

Evaluation of the Effect of Igbo Indigenous Apprenticeship System (*Igba Bonyi*) on Small Business Sustainability in Nigeria

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Abstract

Sustainability has remained the bane of Micro, Small and Medium scale Enterprises (MSMEs). Year on year, statistics continue to show that about 70 – 80% percent of MSMEs windup within the first three years of their operation. Formal measures taken by businesses and governments to contain this rate of business failure have proved ineffective. Conversely, extant literature and empirical studies have shown that indigenous entrepreneurship – the Igbo Apprenticeship system (*Igba Bonyi*) has been very effective in producing sustainable MSMEs in Nigeria. This paper investigated the gamut of the ecosystem inherent in the apprenticeship system that has created sustainable business environment for MSMEs. The survey research method was adopted using structured questionnaire to elicit relevant information from entrepreneurs in Ogbor Osi Market Owerri, Imo State, Nigeria. The quantitative data collected from 112 respondents were tested using Simple Regression Analysis and applying SPSS version 21. The study concluded that there is significant positive relationship between indigenous entrepreneurship (engagement, learner's stewardship, commitment and patience) and small business sustainability (acquisition of in-depth market knowledge, networking propensity, social capital support and ability to build stakeholders' strategic alliance). We recommend that, in order to ensure MSMEs sustainability, people should undergo suitable traditional business training to obtain necessary skills and experiences.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship, Sustainability, Indigenous entrepreneurship, Networking propensity, Strategic Alliance

Introduction

Despite the different strategies so far adopted in the teaching and learning of Entrepreneurship at the various tiers of the educational system, research has proven that indigenous skills are essential in the delivery of sustainable entrepreneurship education (Major & Leigha, 2019; Obunike, 2016; Ligthelm, 2010; Maritz & Foley, 2018). For Maritz & Foley (2018), indigenous entrepreneurship represents a significant opportunity for indigenous-led economies that support sustainable economic development and social well-being. It contributes highly to economic development (Boufaden, 2013, Wambui, Martin & Smuel, 2020).

As observed by Wattanapruttipaisan (2013), Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SMEs) are the backbone of virtually all economies of the world. This supports the assertion of Gollin (2008) that SMEs (often informal) dominate the economic lives of most Least Developed Countries (LDCs) of the world. As a result, most governments in the LDCs have recognized the need to formulate policies that build favorable environment for the establishment and operation of SMEs (Isiaka, Kadiri & Salman, 2017). Thus, the small business sector has become one of the most important means to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 8-10 (Decent work and economic growth; Industry, innovation and infrastructure and Reducing inequality), among others, in most countries, including Nigeria. However, Ugani (2016) noted that sustainability and productivity are the main challenges confronting SMEs, such that SME owners find it difficult to sustain their businesses beyond five years Fatoki, 2014). However, researches have shown that the Igbo Apprenticeship System (IAS) provides a more sustainable outcome (Obunike, 2016; Onwuegbuzie, 2017; Ekekwe, 2021).

The Igbos are known for their indigenous entrepreneurship education, also known as traditional business school (Igba Bonyi or Igba Odibo). By definition, Cahn (2008), cited in Wambui, et al (2020) sees indigenous entrepreneurship as a form of enterprise where a people's culture and way of life and contemporary business concepts are successfully blended to positively and harmoniously contribute to the enterprise, providing income and other socio-cultural outcomes. In his theoretical framework of cognitive development, Vygotsky (1978) argued that learning is a socially mediated process, fundamentally influenced by a people's socio-cultural imperatives. As noted by Obunike (2016), IAS has a strong overlaps with ethnic, social and domestic entrepreneurship, as indigenous people see themselves as a collectivist group who work together on the basis of their common ancestry, kinship, history, language and at times, religion. Wambui et al (2020) added that entrepreneurship for indigenous communities include identification of business opportunities, soliciting for resources and starting a business with the aim that these opportunities would transform to value creation and provide solution to society's needs and wants.that people are willing to pay for.

While analyzing business failures in Nigeria, Obunike (2016) observed that many entrepreneurs devote much time to customer acquisition, only to lose them to competitors in a very short period, because they failed to acquire the requisite traditional business school experience. The findings of Isiaka et al (2017) show that most SMEs in Nigeria liquidated within the first five years due to insufficient capital, lack of focus, inadequate market research, over-concentration on one or two markets for finished products and lack of succession plan. It therefore follows that, gaining previous knowledge of a business through "Igba Bonyi" helps intending entrepreneurs to understand every aspect of the business, which enables them to start their own businesses with very clear insight about critical stakeholders such as; customers, competitors, suppliers, even creditors, and how to network in the business (Obunike, 2016).

Unfortunately, findings have shown that many Igbo entrepreneurs are yet to fully understand and properly use customer relationships and networking as a business strategy to achieve profitability and success in their businesses (Ayozie, Oboreh, Umukoro & Ayozie, 2013; Obunike, 2016). This situation is against the meaning of entrepreneurship as portrayed by Anyanwu (2008), which entails recognizing business opportunities, exploiting those opportunities and creating an enterprise to exploit the opportunity in the 'local environment. The addition of indigenous entrepreneurship to the body of knowledge, in Maritz & Foley (2018), provides practical implications and framework for the benefit of all the entrepreneurship ecosystem participants, including; entrepreneurship educators, indigenous entrepreneurs, policy makers, training suppliers and dynamic institutional participants, such as incubators, accelerators and community development initiatives.

This study, therefore, investigated the relationship between indigenous entrepreneurship and business sustainability. The study is based on the notion that despite the amount of capital invested in a business, if there is no in-depth knowledge of the business, it may be difficult to yield expected outcome, which in turn, hinders growth and expansion. Here, indigenous entrepreneurship is studied in terms of learner's engagement, effective stewardship, commitment and patience. On the other hand, small business sustainability is measured in line with in-depth market knowledge, networking propensity, social capital from family and master (Oga) and stakeholders' strategic alliance.

Studies exist on small scale business sustainability and indigenous entrepreneurship. In 2010, Ligthelm studied the nature of the relationship between entrepreneurship and small business sustainability in Jubulani, South Africa; Obunike (2016) investigated induction strategies of Igbo entrepreneurs and micro-business success in Onitsha, Nigeria; Isiaka, Kadiri and Salman (2017) reviewed studies on the effect of entrepreneurial practices in managing small scale business for sustainable development in Nigeria, while Maritz and Foley (2018) conceptualized a framework of Australian indigenous entrepreneurship education ecosystem. Again, Major and Leigha (2019) reviewed extant literature on indigenous skills and entrepreneurship education, looking at how they could blend for sustainable development in Nigeria. In 2020, Ajibola examined Nigeria SME sustainability

strategies and discovered effective leadership and entrepreneurial skills, among other themes. Wambui et al (2020) equally adopted positivist and phenomenology paradigms and cross sectional research design to investigate the contributions of indigenous entrepreneurship among micro and small livestock enterprises to economic development in Turkana County, Kenya. However, none of these dealt directly with the Igbo Apprenticeship System (Igba Bonyi).

This study investigated indigenous entrepreneurship (Igba Bonyi) and small business sustainability using timber line of Ogbo Osisi Market, Owerri in Imo State, Nigeria as a study. The study specifically answered the following research questions:

- i. Is there any relationship between engagement in traditional entrepreneurship education (Igba Bonyi) and acquisition of in-depth market knowledge among timber entrepreneurs in Ogbo Osisi Market, Owerri?
- ii. In what ways does stewardship in traditional entrepreneurship education influence networking propensity among timber entrepreneurs in Ogbo Osisi Market, Owerri?
- iii. Does any relationship exists between commitment in traditional entrepreneurship education and social capital support among timber entrepreneurs in Ogbo Osisi Market, Owerri?
- iv. Does patience in traditional entrepreneurship education influence the ability of timber entrepreneurs in Ogbo Osisi Market, Owerri to build stakeholders' strategic alliance?

Review of Related Literature

Sustainable development is said to be the organizing principle for meeting human development goals, while at the same time sustaining the ability of natural systems to provide the natural resources and ecosystem services upon which the economy and society depend. Sustainable development, in Shaker's (2015) view, is the holistic approach and temporal processes that lead us to the end point of sustainability. The three pillars of sustainable development are economic growth, environmental stewardship, and social inclusion. Elkington called it "the Triple Bottom Line"- People, Planet and Profit (3 Ps, TBL or 3BL). The triple bottom line is a sustainability framework that examines a company's social, environment and economic impact (Mukhopadhyay & Mukhopadhyay (2020). All the three carry across all sectors of development, from cities to agriculture, infrastructure, energy development and use, water, and transportation. The question facing countries, cities, corporations, and development organizations today is not whether to embrace sustainable development, but how. Meaning, sustainable development is a necessity. The satisfaction of human needs and aspirations is the major objective of development, but that must be achieved on a sustainable basis.

The contribution of micro and small enterprises (MSEs) to economic sustainability is widely being recognized by majority of non-governmental organizations, emerging markets, bilateral and multilateral aid agencies. Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) contribute to economic development and create 80% of the jobs in Nigeria. However, 80% of SMEs are not sustained beyond 5 years (Ajibola, 2020). The importance of small scale enterprises includes among others, substantial contribution of the sector to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), employment generation, increasing local value added, innovation and technological development (Fatoki, 2014). Since indigenous entrepreneurship is more prevalent in Nigeria, it has positive outcomes: generates employment opportunities for the country with the engagement of young school leavers; reduces crime to a considerable extent, and reduces immorality in the country.

The development of SMEs is an essential element in the growth strategy of most economies and holds particular significance for developing countries like Nigeria. However, Isiaka et al (2017) noted that managing small business through entrepreneurial practices, and the consequent predominant business failures have become issues of concern in Nigerian business environment.. Jean-Baptiste, of yore, in Isiaka et al (2017), simply noted that an aristocrat industrialist, with his unpleasant practical experiences developed the concept of entrepreneur a little further, which survived for almost two centuries. According to him, an entrepreneur is one who combines

the land of one, the labour of another, and capital of yet another, and thus, produces a product. By selling the product in the market, he pays interest on capital, rent on land and wages to laborers and what remains is his/her profit. Nevertheless, business dynamic operating environment has further complicated the role of an entrepreneur, who now contends with local, national and international competition. The entrepreneur also has to contend with risks and uncertainty (Knight, 2006).

Recent economic developments around the world especially in the developing countries have led to the realization that large scale enterprises have not played, and cannot let alone, be expected to play the dynamic roles that are supposed to be played in the development of the economy. They lack the nimbleness and agility, the domain of MSMEs, to perform such functions. Ogundele (2000) explicitly explains whom an entrepreneur is by defining an entrepreneur as an innovative individual who initiates and nurtures the growth of a new business that has not existed before. Arguably, an entrepreneur hardly initiates and nurtures the growth of a business that has not existed before. What is more practicable is creative innovation—a remarkable improvement on what is already existing (Shumpeter, 1934). More realistically, Mordi, Simpson, Okafor and Singh (2010), perceives an entrepreneur as someone who undertakes a commercial enterprise and who is an organizational creator and innovator. Entrepreneurship involves discovery, evaluation, and exploitation of opportunities. This fits the entrepreneur with his environment; studying the needs and attending to them – hence, an entrepreneur is a problem solver. An entrepreneur starts and makes his living out of the business he has started. An entrepreneur plans, organizes, staffs, and coordinates a new business, thereby, enriching himself and others through the business. Most importantly, an entrepreneur creates value which solves society's problems.

Indigenous people see themselves as a collective group who work together on the basis of their common ancestry, history, language, and, at times, religion. Indigenous entrepreneurship has strong overlaps with ethnic, social, and domestic entrepreneurship (Obunike, 2016). Dana (1995) broadly defines indigenous entrepreneurship as self-employment based on indigenous knowledge. Inherently, indigenous Igbo entrepreneurs are communal and possess similar characteristics and motivation in their business pursuit.

Indigenous entrepreneurship in a developing country like Nigeria is ease to engage in. As a democratic space, private individuals or groups are allowed the opportunity to engage in any legitimate business, and manage their businesses with minimal interference. Chuta (2014), cited in Isiaka, et.al (2017) mentions that innovation that accompanies investment in small businesses helps to transform the traditional sector. It modernizes the people's perception of life and introduces the use of machines instead of manual labour. Again, the skills of men are modernized and synchronized with developments in the new industrial sector. Of course, other functions of the entrepreneur in Nigeria's economy are many and varied: the creation of employment to augment government's efforts, thus reducing socio-economic problems; wealth creation; reduce the concentration of economic power, stimulates economic equitable redistribution of wealth, income and even political power in the interest of the country; contributes to regional activity and cooperation and promotes Nigeria's export trade—reasonable quantity of products and services from Nigeria are sold in other countries.

Cross country researches in indigenous entrepreneurship seem to highlight some differences in the critical economic and social factors that make for entrepreneurship justification (Bodle et al. 2018; Spencer et al. 2016; Foley 2017; Foley 2008).

The work of Obunike (2016) carried out a thorough investigation on the relationship between business induction strategies and success among indigenous Igbo entrepreneurs in Nigeria. In testing the hypothesis, success was considered the dependent variable while the aggregate measures of business strategies the independent variables. The sample of the study covered the household equipment line of Main Market Onitsha. The total number of the population was over five hundred traders since. The actual number of the people was not certain, but the number of the shops' capacity in the market was used to assume the number of business entrepreneurs in

the market. The findings justified the “Igba-odibo” (Traditional Business School) concept as a business strategy for achieving success in business, which is measured through business/opportunity utilization, customer relationship/business networking and capital acquisition for business.

Maritz and Foley (2018) carried out an emergent inquiry and participatory action research into entrepreneurship education ecosystems, enabling the expansion of indigenous research and practice, with the objective of delineating specific fundamentals associated with indigenous entrepreneurs, such as limitations in social, human and financial capital. They included and integrated Australian indigenous value perspectives including indigenous knowledge, wisdom, and resilience, as well as the cultural captivity of entrepreneurship and Indigenous culture. The study provided practical implications and a framework to the benefit of all ecosystem participants, including entrepreneurship educators, indigenous entrepreneurs, policy-makers, training suppliers, and dynamic institutional participants, such as incubators, accelerators, and community development initiatives. Wambui, et al (2020) carried out a study to determine the contribution of indigenous livestock entrepreneurship to economic development in Turkana County. The study adopted positivist and phenomenology paradigms and cross sectional research design. The target population was all micro and small livestock enterprises, registered members of the Livestock Marketing Association in Turkana County; comprising of 598 livestock enterprises out of which a sample size of 339 MSEs was selected through proportionate stratified sampling and simple random sampling techniques. Secondary and primary data were collected for analysis. The study purposely selected four firms from the survey method for case studies. Pilot study was conducted and reliability and validity of the study instrument was evaluated. Descriptive and inferential analyses were done. The result revealed that indigenous entrepreneurship has a positive and significant effect on economic development in Turkana County. Kenya. Generally, these studies surmised that indigenous entrepreneurship is important in determining economic development, irrespective of context.

Theoretical Framework

Cognitive Apprenticeship Theory developed by Collins, Brown, and Newman (1989), argue that cognitive apprenticeship is less effective when skills and concepts are taught independently of their real-world context and situation. This supports Vygotsky's (1978) view that behaviour is socially and culturally guided and constructed. Cognitive apprenticeship focuses on “learning-through-guided-experience on cognitive and metacognitive skills and processes” (Collins, Brown, & Newman, 1989, p. 457), instead of the physically concrete craft or trade that is the focus of traditional apprenticeships.

The approach, as formulated by Collins et al (1989), consists of six teaching methods: modeling, coaching, scaffolding, articulation, reflection, and exploration. The six methods, in turn, devolve into three groups: cognitive, associative and autonomous stages.

Modelling and coaching as stated by Nwaeze (2018) are the main processes involved in a cognitive apprenticeship. The apprentice develops and declares an understanding of the skill in the cognitive stage when they are still beginners in the trade. The associative stage is when the apprentice starts taking more responsibility and mastery of the trade with the earlier mistakes made being rectified and lessons learn. As the apprentice gains more experiences and shows more mastery of the trade they tend to learn more about big transactions and gradually get to the level when they settled to remain autonomous. Their performance shows their understanding of the trade and ability to take charge when they can finally stay on their own.

In effect, the Igbo apprenticeship training programme follows Collins, et.al (1989) trajectory of zone of development stages: where the apprentice starts cognitive learning through the assistance of their Oga, older Umu Bonyi and other knowledgeable adults; enhances their knowledge through enquiry; gradually practices

what is learn through trial and error and finally understands the business and is capable of operating independently.

Methodology

This study adopted the cross-sectional survey design, to determine the prevailing characteristics in the population, under study, at a certain point in time. This was used to generate needed data from the selected entrepreneurs in Ogbo Osis Market, Owerri, Imo State of Nigeria. The researchers obtained data for this study from both primary and secondary sources. The questionnaire was the only source of primary data collection.

The five-point Likert Scale (Strongly Agreed, Agreed, Indifferent, Disagreed and Strongly Disagreed) was used in the questionnaire administered to respondents. The Taro Yamane (1967) formula $\{n = N / 1 + N (e)^2\}$ as referenced by Botes (2009) and Alugbuo (2005), served as the formula with which the sample size of 139 was determined from a population of 213 entrepreneurs. 122 copies of the questionnaire were retrieved with 88% success rate. However, out of the 122 copies, 10 were invalid while 112 were used for further analyses. The relative high invalid number (10) may be connected with the low level of literacy of the respondents.

The validity of the research instrument was tested using factor analysis. The content weight was validated by the productive modifications of experts in the field of research. A pilot survey was conducted on 20 entrepreneurs (11% of the sample). The test-re-test reliability method yielded a correlation of 80%, as there were 16 affirmative votes and 4 pessimistic votes on the questions raised by the researchers about indigenous entrepreneurship and MSMEs sustainable development. The quantitative data produced in this study were tested using the Simple Regression Analysis, using SPSS version 21.

Data Presentation and Analyses

Table 1: Responses to questions on the nature of engagement in indigenous entrepreneurship in Ogbo Osis Market

Statement	SA	A	UN	D	SD	Total
Before I became independent, I served under my own master (Oga).	112	0	0	0	0	112
I have young people learning my kind of trade under me.	112	0	0	0	0	112
There is a specified duration for learning this line of trade.	88	8	12	2	2	112
There are laid down rules and regulations guiding training in this line of business.	98	6	4	2	2	112
After training, I am supposed to settle my apprentice	80	11	9	6	6	112
Total	490	25	25	10	10	560
Average	98	5	5	2	2	112
Percentage	88	4	4	2	2	100

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Table 1 shows that on the average; 98 (88%) respondents, 5 (4%) respondents, 5 (4%) respondents, 2 (2%) respondents and 2 (2%) respondents, strongly agreed, agreed, were indifferent, disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively, on the questions relating to engagement in indigenous entrepreneurship in Ogbo Osis Market.

Table 2: Responses to questions on in-depth knowledge about the trade among indigenous entrepreneurs in Ogbo Osis Market

Statement	SA	A	UN	D	SD	Total
My business is gradually growing.	98	10	2	1	1	112
I have adequate knowledge about my business.	92	12	4	2	2	112

I know how to relate with my customers.	102	2	6	1	1	112
I know where I can buy my goods at a cheaper rate	102	8	1	1	0	112
I can convincingly approach any bank for loans.	86	13	7	5	1	112
Total	480	45	20	10	5	560
Average	96	9	4	2	1	112
Percentage	85	8	4	2	1	100

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Table 2 shows that on the average; 96 (85%) respondents strongly agreed, 9 (8%) agreed, 4 (4%) were indifferent, 2 (2%) disagreed and 1 (1%) strongly disagreed respectively, on the questions relating to in-depth knowledge about the business among indigenous entrepreneurs in Ogbo Osisi Market.

Table 3: Responses to questions about stewardship of indigenous entrepreneurs in Ogbo Osisi Market

Statement	SA	A	UN	D	SD	Total
I was involved in the sale of goods for my master	101	8	1	1	1	112
I was sometimes sent to collect money from customers	89	13	6	2	2	112
My master sometimes sent me to pay his suppliers and other creditors.	92	16	3	0	1	112
In some occasions, I went to deposit and withdraw money from the bank on behalf of my master.	80	24	6	1	1	112
I handled my master's money carefully.	98	9	4	1	0	112
Total	460	70	20	5	5	560
Average	92	14	4	1	1	112
Percentage	82	12	4	1	1	100

Source: Field Survey, 2021

As shown in table 3, an average; 92 (82%) respondents strongly agreed, 14 (12%) agreed, 4 (4%) respondents were indifferent, 1 (1%) respondent disagreed and 1 (1%) respondent strongly disagreed respectively, on the questions relating to stewardship among learner indigenous entrepreneurs in Ogbo Osisi Market.

Table 4: Responses to questions on networking propensity of indigenous entrepreneurs in Ogbo Osisi Market

Statement	SA	A	UN	D	SD	Total
I have a network of friends who I trust to give me information on current trends in my business.	79	19	7	4	3	112
We have high level of trust in Ogbo Osisi Market that we can resist any form of external competition.	68	21	17	4	2	112
When I have problems, I have business partners I can always run to for assistance.	89	18	3	1	1	112
Sometimes we form a group to attract grants from the government.	77	17	8	6	4	112
I am confident that my business can never go bankrupt.	112	0	0	0	0	112
Total	425	75	35	15	10	560
Average	85	15	7	3	2	112
Percentage	76	13	6	3	2	100

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Information shown in table 4 indicates that on the average; 85 (76%) respondents, 15 (13%) respondents, 7 (6%) respondents, 3 (3%) respondents and 2 (2%) respondents, strongly agreed, agreed, were indifferent, disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively, on the questions relating to networking propensity of indigenous entrepreneurs in Ogbo Osisi Market.

Table 5: Responses to questions on commitment of indigenous entrepreneurs in Ogbo Osisi Market

Statement	SA	A	UN	D	SD	Total
I was never absent from work	61	23	13	9	6	112
I was always punctual to work	71	18	12	7	4	112
I saw to the safety of my master's property	96	9	4	1	2	112
I related well with my master's business stakeholders.	88	12	4	6	2	112
I handled my master's money carefully	99	8	2	2	1	112
Total	415	70	35	25	15	560
Average	83	14	7	5	3	112
Percentage	74	13	6	4	3	100

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Data analyzed in table 5 above indicates that on the average; 83 (74%) respondents, 14 (13%) respondents, 7 (6%) respondents, 5 (4%) respondents and 3 (3%) respondents, strongly agreed, agreed, were indifferent, disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively, on the questions relating to commitment of learner indigenous entrepreneurs in Ogbo Osisi Market.

Table 6: Responses to questions on attraction of social capital support among indigenous entrepreneurs in Ogbo Osisi Market

Statement	SA	A	UN	D	SD	Total
My master settled me financially after my years of service with him.	99	10	1	1	1	112
Relatives and friends provided financial support for my business startup capital.	82	21	4	3	2	112
Wealthy friends and relatives sometimes provide the collateral I used to borrow money from banks.	68	18	10	8	8	112
Some of my master's suppliers granted me some goods on credit.	88	18	2	2	2	112
Some of my customers are ever willing to pay for goods in advance.	73	18	8	6	7	112
Total	410	85	25	20	20	560
Average	82	17	5	4	4	112
Percentage	73	15	4	4	4	100

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Table 6 shows that on the average; 82 (73%) respondents strongly agreed, 17 (15%) respondents agreed, 5 (4%) respondents were indifferent, 4 (4%) respondents disagreed and 4 (4%) respondents strongly disagreed respectively, on the questions relating to attraction of social capital support among indigenous entrepreneurs in Ogbo Osisi Market.

Table 7: Responses to questions on patience of indigenous entrepreneurs in Ogbo Osi Market

Statement	SA	A	UN	D	SD	Total
I served my Master for the specified period of time agreed.	102	8	1	1	0	112
I received scolding from my master severally, still I did not give up on my training.	110	2	0	0	0	112
I received insults from my Master's relatives still I did not stop my training.	82	24	2	2	2	112
Many of my friends in other areas of endeavour moved ahead of me but I persisted.	78	21	6	5	2	112
I was lonely, and unable to have some measure of freedom, still I persisted in my training.	88	20	1	2	1	112
Total	460	75	10	10	5	560
Average	92	15	2	2	1	112
Percentage	82	13	2	2	1	100

Source: Field Survey, 2021

As presented in table 4.7, on the average, 92 (82%) respondents strongly agreed, 15 (13%) respondents agreed, 2 (2%) respondents were indifferent, 2 (2%) respondents disagreed and 1 (1%) respondent strongly disagreed respectively, on the questions relating to learner patience among indigenous entrepreneurs in Ogbo Osi Market.

Table 8: Responses to questions on ability to build strategic alliance among indigenous entrepreneurs in Ogbo Osi Market

Statement	SA	A	UN	D	SD	Total
I benefit from the network of other small businesses who pull resources together to reach larger market area.	67	22	10	8	5	112
We have strong degree of unity in Ogbo Osi Market.	84	18	5	3	2	112
I have business partners outside Ogbo Osi Market.	98	10	1	2	1	112
I have partnership with some financial institutions.	77	22	7	4	2	112
I am in constant contact with some community members	79	28	2	3	0	112
Total	405	100	25	20	10	560
Average	81	20	5	4	2	112
Percentage	72	18	4	4	2	100

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Table 8 shows that on the average, 81 (72%) respondents strongly agreed, 20 (18%) respondents agreed, 5 (4%) respondents were indifferent, 4 (4%) respondents disagreed while 2 (2%) respondents strongly disagreed respectively, on the questions relating to ability to build strategic alliance among indigenous entrepreneurs in Ogbo Osi Market.

Test of Hypotheses

The stated hypotheses were tested using simple regression in SPSS version 21. The result is summarized in table

Table 9: Descriptive Statistics

Hypotheses	Mean	R	R Square	t	Sig.
1	4.7589	.958	.917	34.951	0.000
2	4.5893	.925	.855	25.463	0.000
3	4.5089	.982	.964	54.053	0.000
4	4.5536	.892	.795	20.641	0.000

Interpretation

The R-values (0.958, 0.925, 0.982 and 0.892) show that a very strong, positive and significant relationship exists between the identified variables of indigenous entrepreneurship and those of small business sustainability. The adjusted R² values (0.917, 0.854, 0.963 and 0.793) reveal that 91.7%, 85.4%, 96.3% and 79.3% variations in indigenous entrepreneurship (engagement in traditional entrepreneurship, learner’s stewardship, learner’s commitment and learner’s patience) are predicted by the four variables of small business sustainability (in-depth market knowledge, networking propensity, social capital support and ability to build stakeholders’ strategic alliance) respectively.

Also, the F values (1221, 648, 2922 and 426) and p value (0.000 for all) which are greater than f- critical value at 0.05 level of significance (6.39) and less than alpha (0.05) respectively are positive signs of relationship. The Durbin Watson test (1.764, 1.761, 1.790 and 1.775) shows that the residuals from the linear regression are independent and there is no first order linear autocorrelation, since the values fall between $1.707 < d < 1.831$ and they tend to be closer to 4 as against 0.

The coefficients tables equally show that engagement in indigenous entrepreneurship (t=34.951; p=0.000), learner’s stewardship (t=25.463; p=0.000), learner’s commitment (t=54.053; p=0.000) and patience (t= 20.641; p= 0.000) are significant predictors of small business sustainability (in-depth knowledge about the business, networking propensity, attraction of social support and building strategic alliance. This is because their p-values are less than alpha (0.05) and their t-values greater than t-critical (1.960).

Decision

Since F- calculated values (1221, 648, 2922 and 426) are greater than F critical (6.39) and the p values (0.000) are less than alpha (0.05), we therefore reject all the Null hypotheses and accept the alternative hypotheses. This states that there is significant relationship between indigenous entrepreneurship (Igba Bonyi) and small business sustainability among timber entrepreneurs in Ogbo Osisi Market, Owerri.

Discussion of Findings

The result of the test of hypothesis one shows that there is significant positive relationship between engagement in traditional entrepreneurship education (Igba Bonyi) and acquisition of in-depth market knowledge among timber entrepreneurs in Ogbo Osisi Market, Owerri. This means that following the fact that the entrepreneurs served their masters, observing the guiding rules for the training and got settled after the specified period of learning, they acquired adequate knowledge on how to grow their businesses, manage customers, suppliers and other financial stakeholders. This is in line with the finding of Ligthelm (2010), which states that the ability to adjust one’s business model to adapt to changed economic circumstances is an important characteristic of entrepreneurial conduct that ultimately dictates survival in increasingly competitive economic environments. It equally supports Major et al (2019), that it is recognized that indigenous skill elements are crucial in the delivery of entrepreneurship education for sustainability.

The study also found that there is significant positive relationship between learner’s stewardship in traditional entrepreneurship education and their networking propensity. In other words, when learners faithfully serve their

masters, they build a formidable network of friends, compete favourably, build business partners and attract heavy supports from the government and other stakeholders. This supports the conclusion of Isiaka et al (2017) that, the secret behind the success of self-reliant strategy is mainly in peoples' positive attitudes to enterprise, and in the extent to which the right incentive, adequate enough to make risk worth taking rather than in any particular political philosophy.

Again, the study found that there is significant positive relationship between learner's commitment in traditional entrepreneurship education and social capital support. This implies that regularity and punctuality to shop by learners, their ability to handle their master's property and money, as well as relate well with the stakeholders are of great necessity for small business sustainability. It enables the servants gain supports from their masters, relatives, friends and other stakeholders, which helps them establish their own businesses with ease. This finding is in line with the findings of Ligthelm (2010), Obunike (2016), Major et al (2019) and Ekekwe (2021), where social capitalism (stakeholders' support) plays very important role to build a budding entrepreneur.

Finally, the study found that there is significant positive relationship between learner's patience in traditional entrepreneurship education and their ability to build stakeholders' strategic alliance. The ability of a learner to remain faithful throughout the agreement period, not minding various distractions coming from friends, relatives and even business competitors, is a necessary sinew to small business sustainability. The person gains from network of other MSMEs and partnership with various business stakeholders. This supports Major & Leigha, (2019) that blending the potentials of both entrepreneurship education and indigenous skills systems is tantamount to forging sustainable development for the future. It is also in tandem with the findings of Obunike (2016) and Wambui (2020), whose results revealed that indigenous entrepreneurship has a positive and significant effect on economic development.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, we hereby conclude that there is significant positive relationship between indigenous entrepreneurship (engagement, learner's stewardship, commitment and patience) and small business sustainability (acquisition of in-depth market knowledge, networking propensity, social capital support and ability to build stakeholders' strategic alliance among timber entrepreneurs in Ogbo Osis Market, Owerri.

Based on the findings and conclusion of this study, we recommend that, in order to ensure small business sustainability, apprentices should undergo appropriate traditional business training to obtain necessary skills and experiences. On the part of the masters (Ogas), they should ensure timely settlement of their diligent apprentices. Stakeholders should equally support successfully graduated apprentices to gain a foothold in their new business. We further recommend further research on the integration of the Igbo Apprenticeship System (IAS) into the formal educational system and the formalization of the IAS process, to forestall possible Ogas' tyranny and Umu Bonyi's (apprentices) infidelity.

Contribution to Knowledge

This study has contributed to the body of knowledge on Igbo Apprenticeship System (IAS), by clearly delineating critical entrepreneurship and MSMEs sustainability variables that make for effective indigenous entrepreneurship sustainability. Is is a gap in knowledge/literature that this study has filled.

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