

Entrepreneurship Development and Employment Generation of Small and Medium Scale Enterprises in Nigeria

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Abstract

This research investigates the influence of entrepreneurship development on employment generation in selected small and medium scale enterprises (SMEs) in Ogun State, Nigeria. The paper also emphasizes the essential entrepreneurial skills required for establishing SMEs. The study employed a survey research design, where a sample of 80 entrepreneurs was randomly selected, and data was collected through a questionnaire. Data analysis involved descriptive statistics and regression analysis to test the hypotheses at a significance level of 5%. The findings indicate a positive correlation between entrepreneurship development and employment generation in SMEs, highlighting the crucial role of entrepreneurship development in creating jobs in this sector. Additionally, the results demonstrate that changes in employment generation in SMEs can be attributed to entrepreneurship development. Consequently, entrepreneurship development forms the foundation for promoting employment generation in small and medium scale enterprises. Recognizing the significant role of entrepreneurship development in job creation, the paper recommends focusing policy efforts on establishing supportive facilities for entrepreneurs and enhancing their employment generation capabilities through skills development, upgrading, and certification.

Keywords: Creative Skills, Employment Generation, Small and Medium Scale Enterprise

1. Introduction

In the past, there were ample job opportunities available for Nigerian graduates, to the extent that employers actively sought graduating students from tertiary institutions for immediate employment. However, the situation has reversed today, with many college graduates lacking the necessary skills for employment. The few available jobs are being pursued by a large number of unemployed individuals. Even those fortunate enough to secure jobs often require retraining to acquire the required skills for efficiency and effectiveness in their roles. There seems to be a disconnect between the education system and the labour market.

Adebayo (2013) argues that the persistent problem of graduate unemployment in Nigeria is a result of higher education curricula that are irrelevant to the current needs of society. Over the years, tertiary institutions have prioritized theoretical knowledge over practical skills in their courses. Adebayo further highlights barriers to entrepreneurship education development in

Nigeria, including discrimination against certain courses, leaders in the sector's dislike for technical and skills training, resistance from conservative academics to new knowledge that is not purely theoretical, and a general lack of entrepreneurship education among Nigerian academics to create a relevant and enduring curriculum for universities.

Nanighe and Ibebietei (2002) suggest that developed nations like the United States, Canada, United Kingdom, and Western European countries have strategically recognized entrepreneurship activities as major drivers of economic growth and development. They have incorporated entrepreneurship education comprehensively into their formal education curricula, acknowledging the positive impact of skills acquired in entrepreneurship, particularly in small and medium scale enterprises (SMEs). Nigeria cannot afford to be left behind in this regard.

Entrepreneurship development, accompanied by the acquisition of skills and competencies, can enable Nigeria to keep pace with rapid business, industrial, and technological growth and development, thus maintaining its material civilization (Olateju, 2013; Okolie, 2010). Entrepreneurship development fosters creativity, innovation, and ultimately leads to inventions, all of which are crucial for various job requirements.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

In today's world, employment prospects for Nigerian youths are increasingly competitive, while job openings remain limited. The reality is that job competition and unemployment are becoming more challenging for university graduates and professionals. Unfortunately, the government's response to the unemployment problem has been slow, inadequate, and not radical. The unemployment market continues to expand each year, posing one of the most critical problems in Nigeria, despite the country's abundant human and material resources. Years of corruption, mismanagement, and wastage have hindered economic growth, resulting in underutilized resources, unemployment, and poverty. Even more concerning is the fact that tertiary institutions in the country continue to produce more graduates every year, while available jobs are insufficient to accommodate the growing number of job seekers. The number of graduates unable to secure their first employment within five years after graduation is increasing, and even those with masters and professional qualifications are not spared from this socioeconomic phenomenon. Some graduates are accepting meager salaries to secure jobs, while others resort to lower qualifications, such as secondary school certificates and national diplomas, to secure menial jobs.

Entrepreneurial development has been suggested as a means to address the problems of unemployment and poverty among Nigerian youths and graduates, enabling them to not only create jobs but also generate wealth (Midea, 2004; Izedonmi, 2009; Unachukwu, 2009). Unachukwu (2009) emphasizes that entrepreneurship is a central pillar for economic growth and development, employment generation, and poverty alleviation, particularly in the face of global economic crises. Therefore, entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial skills acquisition, and

development must be taken seriously in Nigeria, as skill acquisition empowers individuals with vocational abilities, making them self-reliant and eliminating the burden of dependence on others.

Specifically, it is however noted that small and medium scale enterprises (SMEs) have become the main provider of employment to the growing population and the emerging economies. As a result of this trend, how to manage the SMEs in a creative manner to ensure continuous success needs to be documented, instituted and inculcated in all business minded people including students of higher learning. From the foregoing, this paper is guided by the major research questions. To what extent can entrepreneurship development influence SMEs employment generation? Other specific question is; what are entrepreneurial skills needed for establishing small and medium scale enterprises?

1.3 Research Objectives

The broad objective of this study is to analyze the influence of entrepreneurship development on employment generation in small and medium scale enterprises in Ogun state, Nigeria. The specific objectives are as follows:

1. To examine the extent to which entrepreneurship development influences employment generation in small and medium scale enterprises.
2. To analyze the entrepreneurial skills needed for establishing small and medium scale enterprises.
3. To investigate the relationship between entrepreneurship development and employment generation in SMEs.

2. Conceptual and Theoretical Literature

2.1 Concept of Entrepreneurship Development

Entrepreneurship development refers to the process of individuals identifying and seizing opportunities, as well as effectively managing and nurturing a business venture. It involves the acquisition of skills and tools necessary for creating a sustainable and prosperous future for oneself and the community. According to Obasan (2013), entrepreneurship is the art of managing both small and large businesses, taking risks, and reaping the rewards. Stevenson (1985) defines entrepreneurship as the creation of value by combining unique resources to exploit an opportunity. It goes beyond starting a new business and encompasses the entire process of individuals becoming aware of opportunities, developing ideas, and taking responsibility and initiative. Entrepreneurship empowers individuals by equipping them with essential skills and experiences to address present and future challenges. It enables them to seek investment opportunities, establish and successfully run enterprises, and develop independence and self-reliance.

Furthermore, an entrepreneur is that person who processes the capacity and capability to build something from nothing, it is a risk-taker who is committed, devoted and bears uncertainty (Okpara, 2007). According to Otokiti (2000) entrepreneur is that individual who ensures all the factors of production are supplied and ensure their coordination in production process.

2.2 Entrepreneurship Development and Employment Generation:

The relationship between entrepreneurship development and employment generation is significant. Understanding the skills required for successful entrepreneurship and how they can be acquired and improved is essential for employment creation, business survival, and growth. Chell (2013) suggests that while certain personality traits may be associated with entrepreneurial behavior, it is possible to identify and cultivate a range of entrepreneurial skills that can be learned, practiced, and enhanced. Developing these skills can contribute to job creation and improve the prospects of businesses.

The nature of entrepreneurship is subject to theoretical and empirical debates, with implications for employment generation discussions. The creation of new opportunities, rather than discovering existing ones, is considered a central aspect of entrepreneurship. While the characteristics and qualities of individual entrepreneurs play a role, entrepreneurship skills are influenced by various factors such as environmental and upbringing traits, education levels, business experience, ethnicity, access to training and support, and participation in diverse learning networks. Regions with lower levels of entrepreneurial activity may also exhibit lower levels of entrepreneurship skills among existing small businesses (Shane and Venkataraman, 2000).

Overall, entrepreneurship development plays a vital role in employment generation by equipping individuals with the necessary skills and mindset to identify and seize opportunities, create value, and successfully manage businesses.

2.3 Entrepreneurship Development in Nigeria

In Nigeria, the government has made efforts to promote entrepreneurship development as a means to address the issue of unemployment. The National Directorate of Employment (NDE) was established in 1986 with the aim of implementing programs to combat unemployment. The NDE has carried out various programs to train unemployed youths in different skills such as tailoring, bricklaying, automobile engineering, mechanics, photography, architectural designs, seamanship, and other vocations. Additionally, state governments have provided soft loans to graduates of these programs to support them in starting their own businesses.

2.3.1 Role of Universities & Polytechnics

Universities and polytechnics in Nigeria also play a role in promoting entrepreneurship development. The National Universities Commission, National Board for Technical Education, and National Commission for Colleges of Education were mandated by the Federal Ministry of

Education to introduce entrepreneurship education into the curricula of tertiary institutions. Entrepreneurship education has become a compulsory course for undergraduate students in all tertiary institutions, regardless of their area of specialization (Yahya, 2011). The goal of this policy is to equip students with entrepreneurial skills to make them self-reliant and self-employed after graduation (Oyelola, 2010).

"The universities, polytechnics, and colleges of education are responsible for implementing the government's policy on entrepreneurship education. Their roles include establishing entrepreneurship studies, developing the curriculum for the course, creating teaching materials, establishing entrepreneurship resource and knowledge centers, and providing capacity-building for lecturers. The government expects that, by implementing these measures, at least 50,000 graduates would have received entrepreneurship education with sufficient skills, and out of this number, around 10,000 graduates would become self-employed by establishing their own business ventures.

Overall, the government of Nigeria recognizes the importance of entrepreneurship development in addressing unemployment and has implemented programs and policies to promote entrepreneurship education and support aspiring entrepreneurs. The aim is to equip individuals with the necessary skills and knowledge to create their own businesses and contribute to economic growth and job creation in the country.

2.3.2. Challenges of Entrepreneurship Development in Nigeria

According Kuratko (2003); Yahya, (2011) several challenges affecting entrepreneurship development in Nigeria which includes:

1. **Poor curriculum implementation:** The implementation of entrepreneurship education in Nigerian tertiary institutions has been ineffective, with a gap between the intended objectives and the practical realities. There is often too much emphasis on theoretical instruction and group-based business plan writing, rather than practical experiences such as industrial tours and real execution of business projects.
2. **Lack of standard learning materials:** There is a shortage of textbooks and other learning materials specifically tailored to the Nigerian business environment. The available resources do not adequately address the unique challenges and characteristics of the Nigerian business landscape.
3. **Inadequate funding:** Entrepreneurship development in Nigeria suffers from a lack of sufficient funding. The curricula and programs related to entrepreneurship education face financial constraints, affecting their implementation and effectiveness.

4. **Misconceptions and mindset:** Many students perceive entrepreneurship education as an elective or a compulsory course imposed on them by the government, leading to a lack of enthusiasm and engagement. The preconceived mindset discourages learners from fully participating in entrepreneurship activities in and outside the classroom.
5. **Challenging business environment:** Graduates who venture into entrepreneurship based on their education often face significant challenges in the business environment. These challenges include multiple taxes, poor government patronage, difficulty in registration and incorporation, limited access to funds from banks, strict government regulations, inflation, and harassment/extortion by officials, infrastructure decay, and high costs of raw materials.

2.4 Employment Generation in Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs):

Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) play a crucial role in employment generation, not only in Nigeria but in many developing nations. In these countries, the informal economy, in which SMEs operate, tends to be relatively large. SMEs provide a significant proportion of jobs, especially when compared to the formal sector. Studies have shown that SMEs account for a substantial portion of employment in developing countries, such as Morocco, the Philippines, Thailand, Bangladesh, and Nigeria (Abumere et al (1998).

SMEs in Nigeria have been found to provide a substantial number of jobs, with reports indicating that they contribute to around 63% of employment in cities like Kano and 62% in Lagos (Mabogunje & Fulani 2005; Fapohunda 2005). As the formal sector faces limitations in absorbing the growing labor force, SMEs have become the employer of last resort, providing opportunities for those who cannot find employment in the formal sector. Additionally, as formal sector employment shrinks, redundant workers often establish their own small businesses, contributing to the growth of SMEs (Ogunrinola, 2007).

Apart from the current employment opportunities they provide, SMEs also contribute to the development of future entrepreneurs through their training and apprenticeship systems. These enterprises serve as platforms for skill formation and training, not only for the owners themselves but also for apprentices who may become future entrepreneurs. Therefore, SMEs in Nigeria have a dual role: generating gainful employment and fostering the development of future entrepreneurs through training and apprenticeship programs.

2.5 Theoretical and Empirical Framework

This study relies on three theoretical approaches to explore the relationship between entrepreneurship development and employment generation which include:

The Schumpeter Effect (TSE)

This theory suggests that entrepreneurship and unemployment are inversely related. When there is a high level of unemployment, there is a low degree of entrepreneurial activity. People with lower human capital and entrepreneurial talents are less motivated to start and sustain new firms, leading to higher unemployment rates. The high level of unemployment is often associated with a low degree of entrepreneurial activities, that is, where people are not motivated to set up business enterprises, the rate of unemployment would be very high. The implication of Schumpeter effect is that unemployment tends to be very high because people have lower endowments of human capital and entrepreneurial talents required to start and sustain new firms (Lucas 1978; Jovanovic 1982).

The Refugee Effect (TRE)

The refugee effect proposes that an increase in unemployment can lead to an increase in entrepreneurship activity. When individuals face unemployment and a sense of hopelessness, they may turn to self-employment as a viable alternative. The opportunity cost of not starting a firm decreases, leading to an increase in start-ups and potentially reducing unemployment levels.

Risk Taking Theory (RTT)

This theory emphasizes the role of entrepreneurship education in stimulating individuals to take calculated risks for guaranteed future benefits. Entrepreneurship education enhances individuals' ability, capability, and potential to undertake risks for economic gains. It is based on the idea that entrepreneurship is a mental education that prepares individuals to handle the responsibility of taking risks.

Empirical studies have also examined the relationship between entrepreneurship development and employment generation:

Muhammad and Andow (2010) evaluated the impact of entrepreneurial skills development programs on the performance of women entrepreneurs in Kaduna State, Nigeria. The study found that post-entrepreneurial skills development period was better than the pre-period in terms of turnover, market availability, and profit before tax. However, there was no significant difference in terms of capital. The study concluded that entrepreneurial skills development programs have a positive impact on women entrepreneurs and recommended increased government support for women's participation in skills acquisition programs.

Ekpe (2015) investigated the relationship between entrepreneurial skill acquisition and self-employment practice among graduates from Malaysian public universities. The study developed a conceptual model based on Ajzen's theory. The findings suggested that appropriate strategies, such as counseling in schools, should be implemented to encourage greater participation of youth in self-employment practice.

Ibebietei (2012) examined the entrepreneurship skills acquired by secondary school students in the south-south region of Nigeria. The study revealed that students predominantly acquired farming and home economics skills, while other skills were less prominent. The study recommended comprehensive and collaborative approaches by the government and stakeholders to ensure that students acquire a broader range of entrepreneurship skills.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The study utilized a survey research design and employed quantitative techniques. This approach allows for easy access to information and provides insights into the characteristics of the respondents.

3.2 Population and Sample

The population of the study consisted of 100 entrepreneurs who were members of three selected groups/associations: the National Association of Small-Scale Industrialists, Aquaculture Enterprise Developers, and Registered Farmers Association. These groups were chosen based on their active participation in enterprise development programs in Ogun State. The sample size was determined using the Yaro Yamani method, and a sample of 80 respondents was selected through simple random sampling.

3.3 Data Collection

Primary data was collected using a questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed using a five-point Likert scale to gather information representing the opinions and views of the respondents. A total of 80 questionnaires were administered to the selected entrepreneurs, and 74 questionnaires were returned, resulting in a response rate of 92.5%.

3.4 Data Analysis

The data collected was analyzed using descriptive statistics and regression analysis. Descriptive statistics such as percentages, means, and standard deviations were used to summarize the data. Regression analysis was employed to determine the extent to which changes in the independent variable (Entrepreneurship Development) can explain variations in the dependent variable (Employment Generation). The analysis was conducted using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software.

3.5 Research Hypothesis

The following research hypotheses are tested for the study and formulated in a null form:

Ho₁: Entrepreneurship development does not influence the employment generation of small and medium scale enterprises

Ho₂: There is no entrepreneurship skill needed for establishing small and medium scale enterprises.

Ho₃: There is no relationship between entrepreneurship development and SMEs employment generation.

3.6 Model Specification and Variable Identification

In order to estimate the relationship between entrepreneurship development and employment generation of small and medium scale enterprises, linear regression analysis was adopted.

Where: **Entrepreneurship development** is the **Independent variable**

And: **Employment generation** is the **Dependent variables**

The following explanatory variables are identified such as: entrepreneurship development, entrepreneurial skills, socio-economic climate and ease of doing business policy as functions of Employment generation, the linear model is estimated using regression technique which can be stated as follows:

$$EG = f(ED, ES, SEC, EDBP)$$

Where

EG = Employment generation

ED = Entrepreneurship development;

ES= Entrepreneurial skills;

SEC = Socio-economic climate and

EDBP = Ease of doing business policy

This model can be expressed in econometric form, it can be stated as:

$$EG = \alpha + a_1ED + a_2ES + a_3SEC + a_4EDBP + u \dots\dots\dots (3)$$

Where α = Constant; $a_1 - a_4$ = coefficient of the independent variables; u = Error term

4. Presentation and Analysis of Data

The data presented in Table 4.1 provides information on the socio-demographic characteristics of the selected groups/associations in the study area.

Table 4.1: Socio-Demographic Information

SEX	Frequency	percentage
Male	48	64.9
Female	26	35.1
Total	74	100
Age		

20-30	7	7.5
31-40	28	37.8
41-50	23	31.1
51-60	16	21.6
61 and above	-	-
Total	74	100
Marital Status		
Single	26	35.1
Married	40	54.1
Divorced	8	10.8
Total	74	100
Education Qualification		
NONE	-	-
WAEC/SSCE	28	37.8
DIPLOMA/ND	19	25.7
HND/BSC	24	32.4
MASTERS/phD	3	4.1
Total	74	100

The table indicates that the majority of the respondents were male, accounting for 64.9% of the sample, while females constituted 35.1%. In terms of age, the highest percentage of respondents fell within the 31-40 years age group, representing 37.8% of the sample. The next two age groups, 41-50 years and 51-60 years, accounted for 31.1% and 21.6% of the respondents, respectively. Regarding marital status, 54.1% of the respondents were married, while 35.1% were single. A smaller proportion of the respondents, 10.8%, reported being divorced, separated, or widowed.

4.2 Test of Hypotheses

4.2.1 Research Hypothesis one

Entrepreneurship development does not influence the employment generation of small and medium scale enterprises

Table 4.2.1: Linear Regression Model

Model Summary^b

Model	R	R-Square	Adjusted R-Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	F-Statistics	Sig.
1	.818 ^a	.669	.651	.187777	36.888	.000

a. Predictor: (Constant), ED, ES, SEC, EDBP

b. Dependent Variable: Employment generation

: Author's computation using SPSS

Table 4.2.1 presents the results of a multiple linear regression analysis. The analysis shows the coefficient of determination (R²) to be 0.669, indicating that 66.9% of the possible changes in the dependent variable (EG) can be explained by the explanatory variables included in the regression model. Furthermore, the F-statistic is reported as 36.88, and the associated probability (p-value) is stated to be less than 0.005. This suggests that the relationship between the explanatory variables and the dependent variable is statistically significant at a 5% error level, indicating that the regression model has explanatory power.

Coefficient

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig,
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	.774	1.393		.556	.000
ED	.437	.092	.230	2.585	.000
ES	.308	.138	.080	.785	.012
SEC	.249	.084	.297	2.954	.004
EDBP	.646	.154	.339	2.898	.005

a. Dependent Variable: EG

Source: Author’s computation using SPSS

The coefficient table above shows the regression coefficients of the explanatory variables in relation to the dependent variable indicating how each of them can possible influence employment generation of small and medium scale enterprises. It shows that entrepreneurship development influences the employment generation by 43.7%. The relationship between the dependent and independent variable would be predicted by re-writing the model and imputing the derived regression coefficients as follows:

$$EG = \alpha + a_1ED + a_2ES + a_3SEC + a_4EDBP + u$$

Where $EG = .774 + .437ED + .308ES + .249SEC + .646EDBP$

This relationship shows that a unit increase in entrepreneurship development (ED) will lead to 43.7% increase in employment generation of small and medium scale enterprises. Thus, entrepreneurship development does influence the employment generation of small and medium scale enterprises.

4.2.2 Research Hypothesis Two

There is no entrepreneurship skill needed for establishing small and medium scale enterprises. Table 4.2.2 Entrepreneurs’ responses on entrepreneurial skills needed for establishing small and medium scale enterprises

Items	N	X	SD	R
You look for better ways to do that task that make thing more relevant	74	14.8	26.47	Agree
Thinking creatively in the midst of challenges	74	13.6	24.33	Agree
Have ability to communicate and market goods and services	74	10.8	19.32	Agree
You have managerial skills to control resources	74	14.2	25.40	Agree
Have a technical know-how of the identified enterprise	74	14.6	26.12	Agree
Paying close attention to how people use products or services	74	14.8	26.47	Agree
You draw or write down your idea on task or project you are working on	74	14.0	26.83	Agree
You test your idea and see if it works	74	13.6	24.33	Agree
Keep working on a problem, adjusting and rethinking your ideas until you find a solution	74	14.8	26.47	Agree
Being surround yourself with people from different backgrounds	74	13.8	24.69	Agree

The table 4.2.2 shows that the respondents agreed on all the items in the table with a mean rating of 3.0 and above, which was the cutoff point of 3.0. The results indicated that the items were agreed upon as entrepreneurial skills help in establishing small and medium scale enterprises.

4.2.3 Research Hypothesis Three

There is no relationship between entrepreneurship development and SMEs employment generation

Table 4.2.3 Correlation Matrix of variables

		EG	ED	ES	SEC
EG	Pearson Correlation	1	.679**	.799**	.483**
ED	Pearson Correlation	.679**	1	.456**	.487**
ES	Pearson Correlation	.799**	.456**	1	.896**
SEC	Pearson Correlation	.483**	.487**	.896**	1

Source: Researcher' Computation using SPSS

The correlation table above clearly shows that significant relationship exists between entrepreneurship development and employment generation. In fact, there is positive relationship which specifies that entrepreneurship development plays an important role in employment generation of small and medium scale enterprises. It is an important force which inspires a person to create employment or job. Though, entrepreneurship development easily encouraged by developing entrepreneurial skills for establishing business. The desire of a person or an entrepreneur to lead independent and self-dependent life is also helpful in making a person as an entrepreneur and it facilitates overall entrepreneurship development. Such person believes in self-employment.

4.3 Summary of Findings

The result of the finding suggests that there is a significant relationship between entrepreneurship development and employment generation in small and medium-scale enterprises. The relationship is described as positive, indicating that entrepreneurship development plays a crucial role in creating jobs and employment opportunities. It is emphasized that developing entrepreneurial skills and fostering a desire for self-employment are important factors in promoting entrepreneurship development.

5. Conclusions and Policy Recommendations

Small and medium-scale enterprises play a vital role not only in generating employment but also in contributing to national development. The sustainability of employment in these enterprises relies on the development of entrepreneurship skills. Therefore, policy efforts should focus on skills development, upgrading, and certification to support entrepreneurs in acquiring the necessary skills for employment generation.

Additionally, establishing facilities that can support the income and employment generation capacity of small and medium-scale enterprises is essential. These facilities can provide financial support, training programs, mentorship, and access to resources to help enterprises grow and create more jobs over time. Furthermore, it is important to implement policies that facilitate the transition of enterprises in this sector into typical small and medium-scale enterprises. These policies should aim to enhance their productivity, output, and employment levels, thereby contributing to sustainable economic growth and development.

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