



Research Paper

Effect of Mentoring on the Growth of Selected Small Scale Businesses in Makurdi Metropolis, Benue State-Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Strategies for developing the capabilities of employees are important part of any organization's overall strategy and source of competitive advantage. This study investigated the effect of mentoring on the growth of selected small scale businesses in Makurdi Metropolis, Benue State. The study specifically examined the effect of career support, psychological support and knowledge transfer on the growth of selected small scale businesses in Makurdi Metropolis. The study adopted a cross-sectional survey design and the population of the study was 152 (owners and employees) of small scale businesses within Makurdi Metropolis. A pilot study was carried out to measure validity and reliability of items on the questionnaire. Data collected from respondents through self-administered questionnaire were analysed using Mean, Standard Deviation and Regression Analysis. Formulated hypotheses were tested with the aid of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 23) software. The study found that career support has significant effect on the growth of small scale businesses ($P.019$; $\beta=.349$); psychological support has significant effect on the growth of small scale businesses ($P.000$; $\beta=.734$) and knowledge transfer has significant effect on the growth of small scale businesses ($P.000$; $\beta=.516$). It recommended amongst others that government should organize mentorship programmes for entrepreneurs and business men to enable them have knowledge about business mentoring and the importance of transferring knowledge to enhance viability and growth of their businesses.

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1. Introduction

In today's turbulent business environment the survival and growth of organizations have become major concern and tasks which management of organizations are striving hard to achieve. This is necessitated by fierce competition, technological advancements, frequent changes in customer preferences and expectations and swift market changes. To remain competitive organizations must retain employees, inspire and support them to learn incessantly. Organizations therefore place greater prominence on developing their employees, who are regarded as the life blood of organizations and a determinant factor for survivability (Nwaeke & Obiekwe, 2017). Strategies for developing the capabilities of employees are an important part of any organization's overall corporate strategy. This can be better achieved through mentoring programmes, which are aimed at increasing productivity and ensuring the growth of organizations (Mundia & Iravo, 2014; Anekwe, 2019).

Mentoring is rapidly becoming worldwide as a highly effective human resource development process (Ayodeji & Adebayo, 2015). Mentoring is recognised as an important contributor to building capacity within organisation. By creating a mentoring culture, the best organisations continually recognize human resource as the most important asset and take practical steps to nurture talent and improve learning, performance and retention (Kunaka & Moos, 2019). Mentoring focuses on helping individuals acquire the skills necessary to do their job and possibly further their career (Zachary, 2012; Anekwe, 2019). The mentees set the agenda based on their own development needs, and the mentor provides insight and guidance to help them achieve their desired goals (Rankhumise, 2015).

The corporate business world has developed systems of mentoring which are integral to the induction and supported development of new company employees. Mentoring practices include career support, psychological support and knowledge transfer (Okurame & Balogun, 2013; Muzaffar, Abdul & Mohd, 2016). Career support covers mentorship aspects like sponsorship, exposure, facilitating visibility, protection, or organizing challenging assignments for younger employees (Ekpoh & Ukot, 2019). Psychosocial support includes counselling, role modelling, acceptance, confirmation, and friendship (Merrill & Afifi, 2015). Knowledge transfer shows that workplace relationships should be fostered to promote transfer of tacit knowledge, which is stressed the importance of human resource development to organization success (Barthauer, Spurk & Kauffeld, 2018). These mentorship programmes are important for every business organization including small scale businesses.

The immense contributions of small scale businesses to the socio-economic growth and development of nations have been well acknowledged (Amin, Thurasamy, Aldakhil & Kaswuri, 2016; Muzaffar, Abdul & Mohd, 2016). The relevance of these businesses is felt in the areas of employment, growth of export earnings, contribution to Gross Domestic Product (GDP), export commodities and creation of employment opportunities for teeming unemployed youths (Oni & Daniyan, 2012; Pulka, Ramli & Bakar, 2017). Growth is crucial to the long-term survival of a business and it is an organizational outcome resulting from the combination of firm-specific resources, capabilities and routines (Park & Jang, 2013). Growth refers to increase or change in size of a business in terms of revenue generation, value addition and expansion (Gupta, Guha & Krishnaswami, 2013). The most common growth measures are related to change in sales (revenue), number of employees and value of assets, market share (Aminu & Shariff, 2015; Adamson, Wang, Holm & Moore, 2017).

Mentoring is a mechanism that allows personal, psychological and professional development hence it is important for the growth of small scale enterprises (Barthauer, Spurk & Kauffeld, 2018). However, most businesses are confronted with issues of poor management, lack of career support for employees and knowledge transfer which may be attributable to non-availability of mentorship programmes. In Makurdi metropolis, it is worrisome that most small scale businesses cease to exist at the death of their owners and

even where such businesses continue they experience dwindling growth. Also, many small businesses do not have people with adequate skills to provide mentorship to employees and this affect growth of their businesses. When senior organizational leaders retire, they take with them knowledge that is needed by organizations to continue to grow and this invariably affects business growth. This study is therefore carried out to investigate the effect on mentoring on growth of selected small scale businesses in Makurdi metropolis, Benue State.

The main objective of this study is to examine the effect on mentoring on growth of selected small scale businesses in Makurdi metropolis, Benue State. The specific objectives of the study include:

- *To determine the effect of career support on the growth of small scale businesses in Makurdi metropolis, Benue State*
- *To ascertain the effect of psychological support on the growth of small scale businesses in Makurdi metropolis, Benue State*
- *To examine the effect of knowledge transfer on the growth of small scale businesses in Makurdi metropolis, Benue State*

2. Literature Review

2.1. Concept of Mentoring

Entrepreneurs need to continue to learn and receive appropriate support to cope with the challenges of the new business to enable success and persistence. Mentoring covers activities often designed and encouraged by management to develop its personnel and ensure that they improve and maintain the organisation's competitive advantage (Okurame, 2013). Peretomode (2017) noted that mentoring is more than giving advice on how to work more effectively or handle a specific problem. It involves the mentor taking personal interest in seeing that a mentee develops talent, skills, expertise and knowledge needed to succeed and have a successful career that contributes to the organization (Barthauer, Spurk & Kauffeld, 2018). Bilesanmi (2013) defined mentoring as a set of tailor-made advice and incentive that a more experienced staff, in an innovative way can offer less experienced members in a plethora way and on a range of competencies.

Mentoring consist of sharing experience, listening with empathy, developing insight through reflection and professional friendship (Anekwe, 2019). Mentoring is a transactional process of transmitting information, advice, support and expertise from an experienced to a less-experienced individual (Kunaka & Moos, 2019). This means that mentoring concerns with career enhancement, professional development, building and maintaining a professional network, increasing competence and self-esteem. The ultimate goal of mentoring is to ensure that the appropriate ways of doing things are transferred to the new generation (Cope, 2011).

Mentoring involves two parties (mentee and mentor). A mentee is a person with less experience and knowledge in a specific field or task that is aided by an expert. The mentee can also be described as an individual involved in a mentoring relationship who receives career support, protection, and advocacy from a mentor (Masalimova & Sabirova, 2015). A mentor on the other hand is a person with experience and expertise, who is committed to providing better assistance and career support for the protégé (Dobrow, Chandler, Murphy & Kram, 2012). Mentoring is defined in this study as a professional relationship in which an experienced person (the mentor) assists another (the mentored or mentee) in developing specific skills and knowledge that will enhance the less-experienced person's professional and personal growth.

2.2. Dimensions of Mentoring

The corporate business world has developed systems of mentoring which are integral to the induction and supported development of new company employees. The dimensions of mentoring used in previous studies include career support, psychological support and knowledge transfer (Okurame & Balogun, 2013; Ayodeji & Adebayo, 2015; Muzaffar, Abdul & Mohd, 2016), career development, role modeling and social support (Ayse, Cevdet & Halil, 2013). Career support, psychological support and knowledge transfer are used as dimensions of mentoring in this study.

Career support covers aspects like sponsorship, exposure, facilitating visibility, protection, or organizing challenging assignments (Ekpoh & Ukot, 2019). Career support has been effective in career advancement and the development of skills and competencies (Tschopp, Unger & Grote, 2016). Career support functions are directly related to assisting the mentee with career advancement (Ibrahim & Ismail, 2020). These functions include providing a mentee with opportunities for increased exposure and visibility within an organization, sponsorship, coaching, exposure to important contacts and resources, facilitating protection of the mentee and challenging assignments to enhance the protégé's career these functions are helpful in increasing the performance (St Jean & Audet, 2012; St-Jean & Tremblay, 2020).

Psychological support functions focus more on the personal aspects of the mentee that influence the mentee self image and competence. Mentors providing psychosocial functions usually have an emotional bond with the mentee and provide role modeling, counseling, friendship, acceptance and confirmation (Clutterbuck & Klasen, 2012). Psychosocial support includes aspects such as counselling, role modelling, acceptance, confirmation, and friendship, which have been found to foster a sense of competence, confidence, self-efficacy, and effectiveness in the professional role (Muzaffar, Abdul & Mohd, 2016). This dimension of mentoring is viewed as what a mentor does to help the mentee develop a sense of competence and effectiveness.

Knowledge transfer is another mentoring practice which involves the use of tools to prepare skills of employees and strengthen organizational capabilities, intelligence, build organisational knowledge (Craig, Allen, Reid, Riemenschneider & Armstrong, 2013), and sustain the organization's competitive advantage (Ekpoh & Ukot, 2019). Knowledge transfer is conceptualized as a process where a person (mentor) facilitates professional growth of an individual (mentee) by providing skilled and knowledge transfer learned through the years (Ofobruku & Yusuf, 2016).

2.3. Concept of Growth of Small Scale Businesses

Growth is an important stage of lifecycle for all for-profit organizations. Growth has long been considered a critical and distinct component of organizational performance (Ubesi & Okeke, 2013). The growth of firm can be represented by the change of some variable over time and it is defined as an increase in size, number of employees, asset, capital, sales and profit of an organization. Firm growth involves growth of assets, or capital employed turnover, profit and number of employees (Davidson, Steffens & Fitzsimmons, 2009). Firm growth is defined by Kumari and Thapliyal (2017) as increase operations of the company in terms of sales, assets size, volume of production, number of employees, profits and business expansion.

Firms grow either internally or externally (Mwilu & Njuguna, 2020). Internal growth means growing from internal sources such as R&D, marketing, and core business processes (Mwilu & Njuguna, 2020). External growth, on the other hand, involves a firm achieving growth from external resources through partnership or acquisition of companies in related or unrelated business areas (Christoffersen, Pleoffenborg & Robson, 2014). External growth strategies allow a firm to exploit growth opportunities by creating synergies between resources that are already present in the firm with complementary resources from external entities. External

strategies include M&A, alliances, joint ventures, financial investments, minority stakes, and partnership (Chen, Zou & Wang, 2009; Lynch, 2006).

Organisational growth can be achieved in several ways hence, different studies referring to firms with different age, size and industry will have diverse measures (Delmar, Davidsson & Gartner, 2003). The list of possible growth indicators used in the literature include: employment, assets, physical output, market share, profits and sales (Delmar et al., 2003; Park & Jang, 2013). However, no perfect or superior growth measure exists. Firms have different growth patterns according to their characteristics and measures may vary according to the aims of the research. In this study assets growth and sales growth are used as measures of growth (Christoffersen, Pleoffenborg & Robson, 2014). Assets growth refers to the ability of an organization to continue to attract capital as a critical performance dimension and they also need to grow their assets by adopting new technologies in order to remain competitive and survive (Dalton & Dalton, 2006). Sales growth is the primary measure of growth which entails the rate at which a firm is able to expand its sales over time (Christoffersen, Pleoffenborg & Robson, 2014). A firm's ability to exploit product- market opportunities is measured by its sales growth rate (Chen, Zou & Wang, 2009; Andersson, 2013).

2.4. Relationship between Mentoring and Organizational Growth

Mentoring is recognized as having a significant influence on business development. The primary function of mentoring is to promote the mentee's progress in specific areas and to facilitate success in business activities (Kraiger, Finkelstein & Varghese, 2018). The benefits of mentoring include efficiency and professional growth. This is because mentors sharpen their coaching, leadership and communication skills as they advice and motivate their mentees, which they can in turn apply to their day-to-day work (Masalimova & Sabirova, 2015). Mentoring makes it possible for mentors to work with employees of different ages, backgrounds, values, styles of working and professional expertise (Clutterbuck & Klasen, 2012; Kraiger *et al.*, 2018).

A business mentoring programme helps both mentors and mentees to develop their potential and upgrade their expertise (Ofobruku & Yusuf, 2016). Effective mentoring can be associated with positive work behaviours, improve performance and contribute to succession planning, because those who have been mentored are more likely to become mentors themselves (Peretomode & 2017). Business mentoring has been identified as the foundation for the continuity of business and entrepreneurial philosophy, orientation and innovativeness (Mwili & Njuguna, 2020). A study by Mba and Godday (2015) showed the importance of mentoring on the growth of Nigeria Liquefied Natural Gas Company Limited, Bonny. Cheron, Towett and Njeje (2016) also established the significant influence of mentorship practices on employee performance in small manufacturing firms in Kenya.

2.5. Research Hypotheses

Based on the above literature the study formulates the following hypotheses in a null form:

H0₁: Career support has no significant effect on the growth of small scale businesses in Makurdi metropolis, Benue State

H0₂: Psychological support has no significant effect on the growth of small scale businesses in Makurdi metropolis, Benue State

H0₃: Knowledge transfer has no significant effect on the growth of small scale businesses in Makurdi metropolis, Benue State.

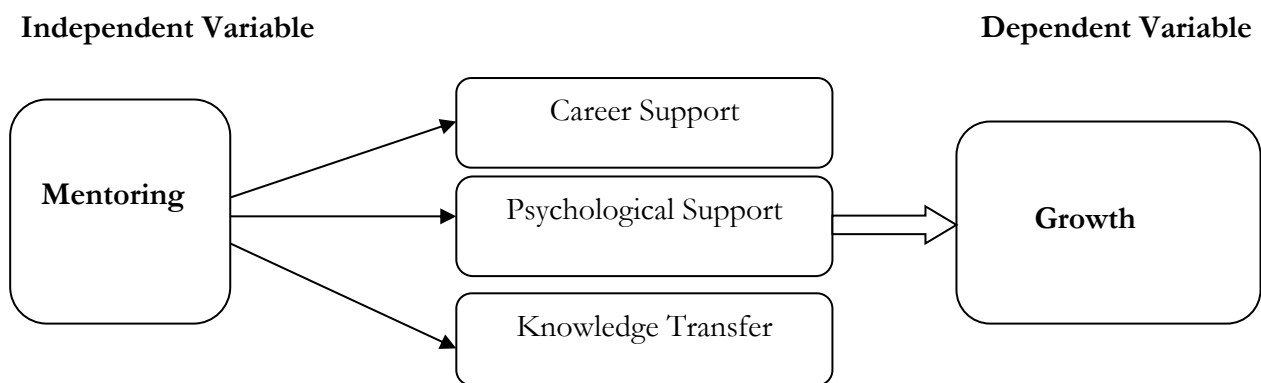


Fig. 1. Conceptual Model of the Study

3. Methodology

This study adopts a cross-sectional survey research design. The use of this design enabled the researchers to collect different opinions of the respondents on mentoring and growth of small scale businesses. The population of the study includes 152 owners and employees of selected small scale businesses within Makurdi Metropolis according to statistics obtained from Benue Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Mines and Agriculture (BECCIMA, 2020). The study selected businesses in the areas of agriculture, services, wholesale and retail trade and restaurants for easy accessibility of information. A census sampling approach was adopted and the respondents were sampled. Data were collected through questionnaire designed on a five-point Likert Scale (Strongly Disagree 1, Disagree 2, Undecided 3, Agree 4 and Strongly Agree 5). A pilot test was conducted on 50 employees of small scale businesses within Makurdi metropolis to ensure reliability of items on the questionnaire using Cronbach’s Alpha method and the result indicated that all the constructs were above 0.70 threshold hence considered reliable.

Table 1. Reliability Test Result

Variable	Cronbach’s Alpha
Career Support	0.842
Psychological Support	0.903
Knowledge Transfer	0.896
Growth	0.918
Average	0.889

Data collected from respondents were presented in tables and analysed using Multiple Regression Analysis with the aid of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 23). Formulated hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

4. Results and Discussion

Data collected from respondents were presented using multiple linear regression analysis.

4.1. Regression Analysis Result

The result of the model summary in Table 2 shows an R² value of .593 meaning that 59.3 % of the variation in the dependent variable is explained by the independent variables while 40.7 % is explained by other variables outside the model, and this indicates that the model is a strong predictor. The R-value of .827

indicates that there is a strong positive correlation between the dependent variable (growth) and the predictor variables (career support, psychological support and knowledge transfer).

Table 2. Model Summary

R	R-Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin- Watson
.827 ^a	.593	.580	.549	1.656

- a. Predictors (Constant), Knowledge Transfer, Psychological Support, Career Support
- b. Dependent Variable: Growth

The result of the analysis of variance presented in Table 3 shows that the model is statistically significant in predicting how the independent variables (career support, psychological support and knowledge transfer) have effect on the dependent variable (P = .000; F = 31.895).

Table 3. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	28.891	3	9.630	31.895	.000 ^b
Residual	44.688	148	.302		
Total	73.579	151			

- a. Dependent Variable: Growth
- b. Predictors (Constant), Knowledge Transfer, Psychological Support, Career Support

The result of data presented in Table 4 shows that taking all other independent variables at zero, a unit change in career support would lead to a 34.9 % change in growth; a unit increase psychological support would lead to 73.4 % change growth while a unit increase in knowledge transfer would lead to a 51.6 % increase growth. At 5% level of significance and 95% level of confidence all the variables (career support, psychological support and knowledge transfer) indicated p-values of less than 0.05. The regression coefficient further shows that psychological support has a more significant effect on growth of small scale businesses in Makurdi metropolis, Benue State.

Table 4. Regression Coefficients

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Beta	Standardized Coefficients	
	B	Std. Error		t	Sig.
(Constant)	.482	.453		1.064	.000
Career Support	.349	.147	.251	2.374	.019
Psychological Support	.734	.133	.527	5.526	.000
Knowledge Transfer	.516	.090	.440	5.740	.000

- a. Dependent Variable: Growth

4.2. Hypotheses Testing

The four hypotheses formulated in this study were all rejected implying that career support, psychological support and knowledge transfer have positive and significant effect on growth of small scale businesses in Makurdi metropolis, Benue State. The summary of the result of tested hypotheses as presented in Table 5 shows that p-values for all the variables were less than 0.05.

Table 5. Summary of Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis	Result	Decision
H0 ₁ : Career support has no significant effect on the growth of small scale businesses in Makurdi metropolis, Benue State	.019 < 0.05	Significant
H0 ₂ : Psychological support has no significant effect on the growth of small scale businesses in Makurdi metropolis, Benue State	.000 < 0.05	Significant
H0 ₃ : Knowledge transfer has no significant effect on the growth of small scale businesses in Makurdi metropolis, Benue State	.000 < 0.05	Significant

4.3. Findings

Results of the study have shown a positive significant relationship between mentoring practices (career support, psychological support and knowledge transfer) and firm growth. Previous studies by Mwilu and Njuguna (2020), Mba and Godday (2015) and Cheron, Towett and Njeje (2016) have shown the significant effect of mentoring programmes on the growth and performance of organizations. Result from hypothesis one revealed a positive significant effect of career support on the growth of small scale businesses in Makurdi metropolis ($p = .019$; $\beta = .349$). This result is consistent with Tschopp, Unger and Grote (2016) who found career support to be effective in career advancement and the development of skills and competencies. St-Jean and Tremblay (2020) also affirmed the importance of career support in assisting employees to acquire knowledge which is helpful in increasing the performance of organizations. The implication of the finding to small scale businesses is that an adequate career support enables employees to learn more from experienced employees thereby contributing to organizational growth.

Findings of the study further indicated that psychological support has a positive and significant effect on the growth of small scale businesses in Makurdi metropolis ($p = .000$; $\beta = .743$). Result of the correlation analysis also showed strong correlation between psychological and growth. In support of this result, Clutterbuck and Klasen (2012) asserted that psychosocial support enable employees with less experience to acquire better skills and knowledge from experienced employees for future growth. Muzaffar, Abdul and Mohd (2016) also found that psychological support helps to foster a sense of competence, confidence, self-efficacy, and effectiveness in the professional role of employees which leads to growth. The implication of the finding to owners and managers of small scale businesses is that psychological support enables employees to improve their productivity and align individual goals to corporate goals hence it is necessary for business growth.

Finally, the result of hypothesis three indicated that knowledge transfer has a positive significant effect on the growth of small scale businesses in Makurdi metropolis ($p = .000$; $\beta = .516$). Correlation analysis result also showed significant relationship between the variables. This result is corroborated by Craig, Allen, Reid, Riemenschneider and Armstrong (2013) who affirmed that knowledge transfer help to build organisational knowledge and strengthen organizational capabilities. In support of the result, Ekpoh and Ukot (2019) established significant effect of knowledge transfer in sustaining an organization's competitive advantage. Ofobruku and Yusuf (2016) also agreed that knowledge transfer enable employees of small scale businesses to develop their potential and upgrade their expertise in the organization. The finding has implication for contemporary business organizations and managers. Knowledge transfer is not only important in facilitating professional growth of mentees (employees) but equally paramount in transferring learned knowledge that ensures the growth and continuity of business.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1. Conclusion

The study on mentoring and growth of small scale businesses in Makurdi metropolis has established that mentoring programmes are an invaluable tool to support individuals in developing their talents and capacities in an organization. The study concludes that career support enable experienced employees to provide assistance to less experienced employees to enable them become more competent. The study also concludes that the employees are more productive when there is psychological support which helps to building their confidence. Finally, the study concludes that knowledge transfer has positive significant effect on the growth of small scale businesses in Makurdi metropolis. The study therefore concludes that mentoring is a significant predictor of growth of small scale businesses.

5.2. Recommendations

The study made the following recommendations in line findings and conclusion drawn:

- *Owners and managers of small scale businesses in Makurdi metropolis should adequately provide assistance and opportunities for increased exposure to less experienced employees to improve their productivity and growth of the organization. They should have people within their leadership whom others look up to as role models and desire to emulate to help ensure the sustainability and growth of business.*
- *Management of small scale businesses should always encourage less experienced employees to learn from their superiors through counselling. Counseling should be considered as a tool for building desired behaviours in people towards achieving an expected level of growth.*
- *Owners and managers of small scale businesses should ensure that mentors are trained in the professional expertise in which mentee is located to avoid possible disagreements. They should ensure that their junior employees are allowed to relate with and be exposed to relevant people and information towards gathering the needed work experience that will help ensure growth.*

5.3. Suggested Areas for Further Research

This study investigated the effect of mentoring on the growth of small scale businesses in Benue State with focus on selected small scale businesses within Makurdi metropolis. Further studies should investigate how different mentoring programmes affect organizational growth in other industries within and outside Benue State. Also, more constructs should be adopted as measurements of mentoring beyond those in this study as this would help further studies to cover items beyond this study. Finally, other researchers should consider larger sample, especially considering the fact that number of small scale businesses have increased seriously in the recent years.

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