

# EFFECT OF NETWORK CAPABILITY ON THE SURVIVAL OF SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES (SMEs) IN NASARAWA STATE, NIGERIA

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## Abstract

*The objective of this study was thus, to examine the effect of network capability on the survival of SMEs in Nasarawa State Nigeria. This study adopted a survey research design, the population used for this study was 10,728 registered SMEs in Nasarawa State (SMEDAN, 2021) out of which the sample size of 386 was determined using Taro Yamane sample size formula and convenience sampling technique was used to select the respondents. The study utilized adapted questionnaire to collect data. Partial least square structural equation modeling was employed to analyze the data collected. The study found that coordination and relational skills has positive and statistical insignificant effect on survival of SMEs in Nasarawa State, Nigeria, while, partner's knowledge and internal communication has positive and statistically significant effect on survival of SMEs in Nasarawa State, Nigeria. The study concludes that coordination and relational skills positively but insignificantly influence survival of SMEs in Nasarawa State, Nigeria, while, partner's knowledge and internal communication positively and significantly influences survival of SMEs in Nasarawa State, Nigeria. The study thus recommended among others that SMEs operators in Nasarawa state, Nigeria should try maintain the use of partners knowledge by way of identifying more partner's potentials with relevant resources and capabilities to complement resources and capability needs for the own advantage and success of the businesses. Also, SMEs operators in Nasarawa state, Nigeria should maintain the use of internal communication practice by way of continuing improving the process channels of internal communication such as face-to-face, memo, prompt feedbacks and holding regular meetings in order to gain more success in their businesses.*

**Keywords:** *Coordination, partners' knowledge, internal communication, relational skills, network capability, survival of SMEs*

## INTRODUCTION

For decades, scholars and business communities have observed a rise in turbulence and competition within the global business environment, making business survival increasingly difficult. As competition intensifies and external conditions become more hostile, enterprises must adopt strategies that ensure long-term sustainability. Business survival refers to a firm's ability to maintain its operations, remain under the same ownership, and sustain financial solvency. To achieve this, small businesses must develop strong organizational capabilities, particularly in the areas of strategic renewal and networking. Networking Capability (NC) plays a vital role in enabling businesses to acquire essential resources, overcome environmental constraints, and adapt to market shifts. This includes leveraging partnerships that provide access to otherwise unattainable markets, technologies, and knowledge (Yang et al., 2018; Karami & Tang, 2019).

NC refers to a firm's ability to develop, sustain, and utilize inter-organizational relationships to gain a competitive edge. This study adopts the model of Walter et al. (2006), which identifies four key dimensions of NC: coordination (CO), relation skills (RS), partner's knowledge (PK), and internal communication (IC). Coordination involves the ability to align and integrate activities across firms to ensure efficiency and mutual support. It facilitates the combination of dispersed resources into unique, competitive configurations. Relation skills refer to a firm's capacity to establish and maintain beneficial partnerships with key stakeholders, helping to access complementary resources and create strategic alignment or even reshape their business environments (Schmitt et al., 2018). These skills are critical for navigating the changing demands of the industry and are closely tied to learning and strategic adaptability. Partner's knowledge reflects a firm's awareness of the capabilities and limitations of its partners, which enhances knowledge sharing and innovation. This transfer of knowledge, particularly among micro, small, and medium enterprises, is essential for adapting to dynamic environments and achieving growth (Zubielqui et al., 2015). Internal communication, on the other hand, involves the efficient flow of

information within the organization, ensuring that resources are effectively coordinated internally and externally. Strong internal communication helps in resource optimization and strategic alignment across departments, which is especially important during crises or strategic changes (Yates, 2016). With these elements in mind, this study investigates the impact of networking capability on the survival of small businesses in Nasarawa State, Nigeria, recognizing that success in today's competitive landscape hinges on a firm's ability to build and leverage strategic relationships.

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are generally established with the aspiration to grow, achieve long-term survival, and eventually evolve into larger, more successful ventures. However, in Nigeria particularly in Nasarawa State many SMEs fail shortly after inception, with some closing down entirely within a few years. This alarming rate of failure is often linked to inadequate networking capability. Although networking capability is believed to foster beneficial exchanges and strategic partnerships, there is limited empirical evidence connecting its four dimensions coordination, partner's knowledge, relation skills, and internal communication with SME survival. Statistics reveal that 75–80% of Nigerian SMEs fail within the first three years (Akingbolu, 2014), despite the country's wealth of natural resources and entrepreneurial potential. Scholars such as Josefy et al. (2017) have emphasized that poor networking capability negatively impacts SME survival, making it a critical area of focus for researchers and practitioners alike.

Despite Nigeria's recognition as a leader in entrepreneurial spirit (GEM, 2018), the persistent failure rate of SMEs suggests that having entrepreneurial intent alone is insufficient for sustained success. According to Coric et al. (2014), the survival and development of enterprises depend largely on the strategic application of networking capabilities to launch and guide business operations. Most previous studies have narrowly focused on isolated components of networking, such as internal communication (Okuneye et al., 2015) or its impact on performance (Mário et al., 2017), while others explored network capability in combination with entrepreneurial orientation (Walter et al., 2016). However, no study has comprehensively examined the full spectrum of networking capability dimensions in relation to SME survival in Nasarawa State. It is on this basis that the current study seeks to assess the effect of network capability—measured through coordination, partner's knowledge, relation skills, and internal communication—on the survival of SMEs in Nasarawa State, Nigeria.

The general purpose of this study is to examine the effect of network capability on the survival of SMEs in Nasarawa State Nigeria. While the specific objectives are to:

- i. Evaluate the effect of coordination on the survival of SMEs in Nasarawa State, Nigeria;
- ii. Determine the effect of partners' knowledge on the survival of SMEs in Nasarawa State, Nigeria;
- iii. Assess the effect of internal communication on the survival of SMEs in Nasarawa State, Nigeria;
- and
- iv. Examine the effect of relational skills on the survival of SMEs in Nasarawa State, Nigeria.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Network Capability**

According to Ritter and Gemünden (2022), network capability refers to a firm's ability to initiate, manage, and leverage relationships with external partners to gain access to critical resources, information, and opportunities. This ability enables firms to function effectively in interconnected business environments where collaboration and alliances are key to survival and growth.

Walter et al. (2006) define network capability as the sum of skills necessary to develop and manage relationships with external organizations. These skills include coordination, communication, partner knowledge, and relationship management, which collectively help firms enhance their competitive advantage by creating value through external interactions. Their framework emphasizes how well a firm can systematically build, sustain, and exploit inter-organizational relationships for strategic benefit.

More recently, Kraus et al. (2023) describe network capability as the dynamic competency of a firm to identify, establish, and nurture productive relationships with multiple stakeholders in its operating environment. They argue that in today's volatile markets, network capability not only provides access to external knowledge and technologies but also facilitates innovation and adaptation through shared learning and cooperative behavior.

### **Coordination**

According to Mintzberg (2020), coordination involves the synchronization of interdependent tasks to ensure that organizational efforts are harmonized and directed towards collective objectives. It is particularly critical in dynamic business environments where diverse actors must collaborate seamlessly to deliver consistent outcomes.

Brettel and Flatten (2021) define coordination as the capability of a firm to manage inter-organizational interactions in a structured manner, enabling resource sharing, knowledge exchange, and joint problem-solving with partner firms. This form of coordination extends beyond internal operations, encompassing external networks that are vital for organizational adaptability and long-term survival.

Similarly, Gnyawali and Madhavan (2022) describe coordination as a strategic function that facilitates the alignment of activities across organizational boundaries, enhancing cooperation and ensuring that all partners contribute effectively to mutual goals. They emphasize that in small businesses, strong coordination mechanisms reduce redundancies, improve efficiency, and increase the firm's resilience in a competitive market.

### **Partner's Knowledge**

According to Lin et al. (2021), partner's knowledge encompasses the depth and breadth of awareness a company has about its partners' strengths, weaknesses, operational styles, and goals, which helps facilitate effective collaboration and informed decision-making in joint ventures or strategic alliances. This understanding enables businesses to align their operations with those of their partners, minimize conflicts, and maximize synergy.

Similarly, Mikalef et al. (2020) define partner's knowledge as the accumulated insight a firm possesses regarding the technological, managerial, and cultural practices of its partner organizations. This knowledge is crucial for fostering trust, enhancing communication, and achieving mutual objectives in inter-organizational relationships. It supports innovation and adaptability by allowing firms to learn from each other, share resources, and respond collectively to environmental changes.

### **Internal Communication**

According to Welch and Jackson (2021), internal communication encompasses the strategic management of communication processes that support employee engagement, enhance organizational cohesion, and align employee behavior with corporate goals. It includes both formal and informal channels, ensuring that staff members are informed, connected, and motivated to contribute effectively to organizational success.

Similarly, Men and Yue (2022) define internal communication as the planned and consistent dissemination of relevant organizational information through appropriate internal channels to foster employee understanding, trust, and participation. They emphasize that effective internal communication strengthens organizational culture, boosts morale, and plays a critical role in navigating change, particularly in dynamic and competitive business environments.

### **Relational Skills**

According to Schmitt et al. (2018), relational skills are the competencies that allow firms to build and manage relationships with key stakeholders in order to access complementary resources, adapt to

changing environments, and co-create value. These skills involve trust-building, communication, emotional intelligence, and mutual respect, all of which are essential for long-term collaboration.

In the view of Wang and Chugh (2020), relational skills are defined as the social and interpersonal capabilities that help individuals and organizations navigate complex interactions, manage conflict, and sustain cooperation across diverse teams or partners. These skills are seen as essential in entrepreneurial and small business contexts where strategic partnerships and collaboration are crucial for business survival and performance.

### **Survival**

Josefy et al. (2017) defined survival as the ability of an enterprise to continue business operations, maintaining its original ownership, ability to meet with the customers' needs and wants, ability to retain key works, ability to withstand competitors, and remaining financially solvent (avoiding bankruptcy). The roots of enterprise survival are from biological sciences and the main theme of enterprise survival was the idea that, in nature, there is competition to survive and only the fittest survives. Similarly, when the organization is unable to survive, it may be declared that it has failed. The failure can be of three types: firstly, discontinued business operations; secondly, change of ownership through acquisition or merger; thirdly, the business is declared as bankrupt or insolvent. Organizational survival depends upon different factors including size of the organization, organizational flexibility and specialization, organizational age, financial position, sales, profitability, working capital, retained earnings, market structure, and government policies (Schwartz, 2013).

### **Coordination and Survival of Small and Medium Scale Enterprise**

Ojotu, et. al. (2019) carried out research on the effect of networking on performance of small and medium scale enterprises in Benue State, Nigeria. The objective of the study is to examine the effect of networking on the performance of Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SMEs). The study focused on SMEs in Makurdi metropolis. The study specifically examined the effect of network coordination, network structure, network governance and network content on the performance of SMEs in Makurdi, Benue State. The study adopted the survey research design due to its ease of application and the speed with which its results are ready. The target population for this study consists of 708 owners/senior management staff of SMEs in Makurdi metropolis in Benue State, Nigeria. These consisted of different sectors like food processing (24), livestock rearing (32), schools (86) trading (164), art/craft (42), baking (34), table water (17), fashion and designing/ hair dressing (97), ICT (92), health (65) and transportation (55). 256 respondents were sampled. The questionnaire was used as the research tool for data collection. The research tool consists of two 4-point Likert questionnaires. With the aid of SPSS version 21, multiple regression analysis was used to test the strength of the effect of network dimensions on performance of SMEs. Findings of the study revealed that network coordination, network structure and network governance have significant effect on the performance of SMEs in Benue State. Also, the result indicated that network content has significant effect on the performance of SMEs in Benue State. The study concluded that the structure, governance and content of networks maintained by SMEs have significant effect on their performances. The variables used for the study were not the only variables to measure networking capability.

Worku (2017) conducted a study on the analysis of factors that affect the long-term survival of small businesses in Pretoria, South Africa. The objective of the study was to the effect of coordination on long-term survival of small businesses in Pretoria, South Africa. The study adopted a survey research design. The population of the study comprised of 349 small businesses in Pretoria, South Africa. The sample size used for the study was small businesses 188 in Pretoria, South Africa. Questionnaire was used as the instrument for data collection in the study. Pearson's chi-square tests of associations, binary logistic regression analysis and the Cox Proportional Hazards Model were used data analysis and for estimating odds ratios and hazard ratios of key predictors of viability and long-term survival. The study found that the long-term survival and viability of small businesses in Pretoria, South Africa were adversely affected by lack of proper coordination of entrepreneurial skills, supervisory support to newly



established businesses, and inability to operators running newly established businesses to acquire relevant vocational skills.

### **Partner's Knowledge and Survival of Small and Medium Scale Enterprise**

Ibidunni et al. (2020) explored the link between partners knowledge transfer and innovation performance of informal economy SMEs that are involved in international business relationships in Nigeria. The study adopted a survey research design. The study the sample size used for the study comprised of 370 owners-managers and managers of small and medium enterprises in Nigeria's informal electronic market. The study utilized questionnaire as the instrument for data collection. The data generated for the study was analyzed using Structural Equation Model (AMOS 22). The study found that partner's knowledge transfer dimensions, such as partner's ideas, R&D and social networking, have varying levels of impact on innovation performance of informal sector SMEs. The study also found that partner's knowledge transfer from training showed an inverse and insignificant relationship with innovation performance. The study established implications and recommendations that will be useful for theory and practice. The variable used in the study is only a variable of network capability.

Mtswenem (2019) examined the effect of knowledge management on the performance of quoted construction Firms in Nigeria. The study was undertaken to ascertain the effect of knowledge management on the performance of Quoted Construction Firms in Nigeria. The study used knowledge creation, storage, sharing, and implementation as proxies of knowledge management while profitability, growth and survival were used to measured performance. The study adopted the cross-sectional survey research design. The population used for the study comprised of senior and middle level managers of the seven quoted construction firms in Nigeria which has total of 5657. The sample size used for the study was 411 of senior and middle level managers of the seven quoted construction firms in Nigeria which was determined using the Taro Yemen's formula for sample size determination. The study utilized questionnaire as the instrument for data collection. The data gathered for the study was analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) via the instrumentality of the SPSS AMOSV erosion. The study found that knowledge creation had significant effect on profitability but not on growth and survival; knowledge storage had significant effect on profitability, but not on growth and survival; knowledge sharing had significant effect on profitability, growth and survival and knowledge implementation had significant effect on profitability, growth and survival. The study covered only quoted construction Firms in Nigeria, as such, the findings from the study cannot be generalized to other manufacturing firms and other industrial sectors.

### **Internal Communication and Survival of Small and Medium Scale Enterprise**

Najib, et al. (2021) carried out extensive research on Business Survival of Small and Medium-Sized Restaurants through a Crisis: The study aimed to investigate the effects of internal communication on the business survival of SME restaurants in Indonesia. The study analyzed the impact of internal communication on the innovation of SME restaurants. The study adopted a survey research design. A total of 120 owners or managers of SME restaurants participated in this study. The sample was collected based on a purposive method. The study used questionnaire as the instrument for data collection. To analyze the relationship among latent variables, the study implemented structural equation modeling (SEM). The results of the study show that internal communication has a positive impact on business survival through marketing and process innovation. In this study, the entrepreneurial factor had the highest impact on SMEs' survival. The sample size used for the study was too small. Also, the study focused only on SME restaurants in Indonesia, as such the result from the study cannot be generalize to SMEs in other sectors.

Mário et al. (2017) investigated the influence of internal communication on the organizations' performance: proposition of model. The aim of the study was to develop a model to identify the influence of communication, organizational identification and trust on the organizations' performance and proposition of model. The research was descriptive and quantitative, and it was conducted in a soft drink Industry, in Brazil. Hypotheses (n=9) were raised and 310 employees were sampled for the study,

considering the constructs: Internal Communication, Trust in the Co-workers, Trust in the Manager, Organizational Identity and Performance. The study used questionnaire as the instrument for data collection. The data gathered for the study was analyzed using PLS-SEM. The results of the study revealed that internal communication has positive and significant influence on the organizations' performance. The higher the organizational identification, the greater will be the trust in the manager and the performance.

### **Relational Skills and Survival of Small and Medium Scale Enterprise**

Saramolee, et al. (2022) conducted a study on relational skills development affecting organizational learning and corporate performance: An Empirical Study in Thailand. The objective of the study is to describe the factors and patterns of relationships involved in dominant relational skills development by focusing on social skills that influence organizational learning for business sustainability and operational efficiency enhancement. The research provides guidelines that hotel businesses in Phuket Province can use to implement strategies in a currently rapidly-changing and competitive environment. This study shows that relational skills and social skills influencing the organizational performance of the hotel businesses in Phuket include communication, leadership, problem solving, and teamwork skill. This analytical result is based on resource-based and service innovation theories and can be used to improve organizations operating performance. The study only relied on empirical reviews and theories and did not conduct any statistical analysis.

Muslimu & Alhassan (2020) examined the effect of relational skills on small and medium scale enterprises (SMEs) performance: a study of registered businesses operating in sabongari market Kano. The aim of the study was to investigate the effect of entrepreneurial personal maturity and technical skills on SMEs performance among owners/managers operating registered businesses in Sabon Gari Market Kano, Nigeria. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study comprised of three hundred and three (303) owners/managers operating registered businesses in Sabon Gari Market, Kano. The sample size used for the study was one hundred and seventy-two (172) business owners/managers which 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 and Regression analysis was used to analyze the collected data through Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). Face validity and reliability test (Cronbach's Alpha) were conducted. The study found that personal maturity and entrepreneur skills have significant positive effect on small and medium scale enterprises (SMEs) performance in Sabon Gari Market, Kano, Nigeria. The study covered only single market in Kano. The stud used technical skills to proxy entrepreneurial skills and personal maturity to measured entrepreneurial skills. Therefore, the findings from the study cannot be generalized to other markets not selected and other states in Nigeria.

### **The Survival Based Theory**

This theory, as previous one, was also initially introduced in the field of economics. Researchers such as Schumpeter (1934), Alchian (1950), Harrod (1939) and Marshall (1949) were among the first who introduced the idea of evolutionary thinking and natural selection into the concept of economics. Hence it is not a surprise to find most common application of survival of the fittest theory found in economics, mainly being used to analyze how firms thrive and compete in industries, and also to explain changes in economy (Nelson & Winter, 1982). The concept of survival-based theory or some might call it as "survival of the fittest" theory was originally developed by Herbert Spencer (Miesing & Preble, 1985). This theory, which was quite popular during late 19th and early 20th century, emphasized on the notion that by following the principle of nature, only the best and the fittest of competitors will win, which in the end would lead to the improvement of the social community as a whole.

The survival-based view in strategic management emphasized on the assumptions that in order to survive, organizations has to deploy strategies that should be focused on running very efficient operations

and can respond rapidly to the changing of competitive environment (Khairuddin, 2005), since the one that survive is the one that is the fittest and most able to adapt to the environment. Mc Donald was argued as one of the success story which suit perfectly to the Darwinian survival of the fittest theory (Stillman, 2003). It was argued that the success story of Mc Donald was attributed to its ability to adapt high level of efficiency into the hurried place of modern life and efficient workplace. However, some of the proponents of this view argued that selecting a particular set of strategy would not be optimal. Instead, it is better to experiment with several strategies at once and let the process of natural selection choose the best strategy that adapts better to the environment (Lynch, 2000). This view put the survival-theories of strategic management. The application of this theory in the field of corporate turnaround was also quite straight forward. An ailing company usually faces lots of problems simultaneously, such as financial difficulties, failing products, losing key personnel and many others. These were actually just signs that the company was not running efficiently. Turning around company usually characterized with under-performing sales and under-capacity in terms of factory output and overwhelming size in human resource department. These characteristics of inefficient organization could explain why such turning around companies usually layoff its workers, repositioning their products and selling off its under-capacity assets in order to strengthening their condition. It is actually the primary objective of such turning around company to make the organization run efficiently in order to better adapt to the environment, improving its profitability and to achieve the ultimate goal of surviving the competitive market in which it operates.

This study adopts survival-based theory for the fact that theory holds that an enterprise which have best network capability ahead of its competitors or rivers wins and survive. As survival-based theory argued, if it is not adapting to the ever-changing environment and become efficient in it, it simply will not survive. Thus, the one that really successfully turned-around is the one that operates efficiently and adapting successfully to its environment with the help of its network capability.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study adopted a survey research design because the research objectives required the use of primary data. The population of this study comprised of registered small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Nasarawa State. According to Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN) (2021), the registered SMEs in Nasarawa State have total population of Ten Thousand Seven Hundred and Twenty-Eight (10,728) firms, where small enterprises have total population of Ten Thousand One Hundred and Sixty-Three (10,163) and medium enterprises have total population of Five Hundred and Sixty-Five (565). Therefore, the population of this study comprised of Ten Thousand Seven Hundred and Twenty-Eight (10,728) registered SMEs in Nasarawa State as provided by (SMEDAN, 2021).

In order to determine the sample size for this study base on the population stated above, the study adopted Yamane (1967) formula for calculating sample size for finite population to determine the sample size for the study. Thus, the sample size is 386. The study used convenience sampling technique to select the respondents. Also, the targeted respondents for this study were SMEs owners or managers or staff who assumed the responsibilities of owner or manager.

For the purpose of this study, primary data was used. Questionnaire was used to collect data from the respondents using the five (5) point Likert scale. The questionnaire was used because it offers certain advantages such as; it allows for large number of information to be collected from a large number of people or respondents in a short time period, the results of the questionnaire can be quickly and easily quantified by the researcher, can be analyzed scientifically and when the data has been quantified, it can be used to compare and contrast other researches.

The data collected for this study was analyze using Partial Least Square Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The Partial Least Square Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was used to determine the effect of independent variables on dependent variable.

## Model Specification

The model of this study is design as shown in fig. below:

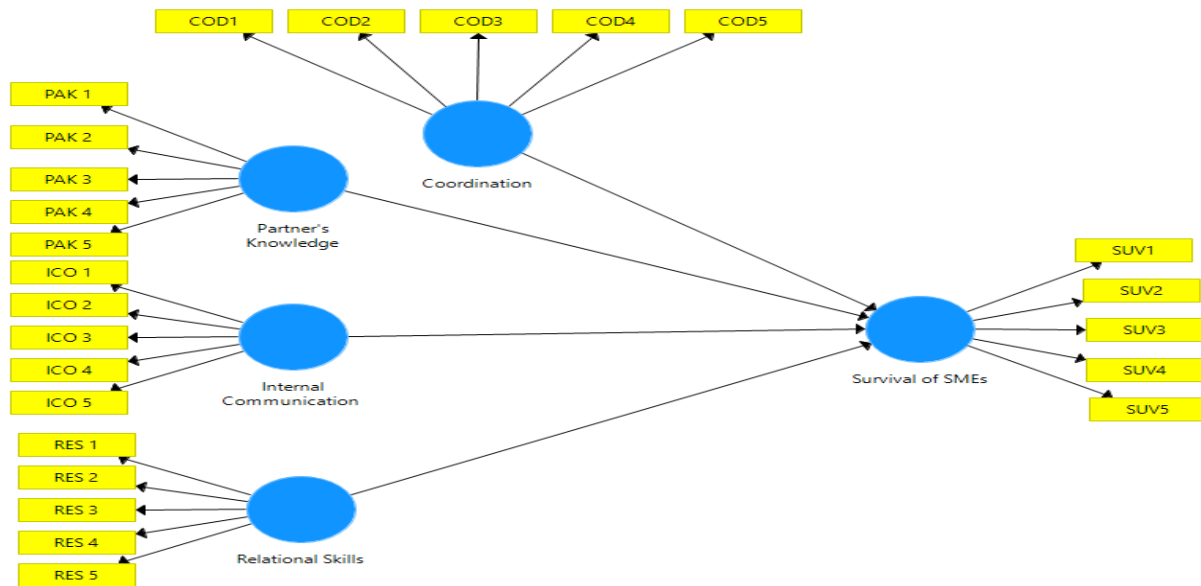


Fig. 3.1 Research Model

The fig. 3.1 above is the mode designed for the study. The model show all the variables used in this study with independent variables each pointed arrows to the dependant variable. It also shows the questionnaire items used for each variable.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Out of Three Hundred and Eighty-Six (386) copies of questionnaire administered, Three Hundred and Twenty-Seven (327) copies were returned; Fifty-Nine (59) copies were not returned. Out of Three Hundred and Twenty-Seven (327) copies of questionnaire returned, sixty-three (63) copies were invalid and not useable for the analysis and Two Hundred and Sixty-Four (264) copies were valid and usable for the analysis. Therefore, the Two Hundred and Sixty-Four (264) copies which represent 68% of the total copies of questionnaire administered were valid and deemed useful and the analysis was done using these Two Hundred and Sixty-Four (264) copies.

### Measurement Model Evaluation

The measurement model was evaluated using convergent validity. Convergent validity is determined by examining the factor loadings, composite reliability and average variance extracted (AVE) (Gholami, et al, 2013). The result of the Convergent validity with regard to coordination is shown in figure 4.1 and Table 4.3 bellow. From the result all the questionnaire items used for coordination has achieved the acceptable factor loadings of above 0.60; it composite reliability (CR) values is above 0.7 and average variance extracted (AVE) is above 0.5 as recommended by Hair et al. (2019). This is shown in the figure bellow.

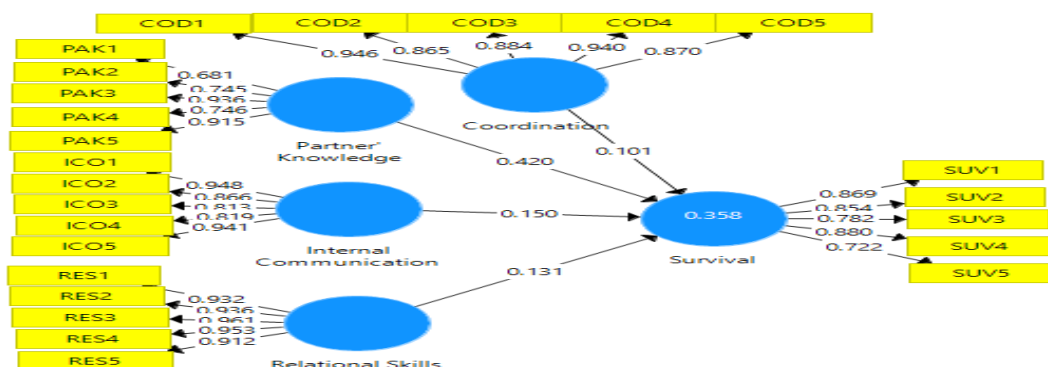


Fig. 4.1: Measurement model of the study constructs and indicators.



Source: author's computation via SmartPLS, 2025

**Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)**

	Survival	Coordination	Partner's Knowledge	Internal communication	Relational skills
Survival					
Coordination	0.275				
Partner's Knowledge	0.337	0.268			
Internal communication	0.560	0.410	0.368		
Relational skills	0.363	0.358	0.608	0.416	

Source: author's computation via SmartPLS, 2025

Table 4.8 above depicted the results of Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio for the variables used in this study. The result shows that the value of Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) in all the respective cases are less than 0.90 which indicates that there is absent of discriminate validity problems. Since discriminate validity problems are present only when HTMT values are high than 0.90 for structural models (Henseler, et al., 2015).

**Model Goodness of Fit**

	Saturated Model	Estimated Model
SRMR	0.050	0.050
d_ULS	0.797	0.797
d_G	2.363	2.363
Chi-Square	2,364.083	2,364.083
NFI	0.737	0.737

Source: author's computation SmartPLS Output, 2025

Table 4.10 above shows the result of model goodness of fit. Sequel to the need to validate the PLS model, there is a need to assess the goodness of fit of the model as suggested by Hair, et al., (2017). This study used the standardised root mean square residual's (SRMR). The choice of this index was based on the fact that the SRMR provides the absolute fit measure where a value of zero indicates a perfect fit. The study adopted Hu and Bentler (1998) suggestion that a value of less than 0.08 represents a good fit while applying SRMR for model goodness of fit. The study result indicates an SRMR value of 0.056 which is less than 0.08, therefore indicating the fitness of the model of this study as suggested by Hu and Bentler (1998); Ringle, et al. (2019).

**Hypotheses Testing**

**Table: Results of the Structural Model Analysis (Hypotheses Testing)**

Hypotheses	Relationship	Path Coefficient Beta ( $\beta$ )	Standard Error	T Statistics	P value	Decision	R <sup>2</sup>	Adj.	R <sup>2</sup>
H <sub>01</sub>	COD->SUV	0.099	0.062	1.641	0.10	Accepted	0.35		
H <sub>02</sub>	PAK->SUV	0.427	0.047	8.925	0.00	Rejected	8	0.350	
H <sub>03</sub>	ICO->SUV	0.156	0.054	2.763	0.00	Rejected			
H <sub>04</sub>	RES->SUV	0.128	0.070	1.882	0.06	Accepted			

Source: author's computation via SmartPLS, 2025

The fig. 4.2 and Table 4.11 above show the structural model and hypotheses testing result for this study. The table shows the values for Beta, standard Error, T-statistics, P Value, decision,  $R^2$  and Adj.  $R^2$ . The beta value, t-values and the corresponding p-value were used in assessing the structural model in this study. This was carried out through the SmartPLS bootstrapping procedure. The rejected and accepted were use as decision for significant and insignificant respectively.

**Ho<sub>1</sub>:** Coordination has no significant effect on the survival of SMEs in Nasarawa State, Nigeria.

This hypothesis was carried out through the bootstrapping procedure. The bootstrapping out from the Smart PLS shows that path coefficient of coordination and survival of SMEs (COD->SUV) is positive and statistically significant. The result from this analysis shows that coordination has positive and insignificant effect on survival of SMEs in Nasarawa state, Nigeria at 5% level of significant. This decision was based on the positive beta ( $\beta$ ) value of 0.099 (9%), t-value of 1.642 which is below 1.96 and its corresponding p-value of 0.101 ( $\beta$  value = 0.099, T-value = 1.642 and P-value = 0.101). This result has not provided the sufficient ground for rejection of the hypothesis one which states that coordination has no significant effect on the survival of SMEs in Nasarawa State, Nigeria. Therefore, this null hypothesis is accepted. Furthermore, this result has proved that the relationship between coordination and of survival of SMEs in Nasarawa State, Nigeria (COD->SUV) is positive and insignificant at 5% with t value less than 1.96. This result is shown in figure 4.2 and table 4.11 respectively above.

**Ho<sub>2</sub>:** Partners' knowledge has no significant effect on the survival of SMEs in Nasarawa State, Nigeria. This was carried out through the SmartPLS bootstrapping procedure. The result of the test of the hypothesis with respect to partners' knowledge and survival of SMEs in Nasarawa State, Nigeria (PAK->SUV), the bootstrapping result from the output of Smart PLS above reveals that path coefficient of partners' knowledge has positive and significant effect on survival of SMEs in Nasarawa State, Nigeria at 5% level of significant. This decision was based on the positive beta ( $\beta$ ) value of 0.427(43%), t-value of 8.925 which is greater than 1.96 and its corresponding p-value of 0.000 ( $\beta$  value = 0.427, t-value = 8.925 and p-value = 0.000). This result has provided sufficient ground for the rejection of the null hypothesis which states that partners' knowledge has no significant effect on the survival of SMEs in Nasarawa State, Nigeria. Therefore, this null hypothesis is hereby rejected. Furthermore, this result has proved that the relationship between partners' knowledge and the survival of SMEs in Nasarawa State, Nigeria is positive and significant at 5% level of significant. This result is shown in figure 4.2 and table 4.11 above.

**Ho<sub>3</sub>:** Internal communication has no significant effect on the survival of SMEs in Nasarawa State, Nigeria.

This was carried out through the SmartPLS bootstrapping procedure. The result of the test of the hypothesis with respect to internal communication and survival of SMEs in Nasarawa State, Nigeria (ICO->SUV), the bootstrapping result from the output of Smart PLS above reveals that path coefficient of internal communication has positive and significant effect on survival of SMEs in Nasarawa State, Nigeria at 5% level of significant. This decision was based on the beta ( $\beta$ ) value of 0.156 (16%), t-value of 2.763 which is greater than 1.96 and its corresponding p-value of 0.006 ( $\beta$  value = 0.156, t-value = 2.763 and p-value = 0.006). This result has provided sufficient ground for the rejection of the null hypothesis which states that internal communication has no significant effect on the survival of SMEs in Nasarawa State, Nigeria. Therefore, this null hypothesis is hereby rejected. Furthermore, this result has proved that the relationship between internal communication and the survival of SMEs in Nasarawa State, Nigeria is positive and significant at 5% level of significant. This result is shown in figure 4.2 and table 4.11 above.

**Ho<sub>4</sub>:** Relational skills have no significant effect on the survival of SMEs in Nasarawa State, Nigeria.

This hypothesis was carried out through the bootstrapping procedure. The bootstrapping out from the Smart PLS shows that path coefficient relational skills and the survival of SMEs in Nasarawa State, Nigeria (RES->SUV) is positive and statistically insignificant. The result from this analysis shows that relational skills have positive and insignificant effect on survival of SMEs in Nasarawa State, Nigeria at

5% level of significant. This decision was based on the positive beta ( $\beta$ ) value of 0.128 (13%), t-value of 1.882 which is less than 1.96 and its corresponding p-value of 0.060 ( $\beta$  value = 0.128, T-value = 1.882 and P-value = 0.060). This result has not provided sufficient ground for rejection of the hypothesis which states that relational skills have no significant effect on the survival of SMEs in Nasarawa State, Nigeria. Therefore, this null hypothesis is accepted. Furthermore, this result has proved that the relationship between relational skills and survival of SMEs in Nasarawa State, Nigeria (RES->SUV) is positive and insignificant at 5% with t value less than 1.96. This result is shown in figure 4.2 and table 4.11 respectively above.

The result of this study reveals that partner's knowledge and internal communication has positive and statistically significant effect on survival of SMEs in Nasarawa State, Nigeria, while coordination and relational skills has positive and statistical insignificant effect on survival of SMEs in Nasarawa State, Nigeria.

### *Discussion of Findings*

The objective of this study was to examine the effect of network capability on the survival of SMEs in Nasarawa State Nigeria. The descriptive statistics was computed and the result provided the mean score of 0.101, 0.420, 0.150, 0.131 and 0.232 for coordination, partners' knowledge, internal communication, relational skills and survival and their respective standard deviation scores of 0.062, 0.047, 0.054, 0.070 and 0.126 for coordination, partners' knowledge, internal communication, relational skills and survival respectively. The discriminate validity test was carried out using Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio. The Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio for the variables used was computed and the result revealed that there is no problem of discriminate validity in all respective cases. The test of the model goodness of fit was also conducted and the result revealed the fitness of the model. The measurement model was evaluated using convergent validity and structural model and hypotheses testing were also computed. The general findings of the study from the test of the hypotheses revealed that coordination and relational skills has positive and statistical insignificant effect on survival of SMEs in Nasarawa State, Nigeria, while, partner's knowledge and internal communication has positive and statistically significant effect on survival of SMEs in Nasarawa State, Nigeria. The specific findings are:

### **Hypothesis one**

Hypothesis one stated that coordination has no significant effect on the survival of SMEs in Nasarawa State, Nigeria. The statistical analysis conducted on this hypothesis has not provided evidence for it rejection, therefore, this hypothesis is accepted. The finding from this hypothesis revealed that coordination has a positive and statistical insignificant effect on the survival of SMEs in Nasarawa State, Nigeria. This implies that coordination of network by SMEs in Nasarawa state, Nigeria is positive but not significant to improve the survival of SMEs businesses. In other words, the coordination of network by SMEs operators in Nasarawa state, Nigeria is good but is not enough to increases the survival of their businesses, this could be as a result of ineffective resources and activities integration and synchronization for ensuring its effective utilization. This finding is in line with the finding of Worku (2017) conducted a study on the analysis of factors that affect the long-term survival of small businesses in Pretoria, South Africa and found that the long-term survival and viability of small businesses in Pretoria, South Africa were adversely affected by lack of proper coordination of entrepreneurial skills, supervisory support to newly established businesses, and inability to operators running newly established businesses to acquire relevant vocational skills. This finding contradicts with the finding of Ojotu, et. al. (2019) who examined the effect of networking on performance of small and medium scale enterprises in Benue State, Nigeria and network coordination, network structure and network governance has significant effect on the performance of SMEs in Benue State.

### **Hypothesis two**

Hypothesis two stated that partners' knowledge has no significant effect on the survival of SMEs in Nasarawa State, Nigeria. The statistical analysis conducted on this hypothesis has provided evidence for its rejection, therefore this hypothesis is rejected. The finding from this hypothesis revealed that partners'

knowledge has positive and statistically significant effect on the survival of SMEs in Nasarawa State, Nigeria. This implies that partners' knowledge used by SMEs in Nasarawa State, Nigeria positively and significantly improves the survival of SMEs in Nasarawa State, Nigeria. In other words, partners' knowledge by SMEs in Nasarawa State, Nigeria is good and the more SMEs in Nasarawa State, Nigeria increases the use of partners' knowledge in their businesses the more it increases survival of SMEs of their businesses or the more their businesses survive, this could be as a result of the ability of SMEs in Nasarawa State, Nigeria systematically used of partners' good ideas in running their businesses. This finding is in line with the finding of Ibidunni et al. (2020) who explored the link between partners knowledge transfer and innovation performance of informal economy SMEs that are involved in international business relationships in Nigeria and found that partner's knowledge transfer dimensions, such as partner's ideas, R&D and social networking, have varying levels of impact on innovation performance of informal sector SMEs. This finding is also in line with the finding of Mtswenem (2019) who examined the effect of knowledge management on the performance of quoted construction Firms in Nigeria and found that knowledge creation had significant effect on profitability but not on growth and survival; knowledge storage had significant effect on profitability, but not on growth and survival; knowledge sharing had significant effect on profitability, growth and survival and knowledge implementation had significant effect on profitability, growth and survival.

### **Hypothesis three**

Hypothesis three of this study stated that internal communication has no significant effect on the survival of SMEs in Nasarawa State, Nigeria. The statistical analysis conducted on this hypothesis has provided evidence for its rejection, therefore this hypothesis is rejected. The finding from this hypothesis revealed that internal communication has positive and statistically significant effect on the survival of SMEs in Nasarawa State, Nigeria. This implies that internal communication by SMEs operators in Nasarawa State, Nigeria positively and significantly results to the survival of SMEs in Nasarawa State, Nigeria. In other words, internal communication process adopted by SMEs operators in Nasarawa State, Nigeria is good and it led their business survival, this could be as a result of the ability of SMEs operators in Nasarawa State, Nigeria to effectively disseminate information and knowledge acquired from the outside world and inside in to their businesses activities. This finding is in line with the finding of Najib, et al. (2021) who investigated the effects of internal communication on the business survival of SME restaurants in Indonesia and found that internal communication has a positive impact on business survival through marketing and process innovation. This finding is also in line with the finding of Mário et al. (2017) who investigated the influence of internal communication on the organizations' performance: proposition of model and found that internal communication has positive and significant influence on the organizations' performance.

### **Hypothesis four**

Hypothesis four stated that relational skills have no significant effect on the survival of SMEs in Nasarawa State, Nigeria. The statistical analysis conducted on this hypothesis has not provided evidence for its rejection, therefore, this hypothesis is accepted. The finding from this hypothesis revealed that relational skills have a positive and statistical insignificant effect on the survival of SMEs in Nasarawa State, Nigeria. This implies that relational skills employed by SMEs operators in Nasarawa state, Nigeria is positive but insignificantly to contribute to the survival of SMEs. In other words, the relational skills employed by SMEs operators in Nasarawa state, Nigeria is good but is not enough to increase the survival of their businesses, this could be as a result of the inability of the SMEs operators in in Nasarawa state to effectively relate with others. This finding is in contradict the finding of Saramolee et al. (2022) who conducted a study on relational skills development affecting organizational learning and relational skills and social skills influencing the organizational performance of the hotel businesses in Phuket. This finding also contradicts the finding of Muslimu & Alhassan (2020) who examined the effect of relational skills on small and medium scale enterprises (SMEs) performance: a study of registered businesses operating in sabongari market Kano and personal maturity and entrepreneur skills have significant positive effect on small and medium scale enterprises (SMEs) performance in Sabon Gari Market, Kano.



## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings from this study, it is concluding that coordination positively and insignificantly influences the survival of SMEs in Nasarawa State, Nigeria. This implies that coordination process of SMEs operators in Nasarawa state is positive but not significant, that is coordination is not adequate to influence the survival of businesses.

Furthermore, the study also concludes that partner's knowledge has positive and statistically significant influence on the survival of SMEs in Nasarawa State, Nigeria. This implies that partner's knowledge used by SMEs operator in Nasarawa state, Nigeria positively and sufficiently influences the survival of SMEs in Nasarawa State, Nigeria.

Similarly, the study also concluded that internal communication positively and significantly influences the survival of SMEs in Nasarawa State, Nigeria. This implies that internal communication practice by SMEs operators in Nasarawa State, Nigeria is positive and significant to the survival of SMEs in Nasarawa State, Nigeria.

Lastly, the study concludes that relational skills positively and insignificantly influence the survival of SMEs in Nasarawa State, Nigeria. This implies that relational skills practice of SMEs operators in Nasarawa state, Nigeria is positive but not significantly to influence the survival of their businesses.

Based on the findings and the conclusions drawn by this study, the following recommendations are offered:

- i. SMEs operators in Nasarawa state, Nigeria should improve their coordination process by way of effectively integrating and synchronizing all the resources of the enterprises in order to gain effective utilization of those resources so as to achieve the highest level of business success.
- ii. SMEs operators in Nasarawa state, Nigeria should try maintain the use of partners knowledge by way of identifying more partner's potentials with relevant resources and capabilities to complement resources and capability needs for the own advantage and success of the businesses.
- iii. SMEs operators in Nasarawa state, Nigeria should maintain the use of internal communication practice by way of continuing improving the process channels of internal communication such as face-to-face, memo, prompt feedbacks and holding regular meetings in order to gain more success in their businesses.
- iv. SMEs operators in Nasarawa state, Nigeria should improve on their relational skills practice by way of effectively or attentively interacts and relates with their business partners and their clients (customers) in order to easily identify the strength and weakness of their business partners and to easily identify the problems of their customers so as to gain the success of the enterprise.

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## APPENDIX A

### QUESTIONNAIRE

#### EFFECT OF NETWORK CAPABILITY ON THE SURVIVAL OF SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES (SMEs) IN NASARAWA STATE, NIGERIA

SN	Items	SA	A	UD	D	SD
A	<b>COORDINATION</b>					
COD 1	Our enterprise analyze what we would like and desire to achieve with any partner					
COD 2	Our enterprise brings together all the resources within to ensure effective use					
COD 3	Our enterprise discusses regularly with partners how to support each other for success					
COD 4	Our enterprise bringing together the resources possessed within the organization and outsit the organization (its partners)					
COD 5	Our enterprise brings together all the required information to be up-to-date technology					
B	<b>PARTNERS' KNOWLEDGE</b>					
PAK1	In our enterprise, we know our partners' markets.					
PAK2	In our company, we know our partners' products/procedures/services					
PAK3	In our company, we know our partners' strengths and weaknesses.					
PAK4	our enterprise knows partners' potential and strategies					
PAK5	our enterprise knows our partners' strength and weakness					
C	<b>INTERNAL COMMUNICATION</b>					
ICO1	Our enterprise holds regular meetings for every workers to assess business progress					
ICO2	Our enterprise holds regular meetings for every workers to develop business plan					
ICO3	Our enterprise workers often give feedback to each other on every development					
ICO4	Our enterprise properly addressed the concerns and wishes of all the stakeholders					
ICO5	In our enterprise we feel comfortable sharing ideas directly with members and customers					
D	<b>RELATIONAL SKILLS</b>					
RES1	In our enterprise, we have the ability to build good personal relationships with our business partners.					
RES2	In our enterprise, we have the ability to build good personal relationships with our customers					
RES3	In our enterprise, we always solve problems constructively with our partners					
RES4	our enterprise workers are friendly with each other					
RES5	Our enterprise can put itself in partners' position					
	<b>SURVIVAL OF SMEs</b>					
SUV1	Our enterprise experience continuity in production/service					
SUV2	Our enterprise have capability of continuing business operations					
SUV3	Our enterprise have ability to meet with the customers' needs and wants					
SUV4	Our enterprise have ability to withstand competitors					
SUV5	Our enterprise always work to avoid out of cash					