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EFFECT OF SMES BUSINESS GROWTH ON EMPLOYMENT GENERATION IN JOS, PLATEAU STATE

ABSTRACT

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are often at the forefront of business growth as they play a pivotal role in job creation due to their agility and potential for rapid expansion. This study examined the relationship between business growth and employment generation in Jos, Plateau State. Quantitative research design was adopted for this study. The population of the study is 268 active SME operators in Jos metropolis. Yamane formula was used to derive sample size of 160. Stratified random sampling technique was used for sample selection. Primary data was used for the study. Ordinary least square Regression analysis was used to analyze the data. The result shows that there is significant relationship between business growth and employment generation among the SMEs in Jos. Thus, we recommend that Government should initiate policies aimed at harnessing the potential of SMEs businesses in order to generation employment in Nigeria. This will enhance economic growth, poverty reduction and improve the living standard.

Keywords: *Small and Medium Enterprise, Business Growth, Employment Generation, Unemployment.*

1.0 Introduction

Employment generation is a critical challenge for many nations, particularly in the emerging economies like Nigeria. A robust labour market with ample job opportunities is essential for economic development, poverty reduction, and social stability. Nigeria possesses abundant natural wealth and a young, dynamic workforce, but struggles with high levels of unemployment and underemployment. As of September 2021, Nigeria's unemployment rate stood at 33.3%, according to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS). Additionally, a large portion of the population engages in informal, low-paying jobs with limited job security. Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN, 2017) revealed that unemployment has risen significantly to the extent that government might have been unable to have the true number of unemployed Nigerians. Inadequate job opportunities have resulted in a number of problems including illness, loss of confidence, depression, redundancy among others (Baron & Shane, 2015).

Nowadays, self-employment is the order of the day with many unemployed persons venturing into small business. Safiriyu and Njogo (2012) held that

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the development of SME is meant to quicken business growth through injection of new ideas and innovation, foster the culture of entrepreneurship and create new job opportunities, alleviate poverty and reduce unemployment. Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) held that SME's is the engine of economic development and accounted for 95% of OECD businesses and 60-70% of employment in most of the countries (OECD, 2000). Ayozie and Latinwo (2010) agreed that SMEs have immediate impact on employment generation. Opafunso and Adepoju (2021) revealed that SMEs in Nigeria have contributed to the decline in poverty, improved standard of living an increase as well in employment generation.

Business growth goes beyond various dimensions, including the expansion of existing enterprises, the emergence of new businesses, and the development of entrepreneurial ventures. It encapsulates economic activities across sectors, from agriculture and manufacturing to services and technology. The importance of business growth in the context of employment generation cannot be overstated. When businesses thrive, they create a ripple effect throughout the economy, leading to increased job opportunities. Entrepreneurship, innovation, and investment in various industries stimulate economic growth and contribute to a vibrant labor market. Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are often at the forefront of business growth as they play a pivotal role in job creation due to their agility and potential for rapid expansion. Shettima (2017) held that a well-organized and structured SME sector contributes significantly to employment generation, wealth creation and sustainable economic growth. Rotar et al. (2019) opined that SME's growth contributed to economic and employment growth. This assertion was agreed by Bouazza (2015) who said that SMEs are the major contributors in creating of new jobs.

Kareem (2018) opined that the main idea behind engaging in entrepreneurship (or business) is to make profit and also to create employment opportunity. However, SMEs which ought to be a vehicle for sustainable economic growth and creation of well meaningful jobs have ended up generating more underemployment due to harsh business environment in Nigeria. Business growth is often seen as a means to secure current and future employment opportunities. However, the way in which new business creation exerts its influence on employment is not evident. Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) are often the backbone of employment in many economies, and Nigeria is no exception. Despite the significant role that businesses, particularly Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), play in job creation, Nigeria continues to grapple with high unemployment rate. The issue of rising unemployment in the midst of considerable growth in gross domestic product presents a peculiar challenge for Nigerian economy. It also suggests that the benefits of economic

growth are not translating into employment opportunities. Therefore, this study seeks to investigate the role of business growth on employment generation in Nigeria, identify the challenges inhibiting its effectiveness, and propose strategies to optimize business growth for job creation. Thus, the objective of the study is to examine the effect of SMEs business growth on employment generation in Jos, Plateau state. The specific objective is to examine the relationship between business growth and employment generation in Jos, Plateau State. Hence, we hypothesize:

Ho: There is no significant relationship between business growth and employment generation in Jos, Plateau State.

This paper is divided into five sections. Section one is introduction while section two is literature review, Section three and four are the methodology and data analysis. Section five is conclusion and recommendation

2. Literature Review

2.1.0 Concept of Business Growth

Business growth is a physical process of adaptation and development that involves different stages that occurs over a period of time under conducive business environment. At the inception of a new business (startup), many business organizations start small. Business growth is not simultaneous as it takes a couple of time to manifest. Business growth is not a homogeneous process. The degree and pattern of growth differ from one industry to another. Business growth refers to increase in sale volume, increase in production volume, increase in raw materials usage, increase in power consumption, increase in the work force, increase in revenue and increase in market presence. It involves expansion on the scale of business operation of existing businesses or the establishment of new businesses in a particular economy (Hill & Jones 2017). Business growth can occur in various sectors, including manufacturing, services, agriculture and technology. Business growth is influenced by various factors which has significant implications for the overall performance and survival of the firm. These factors include competition and economies of scale which drive business enterprises toward growth. Government policies can also support business growth by providing access to funding, reducing bureaucratic red tape, fostering a culture of entrepreneurship, encouraging competition, and implementing sound macroeconomic policies.

Business growth may lead to direct employment generation by hiring more employees. For instance, a growing manufacturing company may need to hire additional workers to meet increased production

demands. Business growth may also lead to indirect employment generation through supply chain effects. When a company expands, it often requires more inputs from suppliers, which can lead to increased employment among these suppliers. One job created in a growing business can lead to the creation of additional jobs in related industries. For example, the opening of a new hotel can create jobs not only within the hotel but also in local restaurants, transportation services, and tourism-related businesses.

2.1.1 Concept of Employment Generation

Employment refers to the act of engaging people to work in exchange for compensation. Employment typically includes both formal and informal sector jobs, such as jobs in corporations, small businesses, self-employment, and the agricultural sector. Employment generation is the process of creating new job opportunities for the workforce in an economy (Adebayo & Ogunjobi, 2018). It involves both the quantity and quality of jobs created. Quality jobs often include those that are stable, well-paying, and provide decent working conditions. Factors that influence employment generation include business expansion, entrepreneurship, investment and capital formation, economic policies and industry and sector Dynamics

Employment generation can be hindered by informal economy. In many developing countries like Nigeria, a significant portion of employment is in the informal sector, which often lacks job security and benefits. Skills Mismatch is also another obstacle that affects employment generation. Mismatch between the skills of the workforce and the demands of the labor market can hinder employment generation. Furthermore, economic downturns or external shocks can negatively impact business growth and employment. Inequality also hinders employment generation. Employment generation should ideally reduce income inequality, but in practice, it may not benefit all segments of the population equally.

2.1.2 Concept of Unemployment

Unemployment refers to the condition in which individuals who are capable and willing to work are unable to find suitable employment opportunities. It is a critical economic and social issue that affects individuals, families, and the nation at large. Various forms of unemployment include structural unemployment which occurs when there is a mismatch between the skills and qualifications of the available workforce and the demands of the labour market. In Nigeria, structural unemployment may arise if the education and training of the workforce do not align with the skills required by growing industries. Also, cyclical unemployment is closely tied to economic cycles.

During economic downturns, businesses may cut back on hiring or lay off workers due to reduced demand for goods and services. Conversely, during periods of economic growth, cyclical unemployment tends to decrease. Furthermore, seasonal unemployment occurs in certain industries, such as agriculture which experience seasonal fluctuations in employment demand. Seasonal unemployment occurs when workers are temporarily laid off during off-seasons. Youth unemployment arises when young people entering the labour market face challenges in finding employment due to limited experience and competition for entry-level positions while underemployment occurs when individuals are given opportunities in jobs that do not fully make use of their skills and qualifications, leading to lower job satisfaction and income.

Unemployment is a complex issue influenced by multiple factors. Here are some key factors responsible for unemployment in Nigeria: Insufficient business growth or economic stagnation can lead to reduced job creation, resulting in higher unemployment rates. Also, a rapidly growing population as we have in Nigeria can exacerbate unemployment challenges by increasing the number of job seekers without a corresponding increase in job opportunities. Education and skills gap is one of the factors responsible for unemployment. Lack of adequate education and skills development programs may give rise to workforce that is ill-equipped for the available job openings, contributing to unemployment. Government policies, including labour market regulations and taxation, can either encourage or hinder job creation and, consequently, affect the unemployment rate. Furthermore, global economic conditions, such as trade policies and international market trends, can impact employment opportunities in Nigeria. Lack of economic diversification by past administration has contributed to current high level of unemployment in Nigeria. Historically, Nigeria's economy has been heavily reliant on the oil sector. Overdependence on a single product (petroleum product) has made the economy vulnerable to fluctuations on oil prices and this had reduced the employment opportunities in other sectors. Efforts to diversify the economy are essential for creating more jobs. Factors such as strict labour laws and regulations, high minimum wages, and difficulty in hiring and firing employees can deter businesses from creating new jobs. Labor market rigidities may contribute to unemployment. Entrepreneurship and business environment also influence employment generation. The ease of starting and running a business in Nigeria, as well as access to credit and capital, can significantly impact entrepreneurship and business growth. A challenging business environment may deter the creation of new enterprises that could generate employment. Inadequate infrastructure, including transportation and energy, can hinder business growth and job creation, especially in sectors that require reliable infrastructure. Limited access to markets can also constrain business expansion. Gender disparities in employment exist in Nigeria,

with women often facing limited access to quality job opportunities. Addressing gender inequality in the workforce is essential for reducing unemployment.

2.1.3 Concept of Small and Medium enterprises (SME)

There is no universal definition of small and medium enterprise (SME), however, different countries define SME base on the role it plays on the economy, policies and programs designed by government agencies or institutions. According to Ifechukwu (2000), small-scale enterprise is a business operated mainly with employees that does not exceed fifty. Ali (2003) also held that SMEs are characterized by high labour-intensive mode of production, high operational flexibility, high utilization of local raw materials and short gestation period. According to Jasra et al. (2011), SMEs are business enterprises that engage not more than 250 employees and produce on a small scale. Common criteria that were used by most nations in defining SME includes volume of turnover, profit, number of employees, available finance, capital employed, market share and size of the firm. In 2005, the Central Bank of Nigeria's guideline on Small and Medium Enterprise Investment Scheme defined SME as any enterprise that has asset base not exceeding 200 million naira and this amount excludes land and working capital. National policy on Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) defined small enterprise as a business with a total asset of 5 million naira but not exceeding 50 million naira (excluding land and building). In terms of number of employees, small enterprise is defined as business with workforce that is above ten but not exceeding forty-nine. Medium enterprises are those businesses with total asset above 50 million naira but not exceeding 500 million naira (excluding land and building) and with workforce of between 50 and not exceeding 199 employees (SMEDAN, 2012).

2.2 Theoretical Review

Several studies have provided explanation on business growth and employment generation but for the purpose of this study, human capital theory and entrepreneurship theory were discussed.

2.2.1. Human Capital Theory: Human capital theory, developed by economist Gary Becker in the 1960s, is a fundamental concept in economics that focuses on the idea that investments in education, training, and health can be viewed as investments in human capital. This theory recognizes that individuals, like physical assets or machinery, can be productive assets that contribute to economic growth and development. Human capital theory has had a profound impact on labour economics, education policy, and discussions about workforce development. Human capital theory held that education, training, and health are investments

made by individuals or societies. These investments are expected to yield returns in the form of increased productivity, higher wages, and improved economic well-being. The primary goal of human capital investments is to enhance an individual's productivity in firms. Education and training equip individuals with the skills, knowledge, and abilities necessary to perform their jobs more efficiently and effectively. Human capital theory takes a long-term view, emphasizing that the benefits of education and training accrue over a person's lifetime. Individuals with higher levels of human capital tend to have better job prospects and higher earnings throughout their careers. Individuals make rational decisions about investing in their human capital based on a comparison of the expected benefits (higher income, job security, job satisfaction) with the costs (tuition fees, time spent in education or training).

2.2.2 Entrepreneurship Theory: Entrepreneurship theory is a field of study within economics and business that focuses on understanding the creation, development, and management of entrepreneurial ventures. Entrepreneurs are individuals who identify opportunities, take risks, and mobilize resources to turn their ideas into successful businesses. The study of entrepreneurship theory seeks to explain the motivations, behaviours, and impact of entrepreneurs on innovation, economic growth, and society as a whole. At the core of entrepreneurship theory is the concept of entrepreneurial opportunity. Entrepreneurs are driven by the identification and exploitation of opportunities in the market. These opportunities may arise from technological advancements, changes in consumer preferences, or gaps in the market. It also involves a willingness to take calculated risks. Entrepreneurs often invest time, money, and effort into their ventures with no guarantee of success. The ability to assess and manage risk is a critical entrepreneurial skill. Entrepreneurs are typically associated with innovation and creativity. They develop new products, services, processes, or business models that disrupt existing markets or create entirely new ones. Entrepreneurs must mobilize various resources, including financial capital, human capital, and social networks, to bring their ideas to fruition. Effective resource allocation and management are essential for entrepreneurial success. Understanding market dynamics, such as supply and demand, competitive forces, and consumer behavior, is crucial for entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurs adapt to changing market conditions and identify niches where they can thrive. Entrepreneurship theory also considers the scalability of ventures. Successful entrepreneurs often aspire to grow their businesses, whether through organic growth, mergers, or acquisitions.

The study is anchored on human capital theory and entrepreneurship theory. The justification is that entrepreneurship theory provided explanation on key driver of economic growth. By creating new businesses and industries, entrepreneurs generate employment, increase productivity, and stimulate innovation. This, in

turn, contributes to overall economic development while human capital theory suggests that investments in education and training contribute to economic growth by increasing the productivity of the workforce.

2.3 Empirical Review

Nuhu and Mohammed (2021) examined the influence of business management practices and employment generation in Abuja using survey research method. Stratified random sampling technique was adopted for the study. The sample size of the study is 363. Questionnaire was used to gather data. Regression analysis with the aid of SPSS software version 22 was used to analyze the data. The findings showed that there is a positive significant influence of managerial intent on employment generation in Abuja. Garcia (2020) investigated economic growth and job market dynamics. The study examined the relationship between economic growth, as measured by GDP, and changes in employment levels. The study adopted a longitudinal analysis using data from a large-scale survey conducted annually over a 10-year period. The findings showed a lagged but positive relationship between economic growth and employment. Increases in GDP were followed by gradual employment growth, suggesting that economic expansion plays a crucial role in employment generation over time. Shettima, Sharma and Banerji (2020) examined the impact small and medium enterprises have on employment generation in Kaduna state, Nigeria. Primary data was utilized with the help of a questionnaire; a survey is carried out on 5 selected SMEs having a sample size of 1,000 respondents with 200 respondents in each of the 5 selected SMEs. Data was analysed using the Kaiser varimax Rotation for factor analysis with the aid of SPSS software version 20. The result revealed that there are disparities in the employment generation trends among the selected SMEs which are as a result of inequity in finance, policy discontinuity, insecurity, lack of awareness, ineffective market linkages, among others. Al-Haddad et al. (2019) investigated the role of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in employment generation and economic growth in Pakistan. Simple random sampling technique was used to select 255 respondents. Questionnaire was used for data collection. Data was analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) analytical tool. The result revealed that there is a positive relationship between SMEs and unemployment reduction. The result also showed that there is a positive relationship between SMEs and increase in income level. Kayanula and Quartey (2019) studied SMEs influence on economic growth. The study main objective is the employment generation aspect of SMEs. The study adopted Binomial Logistic regression technique. The findings revealed that SMEs relied on informal services (MFIs) sources of finance. It was also found that SMEs provides gainful employment.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

Quantitative research design was adopted for this study. This approach allows the researcher to analyze numerical data and test hypotheses using statistical methods. The population of the study is 268 active SME operators in Jos metropolis. Yamane formula was used to derive sample size of 160. Stratified random sampling technique was used for sample selection to ensure representation from different sectors. Primary data was used for the study. Questionnaires was used to gather data directly from SME owners/managers, employees, and other relevant stakeholders. Pilot test was carried out on the questionnaire with a small group to identify and address any issues. Regression analysis was used to analyze the data because it establishes the relationship between business growth (particularly in SMEs) and employment generation, as well as understand the paradox of high economic growth alongside rising unemployment rates. The regression model for the study is:

$$EG = \beta_0 + \beta_1 BG + \varepsilon$$

Where:

EG: Employment Generation

BG: Business Growth

β_0 : Intercept (the value of EG when BG is zero)

β_1 : Coefficient of business growth

ε : Error term

4.0 Data Analysis

Table 1: Gender

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Female	51	31.9	31.9	31.9
Male	109	68.1	68.1	100.0
Total	160	100.0	100.0	

SPSS output (2025).

Table 1 revealed that 31.9% (51) are women while 68.1% (109) are men. It shows that men dominate the SMEs land scape in the study area. This is due to culture that discourages women from engaging in

meaningful economic activities. Furthermore, lack of financial empowerment was also responsible for low women participation in business activities.

Table 2: Age

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 21 -30	13	8.1	8.1	8.1
31 -40	67	41.9	41.9	50.0
41 -50	70	43.8	43.8	93.8
51 and above	10	6.3	6.3	100.0
Total	160	100.0	100.0	

SPSS output (2025).

Table 2 provides a distribution of the respondents across different age categories. The majority of the individuals fall within the age range of 31 to 50, with 41.9% fallen within 31-40 age group and 43.8% also within 41-50 age group. This implies that majority of entrepreneurs in the study area are young, vibrant and dynamic.

Table 3: Education Qualification

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Primary school certificate	11	6.9	6.9	6.9
SSCE / GCE	24	15.0	15.0	21.9
Diploma /NCE and above.	125	78.1	78.1	100.0
Total	160	100.0	100.0	

SPSS output (2025).

Table 3 provides a distribution of the respondents across different education qualification categories. The majority of respondents (78.1%) have Diploma / NCE and above qualifications, while smaller proportions have primary school certificates (6.9%) and SSCE/GCE qualifications (15.0%). This shows that most of the entrepreneurs in the study area are literate.

Table 4: Employment Status

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Self Employed	85	53.1	53.1	53.1
Employed	75	46.9	46.9	100.0
Total	160	100.0	100.0	

SPSS output (2025).

Table 4 provides a distribution of the sample across different employment status categories. The majority of individuals in the sample (53.1%) are self-employed, while the remaining 46.9% are employed by SMEs owners.

Table 6: Correlations

		EG	BG
Pearson Correlation	EG	1.000	.769
	BG	.769	1.000
Sig. (1-tailed)	EG	.	.000
	BG	.000	.
N	EG	160	160
	BG	160	160

SPSS output (2025).

Table 6 is the correlation matrix which provides information about the strength and direction of the linear relationship between Employment Generation (EG) and Business Growth (BG). The Pearson correlation coefficient between "EG" and "BG" is 0.769. This indicates a strong positive linear relationship between the two variables. The p-values (both 0.000) suggest that this correlation is statistically significant, meaning that it is unlikely to have occurred by random chance in the sample. Also, with a correlation coefficient of 0.769, as "EG" increases, there is a tendency for "BG" to also increase, and vice versa.

Table 7: Model Summary^b

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	R	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.769 ^a	.591	.588		.47851	.031

a. Predictors: (Constant), BG

Dependent Variable: EG

SPSS output (2025).

Table 7 revealed that the multiple correlation coefficient (R) is 0.769, indicating a moderate to strong positive correlation between the predictors business growth (BG) and the dependent variable employment generation (EG). This value ranges from 0 to 1, where 1 represents a perfect correlation. R Square is 0.591, meaning that approximately 59.1% of the variability in the dependent variable Employment Generation (EG) is explained by the independent variable Business Growth (BG) in the model. This indicates a moderate level of explanation, leaving about 40.9% of the variability unexplained. The Adjusted R Square adjusts the R Square value for the number of predictors in the model and is 0.588, providing a slightly lower value than R Square. The standard error of the estimate gives an average measure of how much the observed values deviate from the predicted values and it is 0.47851.

Table 8: ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	52.262	1	52.262	228.244	.000 ^b
	Residual	36.178	158	.229		
	Total	88.440	159			

a. Dependent Variable: EG

b. Predictors: (Constant), BG

Table 8 revealed that the regression model is statistically significant (p-value < 0.05), suggesting that the independent variable business growth (BG) contributes significantly to explaining the variability in the dependent variable employment generation (EG). The F-ratio of 228.244 is large, indicating that the variance explained by the model is significantly greater than the unexplained variance. The regression sum of squares (52.262) represents the amount of variability in "EG" that is accounted for by the predictor "BG."

Table 9: Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1 (Constant)	1.011	.112		9.035	.000		
BG	.935	.062	.769	15.108	.000	1.000	1.000

a. Dependent Variable: EG

In table 9, the intercept (constant) is 1.011. This is the estimated value of employment generation (EG) when the independent variable business growth (BG) is zero. The t-value of 9.035 is significant (p-value = 0.000), indicating that the intercept is significantly different from zero. The coefficient for "BG" is 0.935. This represents the estimated change in "EG" for a one-unit change in "BG." The t-values for both the constant and BG are quite large, (9.035 and 15,108) and the associated p-values are 0.000, indicating that both coefficients are statistically significant. Thus, the null hypothesis which say that there is no significant relationship between business growth and employment generation in Jos, Plateau State is therefore rejected and the alternate which says that there is significant relationship between business growth and employment generation is accepted. The standardized coefficient (Beta) for "BG" (0.769) indicates a strong positive relationship between "BG" and "EG." The collinearity statistics suggest no issues with multicollinearity.

Table 10: Coefficient Correlations^a

Model	BG
1	
Correlations BG	1.000
Covariances BG	.004

a. Dependent Variable: EG

Table 10 shows a correlation of 1.000 between the coefficients for business growth (BG) and itself which reveals a perfect positive linear relationship. This implies that as the coefficient for "BG" changes, the coefficient for "BG" always changes in the same direction with the same magnitude.

The covariance of 0.004 between the coefficients for "BG" and itself shows the degree to which these coefficients vary together. This positive covariance implied that they tend to increase or decrease together.

5.0 Conclusion and Recommendation

The findings of the study revealed that there is a significant positive relationship between business generation and employment growth in Jos metropolis, Plateau State, Nigeria. In conclusion, SMEs business growth creates wealth and generates new job opportunities. Hence, we recommend as follows:

1. Government and policy makers should initiate policy interventions aimed at harnessing the potential of SMEs business growth for employment generation in Nigeria. This will enhance economic growth, poverty reduction and improve the living standard.
2. Government should enact relevant laws that will improve business environment so that SMEs can maximize their business potential on creation of wealth and employment generation.

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