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Green Entrepreneurship in Plastic Manufacturing: Pathways to Job Creation and Environmental Responsibility

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Author's contribution

The sole author designed, analysed, inteprted and prepared the manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the effect of green entrepreneurship on job creation in plastic manufacturing firms in Anambra State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study set to determine the nature of relationship existing between green entrepreneurial innovation and job opportunity. Correlational research design was adopted. The population of the study comprised of 121 staff from the plastic manufacturing firms representing the three senatorial zones in Anambra State: Awka, Nnewi and Onitsha respectively. An interview was conducted which was later translated into a well-structured questionnaire which was used for data generation. The questionnaire was structured in five-likert scale of strongly agree, agree, undecided, strongly disagree and disagree to capture the responses of all the respondents that facilitated the analysis. The data gathered were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistical tools. Formulated hypothesis was tested using Pearson

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Product Moment Correlation Coefficient at 0.05 level of significance. Finding showed that green entrepreneurial innovation had a significant positive relationship with job opportunity in plastic manufacturing firms in Anambra State. The practical implications of the findings for policymakers, industry stakeholders and academia are that it can enhance competitiveness and sustainability by creating new market opportunities and employment in emerging sectors. Also, it prepares graduates to get fully involved in sustainable business practices that handles environmental challenges while creating jobs. The study concluded that green entrepreneurship had a significant positive relationship with job creation. Therefore, it was recommended that plastic manufacturing firms are adjured to embrace green entrepreneurship in all its entirety so that our environment can be sustained to benefit all stakeholders in particular and citizenry at large thereby preventing environmental damage.

Keywords: Green entrepreneurship; job creation; green entrepreneurial innovation and job opportunity.

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the corporate sector has experienced a paradigm shift towards sustainability and environmental awareness (IMD, 2024). The increasing awareness of global environmental issues becomes this imperative. Consequently, consumers are increasingly seeking products and services that minimize environmental harm and are becoming more conscious of their purchasing choices. The market is currently advantageous for sustainable entrepreneurs due to this need. Entrepreneurs are addressing the challenges of resource depletion and climate change by founding innovative firms that emphasize sustainability. This pattern exemplifies the rise of green entrepreneurship, a movement transforming the traditional business landscape. Waste management, clean technology, sustainable development, and other domains encompassed within the expansive concept of "green entrepreneurship.".

"Green entrepreneurship" refers to the initiation and management of a business with a focus on social responsibility and environmental sustainability. It aims to establish enduring answers to environmental challenges and to promote societal change to avert ecological harm. It seeks to reduce waste and generate economic opportunities. Green entrepreneurship is crucial for promoting sustainable development, mitigating environmental damage, combating climate change, fostering green innovation, stimulating economic growth, and safeguarding the environment. It is synonymous with sustainable entrepreneurship, which equally prioritizes the green economy's capacity to preserve both environmental and economic health. This economic paradigm prioritizes ethical conduct, renewable resources, low-carbon technologies, and enterprises that advocate for environmental preservation and resource conservation. The International Labour Organization (ILO) underscores that green entrepreneurs are crucial for employment creation through the development of green technologies and services. Their endeavors not only create jobs but also foster demand for sustainable practices across multiple sectors in Nigeria and beyond.

The emergence of green entrepreneurship in plastic manufacturing companies in Anambra State represents a significant transition towards sustainability, establishing a foundation for sustainable growth. These companies are implementing sustainable methods, including the recycling of plastic waste and the utilization of biodegradable materials, which not only alleviate environmental harm but also generate employment chances. The utilization of labor in recycling facilities and the establishment of eco-friendly supply chains illustrate the capacity for job generation via sustainable methodologies. Recycling facilities necessitate labor for the collecting, sorting, and processing of plastic trash, therefore creating employment opportunities for unskilled, semi-skilled, and skilled workers (Zilia et al., 2024). The plastic manufacturing sector in Anambra State is undergoing a significant transition towards sustainable methods. This transition is propelled by the pressing necessity to tackle environmental challenges, including plastic pollution and waste management, while concurrently fostering economic growth and job creation. The establishment of green supply chains requires the recruitment of experts proficient in sustainable logistics and resource management, hence guaranteeing job quality.

Government policies and incentives are essential in fostering green business in Anambra State. The government has implemented measures that promote the minimization of plastic waste and the implementation of sustainable technologies. Monetary incentives, including tax concessions and subsidies, are granted to companies who engage in sustainable activities. These initiatives have not only promoted the expansion of green enterprises but also augmented job creation by drawing investments to the green sector (Nwafor, 2024). The collaborative endeavors of the government, corporate sector, and civil society are crucial in facilitating this transformation, guaranteeing that the advantages of sustainable practices are disseminated across the economy.

Moreover, collaborations among the government, business sector, and non-governmental groups have resulted in the creation of training programs designed to cultivate green skills within the workforce, thereby equipping them for emerging jobs in the changing market (Eze, 2024). This study focuses on analyzing the relationship between green entrepreneurship and job creation, specifically aiming to ascertain the nature of the relationship between green entrepreneurial innovation and job opportunities in plastic manufacturing firms in Anambra State.

2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Conceptual Review

2.1.1 Green entrepreneurship

Green entrepreneurship is widely acknowledged as a crucial catalyst for sustainable development and employment generation. It is considered an effective strategy that enables small and medium-sized enterprises to build an innovative, competitive, and sustainable position. A growing number of enterprises are using green entrepreneurship to prioritize proactive strategies for environmental protection (Ataman et al., 2018). Various factors, such as corporate operations within society, utilized technology, available resources, and the availability of skilled individuals, may influence the long-term performance of a corporation (Chukwuka, 2018). Moreover, the initiatives of these companies to promote human welfare and societal progress often garner customer loyalty, suggesting that consumer perceptions significantly impact the company's sustainability. Green entrepreneurship denotes the creation and management of enterprises that emphasize environmental sustainability in conjunction with financial viability. This method not only tackles environmental issues but also generates employment opportunities through innovative techniques and sustainable technologies.

Currently, enterprises employ various strategies and approaches to shape consumer perceptions of their brands and products. The importance of manufacturing SMEs and their essential role in national economic sustainability is paramount for the successful integration of green practices into the economy. Rajkamal et al. (2022) assert that enterprises offering ecologically sustainable products or services are influential economic entities capable of transforming societal trajectories. They also function as a catalyst for startups that advocate for environmental stewardship and sustainable innovation. The indices utilized to assess green entrepreneurship include green entrepreneurial initiative, green entrepreneurial recruiting and selection, green entrepreneurial innovation, green entrepreneurial orientation, green entrepreneurial jobs, ecological economy, and carbon economy [6]. Various studies, including those by Ataman et al. [5], have utilized these dimensions.

Green entrepreneurial innovation: Green entrepreneurial innovation is essential for tackling environmental issues and fostering sustainable economic development. This innovation is defined by three main categories: product innovation, process innovation, and business model innovation. These categories allow green entrepreneurs to build environmentally sustainable products, improve operational efficiencies, and establish new markets for sustainable goods and services (Weis & Nikolić, 2024). The amalgamation of green entrepreneurial orientation (GEO) with ambidextrous green innovation has demonstrated a substantial impact on a firm's green performance. Research demonstrates that both exploratory and exploitative green technologies moderate the association between GEO and environmental outcomes, indicating that enterprises with robust resource orchestration capabilities can more effectively utilize these innovations for sustainable performance (Baquero, 2024; Alfandi & Baitaneh, 2023; Bıçakcıoğlu, 2018).

Furthermore, green entrepreneurship cultivates an innovative culture that alleviates environmental problems while simultaneously producing economic advantages. Through investment in research and development, green

entrepreneurs can establish innovative business models that promote environmental sustainability while improving profitability and competitiveness (Gao et al., 2024). The collaboration between green entrepreneurship and innovation is essential for fostering a robust economy that emphasizes ecological integrity and economic sustainability.

2.2 Job Creation

Job creation continues to be a pivotal concern worldwide, particularly as economies recuperate from the disturbances induced by the COVID-19 epidemic (Cohen & Winn, 2007; Domańska, 2023; Eboh, 2018). Studies demonstrate that small and medium-sized firms (SMEs) are crucial in fostering job creation, representing a substantial share of new employment prospects. Neumark et al., (2011) discovered that small enterprises accounted for the predominant share of job creation in the U.S. economy from 1992 to 2004, corroborating Birch's, (1981) claim that SMEs are vital for employment growth. Larger enterprises significantly contribute to job creation, especially in the manufacturing and construction sectors. Heyman et al., (2018) demonstrated that large enterprises significantly contributed to net job creation in Sweden, underscoring the intricate relationship between business size and employment results. The significance of local economic policies is paramount; efficient governance and conducive institutional frameworks can bolster job development initiatives. The OECD, (2023) asserts that customized policies targeting local characteristics and labor market demands can substantially enhance employment rates. Furthermore, job creation schemes (JCS) have been evaluated for their efficacy in assimilating unemployed individuals into the labor market. Although several JCS have encountered criticism over adverse employment results, creative strategies aimed at particular demographics have demonstrated potential in enhancing integration rates (Hujer & Thomsen, 2010).

2.2.1 Job opportunity

Employment possibilities are essential for economic stability and personal well-being. The availability of jobs is affected by multiple factors, such as technical progress, economic circumstances, and labor market regulations. Recent studies underscore the substantial influence of social media on the formation of employment prospects. Research demonstrates that social media platforms enhance job searches by allowing users to connect with prospective employers and conveniently acquire employment-related information (Davis et al., 2020; McDonald et al., 2022). The digital change of the labor market has modified conventional recruitment practices, rendering online presence increasingly essential for job searchers. Individuals who adeptly utilize their social media sites might augment their visibility to recruiters, potentially resulting in improved employment opportunities (Gandini & Pais, 2023; Fapolunda et al., 2022; Nwafor, 2021; Olawale, 2022). Furthermore, the caliber of employment prospects is also crucial. A meta-analysis indicated that job-search intensity and self-regulation are strongly correlated with employment success, highlighting the necessity of a proactive job-search strategy [18]. Comprehending the changing terrain of employment prospects is crucial for both job searchers and policymakers. By adopting technology and enhancing job-search methodologies, individuals can augment their prospects of obtaining significant work.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

This study is based on the resource-based theory (RBT). The hypothesis was formulated by Penrose (1959) and Birger Wernerfelt (1984), and further improved by Jay Barney (1991). It asserts that an organization's competitive advantage arises from its distinctive, valuable, and non-replicable resources. The theory emphasizes utilizing resources to build sustainable enterprises. These resources encompass valuable assets (access to eco-friendly technologies, green infrastructure, and a skilled workforce), rare assets (unique expertise in sustainable practices, innovative green products/services), inimitable assets (patents, proprietary technologies, and brand reputation), and organized assets (effective management systems and supply chain integration). The contributions of these researchers have elevated resource-based theory to a significant strategic management framework, impacting areas such as entrepreneurship, sustainability, and innovation. This theory is pertinent as it recognizes opportunities for eco-innovation and sustainable product development, promotes investment in green technologies and infrastructure, cultivates partnerships with stakeholders who share environmental values, and enhances competencies in sustainable practices and environmental management to

mitigate waste. This theory also stresses that a firm's unique and rare resources and competencies are pivotal to gaining a sustainable competitive advantage. This becomes possible because firm concentrates on internal strengths instead of external factors. Internal strengths differentiate organizations from others leading them to superior performance and profitability.

2.4 Empirical Review

Abdelwahed et al., (2024) studied drivers of green self-efficacy in Saudi Arabia. It investigates individual factors that motivate green entrepreneurship in Saudi Arabia. It emphasizes the role of personal attributes and contextual influences in fostering green entrepreneurial intentions.

Bahadur Ali Soomro et al., (2024) studied Going green with the green market and green innovation: building the connection between green entrepreneurship and sustainable development. This study aims to explore the role of the green market (GM) and green innovation (GI) towards green entrepreneurship (GE) and sustainable development (SD). Based on cross-sectional data, the researchers used quantitative methods in this study to confirm the conceptual framework. Structured questionnaire was used to collect data from Pakistan's knowledge-based companies (KBCs). A sample of 192 was used. Structural equation modeling (SEM) was utilized to ensure the model's fitness and as a basis for this study's hypotheses. The findings highlighted that GM factors, such as green product (GP), green design (GD), green supply chain (GSC) and green production (GPN) have a positive and significant effect on GM factors, such as on both GE and SD. Further, GI is, also, a significant predictor of GE and SD. Finally, this study's findings show that GE has a predictive role of towards SD.

Domańska, (2024) explored green entrepreneurship and sustainable development goals. This review analyzes the relationship between green entrepreneurship and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It emphasizes the critical role of green businesses in promoting environmental sustainability and economic growth.

Neumann, (2024) researched green entrepreneurship as a key to economic and environmental sustainability. This empirical analysis investigates how green entrepreneurship contributes to economic growth and environmental sustainability. It discusses the mechanisms through which green ventures can create jobs and promote sustainable practices. A systematic review by Golsefid-Alavi et al., (2021) identifies key factors influencing green entrepreneurial orientation (GEO), including individual motivations, institutional support, and market demand for sustainable products. These factors are crucial for fostering an environment conducive to green business initiatives and creation of employment opportunities.

Muo & Azeez, (2024) conducted a study on a systematic literature review and conceptual framework about green entrepreneurial attitude. This paper examines the theoretical underpinnings of green entrepreneurial orientation (GEO) and highlights contemporary trends in GEO research. It examines antecedents, causal linkages, and research deficiencies, proposing promising directions for further inquiry. Demirel & Kucuk (2024) examined green entrepreneurship during difficult periods: A quantitative analysis for European nations. This study employs logistic regression to evaluate data from 7,326 enterprises across 36 European nations, investigating factors that affect the decision to implement green practices. It underscores the significance of financial performance and conducive governmental policies in promoting green entrepreneurship.

Alshebami (2023) investigated the essential factors facilitating the creation of innovative green products and services within small firms in Saudi Arabia. The study focused on a sample of 284 small company owners from various regions of Saudi Arabia. A convenience sample of responses was collected through an online survey. Partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) was employed to analyze the data. The findings indicated a favorable link between green innovation (GI) and both green entrepreneurial self-efficacy (GESE) and green entrepreneurial orientation (GEO). The findings indicated that the relationship among green entrepreneurial self-efficacy, green entrepreneurial orientation, and economic performance (EP) is mediated by green innovation.

A study by Chen et al., (2023) in China examines the correlation between the traits of entrepreneurs and their commitment to environmental sustainability. The results indicate that individual characteristics, including environmental consciousness and innovative potential, substantially affect business financial success and the propensity for green

entrepreneurship. Neumann, (2022) emphasizes that green entrepreneurship yields superior economic results relative to conventional firms, chiefly through the generation of green jobs and the provision of environmentally sustainable products and services. Neumann (2022) highlights that green entrepreneurship leads to more positive economic outcomes compared to traditional businesses, primarily through the creation of green jobs and environmentally friendly products and services.

Abubakar et al., (2022) analyzed the strategic integration impact of green entrepreneurial innovation, green entrepreneurial behavior, and information systems on sustainable business performance and competitiveness in Nigeria. The interrelations among the constructs were examined for long-term developments and post-pandemic business patterns. Data were gathered from 221 proprietors/managers of small and medium-sized firms in Kano utilizing a standardized questionnaire, and structural equation modeling was employed for data analysis. All assumptions were validated, demonstrating a strong impact of green entrepreneurial innovation, green entrepreneurial behavior, and information systems on sustainable business performance and competitiveness.

Achaku et al., (2022) examines the impact of green entrepreneurship on the performance of SMEs in North-Central Nigeria and the Federal Capital Territory. A pre-test was administered via a descriptive cross-sectional questionnaire. The research analyzed 1,233 randomly selected participants from six states and Abuja City in North-Central Nigeria who provided consent. Simple linear regression was employed to evaluate the hypotheses. The results indicated that green entrepreneurship can mitigate the adverse effects of business operations on the environment while ensuring profitability. Furthermore, green entrepreneurial inventive production and green entrepreneurial inclination substantially influence competitive advantage ($\beta = 0.806$, t-value = 49.648, $P = 0.000 < 0.05$) and consumer expenditure ($\beta = 0.976$, t-value = 51.315, $P = 0.000 < 0.05$), respectively. The study provides valuable public information and empirical validation of environmental sustainability within feasible corporate operations.

The study by Bolaji et al., (2022) examined the influence of green supply chain management on organizational performance. This paper is a conceptual review grounded in the existing literature on green supply chain management. Investigations were conducted to assess the influence of reverse logistics, green procurement, and green distribution as elements of Green Supply Chain Management (GSCM) on the performance of manufacturing and logistics companies in Nigeria. A critical literature assessment indicates that the current body of work supports a positive correlation between green supply chain management methods and company performance. They help improve the comprehension of the relationships between various GSCM practices and financial, operational, and environmental performance in manufacturing and logistics. The empirical findings indicate that internal GSCM practices exert the most significant influence on environmental performance, but collaboration with consumers is the most successful strategy for enhancing financial performance. The findings addressing operational performance were predominantly inconclusive, indicating that firm characteristics are more likely to influence operational performance than the decisions made about environmental collaboration.

Investigates the correlation between green innovation and green entrepreneurship, as well as the mediating influence of business strategies on the interplay among green entrepreneurship, green innovation, and competitive advantage. The study utilized a sample of 225 managers overseeing the environmental strategy of medium and large enterprises in Greece. A systematic questionnaire was employed to assess the research variables. The gathered data were examined utilizing descriptive and inductive statistics, encompassing principle components analysis, correlation analysis, a multivariate generalized linear model, and a structural equation model. The empirical findings demonstrate a beneficial impact of green entrepreneurship on both green product innovation and green process innovation. The mediating function of corporate strategy in the relationship among green entrepreneurship, green innovation, and competitive advantage is affirmed.

Evaluate the impact of green marketing strategies on competitive advantage and business performance in Malaysia. A quantitative methodology was employed to gather data from a survey of 33 items utilizing a five-point Likert scale. The unit of analysis comprises small and

Table 1. Green entrepreneurial innovation relates to job opportunity

		Green Entrepreneurial innovation	Job Opportunity
Green Entrepreneurial Innovation	Pearson Correlation	1	.789
	Sig.(2-tailed)		.000
	N	121	121
Job Opportunity	Pearson Correlation		
	Sig.(2-tailed)	.789	1
	N	.000	
		121	121

***. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*

medium enterprises in Malaysia. The participants in this study are departmental managers. Smart PLS version 3.2.9 was utilized to examine the results. The results of the route analysis utilizing partial least squares (PLS) corroborate the variables in their proposed direct associations with business success. The analysis indicates that competitive advantage somewhat mediates the association between green marketing techniques and firm performance.

2.5 Gap in Literature

Previous studies focused attention on linking the variables of green entrepreneurship to performance. This study observed a lacuna that depicts dearth of study on the nature of relationship existing between green entrepreneurial innovation and job opportunity in plastic manufacturing firms in Anambra State. Also none of the previous studies was carried out in plastic manufacturing firms in Anambra State, Nigeria.

3. METHODOLOGY

Descriptive research design formed the basis of this work. It was adopted because surveys enable researchers collect data from a large population, through the instrumentality of structured questionnaire, making it ideal for generalizability. The population of the study was 121 staff of the three plastic manufacturing firms domicile in three senatorial zones representing Anambra North, Anambra Central and Anambra South respectively. Complete enumeration method was adopted taking into cognizance the small size of the population. The study utilized structured questionnaire with a reliability index of .76. Inferential statistical tool named Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to test the formulated hypothesis at 5% level of significance. The decision rule states that the alternate hypothesis will be accepted when the p-value is less than the level of significance used but when the level of significance used is higher than the p-value, accept the null hypothesis and reject the alternate hypothesis.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Decision Rule: Accept the alternate hypothesis if calculated P-value is less than 0.05(P-value).

Test of Hypothesis: Green entrepreneurial innovation does not relate to job opportunity.

The table above depicts the correlation analysis for green entrepreneurial innovation and job opportunity, from the table; it is evident that the correlation coefficient is .789 while the p- value is .000. The level of significance used is (0.05). The result showed that relationship observed from the analysis is statistically significant because the p-value is lower than the level of significance. (0.05). This depicts that increase in green entrepreneurial innovation will result to commensurate increase in job opportunity. Another powerful positive implication of the result is that green entrepreneurial innovation attracts job opportunities for firms. Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there is a significant positive relationship between green entrepreneurial innovation and job opportunity ($r = .789$, $P<0.05$).

5. CONCLUSION AND POLICY RECOMMENDATION

The research demonstrated a substantial positive correlation between green entrepreneurship and employment generation in plastic manufacturing companies in Anambra State. This depicts green entrepreneurship as a legitimate tool that signifies a possible route to attaining sustainable development objectives. It serves as a catalyst for sustainable development, fostering innovative solutions to environmental concerns while

concurrently promoting economic growth and job creation. With the paramount focus on green entrepreneurship, a new era of sustainable prosperity emerges, marked by the creation of new job opportunities in burgeoning green sectors. In the face of environmental damage and unemployment, green business presents a promising solution. Consequently, plastic manufacturing companies are urged to fully adopt green entrepreneurship to ensure environmental sustainability for the benefit of all stakeholders and society as a whole.

DISCLAIMER (ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE)

Author(s) hereby declare that NO generative AI technologies such as Large Language Models (ChatGPT, COPILOT, etc) and text-to-image generators have been used during writing or editing of this manuscript.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

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