

Entrepreneurial Skills: A Vital Resource for the Performance of Micro and Small Enterprises in the North West Region of Cameroon

Abstract: Purpose: The aim of this study is to investigate how entrepreneurial skills influence the performance of Micro and Small Enterprises (MSEs) in the North West Region of Cameroon. Specifically; opportunity recognition and innovation, financial literacy and management skills, resilience and adaptability were the skills under investigation.

Methodology: The study employed a structured questionnaire for a sample of 383 MSEs located and operating within the North West Region of Cameroon. The data was analysed using the ordinary least square regression technique with the help of Statistical Package for Social Science version 21.

Findings: Findings reveal that; opportunity recognition and innovative skills, financial literacy and managerial skills, and resilience and adaptability skills all affect the performance of MSEs in the North West Region of Cameroon significantly at 1%, 5% and 1% respectively. Jointly, these skills account for 72.4 % of the performance of MSEs in that region.

Implications for theory and practice: These findings support Schumpeter's theory of innovation who reiterated that innovative skills is a key factor for entrepreneurship. The findings of adaptability support the social cognitive theory which establishes that environment causes behaviour and likewise behaviour causes the environment. The Human Capital Theory is supported in the findings by reiterating that humans possess skills, knowledge and abilities which can be enhanced. In this regard, we recommend that these skills should be nurtured from basic education and practice in the form of apprenticeship, mentorship and coaching before the entrepreneur ventures. Capacity building should be government oriented from national to local levels as well as private platforms like the church, social clubs, cooperatives, women groups, community groups.

Originality and value: This study jointly examined these entrepreneurial skills which has been separately examined by earlier researchers in foreign countries. It focuses on MSEs which rely on one or two persons for decision making, as opposed to SMEs by previous studies. Additionally, targeting the skills that are most suitable in the context of the North West Region and Cameroon at large is extremely value adding.

Keywords: Entrepreneurial skills, opportunity recognition skill, innovation skill, financial literacy skill, management skill, resilience and adaptability skill, Micro and Small Enterprises, Performance, North West Region, Cameroon.

I. Introduction

Micro and Small Enterprises (MSEs) play an important role in reducing unemployment, poverty and improve economic development. However, despite their significant socio-economic contribution, the failure rate among MSEs in Cameroon is high. One key indicator of a strong and booming economy is the presence of a well-established small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) sector with MSEs being a major component of the SMEs. The SME sector has been widely recognised as an essential driver of economic growth, innovation, employment, and social integration in both developed and developing countries (Neneh & Van, 2017). As such, many governments and policy makers all around the world are focusing on developing the SME sector so as to promote economic growth and development. Raising the level of entrepreneurial knowledge is seen as essential in shaping mind sets as well as providing the necessary competences to develop an entrepreneurial culture. Therefore, it becomes important that efforts in the field of entrepreneurship education are directed towards providing society with an opportunity to acquire the aforementioned competences with the highest degree of educational efficiency. Academics are increasingly calling for more determined action aimed at developing theoretical approach to entrepreneurship education (Franco & Haase, 2009).

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An entrepreneur is a resourceful, passionate and driven to succeed and improve. He or she is a business person who does not only conceive and organise a venture but frequently takes risks in exploiting opportunities (Saranya, 2016). The entrepreneur is commonly seen as a business leader and innovator of new ideas and business processes. These are the people who should possess the skills and initiative necessary to take good new ideas to the market and to make the right decisions that lead to profitability.

According to Van-Praag (2003), the entrepreneur determines the survival duration and the success of his venture because it is the man who makes the difference: he sets the conditions, the boundaries, the characteristics, and ultimately, the value creating ability of the newly founded firm. Sine and Haveman (2005) noted that entrepreneurship is an inherently risky process, hence, the survival of a firm depends on several factors within and beyond the entrepreneur's control. An entrepreneur, while aware of some of the possible risks they could face in the course of the business, his awareness is also affected by bounded rationality (Cooper *et al.*, 1995).

Entrepreneurs have a way of surviving complex problems, unlike the non-entrepreneurs who lack critical entrepreneurial skills (Mwangi, 2020). Skilled entrepreneurs have all it takes to go after their dreams and reach their main goals. They have a way of surviving the tough situation unlike those who have totally no experience or lack the needed skills such as managerial, accounting, negotiation and customer relationship skills (Khamis & Gumawa 2020). The relationship between the owner of a business and its performance indicated that entrepreneurial minded owner grows their business to maturity due to their inherent administrative competences (Sarwoko & Nurdiana 2013).

Micro and Small Enterprises are classified in Cameroon using different bases. According to the Law No. 2010/001 of April 13, 2010 on the promotion of SMEs, Micro enterprises are those that employ fewer than five persons and with an annual revenue not more than FCFA 15 million whereas Small Enterprises employ between six to twenty persons and with an annual turnover between FCFA15 million and FCFA100 million. This study of MSEs thus targets those business entities with less than 20 workers.

Performance is essential to measure the company's success in achieving its goals (Akbar *et al.*, 2022). Performance is the primary consideration in investment decisions, both financial and non-financial factors affect company performance. Companies use performance indicators, including sales, market returns, investment growth, and return on investment, to evaluate their financial performance (Endri *et al.*, 2020). Non-financial performance can be assessed through technological innovation, customer and employee satisfaction, perceived product value, and reduced production time (Hadi *et al.*, 2022; Rashid *et al.*, 2019). Tighter competition and technological advances encourage companies to be more creative and innovative, looking for new opportunities to achieve a successful and sustainable business (Alwi Mahmudin & Rajak 2023).

Various entrepreneurial activities have an important contribution to local economic development (Ayandibu & Houghton, 2017). This local economic development enhances performance and creates employment opportunities, which automatically boost the nation's economic growth. Secondly, organizational innovation also has an important contribution to SMEs' performance. More innovations in organisations lead to more performance (Tsai, 2001).

An economy like that of China recognises the significance of small businesses through policies such as its 12th Five-Year National Economic and Social Development Plan, which focuses on growing the economy (Wang *et al.* 2022). According to Ma *et al.* (2021), the small businesses sector accounts for approximately 75% of China's labour force. In the same way, the small business sector in Russia contributes about 20% of the country's GDP in 2015, and there are 5.7 million SMEs which employ 18 million people (Pinkovetskaia *et al.*, 2018,).

In South Africa, Boeker and Wiltbank (2005) found unfavourable market conditions, insufficient capitalisation, poor management strategies and key personnel ineptitude were the four most significant factors causing business failure. Fatoki (2014) found a number of reasons why South African small businesses fail: lack of market awareness and defined focus; underestimating the amount of time required to work the business; establishment of businesses for poorly chosen reasons; family demands on time and money; an education system that discourages entrepreneurship; lack of financial accountability; crime and corruption; and lax enforcement of contracts and property rights.

In Cameroon, SMEs constitute 95% of the country's economy and also helps in job creation especially among the youths. According to the National Institute of Statistics (2020), MSEs account for over 90% of businesses in Cameroon and contribute approximately 36% to the country's GDP. This, to a greater extent, means that their successes or failures have

significant implications for economic growth. Law N° 2010/010 of April 13, 2010, paved the way for the creation of SMEs in Cameroon to which MSEs belong. This law lays down general rules for the promotion of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises, by the Cameroon Investment Charter. Since the enactment of this law, the number of MSEs created over the years has increased tremendously. According to statistics by the Research and Analysis Centre on the Economic and Social Policies of Cameroon (CAMERCAP-PARC), 61,366 SMEs were created in Cameroon between 2010 and 2016, with 59,200 being local enterprises and 2,166 foreign. Even so, 72.24% of the enterprises, according to CAMERCAP-PARC, were nonexistent on the taxation department's database as of May 2016. (CAMERCAP-PARC, 2016; Muriithi, 2017, Ndindah & Tripathi, 2022).

Cameroon's "Vision 2035" is aimed at transforming economy into an emerging nation by the year 2035. The four main general objectives include; reducing poverty to socially acceptable levels, becoming a middle-income country, becoming an industrialized country, consolidating democracy and enhancing national unity (MINEPAT, 2009). On the basis that entrepreneurs can speed up the attainment of this vision as they try to put in place measures that can better the health of the Cameroon Entrepreneurship Ecosystem. This has been reflected in the current ranking of Cameroon at the 121st position out of 147 countries (GEDI Report, 2019) and 167 out of 170 (World Bank Report, 2019) according to the classification of the Entrepreneurship Ecosystems by the Washington Global Entrepreneurship and Development Institute in 2019 and the World bank respectively. Furthermore, the government of Cameroon through the creation of the Ministry of Employment and Vocational Training aimed at elaborating and implementing Government's employment, training and professional integration policy. Though much has been attained so far, most business owners still need enhancement of entrepreneurial skills which are necessary for sustainable entrepreneurial success.

According to Akhigbe and Onuoha (2020); Omhonria and Needorn (2022), many factors contribute to poor performance and premature death of SMEs, including: lack of entrepreneurial skills, inability to embrace innovativeness, inadequate market research, poor competitive aggressiveness, overconcentration on one or two markets for finished products, lack of succession plan, decline in the volume of sales, inability to separate business and family or personal finances, lack of business strategy and cut-throat competition. It is evident that the success of MSEs is a big worry at both micro and macro scales in Cameroon, and owing to the fact that entrepreneurial skills are one of those factors accounting for the failure rate of these MSEs, it is thus imperative to address this on a scientific basis - the rationale for this study.

The early works of Shane (2000); Gundry *et al.*, (2014) has been able to indicate the ability to identify market opportunities and innovate as major contributing factors to micro business success. According to Shane (2000), entrepreneurs who possess strong opportunity recognition skill are most likely to achieve a competitive advantage. Gundry *et al.*, (2014) reiterates that innovation accompanied by opportunity recognition, enhances a business growth prospect.

According to Lusardi and Mitchell (2014), financial literacy and management skills are critical in maintaining cash flow, budgeting and securing fundings. Their research justified the fact that entrepreneurs with a good financial literacy standing are more successful on sustaining and growing their micro businesses. Also, Keller and Swaminathan, (2020) stress the need to build marketing and customer relationship management skills as it increases customer loyalty and sales. Additionally, they single out digital marketing skills are accounting for higher success rates among micro entrepreneurs. The research of Coutu, 2002; McGee *et al.*, 2017 shows that resilient entrepreneurs are better equipped to handle setbacks, thus enhancing their business longevity. However, Tsambou and Ndokang (2016) established that social networking capacity of entrepreneurs facilitates economic action and permits such business persons to expand the scope of their businesses by saving resources and leveraging exclusive resources and opportunities. These studies have provided a scientific justification and contextual relevance for the constructs used to capture entrepreneurial skills in this study.

It has been observed that a good number of studies have been carried out in other parts of the world on entrepreneurial skills development and sustainability of SMEs (Gakure *et al.*, 2006; Gakure and Karugu, 2025). In Cameroon specifically, a number of researchers have explored the domain of entrepreneurship; Okah-Efogo and Timba (2015), Elle (2012), Valliere (2015), Wujung and Fonchamnyo (2016), Neneh (2014), Neneh and Van (2017), Maurice and Pelagie (2015), Forje (2009), St-Pierre *et al.*, (2015). These researchers have examined different concerns of entrepreneurship, but none has examined the skills that can propel entrepreneurial success in Cameroon. This provided a strong motivation for the researcher to undertake the present study aimed at exploring the effect of entrepreneurial skills on the performance of MSEs in the North West Region of Cameroon.

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The North West Region of Cameroon has a vibrant entrepreneurial culture, and it is known for its enterprising and innovative citizens. This region does not fall within the industrial zone of Cameroon, as such about 80% of businesses there can be classified as Micro and Small Enterprises (MSEs). However, many MSEs like those of other part of the economy and Africa at large face various challenges in their quest to achieve sustained growth and profitability. A major deterring factor to entrepreneurs in the North West Region is the fact that the agricultural landscape is not glaringly beneficial as the region is not endowed with volcanic soil making it inherently unattractive for a majority of agricultural products, the region is not along the coastal zone with seaports and other facilities that can enhance their growth. It can thus be said that, the skills and ambitions of the entrepreneurs in this region are more of a propelling factor than the inherent natural fertile soil benefits that usually served as push factors for most agricultural endeavours.

While the main objective is to examine entrepreneurial skills and how such skills affect the performance of MSEs in the North West Region of Cameroon, the specific objectives that will be achieved in the course of this study includes the following:

- To ascertain the effect of opportunity recognition and innovation skills on the performance of MSEs in the North West region of Cameroon.
- To assess the influence of financial literacy and managerial skills on the performance of MSEs in the North West region of Cameroon.
- To determine how resilience and adaptability skills affect the performance of MSEs in the North West region of Cameroon.

To achieve the above stated objectives, the following questions will guide the research endeavour;

1. What is the effect of opportunity recognition and innovation skills on the performance of MSEs in the North west of Cameroon?
2. To what extent do financial literacy and managerial skills influence the performance of MSEs in the North west region of Cameroon?
3. How do resilience and adaptability skills affect the performance of MSEs in the North west region of Cameroon?

From the reviewed literature, it can be observed that so much research has been carried out on entrepreneurial skills and the performance of small businesses in other countries. However, there still exist a gap that this present study seeks to close. Firstly, it was observed that despite the abundant literature, nothing has been written on entrepreneurial skills and performance of MSEs in the North west region of Cameroon. This creates a geographical gap that the present study seeks to close.

Most studies carried out previously (Astuti *et al.*, 2019; Ikupolati *et al.*, 2017) investigated the effect of other entrepreneurial skills such as; ability to recognise opportunity, drive to see venture through to fruition, conception of products and services, etc. which is different from the variables used in this study (opportunity recognition and innovation skills, financial literacy and managerial skills, and resilience and adaptability skills). Some previous researchers study the various factors that influence business performance (Khamis & Gumawa (2020); Harini *et al.*, (2023). As such, this study contributes to literature by providing a body of knowledge on the highlighted variables which are highly relevant given the peculiarity of the North West Region. The North West Region has been plagued by the socio-political crisis since 2016, implying it takes the ability of an entrepreneur to; identify opportunities, innovate, be financially literate, good management ability, resilience and adaptability to enable a business survive in this region for over nine (9) years of crisis.

In an attempt to fill the identified gap, research will be undertaken and presented in this write-up. The paper is structured to open up with the overall topic, an abstract, introduction, literature review, methodology, results, discussion and conclusion. All citations will be referenced using the American Psychological Association citation and referencing style.

II. Literature review

Lyonga *et al.*, (2025). Undertook a study with the main objective of carrying out an empirical analysis on how Entrepreneurship and SME's can be competitive in Cameroon. The study made use of secondary data obtained from the

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World Bank records, Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM), and the World Economic Forum (WEF). The study evaluated the activities of entrepreneurs employing the Total early-stage Entrepreneurial activity (TEA) index and SMEs competitiveness using the business sophistication metrics. An ordinary least square technique was used taking into consideration institutional constraints. The findings showed that there exists a strong positive effect of entrepreneurship on competitiveness of SMEs, particularly through innovation and market expansion. They recommended that policy makers should improve on financial access and simplify the regulatory framework while improving entrepreneurial education. The major limitation in this study is that it is basically reliant on secondary data and as such the current scenario is not yet captured. This implies there is a natural time gap that has not been reflected.

Ndlela and Barnes (2024) carried out a study on the influence of creative problem-solving on the longevity of small and medium enterprises. The research modelled the influence of critical thinking, creative thinking, organizational innovativeness, creative problem-solving abilities (CPS), and internal business performance factors on the longevity of small and medium enterprises. Data from a total of 105 Manufacturing and 99 Construction SMEs were captured using a survey. Inferences were drawn using structural equation modelling. Confirmatory factor analysis revealed that latent variables within the creative problem-solving model overall demonstrated moderate ability to predict longevity. However, the creative problem-solving structural equation models for both sectors showed that creative thinking strongly increased critical thinking which increased SMEs' longevity. Though this has added value to scientific findings and understanding of skills necessary for entrepreneurs to thrive, it is however not very relevant and suitable for entrepreneurial studies as problem solving skills is generic to all organisations, not just entrepreneurs as the case should be. Additionally, there is no sufficient information to assess the representativeness of the sample but a comparative finding for SMEs in different sectors could have been more beneficial.

Razzaque and Mangalaraj (2024) carried out a study on the effect of entrepreneurial leadership traits on corporate sustainable development and firm performance: a resource-based view. The study aimed to empirically assess entrepreneurial leadership skills' role in Corporate Sustainable Development (CSD) and firm performance (FP). This study considers five specific entrepreneurial traits: innovativeness, creativity, analytical thinking, emotional intelligence and passion and motivation. Confirmatory factor analysis and structural equation modelling (SEM), were used on survey responses from 321 Bahraini firms. This study's data collection occurred under environmental uncertainties due to the pandemic and provides a unique context for understanding CSD and entrepreneurial leadership skills under high business/environmental uncertainty. The findings reveal that entrepreneurial leadership skills positively impact CSD and firm performance through creativity, passion and motivation. However, innovativeness negatively affects CSD and FP. Furthermore, CSD positively influences firm performance. This study thus adds value but is more specific to leadership in particular, thereby providing a narrow base of skills for entrepreneurial success.

Guzmán *et al.*, (2023) carried out a study on managerial skills and organizational performance: competitive advantage. This study has a quantitative approach by applying questionnaires to a sample of 273 companies in Caquetá, mainly in the commerce, manufacturing, and services sectors. The data analysis is quantitative, descriptive, correlational, and explanatory. The main results reveal that managerial skills and organizational performance are variables that impact the competitive advantage of SMEs in the department of Caquetá. The choice of the variable under study is relevant for all businesses including entrepreneurs. Reason it is one of the constructs employed in the current study.

Ngo (2023) carried out a study on the impact of entrepreneurial orientation on SMEs' performance in a transitional economy: the mediating role of differentiation advantages and innovation capability. A sample of 176 manufacturing SMEs currently operating in Vietnam was analysed. Partial least square structural equation modelling was applied to test the hypotheses. The results indicate that DA and IC fully mediate the relationship between EO and performance. These findings permit four theoretical contributions to the literature. First, this study contributes to the EO literature by examining the effects of EO in a transitional economy as Vietnam. Though providing contribution to theory, varying the sectors under study would have been ideal.

Srimulyani, *et al.*, (2023) carried out a study on Internal factors of entrepreneurial and business performance of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in East Java, Indonesia. Descriptive statistics and structural equation models were used to analyse the research data. Samples were taken with uncontrolled quota sampling techniques. The research data was collected by distributing questionnaires online with the Google form application and offline. The total respondents were 575 small-medium enterprise owners. The test results showed that internal factors such as entrepreneurial self-efficacy, motivation, and leadership could increase business performance significantly. In contrast, entrepreneurial-innovative work

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behaviour cannot significantly increase business performance. Internal factors are relevant but likely to be more uncontrollable from the entrepreneurial stand point.

Exposito and Sanchis-Llopis (2024) carried out a study on Entrepreneur's Gender and SMEs Performance: The Mediating Effect of Innovations. The aim of this study is to explore the differences between men led and women-led businesses as regards the performance results they obtain from innovating. We use a sample of 1376 Spanish small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to analyse the effect of entrepreneur's gender on business performance considering the mediating effect of innovations, that is, the possibility that gender indirectly influences business performance by affecting the introduction of innovations. Using econometric techniques such as multivariate probit model, we estimate discrete choice models to investigate the relationship amongst gender, innovations and performance. Our main results show that men-led SMEs are more likely to achieve superior performance from innovations, and particularly, from their higher propensity to implement process innovations, in comparison to women-led SMEs. Given that there are fundamental variables that differentiate male from female entrepreneurs, this narrows the implication of this research findings.

Srilekh and Kapoor (2023) carried out a study on the impact of entrepreneurial competencies on micro and small enterprises performance in Faridabad: examining the moderating effect of information technology. This study reviewed literature and provided a scholarly background to the study by including some contributions given by various researchers as well as institution on Entrepreneurial competencies and its major impact on MSEs. Articles from 2002 to 2020, were extracted through systematic procedure of search, also exclusion and inclusion criteria were adopted for the study. The analysis of 7 publications revealed several characteristics and theories that have a favourable impact on students' career development. Current field are identified. The implementation of experiential practical activities regarded as best practices in entrepreneurship instruction in universities can boost students' enthusiasm and motivation for participating in business start-up activities even as undergraduates, according to the analysis' findings, which we also analysed. The methodology is basically meta-analysis, the implications may be nature as the fundamental differences in the studies that contributed to the variation in findings is not analysed.

Mutuku *et al.*, (2022) carried out a study on the Effect of Entrepreneurial Skills on Organizational Performance of Small and Medium Enterprises in Nakuru City-Kenya. Data was collected from a sample of 20 small and medium sized enterprises. This study used correlational survey design to collect data from a sample of 20 respondents in order to establish the effect of entrepreneurial skills on organizational performance of Small and Medium Enterprises. Pearson correlation and multiple regression analysis was used as method of analysis in this study. The findings of the study show that problem solving skills, entrepreneurial literacy skills and communication skills have a statistically significant positive relationship with SMEs performance. The positive relationship between entrepreneurial skills, entrepreneurial literacy skills and performance of SMEs means that, as entrepreneurial skills increase among the SMEs in Nakuru city, their performance increases. This study added a lot of scientific justification to the construct of literacy skills though not specific to financial as is the case. Also, the sample size is too small for policy making.

Darmo *et al.*, (2021) carried out a study on the effects of entrepreneurial skills, benchmarking, and innovation performance on culinary micro-small-medium enterprises. Online questionnaires were used as the instrument to collect data, and the data were analysed by deception analysis to illustrate various features of the variables studied. Hypothesis test was conducted by Partial Least Square Path Modelling (SEM-PM). The MSME population was 231 and the representative sample was 144 culinary companies. It was found that entrepreneurial skills, benchmarking, and performance of culinary MSME innovations tended to be lower than expected. The results of this study revealed that entrepreneurship and benchmarking skills had significant effects on innovation performance. The entrepreneurial skills captured for this study are broad-based, making it difficult for practical implication.

Khamis and Gumawa (2020) carried out a study on the effect of entrepreneurial skills on small and medium scale enterprises (SMEs) performance: a study of registered businesses operating in sabon gari market kano. Descriptive survey research design was used while a sample size of one hundred and seventy-two (172) business owners/managers were drawn through the use of Yamane (1967) formula for sample size determination out of three hundred and three (303) owners/managers operating registered businesses in Sabon Gari Market, Kano, which constituted the study population. Probability sampling technique was used which involves simple random sampling. Closed-ended questionnaire served as a data collection tool for the study for a Social Science (SPSS) version 21 and regression analysis was used to analyse the collected data. Face validity and reliability test (Cronbach's Alpha) were conducted. The findings indicate that entrepreneurial skills have significant effect on SMEs performance; it also shows that significant relationship

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exists between entrepreneurial skills and SMEs performance. This study is empirically rewarding but the lack of precision of entrepreneurial skills makes practical implication difficult.

Astuti *et al.*, (2019) carried out a study on entrepreneurial skills and SME's business performance: empirical study culinary business. The quantitative research data type was based on a questionnaire. Population is SME's entrepreneur, who are members of the food and beverage sub-sector community in Malang City, 300 SMEs. The sample size is 181 entrepreneurs of SMEs food and beverage on chips as the sub sectors were made using the simple random sampling technique. The results of this study indicate that the influence of entrepreneurial skills with business performance SME's is small. Personal maturity skill has a major contribution of entrepreneurial skill on business performance SMEs. The major concern for the study was refuted while priority was given to maturity skills, however there is no scientific justification to this.

Abdul (2018) carried out a study on Entrepreneurial skills and growth of Small and Medium Enterprise (SMEs): A comparative analysis of Nigerian entrepreneurs and Minority entrepreneurs in the UK. Data collection was through an online survey questionnaire, and it was administered to a population of 38 SME owners both in Nigeria and in the UK. The research followed judgmental sampling techniques to explore their experience, beliefs, and attitudes to entrepreneurial skills. The study findings were that entrepreneurial skills have a significant influence on the growth of SMEs in Nigeria and the UK. However, the respondent in Nigeria and the UK agreed that creative thinking, problem solving and communication skills are critical for increase sales and competitive advantage. Moreover, the respondent in Nigeria strongly agrees that high level of creative thinking with a bit of problem solving and communication skills will SMEs growth. By contrast, UK minority entrepreneurs argue that great creative thinking and a balance of problem solving and communication skills are critical to SMEs growth. Adopting judgemental sampling introduces some element of bias. Also, the comparative analysis without employing control variables makes the findings misleading as there are significant differences in the different areas of study. Additionally, the sample size is too small.

Aun *et al.*, (2018) in their article the effect on entrepreneurship skills development on youth employment in Kwara State, Nigeria with the objective of the study being to examine the Effect of Entrepreneurship Skills Development on Youth Employment in Kwara State, Nigeria. The population of the study comprised of 195 students enrolled in International Vocational, Technical & Entrepreneurship College (IVTEC), of which a sample of 131 respondents was selected. Primary data were used; the data were gathered through a structured questionnaire. The data were analysed using both Pearson correlation and simple regression analysis. The results of the study revealed that a positive relationship exists between entrepreneurship skills development and youth employment generation, which is significant at p-value of 0.000 ($R = 0.714$, $R^2 = 0.510$, $(0.000) < 0.05$). The study concluded that entrepreneurship skills development has effect on youth employment. The study was basically on students undergoing training, the effect could thus be less observed as compared to a situation where a control group would have been employed with those not undergoing training.

Buwah *et al.*, (2024). Carried out a study on entrepreneurship development in Cameroon: An analysis of the characteristics of Cameroonian Entrepreneurs. The main objective of the study was to describe the characteristics of Cameroonian entrepreneurs. The study employed a descriptive research design and a questionnaire was used to collect data from sample of 150 respondents selected purposively and employing snowball sampling technique. The results obtained revealed that most Cameroonian entrepreneurs are more optimistic in nature and have the pushful spirit to see that their intended ventures survive and grow despite all the challenges that are associated from different stakeholders like local council agents and taxation authorities, high taxes, inflation, socio-political crisis, insecurities, electricity shortages, bad transport network, little or no subventions, just to name a few. A majority of the entrepreneurs in Cameroon though below the ages of 42 years are generally seen as; hardworking, trustworthy, sceptical, innovative, motivated, realistic, self-confident, visionary, time conscious, determined, discrete, dynamic among many other attributes.

Ikupolati *et al.*, (2017) examines entrepreneurs' managerial skills as determinants for growth of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Nigeria. The study adopts a survey research design by using a simple random sample of 204 entrepreneurs in registered SMEs with Corporate Affairs Commission in Abuja, Kaduna, Kano, Ibadan, Lagos and Aba. The obtained data through administered questionnaire were analysed using Linear Regression Technique. The empirical findings show that both the entrepreneurs' conceptual and technical skills contribute to the growth of SMEs in Nigeria through the enhancement of managerial skills.

Conceptual Framework

The concepts employed for this study can thus be diagrammatically presented as follows;

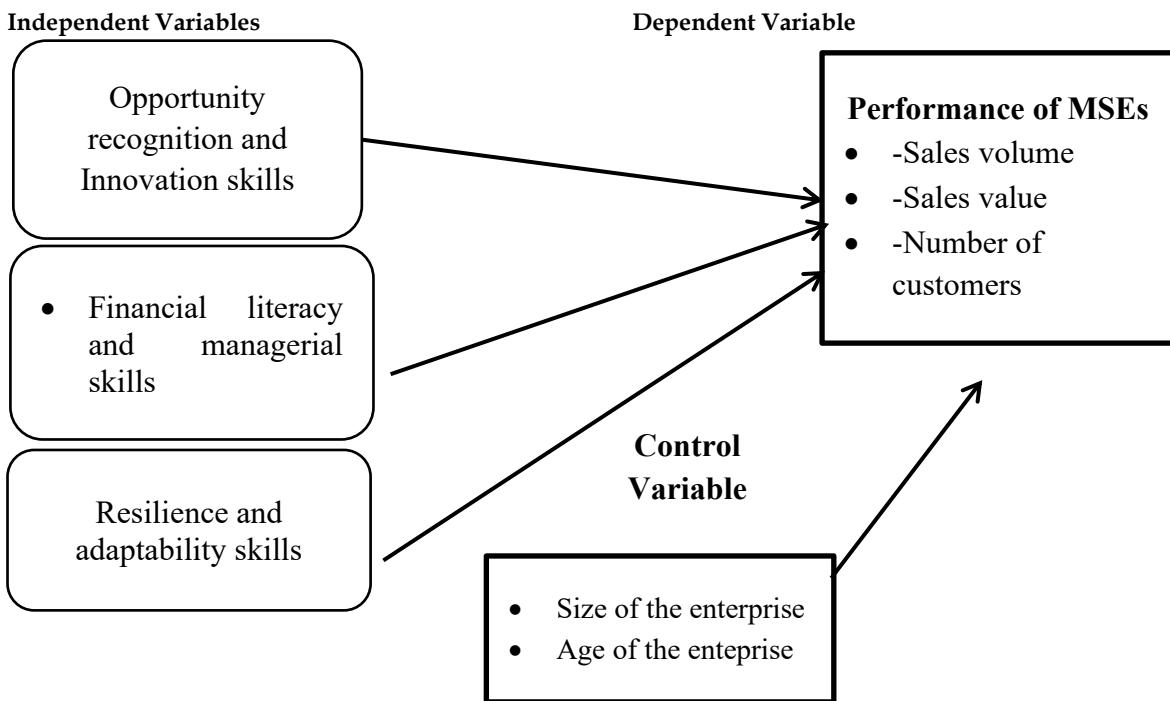


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework for Entrepreneurial Skills and Performance of MSE (2025)

Source: Author, (2025)

Figure 1 gives a diagrammatical representation of the variables employed in this study. The dependent variable; (performance of MSEs), independent variables; (opportunity recognition and innovation skills, financial literacy and managerial skills, and resilience and adaptability skills) and control variables (Size of the enterprise and age of the enterprise). The arrows show the direction of the relationship between the dependent variable, independent and control variables, implying that the various independent variables and control variables explain changes in the dependent variable.

Drawing inspiration from the findings of earlier studies, responding to the recommendations of Lyonga *et al.*, (2025) and establishing contextual skills relevant to MSEs in the North West Region of Cameroon, the following hypotheses guided this study;

- 1) H_0 : Opportunity recognition and Innovative skills do not have a significant statistical effect on the performance of MSEs in the North west region of Cameroon.
- 2) H_0 : Financial literacy and Managerial skills do not have a significant statistical effect on the performance of MSEs in the North west region of Cameroon.
- 3) H_0 : Resilience and adaptability skills do not have a significant statistical effect on the performance of MSEs in the North west region of Cameroon.

III. Methodology

The research employed a survey design because it enables the researcher to use questionnaire to gather data from a representative sample of a broader population. In addition, survey design was utilized to define study priorities, acquire background data, and clarify issues and hypotheses about entrepreneurial skills in MSEs within the North West Region of Cameroon. The population of this study consist of MSEs operating in the North West region of Cameroon. Due to the current socio-political crisis in this region, many MSEs have not been able to register since 2016 making the total number of MSEs both registered and unregistered to be infinite. The study thus adopted a Cochran's formula of an infinite population to determine the sample size, as follows:

$$n = \frac{Z^2 pq}{e^2}$$

where:

- n is required sample size
- Z is the confidence level at 95% (standard value of 1.96)
- p is the sample proportion (0.5)
- q is $1-p$ ($1-0.5 = 0.5$)
- e is the error margin

$$n = \frac{(1.96)^2(0.5)(0.5)}{(0.5)^2}$$

$$n = 384.16$$

A snow ball sampling approach was adopted since the owners of MSEs are more known by their business partners. Additionally, the socio-political crisis made some areas of the North West region not accessible making it most feasible to use an online survey.

The responses were scrutinized to ensure they meet the criterion of MSEs (less than 20 employees). The questionnaire was structured in five sections including: demographic information of respondents; opportunity recognition and innovation skills; financial literacy and managerial skills; resilience and adaptability; and performance of MSEs. The declarative statements adopted a five-point Likert Scale. Pretesting was conducted to assist in determining accuracy, clarity, and suitability of the research instrument (questionnaire). Additionally, the Cronbach alpha test was conducted to check the extent to which the instrument is reliable or not.

This study employed the Ordinary Least Square technique for estimation of parameters. Given that each construct had many statements, we use the various items to develop an index which makes the construct to become continuous therefore suitable for ordinary least square. Additionally, the necessary conditions must be met to make this technique appropriate and must include; normality test, linearity test, homoscedasticity test and autocorrelation test. The model specified which served as a guide to the statistician is presented below.

An econometric model with the performance of MSEs as the dependent variable and entrepreneurial skills as the independent variable. The constructs to capture the independent variables included; opportunity recognition and innovation skill; financial literacy and managerial skill; resilience and adaptability skill; and control variables: size of the enterprise and age of the enterprise.

Economic Model

$$\text{PMSE} = f(\text{ORI}, \text{FMS}, \text{RAS}, \text{SIZ}, \text{AGE}) \dots \quad (1)$$

Where: PMSE = Performance of MSE

ORI = opportunity recognition and innovation skill

FMS = financial literacy and managerial skill

RAS = resilience and adaptability skill

SIZ = size of the enterprise (measured by number of employees)

AGE = age of the enterprise (measured by longevity)

Econometric Model

μ = stochastic error term and $\beta_1, \beta_2, \beta_3, \beta_4$ and β_5 , are the coefficients of the parameters to be estimated

Data collected was organized, tabulated, and analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Pre-test was conducted, known as the normality test. This normality test was used to validate the OLS method of analysis. The descriptive analysis (tables, percentages, means and standard deviations) and inferential analysis using Pearson Product Moment correlations were computed to reveal relationships between dependent and independent variables. The techniques were validated based on statistical measures such as the standards error, the *t*-test, adjusted R-Square, F-Statistic, *p*-value; all aimed at ascertaining how best and accurate the estimated coefficients are. Equally, the Durbin Watson test was used to test for autocorrelation amongst variables. F-statistic *p*-value was used to check for linearity, Breusch-pagan test was used to check heteroscedasticity.

IV. Results

In this study, the retained copies of questionnaire were 383. This gave a response rate of 99.48% which is highly acceptable. Table 1 presents the various descriptive statistics such as the mean, standard deviation, minimum and maximum values of the dependent, independent and control variables.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Studied Variables

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Opportunity recognition and innovation skills	383	1.40	4.60	3.0757	.64606
Financial literacy and managerial skills	383	1.40	5.00	3.0799	.66189
Resilience and adaptability skills	383	1.40	4.60	3.0733	.63218
Size of the enterprise	383	1.00	2.00	1.5744	.49508
Age of the enterprise	383	1.00	6.00	4.7755	1.13568
Performance of MSEs	383	1.25	4.75	3.0973	.72820
Valid N (listwise)	383				

Source: Author (2025)

As presented on Table 1, the total number of observations are 383. The variables of this study are investigated by determining their minimum and maximum value, mean and standard deviation. Firstly, the mean of opportunity recognition and innovation skills, financial literacy and managerial skills, resilience and adaptability skills, size of the enterprise, age of the enterprise and performance of MSEs is 3.0757, 3.0799, 3.0733, 1.5744, 4.7755 and 3.0973 respectively while the standard deviation are 0.64606, 0.66189, 0.63218, 0.49508, 1.13568 and 0.72820 respectively. The minimum values are 1.40, 1.40, 1.40, 1.00, 1.00 and 1.25 respectively and the maximum values are 4.60, 5.00, 4.60, 2.00, 6.00 and 4.75 respectively.

Cronbach alpha test was done to test the extent to which the instrument used to collect data was reliable. Table 2 presents the Cronbach alpha values for all the variables under study.

Table 2: Reliability Test

Variable	Cronbach's alpha
Opportunity recognition and innovation skills	0.706
Financial literacy and managerial skills	0.747
Resilience and adaptability skills	0.711
Performance of MSEs	0.719

Source: Author (2025)

As seen on Table 2, we can observe that all the variables, both dependent and independent all have an alpha Cronbach value above 0.7. Therefore, we can conclude that the instrument (questionnaire) used for data collection is reliable and could give consistent results.

Normality tests are used to determine if a data set is well-modelled by a normal distribution and to compute how likely it is for a random variable underlying the data set to be normally distributed.

Table 3: Normality Test

Variables	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Opportunity recognition and innovation skills	0.322	383	0.506	0.367	383	0.423
Financial literacy and managerial skills	0.313	383	0.410	0.389	383	0.312
Resilience and adaptability skills	0.403	383	0.239	0.408	383	0.234
Age of the enterprise	0.512	383	0.113	0.589	383	0.402
Size of the enterprise	0.464	383	0.323	0.504	383	0.134
Performance of MSEs	0.378	383	0.212	0.443	383	0.300
a. Lilliefors Significance Correction						

Source: Author (2025)

In this study we made use of Shapiro-Wilk Test as presented on Table 3 and all the *p*-values are above 0.05 implies that the data is normally distributed making suitable for ordinary least square analysis.

Table 4 presents the results for the regression analysis that employed the SPSS version 21 with the data captured and tested to ensure suitability. Table 4 presents the coefficients for each variable under study, their standard errors, test statistic with associated significance level.

The linearity test is conducted by comparing the *p*-value of the F-statistics to the recommended *p*-value at 5% level of significance (*p*=0.05). As presented on Table 4, *p* = 0.024 < 0.05, and implies the value is significant as such indicating the data validates the test for linearity thereby making it suitable for ordinary least square technique. Still checking on the appropriateness of the OLS as an appropriate variable for this study, the Durbin Watson test is used to check autocorrelation. Given that the value is 1.639 and is moving closer to 2.0, it indicates there is no autocorrelations. The Breusch-pagan value test shows a value of 1.030 which is greater than 0.05 indicating that it is insignificant and implies there is no evidence of heteroscedasticity in the results.

Given that the data adheres to the normality test, linearity test, homoscedasticity and no autocorrelation it can thus be certain that ordinary least square is an appropriate analytical technique as employed in this study.

Table 4. Regression Results

Variable	Coefficient	Standard error	t-statistics	P > t
Opportunity recognition & Innovation skill	0.462	0.160	2.887	0.003
Financial literacy & Managerial skills	0.561	0.260	2.157	0.014
Resilience & adaptability skills	0.160	0.060	2.673	0.008
Size of the enterprise (1 if less than 5 employees and 0 if otherwise)	-0.110	0.075	-1.470	0.142
6-10 years of existence	0.079	0.033	2.419	0.016
Above 10 years of existence	0.025	0.024	2.224	0.015
Less than 5 years (based on comparative category)				
Diagnostic tests				
R ²	0.742			
Adjusted R ²	0.724			
F-statistics	2.338			
Prob > F	0.024			
Durbin Watson	1.639			
Breusch-pagan	1.030			

Source: Author, (2025)

The coefficients for all the skills under investigation are positive (0.426, 0.561 and 0.160) indicating that these skills positively affect the performance of MSEs at varying degrees as indicated by the values. Financial literacy and managerial

skills affect the performance of MSEs in the North West Region of Cameroon most while resilience and adaptability have the least effect. The variation in the size of the enterprise equally has an effect on the performance of the MSEs, though negatively. Enterprises having less than five (5) employees affecting the performance of MSEs negatively while those with more than 5 employees but fewer than 20 employees do not affect performance of MSEs negatively. The age of the enterprise has a positive effect on the performance of MSEs in the North West Region of Cameroon at a varying degree. MSEs that are between 6-10 years as well as those above to years of existence has positive effect on their performance as oppose to those MSEs that are less than five (5) years.

As presented on Table 4, the Adjusted R-square is 0.724 (72.4%) indicating that the overall model specified for this study captured variables that has 72.4% effect on the performance of MSEs in the North West Region of Cameroon. The remaining 27.6% performance is accounted for by other variables not captured in the model specified for this study. The *p*-value for the overall study is 0.024 indicating that the results is significant at 5% level of significance.

V. Discussion

As seen on Table 4, the t-statistic of opportunity recognition and innovation skills (b_1) is 2.887. It will be tested at 5% level of significance. In response to the first hypothesis, opportunity recognition and innovation skills have a positive effect on the performance of MSEs in the North west region of Cameroon. This is not in accordance with the null hypothesis which states that opportunity recognition and innovation skills do not statistically significantly affect the performance of MSEs in the North West region of Cameroon. The t-critical at 5% confidence interval using a two-tail test is equal to 1.649 ($t = 1.649$). Since the t-calculated is greater than the t-critical, we reject H_0 . And affirms the alternative hypothesis that opportunity recognition and innovation skills statistically significantly affect the performance of MSEs in the North west region of Cameroon. This findings are consistent with those of Njogu (2014) who studied the effect of innovation on the financial performance of Small and Medium Enterprises in Nairobi County, Kenya where the findings revealed a statistically significant positive impact of Innovation on Financial performance of SMEs. Similarly, Tsai (2001) findings support this as he puts that innovations in organisations lead to more performance. This finding equally aligns with the findings of Shane (2000) and Gundry *et al.*, (2014) as well as Lyonga *et al.*, (2025) who affirms that innovation contributes to competitiveness. The findings of Ndlela and Barnes (2024) equally aligns to those of this study as they reiterate that organisational innovativeness contributes to organisational performance. The findings of Razzaque and Mangalaraj (2024) rather contradicts as their study reveal that innovativeness negatively affects corporate sustainable development and firm's performance.

As presented on Table 4, the t-statistic of financial literacy and managerial skills (b_2) is 2.157. As regards the second hypothesis, financial literacy and managerial skills have a positive effect on the performance of MSEs in the North west region of Cameroon. This is not in accordance with the second null hypothesis which states that financial literacy and managerial skills do not statistically significantly affect the performance of MSEs in the North west region of Cameroon. The t-critical at 5% confidence interval using a two-tail test is equal to 1.649 ($t = 1.649$). Since the t-calculated is greater than the t-critical, we reject H_0 . We thus accept the alternative hypothesis that financial literacy and managerial skills statistically significantly affect the performance of MSEs in the North west region of Cameroon. The findings are consistent with those of Aun *et al.*, (2018) who found out that entrepreneurial skill development contributes to youth employment. The findings also support the findings that entrepreneurial orientation is one of the tools to gain superior performance by Herath and Mahmood, (2012) as well as that of Lusardi and Mitchell (2014) who found out that financial and managerial literacy improves the performance of SMEs. In the same pattern, Guzman *et al.*, (2023) findings reveal managerial skills and organisational performance contributes to competitive advantage in SMEs in Caqueta.

As shown on Table 4, the t-statistic of resilience and adaptability skills (b_3) is 2.673. revisiting the third hypothesis which stated that resilience and adaptability skills does not statistically significantly affect on the performance of MSEs in the North west region of Cameroon. The contradicts the *t*-values as t-critical at 5% confidence interval using a two-tail test is equal to 1.649 ($t = 1.649$). Since the t-calculated is greater than the t-critical, we reject H_0 . We thus affirm the alternative hypothesis that resilience and adaptability skills statistically significantly affect the performance of MSEs in the North west region of Cameroon. The findings are consistent with those of Darmo *et al.*, (2021) who study reveal that entrepreneurial skills have an effect on innovation performance. This finding equally aligns with that of Coutu (2002) and McGee *et al.*, (2017) who's revealed that resilience significantly accounts for organisational performance.

As presented on Table 4, the t-statistic of Size (b_4) is 1.470. when tested 5% level of significance it shows that businesses with less than five (5) employees have a negative effect on the performance of MSEs in the North west region of Cameroon.

This is statistically insignificant. Owners or managers of micro enterprises witnessed reduce the performance of MSEs compared to managers or business owners of small enterprises. Quantitatively, managers of micro businesses decrease the performance of MSEs by 0.110 compared to managers of small enterprises.

As seen on Table 4, the t-statistic of age of the enterprise (b_5) is 2.419 and 2.224 for businesses between 6 to 10 years old and enterprises older than 10 years respectively. This implies 6 to 10 and above 10 years positively increase the performance of MSEs in the North west region of Cameroon than enterprises that are less than five (5) years. The t-critical at 5% confidence interval using a two-tail test is equal to 1.649 ($t = 1.649$). Since the t-calculated is greater than the t-critical, we reject H_0 . This implies that the test is statistically significant. Therefore, enterprise longevity significantly affects the performance of MSEs positively in the North west region of Cameroon.

On a general note, given that all the sub constructs for entrepreneurial skills affect the performance of MSEs, the main objectives is thus achieved and arrived at the fact that entrepreneurial skills affect the performance of MSEs in the North West Region of Cameroon. This finding is in accordance with that of Abdul. (2018) who found out that entrepreneurial skills contribute to the growth of SMEs in UK. Khamis and Gumawa, (2020) equally found out that entrepreneurial skills affect the performance of SMEs. Similarly, Astuti *et al.*, (2019) equally found out that entrepreneurial skills contribute to performance of culinary businesses though on a small magnitude.

VI. Conclusion

The main objective of this study was to investigate the effect of entrepreneurial skills on the performance of MSEs in North west region of Cameroon. This was achieved through a comprehensive analysis of micro constructs that measured entrepreneurial skills including: opportunity recognition and innovation skills, financial literacy and managerial skills; and resilience and adaptability skills. Firstly, in line with the specific objective which was to ascertain the effect of opportunity recognition and innovation skills on the performance of MSEs in the North west region of Cameroon. The regression results showed that opportunity recognition and innovation skills significantly affected the performance of MSEs in the North west region of Cameroon.

Secondly, in line with the second specific objective which was to assess the effect of financial literacy and managerial skills on the performance of MSEs in the North west region of Cameroon. The regression results showed that financial literacy and managerial skills significantly affected the performance of MSEs in the North west region of Cameroon.

Lastly, the third specific objective which was to investigate the effect of resilience and adaptability skills on the performance of MSEs in the North west region of Cameroon. The regression results reveal that resilience and adaptability skills significantly affected the performance of MSEs in the North west region of Cameroon. The study concluded that in order to achieve better performance as an owner or manager of a micro and small enterprise, opportunity recognition, innovation, financial literacy, managerial, resilience and adaptability skills should be nurtured and developed.

Following the results of our study, we thus recommend a series of policies to be adopted and implemented;

- Entrepreneurship should be thought both in theory and practice from the basic level of education to all Cameroonians. This will enable them to nurture and develop skills that will make them successful business owners or intrapreneurs if they so decide to be employees.
- The North West Regional Delegate for Small and Medium Sized Enterprises, Social Economy and Handicraft in collaboration with the Regional Delegate for Commerce and that of Delegate for Employment and Vocational Training should structure a comprehensive training programme to harness these skills.
- The Chamber of Commerce in Cameroon which is responsible for registering businesses should make training certification for the owner or manager (management team) as a major requirement to be complied with before the business owner gets the business registered.

As recommendation for further studies, a comparative study can be done with other regions in Cameroon so as to identify contextual skills appropriate to enterprises in different regional. Also, another comparative analysis can be done in different sectors or industries to isolate skills necessary and peculiar to different sectors or industries. Another study could be done to separate owner manager MSEs from professionally managed MSEs.

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The major limitation to this study was the inaccessibility to so many divisions and sub divisions of the North West Region of Cameroon which is highly risky given the on-going socio-political plaguing the English-speaking regions of Cameroon. Another limitation is the absence of secondary data which could have complemented this primary data to give a more holistic analysis to the study. This is associated to the fact that micro businesses are not highly structured to capture and store information.

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Conflicts of interest

The authors has no conflict of interest for this study

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