

Entrepreneurial Competencies and Small Businesses Performance in Ebonyi State: Evidence from Networking, Risk-Taking and Managerial Competencies

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Abstract

This study examined the effect of entrepreneurial competencies on the performance of small-scale enterprises in Ebonyi State. The main objective of the study is to examine the extent to which entrepreneurial competencies influence performance of small businesses in Ebonyi State, specifically, the study sought to; ascertain the extent to which networking competence affects small business performance in Ebonyi State, to determine the extent to which risk taking competence affects small business performance in Ebonyi State, and to find out the extent to which managerial competence affects small business performance in Ebonyi State. The study was anchored on Resource Based View (RBV) theory by Edith Penrose (1959), sample size of 331 was derived from a population of 2433 using Krejcie and Morgan table 1970 and a structured questionnaire was used to elucidate data from respondents which was analyzed by regression and findings show that networking competency (NTC), and managerial competency (MGC) had P-values of 0.000, and 0.000. and coefficient of 0.324 and 0.310 respectively showing positive and significant value, but risk-taking competency (RTC) has p-value of 0.583 and coefficient of 0.034 showing positive and insignificant. The study recommended among others, small business owners should consistently maintain networking competency by creating networking opportunities with experienced managers and industry expert, Small-scale enterprise's owners/ managers should invest in leadership development programs, strategic planning workshop and communication training in other to create a conducive business environment. Finally, the study recommended that existing and aspiring entrepreneurs in Ebonyi State should aim for stronger Risk-taking competences in order to achieve positive results in small-scale enterprises sector.

Key Words; Networking Competency, Risk-Taking Competency, Managerial Competency, Performance of Small Businesses

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I. Introduction

Small businesses worldwide, particularly in developing countries, play a vital role in the economy in the areas of: employment creation, provision of manufacturing input, developing rural technology, attracting foreign exchange earnings; and generally supporting the entire economy and social service development in the country (Folorunso et al., 2015). Nigerian is a developing country endowed with abundant human and material resources. However, these resources are not put to proper use (Folorunso et al., 2015). Inflation and economic recession are the order of the day as prices continues to go up and standard of living is on the sloping-edge. Giving these, Omolomo (2015) said that the role of small business cannot be underestimated due to its significant contribution toward poverty reduction, creation of employment opportunities, growth and development of national economy, income re-distribution, wealth creation and improved standard of living of the poor who are the vast majority of Nigerian population.

The current global down turn, which was further triggered by the advent of Covid-19, resulted in fall on price of crude oil globally (Kaigama, 2023). This has resulted to shift of emphasis by the policy makers in the country to industrial sector where small businesses are crucial drivers. Due to socioeconomic importance of small businesses, its performance and efficiency is important for all types of economies, researchers and policy makers. Small-scale businesses have been recognized as critical drivers of economic growth, and employment generation

in both developed and developing economies. These businesses serve as the backbone of a lot of economies as it fosters innovation, enhancing local economic activities, and providing a platform for entrepreneurial development. In Nigeria, where unemployment and underemployment rates remain high and poses significant challenges, small-scale businesses have emerged as a vital tool for addressing these socio-economic issues. By creating job opportunities and contributing to the gross domestic product (GDP), small scale enterprises have demonstrated their potential to reduce poverty and promote inclusive economic growth. (Thomas, Abaikpa, Daniel & Akpan, 2024).

According to the International Labour Organization (ILO 2019), small and medium business account for more than 70% of employment opportunities worldwide, particularly in developing countries. In Nigeria, Small and medium enterprises represent over 90% of the industrial sector, employing a substantial portion of the workforce. These businesses provide a pathway for individuals, especially in suburban and rural areas, to escape the cycle of poverty by offering job opportunities and promoting skills development (ILO, 2019). Like other developing economies, Nigerian economy is significantly based on the operational capacity of small scale enterprises and operational capacity of small enterprises is rooted on competencies of the entrepreneurs or business owners.

Entrepreneurial competencies are the intrinsic qualities, such as specialized knowledge, motivations, self-images, qualities, social positions, and abilities that contribute to the establishment, survival, and growth of businesses (Bird, 2019). They are skills, attitudes, knowledge and behaviors that brings about creation of new enterprises where others see challenge, act on the opportunity by creating something of value or successfully initiate, start, manage and grow a business venture which could be social, cultural or commercial goods or services. Entrepreneurial competencies are important factor which improves the success of firms (Wickramaratne, Kiminami & Yagi, 2014). Sound entrepreneurial competencies are a major predictor of small and medium- sized enterprises performances, which helps to improve both the economic and social lives of the populace by creating employment. As a result, the relationship between entrepreneurial competencies and small business performance has gotten a lot of attention from academics, practitioners, government officials, and international organizations (Sallem, Nasir, Nori, & Che Kassim, 2017).

Performance according to Elger (2019) is generally to take a complex series of actions that integrate skills and knowledge to produce a valuable result. He noted that depending on the circumstance, the performer may be an individual, or a collection of people who are collaborating such as an academic department, research team, committee, student team, or a university. He further added that performance is a journey and not a destination and as such he chose to talk about 'levels of performance'. Gathungu, and Oabana, (2018) defined performance as the ability of a business to provide acceptable results and actions. It is the ability to attain a defined goal. The literature on the concept of performance is very extensive, and on this note Eniola and Entabang (2015) asserted that performance is the primary concern of corporate managers or owners. This study adopts the definition of performance by Asakania (2016) to mean how well a corporation accomplishes its stated objectives.

Over the years, small businesses that adopt good practices of entrepreneurial competencies have been seen to improve their performances because entrepreneurial competence has a significant positive effect on small business performance leading to increased profitability, growth, and sustainability. It allows entrepreneurs to identify and capitalize on opportunities, manage risks, innovate and effectively manage resources, employees and finances. Essentially, strong competencies provide the foundation for better decision- making and are a major predictor of a business' success. Many studies carried out have attested to this fact. A research conducted by Sungkawati (2019) on the impact of entrepreneurship competence on business performance in Indonesia revealed that, enterprises require entrepreneurial competencies. Kaigama (2023) who examined the influence of relationship competencies; conceptual competencies; organizing competencies; strategic competencies; commitment competencies, and learning competencies on the sustainable performance of small business in north-east Nigeria found a positive influence on small business performance. Also, Addah and Dokai-okonkwo (2024) in their study, in Delta state Nigeria, examined the effect of entrepreneurial competence on the sustainability of manufacturing SMEs with the objectives to determine the effect of strategic competency, learning competency on the sustainability of manufacturing SMEs in Delta state, found a positive relationship.

Unfortunately, the developing countries are grappling with the survival of small scale enterprises. Small enterprises still fail to sustain operations beyond five years due to low performance and inability to scale up (SMEDAN 2021). It then becomes contentious to ask whether the same positive results that were gotten from developing country will be obtained if such interrogation is executed in Ebonyi state, hence, this study investigated the effects of entrepreneurial competencies on the performances of small scale enterprises in Ebonyi state.

1.2 STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Over the years, small businesses that adopt good practices of entrepreneurial competencies have been seen to improve their performances because entrepreneurial competence has a significant positive effect on small business performance leading to increased profitability, growth, and sustainability. It allows entrepreneurs to

identify and capitalize on opportunities, manage risks, innovate and effectively manage resources, employees and finances. Essentially, strong competencies provide the foundation for better decision-making and are a major predictor of a business' success. Many studies carried out have attested to this fact. A research conducted by Sungkawati (2019) on the impact of entrepreneurship competence on business performance in Indonesia revealed that, enterprises require entrepreneurial competencies. Kaigama (2023) who examined the influence of relationship competencies; conceptual competencies; organizing competencies; strategic competencies; commitment competencies, and learning competencies on the sustainable performance of small business in north-east Nigeria found a positive influence on small business performance. Also, Addah and Dokai-okonkwo (2024) in their study, in Delta State Nigeria, examined the effect of entrepreneurial competence on the sustainability of manufacturing SMEs with the objectives to determine the effect of strategic competency, learning competency on the sustainability of manufacturing SMEs in Delta State found a positive relationship.

Studies have identified numerous entrepreneurial competencies such as opportunity competence, relationship competence, conceptual competence, organizing competence, strategic competence, commitment competence, learning competence, ethical competence and familism to have positively contributed to the survival and growth of small scale enterprises in the developed countries of the world. Unfortunately, the developing countries are grappling with the survival of small scale enterprises. Small enterprises still fail to sustain operations beyond five years due to low performance and inability to scale up (SMEDAN 2021). It then becomes contentious to ask whether the same positive results that were gotten from developing country will be obtained if such interrogation are executed in Ebonyi state hence this study to investigate whether the poor performance of SSE in the developing countries is orchestrated by lack of networking competence, risk taking competence and managerial competence.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study was to examine the effects of entrepreneurial competencies on the performances of small businesses in Ebonyi State. The specific objectives are to;

- i. Ascertain the effect of networking competency on the Performance of Small Businesses in Ebonyi State.
- ii. Examine the effect of Risk-taking Competency on the Performance of Small Businesses in Ebonyi State.
- iii. Determine the effect of Managerial Competency on the Performance of Small Businesses in Ebonyi State.

1.4 Hypotheses of the Study.

HO1. Networking competency does not influence performance of small business in Ebonyi State

HO2. Risk taking competency does not influence small business performance in Ebonyi State

HO3. Managerial competency does not influence performance of small business in Ebonyi State.

1.5 Limitations of the Study

This study was limited by the inherent weaknesses in the use of questionnaire to collect data, and by the use of only quantitative data for a human behavioural study, which can be enriched by the additional use of qualitative data such as interview with the owners of small scale enterprises would provide invaluable depth, helping to explain the why behind the quantitative results obtained in the current study. The study was also limited by apathy on small scale enterprises owners regarding filling the questionnaires as some of them were always too busy to attend to the questionnaire but the researcher allowed people like that to go home with the questionnaire and return it the next day

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Conceptual Review

2.1.1 Entrepreneurial Competency

For better understanding of entrepreneurial competencies we need to first understand entrepreneurship. Khan, (2021) defined entrepreneurship as a process of using skills which an individual or group acquired to establish new business idea which will yield positive impact in the society. In that definition, it is not enough to perceive a business idea, it is the ability to translate the idea into business(s) that has the capacity to impact on the society and have positive result that makes an entrepreneur. Aruwa (2016) also defines entrepreneurship as the willingness and ability of an individual to look out for investment opportunities and successfully establish and operate an enterprise. Aruwa's perspective added that for one to be an entrepreneur such a person will have the ability to seek investment opportunities and probably see opportunity where others see challenge Entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial opportunities are closely related as it takes one who is entrepreneurial to recognize an opportunity and have ability to act on the opportunity which brings about creation of new enterprises or innovations.

Competence on the other hand is the combination and integration of observable and measurable knowledge and skills that contributes to improved performance, and ultimately lead to entrepreneurial success (Al Mamun & Fazal, 2018). Different scholars have classified this competency differently for example, Man et al.

(2002) defined and classified entrepreneurial competencies as higher-level characteristics encompassing personality traits, skills and knowledge, which can be seen as the aggregate capability of the entrepreneur to effectively accomplish a job. (a) opportunity competency (b) relationship competencies (c) conceptual competency (d) organizing competency, (e) strategic competency, (f) commitment competency, and (g) learning competency; these competency areas are recognized in most literature and are categorized according to (Man et al., 2002).

2.1.2 Networking Competency

The idea of networking is necessitated because firms cannot and should not survive and prosper solely by their individual effort, and that each firm's performance depends upon the activities and performance of others (Human & Naude, 2015). Taking this further, a firm or enterprise that sources and gets its inputs from another enterprise, produces and sells to other enterprises require the network of others to stay afloat in business and ensure successful performance. Turyakira and Mbidde (2015) defined networking as "The free association of the business with the aim of sharing information, resources and capabilities through cluster, strategic alliance or business collaboration". The researchers further explained that the prosperity of networking is generated based on mutual trust, commitment, shared knowledge and valuable associations that empowers business to propagate and survive. Networking could be in the form of cluster, business collaborations and strategic alliance and has become popular as a competitive tool among businesses (Human, et al, 2015)

2.1.3 Risk-Taking Competency

Starting or buying a business has to do with a lot of risks and the entrepreneurs who have risk taking competency grab the opportunities when they come by, however, The higher the rewards, the higher the risk that the entrepreneur is likely to face. For this reason, entrepreneurs tend to properly evaluate risk carefully in order to ensure that the risks they take will enhance their entrepreneurial performance. The different types of risk entrepreneurs are exposed to include: career risk, financial risk, family and social risk and psychic risk. The ability to take risks allows the entrepreneur to venture into very lucrative opportunities which can bring in tremendous successes to the business. Zichella (2016) examined entrepreneurial behaviour when faced with risk and uncertainty at Copenhagen Business School in Denmark. The study found out that, entrepreneurial oriented individuals respond significantly different to degrees of risks and uncertainties.

2.1.4 Managerial Competency

Managerial competency is the essential leadership skills required to effectively plan, coordinate and ensure good job performance in managerial roles (Renko et al., 2015; Lawal & Umoru, 2022). It is the cornerstone of effective management, encompassing a diverse skill set that enables managers to navigate the complexities and changing environments of modern business (Dessler, 2015). This includes but not limited to the ability to formulate strategic plans, organize resources efficiently, provide visionary leadership, and exercise precise control over organizational activities which summarily, translate to enhanced business performance. Managerial competency is crucial for organizational success, blending knowledge, attributes, and behaviors necessary for effective management (Robbins & Coulter, 2017). Defined by Zarefard et al. (2018) as characteristics related to effective job performance, these competencies are vital for new businesses founded by entrepreneurs. These managerial skills are encompassing qualities and attributes that enable effective workforce management, significantly enhance organizational efficiency and performance.

2.1.5 Small Business Performance

The term Micro, Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (MSMEs) has no generally established definition, because the criteria for defining and classifying an enterprise as either micro, small, medium or large varies from one country to another and depending on whether the country is a developed or developing one. A micro business for example in one country may be a small business in another country because here in Nigeria, the major criteria used in classifying a business as micro, Small or medium Sized Enterprises are number of employees, capital strength, sales value, initial capital, relative size, ownership structure and the industry type. SMEDAN, (2020) states that Small Enterprises are those enterprises whose total assets (excluding land and building) are above Five Million Naira but not exceeding Fifty Million Naira with a total workforce of above ten, but not exceeding forty-nine employees. Business performance refers to the operational capability of an enterprise to meet the expectations of its owners or major shareholders (Umar 2018). It has to do with assessing how well a firm's strategies adapt to changes in the business environment.

2.2 Empirical Review

Hannatu, and Timothy, (2025) studied "effect of entrepreneurship competencies on performance of selected SMEs in Nasarawa State, Nigeria." Using a sample of 347 SMEs and a structured 5-point Likert scale

questionnaire for data collection, the data collected was analyzed with Smart PLS-SEM. The study identified personal competency, technical competency and managerial competency as significant drivers influencing business performance. While proactive competency does not show a significant effect, the study advocated for a proactive business strategy, urging SMEs to stay attuned to market dynamics and engage in scenario planning. The study recommended tailored interventions for SME owners to enhance personal competencies, emphasizes the importance of leadership development and strategic planning for managerial competency, and stresses the continuous development of technical skills to ensure SMEs' competitiveness in the dynamic business landscape of Nasarawa State, Nigeria. The study concentrated on personal competency, technical and managerial competency whereas, the present study seeks to understand the effect of networking competency, risk-taking competency and managerial competency.

Ibeh, Agbo, and Okebaram, (2025) carried out a study on entrepreneurial competencies and sustainable business practices of small and medium scale enterprises in southeast Nigeria. The study used both primary and secondary data. The population of the study (632) was the management staff and employees of ten (10) selected leading technopreneur firms within the Southeast region of Nigeria. The study combined both purposive sampling techniques and random sampling techniques. Analysis was done using ordinal Least Square Regression analysis with the aid of Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23. Findings revealed that; at 5% level (Sig < .05) of significance, business mindset competency had a positive and significant effect on the adaptation to changing market and environmental conditions of selected SMEs firms in Southeast, Nigeria. The study recommended that entrepreneurs need to cultivate a growth-oriented, proactive business mindset within their organizations and to encourage creative thinking, resilience, and adaptability. 10 leading technopreneur firms in the whole southeast zone of Nigeria may not be enough to generalize the findings of the study.

Ibidunni, Ogundana, and Okonkwo, (2021) studied entrepreneurial competencies as a viable pathway for improving the innovative performance of SMEs in Nigeria's informal sector and the contingent roles of the business environment. The study was a survey research design, data was gathered from 296 entrepreneurs who operate informal SMEs in Nigeria. The study utilized SEM-PLS multivariate analysis. from the findings, the study recommended that entrepreneurial competencies, especially strategic, competencies, are essential for achieving higher innovation performance. This study focused only on the informal sector and selected only 296 entrepreneurs in the whole country without detailed explanation of how many entrepreneurs were selected from each state or from each geopolitical zone.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

The Resource-based Theory (RBV)

The study was anchored on Resource Based View (RBV) theory propounded by Edith Penrose (1959), the theory postulates that successful and sustainable business performance results from resources that are inimitable, not substitutable, tacit in nature, and synergistic (Al Ansari, 2014). These resources can be tangible or intangible assets, these firm's inimitable resources provide a sustainable competitive advantage and drive firm growth. The theory suggests that the combination of capabilities and resources allows a firm to differentiate itself from competitors, leading to superior offerings and performance. Based on this theory the intellectual capital is a main resource to improve enterprise growth. It can be human (characteristics, knowledge, skills, and capabilities), organizational (technology, processes, patents, and networks), and social (links with customers, suppliers, and partners), all of which are important strategic resources/assets which the firm needs to propel its innovation efforts alongside increasing and sustaining competences and capabilities. The study adopts this theory because entrepreneurial competencies (networking, risk taking and managerial) are considered intangible resources under the category of human (characteristics, knowledge, skills and capabilities) these competencies become even more critical due to the changing and challenging business environment. This theoretical foundation supports the central argument that the strategic deployment of unique and well-developed competencies of networking, risk-taking and managerial competencies are key driver of small business success in challenging business environments.

III. METHODOLOGY

Descriptive survey method was used in the study. The total population of the study is 2,433 small businesses in Ebonyi State (SMEDAN 2024). Using Krejcie and Morgan table 1970, a sample size of 355 respondents were selected using simple Random sampling strategy. In the simple random sampling strategy, every member of the population has an equal, independent, and non-zero chance of being selected, this means that the researcher selected 355 small businesses from the entire population of study. The study collected primary data through the use of structured questionnaire designed to reflect the five (5) point Likert scale of strongly agree(5), agree(4), undecided(3), disagree(2), and strongly disagree(1) and was used by the researcher to elicit information from the respondents on all aspects of the subject matter of the study. The instrument was both face and content validated by the research supervisor and other senior researchers in the field. It was also tested for reliability through the method of test re-test and 0.77, 0.75, 0.78 and 0.81 coefficient were obtained for networking

competence, managerial competence, risk-taking competency and small scale enterprises performance respectively. Data gathered were analyzed quantitatively, using summary statistics, and Multiple Regression analysis. SPSS version 26 was used as statistical software in analyzing the data. All tests were carried out at 0.05 level of significance. The model meant to analyze the relationship between entrepreneurial competencies and small business performance was specified as follows:

$$SBP = f(NTC, RTC, MAC) \quad (1)$$

Specifying econometrically, the equation becomes:

$$SBP = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 NTC + \alpha_2 RTC + \alpha_3 MAC + \mu t \quad (2)$$

Where:

- SBP = Small business performance
- α_0 = The intercept
- μt = Stochastic error margin
- NTC = Networking Competence
- RTC = Risk -Taking Competence
- MAC = Managerial Competence

The sign expectations for the coefficients are:

$$\alpha_1 > 0, \alpha_2 > 0 \text{ and } \alpha_3 > 0$$

IV. DATA PRESENTATION AND RESULT

4.1 Data Presentation

The data collected were presented in simple table. The data analyses were based on the answer to the key questions received from various respondents.

Table 1: Questionnaire Distributed and Returned

Specification	Number of questionnaire distributed	Number of questionnaire returned	Number of questionnaire not returned	Total
331	320	11	331	
Percentage (%)	96	4	100	

Source: Field Survey Report 2026

Table 1 depicted the questionnaire distributed and return rate. The table showed that 331 copies of questionnaire were distributed to small business owners in Ebonyi State, out of which 320 representing 96% were properly filled and returned whereas, 11 representing 4% were either not returned or not properly filled.

Table 2: ANOVAa

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	
1	Regression	30.812	3	10.271	94.674	.000b
	Residual	34.390	317	.108		
	Total	65.202	320			

Source: Empirical Analysis 2026

- a. Dependent Variable: SBP
- b. Predictors: (Constant), MAC, RTC, NTC

The ANOVA summary as presented in table 2 above shows that the outcome is statistically significant with p-value (0.000) < 0.05 and the F value of 94.674

TABLE 3: Coefficientsa

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B			
	B	Std. Error	Beta	Lower Bound	Upper Bound			
1	(Constant)	1.657	.185	8.971	.000	1.293	2.020	
	NTC	.324	.082	.353	3.975	.000	.164	.485
	RTC	.034	.063	.039	.549	.583	-.089	.158
	MGC	.310	.061	.341	5.110	.000	.190	.429

a. Dependent Variable: SBP

Source: Empirical Analysis 2026

From table 3 above, it is observed that networking competency (NTC) and managerial competency (MGC) had P-values of 0.000, and 0.000. Since the P-values (0.000 and 0.000) are less than 0.05, it suggests that the two outcomes are statistically significant. Thus, leading to the rejection of the null hypotheses in the two outcomes which had it that networking competency does not significantly affect small business performance in Ebonyi State and that managerial competency does not significantly influence small business performance in Ebonyi State. In view of the rejection of the null hypotheses, the alternate hypotheses were accepted, thus, networking competency significantly influence small business performance and that managerial competency significantly influence small business performance in Ebonyi State. Table 3 also indicated that risk –taking competency (RTC) has p-value of

0.583 and since the p-value is greater 0.05 it suggests that the outcome is not statistically significant leading to upholding the null hypotheses that risk taking competency does not significantly influence performance of small businesses in Ebonyi State.

These outcomes were also supported by tolerance statistics level, VIF, and t-statistics as there are no multi-collinearity problems among the explanatory variables in the study and as such affirming that entrepreneurial competencies are required to improve small businesses performance in Ebonyi State. Therefore, entrepreneurship competencies have significant effects on small business performance in Ebonyi State.

V. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The following results were generated from the analysis and test of hypothesis of the study;

5.1 H01 Networking Competency does not significantly influence small business performance in Ebonyi State.

Based on the regression result, networking competency significantly influences small business performance based on the regression result presented in table 3 the coefficient of Networking competency (NTC) is 0.324 while the P-value is [0.000]. The parameter of NTC is positive and significant in measuring small business performance (SBP) as confirmed by its P-value. Since 5% (0.05) level of significance is greater than the P-value [0.000], the null hypothesis was rejected and concluded that the level of networking competency has significant effect on small business performance in Ebonyi State this discussion is in line with findings of Khan (2021) who carried out study on entrepreneurial competencies and enterprise performance: on street food cart owners in Khulna city of Bangladesh. findings reveal that the entrepreneurial competencies of the entrepreneurs is the most commonly contribution in terms of producing business performances. this finding also support the position of Edith Penrose 1959 when she postulated that successful and sustainable business performance results from resources that are inimitable such as networking competency of the organization.

5.2 H02 Risk-taking competency does not significantly influence small business performance in Ebonyi State.

From the regression coefficient result in table 3, Risk-taking competence does not significantly influence small business performance due to the fact that based on the regression result presented in tables 6, the coefficient of Risk-taking competency (RTC) is 0.0310 while the P-value is [0.583]. The parameter of RTC is positive and insignificant in measuring small business performance (SBP) as confirmed by its P-value. Since 5% (0.05) level of significance is less than the P-value [0.583], we uphold the null hypothesis and conclude that the level of Risk-taking has positive and insignificant influence on small business performance in Ebonyi State. This result shows that though risk taking has a positive influence on small scale enterprises, the level of risk-taking is insignificant in affecting small enterprises performance. This finding could be because small businesses owners in Ebonyi state still lack the courage and skill required to properly evaluate risks carefully.

5.3 H03 Managerial Competency does not significantly influence small enterprises performance in Ebonyi State

Based on the findings of the analysis of regression coefficient, Managerial competency significantly influences small scale enterprises performance in Ebonyi State as the regression result presented in tables 3, shows that the coefficient of managerial competency (MAC) is 0.310 while the P-value is [0.000]. The parameter of MAC is positive and significant in measuring small businesses performance (SBP) as confirmed by its P-value. Since 5% (0.05) level of significance is greater than the P-value [0.000], we reject the null hypothesis and conclude that managerial competency has significant influence on small business performance in Ebonyi State. This finding is in line with the findings of Ibidunni, Ogundana and Okonkwo (2021) in their study of entrepreneurial competencies as a viable pathway for improving the innovative performance of SMEs in Nigeria's informal sector and the contingent roles of the business environment. from the findings, the study concluded that entrepreneurial competencies, including strategic, competencies, are essential for achieving higher innovation performance. This finding is also supported by the theory of the study which states that successful and sustainable business performance results from resources that are inimitable such as managerial competency of the organization.

VI. CONCLUSION

Entrepreneurial competencies are the intrinsic qualities, such as specialized knowledge, motivations, self-images, qualities, social positions, and abilities that contribute to the establishment, survival, and growth of businesses. Previous studies have identified numerous entrepreneurial competencies to include opportunity competence, relationship competence, conceptual competence, organizing competence, strategic competence, commitment competence, learning competence to positively contribute to the survival and growth of small scale

enterprises in the developed countries of the world. Unfortunately, the developing countries are grappling with the survival of small scale enterprises. This study has provided empirical evidence that networking competency, and managerial competency have positive and significant influence on small business performance. The empirical evidence of this study also shows that risk-taking competency of small business owners in Ebonyi State is positive but insignificant to the success and sustainability of their business performance, this could be because they lack skill to analyze risk properly because the higher the risk the higher the profit. Therefore, the study concludes that competencies of an entrepreneur are important factors that improve the success of firms.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

ii. Small scale enterprise's owners/ managers should constantly maintain their networking competency as it positively and significantly affects their business performance. They should build and consistently nurture relationships with business stakeholders and attend industry conferences and networking forums.

iii. Small scale enterprise's owners/ managers should invest in leadership development programs strategic planning workshops and communication training in order to create a conducive business environment. They should also create networking opportunities with experienced managers and industry expert.

iv. Existing and aspiring entrepreneurs in Ebonyi State should aim for stronger Risk-taking competences in order to achieve positive results in small scale enterprises sector, the study recommend policymakers and stakeholders to engage current and prospective entrepreneurs in training and development to better equip them with best risk-taking competence.

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KREJECIE AND MORGAN TABLE FOR SAMPLE SIZE DETERMINATION

International Journal of Entrepreneurship, Technology and Innovation,

Department of Entrepreneurship, Faculty of Management Science

University of Benin, Benin City, Nigeria

IJETI Article Assessment Form

Title of Article: Entrepreneurial Competences and Performance of Small Scale Enterprises in Ebonyi State

1. Plagiarism/AI Writing Report

2. Appropriateness of the Title (Suggest a more appropriate title if necessary)

Current title: Entrepreneurial Competences and Performance of Small Scale Enterprises in Ebonyi State

Issues identified:

- Title is acceptable but too broad.
- “Competences” and “competencies” are used interchangeably throughout the paper.

Suggested improved title:

Entrepreneurial Competencies and Small Business Performance in Ebonyi State: Evidence from Networking, Risk-Taking and Managerial Competencies

3. Clarity of Purpose/Objectives of the Paper

The objectives are generally stated but poorly written. Specific issues:

- No clearly labelled Statement of the Problem.
- No hypotheses section despite discussion of null hypotheses later.

4. Appropriateness/Completeness/Currency of Literature Review

Literature review is inadequate. Problems:

- Mostly descriptive summaries; no critical analysis.
- Weak empirical synthesis.
- No clear gap identification.
- Poor organization between conceptual, empirical, and theoretical review.
- Heavy reliance on old references (2014–2019) with few recent studies.

5. Adequacy of Methodology

Methodology has several weaknesses. Major errors:

1. Population reported as 2433, but abstract says “population Of 2433” (typing error).
2. Sample size 355 from Krejcie and Morgan is acceptable but no justification table shown.
3. Sampling technique is too vague (“simple random sampling”) without sampling frame.
4. Reliability section is inconsistent:
 - o “0.77, 0.75, 0.78 and 0.81 coefficient were obtained for networking competence, managerial competence, networking competency and performance respectively.”
 - o Networking competency repeated twice.
 - o Risk-taking omitted.

6. Originality/Contribution to Knowledge

Contribution is weak. Issues are:

- Topic is common and not novel.
- Claims novelty based only on Ebonyi State context.
- No explicit statement of contribution.

7. Grammar/Style/Punctuation

The manuscript contains extensive grammatical and stylistic errors.

8. Referencing Style/Adequacy

Referencing is below publishable standard.

9. Extent to Which Objectives Were Achieved

Objectives were partially achieved.

10. Is the Paper Publishable?

[] Yes, without any corrections

[] Yes, with only editorial corrections

Yes after minor corrections by the author

Yes after major corrections by the author

Not publishable

Reason: The paper has a relevant topic and analyzable data but contains major conceptual, methodological, language, and formatting deficiencies.

11. Corrections to Be Made by Author

1. Rewrite abstract for clarity and grammar.
2. Add clear Statement of Problem.
3. State research hypotheses explicitly.
4. Correct all grammatical and typographical errors.
5. Standardize "competence/competency."
6. Correct reliability reporting.
7. Remove contradictory conclusion on risk-taking competency.
8. Revise discussion section (tables referenced as Table 6 instead of Table 3).
9. Update literature with recent sources.
10. Verify all future-dated references/data.
11. Improve methodology detail.

Name of Assessor: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____