

ENTREPRENEUTSHIP SKILL APPLICATION AND BUSINESS PERFORMANCE OF SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES IN YENEGOA BAYELSA STATE

Azuonwu, Benneth E., Aigboje Oyaregba Patrick
Department of Marketing, Entrepreneurship and Procurement,
Faculty of Management Sciences, Federal University Otuoke,
Bayelsa State, Nigeria.

*Email: azuonbenneth12@gmail.com, aigbojepo@fuotouke.edu.ng
 07036590862, 08037315485*

ABSTRACT

This research work examines entrepreneurship skills application and business performance of SMEs in Yenagoa Bayelsa State. The main objective of this study was to identify the effect of entrepreneurship skills on business performance of SMEs in Yenagoa, Bayelsa state Nigeria. Three hypothesis were used in the course of this study. The population of study consists of selected SMEs in Yenagoa. This study collected primary data through self-administered questionnaires while secondary data were collected from documented data from published financial statements, statistical bulletin, annual reports and account. The research design employed for this research is survey research design. This method was chosen because it will help the researcher in getting the required data and also assist in answering the research questions in order to achieve the research objectives. The statistical tool of analysis adopted for this research work is Pearson correlation coefficient. The test result reveals a significant relationship between innovativeness and business growth ($0.043 < 0.05$). Similarly, test result shows that there is a significant relationship between Risk taking ability and business growth ($0.029 < 0.05$). In the same vein, test result show that there is a significant relationship between change orientation and business growth ($0.024 < 0.05$). The study concluded that there is a significant relationship between the variables of entrepreneurship skills and business performance. This study recommends that business owners and managers of SMEs should prioritize the development and improvement of entrepreneurship skills in order to enhance the overall performance and competitiveness of their business, entrepreneurship education should be made compulsory to all students from primary to tertiary institutions in order to prepare them to apply the necessary skills needed in employment after graduation, finally, all SMEs should establish a culture of continuous learning.

Key Words: Innovativeness, Risk-Taking, Change-Orientation, Business Growth

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) refer to businesses that fall between micro-enterprises and large corporations in terms of size and resources. According to the European commission, an SME is defined as "a business with fewer than 250 employees and an annual turnover of no more than 50 million euros" (European commission, 2022). Small and medium scale enterprises all over the world are prone to failure due to the specific traits that has been possessed by the businesses, their owners and managers (Bannock, 2015).

In Nigeria and Bayelsa state in particular, SMEs have a low performance rate as entrepreneurs start businesses but they are unable to turn them into sustainable businesses. Furthermore, the majority of newly established SMEs in Nigeria do not go from the first stage of existence to subsequent phases including performance, success, takeoff, and resource maturity. (Abiodun 2022)

Entrepreneurship skills play a crucial role in the success and growth of SMEs worldwide (kuratko 2020). In Yenagoa, Bayelsa State, Nigeria, SMEs form a significant portion of the local economy, contributing to employment generation, economic growth, and poverty reduction (Bidapo-obe &

Ogbari, 2021). However, despite their potentials, many SMEs in Yenagoa face challenges related to limited access to resources, market competitiveness, and managerial capabilities (Ogeibu & Adu, 2019).

Across the globe as well as in Nigeria, several dimensions or characteristics and factors have been identified to be key determinants of SMEs performance. (Begen et al, 2021) Given the typically modest development rate of SMEs worldwide, it is essential to develop an awareness of the essential entrepreneurial traits or aspects and business procedures that may aid in the comprehension and advancement of SMEs' performance. In, 2022, Beltran et al. It is often believed that managers and company owners who have good management abilities will succeed greatly in guaranteeing the ongoing development and expansion of their companies. (Chen et al, 2022)

Entrepreneurship is a process of bringing together creative and innovative ideas, combining them with management and organizational skills in order to combine people, money and resources to meet an identified need and thereby creating wealth (Agomuo, 2022). Entrepreneurship has been acknowledged as a pertinent aspect of the dynamics of all economies, and it is regarded as the driving force in economic development and the creation of jobs (Ronstadt, 2021).

On the organizational side, entrepreneurship involves searching for techniques to build up a company's ability to adopt new ways of carrying on with its activities, establish innovations and goods, and go into new markets in new organizational forms (Mair & Noboa, 2020). Otherwise, it is also regarded as a process through which companies introduce, develop new ways of doing business, and change themselves by transforming business domains or processes. From an individual perspective, entrepreneurship research focuses on entrepreneurial positioning, its antecedents, and its consequences (like entrepreneurial behaviour) (Perez, Rodriguez, Martín, & Delgado, 2021).

Entrepreneurship is recognized as an important driver of economic growth, productivity, innovation and employment. it is widely accepted as a key aspect of economic dynamism transforming business ideas into economic opportunities (Khamis & Gumawa, 2020). Ács, Szerb, and Autio (2019) argued that entrepreneurship is the driver of national development and reduces poverty levels and the consequence of factors like culture, access to funds, and modern technologies. Mgbonyebi and Olaniyi (2019) iterated that history shows that economic progress has been significantly driven by pragmatic people who are entrepreneurial, innovative, having ability to exploit opportunities and willing to take risks. Entrepreneurship, without a doubt, has been identified to be a factor that play a vital role in fostering the wanted economic transformation in various nations (Tok, 2020).

Entrepreneurial skill is the ability to combine both the innate characteristics and other resources, which depends on the individual's entrepreneurial skills (Muogbo & John-Akamelu, 2018). Entrepreneurship is a characteristic embodied in entrepreneurs' mind that help establish businesses, generate employment, create new products and services, stimulate innovation and improve welfare (Oluwuo, 2019). Entrepreneurial skills are the skills, which complement the entrepreneur to analyze situations, opportunities and environments, and assist the entrepreneur/manager to organize/manage and assume the risk and reward of a business or enterprise (Muogbo & Akamelu, 2018). Skills essential for the success of SMEs include motivation, innovation, creativity, risk taking, change orientation, financial management, and technical skills. A weakness in a particular skill is associated with a decrease in the overall performance of the venture (Osakwe & Ogon, 2019).

Skilled entrepreneurs have all it takes to go after their dreams and reach their main goals. They have a way of surviving the tough situation unlike those who have totally no experience or lack important skills such as managerial, accounting, negotiation and customer relationship skills (Ogonor, 2019).

When one does not have the relevant information and expertise, the influence of entrepreneurship on wealth creation in any country might be less than optimal (Dana, 2021). Subsequently, people or entrepreneurs bringing/applying their different skills, expertise, and abilities to bear upon the society would progress the economic standing of that society.

In order to be successful, an entrepreneur must be sufficiently skilled and apply those skills in a variety of areas to put together the many ingredients required to create a successful business” (Lazear, 2015).

Therefore, it is crucial that SMEs' owners or managers have specialized talents and follow particular business procedures in order for their operations to run well.(Deng & Fang, 2022) In this regard, SMEs deserve much more attention, especially with regards to skill acquisition, skill application and the business practices of the entrepreneurs (Ibanga, 2020). Consequently, in order for the better performances of SME in Nigeria vis a vis Yenagoa, Bayelsa State, it is necessary for an entrepreneur to apply some skills (Uwalaka et al, 2020).

On the basis of the above, this study is carried out to examine the impact of entrepreneurship skills application on business performance of small and medium enterprises in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State.

Statement of the Problem

In many nations, small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) are a key source of income, growth, and well-being. This increase is a result of the creation of an environment that encourages both start-up and growth-oriented businesspeople. Consequently, lowering the challenges experienced by current businesses and offering chances to grow from errors. (Afolabi, Kareem, Okubanjo, Ogunbanjo & Aninkan, 2017). According to the studies of Akhere, Akpomudjere and Ihimenkpen (2017) entrepreneurs are identified as the engine of economic progression and the creation of wealth, and they are important to the quality of life by providing employment opportunities for both the educated and less educated. However, despite the rigorous contribution of this sector, the problem of unemployment is not totally resolved globally.

Muogbo and John-Akamelu (2018) assert that they possess the requisite knowledge and abilities. The number of failing SMEs has not declined in recent years, nevertheless, indicating that more work has to be done to help and maintain these companies. Over the years, entrepreneurship researchers have focused mostly on developing ideas, paying little attention to what it takes for a business to succeed. In his empirical research, Oluwuo (2019) came to the conclusion that enhancing entrepreneurial abilities might be a way to increase the independence of both new and seasoned business owners. Similarly, Osakwe and Ogonu (2019) claim that entrepreneur’s success depends on the connection of crucial entrepreneurial skills for starting businesses, as well as the performance and development in their early years. To the best of the researcher’s knowledge, Entrepreneurship skill application and business performance of SMEs has been studied overtime. However, none of the study at the disposal of the researcher combined the measures of the entrepreneurship skill as this current study in a work. This is a gap that this current study intend to fill.

Additionally, the research of Ogonu (2019) identified lack of entrepreneurial skills among graduates and thus, degenerate to failed entrepreneurial journey of business owners. In addition to the above, there have been mixed results as to what entrepreneurial skill(s) is a key determinant of SMEs performance and growth. As a result of the above discussions, this study, therefore, intends to examine the influence of these skills on SMEs performance. A case study of registered SMEs operating in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to examine the effects of entrepreneurial skills application on business performance of SMEs in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State. However, the specific objectives are to:

1. Examine the effect of innovativeness on growth of SMEs in Yenagoa.
2. Assess the effect of risk-taking ability on growth of SMEs in Yenagoa.

Research Questions

This research seeks to provide answers to the following research questions to guide us in our research work.

1. Is there any effect of innovativeness on the growth of SMEs in Yenagoa?
2. What is the effect of risk-taking ability on the growth of SMEs Yenagoa?

Research Hypotheses

This study intends to use the null hypotheses in its analysis

HO₁: Innovativeness does not have a significant effect on growth of SMEs in Yenagoa.

HO₂: There is no significant relationship between Risk-taking ability and growth of SMEs in Yenagoa.

Scope of the Study

The study is basically on entrepreneurship skills application and business performance of SMEs in Yenagoa, Bayelsa state. And the lag span from 1991 to 2022.

Theoretical Scope: The theoretical scope covers relevant literature on entrepreneurship skills application and SMEs performance

Geographical Scope: six registered Small and Medium Enterprises in Yenagoa metropolis of Bayelsa State is the area of study which are listed in chapter three under population of the study.

Level of Analysis: Entrepreneurship skills application is measured with Innovativeness, risk taking ability and change-orientation which are the independent variables while growth of SMEs is used to represent business performance of SMEs which is the dependent variable. The unit of analysis for this study is the micro level which means the individual employees in the enterprise.

Definition of Terms

Entrepreneur: An Entrepreneur is a person who organizes and manages a business under taking, assuming the risk for the sake of profit. An Entrepreneur is a person who is willing to help launch a new venture or enterprise and accept full responsibility for the outcome.

Entrepreneurship: This is a process of identifying and starting a new business venture, sourcing and organizing the required resources, while taking both risks and rewards associated with the venture. Entrepreneurship is the dynamic process of creating incremental wealth. This wealth is created by individuals who assume the major risks in terms of equity, time and/or career commitments of providing values for some product or service. The product or service may or may not be new or unique but value must be infused by the entrepreneur by securing and allocating the necessary skills and resources. Entrepreneurship is the process of creating and building something of value from practically nothing. That is, it is the process of creating or seizing an opportunity and pursuing it regardless of the resources currently controlled.

Business: Business stems from the idea of being busy, and implies socially valuable and rewarding work. An organization or Economic system where goods and services are exchanged for one another or for money. A business is also known as an enterprise or firm, is an organization involved in trade of goods, services or both to consumers. A business owned by multiple individuals may be referred to as a company.

Small business: Small businesses are normally privately owned corporations, partnerships, or sole proprietorships.

Small and Medium Enterprise: Individual and Firms managing a business enterprise established mainly for the purpose of providing any service other than professional services.

Skill: Special ability in a task, especially ability acquired by training. The ability to do something well arising from talent, training or practice.

Innovativeness: The quality of being innovative, which involves introducing new ideas, methods, or products. It often involves creativity, problem-solving, and a willingness to think differently to create something new or improve existing processes

Risk-Taking: The willingness to take chances or make decisions that involve uncertainty or potential negative outcomes. In business and other contexts, risk-taking can lead to innovation, growth, and success, but it also carries the possibility of failure or loss.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptual Clarifications

The Concept of Entrepreneurship

The term "entrepreneur", although apparently common, remains one of the most difficult concepts to define. Much depends on whether the term is used to describe capacity to innovate or whether it refers to ability to organize and manage a business concern. Glueck (2018) defines an entrepreneur as an individual who creates a new firm and continues to manage it until it is successful. Entrepreneurs have been identified as individuals with the ability to find out sustainable business opportunities. And invest their resources to start viable business ventures (Egrinya, Ogbo, Laven & Peter, 2022). The concept of entrepreneurship was credited to the ideology of an Irish economist Richard Cantillon, who used the word for individuals with "willingness to carry out forms of arbitrage involving the financial risk of a new venture" to describe the basic tenets of an entrepreneur (Albalushi & Naqshbandi, 2022). Generally, the concept of entrepreneurship entails the ability to seek investment opportunities and establish an enterprise based on identified opportunities (Okoro, 2021). By function, entrepreneurship includes the willingness and the ability seek out investment opportunities, develops new venture or new approach to an old business/ idea, effective manipulation of human intelligence and creativity, risk-taking and value/wealth creation (Niji, 2019).

Entrepreneurship Skills

The personal skills that engender the strategy for effective and efficient business performance is called entrepreneurial skills. Entrepreneurial skills are the ability to identify and exploit entrepreneurial opportunity for self-growth (Abdul, 2018). It also helps entrepreneurs to acquire self-confidence, self-esteem and participate in decision-making at household and community levels (Yusuf, 2017). These, according to Yusuf (2017), comprises inner discipline, ability to take risk, innovativeness, change orientated and persistence.

Littunen (2018) looks at abilities, knowledge and skills with greater specificity, where the most important to entrepreneurship are listed as: the ability to take risks, innovativeness, knowledge of how the market functions, manufacturing know-how, marketing skills, business management skills and the ability to cooperate, technical skill, extended with a good nose for business, the desire to take risks, the ability to identify business opportunities, the ability to correct errors effectively, and the ability to grasp profitable opportunities.

Entrepreneurial skill can be defined as the ability to create something new with value by devoting the necessary time and effort, assuming the accompanying financial, psychic and social risks, and receiving the resulting rewards of monetary and personal satisfaction and independence (Hisrich & Peters, 2017). The capacity to take advantage of an idea and launch a business, no matter how big or little, for social and developmental as well as personal benefit is known as entrepreneurial skill (Olagunju, 2018). According to Kilby (2016), the range of potential entrepreneurial abilities includes the ability to see economic opportunities, develop organizational and technical innovations, gain control over limited resources, assume responsibility for internal management, and advance the company externally in all areas. (of teaching enterprise) Some of the entrepreneurial skills include: Creative thinking, Planning of research, Decision making, Organizing, Communicating, Team building, Marketing, Managing finance, Record keeping, Goal setting and Managing business,

observing, interpreting of market, exhibiting of knowledge and mastering of skills, ability to communicate and so on (Olalekan, 2018).

One of the important inputs in any business survival is competent entrepreneurship skills. More the entrepreneurship activities, better the growth and development. Entrepreneurship is the life blood of any economy and it applies more to a developing economy like Nigeria. This growth is often explained by entrepreneurship being seen as a major engine for economic growth and job creation (Wong, Ho, & Autio, 2019), and as a response to the increasingly globalized, uncertain and complex world we live in (Gibb, 2017). Today entrepreneurial skill has become an important part of both industrial and educational policy in many countries (Hytti & O’Gorman, 2018). In order to improve employment and develop the business sector and social cohesion within the Nigeria. Encouraging entrepreneurship is the key to create jobs and improve competitiveness and business survival throughout Nigeria, to which education and training offer are of important contribution. The European Commission, in many work papers, has defined entrepreneurship as a basic skill, stressing the importance of the development of an entrepreneurial spirit among European citizens.

Concept of Innovativeness

In the simplest form, Innovation is defined simply as a "new idea, device, or method" (Muogbo & John-Akamelu, 2018). More so, innovation can also be viewed as the application of better solutions that meet new requirements, unarticulated needs, or existing market needs (Niji, 2019). According to Albalushi and Naqshbandi (2022), innovations require only three things: (1) a recognized need, (2) competent people with relevant technology, and (3) financial support.

Innovativeness is one of the entrepreneurial skills that must spur and bring about a positive effect on business survival, in general and business growth in particular. For one to be innovative connotes that he/she can recognized need, exert competence with relevant technology and utilize his/her financial support (Okoro, 2021). This implies that innovation involves changing or creating more effective processes, products and ideas, and can increase the likelihood of a business succeeding. Businesses that innovate, create more efficient work processes and have higher productivity and performance. These attributes actually necessitate business growth, thus an innovative entrepreneur, stands more chance to survive his/her business and become better empowered.

Concept of Risk Taking

Risk is the degree of uncertainty and potential loss associated with outcomes which may follow from a given behavior or set of behaviors (Khamis & Gumawa, 2020). For entrepreneurs, risk can be defined as loss due to business disadvantages (Okoro, 2021). Risk Taking is the ability of entrepreneurs to set their own objectives where there is moderate risk of failure and take calculated risks, gain satisfaction from completing a job well, not be afraid of public opinion, skepticism and take responsibility for their own actions. It is the willing to take risks and go the extra mile to achieve better things. .

Concept of Business Performance

Business performance refers to the evaluation of how effectively a company achieves its objectives and goals, encompassing various dimensions such as financial, operational, customer, and market aspects (De Waal & Counet, 2020). Financial performance indicators, including profitability, revenue growth, and return on investment, provide insights into the financial health of the organization (De Waal & Counet, 2020). Operational efficiency measures the effectiveness of processes and resource utilization (De Waal & Counet, 2020). Customer satisfaction reflects the level of customer loyalty and retention (De Waal & Counet, 2020), while market competitiveness evaluates the company's position relative to competitors in terms of market share and product/service differentiation (De Waal & Counet, 2020).

Measurement of Business Performance:

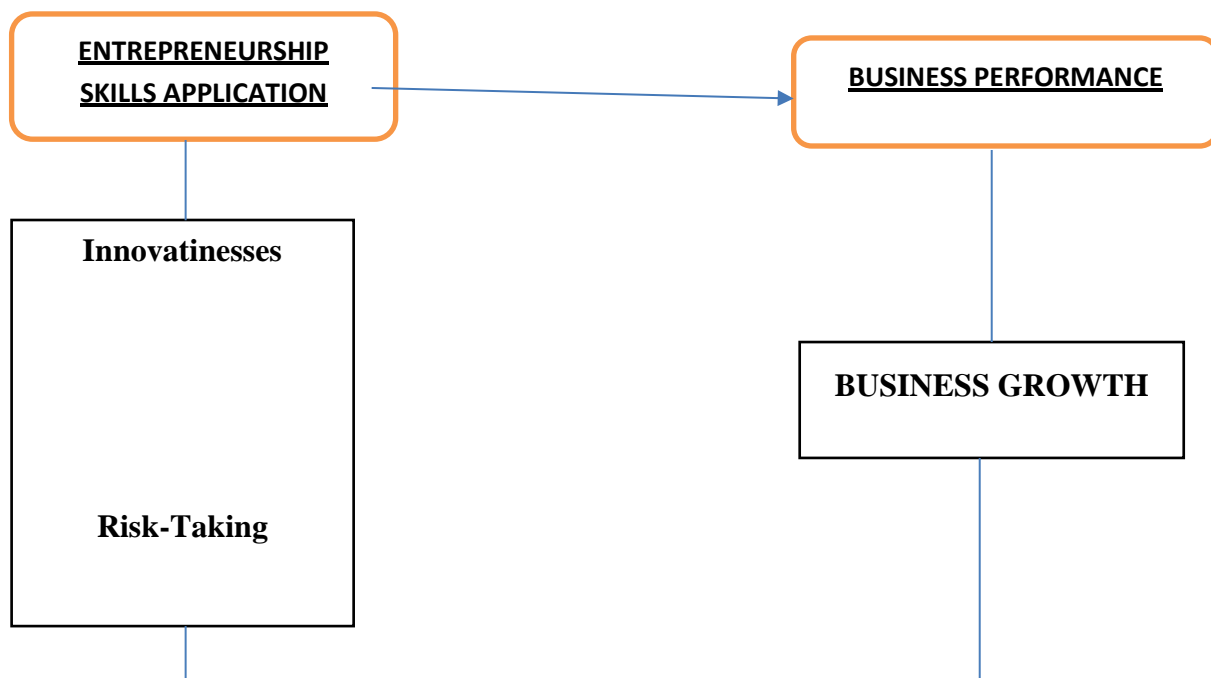
Business performance is measured by the growth of the business.

Business Growth

Growth in a business context refers to the expansion and increase in size, revenue, market share, and profitability of a company over time (Griffith, Huergo, & Mairesse, 2021). It involves both quantitative and qualitative aspects, including increased production, sales, customer base, and product/service offerings. Growth can be organic, achieved through internal development and investment, or inorganic, through mergers and acquisitions (Griffith et al., 2021).

Key Aspects of Growth:

- 1. Revenue Growth:** Revenue growth is a fundamental indicator of a company's expansion. It reflects the increase in sales over a period, indicating market demand and competitiveness (Dutta & Neetha, 2018).
- 2. Market Expansion:** Market expansion involves entering new geographical areas or targeting new customer segments. It allows a company to tap into new sources of revenue and diversify its customer base (Dutta & Neetha, 2018).
- 3. Product Innovation:** Growth often involves developing new products or services to meet evolving customer needs and preferences. Product innovation can drive revenue growth and maintain competitiveness (Dutta & Neetha, 2018).
- 4. Profitability:** While revenue growth is crucial, sustainable growth also considers profitability. A company's ability to generate profits from its operations is essential for long-term growth and sustainability (Dutta & Neetha, 2018).



Source: Adapted from Jacinta, Ozigbo, , Ngige, , & Ugwu. (2020).

Risk Taking and Business performance

Research has discovered that risk-taking ability has a positive relationship with business performance (growth). Today, risk taking ability has become an important part of both industrial skills in many countries (Hytti & O'Gorman, 2018). In order to increase the chances of business performance, the entrepreneur has to be a risk taker. Risk-taking is the ability to determine the possible hurdles to business and work out ways to surmounting them, with the aim to succeed (Niji,

2019). This suggests that a risk-taker has a better propensity to breakthrough in his/her business. Thus, the less risk averse an entrepreneur the less ability he/she has to take calculated risks, exploit business opportunities.

Innovativeness and Business performance

One of the important inputs in any business performance is innovative skills. More the entrepreneurial innovativeness, better the growth and survival of the business. An innovative entrepreneur is often seen as someone who does things in different ways to achieve better results (Wong, Ho, & Autio, 2019). Today, innovative skill has become an important part of both industrial skills in many countries (Hytti & O’Gorman, 2018). In order to increase the chances of business performance, the entrepreneur has to be innovative and a go getter. In the simplest form, Innovation is defined simply as a "new idea, device, or method" (Muogbo & John-Akamelu, 2018). More so, innovation can also be viewed as the application of better solutions that meet new requirements, unarticulated needs, or existing market needs (Niji, 2019).

According to Albalushi and Naqshbandi (2022), innovations require only three things: (1) a recognized need, (2) competent people with relevant technology, and (3) financial support. For one to be innovative connotes that he/she can recognized need, exert competence with relevant technology and utilize his/her financial support (Okoro, 2021). This implies that innovation involves changing or creating more effective processes, products and ideas, and can increase the likelihood of a business succeeding. Businesses that innovates, create more efficient work processes and have better productivity and performance. These attributes actually necessitate business growth, thus an innovative entrepreneur, stands more chance to grow his/her business and become better empowered.

Gibb (2017) opined that there is a positive relationship between innovativeness and business performance and the more innovative an entrepreneur is, the higher the chances of its business growth (performance). Innovativeness is one of the entrepreneurial skills that must spur and bring about a positive effect on business performance, in general and business growth in particular.

Related Theories

Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB)

The theory of planned Behaviour by Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) states that any behaviour requires some planning, the act of creating a new business, can be predicted according to the intention adopted by a given individual. The model developed by Ajzen (1991) comprises of three independent variables, which precede the formation of the intention and that in turn predict behaviour. The first variable talks about attitude towards the behaviour, which inferred to, determining the opportune moment for a particular behaviour. The second independent variable corresponds to subjective norms, which means the very perception that an individual has on the surrounding community, perception of individual control, leading the individual to also have a certain behaviour. The third variables, the perception of behavioural control reflects the experience, impediments and obstacles faced by the individual previously. These three independent variables work in tandem with each other’s as, the more favourable is the attitude and subjective norms and the greater the perception of individual control, the stronger should be the intention to perform particular behaviour.

This model has been classified as one of the most popular models that analysed the entrepreneurial intentions of individuals. The theory assumes that a behaviour is best explained by an intention to try to perform the behaviour (Ajzen, 1987). The theory has been applied to the context of entrepreneurship because an engagement in entrepreneurship is a behaviour that is under volitional control. Various studies have used the theory to explain intentions to become an entrepreneur and entrepreneurial behaviour (Asogwa & Anah, 2017).

A meta-analysis evaluating the theory of planned behaviour in the context of entrepreneurship, reported that attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control accounted for 39% of

the variance in entrepreneurial intentions (Yusuf, 2017). Thus, the TPB provides a valid framework for studying the relationship between entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial behaviour.

Human Capital Theory

Human Capital Theory proposed by Robert (1991). Thus this theory supports the current study in that through entrepreneurship, entrepreneur who garner entrepreneurial skills can boost their economic, productive, marketing, skill acquisition empowerment. The theory sees education as a tool for improving human capital, stimulating labour productivity and boosting the levels of technology across the globe. This theory advocates for investment in a workforce of the nation, whether in the public and private sector organizations, for reason being that expenditure on training and development is a productive investment like investment on physical assets (Olaniyan & Okemakinde, 2008). This connotes that education engender creative thinking for generating new ideas, improved techniques, new technologies and new products. This supposes that empowerment in forms of financial support, skill acquisition, can engender entrepreneurial skills in forms of risk-taking, innovative, goal-oriented behaviours.

Action Regulation Theory

Action regulation theory or activity regulation theory was jointly developed by Winfried Hacker in the 1980s. Action regulation theory is a meta-theory on the regulation of goal directed behaviour. The theory explains how workers regulate their behaviour through cognitive processes, including goal development and selection, internal and external orientation, planning, monitoring of execution and feedback processing. Entrepreneurship Action is goal-oriented behaviour and therefore needs to be regulated, most behaviour is goal-oriented. It was developed in response to behaviourist theories which conceptualized human behaviour as mere reactions to environmental stimuli; Its roots are in German and some Russian Psychological, cognitive, and human factors research (Abdul, 2018), with additional roots in systems theory and activity theory.

Review of Empirical Literature

Egrinya, Ogbo, Laven and Peter (2022) investigated entrepreneurship education and small and medium enterprises development in North Central, Nigeria. On the conduct of the study, the survey design was used. The target population of the study was 17,973 consisting of all staff of private enterprises (including owner-founder) that are registered with the various state ministries of Trade, Commerce, Industry, and Tourism in North Central, Nigeria. A sample size of 377 was drawn from the population using Krejcie and Morgan sample size determination. Bowley's proportional statistical technique was used to determine the proportional allocation of questionnaire to the number of enterprise and staff in each state. The instruments used for data collection was the mixed method: which is quantitative (structured questionnaire) and qualitative (interview) method. Face and content validity, a panel of management experts in the department was used to critiques the validity of the instrument. The instrument was checked for reliability using Test-retest method and the results computation was carried out using Spearman Ranking Correlation Coefficient of test-retest results and a value of 0.98 indicated a high degree of item consistency. The hypotheses were tested using Pearson product moment correlation technique for hypotheses one and two; simple linear regression for hypothesis three. The findings revealed that: To a large extent entrepreneurship vocational training enhances products development of small and medium enterprises in North Central, Nigeria ($r=.979$, $p<0.05$): Entrepreneurial skill acquisition enhances productivity of small and medium enterprises in North Central, Nigeria ($r=.949$, $p<0.05$). Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended that there should be more government and private sector involvement in the concept of entrepreneurship education.

Hazudin, Sabri, Kader, Saripin & Ridzuan. (2022). investigated the linkages between social skills, entrepreneurial skills (knowledge, experience), and enterprise performance during a crisis. The

Federal Land Development Authority (FELDA) Triangle Village was selected as a proxy for the rural population, and sampling frame of 543 micro entrepreneurs was obtained from the Local District Office. A total of 150 questionnaires were distributed in a systematic random order based on a minimum sample size of 85 calculated using the G*Power statistical tool. The final 134 usable samples were analyzed using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM). The results ascertained that the direct positive effect of social capital on enterprise performance was significant and that social capital had a specific and indirect effect on enterprise performance through entrepreneurial skills. The study also reported the full mediating effect of entrepreneurial skills on the social capital-enterprise performance relationship.

Niji (2019) explored entrepreneurial skills acquired among senior secondary students in Economics, as a panacea for boosting self-employment. The purpose of the study is to examine senior secondary Economics students innovative, communicative and managerial entrepreneurial skills and interest for self-employment. The study adopted a descriptive survey design. Four research questions and three hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. The population comprised 3,026 senior secondary school students in Oshimili Local Government Area, Delta State. Yamane formula was used to determine the sample size of 353 students. A purposive random sampling technique was used to select 4 coeducation schools from 15 public schools; a simple random sampling was used to select 200 girls and 153 boys from each school. An Entrepreneurial Skills' Acquisition Questionnaire for Secondary School Economics Students (ESAQSSES) was used for data collection. ESAQSSES was structured into twenty-five items on a four-point rating scale. Mean, standard deviation and t-test were statistical analysis used for the study. The results showed that students possessed innovative, communicative entrepreneurial and some managerial entrepreneurial skills. The findings further revealed that students' innovative and communicative, entrepreneurial skills showed a significant difference in the mean ratings of their responses of male and female students. Also, findings showed that managerial entrepreneurial skill showed no significance difference between the mean ratings of male and female students. These findings indicated that students showed high percentage of interest for self-employment and reduced percentage as a result of risk factors in business. It was recommended among others that teachers should help motivate students to identify their potentials and build essential skills that will be relevant to the student and society. Abiola, Yomi-Akinola and Adedapo (2019) examined the impact of skill acquisition and empowerment programme on the participation of youth in small and medium scale enterprises in Ikeja Local Government Area of Lagos State. The findings of this study showed a significant positive relationship between entrepreneurship skill acquisition and involvement in entrepreneurial activity. The findings of this study also revealed that there is insignificant positive relationship between access to empowerment programme and involvement in entrepreneurship activity. The findings of this study also showed that respondents' gender, age, marital status, educational level, skill acquisition and empowerment program jointly predict entrepreneurial development. The study recommended that government should make entrepreneurship a compulsory subject from upper basic through secondary school; students in tertiary institutions should be exposed to practical entrepreneurship; government and financial institutions to enhance youth participation in SMEs should also provide financial aid with little or no collateral. Government and nongovernmental organizations should sensitize the youth on the significance of combining entrepreneurship skills with formal education early in their career in life in order to equip the future leaders with the requisite skills for them to be job creators and not job seekers.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Research design involves defining the methodological structure or apparatus within which research is to be experimented. It is a logical model of proof that allows the researcher to draw inferences concerning causal relationship among the variables under investigation. It is also the program that

guides the investigator as he collects analyses and interprets (Abdul, 2018). The proposed research design for this study is the survey research design. Survey research method is the systematic gathering of information from respondents for the purpose of understanding and/or predicting some aspect of the behavior of the population interest. This method was chosen because it will help the researcher in getting the required data and also assist in answering the research questions in order to achieve the research objectives.

Population of the Study

The total population of the study is 120 staff of 6 registered Small and Medium Enterprises in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State of Nigeria. The firms were selected based on the popularity and the predominance of the industry they belong. The total respondents (population) of the study are 120 employees of the selected organizations, which are presented in the table below:

Table 1: List of Small and Medium Enterprises

S/N	List of Small and Medium Enterprises	Population Size
01	NDU Pure Water, Yenagoa Branch	30
02	Kodel Engineering	21
03	Paul Fashioner Designer	14
04	Stevo Fashion House	23
05	A2W Communication Technology	16
06	400 Cleaners	16
	TOTAL POPULATION	120

Source: HRM/MD of the various firms, 2024.

Sample and Sampling Techniques

The sample size of this study will be determined using the Taro Yamen (1967) formula with a significant level of 5%. The formula is given as;

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where:

n= sample size

N= population size = 120

e = level of significance = 0.05

The sample size of this study is determined thus:

$$n = \frac{120}{1 + 120(0.05)^2}$$

$$= \frac{120}{1 + 120(0.0025)}$$

$$= \frac{120}{1 + 0.3}$$

$$= \frac{120}{1.3}$$

$$= 92 \text{ (approximately)}$$

Therefore, given a population size of 120, the study will use a sample size of 92. Data will be collected from respondents through administration of ninety-two (92) copies of questionnaires. Also, the sample size will be proportionally distributed among the various small and medium enterprises using Bonley (1964) proportionate allocation formulae given as;

$$n_h = \frac{(nN_h)}{N}$$

Where;

n_h = number of units allocated to each firm

n = sample size

N_h = population size of a given firm

N = population size

Table 2: sample size distribution among small and medium enterprises

S/N	List of small and medium enterprises	Accessible Population	Working	Sample size
01	NDU pure water	30	$92*30/120$	23
02	Kodel Engineering	21	$92*21/120$	16
03	Paul Fashion Home	14	$92*14/120$	11
04	Stevo Fashion House	23	$92*23/120$	18
05	A2W Communication Technology	16	$92*16/120$	12
06	400 Cleaners	16	$92*16/120$	12
	Total=	120		92

Source: Researchers Computation, 2024

Method of Data Collection

There are two basic sources of data in social and management science research: They are primary and secondary sources. Both sources will be explored in this research.

The primary source is the most important and reliable data collection source. It connotes obtaining first-hand information about the subject matter through questionnaire and observation. The researcher will use questionnaire method to gather information without manipulating the respondents for appropriateness.

The secondary data will be gotten from related literature on human capital development and employees' productivity. Textbooks, Journals and articles from web will also be used.

This study will adopt mainly the primary method of data collection as copies of questionnaire will be administered to all the managers of the selected registered Small and Medium Enterprises in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State.

Measurement of Variables

Measurement of variable is the description of individuals, involving the use of number of values that can be manipulated to give further information about the variables (Abdul, 2018), **5 likert** summated rated scale method will be used ranging from 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neutral, 4= agree, 5= strongly agree to measure the chosen variable in this study. Three sections will be used in this study, firstly the demographic sections where employee will be asked personal questions, secondly business survival (dependent variable) thirdly, the independent variable which dimension are Innovativeness, Risk taking ability and Change-Orientation.

Reliability and Validity of the Research Instrument

Validity is the acceptance of the extent to which research scores represent true differences among individuals on the particular variable been measured. It is the provision of proof to convince others of the authenticity or objectivity of one's assertion.

Validity measures how relevant the instrument is to the study. Content validity and construct validity will be used to test if the content of the research instrument addressed what ought to measure. Content validity is the acceptance of a situation or what one has done simply on its face value because it makes logical sense.

Construct validity is done by rigorously investigating with appropriate instruments, the specific traits being measured in all their ramifications. It makes concepts more meaningful. "Construct validity can be obtained by relating a measuring instrument to a general theoretical framework in order to determine whether the instrument is tied to concepts and theoretical assumptions (Khamis & Gumawa, 2020). Most variables used in this study sourced from existing literature and had been pre-tested and validated in previous studies.

Also, the questionnaire would be given to my supervisor and assessed by some experts and professionals in the field of management sciences to assess the content of the questionnaire so as to ascertain whether the information received from the respondents will be relevant to the objective of the research gathered from the reviewed literature.

Model Specification

The following model by Jacinta, Ozigbo, Ngige and Ugwu (2020) is adapted for this study

$$BP = f(IN, RTA, CO, CR)$$

$$BP = \beta_0 + \beta_1 IN + \beta_2 RTA + \beta_3 CO + \beta_4 CR + \varepsilon$$

Where;

BP = Business Performance (dependent variable)

IN = Innovativeness

RTA = Risk Taking Ability

CO = Change Orientation

ε = error term

β_0 = intercept/constant

β_1 - β_3 = coefficients of parameters

Method of Data Analysis

Method of data analysis is the mathematical and statistical techniques employed in the analyzing and interpreting the outcome of the research instrument as regards the hypotheses (Abiola, Yomi-Akinola & Adedapo, 2019). The proposed statistical techniques adopted for processing the data and testing the hypotheses for this study will be Pearson correlation coefficient. The researcher will also use descriptive statistics and frequency analysis. The distribution of data will be stated by frequency distribution tables.

Limitations of the Study

This study is anticipated to encounter several limitations such as difficulty in generating data from the staff due to the organization's policies and individual reasons.

Secondly, the study is expected to face reluctance of some respondents to fill in the questionnaire forms because of fear of unveiling information; this will be overcome by providing a good explanation to respondents about the aim of the research.

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This chapter focuses on the presentation, analysis and interpretations of data collected from the study. The initial section present data on: The effect of entrepreneurship skills application on SMEs

performance in yenegea bayelsa state. The data gathered from completed questionnaires is then analyzed and explained in a tabular form. The analysis is based on the responses received from the questionnaires, providing insight into the research findings.

Data Presentation

In order to achieve our research objectives, a total of 92 copies of questionnaires were distributed and 59 copies of questionnaires were retrieved.

Table 4.1 Questionnaire Administration and Retrieval

Variables	Responses	Percentage
Retrieved	59	64.13%
Not Retrieved	33	35.87%
Total	92	100%

Source: Author's field work 2024

4.2 Descriptive Data Analysis

4.2.1 Demographic Information of Respondents

Demographic Information			
Measure	Categories	Frequency	Percent
Age	Below 21	5	8
	21-25	6	10
	26-30	9	15
	31-35	21	36
	36-40	10	17
	Above 40	8	14
Gender	Male	34	58
	Female	25	42
Marital Status	Single	20	34
	Divorced	3	5
	Married	35	59
	Widowed	1	2
Number of Years in Business	Less than 3	14	24
	3-6	28	47
	7-10	7	12
	Above 10	10	17
Educational Level	WAEC//NECO	11	19
	O.N.D/NCE	13	22
	B.Sc/HND	19	32
	M.Sc	10	17
	P.hD	6	10

Table 4.2.1 above shows the age categories of respondent and the frequency. From the table the age category of '31-35' has the highest percentage of response with 36% followed by the age category '36-40' representing 17% of the sample.

Table 4.2.1 above also shows the gender categories of respondent and the frequency. From the table male has the highest percentage of response with 58% while 42% of the respondents are female.

Table 4.2.1 shows the educational level of respondent and their percentage. It is observed that 'B.Sc/HND' holders have the highest percentage of responses with 32% followed by "O.N.D/NCE" holders with 22%.

Table 4.2.1 also shows that 14 (24%) of the respondents have been in business for 'Less than 3' years, 28 (47%) respondents have been in business for '3-6' years while 10 (17%) respondents have been in business for 'more than 10' years.

Entrepreneurship Skills application and business Growth of SMEs

The respondents were given a questionnaire and asked to rate how much they agreed or disagreed with each statement, indicating their level of agreement or disagreement. They are graded on the basis of a five-point Likert scale where 5 = Strongly Agreed, 4 = Agreed, 3= Undecided, 2=disagreed and 1=, strongly Disagreed. A mean score of 2.5 was adopted to measure the level of satisfaction on the test variables. Where the mean score of the responses to a particular statement is greater than the cutoff point of 2.5 it implies that it is satisfactory, else it is unsatisfactory. The results are presented in table 4.3.1 below.

Table 4.3.1: Innovativeness and Business Growth

S/n	Statements	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Undecided (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)	Mean	
1	Innovation improves business productivity.	2 (3)	5 (8)	2 (3)	39 (66)	11 (19)	4.05	
2	Entrepreneurs who are highly innovative do better in business.	3 (5)	2 (3)	4 (7)	32 (54)	18 (31)	4.03	
3	Lack of innovativeness limits the growth of a business.	3 (5)	2 (3)	4 (7)	21 (36)	29 (49)	4.17	
4	Innovativeness is one of the major determinants of business growth.	9 (15)	5 (8)	4 (7)	11 (19)	30 (51)	3.81	
	Grand mean							4.0
	Cut off point							2.5

The data presented in table 4.3.1 indicates that items 1, 2, 3 and 4 are accepted because they have mean scores of 4.05, 4.03, 4.17, and 3.81 respectively, which are above the criterion mean of 2.5. Consequently, the grand mean score of 4.0 is also above the criterion mean score of 2.5. This implies that there is a relationship between innovativeness and business performance of SMEs in yenagaa, bayelsa state.

Table 4.3.2: Risk Taking Ability and Business performance

S/n	Statements	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Undecided (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)	Mean	
6	Risk taking ability is a key characteristics of successful entrepreneurs.	3 (5)	8 (14)	4 (7)	19 (32)	25 (42)	3.93	
6	Entrepreneurs who take high risks get high reward.	2 (3)	7 (12)	10 (17)	37 (63)	3 (5)	3.54	
7	Lack of risk taking skill limits the growth of a business.	5 (8)	11 (19)	2 (3)	30 (51)	11 (19)	3.53	
8	Risk taking is one of the major determinants of business growth.	4 (7)	5 (8)	5 (8)	24 (41)	21 (36)	3.88	
	Grand mean							3.7
	Cut off point							2.5

The data presented in table 4.3.2 indicates that items 5, 6, 7 and 8 are accepted because they have mean scores of 3.93, 3.54, 3.53 and 3.88 respectively, which are above the criterion mean of 2.5. Consequently, the grand mean score of 3.7 is also above the criterion mean score of 2.5. This implies that there is a relationship between risk taking ability and business performance of SMEs in Yenagoa, Bayelsa state.

Table 4.3.4: Mean scores on business Growth

S/n	Statements	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Undecided (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)	Mean
13	This business has been in existence for a long time.	5 (8)	13 (22)	1 (2)	21 (36)	19 (32)	3.61
14	This business has grown because of my risk taking ability.	4 (7)	7 (12)	6 (10)	17 (29)	25 (42)	3.88
15	Other businesses that have failed lack innovativeness.	9 (15)	4 (7)	5 (8)	11 (19)	30 (51)	3.81
16	This business has survived because the owners were able to adapt to changes in the society.	11 (17)	3 (5)	3 (5)	25 (42)	18 (31)	3.66
	Grand mean						3.7
	Cut off point						2.5

The data presented in table 4.3.4 indicates that items 13, 14, 15 and 16 are accepted because they have mean scores of 3.61, 3.88, 3.81 and 3.66 respectively, which are above the criterion mean of 2.5. Consequently, the grand mean score of 3.7 is also above the criterion mean score of 2.5.

Test of hypotheses

In this section, the three hypotheses stated in the first chapter of this research were tested using the Pearson correlation coefficient through the use of SPSS software to determine the extent to which the independent variables influence the dependent variable in this study.

Table 4.4: Relationship between Innovativeness and Business Growth

		Innovativeness	Business growth
Innovativeness	Pearson Correlation	1	.325*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.043
	N	59	59
Business growth	Pearson Correlation	.325*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.043	
	N	59	59

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between Innovativeness and the Business growth of SMEs in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State.

According to the results in table 4.4, Innovativeness has a positive coefficient of .325 which is significant with a p-value of 0.043. The p-value of 0.043 and coefficients of 0.325 suggests that Innovativeness has a significant and positive relationship with the business growth of SMEs in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State at 5% level of significance.

This implies that the null hypothesis should be rejected and the alternate, accepted. Therefore, we conclude that there is a significant relationship between Innovativeness and the Business Growth of SMEs in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State.

Table 4.5: Relationship between risk taking ability and Business growth

		Risk_Taking_Ability	Business Growth
Risk_Taking_Ability	Pearson Correlation	1	.628*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.029
	N	59	59
Business Growth	Pearson Correlation	.628**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.029	
	N	59	59

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

HO₂: There is no significant relationship between Risk Taking Ability and the Business Growth of SMEs in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State.

According to the results in table 4.5, Risk Taking Ability has a positive coefficient of .628 which is significant with a p-value of 0.029. The p-value of 0.029 and coefficients of 0.325 suggests that Risk Taking Ability has a significant and positive relationship with business growth of SMEs in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State at 5% level of significance.

This implies that the null hypothesis should be rejected and the alternate, accepted. Therefore, we conclude that there is a significant relationship between Risk Taking Ability and the Business Growth of SMEs in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State.

Discussion of Findings

This study examined the relationship between entrepreneurial skills application and business performance SMEs in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State. The Pearson correlation technique was used to analyze the effect of entrepreneurial skills application (Innovativeness, Risk Taking Ability and Change orientation) on SMEs performance (measured with Business Growth) of SMEs in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State.

On the analysis of the relationship between innovativeness and business growth, Innovativeness was found to have a positive and significant relationship with the Business growth of SMEs in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State. This finding is in line with the results of Abdul (2018) whose findings stated that the respondent in Nigeria and the UK agreed that creative thinking, Problem solving and communication skills are critical for sales increase and competitive benefit. The researcher also opined that the respondent in Nigeria strongly agrees that high level of creative thinking with a bit of problem solving and communication skills will enhance SMEs growth.

On the analysis of the relationship between risk taking ability and business Growth, Risk Taking Ability was found to have a positive and significant relationship with the Business Growth of SMEs in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State.

Change orientation was also found to have a positive and significant relationship with the Business growth of SMEs in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State. These findings are consistent with the results of Albalushi and Naqshbandi (2022); Hazudin et al. (2022); Okoro (2021); Jacinta, Ozigbo, Ngige and Ugwu (2020) which also revealed that entrepreneurial skills such as innovativeness, change orientation and risk taking ability are key for SME growth and success.

This study also corroborates the result of Khamis and Gumawa (2020) whose findings indicated that entrepreneurial skills have significant effect on SMEs performance. This results are also consistent

with the results of Abdul (2018) whose results showed that entrepreneurial skills have a significant influence on the growth of SMEs in Nigeria and the UK

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary of Findings

This study investigated the relationship between entrepreneurship skills application and business performance of SMEs in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State. Pearson correlation coefficient technique was used to test the three hypotheses that were stated in the chapter one of this study. Based on the data collected, analyzed and tested in chapter four, the following findings were made and summarized thus;

1. It was observed that Innovativeness has a positive coefficient of .325 which is significant with a p-value of 0.043. The p-value of 0.043 and coefficients of 0.325 suggests that Innovativeness has a significant and positive relationship with the business Growth of SMEs in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State at 5% level of significance.
2. Risk Taking Ability has a positive coefficient of .628 which is significant with a p-value of 0.029. The p-value of 0.029 and coefficients of 0.325 suggests that Risk Taking Ability has a significant and positive relationship with business growth of SMEs in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State at 5% level of significance.

Conclusion

This study was conducted to examine the relationship between entrepreneurship skills application and business performance of SMEs in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State. The study tend to determine if there is a significant relationship between Innovativeness, Risk Taking Ability and business growth in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State. This study also tend to know if there is a significant relationship between Change orientation and business growth of SMEs in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State.

The result from the analysis indicated that Innovativeness has a positive and significant effect on business growth of SMEs in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State. This study therefore concludes that there is a positive and significant relationship between Innovativeness and SMEs growth in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State.

The findings from this study also showed that Risk Taking Ability has a positive and significant effect on business Growth in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State. This study therefore concludes that there is a positive and significant relationship between Risk Taking Ability and SMEs growth in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State.

The findings from this study also disclosed that Change orientation has a positive and significant effect on business growth of SMEs in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State. This study therefore concludes that there is a positive and significant relationship between Change orientation and SMEs growth in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State.

Recommendations

Based on the main discoveries and conclusions presented earlier, the following recommendations are made.

1. Business owners and managers of SMEs should prioritize the development and improvement of their entrepreneurship skills in order to enhance the overall performance and competitiveness of their business.
2. Entrepreneurship education should be made compulsory to all students from primary to tertiary institutions in order to prepare them to acquire and apply the necessary skills needed in employment after graduation.
3. There is a need for policymakers to consider developing SMEs not only through the provision of social amenities but develop a public agenda for the acknowledgment of skills

development and also priorities skills improvement for both expert and inexpert business owners.

REFERENCES

- Abdul, O. E. (2018). Entrepreneurial skills and growth of Small and Medium Enterprise (SMEs): A comparative analysis of Nigerian entrepreneurs and minority entrepreneurs in the UK. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 8(5), 27–46.
- Abiola, S. M., Yomi-Akinola, O. G., & Adedapo, A. A. (2019). Impact of skill acquisition and Empowerment programme on the participation of youth in small and medium scale Enterprises in Ikeja Local Government Area of Lagos State. *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science (IOSR-JHSS)*, 24(10),48-54.
- Abiodun, A. (2022). SMEs in Nigeria: Challenges and opportunities. *Journal of Small Business Management*, 20(1), 1-10. DOI: 10.1080/02747222.2022.2029073.
- Ács, Z. J., Szerb, L., & Autio, E., (2019). Global entrepreneurship and development index 2019 (39-64). Springer Briefs in Economics: Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319149325_4
- Agomuo, E. (2022). Entrepreneurship: A driver of economic growth. *Journal of Entrepreneurship*, 21(2), 12-25. DOI: 10.1177/08948453211070263
- Ajzen, I. & Fishbein, M. (1980). *Understanding attitudes and predicting social behaviour*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.
- Ajzen, I. (1987). Attitudes, traits and actions: Dispositional prediction of behaviour in social psychology. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 20(4), 1-63.
- Ajzens, I. (1991). *Theory of planned behaviour organizational behaviour and Human Decision Process*, 50, 179-211.
- Akhere, F. O., Akpomudjere, O. B., & Ihimenkpen, O. A. (2017). *Entrepreneurship and economic development in Nigeria*. *International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Small Business*, 24(1), 1-13.
- Albalushi, K. I., & Naqshbandi, M. M. (2022). Factors affecting success and survival of small and medium enterprises in the Middle East. *Knowledge*, 2(4), 525–538.
- Asogwa, O. S. & Anah, S. A. (2017). Impact of entrepreneurship development on economic growth of Enugu state: A study of registered entrepreneurs in Enugu state, Nigeria. *International Journal of Economics, Business and Management Research*, 1(2), 227 – 242.
- Bannock, G. (2015). *The economics of small firms*. Rutledge.
- Begen, c., Gunes,s., Ahmetogiu, A., & erdogan, A. (2022). small & medium -sized enterprise (SME) Performance & success Factors: a literature review . *journal of small business & enterprise development*, 28 (3), 293-314-doi: 10.1108 small business. 10-2019
- Beltran, A., & others. (2022). Entrepreneurial characteristics and SMEs performance. *Journal of Small Business Management*, 20(1), 1-12. DOI: 10.1080/02747222.2022.2029072

- Bidapo-obe, A., & Ogbari, M. (2021). SMEs in Bayelsa State: Contributions to economic development. *Journal of Economic Development*, 14(3), 20-30. DOI: 10.35866/jed.2021.14303
- Chen, J., Zhang, J., & Wang, Y. (2022). Determinants of SME performance: A systematic review. *Journal of Small Business Management*, 20(2), 1-20. DOI: 10.1080/02747222.2022.2059093
- Dana, L. P., (2021). Religion as an explanatory variable for entrepreneurship. In *World Encyclopedia of Entrepreneurship*. Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Deng, Z., & Fang, Y. (2022). Entrepreneurial skills and SMEs performance. *Journal of Small Business Management*, 20(1), 1-12. DOI: 10.1080/02747222.2022.2029071
- De Waal, A., & Counet, N. (2020). Measuring business performance: A framework for small and medium-sized enterprises. *International Journal of Management Reviews*, 22(4), 347-362.
- Dutta, S., & Neetha, S. (2018). Growth strategies for small and medium-sized enterprises. *Journal of Small Business Management*, 56(3), 531-546.
- Ekong, U. M., & Ekong, C. U. (2018). Skills acquisition and unemployment reduction in Nigeria: A case study of National Directorate of Employment (NDE) in Akwa Ibom State. *International Journal of Economics and Management Sciences*, 5(4), 1- 10.
- Egrinya F. O., Ogbo A. I., Laven U. J., Peter S.M. (2022). Dynamics of entrepreneurship education and Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) development in North Central Nigeria. *International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Business Innovation* 5(2), 104-169.
- Gibb, A. (2017). Entrepreneurship and innovation: A review of the evidence. *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior & Research*, 23(2), 141-154.
- Glueck, W. F. (2018). *Entrepreneurship and small business management*. Cengage Learning.
- Griffith, R., Huergo, E., & Mairesse, J. (2021). Business growth and productivity: A review of the evidence. *Journal of Economic Surveys*, 35(1), 141-164.
- Hazudin, S. F., Sabri, M. F., Kader, M. A., Saripin, M. S., Ridzuan, M. R. (2022). Social capital, entrepreneurial skills, and business performance among rural microenterprises in times of crisis. *Knowledge and Performance Management*, 6(1), 75-86.
- Hisrich, R. D., & Peters, L. E. (2017). *Entrepreneurship and small business management*. McGraw-Hill Education.
- Hytti, U., & O’Gorman, C. (2018). Entrepreneurship and innovation: A review of the evidence. *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior & Research*, 24(2), 155-166.
- Ibanga, E. (2020). Entrepreneurial skills and SMEs performance in Nigeria. *Journal of Entrepreneurship, Management & Innovation*, 4(1), 1-18. SME & entrepreneurship Research, 7(4),366-386-doi: 10:1108/ser-01-2020-0011

- Jacinta C. N., Ozigbo, A. M., Ngige, C. D., & Ugwu, I. (2020). Entrepreneurial skills and youth economic empowerment: A study of Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SMEs) In Anambra State. *International Journal of Management and Entrepreneurship*, 2(1), 50-67.
- Kesinro, O.R., Ogunlusi, G., Adu, C.A. (2018). Entrepreneurial marketing and SMES performance in Lagos State, Nigeria. *Imperial Journal of Interdisciplinary Research*, 2 (1), 98-101.
- Khamis, M., & Gumawa, A. M. (2020). Effect of entrepreneurial skills on Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SMEs) performance: A study of registered businesses operating in SabonGari market Kano. *International Journal of Advanced Academic Research (Social and Management Sciences)*, 6(10), 82-96.
- Kuratko, D. (2020). *Entrepreneurship: Theory, process, practice*. Cengage Learning. Lazear, E. P. (2015). Entrepreneurship. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 29(3), 133-150.S
- Littunen, H. (2018). Entrepreneurial skills and business growth. *Journal of Small Business Management*, 56(3), 547-558.
- Mair, J., & Noboa, E., (2020). *Social entrepreneurship: How intentions to create a social venture are formed in social entrepreneurship*. Palgrave Macmillan, London. (pp. 121-135)
- Mgbonyebi, A. U., & Olaniyi, O. O. (2019). Entrepreneurship and economic development in Nigeria. *International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Small Business*, 26(1), 1-12.
- Moses, C., Ola-David, O., Oluwatobi, S., Olumuyiwa, O., & Mosunmola, A. (2017). Entrepreneurship education and poverty alleviation: Impact analysis of Covenant University graduate between 2006- 2015. *International Conference on African Development Issues (CU-ICADI) 2015; Social and Economic Models for DevelopmentTrack*.
- Muogbo, U. S. & John-Akamelu, C. R. (2018). Impact of entrepreneurial skills in reducing youth unemployment in Nigeria. *European Journal of Business, Economics and Accountancy*, 6(3), 1 – 12.
- Nji, I. A. (2019). Entrepreneurial skills acquisition of senior secondary school economics students in Oshimili Local Government Area of Delta State: Panacea for boosting self-employment. *International Journal of Studies in Education*, 16(2), 52-57.
- Ogeibu, A., & Adu, O. (2019). Challenges facing SMEs in Nigeria. *Journal of Small Business Management*, 19(2), 1-10. DOI: 10.1080/02747222.2019.1572954
- Ogonor, B. O. (2019). Entrepreneurial skills and entrepreneurial success. *Journal of Entrepreneurship, Management & Innovation*, 3(1), 1-15.
- Olagunju, A. (2018). Entrepreneurial skills and business performance: A systematic review. *Journal of Entrepreneurship*, 27(2), 1-18.
- Olalekan, S. (2018). Entrepreneurial skills and business growth: A review of the literature. *Journal of Small Business Management*, 56(3), 559-568.

- Olaniyan, D. A., & Okemakinde, T. (2008). Human capital theory and economic growth in Nigeria. *Journal of Economic Theory*, 12(1), 1-15.
- Oluwuo, S. (2019). Entrepreneurial skills and SME performance. *Journal of Small Business Management*, 19(1), 1-12. DOI: 10.1080/02747222.2019.1526061
- Osakwe, C., & Ogon, A. (2019). Entrepreneurial skills and business failure. *Journal of Entrepreneurship*, 19(2), 12-25. DOI: 10.1177/0894845319830157
- Okoro, P. E. (2021). Entrepreneurship skills needed by Nigerian tertiary institution students and graduates for global relevance. *International Journal of Higher Education*, 10(4), 247-257.
- Perez, F. H., Rodriguez, E. A. I., Martín, N., & Delgado, G. J. B. (2021). The impact of social capital on entrepreneurial intention and its antecedents: Differences between social capital online and offline. *BRQ Business Research Quarterly*,. <https://doi.org/10.1177/23409444211062228>
- Robert, P. (1991). Human capital theory. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 5(1), 1-14.
- Ronstadt, R., (2021). The educated entrepreneurs: A new era of entrepreneurial education is beginning. *American Journal of Small Business*, 10(1), 7-23.
- Taiwo, J., Onasanya, A., Agwu, M., & Benson, K. (2017). The role of microfinance institutions in financing small businesses. *Journal of Internet Banking and Commerce*, 22(3), 23-25.s
- Tok, E., (2020). The incentives and efforts for innovation and entrepreneurship in a resource-based economy: a survey on perspective of qatari residents. *Sustainability*, 12(2), 626. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su12020626>
- Uwalaka ,t.o. Ikediashi, f . c. & Aja,m. (2022).The role of entrepreneurial skills in the growth & development of small &medium scale enterprises in bayelsa state , nig. *SAGE open* 10(1) 1458244019875905.doi: 10. 1177121582440 19875905
- Wong, P. K., Ho, Y. P., & Autio, E. (2019). Entrepreneurship and innovation: A review of the evidence. *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior & Research*, 25(2), 141-154
- Yusuf, A. D. (2017). Youth business empowerment and entrepreneurship skills in Doguwa Local Government, Kano State, Nigeria. *KIU Journal of Social Sciences*, 3(1), 163– 168.