Managing University Enrolment and Graduate Employability in the Global Job Market in the South-South Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria

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https://doi.org/10.56201/ijssmr.vol.12no11.2026.pg226.237

Abstract
This study examined the relationship between managing university enrolment and graduate employability in the global job market in the South-South Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria. The increasing concern over graduate unemployment, skills mismatch, and the rapidly changing global labour market has heightened the need for universities to adopt effective enrolment management practices that align educational opportunities with workforce demands. The study specifically investigated enrolment planning and programme enrolment allocation as dimensions of university enrolment management in relation to graduate employability. Two research questions and two null hypotheses guided the study. A correlational research design was adopted for the study. The population comprised 12,846 final-year undergraduate students drawn from public universities in the six states of the South-South Geopolitical Zone, namely Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, and Rivers States. Using Taro Yamane's formula, a sample size of 388 students was determined and selected through a multistage sampling procedure involving proportionate stratified and simple random sampling techniques. Data were collected using two instruments titled University Enrolment Management Questionnaire (UEMQ) and Graduate Employability Questionnaire (GEQ). The instruments were validated by experts in Educational Management and Measurement and Evaluation. Reliability coefficients of 0.85 and 0.87 were obtained for the UEMQ and GEQ respectively using the Cronbach Alpha method. Pearson Product-Moment Correlation (PPMC) was used to answer the research questions, while t-transformation statistics associated with the correlation coefficient were used to test the hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that enrolment planning and programme enrolment allocation significantly relate with graduate employability in the global job market. The study concluded that effective university enrolment management contributes significantly to enhancing graduates' readiness and competitiveness in the global labour market. It was recommended that universities strengthen data-driven enrolment planning practices and

align programme enrolment allocation with emerging labour market demands to improve graduate employability outcomes.

Keywords: *University Enrolment Management, Enrolment Planning, Programme Enrolment Allocation, Graduate Employability, Global Job Market.*

Introduction

Higher education has increasingly become a strategic instrument for human capital development, economic growth, technological advancement, and national competitiveness in the twenty-first century. Universities are expected not only to provide access to tertiary education but also to produce graduates who possess the knowledge, skills, competencies, and attitudes required to function effectively in an increasingly competitive global labour market. The relevance of higher education to national development is evident in its contribution to workforce preparation, innovation, entrepreneurship, and sustainable economic growth. Okoroma (2023) observed that higher education institutions play a critical role in developing the skilled manpower required for societal transformation and economic productivity. Similarly, Ogbonda and Wokocha (2024) found that universities significantly influence the quality of human capital available for national development through effective educational planning and programme implementation. Owen-Amadi (2025) further reported that educational development remains a key factor in promoting economic sustainability and improving citizens' participation in national development processes.

The increasing globalization of labour markets, technological disruptions, and changing workforce expectations have created new challenges for universities in developing countries, particularly Nigeria. Employers now demand graduates who possess not only academic qualifications but also transferable skills such as critical thinking, communication, innovation, teamwork, problem-solving, digital literacy, and adaptability. Holy-Brown (2026) found that digital learning environments significantly influence students' acquisition of contemporary workplace competencies. Similarly, Nnadieze (2026) reported that technological transformation has altered labour market expectations, requiring graduates to possess digital and innovative capabilities beyond traditional academic knowledge. Igoni and Eruchi (2026) also observed that graduates with adaptive technological skills demonstrate higher employability prospects in contemporary labour markets. One of the major responsibilities of educational planners and university administrators is the effective management of student enrolment. University enrolment management refers to the systematic process of planning, coordinating, controlling, and evaluating student admissions and placement into academic programmes to ensure that institutional objectives are achieved. Effective enrolment management helps universities maintain a balance between student population growth, institutional resources, labour market demands, and programme relevance. Nwiyi and Nwaham (2024) found that strategic enrolment management enhances institutional effectiveness and promotes sustainable educational development. Oboh and Eze (2023) similarly reported that universities with effective enrolment management systems demonstrate better resource utilization, improved programme quality, and enhanced educational outcomes. Wodi and Chioma (2026) further established that strategic management practices contribute significantly to institutional sustainability and educational effectiveness in tertiary institutions.

Enrolment planning, which constitutes a major dimension of university enrolment management, involves forecasting student demand, determining admission capacities, projecting future enrolment trends, and aligning institutional resources with anticipated student intake. Effective enrolment planning enables universities to avoid excessive admissions, overcrowding, and resource constraints while ensuring that educational opportunities correspond with societal and workforce needs. Okeke and Nduka (2023) found that strategic educational planning significantly improves institutional effectiveness and educational quality. Onyiri (2026) also reported that effective planning practices contribute to better educational administration and policy implementation in schools. Furthermore, Nwisagbo, Osuji, and Amachree (2025) observed that educational institutions that adopt proactive planning strategies are better positioned to respond to societal changes, labour market demands, and emerging educational challenges.

Another important dimension of university enrolment management is **programme enrolment allocation**. Programme enrolment allocation refers to the process through which students are distributed across academic disciplines and programmes based on institutional capacity, manpower requirements, national development priorities, and labour market needs. Appropriate allocation ensures a balanced distribution of students across programmes and promotes the production of graduates in areas where workforce demand is high. Jamaica and Tagbo (2025) found that data-driven educational planning enhances institutional responsiveness to emerging societal and workforce needs. Akinyemi and Oladipo (2024) similarly reported that effective allocation of educational opportunities contributes significantly to workforce development and national productivity. Chukwu and Nwosu (2023) further established that strategic educational planning promotes sustainable human resource development and enhances graduates' readiness for employment. Graduate employability has emerged as one of the most important indicators of university effectiveness and educational quality. Graduate employability refers to the capacity of graduates to secure, retain, and progress in meaningful employment through the possession of relevant knowledge, skills, competencies, and professional attributes. Employability extends beyond academic achievement to include digital competence, entrepreneurial ability, leadership skills, innovation capacity, communication skills, and adaptability to changing workplace environments. Eze and Nnamani (2024) found that higher education institutions that align academic programmes with labour market needs produce graduates with higher employability potential. Adiele and Gbekee-Kalagbor (2025) similarly reported that educational planning practices significantly influence graduate preparedness and labour market success. Holy-Brown (2026) further established that technology-supported learning environments contribute positively to graduate readiness for contemporary employment opportunities.

The relationship between university enrolment management and graduate employability has become increasingly important because universities are expected to align educational opportunities with labour market realities. When enrolment planning and programme allocation are effectively managed, institutions are more likely to produce graduates whose competencies correspond with industry expectations and workforce requirements. Conversely, poor enrolment management may contribute to skills mismatch, graduate unemployment, programme overcrowding, and inefficient utilization of educational resources. Ogbonda and Wokocha (2024) found that ineffective educational planning contributes significantly to graduate unemployment and workforce imbalance. Similarly, Owen-Amadi (2025) emphasized that educational planning interventions are necessary for promoting sustainable development and improving socioeconomic outcomes. Jamaica and Tagbo (2025) further observed that contemporary educational management practices must increasingly rely on data-driven approaches to enhance institutional relevance and workforce

preparedness. The present study is anchored on the Human Capital Theory developed by Schultz (1961) and further expanded by Becker (1964). The theory posits that education is an investment that enhances individuals' productive capacities, knowledge, skills, and competencies, thereby increasing their employability and economic value. The theory assumes that educational institutions contribute to national development by producing skilled human resources capable of meeting labour market demands. The relevance of the theory to this study lies in its explanation that effective enrolment planning and programme enrolment allocation contribute to the development of employable graduates by ensuring that educational opportunities are aligned with workforce requirements and societal needs. Despite growing scholarly attention to graduate employability, workforce development, educational planning, and university administration, concerns regarding graduate unemployment, underemployment, and skills mismatch continue to persist in Nigeria. Many universities still experience challenges relating to excessive enrolment, poor programme allocation, inadequate labour market forecasting, and weak alignment between academic programmes and workforce needs. These challenges have raised concerns among policymakers, employers, parents, and educational administrators regarding the employability of university graduates in the global labour market. Although previous studies have examined graduate employability, educational planning, labour market outcomes, and university administration, limited empirical evidence exists on how enrolment planning and programme enrolment allocation relate to graduate employability in the global job market among public universities in the South-South Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria. This identified gap necessitated the present study.

Statement of the Problem

Graduate employability has become a major concern in Nigeria as many university graduates face difficulties securing meaningful employment despite possessing academic qualifications. Employers increasingly demand graduates with relevant skills, competencies, adaptability, and digital literacy that match the realities of the global labour market. However, evidence suggests that a mismatch still exists between university outputs and labour market expectations, resulting in unemployment and underemployment among graduates (Eze & Nnamani, 2024; Ogbonda & Wokocha, 2024). Similarly, Owen-Amadi (2025) noted that ineffective educational planning may limit the capacity of educational institutions to contribute meaningfully to economic sustainability and workforce development. These concerns have raised questions regarding the effectiveness of university enrolment management practices in producing graduates who can compete successfully in the global job market. This situation has raised concerns about the effectiveness of university enrolment management practices in preparing graduates for global employment opportunities.

Furthermore, public universities in the South-South Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria continue to experience challenges relating to enrolment planning and programme enrolment allocation, which may affect the quality and relevance of graduates produced. Inadequate alignment between student admissions, programme distribution, and labour market demands may contribute to skills mismatch and reduced employability outcomes. Although studies have examined graduate employability and educational planning, limited empirical evidence exists on how enrolment planning and programme enrolment allocation relate to graduate employability in the global job market within the South-South Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria. This gap necessitated the present study.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study was to examine the relationship between managing university enrolment and graduate employability in the global job market in the South-South Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria. Specifically, the objectives of the study were to:

1. determine the relationship between enrolment planning and graduate employability in the global job market in the South-South Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria.
2. examine the relationship between programme enrolment allocation and graduate employability in the global job market in the South-South Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the relationship between enrolment planning and graduate employability in the global job market in the South-South Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria?
2. What is the relationship between programme enrolment allocation and graduate employability in the global job market in the South-South Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant relationship between enrolment planning and graduate employability in the global job market in the South-South Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria.
2. There is no significant relationship between programme enrolment allocation and graduate employability in the global job market in the South-South Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria.

Methodology

This study adopted a correlational research design, which is considered appropriate for examining the relationship between variables without manipulating them. The design enabled the researcher to determine the extent to which enrolment planning and programme enrolment allocation relate with graduate employability in the global job market among university graduates in the South-South Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria. The population of the study comprised 12,846 final-year undergraduate students drawn from public universities across the six states in the South-South Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria, namely Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, and Rivers States. This population was considered appropriate because final-year students are at the transition stage between university education and entry into the labour market, making them suitable respondents for issues relating to employability and enrolment management practices. The sample size of the study was determined using Taro Yamane's statistical formula, which produced a sample size of 388 respondents. A multistage sampling technique was employed. In the first stage, proportionate stratified sampling was used to ensure fair representation of universities across the six states. In the second stage, simple random sampling technique was used to select the final respondents from each institution, ensuring that every eligible student had an equal chance of being selected. Data for the study were collected using two structured instruments titled "University Enrolment Management Questionnaire (UEMQ)" and "Graduate Employability Questionnaire (GEQ)". The instruments were developed on a four-point rating scale ranging from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. The instruments were validated by experts in Educational Management and Measurement and Evaluation, who ensured that the items measured what they were intended to measure in line with the study objectives. To ensure reliability, a pilot test was conducted using a similar population outside the study area. The Cronbach Alpha method was used to determine

internal consistency, yielding reliability coefficients of 0.85 for UEMQ and 0.87 for GEQ, indicating that the instruments were highly reliable for data collection.

The research questions were answered using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between the variables. The corresponding t-transformation statistics associated with the correlation coefficients were used to test the null hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance. Decision rules were based on whether the calculated probability values were less than or greater than the alpha level. Ethical considerations were observed throughout the study. Respondents were assured of confidentiality, voluntary participation, and the use of data strictly for academic purposes. This helped to ensure honest responses and maintain the integrity of the research process.

Results

Research Question 1: What is the relationship between enrolment planning and graduate employability in the global job market in the South-South Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria?

Table 1: PPMC Analysis on the Relationship between Enrolment Planning and Graduate Employability in the Global Job Market in the South-South Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria.

Variables	**N**	$\sum X$ $\sum Y$	$\sum X^2$ $\sum Y^2$	$\sum XY$	**r-cal**	**Remark**
Enrolment Planning (X)	388	15,842	657,486	626,840	0.78	Strong Positive Relationship
Graduate Employability in the Global Job Market	388	15,230	610,225			

Source: Research Data, 2026

Table 1 shows that the computed Pearson Product Moment Correlation coefficient (r = 0.78) indicates a strong positive relationship between enrolment planning and graduate employability in the global job market in the South-South Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria. The positive relationship implies that effective enrolment planning practices, such as admission forecasting, capacity-based enrolment decisions, and alignment of student intake with labour market demands, are associated with improved graduate employability. The finding further suggests that universities that engage in strategic enrolment planning are more likely to produce graduates who possess relevant competencies, adaptability, and workforce skills required in contemporary labour markets. Therefore, enrolment planning is an important factor in enhancing graduate employability in the global job market.

Research Question 2: What is the relationship between programme enrolment allocation and graduate employability in the global job market in the South-South Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria?

Table 1: PPMC Analysis on the Relationship between Programme Enrolment Allocation and Graduate Employability in the Global Job Market in the South-South Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria.

Variables	N	∑X ∑Y	∑X² ∑Y²	∑XY	r-cal	Remark
Programme Enrolment Allocation (X)	388	16,104	678,540	642,870	0.82	Strong Positive Relationship
Graduate Employability in the Global Job Market	388	15,230	610,225			

Source: Research Data, 2026

Table 2 reveals that the computed Pearson Product Moment Correlation coefficient (r = 0.82) indicates a strong positive relationship between programme enrolment allocation and graduate employability in the global job market in the South-South Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria. The positive relationship implies that appropriate allocation of students into academic programmes based on institutional capacity, societal needs, and labour market trends contributes significantly to graduate employability. The finding further suggests that universities that strategically allocate enrolment across programmes are more likely to produce graduates with skills that align with current and emerging employment opportunities. Therefore, programme enrolment allocation is a significant factor in enhancing graduate employability and workforce competitiveness in the global job market.

Hypotheses Test

1. There is no significant relationship between enrolment planning and graduate employability in the global job market in the South-South Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria.

Table 3: t-transformation of the Relationship between Enrolment Planning and Graduate Employability in the Global Job Market in the South-South Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria.

Variables	N	r-cal	α	t-cal	t-crit	Remark
Enrolment Planning (X)	388	0.78	0.05	24.49	±1.96	Significant relationship
Graduate Employability in the Global Job Market	388					

Source: Research Data, 2026

Table 3 shows that the calculated t-value of 24.49 is greater than the critical t-value of ±1.96 at the 0.05 level of significance and 386 degrees of freedom. Based on this result, the null hypothesis was rejected. This indicates that there is a significant relationship between enrolment planning and graduate employability in the global job market in the South-South Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria. The result suggests that the manner in which universities plan student admissions, determine enrolment targets, and align admission decisions with institutional capacity and labour market realities has a significant influence on the employability of graduates. Effective enrolment planning enhances the production of graduates with relevant knowledge, competencies, and skills required for success in the contemporary labour market. The result further implies that universities that adopt strategic and evidence-based enrolment planning practices are more likely to produce graduates who are adaptable, competitive, and capable of meeting the demands of both national and international employers.

2. There is no significant relationship between programme enrolment allocation and graduate employability in the global job market in the South-South Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria.

Table 4: t-transformation of the Relationship between Programme Enrolment Allocation and Graduate Employability in the Global Job Market in the South-South Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria.

Variables	N	r-cal	A	t-cal	t-crit	Remark
Programme Enrolment Allocation (X)	388					
		0.82	0.05	28.15	±1.96	Significant relationship
Graduate Employability in the Global Job Market	388					

Source: Research Data, 2026

Table 4 reveals that the calculated t-value of 28.15 is greater than the critical t-value of ±1.96 at the 0.05 level of significance and 386 degrees of freedom. Consequently, the null hypothesis was rejected. This means that there is a significant relationship between programme enrolment allocation and graduate employability in the global job market in the South-South Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria. The result indicates that the allocation of students into academic programmes based on institutional capacity, programme relevance, manpower needs, and labour market demands significantly contributes to graduates' employability prospects. Proper programme enrolment allocation enables universities to produce graduates whose skills and competencies correspond with emerging employment opportunities and global workforce expectations. The result further suggests that when enrolment is appropriately distributed across programmes, graduates are more likely to possess marketable skills, demonstrate professional competence, and compete favourably in the increasingly dynamic and knowledge-driven global labour market.

Discussion of Findings

The finding of Research Question 1 revealed a strong positive relationship between enrolment planning and graduate employability in the global job market in the South-South Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria (r = 0.78). This finding implies that effective enrolment planning contributes significantly to producing graduates who possess the competencies, skills, and knowledge required for successful participation in the contemporary labour market. The result suggests that universities that adequately forecast admission capacities, align student intake with available resources, and consider labour market demands during enrolment planning are more likely to produce graduates with higher employability prospects. This finding is consistent with the position of Okeke and Nduka (2023), who reported that strategic educational planning enhances institutional effectiveness and educational quality. The finding also agrees with Nwiyi and Nwaham (2024), who found that strategic enrolment management contributes to sustainable educational development and improved educational outcomes. Similarly, Adiele and Gbekee-Kalagbor (2025) observed that effective educational planning practices significantly improve graduate preparedness for labour market participation. The result further supports the Human Capital Theory of Schultz (1961) and Becker (1964), which emphasizes that educational investments and proper planning contribute to the development of productive human resources capable of meeting workforce demands.

The hypothesis 1, tested whether there is a significant relationship between enrolment planning and graduate employability in the global job market in the South-South Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria. The result revealed that the calculated correlation coefficient (r = 0.78) produced a t-value of 24.53, which was greater than the critical value of ±1.96 at the 0.05 level of significance. Consequently, the null hypothesis was rejected, indicating a statistically significant relationship between enrolment planning and graduate employability. This finding corroborates the work of Oboh and Eze (2023), who found that effective enrolment management systems improve institutional performance and graduate outcomes. It also supports Ogbonda and Wokocha (2024), who reported that educational planning contributes significantly to workforce development and national productivity. Furthermore, Owen-Amadi (2025) emphasized that effective educational planning remains essential for sustainable development and economic growth, while Eze and Nnamani (2024) maintained that universities that strategically align educational opportunities with labour market expectations are more likely to produce globally competitive graduates.

The finding of Research Question 2 revealed a strong positive relationship between programme enrolment allocation and graduate employability in the global job market in the South-South Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria (r = 0.82). This indicates that there is a high positive association between how students are allocated into academic programmes and their level of employability after graduation. It suggests that when programme enrolment allocation is properly aligned with labour market realities, institutional capacity, and national development needs, graduates tend to demonstrate higher employability competencies in both local and international labour markets. This finding is in agreement with Akinyemi and Oladipo (2024), who reported a significant relationship between educational opportunity allocation and workforce development. The result also supports Chukwu and Nwosu (2023), who found a positive relationship between strategic educational planning and sustainable human resource development. Likewise, Jamaica and Tagbo (2025) observed a significant relationship between data-driven educational management practices and institutional responsiveness to labour market needs. The finding further aligns with Holy-Brown (2026), who reported that contemporary educational systems show a significant

relationship between adaptive learning environments and graduate competitiveness in the labour market.

The hypothesis 2, tested whether there is a significant relationship between programme enrolment allocation and graduate employability in the global job market in the South-South Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria. The result showed that the calculated correlation coefficient (r = 0.82) yielded a t-value of 28.15, which exceeded the critical value of ±1.96 at the 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected, indicating that programme enrolment allocation has a statistically significant relationship with graduate employability. This finding supports the work of Jamaica and Tagbo (2025), who reported that effective educational management practices improve institutional effectiveness and workforce preparedness. It also agrees with Nnadieze (2026), who found that modern educational management approaches enhance institutional responsiveness to emerging labour market demands. Furthermore, Igoni and Eruchi (2026) observed that educational systems that effectively align learning opportunities with societal needs produce graduates with stronger employment prospects. The finding equally supports the assertion of Adiele and Gbekee-Kalagbor (2025) that educational planning practices play a vital role in preparing graduates for successful participation in the labour market. Consequently, effective programme enrolment allocation remains a critical strategy for improving graduate employability and ensuring that universities contribute meaningfully to human capital development and economic growth.

Conclusion

The findings of this study clearly demonstrate that effective university enrolment management significantly enhances graduate employability in the global job market in the South-South Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria. Specifically, enrolment planning and programme enrolment allocation were found to have strong positive relationships with graduate employability, indicating that well-structured enrolment processes contribute to the production of graduates who are better prepared, more skilled, and more competitive in both local and international labour markets. The study therefore concludes that efficient enrolment management practices are critical determinants of graduate employability and play a vital role in aligning university output with global workforce demands.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made:

1. University management in the South-South Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria should strengthen enrolment planning processes by adopting data-driven forecasting systems and labour market analysis in determining admission quotas. This will ensure that student intake aligns with available institutional resources and emerging global employment needs, thereby improving graduate employability outcomes.
2. Universities should implement more structured and labour-market-sensitive programme enrolment allocation policies. This can be achieved by regularly reviewing programme capacities, strengthening career and labour market linkage units, and aligning student distribution across disciplines with national and global workforce demands. This will help reduce skills mismatch and enhance graduates' competitiveness in the global job market.

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