

**ENVIRONMENTAL CONSTRAINTS AND SMALL SCALE
ENTERPRISES START-UP INTENTION AMONG VOCATIONAL
TRAINEES IN LAGOS STATE, NIGERIA**

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Abstract

The study examined possible environmental constraints that may hinder vocational trainees from starting a business of their own. The research design used for the study was survey design. A modified Likert type structured questionnaire was administered to the Lagos state vocational trainees at the various centres within the state. A total of 591 copies of the distributed questionnaire were found useful. Hypotheses raised were tested using Spearman rho correlations. The study revealed that difficulty in accessibility to startup capital and inconsistent government policies, though positive does not significantly affect business start-up intention, while epileptic electricity supply is positively and significantly related to business start-up intention. It is therefore recommended that government at all levels need to facilitate accessibility to start-up capital for up coming entrepreneurs and improve power supply. In addition, there is the need for specific government policies, directed towards encouraging small scale enterprises. For example, the development and establishment of incubating centres for new businesses to enjoy relatively cheaper costs of infrastructural facilities and professional services. Non governmental organisations can partner with government to provide these services to small scale enterprises.

Keywords: *environmental constraints, startup capital, electricity supply, government policies, startup intention*

1. Introduction

Small and medium scale enterprises are considered to be a principal driving force in economic development. They stimulate private ownership and entrepreneurial skills, they are flexible and can adapt speedily to the changing market forces hence they are the sources of diversifying economic activities. They are making significant contributions to the gross domestic products as well as employment generation (Lawal, Ajonbadi, and Otokiti, 2014). Olayiwola (2007) quoting Nichel, McHugh & McHugh (2002), Nichelet. et.al (2002) stated that small businesses create 75.5% of new jobs in America, account for more than 40% of the gross domestic product and more than 80% of Americans find their first job in small businesses. In Nigeria Nwannekanma (2009) stated that about 37% of GDP was attributed to the SMEs which made the subsector the second largest contributor to the GDP after Oil and Gas. In spite of these tremendous contributions, majority of these businesses are faced with huge environmental challenges such as the inability to raise the required capital to startup or expand, underdeveloped infrastructural facilities, particularly the energy sector and inconsistent government policies. Most small businesses find it difficult to plan, hence it is either the business continues to remain small for a long time or it eventually winds-up. In a capitalistic economy like Nigeria, the involvement of government in the provision of employment is limited, hence putting the business of employment creation on the private sector. Since businesses operate within an environment and government is expected to ensure a friendly environment as prerequisite for business success, it is observed that many of the vocational trainees do not startup a business of their own after completion. The study is therefore an attempt to investigate both the immediate and remote causes of environmental constraints that may be responsible. This study added to the body of knowledge as it identified major constraints to the startup business intention of vocational trainees. It also offers valuable suggestions to government and non-governmental organisations on how to make the business environment conducive for prospective small business owners, while businesses are expected to be equipped with the appropriate vocational skills that promote business success in a challenging business environment. The rest of the study is divided into four sections, section one presents the literature review, section two research methods, while section three presents results and discussion, and finally section four summarises and concludes the study.

1.1 Objectives of the study

The aim of this study is to examine environmental constraints and small scale enterprises start-up intention among vocational trainees in Lagos State. Specific objectives of the study are to:

- i. Examine the relationship between startup capital and business start-up intention of vocational trainees ;
- ii. Study the effect of electricity supply on business startup intention of vocational trainees and;
- iii. Investigate the relationship between government policies and business start-up intention of vocational trainees.

1.2 Hypotheses of the study

The following hypotheses were tested in this study:

- i. There is no significant relationship between difficulties to raise startup capital and business startup intention,
- ii. Epileptic electricity supply does not significantly affect business startup intentions and
- iii. Government policies do not significantly influence business startup intention

2. Literature review

2.1 Small scale Business intention and motivations

Small Scale Business intention is the cognitive state immediately prior to executing a behaviour (Kueger, 2005 in Izedonmi and Okafor, 2010). This description suggests the willingness or inclination of an individual or a group to startup a business venture in the future. This is a key determinant for venture creation and it is moderated by exogenous variables such as family background, position in the family, parents occupation, education and training (Bird and Jelinek, 1988 in Izedonmi and Okafor, 2010). Perceived desirability and feasibility were also identified as two other important determinants of business venture intention (Krueger, 2005 in Izedonmi and Okafor, 2010). Perceived desirability is the degree to which an individual feels attracted to becoming a business venture creator, while perceived feasibility is the extent to which individuals consider themselves fit to carry out a given entrepreneurial behaviour (Garba, Kabir and Nalado, 2014).

Small scale business motivations have to do with both the internal and external forces that actually brought about venture creation. Individual potential business owners are pulled into entrepreneurial activity because of opportunity recognition, desire for independence and/or motive to increase their incomes, this group is also known as opportunity-driven entrepreneurs. On the other hand, others are pushed (necessity-driven entrepreneurs) into entrepreneurship because they have no other means of making a living or employment opportunities are not readily available. They became involved in entrepreneurial activity primarily because they are either unemployed or they have been compulsorily retired from their previous

employment (Bosma 2009; Stokes & Wilson, 2002). Nickels, Mchugh & Mchugh (2002) identified four reasons why people take up entrepreneurial challenge namely: opportunities, profit, independence and challenge. Moore *et al* (2008) noted that different individuals have various reasons and motivations for owning businesses, but the most general motive is to satisfy needs of customers. This implies that utilities must be created with the aim of satisfying the specific needs or fill gaps within or outside their operating environment. In additions to the central goals stated, researchers and scholars have suggested several other motivations or incentives for becoming an entrepreneur such as: make money (or Profit); be your own boss (Independence); Escape a bad situation (Freedom); enjoy a satisfying life (personal satisfaction) and contribute to the community (personal fulfillment) (Moore *et al* 2008). The study of Dennis, Jr. (2001) noted that most small business owners affirmed their satisfaction in their career. For many entrepreneurs, the satisfaction they receive is much more than money or independence (Moore *et al*, 2008).

2.2 Vocational education

Vocational Education (VE) has its origin from the apprenticeship scheme, where an individual receives training on a trade of his/her choice. VE as it is understood today is traceable to the early twentieth century, during which its benefits were first recognized by the western world (Ihekwoaba, 2007). VE is an improvement on the traditional apprenticeship scheme which has been a method of passing down a family profession to other generations specific technical trades such as blacksmith, traditional drumming etc. (Olayiwola and Alaneme 2015). The traditional apprenticeship system has been limited by the non availability of any form of curriculum, limited or non existence of theoretical basis and absence of objectivity in the assessment of the skills of trainees. Government VE, however, designed a curriculum with some basic theoretical basis, modalities for assessment and mandatory industrial training with accredited practitioners. The advantage of having a skillful workforce encouraged the diversion of funds to institutions that specialised in the training of highly specialised skills particularly in areas such as automobile mechanic, welder and others. During its initial development, VE was associated with the activities related to the lower social classes, hence it was stigmatised and seen as being inferior to standard post-secondary education (Smith and Miner, 1983). Despite the initial challenges in the development of VE, as the labour market became more specialised and the demand for highly specialized skills were required, government and private operators began to invest heavily in VE through publicly funded training organizations and subsidised apprenticeship schemes. It received further impetus towards the end of the twentieth century, it moved away from

being restricted to vocational or technological schools to being part of community colleges' curriculum accompanied by certificates and associate degrees in specialised fields in selected developed economies (Wikipedia, 2012). For example, the 6-3-3-4 system of education in Nigeria which was introduced in the early 80s, with the primary focus of building the technical capacities of students, right from secondary school level. This was expected to prepare them for engagement in engineering and technology related fields in higher institutions. The policy failed due to a lack of commitment on the part of government to equip laboratories and workshops with the necessary equipment to facilitate skills acquisition (Thovoethin, 2012). In addition, continuous reductions of government expenditure spending on education permeated the actions of successive administrations. Finally, the privatisation of the education sector brought about private participation in secondary education where many investors could neither provide adequate and conducive classrooms nor the capital intensive laboratories and workshops required for the effective implementation of the policy (Thovoethin, 2012). This action of government brought about the failure of the policy.

VE was however promoted by many states in Nigeria, particularly in Lagos State when it became obvious that the level of unemployed youths was becoming unnecessarily high, school leavers were unable to secure admission into the tertiary institutions with restricted admission policies. The Lagos state government then embarked on a massive vocational education training for both youths and adults with the aim of building the skills adequate for self-employment.

2.3 Artisans versus opportunistic entrepreneurs

Entrepreneurs display heterogeneity in their attitudes, behaviours, managerial abilities, professional trainings, and approaches to decision making. Moore *et al.* (2008) described an artisan entrepreneur as a person with primarily technical skills and little business knowledge. While an opportunistic entrepreneur on the other hand, is a person with both sophisticated managerial skills and technical knowledge. According to Smith and Miner (1983), the education of the artisan entrepreneur is limited to technical training, such entrepreneurs have technical job experience, but they typically lack good communication skills and managerial training. Artisans' approach to business decision making is often characterized by the following features: they are paternalistic – they guide their businesses as much as they guide their own families; they are reluctant to delegate authority; there are few capital sources to create their firms; they define marketing strategy in terms of the traditional components of the price, quality and company reputation; their sales efforts are primarily personal; and their time orientation is short, with little or

no conscious planning for future growth (Smith and Miner 1983). Most of the time they provide direct services to their customers and when they are not available, customers prefer to wait. A motor or motor cycle mechanic that starts an independent garage, a beautician who operates a beauty shop and a carpenter who operates a workshop are examples of artisan entrepreneurs. The current study focused on potential artisan entrepreneurs.

2.4 Business startup Constraints

A number of constraints have been identified as militating against potential business owners in Nigeria which has also capped the growth of the existing businesses. Olorunisola (2003) identified the following as lingering problems of SMEs' subsector: access to money and capital market; shortage of skill, financial indiscipline; inadequate infrastructural base; poor implementation of policies; poor management practices and low entrepreneurial skill; restricted market access and overbearing regulatory and operational environment. The study of Ben-Caleb, Faboyede, and Fakile (2003) listed constraints inhibiting SMEs development in Nigeria as: inadequate funds; poor infrastructural facilities; overbearing regulatory and operational environment; financial recklessness/indiscipline of owner-managers; restricted market; deficiency in policy implementation and lack of managerial skills' support. The Study of Osotimehin, Jegede, Akinlabi and Olajide (2012) identified financial constraint and lack of managerial skills as major obstacles hampering the efficient performance of micro and small scale enterprises in Nigeria. Ologundudu (2014) investigated the epileptic nature of electricity supply and its consequences on industrial and economic performance in Nigeria 1972-2010, results showed a feedback causal relationship between GDP per capita and electricity supply; it also revealed a unidirectional relationship between capital employed and GDP per capita without a feedback effect, running from capital to GDP per capita. Similarly, Ogundipe and Apata (2013), examined electricity consumption and economic growth in Nigeria, they found the existence of a undue co-integrating relationship among the variables in the model with the indication of electricity consumption impacting significantly on economic growth; also, evidence of a bi-directional causal relationship was found between electricity consumption and economic growth. These studies point out the importance of a steady supply of electricity as an important variable that can encourage both potential and existing investors, as it has a significant impact on their performance both in the short and long runs. It is also important to point out that all of these constraints raise the cost of operation of SMEs, thus limiting their profitability in a market in which they are not major players.

3.0. Research Methods

3.1 Study approach

This study made use of survey design. The area of study is the vocational centres in Lagos state, Nigeria. These vocational centres are spread across all the Local government areas as well as Local Council Development Authorities in Lagos State, Nigeria. The vocational centres provide vocational training in diverse trades and professions. The period of training is usually short and intensive ranging between 3 and six months. The vocational centres do not charge any fees all through the training period, as the government of Lagos state bears the financial burden of the trainees. A structured questionnaire was the major instrument of data collection. The questionnaire was divided into two sections. Section 1 required the bio-data of the respondents, while section 2 requested the respondents to indicate the extent to which startup capital, electricity supply and government policies can affect their startup intention, using a modified likert scale.

3.2 Population and sample size

The population of the vocational trainees was not available when the data were collected because of the rate of entry and exit of trainees. Over 800 copies of questionnaire were administered to the vocational trainees. A convenient sampling technique was adopted as it was those who were available at the training centres on the day of visitation that were sampled. A total of 591 were found useful. Descriptive statistics was used to analyse the bio-data information and responses to the research items, while Spearman rho correlation was used to test the hypotheses of the study.

4.0 Results and discussion

Table 1 shows the biodata information of the respondents, 59% were female. This is showing that more females are seeking opportunities to acquire skills to be able to run a personal business, possibly to give flexible time to take care of the family. More than 76% were single, close to 70% fall within ages 18 and 25 years. This finding also showed that majority of respondents fall within the range of young people who are just completing their Senior Secondary schools (SSS) who either are unable to find a job, or secure admission into tertiary institutions, it is also possible that their parents are not in position to finance their education or that vocational training is being used as a gap filler during the waiting period for admission. This finding is consistent with the study of Olayiwola and Alaneme (2010), where it was found that less than 20% of those who wrote Senior Secondary Certificate Examinations (SSCE) on yearly basis are admitted into the various tertiary institutions in Nigeria. This conclusion is also obvious in that over 63.1% claimed to hold SSCE and GCE O/L as their highest qualification.

Table 1 Bio-data of respondents (N =591)

Gender	F	%
Male	240	40.3
Female	351	59.7
Marital status		
Single	454	76.2
Married	128	21.5
others	8	1.3
Total	591	100
Age bracket		
Less than 18	105	17.6
Between 18 and 25	306	51.4
Between 26 and 30	79	13.1
Between 31 and 40	78	13.1
Between 41 and 50	18	3.0
Between 51 and 60	05	0.7
Total	591	100
Highest qualification		
Below primary school	6	1.0
Primary six certificate	4	0.7
JSS certificate	19	3.2
Technical Certificate	19	3.2
SSCE/GCE	373	63.1
OND/NCE	87	14.7
HND/B.Sc/BA	83	14.0
Total	591	100
Reasons to learn a trade		
Love and passion for self employment	497	84.1
Others	94	15.9

Field study 2010

Table 2 showed responses to the statement ‘the fund required to start may be difficult to raise. Over 83% of the respondents agreed to the statement. This is overwhelming in that no matter how skillful the vocational trainees may be in their choice of trade, the startup capital may be a constraint. In the study of Olayiwola (2007), where motor spare parts apprentice were studied among the Igbos traders, it was found that the Igbo system of apprenticeship provided for the take off grant for the apprentice by the master in addition to the supervision role of the master until the apprentice become stabilized. The establishment of Micro finance banks in Nigeria was aimed at solving these problems of access to finance, but the major challenge is that the cost of fund is usually too high and the duration of the facilities is usually too short. The study of Adewole (2009) found that SMEs are faced with the problem of restricted access to credit facilities from the micro finance banks due to the inability of small business owners to meet the collateral requirements and high interest rate charged by the microfinance banks which rendered most of the businesses unprofitable. Majority of the respondents of this study are young school leavers without any asset for collateral, it implies that if parents and family members cannot raise startup capital, the trainees may have to fall back on seeking paid employment as a result of financial constraints.

Table 2. The capital required to start may be difficult to raise

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	208	35.0
	Agree	286	48.0
	Disagreed	46	7.7
	Strongly Disagree	37	6.2
	Total	577	97.0
Missing	System	14	3.0
Total		591	100.0

Source: Field Study, 2010

Table 3 showed the responses to epileptic electricity supply as a constraint for business venture intention. Over 84.3% of the trainees agreed that the problem of electricity is a major consideration before venturing into business. It is an accepted fact that so many manufacturing and allied organizations have relocated to neighbouring countries as a result of the high cost of power generation for operations. The researchers had the opportunity to interact with a small business owner who manufactures nylon bags, according to the entrepreneur, over one million naira was spent in a month to fuel the generator, apart from the fact that the

company could not operate at full capacity, it was becoming increasingly difficult to breakeven. After the relocation to where electricity was relatively stable, the organization was able to save the substantial cost of running the generator. The study of Adewole (2009) found that 96.3% identified electricity as the greatest constraint in running their businesses.

Table 3. The epileptic electricity supply is a major consideration

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	270	45.7
	Agree	228	38.6
	Disagreed	48	8.1
	Strongly Disagree	29	4.9
	Total	575	97.3
Missing	System	16	2.7
Total		591	100.0

Source: Field Study 2010

Table 4 sought to evaluate government policies in relation to the survival of small scale business. The responses revealed that over 76.5% of the respondents agreed that government policies are not conducive for the survival of new business. This finding is consistent with Adewole (2009) where 91.4% agreed that inconsistent government policies are hindering the growth of small scale businesses. Olorunisola (2003) also identified overbearing regulation and operational environment as part of the lingering problems of the SMEs sub-sector.

Table 4. Government policies are not conducive for the survival of new business

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	161	27.1
	Agree	284	49.4
	Disagreed	66	11.1
	Strongly Disagree	46	7.7
	Total	567	95.3
Missing	System	28	4.7
Total		595	100.0

Field Study 2010

Test of Hypotheses

For hypothesis 1, a spearman rho correlation was calculated measuring the relationship between the problem of raising initial capital for business start-up and business start-up intention ($\rho = 0.058$, $p > 0.05$). We therefore accept the null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between difficulties to raise startup capital and vocational trainees business start-up intention. This finding did not support previous study, for example, Osotimehin *et al*, (2012) which showed that financial constraint is a serious factor militating against the effective management of small and medium enterprises in the Nigerian business environment. Gbandi and Amissah (2014), suggested financial options both potential and existing small and medium business owners could explore to ameliorate financial shortages.

For hypothesis 2 a spearman rho correlation was calculated measuring the relationship between epileptic electricity supply and business start-up intention ($\rho = 0.218$ $p < .001$). We accept the alternative hypothesis that epileptic supply of electricity has a significant effect on new business start-up intention. The Study of Ologundudu, (2014) which investigated the epileptic nature of electricity supply and its consequences on industrial and economic performance, showed that the index of industrial development, electricity supply, technology and capital employed are important determinants of economic development. The study posited that however novel the industrial policy may be, without fixing the electricity supply problem in Nigeria, the country may not be able to drive economic development to the desirable threshold (Ologundudu, 2014). Forkuoh and Li, (2015), investigated the effect of power outages on SMEs growth in Ghana, they reported that power outages had a negative effect on SMEs growth, while the costs of operating businesses significantly increase under power outages.

Finally, for hypothesis 3, spearman rho correlation was calculated measuring the relationship between inconsistent government policies and business start-up intention ($\rho = 0.075$, $p > 0.05$). Hypothesis 3 is not supported. Even though existing studies identified inconsistent government policies as militating against start-up intention, causing business failure as well as retarding the growth and development of SMEs {Ogujuiba *et al*, (2004); Ogechukwu, (2009), Fatai, (2009) in Ben Caleb *et al*, 2013}. In Table 1, 84.1% indicated that they chose to learn a trade because of their passion to be self employed. This study has come up with high business start-up intention among the younger generation.

Raising initial capital and inconsistent government policies were not significant, though, positive. The implication of this is that a good business idea, determination

and the entrepreneurial mind set can make any focused entrepreneur to survive any business environment. The positive effect and significance of epileptic electricity supply showed its importance in encouraging potential business owners.

Table 4. Spearman rho correlation matrix Business intentions and constraints

		1	2	3	4
Business intention	Correlation	1.000			
	Coefficient				
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.			
Capital requirement	Correlation	.058	1.000		
	Coefficient				
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.158	.		
Electricity supply	Correlation	.218**	.219**	1.00	
	Coefficient			0	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.	
Government policies	Correlation	.075	.218**	.281**	1.00
	Coefficient				0
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.068	.000	.000	.
N		590	590	590	590
** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)					
* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).					

5.0 Summary and Conclusion

5.1 Summary

The study examined the possible environmental constraints that may constrain vocational trainees from starting a business venture. Three hypotheses were raised, two were rejected and one accepted. While raising initial capital and inconsistent government policies may be constraints for business start-up intention, they are not sufficient reasons to prevent any one with an aggressive entrepreneurial mind set from actualising his/her business start-up intention. This study showed that despite the unfriendly business environment, a large number of potential entrepreneurs are willing to venture into a new business. Capital requirements for start-up, availability of constant electricity supply, and consistent and friendly government policies will have an integrated effect on more skilful artisan starting a venture. Inability to access to the startup capital, epileptic supply of electricity and inconsistent government policies were possible constraints that may hinder vocational trainees to startup their own business.

5.2 Conclusion and Recommendations

Although, the aims of the vocational centres are to equip trainees with skills to make them self reliant and possibly create new jobs to reduce the level of unemployment, if they are constrained by inaccessibility of funds, lack of regular supply of electricity and inconsistent government policies, the huge investment at the various levels of government will be a mere waste. This study recommends strongly that government assist the committed and highly skilled trainees with minimum funds made available to enable them start-up a venture, establish incubating centres where new businesses can be located and government makes necessary infrastructural facilities available as practiced globally. Specific friendly policies that alleviate the suffering of the small scale business should be made through using a bottom-up approach as this allows government identify the areas of needs, of the operators. There is a need for potential business owners to equip themselves with basic managerial skills in addition to the vocational skills already acquired to ensure success. Other determinants of business start-up intention are not included in this study such as involvement in family business and individual attitudes (Reitan, 1997; Peterman and Kennedy, 2005 both in Garba *et al*, 2014). It is therefore suggested that future research should include more variables and it should extend to other states in Nigeria.

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