



## Business Mentoring: Panacea to Sustainable Entrepreneurship in South-East Nigeria

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### Abstract

Business mentoring is the process of ensuring the survival of mentee enterprises by the mentor. The study investigated mentorship in business as a panacea to entrepreneurship sustainability in Nigeria South-East zone. A survey was employed as the study design. The study was restricted to the commercial centres of the states in Nigeria south-east zone. 10,887 registered small-scale companies (Aba 3062, Abakaliki 1489, Enugu 1516, Onitsha 3126, and Owerri 1694) make up the study population. Using Yamane's (1967) statistical formula 386, the sample size was calculated. Bowley's (1926) allocation formula was used to proportionally distribute the sample size (Aba 108, Abakaliki 53, Enugu 54, Onitsha 111, and Owerri 60). A systematic, self-administered questionnaire was used to gather data. The hypothesis was tested using multiple regressions. With p-values below 0.05 significance, and positive t-values ( $t = 9.133$ ), the test hypotheses demonstrated that apprenticeship has a significant and beneficial impact on sustainable entrepreneurship. In contrast, the p-value is more than 0.05 and the t-values are positive ( $t = 1.634$ ), indicating a weak but positive association between business networking and sustained entrepreneurship. According to the study's findings, young business owners need to find a mentor to help them hone their abilities and expertise in a given industry.

**Keywords:** Networking, Apprenticeship, Mentoring, and Entrepreneurship sustainability

### Introduction

Sustainable entrepreneurship is the managerial activities that ensure consistency and survival of enterprises. Sustainable entrepreneurial activity is identifying and exploiting economic possibilities to produce long-term economic growth and

prosperity, social cohesion, and environmental protection for future generations (Parastuty&Bögenhold, 2019; Bögenhold, 2019). Entrepreneurship is the process of starting a firm with a creative idea and reducing the risk involved by using less natural resources and energy. Long-

term organisational performance depends on innovation and efficient risk factor management (Bögenhold, 2019). In addition to innovation, entrepreneurship helps the region's economy grow and helps young people get financial stability because job opportunities are limited (Bögenhold, 2004; Petuskiene & Glinskiene, 2011). Several facilitators and obstacles influence effective participation in sustainable entrepreneurship, which may change over time and across geographical areas.

Entrepreneurs' inexperience during the startup phase of their businesses is one of the major issues in this industry. Though they may require further knowledge and intellectual resources to implement their ideas, young entrepreneurs may have strong ideas for sustainable firms. As a result, their inexperience rather than their business may be the reason they are unable to thrive in the market.

The need for business-specific information and skills is one of the main reasons why entrepreneurs in all industries gain a great deal from having a mentor for their professional growth and company success. Mentors are a type of figure that entrepreneurs might find. Mentors assist a person in learning and progressing in their desired career. They are competent individuals who use their entrepreneurship experience or specialised knowledge to assist budding entrepreneurs in achieving success in both company and life. Allen (2015) asserts that a business mentor have sufficient business expertise to enable them to help others. A business mentor, on the other hand, is someone who has enough expertise and experience committed to the ongoing development of a managed business, claim Rothwell and Chee (2013). They also discuss the characteristics of a successful business mentor, including networking opportunities, learning experiences, care for the development and well-being of their mentee, and, most importantly, trustworthiness. To achieve such

outcomes, St-Jean and Tremblay (2011) have identified the type of information that a mentor gives to his mentee. A mentor helps aspiring entrepreneurs establish the goal and objectives of their enterprise. Mentorship activities helps new business owners gain effective knowledge and skills, such as enhancing their basic accounting skills, learning how to grow their clientele, and identifying business prospects.

Several elements that connect charity endeavors with Igbo culture stem from the historical past and the ancient native culture, which gave origin to societal notions like Ubuntu. According to commonly held Ubuntu ideas, the rights of society come before the rights of the individual for the sake of the common good (Bandura, 1997). "I am what I am because of who we all are" is the fundamental tenet that bases the concept. It is a humanist ideology that has historically opposed Western nations' individualism by emphasising the importance of interpersonal relationships and allegiances. This is particularly true for Igbo apprenticeships, where mentees' survival often depends on the practical knowledge that mentors teach them. The impact of mentors on entrepreneurial development is amplified by the social dimension that all acts and decisions in this setting have in this context. Entrepreneurs are individuals or persons, while entrepreneurship is a process (Chukwu & Uzochukwu, 2013).

Entrepreneurial mentorship and its traits have been the subject of extensive research over the past 20 years (St-Jean & Audet, 2011). In spite of this, there aren't many studies that attempt to explain mentors in the entrepreneurship social niche. The importance of their work is growing in both underdeveloped and, more recently, developed countries. Therefore, there is need to investigate the effect of business mentoring as a panacea for entrepreneurial survival in southeast Nigeria. The following are the specific objective of the study;

- 1) To determine the impact of apprenticeship on sustainable entrepreneurship of selected small-scale enterprises.
- 2) To ascertain the role of business networking on sustainable entrepreneurship of selected small-scale enterprises.

### **Business Mentoring**

Business mentoring is a business activity that involves two or more individuals (mentor and mentee). The goal is to transmit information and empower the mentee so that they can flourish in their business. Mentoring is a tight, forward-moving relationship in which one partner willingly gains from the other's greater experience, knowledge, abilities, or status in all areas of human effort (Okurame and Balogun, 2013). Sachdeva and Malhotra (2014) state that mentoring entails developing professional friendships, sharing personal experiences, listening with empathy, and gaining understanding via reflection. Business mentorship further comprises motivating and empowering people (mentees) to recognise their unique potential and goals and helping them develop means of implementing or realising them.

### **Sustainable Entrepreneurship**

Sustainability of entrepreneurship is the ability of an enterprise to be sustain and strive over a given period of time. One of the best strategies for ending poverty and guaranteeing long-term development is entrepreneurial growth (Iyiola & Azuh, 2014). Entrepreneurship is defined as the process of converting opportunities into profit by utilising available resources. It includes finding a business opportunity, developing a product, expanding the enterprise, taking risks, and making money for the entrepreneur and stakeholders (Ayer, 2010; Gwija, Eresia-Eke, & Iwu, 2014). In order to generate societal and financial value, sustainable entrepreneurship seeks out and seizes social, economic, and environmental opportunities (Ehugbo & Ugboko, 2020).

Evidently, entrepreneurs are adept in identifying long-term company prospects and developing new markets as opposed to altering current structures (Filser, Kraus, Tierno, Kailer, & Fischer, 2019). An entrepreneur's long-term winning strategy is sustainable entrepreneurship (Ehugbo & Ugboko, 2020). They added that the sustainability of the business will be ensured by an entrepreneur's capacity to integrate and use social, economic, and environmental risks and possibilities.

### **Apprenticeship**

Apprenticeship is a non-formal technique of technical skill training and transfer. Furthermore, efficient apprentice mentoring will result in the transfer of knowledge and skills from the master to the mentee, which increases entrepreneurial sustainability when dexterously passed. For those seeking to learn the fundamentals of a profession in a relevant and hands-on manner, apprenticeship training programs offer opportunities (Anyakora, Osagie, Gambo, & Iyagba, 2015, cited in Ezenwakwelu, Egbosionu, & Okwo, 2019). Apprenticeship programmes allow the learner to stay with the instructor on a particular vocational skill acquisition. This is to certify the mastery and competency of the learner by the trainer before issuing a certificate of graduation. Effective apprenticeship programmes have the potential to support entrepreneurship in a developing country.

### **Business Networking**

Networking in business is a formal and transparent relationship between two or more individuals or groups who are in the same line of business to achieve a competitive edge in the industry. Business networking is a process that needs to be managed using specific applications in various situations. The benefits of this include a wide and well-balanced network of relationships, recurring transactions, outcomes that surpass the capabilities of a single company, access to

possibilities and information, and the creation of jobs (Baker, 2000). According to Wickham (2004), business networking refers to the connections that exist between various companies; a competitive edge in the business world can be established and maintained through the efficient use of these connections. Business networking is a management strategy for sharing business secrets and pulling resources to achieve a competitive advantage over rivals.

### Empirical Review

Anekwe (2019) explored the relationship between mentorship and company performance in Nigeria. Qualitative research was used in the study. It was determined that, with the help of business expertise, mentoring is a suitable kind of assistance that enables mentees to develop their managerial abilities and learn by doing.

Obi, Mbah and Ozoko (2018) examined the role of social environment on expansion of businesses in Southeast Nigeria. The rationale were to determining the extent to which family size and the growth of family-owned small and medium businesses are correlated was the explicit aim of the study. 7061 owners of registered small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) from the five South-Eastern States of Nigeria made up the study's sample. Using the statistical technique developed by Freund and Williams to determine sample size, the population was sampled down to 347. Bowley's (1926) allocation formula was used to divide the determined sample size among the five South Eastern States of Nigeria, and a standardised questionnaire was used to gather data from the respondents. According to the study's findings, family size had no discernible beneficial impact on family-owned SMEs in Southeast Nigeria. The number of employees in SMEs in South-East Nigeria is significantly positively correlated with the predominant age group ( $r(n = 347) = .155$ ,  $t(n = 347) = 15.320$ ,  $p < .05$ ). The amount of sales in SMEs in South East Nigeria is significantly positively correlated with

the Igbo client "igbaodibo" ( $t(n = 347) = 18.600$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

In Ghana, a developing economy, Agyapong, Agyapong, and Poku (2017) investigated the relationship between social capital and the success of micro and small businesses. Cross-sectional data gathered from 500 MSBs in Ghana's Ashanti Region using a questionnaire and a survey methodology served as the study's foundation. With the help of SPSS version 20, the study's scales and measures were validated using confirmatory factor analysis in LISREL 8.50. To generate the study's suggested model, ordinary least square regression analysis was employed. The tested hypotheses demonstrated that social capital improved performance, that there is a positive correlation between performance and innovation, that social capital influences innovation favourably, and that innovation mediates the relationship between social capital and performance to some extent.

In Abuja, Nigeria, Ofobruku and Nwakoby (2015) investigated how employee performance in a particular family business was affected by mentorship. With a focus on family-owned construction enterprises in Abuja. Survey strategy that blended quantitative and qualitative methods was employed in the study. 3685 persons are employed by the chosen construction companies. Analysis was done on the replies of 367 workers from construction companies. The Pearson Correlation Coefficient Statistics approach was used to evaluate the data. According to the study's findings, career, psychological, and mentoring support all had a major and positive influence on worker performance.

### The Mentor Role Theory of Kram

Kram (1983) was the one who first proposed this theory. The foundation of this study, particularly with reference to corporate mentoring, was Kram's mentor role proposition. According to this view, Kram classified mentoring as offering both



psychosocial assistance and career growth. Career support and psychosocial support are two essential components of the mentoring relationship, according to Kram (1983). Sponsorship, counselling, exposure to valuable contacts and resources, visibility, protecting mentees, and giving them difficult tasks to further their careers are all examples of career support responsibilities (Noe, 1988; Kram, 1983). Role modelling, companionship, counselling, acceptance, and affirmation of the mentee are examples of psychosocial support roles (Clutterbuck, 2004; Kram, 1983). Because of its characteristics pertaining to both objective and subjective entrepreneurial sustainability, this theory was selected for this investigation.

### Methodology

The approach used for the study was quantitative. The study's research design was a survey. The study was limited to the commercial hubs of the five states in Southeast Nigeria: Aba, Abakaliki, Enugu, Onitsha, and Owerri. The research population consists of 10,887 registered small-scale businesses (Aba 3062, Abakaliki 1489, Enugu 1516, Onitsha 3126, and Owerri 1694). The sample size was determined using Yamane's (1967) statistical formula 386. Aba 108, Abakaliki 53, Enugu 54, Onitsha 111, and Owerri 60 were given a proportionate share of the sample size using Bowley's (1926) proportional allocation

formula. Data was collected using a careful, self-administered questionnaire. Multiple regressions were used to evaluate the hypothesis.

One model was designed specifically to capture the objectives of the study. The model is stated below.

The functional model form is presented below;

$$SE = f(A, BN)$$

Where:

$f$  = Functional Notation

SE = Sustainable Entrepreneurship

A = Apprenticeship

BN = Business Networking

The Regression Model can be restated in econometric form as:

$$SE = \alpha O + \beta_1 A + \beta_2 BN + \varepsilon \quad (1)$$

Where:

$\alpha$  = Constant Term

$\beta$  = Beta coefficients

SE = Sustainable Entrepreneurship

A = Apprenticeship

BN = Business Networking

$\varepsilon$  = Error

### Presentation and Analysis of Data

Of the 386 questionnaires issued, 342 were completed and returned, thus showing a response rate of 87%, which is considered adequate for the study.

**Table 1: Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.664 <sup>a</sup>	.441	.438	1.09174
a. Predictors: (Constant), Apprenticeship, Business Networking				

Source: SPSS Output

**Table 2: ANOVA<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	320.284	2	160.142	134.360	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	405.243	340	1.192		
	Total	725.528	342			
a. Dependent Variable: Sustainable entrepreneurship						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Apprenticeship, Business networking						

Source: SPSS Output

**Table 3: Coefficients**

Model		Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	3.605	.786		4.587	.000
	Apprenticeship	.666	.073	.581	9.133	.000
	Business networking	.139	.085	.104	1.634	.103
a. Dependent Variable: Sustainable entrepreneurship						

Source: SPSS Output

**Interpretation**

The potential of business networking and apprenticeship variables to impact sustainable entrepreneurship is assessed in the regression tables (Tables 1, 2, and 3). According to the model summary in Table 1, apprenticeship and business networking have a 66.4 percent impact on sustainable entrepreneurship (as shown in the R column), suggesting a strong linear link between the independent and dependent variables. According to the corrected R<sup>2</sup> value (0.441), apprenticeship and business networking can predict up to 44.1 percent of sustainable entrepreneurship. The (ANOVA) table shows overall statistically significant relationship, according to the F-test,  $f(134.360, p 0.05)$ .

The findings of the regression model's coefficient analysis are shown in Table 3. The t-test is used to determine the regression coefficient (B), the intercept ( $\alpha$ ), and the significance of the coefficient in the model in order to test the null hypothesis that the coefficient is zero. The data shows that apprenticeship has a significant and positive impact on sustainable entrepreneurship, with p-values below 0.05 and positive t-values ( $t = 9.133$ ). In contrast, the p-value is more than 0.05 and the t-values are positive ( $t = 1.634$ ), indicating a weak but positive association between business networking and sustained entrepreneurship. Furthermore, the standardised beta coefficients (0.666 and 0.139) show that apprenticeship and business networking strongly impact sustainable

entrepreneurship. Consequently, the null hypothesis is disproved, and it is determined that apprenticeship and sustainable enterprise have a substantial and favourable association. At the same time, there is an insignificant and positive relationship between business networking and sustainable entrepreneurship.

### Discussions of Finding

The findings showed that apprenticeship and sustainable enterprise had a strong favourable correlation. This study is comparable to that of Obi, Mbah and Ozoko (2018) who examined the social environment and expansion of small and medium-sized businesses in southeast Nigeria. The second finding indicates that business networking and sustained entrepreneurship have a negligible beneficial association. Agyapong, Agyapong, and Poku (2017) examined the connection between social capital and micro and small business success in an emerging country, and this study supports their findings.

### Conclusions

One of the main reasons why entrepreneurs in all industries benefit greatly from having someone to mentor them in their business development and professional advancement is the necessity of mentoring in a particular industry. A mentor helps someone learn and advance in their chosen field of work. They are competent individuals who use their entrepreneurship experience or specialised knowledge to assist budding entrepreneurs in achieving success in both company and life. As a result, new business owners need to find a mentor to help them hone their abilities and expertise in a certain industry.

### Recommendations

- 1) A potential entrepreneur should be attached to an experienced entrepreneur who will serve as a coach. The implication is that when the individual is connected, they will be better guided on how to succeed in their chosen career.
- 2) The young entrepreneur should work with other successful entrepreneurs. The implication is that the other successful entrepreneurs will serve as mentors to ensure the young entrepreneur succeeds and provide him with financial and business partner linkages when necessary.

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