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Examining the Impact of Entrepreneurship on Employment Opportunities in Nigeria's South-South Geopolitical Zone

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ABSTRACT

This study examined entrepreneurship and employment opportunities in South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria. One specific objective was formulated and tested in the study. Gartner's entrepreneurship theory, introduced by Gartner in 1985, emphasizes the behavioral approach in understanding entrepreneurship. The cross sectional research design adopted for the study using the survey method. A sample of 400 was obtained from a population of 4,342,706 with the aid of Taro Yamane sample size derivation formula. Simple random sampling and Convenience sampling methods were used to select the survey participants. The questionnaire was employed for data collection. The instrument's validity and reliability were assessed to ensure its suitability for field use. A reliability score of $r^2 = 0.79$ was obtained which showed a strong reliability value and was used to run the analysis. Descriptive data were analyzed using mean while the hypotheses were tested using Simple Linear Regression. Results obtained were analyzed and discussed using secondary data (literature) in the work to support the findings of the study. The study revealed that entrepreneurship significantly impacts on employment opportunities in South-South geopolitical zone in Nigeria. It was recommended that government should consider investment in infrastructure such as improvement in transportation, energy, and internet infrastructure to facilitate business operations and attract investments to enhance employment opportunities in the region.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship, Employment Opportunities, South-South Geopolitical Zone, Nigeria, Job Creation, Unemployment and Sustainable Employment

Introduction

The pride of any government is the attainment of higher levels of development in all facets of life in such a way that its citizens would derive national attachment to governance. However, for a nation to be in a phase of development, there must be some pre-requisite which include socio – political and economic stability. Development is critical and essential to the growth and sustenance of any nation. A country is classified as developed when it is able to provide qualitative life for her citizens. Nigeria in the last fifty years has been battling with the problem of development in spite of the human and natural resources in her possession which has greatly affected her quest to improved quality of life of her citizens where poverty, unemployment and starvation still pervades the country as a result of lack of quality investment in entrepreneurship (Zafar, & Mustafa, 2017).

The notion of entrepreneurship has caught the interest of current scholars and practitioners for some time now, as proven by the growing body of literature and the emergence of fresh scientific and non-scientific groups. Entrepreneurship has become increasingly popular as a technique for solving social problems, such as creating employment, eradicating poverty, developing rural areas, and growing the economy in emerging nations Adekunle, and Kayode, (2014). Aside from Nigeria, numerous countries in the world are regularly working towards achieving progress and development. Zoltan, (2018) has shown that entrepreneurship plays a crucial role in reducing poverty by creating jobs and generating income for individuals

and communities. United Nations Development Programme (UNPD), has revealed that fostering in marginalized communities contributed to sustainable development and poverty reduction leading to social inclusion and economic empowerment (Bosma et al., 2017).

It suffice to note that unemployment is rampant in Nigeria like other developing nations because of mismatch between the need of employers and supply of job-specific human capital produced by tertiary institutions (Simkovic, 2012). According to available data at the Nigeria Bureau of Statistics, as at the last quarter of 2015, out of an economic active population (15-65yrs) of 104.3million, the labour force was 75.9 million. Youth population was 36.38million (48% of the total work force). About 20.7million (49.6% of work force) were either unemployed or underemployed. However, Nigeria unemployment rate was 5.3 percent in Q4 2022 and declined to 4.1 percent in Q1 2023. These indices accentuate the need for efficient entrepreneurial development in Nigeria which is crucial for socio-economic growth, poverty reduction and sustainable development. The current economic recession in Nigeria today tells the whole story; Nigeria is faced with lots of challenges ranging from high rate of poverty, youth and graduate unemployment, over dependence on foreign goods and technology, insecurity, low economic growth and development, poor infrastructural development among others (Ekwesike, 2012). This calls for the need to drive entrepreneurship towards employment creation at all levels, and this paper explores the link between entrepreneurship and employment opportunities particularly in the South-South that play host to the vast oil resources that sustains the Nigerian economy.

Objective of the Study

The general objective of the study is to determine the impact of entrepreneurship on employment opportunities in Nigeria's South-South .Geopolitical Zone. The specific objective therefore is to:

1. Examine how entrepreneurship impacts on employment opportunities in Nigeria's South-South Geopolitical Zone.

Research Hypothesis

H0₁ There is no significant relationship between entrepreneurship and employment opportunities in Nigeria's South-South Geopolitical Zone.

Review of Related Literature

Conceptual framework: Entrepreneurship

The term entrepreneurship, entrepreneur and small businesses have been in existence for many years, but people have diverse perspectives about them. They mean different things to different people depending on the context (Vecianna, 2018). Entrepreneurship is not only seen as a way to drive economic development but also changes in society (Ratten & Dana, 2019). Entrepreneurship can be perceived in terms of process, behaviour as well as outcomes (Stam, & Spigel, 2017) and they are the backbone of economic development for major countries all over the world. They play a significant role in alleviating poverty while acting as major drivers for social and economic change, particularly for emerging economies in Asia, South America and Africa (Igwe, Newbery, Amoncar, White & Madichie, 2018). The last two decades have witnessed tremendous innovations and technological advancement in developing economies. These changes range from new forms of Open Innovations (OI) (Nambisan, Siegel & Kenney, 2018; Eckhardt, Ciuchta & Carpenter, 2018), Digital Platforms (DP), Mobile Transactions (Tiwana, 2013), Social Enterprises (SE) (Ratten & Dana, 2019), new ways of forming networks and new social ecology of entrepreneurs (Carroll & Khessina, 2015).

In developing African countries, it has been recorded that small-scale entrepreneurs engage mostly in small business activities. These oftentimes translate into income generating ventures for urban and rural dwellers, particularly the unemployed youth, who constitutes a significant percentage of the population of these countries (Ihugba & Njoku, 2013). Therefore, the place of small-scale businesses in any economy as drivers of entrepreneurship, agent of economic growth, employment creation, wealth generation and poverty alleviation, cannot be overlooked.. Sadly, despite the role of small

businesses in major economies, they have not been properly coordinated in most African countries due to several factors which revolve around lack of interest, little understanding and government support. This is unfortunate given that the development of entrepreneurship in the small business sector has the potential of reducing unemployment and poverty significantly for developing African economies; especially when the historical economic and social growth of great economies such as the USA, UK, Japan, India, Canada and even China can be traced down to entrepreneurship development in this sector. It has therefore become imperative for developing economies such as Nigeria to refocus their attention on the potential role of entrepreneurs as the required change agents for these countries (Wale-Oshinowo & Kuye, 2016).

Entrepreneurship and Employment Opportunities

Naude (2011) draws the conclusion that entrepreneurship will contribute to growth and employment creation in advanced, emerging and least developed economics alike. In Nigeria, studies have been carried out on the effect of entrepreneurship development on the problem of high unemployment rate, high level of poverty and slow economic growth rate (Ariyo, 2015, Agboli and Ukaegbu, 2016). Given the generally held view that entrepreneurship development is the key to poverty eradication, employment generation and rapid economic development, various government in Nigeria have, over the past three decades, evolved policies and programme aimed at developing entrepreneurship through the development of small and medium scale enterprises (SMEs). In spite of all the efforts, unemployment rate has remained high, rising from 13.1% in year 2000 to 23.9% in 2011, with youth unemployment put at over 50% (IMF, 2013, rise networks, 2013).

Mulikat and Sadiat (2017) carried out research on effect of entrepreneurship on poverty reduction by using empirical fact from Sokoto State Nigeria. The use of primary data in terms of questionnaire were administered. The study showed that there is positive relationship between entrepreneurship and poverty reduction, that is, as the level of entrepreneurship rise, the rate of poverty reduced. The study recommended the government in order to promote the level of entrepreneurship, provide fund, power and good transportation system as well as entrepreneurship skill programme within its policy framework. Ibitoye Atoyebi & Sufian (2015) conducted research on Entrepreneurship and Poverty Reduction in Nigeria by way of empirical analysis, that is, the researcher adopted a stratified random sampling techniques, 500 entrepreneurs and apprenticeship were chosen from six recognize Local government of Lagos State. This result showed the positive relationship between entrepreneurship and poverty reduction. Adofu & Akoji (2013) on their research study on alleviating poverty through the use of entrepreneurship skills acquisition in Kogi State Nigeria, showed that entrepreneurship can reduce poverty rate by the use of quantitative research approach. The result featured that the high rate of poverty in Nigeria which is rampant among the youth nowadays is caused by the inability to acquire entrepreneurship skill. Ali, A. & Ali, D. (2013) take an insight on the relationship between entrepreneurship development and poverty reduction at Banadir region in Somalia. Their study indicated that there was weak positive correlation between entrepreneurship development & poverty reduction. By way of analysis, sig or P-value was less enough suggesting that the two variables indicate that the computed R-value was -0.195.

Mitra & Abubakar (2011) by using an illustrative case study examined the participation of graduate entrepreneurship in perspective of human capital development – education, training and research to meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in Nigeria. They found that knowledge creation lies at the heart of entrepreneurship development in developing economies based on human capital development. Jones & Matlay (2019) developed a conceptual framework based on Gartner's (1985) conceptual framework for understanding the complexity of entrepreneurship education. Also, they tried to ascertain two questions as to why entrepreneurship education is important and how such importance can be prolonged. They proposed an alternative framework based on the logic of Gartner's framework to advance the understanding of entrepreneurship education where dialogic relationships exist between students, educators, educational process, institutions and the communities they existed.

Okpara (2018) examined the factors that obstruct the growth and survival of small businesses in Nigeria. He used a survey method to gather data from 211 small business owners and managers located in selected cities in Nigeria. He conducted several statistical analyses to identify the factors constraining the growth and survival of SMEs in Nigeria. He found that the most common constraints obstructing small business growth and survival in Nigeria are lack of financial support, poor

management, corruption, lack of training and experience, poor infrastructure, insufficient profits, and low demand for product and services.

Ali & Ali (2013) identified the relationship between entrepreneurship development and poverty reduction at Benadir region in Somalia. They use Correlation research design comprised of 80 participants of micro and small enterprises in Benadir region. The study found that Sig. or P-value was less enough, suggesting that the two variables indicated that the computed R-value was -0.195; this indicates that there was weak positive correlation between entrepreneurship development and poverty reduction. Ndedi (2019) investigated the South African Government support to youth entrepreneurship program through various agencies. They conducted desk research on the impact made by the various Sector Education Training Authorities in the area of entrepreneurship education and training. They found that there were no inter-disciplinary approaches in entrepreneurship training that make entrepreneurship education accessible to all students, and where appropriate, create teams for the development and exploitation of business ideas.

Theoretical framework: Gartner Entrepreneurship Theory

According to Dusan and Velickaite (2010), rapidly growing companies have been the subject of study for many years. Researchers have tried to clarify the key factors that cause some business to grow rapidly. While others remain small or grow very slowly, often studies have concentrated on the founder, his or her personality management skills, goal and so forth in academic discussion, the question of entrepreneurial skill is related to the debate on whether entrepreneurship can be conceived as something teachable or not. Katz (2011), For example, suggests that most likely there are some skills that can be taught and some that cannot. Some theories were developed that entrepreneurs are born. Nevertheless experience has shown that entrepreneurship can be taught and that a positive environment encouraged entrepreneurial thinking, promotes innovation and leads to a higher degree of social and economic sustainability.

The observed scientific problem exists within the entrepreneurship research as generally accepted definition of entrepreneurship and related definitions such as entrepreneur, entrepreneurial team corporate entrepreneurship, etc, cannot be imposed or even assumed. In respect, the search for an appropriate basis for understanding and describing the phenomenon creates a challenging problem for entrepreneurship researchers. The goal of this paper is to provide some systematic clarification on the concept of entrepreneurship. Its components and related processes and to build a theoretical framework, based on relevant research in the field. The objective of the research is entrepreneurship, its components processes and nexus between them. On the purpose to reach the aim, scientific literature analysis, comparison and systematization methods were applied. Entrepreneurship research has been paid by great attention during the past four decades as ownership of firms (Cuevas 2014), management of small businesses (Scott and Bruce 2009), innovativeness (Schumpeter 2014, Hin, 2011), networking (Larson and Starr 2013), organizing (Johanisson 2010), making the ideas work even though the needed resources are not under control (Stevenson and Jarillo 2010), all new businesses Acs (2011) etc. Because of the lack of a conceptual framework that explains and predicts a set of empirical phenomena not explained by conceptual frameworks already in existence in other, related fields of research, the distinctive contribution of the entrepreneurship field is still difficult to identify. Many different views about entrepreneurship were greatly worked out by Gartner (2010), deservedly reputed as the leader in entrepreneurship research.

Gartner's entrepreneurship theory, introduced by William B. Gartner in 1985, emphasizes the behavioral approach in understanding entrepreneurship. According to Gartner, entrepreneurship is about creating organizations and the process involves four major dimensions: the characteristics of the individual (the entrepreneur), the organization which is being created, the environment surrounding the new venture, and the process by which the new venture is started. This theory is particularly relevant when examining "Entrepreneurship and Poverty Reduction in Nigeria" for several reasons: Gartner's theory can be applied to understand how the process of creating new ventures contributes to poverty reduction in Nigeria. By focusing on the entrepreneurial process, stakeholders can identify specific stages where targeted support (such as financial aid, training, and access to markets) can significantly impact the success of new businesses. This is crucial in a Nigerian context where barriers to entrepreneurship often include lack of access to capital, insufficient infrastructure, and regulatory hurdles.

This dimension stresses the importance of the newly created organization in the entrepreneurial process. In Nigeria, supporting the development of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) is critical for poverty reduction. These organizations often provide the most accessible employment opportunities for the poor and can significantly contribute to economic growth and development. Understanding the nature of these organizations and their challenges can lead to more effective policies and support mechanisms.

Research Methods

The study adopted the cross sectional research design. Cross sectional design is a technique for gathering data on a population relative to a period in time across a section of a population through the means of quantitative instrument (questionnaires). The population of study consisted of the states in the South-South; all the small and medium scale enterprises in the South-South Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria. The target population of the study is 4,342,706. The sample size of the study is 400 and this was obtained using Yamane (2012) sample size determination formula. The simple random sampling method using balloting was used to select the states that constituted the target population of the study. The questionnaire is the main research instrument used for data collection for this study. The face and content validity measure were used to determine the validity of the instrument. Cronbach alpha test was used to ascertain measure reliability of the research instrument. The study used both descriptive and inferential statistics to provide answer to the research questions and hypotheses derived from the statement of the problem. Mean was used to analyse the descriptive data. Simple linear regression was used to test the hypothesis formulated to determine the linear relationship between the independent and dependent variables.

Results and Discussion

This chapter focuses on the presentation and analysis of data collected in the field using structured questionnaires. Respondents were given 400 copies of the questionnaire in total. Only 377 out of the 400 questionnaires distributed to respondents were returned entirely and precisely filled, while the remaining 23 surveys were returned but not accurately filled. This means that 94.0% of the questionnaires were returned, while 6% were misplaced. The researcher presented the data and analyzed the research findings using the 377 questionnaire as the basis for data analysis.

4.1. Presentation and Analysis of Data

Distribution of socio-demographic characteristics of Respondents

This section presents the distribution of respondents' socio demographic characteristics.

Table 4.1: Socio-Demographic of the Respondents

		Frequency	Percentage
Sex	Male	195	51.7
	Female	182	48.3
	Total	377	100.0
Age (years)	18-28	83	22.0
	29-39	184	48.8
	40 years and above	110	29.2
	Total	377	100.0
Educational Qualification	Primary education	49	13.0
	Secondary education	101	26.8
	Higher education	227	60.2
	Total	377	100.0
Type of enterprise	Small and medium scale	231	61.3
	Large scale	146	38.7
	Total	377	100.0%
Income of respondent	10,000-100,000	211	56.0
	101,000-200,000	92	24.4
	201,000 and above	74	19.6
	Total	377	100.0

Source: Author's Fieldwork, 2024

The socio-demographic characteristics of those who took part in the survey are shown in table 4.1, 51.7 percent of the respondents were males, while 48.3 percent were females, according to the gender distribution of the respondents. The age distribution of the survey participants shows that 22.0 percent are between the ages of 18-28 years, 48.8 percent are between the ages of 29-39 years, and 29.2 percent are 40 years, and above. The respondents' marital status revealed that 59 percent were unmarried, 29 percent were married and 12 percent were divorced. The respondents' educational qualifications revealed that 13.0 percent had a primary school certificate, 26.8 percent had a secondary school certificate, and 60.2 percent had a higher education certificate. The type of enterprise operated distribution of the respondents revealed that 61.3 percent were small and medium scale business owners, and 38.7 percent were large scale business owners. The income distribution

of the respondents revealed that 56.0 earn between 10,000-100,000, 24.4 percent earn between 101,000-200,000 and finally, 19.6 percent earn between 201,000 and above.

Analysis of Research Questions

This section discussed the specific objectives of the study follows:

Research Question 1

Does entrepreneurship impact on employment opportunities in South-South geopolitical zone in Nigeria?

Table 4.2: Respondents' responses on the impact of entrepreneurship on employment opportunities

ITEMS	N	Mean	Remark
Entrepreneurship create employment opportunities	377	3.89	Positive
Entrepreneurship bridges low labour engagement gap	377	3.51	Positive
Entrepreneurship creates self empowerment	377	3.62	Positive
Entrepreneurship makes job available for many others	377	3.60	Positive
Entrepreneur bring about establishment of industries	377	3.51	Positive
Weighted Mean		3.63	

Source: Fieldwork, 2024 (Key: N Number of observations)

Table 4.2 displays respondents' opinions on the impact of entrepreneurship on employment opportunity. The replies were weighted based on how much respondents agreed with the options provided. For affirmative responses, a weighted mean value of 3.0 was used as a benchmark. Table 4.2 shows that respondents believe that entrepreneurship create employment opportunities, entrepreneurship bridges low labour engagement gap, entrepreneurship creates self empowerment, entrepreneurship makes job available for many others and entrepreneur bring about establishment of industries. This is given with the mean scores of 3.89, 3.51, 3.62, 3.60 and 3.51 which are above the benchmark mean of 3.0.

Test of Hypothesis

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between entrepreneurship and employment opportunities in South-South geopolitical zone in Nigeria.

Table 4.3 a, b and c: Simple Linear Regression result for hypothesis one

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	R Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.719 ^a	.620	.618	.91982

a. Predictors: (Constant), Entrepreneurship

ANOVA ^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	10.476	1	10.476	12.382	.000 ^b
	Residual	317.274	375	.846		
	Total	327.751	376			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Entrepreneurship

b. Dependent Variable: employment opportunities

Coefficients ^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.385	.096		24.970	.000
	Entrepreneurship	.132	.037	-.179	-3.519	.000

a. Dependent Variable: employment opportunities

Table 4.7a, b and c show the model summary, ANOVA and Coefficient result of the simple linear regression tested for hypothesis one. From the table, it can be observed that R value of .719 indicates a positive relationship between entrepreneurship and employment opportunity. Also, the R-Square value of .620, and the adjusted R-Square value of .618 both establish that the independent variable entrepreneurship could be explained by the employment opportunities being the effect, and the variation between same is not far as can be seen by the score obtained for the Adjusted R-Square score. Equally, the ANOVA table shows the null hypothesis is rejected given by ($F = 12.383$, $P = .000 < 0.05$), and this shows that the result is significant. Finally, the coefficient table reveals that the relationship between entrepreneurship and employment is significant given by the probability value of .000 which is below the given alpha value of .05.

Discussion of Findings

The relationship between entrepreneurship and employment opportunities

In this section, the study's findings are explained in relation to the six hypotheses that were evaluated. The first hypothesis revealed that there is a significant positive relationship between entrepreneurship and employment opportunities. This was based on the linear regression result ($F = 12.383$, $p\text{-value} = 0.000 < 0.05$) result obtained which established a significant relationship entrepreneurship and employment opportunities. Also, the average mean score of 3.63 obtained from the descriptive data analysis support the result obtained from the hypothesis. Naude (2011) draws the conclusion that entrepreneurship will contribute to growth and employment creation in advanced, emerging and least developed economies alike.

Mulikat and Sadiat (2017) carried out research on effect of entrepreneurship on poverty reduction by using empirical fact from Sokoto State Nigeria. The use of primary data in terms of questionnaire were administered. The study showed that

there is positive relationship between entrepreneurship and poverty reduction, that is, as the level of entrepreneurship rise, the rate of poverty reduced. The study recommended the government in order to promote the level of entrepreneurship, provide fund, power and good transportation system as well as entrepreneurship skill programme within its policy framework. Ibitoye Atoyebi & Sufian (2015) conducted research on Entrepreneurship and Poverty Reduction in Nigeria by way of empirical analysis, that is, the researcher adopted a stratified random sampling techniques, 500 entrepreneurs and apprenticeship were chosen from six recognize Local government of Lagos State. This result showed the positive relationship between entrepreneurship and poverty reduction. Adofu & Akoji (2013) on their research study on alleviating poverty through the use of entrepreneurship skills acquisition in Kogi State Nigeria, showed that entrepreneurship can reduce poverty rate by the use of quantitative research approach. The result featured that the high rate of poverty in Nigeria which is rampant among the youth nowadays is caused by the inability to acquire entrepreneurship skill.

Conclusion

The study concludes that entrepreneurship serves as a vital engine for economic growth, creating job opportunities, fostering innovation, and enhancing local economies. By empowering individuals—particularly marginalized groups such as women and youth—entrepreneurship helps to improve livelihoods and promote financial independence.

Recommendation

To enhance employment opportunities in the South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria, government should consider investment in infrastructure such as improvement in road transportation network, energy, and internet infrastructure to facilitate business operations and attract investments.

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