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Effects of Access to Finance and Business Mentorship on Sales Growth of SMEs in Gboko Metropolis, Benue State, Nigeria

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Abstract:

The study examined the effects of access to finance and mentorship on sales growth of SMEs in Gboko metropolis, Benue State, Nigeria. The study employed a survey design and used a structured questionnaire (Four Likert Scale) designed by the researcher to gather data. Four research questions and four hypotheses guided the study. A reliability (Cronbach Alpha) estimate of 0.941 was obtained for the questionnaire. With the aid of Taro-Yamane formula, two hundred and forty-eight (248) SME Managers operating in different sectoral activities were sampled from 650 registered SMEs in Gboko metropolis. Data were analysed using mean and standard deviation, while four hypotheses were tested using Analysis of Variance at a 0.05 level of significance. Findings showed that access to finance and business mentorship has a significant effect on sales growth of SMEs in Gboko metropolis of Benue State. The research questions were answered using mean and standard deviation, while hypotheses were tested using Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) at a 0.05 level of significance. The study found that all the p-values were less than 0.05, indicating that all the variables were statistically significant in affecting sales growth of SMEs in Gboko metropolis, Benue State. The study concluded that all the variables have a significant effect on sales growth of SMEs in Gboko metropolis of Benue State. The study suggests, among others, that government should make available soft loans for SMEs and hence facilitate productive dialogue with private sector investors to remove barriers to doing business by deploying approaches that promote market access across the country.

Keywords: Access to finance, business mentorship, sales growth, SME's

1. Introduction

SMEs have been perceived as important apparatus for job creation and economic growth. This has been necessitated by the increasing awareness within governments that large projects in the industrial sector are less likely to generate the requisite employment opportunities, given the high capital-intensity of output in the sector. There is growing recognition of the important role SMEs play in the economic development of any country, Nigeria inclusive (Oni & Daniya, 2012). Avendano (2013) asserted that SMEs provide the vast majority of employment in developing countries and are keystones in the productive structures of emerging economies. According to Subhan, Mahmood and Sattar (2013), SMEs are the driving force for the promotion of economic development in developed and developing countries.

The significance of entrepreneurship development in several economies globally cannot be overemphasised, as the majority of countries worldwide have established programmes to support entrepreneurship within their communities. Governments of most countries, especially the developing countries, have in the past invested so much effort and resources in establishing policies intended to uplift entrepreneurship (Oni & Daniya, 2012). In the United States of America (USA), according to Audrestch (2007), the government mandated all Universities to introduce entrepreneurship training in their curriculum as a mandatory course that all students must attend before graduation. According to Minniti (2008), in countries such as China, Brazil, Saudi Arabia, Malaysia and Nigeria, different entrepreneurship supportive

programmes have been established to create an enabling environment for sales growth of small and medium-scale enterprises.

SMEs have to deal with certain entrepreneurship factors in the general environment that could either hinder or support sales growth of the enterprises. Such factors include: resource availability, business start-ups, and access to markets, regulation, competitive forces, and buying power of the consumers (Ikherehon, 2002). It is further contended that firms that possess higher levels of entrepreneurship support will perform better than those with lower levels of entrepreneurship support (Rauch, 2009; Dada, 2012). Higher levels of entrepreneurship support allow firms to have the ability to identify and seize opportunities in a way that differentiates them from non-supportive entrepreneurial firms (Soininen, 2013).

Turyakira and Ikiror (2015) assert that the government of Nigeria, coupled with the assistance of World Bank and the African Development Bank, has articulated various strategies, policies and programmes in the past to boost SMEs growth and enhance wealth creation. For the implementation of government programmes and policies towards entrepreneurship and small businesses, successive Nigerian governments have established some agencies and policies including: World Bank SME loan scheme, African Development Bank Export Stimulation Loan (ADB/ESL) scheme, CBN Re-discounting and Re-financing Facility (RRF), Nigerian Agricultural Land Development Authority (NALDA), Better Life for Rural Women (BLRW), Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP), Youth Empowerment Scheme (YES), National Economic Reconstruction Fund (NERFUND), Bank of Industry (BOI) and the Graduate Employment Loan Scheme (GELS) initiated by the National Directorate of Employment (NDE).

The Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) introduced the Micro, Small and Medium Industries Equity Investment Scheme (SMIES), National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS), Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (ERGP), Nigerian Industrial Revolutionary Plan (RIRP), Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN), Entrepreneurship Development Centers (EDC) (Osemeke, 2012) and recently Subsidy Reinvestment Programme (SURE-P), Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT), Social Investment Programme (SIP) and many other programmes to encourage business development in the country.

The environment of a business can be defined as the totality of conditions, events, and influences that surround and affect the operations of a business (Strydom, 2012). Entrepreneurship supportive environment comprises a wide range of business development services, such as mentorship, training, ease of doing business, networking, laws (regulation) and financing that affect sales growth of SMEs (Nieman & Nieuwenhuizen, 2014). In Benue State, different entrepreneurship programmes have also been carried out to support the activities of SMEs.

Beck and Demirguc-Kunt (2006) reported that access to finance is significant in facilitating the entry, exit and growth of SMEs. Fatoki and Garwe (2010) argue about the problem of access and availability of finance to entrepreneurs in developing countries. Watson (2004) reported that entrepreneurship mentors play an active role in supporting entrepreneurs. Mentorship takes many forms. It may be formal or informal, aimed at skills improvement or solution to management problems, and may be provided by someone within or outside business (Schoof, 2006; Duggan, 2009). Entrepreneurship training is aimed at leading to either employment in an existing enterprise, self-employment (in either the formal or informal economy), or further education (Maas & Herrington, 2007; Wiseman, 2014). Ease of doing business focuses on the regulatory environment for small and medium-sized enterprises. These enterprises are key drivers of competition, growth and job creation, mostly in developing economies (Leroy, 2012). The variables discussed above significantly affect sales growth of small and medium-scale enterprises.

Sales growth has been defined as the result of efforts in the form of activities of the business enterprise, which includes its strategy and operational activities, management of all segments of business enterprise such as the human resources, finance, production, and marketing (Leitner, 2000). Sales growth of SMEs is the effort expended by such enterprises to reach and achieve their stated objectives which could include sales growth, customer satisfaction, survival, innovativeness, return on investment, employment, and, ultimately, profitability. This means sales growth is actual output against expected output (Mark & Nwaiwu, 2015).

Sales growth of SMEs in this study includes sales growth, profitability and innovativeness. Sales growth refers to the amount a company derives from sales compared to a previous corresponding period of time in which the later sales exceed the former, usually given as a percentage (Kessy & Temu, 2010). According to Hussain, Asif, Ahmad, and Bilal (2011), profitability is the ability to make a profit from all the business activities of an organization, which shows how efficiently the management can use all the resources available in the market. Innovativeness refers to an enterprise's ability to engage in new ideas and creative processes that may result in new products and services, markets or technological processes that could result in enterprise sales growth (Hult, Hurley & Knight, 2004). Innovations have proven to be crucial components for the entrepreneurship development of modern societies (Akande & Oladejo, 2013). This study, therefore, investigates the influence of an entrepreneurial, supportive environment on sales growth of Small and Medium Enterprises in Gboko metropolis, Benue State, Nigeria.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

One of the reasons for the increased attention towards SMEs is their contribution to employment. Since they offer individuals a livelihood and a source of independent revenue, they provide a medium for people to escape from poverty and inequality. Governments of most countries, especially developing countries, have in the past invested so much effort and so many resources in establishing policies intended to uplift entrepreneurship and create an entrepreneurial, supportive environment to help improve sales growth of small and medium-scale enterprises. The government of Nigeria has formulated and implemented various policies aimed at increasing job opportunities, development of infrastructure as

well as income generation through the creation of new small and medium enterprises and improving sales growth and competitiveness of existing ones.

Previous studies indicate that SMEs limited sales growth has been associated with limited access to finance, inadequate provision of public services, and unfavorable system of taxation, high regulatory burden and unstable government policies. However, a few studies have been carried out on entrepreneurship supportive environment and sales growth of SMEs in Nigeria considering financial and non-financial measures of sales growth. Also, previous studies carried out on entrepreneurship-supportive environments and sales growth of SMEs considered different dimensions of supportive environments such as tax policies, infrastructural facilities, regulation, financing, business incubation, and location, amongst others. This study intends to examine the influence of access to finance and business mentorship on sales growth of SMEs in Gboko metropolis, Benue State, Nigeria.

1.2. Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to examine the effect of an entrepreneurial, supportive environment on sales growth of SMEs in Gboko metropolis, Benue State, Nigeria. Specifically, this study is designed to

- Determine the effect of access to finance on sales growth SMEs in Gboko metropolis, Benue State, Nigeria;
- Assess the effect of business mentorship on sales growth of SMEs in Gboko metropolis, Benue State, Nigeria.

1.3. Research Questions

The following research questions guided the conduct of the study:

- What is the effect of access to finance on sales growth of SMEs in Gboko metropolis, Benue State, Nigeria?
- What is the effect of business mentorship on sales growth of SMEs in Gboko metropolis, Benue State, Nigeria?

1.4. Statement of Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated to guide this study and tested at a 0.05 level of significance:

- HO₁: Access to finance has no significant effect on sales growth of SMEs in Gboko metropolis, Benue State, Nigeria.
- HO₂: Business mentorship has no significant effect on sales growth of SMEs in Gboko metropolis, Benue State, Nigeria.

2. Research Design

The study employed a survey design and hence made use of a questionnaire to gather data.

2.1. Population of the Study

The population of this study consists of 650 registered small and medium enterprises in Gboko metropolis operating in different sectoral activities according to statistics obtained from the Benue State Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (BECCIMA, 2023). Participants in the study include owners and managers of micro, small and medium-scale enterprises in Gboko metropolis, Benue State. The breakdown of the population according to the nature of the SMEs is presented in table 1:

2.2. Sample and Sampling Technique

In order to reduce the population to a manageable number, the sample size will be determined using Taro-Yamane's (1967) formula, which is given as:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2} \quad (1)$$

Where,

n = Sample size

N = Population of the study

e = Level of significance (tolerable error) at 5%

1 = Constant

$$n = \frac{650}{1 + 650(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{650}{1 + 650(0.0025)}$$

$$n = \frac{650}{2.625}$$

$$n = 247.6$$

$$n = 248 \text{ (Sample Size of the Study)}$$

Bowley's (1964) population allocation formula is employed in determining the sample size per each sub-sector of SMEs. The formula was stated as follows:

$$nh = \frac{n \times Nh}{N} \quad (2)$$

Where:

nh = sample size per sub-sector

n = total sample size

Nh = total number of owners

N = total population size

$$\text{Professional and Other Services} = nh = \frac{248 \times 110}{650} = 42$$

$$\text{Wholesale and Retail Trade} = nh = \frac{248 \times 220}{650} = 84$$

$$\text{Agriculture} = nh = \frac{248 \times 122}{650} = 47$$

$$\text{Manufacturing} = nh = \frac{248 \times 90}{650} = 34$$

$$\text{Hospitality} = nh = \frac{248 \times 108}{650} = 41$$

$$\text{Thus, } 42 + 84 + 47 + 34 + 41 = 248$$

The probability sampling employed in the study is stratified random sampling since the population from which the samples were picked did not constitute a homogeneous assemblage - there were different kinds of micro and small business ventures operating different types of businesses. Stratified random sampling was preferred as it provides data to analyze sub-groups and facilitates the use of different methods in strata, thereby enabling the researcher to comfortably and easily control the sample size in the strata.

2.3. Instrument of Data Collection

The instrument used in this study is the Questionnaire. It comprised closed-ended questions and was structured based on the objectives of the study.

The questionnaire was structured to capture views from business owners. The closed-ended questions will gather the respondent's opinions concerning specific issues. The questions were designed using a four-point Likert scale for measurement, which ranged from strongly agree to strongly disagree (strongly agree = 4, agree = 3, disagree = 2, strongly disagree = 1). These were used to reflect the agreement of respondents on the statements posed to them in the questionnaire.

2.4. Validation and Reliability of the Instrument

Face and content validity were conducted on the instrument. Also, factor analysis will be adopted to test the construct validity of the instrument. Factor analysis will be used because the questionnaire is multiple-scale and has many options. The result of the factor analysis, as presented in table 1, shows that Kaiser-Meyer Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett test surpass the threshold of 0.5.

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin	Measure of Sampling Adequacy	0.796
Bartlett's Test of		
Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	846.713
Df		10
Sig.		.000

Table 1: KMO and Bartlett's Test

Source: SPSS Data Output, 2023

Reliability of the instrument was carried out to ensure consistency of the measurement instrument. The overall reliability coefficient of the questionnaire is 0.971. This implies that the instrument is reliable for use in data collection.

2.5. Method of Data Collection

Data were collected through questionnaire administration. This approach is to be adopted/chosen because it is famous and takes a snapshot of a population at certain times, thereby permitting conclusions relating to phenomena in an immense population to be drawn. It is preferred since it is concerned with answering definite questions such as who, how, what, which, when and how much.

2.6. Variable/Model Specification

2.6.1. Variable Specification

The study is measured using two variables: the independent variable (entrepreneurship-supportive environment) and the dependent variable (Sales growth of SMEs). The independent variable is measured in terms of access to finance and business mentorship.

2.6.2. Model Specification

In this study, sales growth of SMEs is regarded as a function of an entrepreneurship-supportive environment. Entrepreneurship supportive environment in this study comprises ease of doing business, training, access to finance and business mentorship.

In this vein, the study suggests that:

$$\text{SMEs} = f(\text{ESE})$$

(3)

Where:

SMEs = Sales growth of Small and Medium Enterprises (dependent variable)

ESE = Entrepreneurship Supportive Environment (independent variable)

Given that entrepreneurship supportive environment comprise two dimensions, the implicit form of the model is given as follows:

$$\text{SMEs} = f(\text{ACF}, \text{BME})$$

(4)

Where:

ACF = Access to Finance;

BME = Business Mentorship.

Thus, the explicit form of the model for the study is stated as follows:

$$\text{SMEs}_i = B_0 + B_1 \text{ACF}_i + B_2 \text{BME}_i + e_i$$

Where:

B_0 = constant of the model.

B_{1-2} = coefficients of the model.

e = disturbance terms or error terms.

2.6.3. A Priori Expectation

This means that all the independent variables $B_1 > 0$, $B_2 > 0$ (access to finance and business mentorship) are expected to have a significant influence on the dependent variable (sales growth of SMEs).

2.7. Data Analysis Techniques

The statistical tools used in answering research questions are the means and standard deviations. Descriptive and inferential statistics are employed for data presentation and analysis, respectively, with the aid of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) is employed to test the hypotheses at a 0.05 significance level. This method was adopted to help measure the influence of the independent variables (access to finance and business mentorship) on the dependent variable.

2.7.1. Decision Rule

Mean and Standard Deviation were used to answer research questions. In answering the research questions, mean values that are less than 2.50 were considered to have a low effect, while those mean values higher than 2.50 were considered to have a high effect. Regression was used to test the hypotheses at a 0.05 level of significance. The decision was that the null hypothesis was rejected if the p-value was less than 0.05 and it was not rejected if otherwise.

3. Results and Discussion

This section focuses on data presentation and analysis, test of hypotheses and discussion of findings.

3.1. Data Presentation and Analysis

3.1.1. Descriptive Statistics on Research Objectives

Frequency tables and percentages were used to present and analyze the responses collected from the respondents to the research questions.

3.1.1.1. Responses on the Effect of Access to Finance on Sales Growth of SMEs

What is the influence of access to finance on sales growth of SMEs in Gboko metropolis, Benue State, Nigeria?

S/No	Questions	N	SA	A	D	SD	X	SD	Remark
1	I receive financial assistance from family members for my business.	248	91	104	49	4	3.14	.78	HE
2	I receive financial assistance from friends to grow my business faster.	248	44	140	50	14	2.86	.77	HE
3	Loans provided by the government help my business to make more profit.	248	53	132	55	8	2.93	.75	HE
4	Non-governmental organizations provide financial assistance to my business.	248	4	51	115	78	1.92	.76	LE
5	Reduction in the cost of interest rates and application fees has made it easy for my business to access finance.	248	59	101	68	20	2.80	.89	HE
	Cluster Mean						2.73	0.79	HE

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation of Rating on Influence of Access to Finance on Sales Growth of SMEs
Source: Field Survey, 2023

The result in table 2 presents the mean and standard deviation of the rating of the influence of access to finance on sales growth of SMEs in Gboko metropolis, Benue State, Nigeria. The result revealed that the mean ratings of items 11, 12, 13 and 15 are 3.14, 2.86, 2.93 and 2.80, respectively, with corresponding standard deviations of 0.78, 0.77, 0.75 and 0.89, indicating high influence. However, item 14, with a mean rating of 1.92 and a standard deviation of 0.76, indicated low influence. The data also indicated that the cluster mean was 2.73, with a standard deviation of 0.79, indicating high influence. Since the cluster mean is greater than the cut-off point of 2.50, it, therefore, implies that the respondents agreed that access to finance influences sales growth of SMEs. Thus, it implies that access to finance influences sales growth of SMEs in Gboko metropolis, Benue State, Nigeria.

3.1.1.2. Responses on the Influence of Business Mentorship on Sales Growth of SMEs

What is the influence of business mentorship on sales growth of SMEs in Gboko metropolis, Benue State, Nigeria?

S/No	Questions	N	SA	A	D	SD	X	SD	Remark
1	Mentorship relationship helps my business to increase sales.	248	30	93	99	26	2.51	.84	HE
2	I receive advice from other individuals in the same line of business.	248	80	109	53	6	3.06	.80	HE
3	I receive knowledge mentorship in developing creative problem-solving skills in managing my business.	248	20	58	114	56	2.17	.87	LE
4	I receive leadership mentorship to build interpersonal skills for my business.	248	63	131	48	6	3.01	.74	HE
5	Innovative mentorships are requisites to the successful sales growth of my organization.	248	14	67	94	73	2.09	.89	LE
	Cluster Mean						2.57	0.83	HE

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation of Rating on Influence of Business

Mentorship on Sales Growth of SMEs

Source: Field Survey, 2023

The result in table 3 presents the mean and standard deviation of the rating of the influence of business mentorship on sales growth of SMEs in Gboko metropolis, Benue State, Nigeria. The result revealed that the mean ratings of items 16, 17 and 19 are 2.51, 3.06 and 3.01, respectively, with a corresponding standard deviation of 0.84, 0.80 and 0.74, indicating high influence. However, items 18 and 20, with mean ratings of 2.17 and 2.09 and standard deviations of 0.87 and 0.89, indicated low influence. The data further indicated that the cluster mean was 2.57 with a standard deviation of 0.83. Since the cluster mean is greater than the cut-off point of 2.50, it implies that the respondents agreed that business mentorship influences sales growth of SMEs in Gboko metropolis, Benue State, Nigeria.

3.2. Test of Hypotheses

To test the hypotheses, regression analysis was utilized to investigate the influence of entrepreneurship supportive environment on sales growth of SMEs. The results are presented as follows:

3.2.1. Regression Analysis Result

The result of the regression analysis carried out was presented using model summary, ANOVA and coefficient tables.

3.2.2. Model Summary

The findings of the study showed that the R-squared, which is the coefficient of determination, reveals the variation in the dependent variable due to changes in the independent variables. From the findings in table 3, the value of R-squared was 0.726, which indicates that there was a 72.6 % variation in sales growth of SMEs in Gboko metropolis, Benue State, due to changes in ease of doing business, entrepreneurship training, access to finance and business mentorship at 95 % confidence interval. This shows that 72.6% of changes in sales growth of SMEs could be accounted for by the ease of doing business, entrepreneurship training, access to finance, and business mentorship. Durbin-Watson statistic was employed to determine the presence or absence of auto-correlation. When there is no auto-correlation, the Durbin-Watson statistic will be near 2, or (a value of 2 or close to 2 is ideal). For this model, the value of Durbin-Watson statistic was computed to be 1.822, which was reasonably close to 2. This implied that there was no auto-correlation.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.726 ^a	.527	.513	.449	1.822

Table 4: Model Summary

a. Finance, Business Predictors: (Constant), Ease of Doing Business, Access to Mentorship, Entrepreneurship Training

b. Dependent Variable: Sales Growth of SMEs

Source: Field Survey, 2023

3.3. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

From the ANOVA statistics in table 5, the processed data, which is the population parameters, had a significance level of 0.013 which shows that the data is ideal for concluding the population's parameter as the value of significance (p-value) is less than 5%. The F-value (10.897) indicates that ease of doing business, entrepreneurship training, access to finance and business mentorship significantly affect the sales growth of SMEs in Gboko metropolis, Benue State. The significance value was less than 0.05, indicating that the model was statistically significant. This implies that the overall regression model is statistically significant, valid and fit.

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	28.832	5	5.766	10.897	.013 ^b
Residual	128.056	242	.529		
Total	156.887	247			

Table 5: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

a. Dependent Variable: SMEs Sales Growth

b. Predictors: (Constant), Business Mentorship, Ease of Doing Business, Access to Finance and Entrepreneurship Training

Source: Field Survey, 2023

3.4. Regression Coefficient

The regression coefficient in table 6 indicates that holding ease of doing business, entrepreneurship training, access to finance and business mentorship to a constant zero, sales growth of SMEs would be 1.150, a unit increase in ease of doing business would lead to an increase in sales growth of SMEs by 0.719, a unit increase in entrepreneurship training would lead to sales growth of SMEs by a factor of 0.687. Also, a unit increase in access to finance would lead to an increase in sales growth of SMEs by a factor of 0.820 and a unit increase in business mentorship will bring about 0.795 changes in sales growth of SMEs. The study also found that all the p-values were less than 0.05, indicating that all the variables were statistically significant in affecting sales growth of SMEs in Gboko metropolis, Benue State. The result of the regression analysis further indicated that access to finance has a more significant effect on the performance of SMEs in Gboko metropolis, Benue State.

Also, the tolerance and variance inflation factor (VIF) values in table 6 showed that multi-collinearity does not present a challenge in this study. The VIF values of all the variables were less than 2, which was far less than 10 and considered harmful for regression analysis. The general rule is that when VIF values exceed 10, it is a sign of multi-collinearity. The tolerance values are a measure of the correlation between the predictor variables and can vary between 0 and 1. The closer to zero the tolerance value is for a variable, the stronger the relationship between the variable and the other predictor variables. For this model, all the tolerance values were high-ranging from 0.11 for entrepreneurship training to 0.40 for ease of doing business, giving the researcher a good model.

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta				
1	(Constant)	1.150	.112					
	Ease of Doing Business	.719	.316	.659	.040	.040	.040	1.013
	Entrepreneurship Training	.687	.585	-2.396	.011	.011	.011	1.548
	Access to Finance	.820	.173	-1.656	.029	.029	.029	1.185
	Business Mentorship	.795	.507	1.100	.017	.017	.017	1.576

Table 6: Regression Coefficients

a. Dependent Variable: Sales Growth of SMEs

Source: Field Survey, 2023

3.5. Discussion of Findings

The major findings of this study are discussed based on the objectives of the study as follows:

3.5.1. Effect of Access to Finance on Sales Growth of SMEs in Gboko Metropolis, Benue State, Nigeria

The study revealed that there is a significant effect of access to finance on sales growth of small and medium scale enterprises in Gboko metropolis, Benue State ($F = 10.897$; $p = 0.013 < 0.05$). This finding is consistent with Abosede, Hassan and Oko-Oza (2017), who reported that access to finance facilitates the entry, exit, and growth of firms. Oaya and Mambula (2017) argued that the inaccessibility of bank financing had a negative impact on the growth of firms. Additionally, Murigi (2014) in their study found that financial accessibility has a significant effect on the sales growth of small and medium-scale enterprises. Mbugua *et al.* (2013) in their study indicated that there is a significant relationship between the availability of finance and the growth of enterprises. The implication of the finding to managers is that financial accessibility from formal and informal sources of finance is important for the sales growth of SMEs. There is a need to check the high-interest rate and collateral demand that hinder most SMEs from accessing credit from formal lending institutions.

3.5.2. Effect of Business Mentorship on Sales Growth of SMEs in Gboko Metropolis, Benue State, Nigeria

The result collected from the respondents on the fourth objective showed that business mentorship has a significant effect on sales growth of small and medium scale enterprises in Gboko metropolis, Benue State ($F=10.897$; $p = 0.013<0.05$). This finding is in consonance with the works of Chebii (2017), Ofbruku and Nwakoby (2015) and Mohammad and Santi (2017). They established that business mentorship motivates employees and empowers others to identify their own strengths and achieve organizational targets and goals. They also showed that business mentorship has a significant and positive effect on the survival of small and medium-sized businesses. A study in Nigeria by Akande and Oladejo (2014) found a significant and positive impact of business mentoring on the sales growth of small and medium-scale businesses. Similarly, Oyewale *et al.* (2014) revealed that there is a significant relationship between business mentorship (coaching) and sales growth of SMEs in Nigeria. This result implies that business owners should seek advice from other business owners and individuals for proper mentorship to enable them to carry out businesses effectively.

4. Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations

4.1. Summary of Findings

The study examined the effect of an entrepreneurial, supportive environment on sales growth of SMEs in Gboko Metropolis, Benue State. The following findings were revealed:

- Effect of access to finance on sales growth of SMEs in Gboko metropolis, Benue State ($P = 0.013 < 0.05$).
- Business mentorship has a significant effect on sales growth of SMEs in Gboko metropolis, Benue State ($P = 0.013 < 0.05$).

4.2. Conclusion

This study examined the effect of an entrepreneurial, supportive environment on sales growth of SMEs in Gboko metropolis, Benue State, Nigeria. The findings of the study indicate that for SMEs in Gboko metropolis to thrive, there must be an enabling supportive environment. The study concludes that the accessibility of finance by SMEs has helped in improving their business sales growth. The study also concluded that business mentorship has a significant effect on sales growth of SMEs in Gboko metropolis, Benue State, Nigeria.

4.3. Recommendations

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

- Government at all levels, stakeholders and financial institutions (such as World Bank, CBN, BOI, BOA, etc) should always provide financial assistance to SMEs to help improve sales growth of their businesses.
- Business consultants, NDE, World Bank, CBN and other relevant Government Agencies should always provide business mentorship to owners, managers and employees of SMEs in Nigeria through advice and counseling. This will assist them in effectively managing their businesses. Also, the business owners should be mentally upright to accept the mentoring.

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