

EMPLOYEE RETENTION PRACTICE AND SUSSTAINABILITY Of SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES: AN EXPERIENCE FROM REGISTERED SME IN ENUGU STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The study examined Employee Retention Practice and Sustainability of selected Small and Medium Enterprises.. This study sought to determine the effect of training and development programs on sustainability of selected small and medium enterprises in Enugu State, Nigeria, ascertain the effect of career growth opportunities on sustainability of selected small and medium enterprises in Enugu State, Nigeria and evaluate the extent to which work environment affect sustainability of the selected small and medium enterprises in Enugu State, Nigeria. A survey research design was adopted for the study. The study had population size of 1994 employee which was obtained from 25 registered small and medium scale enterprises in Enugu state with Manufacturing Association of Nigeria Enugu Chapter (MAN). and sample size was obtained using Taro Yamane to obtained sample size of 333. Data were collected through primary and secondary sources. Out of 333 copies of the questionnaire distributed, 320 copies (96.10 %) were returned while 13 copies (3.90%) were not returned. The hypotheses were tested using Multiple regression . The findings revealed that Training and development programs had a significant and positive effect on sustainability of selected small and medium enterprises in

Enugu State, Nigeria ($B = 0.635$; $t\text{-value} = 13.494$; $p\text{-value} = 0.000$). Career growth opportunities had a positive effect on sustainability of selected small and medium enterprises in Enugu State, Nigeria ($B = 0.712$; $t = 18.059$; $p = 0.000$). Work environment had positive and significant effect on sustainability of selected small and medium enterprises in Enugu State, Nigeria ($B = 0.745$; $t = 11.707$; $p = 0.000$). The study concluded that employee retention is crucial for the sustainability of SMEs in Enugu State, Nigeria, as it directly impacts their performance. To achieve sustainability, SMEs must implement a combination of retention practices, including competitive compensation, employee training and career development, and creating a positive work environment. The study recommended that SMEs should implement continuous training for their employees to improve performance and adopt new strategies for growth, such as idea generation and new market opportunities. and again this training programs should focus on developing key skills like leadership, networking, planning, and technological innovation

i. .

Keywords: Training and Development; Career Growth Opportunities; Collection and Employee Retention Practice, Work environment; Sustainability

Introduction

In today's business environment, increasing employees' turnover has become a serious challenge. This has caused Human Resources Managers and employers of labour to worry about the negative impact of employee turnover (the number of workers leaving their job over time) on business. The Department of Human resources departments is concerned with the number of people who voluntarily quits their jobs (Okafor, Ifekwem & Adeyi, 2019). Recruiting employees is not just a matter of getting people on board; getting the right people on board and retaining them has become very important for any organization (Ahmad, Khan, & Haque, 2020). Rombaut and Guerry (2020) opined that the main goal of employee retention is to prevent competent employees from leaving the organization. Milman and Dickson (2014) asserted that the retention of employees allows companies to direct their resources for development and performance-enhancing efforts.

Retaining key employees is important because it improves customer satisfaction, increases sales, fosters working relationships, improves employee-supervisor relationships and creates valuable succession planning. In such a system, the knowledge and learning of the system are successfully stored and improved. Failure to retain key employees is costly for any business. Gorde (2019) pointed out that a company must invest in employee retention to be successful. Furthermore, the creation and preservation of knowledge has become a key tool for accelerating competitiveness and improving organizational capabilities to respond to market changes. Bringing talented people into the organization facilitates achievement of their organizations vision which meet the goals that are innovative and can ensure global competitiveness.

Employees are considered as to be the top assets of the organization and as such, it is pertinent for organizations to exert efforts to retain existing talents to prevent new recruitment. To this end, increasing employee retention has become a trend in the business organizations in countries, including Nigeria. Employees with outstanding skills and talents can significantly contribute to the organization's competitive advantage. Hence, organizations should retain such talents particularly in this challenging and unpredictable environment where change is inevitable (Samuel & Chipunza, 2019).

Employee retention is beneficial for the organization and the employees at the same time. Employees today have a lot of good opportunities in hand. The moment they feel unhappy or dissatisfy with the existing employer or the job they are holding; they will always hop to another employment. It is solely the accountability of the employer to retain their best employees. Failure of doing so may lead to the loss of talented employees. Good employers should realize what to be done to attract and retain their employees. Employees are the most vital resources of any organization. If employees are not able to use their full potential and not heard and valued, they would leave because of stress and frustration (Kakar, Raziq, & Khan, 2015)

Research posits that retaining employees, especially in the small and medium scale enterprises, is highly challenging due to varying demand and job-hopping by a number of employees from time to time (Faldetta, Fasone and Provenzan, 2013). The employees working in the small and medium scale enterprises are supposed to deal with high demand of employers and understandable customers whom needs varies from time to time on a day-to-day basis, which causes stress. As a result, their satisfaction level may be reduced, and they may be unwilling to

stay there (Park and Min, 2020). The lack of growth and development is highlighted as the most discussed cause of the high turnover rate globally, particularly in the small and medium scale enterprises. Research highlights that the management of small and medium scale enterprises still focuses on old traditional methods to retain employees, i.e., one-way communication and feedback, where employees cannot share their long-term plans with their respective bosses and cannot get feedback or suggestions for their career development which work against sustainability of small and medium scale enterprises .

SME businesses can address sustainable development-related concerns in communities and boost transformations on the road to sustainability ([Westman, Luederitz, Kundurpi, ; Mercado, Weber, and Burch, 2019) . SMEs are likely to play a crucial role in the management of limited global social and environmental resources([Chege, and; Wang 2020). Being the main form of business and employment, SMEs are crucial actors for the construction of growth that is more inclusive and sustainable (OECD,2019).

Sustainability is considered as not only addressing the needs of society but also as allowing the creation of enhanced value beyond the stakeholder's needs (van Marrewijk, 2003). Companies are expected to generate value by way of producing the goods and services demanded by society while generating profits for their owners as well as welfare for society (European Commission 2002). New market and social pressures are progressively ushering towards a transformation in the values of corporations' activities, as well as in their horizons (European Commission 2002)], and organizations are expected to be "good citizen[s]" (Wolf, 2014).

The use of sustainability management tools and frameworks is poorly developed in most of the SMEs given that they are principally conceived for large companies and do not address the specific needs of SMEs([Das, Rangarajan, and Dutta, 2020). . Jenkins,(2006) argued that the implementation of sustainability-related practices in their business operations, such as it is understood for large companies, cannot merely be "scaled down to fit SMEs". Sustainability-related practices in most SME are informal, undertaken on an ad hoc and local basis and are not integrated within the core business strategy (Preuss, and; Perschke, 2010).

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of this study is to investigate the relationship between Employee Retention Practice and Sustainability of selected Small and Medium Enterprises.

The specific objectives are to:

- ii. Determine the effect of training and development programs on sustainability of selected small and medium enterprises in Enugu State, Nigeria
- iii. Ascertain the effect of career growth opportunities on sustainability of selected small and medium enterprises in Enugu State, Nigeria
- iv. Evaluate the extent to which work environment affect sustainability of selected small and medium enterprises in Enugu State, Nigeria

Review of Related Literature

Conceptual Review: Employee Retention

Employee retention is a key parameter for measuring the strength of an organization. The retention of employees is a priority as organizations compete to attract and retain talented individuals (Dhanpat, Manakana, Mbacaza, Mokone, & Mtongana, 2019). According to Matongolo, Kasekende, and Mafabi (2018), employee retention is the foremost driver of all the factors that can influence the effectiveness of an organization. Employee retention can be defined as the process in which employees are encouraged to remain with the organization for a maximum period of time or until the completion of their objectives (Khalid & Nawab, 2018).Dhanpat et al. (2019)defined employee retention as a way of maintaining employees within an organization

Khalid, Pahi, , & Ahmed. (2016) defined employee retention as a set of activities of an organization utilized for retaining employees. Besides this, Heman (2005) defined employee retention as an effort taken by organizations for providing and maintaining a work environment for the motivation of employees to uphold them with the organization. Employee retention is essential and beneficial for firms. Different firms address retention policies by focusing on employee needs for improvement in the work setting to retain employees for a longer time. According to Lockwook (2006), among organizational strategies, employee retention is a critical component through which an organization can maintain talented human capital. As stated by Hausknecht, Rodda, and Howard (2009) that talented employees working in different levels

judge organizational strategies and processes in a system if they found it suitable, then they decide to stay or to leave the organization.

Training and Development and sustainability

According to Devi & Shaik (2018), training is a process when under company auspices seeks a planned, coordinated and conscious manner to develop in the employees those understanding skill and attitude, which will maximize individual's present and future efficiency and effectiveness of the overall company operations. Training is a form of specialized education aimed at giving the trainee a particular or specialized knowledge, skill and attitude which he must possess to effectively perform in a given position. Training as defined by Armstrong (2009) is the planned organizational efforts or activities conceived with helping an employee acquire specific and immediately usable skills, knowledge, concepts, altitude and behaviours to enable him or her perform more efficiently and effectively on his present job. Adeolu (2019) saw training as a specialized process through which one learns to perform direct tasks of varying complexity and acquire expected job behaviours.. Thus, training is a process of increasing human efficiency through which people are offered the opportunity to acquire new skills and current knowledge required in carrying out various specialized tasks in their place of work. Development is concerned with specific programmes designed to prepare and groom a worker with particular education and training for higher responsibilities (Bello, 2017). While development according to Neelam (2019) is the process of becoming increasingly complex, more elaborate and differentiated by virtue of learning and maturation.

Ho: Training and development programs have no effect on sustainability of selected small and medium enterprises in Enugu State, Nigeria

Career growth opportunities and sustainability

Career development encompasses the progression and growth opportunities provided to employees within an organization. It includes training programs, mentorship, promotions, and other initiatives aimed at enhancing employees' skills and career trajectories. Recent studies highlight the importance of career development in influencing employee performance. For instance, (Gallup, 2023) found that organizations investing in employee development reported 11% greater profitability and were twice as likely to retain their employees. Furthermore, a study

by (Research.com, 2025) revealed that 68% of employees consider training essential to job satisfaction, emphasizing the link between development opportunities and employee contentment

Career development refers to the progression and growth of an employee within an organization. It involves structured planning, training, skill acquisition, and promotional pathways that empower employees to evolve professionally. Career development satisfies an individual's long-term aspirations and enhances their organizational commitment. When employees perceive opportunities for growth and advancement, they are more likely to be engaged, loyal, and productive (Munir & Hameed, 2024).

Ho: Career growth opportunities have no effect on sustainability of selected small and medium enterprises in Enugu State, Nigeria

Work environment and sustainability

Work environment is said to be the physical settings or conditions, social features, all other aspects that are directly or indirectly affecting performance in a job of an employee and all the organization in general comes under the term work environment. These elements of work environment can impact in various ways like it may influence the wellbeing of an individual, relationship with colleagues at organization, collaboration, efficiency, health of employee and more (Awan, 2015). Company culture, condition where work is being done, physical working conditions are few elements that signifies the work environment at any organization (Ali, 2016).

The work environment refer to day to day efficiency in work and productivity including how the work is being done, where it is being done and when was it done and all the elements associated with it which are required to do that work comes under the work environment (Jena, 2016). The career development of any employee can be improved if they pursue good opportunities with healthy and positive work environment which is comfortable and satisfactory to work in and helps in achieving both individual and organizational success with alignment of its core values.

The workplace environment is simply a physical location where an employee perform their daily tasks (Genzorová, 2017). The place could either be as small and private as a home office or as public and big as any big organization, industry. The work area is one significant social place where a centric concept for various things and multiple activities take place on daily basis which

are very important in shaping one organization and even one's future of the career they have (Satyvendra, 2019).

Ho: Work environment has no effect on sustainability of selected small and medium enterprises in Enugu State, Nigeria

Sustainability in Small and Medium Scale Enterprises

Many scholars have emphasized the need for sustainable management in SMEs. Feniser et al. (2017) brought up the idea of using eco-innovative levels. The importance of innovation and innovation management would make SMEs sustainable by meeting the needs of their clients on time. Sustainability is a direction also useful in innovation where economic, social, and environmental responsibilities are integrated in the management of innovation. Firms need to understand what sustainability means to their businesses to enable them to apply it successfully (Feniser et al., 2017). There are two things sustainability in business addresses, namely the effect that the business has on the environment and the effect that the business has on society. The role of a sustainable business strategy is to have a positive impact on both. When companies fail to focus on sustainability, some form of harm will result such as environmental degradation, social injustice, and inequality (Feniser et al., 2017). Engert, Rauter, and Baumgartner (2016) addressed the integration of corporate sustainability into the strategic management of various firms in the industry, the need for the firms to ensure that there is a strategic approach as part of the business strategy and process. Baumgartner and Rauter (2017) defined sustainable development as an economic, environmental, and social development to meet present needs but not pose a threat to future generations. Therefore, sustainability takes care of both the present and the future to safeguard resources, meeting both present and future needs.

Employee Turnover Theory

Employee turnover theory was propounded by March and Simon (1958). According to them, employees intention to leave an organisation can be motivated by job satisfaction and perceived availability to move to another job. According to this theory, an employee is more likely to leave an organization if they were not satisfied with their job or believed there were better opportunities elsewhere due to some human resources strategies that may be lacking and that the

employee needed. According to Porter and Steers (1973), in this theory employee may be influence by factors such as reward, supervision, training and development , relationship amongst other to voluntary leave the oprganisation turnover(Bowen and Siehl, 1997). Furthermore, studies by Ismail (2016), Liu, Wu, Chou, Chen, Yang, and Hsu (2016) also supported that voluntary turnover among employees can be predicted by the intentions of employees to leave the organization due to the above factors. When this happen, it will influence retention rate of employees in the organization Therefore, the turnover influencing factors that can influence turnover intention and hence retention rate include training satisfaction, Reward and Recognition, health and safety , supervisor satisfaction, compensation satisfaction, job satisfaction, job stress, social integration, parent company commitment and local operation commitment, and intent to leave. This theory is important and related to this study in that since human resource factors have been found to influence employee retention, it them means that when such factors are not in place or not management effectively, it will lead to turnover intention (i. e intention to leave)

Training and Development

Aham (2024) investigates the impact of Training and Development (TD) programs on Job Satisfaction (JOS) and Employee Performance (EP) within private commercial banks in South Sudan. Utilizing a quantitative research design, data were collected from 397 employees through a structured questionnaire. The analysis, performed using Covariance-Based Structural Equation Modeling (CB-SEM), reveals that TD programs significantly enhance job satisfaction, with a direct effect of 1.912 on EP and an indirect effect of 0.753 through JOS. The results highlight that job satisfaction mediates the relationship between TD and EP, demonstrating that effective training not only boosts job satisfaction but also improves employee performance. Specifically, a one-unit increase in TD leads to a total effect of 2.665 units increase in EP, combining direct and mediated pathways. These findings underscore the critical role of training programs in enhancing employee outcomes and organizational performance. The study provides practical insights for managers, recommending ongoing investment in training initiatives to foster better job satisfaction and performance. Theoretical contributions include refining existing models on training and organizational behavior. Limitations of the study include its focus on a single sector and reliance on self-reported data. Future research should explore additional variables,

longitudinal designs, and broader contexts to improve the generalizability and depth of the findings.

Revathi (2024) did a study on Training and Development - Improving Employee Performance. The purpose of this study was to how beneficial of training and development programs on employee performance for organisation development. Training and development programs typically involve educational activities that advance a worker's knowledge and ignite greater motivation to enhance job performance. The study also reveals that training and development is a necessity in every company/organisation particularly for the unskilled, semiskilled, newly inducted or the less experience employees. Generally, employees' work contribution was greatly improved due to the different training methods and tools used by the company. Thus, it led to a positive impact on the overall employee's performance and an improvement in their skills and job efficiency. There are many types of training and development. Benefits of employee training and development like Increased productivity. At present Remote mobile training and AI training are passionate now a days and modern gadgets are useful to give training without physical participation

Buddatti and Hassan (2023) did a study on empirically examine how training and development impact employee performance in Malaysia's medium-sized manufacturing enterprises (MMEs). A comprehensive questionnaire is used to collect the data from 280 employees of MMEs. This study conducted a cross-sectional survey, and the data were analyzed using SmartPLS 3.3.9 for multivariate statistical analysis. The partial least square structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) method determines the relationship between exogenous and endogenous variables. The development of an integrated research framework was accomplished. According to the study's findings, training and development affect employee performance. The research was conducted in MMEs, and the analysis is based on cross-sectional data that cannot be contextualized for a broader range of industries. The study results will assist policymakers, legislators, and MME management in lobbying for practical and well-articulated training and development strategies to improve employee engagement and performance.

Joshua & Olla (2023) carried out a study on the impact of training and development on employees' performance at the Forestry Research Institute of Nigeria, Ibadan, Oyo State,

Nigeria. The data collected was primary and cross-sectional. A multi-stage sampling technique was used in selecting 226 respondents in the study organization. The results revealed that the mean age of the employees was 40 years while their average annual income was ₦ 1,272,600 and years of work experience was 9.16 years. The descriptive results showed that the perceived benefits of employees' training and development in the Forestry Research Institute of Nigeria are high (5.28). The perceived enhanced employees' competency levels through the training and development in the Forestry Research Institute of Nigeria are high (5.09). The employees' perceived contributions of training and development to their job performance in the Forestry Research Institute of Nigeria is high (5.44) while the employees are high job performers (6.03). The regression results indicated that there was a significant relationship between employees' job performance and the benefits of employees' training and development ($\beta = 0.59$; $p < 0.05$). The regression results indicated that there was a significant relationship between employees' job performance and the benefits of employees' training and development ($\beta = 0.59$; $p < 0.05$). The regression results indicated that there was a significant relationship between employees' job performance and the benefits of employees' training and development ($\beta = 0.68$; $p < 0.05$). The study concluded that the training and development positively impacted employees' performance in the Forestry Research Institute of Nigeria, Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria. It was recommended that the organization's management team should reconsider funding and instituting proper training and development programs

Career Growth opportunities

Odanwu, Sylvia, Friday, Ogbuene, Joshua (2023) did a study on the impact of career development on employee performance in Nigeria's civil service, a study of Ebonyi State Civil Service, South East Nigeria. Using qualitative and quantitative research approaches, a sample of 382 respondents comprising 36 senior management staff, 91 heads of department and supervisors and 265 operational staff was drawn from 3009 employees of the State Civil Service. A purposive sampling technique was used to reach the respondents. Both primary and secondary sources of data were utilized. Questionnaires and in-depth interviews were the instruments for primary data collection and articles from journals, government gazettes and documents formed the secondary sources. Data was presented and analysed with the aid of Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21 and Microsoft Excel. The hypothesis was tested using Chi-Square inferential statistics. Findings indicate that there is a significant relationship between

career development and employees' job performance, that career development has moderately impacted employee behavioural competencies (attitude to work) in the Ebonyi State Civil Service within the period under review and that insufficient funding and poor salary packages have affected career development and employee performance in Ebonyi State Civil Service, from 2015-2022. Key recommendations include that Ebonyi State Civil Service Commission should prioritize and enhance career development opportunities within the civil service to enable the employees to benefit from and utilize them to maintain positive work attitudes and boost overall organizational performance, that Ebonyi State Civil Service should provide adequate, transparent and fair promotion opportunities based on merit and performance and that Ebonyi State Civil Service should explore alternative funding sources, seek partnerships or grants, and prioritize budget allocations for employee training and resources

Efenji (2023) did a study to investigate effect of career development on employee productivity in University of Cross River State with objectives of evaluate the effect of career training and career advancement on employee productivity, This study adopted the survey research design on Population of both academic staff and non-academic staff of University of Cross River State, which stood at four hundred and ninety nine (499). The multiple linear regression technique was used to determine the effect of the independent variables on the dependent variables. Beta coefficient in respect to career training (CT) is estimated at 0.946 and career advancement (CA) is estimated at -0.025. Result shows that that career training significantly increases on employee productivity while career advancement insignificantly decreases the productivity of employees in University of Cross River State. It is recommended that, the management of organizations should consider organizing for trainings and seminars for employees this will help to increase employee skills and competence making them more willing to work harder and deliver quality service delivery for the success of the organization

Sandra (2025) investigated the effect of career development on employee performance of selected firms in Delta and Edo States, Nigeria. The specific objectives were to;examine the extent to which mentoring, advancement, training and counseling are related to employee performance. Descriptive research survey design was utilized in the study. The study population comprised of all managers and staff in selected manufacturing firms in Delta and Edo States, Nigeria (Vintex Aluminum Asaba, Life Flour Mill Sapele, Differential Aluminum, Benin City

and Nelux Paint Benin) with estimated population of 413 employees. A sample of 203 was obtained from the total population of 413. Out of the 203 copies of questionnaire that were administered to employees, 199 were retrieved and fully completed. Data obtained were analyzed using descriptive, Pearson Correlation and simple linear regression analysis. The study found that mentoring ($T=26.168$, $p<0.05$), advancement ($T=34.025$, $p<0.05$), training ($T=13.876$, $p<0.05$) and counseling ($T=23.376$, $p<0.05$) have a significant and positive effect of employee performance. The study concluded that career development practices especially through mentoring, advancement, training as well as counseling is a strategic tool for enhancing employee performance in the organization. On the basis of the findings, it was recommended that Organization should put in place mentoring programmes through which employees can be mentored, educated and guided on their career related issues in order to skillfully carryout operations and other activities of the organization. Also, Employees should be given more opportunities to explore and increase their capabilities, intellectuals and skill both within and outside the organization. Furthermore, Management should provide training programmes for both old and new employees to develop their careers. This will equip new employees with skills needed for the job and reinvigorate old employees thereby revamping their old skills for the current work situation. Finally, Management should endeavor to put in place counseling intervention programmes in which the psychological and career related issues of the employees are resolved. This will go a long way to relieve mentally stressed and depressed employees and put them on track again.

Work environment

Shaari, Sarip, & Ramadhinda (2022) did A study of The Influence of Physical Work Environments on Employee Performance .it is our major objective to examine whether there is a relationship between the physical work environment in Indonesian manufacturing companies and employee performance. The data for this study was collected through the use of a quantitative survey. There were 187 employees who participated in the study at a company operating in Batam, Indonesia. In order to analyze the data and determine the relationship between variables, a Pearson Correlation Analysis was used. The results of this research indicate that there is a significant relationship between the performance of employees and the physical environment in

which they work. There is, however, a small correlation between these two variables. Employees can work comfortably in a work environment which is conducive to their ability to complete their tasks in order to do their jobs effectively. There are, however, other aspects that need to be taken into account, such as improving communication between colleagues, providing employees with a supervisor to assist them in completing their tasks, and taking time to consider employees' working hours, which may also play a significant role in improving employee performance.

Mohamad (2021) did a study on the Impact of Work Environment on Employees Performance. Therefore, the aim of this study is to investigate firstly the relationship between the employee performance and work environment and determining the impact of work environment has on employees' performances at work. A real estate company Investo Global was chosen for this study due to accessibility and feasibility. The target population of the study was found to be 120, through the RAO Soft sample size was found to be 92 which were the respondents of the study and will be tested, with confidence level of 95% while remaining 5% was considered as error. To collect data a structured quantitative questionnaire was adapted from the prior research with permission and referenced. A mixed methodology was selected for this study. The data collected is analyzed through SPSS, the cross-sectional approach was used. To test the data each of the questions were separately first analyzed and interpreted and to see the contribution of each variable and contribution to the work performance of Investo Global employees, Pearson's Correlation Analysis was used to see relationship of variables. The factors which were selected for measuring work environment were employee benefits, supervisors and coworker's support, training and development, adequate workload, physical work environment. The results show all the variables had a significant and positive relationship with employee performance. The most dominating variable out of all was employee benefits as considered by the employees of Investo Global which effect their work performance greatly.

METHOD AND MATERIALS

The study was carried out using descriptive survey design. Primary data was obtained through the use of questionnaire and observations while Secondary data were obtained through books, journals, and the internet. The population of the study was 1994 that was obtained from 25 selected small and medium scale enterprises in Enugu who registered with Manufacturing association of Nigeria Enugu Chapter (MAN). A sample size of 333 was determined from the

population using Taro Yamane's sample size determination method. Out of 333 copies of questionnaire distributed 320 was returned and used while 13 copies were invalid. The instrument used for data collection was questionnaire structured in 5 point Likert scale ranging from (SA = Strongly Agree; A = Agree ; U = Undecided ; D= Disagree and SD = Strongly Disagree) and The instrument was validated with content validity of face to face approach where managers and directors made the necessary corrections for the instrument to measurement what it ought measure . The reliability test was done using test-retest method. The result gave a reliability coefficient of 0.72, indicating a high degree of consistency. The three hypotheses formulated were tested at 0.05 level of significance. Multiple Regression was used for hypotheses . A computer aided Microsoft special package for social science (SPSS) was used to aid analysis

Data Analysis and Discussion

The data obtained from the field were presented and analyzed with descriptive statistics to provide answers for the research questions while the corresponding hypotheses were tested with multiple regression at 0.05 alpha level. The five Likert scale form was design as SA = strongly agree, A= Agree, U= Undecided, D = Disagree and SD = Strongly Disagree

Table 4.1 Responses on Training and Development

	Questions	SA	A	U	D	SD	Total
1	Training and development assist employee to acquire new skills for their tasks and chances SMEs survivability	207 (64.69%)	101 (31.56%)	4 (1.25%)	5 (1.56%)	3 (0.94%)	320
2	Training and development increase productivity of a firm and leads to SMEs survival	109 (34.06%)	200 (62.5%)	5 (1.56%)	4 (1.25%)	2 (0.63%)	320
3	Deficiency of a worker can be remedied through training and development, which increases the chances of SMEs survival	230 (71.88%)	75 (23.44%)	6 (1.88%)	5 (1.56%)	4 (1.25%)	320
4	Employees who go for training and development are motivated and hence the chances of survivability of the organization	200 (62.5%)	100 (31.25%)	7 (2.19%)	5 (1.56%)	8 (2.5%)	320

Source : Field survey 2025

Item 1 of table 4.1: Indicates that 207(64.69%) of the respondents strongly agreed with the statement that training and development assist employee to acquire new skills for their tasks and chances SMEs survivability. 101(31.56%) 4(1.25%) were undecided, 5(1.56%) disagree that Training and development assist employee to acquire new skills for their tasks and chances SMEs survivability while 3(0.94%) of the respondents strongly disagreed with the statement.

Item 2 of the table 4.1 states that training and development increase productivity of a firm and leads to SMEs survival. 109 (34.06%) strongly agreed with the statement, 200(62.5%) agreed, 5(1.56%) were undecided, 4(1.25%) disagreed that training and development increase productivity of a firm and leads to SMEs survival while 2(0.63%) strongly disagreed with the statement.

In item 3 of the table 4.1: 230(71.88%) of the respondents strongly agreed that deficiency of a worker can be remedied through training and development, which increases the chances of SMEs survival, 75 (23.44%) agreed, 6(1.88%) were undecided, 5(1.465%) disagreed while 4(1.25%) strongly disagreed that deficiency of a worker can be remedied through training and development, which increases the chances of SMEs survival

In item 4 of the table 4.1: 200(62.5%) of the respondents strongly agreed that employees who go for training and development are motivated and hence the chances of survivability of the organization, 100 (31.25%) agreed, 7(2.19%) were undecided, 5(1.65%) disagreed while 8(2.5%) strongly disagreed that employees who go for training and development are motivated and hence the chances of survivability of the organization

Table 4.2 Responses on Career Growth Opportunities

	Questions	SA	A	U	D	SD
5	Organization that design career growth of workers with the content to retain their staff encourages career growth opportunities and survivability of the organization	203 (63.43%)	100 (31.25%)	5 (1.56%)	6 (1.88%)	6 (1.88%)
6	Organization that allows their staff to	160	141	4	8	7

	further their education promotes career growth opportunities and increase the chances of its survival	(50%)	(44.06%)	(1.25%)	(2.5%)	(2.19%)	
7	Organization that recognize additional qualification encourages career growth opportunities which contributes to survival of the organization	159 (49.69%)	144 (45%)	3 (0.94%)	6 (1.88%)	8 (2.5%)	320
8	On-the-job and off-the-job training promote career growth of staff of small and medium enterprises and hence impacts positively on SMEs survivability	103 (32.19%)	201 (62.81%)	4 (1.25%)	6 (1.88%)	6 (1.88%)	320

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Item 5 of table 4.2: Indicates that 203(63.43%) of the respondents strongly agreed with the statement that Organization that design career growth of workers with the content to retain their staff encourages career growth opportunities and survivability of the organization. 100(31.25%) 5(1.56%) were undecided, 6(1.88%) disagree that Organization that design career growth of workers with the content to retain their staff encourages career growth opportunities and survivability of the organization which 6(1.88%) of the respondents strongly disagreed with the statement.

Item 6 of the table 4.2 states that Organization that allows their staff to further their education promotes career growth opportunities and increase the chances of its survival. 160 (50%) strongly agreed with the statement, 141(44.06%) agreed, 4(1.25%) were undecided, 8(2.5%) disagreed that organization that allows the staff to further their education promotes career growth opportunities and increase the chances of its survival while 7(2.19%) strongly disagreed with the statement.

In item 7 of the table 4.2: 159(49.69%) of the respondents strongly agreed that organization that recognize additional qualification encourages career growth opportunities which contributes to survival of the organization, 144(45%) agreed, 3(0.94%) were undecided, 6(1.88%) disagreed while 8(2.5%) strongly disagreed that organization that recognize additional qualification encourages career growth opportunities which contributes to survival of the organization

In item 8 of the table 4.2: 103(32.19%) of the respondents strongly agreed that On-the-job and off-the-job

training promote career growth of staff of small and medium enterprises and hence impacts positively on SMEs survivability, 201 (62.81%) agreed, 4(1.25%) were undecided, 6(1.88%) disagreed while 6(1.88%) strongly disagreed that On-the-job and off-the-job training promote career growth of staff of small and medium enterprises and hence impacts positively on SMEs survivability

Table 4.3 Responses on work environment

	Questions	SA	A	U	D	SD	Total
9	Employee wellbeing and social responsibility can contribute to a positive work environment	187 (58.44%)	144 (35.63%)	5 (1.56%)	10 (3.13%)	4 (1.25%)	320
10	Providing adequate lighting to reduce eye strain, improve concentration and boost employee mood	205 (64.06%)	102 (31.88%)	4 (1.25%)	4 (1.25%)	5 (1.56%)	320
11	Maintaining a comfortable temperature range and ensuring good air quality to prevent health issues and promote productivity	178 (55.63%)	125 (39.63%)	5 (1.56%)	5 (1.56%)	7 (2.19%)	320
12	Managing noise levels to reduce distraction, improve communication and enhance overall well being	200 (62.5%)	104 (32.5%)	6 (1.88%)	5 (1.56%)	5 (1.56%)	320

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Item 9 of table 4.3: Indicates that 187(58.44%) of the respondents strongly agreed with the statement that Employee wellbeing and social responsibility can contribute to a positive work environment 10(3.13%) disagree that Employee wellbeing and social responsibility can contribute to a positive work environment while 4(1.25%) of the respondents strongly disagreed with the statement.

Item 10 of the table 4.3 states that Providing adequate lighting to reduce eye strain, improve concentration and boost employee mood. 205 (64.06%) strongly agreed with the statement, 102(31.88%) agreed, 4(1.25%) were undecided, 4(1.25%) disagreed that Providing adequate lighting to reduce eye strain, improve concentration and boost employee mood while 5(1.56%) strongly disagreed with the statement.

In item 11 of the table 4.3: 178(55.63%) of the respondents strongly agreed that Maintaining a comfortable temperature range and ensuring good air quality to prevent health issues and promote productivity, 125(39.63%) agreed, 5(1.56%) were undecided, 5(1.56%) disagreed while 7(2.19%)

strongly disagreed that Maintaining a comfortable temperature range and ensuring good air quality to prevent health issues and promote productivity

In item 12 of the table 4.3: 200(62.5%) of the respondents strongly agreed that Managing noise levels to reduce distraction, improve communication and enhance overall well being, 104 (32.5%) agreed, 6(1.88%) were undecided, 5(1.56%) disagreed while 5(1.56%) strongly disagreed that Managing noise levels to reduce distraction, improve communication and enhance overall well being

Table 4.4 Responses on Business Sustainability

	Questions	SA	A	U	D	SD	Total
13	Organizations technology development ability and degree of originality, which can drive innovation and competitiveness	201 (62.81%)	105 (32.81%)	6 (1.88%)	6 (1.88%)	2 (0.63%)	320
14	Management system for efficient technological innovation, enabling SMES to stay ahead of the curve	204 (63.75%)	102 (31.88%)	5 (1.56%)	2 (0.63%)	7 (2.19%)	320
15	SMEs ability to market products developed using the latest technology crucial for reaching new customers and expanding market share	110 (32.38%)	200 (62.5%)	3 (0.94%)	4 (1.25%)	3 (0.94%)	320
16	SMEs derivative effect on technology area and competitiveness compared to competitors reflecting an SMEs ability to innovate and adapt	65 (20.31%)	241 (75.31%)	4 (1.25%)	4 (1.25%)	6 (1.88%)	320

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Item 13 of table 4.4: Indicates that 201(62.81%) of the respondents strongly agreed with the statement that Organizations technology development ability and degree of originality, which can drive innovation and competitiveness.105(32.81%) 6(1.88%) were undecided,6(1.88%) disagree that Organizations technology development ability and degree of originality, which can drive innovation and competitiveness while 2(0.63%) of the respondents strongly disagreed with the statement.

Item 14 of the table 4.4 states that Management system for efficient technological innovation, enabling SMES to stay ahead of the curve. 204 (63.75%) strongly agreed with the statement, 102(31,88%) agreed, 5(1.56%) were undecided, 2(0.63%) disagreed that Management system for efficient technological innovation, enabling SMES to stay ahead of the curve while 7(2.19%) strongly disagreed with the statement.

In item 15 of the table 4.4: 110(32.38%) of the respondents strongly agreed that SMEs ability to market products developed using the latest technology crucial for reaching new customers and expanding market share, 200(62.5%) agreed, 3(0.94%) were undecided, 4(1.25%) disagreed while 3(0.94%) strongly disagreed that SMEs ability to market products developed using the latest technology crucial for reaching new customers and expanding market share

In item 16 of the table 4.4: 65(20.31%) of the respondents strongly agreed that SMEs derivative effect on technology area and competitiveness compared to competitors reflecting an SMEs ability to innovate and adapt, 241 (75.31%) agreed, 4(1.25%) were undecided, 4(1.25%) disagreed while 6(1.88%) strongly disagreed that SMEs derivative effect on technology area and competitiveness compared to competitors reflecting an SMEs ability to innovate and adapt

Test of Hypotheses

Table 4.5 Model Summary^b

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.949 ^a	.902	.901	.26074	.363

a. Predictors: (Constant), Work environment , Career growth opportunities, .Training and development programs

b. Dependent Variable: Sustainability

The multiple regression model developed shows a strong relationship between the dependent variable (: Sustainability) and the set of independent variables: work environment (WE), Career growth opportunities (CGO), and Training and development (TD). This is evidenced by a multiple correlation coefficient (**R**) of **0.949**, indicating a strong positive linear relationship between the predicted and actual values.

The **R Square** value of **0.902** suggests that approximately 90.2% of the variation in the dependent

variable (Sustainability) can be explained by the combined effect of the three predictors. This indicates that the model explains a substantial proportion of the variability, making it a good fit for the data.

Furthermore, the **Adjusted R Square**, which takes into account the number of predictors when adjusts for any potential over fitting, stands at **0.901** This confirms that the model remains robust even after adjusting for the number of variables included.

The Standard Error of the Estimate is 0.260, reflecting the average distance between the actual data points and the model's predicted values. A lower value here indicates that the model's predictions are fairly accurate. Hence, the regression model demonstrates a strong explanatory power and provides a reliable framework for understanding how the variables employee retention practice tools (WE, CGO, TD) contribute to changes in the outcome being studied

Table 4.6 ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	196.716	3	65.572	964.469	.000 ^b
	Residual	21.484	316	.068		
	Total	218.200	319			

a. Dependent Variable: Sustainability

b. Predictors: (Constant), Work environment , Career growth opportunities, .Training and development programs

Table 4.7 Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-.105	.038		-2.751	.006
	.Training and development programs	.635	.032	.425	13.494	.000
	Career growth opportunities	.712	.039	.561	18.059	.000
	Work environment	.020	.016	.024	1.265	.207

a. Dependent Variable: Sustainability

The **Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)** table evaluates whether the overall regression model is statistically significant - that is, whether the set of predictors work environment (WE), Career growth opportunities (CGO), and Training and development (TD) as a whole reliably predicts the dependent variable (**Sustainability (ES)**).

From the table, we see that the **regression sum of squares** is **196.716**, and the **residual sum of squares** (or error) is **21.484**, giving a **total sum of squares of 218.200**. This indicates that the majority of the variation in purchase intention is explained by the regression model.

The model has 3 **degrees of freedom** for regression (corresponding to the six independent variables: (WE, CGO, TD) and **318 degrees of freedom** for the residual (based on a sample size of 320).

The **mean square** for the regression is **65.572**, and for the residual it is **0.068**. The **F-statistic** value is 964.469, which is extremely high. This indicates that the model provides a much better fit than a model with no predictors.

Most importantly, the **significance value (Sig.)** is **.000** ($p < 0.05$), indicating that the regression model is **statistically significant**. In other words, there is a very high likelihood that the relationship observed between the independent variables and sustainability is not due to chance.

Hypothesis One

H₀ : Training and development programs have no significant and positive effect on sustainability of selected small and medium enterprises in Enugu State, Nigeria

- (B) = 0.635
- t-value = 13.494
- p-value = 0.000

Interpretation: The result indicates a statistically significant positive relationship between Training and development programs and sustainability at the 5% significance level.

Decision: Reject H₀₁.

Conclusion: Training and development programs had a significant and positive effect on sustainability of selected small and medium enterprises in Enugu State, Nigeria

4.3.2 Hypothesis Two

Hypothesis Two

H₀: Career growth opportunities has no positive effect sustainability of selected small and medium enterprises in Enugu State, Nigeria

- $B = 0.712$
- $t = 18.059$
- $p = 0.000$

Interpretation: Career growth opportunities have a significant positive effect on sustainability.

Decision: Reject H_{02} .

Conclusion: Career growth opportunities have a positive effect sustainability of selected small and medium enterprises in Enugu State, Nigeria

Hypothesis Three

H₀: Work environment has no positive and significant effect on sustainability of selected small and medium enterprises in Enugu State, Nigeria

- $B = 0.745$
- $t = 11.707$
- $p = 0.000$

Interpretation: Although Work environment has a positive coefficient, the p-value slightly exceeds the 0.05 threshold, indicating that it is **not statistically significant** at the 5% level.

Decision: Do not reject H_{03} .

Conclusion: Work environment had a positive and significant effect on sustainability of selected small and medium enterprises in Enugu State, Nigeria

Summary of findings

The findings at the end of this study include the following

- i. Training and development programs had a significant and positive effect on sustainability of selected small and medium enterprises in Enugu State, Nigeria ($B = 0.635$; $t\text{-value} = 13.494$; $p\text{-value} = 0.000$)
- ii. Career growth opportunities had a positive effect sustainability of selected small and medium enterprises in Enugu State, Nigeria ($B = 0.712$; $t = 18.059$; $p = 0.000$)
- iii. Work environment had positive and significant effect on sustainability of selected small and medium enterprises in Enugu State, Nigeria ($B = 0.745$; $t = 11.707$; $p = 0.000$)

Conclusion

The study concluded that Employee retention is crucial for the sustainability of SMEs in Enugu State, Nigeria, as it directly impacts their performance. To achieve sustainability, SMEs must implement a combination of retention practices, including competitive compensation, employee training and career development, and creating a positive work environment. A coherent strategy is essential, with findings indicating that neglecting areas like training can create significant performance gaps.

Employee retention practices play a crucial role in the sustainability of small and medium-scale enterprises (SMEs). By implementing effective retention strategies, SMEs can reduce turnover rates, improve productivity, and enhance overall performance. By prioritizing employee retention practices, SMEs can create a stable and productive workforce, ultimately driving business sustainability and growth. Effective retention strategies can help SMEs overcome challenges and achieve long-term success

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made

- i. SMEs should implement continuous training for their employees to improve performance and adopt new strategies for growth, such as idea generation and new market opportunities . and again this training programs should focus on developing key skills like leadership, networking, planning, and technological innovation

- ii. SMEs should focus on training and development opportunities that enhance skills and job satisfaction, creating an enabling work environment through effective leadership, and linking career growth to business strategy by focusing on skills that drive innovation and customer-oriented products

- iii. SMEs in Enugu State, Nigeria, businesses should focus on providing adequate equipment, a comfortable and safe workspace, and fostering positive interpersonal relations. which involve a proper succession plan, investing in employee education and health, and creating a value-driven environment to enhance employee engagement and retention

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