

Effect of Graduate Unemployment on Career Development in Ghana

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Abstract

This study examines the effect of unemployed graduates in Ghana on their career development. The study adopts a mixed research methodology through a structured questionnaire and interview guide. The purposive sampling was employed for a sample of 250 respondents, including both private and public universities and Human Resource professionals in the Greater Accra region of Ghana. Based on content analysis, correlation and regression analysis techniques, the study found that the unemployment situation in Ghana can also be attributed to the programmes pursued in the Universities. The study discovered that one key demographic characteristic that might influence graduate unemployment would be the age of the graduates. The study found that graduates who offered psychology, sociology, physical sciences, Mathematics, engineering, government, political studies, Health (Nursing, Doctors, etc.), arts and history normally find it difficult to be employed in Ghana. The findings of the study further demonstrated that unemployment status has a negative and significant impact on the career development of graduates. The study recommended that the majority of the teaching that goes on in our universities should be reviewed in terms of projects and skills that are relevant to the current economy and workplace demands.

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1. Introduction

Many countries throughout the world have seen a rise in the number of graduates entering the workforce in recent years as a result of increased access to higher education. In today's contemporary environment, there are a number of colleges and universities, both public and private, on the rise. This provision applies to all educational institutions, including polytechnics. The tendency according to Machin and McNally (2007), has affected how firms employ educated personnel. As a result of the expansion, competition for jobs has intensified, and graduate unemployment has risen tremendously. This has become a major source of concern globally (Baldry, 2013; Filmer et al., 2014; Arif & Farooq, 2011; Hanapi & Nordin, 2014). A significant fraction of the unemployed graduate population may be actively looking for a job, but it does not change the definition of the unemployment rate (Khraief et al., 2020).

Many graduates from tertiary institutions are concerned about the state of the labour market after graduation. Graduating students across the developed world find themselves in jobs for which they are overqualified at the outset of their careers (Lauder & Mayhew, 2020; Burke, Scurry & Blenkinsopp, 2020; Duta, Wielgoszewska & Iannelli, 2021). Graduate unemployment is also a source of concern, owing in large part to a mismatch between the demand for high-skilled jobs and the supply of new graduates (Tamrat, 2023). Graduate unemployment has indeed decreased since the outbreak of the financial pandemic in 2008 and 2018 respectively, however, it's still an issue in some African and EU countries. For example, Ghana's unemployment rate as of 2020 stood at 4.53%, up 0.413% from 2019. The unemployment rate in Ghana was 4.12 % in 2019, a 0.04% decrease from last year's 4.13 % (Ghana News Agency, 2022).

According to the EU average of 76 percent, the rates in Italy and Greece were 45 and 44 % in 2014, respectively (Eurostat, 2015). Furthermore, cohorts of graduates who graduate in recessionary economies have been demonstrated to face enduring, unfavourable labour market repercussions in terms of being stuck in lower-level employment and having difficulty in accessing future career prospects (Beaudry, Green & Sand, 2016; Kahn, 2010)

There has been a look into how independent variables or factors like educational attainment and career choice influence unemployment (Ayuka, 2020). Whilst others have used exploratory studies in search of the causes, consequences, and remedies of graduate unemployment (Olukayode, 2017; Oppong & Sachs, 2015), some studies looked into the impact of graduate unemployment (Poku-Boansi & Sam Afrane, 2011). The gap grasped is that there has not been an empirical investigation into, specifically, the effect that the condition of being unemployed has on the career choice or path or career development of the victims who leave tertiary institutions with the hope of getting employable skills and looking forward to charting new dawn of using those skills in their career acquisition. In addition, the studies reviewed have looked mostly at the macro level of impact of unemployment among the youth, thus the impact from the national level (Ayuka, 2020; Olukayode, 2017; Boateng, 2015). A few have sought to look into how the micro-level, assessing how the bearing related to the wellbeing of career health of the graduates who are employed (Konstam, Celen-Demirtas, Tomek and Sweeney, 2015). The first objective of this study is to identify the critical determinants of graduate unemployment in Ghana. This involves exploring various factors such as educational mismatches, skill gaps, and economic conditions that contribute to the high rate of unemployment among graduates (Husin et al., 2021). By understanding these determinants, the study aims to provide insights into the systemic challenges faced by graduates in the job market (Mncayi & Meyer, 2022). Secondly, the study seeks to assess the relationship between career preference and the unemployment of graduates in Ghana. This involves examining how personal career choices, influenced by educational background and market demands, affect employment outcomes (Ghani, 2020). This assessment is crucial in understanding whether the aspirations of graduates align with the available job opportunities in the market (Ryu & Jeong, 2021). Finally, the study aims to examine the effects of graduate unemployment on career development in Ghana. This involves analyzing how prolonged periods of unemployment or underemployment affect the career trajectories and skill development of graduates (Okolie et al., 2020). Understanding these effects is vital for developing strategies to support graduates in navigating the job market and achieving their career goals (Yuan et al., 2020).

The study addresses several gaps in the existing literature. Firstly, while there is substantial research on graduate unemployment, there is a lack of comprehensive studies focusing specifically on Ghana (for example: Kinasih & Nihayah, 2022; Krajňáková, Pilinkienė & Bulko, 2020; Salahuddin, Mahpar & Ishak, 2023). Additionally, the relationship between career preferences and unemployment has not been extensively explored in the Ghanaian context (Briones et al., 2021; Ajayi & Anyidoho, 2022; Gyarteng-Mensah et al., 2022; Segbenya et al., 2023). This study is motivated by the need to provide empirical evidence that can inform policy decisions and career guidance programs in Ghana (Boateng, 2021). The contributions of this research are significant, as it not only adds to the academic discourse but also provides practical insights for stakeholders, including educational institutions, policymakers, and graduates themselves, in addressing the challenges of graduate unemployment in Ghana.

2. Literature Review

The concept of Graduate unemployment is described by Oppong and Sachs (2015) as the number or percentage of degree holders (graduate and postgraduate) in a particular economy where the indices are capable and prepared to work, but are unable to find employment. Graduate unemployment, as defined by this definition, is a specific sort of unemployment experienced by individuals who have earned a postsecondary degree but are currently employed part-time and earning zero dollars. According to Eneji, Maifa and Weiping (2013), Akinyemi and Ikunomore (2012) and Ogege (2011), graduates from universities and polytechnics who are ready to work but have been discriminated against because of a lack of work experience all fall under the umbrella of graduate unemployment. People who have recently graduated from a four-year college or university, those who have been laid off and are looking for work, and those who are unemployed or working in a job that is disguised all fall within these bands.

Attieku, Dorkey, Marfo-Yiadom, and Tekyi, (2006) define career decision-making by way of an act of choosing which a particular course of action from among various alternatives for the attainment of the desired end or as a solution to a particular problem. A conscious or unconscious attempt to choose from competing options, such as policies, methods, or programs. As part of the process. According to Attieku, Dorkey, Marfo-Yiadom, and Tekyi (2006). As a result of Gibson and Mitchell's (1995) work, students can now make more informed selections about their future careers. Student support should focus on areas like self-awareness, education awareness, and career awareness. They also advocated for opportunities for students to explore their options in the areas of career exploration and planning.

While discussing the topic of professional growth, Tolbert (1974) asserts that career development can be broadly characterized as a lifelong process of developing beliefs and values, abilities, interests, and knowledge of the workplace as well as other personal traits. It is the whole amount of psychological, sociological, educational, physical, economic, and chance aspects that combine to shape an individual's career throughout the course of his or her lifetime, according to

Sears (1982). As a result, advancing one's career entails balancing the needs of one's mind, emotions, social network, education, and employment at the same time. Through paid or unpaid job experience, an individual's career development is concerned with his or her development of skills and the availability of career prospects.

The study is underpinned on the human capital theory. Human Capital Theory, a cornerstone in labor economics, conceives that investments in education, training, and health are pivotal in improving productivity and earnings of individuals, thereby contributing to economic growth. This theory, first rigorously developed by economists such as Theodore Schultz and Gary Becker in the mid-20th century, suggests that human capital is a critical driver of economic success, both for individuals and for society's at large (Becker, 1964; Schultz, 1961).

Schultz (1961) emphasized the role of education and training in enhancing the productive capabilities of a workforce, arguing that these investments yield returns similar to those on physical capital. Becker (1964) further expanded this concept, detailing how individuals make decisions on education and training based on a cost-benefit analysis, weighing the potential future earnings against the current costs of such investments. However, the Human Capital Theory has faced criticism for its overly simplistic view of the relationship between education and economic productivity. Critics argue that the theory underestimates the complexity of how education translates into economic growth and overlooks the role of social and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986). It is also criticized for assuming a linear and direct relationship between education level and productivity, neglecting factors such as the quality of education, the relevance of skills to the job market, and the socio-economic background of individuals (Marginson, 2019).

Relating this to the study of graduate unemployment in Ghana, the Human Capital Theory provides a useful lens to understand the challenges faced by graduates. The theory would suggest that the unemployment of graduates in Ghana could be as a result of mismatching between the skills acquired through their education and the needs of the job market. This aligns with the study's findings that certain fields of study, such as psychology, sociology, and the arts, face higher unemployment rates in Ghana. It implies that the education system may not be fully aligned with the economic and industry demands of the country.

Furthermore, the study's recommendation for a shift in university teaching towards skills and projects relevant to the current economy despairs of the Human Capital Theory's emphasis on the economic value of education. However, it also highlights the limitations of the theory. As does not fully account for the broader socio-economic factors influencing graduate unemployment, such as economic policies, industry driven growth, and the overall job market landscape in Ghana. In essence, while Human Capital Theory offers valuable insights into the importance of education and skill development in economic productivity, its application in understanding the graduate unemployment situation in Ghana reveals its limitations. It underscores the need for a more laborious approach that considers the quality and relevance of education, as well as broader economic and social factors, in addressing the challenges of graduate unemployment.

Figure 1 demonstrates the conceptual framework of the study depicted in the diagram which serves as a visual representation to address the specific objectives outlined. In Ghana, where graduate unemployment is a concern, this part of the study looked into how graduates are

potentially altering their career aspirations based on the job market's demands or the availability of employment opportunities. It also considered whether the necessity to secure employment leads to a compromise on career aspirations or if it encourages a shift towards more entrepreneurial roles.

The study further examined how being unemployed after graduation—a period meant for entering the job market and applying one's skills—impacts the subsequent professional growth of individuals. This involves looking at how the initial setback of unemployment affects the trajectory of career advancement, skill enhancement, and overall professional success. The study is likely to investigate long-term implications such as job stability, satisfaction, and progression in relation to the early career challenges posed by unemployment.

In principle, the diagram suggests that the graduate unemployment in Ghana is a fundamental element that could shape an individual's career choices and the subsequent development of their career. The study seeks to explore these dynamics by examining the direct relationship between unemployment, the career paths of graduates choose or forced to take to a course, and how these paths influence their professional growth and development.

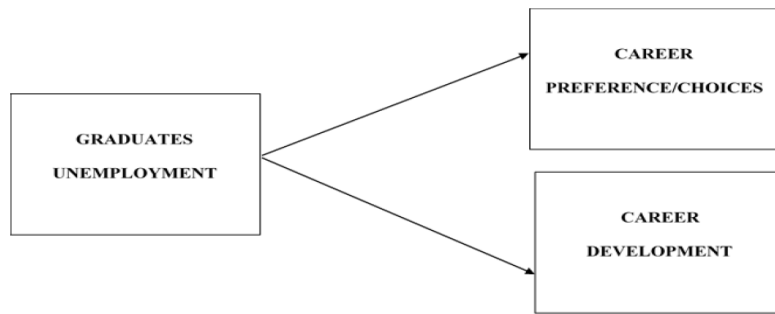


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of the Study
Source: Author's Own Construct, 2022

3. Methodology

To evaluate the premise of research questions concerning the current state of the study's, a descriptive research methodology was used to collect analytical data about individual and collective research samples (Zaker et al., 2019). As per Saunders et al. (2007), the descriptive study approach is ideal when it comes to analyzing current situations and connections, established practices, and how individuals see ongoing activities. According to Ary et al. (2006), the descriptive design functions as a vehicle for accumulating data to measure existing activities to make improvements to such practices. In most cases, descriptive surveys improve preliminary research by assisting scholars in the process of collecting evidence, condensing it, presenting it, and interpreting it (Creswell, 2003). For this study, the collection of data was done using a mixed-method technique. This helped provide findings that are not merely statistical in nature but are grounded in broader understandings of individual career choice trajectories and how institutional frameworks and processes work to determine these flights.

3.1. Population, sample and sampling procedure

The population consists of all unemployed graduates from all tertiary universities in Greater Accra, Ghana, as well as professionals working in the field of human resource management. According to Saunders et al. (2007), the likelihood of making an incorrect assumption about the population is reduced when the sample size is increased. It is the process of selecting a subset of the population to take part in the research. In view of this, given that the total number of people in the population the study adopted the formulae based on the Central Limit Theorem and principles of normal distribution (Ott & Longnecker, 2015).

$$n = \frac{Z^2 \times p \times (1-p)}{E^2}$$

Where:

n is the sample size.

Z is the Z-score, which corresponds to the desired confidence level (1.96 for 95% confidence).

p is the estimated proportion of the attribute present in the population (if unknown, 0.5 is used as it provides the maximum sample size).

E is the margin of error (6.2%).

In relation to this, the research was conducted on all two hundred and fifty (250) individuals. 10 professionals working in the field of human resource management provided data via the interview guide and 240 unemployed graduates provided data using the questionnaires.

Participants were selected through the process of purposive sampling, based on whether they met the requirements of having been jobless for more than two years and having never obtained a job after graduating from tertiary institutions and completing their national service. The fundamental issue of the approaches of purposive sampling is the use of judgment in order to pick those individuals who are able to supply the most useful information in support of the goals of the research (Kumar, 2011).

3.2. Data collection instruments, procedure and analysis

The research methods used for this study included questionnaires and interviews. The questionnaires were administered to the respondents with the assistance of three volunteers to both ensure a high response rate and limit the number of mistakes that occurred. There were instances of both open-ended and closed-ended questioning. To elicit responses from the majority of people who participated in this study, questionnaires were employed. To gain an understanding of the critical determinants of graduate unemployment in Ghana, in-depth interviews with key informants of key institutional bodies were conducted, and they were guided by interview guides.

Analyses were conducted for both qualitative and quantitative data. Generally, however, data collected from the field was cleaned before being used for validation, ensuring that every question was answered correctly and had only one possible

response. These changes were made following a thorough check to make sure that no questions with just one possible response had been overlooked or overlooked more than once. In a comparable fashion, the accuracy of the recordings made during the interviews was validated. In a nutshell, before the real data analysis took place, the acquired information was meticulously edited to ensure that it was consistent and comprehensive. Following the completion of the gathering process, the data were initially organized and cleaned. The questionnaires were examined to ensure that they were comprehensive and consistent. The data from the surveys were examined using the statistical program SPSS, while the data from the in-depth interviews were transcribed, manually evaluated, and categorized according to the topics and subject matters discussed.

The model specification is as follows:

$$gu = \alpha + \beta_1 cc + \beta_2 cd + e$$

Where *gu* is graduate unemployment, being the dependent variable

cc is career choices made by the respondents

cd is career development of respondents

4. Results and Discussions

4.1. Qualitative Findings

The researcher selected with ten individuals from the selected organizations' Human Resource Department, who were purposefully chosen. However, six employees showed up for the interview, resulting in a 60% response rate for the research.

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

In this part, we gave the respondent profile for this study, including their demographics and other background information. Participants' gender, age range, level of education, and length of time in the same job were all collected. See Table 4.1 for a breakdown of respondent characteristics.

Table 1 Demographic Distribution of Respondents

S/N Interviewee	of Characteristics of Interviewees
Interviewee 1	"This respondent is a female and serving as the Human Resource Manager of United Bank for Africa (Ghana) Limited. She is between the ages of 41 – 50, has 6 – 10 years of continuous service and holds a Master's degree".
Interviewee 2	"This respondent is a male and serving as the Assistant Human Resource Manager of Ghana Education Service. He is between the ages of 41 – 50 years, has 6 to 10 years of continuous service and holds a master's degree".
Interviewee 3	"This respondent is a male and she is the Head of the Staff section of the Human Resource department of Ghana Statistical Service. He is between the ages of 31 – 40 years. He has worked for 0 to 5 years continuously and currently holds a Master's degree".
Interviewee 4	"This respondent is a female and she is the Head of the Labour Relation section of the HR department of L' AINE Services Limited and she is also between the ages of 31 – 40 and has a master's degree. She has been in the company for the past 0 to 5 years".
Interviewee 5	"This respondent is a male and with 11 to 15 years of work experience, he currently serves as the head of the development section under the HR department of Unilever Ghana Limited. He is between the age brackets of 41 – 50 years. He is a Master's degree holder".
Interviewee 6	"This respondent is a male with 11 to 15 years of work experience; he serves as a supervisor at the HR department of DAS Pharma Ltd. He is in the age bracket of 51 – 60 years. He is a Degree Holder".

Source: Fieldwork, (2022)

The first specific objective of the study determined the critical determinants of graduate unemployment in Ghana. This section demonstrates the findings on the critical determinants of graduate unemployment in Ghana. Six major themes emerged with sub-themes as needed including programs pursued, demographic characteristics, the quality of content, graduate characteristics, global and emerging issues and the increasing number of universities and graduate flood. The

study found that the unemployment situation in Ghana can also be attributed to the programmes pursued in the Universities. The study discovered that one key demographic characteristic that might influence graduate unemployment would be the age of the graduates. The findings of the study discovered that respondents believed the quality of content taught in the universities is a great contributing factor to unemployment in Ghana. They were of the view that the content taught are more theoretical. The study discovered that the academic achievement, technical skills, communication skills, personality, leadership and motivating abilities of graduates also influence graduate unemployment. The study discovered that the current global and emerging issues such as the Covid-19, other health issues and the Russia-Ukraine wars.

For instance, the respondent “Interviewee 1” was of the view that:

“...most of the programs pursued in the universities are just theoretical, so graduates lack the experience (practical) and knowledge that employers need. Which at the end of the day influence graduates not getting employment.”

The Interviewee 2 said that:

“When it comes to unemployment, age plays a significant role. To begin with, many young individuals have limited or no prior experience in the labor market and typically lack industry-specific skills. When they hire youthful people, firms have to pay greater expenses for initial investments but have reduced costs if they decide to let those individuals go.”

Respondent, the Interviewee 4 shared that:

“...the quality of content is a critical factor. Employers are interested in what you know. I believe the quality of content is too bookish instead of being practical and involving.”

In line with these findings, [Hosain et al., \(2021\)](#) found that factors such as academic achievement, technical skills, communication skills, personality, leadership and motivating abilities, as well as teamwork and problem-solving skills, are regarded as independent variables that have an effect on unemployment rates. After conducting an exhaustive statistical study, the researchers concluded that all of the independent elements, except for technical abilities as well as leadership and motivating qualities, had a significant bearing on the unemployment rate in the country. According to the findings of yet another study Interviewee 5. “This respondent is a male and with 11 to 15 years of work experience, he currently serves as the head of the development section under the HR department of Unilever Ghana Limited. He is between the age brackets of 41 – 50 years. He is a Master’s degree holder”. Interviewee 6 “This respondent is a male with 11 to 15 years of work experience; he serves as a supervisor at the HR department of DAS Pharma Ltd. He is in the age bracket of 51 – 60 years. He is a degree Holder”. conducted in Malaysia, those who possess strong employability skills do better than those who are deficient in these talents ([Graham & Mlatsheni, 2015](#)).

[Yu \(2013\)](#), [Ismail \(2011\)](#), and [Graham and Mlatsheni \(2015\)](#) all support the idea that academic achievement influences graduate unemployment rates. This suggests that poor command of the English language, as well as a lack of leadership and technical skills, have had a significant impact on graduates' unemployment thus far. [Graham and Mlatsheni \(2015\)](#) also support the idea that graduate unemployment rates are influenced by academic achievement. Recent research indicates that the COVID-19 cases are to blame for unemployment in Germany, Italy, and the United Kingdom. It was also obvious that the epidemic causes a significant spine in the unemployment rate in the economies of primarily European countries ([Su et al., 2021](#)). Changes in the environment and the spread of infectious illnesses are among the global elements that are taken into consideration to be among the factors that contribute to unemployment ([Lee & Cho, 2016](#)).

4.2. Quantitative Analysis and Findings

Demographic information of Respondents

In this part, we give the study's findings about the demographic characteristics of respondents who filled the questionnaires, such as their gender, age, educational qualification, occupation, and length of service. Those results are shown in Table 2. Only 195 of the original 240 participants in the study completed and returned the questionnaire. This led to an approximate 81% response rate.

Table 2: Demographic information of Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age	20-30 years	60	30.8
	31-40 years	106	54.4
	41 - 50 years	29	14.9
Gender	Male	105	53.8
	Female	90	46.2
Educational Qualification	Diploma	37	19.0
	First Degree	134	68.7
	Masters’ Degree	24	12.3

Employment Status	Unemployed	132	67.7
	Employed	40	20.5
	Self-Employed	23	11.8
Programmes Offered	Humanities	34	17.4
	Commerce	46	23.6
	Education	51	26.2
	Science	40	20.5
	Human Resource	24	12.3
Major Course Offered	Economics, risk management	12	6.2
	Accounting, Finance	8	4.1
	HR, Industrial psychology, labour relations	10	5.1
	Marketing, business management, logistics	14	7.2
	Psychology, sociology	27	13.8
	Physical sciences, Math, engineering	26	13.3
	Languages, communications	9	4.6
	Law Computer sciences, IT	9	4.6
	Government, political studies	27	13.8
	Education	7	3.6
	Health (Nursing, Doctors etc.)	23	11.8
	Arts, history	23	11.8
	Economics, risk management	12	6.2
Length of Unemployment	1 – 3 years	85	43.6
	4 – 5 years	29	14.9
	6 – 9 years	18	9.2

Source: Field Data, 2022.

Relationship between career preference and unemployment of graduates

The second specific objective of the study was to assess the relationship between career preference and unemployment of graduates in Ghana. This section of the chapter presents the results on the relationship between career preference and unemployment of graduates. The Chi-Square statistic is used for testing relationships between the variables (career preference and unemployment of graduates). The study takes into consideration of career preference – the major course offered by the respondents. The null hypothesis of the Chi-Square test is that no relationship exists between the categorical variables in the population; they are independent.

The results from Table 4.4 show the association between career preference and unemployment of graduates. From the Table, it can be observed that 7.57% of those who offered Economics or risk management were unemployed, 3.78% of those who offered accounting or finance were unemployed; 3.03% of those who offered HR, Industrial psychology, or labour relations were unemployed; 7.57% of those who offered Marketing, business management or logistics were unemployed and 13.63% of those who offered psychology or sociology were unemployed.

Moreover, the findings showed that 12.12% of those who offered Physical sciences, Mathematics, or engineering were unemployed; 6.06% of those who offered Languages or communications were unemployed; 4.54% of those who offered Law, Computer sciences or IT were unemployed; 14.39% of those who offered Government or political studies were unemployed; 4.54% of those who offered Education were unemployed; 12.87% of those who offered Health (Nursing,

Doctors, etc.) were unemployed and 9.84% of those who offered Arts, history was unemployed.

The study also conducted a chi-square test of independence to be sure as to whether or not there existed a relationship between the career preference and unemployment of graduates. The test gave a score value of 233.523. At the degree of freedom level of 22, the p-value was 0.000. This means that at a significant level of 0.05, there was enough evidence to conclude that there was any significant relationship between career preference and unemployment of graduates as the test score was less than the 0.05 alpha score.

This finding further suggests that graduates who offered psychology, sociology, physical sciences, Math, engineering, government, political studies, Health (Nursing, Doctors, etc.), arts and history normally find it difficult to be employed in Ghana. In South Africa, the use of primary data Among South African university graduates, Dunga and Mncayi (2016) attempted to determine the association between career choice and employment longevity. Students with a humanities degree took longer to find a job than those who studied other fields of study, according to a study that used OLS estimate. Study results show that despite these findings, popular subjects including human resource management, psychology in industries, labour-related courses; management of public institutions and administration as well as political science take longer to secure a job than previously thought. In South Africa, those who studied accounting, mathematics, education, and health had the quickest path to employment. In 2015, a questionnaire was used to collect data for the study, which relied on primary data. The institution where the graduates came from, their academic credentials, their socioeconomic status, and the impact of their career choice on employment was not considered in the study

Table 3: Career preference and Unemployment of graduates

Variable	UNEMPLOYMENT STATUS OF GRADUATES				Probability
	Unemployed	Employed	Self-Employed	Pearson chi ² (22)	
Economics, risk management	7.57%	5%	0%		
Accounting, Finance	3.78%	0%	13.04%		
HR, Industrial psychology, labour relations	3.03%	10%	8.69%		
Marketing, business management, logistics	7.57%	10%	0%		
Psychology, sociology	13.63%	10%	21.73%	233.523	0.000**
Physical sciences, Math, engineering	12.12%	15%	17.39%		
Languages, communications	6.06%	2.5%	0%		
Law Computer sciences, IT	4.54%	7.5%	0%		
Government, political studies	14.39%	10%	17.39%		
Education	4.54%	2.5%	0%		
Health (Nursing, Doctors, etc.)	12.87%	10%	8.69%		
Arts, history	9.84%	17.5%	13.04%		

* =Significant at (1%), ** at (5%).

Effects of graduate unemployment on career development in Ghana

The second specific objective was to examine the effects of graduate unemployment on career development in Ghana. The findings on the effects of graduate unemployment on career development in Ghana are shown in this particular section of the chapter. These findings are further shown in Table 4 below:

Table 4 Hierarchical Multiple Linear Regression Analysis with graduate unemployment and career development

Dependent Variable: Career Development

	Model 1				Model 2			
	B	SE B	β	t	B	SE B	β	t
(Constant)	3.278**	.149		21.971	3.286**	.153		21.465
Gender	.039	.061	.048	.638	.040	.062	.049	.653
Age	-.029	.048	-.047	-.617	-.027	.048	-.044	-.565
Educational Qualification	.068	.055	.092	1.244	.068	.055	.092	1.238
Programmes Offered	.039	.023	.122	1.693	.040	.023	.124	1.707
Unemployment Status					-.011**	.044	-.019	-.252
R Square		.028***				.028***		
F		1.359**				1.095**		
ΔR ²						.000†		

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, and *** $p < .001$ || B (Unstandardized Coefficient); SE B (Standard Error of the Coefficient); β (Standardized Coefficient); and t (t-Statistic)

In this study, a hierarchical two-stage multiple linear regression model was used. The first phase contains demographic variables such as age, gender, highest educational qualification, and programmes offered. The unemployment Status of respondents was incorporated into the second phase of the model. Table 4.4 shows that unemployment status has a negative and significant impact on the career development of graduates ($\beta = -.011$, $p < .01$). This basically implies that when graduates stay longer unemployed, their career development would be affected negatively by 1.1%. The independent variable, which had an effect on career development, accounted for 2.8% of the variance. Despite this, only the respondents' age ($\beta = -.029$, $p < .001$) and the second model ($\beta = -.027$, $p < .001$) negatively predicted career development in the demographic model. Career development was positively predicted by other respondent demographics such as gender, highest educational qualification and programmes offered.

In tandem with these findings, Maree, Ebersohn and Vermaak. (2008) explores the impact of unemployment on achievement motivation, suggesting that unemployment not only hinders career development but also affects intrinsic motivation. Maree et al.'s findings show how unemployment can have a broader psychological impact, affecting motivation and career progression. Egdell and Beck (2020) delves into the long-term 'scarring' effects of unemployment, similar to the study's findings on the negative impact of unemployment on career development. Egdell and Beck's research provides a broader perspective on how unemployment can leave lasting effect on individuals' careers and sense of security, aligning with the study's emphasis on the detrimental effects of prolonged unemployment. In addition, [Bravo and Herce \(2022\)](#) examines the long-term financial implications of unemployment, specifically on pension entitlements. While the current study focuses on the immediate impact on career development, Bravo and Herce's work extends the understanding of unemployment's impact into the realm of long-term financial security and retirement planning. Hulshof, Demerouti and Le Blanc (2020) on the other hand investigated interventions to assist the unemployed, focusing on well-being and reemployment. It contrasts with the current study by offering solutions to mitigate the negative effects of unemployment. While the study highlights the problems associated with unemployment, Hulshof et al. focus on practical interventions to improve job search outcomes and mental health during unemployment.

Moreover, Mzimela, (2023) emphasizes the positive role of entrepreneurship education in shaping career decisions and combating unemployment. This contrasts with the current study, which highlights the direct negative impact of unemployment on career development. While Mzimela suggests a proactive educational approach to mitigate unemployment, the study points out the consequences of prolonged unemployment on career progression. Chong and Thi (2021) underscore the importance of support systems in universities for developing employability, contrasting with the current study's focus on the negative impact of unemployment. While Chong and Thi explore how mentoring can positively influence career development, the study provides insight into how the lack of employment opportunities can hinder it. Othman et al. (2023) addressed the importance of strategic career decision-making and enhancing employability to combat unemployment challenges. This study offers a proactive approach to career development, focusing on how graduates can enhance their employability. In contrast, the study emphasizes the negative consequences of unemployment on career development.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, it is concluded that, unemployment status has a negative and significant impact on the career development of graduates. This implies that when graduates stay longer unemployed, their career development would be affected negatively. It is also concluded that graduates who offered psychology, sociology, physical sciences, Mathematics, engineering, government, political studies, Health (Nursing, Doctors, etc.), arts and history normally find it difficult to be employed in Ghana.

In view of this, it is recommended that the majority of the teaching that goes on in our universities should be reviewed in terms of projects and skills that are relevant to the current economic indices and workplace demands. This will enable the development of independent thinkers and innovative students, which will make them more employable, and self-sufficient by starting businesses for themselves and others. Our educational institutions ought to develop generational curriculums that befit the development of new opportunities for technical and vocational training, as well as the establishment of work-study programs that promote collaboration between various sectors of industry, commerce, and education, similar to what the Germans have established. The concept of entrepreneurship needs to be included in the curricula of all of the subjects taught in our educational institutions from crèche through university so that students may cultivate an entrepreneurial attitude and acquire a burning desire to be innovative.

The study further suggests that students should be made aware of what goes on in the working environment, and the government ought to institute a strategy that is crystal clear and aims to either concentrate on or connect education to the world of labour. This link, if it is properly carry-out effectively, has the potential to significantly affect both the future

economy of a nation like Ghana and the well-being of the people. With current rapid information and technological advancement, it is imperative to know that teachers instill in their students a love of learning that will last a lifetime since it is the key to realizing one's full potential. They will continue to stay current and refresh themselves in this manner, allowing them to become prepared for the world of work and to integrate with ease.

It is also recommended that higher education institutions should make developing entrepreneurial skills and an innovative mindset a prime focus in order to reduce the average length of time that graduates remain unemployed across all demographic groups. With this, graduates will have an easier time finding employment, and they will be called upon more frequently not just as successful candidates but also as job creators. Additionally, universities should provide students with the opportunity to fully develop their potential while maintaining a sense of social responsibility. This would educate students to become full participants in a democratic society as well as promoters of change in the future economy.

Practical and Policy Implications

The study's findings on the critical determinants of graduate unemployment in Ghana, the relationship between career preference and unemployment, and the effects of unemployment on career development have significant practical and policy implications. Firstly, the identification of specific university programs linked to higher unemployment rates in Ghana suggests a need for a practical reevaluation of higher education curricula. The emphasis on theoretical content over practical skills highlights a gap between academic training and market demands. Universities should consider integrating more practical, skills-based training into their courses, especially in fields like psychology, sociology, physical sciences, and engineering, where graduates face higher unemployment rates. This approach could involve partnerships with industries, internships, and apprenticeships that provide real-world experience. Furthermore, the study's findings on the importance of soft skills, such as communication, leadership, and motivation, underscore the need for holistic education models. Universities and educational policy-makers should focus on developing these competencies alongside technical knowledge, preparing graduates not just for job acquisition but for long-term career development.

On a policy level, the study's findings call for a multi-faceted approach to addressing graduate unemployment. The government, in collaboration with educational institutions, should consider policies that encourage curriculum reform to align education with labor market needs. This could involve incentivizing universities to update their programs and teaching methodologies to be more practical and skills-oriented. The impact of global and emerging issues like the Covid-19 pandemic and geopolitical conflicts on unemployment cannot be overlooked. Policy-makers should develop strategies that enhance the resilience of the job market and educational systems against such shocks. This might include support for sectors less affected by global crises or those that have shown resilience, such as health and technology sectors. Additionally, the negative impact of prolonged unemployment on career development calls for policies that support graduates during their job search. This could include unemployment benefits, career counseling services, and job placement programs. Such support not only aids in reducing the immediate burden of unemployment but also helps in maintaining the career trail of graduates.

In summary, the study's findings provide a comprehensive overview of the factors contributing to graduate unemployment in Ghana and its consequences. Addressing these issues requires a collaborative effort between educational institutions, industry players, and policy-makers. By focusing on curriculum reform, skills development, and supportive policies, it is possible to create a more favorable environment for graduates' employment and career development in Ghana.

Limitations of the Study and Future Research

The study on the impact of graduate unemployment on career development in Ghana, while insightful, has several limitations that must be acknowledged. Firstly, the research methodology, despite being mixed, may have inherent biases due to the purposive sampling technique. This method involves selecting participants who meet certain criteria, in this case, graduates unemployed for more than two years. Such a sample might not be fully representative of all unemployed graduates in Ghana, potentially skewing the results and limiting the generalizability of the findings.

Another limitation is the geographical focus on Greater Accra. While this region is significant, it may not condense the diverse experiences of graduates across different regions of Ghana, where economic conditions and job markets can vary substantially. This geographical limitation means the findings might not accurately reflect the national situation regarding graduate unemployment and its impact on career development.

Furthermore, the study's reliance on self-reported data through questionnaires and interviews can introduce response biases. Participants may provide socially desirable answers or may not accurately recall past events, affecting the reliability of the data. Also, the study seems to focus primarily on certain fields of study, potentially overlooking how graduates from other disciplines are affected by unemployment. Given these limitations, future research should aim to address these gaps. Expanding the study to include a more diverse and representative sample of graduates from various regions and disciplines across Ghana would enhance the generalizability of the findings. Employing a longitudinal study design could also provide deeper insights into the long-term effects of unemployment on career development.

Additionally, future research could explore the qualitative aspects of graduate unemployment more deeply. Understanding the personal experiences, coping mechanisms, and psychological impacts of prolonged unemployment could provide a

more holistic view of the issue. Investigating the role of external factors such as economic policies, industry trends, and the global economic environment could also offer a broader understanding of the challenges faced by graduates in Ghana. Moreover, comparative studies involving other sub-Saharan African countries could provide a regional perspective, helping to identify common challenges and effective strategies employed in different contexts. Finally, examining the effectiveness of various interventions, such as vocational training, entrepreneurship programs, career falls and policy changes, in mitigating graduate unemployment would be valuable for policymakers and educational institutions.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they are not aware of any competing financial interests or personal relationships that may have influenced the work described in this document.

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