

Influence of Managerial Competencies on Small and Medium Enterprise Performance

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Abstract

Not many studies have examined the relationship between managerial competencies and small and medium enterprise (SME) performance. All the more in this way, there is still insufficient empirical proof of such relations in small and medium ventures operating in Nigeria. To address this information gap, this study investigates the impact of technical skills, generic skills and conceptual skills on the performance of SMEs operating in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja, Nigeria. Essential information was gathered from respondents with the guide of surveys. Respondents of this study comprise proprietors/leaders of SMEs working in the FCT. 427 questionnaires were distributed to respondents of the study. Be that as it may, just 356 samples were discovered usable for final examination. PLS-SEM was utilized to dissect information gathered from respondents. Measurable investigation uncovers that generic skills and conceptual skills have positive critical effect on the performance of SMEs in the FCT. However, technical skills have positive insignificant effect on performance of SMEs. The examination consequently prescribes that SME administrators should constantly encourage great relationship among representatives in their organizations. Furthermore, supervisors should consistently formulate vital objectives that would be truly sought after by all representatives of their association as it might help support execution.

Keywords: Technical skills, generic skills, conceptual skills, firm performance.

1 Introduction

SMEs are viewed as the drivers of financial development and improvement in various nations of the world. Indeed, the sector represents more than 80 percent of financial development in many nations on the planet (Sidek and Mohammed, 2014). In the assessment of ThabitYahya and AbdelhayElsayed (2012), SMEs assume significant jobs in moving nations to a more elevated level of prosperity. On account of Nigeria, SMEs endeavors to some degree give jobs to the Nigerian populace. SMEs contribute largely to domestic output by providing raw material for larger firm's consumption thereby creating enabling environment for government to generate incomes from the activities of the SMEs through various forms of tax levies (Aminu and Shariff, 2015).

Numerous analysts inferred that SMEs creates job opportunities and independent work openings (Mahadalle and Kaplan, 2017), in this manner prompting decrease in destitution, increment in business, advancement in innovation and inspiring in societal position and way of life of residents. Nonetheless, the commitment of SMEs in Nigeria to the national Gross

Domestic Product (GDP) is poor and as of now, the contribution of SMEs in Nigeria is beneath desires (Aminu & Shariff, 2015). In spite of the huge number of SMEs in Nigeria, their commitment to the GDP is exceptionally poor (Eniola, 2014). According to Aganga (2015), SMEs in Nigeria represents around 50 percent of the country's GDP and employs around 60 million Nigerians, which is essentially under 50 percent of the total populace in the nation. Abdullahi et al., (2015) related that SMEs in Nigeria ought to be contributing more to the GDP and creating more employments in the nation to checkmate the geometric increment of joblessness in the nation.

Ensuring that organisations activities meets its goals in an efficient manner is viewed as perhaps the greatest test confronted by SMEs with reference to their survival and competitive advantage (Eniola and Ektebang, 2014). As per Rosaline and Nadu (2013), managerial competencies are exceptional arrangement of practices that lead to successful SME operation. Accordingly, managerial competencies can be said to have essential significance for improved SMEs' growth and development. Likewise, Eniola (2014) indicated that all together for SMEs in Nigeria to perform highly, endeavors must be made to organize workshops and planning programs for entrepreneurs to improve their aptitudes and abilities in the field of business. Hence, to prevail in a hyper aggressive business condition like Nigeria, organisations must demand supervisors with skills and competencies which will prompt and lead to high business performance (Bailey and Mitchell, 2006).

Managerial competencies have been identified as key success indicators of organisations that are used to accomplish both their mission and vision, and utilized in creating added value which improves business performance (Krajcovicova, Caganova and Cambal, 2012). There are similarities and contrasts in managerial competencies across cultures and work environments (Khoshouei, Oreyzi and Noori, 2013), which require the replication of this investigation in Nigeria. Be that as it may, organizations in Nigeria encounter various challenges that range from competition with foreign-made products, to larger businesses in Nigeria. Thus, in order for SMEs in Nigeria to stay in business irrespective of these hitches, they need skills and competences that will permit them to make known their products and enterprises to their customers at value that will yield better deals and gainfulness (Mohammed, Ibrahim & Shah, 2017). Likewise, Sidek and Mohamed (2014) suggested that reviews on the relationship between managerial competencies and SME performance are somewhat rare, accordingly future research may be supported by utilising a sample covering a more diverse set of businesses.

The efficiency and effectiveness of managers requires managerial skills. Lack of these skills may decrease the capability and success of businesses (Abbaszadeh, Eyni and Rabiei, 2012). Thus, this study applied Katz (1995) managerial competency variables; technical, generic and conceptual skills as they relate to the performance of SMEs in Nigeria. On the basis of the identified literature gap, this study evaluated the effect of managerial competencies on the performance of SMEs in Nigeria.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Resource Based View of the Firm (RBV)

The underpinning theory used to explain the proposed research framework is the RBV which was propounded by Penrose in 1959. The RBV opines that organizations possess assets, a subset of which enables them to achieve superior long-term performance (Saqib and Rahid, n.d). Assets that are noteworthy and uncommon can swift organisations to attain superior competitive advantage. Therefore, such advantageous position can be retained over a long period to enjoy continuous performance. The RBV takes the point of view that significant, unmistakable firm assets and abilities provide the key bases of sustainable competitive advantage (Hart, 1995). The RBV articulated that there are connections among firm assets and firm performance (Hart, 1995). Penrose (1959) contended that an organisation's resources are essential to an organization's high performance. So also, Barney (1991) places that organ-

izations that have resources that are important and uncommon would achieve competitive advantage and sustained performance. On account of this study, firm's resources represent managerial competencies, which is the exogenous variable of the study. The RBV posits that managerial competencies should positively influence the performance of firms. This therefore, sheds light on the relationship between the exogenous variables and the endogenous variable of the study.

2.2 Concept of Business Performance

Performance is a phenomenal concept and significant factor in the discipline of management and has to a great extent being of distinct fascination to specialists and academicians. Performance alludes to the degree of accomplishment or accomplishments of an organization inside a specific timeframe (Aisyah, Musa and Ramli, 2017). Most organisation's objective to keep on existing, make benefit, and stay applicable in the business can be accomplished if such associations performs well. Entrepreneurial performance is a personal determination to achieve economic objectives and financial improvement by means of a robust social networking (Oriarewo, Agbim and Zever, 2014). Proprietors/business owner's performance cannot be isolated from his/her business as when the firm succeeds, the proprietor likewise succeeds and vice versa (Yusuff, Bakar & Ahmad, 2016). Business performance facilitates a constant reflection of either success or failure of the organization and is a fundamental subject in the discus of business undertakings (Mohammed, Ibrahim and Shah, 2017). As with larger firms, performance is the ultimate criterion for determining whether an SME is competitive or not (Man and Lau, 2000).

Different measures have been used by earlier analysts in the estimation of business performance. Firm performance is measured either objectively or subjectively. Achieving a certain level of increasing sales is certainly one way to measure business success, but it is not the only way; performance can also be attributed to recognition and respect earned by the business owner or providing employment and raising the standard of living of the employees and business community may be more useful measure of business performance (Veliu and Manxhari, 2017). The study of AbdulWahab and Al-Damen (2015) considered increasing sales, accumulated return on investments, access to more finance and work expansion as success indicators. Business Performance measures used in the study of Aisyah et al., (2017) consists of three (3) indicators, increasing market share from year to year, increasing return on capital invested, profit which considered respondents opinion in relation to the extent to which the business generates more return on the initial capital employed and capital, which was the respondent's opinion in terms of increase in the capital required for running the business from time to time.

Performance has been evaluated by Oriarewo *et al.*, (2014) utilizing financial performance, relative firm performance and individual performance. Performance measure utilized in the investigation of Chye, Tat, Osman and Rasli (2010) comprises two elements of small firm performance, for example, increasing sales and profitability. An assortment of the literature demonstrated that both quantitative and subjective markers have impediments and are prescribed to be utilized conversely. Estimating quantitatively includes the utilization of rate of return, benefit, deals, etc while the subjective estimations are regularly called as performance markers. Performance markers could be pointers, for instance, information and business experience, the ability to provide superior items and administrations, the capacity to grow innovative items and processes, the ability to administer and work in gatherings, work efficiency, and corporate responsibility to the earth (Sarwoko, Surachman, Armanu and Hadiwidjojo, 2013).

The estimation of execution by Bendassolli, Borges-Andrade, Gondim and Makhamed (n.d) depended on the abstract impression of business visionaries about their fulfillment with business execution objective pointers like gainfulness, deals volume, quantifiable profit, and

piece of the pie and their social and emblematic connections picture of the endeavor and individual professional success adjusted from earlier examinations. Man, Lau and Snape (2008) estimated business execution utilizing three factors, venture productivity, business development, and relative execution. Together it is accepted that the exhibition estimation of Man *et al.*, (2008) better mirror the ideas of a SME's intensity execution in a progressively complete picture as they speak to execution at present, later on and in correlation with its rivals.

2.3 Concept of Technical Skills

Specialized aptitude can be said to mean having a decent capability and been prudent in a particular sort of business or action that an individual is included. As indicated by Abbaszadeh, Eyni and Rabiei (2012), specialized aptitudes include the capacity for profitability from specialized information, strategies and procedures that will empower smooth release of obligations. Specialized capabilities furthermore incorporate accurate knowledge about organisation rules, structure, management systems and employee characteristics (Seete, Poee and Chinomona, 2016). Technical competencies are likely to be gained through formal training, qualifications and work experience. In Kose and Sencan's (2016) view, technical skill indicates a manager's specialized knowledge, analytical ability and abilities over the area he / she is responsible for.

2.4 Concept of Generic Skills

Also known as human skill is generic skill which involves the ability to develop a good working relationship with people. Human skills refer to the capacity of a manager to communicate and work effectively with team members (Seete *et al.*, 2016). According to Kose and Sencan (2016), human skill means to reach operation by promoting cooperation among a community that is led by a manager. A well-developed sense of empathy and a reputation for honesty are important for successful human relationships (Rosaline and Nedu, 2013). The ability to work effectively with every member of the organization can be said to mean human relations skills.

2.5 Concept of Conceptual Skills

Conceptual skills are essential to the creation of the firm's vision and strategic plan. Conceptual skills can be defined as the capability of managers to take a collective assessment of the company and to solve problems from operational point of view (Sidek and Mohammed, 2014). Conceptual capacity requires the control of an entity from a general unit to understand (Abbaszadeh *et al.*, 2012). Conceptual skills include a manager's ability to assess the organization's relationship with its internal and external environment and to align the company as a whole (Kose and Sencan, 2016).

2.6 Managerial Competencies and SMEs performance

This section reviews related empirical studies with a view of establishing a research gap for the present study. Sidek and Mohammed (2014) conducted a study on the relationship between managerial competencies and microfinance institution growth using data collected from Kelantan and Terengganu microfinance banks participants. The study utilized Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) methodology, and found that all the dimensions of managerial skills—technological, generic and conceptual skills—had positive and significant impacts on small business development. The Abbaszadeh *et al.* (2012) research examined the relationship between managerial skills of the managers and efficiency of the employees. The findings of the analysis showed that there were important correlations between the management competencies and the optimal use of the resources of the company. Vielu and Manxhari's (2017) research examined the linkages between SME's managerial competency and efficiency. Ques-

tionnaires were used to collect data, and the constructs used were adapted from prior research and already tested for reliability. The findings suggest that success is related to managerial competency. In the same vein, ThabitYahya and AbdelHeyelsayed (2012) also conducted an investigation into the influence of the managerial competencies factor among SMEs in Selangor, Malaysia.

Similarly, Seete *et al.*, (2016) conducted a research to examine the relative importance of managerial competencies on job performance. The findings revealed that a strong and positive relationship exist between technical skills, interpersonal skills, values and ethics enforcement, managerial skills and perceived job performance. Also, Arinaitwe, Mwesigwa, and Anyongyeire (2016) in their landmark study examined the relationship between managerial skills, ethical environment, and success of Uganda Health projects. Clear relations between managerial skills, ethical environment and project success were identified. Fatoki's research (2014) explored the effect managerial skills on South African performance companies. The survey results suggested that a relationship exists between managerial competencies and company performance.

More so, Manani and Ngui (2019) examined the effect of employee competencies on employee job performance in humanitarian organizations in Kenya. The findings revealed that employee competencies have positive and significant effect on organizational performance. In addition, Masoud and Khateeb (2020) evaluated the influence of managerial competencies on the performance of small businesses in Jordan. Specifically, the study assessed the effect of communication, planning and organizing, strategic thinking and scenario building, teamwork and customer focus on business performance. The study found out that communication, planning and organizing have positive and significant effect on the performance of businesses in Jordan.

Based on the theoretical framework and literature review in this research, the study therefore, hypothesizes that:

H₁: Technical skill has significant effect on the performance of SMEs in Nigeria

H₂: Generic skill has significant effect on the performance of SMEs in Nigeria

H₃: Conceptual skill has significant effect on the performance of SMEs in Niger

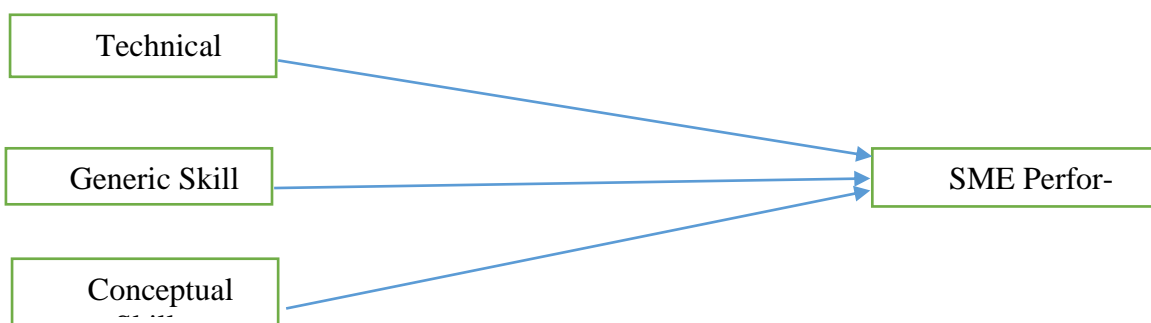


Figure 1

Research Model

3. Methodology/Materials

This study is quantitative in nature and the research design is cross sectional in nature because it is viewed as the most appropriate for the study because longitudinal surveys require a longer time to be carried out compared to cross sectional surveys (Kothari & Garg, 2014). The population of the study comprises all SMEs operating in the FCT. There are 2,690 registered SMEs operating in the FCT (SMEDAN, 2013). Dillman's (2000) formula for determining sample size from a population was used by the study to arrive at a minimum sample size, which is 328. However, the sample size was increased by 30% to 427 to cater for non-response bias (Israel, 2013). The SMEs in the FCT were stratified by area councils and questionnaires were distributed proportionately to each of the area councils in the FCT. There are six (6) area councils in the FCT. Primary source of data was utilized for the study using structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed with items measuring each of the four (4) variables of the study adapted from previous researchers (*i.e.*, Botha, Niemen & Van Vuuren, 2006; Spillan and Parnell, 2006). The questionnaires were distributed to only owner/managers of registered SMEs operating in the FCT. 403 questionnaires were returned from the respondents but only 356 were found usable for analysis. This therefore constitutes 83% response rate, which is suitable for data analysis (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2013). The study analyzed the data using structural equation modeling (SEM) to via SmartPLS2 package.

4. Results/Findings

4.1 Measurement Model Analysis

To ascertain the measurement model, the reliability and validity of the model were assessed by the measurement model of PLS-SEM path modeling. As can be seen, Table 1 represents the reliability and convergent validity of constructs of the study.

Table 1

Construct Reliability and Convergent Validity

Construct	Items	Loadings	AVE	CR
Performance	PRF1	0.66	0.60	0.90
	PRF2	0.87		
	PRF3	0.89		
	PRF4	0.76		
	PRF5	0.78		
	PRF6	0.64		
Technical Skills	TEC3	0.89	0.69	0.82
	TEC4	0.76		
Generic Skills	GEN1	0.64	0.52	0.86
	GEN2	0.86		
	GEN3	0.90		
	GEN4	0.62		
	GEN5	0.74		
	GEN6	0.48		
Conceptual Skills	CON1	0.60	0.56	0.83
	CON2	0.62		
	CON3	0.92		
	CON4	0.81		

Note: PRF7-8, TEC1-2, TEC5, CON5 were deleted as a result of insufficient loadings. AVE represents Average Variance Extracted. CR represents Composite Reliability.

The reliability of the constructs was tested using Composite Reliability (CR), whereas convergent validity of such constructs was determined using Average Variance Extracted (AVE) as suggested by Garson (2016). However, for each reflective construct to achieve internal consistency reliability, the value of its CR should be ≥ 0.7 (Lee and Chen, 2013), while AVE should be ≥ 0.5 for it to attain of convergent validity (Garson, 2016). Item loadings should be above 0.5 (Hair, Black, Babin & Anderson, 2014). From the results presented on Table 1 above, reliability of all the constructs are therefore achieved. On the other hand, as the grand mean scores of each construct (i.e., the average of the squared of factor loadings of each construct's items) is above the threshold of 0.50, it clearly indicates that each of these constructs explains more than 50% of the variance of its indicators (Hair *et al.*, 2014). Thus, both the reliability and convergent validity therefore achieved.

Table 2*Discriminant Validity Using Fornell-larcker Criterion*

Construct	1	2	3	4
1. Conceptual Skills	0.75			
2. Generic Skills	-0.02	0.72		
3. Firm Performance	0.05	0.38	0.77	
4. Technical Skills	0.06	0.05	0.10	0.83

Note: "Squared correlations; AVEs in the diagonal.

To ascertain the discriminant validity of the constructs, the square root of AVE of each of the construct should be higher than its correlations with any other construct (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). In other words, to achieve the discriminant validity of each of the study reflective constructs, the square root of the AVE should be higher than its correlation with other latent variables (Garson, 2016). Thus, the numbers that are bolded represent the square root of AVE of each latent variable, and as can be seen, such numbers are higher than the corresponding correlation of each construct with any other latent variable. Consequently this exhibits the attainment of discriminant validity of the constructs of this study.

4.2 Structural Model Analysis

Table 3 represents the results of the hypothesized relationships of the study. As can be seen on the aforesaid table, it can be deduced that technical skill has positive insignificant effect on SME performance ($\beta=0.054$, $p>0.10$). Thus, H_1 has not been supported empirically in this study.

Table 3

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis	Relationship	Beta	Std. Err	Tvalue	Decision
H ₁	TEC -> PRF	0.054	0.08	0.68	Not Supported
H ₂	GEN -> PRF	0.38	0.06	6.47***	Supported
H ₃	CON -> PRF	0.08	0.05	1.55*	Supported
R Square		0.17			

*** $p < 0.01$; ** $p < 0.05$; * $p < 0.1$

However, empirical analysis has revealed that generic skills has positive significant effect on SME performance ($\beta=0.38$, $p<0.01$). Thus, H_2 is therefore supported. Similarly, to H_2 , the structural model analysis of the study reveals that conceptual skills has positive significant effect on SME performance ($\beta=0.08$, $p<0.1$). Thus H_3 is also supported. Adjusted R square is 17%. This means that technical skills, generic skills and conceptual skills explains 17% variation in the performance of SMEs in Nigeria.

5. Discussion of Findings and Conclusion

This study empirically examined the relationships between managerial competencies and SMEs performance in Nigeria, as there exist lack of empirical evidence of such relationships in the small and medium scale sector particularly in the Nigerian context. Therefore, this study has addressed this knowledge gap by establishing the relationships between technical skills, generic skills, conceptual skills and firm performance, statistically using a sample of registered SMEs in the FCT. The study concludes that generic skills and conceptual skills has significant effect on firm performance. This supports the findings of Mahadalle and Kaplan (2017). However, technical skills do not have significant effect on firm performance. This contradicts the findings of Fatoki (2014). It is furthermore concluded that generic skill is the most important predictor of firm performance among the predictor variables of the study. The study, therefore, recommends that managers of firms should always foster good relationship among the employee in their firms. In addition, managers should always come up with strategic goals that would be earnestly pursued by all employees of their organization as it may help boost performance. However, although technical skill does not exhibit a significant role on the performance of these firms in the current study, firm managers should not ignore it as a component of managerial competencies giving that it doesn't exert a negative influence of their performance.

6. Limitations and Direction for Further Studies

The impediment of this study is that it is concerned with small number of registered SMEs within the Federal capital territory, as such future effort may be required to so as to replicate the model on a larger sample in a different context to re-generalize the findings of this study. Finally, as the current research has been conducted as a cross-sectional study, future effort may be required to examine the relationship based on longitudinal method in order to ascertain the effects over different periods of time.

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