

Strategic Agility and Entrepreneurial Capability of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria

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Abstract:

The study aims to investigate the effect of strategic agility on entrepreneurial capability of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. Conceptually, the study evaluates the extent to which strategic sensitivity, core capability, and strategic leadership influence SMEs entrepreneurial capabilities in the study area. The study employed cross-sectional survey research design approach to gather survey data, focused on viable SMEs with business-oriented sustainability plan to obtain primary data from respondents using a structured questionnaire, leading to 254 respondents consistently completed and returned questionnaire for the study from the ten (10) Federal Constituencies (Abak, Eket, Etinan, Ikono, Ikot Abasi, Ikot Ekpene, Itu, Oron, Ukanafun, and Uyo) in Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria. The data collected was analyzed using descriptive statistical tools such as frequencies and percentages, and simple linear model as inferential statistical tool for testing the hypotheses, and SPSS as statistical software package. The quantitative outcome was determined through a 95 percent confidence level, at p-value less than 0.05. The result from the regression analysis revealed that, all the measures of strategic agility studied were positive and statistically significant, with strategic sensitivity ($R^2 = .672$, Beta = .952, $p = 0.000$), core capability ($R^2 = .637$, Beta = .884, $p = 0.000$), and strategic leadership ($R^2 = .523$, Beta = 1.013, $p = 0.000$). The finding further showed that, strategic sensitivity, core capability, and strategic leadership has a positive and statistically significant influence on entrepreneurial capability of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria, implying that, SMEs entrepreneurs are very sensitive in, with required capabilities and good leadership to drive what they venture into to be profitable, and are strategic in diversifying and or expanding their businesses. Hence, the study recommended that, all SMEs entrepreneurs should institutionalize the strategic agility measures (strategic sensitivity, core capability, and strategic leadership) especially strategic sensitivity that shows very strong significant influence as their core operational pillars, to enable remaining agile in the changing business environment for economic stability and sustainable growth.

Keywords: Strategic agility, Strategic sensitivity, Core capability, Strategic leadership, Entrepreneurial capability, Small and Medium Enterprises

Introduction

The global shift from strategic planning to strategic agility is driven by globalization and diversification demand in different economies to achieve economic growth and sustainability, anchored by technological advancement, global networking, strategic sensing, and competitiveness. Therefore, for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) operators to strategically adapt to the changes in marketplace and be agile in processes leading to business growth, sustainability and profitability, SMEs must constantly adapt to market disruptions and evolving business conditions. Organization should be able to quickly adjust to changes to survive and continue to succeed (Bassey *et al.* 2023). In an assertion of Ben (2025), the world economy over the years has developed enormously that can be attributed to the activities of SMEs, especially in the developing countries. Strategic agility, which encompasses organizational capability and effectiveness in navigating through uncertainties and changes in business environment to proactively sense market dynamics, align leadership decisions with core capability to reallocate resources efficiently, plays a crucial role in enhancing SMEs performance. By harnessing strategic agility, SMEs can improve operational efficiency, encourages innovativeness, and sustainable competitive advantage in an increasingly volatile market environment. Small and Medium Enterprises in Akwa Ibom State operates in a highly dynamic and changes environment, influenced by economic fluctuations, changing consumer preferences, regulatory policies, and technological advancements. Strategic agility as an aspect of organizational agility requires strategic leaders to possess strong mental agility to be able to effect, drive and ensure its maintenance over time (Haider *et al.*, 2021). Strategic agility should be the concerns of all organizational members in strategic position to always be at alert to initiate evolving strategy, adjust, and implement as response to changes arising from unstable operating business environment Strategic agility is identifying ability to exploit opportunities in the business environment that outplay or outsmart rivalry and profit from it, in either as a new business entity or expanding an existing business to improve performance. The use of strategic agility to pursue firm success warrants the need to experiment on what works, adjust as the circumstance dictates, and track the market preferences to better be able to quickly and/or moderately recalibrate a choice strategy on on-going basis (Gregorio, 2020). Deshati, (2023) explained the different strategic agility dimensions as stated in extant strategic management literature including strategic sensitivity, strategic resource fluidity and strategic leadership. In others view, strategic agility is measured in terms of clarity of vision, strategic leadership, core capabilities, strategic sensitivity, and strategic resource fluidity (Hutzschenreuter *et al.* 2014, Dheseviano and Ogochukwu, 2023).

This strategic agility dimensions if applied will further strengthen SMEs agile operations. The National Bureau of Statistics (2017) maintained that over 90% SMEs businesses operate in Nigeria and creates over 80% employment opportunities. Even with this enormous contribution globally to economic growth, social development and job creation, the sector continues to face difficulties in achieving targeted business performance due to highly dynamic and unpredictable environment, influenced by economic fluctuations, open market competition, consumer preferences, technological advancements, and government regulatory policies. This unprecedented situation brings in thinking strategies that will enable competitive business environment for sustainable growth, where one of it is strategic agility. Strategic agility is the resourceful tendency to predict, act and respond to external threat and opportunities and threats occasioned by changing business environment that may be through execution of specific strategies aimed at driving value chain activities (Mutunga *et al.* 2024)

SMEs operate in an uncertain and volatile environment characterized by frequent changes in consumer preference, price fluctuation, and unpredictable financial exchanges, and to enhance business growth and profitability, SMEs must constantly adapt to these changes through strategic sensitivity, core capability, and strategic leadership for effective market sensing and competitiveness. Therefore, this informed the study to evaluate the effect of strategic agility on the entrepreneurial capability of small and medium enterprises in Akwa Ibom State of Nigerian.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) despite diverse challenges ranging from infrastructure deficit, fuel subsidy removal, policy and regulatory lapses, energy uncertainty, vast population growth, and lack of financial support or access to funding, undoubtedly, SMEs continue to play a very vital role in Nigeria's economic development, employment generation and wealth creation. These persistent challenges faced by SMEs constantly affect production costs, and fluctuating consumer purchasing power linked to foreign exchange instability have significantly constrained their ability to sustain profitability and competitive advantage. Furthermore, issues such as poor business strategy, weak innovative capability, and inconsistent government policies have further degraded operational inefficiencies. Hence, raise critical concerns about the strategic sensitivity, strategic leadership, and core operational capability that supposed to drive the performance of SMEs in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria, where these factors are not clearly known to SMEs managers. However, many SMEs struggle with rigid structures, slow decision-making, lack of strategic sensing, poor leadership, weak managers capability in effective resource allocation, constitutes hinderance to respond actively to market disruptions.

Strategic agility, with it dimensions as strategic sensitivity, strategic leadership, and core capability are known as a critical factor that enhance SMEs performance. The lack of strategic agility in many SMEs has led to poor service delivery, reduced profitability, and customer satisfaction. Hence, this study seeks to examine the effect of strategic agility on the entrepreneurial capability of SMEs in Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria, by determining how strategic sensitivity, core capability, and strategic leadership contribute to SMEs entrepreneurial capability for sustainable business growth.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study was to examine the effect of strategic agility on entrepreneurial capability of SMEs in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The specific objectives include to;

- i. examine the effect of strategic sensitivity on entrepreneurial capability of SMEs in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.
- ii. examine the influence of core capability on entrepreneurial capability of SMEs in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.
- iii. evaluate the influence of strategic leadership on entrepreneurial capability of SMEs in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

1.4 Research Questions

- i. To what extent does strategic sensitivity affect entrepreneurial capability of SMEs in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria?
- ii. How does core capability affect entrepreneurial capability of SMEs in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria?
- iii. What is the influence of strategic leadership on entrepreneurial capability of SMEs in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria?

1.5 Research Hypotheses

- i. **H₀₁:** Strategic sensitivity has no significant effect on entrepreneurial capability of SMEs in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.
- ii. **H₀₂:** Core capability has no significant influence on entrepreneurial capability of SMEs in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.
- iii. **H₀₃:** Strategic leadership has no significant influence on entrepreneurial capability of SMEs in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study will inform SMEs operators of the growing importance of strategic agility when articulated into business processes, its competitive advantage and long-term benefit, in increasing the performance, profitability, and improving national economy. It will guide government and decision-makers concerning the challenges, policy formulation, planning, development, and implementation that will enable SMEs sustainable growth in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

The study will contribute to the available knowledge of strategic agility for SMEs entrepreneur, researchers, and scholars currently in business and economic field of study.

1.7 Scope and Limitations of the Study

The study focused on strategic agility and entrepreneurial capability of SMEs in Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria. The scope covered the content, geographical and unit of analysis. The review of literature of this study was on strategic agility and its dimensions and the entrepreneurial capability of small and medium enterprises. The content scope of this study was limited around strategic agility and its dimensions such as strategic sensitivity, core capability, and strategic leadership on entrepreneurial capability of SMEs in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The geographical scope covered the ten (10) Federal Constituencies that are in Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria.

2.1 Conceptual Framework

The framework for this study is as presented and discussed in this section. These include the dimensions that are identified as variables underpinning this study.

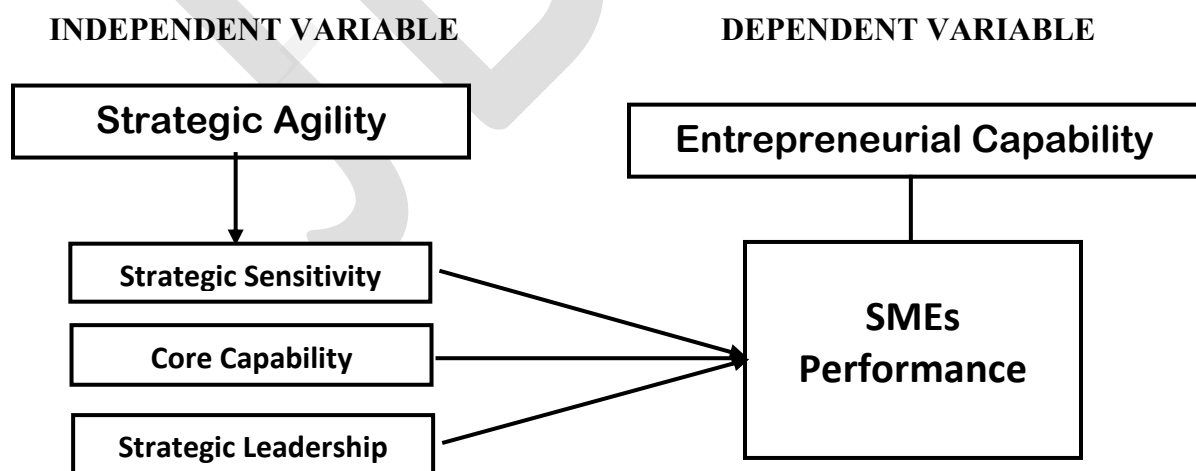


Figure 2.1: Conceptual Framework of the Study
Source: The Researcher (2026).

2.1.1 Strategic Agility

In the 1990s, the term strategic agility came into being a vital concept in business and strategic management due to research led by Roger Nagel and sponsored by the United State (U.S.), in 1991 the government at Iacocca Institute of Lehigh University, with focus to advancement from mass production through lean to present agile manufacturing or production, due to threat and how to respond quickly to market changes, came up with four structural pillars that can define true agile manufacturing system as operational requirement to drive market opportunities. The report, according to Iacocca Institute report (1992) brought four operational structures as core competence management, the virtual enterprise, capability for reconfiguration, and the knowledge-driven enterprise as true agile requirement for a paradigm shift in the manufacturing system. Several literatures put agility to encompass, organizational agility, cultural agility, strategic agility, value agility, delivery agility, business agility and learning agility including mental agility. Where Isaiah and Dickson (2023) further highlighted that, agility incorporates, harnesses, integrates, and leverages flexibility, speed, responsiveness, and competency to be effective. In some Scholars definition, strategic agility is the ability to seize opportunities in the business environment and make quick decisions to improve performance (Vecchiato, 2015; Sull, 2009). Sarkosi *et. al.* (2022), sees strategic agility as the ability of an organization to detect changes through the opportunities and threats existing in the business environment, and to give rapid response through the recombination of resources, processes, and strategies. They further added that, a review of the strategic agility literature shows that an agile organization can succeed in a competitive environment by applying abilities of responsiveness, competence, flexibility, and speed aim to achieve competitive advantage in the market (Sarkosi *et. al.*, 2022). Soltaninezhad *et. al.* (2020) sees strategic agility as the key gateway to future competition and a comprehensive response to business challenges of profiting from rapidly changing, continually fragmenting, global markets for high quality, high performance, customer configured goods and services. Sampath and Krishnamoorthy, (2017) considered strategic agility to be about being adaptive to changes in the business context, spotting opportunities, threats, and risks, and launching new strategic initiatives rapidly and repeatedly. Goel, (2021) supports that strategic agility is concerned with creating new markets with new products that reach new customers reflected in creating market innovations and new business models. In sum therefore, strategic agility refers to bias for swift and quick response by business organization to pertinent issues that affect its operations by making prompt adjustment to its choice strategy.

Dimensions of Strategic Agility

The dimensions of strategic agility adopted in this study are strategic sensitivity, core capability, and strategic leadership and discussed here under

2.1.1.1 Strategic Sensitivity

Strategic sensitivity is the ability of SMEs entrepreneurs to understand, recognize, and response to certain shift in real time that will enable a proactive step in identifying and exploiting market opportunities due to external environment changes. The success of organizations in achieving their goals requires the correct availability of several organizational variables, the most important of which is strategic sensitivity (Mueni, and Githira, 2023). Strategic sensitivity process starts from the environment and matches the advantages of the firm with the environmental gaps (Ekanem *et. al.*, 2023). Strategic sensitivity is an essential business requirement to operate in a competitive environment, enabling organizations to remain in touch with the dynamic environment and make constant realignment to achieve success by adopting modern strategic concepts. Hamed, (2023)

recognize strategic sensitivity as an organization's ability to identify and adapt to changes in markets, industries, and technology. Therefore, the importance of strategic sensitivity as a tool in achieving organizational performance is vital for long-term success through vision and market sensibility. Firms are prone to variety of challenges when it lacks strategic sensitivity, ranging from social, economic, technological, and cultural challenges. Organization must be sensitive in conditions of uncertainties and instabilities occasion by the implications of globalization leading to extensive competitions and increased technological development to constant changes in processes, where customer's demands and expectations will be a top priority. Strategic sensitivity is a core dimension of strategic agility helping organizations to create their available opportunities working with their customers (Obioma *et. al.*, 2019).

2.1.1.2 Core Capability

Core capability is said to be a distinctive capabilities, dynamic capabilities, or organizational competencies link to enterprise resources to well manage stability. It is an organization's asset and unique characteristics in structure, skill, and processes in achieving business growth and long-term sustainability. The allocation of resources to carry out a organizational task constitutes core capability (Sampath and Krishnamoorthy, 2017). Ezeanolue (2022) agrees that such competencies are mostly responsible to bring about success in an organization. Isaiah, (2023) emphasized that these principal competencies provide firms with strength in both bad and good economic conditions and are very valuable organizational assets for firms that possess them, and in the other hand serve as the frustrating challenges for competing firms that lack these competencies. Business Agility Institute (2020) cited George *et. al.*, (1992) refers to core capabilities as most critical distinctive resources to possess and difficult to imitate when effectively matched to strategic targets in a value chain.

2.1.1.3 Strategic Leadership

Strategic leadership is a concept in management and strategy literature that requires organizational agility in effective decision making, creative in thinking, innovation, development stride, strategic resources allocation, stakeholders' engagement, and good succession framework to achieve firm's set goals. Leadership is the process where an individual influence a group of individuals to achieve a common goal (Mba *et. al.*, 2023). Strategic leadership is the ability to equip behaviors in line with organization's vision, in efficient allocation of resources where workplace services and processes are properly coordinated leading to the achievement of targeted goals. Strategic leadership as the ability to anticipate, envision, maintain flexibility, and empower others to create strategic change as necessary (Hitt *et. al.* 2013). Quantive (2024) describes strategic leadership as being concerned with "transforming an organization through its vision and values, culture and climate and structure and systems as well as strategy. Strategic leadership involves enormous responsibilities on the part of the strategic leaders and organization's strategists after whose values and world views, organizational culture is often shaped (Reed, 2021). These strategic responsibilities cover the definition of strategic intent, mid-wife of strategy formulation, supervision of strategy implementation and effecting strategy evaluation and control (Salu, 2022). In other words, it is the responsibility of strategic leaders and strategists to craft strategies and ensure that the functional managers translate them into concrete accomplishments (Jabar and Hussein, 2017).

Therefore, for SMEs to achieve it full entrepreneurial capability, they need to constantly realign, and modify it core strategy to quickly respond to changes, opportunities, or threats toward the attainment of competitive advantage. Strategic leadership encourages continuous learning, collaboration, and

concerted actions (Sarkosi *et. al.*, 2022). Arbussa *et. al.* (2017) in their work carried out in Spain found strategic leadership in leadership unity as measures of strategic agility to be impactful on company's performance significantly.

2.1.2 Entrepreneurial Capabilities

Entrepreneurial capabilities if possessed by entrepreneurs will enhance SMEs performance, sustainable growth, and promote healthy survival strategy where market turbulence and uncertainties are effectively depleted. This entrepreneurial capability is likened to, operational efficiency, strategic adaptability, marketing strategy, structure, skills, and experience, among others. This capability is being mediated by the relationship between entrepreneurial capability and manufacturing SMEs' sustainable performance through innovation (Al Koliby *et. al.*, 2023). To collaborate the foregoing, Patrick *et. al.* (2022) maintained that 'entrepreneurial capability is the ability to drive the organization towards its goals by possessing internal drive, creativity, problem-solving abilities, and communication skills, as well as management expertise that influences the sustainable operation of the business'.

2.1.3 Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)

The concept of SMEs is dependent on the policies and important attached to it by each country. As every country knows the contribution of small and medium enterprises toward wealth generation and livelihood sustainability including contribution to national economic growth, where Nigeria is one. In the World Bank (2015) report, SMEs have at most 300 employees with an annual turnover not more than 15 million US dollars. Adamu *et. al.* (2022) put the definition of SMEs by Small and Medium-Sized Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN) that categorizes 'SMEs criteria as a micro-enterprise as a commercial enterprise with less than 10 people with an annual turnover of less than ₦5,000,000.00, a small corporation as a commercial enterprise with 10-49 human beings with an annual turnover of ₦5 to 49,000,000.00; and a medium enterprise as a business with 50-199 people with an annual turnover of ₦50 to 499,000,000.00'. This study aligned solely with the SMEDAN view, as these criteria form the basis from which Nigerian government gives an important attention through policies to SMEs development, funding and access to funding including technical support for increase orientation and expansion toward actualization of SMEs sustainable growth, wealth creation, and improve living standard. Therefore, the development strategy through the instrumentation of entrepreneurship and modernity will activate how best SMEs should contribute to the improved productivity and sustainable growth (Ben and Udofot, 2026)

2.1.4 Strategic Agility and Entrepreneurial Capability

Strategic agility and entrepreneurial capability are vital to business performance if Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) want to survive and attend sustainable growth in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. SMEs that strategically sense happening in business environment will take decisive decision, accompany by risk-taking and create marketing channels to mitigate structural challenges and volatile market uncertainty to achieve enterprise success. As afore said, include but not limited to customers orientation, risk taking, experience and skillful, innovativeness, technological advancement flexibility, and social networking combine with Strategic agility allows SMEs owners in commercial hubs with goal to succeed, and to constantly realign internal structures when economic conditions shift to meets the external needs and preference. When SMEs entrepreneurs display agile capabilities, strong human relations, and adaptability in the face of market disruption,

their overall performance and capacity will be enhanced through the application of strategic sensitivity, core capability and strategic leadership, especially when heavily tested by structural challenges, funding access, and poor social amenities. Paul et. al. (2023) in their study of entrepreneurial capability and business performance, found that the relationship between entrepreneurial skills and performance of small and medium-sized businesses is moderated significantly positively by information and communication technologies, and recommended that SME owners should embrace the use of information and communication technologies in managing their businesses.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

The theory chosen for this study is Dynamic Capabilities Theory (DCT), propounded by Teece, Pisano and Sheun, (1997). The concept of Dynamic Capabilities Theory explained how resources and product markets is linked to competitive advantage, survival of firms, and enhance organizational performance by understanding, restructuring, and quickly responding to changing business environments. The Theory narrated ways on how SMEs can navigate through turbulence operation environment, survive bottleneck, and gain sustainable competitive advantage. Dynamic capabilities rely heavily on research in critical areas such as, management of research and development, product and process developments, technology transfer, intellectual property, manufacturing, human resources, and organizational learning (Teece *et. al.*, 1997). Teece, (2007) maintained that Teece *et al.* (1997) defined DCT as the firm's ability to integrate, build, and reconfigure internal and external competences to address rapidly changing environments" and it examines how firms address or bring about changes in their turbulent business environment through reconfiguration of their firm-specific competencies into new competencies.

According to Aremu et. al. (2022), dynamic capability theory emphasizes the ability of SMEs to seize opportunities and stay competitive by understanding environmental conditions, respond to opportunities, and restructure business processes and systems to embrace change that will enhance business performance. In the view of critics, and for sustainable competitive advantage, Dynamic Capability Theory cannot answer all questions. Zahra *et. al.* (2006) in their argument said that there are some inconsistencies and ambiguities in the literature of DCT. While Ambrosini *et al.* (2009) maintained that, to understand dynamic capabilities, the managerial perceptions of the need for change –functions of their perceptions of their firms' external and internal environments need to be considered. Adding that, there are gaps for a manager to misperceive the need for change and as a result fail to apply appropriate Theory framework.

But Teece, (2007) opined that, Dynamic Capability Theory framework guide scholars to understand the foundations of long-run enterprise success while assisting managers delineate relevant strategic considerations and the priorities, they must adopt to enhance enterprise performance and escape the zero-profit tendency associated with operating in markets open to global competition. He further added that, the framework integrates the strategy and innovation literature and highlights the most important capabilities that the management need to sustain superior long run business performance

On the whole, dynamic capabilities become relevant and relate to strategic agility which business organizations require, given their experience of constantly changing operating environment, to help them pursue competitive advantage and remain profitable. Hence, the choice of the Dynamic Capability Theory for this study as a linkage between strategic agility and entrepreneurial capability of SMEs, that addresses how SMEs can integrates, builds, and reconfigures internal and external competences to address changing business environments.

2.3 Empirical Review

Sajuyigbe *et. al.* (2021) evaluates the relationship between strategic agility and organizational competitiveness of multinational companies. The result reveals that strategic sensitivity, strategic response, and collective capability have a positive and significant relationship with organizational competitiveness.

Bassey *et. al.* (2023) assessed strategic agility and organizational performance in selected manufacturing firms in South-South Nigeria. The objective of the study was to examine the influence of strategic agility on organizational performance in selected manufacturing firms in South-South Nigeria. A survey research design was adopted for the study and a sample size of 177 respondents were drawn from the population of 319. Results showed that strategic agility dimension of strategic leadership and organizational flexibility had significant influence on organizational performance and concluded that the dimensions of strategic agility (strategic sensitivity and core competence) are relational aspect that affects organizational performance.

Oci *et. al.* (2022) provided empirical evidence regarding the effect of entrepreneur orientation and strategic agility on SME business performance during the recession due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The results showed that entrepreneur orientation has no significant positive effect on business performance, but significant effect on strategic agility. and Strategic agility has a positive and significant effect on business performance. Omuka and Julius (2024) investigated strategic agility on the performance of avocado exporters in Nairobi County, Kenya. The study used both descriptive and inferential statistics to analyze the data from questionnaire. Their study revealed that strategic technological capabilities had the highest impact on organizational performance.

Mba *et. al.* (2023) conducted a study on examining how strategic leadership practices impact organizational performance: The case of Nigerian teaching hospitals. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Findings showed that strategic leadership practices have significant and positive effects on the performance of the studied hospital. It was concluded that strategic leadership practices positively affect the performance of the studied hospital.

Aremu *et. al.* (2022) examined the impact of parameters of strategic agility on the organizational performance of manufacturing sector in Oyo State, Nigeria. The objective was to determine the extent to which strategic sensitivity, strategic response, information technology capabilities and human resource capabilities influence organizational performance. A purposive sampling technique and convenient sampling was used to select 240 sample size for the study. Data were analyzed using correlation and regression. The results revealed a significant relationship between strategic agility parameters and organizational performance. Olaleye *et. al.* (2021) conducted a study on the role of innovation and strategic agility on firms' resilience: A case study of tertiary institutions in Nigeria. The objective of this study was to examine the relationship amongst innovation, strategic agility, and firms' resilience in Nigerian tertiary institutions. The study showed that innovation and strategic agility predict a firms' resilience in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. The studies as reviewed uses various dimensions to measure strategic agility, while the present study measures strategic agility through strategic sensitivity, core capability, and strategic leadership on entrepreneurial capability of SMEs in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

3.1 Methodology

The study employed cross-sectional survey research design approach to gather survey data on study variables to examine the effect of strategic agility on entrepreneurial capability of SMEs in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The study focused on viable SMEs with business-oriented sustainability plan to obtain primary data from respondents using a structured questionnaire in a

population of 979 empowered entrepreneurs in the ten federal constituencies obtained from Akwa Ibom State Agency for Community and Social Development (AKSACSD). The data collected from 254 respondents was analyzed using descriptive statistical tools such as frequencies and percentages, and inferential statistical tool (simple linear model) for testing the hypotheses, and SPSS as statistical software package. The quantitative outcome was determined through a 95 percent confidence level, at p-value (significant value) less than 0.05.

3.2 Population of the study

The population of this study is as obtained from the Akwa Ibom State Agency for Community and Social Development, containing the number of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) empowered through grant and soft skill training in the ten (10) Federal Constituencies of Abak (Abak, Etim Ekpo, and Ika LGAs), Eket (Eket, Esit Eket, Ibeno, and Onna LGAs), Etinan (Etinan, Nsit Ibom and Nsit Ubium LGAs), Ikono (Ikono, and Ini LGAs), Ikot Abasi (Ikot Abasi, Mkpato Enin, and Eastern Obolo LGAs), Ikot Ekpene (Ikot Ekpene, Essien Udim, and Obot Akara LGAs), Itu (Itu, and Ibiono Ibom LGAs), Oron (Oron, Mbo, Okobo, Orue Offong/Oruko, and Udug Uko LGAs), Ukanafun (Ukanafun, and Oruk Anam LGAs), and Uyo (Uyo, Ibesikpo Asutan, Nsit Atai, and Uruan LGAs) in Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria, within a specified period of two years to enable effectiveness of the study. The number of entrepreneurs empowered is as presented in Table 3.1, showing nine hundred and seventy-nine (979) owners of SMEs used as the population for the study.

Table 3.1 Number of Entrepreneur Empowered Per Federal Constituency

S/N	Federal Constituency	Male	Female	Total
1	Abak (3 LGAs)	69	35	104
2	Eket (4 LGAs)	76	48	124
3	Etinan (3 LGAs)	71	51	122
4	Ikono (2 LGAs)	41	25	66
5	Ikot Abasi (3 LGAs)	33	30	63
6	Ikot Ekpene (3 LGAs)	69	24	93
7	Itu (2 LGAs)	39	10	49
8	Oron (5 LGAs)	106	51	157
9	Ukanafun (2 LGAs)	42	29	71
10	Uyo (4 LGAs)	80	50	130
TOTAL	31 LGAs	626	353	979

Source: Akwa Ibom State Agency for Community and Social Development, (2026).

3.3 Sampling Techniques and sampling Size Determination

The study adopted sampling distribution approach, and stratified sampling techniques used to choose its respondents, this guaranteed unbiased with equal chance of each member of the

population being chosen. In sample size distribution and for accuracy, the sample size within the population was calculate using Krejcie and Morgan Formula, as below.

$$s = [x^2 np (1-p)] / [d^2 (n-1) + x^2 p (1-p)] \quad \text{model 3.1}$$

Where:

n = require sample size

X^2 = the table value of chi-square for 1 degree of freedom at the desired confidence level (3.841), same as (1.96). (1.96)

N = the population size

P = the population proportion, to be .50 assumed would provide the maximum sample size

d = the degree of accuracy expressed as a proportion (.50)

Since N = 979

$$n = [3.841 (979) (0.5) (1-0.5)] / [0.05^2 (979-1) + 3.841(0.5) (1-0.5)]$$

$$= 940.3295 / (2.445 + 0.96025)$$

$$= 940.3295/3.4055$$

$$= 276$$

Sample size (n) = 276.

In the distribution of questionnaire, there is always bound to be shortfall and to have a good number of filled and returned copies of the questionnaire. Edwards *et al.* (2002) recommended the need to increase the copies of questionnaire for distribution between 10-20 percent. To enable the number of questionnaires distributed to be greater than the sample size, and achieve an expected confidence interval range, with the least 75% of the copies of the questionnaire given returned and use for the study. Therefore, copies of questionnaire distributed were increase by 20 percent and is as shown in Table 3.2, resulting to.

$$n = 276 + (0.2) (276) = 331$$

Table 3.2. Distribution of Sample Size and Questionnaire

S/N	Federal Constituency	Population(N)	Calculation	Sample Size (n) (Questionnaire)
1	Abak (3 LGAs)	104	$(104/979) \times 276$	29 (35)
2	Eket (4 LGAs)	124	$(124/979) \times 276$	35 (42)
3	Etinan (3 LGAs)	122	$(122/979) \times 276$	34 (42)
4	Ikono (2 LGAs)	66	$(66/979) \times 276$	19 (22)
5	Ikot Abasi (3 LGAs)	63	$(63/979) \times 276$	18 (21)
6	Ikot Ekpene (3 LGAs)	93	$(93/979) \times 276$	26 (31)
7	Itu (2 LGAs)	49	$(49/979) \times 276$	14 (17)
8	Oron (5 LGAs)	157	$(157/979) \times 276$	44 (52)
9	Ukanafun (2 LGAs)	71	$(71/979) \times 276$	20 (24)
10	Uyo (4 LGAs)	130	$(130/979) \times 276$	37 (44)
TOTAL	31 LGAs	979		276 (331)

Therefore, the sample size (n) is 276, as 331 represent the total number of questionnaire distribution for the study.

3.4 Model Specification

The model was adapted from the study of Ayandele, *et. al* (2022) as, $QS = f(KA, KS, KT)$. This was modified to suit the variables used. Hence, the model for the study was anchored on the objective, and is expressed below:

$$y = X_i + X_{ii} + X_{iii} + \varepsilon$$

Model 1

Simple Regression Model Specification for Objective One to three

$$EC = f(SS), f(CC), f(SL)$$

Model 2 - 4

Model 2 is transformed into Econometric form for objective one as:

$$EC = \beta_0 + \beta_1 SS + \varepsilon$$

Equation 1

Where,

EC = Dependent variable (Entrepreneurial Capability),

β_0 = Beta Coefficient

SS= Strategic sensitivity

β_1 , = coefficients of determination

ε = error term.

Model 3 is transformed into Econometric form for objective two as:

$$EC = \beta_0 + \beta_1 CC + \varepsilon$$

Equation 2

Where,

EC = Dependent variable (Entrepreneurial Capability),

β_0 = Beta Coefficient

CC= Core Capability

β_1 , = coefficients of determination

ε = error term.

Model 4 is transformed into Econometric form for objective three as:

$$EC = \beta_0 + \beta_1 SL + \varepsilon$$

Equation 3

Where,

EC = Dependent variable (Entrepreneurial Capability),

β_0 = Beta Coefficient

SL= Strategic Leadership

β_1 , = coefficients of determination

ε = error term.

4.1 Data Presentation

Three hundred and thirty-one (331) copies of questionnaire were distributed using proportionate sampling according to the SMEs owners or managers. Figure 4.1 shows the number of distributed, completed and returned copies of the questionnaire.

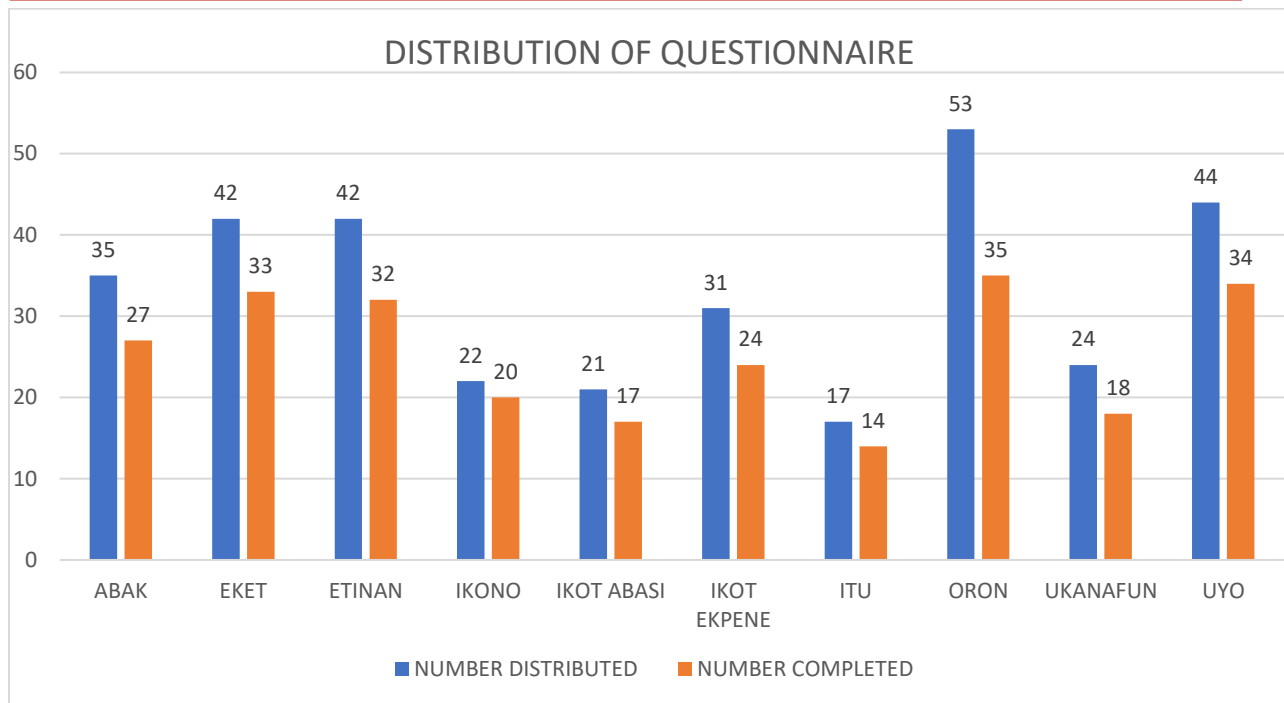


Figure 4.1 Number of Questionnaire Copies Distributed and Returned

Source: Filed Survey, (2026).

A total of 331 copies of the questionnaire were distributed. 266 were completed and returned representing 80.4 per cent return rate. In the returned 266, 12 copies had inconsistent answers which resulted in the exclusion from coding and analysis. Therefore, the study used a total of two hundred and fifty-four (254) consistently completed and returned copies of the questionnaire for data analysis, using descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages), and inferential statistical using simple regression model to test hypotheses, with SPSS version 25 as the statistical software package.

4.2 Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis One

Ho₂: Strategic sensitivity has no significant effect on the entrepreneurial capability of SMEs in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

$$EC = \beta_0 + \beta_1 SS + \varepsilon$$

Table 4.1

Model Summary^b

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	R Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.820 ^a	.672	.670	.28743	1.845

a. Predictors: (Constant), Strategic Sensitivity

b. Dependent Variable : Entrepreneurial Capability

ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	30.156	1	30.156	365.024	.000 ^b
	Residual	14.705	252	.083		

Total	44.862	253				
a. Dependent Variable : Entrepreneurial Capability						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Strategic Sensitivity						
Coefficients ^a						
	Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients				
Model	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	
1	(Constant)	.234	.154		1.521	.130
	Strategic Sensitivity	.952	.050	.820	19.106	.000

a. Dependent Variable : _ Entrepreneurial Capability

Source: Researchers Computation (2026)

The simple regression analysis carried out in Table 4.1 was to test the first null hypothesis and to guide in the prediction of the entrepreneurial capability of SMEs from strategic sensitivity in the study, stating that strategic sensitivity has no significant effect on the entrepreneurial capability of SMEs in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. As presented in Table 4.1, the result of R-square has the regression analysis of .672. This means that 67.2 % of the variance in entrepreneurial capability is explained by strategic sensitivity of SMEs in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. From the ANOVA, it has confirmed the present of a positive significant effect between the studied variables. The findings also revealed Beta= .952, p=0.000, meaning that an increase in strategic sensitivity would be accounted for an increase of 95.2% in entrepreneurial capability of SMEs in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. Hence, there is a positive and significant influence of strategic sensitivity on entrepreneurial capability of SMEs in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

Hypothesis Two

Ho₁: Core capability has no significant effect on entrepreneurial capability of SMEs in Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria

$$EC = \beta_0 + \beta_1 CC + \varepsilon$$

Table 4.2 **Model Summary^b**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.798 ^a	.637	.635	.30171	1.688

a. Predictors: (Constant), Core Capability

b. Dependent Variable : Entrepreneurial Capability

ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	28.658	1	28.659	314.834	.000 ^b
	Residual	16.202	252	.091		
	Total	44.860	253			

a. Dependent Variable : Entrepreneurial Capability

b. Predictors: (Constant), Core Capability

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta			
1	(Constant)	.466	.153			3.055	.003
	Core Capability	.884	.050	.799		17.744	.000

a. Dependent Variable : Entrepreneurial Capability

Source: Researchers Computation (2026)

The simple regression analysis carried out was to help in the prediction of the entrepreneurial capability of SMEs from core capability in testing the second null hypothesis, stating that core capability has no significant influence on the entrepreneurial capability of SMEs in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. In Table 4.2, the result of R-square has the regression analysis of .637. This means that 63.7 % of the variance in entrepreneurial capability is explained by core capability of SMEs in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. From the ANOVA, confirmed a positive significant influence between the studied variables. The findings also revealed Beta= .884, p=0.000, meaning that an increase in core capability would cause an increase of 88.4% in entrepreneurial capability of SMEs in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. Hence, there is a positive and significant influence of core capability on entrepreneurial capability of SMEs in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

Hypothesis Three

Ho₃: Strategic leadership has no significant effect on the entrepreneurial capability of SMEs in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

$$EC = \beta_0 + \beta_1 SL + \varepsilon$$

Table 4.3

Model Summary^b

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.723 ^a	.523	.521	.34567	1.473

a. Predictors: (Constant), Strategic Leadership

b. Dependent Variable : Entrepreneurial Capability

ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	23.593	1	23.593	197.456	.000 ^b
	Residual	21.269	252	.119		
	Total	44.862	253			

a. Dependent Variable : Entrepreneurial Capability

b. Predictors: (Constant), Strategic Leadership

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta			
1	(Constant)	.009	.225			.039	.969

Strategic Leadership	1.013	.072	.725	14.052	.000
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a. Dependent Variable : Entrepreneurial Capability

Source: Researchers Computation (2026)

The simple regression analysis carried out in Table 4.3 was to test the third null hypothesis and to guide in the prediction of the entrepreneurial capability of SMEs from strategic leadership in the study, which state that, strategic leadership has no significant influence on the entrepreneurial capability of SMEs in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. As evidence in Table 4.3, the result of R-square has the regression analysis of .523. This means that 52.3 % of the variance in entrepreneurial capability is explained by strategic leadership of SMEs in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The result from the ANOVA, confirmed the present of a positive significant influence between the studied variables. The findings also revealed Beta= 1.013, $p=0.000$, meaning that an increase in strategic leadership would account for an increase of 101.3% in entrepreneurial capability of SMEs in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. Hence, there is a strong positive and significant influence of strategic leadership on entrepreneurial capability of SMEs in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

4.3 Discussion of The Findings

The study was to examine the effect of strategic agility on the entrepreneurial capability of SMEs in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The findings as analysed in Tables 4.1, 4.2, 4.3 revealed that there is a significant effect of strategic agility as measured by strategic sensitivity, core capability, and strategic leadership, on the entrepreneurial capability of SMEs in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria, align with a lot of studies in the literature like Sajuyigbe *et. al.*, 2021, Bassey *et. al.*, 2023, Oci *et. al.*, 2022, Omuka and Julius, 2024, Mba *et. al.*, 2023, Aremu *et. al.*, 2022, Ekanem *et. al.*, 2023, and Olaleye *et. al.* 2021, among others, confirm that the variables studied have positive and significant effect on SMEs entrepreneurial capability and performance.

The analysis that examines the effect of strategic sensitivity on entrepreneurial capability of SMEs in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria revealed the result of R-square as .672, Beta = .952, $p = 0.000$. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected, and alternative hypothesis accepted, this infer that, 67.2 % of the variance in entrepreneurial capability is explained by strategic sensitivity of SMEs. Therefore, strategic sensitivity is an important and very strong strategic agility component in driving SMEs entrepreneurial capability. According to Mueni, and Githara, (2023) that, for an organizational success, strategic sensitivity is most important variable to achieving set goals.

Core capability as a second variable under study, revealed a statistically significant influence on entrepreneurial capability of SMEs, with the result of R-square of .637, Beta = .884, $p = 0.000$. As it explains that, 88.4% increase in core capability would positively change the entrepreneurial capability of SMEs in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. Hence, there is a positive and significant influence of core capability on entrepreneurial capability of SMEs in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. This is certain because core capability adapted into emerging business processes will leads to organizational effectiveness and efficiency. This is in line with the study of Aremu *et. al.* (2022), who examined the parameters of strategic agility on the organizational performance of manufacturing sector. Their findings showed that strategic agility parameters such as information technology capability and human resource capability among others has a statistically significant influence on organizational performance of manufacturing sector in Oyo State, Nigeria.

Strategic leadership is a critical component of strategic agility when management focus is on implementing strategy that will significantly improve the existing process and closing gap by adapting to market trends and realities that change created. From the simple regression analysis, it is evidenced that the null hypotheses be rejected, as strategic leadership showed a positive and statistically significant influence on entrepreneurial capability of SMEs, with the result of R-square as .523, Beta = 1.013, $p = 0.000$. Showing that, an increase change in strategic leadership would account for an increase of 101.3% in entrepreneurial capability of SME. This is in line with the study of Mba *et. al.*, (2023), who examined how strategic leadership practices impact organizational performance, and found that, strategic leadership practices have significant and positive effects on the performance. In that strategic leadership practices affect performance positively.

4.5 Conclusion

The study aims to examine the effect of strategic agility on entrepreneurial capability of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study investigates the extent to which strategic sensitivity, core capability and strategic leadership influence SMEs entrepreneurial capabilities in the study area. The study population was drawn from the ten (10) Federal Constituencies (Abak, Eket, Etinan, Ikono, Ikot Abasi, Ikot Ekpene, Itu, Oron, Ukanafun, Uyo) in Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria. From the findings of the study, it is confirmed that strategic sensitivity, core capability, and strategic leadership as measures of strategic agility studied has the tendency to influence the entrepreneurial capability of SMEs in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

The study employed cross-sectional survey research design approach to gather survey data on study variables, focused on viable SMEs with business-oriented sustainability plan to obtain primary data from 254 respondents using a structured questionnaire in a population of 979 empowered entrepreneurs obtained from Akwa Ibom State Agency for Community and Social Development (AKSACSD), and the data analyzed using descriptive statistical and inferential statistical tools. From the three measures of strategic agility used for this study, strategic sensitivity has a significant effect of .672, core capability has .637, and strategic leadership is with .523. This reveals that, the three measures were all statistically significant, and the result further shows that, strategic sensitivity coefficient was higher than others, which this study can infer that, strategic sensitivity as a measure of strategic agility with the highest statistically significant influence on the entrepreneurial capability of SMEs in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria, should be institutionalized by all SMEs entrepreneurs as core necessity to sustainable growth and development, together with core capability and strategic leadership.

4.6 Recommendations

The following recommendations are made based on the findings:

- i. SMEs should make strategic sensing of their operating environment a core mandate in identifying and exploiting opportunities while striving to minimize threat. Being sensitive to it environment will enable the understanding of market trends and customers preference that leads to competitive advantage and business stability.
- ii. SMEs to remain competitively in business, should understand their strengths and weakness, endeavor to tackle what constitutes their weakness head-on to overcome them, while continuing to strengthen their core capability to outplay rivalry and stay agile in competitive marketplace
- iii. SMEs should as a matter of important prioritize strategic leadership to forestall external

threat and enterprise weakness that may lead to closure or losses, by upskilling entrepreneurs' orientation through training, human capacity development, acquisition of emerging technology, and seeking technical support, when necessary, in a bid to achieving management focus, enterprise stability, efficient resources deployment, and competitiveness.

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