

Entrepreneurship Development and Micro, Small and Medium Business Enterprises Capacity Building in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the impact of training programs and challenges faced by enterprise support organizations on the perception and development of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in Nigeria. The research design adopted a quantitative survey approach, with structured questionnaires administered, with a population of over 80,000 Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), resulting in a sample size of 426 respondents derived through convenience sampling. Data collection involved various channels, including online platforms and in-person interactions, with responses analyzed using SPSS version 26. The analysis utilized techniques such as regression analysis and correlation to examine relationships between variables. The findings reveal that capacity-building and training programs significantly influence the perception of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises, with regression analysis demonstrating their positive impact on enhancing managerial skills among owners and employees. Conversely, challenges in adopting innovative technologies emerged as significant barriers, negatively affecting enterprises' perceptions. Addressing these challenges, including limited access and resistance from employees, is crucial for fostering a conducive business environment. Moreover, the study tested hypotheses regarding the effectiveness of capacity-building programs and perceived innovation effectiveness, highlighting their positive influence on enhancing managerial skills within the Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises sector. These findings underscore the importance of targeted training initiatives and policies that promote innovation adoption to drive Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises growth and sustainability. The implications of these findings extend to enterprises and policymakers, emphasizing the need for accessible training programs and supportive frameworks for innovation adoption. Recommendations include strengthening partnerships between Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises and government agencies, fostering an enabling entrepreneurship ecosystem, and integrating technological advancements into these enterprises' operations. Addressing challenges in accessing training and adopting innovative technologies is crucial for enhancing the competitiveness and resilience of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises in Nigeria. By implementing targeted strategies and policies, stakeholders can empower enterprises to contribute significantly to the nation's economic development and overall prosperity.

Keywords: Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), training programs, entrepreneurship ecosystem, innovative technologies, Nigeria, capacity building, quantitative survey, SPSS analysis, regression analysis.

INTRODUCTION

Background and Context of the Study

The significance of entrepreneurship in spurring employment rates and fostering GDP growth, especially in

developing nations, cannot be understated. Studies, such as the United Bank for Africa's Growing Business Programme, highlight that over 90% of African companies fall under the classification of Micro, Small, and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSMEs), contributing around 40% to GDP and 70% to employment rates in African countries (Lionel & Samuel, 2018). Micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) are increasingly acknowledged for their role in poverty alleviation, employment generation, and economic progress, particularly in non-agricultural sectors within developing nations. These enterprises, constituting over 90% of all firms, serve as crucial sources of livelihood, especially for marginalized groups like women and youth. Notably, their prevalence in rural areas offers a promising avenue for nurturing entrepreneurial talents, especially among women (Tambunan, 2019; Endris & Kassegn, 2022). Additionally, they play a vital role in the local economic development of regions, as evidenced in South Africa (Fiseha & Oyelana, 2015). Gherhes et al. (2016) further distinguish micro-businesses from SMEs, providing insights into growth constraints, which necessitate targeted interventions for sustainable development.

In Nigeria, the economic prosperity is closely tied to the thriving small enterprise sector, where the vitality of Micro, Small, and Medium-Sized Enterprises (MSMEs) signifies a robust economy, contributing significantly to economic growth, particularly in rural regions.

Despite various governmental and stakeholder initiatives, entrepreneurship and small to medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) in Nigeria grapple with formidable hurdles, hindering their growth and sectoral development. Challenges underscored include limited access to finance, insufficient business skills, and inadequate infrastructure (Goldendale Capital, 2019; Gumel, 2017). Furthermore, political interference exacerbates these issues, impeding the anticipated progress. The impact of financial technology and strategies for rural MSMEs could potentially mitigate these challenges, fostering economic growth in Nigeria (Godgift-David et al., 2018). The embrace of such findings and the implementation of corresponding programs by stakeholders, especially the government, are crucial to fostering the growth and development of these enterprises, ultimately benefiting Nigeria's economic advancement.

Overview of the MSME's Contribution to the Economy

The MSME sector in Nigeria encompasses a diverse range of industries, playing a vital role in the country's economic development. According to Abdul (2018), entrepreneurial skills are pivotal for the growth of SMEs, comparing Nigerian entrepreneurs with those in the UK. These enterprises face various challenges, as highlighted by Abdullahi et al. (2016), including limited access to finance, inadequate infrastructure, and policy inconsistencies. Despite these challenges, MSMEs contribute significantly to poverty alleviation, as emphasized by Abdullahi et al. (2015), through job creation and income generation. The Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN) plays a crucial role in supporting these businesses (Adegbuyi et al., 2016). In Nigeria, the MSME sector serves as a survival strategy for employment generation (Aremu & Adeyemi, 2011), particularly in rural areas (Osunde, 2016). Financial innovation has emerged as a key driver of sustainability and growth for SMEs (Ajide, 2016). Additionally, the impact of financial technology (FinTech) in SME operations has been noted, particularly in payments and collections. These businesses are essential for economic development, as highlighted by Yahaya et al. (2016), contributing to GDP growth and fostering innovation. However, critical challenges persist, necessitating mitigation strategies (Gumel, 2019).

Objectives of the study

The specific objectives and their resultant questions together with the theoretical considerations are:

- To identify the impact of training programs offered by such enterprise support organizations on entrepreneurs of MSMEs.
- To examine the challenges that the key enterprise support organizations face in fulfilling their

objectives and achieving the intended impact.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptual framework:

Entrepreneurship

The field of entrepreneurship has emerged as a significant academic subject in recent years, involving various disciplines primarily within business management schools. However, the lack of a universally accepted definition necessitates a closer examination of the diverse perspectives put forth by scholars to gain a deeper understanding of entrepreneurship. A prevailing viewpoint, as posited by Gerben et al. (2016), emphasizes entrepreneurship as a process rooted in the initiative of individuals to create ventures, drawing from the French term “entrepreneur.” These individuals play a crucial role in translating ideas into viable economic entities, utilizing resources such as financial capital and strategic decision-making skills (Abdul, 2018). Furthermore, scholars have presented a spectrum of perspectives on entrepreneurship, with a notable emphasis on its behavioral dimensions. Ajide (2016) characterizes entrepreneurship as a dynamic endeavor that entails taking significant risks to generate incremental wealth through the delivery of valuable goods or services. Similarly, Fiseha and Oyelana (2015) highlight entrepreneurship as a conduit for local economic development, underscoring its role in fostering growth and innovation within communities.

MSMEs and Capacity Building

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) have emerged as significant drivers of global economic progress, fostering innovation, competition, and sustainable growth. Their role in shaping economies extends to generating employment, driving innovation, reducing poverty, and diversifying economic landscapes, particularly impactful in developing nations where they contribute to curbing unemployment rates and enhancing societal well-being (Muiruri, 2017). Entrepreneurship development is crucial for the growth and resilience of MSMEs, enabling innovation and sustainability. Programs designed to cultivate entrepreneurial skills empower business owners to navigate complexities and seize emerging opportunities, thereby playing a vital role in their success (Achtenhagen & Brundin, 2016; Atiase et al., 2017). Focusing on critical areas such as finance, marketing, technology adoption, and human resource management, these initiatives empower MSMEs to optimize operations, expand their market presence, and compete globally, as highlighted by various studies (Amankwah-Amoah et al., 2018; Devine & Kiggundu, 2016; Abdi, 2019; Agyapong, 2017). However, challenges persist in ensuring widespread access and effective implementation of these programs, owing to issues like limited resources, lack of awareness, and institutional barriers, particularly in remote areas (Alemu, 2018; Babajide et al., 2020).

MSMEs and Entrepreneurship Ecosystem

The entrepreneurship ecosystem significantly influences the growth trajectory of micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), particularly evident in Nigeria. Challenges such as limited access to finance and infrastructure hinder MSME performance. However, initiatives like the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN) aim to address these hurdles (Adegbuyi et al., 2016; Abdullahi et al., 2016). Financial innovation, as highlighted by Ajide (2016), plays a vital role in sustaining MSMEs, fostering economic growth in countries like Nigeria. Moreover, environmental factors and stakeholder support significantly impact MSME success rates. Therefore, fostering an enabling environment through policy interventions and promoting financial and digital innovations are crucial for enhancing the resilience and contribution of MSMEs to Nigeria’s economic development (OECD, 2020; Gerben et al., 2016).

MSMEs and Challenges in Adopting Innovative Technologies

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in Nigeria face hurdles in embracing innovative technologies due to various factors. Financial constraints hinder investment in modern tools and training (Ajide, 2016). Additionally, the lack of awareness and knowledge about available innovations impedes adoption (Akiode, 2020). While these enterprises serve as a crucial source of employment, their growth is stunted by limited access to financing (Gololo, 2017). Moreover, bureaucratic red tape and inadequate infrastructure pose significant challenges. To thrive, MSMEs require supportive policies, access to funding, and educational initiatives (Endris & Kassegn, 2022; Ebitu et al., 2016).

MSMEs and Innovation Effectiveness

Effective innovation within MSMEs is paramount for their growth and success. Innovation not only enhances productivity but also fosters competitiveness in the market (Ebitu, Basil, & Ufot, 2016). MSMEs often face numerous challenges, including limited resources and market saturation (Effiom & Edet, 2018). However, innovative approaches enable them to overcome these hurdles and thrive. Moreover, innovation in MSMEs contributes to human capacity building, driving socio-economic development. Therefore, fostering innovation effectiveness is essential for the sustained growth and prosperity of MSMEs in Nigeria (Ikupolati et al., 2017).

Theoretical Framework

Diffusion of Innovation Theory

The Diffusion of Innovation theory, pioneered by Rogers (1962), offers a valuable framework for examining the adoption of capacity-building initiatives within Nigerian MSMEs. This theory proves instrumental in understanding how these initiatives aimed at enhancing managerial skills are adopted and their subsequent effectiveness (Effiom & Edet, 2020; Matías & Linder, 2020). By analyzing these programs through the lens of Diffusion of Innovation theory, researchers can delve into the factors influencing their adoption rates and success, uncovering what encourages or impedes their implementation. Moreover, this framework helps in understanding the obstacles to innovation adoption within MSMEs and the importance of a conducive entrepreneurial ecosystem (Nordhagen et al., 2021). Leveraging the Diffusion of Innovation theory allows researchers to pinpoint the factors that affect the acceptance of innovative practices, such as the perceived advantages, compatibility, complexity, trial ability, and observability of new ideas or technologies. In line with research by Dearing and Cox (2018), the diffusion of innovations theory serves as the foundational framework for studying entrepreneurship development and capacity building among micro, small, and medium business enterprises in Nigeria. This is because it elucidates how new ideas and practices spread within a given context, offering insights into the adoption and implementation processes.

Institutional Theory

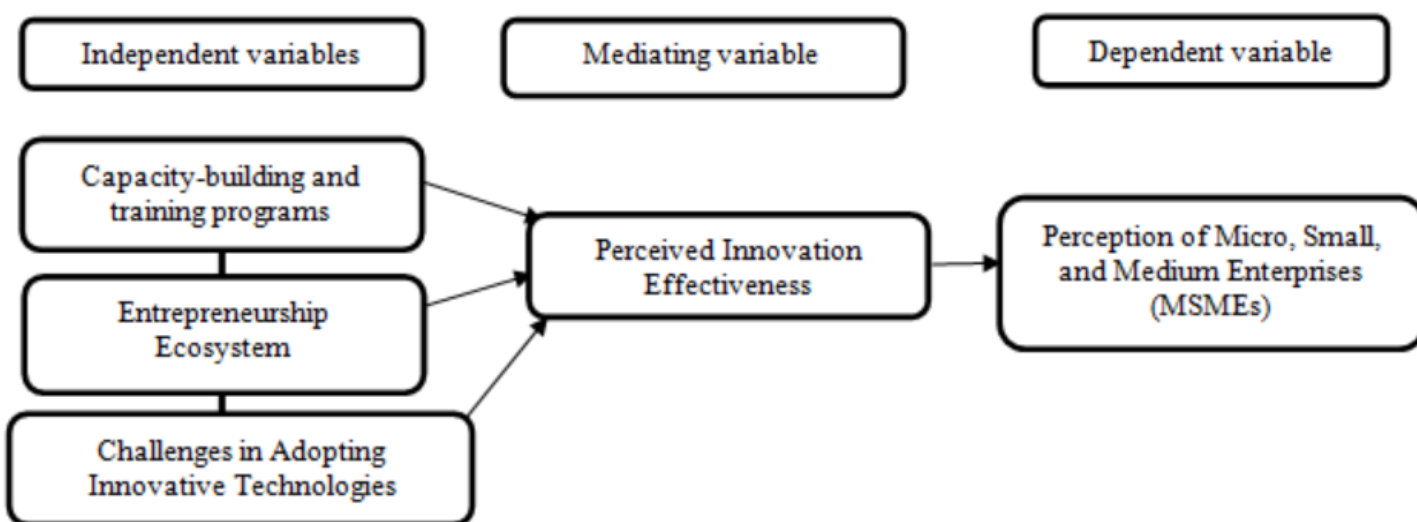
The Institutional Theory, as outlined by DiMaggio and Powell (1983), offers a comprehensive framework to examine the profound impact of formal and informal institutions on the behaviors and decisions of organizations. In the context of Nigerian MSMEs, this theory provides a valuable perspective for understanding their interactions within the larger institutional landscape. For instance, when evaluating the challenges faced by these enterprises, such as their access to financial resources (Wang, 2016), comprehending the institutional factors influencing their capital accessibility becomes crucial. Government policies, banking regulations, and cultural norms significantly shape MSMEs' funding opportunities (Nega & Hussein, 2016), and applying Institutional Theory helps uncover how these factors affect their financing patterns. Moreover, in exploring how a conducive entrepreneurship ecosystem drives innovation among

Nigerian MSMEs (Nordhagen et al., 2021), this theory aids in dissecting how government policies, industry associations, and support networks shape the business environment.

Conceptual Framework

The framework for comprehending entrepreneurship development and capacity building for MSMEs in Nigeria, employing the diffusion of innovation theory, involves interconnected elements influencing the Perception of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). The independent variables—Capacity-building programs, the entrepreneurship ecosystem, and challenges in adopting innovative technologies—act as catalysts shaping the adoption of modern business practices. Capacity-building initiatives encompass training and access to resources enhancing managerial skills, while the entrepreneurship ecosystem fosters an environment supportive of innovation. Conversely, hurdles in embracing innovative technologies, like limited access and financial constraints, impede the integration of new tools. These variables’ interplay is anticipated to influence MSMEs’ perception in Nigeria across several dimensions, potentially impacting managerial skills, growth, sustainability, competitiveness, and adaptability within the business landscape.

Figure 1 Conceptual Model.



Source: Researcher’s own construct

METHODOLOGY

The research design played a crucial role in directing the study’s approach and data collection methods. A quantitative survey research design was chosen to provide statistical insights into the relationships between various factors (Creswell, 2014). This design was significant in shaping the data collection methods and analysis framework employed. With a focus on a large array of MSMEs, comprising over 80,000 entities, the research aimed to encompass a substantial sample size, as advocated by Kothari (2022). Convenience sampling emerged as the most viable option, ensuring accessibility and expediency in participant recruitment (Saunders et al., 2019). The final sample comprised 426 respondents derived using Cochran’s method, balancing the need for comprehensiveness with the resources available (Field, 2018).

Structured questionnaires served as the primary instrument for data collection in line with the principles of quantitative research (Creswell, 2020). Administered to MSME owners, employees, and stakeholders, these questionnaires provided a direct channel for capturing firsthand insights and knowledge. The distribution of surveys was facilitated through various channels, including online platforms and in-person interactions, optimizing response rates and ensuring diverse representation within the sample. Upon completion, the

collected data underwent rigorous analysis using SPSS version 26, a widely utilized tool for quantitative data analysis. Leveraging SPSS enabled the exploration of relationships between variables and the execution of statistical tests crucial for deriving meaningful insights. Techniques such as regression analysis, correlation, and descriptive statistics were employed to ascertain patterns and trends within the dataset. This analytical approach served to validate findings and draw reliable conclusions from the amassed data (Megunda, 2021).

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

This study aims to address the research objectives outlined in the introductory section by providing answers to the following specified research questions:

Impact of Training Programs

Table 2 Model Summary of Linear Regression

Model Summary					
Model	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics	
				F Change	Sig. F Change
1	0.410	0.406	0.58670	97.704	0.000
a. Predictors: Capacity-Building and Training Programs, Entrepreneurship Ecosystem, Challenges in Adopting Innovative Technologies					

Table 3 Multiple regression analysis

Model		Standardized Coefficients		t	Sig.
		Beta			
1	Capacity-Building and Training Programs	0.561		10.984	0.000
	Entrepreneurship Ecosystem	0.082		1.656	0.098
	Challenges in Adopting Innovative Technologies	-0.183		-3.588	0.000
a. Dependent Variable: Perception of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs)					

The impact of training programs offered by enterprise support organizations on small business owners was examined. A linear regression analysis was conducted to assess the predictors' collective influence on the perception of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). The model summary revealed that the predictors collectively explained a significant proportion ($R^2 = 0.410$) of the variance in MSME perception. Notably, capacity-building and training programs emerged as the strongest influencer ($\beta = 0.561$, $p < 0.001$), indicating a substantial positive effect on MSME perception. Conversely, challenges in adopting innovative technologies showed a negative influence ($\beta = -0.183$, $p < 0.001$), highlighting the importance of enhancing training programs to improve MSME perception within the broader ecosystem.

Challenges Faced by Enterprise Support Organizations

Table 4 Model Summary of Linear Regression

Model Summary				
Model	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics	
			F Change	Sig. F Change
1	0.728	0.39726	114.479	0.000

a. Predictors: Challenges in Adopting Innovative Technologies

Table 5 Multiple regression analysis on capacity-building and training programs’ impact on small business owners

Model		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		Beta		
1	Limited access to innovative technologies is a challenge for my MSME	-0.397	-8.562	0.000
	Financial constraints hinder the adoption of innovative technologies	0.104	2.413	0.016
	Lack of awareness about available innovative technologies is a barrier	-0.142	-5.335	0.000
	The complexity of integrating innovative technologies poses a challenge	0.055	1.288	0.199
	Resistance from employees is a barrier to adopting innovative technologies	0.108	2.396	0.017
	Insufficient training opportunities hinder the effective use of innovative technologies	0.187	3.942	0.000
	The cost of upgrading and maintaining innovative technologies is a hindrance	-1.038	-15.158	0.000
	Regulatory challenges are a hindrance to adopting innovative technologies	0.570	15.549	0.000
	The lack of technical support for implementing innovative technologies is a challenge	0.273	7.118	0.000
	External factors, such as political instability, can hinder adoption of innovative technologies	-0.314	-5.386	0.000
a. Dependent Variable: Perception of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs)				

To understand the main challenges faced by enterprise support organizations and their impact on SMEs positively, another linear regression analysis was conducted. The model focusing on challenges in adopting innovative technologies explained a substantial 72.8% of the variability in MSME perception. Among the identified challenges, limited access to innovative technologies, lack of awareness, and resistance from employees emerged as significant factors affecting SMEs’ perceptions. Financial constraints, regulatory issues, and the cost of upgrading were also identified as impact ful challenges. Addressing these challenges can positively impact SMEs and contribute to fostering a more favorable business environment.

Testing Research Hypotheses

The research hypotheses of the study, built upon the conceptual framework, were analyzed through the application of multiple linear regression analysis.

H₁: The effectiveness of capacity-building and training programs and entrepreneurship ecosystem does not positively influence the enhancement of managerial skills among both MSME owners and employees in Nigeria.

Table 6 Model Summary of Linear Regression

Model Summary				
Model	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics	
			F Change	Sig. F Change
1	0.389	0.59488	136.292	0.000
a. Predictors: Capacity-Building and Training Programs, Entrepreneurship Ecosystem				

Table 7 Multiple regression analysis on capacity-building and training programs’ impact on small business owners

Model		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		Beta		
1	Capacity-Building and Training Programs	0.637	13.505	0.000
	Entrepreneurship Ecosystem	0.019	0.399	0.690
a. Dependent Variable: Perception of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs)				

H₂: The effectiveness of perceived innovation effectiveness does not positively influence the enhancement of managerial skills among both MSME owners and employees in Nigeria.

Table 8 Model summary

Model Summary					
Model	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics	
				F Change	Sig. F Change
1	0.548	0.547	0.51203	514.874	0.000
a. Predictors: Perceived Innovation Effectiveness					

Table 9 Multiple linear regression

Model		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		Beta		
1	Perceived Innovation Effectiveness	0.741	22.691	0.000
a. Dependent Variable: Perception of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs)				

The research hypotheses were analyzed through multiple linear regression analysis. Hypothesis 1, focusing on the effectiveness of capacity-building and training programs and the entrepreneurship ecosystem, revealed a significant positive influence of capacity-building programs ($\beta = 0.637, p < 0.001$) on the enhancement of managerial skills among MSME owners and employees. However, the entrepreneurship ecosystem did not significantly contribute to this enhancement. Hypothesis 2, regarding the effectiveness of perceived innovation effectiveness, showed a substantial positive influence ($\beta = 0.741, p < 0.001$) on the enhancement of managerial skills within the MSME sector in Nigeria. Results (Table 6 and 7) show that the effectiveness of capacity-building and training programs positively influences the enhancement of

managerial skills among MSME owners and employees. Similarly, perceived innovation effectiveness significantly contributes to improving managerial skills within the MSME sector in Nigeria (*Table 8 and 9*).

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS, IMPLICATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Discussion of Results

The findings of this study shed light on the pivotal role of training programs offered by enterprise support organizations in shaping the perception of micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in Nigeria. The analysis revealed that capacity-building and training programs emerged as the most influential factor, significantly impacting MSME perception. These findings align with previous research by Mohammed and Beshir (2019); and Batisa (2019), which emphasized the importance of training programs in enhancing the capabilities of small businesses. Additionally, the study highlighted the pressing challenges faced by enterprise support organizations, particularly in adopting innovative technologies. Limited access to innovative technologies, coupled with a lack of awareness and resistance from employees, emerged as significant barriers affecting SMEs' perceptions. These challenges resonate with the findings of Ajide (2016), who emphasized the importance of addressing technological constraints in fostering sustainable development among MSMEs. Addressing these challenges is crucial to creating a conducive environment for SME growth and development. Furthermore, the study tested hypotheses regarding the effectiveness of capacity-building and training programs, as well as perceived innovation effectiveness. The results underscored the positive influence of these factors on the enhancement of managerial skills within the MSME sector. These findings corroborate with the research by Ekekwe (2021) and Fowowe (2017), who emphasized the role of stakeholder capitalism in driving innovation and skill development among SMEs.

Implications and Contributions

The research findings bear crucial implications for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in Nigeria and policymakers. Firstly, the emphasis on targeted capacity-building programs highlights the need for accessible and tailored training initiatives. MSMEs should prioritize participation in such programs to enhance managerial skills, fostering growth and sustainability. For policymakers, understanding the significant impact of challenges in adopting innovative technologies is imperative. Crafting policies that address limited access, financial constraints, and regulatory challenges can create an environment conducive to innovation for MSMEs. Additionally, recognizing the varying impact of the entrepreneurship ecosystem on different dimensions of business development emphasizes the importance of nuanced policy interventions. The study contributes by providing nuanced insights into the multifaceted challenges and influences shaping the perception of MSMEs in Nigeria. The findings offer practical guidance for both entrepreneurs and policymakers, fostering a more informed approach to entrepreneurship development.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, several recommendations emerge to bolster the growth and resilience of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in Nigeria. Firstly, there is a pressing need to strengthen partnerships between MSMEs and government agencies to facilitate accessible and comprehensive training programs. These programs should encompass various aspects of business management to enhance MSMEs' capacity to navigate market dynamics effectively. Secondly, fostering an enabling entrepreneurship ecosystem is paramount to overcoming barriers to innovation adoption. By creating supportive frameworks and platforms, such as innovation hubs and incubators, MSMEs can access resources and expertise to drive innovation within their operations. Thirdly, policymakers and stakeholders should prioritize initiatives that promote collaboration, mentorship, and knowledge-sharing among entrepreneurs. Cultivating a culture of

innovation and risk-taking is essential for MSMEs to thrive in dynamic business environments. Lastly, efforts should be directed towards integrating technological advancements into MSME operations. Initiatives such as technology hubs, partnerships with research institutions, and awareness campaigns can facilitate the adoption of innovative technologies, ultimately enhancing the competitiveness of MSMEs in the market.

Conclusion

Moreover, the effectiveness of capacity-building initiatives was shown to enhance the managerial skills of both MSME owners and employees. Furthermore, the presence of an enabling entrepreneurship ecosystem was found to have a positive moderating effect on the relationship between barriers to innovation adoption and the capacity of MSMEs to innovate and compete effectively. These outcomes underscore the importance of addressing financial accessibility, fostering capacity-building programs, and cultivating an enabling entrepreneurship ecosystem to facilitate the growth, innovation, and sustainability of MSMEs in Nigeria. As such, these findings can guide policymakers, stakeholders, and practitioners in formulating targeted strategies that empower MSMEs to contribute more significantly to the nation's economic development and overall prosperity.

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