

## **GOVERNMENT ENTREPRENEURSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES AND SMALL AND MEDIUM SCALE ENTERPRISE PERFORMANCE IN PORT HARCOURT METROPOLIS, RIVERS STATE, NIGERIA**

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### **Abstract**

The study examines the link between government entrepreneurship development programmes and small and medium scale enterprises in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State, Nigeria. Two research questions and two non-directional hypotheses guided the study. The research employed a survey methodology. The study's population consisted of 155 chosen entrepreneurs. A 25-item questionnaire was utilised as the tool. The instrument's reliability coefficient was established at 0.72 by Pearson Product Moment Correlation. The study utilised mean and standard deviation to analyse the data pertaining to the research topics and applied Pearson's Product Moment Correlation to evaluate the hypotheses at a 0.05 alpha level. Findings indicated a substantial relationship between the dimensions of the government entrepreneurship development program, the national enterprise development program, and the Nigerian Bank of Commerce and Industry, and the metrics of SME performance regarding customer satisfaction and profitability. The report advised that the government and entrepreneurs should persist in promoting entrepreneurship development programs.

*Key-words:* Government entrepreneurship development programme, small and medium scale performance, customer satisfaction, profitability

### **Introduction**

Government entrepreneurship development programs denote the financial and non-financial assistance and facilities provided by the government to enhance the operations of small and medium-sized firms in Nigeria. Small and medium-sized firms are a fundamental component of the private sector, engaging in the recruitment and integration of resources for the production of goods or services aimed at wealth or value generation. Olayinka (2015) asserts that small and medium-sized firms significantly contribute to economic and natural development, particularly in alleviating unemployment and producing revenue. Government entrepreneurship development programs and policies significantly influence the trajectory of small and medium-sized firms in Nigeria. Farida, Danjuma, Mojisola, Mujtaba, and Nasamu (2024) claimed that governmental assistance through programs and policies is crucial in establishing the operating environment for enterprises, significantly impacting their success or failure. Entrepreneurship development programmes are defined as the comprehensive process of enhancing skills and knowledge via structured training and institutional development initiatives (Adekunle & Bello, 2022). Government-established entrepreneurship development programs aim to expand the base of small and medium-sized firms to accelerate the creation of new ventures. Obinna in Ogbotubo (2024a) asserted that small and medium-sized enterprises, via entrepreneurship development programs, significantly contribute to job creation, the establishment of innovative enterprises, wealth generation, poverty alleviation, and income production for both governmental and private entities. Saunila (2016) asserted that the implementation of government-assisted programs in the small and medium-sized sector facilitates economic sustainability in any nation.

Small and medium-sized enterprises are universally acknowledged as fundamental components of every economy; consequently, the governments of both developed and developing nations have implemented various initiatives to promote the growth of these businesses through entrepreneurship development programs. Owolabi and Izang (2020) asserted that the development and success, or effective performance, of small and medium-sized firms have garnered the attention of governments at all levels in Nigeria. Obinna in Ogbotubo (2024a) asserted that the government's attitude towards the advancement of small and medium-sized firms has significantly improved recently due to the entrepreneurship development programs implemented by the government. Feyiomi, Temitope, Akeem, and Oladele (2020), Ogbotubo (2024a), and Oluwafemi and Adeyemi (2023) enumerated the following government entrepreneurship development programs and policies: the National Enterprise Development Programme (NEDEP), National Industrial Revolution Plan (NIRP), Small and Medium Scale Industries Credit Scheme, Industrial Development Centre, Nigeria Bank for Commerce and Industries, The Youth Enterprise with Innovation in Nigeria (YOUWIN), the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN), the Central Bank of Nigeria's Youth Entrepreneurship Programme (YEDP), the Small and Medium Industries Equity Investment Scheme (SMIEIS), National Directorate of Employment (NDE), National Economic Reconstruction Fund (NERFUND), and The Bank of Industry-Youth Entrepreneurship Support (YES-Program). The objective of these programs, as referenced by Obinna (2013) and Saunila (2016), is to assist both aspiring and current entrepreneurs of small and medium enterprises in identifying and formulating distinctive innovative business opportunities, obtaining financial and non-financial support, and connecting them with banks for credit facilities that facilitate the effective operation of their enterprises. Esene (2016) asserted that entrepreneurship development programs, alongside financial incentives, provide training and counselling about the problems posed by the dynamic character of the contemporary business environment.

The existing research clearly indicates that government entrepreneurship development programs have favourably influenced the operations of small and medium-sized firms in Nigeria. Nevertheless, the entrepreneurs of small and medium-sized enterprises in Rivers State, particularly within the Port Harcourt Metropolis, have not been well explored experimentally. This gap warrants attention and has become a significant worry for scholars. This study investigated the link between government entrepreneurship development programs and the performance of small and medium-sized firms in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State, Nigeria.

Government entrepreneurship development programs are essential for assessing and enhancing the success and performance of small and medium-sized firms in Nigeria. Small and medium-sized firms in Rivers State, particularly inside the Port Harcourt metropolitan, can enhance their performance if they receive sufficient government support in infrastructure, financing, and training development programs. Owners of small and medium-sized firms are anticipated to receive government assistance to enhance performance and achieve success. Feyiomi, Temitope, Akeem, and Oladele (2020) contended that the Nigerian Government acknowledged and evaluated the contributions of small and medium-sized firms; hence, it formulated programs aimed at enhancing and fortifying the sector for economic growth and development. Feyiomi, Temitope, Akeem, and Oladele (2020), Ogbotubo (2024a), and Oluwafemi and Adeyemi (2023) enumerated the following government entrepreneurship development programs and policies: the National Enterprise Development Programme (NEDEP), National Industrial Revolution Plan (NIRP), Small and Medium Scale Industries Credit Scheme, Industrial Development Centre, Nigeria Bank for Commerce and Industries, Many organisations are making efforts to inspire young people to be innovators and entrepreneurs. Some of these include YOUWIN in Nigeria, SMEDAN in Nigeria, the Youth Entrepreneurship Programme (YEDP) of the Central Bank of Nigeria, SMIEIS in Small and

Medium Industries, NDE in National Directorate of Employment, NERFUND in National Economic Reconstruction, and YES-Program in Bank of Industry.

Given the aforementioned data, it is evident that government entrepreneurship development programs might positively impact the performance of small and medium-sized firms in Nigeria. Nevertheless, the degree to which these programs have improved the performance of small and medium-sized enterprises in Rivers State, notably in Port Harcourt, has not been sufficiently experimentally investigated. Smith, Brown, Johnson, Farida, Danjuma, Mojisola, Mujtaba, and Nasamu (2024) said that prior research has investigated many aspects of this connection, focussing on elements such as financial accessibility, labour market rules, and firm survival rates. Nevertheless, although current research offers significant insights into the effects of government initiatives on small and medium-sized enterprises, there are considerable deficiencies in the literature regarding the contributions of the Bank of Industry-Youth Entrepreneurship Support (YES-Program) and the National Enterprise Development Programme (NEDEP) to the profitability and customer satisfaction of SMEs in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State, Nigeria. At this end, the problem of this study put in question form is thus; how would the exposure of entrepreneurs small and medium scale enterprises to Bank of Industry-Youth Entrepreneurship Support (YES-Program) and the National Enterprise Development Programme (NEDEP) contribute to performance of the sector in Port Harcourt Metropolis in Rivers State, Nigeria? Or do the owners and managers of small and medium scale enterprises benefit from the Bank of Industry-Youth Entrepreneurship Support (YES-Program) and the National Enterprise Development Programme (NEDEP) in the study scope? Hence, this study

The main purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between government entrepreneurship development programmes and small and medium scale enterprises performance in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to determine the relationship between National Enterprise Development Programme and customer satisfaction of small and medium scale enterprises in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria and also examine the relationship between Nigerian Bank of Industry and profitability of small and medium scale enterprises in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria. The following research questions guided the study: What is the relationship between National Enterprise Development Programme and customer satisfaction of small and medium scale enterprises success in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria? What is the relationship between the Nigerian Bank of Industry and profitability of small and medium scale enterprises in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria?

## **Literature Review**

### ***Theoretical Review***

#### ***Exogenous Firm Growth Theory***

The exogenous firm growth theory is propounded by Robert Solow, an American economist in 1956. The basic postulation of the theory states that economic and social growth of a firm is driven by exogenous factors such as political factors, legal frameworks, economic policies and programmes, culture, and technology and ecology system. The theory maintains that the performance of a firm is assumed to be improved and productive when all available external resources are fully utilized.

This idea suggests that the performance-based behaviour of small and medium-sized firms is stimulated and maintained by external factors, including government policies and programs. The successful performance of small and medium-scale firms is a perceived behaviour influenced by the acceptance of certain external factors, such as government entrepreneurship development programs.

## ***Conceptual Review***

### ***Government Entrepreneurship Development Programmes***

Government entrepreneurship development programs are essential for assessing and enhancing the success and performance of small and medium-sized firms in Nigeria. Small and medium-sized firms in Rivers State, particularly inside the Port Harcourt metropolitan, can enhance their performance if they receive sufficient government support in infrastructure, financing, and training development programs. Owners of small and medium-sized firms are anticipated to receive government assistance to enhance performance and achieve success. Feyiomi, Temitope, Akeem, and Oladele (2020) contended that the Nigerian Government acknowledged and evaluated the contributions of small and medium-sized firms; hence, it formulated programs aimed at enhancing and fortifying the sector for economic growth and development. Feyiomi, Temitope, Akeem, and According to Oladele (2020), Ogbotubo (2024a), and Oluwafemi and Adeyemi (2023), a number of government programs and policies have been put in place to foster entrepreneurship. These include: NEDEP, NIRP, SMIEIS, Industrial Development Centre, Nigeria Bank for Commerce and Industries, YOUWIN, SMEDAN, YEDP, NERFUND, National Directorate of Employment, and YES-Pro.

The data presented above suggests that small and medium-sized businesses in Nigeria could benefit from government initiatives to foster entrepreneurship. But there hasn't been enough experimental research on how much these initiatives have helped small and medium-sized businesses in Rivers State, especially in Port Harcourt thrive. Previous studies have looked into many facets of this relationship, with an emphasis on factors including financial accessibility, labour market regulations, and company survival rates (Smith, Brown, Johnson, Farida, Danjuma, Mojisola, Mujtaba, and Nasamu, 2024). Despite the fact that there is a wealth of information available on how government programs affect SMEs, there is a severe lack of literature on how the National Enterprise Development Programme (NEDEP) and the Bank of Industry's Youth Entrepreneurship Support (YES-Program) affected SMEs in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State, Nigeria, in terms of both profitability and customer satisfaction. In light of this, the research question guiding this study is as follows: what impact, if any, would involvement of the National Enterprise Development Programme (NEDEP) and the Bank of Industry-Youth Entrepreneurship Support (YES-Program) on the sector's performance in the Port Harcourt Metropolis of Rivers State, Nigeria? Or, is the study's scope limited to determining whether or not the National Enterprise Development Programme (NEDEP) and the Bank of Industry's Youth Entrepreneurship Support (YES-Program) help small and medium entrepreneurs? Consequently, the research

A strategy or set of processes put in place by a government or parastatal entity to increase entrepreneurial knowledge and abilities via structured training and institutional development is called a government entrepreneurship development program. The entrepreneurship development strategy, according to Obinna in Ogbotubo (2024), is to increase the number of people who are willing to start their own businesses so that more new ones may be launched more quickly. Government policies and programs must be put in place to ensure that profit-oriented organisations may operate efficiently and successfully, according to Dionco-Adetayo and Adetayo (2023). Failing to address this crucial area might put firm operations at risk. Owolabi and Izang (2020) highlighted the interconnectedness of SMEs and government engagement, showing how governmental resources (such as money, materials, and workers) are essential to the private sector, which in turn is subject to government-instituted regulatory agencies.

Among the many initiatives run by the government to foster an entrepreneurial spirit are the following: the Entrepreneurship Education Program; the Nigerian Industrial Development Bank; the Bank of Industry; the Industrial Development Centre; the Natural Enterprises Development Programme; and the Natural Industrial Revolution. According to Esene (2016), small and medium-sized business owners and managers are able to accomplish much more with the help of entrepreneurship development programs.

These programs help reduce unemployment, boost product and service quality, guarantee customer happiness, increase ROI, and cultivate entrepreneurial knowledge and skills through organised training programs. According to Emmanuel and Adeusi (2017), entrepreneurship development programs help small and medium-sized business owners become more self-reliant, which speeds up the launch of new companies, creates more jobs, and boosts the economy. Government entrepreneurship development initiatives encourage small and medium-sized businesses by helping entrepreneurs find and pursue new opportunities through training and mentoring. According to this research, government entrepreneurship development programs are economic and social services that help business owners learn as much as possible about a certain product or service. These programs help people get in touch with banks so they may get the loans they need to establish or expand their businesses in productivity, marketing, customer service, quality assurance, and manufacturing.

### ***The National Enterprise Development Programme-NEDED***

The government's initiatives to address the success requirements of small and medium-sized enterprises must implement specific programs and policies to facilitate the sector's success. The National Enterprise Development Programme, as described by Mihaju, Odalo, Achoki, and Njuguna (2020), was instituted by the federal government to create an enabling environment for entrepreneurs nationwide, facilitating access to financial and non-financial benefits across all 36 states and their local governments to address operational, marketing, and technical requirements. Wisdom (2022) said that the program has been recognised as a significant federal government initiative supporting small and medium-sized enterprises throughout Nigeria. Owolabi and Izang (2020) asserted that the National Enterprise Development Programme is one of the current initiatives designed to provide essential assistance for the initiation and growth issues faced by the private sector.

The Bank of Industry's Youth Entrepreneurship Support (YES) Program is an initiative of the Nigerian Bank of Industry. The program offers young Nigerian entrepreneurs access to funding for the realisation of their company concepts, expansion, and modernisation of their current enterprises. Okey in Owota (2022) said that a significant advantage of the YES-Program in Nigeria is its comprehensive business training course, which also provides small business loans to the proprietors of these firms. Participants in the YES-Program are required to complete training through the BOI entrepreneurial capacity program. Samuel in Onwuegbuzie and Nwankwo (2023) said that the YES-Program of the Bank of Industry has bolstered the small and medium size enterprise sector by facilitating capital and microcredit provision.

The YES-Programme is the Bank of Industry's initiative aimed at tackling youth unemployment in Nigerian states by enhancing the capabilities of young individuals and generating innovative company concepts. Ajiri in Adekunle and Bello (2022) asserted that the YES-programme is designed to empower young individuals with the necessary skills and knowledge for self-reliance. Wisdom (2020) claimed that the YES-programme consists of the following components: An eight-week online training program on offensive entrepreneurship and company management designed to assess participants' comprehension and monitor their development. b. The entrepreneurial concept. c. Revenue model (the method by which the firm will generate income). Sales and marketing. e. Executing an effective company ethics and compliance strategy. Operations. Financial strategies. g. Technical skills training in collaboration with various technical training and vocational institutions nationwide. Financing of enterprises by the Bank of Industry through its many cluster initiatives.

Tamara (2015) stated that YES entrepreneurship development programmes has the finding objectives. With the goal of developing an interactive learning tool to instruct ambitious young business owners in the ropes. Igniting a sense of enterprise among the younger generation's Providing a nurturing environment for budding businesses to achieve this goal, we must guide young people who are interested



in starting their own businesses and ensure that they are qualified to receive small company loans from the Bank of Industry.

### ***Small and Medium Scale Enterprise Performance***

Companies are considered small or medium-sized if their employee counts fall below specific limits. According to Okoye, Emmanuel, and Adeusi (2017), small and medium enterprises in Nigeria were defined by the Central Bank of Nigeria according to their asset base and staff count. According to Aderemi in Tahir (2015), small and medium-sized businesses are those that have an asset base of no more than N200 million (not including land and working capital), ten to two hundred employees, and are usually run by owners or family members. These businesses usually offer basic goods and services and often have weak management and organisational structures.

The performance of business organisations is often assessed by effectiveness, efficiency, profitability, growth, job creation, customer service, and productivity. Saunila (2016) further demonstrated that company performance encompasses two distinct domains: financial and non-financial performance. George (2009) defined the performance of small and medium-sized firms as the extent to which owners or managers efficiently and effectively utilise organisational resources to achieve the organization's objectives and satisfy all stakeholders. Odalo, Achoki, and Njuguna (2020) posited that government enterprise development programs foster an enabling environment for small and medium-sized enterprises, enhancing operational efficiency within an economy by generating employment, elevating living standards through the provision of goods and services, increasing profitability, contributing to GDP, and alleviating poverty levels. Husin and Ibrahim (2014) defined enterprise performance as the assessment of the output of a certain process in SMEs, followed by the modification of that process to enhance output efficiency and effectiveness. This study defines the performance of small and medium-scale firms as the effective utilisation of limited resources to fulfil their purpose and vision for existence. Numerous developing and growing economies worldwide have effectively prioritised the creation of a conducive environment to foster the development of small and medium-sized firms and to support their sustained growth and performance.

### ***Profitability***

The capacity to generate a profit is this. It is a comparison of the actual production with the planned or anticipated output. According to Ajiri (2012), a company's profitability may be defined as its performance in relation to the profits it produces as a percentage of the shareholders' investment, the capital invested in the firm, or the sale price. The present paper thus refers profitability as a measure of business enterprise success when the activities of business enterprises yield financial impact on the internal and external setting of business. Fela in Ogbotubo, Ambakederemo and Ekene (2020) maintained that small and medium scale enterprises become profitable when the profit generated help to: Provide means of measuring performance, use as a means of control, serve as an centre for people to work effectively, it serves the organization to meet current committed, and enable organization to meet desire of the shareholders.

Profitability of small and medium to large extents dependent on the effective utilization of the available resources through a coordinated internal and external support. Entrepreneurship development programmes provide and expose the owners of small and medium scale enterprises to basic training and financial and non-financial opportunities required for their effective operations. Tahir (2015) stated that small and medium scale enterprises are recognized as very essential tools to the growth of an economy and their activities usually improve and influence the well-being of the populace; hence, government continues to formulate policies and programmes to encourage their financial and non-financial

performance. Adekunle and Lawal (2024) asserted that, adequate provision of financial and non-financial external public services or supports contribute majorly to performance of the private sector.

Profitability thus, is described as a measure of performance of small and medium scale enterprises in terms of excess of outputs over inputs assisted and supported by internal and external forces, especially the impact of government programmes.

### ***Customer Satisfaction***

Small and medium scale enterprises are being in existence to satisfy target customers through their products and services. A productive and economically viable enterprise is the one that has a high scorecard of customer patronage over similar firms in a given environment (Ogbotubo, 2024) It is imperative for organization to secure adequate support from both intermediary and external environment to provide quality products and services to their clients. Ottih (2016) described customer satisfaction as the total processes employed by a firm to make present customer satisfied. Audu (2022) states that sales growth, customer service and welfare, market share, market expansion, product and service innovation are all strong indicators of a successful organization. Uchehara (2019) states that providing products and services to meet up customers' demands in any dynamic environmental setting to earn customer retention, reputation and life time-based relationship on product and service patronage is nothing, but to improve on the economic status of business enterprises. Customers and clients are best served when business enterprises render the needed services or products to them. Onwuegbuzie and Nwankwo (2023) maintained that, the impact of government programmes on SME performance in quality product and service delivery in Nigeria is gaining a serious attention, specifically in the manufacturing sector. Adekunle and Bello (2022) buttressed that government small and medium scale-based policies and programmes have helped the sustainability of the relationship between the customers and the manufacturing sector in Nigeria.

This study referred customer satisfaction as enabling environment created by owners and managers of small scale and medium scale enterprises to earn customer attentions over their outputs towards achieving the goals of the enterprises. The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance:

**Ho<sub>1</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between National Enterprise Development Programme and customer satisfaction of small and medium scale enterprises in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria.

**Ho<sub>2</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between Nigeria Bank of Industry and profitability of small and medium enterprises in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria.

### ***Empirical Review***

Adekunle and Lawal (2024) examined the influence of government initiatives on the survival rates of SMEs within Nigeria's service industry. The researchers administered questionnaires and interviews with 150 owners and managers of SMEs across diverse service sectors, including hospitality, retail, and professional services. The research employed a self-designed questionnaire to gather data from the field. The gathered data underwent investigation using correlation analysis and regression modelling. The findings indicated that the activities of SMEs in the service sector necessitate substantial regulatory, infrastructural, and financial assistance, and that the sector encounters restricted access to government support programs.

Babatunde and Durowaiye (2014) investigated the influence of entrepreneurship education as a component of entrepreneurship development programs on entrepreneurial success among Nigerian undergraduates. The study employed a survey design utilising the chi-square statistical technique. The study revealed that exposure to entrepreneurship education affects students' enthusiasm and performance in the industry when the gained skills are applied. This study is pertinent to the current research since both examine entrepreneurship development programs and their correlation with small and medium-sized

firms. Nonetheless, they vary in the domain of research dimensions. The previous study focused on entrepreneurship education as a component of government entrepreneurship development programs, whereas the current study investigates the relationship between the National Enterprise Development Programme and the YES-Programme by the Bank of Industry for existing small and medium-sized enterprises in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State, Nigeria.

The impact of government programs on the efficiency and productivity of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Nigeria's manufacturing sector was studied by Onwuegbuzie and Nwankwo (2023). Researchers used a quantitative survey approach for this investigation. Questionnaires and in-person interviews were used to gather information. The research made use of a cohort of two hundred business owners. To investigate the subject of the study, descriptive statistics were used, and to identify significant factors influencing the performance of SMEs, regression analysis was employed. Tax incentives, infrastructure development, and financial efforts were some of the government policies and programs that had a positive effect on SME performance. This was because these initiatives helped to cut operating costs, improve market access, and promote innovation. This study is similar to Onwuegbuzie and Nwankwo (2023) in that it sought to determine how government entrepreneurial policies and initiatives affected the success of SMEs. However, this study is different from others in terms of methodology, geographic scope, inferential statistics application, demographic characteristics, and sample selection.

Oluwafemi and Adeyemi (2023) looked examined the effect of government entrepreneurial programs on the bank-related financial performance of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Nigeria. Quantitative survey methods were used in the study. The researcher used a questionnaire that she had developed herself to collect information from 150 owners of small and medium-sized businesses. In the financial sector, financial ratio analysis and regression modelling were used to examine the obtained data in order to determine the association between government initiatives and the financial performance of SMEs. Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the banking and finance sector were found to be affected by government policies and initiatives, such as lending practices, capital adequacy standards, training, and monetary restrictions.

Adekunle and Bello looked at how environmental rules in Nigeria's government affected small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Descriptive research methods were employed in the study. A group of 215 entrepreneurs were surveyed using a self-administered questionnaire. Government environmental regulations, pollution control measures, and sustainable practices were the primary determinants of small and medium enterprise (SME) performance, and this study used descriptive statistics to examine the research question and regression analysis to test the null hypotheses about the relationship between the predictors and SME performance. If small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) wanted to be more sustainable and competitive, the results showed that they had to follow environmental regulations and use sustainable practices. In addition, the study found that improving environmental governance frameworks, providing technical assistance and capacity-building support, and encouraging green business activities to strengthen the sustainability of SMEs all contributed to better sector scores.

### **Methodology**

The present study adopted survey correlational design to determine the opinions of the respondents on the relationship between government entrepreneurship development programmes and small and medium scale enterprises in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State, Nigeria. The population of the study comprised 155 entrepreneurs from the study scope. Since the population is manageable, the researchers decided to engage all; hence, no sample. The study adopted a self-structured questionnaire on a 4-point Likert scale to collect the primary data from the respondents. The face and content validity of the instrument was done by two experts. Using the Kuder Richardson 21 (KR-21) formula, a pilot test of 30 small and medium-scale firms in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State, yielded an instrument reliability coefficient of 0.72. This result



demonstrated the dependability of the device. To test the two null hypotheses, the field data were analysed using mean, standard deviation, and Pearson Product Moment Correlation.

**Decision criteria:** A mean value that was greater than or equal to 2.50 was regarded as an agreed opinion while a mean value less than 2.50 was regarded as disagreed opinion. For the hypotheses, if the computed (r) value was greater than the critical r value for two tailed-test at 0.05 level of significance, reject the null hypothesis, otherwise accept.

### Data Analysis and Hypotheses Testing

#### Univariate Analyses

#### Data Distribution of Study Variables

**Table 1: Government Entrepreneurship Development Programme Indicators**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
NEDP	155	4	16	13.45	2.834
.1	155	1	3	2.39	.805
.2	155	1	4	3.36	.880
.3	155	1	4	3.19	.614
.4	155	1	5	4.50	.791
BOI	155	4	17	14.09	3.306
.1	155	1	3	2.39	.805
.2	155	1	4	3.36	.880
.3	155	1	5	3.84	1.000
.4	155	1	5	4.50	.791
Valid N (listwise)	155				

*SPSS output, Version 20 – Field Survey, 2024*

Table 1 illustrated the result for the data distribution for the dimensions (National Enterprise Development Programme (NEDP) and the Bank of Industry-YES Programme (BOI)); the results pointed out that the dimensions all bear high and substantial mean values, resulting from the high mean scores for each of their statement items.

**Table 2: Indicators of Performance of SMEs**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Customer Satisfaction	155	4	16	13.12	2.646
.1	155	1	4	2.55	.989
.2	155	1	4	3.36	.880
.3	155	1	4	3.30	.658
.4	155	1	4	3.90	.511
Profitability	155	4	20	14.45	3.802
.1	155	1	5	2.75	1.277
.2	155	1	5	3.52	1.056
.3	155	1	5	3.68	.873
.4	155	1	5	4.50	.791
Valid N (listwise)	155				

*SPSS output, Version 20 – Field Survey, 2024*

Table 2 presents the data distribution results for the measures of customer satisfaction and profitability. The findings indicate that all indicators exhibit elevated and significant mean values, attributable to the high mean scores of each statement item, thereby suggesting the adequacy of these items.

### ***Bivariate Level Analyses***

Here, we discuss how to use Spearman's rank order correlation coefficient and the resulting p-values to evaluate the hypotheses stated in the first chapter. When the p-value is less than the alpha level of 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. On the other hand, when the p-value is greater than the alpha level (0.05), the null hypothesis is accepted.

H<sub>01</sub>: There is no significant relationship between national enterprise development programme and customer satisfaction of SMEs in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria.

Table 3: Correlation between national enterprise development programme and customer satisfaction of SMEs

		NEDP	Customer Satisfaction.
Spearman's rho	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.668**
	NEDP		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
	N	155	155
	Correlation Coefficient	.668**	1.000
	Customer Satisfaction		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
	N	155	155

\*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

SPSS output, Version 2020 – Field Survey, 2024

In order to find out how the national enterprise development program relates to success measures, we used Spearman's rank order correlation, which is shown in Table 3. The results came from 155 respondents. Customer satisfaction was shown to be statistically significantly correlated with the national enterprise development programme, with a strong positive correlation coefficient ( $\rho = .668^{**}$ ,  $p = .000 < 0.05$ ). There is a strong correlation between the NEDP and happy customers, as seen above.

**Decision:** The hypothesis ( $H_{01}$ ) is, rejected and state that there is significant relationship between NEDP and customer satisfaction of SMEs in Rivers State, Nigeria.

$H_{02}$ : There is no significant relationship between Bank of Industry-YES Programm (NBCI) and profitability of SMEs in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Table 4: Correlation between NBCI and Success of SMEs

		NBCI	Profitability
Spearman's rho	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.941**
	NBCI		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
	N	155	155
	Correlation Coefficient	.967**	.968**
	Profitability		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000
	N	155	155

\*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

SPSS output, Version 20 – Field Survey, 2024

One hundred fifty-five (155) respondents reported that the Bank of Industry (BOI) was associated with the profitability of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), and Table 3 shows the results of the Spearman's rank order correlation analysis. Significant association values were indicated by a strong positive correlation coefficient ( $\rho = .941^{**}$ ,  $p = .000 < 0.05$ ) between BOI and profitability.

Decision: Here, we deny  $H_02$  and assert that, for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Rivers State, Nigeria, there is a statistically significant correlation between BOI and profitability as a performance indicator.

### *Discussion of Findings*

This research looked at small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the Port Harcourt Metropolis area of Rivers State, Nigeria, and how they fared after participating in government-sponsored entrepreneurship development programs. In order to find out what the relationship was, we investigated two hypotheses that were made up as possible answers to two study questions;

- i. The result of the tested  $H_{01}$  revealed the existence of a significant relationship between National Enterprise Development Programme and the measure (customer satisfaction) of SMEs performance; ( $\rho = .668^{**}$ ,  $p = .000 < 0.05$ ; this empirical finding is supported by Babatunde and Durowaiye (2014), Odalo, Achoki and Njuguna (2020) who stated that NEDP was established by the federal government with the aim of increasing access to finance, markets, development business ventures and awakening of technical skills among entrepreneurs.
- ii. The tested  $H_{02}$  demonstrated a substantial correlation between the Bank of Industry (BOI) and profitability, which serves as an indicator of SMEs' success. This analysis employs Spearman's rank order correlation to determine the relationship between the Bank of Industry (BOI) and the profitability of SMEs, based on data from one hundred and fifty-five (155) respondents. A robust positive correlation coefficient was observed between BOI and profitability, with ( $\rho = .941^{**}$ ,  $p = .000 < 0.05$ ). This conclusion is corroborated by Adeleke and Lawal (2024), who asserted that one advantage of the YES program in Nigeria is the practical business training it provides to young entrepreneurs, along with modest business loans for initiating new companies. Beneficiaries of the yes-program must complete training under the BOI entrepreneurship capability program as established by the organisation. Onwuegbuzie and Nwankwo (2023) stated that the YES-Program of the Bank of Industry has bolstered the small and medium-sized firm sector by facilitating capital and microcredit provision. The YES-Programme is the Bank of Industry's initiative aimed at tackling youth unemployment in Nigerian states by enhancing the skills of young individuals and generating innovative company concepts. Ajiri in Adekunle and Bello (2022) asserted that the YES-programme is designed to empower young individuals with the necessary skills and knowledge for self-reliance. Olayinka (2015) similarly confirmed that the YES-Program of the Bank of Industry has bolstered the small and medium size enterprise sector by facilitating capital and microcredit provision, consequently enhancing profitability.
- iii. The results from the analyzed data on the research questions and hypothesis revealed there is a significant link between government entrepreneurship programmes under investigation and performance of small and medium scale enterprises in Port Harcourt Metropolis, River State, Nigeria. Farida, Danjuma, Mojisola, Mujtaba, and Nasamu.(2024), Ogbotubo (2024) and Ottih (2016) supported this finding when they held that government policies and entrepreneurship-based programmes in form of financial and non-financial provisions serve as foundation to strengthen the entrepreneurs to be strategic in decision making, shaping objectives, mission, and operational strategies for effective and efficient performance.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the findings emerged, the study concludes that National Enterprise Development Programme directly relates with performance of SMEs in terms of customer satisfaction in Port Harcourt metropolis, Rivers State, Nigeria.; in that, the federal government with the aim of increasing access to finance, markets, development enterprises-based trainings, awakening of technical skills and knowledge exposes entrepreneurs to providing quality products, service as well as effective relationship and communication. Again, Bank of Industry is significantly related with profitability of SMEs in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State, Nigeria. Accordingly, from our empirical findings, there is a significant relationship government entrepreneurship development programmes and performance of small and medium scale enterprises in the study geographical scope.

Consequent upon the conclusion, the study made the following recommendations:

- i. Government should encourage create more small and medium scale-based development programmes. Financing of business by bank of industry under its some cluster initiation should not be overlooked.
- ii. Interaction learning platforms to train and retrain young aspiring entrepreneurs in the small and medium scale enterprise sector should be encouraged.
- iii. Entrepreneurial spirit in the youths through these programmes should be kindled and motivated.
- iv. Financial inclusion by directing the young aspiring entrepreneurship and making them eligible for small and medium enterprises loans through Bank of Industry should be deepened.

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