



Relationship Between Government Support Initiatives and Sustainability of Small Businesses in Lagos State, Nigeria

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Abstract. This paper examines the effect of government support on the sustainability of small-scale businesses in Lagos State, Nigeria. SMEs are crucial in their contribution to economic growth, creation of employment and stimulation of innovation especially in the developing countries. However, these enterprises are confronted with multiple challenges which include lack of access to finance, poor infrastructure and barriers such as regulations which prevent them from fostering growth and sustainability. It is the government assistance in the form of financial assistance, infrastructure development, training facilities and tax benefits, necessitated in overcoming these challenges and facilitating a friendly ambience for small businesses to grow. Methodology The study adopted a correlational research design surveying 174 Small Business owners, representing 20 local government areas of Lagos State, through a structured questionnaire to examine the influence of government support on business sustainability. Descriptive statistics are used in the study to describe the characteristics of the respondents and Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation (PPMC) is used to find the relationship between government intervention and small business sustainability.

We find a positive correlation ($r = 0.30$, $p = 0.04$) between government support initiatives and sustainability of small businesses in Lagos State such that, firms that access government support are more likely to be sustainable. It was discovered that business support programs and capital injection by government will have a positive impact on small businesses operational effectiveness, ease of access to the market, and its long-term survival. In particular government tax incentives and building of capacity had a lot of positive impacts on business in relation to sustainability of business practices, 67.8% of respondents indicated. Second, 55.2% of the surveyed firms admitted that government programmes had

assisted them to cut their operational costs, enabling them to compete more effectively. These insights indicate that policy interventions can play a role in strengthening the resilience of small businesses and help drive their success in the long run. The study highlights the importance of continued commitment to the provision of infrastructure, finance and skill-building programs to support the sustainability of small businesses in Lagos State.

Keywords: Government Support, Small Businesses, Sustainability, Lagos State, Economic Growth

1. Introduction

Small businesses are the engines of economic growth and development and are the leading contributors to jobs in both developed and developing economies. Their permanence is underlined by their role in GDP growth, employment generation, poverty alleviation and their local value adding effect (Nainatul Farzuha Nor et al., 2023). Despite this potential, small businesses are often limited by an array of challenges which include: limited access to finance, poor infrastructure, bureaucratic barriers and limited managerial capacities (Pu et al., 2021 as cited in Adeoye, 2024). In the face of such headwinds, here in the cold face of it, Government support measures become a vital lever for the sustainability and competitiveness of small business too. Small and medium-sized enterprises (SME) are considered as the growth engine of the economy in most countries. They provide livelihood and contribute significantly to GDP of nations, particularly in developing countries (Nainatul Farzuha Nor et al., 2023). Comprising 64 million SMEs, also accounting for between 65-68 per cent of private sector employees in Nigeria are playing a major role in inclusive growth (Adeoye, 24). Their flexibility enables them to respond quickly to market

opportunities, which are crucial to economic adaptation and innovation.

SMEs are drivers of economic growth with regards to job creation, innovation and local economic factors (Ayyagari, Beck, & Demirgüç-Kunt, 2017). They are a very large share of GDP and employment in many economies, especially in the developing world. In Nigeria, for instance, small and medium enterprises (SMEs) contribute about 48% of GDP and 96% of the manufacturing sector (Nwankwo & Onwuka, 2020). Their efforts to stimulate an inclusive growth are also recognised, they rule in a lot of underprivileged areas of the society where they eventually deliver the basic goods and services.

Despite their importance, small firms are subject to many challenges which become obstacles to the growth and survival of small businesses. Inadequate access to credit still remains a significant constraint, because of the tough credit environment and the absence of collateral (Beck & Demirgüç-Kunt, 2006). In addition, infrastructure bottlenecks in the form of erratic power supply, poor transportation, and limited digital connectivity are barriers to effective business operation and market accessibility (Diarra et al., 2021). The absence of both management and technical skills hinder innovation and adaptation to the market forces (Hall et al., 2010). Furthermore, excessively complicated regulatory frameworks as well as costs of regulation will inhibit formalisation and sustainability (Edwards et al., 2016).

Faced with these issues, governments have taken various steps to assist small businesses. Such efforts are to remove bottlenecks and create a favourable setting for sustainable development. Supportive measures supported “credit access for livestock and poultry in specialised programmes of grants, subsidies, direct loans and venture capital (programs)” to increase financial access (González et al. For example, small firms, which are about the only ones blocked from commercial banking facilities, can certainly obtain cheap credit from government-subsidized loan programmes. Enhancing physical infrastructure, including transport, energy and digital connectivity, strong relative to operational performance to market access (Furger et al., 2020 Furger, Keller Rauter & Schlegelmilch, 2020). For example, digital extension, allows small business to ride on e-commerce and global market. Facilitation assistance to stimulate business enable smallscale between small-scale ventures and their ability to innovate and adopt ECM practices transfer skills related to financial management, marketing and sustainability (Hall et al., 2010). These are programs

for manager capability development and technology adoption. To create a business-friendly environment, a significant emphasis is placed on simplifying the process of registration/environmental standards/incentives to behave in an environmental friendly manner as regulations that would guide the business into operating according to compliance and sustainable measures (Doran et al., 2017). Combining efforts of small businesses, large enterprises, universities and governments leads to innovation and resource pooling (Boons & Lüdeke-Freund, 2013). The sustainability of small businesses is likely to be determined by the effectiveness of government support programmes and how fully the primary endogenous constraints facing SMEs are treated. Moreover, there are indications that targeted financial support can also help businesses to make important investments in sustainable activities and technologies that can increase the resilience of their business (Ayyagari et al., 2017). Investments in infrastructure reduce the cost of operation and benefit market coverage, thus enhancing the competitiveness and the life span (Furger et al., 2020). Developing skills among entrepreneurs to considerations be able to run their businesses with greater sustainability, use of resources efficiently and innovatively (Hall et al, 2010). At the same time, supportive policies and networking are establishing a climate in which small businesses can thrive and navigate this changing economic and climate terrain. But the impact of those policies varies by policy type, how the policy is carried out and the context. Financial aid, e.g., may be directed improperly and amount to resource waste. Infrastructure investment, e.g., may be not sufficient to benefit the remote or under-served areas. In addition, the survival of MSBs is not only associated with external support, but also with internal factors, such as entrepreneurial resilience, management practices and market environment (Fernandez et al., 2021).

1.1 Hypothesis

There is no significant relationship between government support initiatives and sustainability of small businesses in Lagos State.

2. Methodology

The research is a Correlational Study and is one of the crucial instruments of social science. This is of particular benefit in studying potential relationships between different variables, which can inform further experimentation or policy-making. Correlational research is non-experimental approach that is used to determine the extent of relationship that exists

between two or more variables by testing whether one variable changes as the other changes (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

To this end, a survey report of the National Bureau of Statistics, in Nigeria in 2021, further confirmed 1320 registered small business organizations in Lagos State (the location of this study). Using Hair et al. s formula for the sample size, and 174 was determined as the sample size. To ensure more accurate representation of the sample size. A di-stage sampling method was used in this study. That is, stratified and a simple random sampling techniques were utilized. Stratified sampling method based on Local Government Areas was used for the stratification. The local government areas in Lagos state are 20 in number. In this way, eight (8) small business owners per local government area who will volunteer to be part of the survey will be identified and the total number of participants becomes 174. dip bowl simple random sampling was applied for select the respondent of study.

This study is in Lagos State, Nigeria (commercial nerve of Nigeria). As the former capital of Nigeria, it has a dense population of Insurer (Heavy Markets), heavy markets, traders, and business people as well as corporate heavyweights including financial institutions, banks and multinationals. The idea of sustainability culture and lifestyle has also been advocated and promoted by the Lagos State (Gbonegun, 2022). Small scale enterprises are very relevant to Lagos State economy as it provides for the grassroot and is also a middle man to other large-scale businesses. This is evident in the contribution of small businesses to the GDP as well as the number of people employed (SMEDAN, 2021). This makes Lagos state a good base and unit of study for the research.

3. Results

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Gender		Frequency	Percent (%)
Valid	Male	82	47.1
	Female	92	52.9
	Total	174	100.0
Age		Frequency	Percent
Valid	18 – 25	15	8.6%
	26 – 33	30	17.2%
	34 – 41	46	26.4%
	42 – 49	68	39.1%
	50– Abo	15	8.6%
	Total	174	100.0
Staff Status		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Perm	101	73.2%
	Temp	73	26.8%
	Total	138	100.0
Educational Qualification		Frequency	Percent
Valid	No Education	12	8.7%

It started with looking for the access to the small business owners for research permission. In the event that such approval is given, additional guidance was requested regarding when it should be implemented before using a research instrument. Data collection in the target sample was achieved within four (4) weeks.

The questionnaire is divided into different parts in order to gain full coverage of different dimensions of the report. Section A contains the personal and business characteristics of small business owner operators such as Local Government Area, sex, age wave2, size of staff, number of customers, highest level of education, main type of business and age of the business. Section B is focusing on government tax incentives and C is looking for response on the sustainability of small businesses. The 5-point Likert scale that is used in the study is a commonly used method in social science research for attitude and perception measurement (Joshi et al., 2015). Reliability is the extent to which the items are consistent in measuring the same thing. This is commonly assessed by means of Cronbach's alpha that describes the internal reliability. Confirmation of a value for Cronbach’s alpha 0.74.

Descriptive statistics of frequency and percentage will be used to present the demographic characteristics of the respondents in tables, whereas their demographic characteristics will be discussed in paragraph form to address research questions using mean and standard deviation. Hypothesis was tested using the Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation (PPMC) at 0.05 alpha level of significance.

	O'Level	32	23.2%
	ND/NC	60	43.5%
	Degree	70	50.7%
	Total	138	100.0
Business Age (In Years)		Frequency	Percent
Valid	10-15	22	12.6%
	16-20	99	57.0%
	21 Above	53	30.4%
	Total	174	100.0

Table 1: explanation the demographic characteristics of the respondents give insights into the sample population's gender, age, staff status, educational qualifications, and business age. The sample comprises a slightly higher percentage of females (52.9%) compared to males (47.1%), indicating a relatively balanced gender representation. The majority of respondents are concentrated in the 42-49 age bracket (39.1%), suggesting that most small business owners in this sample are likely to be more experienced entrepreneurs. This age cohort may possess significant insights into the sustainability of their businesses and can provide a wealth of knowledge on how government initiatives impact their operations. The lower representation of younger respondents (8.6% in the 18-25 and 50 years and above categories). A significant majority (73.2%) of the respondents are permanent staff members. This suggests stability and potentially greater job security within these businesses, which may positively influence their approach to sustainability practices. The presence of temporary staff (26.8%). The educational qualification data indicates that the majority of respondents (50.7%) hold a degree, while 43.5% possess a National Diploma or Certificate. This suggests a relatively educated sample with a significant proportion of respondents having at least a tertiary education background. A higher level of education may correlate with greater awareness of sustainability practices and government support initiatives. However, the 8.7% with no formal education underscores a need for inclusive programs that cater to all educational backgrounds. The majority of businesses represented in this sample (57.0%) fall within the 16–20-year age range, indicating that many respondents are operating established businesses rather than start-ups. This stability can suggest resilience and a certain level of expertise in navigating the challenges faced within the market. The significant percentage of businesses with more than 21 years of experience (30.4%) may indicate a depth of experience that could positively influence conversations around sustainability. Conversely, only 12.6% fall in the 10–15-year range.

There is no significant relationship between government support initiatives and sustainability of small businesses in Lagos State.

Table 2: Summary of Person Product Moment Correlation on Government support initiatives and sustainability of small businesses in Lagos State.

Variables	Mean	SD	n	df	r	Prob	decision
Government Support Initiatives	3.55	0.80	174	172	0.30	0.04	Rejected
Sustainability of Small Businesses	3.60	0.78					

Table 2, which presents the findings from the Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis regarding the relationship between government support initiatives and the sustainability of small businesses in Lagos State. Government Support Initiatives have mean of 3.55, this mean score suggests that respondents generally have a positive perception of government support initiatives. A mean of 3.55 indicates that while many respondents believe these initiatives are beneficial, there may still be some respondents with neutral or critical views. Standard Deviation (SD) of 0.80, This standard deviation indicates a moderate amount of variability in respondents' perceptions regarding government support initiatives, suggesting that experiences and perceptions vary among small

business owners. Sustainability of Small Businesses have mean of 3.60 – A mean score of 3.60 indicates that respondents hold a generally positive view on the sustainability practices of small businesses, suggesting that many businesses are engaged in sustainability initiatives to a reasonable extent. Standard Deviation (SD) of 0.78, similar to government support initiatives, this standard deviation suggests some variability in how sustainability is perceived among small businesses, but with a relatively tight clustering around the mean. Correlation Coefficient (r) is 0.30, this correlation coefficient indicates a moderate positive correlation between government support initiatives and the sustainability of small businesses. An r value of 0.30 suggests a reasonable tendency for

small businesses that receive government support to be more sustainable in their practices. This indicates that there is a relationship that warrants further consideration. Prob (p-value): 0.04 – This p-value suggests a 4% probability that the observed correlation is due to chance. Since this p-value is less than the common significance threshold of 0.05, we reject the null hypothesis. This indicates that there is a statistically significant relationship between government support initiatives and the sustainability of small businesses. The results summarized in Table 14 indicate that there is a statistically significant positive relationship between government support initiatives and the sustainability of small businesses in Lagos State. The moderate correlation ($r = 0.30$) and the significant p-value (0.04) demonstrate that increases in government support are associated with improvements in sustainability practices among small businesses.

4. Discussion

Dynamic Interactions between Programmes of Government Support and the Performance of Small Firms. Government support actions it's also worth noting that the government has taken some steps to help the small business community. Such support may come in the way of grants, subsidies, tax breaks, training, or mentoring. Other means of government support may be generated through help in regulation and the setting-up of infrastructure for smaller companies (González et al., 2021).

Monetary support is amongst the most straight forward manner of enhancing the sustainability of SMEs by the state-led programmes. But small business access to capital is critically important because it impacts whether that small business can invest in products and technologies, expand operations, and adopt sustainable business practices (Beck & Demirgüç-Kunt, 2006). Again, where government loans are superior to market terms, optimal cash flows can be utilised to maintain and support 'small businesses initiatives towards the future especially the small and orphaned industry; to ensure their prosperity without being hounded by heavy interest payments, and this brings long-term viability. A study by Ayyagari et al. (2017) demonstrated a significant enhancement of the growth and survival rate of small businesses that have received funding from the government. Statistically, they were also more likely to invest in green technologies, product innovation and operational enhancements, which demonstrated the close correlation between funding access and sustainability.

The other critical policy for the sustainability of the small, 'micro-sized' enterprise is with respect to infrastructure. Infrastructure, such as transportation systems, energy provision, and digital broadband, supports market entry and operational efficiencies (Diarra et al., 2021). Furger et al. In the report by Teluhong et al., 2020 Meanwhile, SMEs close to the existing developed distribution network were able to reduce their logistics cost, and hence participate in new markets. This greater access allows smaller companies to be able to ship out their goods in a sustainable method, without wastage of resources and a minimal disruption to a production system, thereby, allowing the business to be more sustainable overall.

The government-initiated training programs are essential for formation of the skills required to engage both owners and employees of small and medium enterprises in practising sustainability. A range of training actions, such as those for managing accounts, digital marketing and sustainable methods of production are deployed by these workforce development initiatives (Hall et al., 2010). Lee et al.'s study — of business who participate in government funded training and those who didn't, found that those that did were much more likely to adopt sustainable practices. Therefore, sustainable production is an idea that is impossible without a process that works as efficiently as possible, with the least waste and the most efficient use of resources, and in this context, the tasks of responsible staff can be the best for us. In addition, a process of permanent learning and capacity building sustains that, in responding to the demands of the market, the small entrepreneurs have the possibility of innovating, adapting to the changes required by the market through environmentally sustainable practices (Fernandez et al., 2021). Public sector projects frequently enable small firms to network with each other, relationships that are crucial to their continued existence. Governments also may facilitate open innovation through the creation of formative networks in which microbusinesses can interface their trade secrets and relationships with other small firm and large company collaborators and universities in order to enhance innovation potential and access new markets (Boons & Lüdeke-Freund, 2013). In that regard, a research conducted by Cohen (2018) established that small businesses that participated in government-initiated and run network initiatives experienced significant returns on investment from sharing resources, collaborative projects, and joint marketing efforts. The value of such partnerships lies also in the development of more sustainable environmentally and socially motivated business plans which add to the overall sustainability of the firms partnered.

Effective government policy and regulation that encourages sustainable practice can also have a significant impact. Regulation on small-business best practices may include sustainability certification, compliance requirement and environmentally friendly certifications (Edwards et al., 2016). A case in point is the study of Doran et al. (2017), the study found that jurisdictions where governments have put in place regulatory and market incentives for sustainable business, not only see more business compliance but also see increases in loyalty and branding based on sustainable business choices made by those businesses. These regulations contribute towards a situation in which conducting business responsibly is not only desirable, but frequently essential for business survival.

5. Conclusion

The examination of the government support scheme and small businesses' survivability nexus in Lagos State The evidence from this study supports that government initiatives, including financial assistance, infrastructural support, capacity enhancement programs, legislative reform, and networking system, have a positive effect on the sustainability of small businesses. The small positive correlation ($r = 0.30$, $p = 0.04$) suggests that more small businesses involved in the government economic stimulus programs relates to the level of sustainability.

6. Recommendations

Based on the findings and discussions above, the following recommendations are made:

The research results have underscored the need for the increase and expansion of financial assistance programmes in order to ensure the survival of small enterprises in Lagos state. Scaling low-cost, unsecured loans and building out grants that target environmentally-friendly and innovative ventures can go a long way in allowing small business owners to invest in sustainable expansion. Furthermore, micro-insurance schemes should be developed to reduce risks and offer insurance coverage by entrepreneurs to operate in conditions of uncertainty.

Equally important is making investments in infrastructure. Digital connectivity, such as access to affordable internet and digital payment systems, is the first priority as this will enable small businesses to become active participants in e-commerce and operate at scale. While investment on transport networks and new energy infrastructure in deprived

regions could lower operational costs and improve efficiency and market access, logistics centres could connect supply chains and increase productivity in general.

Empowering these small business owners highlight the importance of building capacity and honing skills. Education should be ongoing in financial literacy, sustainable practices, digital marketing and environmental standards and be conducted for varying education levels to be inclusive. Mentoring efforts and knowledge exchange forums are some of the tools that can develop resilience and stimulate innovation to help entrepreneurs to respond timely to the changing economic and environmental conditions".

Finding ways to simplify regulations and provide incentives will help to bring formalization and sustainability improvements. Streamlining registration procedures, lowering the cost of compliance and providing fiscal incentives to adopt eco-friendly practices would encourage small firms to adhere to sustainable benchmarks. By establishing transparent and easily accessible certifications and standards, the organization can additionally deep-root sustainability in their day-to-day, and build a culture of responsible business.

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