ENTREPRENEURIAL INTERVENTION SCHEMES AND PERFORMANCE OF FOOD AND BEVERAGE COMPANIES IN RIVERS STATE, NIGERIA.

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Abstract

This study examined the relationship between entrepreneurial intervention schemes and performance of food and beverage companies in Rivers State, Nigeria. Specifically, it investigated the influence of training schemes and financial schemes on operational performance and operational performance. The research adopted a cross-sectional survey design, with a population comprising 84 food and beverage firms in Rivers State. The entire population was used as the sample, involving 336 managers across the firms. A validated questionnaire, tested for reliability using Cronbach Alpha, was administered, and 330 copies were successfully retrieved for analysis. The data were analyzed using mean and standard deviation for univariate analysis, Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient for test of hypotheses. The findings revealed a significant relationship between entrepreneurial intervention schemes and the performance of food and *beverage companies in Rivers State. The study further established that corporate culture significantly moderates the relationship between entrepreneurial intervention schemes and performance outcomes. Based on these findings, the study concluded that entrepreneurial intervention schemes are vital for enhancing organizational performance. It recommended that the government, multinational corporations, and private sector stakeholders should actively support continuous entrepreneurial training and financing initiatives in order to strengthen marketing effectiveness, improve operational efficiency, and promote a culture of innovation and solution-orientation within the industry.*

Keywords: *Entrepreneurial Intervention Schemes; Training Schemes; Financial Schemes; Organizational Performance; Operational Performance; Profitability Food and beverage firms;*

Introduction

Food and beverage companies which are part of Small and medium-sized firms (SMEs) have given a mechanism for propelling indigenous industries, creating job opportunities, and assisting in the development of indigenous technology in many countries (World Bank, 2014). Globally, food and beverage companies have been used successfully as a poverty alleviation and development strategy. This argument is founded on the fact that they are regarded as a source of dynamism, innovation, and flexibility, and their

importance to an economy's productivity cannot be overstated. The business performance of food and beverage companies contribute more to employment generation, as they employ more than half of the total workforce of the country, and two-thirds in the Africa continent (Takats, 2004). Also, some of them eventually transform to big industries that will stimulate economic development.

Unemployment has recently worsened in Nigeria, particularly in Rivers State (National Bureau of Statistics, NBS. (2017). Formal occupations in the state are grossly insufficient to employ the vast majority of qualified applicants. As a result, entrepreneurship appears to be the solution to such significant unemployment (Oladele et al., 2011). In an attempt to improve the business performance of the food and beverage firms and aid their development, the government, post-independence, established various schemes such as Industrial Development Centers (IDCs) in 1962, Small Scale Industries Credit Scheme (SSICS) in 1971, Small Scale Industries Fund (SSIF). The government issued policy initiatives aimed at addressing the peculiar needs of the SMEs through existing commercial banks. Such among others include: the Rural Banking Scheme (1977); National Economic Reconstruction Fund (NERFUND) was established in the mid-1980s to assist SMEs to adjust to the Structural Adjustment Programme. The Fund provided a long term loan support (5-10 years) to SMEs at concessionary interest rates; established the community banking scheme in 1991 with the objective of rural development and providing start-up facilities for smallholders; establishment of Bank of Industry (BOI) with the principal objective of providing credit to the industrial sector including SMEs at an interest rate of 10 percent; the Nigerian Agricultural Cooperative and Rural Development Bank (NACRDB) were also established with the objective of financing the rural sector with particular interest in the SME subsector; the Community Banking Scheme (1992) which gave mandates to commercial banks to provide finance to the SMEs.

According to Ottih (2016), entrepreneurial intervention programs are designed to help benefiting entrepreneurs develop the competencies and capabilities needed to run their varied small firms efficiently. However, entrepreneurial characteristicsappear to influence these intervention schemes on the successful performance of small and medium firms as a moderating variable Milovanovic & Wittine, (2014). Entrepreneurial characteristicsare essentially those innovative and strategic contributions made by entrepreneurs and top executives to help the organization succeed. In the absence of entrepreneurial services, venture failure is common. Intervention schemes, as noted by Glaub et al. (2009), can stimulate entrepreneurs' drive to manage their small businesses efficiently, as well as help them shift from a passive to a more active performance-driven approaches that ensure entrepreneurial success within a year, if they can cultivate an active entrepreneurial behavior. According to Frese and Sabini (1985), active entrepreneurial behavior involves a self-starting style of business management in which entrepreneurs must set active goals for their firms, actively scan the environment for information, actively plan and execute self-developed plans, and actively monitor and search for feedback. Furthermore, entrepreneurs must be imaginative, take measured risks, be proactive, and persevere in the face of problems that will finally be conquered. They must create a culture of innovation in their firms, reward innovators to attract the best employees to drive their firms' goals, and develop new dynamic and sustainable unit selling points (USPs) to differentiate their firms ahead of competitors in order to gain a competitive advantage.

It is worrisome that the challenges of food and beverage companies continue to prevail, despite the government's, private and multi-nationals efforts towards entrepreneurial interventions schemes designed to promote their contribution to economic growth (Onugu, 2005 & Ogechukwu, 2006). The sector is still characterized with a lot of challenges which include reluctance of banks to grant loans to food and beverage companies due to unavailability of reliable information on borrowers, poor book keeping, poor accounting standards and low transparency of operations, lack of discipline in the use of credit facilities, the perception of the SMEs sector are risky, and difficulties in enforcing loan contracts, high rates of loan diversion, inability to carry out feasibility studies and absence of collateral security (Ogujiuba, et.al.,2004). These challenges are associated with the entrepreneurial characteristics provided and lack quality and excellence of the small and medium scale industries (Onugu, 2005). It is on this background, that this study seek to examine the relationship between entrepreneurial interventions schemes and business performance of SMEs in Rivers State, Nigeria.

The sustained rate of unemployment in Rivers State has posed serious concern to the government and society in general, because it has had adverse effects on the economic growth of the state, and increased the rate vices in the State. Petra et al (2013) argues that government intervention schemes affect the business performance of food and beverage companies. However, little has been established on the previous studies on how entrepreneurial intervention schemes influence the long term performance of food and beverage companies and the extent of its effect in Rivers state.

Furthermore, the link between entrepreneurial intervention schemes and business Performance has not been properly and adequately dealt with (Namusonge, 2014). Petra et al (2013) noted that most studies in the past have little or no empirical evidence on the relationship between entrepreneurial intervention schemes and business Performance. Attempts in this regard have always resulted in mixed, conflicting, inconsistent and inconclusive findings. (Tamuono, et al, 2019; Georgewell, et al, 2021; & Ebitu, et al, 2018). More so, most studies on the relationship between entrepreneurial intervention schemes and small business performance have always focused on large firms in developed markets and economies (Reynolds et tal, 2004), as well as in the Middle East and North Africa (Osuala 2014). Though few of the studies have been conducted in Nigeria (Mba & Emerti, 2014), none has been conducted in the study area. Additionally, the contexts of these empirical studies were different in terms of scope, context, time frame, methodology and the firm used. To the best of our knowledge, no studies have been conducted on entrepreneurial intervention schemes and business Performance using food and beverage companies as a case unlike most studies that focused on SMES. Hence there is a clear gap in existing literature. This study therefore, fills the gap by investigating the relationship between entrepreneurial intervention schemes and business performance of food and beverage companies in Rivers State.

Conceptual Framework

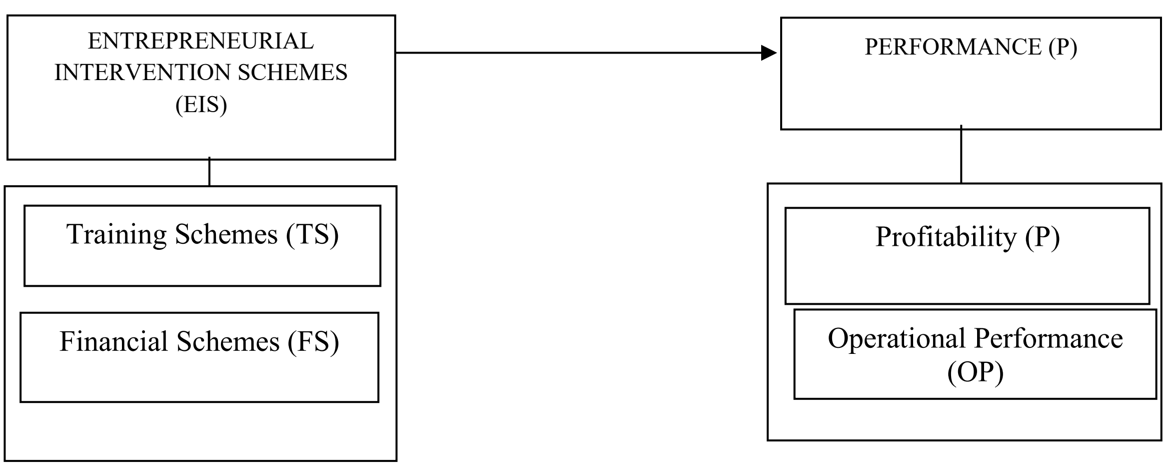

FIG.1.1 Conceptual Framework of Entrepreneurial Intervention Schemes and Performance

Source: Adapted from Ottih (2016), Lumpkin & Dess (1996) Penrose (1959), & Iveta (2012)

The aim of the study was to determine the effects of entrepreneurial intervention schemes on the performance of food and beverage companies in Rivers state, Nigeria. The specific objectives were to;

1. examined the relationship between entrepreneurial training schemes and profitability of food and beverage companies in Rivers state, Nigeria.

2. investigate the relationship between entrepreneurial training schemes and operational performance of food and beverage companies in Rivers state, Nigeria.

3. ascertain the relationship between entrepreneurial financial schemes and profitability of food and beverage companies in Rivers state, Nigeria.

4. explore the relationship between entrepreneurial financial schemes and operational performance of food and beverage companies in Rivers state, Nigeria.

The following research questions guided the study:

1. Is there any relationship between entrepreneurial training schemes and profitability of food and beverage companies in Rivers state, Nigeria?
2. What is the relationship between entrepreneurial training schemes and operational performance of food and beverage companies in Rivers state, Nigeria?
3. What is the relationship between entrepreneurial financial schemes and profitability of food and beverage companies in Rivers state, Nigeria?
4. Is there any relationship between entrepreneurial financial schemes and operational performance of food and beverage companies in Rivers state, Nigeria?

The hypotheses for this study were:

$H0_1$: There is no significant relationship between entrepreneurial training schemes and profitability of food and beverage companies in Rivers state, Nigeria.

$H0_2$: There is no significant relationship between entrepreneurial training schemes and operational performance of food and beverage companies in Rivers state, Nigeria.

H0$_3$: There is no significant relationship between entrepreneurial financial schemes and profitability of food and beverage companies in Rivers state, Nigeria.

H0$_4$: There is no significant relationship between entrepreneurial financial schemes and operational performance of food and beverage companies in Rivers state, Nigeria

Review of Related Literature

Concept of Entrepreneurial Intervention Schemes (EIS)

Entrepreneurial intervention schemes refers to several efforts made by the government and private sectors in diverse ways in order to encourage the growth, survival and full participation of an entrepreneur in an economy (Wisdom, 2016). Intervention fund are provided by an organization through loan with low interest in order to encourage the people to invest in any business to grow the economy (Mohammed, 2003). It is a scheme initiative to support the less developed economy of the world by granting them low interest loan to support them in engaging in business venture (Maxwell, 2001).

According to Ottih (2016), entrepreneurial intervention schemes (EIS) are programs used by the government, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), philanthropists, and churches, among others, to provide entrepreneurial training, entrepreneurial financial assistance, and entrepreneurial incubation facilities, among other things, in order to achieve firm survival and growth. According to Ekaa and Badia (2021), entrepreneurial intervention scheme (EIS) refers to the process of improving entrepreneurial skills and knowledge through structured training and institution-building programs. According to Sam (2014), "Entrepreneurial intervention schemes (EIS) aims to broaden the base of entrepreneurs in order to accelerate the rate at which new ventures are created." This stimulates job creation and economic development. The entrepreneurial intervention scheme (EIS) is aimed at those who want to start or expand a business. Furthermore, entrepreneurial development focuses on future growth and innovation. Essentially, this means learning skills that will allow an entrepreneur to function appropriately and adequately in terms of: (a) achieving current results based on previous decisions and planning for the future based on current circumstances, (b) maintaining and developing the organized capability that allows achievement, and (C) coordinating the specialist functions that should enable a firm to perform the technical task in marketing, personnel, research, and development.

Entrepreneurial intervention schemes (EIS) has been conceived by successive governments as a programme of activities to enhance the knowledge, skill, behaviour and attitudes of individual and groups to assume the role of entrepreneurs. Taking this into account, they have put in place, confidence for building successful programmes in different parts of Nigeria (Owualah, 1999). In this regard, the Federal Government has adopted several strategies and policies towards entrepreneurial development in Nigeria, by establishing Institutions and Agencies. The policy implementation saw the introduction of entrepreneurship intervention programmes (EIP) in Nigeria.

These programmes are usually targeted at owner-managers of small business firms as well as those identified to posses' potential for self- employment (Owualah, 1999). For instance, participants in Nigeria's National Directorate of Employment (NDE) and similar programmes in the country are expected to undergo EDP training. This usually include entrepreneurial tools which ranges from the preparation of a business plan with emphasis on finance, marketing, management and production, identification of new business opportunities, alternative suppliers and market, sources of finance, cash flow analysis and record keeping to training people to think and act in an entrepreneurial ways (Amaeshi 2005).

Dimensions of Entrepreneurial Intervention Schemes

Entrepreneurial Training Schemes

Entrepreneurial training schemes refers to formal and systematic interventions aimed at enhancing the knowledge, skills, abilities, and job performance of individuals engaged in or seeking to start entrepreneurial ventures. Training, as distinguished from entrepreneurship education, focuses on short-term, job-specific skill acquisition delivered through methods such as demonstration, practice, feedback, apprenticeship, and mentoring. Entrepreneurship education, in contrast, is more comprehensive and structured, encompassing lectures, guided readings, presentations, debate, and self-managed learning over a specified duration, with broader outcomes related to mindset, opportunity recognition, and strategic competence. The fundamental aim of entrepreneurial training schemes is to enable enterprises to achieve their objectives by investing value in their most vital resource human capital (Coelho et al., 2018). Empirical evidence indicates that well-designed training programmes lead to increases in skills, knowledge, and overall enterprise performance (Warhuus et al., 2017). However, scholars have raised concerns regarding the quality and relevance of curricula in many training programmes; some programmes are reported to omit essential elements required for trainers to effect meaningful behavioural change (Caroline & James, 2013; Rosa & McAlpine, 2012). Furthermore, while entrepreneurship education programmes have demonstrated effectiveness in influencing entrepreneurial intention and mindset, their impact on actual venture success remains under scrutiny (Henry et al., 2003; Nabi et al., 2010). Thus, there is a pressing need to assess entrepreneurial training schemes not only by their content and delivery methods, but also by their measurable outcomes in areas such as profitability, innovation, and sustainability of enterprises.

Entrepreneurial Financial Schemes

The concept of entrepreneurial financial schemes can be understood as structured mechanisms designed to provide entrepreneurs with access to financial resources necessary for business establishment, expansion, and sustainability. According to McCormick and Atieno (2021), financial accessibility denotes the ease with which entrepreneurs can obtain finance to undertake productive ventures, expand their enterprises, and adopt innovative technologies that enhance both firm-level and national competitiveness. It represents the absence of price and non-price barriers in the utilization of financial services, thereby promoting inclusivity in the entrepreneurial ecosystem. Financial schemes remains a constraint to entrepreneurship as regards to working capital. entrepreneurship have limited access to capital markets, locally and internationally, in part because of the perception of higher risk, informational barriers, and the higher costs of intermediation which constrains growth and competitiveness. Studies on entrepreneurship have pointed out that financial accessibility is an impediment to entrepreneurship' contribution as an engine to national economic development, (Onyimba & Muturi, 2016). Accumulated evidence has shown that financial schemes promotes growth for enterprises through the provision of credit to both new and existing businesses. It benefits the economy in general by accelerating economic growth, intensifying competition, as well as boosting demand for labour.

Entrepreneurial financial schemes encompass access to a wide range of financial services such as credit, savings, payment systems, insurance, and investment management facilities. These schemes are essential for stimulating enterprise growth, particularly among small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), which often serve as the backbone of developing economies. Enhanced access to financial services enables entrepreneurs to increase productivity, generate employment, and reduce income inequality through improved income distribution within the economy. However, financial institutions typically require tangible assets as collateral before extending credit. This poses a major challenge for small-scale entrepreneurs who often lack sufficient collateralizable assets compared to larger firms. The limited ownership of fixed assets among small enterprises may be attributed to their stage of growth and capital constraints, which restrict their ability to accumulate significant retained earnings or acquire large-scale assets. Consequently, these firms encounter difficulties in accessing formal bank loans, leading to dependence on informal sources of finance or internal funding.

Concept of Performance

Performance can be defined as an organization's ability to meet its goals and objectives by exploiting the available resources in an efficient and effective way (Calice 2021). Finance and accounting literature evaluates entrepreneurship' performance by applying financial ratios such as profitability ratios, liquidity ratios, market ratios, and debt ratios, yet these are just the last performance indicators, as they are in fact influenced by how firms perform in terms of their efficiency and productivity, and how inputs and product prices change (Amornkitvikai & Harvie, 2016). However, Entrepreneurship' performance may be measured using objective, subjective and operational measures (Harash, Suhail, & Jabbar,2018). Financial measures (derived from the accounts of a company) are referred to as objective measures because they can be individually measured and verified. Traditional statement of finance performance, statement of assets and liabilities and management account, are not enough to effectively measure performance of businesses, which are seeking to survive and add shareholder/owner value. Measuring performance in Entrepreneurship requires identifying what the business does in terms of levels of processing and attaching key performance indicators to those processes (Madole, 2018).

Measures of Performance

Profitability is a key performance indicator. It is impossible to sustain an unprofitable business. In contrast, extremely lucrative enterprises can provide their owners with significant returns on their investments. As a result, the ultimate purpose of a corporate entity is to make a profit in order to ensure its survival in the current market conditions. Profitability was described by Borio, Gambacorta, and Hofmann (2017) as a business capacity that interprets profit over a specific time period. It is critical to investigate the profitability factors in order to comprehend how businesses finance their activities. When the amount of income gained from business activities exceeds the costs and taxes required to continue the corporate activities, financial gains are realized. Profitability can represent a company's success in terms of profits received from shareholder investments or the quantity of capital used in the firm or in connection to sales activities. Given that the primary goal of investing is profit, the earnings generated by a business are used to assess the investment's success. Profitability in business frequently shows that a company is providing goods or services that customers want at a reasonable price (Minh and Nguyen, 2020).

Operational Performance

Operational performance refers to the measurable aspects of the outcomes of an organization's processes, such as reliability, production cycle time, and inventory turns. Operational performance in turn affects business performance measures such as market share and customer satisfaction (Voss, Åhlström, & Blackmon, 1997). Operational performance (OP) is the backbone of organisational performance (Salem, 2003). Operational performance refers to the ability of an organisation to reduce costs, order-time, lead-time, improve the effectiveness of using raw material and distribution capacity (Heizer, Render & Weiss, 2008; Kaynak, 2008), a vital determinant of competitive advantage (Schroeder, Shah & Xiaosong-Peng, 2011) that leads to improved revenue and returns for organisations (Zhang & Xia, 2013). Operational performance is conceptually defined and explained as competitive priorities (quality, flexibility, cost and dependability) of operations strategy (Wang, Huo, Fujun & Chu, 2010). According to Chavez et al. (2015), operational performance is the strategic dimensions in which organisations choose to compete. Furthermore, it is the foundation of quality practices and the general performance of organisations (Sharma & Modgil, 2020). Assemblage of principles and standards that are used by organisations to control cost, enhance quality, time, flexibility, competitive advantage, and customer satisfaction

Human Capital Theory

Human Capital Theory was propounded by Becker (1964) and further advanced by Schultz (1961), emphasizing the importance of investing in people through education, training, and experience as a means of improving productivity and economic performance. The theory posits that investments in people through education, training and experiential learning raise individual productivity and thereby improve organisational outcomes. The core assumption is that knowledge, skills and competencies are forms of capital that yield returns when applied to production or managerial tasks. Applied to entrepreneurial intervention schemes, this theory suggests that training, apprenticeships and capacity-building programmes increase managers' and owners of businesses' technical and managerial capabilities, improving operational efficiency, quality control and product innovation. In the Rivers State food and beverage sector, where production processes, quality standards and supply-chain coordination are critical, human capital investments via government and NGO training schemes should translate into higher yield, lower waste, improved compliance with safety standards, and ultimately greater profitability and market reputation. Empirically, the theory motivates measuring training intensity, skill acquisition and subsequent changes in productivity and profit margins.

Empirical Review

Bosire and Muturi (2020) did a study on government entrepreneurial intervention and growth of micro, small and medium youth enterprises in Kisii County, Kenya. Specifically, the study sought to establish the effect of training, funding, government policy and marketing as entrepreneurial interventions on the growth of MSMYEs Kenya. The study targeted a population of 1262 youth led micro and small and medium enterprises registered by the ministry of youth and sports in Kisii County. The County was then stratified according to the 9 administrative constituencies. A random sample of 304 Micro, small and medium enterprises was picked which are owned by youth in Kisii County drawn from each of the stratum. A descriptive research design combined with quantitative research approach was used to guide the study. Quantitative data was collected through the use of closed ended questionnaires. The questionnaires were delivered to the respondents personally by research assistants who were to wait for the questionnaire to be filled. Data analysis was done using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21. A multiple regression analysis was used to establish a model between growth of the enterprises and the government entrepreneurial interventions. The findings revealed that government funding, entrepreneurial training, marketing and government policies affected growth of youth owned micro, small and medium enterprises. The study concluded that most youth had limited or no access to government funding, training, involvement in policy making and marketing support thus their enterprises failed to grow. The study recommended that here is need for the government to ensure equitable and effective access to funding, markets and training among the youth so as to enhance growth of their enterprises.

Waithanji (2020) studied the effect of microfinance credit on the profitability of entrepreneurship in Kiambu County, Kenya. The study was done through the use of survey design. Out of the 2,061 entrepreneurship licensed, the study randomly sampled 60 entrepreneurship. The study found that there is a direct relationship of financial accessibility and profitability of the companies. The study also concludes that the enterprises benefit from loans from microfinance institutions, the entrepreneurship seek financial assistance from the MFIs due to interest rate, easy loan repayment and amount offered. There is need to provide an enabling environment for entrepreneurship to grow and thrive; therefore there is a need to develop strategies to enhance increased access to microfinance credit by entrepreneurship from commercial banks and microfinance institutions.

Igwenagu (2019) carried out an analysis of the impact of Micro-Finance banks on the performance of Small and Medium Scale enterprises in Nigeria. The researcher wanted to know as part of the study objectives how entrepreneurship accessed finance from micro finance banks, how this funds are deployed and how it affects performance of the entrepreneurship. The researcher favoured the use of primary data through questionnaire administration and the use of secondary data through extraction of information from the annual report. The findings of the study provide empirical evidence to suggest that the entrepreneurship who accessed funds from microfinance banks also had increase in performance. The study recommends that the micro finance banks be restructured so that they can be in a better position to provide more funds for the numerous number of entrepreneurship in the country.

Abdulkarim, Nurudeen and Faruk (2022) examined the moderating role of government intervention on the relationship between interest rate and SME performance; implication on poverty alleviation in Zamfara state. The population of the study consists of all small-scale enterprise owners in Zamfara State. Simple random technique was used, while the sample size of 397 was arrived at using formula suggested by Israel (2013) for a finite population. The study was anchored on Gibb's Micro and Small Enterprise Support Theory. Using regression analysis, result from the study demonstrated the importance of SMEs in reducing poverty in Zamfara State. Based on the findings, the study concludes that government intervention and interest rate are significant determinants of SMEs performance; besides government intervention significantly moderates the relationship between interest rate and SMEs performance, in addition, SMEs performance is significant determinant of poverty alleviation. The study recommends that Zamfara state government should incentivize SMEs owners by providing them with employment incentives and intervening through subvention and interest rate reductions, as well as creating an environment conducive to business growth.

Methodology

The study employed a cross-sectional survey design. This design was suitable because it enabled the collection of data from a large population at a single point in time, thereby facilitating the assessment of existing relationships between entrepreneurial intervention schemes specifically training schemes and financial schemes and organizational performance indicators. The target population consisted of all 84 registered food and beverage firms operating in Rivers State. Four managerial respondents were selected from each firm, resulting in a total of 336 managers representing various functional areas, including operations, marketing, finance, and human resources. The study adopted a census approach by including the entire population of firms and their respective managerial respondents, thereby eliminating sampling bias and ensuring comprehensive coverage of the industry. The primary instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire designed to capture information on entrepreneurial intervention schemes, corporate culture, and performance indices. The questionnaire comprised closed-ended items structured on a 3-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Content validity of the questionnaire was ensured through expert review by academics in business management and practitioners with experience in entrepreneurship development programmes. Reliability of the instrument was established using the Cronbach Alpha coefficient. Pilot testing was conducted among selected managers outside the study setting. All constructs met the recommended reliability threshold of 0.70, indicating internal consistency and suitability for full-scale data collection. Questionnaires were administered directly to managers across the 84 firms using a combination of physical delivery and electronic distribution to maximize response rates. A total of 336 copies were issued, out of which 330 were retrieved and deemed usable for statistical analysis, yielding a response rate of 98.2%. The high retrieval rate was achieved through follow-ups and coordination with administrative personnel within the companies. Data analysis was conducted using both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Univariate analysis involved the computation of mean and standard deviation to assess respondents' perceptions of the study variables. For the bivariate analysis, the Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient was employed to test the hypothetical relationships between entrepreneurial intervention schemes and measures of organizational performance. All analyses were carried out at a 0.05 level of significance.

Table 1: Administration and Retrieval of Questionnaires

	Number of Cases	Percentage
Copies of Questionnaire Administered	336	100
Copies of Questionnaire Retrieved/Returned	330	98.2
Copies of Questionnaire Not Retrieved/Returned	6	1.8
Completed and Usable Copies of Questionnaire	330	98.2

Source: **Field Survey (2023)**

From Table 1, it is observed that 336 questionnaires were administered to respondents representing 100 percent. 330 copies of questionnaire representing 98.2 percent were returned. 6 copies of questionnaire representing 1.8 while 330 copies of questionnaire representing 98.2 percent were correctly filled and thus suitable for data analysis.

Table 2 Correlations Matrix for Entrepreneurial Training Schemes and Performance

			Training Scheme	Profitability	Operational Performance
Spearman's rho	Training Scheme	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.677**	.635**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.000
		N	330	330	330
	Profitability	Correlation Coefficient	.677**	1.000	.870**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000
		N	330	330	330
	Operational Performance	Correlation Coefficient	.635**	.870**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.
		N	330	330	330

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: SPSS Output

The first relationship examined the influence of entrepreneurial training schemes on the profitability of food and beverage firms in Rivers State. The correlation coefficient obtained was R = 0.677, indicating a high and substantial positive relationship between both variables. This suggests that as firms intensify their entrepreneurial training schemes, their profitability levels tend to improve correspondingly. The probability value associated with this correlation was less than the 0.05 level of significance, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. Consequently, the study concludes that entrepreneurial training schemes exert a significant positive influence on profitability among food and beverage firms in Rivers State.

The second relationship assessed the association between entrepreneurial training schemes and market performance. The computed correlation coefficient was R = 0.669, which also denotes a high correlation and a strong positive relationship between the variables. This implies that enhanced entrepreneurial training schemes contribute to improved market performance, such as increased market share, competitive positioning, and customer retention. The probability value was found to be less than the 0.05 significance threshold, prompting the rejection of the null hypothesis. The study therefore concludes that entrepreneurial training schemes significantly influence the market performance of food and beverage firms in Rivers State

Table 3 Correlations for Entrepreneurial Financial Schemes and Performance

			Financial Scheme	Profitability	Operational Performance
Spearman's rho	Financial Scheme	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.547**	.398**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.000
		N	330	330	330
	Profitability	Correlation Coefficient	.547**	1.000	.870**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000
		N	330	330	330
	Operational Performance	Correlation Coefficient	.398**	.870**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.
		N	330	330	330

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Field Survey (2025)

The third relationship explored the association between entrepreneurial financial schemes and profitability among food and beverage firms in Rivers State. The analysis yielded a correlation coefficient of R = 0.547, indicating a moderate and positive relationship between both variables. This suggests that financial support schemes such as grants, loans, and credit facilities moderately enhance the profitability of firms within the sector. The probability value of 0.000 was lower than the 0.05 significance threshold, necessitating the rejection of the null hypothesis. Therefore, the study concludes that entrepreneurial financial schemes significantly influence the profitability of food and beverage firms in Rivers State.

The fourth relationship examined the influence of entrepreneurial financial schemes on market performance. The correlation analysis produced R = 0.656, signifying a strong positive relationship between the variables. This finding indicates that financial intervention schemes contribute substantially to improved market performance, reflected in increased customer reach, strengthened market presence, and enhanced competitiveness. The corresponding probability value of 0.000 was below the 0.05 level of significance, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. Based on this outcome, the study affirms that entrepreneurial financial schemes have a significant impact on the market performance of food and beverage firms in Rivers State.

Discussion of Findings

The findings from the correlation analysis as presented in Table 2 revealed that entrepreneurial training schemes exhibited a strong positive and statistically significant relationship with both profitability and operational performance of food and beverage firms in Rivers State. The Spearman's rho correlation coefficient between entrepreneurial training schemes and profitability was $r = 0.677$ at a p-value of 0.000, which is below the 0.05 level of significance. This implies that as firms engage more in entrepreneurial training programs, their profitability tends to increase substantially. Similarly, the correlation between entrepreneurial training schemes and operational performance was $r = 0.635$, also significant at $p = 0.000$, suggesting that training interventions contribute to improvements in operational efficiency, productivity, and internal business processes. The result indicates that firms investing in structured and continuous entrepreneurial training enhance employees' managerial and innovative capacities, which in turn improves firm performance indicators. Training equips entrepreneurs and their workforce with requisite business management skills, technical know-how, and adaptability needed to navigate market uncertainties, thereby improving profit margins and operational outcomes. This finding supports the assertion of Ibrahim and Shariff (2016) who found that entrepreneurial training significantly enhances small and medium enterprises' (SMEs) performance in Malaysia by improving managerial competence and operational efficiency. Similarly, Olawale and Garwe (2010) argued that inadequate training and managerial experience hinder business growth, whereas access to quality entrepreneurial education fosters innovation and profitability.

For the second set of correlations as shown in Table 3, entrepreneurial financial schemes demonstrated a positive and significant relationship with measures of performance. The correlation coefficient between entrepreneurial financial schemes and profitability was $r = 0.547$ with $p = 0.000$, indicating a moderate but meaningful relationship. This suggests that financial support schemes such as grants, credit facilities, and low-interest loans enhance the ability of firms to expand production, acquire modern equipment, and improve cash flow management, which collectively boost profitability. Similarly, the relationship between entrepreneurial financial schemes and operational performance yielded a correlation coefficient of $r = 0.398$ with $p = 0.000$, suggesting a moderate but significant association. This implies that financial accessibility plays a pivotal role in promoting efficient operations, technology adoption, and overall business sustainability. These findings are consistent with the work of McCormick and Atieno (2021), who emphasized that access to financial resources is crucial for entrepreneurial productivity and competitiveness. In addition, Afolabi (2015) posited that financial assistance programs strengthen firms' operational capacity and profitability by reducing capital constraints. Similarly, Ekpe, Mat, and Razak (2010) established that access to finance positively influences the performance of women-owned enterprises in Nigeria, highlighting that financial inclusion drives entrepreneurial success. Furthermore, Oni and Daniya (2012) argued that inadequate access to finance remains a critical barrier to SME growth in Nigeria, while the availability of well-structured financial schemes encourages innovation, productivity, and profitability. The findings also align with Eze and Okpala (2020) who demonstrated that financial support initiatives enhance both short-term profitability and long-term operational stability among manufacturing firms

Conclusion

The study examined the effects of entrepreneurial intervention schemes on the performance of food and beverage companies in Rivers State, Nigeria. The findings revealed that entrepreneurial training and financial schemes significantly and positively influence firm performance, particularly in terms of profitability and marketing outcomes. The correlation results indicated that entrepreneurial training schemes are strongly associated with improved profitability and operational performance, suggesting that investment in skill development, business education, and managerial training enhances productivity and competitiveness among firms. Likewise, entrepreneurial financial schemes exhibited a moderate to strong positive relationship with both profitability and operational performance, implying that access to finance, credit facilities, and capital support strengthens firms' operational capacities and market reach.

Recommendations

13. Food and beverage firms should institutionalize continuous entrepreneurial training programs aimed at developing managerial, technical, and innovative capacities among employees and business owners.

14. There is a need for policy frameworks that facilitate easier access to financial resources for entrepreneurs in the food and beverage sector.

15. Management of food and beverage firms should embed entrepreneurial education and skill acquisition into their human resource development strategies.

16. Policymakers at both state and federal levels should strengthen institutional frameworks that support entrepreneurial development.

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