



**DEMOGRAPHIC PRESENTATION ON THE TRACER STUDY OF JOURNALISM GRADUATES OF THE NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA: EMPLOYABILITY AND CORPORATE SOCIAL INTEGRATION IN THE WORKPLACE**

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**Abstract**

This study investigates the demographic dimensions and the analytics on a survey conducted on the acceptability of NOUN Journalism graduates who went through ODeL into the global mainstream of the workplace and professional practice. To achieve this objective, a survey of three critical locations of NOUN Journalism graduates operating in Nigeria, namely, Abuja, Benin and Lagos, was undertaken. Consequently, this empirical research undertook a tracer study of the entire graduates of the M.Sc. and the PGD Journalism programmes in NOUN between 2015- 2020. The major objective is to examine the employability, competence and acceptability of this category of graduates in the professional and general job market comparatively to graduates of the same discipline from conventional universities. The methodology adopted was mixed method-qualitative and quantitative in the survey design using a triangulation of quantitative and qualitative approaches. Using the Google Form platform, the research instrument was administered to 268 NOUN graduates. However, only 102 of them responded, giving a return rate of 38% of the sample. The findings revealed that 174 of the 204 graduates who took part in the Tracer Study were employed (78.53%), and 69.78% indicated their first employment was associated with their degree programme. While, 89.5% of employers attested that they are satisfied with the performance of the NOUN Journalism graduates they employed and that they came with sufficient skills and knowledge. Similarly, in-depth interviews of employers were conducted using a well-structured interview guide to complement, verify and validate the results of the quantitative data. The statistical analysis was done with the use of the ANOVA statistical tool for variance and Independent Sample t-Test. In the conclusion, the report suggested periodic curriculum reviews to ensure that graduates possess the knowledge and abilities required by the sector. The paper recommended that the NOUN Mass Communication Department should develop or update courses and adopt measures to fill the few current-knowledge gaps observed by employers of NOUN journalism graduates. This will further improve the employability of these graduates, career advancement and sustainability in the general and media job market.

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**Keywords:** Employability, Corporate Social Integration and Tracer Study.

**INTRODUCTION**

A crucial aspect of Open and Distance Learning, (ODL) is the assurance of acceptability of the graduates into the economic mainstream. This can be achieved if ODL graduates exhibit the capability to march their counterparts from the conventional universities. Their performances can be measured by employer attestations and through the results of tracer studies. Employers' feedbacks on the performances of ODL graduates is a vital instrument for future restructuring of programmes for enhanced effectiveness both in the relevant ODL institutions and in the work places. A tracer study of Journalism Graduates of National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) is considered apt at this period, having run the programme for over fifteen years. It is germane to assess the level of the acceptability of NOUN graduates into the economic mainstream after more than a decade of the NOUN Journalism training programme. It is also expected to provide viable feedback for programme reviews and for accurate assessment of NOUN products. Such feedbacks would, hopefully, encourage institutional support for the alumni to acquire further competences where necessary to enhance their competitiveness locally and internationally. This is a key quality assurance strategy for the Institution.

The essence of this study is to keep a track record of journalism graduates of the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) and to measure the skills acquired by the Journalism graduates, so as to ascertain the viability of the acquired skills and provide requisite information for evaluation of the entire Mass Communication Programme of the University. It will equally measure the relevance of the practical aspects of the Journalism programme to their jobs as well as provide information on the employability of journalism graduates (that is, the PGD and MSc graduates) of NOUN. If results generated from the analyses of quantitative and qualitative data are positive, as expected, they are likely to engender increase in students' enrolment.

### **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

By its structure and composition, NOUN programmes and course contents require periodic reviews – about five-yearly audit. This is possible if adequate information is provided to show areas of strengths and weaknesses as well as opportunities and threats. Without any empirical study, these reviews may be difficult to conduct. In addition, it may be difficult for NOUN to continuously produce graduates into the society without adequate and reliable data to confirm their usefulness and appropriateness to the society and the University in particular. The need to establish the essence of the journalism graduates and their usefulness after studies as well as their possible areas of need after graduation from NOUN is all subjects that this study intends to determine.

### **Research Questions**

*To what extent are NOUN postgraduate journalism graduates employable in the labour market?*

*To what extent are the courses studied relevant to the graduates' present jobs?*

*What opportunities are available in the job market for journalism postgraduates and what factors drive these opportunities?*

*What views do employers of NOUN journalism graduates have about them?*

*What professional skills have NOUN's postgraduate journalism graduates acquired and what gaps need to be filled?*

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE PAPER**

*Evaluate the extent of employability of NOUN postgraduate journalism graduates in the labour market.*

*Investigate the extent of relevance of courses studied at postgraduate levels to graduates' present jobs.*

*Examine job placement opportunities for NOUN postgraduate journalism graduates as well as their driving factors.*

*Assess employers' feedbacks on their NOUN graduate employees*

*Identify the professional skills acquired by NOUN's postgraduate journalism graduates and spot any gaps worth filling.*

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **Research Design**

This study adopted the survey design, using a triangulation of quantitative and qualitative approaches to achieve higher accuracy and validation of results. Data was collected through questionnaire administered on the targets to retrieve information concerning the quality of trainings they received as well as their job opportunities.

Using the Google Form platform, the research instrument was administered to 268 NOUN graduates. However, only 102 of them responded, giving a return rate of 38% of the sample.

Similarly, in-depth interviews of their employers were conducted using a well-structured interview guide to complement, verify and validate the results of the quantitative data (Tracer Studies Manual: 2001).

#### **Population**

This study targets the entire graduates of the M.Sc. and the PGD Journalism programmes in NOUN between the years of 2015 and 2020.

#### **Sample and Sampling**

The sample size for this study is 33.5% percent of the entire study population. This number is deliberately made large to give room for the inclusion of sufficient number of the graduates such that the finding would be generalised.

**Research Study Areas**

The survey was conducted across three (3) major locations in Nigeria, Abuja (Nigeria’s current capital), Benin (the capital of the former Mid-Western Nigeria) and Lagos (Nigeria’s old capital at independence in 1960). These locations are all significant in Nigeria’s history.

**Abuja as a Study Area**

This section focuses on Abuja, Nigeria’s new capital as its area of interest. Geographically, Abuja which is embedded in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) made up of six Area Councils (equivalent of counties in Europe) is located in the centre of Nigeria. It has a land area of 8,000 square kilometres. It is bounded on the north by Kaduna State, the west by Niger State, the east and southeast by Nasarawa State, and the southwest by Kogi State. It falls within latitudes 70 20’ North of the Equator and longitudes 60 45’ and 70 39’. The FCT’s natural endowments such as; its rolling hills, isolated highlands, savannah grassland, tropical rainforests and equitable climate make it a beautiful and attractive place (www.Abujagalleria, 2023).

Historically, the land now called Abuja was originally the south-western part of the ancient Habe (Hausa) kingdom of Zazzau (Zaria). It was populated for centuries by several semi-independent tribes. The largest of these tribes was the Gbaya (Gwari), followed by the Koro and a few other smaller tribes. In the early 1800s when Zaria fell to the onslaught of the Islamic jihad of Sheikh Usman Danfodio, the founder of the Sokoto Caliphate, some prominent Zaria leaders called Muhammed Makau and his brothers Abu Ja and Kwaka along with their followers fled and founded the Kingdom of Abuja. That territory was subsequently named Abuja after the second leader to Muhammed Makau, Abu Ja. (www.Abujagalleria, 2023).

**Benin as a Study Area**

Searches in historical documents reveal a lot about Benin’s rich socio-cultural past that has metamorphosed into her contemporary enviable status as a city to reckon with in the country. Benin which is popularly called Benin City is also known as Edo, from where the state got its name. It is capital and largest city of Edo State, southern Nigeria. Benin City is situated on a branch of the Benin River and lies along the main highways from Lagos to the eastern states. The city is also linked by roads to Sapele, Siluko, Okene and Ubiaja and is served by air and the Niger River delta ports of Koko and Sapele. The state is bound in the north by Kogi State, east by River Niger, south by Delta State and west by Ondo State (Collins Social Studies Atlas of Nigeria (2009, p. 20).

Benin was the main city of the Edo (Bini) kingdom of Benin (which flourished 13th–19th century). In 2016 boasted a population of 1,500,000 people making it the largest city in the state as well as the fourth-largest city in Nigeria.

**Lagos as a Study Area**

Lagos, which is also a key location for this research work is a busy port city built on a series of islands and surrounding land on the West coast of Africa. It is one of the fastest growing cities in the world, with an estimated current population of 21 million including its surrounding settlements, and is generally referred to as the commercial capital of Nigeria as it remains the economic heart of the country (www.worldcitiesculture.com/cities/lagoscopy, 2023).

Further, as part of its historical trajectory, by the late 15<sup>th</sup> century, Lagos Island had been settled by Yoruba fishermen and hunters who called it Oko. The area was dominated by the Kingdom of Benin, which called it Eko, from the late 16<sup>th</sup> century to the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. The first European contact came when the Portuguese landed on Lagos Island in 1472. Trade developed between them and the natives until they gained a monopoly to sell slaves in the Spanish Americas over a 100 years stretch. The local Obas (Kings) enjoyed mutual good relations based on the slave trade and other commerce with the Portuguese who initially called the Island Onim and later Lagos. But in 1853 the British colonial power as part of its campaign against slave trade in West Africa attacked Lagos, deposed the Oba, overthrew the Portuguese, and in 1861, Lagos came under full British colonial authority (www.britannica.com/place/lagos-state-Nigeria, 2023)..

**Data Presentation and Analysis**

All data collected and analysed are reported. While the research questions guide the collection of data, the study objectives form the basis for data analysis.

**Research Question 1:** To what extent is NOUN Postgraduate Journalism Graduates Employable in the Labour Market?

**Table 1.0** Socio Demographic Characteristic. (n= 102) Frequency Table

Variables	F	%
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**Age Groups**

>20	1	1.0
20-29	6	5.9
30-39	49	48.0
40-49	34	33.3
50 & Above	12	11.8

**Gender**

Female	5352.0
Male	4948.0

**Marital Status**

Married	8078.4
Single	2120.6
Divorced	1 1.0

**Educational Qualification**

HND / B.Sc.	7	6.9
HND / PGD1	1.0	
Masters17	16.7	
PGD 4	3.9	
PGD / Masters69	67.6	
PhD 4	3.9	

**Work Experience**

No Work Experience or > 6 Months2	2.0
1-2 years 7	6.9
3-5 years	16 15.7
6-10 years	2928.4
11 years and Above48	47.1

**Programme Studied**

PGD Journalism – Postgraduate Diploma 29	28.4
M.Sc. Journalism	2 2.0
M.Sc. Mass Communication71	69.6

**Source: Researcher's Survey, 2023****Year of Graduation**

2015	8	7.8
2016	7	6.9
2017	15	14.7
2018	14	13.7
2019	29	28.4
2020	29	28.4

**Source: Researcher's Survey, 2023**

A significant majority, comprising 52.0% (n=53) of the participants in the study, were females, while the remaining 48.0% (n=49) were males. The marital status distribution revealed that a substantial 78.4% (n=80) were married, 20.6% (n=20) were single, and only 1.0% (n=1) were divorced.

Regarding age groups, the largest segment of respondents, accounting for 48.0% (n=49), fell within the 30-39 years range. Close behind, 33.3% (n=34) of the participants were in the 40-49 years category, while 11.8% (n=12) belonged to the 50 and above years age group. In contrast, the age groups with the fewest respondents were 20-29 years and less than 20 years, each representing 5.9% (n=6) and 1.0% (n=1),

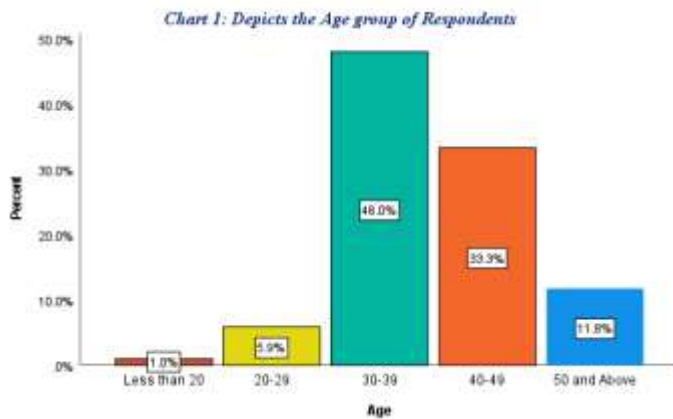
respectively.

Looking at educational qualifications, a significant majority of 67.6% (n=69) of the respondents held PGD/Masters degrees, while only 1.0% (n=1) had HND/PGD qualifications. Among the participants, the most pursued course was M.Sc Mass Communication, with over 69.6% (n=71) of the respondents studying it. In contrast, PGD Journalism – Postgraduate Diploma and M.Sc. Journalism had lower numbers, accounting for 28.4% (n=29) and 2.0% (n=2) of the participants, respectively.

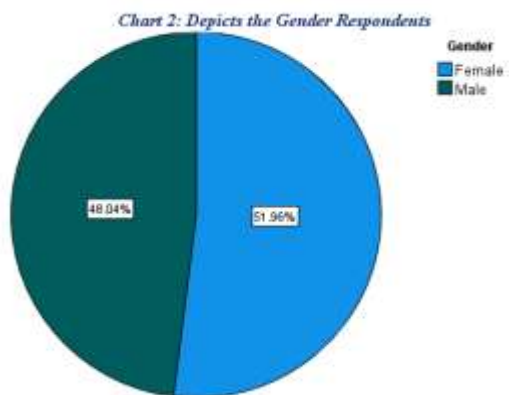
Regarding work experience, a substantial 47.1% (n=48) of the respondents had 11 years and above of work experience, while a small fraction, 2.0% (n=2), had no working experience.

In terms of year of graduation, an equal percentage of respondents, 28.4% (n=29), graduated in both 2019 and 2020, which constituted the largest group of responses. On the other hand, the year 2016 had the least number of respondents, accounting for only 6.9% (n=7) of the participants.

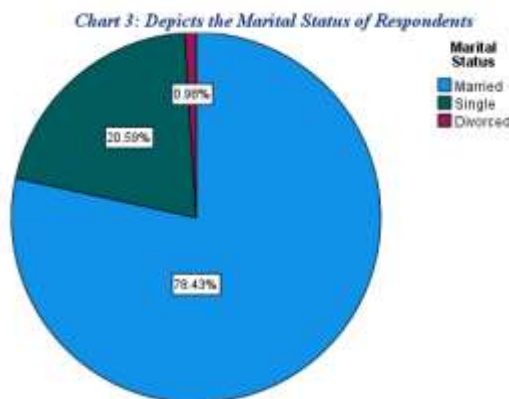
**Presentation of Charts and Tables**



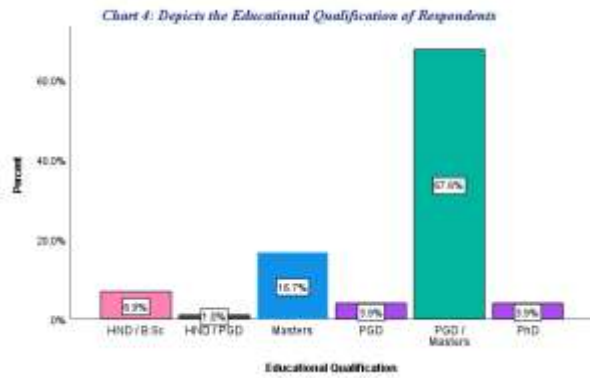
**Source:** Researcher’s Survey, 2023



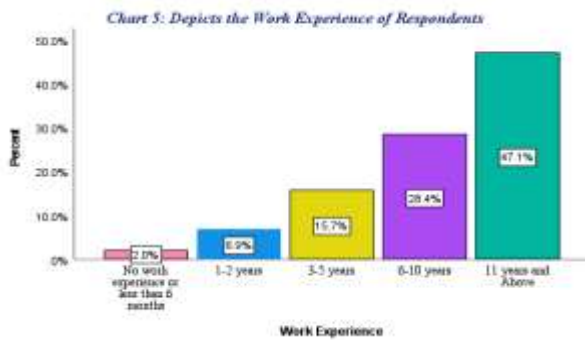
**Source:** Researcher’s Survey, 2023



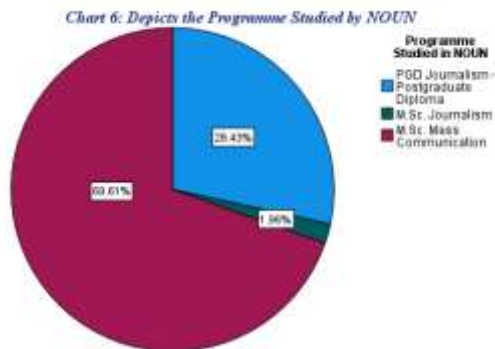
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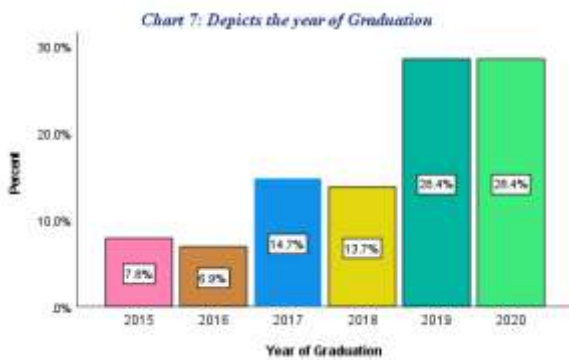
Source: Researcher’s Survey, 2023



Source: Researcher’s Survey, 2023



Source: Researcher’s Survey, 2023



Source: Researcher’s Survey, 2023

**A One-Way ANOVA Analysis**

**ANOVA**

The programme is relevant to my professional (job) requirements

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.797	2	.399	.781	.461
Within Groups	50.546	99	.511		
Total	51.343	101			

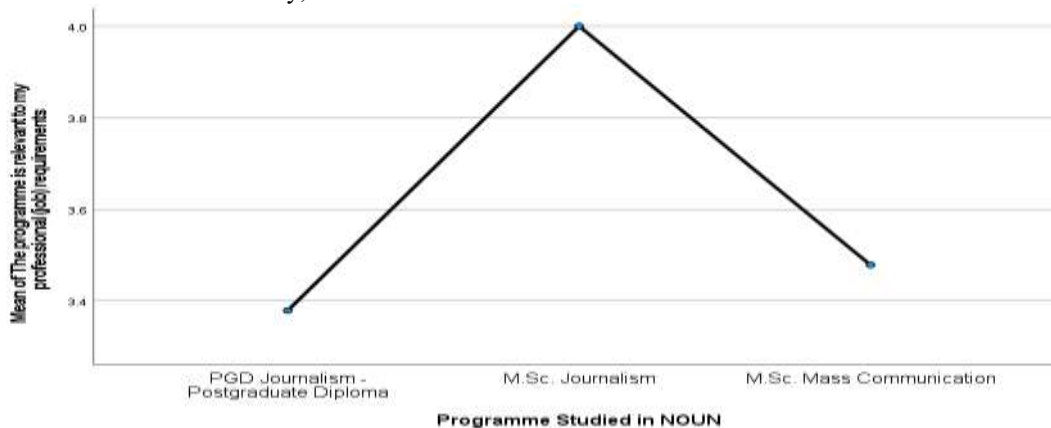
Source: Researcher’s Survey, 2023

**Multiple Comparisons**

Dependent Variable: The programme is relevant to my professional (job) requirements

	(I) Programme Studied in NOUN	(J) Programme Studied in NOUN	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error
Tukey HSD	PGD Journalism Postgraduate Diploma	M.Sc. Journalism	-.621	.522
		M.Sc. Mass Communication	-.100	.157
	M.Sc. Journalism	PGD Journalism Postgraduate Diploma	-.621	.522
		M.Sc. Mass Communication	.521	.512
	M.Sc. Mass Communication	PGD Journalism Postgraduate Diploma	-.100	.157
		M.Sc. Journalism	-.521	.512
Games-Howell	PGD Journalism Postgraduate Diploma	M.Sc. Journalism	-.621*	.115
		M.Sc. Mass Communication	-.100	.146
	M.Sc. Journalism	PGD Journalism Postgraduate Diploma	-.621*	.115
		M.Sc. Mass Communication	.521*	.089
	M.Sc. Mass Communication	PGD Journalism Postgraduate Diploma	-.100	.146
		M.Sc. Journalism	-.521*	.089

Source: Researcher’s Survey, 2023



Source: Researcher’s Survey, 2023

A significant value of 0.461 in a one-way ANOVA test indicates that there is no statistically significant difference in the means of the dependent variable "The programme is relevant to my professional (job) requirements" across the different groups of the independent variable "Programme Studied in NOUN."

In other words, the p-value of 0.461 is greater than the typical significance level of 0.05 (or any other chosen significance level), which means that there is insufficient evidence to reject the null hypothesis. The null hypothesis in this context states that there is no difference in the means of the dependent variable across the different categories of the independent variable.

In simpler terms, the ANOVA results suggest that the choice of program studied in NOUN does not have a significant effect on whether the program is perceived as relevant to the participants' professional requirements. Therefore, there is no strong evidence to support the idea that different programs lead to different perceptions of program relevance for job requirements among the participants.

**An Independent Sample t-TEST****Group Statistics**

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
The programme is relevant to my professional requirements	Female	53	3.51	.669	.092
	Male	49	3.41	.762	.109

Source: Researcher's Survey, 2023

**Independent Samples Test**

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means
		F	Sig.	t
The programme is relevant to my professional requirements	Equal variances assumed	.146	.703	.715
	Equal variances not assumed			.711

Source: Researcher's Survey, 2023

**Independent Samples Test**

		t-test for Equality of Means		
		df	Significance One-Sided p	Two-Sided p
The programme is relevant to my professional requirements	Equal variances assumed	100	.238	.036
	Equal variances not assumed	95.855	.239	.479

**Independent Samples Test**

		t-test for Equality of Means		
		Mean Difference	Std. Difference	Error
The programme is relevant to my professional requirements	Equal variances assumed	.101	.142	
	Equal variances not assumed	.101	.142	

Source: Researcher's Survey, 2023

**Independent Samples Test**

		t-test for Equality of Means		
		95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		
		Lower	Upper	
The programme is relevant to my professional requirements	Equal variances assumed	-.180	.382	
	Equal variances not assumed	-.181	.384	

Source: Researcher's Survey, 2023

The independent sample t-test results indicate a significant difference between the gender groups concerning the relevance of the programme to their professional job requirement.

**Further Analysis of Demographic Data**

Graduates aged 30 to 49 years are the highest in number to respond in the survey, at cumulated 81.3% (83 of the 102 respondents).

Female respondents slightly outnumbered males, at 52% (53 females) against 48% (49 males).

80 respondents are married (78.4%) while 21 respondents (20.6%) are single.

Holders of Postgraduate Diploma and Master's degree responded most, at 89.2% (91 of 102) while responses from PhD holders are only 4, at 3.9% score.



*Respondents with work experience ranging from 3 years to 11 years and above constitute the crushing majority, totalling 91.2% (93 of 102).*

*MSc Mass Communication, 71 respondents (69.6%) and PGD Journalism, 29 respondents (28.4%) represent the Programmes mostly studied at NOUN (total of 100 of 102 respondents).*

*Graduates of 2019 and 2020 responded the most at equal proportion (29 at 28.4%), followed by 2017 and 2018 graduates (16 for 15.7% and 13 for 12.7% respectively).*

*The greatest number of respondents resides in Abuja-FCT (37 for 36.3%) and Lagos (26 for 25.5%).*

#### **Data on Extent of Employability of NOUN Journalism Graduates**

*As many as 93 (91.2%) of the 102 respondents are presently employed.*

*Of the 5 respondents who declared not being presently employed, 2 (40.0%) stated it is because they have nobody to assist them in getting a job (no connections), 2 others (40.0%) blame it on lack of professional eligibility requirements, of which one person answered "My qualification is not recognised in Germany, one has to apply for further studies". One respondent (20.0%) stated that it is because there is no job opportunity.*

*The 93 relevant responses received reveal that 79 (84.9%) gained employment before gaining admission, 9 of them (9.7%) after graduating from Journalism programme(s) in NOUN, and 5 (5.4%) while studying Journalism in NOUN.*

*The employed NOUN graduates currently work in the private sector at 39.2% (40), public sector (federal, state or local government service) at 38.2% (39), in parastatals (companies, agencies that belong to federal, state or local government) at 15.7% (16) and in NGO/INGO (international non-governmental organisation) at 6.9% (7). From 99 valid responses, the present positions of employed NOUN graduates are supervisory level: 48 (48.5%); managerial level: 37 (37.4%); self-employed in journalism work: 10 (10.1%); rank and file level (junior staff): 4 (4.0%).*

#### **Data on Extent of Relevance of NOUN Journalism Programmes to Industry-based Jobs**

*94.1% (96 of 102) respondents agree that NOUN Journalism programme is relevant to their professional (job) requirements.*

*91.2% (93 of 102) agree that knowledge gained from the programme improved their problem-solving ability.*

*69.6% (71 of 102) agree that the quality of education delivered by NOUN facilitators was sufficient, while 16.7% (17 of 102 respondents) are not sure.*

*90.2% (92 of 102) agree that the open and distance learning environment was beneficial to them.*

*Generally speaking, 51.0% of respondents (52 of 102) do not agree that the teacher-student relationship in NOUN was efficient as only 49.0% (50 of 102) agree out rightly while as many as 33.3% (34 of 102) are undecided, and 17.7% (18 of 102) disagree out rightly.*

*Two-thirds of the respondents (68 for 66.6%) agree that the Library facility (i.e. course materials) in NOUN was sufficient. However, a reasonable number of respondents (22 for 21.6%) are not sure that the library facility is sufficient.*

*From a global point of view, 75.5% (77 of 102) of respondents do not agree that the Production Studio facilities for journalism students were sufficient, as up to 45.1% (46 of 102) are undecided while 30.4% (31 of 102) disagree out rightly.*

#### **Data on Opportunities Available for NOUN Journalism Graduates and the Driving Factors**

*Companies/organisations employing NOUN graduates are presently engaged in the following businesses/operations:*

*Journalism (Print/Radio/TV): 21 (20.6%)*

*Public Office: 20 (19.6%)*

*Academic: 19 (18.6%)*

*Advertising/Public Relations: 8 (7.8%)*

*Retailing: 5 (4.9%)*

*Information Technology/New & Digital Media: 5 (4.9%)*

*Healthcare: 4 (3.9%)*

*Finance: 4 (3.9%)*

*Fashion designer entrepreneur: 2 (2.0%)*

*Law enforcement: 1 (1.0%)*

*Journalism. PR: 1 (1.0%)*

*Standardisation & Quality Assurance: 1 (1.0%)*

*Hospitality services (hotels, restaurants, events/entertainment organising): 1 (1.0%)*

*Energy: 1 (1.0%)*

*Education: 1 (1.0%)*

*Automobile: 1 (1.0%)*

*Real Estate & Engineering: 1 (1.0%)*

*Consultancy & contracting: 1 (1.0%)*

*Agricultural risk management: 1 (1.0%)*

*Training: 1 (1.0%)*

*Oil Servicing company: 1 (1.0%)*

*Other: 1 (1.0%)*

*Factors that NOUN graduates consider important for their being employed are mainly: personality/competency (41 for 40.2%); field of study (26 for 25.5%); previous work experience (22 for 21.6%).*

#### **Data on Professional Skills Acquired and Gaps to be filled**

*85.3% (87 of 102) respondents agree to have developed their journalistic skills (writing, editing and presenting for print, broadcast and new media) as a result of the professional skills offered in NOUN's postgraduate Journalism programmes.*

*81.4% (83 of 102) agree to have developed their ability to work professionally as a team member as a result of the professional skills offered in NOUN's postgraduate Journalism programmes.*

*84.4% (88 of 102) agree to have sharpened their critical and analytical skills as a result of the professional skills offered in NOUN's postgraduate Journalism programmes.*

*82.3% (84 of 102) agree to have developed their confidence to investigate stories and generate fresh ideas as a result of the professional skills offered in NOUN's postgraduate Journalism programmes.*

*While 63.7% (65 of 102) agree that the professional skills offered in NOUN's postgraduate Journalism programmes inspired and nurtured entrepreneurial journalism skills in them, as many as 24 respondents (23.5%) are not sure of this.*

*85.3% (87 of 102) agree to have developed and improved their problem-solving skills as a result of the professional skills offered in NOUN's postgraduate Journalism programmes.*

*Although as many as 70.6% (72 of 102) agree to have improved their computer literacy skills as a result of the professional skills offered in NOUN's postgraduate Journalism programmes, up to 20 (19.6%) are not sure of this.*

*While 70.6% (72 of 102) agree to have sharpened their public speaking ability as a result of the professional skills offered in NOUN's postgraduate Journalism programmes, 21 respondents (20.6%) are doubtful (undecided).*

*When requested to do so, to make it possible for members of the research team to interview their employers for confirmation of responses received for the survey, only 30 respondents out the 102 (29.4%) provided the names of their company or organisation; and only 22 respondents (21.6%) supplied the contact details (email, phone number or both) of their employers or supervisors.*

#### **Data Interpretation and Answers to Research Questions**

##### **Data Interpretation & Answer to Research Question 1**

*(To what extent are NOUN postgraduate journalism graduates in the labour market?)*

Extrapolating the fact that 18 of the 19 employers who were interviewed (94.7%) currently employ or have employed 52 (fifty-two) NOUN Journalism graduates in the past 5 years, and also the fact that 91.2% of respondents are presently employed since 3 months to 15 years, we can safely say that NOUN postgraduate journalism graduates are adequately present in the labour market. Over half (58%) of the employers have promoted the NOUN graduates to higher ranks since they assumed duty in their organisations. The graduates are comfortably settled and integrated at the workplace since 96% of the respondents occupy supervisory or managerial positions. In addition to the core Mass Communication industry, the diverse employers of NOUN graduates operate in almost all sectors of the economy.

##### **Data Interpretation & Answer to Research Question 2**

*(To what extent are the courses studied relevant to the graduates' present jobs?)*

89.5% of their employers responded that they are satisfied with the performance of the NOUN Journalism graduates they have employed and that they came to them with sufficient skills and understanding of the job needs. Furthermore, 18 of the 19 employers who were interviewed (94.7%) gave positive appraisals of NOUN graduates' professional performances in their various organisations. Sufficiency in IT (Information Technology) background, technical and communication skills and interpersonal relationship ranked utmost among the 20 strengths or qualities attributed to NOUN Journalism graduates by 94.7% of their employers. Most importantly, the employers answered at 94.7% (18 out of 19) that the employed NOUN graduates were able to learn and adapt to the new technologies they met at the workplace. The NOUN graduates themselves agree at 94.1% (96 of 102) that NOUN Journalism programme is relevant to their professional (job) requirements. These facts prove convincingly that the courses studied by NOUN graduates are highly relevant to the graduates' present jobs.

### **Data Interpretation & Answer to Research Question 3**

*(What opportunities are available in the job market for journalism postgraduates and what factors drive these opportunities?)*

Judging by where NOUN Journalism graduates are currently or have been employed, job opportunities abound for journalism postgraduates in diverse and various organisations such as federal/state government TV organisations, private TV organisations, private advertising and media companies, federal/state government universities, private universities, international non-governmental organisations, and in almost all the other sectors of the economy including self-employment. Of the few staff who left their job, the highest single reason given by their employers was “for better offer” (3 out of 7 resignations, i.e. 42.9%), showing that the journalism job market is lively and competitive.

The three major factors that NOUN Journalism graduates consider important for their being employed are: personality/competency (40.2%), field of study (25.5%), and previous work experience (21.6%).

### **Data Interpretation & Answer to Research Question 4**

*(What views do employers of NOUN journalism graduates have about them?)*

The employers’ views about NOUN journalism graduates are clearly positive and encouraging as narrated in the answer to Research Question 2 above.

### **Data Interpretation & Answer to Research Question 5**

*(What professional skills have NOUN’s postgraduate journalism graduates acquired and what gaps need to be filled?)*

At majority score rates ranging from 63.7% (65 of 102 respondents) to 85.3% (87 out of 102), NOUN’s postgraduate journalism graduates declare that, as a result of the professional skills offered in NOUN’s postgraduate Journalism programmes, they were able to:

*Develop their journalistic skills (writing, editing and presenting for print, broadcast and new media)*

*Develop their ability to work professionally as a team member*

*Sharpen their critical and analytical skills*

*Develop their confidence to investigate stories and generate fresh ideas*

*Improve their computer literacy skills*

*Sharpen their public speaking ability*

They also agree that the professional skills offered in NOUN’s postgraduate Journalism programmes inspired and nurtured entrepreneurial journalism skills in them.

However, following the observations made by the employers, certain gaps need to be filled in the training received by NOUN Journalism graduates. These gaps referred to as “13 weaknesses of NOUN journalism graduates” in the employers’ interview responses, and observed by 94.7% of the employers, are mainly in Administrative or Organisational skills (53.8%). Others are in Communication skills (15.4%), Interpersonal Relations (15.4%) and in Acquisition of Current Knowledge in certain journalistic operations (15.4%).

## **FINDINGS**

The Tracer Study focused on the employability and corporate social integration in the workplace, of NOUN Journalism graduates of 2015 to 2020, and in the process both the NOUN graduates and their employers were investigated. The study discovered that NOUN post-graduate journalism graduates were viable in the labour market. It was revealed that the courses studied are relevant to the graduates’ present jobs.

The opportunities that are available in the job market for journalism postgraduates and the factors that drive these opportunities are varied. Employers of NOUN journalism graduates evaluated their strength and weaknesses. The study assessed the professional skills that NOUN’s post-graduate journalism graduates have acquired and identified the gaps that need to be filled. These gaps would require some form of curriculum restructuring at the Department to update with the most current knowledge in the field that would provide both additional theoretical foundation and grounding for practical industry field experience based on best practice.

## **Conclusion**

Using the employers’ contact details supplied by employed NOUN Journalism graduates, nineteen out of twenty-two employers were interviewed by designated members of the research team and the information obtained from the interviews were used to verify, confirm and therefore reinforce the responses previously submitted by employed NOUN Journalism graduates. Thus, we were able to accomplish the primary mission of the Tracer Study, which is, investigating the employability and corporate social integration of NOUN journalism graduates in the workplace. This was successfully done by providing answers to our five research questions, logically, using our collated, analysed and qualitatively interpreted survey data. The findings prove convincingly that the courses studied by NOUN Journalism graduates are highly relevant to the graduates’ present jobs, that the graduates are socially well integrated in the workplace and that their employers are satisfied with their professional performances. But, to sustain this positive and harmonious “gown and town” status or

synchronisation, and to tend towards perfection, it is needful to fill the current-knowledge gaps observed on the part of the NOUN Journalism graduates.

### Recommendations

NOUN Mass Communication Department should develop or update courses and adopt measures to fill the few current-knowledge gaps observed by employers of NOUN journalism graduates. This will further improve the employability of NOUN journalism graduates, their career advancement and their sustainability in the Journalism job market.

Targeting the international job market for journalism graduates should be part of NOUN's training objectives, to achieve this it is suggested that further investigation should be carried out to determine why a respondent stated that "his/her qualification was not recognised in Germany, one has to apply for further studies", and then remedial or conformity measures should be taken, if applicable, to make NOUN Journalism courses acceptable internationally.

To help improve the training environment and outcomes, it is important to reinforce or update the courses, services or operations for which NOUN journalism graduates chose as response "undecided" at over 20.0% when they responded to the questions in the Tracer Study survey questionnaire.

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