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Research Article

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Contributions of SMEs to Employment creation among Households in Ajaokuta Local Government Area, Kogi State

Emmanuel Chinanuife[1] and Afamefuna A Eze[2*]

[1]*Department of Economics, Faculty of Management and Social Sciences, Topfaith University, Mkpatak, Akwa Ibom, Nigeria*
[2]*Department of Economics, Faculty of the Social Sciences, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Nigeria*

[*]**Corresponding author**
Afamefuna A Eze, Department of Economics, Faculty of the Social Sciences, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Nigeria.

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ABSTRACT
Development in the world today takes different dimensions but serious emphasis is place on the role of SMEs in improving the income and well-being of people. This study empirically assessed the contributions of small and medium scale enterprises to employment creation among households in Ajaokuta Local Government Area of Kogi state. The objective was analysed using one-way ANOVA. The finding of the study shows that the presence of SMEs in the area contributes to increase in kiosk, increase in white- and blue-collar jobs, decrease in the number of applicants and increase in the number of bankers in Ajaokuta local government area of Kogi state. The study therefore recommends that fund should be made available at low interest rate to encourage the establishment and growth of SMEs in order to reduce massive youth unemployment in the country.

Keywords: Employment, SMEs, Economic Activities, ANOVA

Introduction

One of the main objectives of many developing countries worldwide has been the pursuit of economic development. The high rates of unemployment and poverty in developing nations are just two of the issues that continue to impede the achievement of socioeconomic progress. Developing economies face significant obstacles in the areas of creating jobs, reducing poverty, and increasing income, among other things. Due to fluctuations in the number of young people without jobs, many developing countries—including Nigeria—find it challenging to maintain economic growth [1]. The government and other economic stakeholders are starting to question why the nation's economy is growing at such a modest rate. All things considered, a number of causes are responsible for Nigeria's slow speed, such as inconsistent power production, property and life security risks, corruption, skewed government policies, and various taxation regimes imposed by the federal, state, and local governments.

For many economies in Africa and throughout the world, small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) are vital [2]. In both industrialized and developing nations, small and medium-sized enterprises have made remarkably significant contributions during the last 20 years [3,4]. The important rise in economic growth and development in the majority of African nations is attributed to the operations of SMEs [5,6]. Globally, there is disagreement on what constitutes SMEs [7,8]. The Capacity Development Centre of Ghana said in 2012 that micro, small, and medium-sized businesses, or 92 percent of registered companies, had a beneficial impact on the socioeconomic development of the nation. Using personnel and fixed assets as a basic criterion, the National Board for Small Scale Industries (NBSSI), currently known as the Ghana Enterprises Agency (GEA), defines SMEs in the Ghanaian context. Likewise, the Ghana Statistical Service classified SMEs according to the number of employees: 1 to 5 for micro, 6 to 30 for small, 31 to 100 for medium, and more than 100 for big enterprises. SMEs are classified as micro, with 1-9 employees, small, with 10-99 employees, and medium-large, with 100-499 employees by Abor & Quartey [9].

SMEs are acknowledged as catalysts for innovation, economic expansion, and job creation in Africa [10]. According to Hongbo et al. Cote d'Ivoire's SMEs made up 98% of the country's domestic businesses, which contributed 18% of the country's

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GDP and 20% of all modern jobs [11]. Maholwana similarly came to the conclusion that South Africa's SMEs are effective forces behind development and inclusive economic growth [12]. Through its examination of the National Development Plan 2030 (NDP 2030), the study also demonstrates how the South African government considered the role that SMEs may play in realizing the objectives of the 2030 agenda. Therefore, it can be mean that in the majority of Africa's emerging nations, SMEs have taken center stage in the attention of policymakers. According to Nuwagaba, SMEs in Tanzania are renowned for having transformed the country's economy from a command to a market economy [13]. It was also proven by this analysis that 60 percent of Tanzania's GDP is generated by SMEs. It is shocking that so few empirical studies have been done on SMEs and their significance or contributions towards the development of African economies, particularly Ghana [14]. This is because SMEs can exploit their potential in job creation/employment, innovation and business opportunities, and provision of social services (CSR).

Muritala, Awolaja and Bako further argued that small and medium enterprises enhanced competition and entrepreneurship and hence have external benefits on economy wide efficient and productivity growth [15]. Kuteyi asserted that small and medium enterprise may drive economic growth through employment creation channels and that they mostly used labour intensive technologies thereby reducing unemployment rates [16]. The promotion of human and capital resources development in Nigeria can be done through small and medium scale enterprises [17]. In view of that, the collective authority had in the past provides policies drives for the development of small and medium scale enterprises. These policy drives were divided into three categories by Eze and Okpala: tariff regimes, financial support and technical help, and incentives (fiscal and export) [17]. According to Eze and Okpala, the fiscal incentives for small businesses include tax breaks for the first six years of operation, a five-year pioneer status grant that can be extended by two years for businesses in economically disadvantaged areas, relief for capital allowance investments in infrastructure, and a minimum income of 20 percent from the use of locally produced raw materials [17]. According to Okafor, Ugochukwu, and Chijindu, SMEs are particularly important for creating jobs, mobilizing and utilizing local resources, exporting goods, increasing output, reducing income inequality, promoting an economy that replaces imports, promoting equitable development, reducing rural-urban migration, fostering technological innovation, transforming indigenous technology, and producing intermediate goods for both forward and backward integration [18].

The nation's pursuit of economic growth and development is contingent upon the performance of the small and medium-sized companies subsector of the economy. Today, nations continue to implement workable policies and programs that would establish and prepare the way for the sustainable development of their economies through the development of SMEs, regardless of the degree of growth and development experienced by the globe at large. Several studies have demonstrated that small and medium-sized businesses stimulate economic expansion. Moreover, the demise of subsector financing sources and infrastructure is a significant barrier impeding the growth of SMEs in Nigeria. Most of the time, operators find it difficult to access funding choices, especially those provided by banks. Numerous operators have been forced by this occurrence to look into different finance options that have higher interest rates and other ramifications. In response, the Nigerian Central Bank provided the government with a number of financing avenues for SMEs. Among many other financial avenues, they include direct loans from state governments, microfinance banks, and the Micro, Small, and Medium Scale Development Fund (MSMSDF). It has resulted in a noticeable improvement in their activities over a brief period of time [19].

Objective of the Study

The broad objective of this study is to find out how SMEs could to reduce unemployment in Nigeria. However, the specific objective of this study is to examine the contribution of SMEs to employment creation among households in Ajaokuta Local Government Area.

Hypothesis of the Study

H0: There is no statistically significant difference in the mean contribution of SMEs to employment creation among households in Ajaokuta Local Government Area.

H1: There is statistically significant difference in the mean contribution of SMEs to employment creation among households in Ajaokuta Local Government Area.

Literature

Small and medium-sized businesses, or SMEs, are a prevalent sight in the Nigerian marketplace. Being a developing economy, SMEs are so prevalent that it is difficult to even obtain reliable data about them. Despite this, SMEs are the main engines of the economy because they are simple to enter but difficult to sustain. In many nations, SMEs are largely responsible for the growth in overall employment [20]. In these nations, the contributions of larger businesses often stay constant, although SMEs account for a sizable portion of GDP growth [21].

Improving commerce and industrialization in the current developed countries was the main goal of the introduction of the concept of small and medium-sized companies (SME) into the development landscape in the late 1940s [22]. SME definitions are often developed nationally, taking into account the economic function of SMEs as well as the policies and initiatives created by certain organizations or authorities with the authority to foster SMEs. In industrialized economies such as Japan, Germany, and the United States of America (USA), a small firm might be considered a medium-sized or large-scale enterprise in a developing country like Nigeria. Furthermore, depending on the policy focus of each agency or growing institution, the definition of a SME changes over time [20].

Small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) are a diverse group of companies that can be found operating in various sectors of the national economy [21]. These include the proprietors of coffee shops, tailor shops, iron fabrication businesses, roadside mechanics, small transportation companies, internet cafés, small engineering or software companies, and a medium-sized auto parts company. A portion of SMEs generate goods for both domestic and international markets. They can be found at the local, regional, national, or worldwide levels, and their owners can be wealthy or impoverished.

Challenges to SMEs Development in Nigeria

The government has worked hard to ensure that the SME sector grows with the goals of lowering unemployment, minimizing social vices, and raising the standard of living for the general public, but the sector still faces many obstacles. Some of the issues that SMEs in Nigeria encounter is examined by Ilegbinosa and Jumbo and are addressed below [24]:

Insufficient Funding: SMEs are often known globally to be financed by the personal or family savings of its owners. Nevertheless, this source of capital is inactively low for the establishment, expansion, and development of new and existing SMEs due to the high rate of poverty and resulting low level of savings in Nigeria and other Less Developed Countries. This may help to explain why the majority of SMEs in Nigeria typically begin with insufficient financing and then prepare to close if they do not receive outside investment from the government or a financial institution.

Insufficient Infrastructure: For a considerable amount of time, Nigeria's small and medium-sized enterprise (SMEs) have been impeded by issues such as unstable and inconsistent electricity supply, crumbling roads, insufficient water supply for domestic and commercial purposes, and expensive and ineffective communication systems. As a backup source of electricity, almost every SME in operation in Nigeria has one or more power producing plants. Such generating plants are typically very expensive to obtain, maintain, sustain, and manage. As a result, production costs and product prices have increased significantly, with the latter becoming increasingly uncompetitive when compared to imported equivalents.

Inadequate Planning and Management: In order for an organization to achieve its predetermined goals and objectives, management entails planning, coordinating, organizing, and controlling both natural and human resources [25]. As such, it entails using people to do tasks effectively and appropriately. However, a survey of SMEs in LDCs revealed that owners essentially handle everything themselves without consulting experts or specialists. As a result, the organization's resources have been wasted, underutilized, and exhibited incompetence.

Low Education and Experience: The low educational attainment and insufficient business experience of Nigerian SME operators are closely linked to the planning and management issue [26]. The absence of pioneering, inventive, innovative, dynamic, energetic, and entrepreneurial talents and abilities required to successfully approach and tackle difficulties as they emerge has been explained by these. Thus, human resources are the cornerstone of a country's wealth [27].

Managing raw materials and selecting the right technology are essential for any organization, no matter how big or little, to expand and thrive. One of the challenges faced by small businesses is the lack of access to good raw materials and timely and cost-effective organization [28]. Most of these basic resources are imported into Nigeria rather than being manufactured there. Furthermore, a frequent evaluation of things produced locally or domestically is that they lack consistency and standards. The unique challenge of material purchase, upkeep, conservation, and storage faces SMEs in agro-allied sectors. Additionally, it is imperative to adequately address the selection of technical knowledge and experience that would yield superior, quality, and standard goods capable of competing with their worldwide counterpart and satisfying both domestic and foreign needs [29].

Insufficient Friendly and Facilitating Environment: The Nigerian Federal Government's monetary and fiscal policies for commercial matters have been erratic, contradictory, inconsistent, and occasionally at odds with one another [30]. When compared to their international counterparts, who have the option of using Nigeria as a dump for their output, this has caused a great deal of issues for local investors. The issue of illegal taxes (business development tax, business registration tax, business premise tax, sanitation fees, signboard fees, stickers, etc.) is related to this. These taxes are typically imposed by state and municipal government agencies (tax force on this or that). This leads to high operating costs and an unfavorable business environment for SMEs in Nigeria.

In the majority of developing nations, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) have shown to be a significant intervention in addressing the issues of unemployment and poverty. Opafunso and Adepoju investigate how SMEs affected Ekiti State's economic development between 2006 and 2013 [31]. The results showed a strong and positive correlation between SMEs and the decline in poverty, the creation of jobs, and the raising of the general standard of living in Ekiti State. In addition, the outcome showed that the number of SMEs in the State increased by 57% between 2009 and 2013. Similar to this, Morenikeji and Oluchukwu demonstrate the relationship between small and medium-sized businesses and the sustainable growth of the Nigerian economy, as well as the relationship between SMEs' promotion and increased job creation. According to Adegboyega, Godwin, and Joy, small and medium-sized businesses have a direct impact on income, poverty, and the creation of jobs [1,32].

Methods and Data

Descriptive survey design was employed for this study. A descriptive survey design is a form of research that is aimed at collecting, finding, discussing and interpreting existing conditions. This is considered appropriate because the area under study is so large that collection of data from the entire area was not possible within the available time frame. Also, Analysis of Variance was used to test the hypothesis of the study.

Area of the Study

Kogi state is a state in the North central Region of Nigeria, bordered to the east by Ekiti and Kwara, to the north by the federal capital Territory and Nasarawa State, to the northwest by Edo State and Ondo state, by the southeast by Enugu state and Anambra state, to the west by Benue state [33]. Kogi state is the only state in Nigeria to be bordered by 10 other states. Kogi state was created on August 27, 1991. It has a total land area of 29,833km2 and about 4.5 million people as at 2016 Census. The per capita income of the state is overt $1,401 and Human Development Index of 0.558.

Ajaokuta is a Local Government Area in Kogi State, Nigeria and a town within it on the left bank of the Niger River. The headquarters of the LGA is in the town of Egayin in the south of the area at 6°40′11″N 8°48′19″E and has an area of 1,362 km^2.

Population of Study

According to 2006 census exercise, the population of Ajaokuta is projected to be 173,268; Male Population, 88,781 (51.2%); Female Population, 84,487 (48.8%). Therefore, the population of the study is 173,268 people.

Sample and Sampling Techniques

The population of study is 173,268 and a sample of 400 was used for this study. The sample size was arrived at using Taro Yamane's formula in calculating what would be the appropriate sample size considering the population of the area.

$N/1 + N(e)^2$

Where N = Total Population
e = Degree of Difference
Therefore,

$$\frac{173{,}268}{1+173{,}268(0.05)^2}$$

$$\frac{173{,}268}{1+173{,}268(0.0025)}$$

$$\frac{173{,}268}{1+433.17}$$

399.07

Approximately 400
So, 400 is the sample size of this study.
Meanwhile, stratified random sampling was adopted for the study. Stratified random sampling was considered "because it assures for more representation of every segment of the population".

Research Instrument

Questionnaire was the research instrument used for this study. The questionnaire was designed in unambiguous words to obtain the views of the respondents.

Validity and Reliability

To ensure that the research instrument is validity, it was subjected to facial and content validity. The facial validity was done by colleagues in the department while the content validity was done by my project supervisor for content validity for assessment and approval. The reliability test of the instrument was carried out using split-half method. A pilot study was conducted and the questionnaire was divided into odd and even number. The reliability coefficient was test using Spearman Rank correlation. The study discovered a reliability coefficient of 0.85. This shows that the instrument explains about 85 percent. The remaining 15 percent could be attributed to variability within the population. With the correlation coefficient of 0.85, the instrument is highly reliable and would produce a robust result.

Methods of Data Collection

This study used primary source of data for the analysis. This source involved efforts made to reach for the first-hand fact on the subject. Therefore, the instrument of primary source applied was the questionnaire. The study used self-designed closed ended questionnaire. The items of the questionnaire were designed following the objectives of the study.

Method of Data Analysis

In analyzing various data collected for this study, section A of the questionnaire was analyzed using frequency table and simple percentage. Section B was analyzed using a five-point Likert type rating scale of a structured response pattern of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Undecided (U), Strongly Disagree (SD) and Disagree (D), which are scored 5,4,3,2 and 1 point respectively.

The hypothesis of the study was test using Analysis of Variance (ANOVA).

Results

This study presents, analyzed and interprets the data generated from the questionnaire distributed to residents in Lokoja, Kogi State. Background information of the respondents was analyzed used simple percentages while section B was analyzed using one-way ANOVA.

Background Characteristics of the Respondents

Table 1: Percentage Distribution of Sex of Respondents

SEX					
		Frequency	**Percent**	**Valid Percent**	**Cumulative Percent**
Valid	male	154	24.6	38.5	38.5
	female	246	39.3	61.5	100.0
	Total	400	63.9	100.0	
Missing	System	226	36.1		
Total		626	100.0		

Source: Author, 2023

Table 1 shows the percentage distribution of sex of respondents. It could be observed that 154 male and 246 female were sampled. This represents 38.5 percent and 61.5 percent respectively. The study shows that female respondents exceed male respondents by 92 (23%). It could be observed that women form the greater number of respondents sampled. This is an indication that their responses would actually portray the level of women involvement in SMEs.

Table 2: Percentage Distribution of Marital Status of Respondents

Marital status					
		Frequency	**Percent**	**Valid Percent**	**Cumulative Percent**
Valid	single	107	17.1	26.8	26.8
	married	273	43.6	68.3	95.0
	divorced	20	3.2	5.0	100.0
	Total	400	63.9	100.0	
Missing	System	226	36.1		
Total		626	100.0		

Source: Author, 2023

Table 2 shows the percentage distribution of marital status of respondents. It could be observed that out of the total respondents sampled, 107 (26.8%) were single, 20 (5%) were divorced and 273 (68.3%) were married. This further revealed that the study sampled more of married respondents than single or divorced. The implication of this is that these respondents would be more responsible and would actually account for the contributions of SMEs in Ajaokuta local government area of Kogi state.

Table 3: Education Background of Respondents

Edu background					
		Frequency	**Percent**	**Valid Percent**	**Cumulative Percent**
Valid	FSLC	14	2.2	3.5	3.5
	SSCE	250	39.9	62.5	66.0
	NCE/ OND and above	136	21.7	34.0	100.0
	Total	400	63.9	100.0	
Missing	System	226	36.1		
Total		626	100.0		

Source: Author, 2023

Table 3 shows the education background of respondents. it could be observed that 14 (3.5 %) have only first school leaving certificate, 250 (62.5%) have Senior Secondary Certificate while 136 (34.0%) have NCE/OND and above. It could be observed that greater number of the respondents have at least senior secondary certificate. This shows that whatever training on SMEs best practices would be assimilated.

Table 4: Percentage Distribution of respondents based on years of resident in the area

Years of resident					
		Frequency	**Percent**	**Valid Percent**	**Cumulative Percent**
Valid	0-3 years-new	12	1.9	3.0	3.0
	4-10 years-not new	253	40.4	63.3	66.3
	11 years and above-old	135	21.6	33.8	100.0
	Total	400	63.9	100.0	
Missing	System	226	36.1		
Total		626	100.0		

Source: Author's Field Survey, 2023

Table 4 shows the percentage distribution of respondents based on the years of residents. It could be observed that 12 (3.0%) of the respondents have stayed for the period of 0-3 years, 253 (63.3%) have stayed for the period of 4-10 years while 135 (33.8%) have stayed for the period of 11 years and above. This shows that greater percentage of the respondents have long stayed in the area under study and would be in a position to offer better information about the existence of SMEs.

Hypotheses Testing

H0: There is no statistically significant difference in the mean contribution of SMEs to employment creation among households in Ajaokuta Local Government Area.

H1: There is statistically significant difference in the mean contribution of SMEs to employment creation among households in Ajaokuta Local Government Area.

Decision Rule: Reject H0 if the probability value of any of the items representing the contribution of SMEs to employment creation among households is less than 0.05. Otherwise, the null hypothesis would not be rejected at 5 % level of significance.

Table 5: Shows the one-way analysis of variance for the mean difference of the contribution of SMEs to employment creation among households in Ajaokuta local government area of Kogi state

ANOVA						
		Sum of Squares	**Df**	**Mean Square**	**F**	**Sig.**
Increase in POS	Between Groups	3.551	4	.888	1.775	.133
	Within Groups	197.526	395	.500		
	Total	201.078	399			
Increase in kiosk	Between Groups	26.944	4	6.736	11.079	.006
	Within Groups	240.255	395	.608		
	Total	243.198	399			
Increase in white- and blue-collar job	Between Groups	44.077	4	11.019	35.473	.000
	Within Groups	122.701	395	.311		
	Total	166.778	399			
Increase in construction works	Between Groups	2.016	4	.504	1.000	.407
	Within Groups	199.061	395	.504		
	Total	201.078	399			
Decrease in the number of applicants	Between Groups	18.675	4	4.669	7.617	.015
	Within Groups	241.965	395	.613		
	Total	244.640	399			
Increase in the number of bankers	Between Groups	44.906	4	11.227	36.288	.000

	Within Groups	122.204	395	.309		
	Total	167.110	399			
Increase in the number of govt and private workers	Between Groups	2.016	4	.504	1.000	.407
	Within Groups	199.061	395	.504		
	Total	201.078	399			

Source: Author's field work, 2023

Table 5 shows the one-way analysis of variance for the mean difference of the contribution of SMEs to employment creation. It could be observed that increase in kiosk, increase in white- and blue-collar job, decrease in the number of applicants and increase in the number of bankers were found to be statistically significant. This shows that the probability value of increase in kiosk (prob. = 0.006 < 0.05), increase in white- and blue-collar job (prob. = 0.000 < 0.05), decrease in the number of applicants (prob. = 0.015 < 0.05) and increase in the number of bankers (prob. = 0.000 < 0.05) were less than 0.05 for 5 percent level of significance. However, the probability value of increase in POS (prob. = 0.133 > 0.05), increase in construction works (prob. = 0.407> 0.05) and Increase in the number of government and private workers (prob. = 0.407 > 0.05) were all greater than 0.05 for 5 percent level of significance. This implies that there is statistically significant difference in the mean contribution of SMEs to employment creation among the people of Ajaokuta Local Government Area.

Therefore, SMEs contributes to increase in kiosk, increase in white- and blue-collar job, decrease in the number of applicants and increase in the number of bankers in Ajaokuta local government area of Kogi state.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Development in the world today takes different dimensions but serious emphasis is place on the role of SMEs in improving the income and well-being of people. This study assessed the contributions of small and medium scale businesses to employment creation among households in Ajaokuta Local Government Area of Kogi state. It is expected that increase in the number of SMEs should reduce poverty level by increasing the income of the people of Ajaokuta local government area. The objectives were examined using mean and standard deviation while the hypotheses were tested using one-way ANOVA. The finding of the study shows that SMEs contributes to increase in kiosk, increase in white- and blue-collar job, decrease in the number of applicants and increase in the number of bankers in Ajaokuta local government area of Kogi state. Also, SMEs leads to increase in income through increase in wealth creation, and leads to job creation, reduces poverty level. The study recommends that fund should be made available at low interest rate to encourage the establishment and growth of SMEs and government policy through incentives should be enacted to encourage youths to embark on SMEs in order to reduce massive youth unemployment in the country.

Declaration of Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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