

Effect of Political Environmental Factors on the Performance of Selected Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Gombe State

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Abstract

The main objective of this study was to examine the effect of political environmental factors affecting SMEs performance in Gombe State. In the study, political environmental factors (Government Regulations and Political Instability) was the independent variable (IV) that was used to measure the dependent variable (DV) SMEs performance. The study adopted survey research design and data were collected through the use of five (5) points Likert-scale questionnaire which was adapted from previous studies. The study population were the one hundred and forty-two (142) SMEs which registered with Ministry of Trade, Industry and Tourism Gombe State as at February, 2023. The study sample size of 105 was obtained using Taro Yamane (Yamane, 1973) formula with 95% confidence level and the researcher adopted convenience sampling techniques to administered 105 questionnaires to owners/managers of the one hundred and five (105) SMEs. Data obtained were analyzed using Multiple Regression (Ordinary Least Square Estimation) and Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient with the aid of SPSS package. Results from the study revealed that government regulation and political instability have positive and significant relationship with SMEs performance in Gombe State. The study recommends that: Government Regulations such as tax policy, minimum wages policy and government supports policies should be given proper attention by governments at all level. Government should also try as much as possible to maintain stable political atmosphere, devoid of street protest, frequent change of cabinet members/cabinet reshuffle and other civil unrest which are capable of truncating the relative peace and tranquility enjoyed by the business community.

Keywords: *Political Environment, Government Regulation, Political Instability, Performance, SMEs*

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Background to the Study

Performance refers to prominent achievement in specific field of activity, it can also be referred to as how a person or group of individuals get to the final conclusion of accomplishing goal or objective (Anderson & Trujilo, 2022). The term performance is usually use to evaluate the work done by organization and to measure competitiveness. According to Bozic (2023), Organizational Performance measures how organization effectively and efficiently uses its human and no-human resources to accomplish its mission. To know the level of work/task done by organization, its performance has to be measured and this measurement process is called performance measurement. Performance measurement estimate the parameters under which programs, investments and acquisitions reaches its targeted results (Ondoro, 2015).

According to Garba and Viswanadham (2016), performance can be in terms of financial and non-financial and its include: return on investment, return on assets, return on equity, return on capital employed, market share, customer satisfaction, productivity, delivery time, and employee's turnover without which an organization such as SMEs cannot survive. There is no universally accepted definition of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), they are defined differently in accordance to the legislation of different countries. However, number of employees, assets, sales volume and loan capacity are the common criteria used to define firm as either small or medium (World Bank 2019). In Nigeria for example, Small Enterprise are those enterprises with 10 to 49 employees and with an annual turnover greater than 25 million naira (N25,000,000.00) but less than one hundred million naira (N100,000,000.00), while Medium Enterprises are those enterprises with 50 to 199 employees and with an annual turnover greater than hundred million naira (100,000,000.00) but less than one billion naira (N1,000,000,000.00) (NBS, 2021; SMEDAN, 2021). Agarwal and Ashwani (2018) opine that Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) constitute about 99.7% of enterprise globally. In European Union (EU), SMEs employed about 88.8 million labor forces and generating value added of about €3,666 trillion which represent 28% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (Muller *et al.*, 2017). In Nigeria, SMEs accounted for 96.90% of businesses, 87.90% of employments and contributed 46.31% of GDP in 2020 (National Bureau of Statistics, 2021). Effiom *et al.*, (2020) opine that, SMEs is the building blocks in national economic and industrial development.

Statement of the Problem

Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) act as engines that propel economic development of both developed and developing nations of the world (Chen, 2022), but despite its contributions and importance, its faces some challenges in Nigerian (Effiom, *et al.*, 2022). According to Dimoji and Onwuneme (2016), unfair competition, marketing problems and other environmental factors such as harassment by government officials, human resource and technological constraints are some of the reasons for poor performance of SMEs in Nigeria. Some researchers opine that the low contribution of SMEs to the economic development of the Nigeria compared to Europe and America may be due to some internal and external business environmental factors such as: marketing and sales

problems, management inefficiency, market competitions, government regulation, trade policies, financial problems and infrastructure inadequacy etc. (Mbasua *et. al.*, 2015; Muhammed, *et. al.*, 2022). Therefore, SMEs owners and other stakeholder needs to assess their business environment from time to time in order for their businesses to achieve its set goals. Effiom and Edet (2020) believes that conduciveness and peacefulness of business environment is tantamount to the success and progress of business, therefore proper monitoring of the political environmental factors (governments regulations and political instability) and development of sound strategies will assist SMEs in boosting its performances. This study therefore examines the effect of political environmental factor on the performance of selected SMEs in Gombe State.

Research Questions

In the course of this study, the following questions would be answered:

- i. To what extent does government regulations affect SMEs performance in Gombe State?
- ii. What is the effect political instability on the performance of SMEs in Gombe state?

Research Objectives

The aim of this study is to examine the effect of political environment on the performance of selected SMEs in Gombe state and its specific objectives are:

- i. To examine the relationship between government regulation and performance of selected SMEs in Gombe state.
- ii. To examine the relationship between political instability and performance of selected SMEs in Gombe state.

Statement of Hypotheses

Ho₁; Government regulation has no significance effect on performance of SMEs in Gombe State.

Ho₂; Political instability has no significance on performance of SMEs in Gombe State

Literature Review

Conceptual Review

Environment is the sum total of forces that influences individuals, businesses and communities (Hamiza *et. al.*, 2020). Business environment can be divided into two namely: internal and external environment. The internal environmental factors are controllable factors which the organization can easily manipulate to suit any prevailing situation while external environmental factors are made up of extraneous factors which are uncontrollable to the organization, organization has to learn how to manage and cope with these factors in other to survive. External environmental factors include technology, economic, socio-cultural and political environment (Banda, 2020). But in this study, the researcher focus on political environmental factors, a component of the external environmental factor.

Concept of Political Environment

Political environmental factors are the actions taken by the government which potentially affect the daily activities of any business or company, which includes government regulations, laws, policies, rules and security (Hamiza, *et. al.*, 2020). Political environment involves the influence exerted by the three organs of government: the executive, legislature and the judiciary in shaping, directing, developing and controlling of business activities. Richards *et. el.*, as cited in Ondoro (2015) asserted that political environmental factors of a country has to do with forces and issues arising from political decision of government which has the capability of altering the desired outcome and value of a given economic action, by distorting the probability of achieving business goals. Okonkwo and Obidike (2016) asserted that the small and medium scale business owners in Nigeria are operating under unstable political environment which is made up of many risks such as currency devaluation, taxation, repatriation, inflation, campaigns against foreign goods, kidnaping and terrorism. This was also supported by Aldrich as cited in Onoriode and Agbele (2020) who opines that business environment is made of stable and unstable homogenous, heterogeneous, rich and poor, complex and simple, and unpredictable variables. The inability of the SMEs owner to predict the political terrain in which their businesses operate is a contending issue that business owners are facing in their day-to-day operations.

Political Environmental Factors

Political environmental factors can affect business organization in many ways, it could act as risk factor that can lead to a major loss, it can also act as power to change business results. These factors could be economic, legal or social factor, it can also be a mixture of these factors. For instance, increase or decrease in tax could be an example of political element (Okoye, 2014). There are many political factors that could affect business positively or negatively, but this study will concentrate on: government regulation (taxation policy, minimum wage policy and government support), and political instability.

- i. Government Regulations** means promulgation targeted rules accompany by some authoritative mechanism for monitoring and enforcing compliance. SMEs activities in developing counties such as Nigeria is primarily based on necessity, therefore creation of government regulations and policies for SMEs varies from country to country. Sathe as cited in Eniola and Entebang (2015) argued that government regulations and their bureaucratic procedures can hinder or facilitates SMEs performance. Similarly, governments regulations and policies can as well restrict the autonomy and freedom of businesses. This study anchored government regulations under the following:
 - a. Tax Policy:** this means the mandatory payments made by individuals and corporations to the government through relevant tax authorities. According to Chude and Chude (2015), taxes are obligatory charges that are repeatedly enforced as a law, not design for specific benefit for each taxpayer, but they mainly contribute to the overall government revenue meant for funding government expenditures.

- b. **Minimum Wage Policy:** Minimum wage is “the minimum amount of remuneration that an employer is required to pay wages earners for the work performed during a given period, which cannot be reduced by collective agreement or an individual contract” (ILO as cited in Yusoff, *et. al.*, 2021). The minimum wage represents a basic salary which does not include overtime, allowance and other benefits.
- c. **Government Supports:** Government Supports refers to tax incentives, government grants, government-supported loans and guaranties, reduction of mandatory contributions, trusts, or insurance provided by a government. Government support does not only promote quick access to resources but also support SMEs financial and non-financial needs at developed and developing countries (Khan, *et. al.*, 2022). This was also supported by Han, *et. al.*, (2017) who opine that government support plays a decisive role in the improvement of organizational performance.

Political instability is defined as the potential for sudden and significant change in the leadership policies or condition of a country. It is a prodigious problem in developing nations around the globe, which is caused by poor political culture, ineffectiveness and the incompetence of political parties (Chawdhury, 2016). The growth of every economy dependent on the stability of the political space of the country because it goes a long way to stability the country's economy, frequent protest and social turbulence, social discrimination and frequent reshuffle or change in government all contributes to political instability of a society or state (Solomon, *et. al.*, 2020).

Concept of Performance

From general perspective, performance refers to prominent achievement in specific field of activity. The term defines how a person or group of individuals get to the final conclusion of accomplishing goal(s) or objective(s). The term performance is usually used to evaluate the work done by organization and it is also use to measure competitiveness. The extent to which targeted task of business is accomplished in comparison to the final output at the end of the business period is known as business performance. Firm performance can be evaluated in accordance with organizational overall achievement in terms of suppliers' performance, products and services qualities, human resources, customer satisfaction, market share and other financial factors (Bozic, 2023). In this study, performance was measured from the following perspective:

- i. **Profitability:** Profitability here means the measure of efficiency and it is defined as the business's ability to produce a return on an investment based on its resources in comparison with an alternative investment (Anderson & Trujillo, 2022).
- ii. **Growth:** Growth measures business success and it is a key driver to wealth creation, economic development and employment opportunities in most countries of the world. The growth of a firm is a product of firm's specific resources such as: employees, capital, knowledge and how they were being acquired, organized and transformed into sellable products and services (Francis-Smyth & Robertson, 2021),

- iii. **Business Expansion:** Business expansion is a distinct period where the business reaches the point for growth and seeks out additional options to generate more profit. This expansion could be in form of increase in marketing, adding sales employees, adding franchisees, opening of another location, forming an alliance, offering new products or services, entering into new markets, merging with or acquiring another business Lucas, 2021).
- iv. **Market Share:** Market Share represents the percentage of an industry, or a markets total sale, that is earned by a company over a specific period of time. Market share is usually calculated by dividing company's sales over a period by the total sales of the industry over the same period, this is used to give a general idea of the size of a company in relation to its market and competitors (Hayes, *et al.*, 2021).

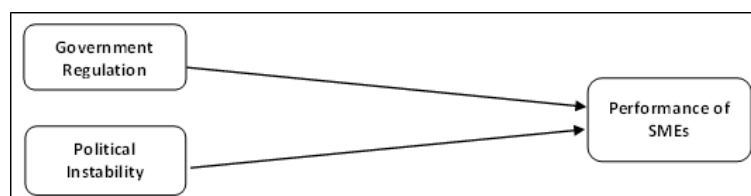
Concept of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)

Small and medium enterprise (SMEs) definition varies from one country to another, in some developed countries such as USA and Britain, Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) is defined in terms of its annual turnover and based on the number of its employees. In Britain for example, SMEs is defined as that industry that has an annual turnover of two million pound or less with fewer than two hundred (200) employees (Bakare, 2015). United States sees Small and Medium Enterprises to include firms with about five hundred (500) employees. Meanwhile, Japan defined Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) according to the type of industry (such: as manufacturing industry, wholesale industry, retail and service industry etc.), paid-up capital and number of employees. In Nigeria, SMEDAN 2021; and NBS 2021 explained that Small Enterprise are those enterprises with 10 to 49 employees and turnover greater than 25 million naira (N25,000,000.00) and Medium Enterprises are those enterprises with 50 to 199 employees and a turnover greater than one hundred million naira (100,000,000.00).

Conceptual Model

In this study political environmental factor was the independent variable (IV) and performance of SMEs is the dependent variable (DV). However, the observed variable to measure the latent construct are government regulation and political stability as shown in figure 1.

Figure 1: Conceptual Model Showing the Observed Variables of the Independent construct that Measure the Latent Variable.



Source: Adapted from Hamiza *et. al.*, (2020)

Empirical Review

Government Regulation and SMEs Performance

Gloria (2022) studied government policies and growth of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Anambra State. The aim of the study was to examine the effect of government policy on the growth of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Anambra State. Descriptive survey design was adopted, and the study population was 1,200 SMEs operators in Anambra State out of which 300 SMEs was used as sample size. Questionnaires were administered respondents and data gathered was analyzed using regression analysis. Findings from the study indicated that, government tax policy has a significant positive effect on the growth of SMEs in Onitsha North Local Government Area of Anambra State. Similarly, Sims (2018) studied the effect of 20% minimum wage increase on small business in rural Arizona: a qualitative multi-case study. The aim of the study was to explore rural business owner decision-making when faced with a 20% increase in the minimum wage and how these decisions affected the small business. The study administered open-ended semi-structured questions to 13 small business owners and the study adopted theoretical thematic analysis approach, findings from the study indicated that, 20% increase in the minimum wage led to reduced net income, wages comparison, decrease in employments opportunities, and diminished incentives for small business ownership. Alkahtani *et. al.*, (2020) studied does government support enhance the relation between networking structure and sustainable competitive performance among SMEs. The aim of the study was to examine how networking structure (density and centrality) affects sustainable competitive performance in Pakistan's SMEs. The study adopted a quantitative descriptive survey research method, and the study sample size was 267 SMEs operating in twin cities. Structured questionnaires were used to gather responses from the top management staff and data collected was analyzed using descriptive statistical analysis and correlation coefficient. Findings from the study indicated that Government Supports has a positive and significant ($\beta=313, p<0.01$) impact on sustainable competitive performance.

Political Instability and SMEs Performance

Alnassar and AL-Shakrchy (2020), studied financial education, political instability and firm performance: evidence from Malaysian SMEs. The purpose of the study was to assess the short-term and long-term interaction between firm performance, financial education and political instability in Malaysia small and medium enterprises (SMEs). The study employed a time-series methodology and autoregressive distributed lag model (ARDL) was used to deliver the outcome of the hypothesis assessment. The study findings revealed a negative long-term relationship between firm performance and political instability. Bazza and Daneji (2013), studied the effect of political instability on organizational performance in financial institutions in Maiduguri, Borno State, Nigeria. The major objective was to examine the impact of political instability on organizational performance and the study population was 123 out of which 30 sample size was used. Explanatory research method was used, and data collected through primary and secondary sources were analyzed through correlation techniques, percentage, and chi-square test tools. The study findings indicate that the banking sector has problems with performance or goal attainment during an unstable political environment.

Theoretical Review

Institutional Theory

Institutional theory was introduced in the late 1970s by John Meyer and Brian Rowan as a means to explore how organization fit with, related to, and how organization are being shaped by its societal, state, national and global environment. Institutional theory concentrates on the flexibility aspects of the social structure, and these social structures includes rules, norms, and routines deemed as an influential guiding principle for social behaviors. Institutional theory calls the attention of organization stakeholders to the various role of government and professional associations in organizations (Jaradat, *et al.* 2018). Institutional theory shed more lights on the influence of external environmental factors on organizational decision-making and performance (Furusten, 2023).

Methodology

This study adopted descriptive research design, the targeted population was 142 SMEs which registered with Ministry of Trade, Industry and Tourism, Gombe state as at February, 2023 out of which a sample of 105 was selected through Taro Yamane (Yamane, 1973) formula with 95% confidence level. This study used primary data source with the aid of five Point Likert-Scale questionnaire ranging from strongly disagree (SD) to strongly agree (SA). The quantitative data obtained were analyzed using Multiple Regression with the aid of SPSS package. Cronbach's Alpha reliability test was carried out on all the 22 items of the questionnaire and the overall reliability test for the items was 0.868 (86.8%), which implies that the items were valid and reliable. Cronbach's Alpha of 0.700 and above is accepted for a valid work (DeVellis, 2003).

Data Presentation and Analysis

H₀₁: Government Regulations does not have significant relationship on SMEs performance in selected SMEs in Gombe State.

H₀₂: Political Instability does not have significant relationship on SMEs performance in selected SMEs in Gombe State.

Table 1: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.342 ^a	.117	.100	.96536	1.423

a. Predictors: (Constant), POLITICAL_INSTABILITY, GOVERNMENT_REGULATIONS

b. Dependent Variable: PERFORMANCE_SMEs

Source: Field Survey, (2023)

Table 1 shows that government regulation and political instability have significant effect on SMEs performance. Additionally, government regulation and political instability jointly contribute about 11.7% to the performance of SMEs in Gombe State. The estimated Durbin-Watson value of 1.423 clears any doubts as to the existence of positive first order serial correlation in the estimated model. Implication of this findings is that 11.7%

variations in SMEs performance were caused by the study predictors, while 88.3% variations are caused by other factors not captured in this study.

Table 2: ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	12.601	2	6.300	6.761	.002 ^b
	Residual	95.056	102	.932		
	Total	107.657	104			

a. Dependent Variable: P_SMEs

b. Predictors: (Constant), P_Instability, G_Regulations

Source: Field Survey (2023)

Table 2 indicates the level of significance of predictors variables, the table shows that government regulation and political instability were related to SMEs performance and that the relationship between them were significant compared to Alpha value of 0.05.

Table 3: Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	5.654	.555		10.196	.000
	GOVERNMENT_REGULATIONS	-.257	.118	-.211	-2.187	.031
	POLITICAL_INSTABILITY	-.229	.101	-.218	-2.257	.026

a. Dependent Variable: PERFORMANCE_SMEs

Source: Field Survey (2023)

Table 3 shows the coefficient values of government regulations and political instability as -0.211 and -0.218 respectively; meaning that for every one percent variation (increase) in the government regulation and political instability, there will be 21.1% and 21.8% inverse variations (decrease) in the selected SMEs performances. Under the standardized coefficients, it was clearly shown that Government Regulations has standardize coefficient of -0.211 and p-value of 0.031, this means that there was positive and significant relationship between government regulation and SMEs performance. Studies by Gloria (2022), Sims (2018) and Alkahtani *et. al.*, (2020) supported this finding, they investigated the effects of tax policies, minimum wage policies and government supports policies on SMEs and their various studies and results showed that government regulations through tax, minimum wage and government supports policies have positive and significant relationships on SMEs performances. Political Instability with a standardize coefficient of 0.-218 and p-value <0.05 (0.026) also supported the findings of Alnassar and AL-Shakrchy (2020) and Bazza and Daneji (2013) which revealed that political instability has significant effect on SMEs performances.

Conclusion

This study examines the effect of political environmental factors using government regulation and political instability as observed variables to measure SMEs performance in Gombe state. The study made use of primary data source and five-point Likert-scale questionnaires were administered to 105 SMEs owners/managers who served as respondents. Data gathered from the study were analyzed using Multiple Regression. Findings from the study revealed that Government Regulations and Political Instability have statistical significance on SMEs performance in Gombe state. The study recommends that: Government Regulations such as tax policy, minimum wages policy and government supports policies should be given proper attention by governments at all levels in order to make the business environment friendly to the SMEs operators. Government should also try as much as possible to maintain stable political atmosphere, devoid of street protest, frequent change of cabinet members/ cabinet reshuffle and other civil unrest which are capable of truncating the relative peace and tranquility enjoyed by the business community.

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