ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION AND PERFORMANCE OF SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES (SMES) IN ENUGU STATE

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Abstract: The study evaluated the relationship between Entrepreneurship education and Performance of the Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Enugu State. The specific objectives were to: Examine the relationship between training workshops and problem solving skills; evaluate the relationship between mentorship and reduction of unemployment and ascertain the relationship between opportunity evaluation and the number of business start-ups by SMEs in Enugu State. The area of the study comprised staff SMEs in Enugu State metropolis. The study used the descriptive survey design approach. A total population of three hundred and twenty (320), staff was used. The whole population was used due to small size.. Two hundred and eighty two (282) staff returned the questionnaire accurately filled. Data were presented and analyzed by mean score and standard deviation using Sprint Likert Scale. The hypotheses were analyzed using Pearson correlation coefficient (r) statistical tool. The findings indicated that training workshops had direct positive relationship with problem solving skills, r $(95, n = 282) = .484 < .782, p < 0.05$.; mentorship had direct positive relationship with the reduction of unemployment r $(95, n = 282) = .511 < .730, p < 0.05$. and opportunity evaluation had direct positive relationship with the number of business startups by SMEs in Enugu State, Nigeria r $(95, n = 282) = .515 < .760, p < 0.05$. The study concluded that training workshops, mentorship and opportunity evaluation had significant positive relationship with problem solving skills, number of business start-ups and reduction of unemployment of SMEs in Enugu State, Nigeria. The study recommended among others that the management of Small and medium enterprises should frequently send their staff on training to empower them for organizational duties for the retention of small and medium scale enterprised members in Nigeria.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship, education, Performance, Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), training workshops, mentorship and opportunity evaluation

1.1 INTRODUCTION

It is conceived that education is capable of bringing about the desired socio-economic and political changes in the country (Oboreh & Nnebe, 2019). The recent call for the inclusion of Entrepreneurship Education in tertiary educational institutions in Nigeria is an indication of its importance to employment creation; as Nigeria continues to turn out graduates from our various institutions that are hardly self-reliant but solely dependent on white collar

jobs for sustenance because they lack adequate skills that will make them function effectively and efficiently towards the development of the economy (Oboreh & Nnebe, 2019).

Entrepreneurship education is concerned with fostering creative skills that can be applied in practices, education, and environments supporting innovation (Gundry, Gundry, Ofstein and Kickul, 2014). Entrepreneurial ability involves adaptive behaviors and strategies to influence others' actions in relational contexts (Tocher, Oswald and Shook, 2012), thereby driving innovation and bringing high returns. The entrepreneurship framework by Bacigalupo, Kampylis, Punie, and Brande, 2016) considers opportunity identification, entrepreneurial skills, and action as three key areas of entrepreneurial competence. Studies have shown that political skills can help entrepreneurs feel a sense of confidence and control over their work environment. They are likely to be engaged confidently in the dynamics of the environment, and effectively alter attitudes and behaviors to adapt to uncertain conditions with political skills said to explain how individuals recognize opportunities (McAllister, Parker, Perrewé, and Ferris, 2016). The small and medium enterprises(SMEs) with highly developed political skills can effectively integrate existing resources, accurately identify and interpret social cues from the environment, and gradually become a major force in technology and product innovation (Wei, Liu and Sha, 2019).

Entrepreneurship education seeks to provide with the knowledge, skills and motivation to encourage entrepreneurial success in a variety of settings. Variations of entrepreneurship education are offered at all levels of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) through vocational acquisitions Centres established in various parts of state (Paolucci, Sansone and Fiore, 2019). Entrepreneurship education focuses on the development of skills or attributes that enable the realization of opportunity, where management education is focused on the best way to operate existing hierarchies (Miron-Shatz, Shatz, Becker, Patel and Eysenbach, 2014). It is as result of this that led to the study Entrepreneurship education and Performance of the Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Enugu State.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Entrepreneurial education equips the Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) or individuals the ability to recognize commercial opportunities, self-esteem, knowledge and skills to act on them. It gives opportunity recognition, commercializing a concept, managing resources, and initiating a business venture. With constant advances in technology, new jobs being created, and the need to continually innovate to stand out, there are plenty of opportunities for SMEs to take advantage of their entrepreneurial skill set in and out of the classroom. Encouraging SMEs to pursue entrepreneurship is one thing, but teaching them how to put their entrepreneurial mindset to work is the first step in helping to create a better tomorrow.

Given the challenges entrepreneurs face in a developing economy which Enugu, Nigeria are not exceptional such as challenges within the industry, government policy inconsistencies and corruption, infrastructural deficit and technology deficit have resulted to lack of training, poor mentorship and opportunity evaluation. This hinders the integration of entrepreneurial competencies into technical SMEs programs. Nigeria has concentrated more on teaching knowledge and skills. Products of these training are expected to be engaged in either self-employment or being employed. Unfortunate, Nigeria including Enugu is characterized by high levels of youth restiveness, unemployment, poverty and crime. The challenges if not solved might lead to poor problem solving skills, unemployment, and low number of business startups, poor remuneration for staff, etc. Based on these, the study

examined Entrepreneurship Education and Performance of the Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Enugu State.

1.3 Objectives of the study

The main objective of the study was to evaluate the relationship between Entrepreneurship Education and Performance of the Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Enugu State. The specific objectives were to:

    i.   Examine the relationship between training workshops and problem solving skills by SMEs in Enugu state, Nigeria

    ii.   Evaluate the relationship between training workshops mentorship and reduction of unemployment by SMEs in Enugu state, Nigeria

    iii.   Ascertain the relationship between opportunity evaluation and the number of business start ups by SMEs in Enugu state

1.4 Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study

    i.   What is the relationship between training workshops and problem solving skills by SMEs in Enugu state, Nigeria?

    ii.   What is the relationship between mentorship and reduction of unemployment by SMEs in Enugu state, Nigeria?

    iii.   What is the relationship between opportunity evaluation and the number of business start ups by SMEs in Enugu state?

1.5 Statement of the Hypotheses

The following Hypotheses guided the study

    i.   Training workshops has relationship with problem solving skills by SMEs in Enugu state, Nigeria

    ii.   Mentorship has relationship with the reduction of unemployment by SMEs in Enugu state, Nigeria

    iii.   Opportunity evaluation has relationship with the number of business start ups by SMEs in Enugu state

Review of the Related Literature

2.1 Conceptual Review

2.1.1 Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship is the ability and readiness to develop, organize and run a business enterprise, along with any of its uncertainties in order to make a profit. The most prominent example of entrepreneurship is the starting of new businesses (Adam, Drury and Munichiello, 2022). Entrepreneurship that proves to be successful in taking on the risks of creating a startup is rewarded with profits, fame, and continued growth opportunities. Entrepreneurship that fails results in losses and less prevalence in the markets for those involved. Entrepreneurship is highly risky but also can be highly rewarding, as it serves to generate economic wealth, growth, and innovation. Entrepreneurship is one of the resources economists categorize as integral to production, the other three being land/natural resources, labor, and capital. An entrepreneur combines the first three of these to manufacture goods or provide services. They typically create a business plan, hire labor, acquire resources and financing, and provide leadership and management for the business (Adam et al., 2022).

2.1.2 Education

Education is a purposeful activity directed at achieving certain aims, such as transmitting knowledge or fostering skills and character traits. These aims may include the development of understanding, rationality, kindness, and honesty. Today, educational goals increasingly encompass new ideas such as the liberation of learners, skills needed for modern society, empathy, and complex vocational skills (King, 2011). Education is essentially a process of growth and development which goes on throughout life. Education is the modification of behavior (Kolangi, 2014).Scope of education is as vast as life itself. There is no aspect or dimension of life which is not covered under education. In fact, all education is life and all life is education.

2.1.3 Entrepreneurship education

Entrepreneurship education is viewed as an attempt to create value through recognition of business opportunities, communicative, and management skills to mobilize human, financial and material resources necessary to bring a project to function (Koa and Stevenson, 2020). The entrepreneurship education is a relatively new phenomenon in Nigerian higher education institutions. This occur when the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) adopted small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) as the building block of the country's economy and the right entrepreneurs to realize the objective of setting up small and medium scale enterprises were not available despite the existence of millions of unemployed youths, including higher institution graduates who regrettably, do not have the requisite skills and experiences for entrepreneurship in the country (Nwekeaku, 2013). Responding to the need to produce workers with the necessary entrepreneurial skills and experiences, the FGN directed all higher education institutions in the country to run entrepreneurship studies programme as a compulsory course for all students irrespective of their disciplines with effect from 2007/2008 academic session (Sanusi *et al*, 2017).

2.1.4 Components of Entrepreneurship education

2.1.4.1 Training workshops

Training is the act of providing information and instruction to someone. It is the act of teaching and or developing skills, knowledge, etc. in a student or individual. A training workshop is a type of interactive training where participants carry out a number of training activities rather than passively listen to a lecture or presentation. Broadly, two types of workshops exist: A general workshop is put on for a mixed audience, and a closed workshop is tailored towards meeting the training needs of a specific group. Training and workshops are common in the arsenal of a trainer who aims to provide instruction and training to recruits. The purpose of training is to improve one's capability, capacity, productivity and performance. Many trades, occupations or professions, require basic initial training. A workshop is an interactive meeting in which a group of people goes through a series of activities to achieve to solve a problem or work on a project. Workshops are often led by a facilitator and can range from a couple of hours to multiple days (Wirtz, 2022).

2.1.4.2 Mentorship

Mentoring plays major role in updating the competencies (that is knowledge, attitude and skills) of a beginning entrepreneur. It helps in creating insight into current practices and also in creating awareness of the different issues in the profession. The role of a business mentor is to assist and offer direction to their mentees, helping them run and grow their business and encouraging them to develop the skills they need to be successful. The advice comes from the mentor's own knowledge and experience, which is extremely valuable. The relation of mentoring is a win-win one, with advantages for both parties: mentee and men-tor. Mentoring transmit and/or complete competences, skills and abilities that are not acquired through the classical education system. The paper

presents practical tips to construct and enforce a productive mentoring system, starting with the mentor(s) selection to the outputs and process evaluation,(GillichandCristian,*2014*).

2.1.4.3 Opportunity Evaluation

Opportunity evaluation is essentially a process of judgment based on cognition (Shepherd, McMullen, and Jennings, 2007; Wood and McKelvie, 2015). Opportunity evaluation is strongly affected by how entrepreneurs interpret. Opportunity recognition is an essential skill for an entrepreneur to have. It encourages people and businesses to develop new products and skills and improve those that already exist. Entrepreneurs with high opportunity recognition skills can create new products that satisfy the existing market. Opportunity evaluation, an essential inflection point (Scheaf, Loignon, Webb, Heggestad, and Wood, 2019) is crucial for entrepreneurs to determine whether to further develop and exploit opportunities, switch to alternative opportunities, or give up entrepreneurial actions completely (Wood and McKinley, 2010; Gruber et al., 2015)

2.1.5 Performance

The efficiency of the organization's top management team is measured by the performance of the company hence reflecting the role of every individual working in the company and performing a particular task assigned to him. Hence performance is the indicator how efficiently the organization is managed and how effectively and efficiently the human and other resources are utilized in the firm. There are two types of firm performance financial and non-financial (Eneizan, Wahab and Bustaman, 2015). Organizational performance is the capacity in what a firm can work and achieve a particular target for the profit. The persistence of evaluating the performance is to acquire beneficial info regarding the cash and fund flow of the firm, the utilization of funds, effectiveness, and efficiency. As well as the info can also help managers in optimal decision making (Wahab, Obaid, Zainon and Eneizan, 2016).

2.1.6 Components of Performance used in the study

2.1.6.1 Problem solving skills

Problem-solving skills are the ability to identify problems, brainstorm and analyze answers, and implement the best solutions. Problem-solving enables us to identify and exploit opportunities in the environment and exert (some level of) control over the future. Problem solving skills and the problem-solving process are a critical part of daily life both as individuals and organizations. Problem-solving is the process of observing what is going on in your environment; identifying things that could be changed or improved; diagnosing why the current state is the way it is and the factors and forces that influence it; developing approaches and alternatives to influence change; making decisions about which alternative to select; taking action to implement the changes; and observing impact of those actions in the environment (Stottler and Tregoe, 2023).

2.1.6.2 Reduction of unemployment

Unemployment is a term referring to individuals who are employable and actively seeking a job but are unable to find a job. Included in this group are those people in the workforce who are working but do not have an appropriate job. Usually measured by the unemployment rate, which is dividing the number of unemployed people by the total number of people in the workforce, unemployment serves as one of the indicators of a country's economic status (CFI, 2022). Unemployed workers must maintain at least subsistence consumption during their period of unemployment. This means that an economy with high unemployment has lower output without a proportional

decline in the need for basic consumption. High, persistent unemployment can signal serious distress in an economy and even lead to social and political upheaval (Hayes, Anderson & Perez, 2022).

2.1.6.3 Number of business start ups

A startup is a company that's in the initial stages of business. Grant, James and Logan, (2022) noted that the term startup refers to a company in the first stages of operations. Startups are founded by one or more entrepreneurs who want to develop a product or service for which they believe there is demand. These companies generally start with high costs and limited revenue, which is why they look for capital from a variety of sources such as venture capitalists. Baldridge and Curry (2022) also opined that startups are young companies founded to develop a unique product or service, bring it to market and make it irresistible and irreplaceable for customers. Rooted in innovation, a startup aims to remedy deficiencies of existing products or create entirely new categories of goods and services, disrupting entrenched ways of thinking and doing business for entire industries.

2.1.7 Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)

The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) has through its various circulars and intervention fund programmes generally defined Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) as entities with asset base of N5 million and not more than N500 million excluding land and buildings with employees between 11 and 200. Small Enterprises: between 10 and 49 employees. Medium Enterprises: between 50 and 249 employees. https://highnetresources.com/2017/08/31/definition-of-small-and-medium-scale-enterprises-sme .In this paper, we looked at SMEs who have graduated from an apprenticeship with above 5 Million naira assets base and between 10 and 150 employees and how they started up. People who got the Trade secrets from their masters. This could include formulae and recipes, proprietary databases, business processes and methods, information about costs, pricing, margins, overhead, manufacturing processes, proprietary computer software programs, customer lists, and strategic plans and marketing programs. (World intellectual property organization, 2021).

2.2 Theoretical Framework

The Joseph Schumpeter's Theory of entrepreneurship guided the study:

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Joseph Schumpeter's theory of entrepreneurship was developed in the year 1942. G.F. Papanek (1962) and J.R. Harris (1970) conclude that entrepreneurship is an important factor that influences entrepreneurial activity. Economic gains spontaneously develop the desire to pursue diverse entrepreneurial ventures among entrepreneurs. The relationship between a person's intrinsic motivation and desired economic gains has a profound influence on the development of entrepreneurial skills. Whenever certain economic conditions are favorable, entrepreneurial growth and economic growth take place. Entrepreneurial incentives are a major motivator for entrepreneurial activities. Speaking of innovations, he noted the new combination of factors of production, Schumpeter gave the entrepreneur the role of innovator, who was not just an ordinary executive, but an innovator (Daniel and David, 2021).Schumpeter starts with the assumption of a purely competitive economy in a stationary state. In such an economy, there is no uncertainty, no economic profit, stable money supply, stable income velocity of money, stable price level, and no economic growth.

2.3 Empirical Review

2.3.1 The relationship between training workshops and problem solving skills by SMEs in Enugu state, Nigeria

Ezenwakwelu, Egbosionu, Benardine and Okwo (2019) carried out a study on the Apprenticeship Training Effects On Entrepreneurship Development in Developing Economies. The study examines the effects of apprenticeship training on entrepreneurship development in developing economies: A case study of Nigerian apprenticeship system. The study seeks to ascertain how apprentices acquire technical and entrepreneurial skills for self employment; assess the extent to which apprentices acquire entrepreneurial skills and knowledge for entrepreneurship development, and also identify the challenges encountered by apprentices in course of skill acquisition. The study adopted the survey design and interview apprentices in specific vocations. The sampled data were analyzed using Chi-square technique on Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS v.20). Experts from the academia and industry validated the instrument. The results reveal that: apprentices acquire technical and entrepreneurial skills for self-employment through formal and informal apprenticeship training systems; Lack of qualified manpower, insufficient training tools, inadequate infrastructure facilities and lack of start-up capital impede the course of skill acquisition and apprentices do ultimately acquire sufficient entrepreneurial skills and knowledge for entrepreneurship development.

Emezue, and Onwujekwe, (2020) carried out a study on the Effect of Entrepreneurship Education on Performance of Small and Medium Scale Enterprise in Enugu State. The study focuses on effect of entrepreneurship education on performance of small and medium scale enterprise in Enugu State, Nigeria. The study sought to determine effect of employee training on performance of small and medium scale enterprise in Enugu State and ascertain the factors hindering Entrepreneurship education in Nigeria. The study had a population size of 2368, out of which a sample size of 341 was realized using taro yamene's formula at 5% error tolerance and 95% level of confidence. Instrument used for data collection was primarily questionnaire and interview. Out of 341 copies of the questionnaire that were distributed, 310 copies were returned while 31 were not returned. The descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The hypotheses were tested using Pearson chi-square and simple linear regression statistical tools. The findings indicated that employee training significantly and positively improve small and medium scale enterprise in Enugu State ($r = .746$; $F= 467.493$; $t = 6.019$; $P < 0.05$). Inadequate infrastructure, insecurity and lack of training/vocational facilities are the factors that hinder entrepreneurship education in Nigeria ($X^2 c = 39.016 > (X^2 t = 9.49$; $p <0.05$). The study concluded that entrepreneurship plays a crucial role in the economic growth and development of any nation.

Ajike, Ejike, and Chukwujama, (2021) carried out a study on the Maximizing Small Businesses in Nigeria through the Application of Lean Principles. This study was on Maximizing Small Businesses in Nigeria through the application of Lean Principles with special reference to small sized printing press in Enugu State. The study took a critical look at growth trend among small businesses in terms of their survival strategy, potentials and contributions to industrial development against the backdrop of government intervention programs on small and medium enterprises. The study explored the impact of lean principles in terms of value addition and continuous improvement of work process for the elimination of operational wastes in other to achieve operational efficiency among small businesses in Nigeria. The study adopted a survey design using forty small sized printing businesses in Enugu State. Census sampling method was used. The hypotheses were tested using Pearson's Moment

Correlation Coefficient. The study concluded that wastes reduction principles embedded in lean management are necessary for the efficiency and sustainability of all businesses.

2.3.2 The relationship between mentorship and reduction of unemployment by SMEs in Enugu state, Nigeria

Duru and Anyanwu (2019) conducted a study on Entrepreneurship in Small and Medium Enterprises: A Catalyst for Capacity Building and Sustainable Youths Employment Generation in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, Nigeria. This study investigated whether entrepreneurship in Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) can be a facilitator for capacity building and sustainable youth's employment generation in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, Nigeria. The study used the survey research design. A structured questionnaire was employed for the collection of data. The views of 100 SMEs entrepreneur selected through the purposive sampling technique were elicited on whether entrepreneurship in SMEs can promote capacity building and sustainable youth's employment generation in Abuja. The results showed that that entrepreneurship in SMEs can facilitate capacity building and sustain employment generation among youths in Abuja. However, the study revealed that entrepreneurship in SMEs can contribute effectively to the provision of capacity building and sustainable job for youths in Abuja. The finding revealed that access to finance was identified as the greatest barrier facing SMEs entrepreneur in the generation of sustainable employment for youths. Furthermore, the main channels through which SMEs entrepreneur create job for youths in the study area were becoming drivers of innovation and becoming the engine of economic growth. The results showed that entrepreneurship in SMEs is a catalyst for capacity building and sustainable youth's employment generation in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja.

Rosman, Ahmad, Norlaila, Nik, and Najihah (2020) conducted a study on the Impact of Entrepreneur Education on Business Performance. The importance of entrepreneurial role in supporting the country's economic growth has been recognized by experts in the field of entrepreneurship. Today the importance of entrepreneurship has become increasingly important where it has turned into a priority for developing countries including Malaysia. Now, there are many higher educational institutions that are aware of the importance of applying entrepreneurial skills in higher education. Therefore, public universities have to implement entrepreneurship education to encourage students to venture into entrepreneurship. This study examined the effects of entrepreneurship education in influencing business performance among ITM/UiTM graduates. A total of 250 graduates from various businesses in Malaysia participated voluntarily in this study by completing survey questionnaires. A series of statistical analysis were applied including descriptive analysis, reliability analysis, correlation analysis, and multiple regressions analysis using the SPSS software. The results of the study indicate that university curriculum, relational factor, society factor, and entrepreneurship values were found to have significant influences on business performance. However, the results revealed that the university role has no significant influence on business performance. The findings of this study contribute to entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurship literature by adding new empirical evidence on the relationship between university curriculum, relational factors, society factor, and entrepreneurship values on business performance. In terms of managerial implications, the findings help HEI's in organizing entrepreneurship education dimensions, particularly in strategizing, marketing, decision making, and positioning themselves in the business industry.

2.3.3 The relationship between opportunity evaluation and the number of business start ups by SMEs in Enugu state

Ndubuisi-Okolo, Attah and Chime (2020) conducted a study on Entrepreneurship Education and Managerial Competence among SMES in Anambra State, Nigeria. Business activities among traders in Anambra State seem to be changing from what it was formerly known for especially the Small Scale businesses. This is because of globalization, inadequate financial resources, poor business connections, paucity of experience, inability to cope with competition, poor sales and high stock of inventory, high operating costs as a result of poor infrastructure, inefficient management, poor business education. This study set out to ascertain the extent to which entrepreneurship education affects managerial competence among traders in Anambra State; to ascertain the effect of participating in business workshop on performance of SMES in Anambra State; and to determine the effect of acquired technical know-how on the turnover of SMES in Anambra State. Research questions and hypotheses were set in line with the objectives of the study. The study adopted a survey research design and a sample size of 196 respondents were drawn from a total population of 386 SMEs of the two selected cities in Anambra State. Although 180 copies of the questionnaire were correctly filled, returned and used for the analysis. Descriptive statistics was used for the analysis. Findings showed that there is a significant positive relationship between performance of SMES and entrepreneurship education as indicated by r- value of $= 0.79$ at 0.05 level of significance. Also, acquired technical know-how has improved traders' business turnover showing a value of $r = 0.75$ at 0.05 level of significance. The study concluded that entrepreneurship education is the major ingredient that traders in Anambra State need in order to improve their business, technical know-how, mindset, turnover and other aspects of their businesses to achieve maximum profit.

Onyishi, (2021) established a study on the Entrepreneurship Education: An Imperative for Sustainable Development in Enugu State. The article focused on achieving sustainable development in Enugu State through entrepreneurship education. The following concepts were clearly discussed namely; entrepreneurship education, entrepreneur, sustainable development, entrepreneurship education and sustainable development in Enugu State, strategies for effective entrepreneurship education in Enugu State were also discussed. The research identified that although some strategies emphasize on entrepreneurship skills, there is need for a comprehensive orientation of institutions with the sole aim of improving the entrepreneurship mentality of the youths in Enugu State. The aftermath of this is the generation of employment, increased output through innovations, efficient utilization of available resources and the facilitation in the transfer of technological advancement to mention a few have been identified as the contributions of entrepreneurship to the development of a state.

Ugwu (2021) conducted a study on a Role of Entrepreneurship Growth on the Performance of Small and Medium Enterprises in South-East, Nigeria. The study evaluated the role of Entrepreneurship Growth on the performance of Small and Medium Enterprises in South East, Nigeria. The specific objectives of the study were to: examine the effect of identification of market opportunities on the profitability of Small and Medium Enterprises in South East, Nigeria and evaluate the effect of employment generation on the productivity of Small and Medium Enterprises in South East, Nigeria. The study used the survey approach. The primary sources were personal interview and the administration of questionnaire. Purposive sampling method was used to select a total sample size of ten (10) firms. The population of the study was two thousand five hundred forty (2540) staff. A stratified sampling method was adopted. The adequate sample size of 334 was determined using Freund and William's statistic formula. 297 staff returned the questionnaire and accurately filled. That gave 88 percent response rate. The validity of the instrument was tested using content analysis and the result was good. The reliability was tested

using the Pearson correlation coefficient (r). It gave a reliability coefficient of 0.80 which was also good. Data was presented and analyzed by mean score (3.0 and above agreed while below 3.0 disagreed) and standard deviation using Sprint Likert Scale. The hypotheses were analyzed using Z-test statistics tool. The findings indicated that Identification of market opportunities on the profitability had positive effect on Small and Medium Enterprises in South East, Nigeria Z (95, n = 294) = 5.283 < 6.900, p > 0.05 and Employment generation on the productivity had positive effect on Small and Medium Enterprises in South East, Nigeria Z (95, n = 294) = 5.283 < 6.900, p > 0.05. The study concluded that identification of market opportunities and Employment generation had positive effect on the profitability and productivity of small and Medium Enterprises in South East, Nigeria.

Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The design employed in the course of the study was a survey method; a survey research design is a study where peculiar character of a known or identified population is studied through a sample, which is deemed to be representative of the population.

3.2 Area of the Study

The study focused on Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Enugu state. The ten (10) selected (SMEs) under study were HIANS Energy Solutions Limited, No. 1 Bank Avenue, off Okpara Avenue; Noche Computers And Technologies, 76 Ogui Rd Opposite Ogui Police Station, Enugu; Magnus Media Limited, No 26 First Avenue off Damijah, Enugu; Digimed Solutions Limited, 1 Nwodo Street, G.R.A, Enugu; Microcredit Solutions Limited, 174, Agbani Road, Enugu; Pure Strem Table Water, Ebonypaint Road Gariki Enugu,Virgo Table Water, Emene Road Enugu, Franklins Farm Produce Ltd, 11 Catholic Avenue, Abakpa Nike, Enugu, Roban stores (Bisala road, Independence layout and Spar Enugu located at Nkpokiti Road, Off Presidential Road, Opp Okpara Square. These organizations with minimum of 10 million naria capital based and high number of staff were chosen. They also engage in entrepreneurship education with a minimum of 15 staff.

3.3 Population for the Study

The population of the study was three hundred and twenty (320) comprising of the management, and senior staff of the organizations under study was used.

Table 3.1 Population Distribution

	Firms	Staff Categories			
		Mgt	Senior	Total	%
1.	HIANS Energy Solutions	**2**	28	30	9
2.	Noche Computers And Techno	5	12	14	4
3.	Magnus Media Limited	4	34	38	12
4.	Roban stores	7	50	57	18
5.	Digimed Solutions Limited	4	24	28	9
6.	Microcredit Solutions Limited	4	38	42	13
7.	Pure Strem Table Water	2	14	16	5
8.	Virgo Table Water,	3	17	20	6
9.	Franklins Farm Produce Ltd	4	26	30	9

10	Spar		12	28	40	13
	Total		**49**	**271**	**320**	**100**

Source: office of the SMEs under study, 2023

3.4 Sample Size Determination

For the purpose of the study the whole population of three hundred and twenty (320) was used due to the small number.

3.5 Instruments for Data Collection

The main instrument used in the data collection was the questionnaire. It was designed to contain both structured and unstructured questions using 5 point liker-scale. The structured questions offered the respondents a range of optional answers from which a choice was made.

3.6 Validity of the Instrument

In order to ensure the validity of the instrument, proper face to face validation was used. The study made use of supervisor and two other experts from the department.

3.8   Reliability of Research Instruments

Cronbach Alpha Coefficient testing tool was adopted for the study in which 20 copies of 15 items questionnaire were distributed to the ten selected organisations; two copies to each firm. (Refer to table 3.3a & 3.3b). The reliability result indicated 0.884, implying a high degree of items consistency.

Table 3.3a Cronbach Alpha Reliability Test

		N	%
Cases	Valid	15	100.0
	Excluded[a]	0	.0
	Total	15	100.0

a.   Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Table 3.3b Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N0 of Items
.887	.884	15

SPSS 20.0 Output

3.9   Method of Data Analysis

Data was presented in frequency tables. Data was presented and analyzed by means of frequency table using Sprint Likert Scale. Data was presented in frequency tables. Data was presented and analyzed by means of frequency table using Sprint Likert Scale. Mean score and standard deviation were used to analysis the data. The hypotheses were analyzed using Pearson coefficient correlation (r) statistics tool. Three hundred and twenty (320) questionnaire were distributed and two hundred and eighty two (282) was returned. Showing high returned rates of

4.0   Data Presentation and Analyses

4.1. The relationship between training workshops and problem solving skills by SMEs in Enugu State, Nigeria

Table 4.1.1: Responses on the relationship between training workshops and problem solving skills by SMEs in Enugu State, Nigeria

		5 SA	4 A	3 N	2 DA	1 SD	∑FX	-X	SD	Decision
1	The provision of instruction in workshop enables SMEs to analyse problems	580 116 41.1	320 80 28.4	48 16 5.7	29 29 10.3	41 41 14.5	1018 282 100%	3.61	1.454	Agree
2	The improving of one's capability helps identifying problems severity	465 93 33.0	320 80 28.4	75 25 8.9	36 18 6.4	66 66 23.4	962 282 100%	3.41	1.563	Agree
3	Assessing the impact of alternative solutions were enhanced through training	485 97 34.4	396 99 35.1	78 26 9.2	40 20 7.1	40 40 14.2	1039 282 100%	3.68	1.380	Agree
4	Improving capability through series of activities helps the SMEs to work more efficiently with clients	555 111 46.0	364 91 19.9	21 7 13.0	84 42 8.1	31 31 13.0	1055 282 100%	3.78	1.394	Agree
5	An interactive meeting enhances competencies and creativity	525 105 37.2	364 91 37.3	54 18 6.4	40 20 7.1	48 48 17.0	1031 282 100%	3.66	1.463	Agree
	Total Grand mean and standard deviation							**3.628**	**1.4508**	

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 4.1.1, 196 respondents out of 282 representing 69.5 percent agreed that the uncompressing devotion of leaders have giving rise to job duties on time with mean score 3.61 and standard deviation of 1.454. Commitments to the creation of value by the leaders have added to staying on the job throughout the day 173 respondents representing 61.4 percent agreed with mean score of 3.41 and standard deviation of 1.563. Leader who becomes a solution provider regardless of the situation 196 respondents representing 69.5 percent agreed with mean score of 3.68 and standard deviation of 1.380. The ability of leader to make solid decisions makes it earlier for completion of duties properly 202 respondents representing 65.9 percent agreed with mean score of 3.78 and 1.394. A leader of role model sets pace where others emulates and attend all scheduled meetings 196 respondents representing 74.5 percent agreed with a mean score of 3.66 and standard deviation 1.463

4.2. The relationship between mentorship and reduction of unemployment by SMEs in Enugu state, Nigeria

Table 4.2.1: Responses on the relationship between mentorship and reduction of unemployment by SMEs in Enugu State, Nigeria

		5 SA	4 A	3 N	2 DA	1 SD	∑FX	-X	SD	Decision
1	An effective mentorship facilities the development of independence of SMEs	515 103 36.5	452 113 40.1	21 7 2.5	44 44 15.6	15 15 5.3	1047 282 100%	3.71	1.217	Agree
2	There is upward mobility with mentorship of the SMEs	420 84 29.8	452 113 40.1	3 1 .4	76 38 13.5	46 46 16.3	921 282 100%	3.27	1.449	Agree
3	Career mentoring enhances competitiveness of the SMEs or individuals terms of necessary knowledge and skills	460 92 36.0	460 115 41.6	18 6 6.8	80 40 2.5	29 29 13.0	1047 282 100%	3.71	1.328	Agree
4	Skilled and ability mentored person learns to recognize and achieve his goals in the labour market	485 97 34.4	376 94 33.3	69 23 8.2	12 6 2.1	62 62 22.0	1004 282 100%	3.56	1.518	Agree
5	Mentors empower the SMEs to find their own solution to a challenge	600 120 42.6	308 77 27.3	42 14 5.0	86 43 15.2	28 28 9.9	1064 282 100%	3.77	1.391	Agree
	Total Grand mean and standard deviation							**3.604**	**1.3806**	

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 4.2.1, 216 respondents out of 282 representing 76.6 percent agreed that the uncompressing devotion of leaders have giving rise to job duties on time with mean score 3.71 and standard deviation of 1.217. Commitments to the creation of value by the leaders have added to staying on the job throughout the day 197 respondents representing 69.9 percent agreed with mean score of 3.27 and standard deviation of 1.449. Leader who becomes a solution provider regardless of the situation 207 respondents representing 77.6 percent agreed with mean score of 3.71 and standard deviation of 1.328. The ability of leader to make solid decisions makes it earlier for completion of duties properly 191 respondents representing 67.7 percent agreed with mean score of 3.56 and 1.518. A leader of role model sets pace where others emulates and attend all scheduled meetings 197 respondents representing 69.9 percent agreed with a mean score of 3.77 and standard deviation 1.391

4.3. The relationship between opportunity evaluation and the number of business start ups by SMEs in Enugu State

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Table 4.3.1: Responses on the relationship between opportunity evaluation and the number of business start ups by SMEs in Enugu State

		5 SA	4 A	3 N	2 DA	1 SD	∑FX	-X	SD	Decision
1	Opportunity evaluation offer valuable opportunities and determine ideas worth pursuing	465 93 33.0	350 90 31.9	36 12 4.3	30 30 10.6	57 57 20.2	938 282 100%	3.33	1.530	Agree
2	Evaluating ideas and opportunity gives SMEs a better chance of achieving commercial success	605 121 42.9	328 82 29.1	42 14 5.0	26 13 4.6	52 52 18.4	1053 282 100%	3.73	1.503	Agree
3	There is potential competitive advantage and firm's gains for the undeveloped with opportunity evaluation	545 109 38.7	400 100 35.5	24 8 2.8	58 29 10.3	36 36 12.8	1063 282 100%	3.77	1.389	Agree
4	Ability to manage cash flow is ensured with evaluating an opportunity	625 125 44.3	304 76 27.0	21 7 2.5	86 43 15.2	31 31 11.0	1067 282 100%	3.78	1.424	Agree
5	A effective market research is investable with evaluating opportunity	560 112 39.7	364 91 32.3	45 15 5.3	50 25 8.9	39 39 13.8	1054 282 100%	3.74	1.412	Agree
	Total Grand mean and standard deviation							**3.67**	**1.4516**	

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 4.3.1, 183 respondents out of 282 representing 64.9 percent agreed that the uncompressing devotion of leaders have giving rise to job duties on time with mean score 3.33 and standard deviation of 1.530. Commitments

Correlations

		The provision of instruction in workshop enables SMEs to analse problems	The improving of one's capability helps identifying problems severity	Assessing the impact of alternative solutions were enhanced through training	Improving capability through series of activities helps the SMEs to work more efficiently with clients	An interactive meeting enhances competencies and creativity
The provision of instruction in workshop enables SMEs to analse problems	Pearson Correlation	1	.698**	.679**	.595**	.613**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	282	282	282	282	282
The improving of one's capability helps identifying problems severity	Pearson Correlation	.698**	1	.602**	.487**	.484**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000	.000
	N	282	282	282	282	282
Assessing the impact of alternative solutions were enhanced through training	Pearson Correlation	.679**	602**	1	.599**	.782**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000	.000
	N	282	282	282	282	282
Improving capability through series of activities helps the SMEs to work more efficiently with clients	Pearson Correlation	.595**	.487**	.599**	1	.666**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		.000
	N	282	282	282	282	282

An interactive meeting enhances competencies and creativity	Pearson Correlation	.613**	.484**	.782**	.666**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	282	282	282	282	282

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

An effective mentorship facilities the development of independence of SMEs	Pearson Correlation	1	.730**	.730**	.595**	.598**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	282	282	282	282	282
There is upward mobility with mentorship of the SMEs	Pearson Correlation	.730**	1	.746**	.604**	.606**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000	.000
	N	282	282	282	282	282
Career mentoring enhances competitiveness of the SMEs or individuals terms of necessary knowledge and skills	Pearson Correlation	.730**	.746**	1	.603**	.583**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000	.000
	N	282	282	282	282	282
Skilled and ability mentored person learns to recognise and achieve his goals in the labour market	Pearson Correlation	.595**	.604**	.603**	1	.511**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		.000
	N	282	282	282	282	282
Mentors empower the SMEs to find	Pearson Correlation	.598**	.606**	.583**	.511**	1

their own Sig. (2-tailed) solution to a challenge N	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	282	282	282	282	282

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

Table 4.4.2. Showed the Pearson correlation matrix on mentorship and the reduction of unemployment showing the correlation coefficients, significant values and the number of cases. The correlation coefficient shows .511 <.730. This value indicates that correlation is significant at 0.05 level (2 tailed) and implies that mentorship had relationship with the reduction of unemployment by SMEs in Enugu state, Nigeria (r= .511 <.730). The computed correlations coefficient is greater than the table value of r = .000 with at alpha level for a two-tailed test (r= .511 <.730. p <.05).

Decision Rule

The decision rule is to accept the null hypothesis if the computed r is less than the tabulated r otherwise reject the null hypothesis.

Decision

Since the computed (r = .511 <.730.) is greater than the table value of .000, we reject the null hypothesis. Therefore, we concluded that mentorship had relationship with the reduction of unemployment by SMEs in Enugu State, Nigeria as reported in the probability value of (r= .511 <.730., p<.05).

4.4.3 Hypothesis Three: Opportunity evaluation has relationship with the number of business start ups by SMEs in Enugu state

		Opportunity evaluation offer valuable opportunities and determine ideas worth pursuing	Evaluating ideas and opportunity gives SMEs a better chance of achieving commmercial success	There is potential competitive advantage and firm's gains for the undeveloped with oppportunity evaluation	Ability to manage cash flow is ensured with evaluating an opportunity	A effective market research is invetable with evaluating opportunity
Opportunity evaluation offer valuable	Pearson Correlation	1	.582**	.540**	.760**	.515**

opportunities and determine ideas worth pursuing	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	282	282	282	282	282
Evaluating ideas and opportunity gives SMEs a better chance of achieving commmercial success	Pearson Correlation	.582**	1	.576**	.538**	.663**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000	.000
	N	282	282	282	282	282
There is potential competitive advantage and firm's gains for the undeveloped with oppportunity evaluation	Pearson Correlation	.540**	.576**	1	.658**	.584**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000	.000
	N	282	282	282	282	282
Ability to manage cash flow is ensured with evaluating an opportunity	Pearson Correlation	.760**	.538**	.658**	1	.590**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		.000
	N	282	282	282	282	282
A effective market research is invetable with evaluating opportunity	Pearson Correlation	.515**	.663**	.584**	.590**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	282	282	282	282	282

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

Table 4.4.3. Showed the Pearson correlation matrix on opportunity evaluation and the number of business start-ups by SMEs showing the correlation coefficients, significant values and the number of cases. The correlation coefficient shows .515 <.760. This value indicates that correlation is significant at 0.05 level (2 tailed) and implies that opportunity evaluation had relationship with the number of business start-ups by SMEs in Enugu state (r= .515 <.760.). The computed correlations coefficient is greater than the table value of r = .000 with at alpha level for a two-tailed test (r= .515 <.760, p <.05).

Decision Rule

The decision rule is to accept the null hypothesis if the computed r is less than the tabulated r otherwise reject the null hypothesis.

Decision

Since the computed (r = .515 <.760.) is greater than the table value of .000, we reject the null hypothesis. Therefore, we concluded that opportunity evaluation had relationship with the number of business start-ups by SMEs in Enugu state as reported in the probability value of (r= .515 <.760., p<.05).

5.1 Summary of Findings

i. Training workshops had relationship with problem solving skills by SMEs in Enugu State, Nigeria, *r (95, n = 282) = .484 <.782, p < 0.05*.

ii. Mentorship had relationship with the reduction of unemployment by SMEs in Enugu   State,   Nigeria *r (95, n = 282) = .511 <.730, p < 0.05*.

iii. Opportunity evaluation had relationship with the number of business start ups by SMEs in   Enugu State, Nigeria *r (95, n = 282) = .515 <.760, p < 0.05*.

5.2   Conclusion

The study concluded that training workshops, mentorship and opportunity evaluation had significant relationship with the problem solving skills, the number of business start ups and reduction of unemployment by SMEs in Enugu State, Nigeria. Entrepreneurship education is concerned with fostering creative skills that can be applied in practices, education, and environments supporting innovation. Entrepreneurial ability involves adaptive behaviors and strategies to influence others' actions in relational contexts, thereby driving innovation and bringing high returns. The entrepreneurship framework by Bacigalupo, Kampylis, Punie, and Brande, 2016) considers opportunity identification, entrepreneurial skills, and action as three key areas of entrepreneurial competence.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were proffered:

1. The management of Small and medium enterprise should often allow and send their staff on training to empower them for organizational duty for the retention of small and medium scale enterprise in Nigeria.

2. There is need for mentorship to expand mentors repertoire of professional knowledge and skills through their instruction and facilitation of others. This will promote the opportunity to further develop and disseminate the wealth of talent, skill and knowledge of its employees.

For effective evaluation of potential competitive advantage and the firm's gains for the undeveloped opportunity, management should embank on opportunity evaluation as the engine of future business growth, creativity drives differentiation, and competitiveness.

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