

# ENTREPRENEURSHIP DEVELOPMENT AND ITS EFFECT ON EMPLOYMENT GENERATION IN NORTH CENTRAL NIGERIA

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**Abstract:** *Despite various government entrepreneurship development programs in Gboko in Benue State, Gboko continues to grapple with high levels of unemployment. This study investigates the impact of entrepreneurship development on employment generation in Gboko, Benue State. However, the specific objectives are to: evaluate the current state of entrepreneurship development in Gboko, including the type of businesses established and the sector they operate in, identify the challenges and barriers faced by entrepreneurs in Gboko, such as access to finance, training and infrastructure, propose recommendations for enhancing entrepreneurship development in Gboko to boost employment and economic growth, assess the current employment situation in Gboko, including unemployment and underemployment rates. While using a quantitative approach, data input was collected with questionnaires from local entrepreneurs, employees of entrepreneurship development organizations, and government officials. The findings indicate that entrepreneurship development programs significantly contribute to job creation in Gboko. Key challenges identified include limited access to finance and inadequate infrastructure. Recommendations for improving the effectiveness of these programs are provided. A sample of 222 entrepreneurs were selected using the random sampling technique and were analyzed using descriptive statistics and chi-square. Key findings indicate a significant positive relationship between entrepreneurship development and employment generation, with evidence showing that entrepreneurship initiatives contribute substantially to job creation and economic growth in Gboko. The analysis underscores the importance of supporting entrepreneurial ventures through policy and financial assistance to enhance employment opportunities and foster economic resilience. This research provides valuable insights for policymakers, stakeholders, and community leaders seeking to leverage entrepreneurship as a tool for employment and economic development.*

**Keywords:** entrepreneurship, development, employment, generation.

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## Introduction

Entrepreneurship development plays a significant role in any contemporary economy as far back as 1776, Adam Smith identified the significant role the market can play in the development process of nations through job creation, high income and improved standard of living. Scholars and economists haven't always paid much attention to entrepreneurship. Recently though, more people are recognizing how important it is for economic development. From 2020 onwards, the role of entrepreneurship has become even more crucial, especially with the challenges brought by the COVID-19 pandemic. According to Bosma (2021), the pandemic showed how important it is for new businesses to adapt and keep the economy going. Entrepreneurs have been very resilient, coming up with new ideas and changing their business models to meet new needs. Kuckertz et al. (2020) noted that during the pandemic, entrepreneurship sped up digital transformation and innovation. This means that new businesses quickly adopted new technologies and ideas to stay afloat and keep providing jobs.

Identified as a significant driver of employment generation and poverty alleviation. The entrepreneurial spirit among the residents of Gboko has led to the establishment of numerous small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), which are crucial for economic development. Recent studies by van Stel et al. (2020) and

Audretsch and Belitski (2021) highlight that having a supportive environment for new businesses is essential for economic stability and job creation. They suggest that creating favorable conditions for entrepreneurship can significantly boost a region's economic growth. Gboko, a major town in Benue State, has historically faced various socio-economic challenges, including high unemployment rates, limited industrial activities, and underdeveloped infrastructure. Despite these challenges, the town has a vibrant entrepreneurial community that has the potential to significantly contribute to the local economy. This study focuses on understanding the specific impact of entrepreneurship development on employment generation in Gboko. By examining the experiences of local entrepreneurs and the outcomes of their ventures, this research aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of how entrepreneurship can drive employment. Despite various government entrepreneurship development programs in Gboko in Benue State, Gboko continues to grapple with high levels of unemployment (Agbo & John, 2023). The effort by the government and various organizations to promote job creation, the unemployment rate remains high, particularly among the youth and recent graduates and the problem is further compounded by inadequate access to financial resources, insufficient entrepreneurial training and lack of infrastructure. (Iorungwa & Akaa, 2022). The core of the problem lies in understanding why these entrepreneurship initiatives are not translating into substantial

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employment generation. Are the programs aligned with the specific needs and potentials of the local economy? Are there systemic issues that need to be addressed to improve the impact of these initiatives? Addressing these questions is crucial for devising strategies that can effectively enhance the entrepreneurial ecosystem in Gboko and, by extension, reduce unemployment. nkire (2023). This study seeks to evaluate the impact entrepreneurship development unemployment generation in Gboko. However, the specific objectives are to: evaluate the current state of entrepreneurship development in Gboko, including the type of businesses established and the sector they operate in, identify the challenges and barriers faced by entrepreneurs in Gboko, such as access to finance, training and infrastructure, propose recommendations for enhancing entrepreneurship development in Gboko to boost employment and economic growth, access the current employment situation in Gboko, including unemployment and underemployment rates.

## Review of Related Literature

### Overview of Entrepreneurship Development

Entrepreneurship development refers to the process of enhancing the knowledge, skills, and abilities of individuals to create and manage successful business ventures. Recent studies highlight the importance of entrepreneurship in fostering economic growth, innovation, and job creation (Kuratko, 2020). This section reviews key literature on entrepreneurship development from 2020 to date, with a focus on its impact on employment.

### Entrepreneurship and Employment Generation

Entrepreneurship is widely recognized as a critical driver of employment. According to research by Bosma and Sternberg (2021), new businesses play a vital role in creating jobs and reducing unemployment, particularly in developing economies. The study found that regions with higher levels of entrepreneurial activity tend to have lower unemployment rates. Kuckertz et al. (2020) emphasized that the COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the digital transformation of businesses, leading to new job opportunities in sectors such as e-commerce, digital marketing, and remote work technologies. These changes have highlighted the resilience and adaptability of entrepreneurs in the face of economic challenges.

### Challenges Facing Entrepreneurs in Gboko

Despite the potential benefits, entrepreneurs in Gboko face several challenges that hinder their growth and contribution to employment. These challenges include limited access to finance, inadequate infrastructure, and a lack of technical and managerial skills (Adebayo 2021). Addressing these challenges is crucial for maximizing the impact of entrepreneurship on employment generation in the region.

### EDPs programs

Entrepreneurship development programs (EDPs) are initiatives designed to foster entrepreneurial skills and provide support to aspiring entrepreneurs. These programs typically include training, mentoring, access to finance, and networking opportunities. According to Adeola and Folorunso (2020), EDPs play a critical role in enhancing business performance and sustainability.

## Theoretical Review

### Social Network Theory

Social Network Theory examines how relationships and social interactions influence entrepreneurial success. Recent studies by Hoang and Antoncic (2021) show that strong social networks provide entrepreneurs with access to valuable information, resources, and support, which are crucial for business success and job creation. These networks can include family, friends, mentors, and professional contacts.

The rationale for using Social Network Theory in this study is that it highlights the importance of social ties in accessing resources and information, making informed decisions, and receiving emotional support. Entrepreneurs with strong social networks are better equipped to navigate challenges and seize opportunities.

Applying this theory in the study of entrepreneurship in Gboko is significant because it can enhance the understanding of how social interactions contribute to business success. This understanding can inform the design of targeted interventions, such as networking events and mentorship programs, to strengthen these social networks. Additionally, policymakers can develop strategies to foster supportive environments for entrepreneurs. Educators can incorporate lessons on the importance of social networks into their curricula, preparing students for entrepreneurial success. Overall, Social Network Theory provides a comprehensive framework for analyzing the social factors that influence entrepreneurship, leading to more effective support and development programs.

### Empirical Reviews

Bosma & Sternberg (2021): Their research emphasized the role of entrepreneurial ecosystems in fostering innovation and employment, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Kuckertz et al. (2020): Highlighted the acceleration of digital transformation in businesses due to the pandemic, which opened new avenues for employment.

Obaji & Olugu (2021): Discussed the impact of government initiatives in Nigeria on supporting entrepreneurship and creating jobs.

Adebayo & Kuntze (2021): Identified the challenges faced by entrepreneurs in Gboko and emphasized the need for supportive policies and infrastructure to enhance employment generation.

## Methodology

Quantitative research design was adopted for this study. The research aims to collect data directly from respondents, based on the fact that Quantitative research design supports the collection of data primarily through the use of questionnaire, the study considered survey research design suitable for the study. The population of the study comprises of 500 registered small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) operating in Gboko, Benue State. The study used Taro Yamane formula with a 5% significance level (margin of error) to determine the sample size which is 222. Cronbach Alpha analysis was administered to obtain the reliability of instrument and a figure of 0.976 was obtained which shows that the instrument is very reliable. To analyze the relationship between entrepreneurship development and employment generation in Gboko, Benue State, simple linear regression with SPSS version 23 was used. The dependent variable (employment generation) was regressed on independent variable (entrepreneurship development).

## Presentation of Data& Analysis of Demographic Data

organized based on the research question. A total of 222 copies of the questionnaire were distributed and 178 was retrieved.

### Introduction

This chapter is concerned with the presentation and analysis of data gathered in the study. The presentation and analysis of data are

### Entrepreneurship Development Program

**Table 1: Participation in Programs:**

| HAVE YOU PARTICIPATED IN ANY ENTREPRENEURSHIP PROGRAMS IN THE PAST 5 YEARS | FREQUENCY | PERCENTAGE |
|--|-----------|------------|
| Yes  | 120       | 67.4%      |
| No   | 58        | 32.6%      |
| TOTAL  | 178       | 100%       |

Sources: field survey 2023

From the table above, 67.4% of the respondents has participated in entrepreneurship programs, while 32.6% have not.]

**Table 2: Program Effectiveness**

| ITEM STATEMENT  | SA (5)        | A(4)          | N (3)         | D (2)         | SD (1)        | MEAN | DECISION |
|---|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|------|----------|
| ENTREPRENEURSHIP PROGRAMS HAS SIGNIFICANTLY IMPROVED MY BUSINESS OPERATIONS | 30<br>(16.9%) | 50<br>(28.1%) | 40<br>(22.5%) | 20<br>(11.2%) | 38<br>(21.3%) | 3.08 | AGREE    |
| THESE PROGRAMS HAS PROVIDED ME WITH BETTER ACCESS TO NECESSARY RESOURCES    | 25<br>(14.0%) | 45<br>(25.3%) | 35<br>(19.7)  | 25<br>(14.0%) | 48<br>(27.0%) | 2.85 | NEUTRAL  |
| PROGRAM HAS HELPED ME TO EXPAND MY BUSINESS                                 | 20<br>(11.2%) | 40<br>(22.5%) | 30<br>(16.9%) | 30<br>(16.9%) | 58<br>(32.6)  | 2.63 | NEUTRAL  |

Sources:Field Survey 2023

Table 6 shows that item 1 agreed while item 2 and 3 were neutral (not strongly agreeing or disagreeing). Which means It's a mixed opinion. people think the program is good for improving business operations, but they're not sure if it helps with resources or expanding the business. Some people don't think it helps at all.

**Table 3 Section C: Employment Generation and Challenges**

| NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES HIRED | FREQUENCY | PERCENTAGE |
|---------------------------|-----------|------------|
| None                      | 50        | 28.1%      |
| 1-2                       | 40        | 22.5%      |
| 3-5                       | 30        | 16.9%      |
| 6-10                      | 20        | 11.2%      |
| More than 10              | 38        | 21.3%      |
| TOTAL                     | 178       | 100%       |

Sources:field survey 2023

From the table above, 28.1% of the respondents has hired no employee, 22.5% has hired 1-2 employees, 16.9% has hired about 6-10 employees while 21.3 has hired more than 10 employees.

**Table 4: Main Challenges**

| WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES YOU FACE IN YOUR BUSINESS | FREQUENCY | PERCENTAGE |
|---|-----------|------------|
| Access to finance                                 | 80        | 44.9%      |
| Inadequate infrastructure                         | 50        | 28.1%      |
| Market competition                                | 40        | 22.5%      |
| Government regulations                            | 30        | 16.9%      |
| Lack of skilled labour                            | 20        | 11.2%      |
| Others  | 18        | 10.1       |

Source - field survey

From the table above, 44.9% of the respondents are faced with the problem of finance, 28.1% are face with the problem of inadequate infrastructure, 22.5% are faced with the problem of market competition, 16.9% are faced with the problem of government regulations, 11.2% are faced with the problem of lack of skilled labour while 10.1% are faces with other challenges. so it can be said that the major challenge is access to funding

**Table 5: Employment Generation**

| ITEM STATEMENT  | SA(5)         | A(4)          | N(3)          | D(2)          | SD(1)         | MEAN | DECISION |
|---|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|------|----------|
| ENTREPRENEURSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM HAS SIGNIFICANT INCREASE IN EMPLOYMENT LEVELS IN MY BUSINESS | 25<br>(14.0%) | 45<br>(25.3%) | 35<br>(19.7%) | 25<br>(14.0%) | 48<br>(27.0%) | 2.85 | NEUTRAL  |
| GOVERNMENT SUPPORT THROUGH THIS PROGRAMS HAS BEEN CRUCIAL IN ENABLING EMPLOYMENT GROWTH           | 20<br>(11.2%) | 40<br>(22.5%) | 50<br>(26.9%) | 30<br>(26.9%) | 58<br>(32.6%) | 2.97 | NEUTRAL  |
| FINANCIAL SUPPORT IS ESSENTIAL FOR THE GROWTH OF MY BUSINESS                                      | 48<br>(27.0%) | 45<br>(25.3%) | 35<br>(19.7%) | 25<br>(14.0%) | 25<br>(14.0%) | 3.37 | AGREE    |
| IMPROVED INFRASTRUCTURE IS NECESSARY FOR MY BUSINESS OPERATIONS                                   | 20<br>(11.2%) | 40<br>(22.5%) | 30<br>(16.9%) | 30<br>(16.9%) | 58<br>(32.6%) | 2.63 | NEUTRAL  |

Sources:field survey 2023

Respondents are neutral about the impact of entrepreneurship programs on employment levels and government support. However, they agree that financial support is essential for business growth. There's a mixed opinion about the necessity of improved infrastructure for business operations.

**Testing of Hypothesis**

The hypotheses stated earlier in chapter one is tested in this section, using the chi-square (X<sup>2</sup>) as a statistical tool. A table of frequency is constructed first to enable the computation of the expected frequency.

The null hypotheses to be tested against the alternative hypotheses for the study is :

Ho: state that there is no significant positive relationship between Entrepreneurship development and employment generation in Gboko Benue state

H1: state that there is a significant positive relationship between Entrepreneurship development and employment generation in Gboko Benue state.

**Hypothesis One**

H0: there is not significant positive relationship between entrepreneurship development and employment generation in Gboko Benue state

USING CHI SQUARE FORMULA

$$X = \frac{(FO-FE)^2}{FE}$$

FE

WHERE FO = OBSERVED FREQUENCY

FE = EXPECTED FREQUENCY

**OBSERVED FREQUENCY ON RESEARCH QUESTION ONE**

| Number of employees hired | PARTICIPATED IN PROGRAM (YES) 120(67.4%) | PARTICIPATED IN PROGRAM (NO) 58(32.6%) | TOTAL |
|---------------------------|--|--|-------|
| None / 50(28.1%)          | 32                                       | 18                                     | 50    |
| 1-2 / 40(22.5%)           | 17                                       | 23                                     | 40    |
| 3-5 / 30(26.9%)           | 25                                       | 5                                      | 30    |
| 6-10 / 20(11.2%)          | 16                                       | 4                                      | 20    |
| More than 10 / 38(21.3%)  | 30                                       | 8                                      | 38    |
| TOTAL                     | 120                                      | 58                                     | 178   |

| EXPECTED FREQUENCY   |  |
|--|--|
| $FE = (\text{ROW TOTAL}) \times (\text{COLUMN TOTAL})$                   |  |
| GRAND TOTAL  |  |
| <p>I. FOR *NONE* UNDER YES</p> $FE = \frac{50 \times 120}{178} = 33.7$   | <p>IV. FOR *6-10* UNDER YES</p> $FE = \frac{20 \times 120}{178} = 13.48$         |
| <p>FOR *NONE* UNDER NO</p> $FE = \frac{50 \times 58}{178} = 16.29$       | <p>FOR *6-10* UNDER NO</p> $FE = \frac{20 \times 58}{178} = 6.52$                |
| <p>II. FOR *1-2* UNDER YES</p> $FE = \frac{40 \times 120}{178} = 26.97$  | <p>V. FOR * MORE THAN 10* UNDER YES</p> $FE = \frac{38 \times 120}{178} = 25.61$ |
| <p>FOR *1-2* UNDER NO</p> $FE = \frac{40 \times 58}{178} = 13.03$        | <p>FOR *MORE THAN 10 * UNDER NO</p> $FE = \frac{38 \times 58}{178} = 12.38$      |
| <p>III. FOR *3-5* UNDER YES</p> $FE = \frac{30 \times 120}{178} = 20.22$ |  |
| <p>FOR *3-5* UNDER NO</p> $FE = \frac{30 \times 58}{178} = 9.78$         |  |

**Calculation For Chi-Square**

| FO | FE    | FO - FE | (FO - FE) <sup>2</sup> | $\frac{(FO - FE)^2}{FE}$ |
|----|-------|---------|------------------------|--------------------------|
| 32 | 33.71 | -1.71   | 2.92                   | 0.09                     |
| 18 | 16.29 | 1.71    | 2.92                   | 0.18                     |
| 17 | 26.97 | -9.97   | 99.40                  | 3.69                     |
| 23 | 13.3  | 9.7     | 94.09                  | 7.07                     |
| 25 | 20.22 | 4.78    | 22.84                  | 1.13                     |
| 5  | 9.78  | -4.78   | 22.84                  | 2.34                     |
| 16 | 13.48 | 2.52    | 6.35                   | 0.47                     |
| 4  | 6.52  | -2.52   | 6.35                   | 0.97                     |
| 30 | 25.61 | 4.39    | 19.27                  | 0.75                     |
| 8  | 12.38 | -4.38   | 19.18                  | 1.55                     |
|    |       |         | TOTAL                  | 18.24                    |

Therefore, calculated value = 18.24

## Degree of freedom

$$Df = (C-1) \times (R-1)$$

Where df = degree of freedom

c = number of columns

r = number of rows

$$= (5-1) \times (2-1)$$

$$= 4 \times 1 = 4$$

$$Df = 4$$

**4 degree of freedom under 0.05 level of significance = 9.488**

### Decision Rule:

If the calculated Chi-Square value is greater than the critical value (18.24 > 9.488), reject the null hypothesis (Ho).

If the calculated Chi-Square value is less than or equal to the critical value, fail to reject the null hypothesis.

### Applying the Decision Rule:

Calculated Chi-Square Value: 18.24

Critical Value: 9.488 or 9.49

Since 18.24 > 9.488, the decision is to reject the null hypothesis (Ho).

Based on the decision rule, the null hypothesis is rejected, indicating that there is a significant positive relationship between entrepreneurship development and job creation in Gboko, Benue State.

## Results and Discussion

From the analyses of this study, the following findings were made: After analyzing and interpreting the data collected, the research findings were generally based on the result of the questionnaire. The questionnaire was sent to 222 respondents in Gboko LGA. The questions for the respondents were structured in a way to select substantial facts and information. In testing hypothesis, Chi-square technique of analysis of data was used. Hypothesis one showed that there is a significant positive relationship between entrepreneurship development and employment generation in Gboko. The finding from this research provide evidence that entrepreneurship development plays a crucial role in employment generation in Gboko, Benue State. While the existing programs have made strides in improving business operations, more targeted support is needed to address challenges such as access to finance and infrastructure. By refining these programs and addressing these barriers, Gboko can foster a more vibrant entrepreneurial ecosystem that contributes to sustainable economic growth and job creation.

## Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, the alternative hypothesis (H1) that there is a significant positive relationship between entrepreneurship development and employment generation in Gboko, Benue State, is accepted. Conversely, the null hypothesis (Ho) is rejected. The study concludes that entrepreneurship development plays a crucial role in reducing unemployment and enhancing economic growth in Gboko. By encouraging and supporting entrepreneurial ventures, the local government and

stakeholders can significantly improve job creation and contribute to the overall socioeconomic development of the region.

## Recommendations

In light of the findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

- I. **Strengthen Entrepreneurship Programs:** The government and private sector should collaborate to enhance existing entrepreneurship development programs, focusing on providing adequate funding, infrastructure, and access to markets.
- II. **Training and Mentor-ship:** Initiatives should be taken to offer comprehensive training and mentor-ship to aspiring entrepreneurs. This will equip them with the necessary skills and knowledge to succeed in their ventures.
- III. **Access to Finance:** Financial institutions should be encouraged to provide accessible and affordable loans to entrepreneurs. Special funding schemes could be introduced to support start-ups and small businesses in Gboko.

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