employer perceptions and internship allocation. These results also concur that, although students tend to overestimate their level of preparedness, gaps in real-world experience still exist, especially in developing nations with limited ties between academics and business⁵. These findings highlight the dual difficulty of matching academic training with the demands of the labour market. While students perceive their economics curriculum as valuable, the gap in their understanding of work ethics emphasises the necessity of practical learning interventions like mandatory internships and industry partnerships^{2,6}. This adds credence to earlier assertions that employability involves more than just having talents; it also entails knowing how to use them in practical situations⁷. This underscores a significant gap in the operationalisation of the curriculum, where cognitive skills are taught in isolation from behavioural competencies. To truly bridge this gap, institutions must treat internships not as optional but as integral to academic progression. Therefore, even while employability perceptions generally remain optimistic, specific enhancements in career counselling and hands-on training are necessary to close any gaps that may still exist, especially in developing economies where structural unemployment remains high.

The second research question examined the extent to which universities support employability through lecturer factors (competence and mentorship). The findings supported the claim made in a recent study that lecturer pedagogical competency has a direct impact on students' career preparedness by demonstrating that students gave lecturers excellent ratings for both content delivery and mentorship in real-world applications⁸. Nonetheless, 38.8% of students expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of accessibility for academic guidance,

supporting previous findings that institutional limitations (such as large student-lecturer ratios) impede individualised support⁹. A likely contributor to this trend is the administrative overburden faced by lecturers, which reduces the time and energy available for meaningful mentoring. This may reflect a system that values content delivery over student development. Accessibility issues are probably made worse by public institutions' high student-lecturer ratios, which supports research on limited resources in Nigerian higher education. While social expectations force men to pursue occupations in the informal sector, which lowers participation with university support, women's higher employability scores from this study may represent greater mentorship-seeking behaviours. This aligns with previous research, which found that inadequate lecturer-student interaction diminishes career guidance effectiveness¹⁰. Furthermore, cultural norms may influence mentorship engagement, with female students potentially feeling more permitted or encouraged to seek guidance, while male students may be socialized into more autonomous career navigation.

The study found that lecturers have a major impact on students' views of employability, particularly through their mentoring and competency^{11,12}. However, Laye's critique of mentorship malpractice in underfunded institutions is in line with the low accessibility ratings, which indicate systemic inefficiencies¹³. Therefore, to maximise the influence of lecturers, institutions must implement mentorship programmes, reduce administrative burdens, and integrate industry-aligned teaching methodologies. This is consistent with earlier publications that argue that lecturer development should be prioritised in higher education administration reforms to increase graduate employability^{14,15,16}. Therefore, to optimise the performance of lecturers, who play a crucial role in facilitating

employability, systemic changes are needed, such as adjustments to the workload and incentives for professional development.

The third research question evaluated curriculum relevance and career guidance as indicators of institutional support. In line with the study's findings that career services in Nigerian institutions are frequently underfunded and underutilised, the results of this study showed a modest level of effectiveness in career services, confirming functional career units¹⁰. Public university underfunding (5.3% of Nigeria's 2024 budget) restricts access to internships and career fairs, increasing the gap with private universities¹⁷. A "theory-practice gap" is revealed by poor fieldwork integration (mean = 3.36), despite high curricular relevance ratings (mean = 4.05), which is consistent with criticisms of African higher education¹⁸. This disconnect may stem from curricula being designed without sufficient industry consultation. While economic theories taught are relevant, their lack of application in local industries renders them abstract for students navigating job markets. On the other hand, the majority of respondents concurred that the curriculum was relevant since it addressed actual economic issues and backed the focus on curriculum-industry alignment. Nevertheless, students rated fieldwork and internships poorly, demonstrating that what is said on paper isn't usually followed in reality. This supports previous studies that demonstrate the significant impact of real-world experience, stepping outside of the classroom and into real-world work environments, on graduates' employability^{7,19}. Therefore, institutions should consider mandating final-year experiential projects in collaboration with employers, thereby ensuring that curricular outcomes translate into employable capabilities. These findings suggest that while curriculum design is theoretically sound, execution lags in practical delivery. Career

services suffer from inconsistent availability, corroborating a call for mandatory career education from the first year. To enhance employability, universities must strengthen industry partnerships and standardise career support systems^{20,21}. This is in line with those who argue that employability frameworks must integrate institutional policies with labour market demands²². Thus, institutional support shows promise but requires operational refinement to translate policy into tangible student outcomes, particularly in resource-constrained settings.

The first hypothesis on the joint influence of lecturer and institutional factors on employability was rejected, with the model explaining 10.9% of variance. That is lecturer and institutional factors significantly influenced the employability of economics undergraduates in Oyo state. One possible explanation is that institutional frameworks, although theoretically robust, often lack effective implementation mechanisms. For instance, career services may exist nominally but fail to engage students due to bureaucratic delivery or low visibility. This underscores the primacy of human capital in employability outcomes. While institutional frameworks (curriculum and career services) provide scaffolding, lecturers' direct engagement, through mentorship and pedagogy, remains the critical lever^{1,8,23}. The study thus advocates for integrated interventions that empower lecturers while addressing institutional gaps in resource allocation and policy implementation.

Hypothesis two, testing the relative influence of these factors, was partially rejected. While lecturer factors significantly predicted employability, institutional support did not. The insignificance of institutional support ($\beta = -0.08$) may reflect bureaucratic delays in policy implementation, such as slow curriculum updates or career service understaffing, which

lecturers' direct influence mitigates. This aligns with two studies, which found that lecturer mentorship directly enhances career confidence, whereas institutional services often suffer from low student engagement^{12,13}. The disparity suggests that top-down institutional policies may lack grassroots efficacy without lecturer involvement. For instance, career workshops fail if lecturers do not reinforce their relevance⁶. Thus, employability strategies must synergise institutional resources with lecturer-led initiatives, ensuring cohesive student support. This suggests a misalignment between institutional policy and ground-level practice. While lecturers serve as frontline agents of employability, their potential is curtailed without institutional reform that enables agile, context-responsive support mechanisms.

Hypothesis three tested the gender difference in the perception of employability of economics undergraduates in universities, Oyo State, Nigeria was rejected, with females reporting higher employability perceptions than males. The female advantage contrasts global trends but aligns with Nigerian female tertiary enrolment rates, suggesting gendered career diligence or male prioritisation of non-formal employment. This contrasts with global trends but aligns with Nigerian studies where females exhibit greater career planning diligence^{14,24}. Possible explanations include gender-specific mentorship gaps or societal pressures on males to secure high-income roles^{25,26}. The findings advocate for gender-responsive employability programmes, addressing male students' unique barriers (e.g., entrepreneurship training) while sustaining female gains through mentorship²⁷. This is in consonance with the study that argues that work meaning differs by gender, necessitating tailored career interventions²⁸. The gender gap observed may also reflect broader societal role expectations, where female students are socialised to be more meticulous and compliant; qualities that align well with

academic and career planning, in contrast to the risk-taking tendencies promoted among their male counterparts.

Testing the difference in the perception of employability of economics undergraduates in universities, Oyo State based on institutional type was rejected, with private university students reporting higher employability than public peers. Private universities' edge underscores resource disparities but risks inequity; public-private partnerships (PPPs) could mandate private institutions to share internship slots with public students¹³. This reflects resource disparities, as private institutions often offer smaller classes and stronger industry ties^{18,19}. However, public universities' lower cost and broader access remain vital for equity²⁰. This disparity likely stems from better-resourced career services, stronger industry linkages, and smaller class sizes in private institutions, enabling more personalised employability development support compared to often overburdened public university systems. To mitigate this gap, public-private partnerships could enhance resource sharing, ensuring all students benefit from robust employability support. Without such equitable frameworks, the employability divide may reinforce socioeconomic inequalities, marginalising graduates from public institutions despite their numbers and potential. Therefore, national policy must enforce collaborative employability ecosystems that transcend institutional boundaries.

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Chapter Five

Conclusion

The chapter contains summary of the study, conclusion, recommendation, contribution to knowledge and area for further studies. It is presented under the following subheadings: Summary of findings, Conclusion, Recommendations, Contribution to knowledge, Suggested Areas for further studies.

5.1 Summary of Findings

Research Question 1 on the perceived employability status of economics undergraduates revealed that economics undergraduates in Oyo State exhibit strong confidence in their employability (Weighted Mean = 4.21). Out of the three indices used to measure undergraduate perception of employability in this study, field of study ranked highest (Mean = 4.31), followed by labour market awareness (Mean = 4.17) and lastly, self-awareness (Mean = 4.14).

Regarding Research Question 2, the results indicated that universities in Oyo state are supporting their students in developing employability through lecturer factors (lecturer competence and mentorship) to a high extent with a weighted mean of 3.86. Out of the two indicators used to measure lecturer factors, lecturer competence had the highest mean score (mean = 3.89) and the second indicator, mentorship had a mean score of 3.61.

The third research question on institutional support received mixed evaluations, with career services scoring moderately (mean = 3.40) and only 41.9% confirming functional career units. While curriculum relevance was rated high (mean = 3.62), a notable theory-practice gap existed, with fieldwork integration (mean = 3.36) lagging behind theoretical

components (mean = 4.05). Private institutions outperformed public universities in support provision, suggesting resource disparities affect employability preparation. These findings indicate a need for enhanced practical training and more equitable distribution of career development resources across institution types.

Hypothesis 1 on the combined influence of lecturer and institutional factors: the regression analysis revealed that lecturer and institutional factors together explained 10.9% of employability variance (Adj. $R^2 = 0.104$; $F_{(2,369)} = 22.54$, $p < .001$). It is concluded that lecturer and institutional factors when combined, significantly influences the employability of economics undergraduates.

The second hypothesis on the relative influence of lecturer and institutional factors indicated that lecturer factors (competence and mentorship) showed a significant positive influence ($\beta = 0.38$, $p < .001$), while institutional support was non-significant ($\beta = -0.08$, $p = .207$), indicating teaching quality outweighs structural support in shaping employability perceptions. This underscores the pivotal role of direct student-lecturer interactions in career preparedness.

The result on gender difference showed that there was a significant gender difference in undergraduates' perception of employability ($t(370) = 4.00$, $p < .001$), with female students reporting higher employability (mean = 64.10, SD = 5.92) than males (mean = 61.58, SD = 5.62).

Finally, on differences in employability status by institution type, results revealed a significant difference ($t(370) = -2.80, p = .005$), with private university students (mean = 64.47) having a higher mean score than their counterparts in public universities (mean = 62.63), though with a smaller effect size ($d = 0.31$).

5.2 Conclusion

This study investigated the perceived employability of Economics undergraduates in Oyo State, Nigeria. The results show that students possess a very high overall perception of their employability. They expressed strong confidence in their field of study and their understanding of labour market requirements.

Analysis shows that the support provided by lecturers is a significant factor. Students rated highly lecturers who demonstrated high content knowledge, clear explanations, and using real-world examples. However, this positive contribution is hampered by inconsistent lecture organisation and a general lack of accessibility for academic guidance or mentorship.

Institutional support services, such as career guidance and relevance of Economics curriculum, were perceived less positively. Their overall influence on employability perceptions was statistically weaker than that of lecturer factors. The analysis also identified significant differences based on gender and institution type. Significant differences in perception were also noted, with female students and those enrolled in private universities reporting higher levels of employability confidence.

The findings indicate that while student confidence is high, their preparedness relies heavily on individual lecturer competence. Strengthening university-wide systems for career services and curriculum development is necessary to build a more reliable and equitable foundation for student preparedness, complementing the variable role played by individual lecturers.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the study's findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. Universities should elevate lecturer training programmes to enhance pedagogical expertise, align closely with industry demands, and boost mentorship effectiveness, as these crucial factors significantly enhance students' perceptions of employability.
2. To conduct a thorough reassessment of institutional support services to ensure that career guidance and curriculums are optimally structured and effectively communicated to all students and not rely solely on lecturer factors.
3. Career guidance units must be revitalised to offer regular, tailored workshops, career fairs, internships, and individualised counseling that respond to the specific needs of Economics students.
4. Economics curricula should undergo periodic reviews to incorporate current labour market trends, experiential learning opportunities (like fieldwork and projects), and entrepreneurship education.
5. Nigeria Universities should implement bold, gender-sensitive career initiatives to tackle disparities in employability confidence, ensuring that both male and female students receive the tailored support they need to thrive.

6. Public universities should examine and adopt best practices from private institutions, particularly regarding resource allocation, industry linkages, and career services to narrow institutional gaps in employability perceptions.
7. The National Universities Commission (NUC) in collaboration with university management should establish a collaborative employability framework that integrates lecturer development initiatives with institutional support services. This structure will strengthen the overall employability outcomes of Economics undergraduates in Oyo State and across Nigeria.

5.4 Contribution to Knowledge

Conceptually, this study gave an in-depth discussion and explanation to the concepts of the research. These concepts which include Lecturer Factors, Institutional Support Services and university student's perception of employability were thoroughly and richly discussed.

The study also contributes to the determinants of employability among Economics undergraduates in Oyo State, Nigeria, particularly emphasizing the central role of lecturers over institutional support services. It provides empirical evidence that lecturer competence and mentorship have a stronger influence on students' career readiness than formal institutional support services.

The findings challenge conventional assumptions about the superiority of curriculum and career services, suggesting that human capital development through effective teaching is equally, if not more essential. Additionally, the study highlights gender and institutional disparities in employability perceptions, offering new insights for targeted policy

interventions. By integrating Human Capital Theory, the research advances theoretical discourse on employability in developing countries, where academic-industry linkages remain weak.

5.5 Suggestion for Further Studies

This study made use of quantitative research. Subsequent studies on the same theme could employ the use of qualitative approach such as interview, observation and focused group. Mixed method can also be considered in order to have more robust responses.

Subsequent studies can also consider other indices of lecturer factors, institutional support services and public and private university student's perception of employability that are not considered in this study, such as research support, technology integration, workload management and infrastructural support. This is to know if they will behave in the same manner as the ones considered in this study. Furthermore, this study can be carried out in other states, region, or the country as a whole.

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APPENDIX I
Reliability Statistics

Scale: Perceived Self Employability

Case Processing Summary			
		N	%
Cases	Valid	20	100.0
	Excluded ^a	0	.0
	Total	20	100.0
a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.			

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.892	15

Item Statistics			
	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
am knowledgeable about the current trends and demands of the labour market in my field of study	3.967	.8654	20
am aware of the key employers and industries in my field of study	4.079	.7274	20
understand the skills and qualifications required by employers in my field of study	4.304	.6212	20
am informed about the job market outlook and prospects in my field of study	4.138	.7185	20
believe that my knowledge of the labour market will enhance my employability prospects	4.358	.6358	20
believe that my field of study provided me with relevant skills and knowledge for the workforce	4.360	.6364	20
am confident that my field of study will lead to good job prospects	4.480	.6170	20
believe that my field of study is in high demand by employers in	4.260	.7205	20

industries			
believe that my field of study provided me with a competitive edge in the labour market	4.209	.7748	20
am satisfied that my field of study aligns with my career goals and aspirations	4.358	.6692	20
am aware of the requirements of my future career	4.304	.6553	20
am aware of the organizational culture and standards in my chosen field of study	4.163	.5949	20
have the knowledge of what is expected of me in terms job specifications in my future profession	4.154	.7805	20
understand the work ethics of various organizations in my career path	4.014	.7012	20
am aware of the skills which are in high demand from potential employers in my profession	4.068	.6579	20

Scale Statistics			
Mean	Variance	Std. Deviation	N of Items
63.214	35.489	5.9573	15

Scale: Lecturer Factors

Case Processing Summary			
		N	%
Cases	Valid	20	100.0
	Excluded ^a	0	.0
	Total	20	100.0
a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.			

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.821	10

Item Statistics			
	Mean	Std.	N

		Deviation	
demonstrate a deep understanding of the course content they teach in the classroom	4.172	.8765	20
explain and simplify difficult concepts effectively and clearly	4.194	.8595	20
use appropriate teaching methods to enhance student's understanding	4.032	.9223	20
are well organized and prepared in delivering course contents	2.882	1.3526	20
Use relevant examples and illustrations to support their teaching for better understanding of students	4.194	.6928	20
provide guidance on career paths for economics graduates	3.957	.9277	20
are easily approachable and accessible for academic advice	2.753	1.3748	20
act as role models and demonstrate professional personalities that I can emulate	4.043	.9393	20
encourage and support my participation in employability and professional development opportunities	3.183	1.3047	20
mentor me on how to apply academic knowledge in real life situations	4.108	.8745	20

Scale Statistics			
Mean	Variance	Std. Deviation	N of Items
37.516	28.498	5.3384	10

Scale: Institutional Support Services

Case Processing Summary			
		N	%
Cases	Valid	20	100.0
	Excluded ^a	0	.0
	Total	20	100.0
a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.			

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.779	10

Item Statistics			
	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
has a functional Career or employability Services Unit that assigns students to faculty or industry mentors	3.108	1.1323	20
organizes workshops on CV writing, interview skills, networking and professional etiquette	3.570	1.0528	20
makes arrangement for career fairs, employer presentations and industry visits	3.086	1.1530	20
Provides me with opportunities for internships and job shadowing	3.505	.9587	20
provides career guidance services that are tailored to the specific needs of economic students	3.710	.8759	20
provides economics curriculum that covers topics that are applicable to real life economic problems	4.054	.7540	20
ensures emphasis on entrepreneurship education and skill development within the economics programme	4.065	.7165	20
ensures regular review and updating of economics curriculum	3.247	1.2517	20
ensures that the economics curriculum provides students with the knowledge and skills needed in the labour market	3.398	1.2558	20
ensures that the economics curriculum includes fieldwork, excursion and research projects that enhance learning and offers workshops to improve my soft skills (e.g., communication, teamwork)	3.355	1.1529	20

Scale Statistics			
Mean	Variance	Std. Deviation	N of Items
35.097	36.724	6.0600	10

APPENDIX 2

Economics Undergraduates' Perceived Employability Questionnaire (EUPEQ)

Department of Arts and Social Science Education,
Faculty of Education,
Lead City University,
Ibadan.

Request to Participate in a Research

I am a MSc Ed student of the above-mentioned institution. I am currently carrying out research on your perception of how some of your experiences as an economics undergraduate in your university are developing your employability. You are to please respond appropriately to the set of questions in this questionnaire. As respondents in this exercise, you are not expected to write your name; all information given will be treated as anonymous and will be used solely for research purpose.

Yours faithfully,

Mrs. Omowunmi Okunniyi.

Section A: Demographic Characteristics

Instruction: Please, tick (✓) the option that best fits your response to the questions below;

Age Range: 15-19 years () 20-24 years () 25 years and above ()

Gender: Female () Male ()

University Type: Public () Private ()

Name of Institution: _____

Course of Study: _____

Present Level: _____

Section B:**Instruction:** Please, tick (✓) the option that best fits your response to the questions below;Strongly Agree (**SA**) Agree (**A**) Neutral (**N**) Disagree (**D**) Strongly Disagree (**SD**)**EMPLOYABILITY**

S/N	Item	SA	A	N	D	SD
	Labour Market Awareness					
	I:					
1	am knowledgeable about the current trends and demands of the labour market in my field of study					
2	am aware of the key employers and industries in my field of study					
3	understand the skills and qualifications required by employers in my field of study					
4	am informed about the job market outlook and prospects in my field of study					
5	believe that my knowledge of the labour market will enhance my employability prospects					
	Field of Study					
6	believe that my field of study provided me with relevant skills and knowledge for the workforce					
7	am confident that my field of study will lead to good job prospects					
8	believe that my field of study is in high demand by employers in industries					
9	believe that my field of study provided me with a competitive edge in the labour market					
10	am satisfied that my field of study aligns with my career goals and aspirations					
	Self-Awareness					

11	am aware of the requirements of my future career					
12	am aware of the organizational culture and standards in my chosen field of study					
13	have the knowledge of what is expected of me in terms job specifications in my future profession					
14	understand the work ethics of various organizations in my career path					
15	am aware of the skills which are in high demand from potential employers in my profession					

Section C: Lecturer Factors

S/N	Item	SA	A	U	D	SD
	Lecturer Competence (Content competence and Delivery competence)					
	My Economics Lecturers:					
16	demonstrate a deep understanding of the course content they teach in the classroom					
17	explain and simplify difficult concepts effectively and clearly					
18	use appropriate teaching methods to enhance student's understanding					
19	are well organized and prepared in delivering course contents					
20	Use relevant examples and illustrations to support their teaching for better understanding of students					
	Lecturer Mentorship					
21	provide guidance on career paths for economics graduates					
22	are easily approachable and accessible for academic advice					
23	act as role models and demonstrate professional personalities that I can emulate					
24	encourage and support my participation in employability and					

	professional development opportunities					
25	mentor me on how to apply academic knowledge in real life situations					

Section D: Institutional Support Services

S/N	Career Guidance Activities	SA	A	U	D	SD
	My university:					
26	has a functional Career or employability Services Unit that assigns students to faculty or industry mentors					
27	organizes workshops on CV writing, interview skills, networking and professional etiquette					
28	makes arrangement for career fairs, employer presentations and industry visits					
29	Provides me with opportunities for internships and job shadowing					
30	provides career guidance services that are tailored to the specific needs of economic students					
	Relevance of Economics Curriculum					
31	provides economics curriculum that covers topics that are applicable to real life economic problems					
32	ensures emphasis on entrepreneurship education and skill development within the economics programme					
33	ensures regular review and updating of economics curriculum					
34	ensures that the economics curriculum provides students with the knowledge and skills needed in the labour market					
35	ensures that the economics curriculum includes fieldwork, excursion and research projects that enhance learning					

Bio-data

A. Personal Data

- **Full Name:** Omowunmi Olubunmi OKUNNIYI
Lead City University, Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria.
Ogutugaomowunmi8@gmail.com
09014895099
- **Date of Birth:** 7th August, 1988
- **Nationality:** Nigerian
- **Marital Status:** Married
- **Name of Next of Kin:** Mr. Babajide Okunniyi
- **Address of Next of Kin:** 1, Olupoyi Street, off Benbo Road, Apata, Ibadan

B. Educational Background

1. Educational Institutions Attended with Dates and Qualification:

i. Primary Education

- 1994 – 1999 Richmab International Nursery/Primary School, Ibadan, Oyo State

ii. Secondary Education

- 2000 – 2005 Abass Maje Nassarawa Secondary School, Kano, Kano State

iii. Higher Educational Institutions Attended with Dates & Qualification

- 2023 – 2025 Lead City University, Ibadan, Oyo State (MSc Ed-Economics Education)

2008 - 2011 University of Maiduguri, Borno State (BSc Ed - Economics Education)

C. Work Experience with Dates:

- Global Emerging Pathogens Treatment Consortium (GET), Ibadan 2019- 2025
- Access Bank Plc., Lagos Nigeria 2015– 2019
- First City Monument Bank (FCMB), Ibadan, Nigeria 2015
- Globacomm Limited, Ibadan, Nigeria 2014
- Government Girls Secondary School (NYSC), Zagga, Kebbi State 2012 - 2013

D. Extra-Curricular Activities

Attending events and browsing the internet

E. Other Relevant Skills

- Strong verbal and written communication skills in English
- Demonstrated initiative in planning and managing administrative tasks
- Critical thinking, problem-solving, and strong analytical skills
- Excellent human relations, interpersonal skills, and ability to multi-task
- Skilled in teamwork and team building to achieve organizational goals

F. Major Conference Attended with Date

- 2nd Multidisciplinary International Conference October 6 - 9, 2025
Theme: Equity, Diversity, and Inclusivity in Research

Postgraduate College, Lead City University, Ibadan.

G. Name and Address of Referees

1. Dr. Oluyomi S. Pitan,

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Lead City University, Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria.

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Signature

Date

2. Dr. Seyi David,

Senior Lecturer, Department of Arts and Social Science Education,

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Signature

Date

The University Compliance Certification

This is to certify that this thesis by Omowunmi Olubunmi OKUNNIYI in the Department of Arts & Social Science Education, Faculty of Education, Lead City University, Ibadan, Oyo State is in full compliance with the approved University format and style.

Signature

Date