

ENTREPRENEURIAL COMPETENCE AND BUSINESS SUCCESSES OF SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES (SMEs) IN BAYELSA STATE, NIGERIA.

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ABSTRACT

The study examined the relationship between entrepreneurial competence and business successes of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Bayelsa State. The study was descriptive survey research design with 80 respondents (N=80) using pre-tested self-designed, close-ended questionnaires to generate primary data. Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics with the aid of Statistical Packages for Social Scientists (SPSS) 23. Pearsons correlation analysis was carried out to examine the relationship between entrepreneurial competences (communication skill competence, risk-taking competence and learning competence) and amplify SMEs performance. The results showed a positive significant relationship between the independent variables (communication skill competence, risk-taking competence and learning competence) and the dependent variables amplify SMEs performance. (Beta Coefficients= -0.043, 0.165 and 0.965 respectively). The study recommended that government should equip current and future entrepreneurs with skills and competencies to make them self-reliant. Additionally, SME owners should improve themselves through personal trainings by attending entrepreneurship seminars and conferences in order to improve their learning, communication and risk-taking competencies.

Keywords: Communication Competencies, Learning Competencies, Risk-Taking Competencies and Profit

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

Due to their agility, small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) contribute significantly to economies by producing a considerable amount of goods in a world that is changing quickly. Because they play a significant role in a nation's economic growth, political stability, and social advancement, SMEs are naturally adaptable. They are regarded as the foundation of the nation's economy and may be set up for any type of commercial activity (Fritsch, 2017). Because SMEs play a vital role in economic development, the government has focused a lot of attention on their growth. (Lawal et al., 2018). The subsector of small and medium-sized businesses in Nigeria has been growing, particularly since the middle of the 1980s, when the economy was in a protracted recession and many major businesses were forced to lay off a significant amount of their workforce. Bahari, et al (2023). From the World Bank report (2015), almost 70 percent of industrial employment are from the sector. (Bolzani & Luppi, 2021). also noted that the agricultural sector which largely consists of small and medium enterprises (SMEs), employs over 50 percent of the nation workforce. The federal, state, municipal, and even some corporate institutions' interest in demonstrating their readiness to contribute to the establishment of the required enabling environment to promote entrepreneurship in the nation may be explained by the strategic role that entrepreneurs play in national development. In high-income nations (developed economies), the SME sector accounts for between 55 and 65 percent of GDP and employment, respectively, according to Zafar & Mustafa (2017). Small and

medium enterprises (SMEs) produce 70% of GDP and 95% of total employment in middle-income nations (developing countries). Similarly, in low-income countries, they account for 60% of GDP and 70% of total employment. As a result, the importance of SMEs to any country's economic growth and development cannot be overstated.

Similarly, Small, and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) generated roughly 50% of Nigeria's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2017. (National survey of Small and Medium Enterprises, 2017). In emerging economies, this is a considerable contribution. (Garavan et al., 2016) stated that business enterprises are critical to Nigeria's economic growth because small firms account for 97 percent of the economy and 70 percent of job opportunities. In Nigeria, SMEs employed 82.02 percent of the total workforce (Buowari, 2015).

Small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) are crucial to a nation's growth and development, according to a wealth of research (Tehseen et al., 2019; Chowdhury et al., 2019). Furthermore, practitioners, company managers, and the government continue to be interested in enterprise success because of the advantages SMEs provide to individual entrepreneurs and society as a whole (Kafetzopoulos, 2020).

However, a number of issues have overtaken Nigeria's business climate, making it not only challenging for companies but also contributing to the country's SMEs' growing failure rate. According to studies, 85% of companies in the nation fail during the first five years of their founding (Wirda et al., 2019). Furthermore, only around 5 to 10 percent of SMEs remain in operation after even the small proportion that survives for more than five years fail between the sixth and tenth years of their existence. (Orji, 2014) Notwithstanding the Nigerian government's efforts and contributions to the growth of SMEs, just 7.27 percent of the nation's exports come from firms, including microbusinesses (SMEDAN, 2017). The primary reason for company failure in the nation has been shown to be a lack of entrepreneurial skills. (Mars, 2016). Because it offers workable answers to the riddle of company failure, entrepreneurial competence becomes essential (Bolzani & Luppi, 2021). One of the key determinants of company operation success, performance, and development is the competency of the entrepreneurs. Chaker and Jarraya (2021). Additionally, the majority of female entrepreneurs run small enterprises that rely heavily on their owners' skills. Therefore, it is crucial to comprehend the nature of these abilities in the context of female entrepreneurs. ((Luppi & Bolzani, 2019).

The traits that set exceptional entrepreneurs apart from mediocre or subpar ones are known as entrepreneurial competencies, and they are a collection of behaviors, skills, and knowledge. According to Haruna and Marthandan (2017), entrepreneurial competences are a collection of high-level attributes, such as knowledge, skills, and personality qualities. According to Chong et al. (2022), entrepreneurial competences help businesses gain a sustained competitive edge, which ultimately leads to business success and expansion. Since entrepreneurial skills are essential for a company's survival, performance, and success, Bahari (2023) emphasized the need of knowing their value, particularly in emerging economies. However, the environment, assumption, and forecast all affect how entrepreneurial abilities are measured. (Aydiner et al., 2020).

The prosperity of SMEs promotes economic stability and acts as a buffer against shocks to the economy, especially in underdeveloped countries where there is little study on entrepreneurship. (Hyder & Lussier, 2016; Coder, 2017). As a result, there is a critical need for study in the area of SMEs and entrepreneurship. Thereby, the current study is needed to cover a potential vacuum in the literature by examining the impact of entrepreneurial competencies on the success of SMEs in Bayelsa State, and specifically to determine the impact of communication skills competencies on the success of SMEs performance, also to evaluate the impact of learning competencies on the success of SMEs performance and to investigate the impact of risk-taking abilities competencies on the success of SMEs performance. Based on the above specific objectives, the paper develops hypotheses in null form in order to test the relationship between the study variables. In view of the

above, this study seeks to examine the role of entrepreneurial competencies on the success of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in with specific reference to Bayelsa State.

Statement of the Problem

Throughout the past few decades, significance of entrepreneurial competencies has been amplified due to the strategic role played by the entrepreneurs of business enterprises. Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) sector have not been performing well in the recent times. This has resulted into increase in the rate of business failure among the SMEs; the large enterprises are also not spared most specially in Bayelsa State and most of them are now relocating to neighboring states within Nigeria.

The major challenge facing SMEs in Bayelsa State is increasing rate of business failure which is as a result to low level of entrepreneurial orientation. Most businesses fail in Bayelsa due to business owners possessing high technical component but lacking in management component of entrepreneurial skills. According to Al-Mamun et al., (2016), the following areas of entrepreneurial competencies which they considered as the missing link to successful entrepreneurship; time management, communication skills, risk-taking abilities, human resources management, learning, marketing management, business ethics, social responsibility, leadership, decision making and financial management are lacking in Bayelsa State.

The issue in literature is however very scantyon entrepreneurial competency in Bayelsa State because little attention is given to research in this area despite the increasing challenge of business failure occasioned mainly by increasing harsh business environment; the need to accord priority to research in this area therefore, becomes imperative to conduct empirical studies on entrepreneurial competencies on the success of small and medium enterprises performance in Bayelsa.

Furthermore, Entrepreneurial Competencies is confirmed to not only associate with the firm performance and competitiveness, but also the growth and success of a business (Shehnaz et al, 2015). Therefore, this variable cannot be ignored in the context of SMEs owner-managers in improving their business performance. However, some of the related studies examined the determinants of entrepreneurial competencies and business performance while some examined the correlation/relationship between entrepreneurial competencies and business performance.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this paper is to examine the relationship between entrepreneurial competence and business successes of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Bayelsa State. Other objectives which the paper seeks to achieve include;

1. To examine the relationship between communication skills competence profit in Bayelsa State.
2. To determine the relationship between learning competence profit in Bayelsa State.
3. To evaluate the relationship between risk-taking competence profit in Bayelsa State.

Research Questions

This study attempts to find answers to the following questions:

1. To what extent does communication skills Competence relate profit of SMEs in Bayelsa State?
2. To what extent does learning competence relates profit of SMEs in Bayelsa State?
3. To what extent does risk-taking competence relate profit of SMEs in Bayelsa State?

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses are stated in the null form to guide the paper;

- Ho₁. There is no positive and significant relationship between Communication skills competence on profit of SMEs in Bayelsa State.

- Ho₂. There is no positive and significant relationship between Learning competence on profit of SMEs in Bayelsa State.
- Ho₃. There is no positive and significant relationship between Risk-taking competence on profit of SMEs in Bayelsa State.

Significance of the Study

This study will be of benefit to this group of individuals;

Aspiring Entrepreneurs: This research is important for start-ups to determine their abilities and improve their prospects of success and ultimate development. It will serve as a tool for personal decision-making and an aid for self-assessment that can be used to raise knowledge of potential business activities among prospective entrepreneurs. With an appropriate and early understanding of the skills required, individuals can focus on learning these skills more efficiently and escape unproductive issues regarding where precious energy and resources should be invested.

Business Consultants: Through this study, business consultants will become more aware of the competencies that entrepreneurs need to master and be trained on, and thus be able to offer appropriate guidance and assistance.

Current Entrepreneurs: Current SMEs can review their competencies and explore whether to develop them via preparation or education in the event of any deficiency. Through knowing that the personal competencies will have a beneficial effect on the company, entrepreneurs will behave more effectively and with greater confidence in achieving their objectives.

Policymakers: For economic progress, the speed of new company construction is crucial, provided that policymakers understand SMEs' significant position in generating employment, promoting their usage of output forces, economic growth, social goods, and market ties and as major contributors to GDP. The fact that SMEs' survival rate is endangered is very troubling. This study will allow policymakers to establish policies that ensure the sustainability of SMEs based on knowledge about what will improve their entrepreneurial leadership skills.

Scholars: This study will be fascinating to scholars because they can gain theoretical and practical awareness of how business skills affect the viability of SMEs in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Alongside offering empirical evidence, this study will add value to the knowledge stocks of the literature on SMEs' entrepreneurial skills and survival, and set a milestone for future research, particularly in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, in the area of SME success.

Scope of the Study

Content Scope

This study focuses on entrepreneurial competence and business success of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). The measurement for the independent variable is communication skills competence, learning competence and risk-taking competence.

Geographical Scope

This study empirically examines entrepreneurial competence and business success of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) from the selected practicing entrepreneurs in Yenagoa LGA, Bayelsa State and considered to be representative of the entire group.

Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis is at the organizational level. It consists of SMEs that have ten (3) persons and above as their employees.

Organization Definition of Terms

Entrepreneur

The entrepreneur is defined as someone who has the ability and desire to establish, administer and succeed in a startup venture along with risk entitled to it, to make profits.

Entrepreneurship

The capacity and willingness to create, plan, and manage a business venture—with all of its unknowns—with the goal of turning a profit is known as entrepreneurship.

Entrepreneurial Competences

Underlying qualities including general and specialized knowledge, motivations, traits, self-images, social positions, and abilities that lead to venture creation, survival, and/or development are known as entrepreneurial competences.

SMEs

Businesses that keep their assets, income, or workforce below a specific level are classified as small and medium companies (SMEs). The criteria for defining a small and medium business vary per nation. There are size requirements that must be fulfilled, and sometimes the industry the business works in is also considered.

Business Success

Business success can be defined as the achievement of set goals and objectives by a company, which may vary depending on individual or organizational standards. It encompasses financial gains, personal satisfaction, social impact, longevity in the market, and customer satisfaction. Financial success involves generating profits for shareholders and founders, creating wealth, and ensuring financial security.

Learning Competences

Learning competencies, sometimes referred to simply as competencies, are skills or capabilities required in a particular field of work or study. These competencies are demonstrated through the ability to perform specific tasks in specific settings. Unlike learning targets, which are goals for acquiring a skill, learning competencies measure an individual's proficiency in performing a skill.

Communication Competences

Communication competence refers to the knowledge of effective and appropriate communication patterns and the ability to use and adapt that knowledge in various contexts. It involves understanding how to communicate successfully and efficiently, choosing appropriate communication strategies, achieving communication goals, and being responsive to different backgrounds and cultures in interactions.

Risk-Taking Competences

Risk-taking competences refer to the skills, abilities, and attributes that individuals possess to effectively identify, assess, and pursue opportunities that involve uncertainty and potential risks in various domains such as entrepreneurship, business management, and decision-making

Concept of Entrepreneurial Competencies

A pertinent starting point in conceptualizing entrepreneurial competencies is to first define competence. Competence is simply the ability, which an individual requires to do assigned job. Therefore, competent employees or individuals are those who meet their performance expectations. In management literature, competencies, is used to describe the set of disparate skills managers require to help them perform their jobs. These skills are identified and effectively initiated in training courses or programs. Competencies therefore constitute a cluster of related knowledge, attitudes, and skills, which an individual acquires and uses together, to produce outstanding performance in any given area of responsibility. In fact, in competency-based training all three factors - knowledge, attitudes and skills must be effectively addressed, and taught in an integrated manner. This is the only way outstanding performance can be achieved (Razmus & Laguna, 2018).

Entrepreneurial competency is defined as the individual characteristics including attitude and behavior, which allow the entrepreneur to achieve business success (Sarwoko, 2013). According to Ngugi, J., & Bwisa, H. (2013), entrepreneurial competencies are a set of higher-level characteristics involving personality traits, skills and knowledge. They can be viewed as the total ability of the entrepreneur to perform his role successfully. Moreover, Kiggundu (2012) noted that entrepreneurial competency is the sum total of the entrepreneur's requisite attributes for successful and sustainable entrepreneurship, including attitudes, values, beliefs, knowledge, skills, abilities, personality, wisdom, expertise (social, technical, managerial), mindset and behavioral tendencies. Additionally, according to Bird (2015), entrepreneurial competencies are the essential qualities—personality traits, motivations, social positions, abilities, and knowledge—that propel an organization's expansion. According to Kiggundu (2012), entrepreneurial competences are the culmination of all the characteristics of entrepreneurs—attitudes, beliefs, knowledge, skills, talents, personality, expertise, and behavioral tendencies—that are necessary for successful and long-term business. According to Agyel, S.K. (2018), there are essentially two components to entrepreneurial abilities. The entrepreneur's history, including characteristics, personality, attitudes, self-image, and societal roles, is covered in the first section. Additionally, the second section includes the elements—skills, experience, and knowledge—that are often acquired through theory and practice. According to Nerisa (2015), management and entrepreneurial abilities are closely related. However, Agyel, S.K. (2018), have classified entrepreneurial competencies into six major areas: opportunity competencies, organizing competencies, strategic competencies, relationship competencies, conceptual competencies and commitment competencies.

Communication Competence

Communication is simply the act of transferring information from one place, person, or group to another. Every communication involves (at least) one sender, a message, and a recipient. This may sound simple, but communication is actually a very complex subject (Aydiner et al., 2020). According to Nabiswa and Mukwa (2017), Communication competence refers to the knowledge of effective and appropriate communication patterns and the ability to use and adapt that knowledge in various contexts.

Communication has crucial impacts or among work groups in that organizational communication is a channel to flow information, resources, and even policies (Oyetunde & Oladejo, 2012). Obamiro (2017) indicates that communication is important for organizational growth because it enables the organization to achieve coordinated action, employee's express feelings and emotion, to share information regarding organizational goals and task directions, to achieve effective control, to encourage staff participation in decision making and to create a good public image and reputation for an organization.

Learning Competence

Learning is a **relatively lasting change in behavior that is the result of experience**. It involves the acquisition of information, knowledge, and skills. Learning is not limited to formal education but is an ongoing process that occurs throughout life in various contexts (Raghuvanshia & Garg, 2018). Psychologists study how learning takes place and how different factors such as social, emotional, cultural, and biological variables influence the learning process (Shatnawi et al., 2021).

According to Rossmiller et al. (2017), learning is an **active process** that involves encountering new information, paying attention to it, integrating it with existing knowledge, storing it in memory, and applying it. Whether through hands-on experiences or passive methods like reading or listening, learning leads to a lasting change where acquired knowledge can be retained and applied in relevant situations. **learning competence**, also known as a learning competency, refers to a skill or capability required in one's field of work or study. It is the ability to perform a specific task in a

specific setting. Unlike learning targets, which are goals for learning a skill, a learning competency measures how well an individual can perform that skill (Audi et al., 2021).

Learning orientation is the method of obtaining, sharing, integrating, and creating information and knowledge among members of an organization **Alvarez, S.A., & Barney, J.B. (2017)**. It comprises of obtaining, disseminating, incorporating and creating information and knowledge among members in the organizations, organizational learning revolves around staff training and the mechanisms for developing their knowledge and skills **Bosma N.S.(2018)**. In practice, however, most organization do not invest on organizational learning because it is difficult to measure the immediate impact quantitatively but in the long run it will positively affect the performance of the firm.

Dixon (2012) opined that learning orientation is the key component that supports knowledge productivity processes, which involves looking for information, embracing it, developing and crafting new knowledge on products, processes, and services. Organizations need competent people to learn, understand and interpret new information from the market and changes from the external environment, organization must also be able to create new knowledge faster than other competitors (Campbell, 1989; Olokundun 2017). There are majorly two types of organizational learning; namely adaptive and generative learning. Adaptive learning is very important to a firm because it reveals a firm's ability to do away with obsolete methods, processes, procedures and techniques, and replacing these with new and drastic approaches. This type of learning allows firms to cultivate the attitude of continuous improvement as well as create novel innovations (Gibson & van der Vaart, 2008). In generative learning, a firm gives its employees opportunities to always question the organizational status-quo in forms of norms or long held assumptions, routines and guidelines, by allowing its employees to think outside of the box (Hashi and Stojcic, 2013). Organizational strength and the development of core competencies may result from providing employees with a defined learning path. The attention of different departments is coordinated through a common vision, which ultimately improves the quality of education.

Risk-Taking Competence

SMEs with strong entrepreneurial orientation are often characterized by high risk-taking behavior, such as high debt increment or increased exposure, to obtain high returns by grasping opportunities in the marketplace (Benitez et al., 2018). Risk taking is seen as a defining characteristic of entrepreneur and entrepreneurship (Audi et al., 2022). Entrepreneurial firms tend to take more risk than other firms and are more proactive in venturing into new business (Abbas, 2018). The concept that risk is an important element of entrepreneurship is seen throughout the entrepreneurial literature (Błachnio et al., 2017).

According to Fodor and Pintea, (2017), risk takes place when an individual's actions results in social and economic consequences that cannot be predicted with certainty. Risk taking is also perceived as tendency towards risky projects (Audi et al 2023). It is expected that firms that have better performance would also have a higher level of risk propensity (Udoh, 2017). Risk-taking propensity can then be defined as a tendency to take or avoid risks and it is regarded as an individual characteristic. Risk-taking also connotes a tendency to take bold steps such as venturing into unknown and new market (Afolayan, 2015). It can also be associated with willingness to commit large amount of resources to a project which the probable cost and chances of failure are high (Udoh, 2017). Risk-taking in grabbing market chances refers to businesses' propensity to adopt audacious measures including entering uncharted markets, investing a significant sum of money in projects with unpredictable results, and taking out large loans in the hopes of earning large returns. (Gholamrezaei, Aliabadi, & Ataei, 2021). In this study SME risk taking involve uncertainty about the future effects of current decisions that business choices should consist of an assessment of outcomes and possibilities that it differs from expectations.

Business Success

Success according to Matley, H. (2017) is described as an action or achievement considered in relation to how successful it is. Success are variously measured and the perspective are tied together and consistently monitored from the organization context (Naofirepi et al 2018) What connotes Success varies from one organization to another. Before the 1990s, financial metrics like profit, ROI, sales per employee, and productivity were the only way to gauge success. Short after 1990s till date, attentions have been shifted from financial to less tangible and non-financial measure. This include: Just in-time delivery (JITD) total quality management (TQM), Communication, trust, stakeholder satisfaction, competitive position and quality of product (Nowinski et al 2019). Omoudi et al (2018) also categorized Success measurement into four, namely: (1) Profit which include: return on assets, return on investment and return on sales (2) "KLP Growth in term of sales, market share and wealth creation (3) Stakeholder satisfaction which include customer satisfaction and employee's satisfaction and (4) competitive position.

Despite various definitions of business Success in the literature, business Success of SMEs in this study will be measured subjectively, as specified in terms of cash flow, net profit, sales growth, return on sales, return on investment, return on shareholders' equity and operating profit.

Profit

Since profit is one of the most crucial components of every business's operating system, a large number of theoretical papers have been written about this issue. Profit is the proportion of management effectiveness based on investment and sales returns. It has a significant importance in the long run as it might indicate whether or not a company's earnings has promising future possibilities. It is impossible for a firm to operate without making any money. Since maximizing the wealth of the owners is one of the goals of financial management and profit is a key factor in determining a company's success, (Wach et al., 2018) asserts that profit is one of the most important purposes of financial management.

The capacity of a corporation, organization, firm, or enterprise to turn a profit from all of its commercial operations is known as profitability. It demonstrates how well management may turn a profit while utilizing all of the market's resources. A great number of scientists give their own definition of profitability. According to Sawaeen & Ali, (2020) profitability is an ability of a given investment to earn a return from its use. Profitability, according to Razmus & Laguna (2018), is the capacity of a company to produce revenue; a loss results from its incapacity to do so. He goes on to say that profitability is achieved if revenue is higher than input costs; if revenue is lower than input costs, bad performance may result. Consequently, it can be said that any company has to make enough money to last and expand for a long time. Suheyli Reshid (2015) asserts that every business is focused on making money. Profitability is a measure of how well an organization's management uses its available resources to produce profits. Put otherwise, profitability is the capacity to generate a profit. Furthermore, profitability is one of the key components for every business's effective operation, according to Lestari & Ardianti (2019). Profitability is considered a measure of efficiency and a management guide to increase efficiency, according to Lestari. The ability of the organization to "produce" profit is known as profitability. In a market economy, a firm must be profitable after paying taxes in order to cover all of its expenses as well as to guarantee increased reproduction and prosperity. As a result, all of these academics support the views of several economists who believe that one of the key markers of an organization's successful operation is its profit. Furthermore, some writers identify a profitability ratio as a class of financial measurements and a net outcome. Brigham (Kerr, Kerr, & Xu, 2017) asserts that profitability is the net consequence of a number of managerial decisions and policies, and that profitability rates display the net operational outcome of the combined effects of liquidity, asset management, and debt management. A profitability ratio is a measurement of the amount of output that can be achieved with a given quantity of an asset, claims Lutz (2010). According to the scientist, in a perfect business

environment, profitability is the only indicator needed by any economic institution. Profit is thus one of the most important objectives of financial management as the main objective is to maximize the owners' wealth. Making a profit analysis is crucial to understanding how a business operates and how to increase its performance in the marketplace. Numerous academics have significantly advanced the field of profit analysis research. To provide members of farmers' groups a general understanding of profit analysis in Southern Africa, for example, Luc (2018) has developed a unique handbook. The specialist literature acknowledges the significance of profit analysis at the firm level. Establishing profit margins and figuring out the amount of profit are seen to be the two main goals of firm-level profit analysis.

The following conclusion on the definition of the profit concept may be drawn from the literature review that was previously presented: A business must operate in a profit-making environment in order to be successful, which requires that income surpass the expenses incurred in carrying out the activity. To summarize all of the ideas discussed above, it can be claimed that profit is a necessary requirement for an economic entity to succeed in business. It is determined by comparing the financial consequences with the financial effort required and producing good outcomes. As stated by Bird (2019), a business must be lucrative over the long term in order to succeed. The researchers found that almost every action taken by a profit-driven business may be classified as either an operating, investing, or financing activity. A business will be successful overall if it succeeds in these three areas. Profit has a significant role in an organization's ability to survive and grow; it is especially crucial to increase profits in order to cut expenses and minimize risk.

Theoretical Review

The related theories consist of theories selected by other researcher to explore a subject, as well as the principles, interpretations and assumptions of that theory applicable to the subject being addressed.

Theory of Innovation: Schumpeter's Theory

Some proposals are claimed to occur, but creative solutions are not easy to discover (Faltin, 2001). Throughout a defined field of business and perseverance throughout attempting to find a different approach are essential to enable a detailed study. Ideas will be incorporated, of course, so this is certainly not a simple job. Yet as a challenging task, constructing the entire building on a low base will be unfortunate

(Faltin, 2001). The consistency of the company concept is crucial (Kavanagh & Hisrich, 2010). The flexibility of the product that is developed and improved depends on whether the company can dominate the competition effectively or will struggle for survival and sustainability

J. K. Ngugi (2013) claimed that Schumpeter's 1934 theory is the most commonly recognised innovation theory. This theory of innovation stresses entrepreneurship benefits and the incentives for the creation of new value-generating development that will extend (and change) a revolving flow of revenues. Profits resulting from consumer dominance structures when income will be forced to zero in strictly unfair circumstances. An increase in income over 'natural' prices may be due to an improvement in consumer influence in this typical price and quantity setting in the domain of distribution or markets.

The development of new financial operation, creating new sources of competitive value-adding and disturbing the flow of profits. Development in this area needs to be interpreted as a perturbing rather than smooth mechanism, which was named 'creative destruction'. Creative disruption allows businesspeople to abandon existing paradigms and find alternative approaches. Dependent on stagnation in salaries, the businesses liable have a labour expense that is that with delay only (Etro, 2007). Profits are produced through the development of new fields of production activities. Enterprises may participate in internal creativity to launch or generate new goods or services; may rejuvenate themselves through innovating and modifying internal systems, frameworks or

capabilities; may find and adapt different types of competitiveness in established markets; or may proactively build brand new commodity opportunities that certain businesses have not recognised or acquired. Innovating also calls for a specific concepts of creativity and thus needs a high degree of expert expertise, on which the individual sector and company relies.

This theory is important for this analysis because the sustainability of industry is related to profitability. Schumpeter's invention benefit theory reflects the monopoly status of firms that have first-hand advantages in the markets. In the context of the conventional system of market-based analysis, this common approach to the principle of Schumpeter renders it clear, in which financial analyses often concentrate on its position in economic trade, mainly across exchanges. When leading innovators create a temporary lock on some of the manufacturing (product) or input (process) markets, this produces huge invention income, usually related to higher export values and lower supply or costs.

Human Capital theory:

The human capital theory originated from macroeconomic development theories Schultz (1993). It was used by Becker (1993) in the domain of education. According to Schultz (1993), human capital is an important factor that induces economic growth in modern economy. Becker argues that there are different kinds of investments on capitals; such as expenditure on schooling, a computer training course etc. He argued further that expenditures made by an organization on education, training, and medical care, etc. of their employees and managers are not mere expenses but should rather be seen as investment in capital. These investments according to him are not ordinary expenses but investment with valuable returns that can be calculated. Also, Severine and Lila (2009) were of the same view when they observed that schooling develops certain qualities in people; and that these qualities enhance economic productivity and growth. Similarly, Becker (1993) further argued that investment in human capital could be viewed as similar to investment in other means of production, like factories or mines.

Theory of Leadership: Path-Goal Theory

In an institution, Yukl (2011) described leadership as the capacity and willingness of the individual to control certain participants in the same organization; to consider, determine and comply with what must be achieved and how it can be accomplished; and to promote individual and collective attempts to attain mutual goals. Northouse (2010) described management as a mechanism through which a specific individual influences the achievement of a collective objective by a number of people.

These definitions suggest some elements that are fundamental to the leadership phenomena, including that: (i) leadership is a method, (ii) leadership involves manipulating others, (iii) leadership occurs within a group, (iv) leadership implies reaching a target and (v) members and followers discuss these aims. Leadership as a mechanism is characterized specifically by the idea that leadership is not a characteristic held by only a few individuals at birth. Leadership is characterized as a mechanism and is a transactional interaction between leaders and members. Leadership as a process means that leaders are positively or negatively influenced by their followers. Yukl (2011) stressed that leadership is not a sequential one-way process, but rather a two way, collaborative experience between leaders and followers, where the leader influences her or his followers, and not vice versa. The idea of leadership as a mechanism is applicable to all—not just a few who are born with it. More specifically, leadership is not restricted to only the one member in a community who has formal power (Yukl, 2011).

The idea of a path-goal was initially developed in 1970 by Evans and then updated in 1971 by House to describe a type of leader as an opportunity to become subjects to accomplish goals. The philosophy of the route target provides the notion that incentive plays a significant role in the relationship between the boss, the subordinate and the ultimate performance of the subordinate

dependent on that connection. House (1971) defined the path-goal principle with two basic propositions. First, one of the leader's strategic roles is to improve subordinates' psychological conditions, contributing to opportunities to succeed or job fulfillment' (House, 1971). In other words, leaders must be conscious of the measures taken to articulate goals and strategies and improve happiness by means of external recourses, which can enhance the morale of their subordinates. Second, House (1971) stated that the motivating goal should be accomplished through clear actions of the condition chief. The principle of path-goals identifies four behaviors that improve the engagement of individuals. The four types of management were built on three attitudes displayed by subordinates: (i) happiness of subordinates, (ii) anticipation of subordinates to their leaders and (iii) the expectation of good output of subordinates.

This idea is important for this analysis because growing a small business is focused on sustaining and progressing through the growth process. The behavior of the members is compatible with the incentive of the employee to increase efficiency. The actions and behaviors of the leader have the potential to influence followers, become a paradigm for role models, and provide clear direction and guidelines aimed at achieving a survival goal (Dhladhla, 2011). The trick to recognizing management's route-goal philosophy is to consider the direction that subordinates will follow to accomplish the given goals. Subordinates are inspired by their representatives to accomplish certain targets if representatives explicitly identify priorities, explain the path to accomplish them, eliminate barriers to the fulfilment of the priorities and enable them to achieve their objectives.

Review of Empirical Literature

Fabrizio, Paolo, and Alessandra (2011) investigated how a sample of small and medium-sized Italian business owners' unique abilities affected the company's success. After measuring entrepreneurial talents using a range of instruments, we looked for a correlation with firm success using a multi-dimensional performance indicator and a few control variables. The portfolio of entrepreneurial competencies has an effect on the success of the firm, according to the results. Higher company performance is specifically associated with qualities including efficiency orientation, planning, persuasiveness, self-confidence, organizational awareness, leading others, teamwork, and benchmarking. Factor analysis also showed some typical behavioral paths related to entrepreneurial effectiveness and regression analysis shows the influence of some control variables. According to the results, it is of utmost importance for entrepreneurs to develop some specific competencies in order to obtain a higher performance. Despite the research carried out, the study lacks relevant recommendation(s) as no single recommendation was recorded in the study.

Jose, (2014) examined the influence of entrepreneurial competencies on small firm performance. This research studied the influence of entrepreneurial competencies on the performance of small enterprises by building a causal model using data obtained from Spanish entrepreneurs. In this model entrepreneurs' competencies influence firm performance, competitive scope, and organizational capability in a direct or indirect way are explained. The study found support for most of the hypotheses. Results indicate that entrepreneurial competence plays an influential role in organizational capability and competitive scope, and also has a direct effect on firm performance. The use of organizational capabilities affects positively the firm performance and it partially mediates the relationship between entrepreneurial competence and firm performance. Although competitive scope is not significantly related to business growth, it is a strong predictor of other performance dimensions, such as efficiency and relative performance. Organizational capability is a strong predictor of competitive scope. The implications and future research directions are discussed.

Pi-Shen, (2016) examined whether the introduction of entrepreneurship education based on concepts of experiential learning into the university curriculum has had any positive effect on changing the entrepreneurial perceptions, intentions and competencies of tertiary education students. The paper used Kolb's model of experiential learning as a conceptual framework to interpret the actions taken by the Singapore universities in introducing various forms of

entrepreneurship education schemes. The study found that there is evidence to support claims that entrepreneurship education based on experiential learning in undergraduate courses has had a positive effect on changing entrepreneurial perceptions and intentions among Singapore university students, the findings for entrepreneurial competencies are inconclusive as important aspects of tolerance of failure and opportunity recognition do not seem to have been positively affected.

To date, empirical studies on entrepreneurial competencies and business performance have been examined by numerous researchers and findings from these studies have also revealed the important role of entrepreneurial competencies towards performance/business success in developed countries and developing countries (Man et al., 2002; Han, 2016, Nerisa, 2015, Shehnaz, et al 2015, Fabrizio, Paolo & Alessandra, 2011). Furthermore, entrepreneurial competencies are confirmed to not only associate with the firm performance and competitiveness, but also the growth and success of a business (Shehnaz et al, 2015). Therefore, this variable cannot be ignored in the context of SMEs owner-managers in improving their business performance. However, some of the related studies examined the determinants of entrepreneurial competencies and business performance (Endi, et al, 2013 & Akinruwa, et al 2013), while some examined the correlation/relationship between entrepreneurial competencies and business performance (Juzaimi, et al, 2016 & Han, 2016, Nusratand, 2014, Aruni, et al 2014). Furthermore, some of the studies also examined the effect or role of entrepreneurial competencies on business performance (Shehnaz, et al, (2015, Bello, et al 2015, & Fabrizio, et al 2011). Just few studies examined the influence of entrepreneurial competencies on small enterprises (Jose, 2014, Jose 2012,).

From the above it can clearly be deduced that most of the similar studies were based on different domains like manufacturing firms (Aruni et al, 2014) and small enterprises/firms (Jose, 2012, Jose, 2014) as against SMEs which is the domain of this paper. Most of the studies reviewed were also carried out in foreign countries. Therefore, it is expedient for this paper to examine the impact of entrepreneurial competencies on SMEs performance with specific reference to Zaria local government area of Kaduna state in Nigeria with the hope of contributing to the body of knowledge.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The research design used in the study is descriptive survey design. This method was chosen in preference to others because the study involved the investigation of a group of people (practicing entrepreneurs) to be selected from Yenagoa, Bayelsa State and considered to be representative of the entire group. Also, the study involved selection of large sample while few variables were studied. According to Oluwaseun Oyeboade (2019), a descriptive survey has to do with the use of selected sample of the population in a study and use of questionnaire as the instrument for data collection is common with survey studies.

Population of the Study

Population for the study consists of practicing entrepreneurs (those entrepreneurs who employed from three persons and above in their firms) in Bayelsa state. The operators of such businesses can either take the status of owner-manager or paid manager. The population has been so defined to ensure that the respondents have the capacity to discuss the issues surrounding entrepreneurial competencies effectively. There are 500 and above SMEs in Bayelsa state, since it is not possible to deal with the numbers of SMEs in Bayelsa state, Yenagoa LGA of Bayelsa State was sampled. Therefore, the total respondents (population) of the study are 100.

Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

A sample is a subset of the population; it comprises numbers selected from the population. The sample size for this project was drawn from one hundred (100) respondents from the selected entrepreneurs in Yenagoa LGA. Which is divided into paid managers and owner managers.

Simple random sampling technique will be adopted in gathering information from the respondents. Random sampling technique is used to sample individual respondents within the stratum as it eliminates bias since each member of the target population had an equal chance or probability of being selected.

Through the application of Taro Yamani's statistical formula, the sample size for the study was estimated as follows:

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(\text{sig.level})^2}$$

where:

N = Population = 100

n = Sample Size

sig. level = Significance Level = 5% = 0.05

$$n = \frac{100}{1+100(5\%)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{100}{1+100(5\%)^2}$$

Instrument of Data Collection

Both primary and secondary data were used in the study. The primary data comprised data obtained by directly administering the self-designed questionnaire to the respondents which recorded 100 percent response rate. On the other hand, the secondary data were sourced from: thesis, publications in academic and professional journals, periodicals, books, archives among others.

Measurement of Variables

The questionnaire comprises sections A-C. Section A contains seven items pertaining to the demographic (personal) details of the respondents (e.g., gender, age, marital status). Section B comprises eighteen (14) items on the dimensions of entrepreneurial competences. Communication competence was observed with six (5) indicators adopted from Diodlo, N. (2017) e.g. Determine long-term issues, problems, or opportunities". Risk-taking competence is measured by five (5) observables adapted from Fix, B. (2018), e.g. "We plan the operations of the business to reduce and control risk"; "We offer fast delivery and quickly adapt the distribution network to meet demand". Learning competence is operationalized by four (4) indicators, culled from Gamede, B.T & Uleanya, C. (2017). A sample statement item is —Apply learned skills and knowledge into actual practices|. Section C pertains to Business Success constructed with six (6) indicators adapted from Matley, H. (2017), and Fonseca, Ramos, Rosa, Braga and Sampaio (2016). A sample item include: "Our firm has experienced higher growth in market share relative to competitors". All the observed indicators for the study constructs were anchored on a five-point Likert scale of 1 to 5, where 1=strongly disagree, and 5=strongly agree (see appendix 1).

Reliability and Validity of the Research Instrument

Validity of Research Instrument

According to Ogunnaike, Olusola (2018), validity is the degree by which the sample of test items represents the content the test is designed to measure. Adeyemi, Olufunmilayo (2020) contend that the usual procedure in assessing the content validity of a measure is to use a professional or expert in a particular field. In this study to ensure validity of the questionnaire, the questionnaire (draft

form) will be presented to my supervisor for his review on its factorial, criterion and content. Based on his comments and suggestions, necessary adjustments will be made on the draft questionnaire.

Reliability of Research Instrument

Reliability relates to whether a measuring system produces component errors that exist with accuracy during a single calculation attempt, while a specified unit is calculated by the same instrument. If the findings of an analysis can be replicated in a specific manner, the test instrument is deemed accurate. Reliability measures are used to determine the reliability or equivalence of the collections of objects in a single evaluation or from multiple observers who assess behavior or occurrence using the same instrument, or to calculate the consistency of tests performed at separate periods with the same subjects Ibrahim, Aisha (2022). When reliability is a metric, this does not automatically imply that it is always accurate and when anything may be calculated accurately on a scale, it cannot be assessed. To assess reliability, this study employed the most widely used internal accuracy metric—Cronbach's alpha (α).

Cronbach's alpha is generally represented as a number from 0 to 1, and was established to determine the internal accuracy of a measure or scale by Lee Cronbach in 1951, according to Nwosu, Chinwe (2023), External consistency defines the magnitude of the specific or equivalent definitions or structures evaluated in different test items, and thus refers to the inter-relatedness of the tested variables. Where a low alpha value is obtained, this may be due to a few queries, weak interconnections among objects or heterogeneous constructions. When there is a weak association between alpha-low objects, they should be updated or rejected. The effect of these poor associations is effectively to measure the association of each of the test items with the overall score check. Where alpha values are too high, this may imply that other objects replicate or check the same query in a different way. The suggested values of 0.7 to 0.9 were used in this analysis as cut-off reliabilities. Cronbach's alpha is a generic type of formula Kuder-Richardson (K-R), which was used as a tool's in-house coherence on the premise that data from all the possible instrumental halves were split-half accurate. The time required to measure a reliability coefficient in other methods is decreased

Model Specification

The dependent variable (business success the Yenagoa, Bayelsa State) was regressed against the four variables of entrepreneurial competencies—communication competency, learning competency and risk-taking competency. The research model was derived from the theoretical framework. The relationship among the variables was depicted as below:

- $P = \beta_0 + \beta_1 LC1 + \beta_2 CC2 + \beta_3 RTC3$, where
- P = Business Success
- β_0 = constant (coefficient of intercept)
- LC = Learning Competency
- CC = Communication skills Competency
- RTC = Risk-Taking Competency
- $1 \dots \beta_3$ = regression coefficient of the four variables.

Analysis of variance (ANOVA) will be used to test the significance of the overall model at a 0.05 level of significance.

Methods of Data Analysis

To test completeness and accuracy, this study analyzed the completed questionnaires and then labelled the data to categories the answers correctly and allocate numerical statistics to dumb variables. To quantify the results, concise statistics were used, including percentages and frequencies. All quantitative data were measured by normalization in real values. The quantitative

data analyses were then evaluated using Version 24 of SPSS, using both linear and multiple regression tests. For easier interpretation and review, the data were presented in tables and other graphical displays, if possible. Quantitative reports were produced through tabulation, percentages and central trend calculation. Cooper and Schindler (2003) stated that percentage usage is important because it simplifies data by decreasing all numbers from 0 to 100, and often converts data to normal type for numerical comparisons with a base of 100.

Characteristics of the Sample

Out of eighty (80) administered questionnaires, seventy-six (76) copies of the questionnaires were duly filled and returned from the respondents and analyzed. This gives a response of ninety-five (95%), this was achieved as a result of follow up and the non-retrievable questionnaires were as a result of the negligence of SMEs owners to fill the received questionnaire. However, only seventy-five (75) copies of the questionnaires were analyzed for the purpose of this paper.

Table 4.2: Summary of Questionnaire Distribution and Responses

SMEs	Questionnaire Distributed	Questionnaire duly filled and returned	Percentage (%)
SMEs	80	75	95

Source: Researcher's Computation (2024)

Table 4.1 above shows that a total of eighty (80) questionnaires were administered out of which seventy-six (76) copies were duly filled and returned to the researcher representing ninety-five percent (95%) of the response rate. The five percent (5%) non-response rate is not sufficient to invalidate the outcome of the survey. Thus, the ninety-five percent (95%) duly filled and returned would serve as adequate representation for the research study

Table 4.2: Demographic Characteristics of the respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Gender	Male	41	53.9	53.9	53.9
	Female	35	46.1	46.1	100
	Total	76	100	100	
Age	20-35	32	42.1	42.1	42.1
	36-50	34	44.7	44.7	86.8
	51-above	10	13.2	13.2	100
	Total	76	100	100	
Educational Qualification	WAEC	17	22.4	22.4	22.4
	OND	31	40.8	40.8	63.2
	HND/Bachelor	21	27.6	27.6	90.8
	Masters above	7	9.2	9.2	100
	Total	76	100	100	
Years of Experience	0-5	14	18.4	18.4	18.4
	6-10	41	53.9	53.9	72.4
	11-Above	21	27.6	27.6	100
	Total	76	100	100	

Source: Research Data (SPSS Output) 2024

Table 4.2 shows that 41 respondents (59.9%) were males and 35 (46.1%) females. The many Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) is male dominated. For age, respondents within 20-35 age brackets were the least with only 32 respondents (42.1%), while those who are 36 years to 50 years old were the highest with 34 (44.7%). Respondents who are 51 years old and above were 10, representing 13.2% of the total number of respondents. Hence, those managing Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) are in mid-life ages. On highest level of educational attainment, 31 respondents (40.8%) have Ordinary National Diploma, 21 respondents (27.6%) have Higher National Diploma and Bachelor Degree, 17 respondents (22.4%) have The West African School Certificate and while 7 respondents (9.2%) have Master Degree and above. Thus, a great number of those who manages Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) are OND holders. The highest level of years of experience, 41 respondents (53.9%) have 6-10 years of experience, 21 respondents (27.6%) have 11 and above years of experience and while 14 respondents (18.4%) have 0-5 years of experience. Thus, a great number of those who manages Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) have years of experience.

Multiple Regression Results

Table 4.3 Correlations

		Profit	CC	LC	RTC
P	Pearson Correlation	1	.205	.627**	.945**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.075	.000	.000
	N	76	76	76	76
CC	Pearson Correlation	.205	1	.222	.052
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.075		.053	.659
	N	76	76	76	76
LC	Pearson Correlation	.627**	.222	1	.656**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.053		.000
	N	76	76	76	76
RTC	Pearson Correlation	.945**	.052	.656**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.659	.000	
	N	76	76	76	76

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

The correlation between Profit and CC is found to be poor, the value is 0.205, which shows that there is a poor correlation between Profit and CC and the correlation is insignificant because the P value is greater than 0.05, the value is 0.075.

The correlation between Profit and LC is found to be strong, the value is 0.627, which shows that there is a strong correlation between Profit and LC and the correlation is significant because the P value is less than 0.05, the value is 0.00.

The correlation between Profit and RTC is found to be very strong, the value is 0.945, which shows that there is a very strong correlation between Profit and RTC and the correlation is significant because the P value is less than 0.05, the value is 0.00.

Table 4.4 Model Summary^b

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.959 ^a	.919	.915	.11687	1.366

a. Predictors: (Constant), RTC, LC, CC

b. Dependent Variable: P

Source: Research Data (SPSS Output) 2024

The above table shows Pearson correlation coefficient (r) which describes the strength and direction of linear relationship between two or more variables. The R-value of 0.959 shows that there is a strong and but positive correlation among the four variables. The R-square (R^2) value of 0.919 shows that about 91.9 percentage change in Profit (P), is explained by risk-taking competence (RTC), learning competence (LC) and communication skills competence (CC) jointly while (a less part of about) 8.1 percent is captured by the error term. Therefore, 91.9% of (risk-taking competence (RTC), learning competence (LC) and communication skills competence (CC)) have a great impact on Profit. However, based on the adjusted r square result which is 0.915 shows that about 91.5 percentage change in Profit (P), is explained by risk-taking competence (RTC), learning competence (LC) and communication competence (CC) jointly while (a less part of about) 8.5 percent is captured by the error term. Hence, making the entrepreneurship competencies appeared to be a strong and good fit variable for predicting the performance of SMEs in Yenagoa Local Government Area of Bayelsa State, Nigeria.

Durbin-Watson (DW) Statistic: The Durbin-Watson Statistic measure the evidence of autocorrelation in the residuals. The acceptable DW` range of no autocorrelation is between 1.45 and 2.44. Thus, the fitted regression line result showed that there is evidence of autocorrelation as indicated by DW statistic value of 1.366.

Table 4.5 ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	11.129	3	3.710	271.589	.000 ^b
	Residual	.983	72	.014		
	Total	12.112	75			

a. Dependent Variable: P

b. Predictors: (Constant), RTC, LC, CC

Source: Research Data (SPSS Output) 2024

The ANOVA (or F-Statistic) measures the overall significance of the model. The above table (ANOVA^a) shows significant level of 0.000 which is far below the established significant level of this research (0.05) that is ($p > 0.05$). Therefore, the F-statistic (271.589) is high enough for this research to infer that all the independent variables (risk-taking competence (RTC), learning competence (LC) and communication skills competence (CC)) have significant impact on the performance of SMEs in Yenagoa local government area of Bayelsa state in Nigeria. The implication is that an increase in the effectiveness of the independent variables will lead to an increase in SMEs performance in Yenagoa Local Government Area of Bayelsa State, Nigeria. In summary, the result confirms that the overall regression model is significant for the data, and this was capture by **ANOVA** (F-Statistic) value of 271.589 and its associated probability value of 0.00 ($F = 271.589, p > 0.05$), that was found to be significant at 5% level.

Table 4.6 Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1 (Constant)	-.247	.187		-1.319	.191		
CC	-.036	.030	-.043	-.932	.354	.935	1.070
LC	.144	.039	.165	4.757	.000	.534	1.872
RTC	.949	.044	.965	21.506	.000	.560	1.784

a. Dependent Variable: P

Source: Research Data (SPSS Output) 2024

In the regression coefficients, the CC Coefficient value which was found to be -0.36, shows that a unit increase in CC, on the average, decreased Profit by 0.36 units, the LC coefficient value which was found to be 0.144, shows that a unit increase in LC, on the average, increased Profit by 0.144 units, as well as RTC coefficient value which was found to be 0.949, shows that a unit increase in RTC, on the average, increased Profit by 0.949 units. The result from the table above shows that entrepreneurial competence has significant positive impact on the performance of SMEs in Yenagoa Local Government Area of Bayelsa state.

Presentation of Data and Test of Hypotheses Relating to Objective 1

From the t-Statistics and p-value (sig) as shown in table 4.6 test for the hypotheses that is related to objective one which say Communication skills competence (CC) have no significant effect on the profit of SMEs in Bayelsa State. Based on calculated t-value for the relationship between CC and profit (P) was found to be -0.932 with an associated p-value of 0.354, since the p-value is greater than 0.05 at 5% level of significance, we conclude that CC has a negative and insignificant effect on profit (P). The Hypothesis one (Ho1) was, therefore, supported and accepted.

Presentation of Data and Test of Hypotheses Relating to Objective 2

From the t-Statistics and p-value (sig) as shown in table 4.6 test for the hypotheses that is related to objective two which say learning competence (LC) have no significant impact on the profit of SMEs in Bayelsa State. Based on calculated t-value for the relationship between LC and profit (P) was found to be 4.757 with an associated p-value of 0.00, since the p-value is less than 0.05 at 5% level of significance, we conclude that LC has a positive and significant impact on profit (P). The Hypothesis two (Ho2) was, therefore, rejected and not supported.

Presentation of Data and Test of Hypotheses Relating to Objective 3

From the t-Statistics and p-value (sig) as shown in table 4.6 test for the hypotheses that is related to objective three which say Risk-taking competence (RTC) have no significant impact on the profit of SMEs in Bayelsa State. Based on calculated t-value for the relationship between RTC and profit (P) was found to be 21.506 with an associated p-value of 0.00, since the p-value is less than 0.05 at 5% level of significance, we conclude that RTC has a positive and significant impact on profit (P). The Hypothesis three (Ho3) was, therefore, rejected and not supported.

Discussion of Findings

The first hypothesis states that — Communication skills competence (CC) have no significant effect on the performance of SMEs in Bayelsa State. Table 4.5 reveals that communication skills competence (CC) has negative and insignificant relationship with SMEs performance. Hence, Ho1 was, therefore, supported and accepted. Thus, this suggests that the possession of communication skill competency is not too necessary for SMEs performance (SP). It's essential to consider situation where they might perceive as less critical. Such situations are;

- **Niche Markets:** Some SMEs operate in highly specialized or niche markets where communication may have a lesser impact on their performance. In such cases, product quality and uniqueness could be more significant factors.
- **Localized Businesses:** SMEs that cater exclusively to a small, local customer base may require less sophisticated communication skills compared to those targeting broader or international markets.
- **Established Customer Base:** If an SME has a loyal and established customer base, they may not need to focus as much on communication skills to attract new customers or clients.

- **Low Competition:** In some instances, SMEs may operate in markets with limited competition, reducing the immediate need for aggressive marketing and communication efforts.
- **Non-Customer Facing Roles:** Some SMEs may involve backend or manufacturing operations that do not directly interact with customers. In such cases, internal communication within the team may be more critical.

The second hypothesis states that — learning competence (LC) have no significant impact on the performance of SMEs in Bayelsa State. Table 4.5 reveals that learning competence (LC) has a positive, moderate and significant relationship with SMEs performance. Hence, Ho2 was, therefore, rejected and not supported. This suggests that as enterprise members increase their capacity to learn in diverse ways, learn ahead of time, update their stock of knowledge and apply learned skills and knowledge in problem situations, the more will the enterprises succeed in such areas as increase in return on investment, market share and the satisfaction of both primary and secondary stakeholders.

A closer look at the global model indicates a medium effect size attributed to learning competence. This demonstrates that the structural affinity between entrepreneurial competences and SMEs performance is, to a moderate extent, due to the presence of learning competence of the entrepreneurs. Thus, the capacity of enterprise managers to acquire relevant skills, knowledge and abilities for subsequent application at different stages of enterprise development is the second critical factor that accounts for the moderate influence of entrepreneurial competences on business performance.

We therefore state that higher levels of enterprise ability to learn in diverse ways, learn ahead of time, update their stock of knowledge and apply learned skills and knowledge in problem situations will cause an increase in enterprise performance - such as increase in return on investment, market share and the satisfaction of both primary and secondary stakeholders. This finding is congruent with Koçoğlu, İmamoğlu and İnce's (2011) study which concluded that learning is the process of acquiring and sharing knowledge and vision which promotes employee satisfaction and market performance. Moreover, our finding is not a surprise since learning competence reduces business risk, enables members to carry out activities more efficiently and proactively, and aids the generation and better utilization of knowledge (Song & Kolb, 2012; Galliers, Oliveira & Zambalde, 2016) that could lead to the creation of innovative products, thereby birthing competitive performance and business success (Pérez López, Manuel Montes Peón & José Vazquez Ordás, 2005).

Our finding on learning competence also lends support to Nham & Khine Tin (2013) who demonstrated that internal and competitor learning facets amplify performance of manufacturing firms. In addition, our finding is in harmony with the notion that enterprises that possess learning competence are in a better position to develop new products, services and better ways of doing business, which help them reap positive outcomes such as higher levels of new product success, increase in customer retention, higher product quality, and, consequently superior growth and profitability (Slater & Narver, 1995; Lukas et al., 1996). In addition, our finding is in agreement with Singh and Rao's (2017) study which concluded that learning capability stimulates firm's financial (Return on assets, Sales growth and Profitability) and non-financial (market share, innovation, quality and customer satisfaction) performance.

The third hypothesis states that — Risk-taking competence (RTC) have no significant impact on the performance of SMEs in Bayelsa State. Table 4.5 reveals that Risk-taking competence (RTC) has a positive, moderate and significant relationship with SMEs performance. Hence, Ho3 was, therefore, rejected and not supported. This suggests that risk-taking competence has a significant impact on the performance of SMEs. The results also indicated that a number of respondents accepted that the company's existence was influenced by decision-making, managing risk, careful consideration of risks and measured steps.

The result showed a positive and meaningful impact of risk-taking competency on the performance of SMEs in Yenagoa Local Government Area of Bayelsa state. This result contrasts with that of Caliendo et al. (2010), who found that risk-taking was a critical factor of small companies that aimed to turn their industries into different realms in certain sectors and product lines.

Summary of Findings

The study found that communication skills competencies have insignificant negative effect on the profit of SMEs in Yenagoa Local Government Area of Bayelsa State; this is indicated from the beta coefficient of -0.043 which is insignificant at p value of 0.354. Therefore, the research concludes that communication skills competencies have insignificant negative effect on the profit of SMEs in Yenagoa Local Government Area of Bayelsa State.

The research further posits that learning competencies have significant positive impact on the profit of SMEs in Yenagoa Local Government Area of Bayelsa State; this is indicated from the beta coefficient of 0.165 which is significant at p value of 0.00. Therefore, the research concludes that learning competencies have significant positive impact on the profit of SMEs in Yenagoa Local Government Area of Bayelsa State.

Finally, the paper found that risk-taking competencies has significant positive impact on the profit of SMEs in Yenagoa Local Government Area of Bayelsa State; this is indicated from the beta coefficient of 0.965 which is significant at p value of 0.00. Therefore, the research concludes that risk-taking competencies have significant positive impact on the profit of SMEs in Yenagoa Local Government Area of Bayelsa State. Based on these findings, the research concludes that entrepreneurship competencies have significant effect on SMEs performance in Yenagoa Local Government Area of Bayelsa State.

CONCLUSION

Drawing from the empirical investigation, we proposed that three facets of entrepreneurial competences (communication skill competence, risk-taking competence and learning competence) will induce the performance of SMEs. Empirical evidence of the multiple regression analysis conducted suggests that all the three components of entrepreneurial competences amplify SMEs performance. However, it is worthy of note that risk-taking competence, followed by learning competences are the most important contributors to SMEs performance, while communication skill competences contribute to the performance of SMEs based on some situation consider as explained. Therefore, is consider that entrepreneurial competences should be employed in SMEs in other to improve the organizational performance.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the above findings and conclusion, the research recommends that in the long run, entrepreneurs should concentrate on all the competencies for better future performance; however other recommendations are as follows;

- i. Government should equip current and future entrepreneurs with skills and competencies to make them self-reliant.
- ii. The research therefore recommends that entrepreneurship teachings should be a dynamic mix of process and action focus.
- iii. Finally, the research recommends that SME owners should improve themselves through personal trainings by attending entrepreneurship seminars and conferences in order to improve their learning, communication and risk-taking competencies.

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