

## Public Enterprises and Employment Generation in Akwa Ibom State: A Study of Greenwell Technologies

**Idongesit Michael Akpan**

*Department of Public Administration  
Akwa Ibom State University.*

Email: [idongesitmichael02@gmail.com](mailto:idongesitmichael02@gmail.com)

Phone: 08110216064

**Prof. Enefiok Ibok**

*Department of Public Administration  
Akwa Ibom State University*

**Sunday Effiong Ibanga, Ph.D**

*Department of Public Administration  
Akwa Ibom State University*

*Obio Akpa Campus*

Email: [sunnibanga@yahoo.com](mailto:sunnibanga@yahoo.com)

**Ofonmbuk Etido Atakpa, Ph.D**

*Department of Public Administration  
Akwa Ibom State University*

Email: [ofonmbukatakpa@aksu.edu.ng](mailto:ofonmbukatakpa@aksu.edu.ng)

<https://doi.org/10.61090/aksujacog.2023.032>

### Abstract

*Despite the Akwa Ibom State government's efforts at industrialization, the rate of unemployment in the state remains high. This study examined the extent to which government-owned industries have contributed to employment generation in Akwa Ibom State. The theoretical framework for the study was predicated on Kaldor's growth model to explain the relationship between the state's industrial programmes and socio-economic development. As a survey study, the methodology involved a survey instrument and the administration of a questionnaire on 400 respondents using the simple random technique to select respondents from the study population of 177,500. The main statistical tool used in analysing the data was the Chi-square technique. The study revealed that there is no significant relationship between Greenwell fertilizer Technologies and employment generation in Akwa Ibom State. Based on the findings, the study recommended that the Akwa Ibom State government should establish a single framework of action for a clear understanding of the purpose, direction and priorities of State-owned enterprises, which will enhance the coming together of private sectors, transnational agencies, civil society groups that will work together to ensure sustainable development and poverty reduction within the State.*

**Keywords:** Public enterprises, employment generation, socio-economic development, Greenwall technologies, Akwa Ibom State.

### Introduction

State-owned industries are one of the major resources that foster the economic growth and development of any given nation, particularly a developing economy. Government-owned industries may also be called public corporations. Public corporations are regarded as

government agencies backed by state laws and charged with the responsibility of utilising available human and material resources for the development of the general welfare of the people (Basu, 2005).

Industries are no doubt essential catalysts for stimulating social and economic development in any State. This is assertive to the process of economic development transition from an agrarian economy to an industrial economy, where the latter contributes a high proportion to overall socio-economic growth through production/manufacturing, commerce, employment, and infrastructural development, amongst others (Chete, et al, 2014)

The establishment of industries (industrialization) as a deliberate and sustained application and combination of appropriate technological infrastructure, managerial expertise and other important resources has attracted considerable interest in recent times. This is because of the critical role industrialization plays not only in economic development as represented in the form of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by liberal scholars of development, but also in human-based development, which also translates to social development. Industrialization acts as a catalyst that accelerates the pace of structural transformation and diversification of economies; enables a country to fully utilize its factor endowments and to depend less on foreign supply of finished goods and raw materials for its economic growth, development and sustenance. Hence, the relationship between industrialization and socio-economic development is crystalized by the fact that few countries have been able to grow and accumulate wealth without investing in their manufacturing industries (KPMG, 2014; Sanusi, 2003).

In an attempt to industrialize the economy of Akwa Ibom State for socio-economic development, the State adopted various programmes, schemes, and policies to promote such objectives. Some of these programmes and policies are follow-ups from the industrial blueprint of the federal government like the import substitution that was implemented in the 1960s; the Indigenization Policy of 1972, the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) of 1986; and the adoption of the National Integrated Industrial Development (NIID) blueprint by the Federal Government in 2017 (Chete, et al, 2014)

In furtherance to the aforementioned, David (2018) cited in Ekeuwei, (2018) asserts that the government of Akwa Ibom State has embarked on a journey to attain a certain level of industrialization with the establishment of industries like the Greenwell fertilizer blending factory. Greenwell Fertilizer is a government enterprise under the direct supervision of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. The company generated revenue to sustain the enterprise, the main source of its revenue being the sale of fertilizer products. It is apt to presuppose that the presence of this industrial outfit would result in socio-economic development in terms of employment generation in the areas where they are situated.

### **Statement of Problem**

The incidence of high unemployment and underemployment has become a major socio-economic challenge over the past decades, thereby resulting in brain drain, the fact of skilled and trained man-power resorting to trade and petty businesses as means of survival rather than keeping faith with the government for the delivery of democratic dividends which envisions jobs creation in the State.

In its quest to reach the heights of socio-economic development, the Akwa Ibom State government embarked on the establishment of several industrial programmes. By way of evaluation, Sasu (2022) observed that despite the government's deliberate effort through industrialization programmes, the State's unemployment rate is pegged at 51(%) per cent, ranking fourth highest in Nigeria.

Against these statistics, it is presumed that the existence of these industries should create a massive workforce to drive enormous employment and development in the State. It is against

this background that this paper intends to examine government-owned industries and socio-economic development, concerning the Green Well fertilizer factory Abak, on employment generation in Akwa Ibom State, while also proffering plausible recommendations for the study.

### **Research Objective**

To ascertain the extent to which the Greenwell Fertilizer factory has contributed to employment generation in Akwa Ibom State.

### **Research Hypothesis**

H0: There exists no significant relationship between the Greenwell fertilizer factory and employment generation in Akwa Ibom State.

### **Review of Related Literature**

#### **Public Enterprises**

Public enterprises, otherwise referred to as State-Owned Enterprise (SOE) place a premium on public industries as a stimulant for socio-economic growth and development (Udoikah & Ndaeyo, 2021). These public industries are considered to be the foundation for driving a nation's economic growth. It is the process of transforming raw materials into finished consumable goods or intermediate or producer goods. Manufacturing which is a subset of the industrializing includes activities such as processing, quarrying, craft and mining. These activities not only create job opportunities but also contribute to the enhancement of agriculture and the diversification of the economy.

State-owned enterprises (SOEs) in the 21st Century may bring back memories of the various ambiguities that surrounded this field when Public Enterprises were dominating the involvement of the state in economic activities. Some of the ambiguity stemmed from the nomenclature itself. The terms utilized were numerous and included Public Enterprises (PEs), State Owned Enterprises (SOEs), Parastatals, Public Companies, and Public Corporations (Ojeifo & Alegbeleye, 2015).

According to Adeoti (2005), public enterprise means an agency of a predominantly industrial, commercial or financial character, entirely or partly owned and substantially controlled by the Federal, State or Local Government. Ademolekun (2002) refers to public enterprise as an organization that is set up as a corporate body and as part of the governmental apparatus for entrepreneurial or entrepreneur-like objectives. In the submission of Egwakhide & Nyor (2012), Public sector enterprises consist of government-owned enterprises whether at local, state or federal levels. The public sector as an economic agent is acting on behalf of everybody, with all its economic resources commonly owned, and all its activities carried on, on behalf of everybody.

#### **Concept of Socio-Economic Development**

Socio-economic development comprises two relatable factors: the social factors including education, self-actualization and professional development, and the economic factors such as income and resources. Thomas (2014) opines that socioeconomic development is the combination of social and economic development. This development includes advancements or improvements in the standard of living and the economic life and conditions of the people. According to Malcolm (2023), socioeconomic development is a process that identifies both the social and economic needs within a community and seeks to create strategies that will practically address those needs and the best interest of the community over the long run. Ajagun, (2003) opines that socioeconomic development is a state of advancement which makes life more meaningful in various aspects which cut across the economic, administrative, political, social, cultural and religious aspects.

Implicitly, development is not about a particular aspect, rather, it is all-encompassing, and multi-dimensional depending on the point of contention. Oghator & Okoobo, (2000) assert that this aspect of (socioeconomic) development is focused on improving the living conditions of the people. He highlighted some of its indicators to include a higher quality of life, higher income, better education, higher standards of health and nutrition, less poverty in society, a cleaner environment, more equal opportunities, greater individual freedom and richer cultural life amongst citizens of a given state. From the various concepts of socioeconomic development outlined, it can be deduced that the concept is not limited to economic growth or per capita income but is a concept that is all-encompassing and analyses the economic, administrative, political, social, cultural, religious, and living standard of the people in a given society.

In support of the multi-dimensional nature of the concept of socioeconomic development, Uju & Joy (2014) asserted that Socioeconomic development is the process of social and economic development in a society, any programme that creates sustainable access to the economy for its beneficiaries. Accordingly, they view socio-economic development as a process of identifying the social and economic needs within a community and creating strategies to address various issues and needs that would affect society over the long run (Udoms, Atakpa & Ekanem, 2017).

### **Components of Socio-Economic Development**

The socio-economic development of a developed or developing economy depends on various factors or components. These, according to U.N (1951) report, constitute the major components of socio-economic development:

- i. Level of Industrial Development
- ii. Per Capital Income
- iii. Level of Agriculture Development
- iv. Level of Urbanization
- v. Occupational Structure
- vi. Level of Educational Development
- vii. Health Status
- viii. Transport and Communication
- ix. Population Characteristics.

Employment generation, subsumed in “Per Capital Income” is a component of socioeconomic development and an aspect of our dependent variable (socioeconomic development) which is a derivative of Greenwell fertilizer factory (industrialization) being the independent variable.

### **Employment Generation**

The notion of employment generation is not a new concept in the field of socioeconomic development and human capital development. Consequently, scholars have provided various definitions for this concept, depending on their understanding of what employment generation entails.

Employment refers to the number of people who work in government establishments parastatals or private sectors. It could equally mean people who are self-employed or are unpaid family workers (Kareem, 2015). It is a relationship between two parties, typically based on a contract between an employer and an employee. In simpler terms, employment refers to the total number of gainfully working individuals in a community, state, or country.

The Director-General of the Small and Medium Enterprises and Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN), Umar Muhammad Nadada describes employment generation as the process of providing new jobs for unemployed individuals, creating employment opportunities,

and increasing the number of paid jobs available (Umar, 2011). Umar's observation on employment generation is based on the notion that it involves the provision of job opportunities for the unemployed. This can be accomplished by assisting individuals in creating their businesses or by offering paid employment where they can receive salary or wages, depending on the circumstances. However, the definition provided by Umar fails to consider the category of underemployed individuals. Therefore, there is a need to establish a more comprehensive definition of employment generation.

According to Cray, et al (2011), employment generation refers to the creation of new jobs without displacing existing economic activity. This means that new jobs are being created without causing unemployment in other sectors due to the jobs that are created. Employment generation is the process of creating new jobs for the unemployed and the under-employed without necessarily displacing people who are already employed in other economic activities (Ayeeni, 2021).

### **Public Enterprise and Employment Generation**

State-owned industries play a significant role in generating employment opportunities and reducing poverty in developing nations. During the initial stages of transitioning from an agrarian economy to a modernized one, the manufacturing sector in a typical developing country presents a higher potential to absorb surplus labour compared to the services sector (Lavopa et al, 2013). In low-income countries, the services sector is predominantly comprised of informal services, making it challenging to shift unskilled labour from agriculture to formal services. Workers are pulled out of low-productive sectors to manufacturing, leading to an increase in overall productivity in the economy, as well as an increase in the share of workers employed in better-paid jobs in manufacturing as compared to the subsistence income they may obtain in agriculture (Lavopa et' al, 2013) The wage gains associated with industrialization can play an important role in pulling significant proportions of the population out of poverty because in a typically low-income country, labour is the only asset owned by the poor (Ekeuwei, 2018). In addition, industrialization can be crucial in reducing poverty indirectly through the economy-wide positive employment effect of economic growth (Lavopa et' al, 2013).

Ekeuwei, (2018) posits that though it is generally recognized that industrialization can potentially be a powerful force for employment generation and poverty reduction, the magnitude of the employment and poverty input may differ by the stage of economic development. At higher levels of income, as countries start moving out of labour intensive-industries into capital and technology-intensive industries, the direct effect of industrialization on employment and poverty reduction, are the profits obtained from the growth of capital-intensive industries and re-invented in the economy, leading to further economic growth and poverty reduction, which are needful developments in a state.

Greenwell Technologies, a publicly owned enterprise is one of Akwa Ibom State's industrial projects located in Oku Abak, Abak Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State.

Greenwell Fertilizer is a government-industry under the direct supervision of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. The inter-city and inter-state business which is its major source of income generates revenue to sustain the enterprise, the main source of its revenue is from the sale of the fertilizer products. The fertilizer company aims to attract investors to the state and generate employment for the citizens, thereby boosting the economic growth and development of the state (David, 2018 cited in Ekeuwei, 2018).

The Greenwell Fertilizer industry which was established to aid socioeconomic development and by extension, cushion unemployment has from 2015–2022 employed about fifty (50) personnel, all indigenes of Akwa Ibom State (Greenwell Technologies Report, 2023).

## Theoretical Framework

The Kaldor's Growth laws which also suffices as the Kaldor's growth theory (1957), encompasses the relationship between industrialization, employment generation and development within the framework of growth laws (Thirlwall, 1999). However, one of Kaldor's laws that best describes the relativity of public enterprises (industries) and employment generation is the focus of this study. The laws are explained below.

Law 1: there exists a strong positive relationship between the growth of public enterprises (manufacturing output) and the growth of the GDP. This law is summed up by the statement that public enterprises (manufacturing output) are the engine of employment and growth. Kaldor tested this proposition using the regression:

$$q_i = a_i + b_i m_i \dots\dots\dots (1)$$

Where:  $q$  and  $m$  refer to the growth of total output and manufacturing output. Kaldor's proposition suggests that high growth rates are usually found where the share of manufacturing output in GDP is increasing (see Ekeuwei, 2018).

Kaldor's model concisely avers that public enterprises (manufacturing output) should lead to high productivity (in line with the type of commodity or product produced) which will consequently result in increased employment and a spiral in the GDP, resulting in an economic boost. It can be deduced from this model that the essence of industrialization is to improve the socio-economic development of an economy. Therefore, the model has succeeded in identifying the relationship between government industrial programmes of Akwa Ibom state and the indices of socio-economic development it delivers to the teeming population in the state.

## Review of Empirical Studies

Mandara & Ali, (2018) examined the impact of industrialization on economic growth in Nigeria (1981 – 2015). They posited that industrialization is a principal solution to the complex economic issues of Nigeria which applies to other developing economies in pursuit of economic growth. It was however concluded that by any standard, Nigeria would be classified as being industrially under-developed, as efforts at industrialization in the past years have exerted minimal impact on the output growth of the economy.

Bennett, et al (2015) investigated the effect of industrial development on Nigeria's economic growth from 1973 - 2013. PC Give 8.00 version statistical packages were used to analyze the secondary data that was collected from the National Statistical Bulletin, revealing that industrial development has made a significant contribution to the growth of the Nigerian economy.

Ahmed & Mwadkon's (2019) study on the impact of the industrial sector on sustainable economic development in Nigeria, utilized multiple regression ordinary least square analysis and drew data from the CBN statistical bulletin, conclusively demonstrating that industrial productivity exerts a positive and significant influence on economic growth in Nigeria.

While, Moore (2001) cited in Muhammad et al., (2018) asserted that one significant effect of an industry on community development is its ability to provide employment opportunities and create new business ventures. This serves as a source of revenue for the community, Hoselitz, cited in Hull, (2011) argued that, apart from providing employment opportunities for the residents of the community, the effect of the industry should be viewed from the social class structure. He thought that industrialization provides a new set of social positions, that during the early phases of the industrialization process, new and sharp distinctions in social status do emerge and this in the long run, gives rise to more conspicuous patterns of social stratification in the community.

Olorunfemi (2010) examined the direction and strength of the relationship between infrastructural services and manufacturing output in Nigeria using time series data from 1981

to 2005. The study used the Vector Autoregressive (VAR) model and Granger causality. Results showed that the present transport and electricity service in Nigeria did not cause growth to occur in the manufacturing sector. It also revealed that telecommunication and education had contributed to the growth of the manufacturing sector.

### Methodology

The research adopted a descriptive design and survey method in gathering data. The population of the study consisted of the total population of the Abak local government area, which is estimated at 177,500 in 2023 (City Population, 2023). The Sample size of 400 was determined statistically using the Taro Yamane formula. The survey was carried out across Abak local government area, Akwa Ibom State. This study made use of primary data, that is, the questionnaire, which was validated by experts in the Department of Public Administration, Akwa Ibom State University.

### Data Analysis and Interpretation

In examining the relationship between State-owned industries and employment generation in Akwa Ibom State. Using the chi-square technique, the following results were obtained:

**Table 1.** Responses

Response	Agree	Strongly agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total
Male	56	50	24	29	159
Female	52	58	31	20	161
Total	108	108	55	49	320

$$\text{Cell A} = \frac{159 \times 108}{320} = 53.7$$

$$\text{Cell B} = \frac{159 \times 108}{320} = 53.7$$

$$\text{Cell C} = \frac{159 \times 55}{320} = 27.32$$

$$\text{Cell D} = \frac{1159 \times 49}{320} = 24.3$$

$$\text{Cell E} = \frac{161 \times 108}{320} = 54.3$$

$$\text{Cell F} = \frac{161 \times 108}{320} = 54.3$$

$$\text{Cell G} = \frac{161 \times 55}{320} = 27.7$$

$$\text{Cell H} = \frac{161 \times 49}{320} = 24.7$$

**Table 2: Chi- Square Distribution**

Responses	Fo	Fe	Fo - fe	(fo -fe) <sup>2</sup>	$\frac{(fe - fe)^2}{Fe}$
A	56	53.7	2.3	5.29	0.09
B	50	53.7	3.7	13.69	0.25
C	24	27.32	3.32	11.2	0.40
D	29	24.3	4.7	22.09	0.91
E	52	54.3	2.3	5.29	0.09
F	58	54.3	3.7	13.69	0.25
G	31	27.7	3.3	10.89	0.39
H	20	24.7	4.7	22.09	0.89
					<b>X<sup>2</sup> = 3.27</b>

Degree of Freedom = (C-1) X (R-1)

DF = (4-1) x (2-1)

DF = 3x1

DF = 3

Level of Significance = 0.05

Calculated Chi Square value = 3.27

Critical table value = 7.82

The Calculated chi-square value of 3.27 is less than the critical table value of 7.82 at a 0.05 level of significance and 3 degrees of freedom. Thus, the alternative hypothesis (H<sub>i</sub>) is rejected and the null hypothesis (H<sub>o</sub>) is accepted. This means that the activities of the Greenwell Industry are not significant to employment generation in Akwa Ibom state.

### Discussion of Findings

Promoting employment generation is one of the major reasons for the establishment of state-owned industries. The study reveals that the Greenwell industry as a State-owned enterprise is lacking in its contributions to the economic growth and development of Akwa Ibom state, particularly in the area of employment generation. Findings from the study revealed that the Greenwell industry as a public enterprise has not lived up to its expectations in the creation of significant employment opportunities for the indigenes of the State. Though the industry has employed a small number of personnel from the State, this number is not significant to address the issues of unemployment in Akwa Ibom State.

The implication of the above is that while the State hopes to tackle unemployment by channelling resources into these industrial programmes, there exists no corresponding increase in employment generation, as a result of the implementation of the programme in Akwa Ibom State. This is in line with the assertion by Sasu (2022) that despite government's deliberate effort through industrialization programmes, the State's unemployment rate is pegged at 51(%) per cent, ranking fourth highest in Nigeria. This finding also aligns with the assertion by Obadan (2000) that the performance of most public enterprises in both developed and developing countries has been generally disappointing, particularly in the discharge of corporate social responsibilities. Specifically, in Nigeria, Ozor (2006) concluded that the performance of public enterprises in Nigeria is nothing to write home about, as they have failed to perform the initial role for which they were established which, in the context of this study is the employment generation and other aspects of socioeconomic development.



## **Conclusions**

This study established that though the Akwa Ibom State government made some commitments toward the development of an industrial manufacturing base for the state's economy, the effort yielded no significant impact on the employment generation and by extension, the socio-economic development of the state. and consequently widespread development in the long run. Therefore, evidence of the relationship between industrialization as proxied by the selected variable of this study does not satisfy the prior expectation of the relationship between industrialization and employment generation. It was concluded in the study that there is a negative relationship between the State-owned industry (Greenwell Technologies) and employment generation in Akwa Ibom State.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Akwa Ibom State government should establish a single framework of action for a clear understanding of the purpose, direction and priorities of state-owned enterprises, which will enhance the coming together of private sectors, transnational agencies, and civil society groups that will work together to expand the industrial base of Greenwell Technology for higher productivity and service delivery.
2. Greenwell Fertilizer Technologies should target specifically, an increase in its corporate social responsibility operations to complement its employment generation mandate, where its production quota and profit margin are not enough to engender the employment of more citizens.

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