

The Influence of Entrepreneurial Skills and Environmental Factors on Construction SMEs Growth in Nigeria

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Abstract

Globally, the construction industry has become a pride and a foreign exchange earner for most developed and developing countries. But researches showed that indigenous construction firms in Nigeria executes only between 5 – 15% of construction works in the country as a result of lack of attention to capacity development and growth. It appears that the Nigerian construction SMEs have been slow to put strategies in place to develop their capacity to grow. This study was therefore aimed at investigating the factors that constrained the growth of Indigenous construction SMEs in Nigeria. The study examined the influence of entrepreneurial skills and environmental factors on growth of construction SMEs in Nigeria and was guided by the following research objectives which included; determining if entrepreneurial skills and environmental factors influence the growth of construction SMEs in Nigeria. The study targeted 1500 indigenous construction SMEs in Abuja and Kaduna where majority of the construction SMEs have offices. In order to collect the relevant data, a structured questionnaire was used and administered to a sample of 150 firms randomly selected. The statistical analysis of the data was done using the statistical package for social scientist (SPSS) to calculate the descriptive statistics. Chi-square tests and regression analyses were used where necessary. The study found out that entrepreneurial skills and environmental factors influence the growth of construction SMEs in Nigeria.

Keywords: *Construction, Entrepreneurial skills, Environmental factors, Growth, Influence,*

Background of the Study

The study investigates the determinants of growth and sustainability of indigenous construction small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Nigeria. Empirical studies suggest that most small and medium construction firms are not growing and sustainable (Onugu, 2005; Olalokun, 2007, Akindoyeni, 2008; Odulami, 2009; Bala, Bello and Kolo, 2010). The construction industry is that sector of national economy saddled with the responsibility of producing building for housing, social services, commercial, industrial and other public utility purposes as well as the provision of other infrastructural facilities such as roads, railways, airports, seaports and such other development property (Abdu, 1986, and Aqua Group, 1996). Thus, SMEs are increasingly being recognized as productive drivers of economic growth and development for African countries.

In Nigeria, the construction industry on the whole has always occupied an important position in the structure of the economy. According to the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) report, the contribution of the industry to Nigeria's GDP was N1.64 billion in 1987, N1.73 billion in 1990, N1.8 billion in 1991 and N1.87 billion in 1992. In terms of the value output, its contribution has been relatively modest over the years representing an average of about 5.0% of the GDP (Olaloku, 1987). The construction industry largely utilizes the products of other sectors of the economy in terms of materials such as timber, nail, cement, roofing sheets, steel, equipment and finance (Raftery, 1990).

Statement of the Problem

Although most small firms are expected to grow, they generally lag behind larger ones when it comes to growth (Mc Mahon, 2001). Studies by Mosaku (2008), Bala, Belo and Kolo (2008) suggest that small and medium indigenous construction firms in Nigeria are not growing and that most of them fold up within the just five years of their establishment. According to Mosaku (2008) indigenous construction contractors have suffered lack of growth and up till now, foreign construction firms such as Julius Berger, B. Stablini, AG Fererro, Strabag, Bouygues, Cappa D' Alberto, and Ghitto, have dominated construction practice in Nigeria carting away all the major and sensitive jobs from the government. It is therefore important to fill this gap by exploring the actual situation in Nigeria in order to come up with empirical information on how to grow this important sector. The influence entrepreneurial skills and environmental factors on growth of small and medium construction firms in Nigeria is therefore the thrust of this study.

Study Objectives

1. Find out whether entrepreneurial skills influence growth of indigenous construction SMEs in Nigeria.
2. Determine whether environmental factors moderate/mediate growth of indigenous construction SMEs in Nigeria.

Research Hypotheses

- Ho₁: Entrepreneurial skills do not significantly influence the growth of indigenous construction SMEs in Nigeria.
- Ho₂: Environmental factors' moderation/mediation on the growth of indigenous construction SMEs in Nigeria is not significant.

This study focused on small and medium indigenous construction firms or contractors in Kaduna State and Abuja. Kaduna from pre-colonial days has been the regional headquarters of one of Nigerians regional governments while Abuja is the present Federal Capital territory of Nigerian where a lot of construction works are going on to develop the city. Whatever study that is carried out in these two places can therefore be replicated and be seen to be a fair representation of the entire country.

Literature Review

Theories of Growth

Wider scholarly thought on business growth in the literature of economics may be found in works by Marris & Ward (1971), Lindgren & Aislabie (1976), Casson (1982), Brock & Evans (1986), ACS & Audretsch (1990), Keasey & Watson (1993), McMahon et al (1993), Reid (1993), ACS (1995), Chell and Haworth (1988) and O'Farrell & Hitchens (1988). O'Farrell & Hitchens (1988) classified business growth theories into (i) static equilibrium theories (ii) Stochastic models of firm (iii) strategic management perspectives and (iv) theories that have their origins in the field of economics according to which SME growth is viewed as a series of phases or stages of development through which the business may pass in an enterprise life cycle.

Theories of Entrepreneurship

Richard Chitchil (1680-1734) and Frank Knight (1885 – 1972) economic theory have it that entrepreneurship and economic growth take place when economic conditions are favourable. According to Casson, (1945) economic ventures are the main motivators for entrepreneurial activities and economic incentives include taxation policy, industrial policy, source of finance and raw materials, infrastructures availability, investment and marketing opportunities, access to information about market conditions and technology. McClelland stressed that people with high achievement orientation (need to succeed) were more likely to become successful entrepreneurs. These theories of entrepreneurship were intricately interwoven to come up with items that were incorporated in the instruments that will be used in assessing the entrepreneurial skills of the managers and owners of the construction SMEs.

Theory on Environment

Berthalantfy (1950) in his general system theory postulated that an open system is in constant interaction with the environment. This theory implies that changes in the environmental factors will therefore affect a firm as a system and so with business firms that have to change to stay in competition and be compatible with their environments (Kast and Resenweig, 1985). According to Cyert and March (1963) this relationship between firms and their environment has to be understood and observed more seriously

at micro level to make the existence of firms more meaningful, as an economic entity, a firm is in constant challenge by the flow of change in the environmental forces.

Research Methodology

Research Design

Nworgu (1991) Creswell (2003), Fellows and Liu (2007) defined research design as a plan or blueprint which specifies how data relating to a given problem should be collected and analyzed. This research utilized the descriptive and the empirical survey which tried to find out the determinants of growth of small and medium indigenous construction firms in Kaduna and Abuja. This is justified, as according to Nworgu (1991) descriptive survey design in nature is aimed at collecting data on the describing features or facts about a given population, which is the main thrust of the study. The study is aimed at soliciting the opinion of indigenous contractors in Kaduna and Abuja where majority of the firms have their offices as regards active participation in construction works.

Population of the Study

Cooper & Schindler (2008) opined that a population is the total collection of elements about which one wants to make inferences. For this research work, the population consists of all registered indigenous construction firms in Kaduna and Abuja cities who have been doing business for the past five years. The registered population is 1,523 firms as obtained from Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC, 2012).

Sample Size

Nachmias and Nachmias (2009) stated that a sample is any subset of sampling units of a population. Using proportional allocation 90 indigenous small and medium construction firms was selected from Abuja, while 60 was selected from Kaduna.

Data Collection and Instrumentation

This research used was survey research design.

The instrument used for the data collection was influence of Entrepreneurial skills and environmental factors on Small and Medium Nigerian Construction Firms Growth Instrument. A carefully crafted but wide-ranging questionnaires aimed at eliciting right response was used. While some questions were open-ended, others were in a “Yes” or “No” answering format.

Data Processing and Analysis

Both qualitative and quantitative techniques were employed for the data analysis. The quantitative data was subjected to both descriptive and inferential statistics for analysis while the qualitative data that was collected was content coded and analyzed simultaneously. With respect to the descriptive statistics techniques, frequency count in percentages, in conjunction with bar charts and pie charts were used. Likewise the Chi-Square test of Independence and the Correlation and Regression analysis were used for the inferential statistics.

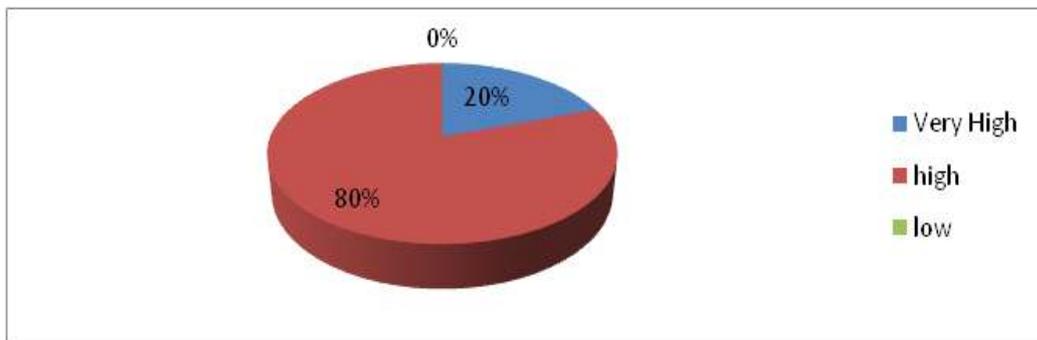
The Influence of Entrepreneurial Skills on the Growth of Indigenous Constructions Small and Medium Firms in Nigeria

This section discussed the influence of entrepreneurial skills on the growth of indigenous Construction SMEs. The entrepreneurial skills considered in this thesis include the entrepreneur's need for achievement, his risk taking propensity, his level of creativity, and internal locus of control.

Need for Achievement

When asked to rate the firms need for achievement, 80% of the Construction Small and Medium Scale responding firms said they have high need for achievement, 20% said they have a very high need and 0% for low.

Figure 1: Pie-chart showing the distribution of SME based on the need for achievement.



Source: Field Data, 2014

From figure1 it seen clearly that the result collaborated the position of McClelland (1987), Wicklland (2001), Hisrich & Peters (2002), Reduan, Kumar & Yen (2006), and Kreito & Kunicki (2007) that the need for high achievement contribute toward running businesses successfully. It can be deduced that majority have high need for achievement.

Inferential Statistics

Ho: Entrepreneur need for achievement does not influence the growth of indigenous construction small and medium firms in Nigeria.

Table1: Chi-Square Tests

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	20.106 ^a	2	.000
Likelihood Ratio	21.063	2	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	5.921	1	.015
N of Valid Cases	137		

From the Table1, the Pearson Chi-Square coefficient obtained is 20.106. The null hypothesis is rejected being that the p-value (0%) is less than the chosen 5% level of significance, and the test therefore revealed that Entrepreneurs' Need for Achievement significantly influence growth.

Risk Taking Propensity

Risk taking

This section probed into the risk taking propensity of construction SMEs and the result revealed that 60% of the responding firms said they do not venture into risky jobs in their operations while 40% do.

Table 2: Distribution of SME risk propensity

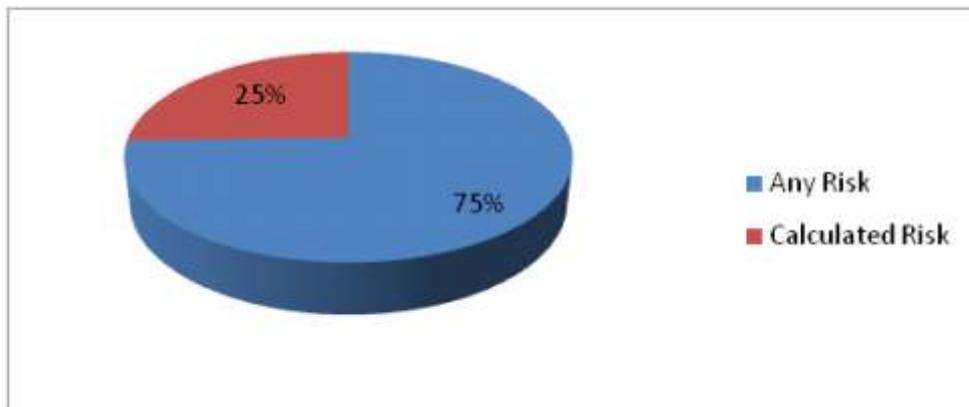
Risky Job	Response	Percentage Response
Yes	55	40%
No	82	60%

Source: Field Data, 2014

Type of Risk Taking

When asked as a follow up question, what kind of risk they take, the finding reflected that 75% of them venture into any risk while 25% said they venture only into calculated risk.

Figure 2: Pie-chart showing the Distribution of SME Based on Setting Performance Goal



Source: Field Data, 2014

From Table 2 and figure 2 the result disagreed with the assertion of Adams-Smith (1976), Parren (2000), Hisrich and Peters (2002) Timons and Spinelli (2007), Badi and Badi (2008) that suggested that risk taking was one of the defining characteristics of an entrepreneur. It can be deduced that majority of firms are risk averse though a fairly sizable number agreed to risk taking and out of those that take risk 75% of them take uncalculated . These results could be attributed to the lack of growth witnessed among construction SMEs.

Inferential Statistics

Ho: The risk taking propensity of entrepreneurs do not influence the growth of indigenous construction small and medium firms in Nigeria. Table 4.3 gives the result of the test.

Table 3: Chi-Square Tests Showing Risk Taking Propensity

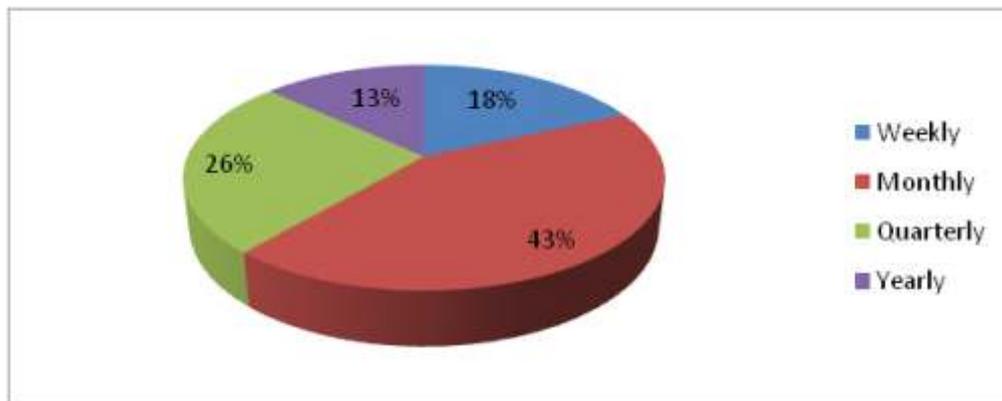
	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	22.021 ^a	2	.000
Likelihood Ratio	22.240	2	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	19.408	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	137		

From Table 3, the Pearson Chi-Square coefficient obtained is 22.021 while the p-value is 0.00. Hence the null hypothesis is rejected being that the p-value (0%) is less than the chosen 5% level of significance, and therefore the test revealed that the Risk taking propensity influences the growth of construction SMEs. In other words, the growth of SMES depends on the risk taking propensity of Entrepreneurs. This implies that, there is need for the construction SMEs to have risk taking propensity which must be calculated to enhance their growth.

Influence of Creativity on SMEs Growth

This section examined the influence of creativity on the Growth of construction SMEs. The result revealed that 43% of the respondents revealed new ideas monthly, 26% reveal quarterly, 18% reveal weakly while 13% reveal yearly as shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Distribution of SME Based on Creativity



Source: Field Data, 2014

From table the result agrees with Hisrish, Peters and Shepard (2007), Liem (2005) and Nieman & Pretorius (2004) that creativity helps business owners with cognitive process of developing in generating ideas concepts, discoveries and envisioning of a new combination of resources and market realities that helps the firm to survive and grow. It can be deduced that majority of the firms reveal new ideas monthly and hence be concluded that creativity influence the growth of firms.

The influence of Internal Locus of Control

This section examined the internal locus of control, the study revealed that 69% of the responding firms said they have internal locus of control while 31% of them do not possess as illustrated in Table 4.4

Table 4: Distribution of Internal Locus of Control

Internal Locus of Control	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	94	69
No	43	31

Source: Filed data, 2014

Table 4 agreed with Schumpeter (1984), Drucker (1985), Timmons and Spinelli (2007) and Badi and Badi (2008) which stated that people with Internal Locus of Control believe that they have influence over the outcomes through the ability, efforts and skills.

Inferential Statistics

Ho: The Internal locus of control of entrepreneurs does not influence the growth of indigenous construction small and medium firms in Nigeria. The result of the test is shown in table 5

Table 5 Chi-Square Tests for Internal Locus of Control

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	7.098 ^a	2	.029
Likelihood Ratio	6.985	2	.030
Linear-by-Linear Association	.070	1	.791
N of Valid Cases	137		

From the Table 5, the Pearson Chi-Square coefficient obtained is 7.089 while the p-value is 0.029. Hence the null hypothesis is rejected being that the p-value (2.9%) is less than the chosen 5% level of significance, and therefore the test revealed that the internal locus of control influences the growth of construction SMEs.

A general regression model was obtained for these sub variables; $Y = 3.346 - 0.379E_1 - 0.565E_2 - 0.309E_3$

Where y is the growth measured through profit, E_1 is the entrepreneurial need for achievement, E_2 is the entrepreneurial risk taking propensity and E_3 is the entrepreneurial Internal Locus of Control.

Objective Two: to Determine if Environmental Factor Moderates Growth of Indigenous Small and Medium Constructions Firms in Nigeria

This section seeks to evaluate the level at which environment factors moderate or mediates the growth of Indigenous construction SMEs. Environmental factors considered in this regards are political, economic and socio-cultural factors. The ability of a firm to advertise his product and conduct market research was also considered. The various responses are described using percentages.

Political Factors

About 92% of the responding firms said the sources of political instability in their business environment is inadequate/scare resources, 81% said one of the sources is inadequate and poor governance, 78% said it is the Politian's that cause political instability, 42% political instability is also generated from inequalities among communities, while only 23% said political instability is generated from political inclinations.

Table 6: Distribution of Respondents Based of Sources of Political Instability

Sources of political instability	Frequency	Percentage
Politicians	107	78
Scarce resources/inadequate infrastructure	127	92
Inequalities among communities	58	42
Political party inclinations	32	23
Inadequate/poor governance system	111	81

Source: Field Data, 2014

In Table 6, the result concurred with, Osisioma (2005) and Acheneje (2009) that political climate has profound influence on the entire firm and determines its success and failure. It can be drawn that majority of the firms are affected by political factors.

Economic Factors

93% of the responding firm said they are affected by multiple taxation, 74% said they are affected by cumbersome business registration process, 51% by inflation rate in the country, 31% by foreign exchange rate, 92% by high cost of doing business, 86% by business rate while the whole responding firms said they are effected by inadequate infrastructure available.

Table 7: Distribution of respondents based of effect of economic factors on SME firms

Economics factors	Frequency	Percentage
Multiple taxation	127	93%
Cumbersome business registration process	101	74%
Inflation rate	65	51%
Foreign exchange rate	43	31%
High costs of doing business	126	92%
High interest rate	120	86%
Inadequate available of infrastructure (such as transportation, power, water supply)	137	100%

Source: Field Data, 2014

From Table 4.7 the result coincided with Nieman (2006) and Acheneje (2009) who posited that the success of any business venture depends on the state of the national economy. It can be drawn that most of the responding firms are affected by economic factors.

Socio-Cultural factors:

This section examined the effect of socio—cultural factors on growth. The study reveals that (74%) said they are affected by corruption, 65% of the responding firms said they are being affected by insecurity and the crime rate in their business environment, 49% of the population said they have being affected by value orientation of the people leaving in that community, 45% b custom and culture of the people, 39% affected by settling areas boys in the business area 28% said they have being affected by religion, and 17% affected by ethnicity or ethnic issues.

Table 8: Distribution of Respondents Based on Socio-Cultural Factors

Socio-cultural factors	Frequency	Percentage
Insecurity/crime rate	89	65%
Value orientation of the people	67	49%
Religion	38	28%
Ethnicity	23	17%
Custom/culture of the people	62	45%
Settlement of area boys doing business in an area	54	39%
Corruption	102	74%

Source: Field Data, 2014

The result concurred with Taylor (1924) and Kluckholla & Stoodbeck (1996) who suggested that socio-cultural factors is an important contextual factor collectively programming minds and affecting entrepreneurs in a given community. It can be deduced that majority of the firms are affected by socio-cultural factors.

Inferential Analysis on Economic, Political and Socio-Cultural Factors

Ho: To determine if environmental factors moderate/mediate the growth of SME Construction firms.

Correlations analysis is used to test the significance between the environmental factors and the growth of firms. The result are shown in Tables 4.9

Table 9: Correlations

		Economic Factors	Growth (Profit)	Political Factors	Sociocultural Factor
Economic Factors	Pearson Correlation	1	-.845**	.663**	.658**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000
	N	137	137	137	137
Growth (Profit)	Pearson Correlation	-.845**	1	-.775**	-.783**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000
	N	137	137	137	137
Political Factors	Pearson Correlation	.663**	-.775**	1	.740**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000
	N	137	137	137	137
Sociocultural Factor	Pearson Correlation	.658**	-.783**	.740**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	
	N	137	137	137	137

The correlation analysis conducted showed that there is a negative correlation between the growth of SME firms and environmental factors. Comparing Economic factor and growth, a correlation coefficient of -0.845 is obtained, indicating that there is a strong negative correlation between the growth of firms and the economic factors affecting firms. The table also showed a negative correlation coefficient between growth and political factors, indicating that as the effects of political factors increase, the growth of SMEs decreases. Similarly a negative coefficient is also obtained when comparing growth and sociocultural factors. This implies that growth decreases when there is an increase in the effect of sociocultural factors.

Marketing Advertising

This section considered the number of firms advertising their product or services. The result showed that 61% of the respondents said they are not advertising while 39% said they are advertising.

Table 10: Distribution of Responses to Advertisement

Advertisement	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	53	39%
No	84	61%

Source: Field Data, 2014

Effect of Advertising

This section probed the effect of advertising. The result reveal that 74% of the firms that advertised said the advertisement has a positive effect on the firm's growth, while 26% percentage said it does not have positive effect.

Table 11: Distribution of Responses to effect of Advertisement

Advert effect	Frequency	Percentage
Positive	39	74%
Negative	14	39%

Source: Field Data, 2014

Market Research

This section examined the number of construction SMEs performing market research. The finding showed that 59% of the responding firm said they don't conduct market research, while 41% percentage said they perform market research. Out of those performing market research a reasonable percentage (about 70%) attest to the fact that the research has help the firm's growth.

Table12: Distribution of Respondents Conducting Market Research

Market Research	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	56	41%
No	81	59%

Source: Field Data, 2014

From Table 10 – 11, the finding disagreed with Hann et al (2002), Chew et al (2008) and Yani & Chewz (2011) that advertising is the most common and the most effective form of business promotion for construction SMEs..

From the results, it could be deducted that most of the construction companies have not seen the need of advertising even though they know that it has serious effect on their survival.

Sub-variable: Advertising Product

The Chi-Square test is used to test if Advertising Product or services influence. The result of the test is as shown in Table 13

Ho: Advertising does not influence the growth of construction SMEs

Table 13 Chi-Square Tests

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	28.583 ^a	2	.000
Likelihood Ratio	29.889	2	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	27.962	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	137		

From table13 the Pearson Chi-Square coefficient obtained is 28.583 while the p-value is 0.00. Hence the null hypothesis is rejected being that the p-value (0%) is less than the chosen 5% level of significance, and therefore the test revealed that advertising a product or services influence the growth of construction firms. In conclusion, Nigerian construction SMEs should adopt advert as a marketing strategy and form strategic allowances to form accommodation by the bigger rivals through sub-contracting practices

Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations

The main purpose of this study was to explore the determinant of growth in construction SMEs in Nigeria. Based on previous studies, the components of determinants such as resources management skills, entrepreneurial skills, individual owners/managers characteristics were supposed or expected to have positive influences on the growth of construction SMEs in Nigeria.

The influence of entrepreneurial skill is the first objective of the study. Here four sub-variable were considered, these include; Entrepreneurial need for achievement, risk taking propensity, creativity and internal locus of control. The study showed that entrepreneur need for achievement, his risk taking propensity and his internal locus of control influence growth, though the study showed that creativity is not a significant factor that may influence the growth of firm. The entrepreneurial variables are being correlated and regress together; the correlation coefficient obtained is 0.402. This implies that there is a positive correlation between growth and entrepreneurial skills. The R-squared value obtained indicated that about 16.2% of growth can be explained by entrepreneurial skills. The regression model is thus: $Y = 3.346 - 0.379E_1 - 0.565E_2 - 0.309E_3$. It can be concluded therefore that the growth of construction firms depend on entrepreneurial skills.

The second objective examined in this study is the environmental factors. Four factors were also considered, these included Political, economic, and socio-cultural factors and marketing. It was seen that political, economic and socio-cultural factors have negative influence on the growth of firms. That is as these factors increase, the growth of firms' decreases. On the other hand, marketing a product or services (in form of advertising) aid

the growth of construction SMEs. That is if the level of marketing or advertising increases, there will be an increase in construction SMEs firms' performance.

Recommendations

The study has provided a justification that entrepreneurs of construction SMEs good entrepreneurial skills, in a conducive environment can significantly influence the growth of construction SMEs in Nigeria. Hence the following specific recommendations have been deduced;

1. Entrepreneurial skills (from the inferential statistics) of the managers of construction SMEs are key to the development of their firms which provide necessary drivers to creating new ideas and producing competitive products, It will also propel employees to achieve the vision and mission of the firms.
2. Construction SMEs should free ride on bigger firms through sub -contracting and embark on vigorous advertising to bring about steady supply of Jobs which will enhance their growth and create awareness for them.
3. The government should endeavor to provide a conducive environment for small business owners because this study revealed that unstable environmental factors such as economic, political and socio-cultural factors affect construction SMEs negatively and hence hinder their growth.
4. The construction industry professional institutes and academics should develop more interest in the formation, development and growth of SMEs in this sector through researches which will help in the growth of the SMEs in Nigeria.

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