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ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND MANAGEMENT COMPETENCIES AS CORRELATES OF SMALL AND MEDIUM SCALE ENTERPRISES (SMES) SUSTAINABILITY

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ABSTRACT

The study examined the entrepreneurship and management competencies as correlates of SMEs sustainability. It was guided by four research questions. A descriptive design of survey type was used. The population comprised all SMEs operators in Abeokuta South local government of Ogun State, Nigeria. Sample size of 125 SMEs were selected using purposive sampling technique. Researcher-developed instrument; tagged: 'Entrepreneurship, Management Competencies and SMEs Sustainability Questionnaire (EMCSMESQ)' with reliability coefficient of 0.92 was used for data collection. Descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation were used for answering research questions 1 and 2. Research questions were answered using PPMC. The findings revealed that communication, networking, leadership, digital marketing, managing finance, accounting, ICT, persistence, commitment and risk-taking were among the entrepreneurship competencies required for SMEs sustainability. Problem-solving, decision-making, delegation, collaboration, motivating, organization, planning, team-working, empathy and time management were among the management competencies required for SMEs sustainability. There was significant relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable in the order of (r = 0.442, P<.05). On this premise, entrepreneurship competencies and SMEs sustainability are related. There was significant relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable in the order of (r = 0.845, P<.05). The researcher concluded that there was relationship between management competencies and SMEs sustainability. It was recommended, among others, that small business enterprise operators should be trained on developing entrepreneurship and management competencies for their sustainability.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship, Management, Competencies, SMES. Sustainability

Introduction

The economic impact of small and medium scale enterprises (SMEs) on any contemporary economy like Nigeria cannot be over-emphasized as it is the engine room for economic growth, development, and sustainability to those economies that paid the required attention to it. SMs are sources for economic growth and development for every nation, because as they grow, their economy grows too. In this era of industrialization, where the development index of nations is measured basically on their achievement in terms of provision of

welfare to their populace, small scale businesses play a role as employment providers in a way that ensures equitable income distribution. Across the globe, small and medium enterprises (SMEs) make enormous contributions towards economic growth and active engagement of citizens. The assertion is as much real with the developing economies as it is with the developed economies. Small and medium scale enterprises (SMEs) are set of businesses that drive economic development of both developed and developing countries. They are the sector that employed larger numbers of people both old and young, reduces poverty and improve living standard in the country. Small and medium enterprises are a vital economic base for any economy as they have the ability to create employment.

Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) are an important economic base to any country as they are a great source of employment creation (Gakure, Ngugi, Waititu & Keraro, 2022). SMEs sustainability is the long-term continuity of an enterprise or keeping the enterprise going over time (Bookchin, 2017). Sustainability is a call to action, a task in progress or journey and therefore a political process. It can also refer to a future intention; sustainable business is not necessarily a current situation but a goal for the future, a prediction. It has also been described as a dialogue of values that defies consensual definition (Blackburn, 2017). Successors of small and medium family enterprises should keep the enterprises ongoing continuously overtime. They should further strengthen the enterprises by maintaining growth of the same.

Atawodi and Ojeka (2021) see SMEs as a source of employment, competition, economic dynamism, and innovation which stimulate the entrepreneurial spirit and the diffusion of skills. Because they enjoy a wider geographical presence than big companies, SMEs also contribute to better income distribution. Olorunshola (2018) defined small-scale enterprises as enterprises whose annual turnover was not more than N500, 000. The Federal Government of Nigeria defined small-scale enterprises for purposes of commercial bank loans as those with an annual turnover not exceeding N500,000, and for Merchant Bank Loans, those enterprises with capital investments not exceeding 2 million naira (excluding cost of land) or a maximum of N 5 million. The National Economic Reconstruction Fund (NERFUND) put the ceiling for small-scale industries at N10 million. Section 37b(2) of the Companies and Allied Matters Decree of 1990 defines a small company as one with an annual turnover of not more than N 2 million and net asset value of not more than 1 million naira. Sustainability of an enterprise implies the capacity of a firm to operate with healthy financial and administrative performances that assures sound productivity and profitability for long periods regardless of shocks that they encounter from time to time (Abugu, 2020).

SMEs sustainability in any economy is not merely a function of relevant skills but also of entrepreneurial competencies.

Entrepreneurial competencies are the capabilities that entrepreneurs develop and inculcate into their firms' cultural patterns of operations in order to sustain performance and improve their competitive positions in the industry. According to Gwadabe and Amirah (2017), in recent times, business activities have become more competitive, and this has increased the failure of SMEs in Nigeria due to the environment and the increased competition. Entrepreneurial competencies have become very important to the survival of SMEs in Nigeria. Entrepreneurial competencies are vital to the achievement of competitive advantage in business through different measures, like proper management of relationships (Gwadabe & Amirah, 2017). Concerning innovative performance, entrepreneurial competencies facilitate entrepreneurs' capability to identify industry opportunities, exploit collaborative platforms across industrial sectors and define a suitable pathway for the future success of the firm (Ibidunni, Olokundun, Oke & Nwaomonoh, 2017). According to Zizile and Tendai (2018), the survival and success of SME have been positively affected by entrepreneurial competencies; they also serve as critical aids in the achievement of innovation performance among SMEs.

Entrepreneurial competencies also help in the judicious and appropriate allocation of a firm's scarce resources which generally aims at the attainment of an organization's goals and objectives which reflects in its overall performance. In light of this, entrepreneurial competencies as a form of internally induced SMEs growth mechanism is a practical interventionist pathway to enhancing SMEs innovativeness (Zizile & Tendai, 2018). Entrepreneurial competencies have its foundation not only in the competency and competence literature but also in the literature of entrepreneurship. Unfortunately, the definitions of entrepreneurial competencies are still elusive within the field of entrepreneurship (Mitchelmore & Rowley, 2019). Nonetheless, the phenomenon is primarily described as a group of competencies that enable and support successful entrepreneurship. There is a consensus that those group of competencies, required for successful entrepreneurship, are embodied within an entrepreneur who adds value through organising resources and opportunities for their businesses (Bird, 2019). Of further importance is that the entrepreneurial competencies are learnable; therefore, recognising the importance of competencies and identifying that it is crucial for educators and the development of learning opportunities (Bird, 2019). It is suggested in the literature that entrepreneurial competencies are associated with the lifecycle of organisations.

Bird (2019) opined that entrepreneurial competencies are needed mainly to operate small or new businesses. Thus, Bird (2019) described entrepreneurial competencies as baseline competencies which are necessary to plan or launch a new venture. Bird (2019) described it as underlying characteristics such as specific knowledge, motives, traits, self-images, social roles and skills which

result in venture birth, survival and growth. Entrepreneurial competencies are the total ability of the entrepreneur to perform a job role successfully, similarly entrepreneurial competencies as a person's skills, knowledge, and personal characteristics. Entrepreneurial competencies have also been understood in terms of traits, skills and knowledge (Man, Lau & Snape, 2021). Man, Lau and Snape (2021) formed a list of nine entrepreneurial competencies based on the work of others, these were: knowledge, cognitive ability, self-management, administration, human resource, decision skill, leadership, opportunity recognition, opportunity development and organisation skill. On the other hand, entrepreneurs require management competencies to operate and grow large organisations.

The role of management competencies in the survival of Small and Medium scale Enterprises cannot be overemphasized, because equipment and money on their own cannot reproduce themselves or make profit without human efforts. In other words, management competencies are the traits required to carry out the managerial processes required to get efficient results in the firm. According to Ahmadu and Ahmadu (2021), management competencies is the bedrock of the firm's better performance and competitive advantage. The theoretical arguments are that resources that are valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable (VRIN), drive the firm's comparative advantage. The management competencies can be one such resource of the firm to drive its growth and sustainable process. SMEs is still constrained by a challenge of poor management competencies exhibited by the management team which pulls down capital accumulation, leading to higher employee turnover and failure to cope-up with the globalization and technology hence no or low SMEs growth (Logose, 2022). From the foregoing, it is clear that management competencies can contribute to the performance or success of SMEs. This is owing to the fact that they may be able to contribute to the provision of solutions to the challenges of inadequate management that plague SMEs. Management competencies are intended to promote a company's healthy growth rather than to include it in mortality figures for businesses (Egwuatu, 2022).

Consequently, Egwuatu (2022) stated that management competencies form a list of knowledge, skills and attitudes that are required for good business management and when combined, provide management with the necessary conditions to overcome obstacles, motivate the team and develop an organization's capabilities, and promote business success, regardless of whether they are essential or complementary management competencies.

Statement of the Problem

Small and medium enterprise (SMEs) generate major growth, wealth and well-being in many countries and this increase came about by the establishment of an environment which provides urge for both start-up and growth-oriented

businesspersons. Thus, reducing the obstacles forced to existing firms, and providing opportunities to learn from mistakes. However, despite the rigorous contribution of this sector, the problems of unemployment are not total resolved globally. Nigeria is a world leader in entrepreneurial spirit, and they believe they have necessary skills and knowledge. However, despite this, the amount of failed SME has reduced in recent years. Additionally, lack of entrepreneurial competencies among SMEs owners and thus, degenerate to failed entrepreneurial journey of business owners. As a result of the above discussions, this study, therefore, sought to examine the entrepreneurship and management competencies as correlates of SMEs sustainability.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study was to examine the entrepreneurship and management competencies as correlates of SMEs sustainability. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Identify entrepreneurship competencies required for SMEs sustainability.
2. Ascertain management competencies required for SMEs sustainability.
3. Find out the relationship between entrepreneurship competencies and SMEs sustainability.
4. Examine the relationship between management competencies and SMEs sustainability.

Research Questions

1. What are the entrepreneurship competencies required for SMEs sustainability?
2. What are the management competencies required for SMEs sustainability?
3. To what extent does entrepreneurship competencies and SMEs sustainability are related?
4. Is there any relationship between management competencies and SMEs sustainability?

Research Method

This study adopted a descriptive design of survey type. The reason for using this design is because the opinions of people are required for gathering relevant data for the study. The population of this study comprised all SMEs operators in Abeokuta South local government of Ogun State, Nigeria. The sample size was 125 SMEs in Abeokuta South local government areas of Ogun State. Purposive sampling technique was adopted for the selection of the sample size. This design solely relied of the researcher discretion of chosen sample size for the study. Researcher-developed instrument; tagged: 'Entrepreneurship, Management Competencies and SMEs Sustainability Questionnaire (EMCSMESQ)'. The instrument was divided into two (2) sections; namely sections A and B. Section A focused on demographic characteristics of the respondents and section B examined items on entrepreneurship competencies, management competencies and SMEs sustainability. The initial draft of the

questionnaire was subjected to content and face validation by three experts from Business Education Department, Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijagun, Ogun State. Each of the experts were served with the instrument and requested to rework, delete or add items as they considered appropriate. Their inputs were considered in preparing the final versions of the questionnaire. Test re-test method was carried out. The instrument was administered twice within two weeks interval on 5 SMEs in Sagamu local government area of Ogun State who were not part of the sample size. The data generated were correlated using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) in order to determine whether the instrument is reliable and reliability coefficient of 0.92 was reported. Primary method of data collection was adopted. Data were collected using the validated instruments. The researcher administered the questionnaire to the respondents with the help of research assistants. The researcher ensured that respondents are adequately briefed on the content and procedure for filling the questionnaire. Descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation were used for answering research questions 1 and 2. Research questions were answered using PPMC. Any mean score of 2.5 and above is regarded as agree while any one below 2.5 regarded as disagree. For PPMC, when p $_{value}$ is less than significance level ($p < .05$), the research questions were rejected, otherwise, accepted.

Presentation of Results

Presentation of the Results

Research Question 1: What are the entrepreneurship competencies required for SMEs sustainability?

Table 1: Descriptive statistics on the entrepreneurship competencies required for SMEs sustainability

Items	Mean	SD	Remarks
Communication competencies	2.95	0.888	Agreed
Networking competencies	2.56	0.699	Agreed
Leadership competencies	2.77	0.751	Agreed
Digital marketing competencies	2.68	0.831	Agreed
Managing finance competencies	2.61	0.900	Agreed
Accounting competencies	2.84	0.735	Agreed
ICT competencies	2.86	0.819	Agreed
Persistence competencies	2.75	0.699	Agreed
Commitment competencies	2.99	0.781	Agreed
Risk-taking competencies	2.98	0.771	Agreed
Average Mean	2.799		

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 4. 1 revealed that average mean was 2.799 which greater than bench mark of 2.50. Since 2.799 > 2.50, this implied that communication, networking, leadership, digital marketing, managing finance, accounting, ICT, persistence, commitment and risk-taking were among the entrepreneurship competencies required for SMEs sustainability.

Research Question 2: What are the management competencies required for SMEs sustainability?

Table 2: Descriptive statistics on the management competencies required for SMEs sustainability

Items	Mean	SD	Remarks
Problem-solving competencies	3.01	0.599	Agreed
Decision-making competencies	2.97	0.805	Agreed
Delegation competencies	2.84	0.779	Agreed
Collaboration competencies	3/12	0.505	Agreed
Motivating competencies	3.05	0.595	Agreed
Organization competencies	3.16	0.677	Agreed
Planning competencies	2.94	0.714	Agreed
Team-working competencies	2.83	0.915	Agreed
Empathy competencies	2.73	0.815	Agreed
Time management competencies	2.79	0.618	Agreed
Average Mean	2.944		

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 4.2 revealed that cluster mean was 2.944 which greater than 2.50. This implied that problem-solving, decision-making, delegation, collaboration, motivating, organization, planning, team-working, empathy and time management were among the management competencies required for SMEs sustainability.

Research Question 3: To what extent does entrepreneurship competencies and SMEs sustainability are related?

Table 4.3: Relationship between entrepreneurship competencies and SMEs sustainability

Variables	Mean	SD	r-value	df	p-value	Remark
SMEs sustainability	29.9267	2.86997				
Entrepreneurship competencies	18.7120	1.96169	.442	3	.001	Significant

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 4.3 revealed that there was significant relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable in the order of ($r = 0.442$, $P<.05$). On this premise, the researcher concluded that entrepreneurship competencies and SMEs sustainability are related.

Research Question 4: Is there any relationship between management competencies and SMEs sustainability?

Table 4.4: Relationship between management competencies and SMEs sustainability

Variables	Mean	SD	r-value	df	p-value	Remark
SMEs sustainability	25.4503	2.62105				
Management competencies	25.4241	3.36909	.845	3	.003	Significant

Source: Field Survey, 2024

From Table 4.4, it was observed that there was significant relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable in the order of (r = 0.845, P<.05). The researcher concluded that there was relationship between management competencies and SMEs sustainability.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of the study revealed that communication, networking, leadership, digital marketing, managing finance, accounting, ICT, persistence, commitment and risk-taking were among the entrepreneurship competencies required for SMEs sustainability. Problem-solving, decision-making, delegation, collaboration, motivating, organization, planning, team-working, empathy and time management were among the management competencies required for SMEs sustainability. Entrepreneurship and management competencies positively related to SMEs sustainability. These findings corroborate with Obeten, Uba, Comfort and Timilehin (2023) who identify entrepreneurial skills required for sustainable small business enterprises in Calabar Metropolis of Cross River State, Nigeria and they found that risk management and ICT skills are required for sustainable small business enterprises in Calabar Metropolis in the post-COVID era. Igberaharha and Utoware (2023) financial resource management competencies and 18 human resource management competencies required by Business education graduates for engagement in small and medium-scale enterprises in Ethiope East LGA of Delta State. The results of the hypotheses tested showed no significant (p≤0.05) differences in the mean ratings of Business education students and managers of SMEs on financial resources management competencies whereas, there were significant (p≤0.05) differences in the mean ratings of respondents on human resource management competencies. Nur (2023) show that innovation competence has a positive and significant impact on the survival of SMEs; leadership competence has a positive and significant influence on the survival of SMEs; network competence has a positive but not significant effect on the survival of SMEs. This research is expected to provide benefits for SMEs in using entrepreneurial competencies in order to maintain business continuity in the future. The analysis technique uses SEM with Smart PLS devices. The results of the study show that innovation competence has a positive and significant impact on the survival of SMEs; leadership competence has a positive and significant influence on the survival of SMEs; network competence has a positive but not significant effect on the survival of SMEs.

Furthermore, the findings of the study correlate with Orji, Emmanuel and Egwuatu (2023) who accessed the role of managerial skills on SME performance in Jabi District, Abuja, Nigeria and found that managerial skills: technical skills, conceptual skills, interpersonal relation skills, and budgeting skills had a substantial effect on the performance of SMEs. The study concluded that insufficient managerial skills are factors militating against SME performance and

recommended among others that SME managers should try to understand, lead, change and regulate the behavior of the individuals and organization they manage to achieve greater performance; the government, Non-Governmental Organizations, and SME owners' unions provide adequate training.

Conclusion

Having examined entrepreneurship and management competencies as correlates of SMEs sustainability the following conclusions were drawn based on the findings of the study that communication, networking, leadership, digital marketing, managing finance, accounting, ICT, persistence, commitment and risk-taking were among the entrepreneurship competencies required for SMEs sustainability. Problem-solving, decision-making, delegation, collaboration, motivating, organization, planning, team-working, empathy and time management were among the management competencies required for SMEs sustainability. Entrepreneurship and management competencies positively related to SMEs sustainability.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are provided for the study:

1. It was recommended, among others, that small business enterprise operators should be trained on developing entrepreneurship and management competencies for their sustainability.
2. Entrepreneurs should thoroughly explore their environment of operation (environmental scanning) through careful and gradual deployment of resources. Also, SME operators should organize themselves into groups according to sectoral groupings and build accessible social network for its members which will provide central access to resources.
3. Government should intervene to provide training centers that will give managerial training to the SMEs owners. This should be done in such a way that the attendance period to be designed by the government representatives in collaboration with SMEs owners' union leaders and a valid and recognized certificate should accompany the training.
4. Governments, also at local level should through their cooperative offices be sending their qualified staff to be interacting with SMEs owners at their places of business to identify their areas of weakness and give them support as appropriate.
5. NGOs should in collaboration with SMEs owners' union leaders organize workshops for the business men and women that will enhance their managerial capability

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