

# ENTREPRENEURIAL SKILLS AND PRODUCTIVITY: A MEDIATING ROLE OF EMPLOYMENT GENERATION AMONG SMALL AND MEDIUM SCALE ENTERPRISES IN ABUJA

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## *Abstract*

**T**he study examined entrepreneurial skills and productivity: a mediating role of employment generation among small and medium scale enterprises in Abuja. The study employed a survey research design with a population of 689 owners of micro, small and medium scale enterprises in Abuja Metropolis. Taro Yamane formula was used to determine the sample size of 253. Data was generated using questionnaire and the instrument was tested for reliability and validity. The study used Partial Least Square Structural Equation Model (PLS-SEM) to model the regression analysis for test of hypotheses to determine if there is an effect of independent variables on dependent variable. Findings showed that entrepreneurial skills have significant and positive effect on productivity among SMEs in Abuja. Similarly, entrepreneurial skill has significant and positive effect on employment generation (EG) among SMEs in Abuja. The study thus concluded that employment generation has significant and positive effect on productivity among SMEs in Abuja, while entrepreneurial skills partially mediated the relationship between employment generation and productivity. The study recommended that entrepreneurial skills should be properly used in SMEs since it has the capacity to enhance employment generation and productivity among SMEs.

**Keywords:** *Entrepreneurial Skills, Employment Generation and Productivity*

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## INTRODUCTION

It has been established that the development and growth of entrepreneurial skills and productivity is the best option out of the current high level of unemployment that has caused great damage to the Nigerian economy (Dauda, 2017). Entrepreneurial skills are skills which are acquired by entrepreneurs or prospective business

owners in a bid to recognize business opportunities, strength, weaknesses and threats in a business environment (John-Akamelu & Muogbo, 2017). Similarly, Entrepreneurial skills are best understood as competencies on resourceful skills capable of steering an individual to be self-reliant, independent and productive in meeting life's challenges. Entrepreneurs develop skills

such as management skills, marketing skills, accounting skills and risk management skills in order to ensure effective productivity in the work which will eventually enhance employment generation. These skills are needed to create products or ideas from zero to reality (Opusunju et al 2018). Furthermore, entrepreneurs should be acquainted with the current economic situation, which has significantly diminished the standard of living and wellbeing of average Nigerian. This situation is fast getting out of control and its eradication is depends on individual nation's economic growth, security and world peace. This is attributed largely to slow pace of entrepreneurship development and skills. This is one of the greatest challenges particularly for emerging economies (Ohida et al, 2019).

Most SMEs in Abuja apply entrepreneurial skills such as innovative skills, creative skills, management skills, marketing skills, accounting skills and discussed risk management skills. This notwithstanding, there is signs that productivity level still remains low and unimpressive thereby leading to consumers demanding for foreign goods and ineffective employment generation. The main objective of this study is to examine the role of entrepreneurial skills and productivity: a mediating effect on employment generation among SMEs in Abuja metropolis. The specific objectives are to:

- i) evaluate the effect of entrepreneurial skills on SMEs productivity in Abuja metropolis.
- ii) examine the effect of entrepreneurial skills on employment generation among SMEs in Abuja metropolis.
- iii) assess the effect of employment generation on

productivity among SMEs in Abuja metropolis.

- iv) evaluate the effect of mediating role of employment generation in the relationship between entrepreneurial skills and productivity among SMEs in Abuja metropolis.

The hypotheses of the study were stated as below:

H<sub>01</sub>: There is no significant effect of entrepreneurial skills on productivity among SMEs in Abuja metropolis.

H<sub>02</sub>: There is no significant effect of entrepreneurial skills on employment generation among SMEs in Abuja metropolis.

H<sub>03</sub>: There is no significant effect of employment generation on productivity among SMEs in Abuja metropolis.

H<sub>04</sub>: Employment generation do not significantly mediate the relationship between entrepreneurial skills and productivity.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review captured the conceptual framework, empirical review and theoretical framework. The conceptual reviewed in this study comprised of entrepreneurial skills, employment generation and productivity.

Entrepreneurial skills refer to the ability to combine both the innate characteristics and other resources, which depend on the individual's entrepreneurial skills (Moska, 2013). Entrepreneurial skills can also be viewed as the skills, which complement the entrepreneur to analyze situations, opportunities and environments, and assist the entrepreneur/manager to organize, manage and assume the risks and rewards of a business or enterprise (Gakure et al, 2013). They are abilities

that drive attitude changes to be able to have skills, create their own results, and solve problems, on an ongoing basis. Entrepreneurial skills are an illustration of entrepreneurial competence (Albanus et al 2022). Entrepreneurial skills are the ability of employee to display certain traits that are learned and required as well as modification in the cause of living such as human skills, communication skills, innovative skills and creative skills.

The term employment is used to describe a situation whereby able-bodied men and women who are qualified to be gainfully employed in any given society can easily secure jobs whereby he or she will not be exploited on securing the job and equally optimize his or her capability in terms of his marginal labour production (Babasanya, 2018). The full employment of labour does not imply that there is no allowable unemployment percentage level but if it is not within the framework of the accepted level considered as full employment for either the developed or developed countries as the case may be, it will not be a serious case for policy decisions (Adeyemi et al, 2020). Employment is a relationship between two parties, usually based on a contract, one being the employer and the other being the employee.

Productivity is the difference between an organization's production and its specified goals and objectives (Farlex, 2015). It examines the relationship between input and output in a given production process. Thus, productivity is expressed in an output versus input formula for measuring production activities. It does not merely define the volume of output, but output obtained in relation to resources employed. In this context, productivity of a firm can be defined as a ratio of input and output (Coelli, et al. 1998). Productivity is a

significance difference between input such as men, machine, materials, methods, money and markets and output of the firm. It is the ratio between input and output in a particular period.

John-Akamelu and Muogbo (2017) examined the effect of entrepreneurial skills on SME's productivity in NnewiNorth Local Government Area of Anambra State Nigeria. The study revealed that management skills, marketing skills, accounting skills and discussed risk management skills are needed for effective productivity of SMEs.

Akande and Alabi (2021) examined the effect of entrepreneurial skills development schemes of Osun State Government on youth employment. The study revealed that entrepreneurial skill dimensions have significant effects on youth employment. The study also revealed that personal and business operation skills have high beta score than other dimensions with you the employment. It was concluded that predictor variables namely (management, technical, business operation and personal) is 70.6% variance of youth employment.

Muogbo and John-Akamelu (2018) examined the impact of entrepreneurial skills in reducing youth unemployment in Nigeria with reference to ABC Transport Company in Anambra State. They found that there are roles entrepreneurial skills and businesses play in youth employment in Nigeria through entrepreneurial development. Furthermore, it shows that youths in Anambra State can be given basic training on how best to establish and grow business enterprise in local communities within the state. Aun et al. (2018) examined the effect of entrepreneurship skills development on

youth employment in Kwara State, Nigeria. The results of the study revealed that a positive relationship exists between entrepreneurship skills development and youth employment generation, which is significant at p-value of 0.000 ( $R = 0.714$ ,  $R^2 = 0.510$ ,  $(0.000) < 0.05$ ).

Debesh (2014) studied the nexus between the productivity growth and the employment through VAR model of Dritsaki and Blanch; Solow and Wilson model and found cointegration and causality but the association went to either direction. In the short run, the nexus was seen to be negative but not in all countries and in the long run, the association was found both to be positive and negative in the world economies like Europe, America, Africa and in Asia.

Alani (2012) examined the effect of productivity growth on employment, capital accumulation and economic growth in Uganda for the period 1972 to 2008 period. It was found that reduction in economic growth might have come from productivity growth, and that productivity growth might have caused unemployment and depletion of capital stock. Second, it was found that both labor and capital productivity growth might have caused unemployment, decline in both capital accumulation and economic growth. Also, Ngodoo et al (2022) examined the impact of SMEs on employment creation in Makurdi metropolis, Benue state and found that SMEs contribute significantly to employment creation in the State but are often faced with the challenges of lack of capital, absence of business planning, lack of confidence in the face of competition, unfavorable environment for the development of SMEs, high

government taxes and inadequate technical knowledge.

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Human capital theory is used as a theory that underpinned this study. Human capital theory is personality structure to relate to entrepreneurial competencies and skills. The theory states that entrepreneurs should have adequate knowledge and skills in relevant business fields (Bruederl et al., 1992). Furthermore, the theory is linked with entrepreneurial accomplishment comparably as personality structure: adequate knowledge and working experience in the relevant fields, empower business founders to pick more efficient approaches, in organizing production processes, creating financial strategies, or analyzing markets for the new product. The human capital of the entrepreneur is the second part of the character-based approach after the entrepreneurial personality. Generally, this theory is concerned with knowledge and experiences of small-scale business owners (Opusunju et al 2019). The general assumption is that, apart from Human capital acting as a resource, it also improves the survival of small firms (Bruederl et al., 1992).

### **METHODOLOGY**

The study adopts a survey research design. The population of this study comprises of owners of small and medium scale enterprises in Abuja Metropolis. Eze et al (2022), conducted a study in Abuja Metropolis using manufacturing firms, accommodation/food services as well as wholesale/retail trade, with population of 689. The breakdown is as shown in the table below:

**Table 1 Population of the Study**

Small Scale Enterprises in Abuja	Owners (population)
Manufacturing	182
Accommodation/food services	321
Wholesale/ retail trade	186
<b>Total</b>	<b>689</b>

Source: Eze et al., 2022

Since the study is current, this study adopted the same population. The sample size was derived using the Taro Yamane formula; which is stated below.

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

Where N is the population size

E is the margin of error (assume 5%)

1 = constant

e = 0.05

$$n = 689 / (1 + 689(0.05)^2)$$

$$n = 689 / (1 + 689(0.0025))$$

$$n = 689 / 1 + 1.7225$$

$$n = 689 / 2.7225$$

$$n = 253$$

Sample size of 253 was considered in this study. However, 25(10% of the sample size) was added to increase the sample size to 278. Therefore, 278 questionnaires were administered to the respondents in the study, to ensure successful return (Israel, 2013). A stratified sampling technique was used in selecting owners of businesses and the reason for this is that the businesses were classified to ensure the representation of each business. This implies that copies of the questionnaire were administered to owners of businesses within this small and medium scale enterprises sectors: manufacturing, accommodation/foods and wholesales/retail sales in Abuja Metropolis. The questionnaire was administered on this basis, manufacturing sector 105 copies, accommodation/ food services 90 copies and retail/whole sale 83 copies. The internal consistency or reliability of the instrument for this research is determined by means of Cronbach's Alpha, using the Partial Least Square Structural Equation Model (PLS-SEM). Any instrument with a coefficient of 0.70 and above is seen as valid and reliable.

The Partial Least Square Structural Equation Model (PLS-SEM) is used to model the regression analysis that is used to test the hypotheses to determine if there is an effect of independent variables on dependent variable. However, the parametric significant tests (as used in regression analyses) cannot be applied to test whether coefficients such as outer weights, outer loadings and path coefficients are significant. Instead, PLS-SEM relies on a non-parametric boot strap procedure (Davison & Hinkley, 1997; Efron & Tibshirani, 1986) to test the significance of the various results such as path coefficients, Cronbach's alpha, HTMT, and R<sup>2</sup> values and Q<sup>2</sup>.

#### DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Data were analysed using SmartPLS 3.3.8. As recommended by Hair, et al., (2014), missing values were replaced using mean substitution because they were less than 10% for the case and 20% for the variable. Harman's one-factor test results of 38% variance indicate that there is no common method bias since

the value is less than 50% (Hair et al., 2014). Additionally, the two predictor variables were subjected to a multicollinearity test; and the results showed that the variance inflation factor (VIF) value was 3.3% below the 10% cut-off point for collinearity problems, as advised by Kock (2015). The data was approved as clean and suitable for further investigations. The two-basic models of PLS path modelling; the

measurement model and structural model, were analysed and computed using SmartPLS 3.3.8.

**Research Findings**

The research findings are discussed under the two basic models of structural equation modelling (SEM); the measurement and structural models using SmartPLS 3.3.8 below.

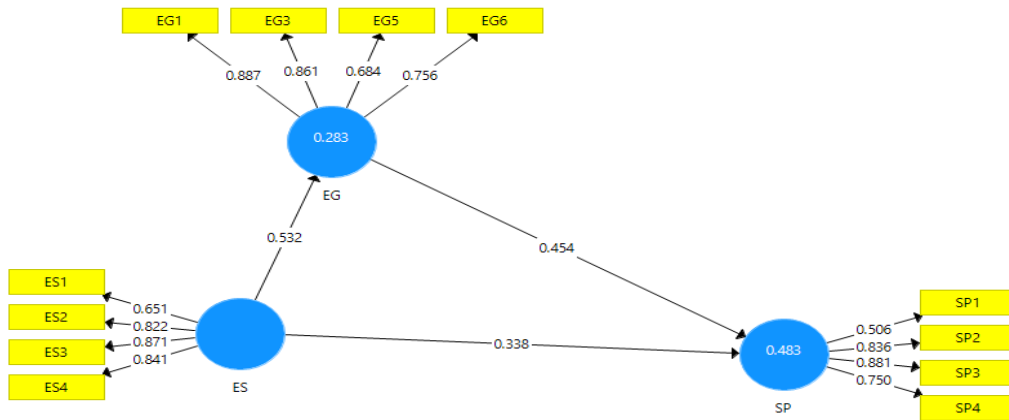


Figure 1: Measurement Model

The items loadings were examined and only items that loaded 0.50 and above were retained (Hulland, 1999; Ojeleye & Bakare, 2020) . Items EG2 and EG4 were deleted owing to loadings below 0.50. The internal consistency was measured using composite reliability and all variables reached the satisfied criteria of 0.70 as recommended by Hair et al. (2014) as the

lowest is 0.838 and the highest is 0.876. In addition, Average Variance Extracted (AVE) was examined to confirm the convergent validity and have all met the minimum threshold of 0.5 provided by Fornell and Larcker (1981). In other words, the values of AVE were greater than 0.5, as it ranges between 0.573 and 0.642. These are presented in table 4.1 below:

**Table 2: Study(n=253): Loadings, Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliability and Convergent Validity (AVE)**

Construct	Indicators	Loadings	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
Employment Generation	EG1	0.887	0.814	0.876	0.642
	EG3	0.861			
	EG5	0.684			
	EG6	0.756			
Entrepreneurial Skills	ES1	0.651	0.813	0.876	0.641
	ES2	0.822			
	ES3	0.871			
	ES4	0.841			
Productivity	SP1	0.506	0.733	0.838	0.573
	SP2	0.836			
	SP3	0.881			
	SP4	0.750			

Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio of correlations was used in the study to verify the components' discriminant validity. HTMT ratio was proposed by Henseler, Ringle and Sarstedt (2015) as a result of Fornell and Larcker Criterion's failure to identify lack of discriminant validity (Ojeleye, Umar, Abu-Abdissamad, & Usman, 2022). According to Hair et al., (2021), HTMT<sub>0.90</sub> threshold should be used

when the constructions are conceptually similar, while HTMT<sub>0.85</sub> threshold should be used when the constructs are conceptually distinct. Consequently, the study utilised HTMT<sub>0.85</sub> since the predictor variables are conceptually dissimilar as all the figures in table 2 and figure 2 below are less than 0.85. Thus, discriminant validity is confirmed.

**Table 3: Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) Correlations Discriminant Validity**

Construct	EG	ES	SP
EG			
ES	0.578		
SP	0.806	0.724	

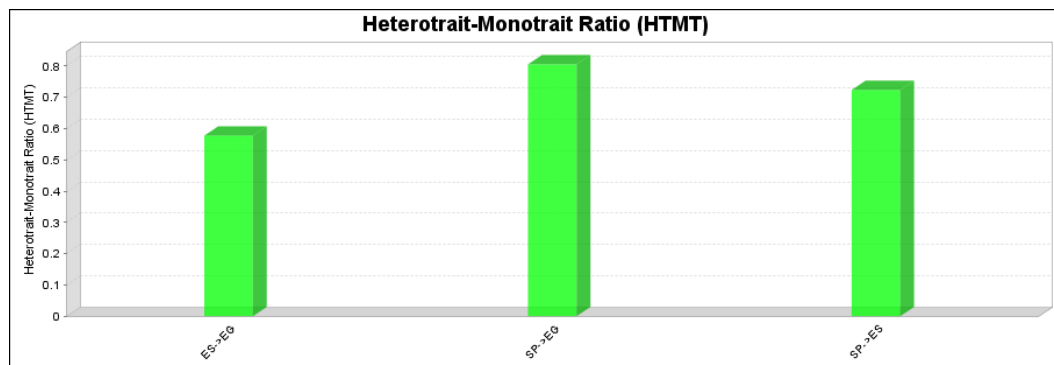


Figure 2: Pictorial display of Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio

**Structural Model**

The hypotheses of the study were tested with structural model. A total of 5000 bootstrapping was conducted to test the

hypotheses for the direct and mediating relationship. The coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ), effect size ( $f^2$ ) and predictive relevance ( $Q^2$ ) were analysed and reported.

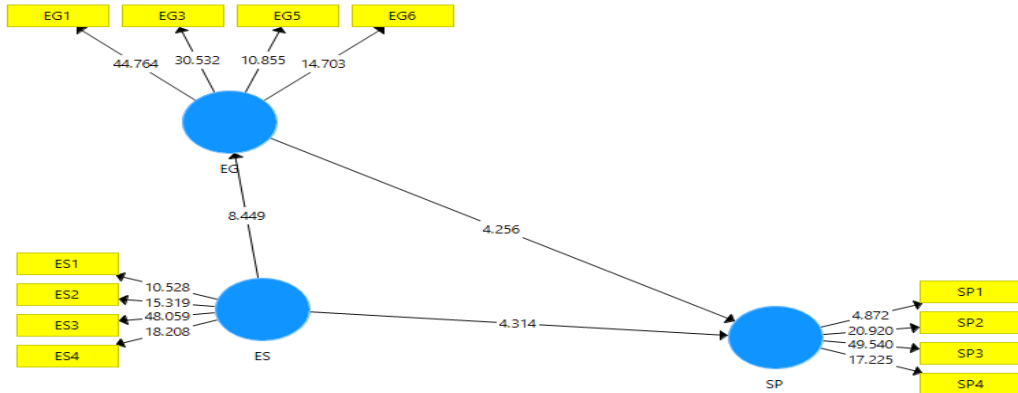


Figure 3: Structural Model

**Table 4: Test of Path Coefficient (Hypotheses)**

Hypotheses	Relationship	Beta	Standard Error	T-value	P-value	Decision
H <sub>01</sub>	ES-> SP	0.338	0.078	4.256	0.000	Rejected
H <sub>02</sub>	ES->EG	0.532	0.063	8.449	0.000	Rejected
H <sub>03</sub>	EG->SP	0.454	0.107	4.256	0.000	Rejected
H <sub>04</sub>	ES->EG->SP	0.242	0.057	4.340	0.000	Rejected
R <sup>2</sup> = 0.483						

The first hypothesis in table 4 above showed that entrepreneurial skills have significant and positive effect on SMEs productivity. The positive beta value shows that 1% increase in entrepreneurial skills will result in 33.8% increase in productivity in Abuja. Thus, H<sub>01</sub> which states that entrepreneurial skill (ES) does not have significant effect on productivity is rejected. The second hypothesis likewise revealed that entrepreneurial skill has significant and positive effect on employment generation (EG). The positive beta value of 0.532 can be interpreted as a 53.2% increase in employment generation for every 1% increase in entrepreneurial skills. Hence, H<sub>02</sub> which states that entrepreneurial skill (ES) does not have significant effect on employment generation is rejected. The positive beta

value shows that 1% increase in entrepreneurial skills will result in 0.24% increase productivity in Abuja. Thus, H<sub>03</sub> which states that employment generation (EG) does not have significant effect on productivity is rejected. The third hypothesis found that employment generation has significant and positive effect on SMEs productivity. The positive beta value depicts that a 1% increase employment generation will lead to 45% increase in SMEs productivity. Thus, the third hypothesis is rejected. Looking at table 4, The fourth hypothesis H<sub>04</sub> stated that entrepreneurial skill does not partially mediate the relationship between entrepreneurial skills and SMEs productivity is hereby rejected. Statistically, employment generation significantly mediated the relationship



between entrepreneurial skill and SMEs productivity. Consequently, according to Ojeleye et al (2022) when both direct and mediating relationship are significant, then partial mediation exist. However, when the direct relationship is insignificant but the mediating relationship is significant, full mediation exist. Hence, since both the direct and indirect relationship are significant in the study, the study concludes that entrepreneurial skills partially mediated the relationship between employment generation and productivity.

Furthermore, Zhao et al. (2010) noted that it is crucial to determine the upper and

lower level confidence interval. They asserted that notwithstanding the statistical significance of the indirect effect, both confidence interval levels should be on the same side. In other words, if the lower confidence interval is positive, the upper confidence interval level should be positive vice-versa. The 2.5% and 97.5% are recommended for the lower confidence interval level and the upper confidence interval level respectively. As such, from Table 5 below both the lower confidence interval level and the upper confidence interval level are positive and there is no zero (0) between them. Consequently, it can be concluded that mediation exists using confidence interval.

**Table 5: Result of Indirect Effect and Confidence Interval**

Relationship	Indirect Effect			Mediation	
	Coefficient ( $\beta$ )	S.E	T-value	P-value	BI (2.5%; 97.5%)
ES->EG->SP	0.242	0.057	4.340	0.000	(0.128;0.348)

Meanwhile, The  $R^2$  stood at 0.483. Chin (1998) recommended that  $R^2$  values of 0.67, 0.33 and 0.19 is regarded as substantial, moderate and little respectively. Thus, the study's  $R^2$  value based on Chin's recommendation is moderate. The  $R^2$  shows that the predictor variables; entrepreneurial skill and employment generation jointly account for 48% variations in SMEs productivity while the remaining 52% is explained by other variables not included in the model.

#### Effect Size and Predictive Relevance

The study examined the effect size of the exogenous variable on endogenous variable using the  $f^2$ . Cohen (1988) suggested that  $f^2$  values of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35, to represents small, medium, and large effects respectively.  $Q^2$  was used to determine the predictive relevance of the exogenous variable. Garson (2016) is of the opinion that  $Q^2$  value of 0 or negative showed that the model is irrelevant in predicting the endogenous variable the results are presented in Table 4.4 below:

**Table 4.4: Assessment of Effect Size ( $f^2$ )**

Construct	$f^2$ (EG)	Effect Size	$f^2$ (SP)	Effect Size
EG			0.286	Medium
ES	0.395	Large	0.158	Medium

$$Q^2_{EG}=0.158 \text{ \& } Q^2_{SP}=0.253$$

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study found that entrepreneurial skills have significant and positive effect on productivity among SMEs in Abuja.

This implies that entrepreneurial skills contribute positively to increase in productivity among SMEs in Abuja. The study is in line with the findings of John-

Akamelu and Muogbo (2017) who found that management skills, marketing skills, accounting skills and discussed risk management skills are needed for effective productivity of SMEs.

The study realized that entrepreneurial skill has significant and positive effect on employment generation (EG) among SMEs in Abuja. This implies that entrepreneurial skills contribute to employment generation among SMEs in Abuja. The study is in line with the findings of Akande and Alabi (2021) who found that entrepreneurial skills dimensions have significant effects on youth employment.

The result also shows that employment generation has significant and positive effect on productivity among SMEs in Abuja. The finding is in line with Alani (2012) who found that reduction in economic growth might have come from productivity growth, and that productivity growth might have caused unemployment and depletion of capital stock (employment generation have positive effect on productivity).

The study also found that entrepreneurial skills partially mediated the relationship between employment generation and productivity. This implies that entrepreneurial skills have direct and indirect effect on employment generation and productivity among SMEs in Abuja, Nigeria. The finding is in lined with the findings of Alani (2012) who found that reduction in economic growth might have come from productivity growth, and that productivity growth might have caused unemployment and depletion of capital stock. Secondly, they found that both labour and capital productivity growth might have caused unemployment, decline in both capital accumulation and economic growth.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study concluded that entrepreneurial skills have significant and positive effect on productivity among SMEs in Abuja. Also, entrepreneurial skill has significant and positive effect on employment generation (EG) among SMEs in Abuja. The study thus concluded that employment generation has significant and positive effect on productivity among SMEs in Abuja while entrepreneurial skills partially mediated the relationship between employment generation and productivity.

### The study recommended that:

- i. SMEs in Abuja should continue to encourage entrepreneurial skills such as innovative skills, creativity skills, invention skills, marketing skills etc since it enhances creativity and innovation, helps identify and resolve problems., develops courage and strength, contributes to the development of society and contributes to the economy.
- ii. SMEs in Abuja should continue to obtained further knowledge on entrepreneurial skills since Sit can enhanced a flexible schedule, autonomy, chance to build a career that aligns with your beliefs, continued growth and development, enhanced managerial abilities and meeting like-minded people.
- iii. SMEs in Abuja should continue to create employment opportunities, expanding their

- business through establishment of branches and business units.
- iv. Entrepreneurial skills should be properly used and learned in SMEs since it helps in generating employment and increasing productivity in Abuja.

#### Suggestion for further Research

It is suggested that further research be carried on effect of entrepreneurial skills and productivity on other sectors like manufacturing firms in Nigeria since this study concentrated only on small and medium enterprises in Abuja.

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