

# Innovations

## Group Synergy and Employee Performance of Small and Medium Enterprises in Kogi State- Nigeria

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**Abstract:** *When people collaborate, their combined efforts frequently produce better results than the sum of their individual contributions. This study looked into the connection between group synergy and employee performance of small and medium enterprises in kogi state. The population of the study consists of [938740] registered small and medium enterprises, making up the entire population. The sample size of four hundred (400) was obtained by applying the Slovincs sampling procedure. The study used survey research design. Four hundred (400) copies of questionnaires were distributed, while three hundred and fifty two (352) copies of questionnaire were correctly completed and returned. The model was estimated using multiple regression analysis, which was also used to test the null hypothesis. Based on the findings, small and medium enterprises employee performance is significantly (.000) impacted by team trust. It was also discovered that employee performance in small and medium enterprises is significantly (.000) impacted by team spirit. The study came to the conclusion that employee performance in small and medium enterprises is significantly impacted by group synergy. The research suggested that small and medium enterprises should actively fosters a culture of trust among group members through transparent communication, reliability, and effective conflict resolution strategies will contribute significantly to enhancing employee performance. It was also recommended that building on the positive influence of team spirit, Small and medium enterprises should cultivate a positive team culture.*

**Keywords:** *Group synergy, Team spirit, Team trust, Employee performance*

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## **Introduction**

The collaborative effort of a group of people working toward a shared purpose or target is known as group synergy. It involves using different skills, knowledge and experiences of team members to accomplish tasks faster and more effectively than they could be finished alone. The world of business is fast becoming dynamic as well as the fast-pace of business environment, companies are realizing more and more that depending just on individual efforts is frequently insufficient to address the complex problems they face. As a result, they rely on the potency of strong group synergy to advance success and accomplish their goals.

The primary objective of group synergy is to use the varied skills and expertise of team members by means of cooperation and reciprocal assistance (Mathieu et al., 2019). Teams can leverage the aggregate intellect and capacities of their members by putting together individuals with complimentary skills, which can result in improved outcomes and increased production (Kozlowski & Ilgen, 2006). Teams who work well together have more creative energy, solve problems more quickly, and make better decisions (Hertel et al., 2019).

Additionally, collaboration encourages individuals to keep learning and developing (Kuvaas et al., 2017). Team members can learn new skills, widen their horizons, and gain insights from one another's experiences through interactions and knowledge sharing (Edmondson & Lei, 2014).

This learning dynamic enhances individual competencies and bolsters team performance, facilitating adaptability and innovation (Gong et al., 2018). Team trust plays a pivotal role in cultivating effective collaboration and cooperation among team members (Jarvenpaa & Leidner, 2018). Trust within a team fosters an environment of psychological safety, where individuals feel empowered to take risks, exchange ideas, and rely on each other's capabilities (Mayer et al., 2016).

Employee performance denotes the degree of productivity, effectiveness, and achievement demonstrated by an individual in fulfilling their job responsibilities and attaining desired outcomes (Bauer & Erdogan, 2018). It stands as a pivotal factor for organizational success and competitiveness. Among the primary determinants influencing employee performance is job satisfaction.

Small and medium-sized businesses are regarded as the engine room of many economies worldwide because they foster innovation, economic expansion, and the creation of jobs. These companies often have fewer employees and produce less revenue annually than larger ones.

Despite their size, SMEs contribute significantly to GDP and employment in various sectors, ranging from manufacturing and services to technology and agriculture. Despite their importance, SMEs face unique challenges, including

limited access to financing, resource constraints, regulatory burdens, and fierce competition from larger corporations. However, governments, organizations, and support networks often provide assistance to SMEs through various initiatives such as funding programs, training workshops, and mentoring services to help them overcome these challenges and thrive.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Effective group synergy plays a critical role in driving employee performance and ensuring the success of an organization. However, several issues can hinder the effectiveness of group synergy, thereby negatively impacting employee performance. Trust is the cornerstone of effective group synergy as it fosters open communication, cooperation, and the sharing of ideas and resources (Dirks & Ferrin, 2014). Without trust, team members may hesitate to share information, take risks, or rely on each other, leading to reduced collaboration and hindered performance (Edmondson, 2012). Abdul and Rifdah (2022) found that team trust has no significant effect on employee performance. Enoch and Tende (2022) identified a major area of concern within the Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC) by shedding light on the possible gap between team spirit and organizational performance among Nigerian personnel. Furthermore, Amy et al.'s (2020) investigation into the correlation between team trust and team spirit in a commercial setting adds to this discourse, suggesting a potential gap between perceived trust within teams and actual performance outcomes.

### **Research Questions**

- i. What is the relationship between team trust and employee performance of Small and medium enterprises?
- ii. What is the relationship between team spirit and the employee performance of Small and medium enterprises?

### **Objectives of the Study**

The general objective of the study was to examine group synergy and employee performance of Small and medium enterprises.

The specific objectives were to;

- i. Determine the relationship between team trust and employee performance of Small and medium enterprises.
- ii. Assess the relationship between team spirit and employee performance of Small and medium enterprises.

### **Research Hypotheses**

The following hypotheses in null form were raised for this study.

**H<sub>0</sub><sub>1</sub>**: Team trust have no significant influence on employee performance of small and medium enterprises.

**H<sub>0</sub><sub>2</sub>**: Team spirit have no significant influence on employee performance of small and medium enterprises.

## **Review of Related Literature**

### **Concept of Group Synergy**

Group synergy refers to the phenomenon where the combined efforts of individuals working together result in a collective output that surpasses the sum of their individual contributions (Robbins & Judge, 2021). Group synergy is the cooperative interaction among team members that enhances the overall performance and effectiveness of the group, leading to superior outcomes compared to what could be achieved individually (Johnson & Johnson, 2018). Group synergy occurs when the combined skills, knowledge, and efforts of team members leads to a heightened level of performance, often characterized by creative problem-solving and innovation (Katzenbach& Smith, 2015).Group synergy denotes the amplification of collective outcomes achieved through cohesive collaboration, where the total exceeds the sum of its components, reflecting a harmonious blending of individual contributions (Belbin, 2012).

Group synergy is the phenomenon where the coordinated efforts and interactions among team members lead to a synergistic effect, resulting in superior performance, heightened creativity, and increased productivity within the group (Thompson, 2018). This cooperative synergy often manifests in increased efficiency, improved decision-making, and a positive team dynamic, ultimately contributing to the overall success and effectiveness of the group.

### **Team Trust**

Trust is a vital element in fostering effective group synergy and organizational success. It is established when team members have confidence in each other's competence, reliability, and intentions (Mayer et al., 2016). Trust serves as the behavioral foundation of group synergy, promoting cooperation, open communication, and collaboration, which ultimately leads to organizational synergy and improved employee performance. Building and maintaining trust is a shared responsibility of different personalities and the organization in general. Individuals should actively work towards building trust by demonstrating competence, reliability, and ethical behavior in their interactions with others. They can establish trust through consistent follow-through on commitments, delivering on promises, and demonstrating integrity in their actions. Trustworthy behavior contributes to a positive team environment and strengthens interpersonal relationships (Erdemet al., 2003).

Organizations promotes trust by creating a supportive and trustworthy environment. Incorporating trustworthy behavior into the performance appraisal system reinforces the organization's values and signals the importance of trust (Erdemet al., 2003). Recognition and rewards for trustworthy behavior reinforce trust as a desirable attribute and encourage its cultivation within the organization. High-performance teams thrive on cooperation and unity among members

(Manz & Neck, 2002). Trust becomes a fundamental value within the team culture, enabling effective collaboration. The evaluation of team performance should include criteria such as reducing mistakes, delivering quality outputs, increasing productivity, and ensuring customer satisfaction (Mickan & Rodger, 2000).

### **Team Spirit**

Team spirit, sometimes called *esprit de corps*, is a fundamental aspect of a group or team where employees share a sense of camaraderie and mutual support within the organization (Jaworski & Kohli, 1993). It encompasses the collective feelings, beliefs, and values of group members and plays a crucial role in achieving common team objectives (Boytet et al., 2005). *Esprit de corps* is considered a key factor for success within an organization (William et al., 2005), as it fosters a positive team environment and enhances team performance. Studies have indicated a favorable relationship between work satisfaction levels of employees and their sense of teamwork. Better employee performance is linked to heightened team spirit (Boyt et al., 2005). Employees that have a strong sense of teamwork are more enhanced, engaged, and focus to their task, which enhances performance on both an individual and team level. Both the members of the team and the team as a whole gain from *esprit de corps* (Homburg et al., 2002).

Diverse cultural and contextual circumstances can have differing perspectives on *esprit de corps*. For instance, a study carried out in Korean hospitals discovered that doctors had a poor opinion of teamwork (Hwang & Chang, 2009). The perception and experience of team spirit can be influenced by cultural variables and organizational dynamics in a given context. Individual work often takes precedence over teamwork among employees (Trimizi & Shahzad, 2009). This emphasizes how crucial it is to foster a culture that appreciates and rewards teamwork because it can improve communication, cooperation, and the effectiveness of the team as a whole.

To foster team spirit within an organization, it is crucial to establish a supportive and inclusive team culture.

### **Concept of Employee Performance**

The ability of employees to successfully finish their jobs and meet the organization's goals is referred to as employee performance, as measured against predefined performance standards (Chen, 2011). It serves as a rating system used by many organizations to assess employees' capabilities and efficiency (Darden & Babin, 1994). High-performance employees, who are well-trained and skilled, are seen as valuable assets that contribute to organizational success and provide a competitive advantage (Pfeffer, 1994). The importance of employee performance extends beyond the organization itself. Ramlall (2008) emphasizes that employee performance is crucial for overall societal well-being, as it affects employees' living standards and consumption patterns, leading to a balanced economy.

Moehariono (2012) defines performance as the volume and/or caliber of separate tasks results in an organization, guided by norms, standards, operational procedures, and criteria established within the organization.

## **Theoretical Framework**

### **Expectancy Theory**

The well-known motivation theory known as Expectancy Theory was created by Victor H. Vroom in the 1960s and focuses on how people behave and make decisions depending on their expectations of certain outcomes and how valuable they believe those outcomes to be (Vroom, 1964). The expectation theory states that humans are motivated to act in way they think will result in positive outcomes and refrain from acting in ways that could have negative consequences (Vroom, 1964). It is based on the notion that three primary factors influence motivation: valence (the worth or attraction of the outcome), instrumentality (the conviction that performance will yield desired consequences), and expectation (the conviction that effort will lead to performance) (Vroom, 1964). The idea holds that people rationally choose their actions depending on their preferences and the possibility of reaching their objectives (Vroom, 1964). Expectancy Theory's emphasis on the mental processes that underlie motivation is one of its strongest points. The theory offers a useful framework for comprehending motivation by acknowledging that people take into account their perceptions of the relationships between effort, performance, and outcomes when making decisions (Latham & Pinder, 2005).

Expectancy theory also has useful applications in the workplace, helping managers and supervisors better understand employee performance and motivation.

However, critics argue that Expectancy Theory's primary focus on cognitive variables may oversimplify the complexity of motivation and overlooking the role of emotions, social influences, and unconscious processes (Mitchell, 1997). The theory has been criticized for assuming that individuals consistently make rational decisions, disregarding the impact of biases, heuristics, and situational factors on behavior (Colquitt et al., 2013).

The Expectancy Theory is relevant to the study as it provides a framework for understanding how group synergy factors, such as team trusts and team spirit, can influence employee performance through the beliefs and perceptions individuals hold regarding the link between their efforts, performance, and outcomes. In simplified terms, the expectancy theory suggest that individuals are task to give their best when they think that their efforts will result in high performance, and high performance will bring about desirable consequences or rewards.

**Empirical Review**

Enoch and Tende (2022) investigated the link between organizational performance and team spirit among Nigerian employees of the Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC). AMAC employees were given questionnaires as part of the survey research strategy employed in this study to collect primary data. A total of 341 questionnaires were distributed; 259 of these were correctly completed and returned, yielding a 75.95% return rate. In the study, correlation analysis and descriptive statistics were employed. The results showed that, with a correlation coefficient of 0.994, there is a strong relationship between AMAC staff performance and team spirit, or esprit de corps. The study found a high and positive correlation between team spirit and team performance. The report also suggested that effective lines of communication be established amongst the team members inside the AMAC organization.

Abdul and Rifdah (2022) used organizational commitment as an intervening variable on CV to study the impact of trust and teamwork on employee performance of Lord Krishna Sinarmulya. In this study, a quantitative method was adopted. 43 employees made up the study's population. The researcher used a non-probability sampling strategy with a saturated sample size of 43 personnel, utilizing a sampling technique. Using SmartPLS 3.0 for analysis. The findings show that trust has no impact on worker performance; trust has no impact on worker performance; teamwork influences organizational commitment; and teamwork has an impact on worker performance through organizational commitment.

Amy et al. (2020) investigated the connection between team trust and team performance in a commercial setting. A meta-analysis utilizing random effects was conducted on both published and unpublished empirical investigations. Cochran's Q subgroup moderator analyses were performed. Meta-regression was used for continuous moderator analysis. 3,671 teams' worth of data from 55 separate studies were combined. The findings showed that in actual business teams, there was a strong, positive correlation between team trust and team performance. Subsequent examination revealed that the kind of business team, team size, and the source of the criterion measure greatly influenced the connection. The findings suggest that it is not appropriate to treat teams of varied sizes, types, and performance standards equally. Findings are limited to business teams and are based on cross-sectional research. Supervisors need to be aware of trust difficulties in the workplace since they could be indicators of future concerns with performance or a reflection of other organizational problems that impact team productivity.

Guler(2018) investigated how staff performance at the University of Abuja Teaching Hospital in Gwagwalada, Abuja, was affected by esprit de corps/team spirit. The study used a survey research design, with a population of 1193 people, including the hospital's management team, lab scientists, physicians, and nurses. The sample size of 300 people was determined using the Taro Yamane formula,

and the research instrument was a questionnaire. Employee performance and group synergy, as well as employee performance and esprit de corps, have a favorable and strong association, according to the results of correlation study utilizing Pearson correlation and regression analysis. The outcome of the regression study also showed a strong and positive correlation between employee performance, esprit de corps, and teamwork. It was demonstrated that an increase of one unit in collaboration, while keeping other variables fixed, will result in an increase in employee performance of 0.23 units, and an increase of one unit in esprit de corps, while keeping other variables constant, will result in an increase of 0.41 units in employee performance. Therefore, it is recommended that policies and programs aimed at promoting and enhancing employee team spirit should be the management's top priority. It can be concluded that esprit de corps has a significant impact on employee performance at the University of Abuja Teaching Hospital.

### Methodology

This study adopts the survey research design. This design is permissible for employing a coherent research instrument for gathering and generating data. The target population of this study was the entire registered small and medium scale enterprises in Kogi State with the total number of nine hundred and thirty eight thousand ,seven hundred and forty [938740] (SMEDAN, 2020). This SMEs are spread across the three senatorial districts of Kogi state.

The sample size of this population was determined using Slovincs(1960) sample size determination formular. The number of samples needed when the population is too big to sample every member directly is determined using this method.

Formular :

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + Ne^2}$$

Where :

n= number of samples

N= total population

e= error tolerance (level)

A confidence level of 95 percent (given a margin of error of 0.05)

$$n = \frac{938740}{1 + (938740)(0.05^2)}$$

$$n = \frac{938740}{1 + (938740)(0.0025)}$$

$$n = \frac{938740}{2347.85}$$



n=400 approximately

The sample size of four hundred (400) was obtained by applying the Slovincs sampling procedure. The following formula, which uses Bourley's (1964) proportional allocation technique, was employed to try and determine the unit sample size of the population:

$$n_h = \frac{N_h}{N} \times n$$

Where;

n = Total sample size

N<sub>h</sub> = Number of respondents in each unit

N = Population size

Therefore, the respondents will therefore be selected as follows;

**Table 1: Sample Frame**

S/No	Geographical zones and locations of SMEs in Kogi State	Population Frequency of SMEs	Sample size Distribution using Bourley's Technique
1	Kogi West	340312	$\frac{340312}{938740} \times 400 = 145$
2	Kogi East	312215	$\frac{312215}{938740} \times 400 = 133$
3	Kogi Central	286213	$\frac{286213}{938740} \times 400 = 122$
	<b>Total</b>	<b>938740</b>	<b>400</b>

Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26 was utilized to assist in the formulation of the null hypotheses and to estimate the model through multiple regression analysis.

**Model Specification**

The dependent variable is employee performance (EPERF), while the independent variable is group dynamics measured by Team trust (TT) and Team spirit (TS). The model is presented thus:

$$EPERF = f(TT, TS)$$

$$EPERF_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 TT_i + \beta_2 TS_i + e_i \text{-----} (1)$$

Where: EPERF = an indicator representing Employee performance (Dependent Variable);

$\beta_0$  = a constant and  $\beta_{1-2}$  = coefficients of independent variables;

TT = a predictor representing (Team trust);

TS = a predictor representing (Team spirit);

e = Stochastic error term;

i = Cross sectional; and

f = Functional relationship.

A-priori expectation: TT, TS > 0

**Data Presentation and Analysis**

Four hundred (400) copies of questionnaire were distributed while three hundred and fifty two (352) copies of questionnaire were correctly completed and returned, given a response rate of 88%. Therefore, the conclusions drawn are based on the analysis of the three hundred and fifty two (352) completed questionnaire.

**Regression Results**

Table 2:

<b>Model Summary</b>				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.945 <sup>a</sup>	.894	.893	.36974
a. Predictors: (Constant), TT, TS				

**Source:** Field Survey, 2024

The components of the independent variable had a combined effect of 89.4% on the dependent variable, according to table 2, the R square value of.894. The adjusted R square value of.893 similarly showed an accurate influence of 89% on the employee performance of small and medium-sized businesses from the combined effect of team trust and team spirit. This indicates that the variables left out of the model account for 19% of the variation in group synergy.

Table 3

<b>ANOVA<sup>a</sup></b>						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	400.560	2	200.280	1465.045	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	47.710	349	.137		
	Total	448.270	351			
a. Dependent Variable: EP						
b. Predictors: (Constant), TT, TS						

**Source:** Field Survey, 2024

The model is fit and significant at the 5% level, as indicated by Table 3's F-Statistics value of 1465.04 and sig. level of.000. This indicates that the outcome is valid and appropriate for use in making decisions.

Table 4:

Coefficients <sup>a</sup>						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.279	.072		3.881	.000
	TT	.143	.023	.150	6.189	.000
	TS	.822	.024	.835	34.539	.000

a. Dependent Variable: EP

Source: Field Survey, 2024

**Ho<sub>1</sub>:** Team trust have no significant influence on employee performance of Small and medium enterprises.

Table 4 presents the results of a t statistic value of 6.189 and a corresponding significance level of .000, both of which are significant at the 5% level of significance. These results suggest that employee performance in small and medium-sized businesses is significantly impacted by team trust. This proves the null hypothesis, which states that employee performance in small and medium-sized businesses is not much impacted by team trust, to be false.

The study aligns with previous research conducted by Amy et al. (2020). The findings is in variance with the result of Abdul and Rifdah (2022). Additionally, the findings are consistent with the expectancy theory, emphasizing the importance of individuals' expectations and perceptions concerning the connection between their efforts, performance, and desired outcomes. In essence, the research underscores the critical role of team trust in fostering a positive impact on employee performance within the context of Small and medium enterprises.

**Ho<sub>2</sub>:** Team spirit have no significant influence on employee performance of Small and medium enterprises.

Table 4 shows a t-statistic value of 34.539 with a corresponding significance level of 0.000, which is significant at the 5% level. This indicates that team spirit has a significant influence on the performance of employees in small and medium enterprises .Based on this, the null hypothesis which says, that team spirit has a significant influence on employee performance of Small and medium enterprises is rejected. This finding aligns with previous research by Enoch and Tende (2022), Guler (2018). It also aligns with the expectancy theory, which highlights the significance of people's expectations and views about the relationship between their performance, efforts, and desired results.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

In conclusion, the research unequivocally demonstrates the significant correlation between group synergy and employee performance. Through meticulous analysis, it becomes evident that team trust and team spirit fosters a conducive environment for enhanced individual and collective performance within organizations. This finding contributes to the pivotal role of teamwork as a catalyst for achieving organizational goals and maximizing performance. As such, fostering a culture of collaboration and synergy among employees emerges as a vital strategy for cultivating high-performance teams and driving organizational success.

The study's conclusions led to the following suggestions being made in an effort to improve small and medium enterprises employee performance:

- i. Small and medium enterprises should actively fosters a culture of trust among group members through transparent communication, reliability, and effective conflict resolution strategies will contribute significantly to enhancing employee performance.
- ii. Building on the positive influence of team spirit, Small and medium enterprises should cultivate a positive team culture. Celebrating success, fostering shared enthusiasm, providing support and encouragement, and promoting adaptability and resilience will contribute to a positive team spirit, consequently enhancing employee performance.

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