

**ENTREPRENEURSHIP THE BEST OPTION FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, THE
CASE OF GAMBIA**

By

Amadou Jawo

A dissertation submitted to the International University of Leadership

In fulfilment of the requirements for the Bachelor Degree of Business Administration

May 2024

Abstract

My study aims to establish facts, not fictions, regarding micro and macro factors affecting the sustainable growth of small and medium size enterprises that are owned by Gambians in the Gambia. The life cycle of a business demonstrates how entrepreneurs turn ideas into startups that go through a survival stage, which they later transform into a rapid growth stage until they reach the maturity stage where they can either diversify or start whole new ventures. Growing up in the Gambia, I have seen how so many Gambians will start a small or medium size business and within a short period of time mostly, (one or two years) will have their business ventures running at a loss and quit operations.

Only a handful of Gambian entrepreneurs have established SMEs that have gone through all the different stages of a successful business life cycle and stayed in business for over two decades. On the contrary, the Gambian business environment is seen as a perfect opportunity to exploit for so many non-Gambian entrepreneurs who originate from the neighbouring countries like Senegal, Guinea, Mali, and Nigeria. These non-Gambian entrepreneurs usually invest in SMEs and within a few years of their operations, their ventures become highly profitable, attain growth, and sustainably maintain their grip on the Gambian market. Previous research is filled with general issues that affect the sustainable growth of SMEs in the Gambia and does not distinguish between Gambian and non-Gambians SMEs. There is limited research to show specifically why non-Gambian SMEs are performing better than Gambian SMEs.

In my findings, I realized that 80% of my respondents do not have the required level of skills and knowledge needed for an entrepreneur to succeed in business. This as a result has made necessity-based entrepreneurship the prevailing approach to business for a large majority of my research participants. In addition, the low level of skills makes it very cumbersome for these entrepreneurs to withstand other challenges they face in the macro environment, thus their inability to sustain their ventures.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Introduction	5
1.1. Background	7
1.2. Aims	10

1.3 Objectives.....	10
2. Summary of Methodology	11
2.1. Research Approach.....	11
2.2. Research Strategy	12
2.3. Explanatory, Exploratory, and Descriptive Research.....	13
2.4. Data collection Method	14
2.5 Sampling method.....	15
3.Economic challenges in today’s environment	16
3.1. Economic slowdown.....	16
3.2 Increasing debt burden	17
3.3 Inflation	17
3.4 Geopolitical tensions.....	18
4. Entrepreneurship.....	18
4.1 The Entrepreneurship Ecosystem in The Gambia.....	18
4.2 ITC and Entrepreneurship in The Gambia.....	19
4.3 The Andandorr Programme	20
5. Entrepreneurship and its impact on the overall economy.....	22
5.1 The role of entrepreneurship in job creation and economic growth.....	22
5.2 The relationship between entrepreneurship and innovation.....	23
5.3 The impact of entrepreneurship on local & regional economic.....	23
5.4 The impact of government policies on entrepreneurship and the economy....	24
5.5 The relationship between entrepreneurship and small business growth.....	25
5.6 The impact of entrepreneurship on global economic development.....	25
5.7. The challenges faced by entrepreneurs and their impact on the economy....	26
5.8 The role of entrepreneurship in promoting economic diversity and income inequality.....	26
5.9. The future of entrepreneurship and its impact on the economy	26
6. Entrepreneurship in the Gambia.....	27
7. Interview	29
7.1 Entrepreneur 1.....	29
7.2 Entrepreneur 2.....	33
7.3 Entrepreneur 3.....	35
8. Analysis.....	38
8.1 Business skill and capabilities	39
8.2 Cooperation between Gambian-owned SMEs.....	41
8.3 External business Environment Analysis.....	42
8.4 Political factors	42

8.5 Economic factors.....	43
8.6 Social factors.....	44
8.7 Technological factors	45
8.8 Legal factors.....	45
9. Survey.....	46
10.Conclusion.....	49
10.1 Main Research findings.....	50
10.2 Why do Gambia owned SMEs struggle to attain sustainable growth.....	50
10.3 What can be done to make Gambian-owned SMEs attain sustainable growth...	53
10.4 Theoretical and Practical Implications.....	55
10.5 Societal, Social, and Ethical Implications.....	56
10.5.1 Social and Social Implication.....	57
10.5.2 Ethical Implications.....	57
11.References.....	59

1. Introduction

There is a positive feedback loop among innovation, entrepreneurship, and economic development. New and growing businesses represent the primary sources of job creation and innovative activity in an economy, two factors that generally result in improved standards of living for all. However, it is important to understand that the potential impact of entrepreneurship and innovation depends on their level of accessibility. For entrepreneurs to bring new ideas to life, they need access to education and a level playing field on which to compete. In this regard, the role of support institutions is to create conditions that allow more entrepreneurs to start businesses by building skills, generating access to finance as well as to international markets and networks, so that businesses can grow. Economic growth suffers when entrepreneurial activity is unevenly spread across socio-economical, demographic, and/or geographic dimensions. Under the right conditions, entrepreneurs have an incredible power: they help regional areas prosper economically, and they serve society through engineering innovative solutions to problems and challenges.

The Gambia has experienced economic growth in recent years. However, several challenges remain: Unemployment, rural development and youth migration are on the top of The Gambia's agenda for prosperity. Micro, small and medium size enterprises (MSMEs) in The Gambia contribute approximately to 20% of the GDP and 70% of the sector is composed of self-employed people. Yet, youth unemployment has increased to 41% during 2019. Business support institutions are catalysts for job creation and economic growth when performing in a conducive ecosystem of support institutions. Institutions are collectively accountable for

exponentially increasing job and economic opportunities for youth. Given the predominance of young population in The Gambia, with almost 60% of the population under the age of 25, start-ups can play an important role in the economy, as a driver of economic growth, employment, diversification and transformation. The Gambia has increasingly recognized the relevance of entrepreneurship for the country's growth, to foster economic opportunities and support young people. However, its ecosystem of support institutions is still at an early stage of maturity. There is a need for clarity on the connection between innovation, entrepreneurship, SMEs and start-ups in the ecosystem.

Moreover, further development of support institutions is needed to guide start-ups in all its development phases. Based on Start-up commons ecosystem categories, The Gambia is currently placed at the first stage of maturity, called (A): Awakening & Manifesto. According to this stage, The Gambia has increasingly embraced start-up culture, development and understanding. In addition, an initial mindset towards creating a start-up ecosystem is starting to form. There is interest in global megatrends and changes taking place in innovation, entrepreneurship and start-up developments. It is, therefore, a critical moment for The Gambia to assess its current position, activities and focus areas compared to international practices and within local context. The Gambia needs to transition to the next stage, "Mapped & Vision", in which institutions – as actors in the ecosystem - seek strategies, policies, new support functions and services in order to grow business creation via entrepreneurship and innovative SMEs. This will mean fully developing and embracing an entrepreneurial culture, start-up development and start-up ecosystem knowledge among local key stakeholders for common understanding and alignment. Further, building a shared vision and roadmap for the Gambian ecosystem will be essential.

1.1 Background

The Gambia is a small, fragile country in West Africa and has a population of 2.5 million. Stretching 450 km along the Gambia River, the country (10,689 square kilometers) is surrounded by Senegal, except for a 60-km Atlantic Ocean front. Most of the population (57%) is concentrated around urban and peri-urban centers and over 60% of the population are youths, (www.gbosdata.org). However, since the country attained independence in 1965, it has made some great strides on some indicators of development, for example increasing access to education, infrastructural development, and health care services. The education system of the Gambia is still developing but has factored the training of entrepreneurs since inception through the teaching of subjects like business management, economics, and

commerce from tertiary level up to undergraduate level. However, one key area that the Gambians continue to struggle for almost 59 years of nationhood is the creation of successful sustainable home base entrepreneurial ventures like small and medium size businesses that maintain a steady growth for decades compared to neighbouring countries in West Africa. It is a fact that the Gambia is a developing country and lacks the required resources to scale up its development initiatives, and the lack of enough resources negatively affects people's creativity. Despite the lack of sufficient resources, it is the duty of every government to improve the conditions in their country. The Gambia government has implemented a series of programs geared towards entrepreneurial development in order to curb the rising unemployment level of 85% of the population (World Bank report on Gambia 2019). The mass migration of the youthful population illegally to the west through the Mediterranean Sea is an indication of the failure of these government policies to nurture nascent talent and skills. Because if a policy does not improve the creativity of people, they cannot grow in whatever undertakings they are embarking on. Good policies are supposed to cater for inclusive growth to answer the question of to what extent does the implementation of an innovation that will improve the social and economic well-being of communities that have structurally been denied access to resources, capabilities, and opportunities. The success of policy implementation also depends on the attitude and level of motivation of the beneficiary.

The current state of the business environment in the Gambia cannot be attributed to only the lack of inclusive policies. A critical look in understanding what role if any being played by the citizenry, especially those that had established small and medium-sized enterprises and the level of commitments they invest in sustaining those enterprises, will be important. Because people have different motives for starting an entrepreneurial venture. In a developing country like the Gambia, characterized with higher levels of unemployment and poverty, the motivation levels of individuals to start a business will tend to differ. Some individuals will decide to establish business ventures to simply attain some basic needs of life while others will want to satisfy a more sophisticated need of life like a sense of self-fulfillment as argued by Maslow's hierarchy of needs in Dencker et al. (2021, p.64). This means that an entrepreneur's prior wishes or need based entrepreneurship (Dencker et al. (2021, p. 63) influence the level of passion, dedication, resource acquisition efforts, longevity and outcomes of many entrepreneurial ventures. Further, looking at the dynamics of Gambian small and medium size entrepreneurs in the country's business environment it can be observed that it is more favourable to external investors (SMEs) than local based investors and that makes it very crucial to study and understand what drives and motivates Gambians to venture in small and medium size enterprises and why they find it difficult to sustain their ventures. Viewing this with the lens of, Weber et al. (2022, p. 3) describes two important phenomena that drive people in sub-Saharan Africa into becoming entrepreneurs, namely opportunity entrepreneurs and

necessity entrepreneurs. Are Gambian small and medium size entrepreneurs opportunistic by venturing in business and activities that guarantee promising market opportunities, or are Gambian small and medium size businesses entrepreneurs necessitated by lack of viable options and pursued business activities out of need when other livelihood options, such as wage employment, are seemingly absent, or less attractive, practicable, or remunerative. Could this be true in the Gambia? Not yet proven, but it is so relevant to trigger the urge to understand the pattern through which Gambian small and medium size enterprises had appeared and disappeared over the last five decades. Like in other developing economies in Africa, interest in entrepreneurship is rapidly increasing and this is true of the Gambia where non-Gambian entrepreneurs are predominantly gaining a fair share of the Gambian market to the peril of Gambian owned business enterprise. Therefore, the need to critically analyze the business environment with some of the active and passive players calls for this study.

1.2. Aims

This thesis is based on one of the most important sectors of the Gambian economy (commerce), and it revolves around small and medium size businesses (SMEs) pioneered and owned by Gambians. The importance of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in a country's economic development is undisputable. Small and medium-sized businesses have a great potential to impact a country's economy in terms of achieving sustainable development goals. Thus, the aim of this study is geared towards understanding the factors affecting sustainable growth of Gambian owned small and medium-sized businesses. First, it is important to note that most foreign owned SMEs in the Gambia registered greater achievements in terms of growth and sustainability, which has resulted in the majority of the country's small and medium-sized businesses owned by foreign nationals. My purpose of writing this thesis therefore is to understand the various antecedents that are negatively affecting the sustainable growth of Gambian owned small and medium-sized businesses by critically studying why so many Gambian startups fail to grow, studying challenges faced by Gambian SMEs that are able to pass startup face and experience slow growth and also study the factors that led to the success of the few Gambian owned SMEs that thrive amidst the prevailing business environment. Further, an in-depth enquiry to enable us to understand these issues will focus our attention on the perceptions of proprietors of some of these businesses and what they believed to be the main factors affecting their businesses. This will further involve trying to understand the part played by the external environments of these business ventures which include some public and private institutions whose main roles are to help in the creation of an enabling environment for these business ventures (SMEs) to thrive and meet

their goals.

1.3 Objectives

My research aim is to trigger an understanding of these endemic factors that are responsible for the rapid failure of so many Gambian - owned small and medium-sized enterprises. An important objective of this study will also be to focus on contributing toward literature that can somehow explain why Gambian -owned SMEs find it difficult to achieve sustainable growth thus showing the factors responsible for the large gap in terms of success rate between Gambian SMEs and non-Gambian SMEs. Because there is inadequate research done on this area, my contribution will aim to explain why so many Gambian owned SMEs fail to successfully move through the entire stages of a business life cycle from introduction, survival, rapid growth, maturity or even to diversification. I also intend to contribute to understanding and explaining some of the actual reasons that makes Gambian - owned small and medium size enterprises rapidly go from introduction of their businesses and quickly to exit without attaining any growth to diversify locally or internationally compared to non-Gambian small and medium enterprises that dominate the Gambian market. The past five decades showed a rapid rise of non-Gambian - owned small and medium size enterprises across the entire country. According to the Gambia government ministry of trade, employment, and regional integration website (motie.gm), over 80% of all corner shops in every city, town and village in the Gambia are owned by non-Gambian entrepreneurs that continue to grow and strengthen their grip on the economy. Why is it that the large majority of Gambian - owned small and medium size enterprises quickly die out, and even the few that manage to survive the storm and become highly diversified and expanded are prone to die immediately the founders die. Finding answers to these salient questions and contributing immensely towards research on this area are the main aims and objectives of this thesis.

2. Summary of Methodology

2.1 A Research Approach

A research approach to theory can take two paths; an inductive or deductive approach. In the case of Inductive research, the focus is on producing new theory by using data, while deductive research on the other hand does the opposite which focuses on using data to test and build upon already existing theories (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007, p. 25). Further, it is important to clarify that a deductive approach is considered most common in the relationship between

research and theory and is also often associated with positivism. Therefore, this will make a deductive approach to be highly affiliated with quantitative research (Bell et al., 2018, 2011, p. 164). That said, my focus is centered more on the inductive approach, which is considered to be affiliated more with qualitative research. As with both a deductive and an inductive approach, it is important to know that, even though some researchers do develop theories, most actually end up with somewhat more than empirical generalizations (Bell et al., 2018, 2011, p. 23). The chosen research approach for this study was an induction. An inductive research approach is developed to identify patterns and relationships across and within cases, as well as their fundamental logical arguments.

Therefore, an inductive approach with the use of qualitative means like key informant interviews (KII) using semi structured interview guides for obtaining first-hand information had assisted this research in fulfilling the purpose of the thesis. A deductive approach would not have been a sufficient research approach for this study. Considering that, there was an insignificant number of theories that could have resulted in creating hypotheses to test the relationship in terms of factors resulting in sustainability and unsustainability of Gambian owned SMEs.

2.2 Research strategy

Qualitative & Quantitative Strategies

The research questions play a key role in determining what research strategy to apply and get a more appropriate answer for a given study. The two important types of approaches available to researchers in most cases to choose from are quantitative and qualitative study (Rutberg, & Bouikidis, 2018, p. 209). Quantitative studies are described by its controlled and strict design and usage of precise measurements to analyze different phenomena. On the contrary, qualitative studies analyses phenomena by adopting a flexible research design and an in-depth, holistic approach that generates rich, telling narratives. Moreover, qualitative research is grounded in words, text, and talk, while quantitative research counts, codes, and quantifies phenomena.

Based on this knowledge, the research method that was most suitable for this thesis was a qualitative approach. The reason for this is that a qualitative method is used to understand and describe actual interactions between people, the meaning of them, and the processes that real-life organizational scenes are composed of. Moreover, Eriksson and Kovalainen (2015, p. 3) highlight the importance of using a qualitative approach when researching the field of

business. It contributes to the possibility to critically examine the business world and its core processes. Considering this, a qualitative approach to the thesis is strengthened due to the focus on wanting to understand the reason why the majority of small and medium size Gambian entrepreneurs have unsustainable and sustainable ventures. To answer those questions, a qualitative approach is necessary because it aids the understanding of people's opinions and perceptions by using words, text, and talk. Since my studies had a limitation of distance, due to the fact that the identified participants in my studies all reside in the Gambia while I stay abroad, I decided to adopt the use of web-based platforms such as WhatsApp, zoom or teams, any of which suitable is for my respondents. The respondents in my studies were recruited through calls via WhatsApp and some through email exchanges, and respondents that met the research profile are chosen to participate in my studies. Since I lived in different time zones, I considered the time differences and before the interviews, respondents had to consent to voluntarily participate in the study.

2.3 Explanatory, Exploratory, and Descriptive Research

The most important aspect of every research process is to begin with a problem question that needs to be solved and answered. The main aim of this is to help me to get answers that are useful to my study and thus-social research is classified into three (3) different categories namely, Explorative, descriptive, and explanatory. First, Explorative research can begin with a literature search, case study and or focus group discussion. The purpose of exploratory research is to formulate research problems, clarify concepts and form hypotheses. Moreover, data from exploratory research is mostly qualitative, and its goal is to discover something new.

However, most Researchers believed that exploratory research is risky, by definition, since it is not possible to know in advance if something new will come out of the whole research process. Since explorative research aims to clarify concepts and or establish hypotheses, it therefore does not suit my study purpose as my study goal does not aim to clarify any given concept nor to create hypotheses. Explanatory research is conducted purposely to explain why a phenomenon occurs and further predict future occurrences. This research method explores why a phenomenon occurs when limited information is available and based on conducting the research there is an increased understanding of the given topic, establishes the factors on how and why it occurs and further predicts future occurrences. Explanatory research or studies are characterized by hypothesis tests that specify the nature and direction of the relationship in or among the variables being studied. Moreover, the data in explanatory research is quantitative and which mostly required statistical tests to prove and establish the validity of the relationships

of the variables. Finally, descriptive research aims to describe a phenomenon and its characteristics, and it is more concerned with 'what' rather than 'how' and 'why' phenomena happen. In addition, descriptive research usually has guiding research questions, but they are not generally driven by structured hypotheses and its data can either be qualitative or quantitative. Since qualitative research is more holistic and frequently involves a rich collection of data sources to get a comprehensive and deeper understanding of research participants which includes their perspectives and opinions, I therefore believed qualitative descriptive study can be suitable for my study. First, the goal of qualitative descriptive study is a comprehensive summarization of specific events experienced by individuals or groups of individuals. So, since my purpose is to understand the factors affecting Gambian owned small and medium sized businesses, getting the opinions of some of the business owners and key players in the business environment will be helpful in my study.

2.4 Data collection method

Qualitative research can use different approaches to collect data, as I mentioned earlier. However, for the purpose of my studies, I depended on the key informant interview to enable me to ask the identified respondents my research questions in order to get key sector player information that yielded the answers I am able to analyse in my findings. However, it is important to note that there are several different methods for collecting data in qualitative research. Three data collection methods are observations, interviews, and questionnaires, where interviews represent one of the most common ones in qualitative research. In regard to research interviews, there are three types; structured, semi-structured, and unstructured. Semi structured interviews have been used in this study due to its flexibility in not being required to ask a specific set of questions. Instead, it has a few overarching themes and questions which serve as a guide throughout the interviews. These interview types also allow more in-depth answers because the flexibility in this approach grants the option to discover and elaborate upon important information that surfaces during the interview.

Semi structured interviews adhered to the purpose of the study, as the aim was to attain a deeper understanding of what challenges and opportunities the SMEs entrepreneurs face in the Gambian business environment. The participants of this study were not geographically close to the researchers, which is one of the reasons why the interviews were held via telephone or WhatsApp. Due to my work, I could not travel to The Gambia and conduct face to face interviews with participants in the studies.

2.5 Sampling Method

Non-random sampling technique of Purposive Sampling method was used, I identified 3 respondents comprising different sector players. I tried to include some Gambian own SMEs that are actively operating and running. When conducting a study, it is of high importance to carefully select your interviewees. It is also common to present a basic profile of the interviewees, containing, for instance, their job role, experience, qualifications, gender, and other criteria that might be relevant to the study. Furthermore, it is practically impossible to access the entire targeted population. Therefore, a carefully selected sample is important to get results that are as closely reflected by the whole population as possible. Considering this, the sampling method of the research process is a very crucial part, because it can assure that the results are aligned with the population if you have used an appropriate sampling technique. The chosen sampling method for this study was purposive sampling, hence it is the appropriate method that can aid researchers to select participants with characteristics or knowledge needed in a research sample.

Literature review (25% of your thesis) (Plagiarism) (the best practices)

3. Economic challenges in today's environment

Over the last two years, the pandemic has played a major role in shaping the global economy. Many sectors have found themselves in difficulty and are still struggling, and the countries dependent on those sectors are now quietly trying to get back up again. Despite the strong economic recovery in 2021, the financial difficulties are not over and may still cause economic slowdown. In addition, many countries are faced with an increasing debt burden, high inflation and, the burning issue of the moment, geopolitical tensions, which all play a major role. A summary is given below.

3.1 Economic slowdown

To limit economic damage, many countries introduced support measures; once again, to rebuild their economies, many are having to take the necessary measures. Partly as a result of that, the global economy is experiencing a strong rebound, but it remains to be seen how long it will last. A new wave of Covid-19 could quickly destabilize this shaky recovery.

We see this happening, for example, in China, which is currently experiencing a slowdown in growth. In recent months, the country has been hit by several virus outbreaks, following which the government decided to re-impose stringent, far-reaching restrictions.

Moreover, the crisis in the key real estate sector is also damaging economic activity, with all the resultant consequences. At a global level, this slowdown will impact China's commercial partners and have an effect on the price of raw materials.

3.2. Increasing debt burden

A second consequence of the pandemic and the recovery plans put in place is a huge increase in national debt. This poses a particular problem for emerging countries, where the economic impact of the pandemic has been somewhat mitigated thanks to the temporary suspension of debt servicing for the poorest of them. The consequences of taking this measure away are still a matter of conjecture.

Governments are not the only ones left with huge debts; companies in the private sector are in the same situation, and here I am thinking primarily of companies in the service sector, for example in tourism, culture and aviation. Furthermore, the disruption of global supply chains, rising raw material prices and high goods transportation costs are also causing concern among companies.

3.3. Inflation

A third challenge facing the global economy is inflation, due in part to ongoing supply problems and rising demand as a result of the economy's resurgence in a post-Covid era. And product scarcity goes hand in hand with higher prices. In response to inflationary pressure, the American Federal Reserve intends to tighten its monetary policy. It previously announced it would likely raise interest rates in March, which would be the first time since December 2018. As a result, vulnerable countries are at risk of finding it more difficult to access the capital market. It is not excluded that the European Central Bank would also hike up interest rates. On top of that, many businesses are finding it difficult to increase their prices, meaning that their profit margins are decreasing significantly. Higher living costs are also leading to social unrest.

3.4. Geopolitical tensions

The last and probably the biggest risk is caused by geopolitical tensions. The first thing that comes to mind is the Russia-Ukraine war, where the fighting, but also the sanctions imposed, are greatly affecting the region as well as Europe and the global economy. You can find the most recent updates on this page.

Further afield, in Asia, next to the military tensions around Taiwan, there are the ongoing trade tensions between China and the USA over semiconductors. To short-circuit Chinese

technological development, the USA has imposed sanctions on the sector, in some cases at the expense of its own industry.

4. Entrepreneurship

We know that entrepreneurship support programmes make a vital contribution to unlocking the economic potential that start-ups and small businesses offer, by helping new entrepreneurs successfully make the leap into entrepreneurship and by supporting existing entrepreneurs to build their businesses. In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, as economies try to recover, this may be more important than ever.

However, having worked with business support organizations (BSOs) and the Gambian entrepreneurship ecosystem for years, we have done a lot of thinking and work in this area and know what can go wrong when programmes take place in isolation and fail to support entrepreneurs throughout their journey. This is why, we put pen to paper to share with you some of the lessons we have learnt and a potential solution for tackling these that the Gambian ecosystem has developed – a solution that aims to enhance specialization and collaboration by ecosystem players, increase training quality, and generate new so-far missing support programmes. At the same time, we still have many questions and would love to hear experiences from elsewhere and your ideas.

4.1 The Entrepreneurship Ecosystem in The Gambia

The Gambia's business sector consists of approx. 115,000 micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) and these contribute approx. 20% of GDP. Among MSMEs, 98% operate as sole proprietors, 77% of which are not registered. These consist of a large number of necessity entrepreneurs as well as some promising start-ups. However, currently, few start-ups in The Gambia scale up due to a long list of obstacles and limiting factors. One of these is

The Gambia's National Entrepreneurship Policy envisions a Gambia by 2026, which has "an enabling entrepreneurship environment with quality entrepreneurship education and a thriving entrepreneurial spirit embracing all parts of the country". While the policy specifically addresses a number of constraints faced by entrepreneurs and the entrepreneurship ecosystem at large, it does not address the need for effective incubation, acceleration, and business development programmes; and how to address this need and current limitations of the ecosystem.

Key actors in the ecosystem include the Gambia Investment and Export Promotion Agency

(GIEPA), the Gambia Chamber of Commerce and Industry (GCCCI), the Gambia Youth Chamber of Commerce (GYCC) and the Gambia Women's Chamber of Commerce (GWCC), as well as the Start-up Incubator Gambia (SIG), The Woman Boss, the National Enterprise Development Initiative (NEDI) and the Gambia Chapter of the Global Youth Innovation Network (GYIN Gambia).

4.2 ITC and Entrepreneurship in The Gambia

Since 2017, ITC has been supporting the different Gambian BSOs in providing relevant support services to entrepreneurs; whilst also having worked with the ecosystem to evolve and meet the growing needs and expectations of the business community. ITC-supported interventions have ranged from assessments of the ecosystem and support for coordination between different actors to trainings of trainers (TOTs), funding, and technical guidance for the delivery of a range of short-term trainings, boot camps, business development advisory services, mentorship and coaching programmes, technical trainings for the enhancement of entrepreneurs' productive capacities, market linkage activities, such as trade fairs; and access to finance schemes. Over the past 3.5 years, ITC and different BSOs have provided entrepreneurship support to over 3,000 young Gambians. Many of the participating entrepreneurs registered gains based on this support, while others needed further guidance and support to successfully establish and/or grow their businesses.

4.3 The Andandorr Programme

Aiming to address these obvious gaps and shortcomings of the Gambian entrepreneurship ecosystem and its support programmes for entrepreneurs, and building on its existing strengths, the Entrepreneurship Core Team, in consultation with other stakeholders in the ecosystem, developed the Andandorr programme.

The Andandorr programme is a pilot programme, which aims to tackle many of the identified issues in the ecosystem by increasing collaboration and coordination within the ecosystem, increasing specialization of the different BSOs, enhancing complementarity of services provided and giving entrepreneurs clarity on the available support programmes, as well as more structured support in lieu of the ad hoc trainings that used to be the norm.

At the core of the programme stands the idea of partnership (Andandorr means partnership in

Wolof)– partnership between the BSOs in developing the pilot, selecting participants, and running the programmes, and sharing data on participants; as well as between the participating entrepreneurs, who are expected to network with other Andandorr entrepreneurs, support one another, and seek business collaborations.

So far, the programme has two main components:

A common customer relationship management (CRM) system; and

An ecosystem-wide support programme for entrepreneurs. Ban area and support programmes in rural areas tend to be even more sporadic and lacking follow-up than those in urban areas.

A (perception of a) lack of access to finance. Many potential entrepreneurs hold off on starting or expanding their businesses based on the apperception that seed funding is a requirement and that starting small with one's own savings and growing the business from there is not a possibility. In fact, many entrepreneurs require additional skills, management competencies and financial literacy much more than funding. It is often more the perception that substantial funds are required to start a business or a sense of entitlement to receiving funds, including grants, than the actual lack of funds that is stopping potential entrepreneurs from starting a business. On the other hand, many entrepreneurs (including those that have already invested their personal savings into their business) genuinely struggle to access business financing without collateral and interest rates at commercial banks are unaffordable for most. This is problematic in the context of entrepreneurship support programmes, as it stops entrepreneurs from having the means to turn ideas into action and make changes in their business.

Low commitment and entitlement among entrepreneurs. Support programmes can only create as much impact as those that are supported and committed to the process. The majority of the country's entrepreneurship support services are donor-funded, and as such entrepreneurs do not usually pay for any services. This takes away some of the screening mechanism for the most committed participants (those who are willing to pay for the services). Many feel entitled to free services by BSOs and do not value the support, which they receive. These concerns about the attitudes of clients combined with a lack of monitoring systems of participants' performance, most likely mean that programmes are less effective than they could be, do not necessarily reach the right people, and are facing challenges in terms of sustainability, as programmes may not be able to continue without external funding.

The goal of the Andandorr CRM system is to create an ecosystem-wide tracking mechanism of entrepreneurs, their needs, support received to date and progress made based on different interventions from BSOs. This is expected to help BSOs improve their monitoring and

evaluation, thereby allowing them to better assess the effectiveness of programmes, while reducing overlaps and duplications of trainings by the same entrepreneurs and identify the most driven and committed entrepreneurs.

The Andandorr support programme for entrepreneurs provides a structured series of support services that take entrepreneurs from the idea stage to internationalization of their businesses via three levels of maturity. This is a long-term support programme aiming to go beyond short-term trainings and offering support throughout all stages of the entrepreneurship journey, including those at a more advanced level. By assigning support offerings from different institutions to levels of maturity and sequencing them, the programme aims to give entrepreneurs clarity on where to find what type of support and to allow the institutions to better synergize and reduce duplication of trainings and participants. The programme is linked to dedicated access to finance mechanisms, which mirror the maturity model of the overall programme, including the grant scheme mentioned above, a loan scheme, and Angel Investment through the recently established Gambia Angel Investors Network (GAIN); and includes some programmes across different locations in The Gambia.

5. Entrepreneurship and its impact on the overall economy

Entrepreneurship refers to the process of creating, organizing, and managing a business venture in order to make a profit. It is characterized by innovation, risk-taking, and the ability to identify and seize opportunities in the market. This entrepreneurial activity drives economic growth by creating new jobs, increasing productivity, and fostering competition.

For example, successful entrepreneurs may develop new products or services that address unmet consumer needs, resulting in increased consumer choice and improved standards of living.

Additionally, entrepreneurship encourages efficiency and resource allocation, leading to improvements in overall economic performance.

5.1 THE ROLE OF ENTREPRENEURS IN JOB CREATION AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

Entrepreneurs play a significant role in driving job creation and economic growth. By identifying market opportunities and taking risks, they establish innovative businesses that generate

employment opportunities. For instance, a tech startup may create jobs for software developers, marketers, and customer support staff. Moreover, these new ventures contribute to economic growth by introducing fresh ideas, products, and services into the market.

5.2 The relationship between entrepreneurship and innovation

Entrepreneurship and innovation go hand in hand. Entrepreneurs are the driving force behind new ideas and ventures that disrupt industries and create value. Through their ability to identify problems and find solutions, entrepreneurs bring about innovative products, services, and business models. Innovation fuels entrepreneurship by providing opportunities for growth and differentiation.

For example, the rise of e-commerce platforms has enabled countless entrepreneurs to start online businesses and reach global markets. It is through the combination of entrepreneurship and innovation that societal progress and economic development can occur.

5.3 THE IMPACT OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP ON LOCAL AND REGIONAL ECONOMIES

Entrepreneurship has a significant impact on local and regional economies. It drives innovation, creates job opportunities, and fosters economic growth. By starting new businesses, entrepreneurs inject fresh ideas and products into the market, stimulating competition. For instance, the rise of tech startups has revolutionized the way we communicate, shop, and work. This not only improves consumer experiences but also increases productivity and efficiency.

Additionally, entrepreneurship promotes entrepreneurship, as successful entrepreneurs often reinvest their profits and mentor aspiring startups. These ripple effects contribute to the overall prosperity and development of local and regional economies.

5.4 THE IMPACT OF GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND THE ECONOMY

Government policies have a significant impact on entrepreneurship and the overall economy.

Some ways in which government policies influence entrepreneurship include:

Regulatory environment: Governments can create favourable or restrictive regulations that affect startups and small businesses. For example, streamlined licensing processes and reduced bureaucracy can encourage entrepreneurship, while excessive red tape can stifle innovation.

Access to financing: Government initiatives such as grants, loans, and tax incentives can provide vital financial support to entrepreneurs. These programs can help bridge the funding

gap and stimulate business growth, particularly in sectors like technology and clean energy.

Intellectual property protection: Strong enforcement of intellectual property rights encourages entrepreneurs to develop innovative products and services. Patent laws, copyright protection, and anti-counterfeiting measures safeguard entrepreneurs' investments and incentivize further research and development.

Education and training: Government policies that enhance entrepreneurship education and vocational training provide aspiring business owners with the skills and knowledge necessary for success. This can lead to a more competitive and dynamic entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Market access: Governments play a role in promoting access to domestic and international markets.

Trade agreements, export assistance programs, and efforts to reduce trade barriers can help entrepreneurs expand their customer base and compete globally.

It is clear that government policies have a profound impact on entrepreneurship, shaping the opportunities and challenges faced by entrepreneurs.

5.5 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND SMALL BUSINESS GROWTH

Entrepreneurship and small business growth have a symbiotic relationship. Entrepreneurs, through their innovative ideas and risk-taking, drive the growth of small businesses and stimulate economic development. Their ability to identify opportunities, create new products or services, and adapt to changing market conditions fuels job creation and generates revenue. Recognizing that business success hinges on various factors, it's crucial for entrepreneurs to also prioritize workplace safety training to ensure the well-being of their workforce, adhere to regulatory standards, and create a conducive environment for sustainable growth.

For example, a tech startup that disrupts traditional industries can bring about significant growth and employment opportunities. Conversely, small business growth also fosters entrepreneurship by providing a fertile ground for aspiring entrepreneurs to gain hands-on experience and build networks. This cycle of entrepreneurship and small business growth contributes to overall economic prosperity and vitality.

5.6 THE IMPACT OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP ON GLOBAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Entrepreneurship has a significant impact on global economic development. It creates new businesses that stimulate job growth, leading to increased employment rates and reduced poverty levels. By introducing innovative products and services, entrepreneurs drive competition and foster economic growth. They also contribute to national income through tax revenues. For instance, successful entrepreneurs often become high-income earners who pay

substantial taxes.

Furthermore, entrepreneurship encourages investment and attracts foreign direct investment, spurring economic development.

5.7 THE CHALLENGES FACED BY ENTREPRENEURS AND THEIR IMPACT ON THE ECONOMY

Entrepreneurs face numerous challenges that can greatly impact the economy. Firstly, securing funding is a common struggle, as startups often lack collateral or an established track record. Limited resources can hinder growth and innovation.

Additionally, navigating complex regulations and legal requirements can be time-consuming and expensive. Fierce competition in crowded markets poses another hurdle, requiring entrepreneurs to differentiate themselves to attract customers. Lastly, managing the uncertainty and risks inherent in entrepreneurship is crucial. Despite these challenges, entrepreneurs contribute to the economy by creating jobs, introducing new products and services, and driving innovation and economic growth.

5.8 THE ROLE OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN PROMOTING ECONOMIC DIVERSITY AND REDUCING INCOME INEQUALITY

Entrepreneurship plays a significant role in promoting economic diversity and reducing income inequality. By encouraging individuals to start their own businesses, entrepreneurship creates opportunities for new industries, products, and services to emerge. This leads to job creation and the development of diverse income streams.

Additionally, entrepreneurship allows individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds to uplift themselves economically.

For example, aspiring entrepreneurs can leverage their unique skills and resources to start successful ventures.

5.9 THE FUTURE OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND ITS IMPACT ON THE ECONOMY

The future of entrepreneurship holds significant potential to drive economic growth. By fostering innovation and creating new businesses, entrepreneurs contribute to job creation, increased productivity, and improved living standards.

For example, the rise of digital platforms has paved the way for numerous startups to disrupt traditional industries, creating new markets and opportunities. However, an entrepreneurial ecosystem that supports startups with access to capital, mentorship, and regulatory frameworks is crucial. Governments and organizations must prioritize the development of such ecosystems to ensure the continued success and impact of entrepreneurship on the economy.

6 . Entrepreneurship in Gambia

Entrepreneurs can contribute to job creation, growth and a more competitive economy. Increasingly, these enterprises are playing an important role in the economy of The Gambia, not only as a source of employment but also as a contributor to economic diversification and transformation. Entrepreneurship, when harnessed strategically, can become a powerful driving force of innovation and domestic investment over the long-term. With the right coordination of policy levers, MSMEs can also partner with foreign investors as local suppliers, providing services and inputs to foreign investment projects, such as food supplies in the hotel industry. In the other direction, foreign companies can have positive spillovers to the MSME sector through the transfer of knowledge and management practices.

In coordination with the Investment Policy Review recently published, the National Entrepreneurship Policy aims to build domestic capacities for the private sector. It sets an example of how investment and entrepreneurship policies can create synergies for domestic business sector development as well as for foreign investors' attraction. The document stresses that several actions are still required to optimize the regulatory environment. Enhancing entrepreneurship education and skills development, and improving access to finance are the two areas where the most significant gaps need to be filled.

The recommendations of the NEP include integrating entrepreneurship competencies and skills into formal and informal education, as well as promoting funding for innovation and sustainable development. With respect to facilitating technology exchange and innovation, and promoting awareness and networking, the NEP calls for strengthening the linkages between private and public sector institutions, and for instilling the entrepreneurship mindset in society.

The Vision of the National Entrepreneurship of the Gambia is that by 2026 The Gambia will have a thriving and sustainable middle-income economy - growing by 7 % at least - driven by self-reliant and innovative local entrepreneurs and an enabling and strengthened ecosystem, embracing all parts of the country. This transformation will have contributed to improved social and equitable conditions, for disadvantaged groups such as women and youth, and sustainable solutions to current social and environmental challenges.

The Entrepreneurship Policy aims to tear down obstacles and abolish burdensome requirements that hamper business operations, set efficient bankruptcy procedures and provide a fair second chance to honest failed entrepreneurs; it will upgrade entrepreneurship

education and skills, facilitate access to finance and support new businesses mobilizing innovation and technology to solve environmental challenges, and spreading ICT, recognizing entrepreneurs as creators of jobs and prosperity with a focus on the inclusion of vulnerable groups, in particular women and youth. It will instill the entrepreneurship mindset, whilst addressing cultural biases including gender in The Gambian society, paying specific attention to the status of women entrepreneurs and other disadvantaged groups. Most initiatives will be in partnership with the private sector to strengthen networking, trust and cooperation among the diverse private sector players in The Gambia.

As in the investment policy implementation, The Gambia Investment and Export Promotion Agency (GIEPA) will play a key role in the entrepreneurship institutional framework in harmony with the national development plan and the investment and industrial policy and their governance mechanisms. The NEP cuts across a wide range of policy areas; therefore, by nature, it cuts across departmental boundaries and involves several departments at national, provincial and municipal government levels. It also goes beyond the public sector and its agencies, to encompass the private sector and its organizations, financial and educational institutions and non-governmental organizations. As it was achieved in the entrepreneurship policy development, inclusive participation is critical to seeking ways and means to ensure that the implementation is carried out adequately, effectively and in a decentralized manner.

Methodology

Findings (what people are doing now)

Interviews (Ask question)

7. INTERVIEW

The interviews below are presented individually in the order of which they were held. The interview's ultimate objectives were geared towards obtaining data that can answer my research questions of this thesis. The focus of the interview questions revolves around revealing micro and macro antecedents that collectively contributed to yield the current state of Gambian owned SMEs business environment. Unearthing the micro antecedents directed the interviewers focus on understanding what motivates Gambians to venture into SME's business and also assessing the respective capabilities and business skills possess by Gambian entrepreneurs and also trying to understand the level of business interactions between Gambian SMEs geared towards harnessing the value of networking for business

growth. On the other hand, in the later parts of the interview, I shift to the external environment studies to specifically ask my interviewees about factors in the macro environment that are affecting the growth of their businesses. The macro antecedents are revealed through critically studying the various PESTEL factors namely, political, economic, social, technological, ecological, and legal issues that juxtapose to yield the current state of affairs of Gambian SMEs. However, it is important to note that in as much I want to understand all the issues in the macro environment, I did not ask my interviewees any questions around the macro ecological environmental issues as we think it is not relevant in the context of this research and the level of development of the Gambian SMEs industry.

7.1 Entrepreneur 1

MICRO ANTECEDENTS AFFECTING GAMBIAN SMEs GROWTH

The first interview was done with a man that owns a small and medium size business in The Gambia. The interview lasted for about 29 minutes and was conducted via WhatsApp video. I experienced no interruptions throughout the interview and had been able to obtain answers for all my interview questions. With reference to the theoretical frame about relative performance of Gambian owned SMEs and non-Gambian SMEs, interviewee one agrees that the majority of Gambian owned SMEs are not doing well compared to the SMEs owned by non-Gambians. On this basis, interviewee one was asked about what really motivates Gambians to venture in business, and he responded that the ultimate objective for him was to be able to gain income and take care of his needs and the needs of his family. Interviewee one continued speaking, answering the first question and added that due to his lack of livelihood skills and lower level of education, he thinks that starting a medium size business will avail him the opportunity to earn income and support his livelihood needs. When asked about how Gambians perceive their own businesses and their environment, he responded by saying that the majority of Gambians including myself see our businesses as ventures that are not distinct from their owners as so many relatives and friends will borrow from our businesses, and some would never pay for what they borrow. He gave examples of people that have taken goods from his shop and never paid for the goods. He said he ended up fighting with some before he could recover his money while some have disappeared without trace and up to date, he cannot see those individuals. Still on question one, interviewee one continued to speak and stated that the business environment in the Gambia in his observation is more favorable to non-Gambians who do not have any relatives in the Gambia and do not allow borrowing from their businesses. Interviewee one made a typical example and explained that he once helped a non-Gambian

brother to start a business by giving him some of his goods to go and sell from house to house in the neighboring villages. He said that he only gave this non-Gambian a little commission for his service but because he has no family in the Gambia and was able to save a good amount of his money raised through his commission by selling my goods, after three years now the non-Gambian brother was able to establish a wholesale business through the support of other non-Gambian SMEs owners while he is still a retailer. When interviewee one was asked about what his business level of interaction with other Gambian businesses is, he responded that there is a very minimal level of interaction between his business and other Gambian owned businesses. He explained that majority Gambian SMEs that are operating in the category of business he does are all very small and largely depend on non-Gambian businesses for effective supply and purchase merchandise for their businesses at a wholesale price. We only see each other as rivals and want to perform better than the other and sometimes when I am getting out of stock for a certain commodity and want a supply of this commodity from my fellow Gambian SMEs to sell to my customers, they will prefer not to give me those items even it will go expired in their shops. Interviewee one was asked to reflect generally on any other micro challenges faced by Gambian owned SMEs, and he responded that there are numerous challenges. First, he explained the term home-based disadvantage which he said means the setback caused to his business due to the fact that all his customers are people he is closely related to and living in the same community who frequently loan or borrow goods from his shop and will never pay for these borrowed goods....

MACRO ANTECEDENTS AFFECTING GAMBIAN SMEs GROWTH

Interviewee one further stated how the following macro environmental factors affects his business sustainable growth. First, he explained that political factors like government policies for Gambian SMEs growth are only serving the interest of few and described it as fancy papers. He went on to state that the high level of corruption in the country only favours the giant businesses, the majority of which are owned by non-Gambians who end up putting down the burden of their high expenditures on the price of their merchandise which many small and medium size businesses finds very expensive thus makes it very difficult for him to buy the required stock for his business outlet to attain growth he yearns. Interviewee one further elaborated on other macro environmental factors and stated that the level of unemployment in the country makes all the businesses scramble for a small group of income earning customers, which he said also contributes to their slow growth. When asked about social factors, interviewee one stated that apart from friends and close relatives that borrow from his shop and some never pays for what they borrow, there are no social factors he is aware of affecting his business growth. He added that when there are community celebrations like the feast periods, his business makes more sales during those periods and that is a positive social

contribution towards the growth of his business. When asked about any other macro environmental factors affecting the growth of his business, interviewee one stated that the introduction of new payment technologies call 'wave' in the country is positively improving the growth of their businesses as it is now reducing borrowing because people don't need to have physical cash with them to be able to make payment for goods they purchased. When I asked about other macro environmental factors like technological, ecological, and legal, interviewee 1 said he does not know how those environments affect Gambian SMEs. Interviewee one was asked to elaborate on what he thinks are factors responsible for the sustainable growth of non-Gambian SMEs in the country, and he stated that the non-Gambian SMEs support each other to grow. He mentions that they form alliances and provide merchandise for each other to sell and provide proceeds from sales on later dates. He further stated that due to the fact that majority of the merchandise importers were at one time non-Gambian SMEs that have attained massive growth in the country over the decades, have made it easy for the majority of the current non-Gambian SMEs to cooperate and easily provide them with merchandise to continue growing their SMEs while Gambian SMEs struggle to have the same favours. He added that the importers of merchandise for his business does not stop at importing but also establish retail shops and therefore doing both wholesale and retail businesses which is making it difficult for Gambian SMEs to grow. When asked what can the Gambia government do to help remedy the current state of Gambian SMEs, interviewee one stated that the government should step in and help regulate the business environment by making sure importers of merchandise goods are not allowed to do both wholesale and retail services. He stated that importers should only import and do wholesale services and the government should ensure Gambian own retail business owners are not discriminated against from getting access to imported merchandise relative to non-Gambian SMEs, interviewee one concludes.

7.2 Entrepreneur 2

MICRO ANTECEDENTS AFFECTING GAMBIAN SMEs GROWTH

The second interview was conducted via WhatsApp call, and it lasted for 23 minutes. There were no interruptions during the entire interview session. The interview was done with another Gambian restaurant business owner. It is a small, registered business that is solely into preparing and selling good quality food for its customers. First, the interviewee was asked how he perceived the Gambia business environment and the businesses. The interviewee responded that the Gambian business environment has a lot of potential for growth, and it is profitable provided that business owners are willing and determined to invest their time and resources. Interviewee two was then asked to explain what motivated him to venture in

business. He responded that his ultimate motivation was to make millions of Gambian dalasi through business and be financially independent. However, he stressed out that there are a lot of challenges in the environment faced by startups and SMEs. These challenges were focused on the Gambian owned small and medium-sized businesses as my goal is to understand why they are less sustainable as compared to foreign owned SMEs. So, the interviewee was asked to reflect on challenges faced by Gambian owned businesses. The interviewee responded that the first challenge faced by Gambian owned SMEs is the cultural and social setting of the Gambian society. "In the Gambia, most people do not separate the business as an entity from themselves so occasional their friends or family members may request for money or items from the business and some do fail to pay back and since we are all related, we therefore, do not bother to recover the money and which is very bad for a business. You realized that foreign owned businesses do not face this challenge as they have less friends and family members in the country". The second challenge mentioned by the interviewee is the fact that most Gambian businesses are not built to be competitive. They are built on the basis of making profit and therefore, are not ready for challenges and competition. "We do not build businesses that are competitive and for example, in the restaurant business we do have people who buy our products just to patronize us and some may even not need the products but since they know us, they may decide to patronize us. Therefore, we might believe that we are making customers but only to realize that the majority of our customers are friends and family members, and this does affect our marketing strategy as we easily become comfortable and do not see the need to attract customers outside our circle". When asked if Gambian business owners do have some form of corporations among themselves and if it's necessary to have corporations to achieve sustainable growth. The interviewee responded that having strong business cooperation among Gambian business owners would be great, since one of the main reasons for the success of most foreign owned businesses is the effective networks and corporations among them. However, interviewee two explains that currently it is very challenging to convince fellow Gambian SMEs that do similar business like him to come together and partner to grow. The interviewee added that there are some associations that are geared towards helping startups, but they are very limited and are unable to help all SMEs.

MACRO ANTECEDENTS AFFECTING GAMBIAN SMEs GROWTH

The interviewee was later asked on the main macro environmental factors affecting Gambian owned SMEs. I asked the interviewee whether the political environment is conducive to Gambian owned SMEs, and are there government policies that are geared towards helping the Gambian owned SMEs. The interviewee responded that the political environment is conducive, and Gambians are free to establish their businesses. I further asked the interviewee on economic factors and whether the business and economic environment is favourable to

SMEs. However, he stated that the country does not have some level of price control and though there are policies that are established to control the way prices are to be set. The interviewee further argued that it is very difficult for startups and SMEs to survive in the country economically. It is very challenging for us as SMEs since there is no price control and more so economically it is very difficult to get financial support and this is because banks loans are challenging to get due to high interest rate and moreover, there is no pool of funds from the government for startups to benefit based on my knowledge. He further argued that this is due to poor implementation of policies and the government failures to provide the necessary avenue for SMEs, especially small or startups, to thrive. He explained that getting funds is very challenging and that the government has not provided the necessary support for the Gambian owned SMEs as compared to foreign owned businesses who get support from their various networks and countries. Moreover, the interviewee stated that the government has not put the necessary measures to help Gambian owned SMEs especially startups from established businesses and foreign owned businesses that are well established in the market. Interviewee 2 was asked if he is aware of other macro environmental factors, for example in the social environment, that are affecting the sustainable growth of Gambian SMEs. He stated that the Gambian culture of behavior towards Gambian businesses is not helping his business. He added that many people prefer to pay high prices for the same goods at non-Gambian businesses and yet will come to loan the same commodity from his shop which interviewee 2 describe as Gambians love “Wula Kono Nyino Balungdoo Tambingdi Suukono Nyinoo ti” which literally means helping the survival of the bust rat over the house mouse. When I asked him about the impact of technological environment, ecological and legal environment and how these environments affect the Gambian SMEs sustainable growth, interviewee 2 only knows about the technological environment and stated that the introduction of social media application have made it easy for him to market his products as he depends more on WhatsApp to do free marketing of his products. The last macro environmental factor interviewee 2 asked on was the legal environment which he described as full of obstacles and explains that the government made it very complicated to register businesses and as a result many Gambians SMEs, he knows prefer to not register their SMEs ventures and operate independently.

7.3 Entrepreneur 3

MICRO ANTECEDENTS AFFECTING GAMBIAN SMEs GROWTH

The third interview was done with a Gambian woman that owns a small and medium size clothing and food business in the Gambia. The interview lasted for about 32 minutes and there

was no interruption throughout the interview. When interviewee three was asked what motivates Gambians to venture in small and medium size businesses, she stated that 'for me, I just want to do something that can make me earn some income and help myself to solve my financial needs and that of my children'. I went on to ask interviewee three how she perceived her business and her business environment. She answered that it is a very difficult task for one to make a business venture grow sustainably in the Gambia, and she added that the business environment that comprises friends, families and strong competitors makes it very difficult for her to have the required support to grow her business. She added that the majority of Gambian SME business owners lack the required skills to effectively run a business, and this makes it very difficult for them to successfully manage the revenue generated by their business. Interviewee 3 gave an example of a friend whose business collapsed due to the fact that she employs a brother to be in charge of her business and because this proprietor and her brother both lacks the required business skills, she added that this led to them taking too much money from their business and use it on solving personal problems and their business eventually ran out of money and failed. We then asked interviewee three whether there is any sort of interaction between her own business and other Gambian SMEs. She stated that Gambian businesses do not support each other and consider each other as rivals always. Interviewee three added that when she attempts to get closer to Gambian businesses around her community and ask them how their businesses are doing and learn from them, 'they try to hide information and consider me as a spy who want to steal valuable information to outperform them in the competitive market when honestly my intentions are to help each other'. Interviewee three added that this unwelcoming attitude of so many Gambian SMEs located in the same market made her not to approach Gambian business owners for purposes of cooperation and growth for their respective businesses. I then asked a follow-up questions and asked interviewee three if she actually believe cooperating with other Gambian business will add value to her business and she responded the following words, 'Yes it will not only add value, but it will make us stronger in the market and dominate the non-Gambian SMEs who had a strong grip in our markets and very much united. She added that majority of Gambian SMEs entrepreneurs lacks the required marketing skills to get and retain customers and give an example that when a customer comes to your shop and want to buy a product and unfortunately got sort of only five Gambian dalasis, interviewee three stated that such customer should be allowed to get the product he/she wanted and be told not to worry about paying the shortage and with that strategy that customer will always return to your shop according to interviewee three.

MACRO ANTECEDENTS AFFECTING GAMBIAN SMEs GROWTH

Interviewee three was informed to focus on some macro environmental factors that are affecting positively or negatively on her business and when I asked her about political factors, she responded that she is not aware there is a government policy in the country that is purposely created to support small and medium size business and added that even if there is any policy, it is serving the interest of giant and established ventures that employs many people. Interviewee 3 stated that the Gambia being a tax-based economy also makes business very difficult for small and medium size entrepreneurs and complains that the high taxes of the government had resulted to hiking prices and that makes it very difficult for small and medium size business like hers to keep up with stronger competitors in the market. She further added that the peace and stability of the Gambia is a macro political opportunity that is very much underutilized and state that it should be a recipe of more growth for all entrepreneurs ranging from small and larger enterprises but complains that other factors like taxes and lack of effective price regulations makes it difficult for her business to thrive. Interviewee three was asked if she is aware of any economic factors of the macro environment that she thinks is/are affecting the sustainable growth of her business. She responded that yes Gambia is a poor country and many people especially the young ones are unemployed, and this has resulted in the rise of dependency ratio. She exemplified that in some households comprising over ten people, everyone depends on one income earner who might be lucky to get employed and uses his disposable income to fend for their families. Furthermore, she added that in such scenarios, the little disposable income of the breadwinner is used on buying only food items and SMEs that sell goods other than food do not make enough sales as a result and their businesses eventually fail to grow. Interviewee three added that getting a loan from the banks had also crippled many SMEs including hers and explained that the interest that comes with these loans are an unending payment that had seriously affected her business especially during the starting phase. When interviewee 3 was asked about if she is aware of any social macro - environmental factors, affecting the growth of Gambian SMEs, she responded that yes there is a bad cultural practice that is affecting women entrepreneurs like her. She explains that because she is a woman many people in her neighbourhood, especially men that are friends to his husband, consider her and business commodities as their property which is an act informed by cultural beliefs. She added that these people will keep taking from my business and some never pays back and that is not helping her business. Interviewee 3 elaborated more on other macro environmental factors affecting the growth of Gambian SMEs, for example the legal environment, and explain her frustration with how non-Gambian SMEs are given better privileges to access loans in banks and business certifications over Gambian SMEs. She ends her deliberation with a recommendation that the Gambia government should come up with better laws that protects small and medium size businesses owned by Gambians against exploitation imposed by merchandise importers with strict commodity price regulations.

8. ANALYSIS

The analysis is divided into two main components. The first component focuses on the business skills and capabilities of Gambian entrepreneurs specialized in the SMEs. I further divided analysis of my first component into three subsections that focuses on revealing the following: the motivation of Gambian entrepreneurs to start SMEs, how a typical Gambians perceived Gambian businesses or its environment and finally the last subsection of component one focuses on the level of cooperation among Gambian entrepreneurs specializing in SMEs. Moreover, from the theoretical frame, also talks about issues like the education system, culture of a region, regulations, and capabilities of the startups business owners in Sub-Saharan Africa have always represented challenges of growth. The second main component of my analysis focuses on my research questions that help us understand the macro environmental factors affecting the growth of Gambian SMEs. I decided to narrow this into five subsections with the help of the PESTLE framework based on the data I collected which focuses on key macro environmental factors like Political, economic, social, technological, and Legal factors. My goal for this approach is to help in revealing the strength or weaknesses Gambian entrepreneurs have while simultaneously unveiling the opportunities and threats they face which ultimately affects their sustainable growth. Further, numerous studies have revealed many micro and macro environmental issues affecting growth of SMEs in Africa. There is a study that argues that SMEs face a lot of difficulties in accessing finance since most of them are not formally registered as businesses-thus not recognized by financial institutions.

8.1 Business skills and capabilities

As previously mentioned, the purpose of this study was geared towards understanding why Gambian SMEs struggle to be sustainable. I dedicate the first part of my research questions to help me understand specifically what business skills Gambian entrepreneurs specializing in SMEs have or did not have that consequently positively or negatively affect the sustainable growth of their business ventures. The data I gathered from my respondents about the level of business skills possessed by Gambian entrepreneurs that specialized in SMEs reveals to some degree a lack of business skills from most of my interviewees. Before I go into details about that, I reflected on my theoretical framework about the need for and importance of

business skills and why entrepreneurs are supposed to acquire business skills. Business skills are very relevant for an entrepreneur to be able to develop a business idea, establish a business, maintain a business, grow a business, and sustain it. This means that an entrepreneurial knowledge is paramount and small-scale entrepreneurs involve in SMEs needs to have some degree of training to gain business knowledge to be able to establish a business that can go through all the stages of a business life cycle. These business skills include but are not limited to the ability to develop a business idea by studying and understanding the megatrends of the society, ability to develop a business plan, ability to identify sources of funding and ability to manage the operations and finances of the business amongst others. While in other instances the attitude of people about a particular type of business or towards specific entrepreneurs plays a crucial role in molding the behaviour of entrepreneurs in how they perceive their own businesses and their business environment. I have focused in detail on each of these different issues defined above as micro antecedents affecting the growth of Gambian SMEs in the subsequent sections.

Gambian Entrepreneurs' motivation to start SMEs Traditionally, the main reason for starting a firm has been considered to be economic. The data I gathered about the actual motivation of a typical Gambian entrepreneur to start a business venture, specifically SMEs, all lead to one similar answer, which is to engage in an activity that can earn them a better living. For example, interviewee 1&2 responded that they both lack livelihood skills and proper prolonged formal education, and this motivated them to start a business to earn a living while interviewee 3 reiterate similar sentiments that she is a housewife with no formal education and in order to take care of her needs she thinks doing petty trade is the only solution.

Gambian Entrepreneurs' perception of the business environment the sociocultural and political environment influence entrepreneurs' attitudes, motives, and intention to start and run a business. The business environment has a great impact on the perception of entrepreneurs and their motives to establish their own business. Moreover, due to the turbulent nature of the business environment, SMEs need to scan their environment - along with the knowledge of their industry before venturing into any type of business. In line with this theoretical frame, my interviewees had acknowledged the fact that the Gambian business environment is very turbulent, and that SMEs are subjected to responding to so many market forces. For example, interviewee 2 responded that he believed the Gambian business environment is very turbulent and can be very challenging for SMEs however, he further argued that there are so many great opportunities for SMEs provided that they are able to discover these opportunities. Further, the perceptions of these interviewees (1, 2 and 3) about the Gambian business environment are all the same since they all stated similar views and challenges affecting them. For example, interviewees 1 & 3 all made mention of how Gambians cannot see the distinction between

them as entrepreneurs and their business ventures and simply consider them all to be one entity which informs their behaviours towards their businesses. They all believed that the Gambian business environment is very small, and the opportunities are very minimal, and this can be due to the smallness of the country and its population. In addition, interviewees 2 argued that since some Gambian-owned SMEs and most foreign-owned SMEs are able to succeed in the same market then they believed that other Gambian SMEs that struggle to grow should learn from the ones that are succeeding and try to study the business environment, have a proper business plan, and most importantly venture into the right industry then they will be able to succeed as well. Finally, based on the empirical findings on the perceptions of these interviewees about the Gambian business environment I may argue that the perceptions of my interviewees are that the business environment is very challenging like most business environments in sub-Saharan Africa but also with a lot of opportunities to tap into.

8.2 Cooperation between Gambian-owned SMEs

In assessing the business skills of an entrepreneur, one important yardstick is the ability of an entrepreneur to leverage its network in the best interest of his/her business venture. This point is supported by the works of Leobbecke & Powel (2003, p. 3), who collectively argues that the concept of competition which means the ability of firms to simultaneously compete and cooperate is not only vital for large technological firms but also SMEs in search of growth opportunities. It is this backdrop that triggered my interest to come up with a research question that can help me understand how effective Gambian owned SMEs entrepreneurs are in terms of their skills to cooperate, network and support each other to grow. Hence, it is common knowledge in the Gambia that there is a high level of cooperation among non-Gambian SMEs and their businesses continue to grow (<https://motie.gm/policies>). This has made us think whether competition could be the missing piece to explain the puzzle why Gambian SMEs find it hard to grow sustainably. All the interviewees highlighted a common theme in their responses to this question, and it all leads to the total absence of cooperation to compete between Gambian SMEs. Given a situation like this, the salient question I asked myself is what might be responsible for this? Is it the level of knowledge of the entrepreneurs, or is it the history of the practice between previous Gambian SMEs. Whatever the answers to these questions are, what is important to understand is that networking and co-operation are tested and proven methods that can foster the sustainable growth of both SMEs and large corporations.

8.3 External business Environment Analysis

The second component of my analysis, to gather answers that can enable me to contribute towards understanding why Gambian SMEs find it difficult to sustain their businesses, was the systematic study of the macro environment that the Gambian SMEs operate in. My goal was to study some of the most critical macro environmental factors that presently affect the Gambian business environment. My study is guided by the famous PESTEL framework even though my focus is centered around the following aspect of the framework namely, political factors, economic factors, social factors, technological factors and legal factors.

8.4 Political Factors

The political environment analysis was intended to help my studies critically investigate a lot of issues in the macro environment that are politically motivated in the context of the PESTEL framework. We knew that SMEs are regarded as critical to the general development of society. They are crucial to economically and socially uplifting citizens, as countries cannot just produce jobs for all community members. In this paper the macro issues of the political environment I focused on includes, the following; government policy for SMEs, the tax policy, corrupt practices and trade restrictions. I understand that the political environment of SMEs is primarily controlled by the government - Therefore, the government has an important role to ensure that the SMEs sector remains highly productive so that collectively the sector can improve the performance of the wider economy. It is on this belief I ask my respondents about what they think are the political issues affecting or not affecting the sustainable growth of Gambian owned SMEs. My data retrieved from my respondents regarding the political component of the PESTEL framework suggest that the government still needs to do a lot to improve on the level of support rendered to Gambian SMEs. For example, when I asked interviewee 1 about issues in the political macro environment that are affecting his business, He responded that The government policy for Gambian SMEs is just a “Fancy paper”, that is serving the interest of very few Gambian businesses. Interviewee 1 does not see the government policies as a useful tool for helping his business and talked about the high level of corruption at the government business regulatory offices, who he said are only serving the interest of giant businesses in the country. However, Interviewee 2 had a different view compared to interviewee 1 about the political environment and stated that the government had created the enabling environment for anyone to freely establish a business venture, but she does not dispute the high level of corruption in the country that according to her does not favour the sustainable growth of Gambian SMEs. Interestingly, Interviewee 3 also reiterates the same sentiments about the political macro environment just like interviewee.

8.5 Economic Factors

My next focus on the macro-economic environment on which I aim to understand specific issues regarding inflation rate, unemployment rate, interest rates and disposable income of Gambians and how these factors affect the sustainable growth of Gambian SMEs. The PESTEL framework facilitates my inference on this topic as well. Accordingly, SMEs must successfully deal with the business environment challenges to survive, progress, and meet their expectations. Further, the business side of SMEs also presents unique challenges, because as the SMEs continue to grow, customers multiply, markets become more complex, and financial aspects become more critical, thus making it difficult for inexperienced entrepreneurs to sustain their ventures. This triggered my interest to ask my respondents about what issues might be in the macroeconomic environment that might be affecting the sustainable growth of Gambian SMEs. The data I gathered from my studies on this subject suggested so many unfavourable conditions in the economic environment. 1 out of 3 interviewees, all have unanimously agreed of a very unfavourable macroeconomic environment for Gambian owned SMEs in the Gambia. Interviewee 1 & 3 both highlighted that due to the high level of unemployment in the country, all the SMEs are forced to scramble for a small group of income earners while interviewee 2 added that bank loans come with too much interest and making it impossible for struggling businesses like his to survive.

8.6 Social Factors

In critically studying the external macro environment of Gambian SMEs, the social factors cannot be neglected. Many focus on the social environment of Gambian SMEs using the PESTEL framework was centered around the following areas: The cultural barriers, Lifestyle attitudes, career attitudes and population growth rates. Social factors had shaped the way the society talked and did things and melded the mindset of people towards local businesses. When I asked my interviewees to share their thoughts on what social factor/s is/are affecting Gambian SMEs, lifestyle attitudes became the most predominant response as the social issue that mostly negatively affects Gambian SMEs growth. Interviewee 1 does not know about any social factors affecting Gambian businesses. However, interviewee 2 stated that he knew many of his customers like to patronize non-Gambian SMEs and pays for good in cash in non – Gambian stores and often times when they come to his store would rather prefer to get the same merchandise on loan some of which will never get paid for thus bringing loss to his business. Interviewee 3 also elaborates on how women entrepreneurs like her struggle to grow her business in an environment where cultural beliefs favour masculinity. She explained that because of our social belief that women and all their belongings are owned by the husband,

this widely accepted norm has been abused by many men in the society, especially friends and relatives of the husband. She explained that because of this cultural belief, her husband's friends and relatives keep taking merchandise from her business and some do not pay back, which had contributed immensely to slowing the growth of her business.

8.7 Technological Factors

Empirical evidence has shown how SMEs in sub-Saharan Africa failed to fully harness the opportunity technology provides in growing their business ventures, Kabanda & Brown (2017). When a study reveals a finding on Sub-Saharan African entrepreneurs, Gambian SMEs cannot be exempted. This reason made it reasonable for me to critically look into the technological macro environment of Gambian SMEs and be able to understand how it has contributed to shape the current nature of Gambian SMEs. When I asked my interviewees about how the macro technological environment affects Gambian SMEs, interviewees 1 and 3 does not know any effect of technology on Gambian SMEs. However, interviewee 2, dwell on the importance of technology to grow businesses but also on Gambian SMEs are underutilizing the opportunity. For example, Interviewee 2's response was "I use WhatsApp a lot to do free marketing " to showcase a recognition of an important effect technological environment has on his business.

8.8 Legal Factors

The legal environment becomes the last section of the macro environment that I have interest in studying to understand what factors in it, is/are affecting the sustainable growth of Gambian SMEs. I continue to use the PESTLE framework as my working tool/guide and my focus was on discrimination laws, employment laws and consumer protection laws. I am able to understand how turbulent the legal environment can be for SMEs in trying to abide by the set rules for the industry. The data I gathered from my respondents suggest how imbalanced the legal environment of the Gambia is and highly unfavourable to Gambian owned SMEs. Interviewee 1 does not know about any legal environmental factors affecting Gambian SMEs, however interviewee 2 expressed his dissatisfaction about the legal environment of the Gambia stating that it is filled with obstacles for growth and as result he prefers to operate his business without being registered.

9. Survey

Discussion and recommendation (compare and contrast)

The analysis of the various responses from my interviewees above had made it easy to move closer to understanding some of the factors that are affecting Gambian owned SMEs positively or negatively in attaining sustainable growth. The various categorization of responses for my interview questions into micro and macro antecedents made it possible to see internal and external strengths and weaknesses, while simultaneously revealing the internal and external threats of Gambian SMEs. However, it is important to note that the purpose of my research was to trigger an understanding of why Gambian owned SMEs find it hard to attain sustainable growth, not to do a SWOT analysis of Gambian owned SMEs as it appears. The research questions for my interviewees were set up in such a way that my gathered data would appear as if a SWOT analysis was what I conducted. This approach had helped my studies to be able to touch on so many different factors ranging from micro and macro issues that had all collectively contributed to affect the sustainable growth of Gambian owned SMEs. In the analysis of my research question 1 regarding motivational factors that influence Gambian entrepreneurs to start an SME business, interviewee 1, 2, & 3 fails to demonstrate being prepared to succeed. Interviewee 1, 2, & 3 follows a necessity based entrepreneurial approach Block & Wagner (2005, p. 11). From the arguments of Block & Wagner (2005), it can be deduced that for an entrepreneur to succeed in business, it is very important for them to have a good motivation. With a good motivation to start a business, an entrepreneur will ensure it starts off the business life on a good footing by acquiring the required knowledge and resources prior to pursuit of an entrepreneurial opportunity. The lack of good motivation to start a business had made the businesses of Interviewee 1,2 & 3 continue to struggle with little growth attainable over the years. They all explained the lack of prior knowledge and resources to pursue their respective SMEs, which had made their entrepreneurial experience worse. In the case of my research question 2 which also revolves around trying to understand micro behavioural traits of Gambian entrepreneurs that have significant effects on the sustainable growth of their SMEs. The question aims to understand how a Gambian entrepreneur's perception of business and their business environment affects the performance of their various business ventures. This is important because people's perception about a business and the business environment informs their behaviours in it. My empirical data regarding perception reveals a widespread belief among my interviewees that Gambian SMEs operate in a turbulent environment characterized by customers and some business owners who do not understand that entrepreneurs are quite distinct from their business and the two are separate entities that are not the same. However, despite the prevalence of that misconception, my interviewees also believe that the business environment has some good opportunities that if properly

exploited will make them have sustainable ventures. Regarding the research question 3 which was about knowing the level of cooperation between Gambian SMEs, based on my gathered data - it has become evident that Gambian owned SMEs do not see cooperation and partnership as an important tool they can leverage to sustainably grow their business ventures. Despite the numerous theoretical evidence on the importance of networking and co-operation for providing SMEs with embeddedness, intangible resources, strategic alliances and outmatch a stronger competitor and help penetrate into new markets respectively. However, my interviewees 1, 2 & 3 had all stated that Gambian owned SMEs do not cooperate to ensure they gain market power, but instead they disunite and intensify competition among themselves to the advantage of their market rivals which comprises a united force of non-Gambian SMEs. After trying to understand some behavioural traits of Gambian SME entrepreneurs that help me move towards explaining why they find it hard to sustain their businesses. I now shift my focus on the external factors that also contributed towards making attaining sustainability difficult for Gambian SMEs. To do as earlier stated I used the PESTEL framework that helps my research to study different areas of the macro environment. I begin with the political environment, which I have dedicated my research question 4 on. It has become evident with the data I have that there is lack of proper coordination on the side of the government to ensure rendering effective support for a smooth operation and growth of Gambian SMEs. What Interviewees 1, 2 & 3 stated when asked about the political environment reveals a lot of room for improvement on the side of the government, for example to reduce bureaucracy, too many statutory payments to register businesses and ensuring non-registered businesses are factored in policy plans. However, it is also important for Gambian SMEs to register their business entities to stand a chance to be recognized and traceable to the government so that they can get the required support for growing their business through the government. Furthermore, as I dig deep down in the macro environment with the PESTLE framework, I tried to also study the contribution of the macro-economic factors that affect Gambian SMEs from attaining sustainable growth. My data regarding the macro-economic environment clearly reveals a lot of negative issues from all our interviewees ranging from high levels of unemployment, high inflation, lack of price controls, high taxes spillover effects and underperformance of the country's productive sectors. It can be seen that all these issues around the economic environment raised by my interviewees are antecedents controlled and managed by the Gambia government. Therefore, it is wise to say the government should fix the macro-economic environmental issues in order to make Gambian SMEs thrive and attain sustainable growth. In addition, I continue my studies of the macro environment, and my next stop is the social environment where culture, lifestyle attitudes, career attitudes and population growth rates become the center of my focus. One of the issues that stands out from the data I gathered is lifestyle attitudes of Gambians towards Gambian SMEs. The fact that all my

interviewees mentioned this social issue regarding attitude clearly reveals a problematic behavioural trait on the side of Gambians that need to change in order to make Gambian SMEs attain sustainable growth. For example, using a widely accepted cultural norm which allows one to take goods from the business of a Gambian SME and not pay for it because the entrepreneur is a woman or is simply a neighbour or relative should not be acceptable and needs to change. In addition, the adaptive expectations of Gambians towards Gambian SMEs as bound to fail needs to change. Some Gambians should be ready to patronize their fellow Gambian SME entrepreneurs and start paying for goods and services they get instead of taking it as a loan and never pay for the loan. Therefore, what I understand from the macro social environment of Gambian SMEs is that there are culturally motivated behaviours and lifestyles that are hampering the sustainable growth of Gambian SMEs. The social macro environment as my data indicates is controlled by the public, and it should be fine-tuned by the people in order to address the challenges it renders to Gambian SMEs. Another very interesting factor I found out in the macro environment that also affects the sustainable growth of Gambian owned SMEs is the technological environment. The technological environment plays a crucial role in helping the growth of businesses and in my efforts to understand how technological advancement is affecting the growth of Gambian - owned SMEs, I focus on two important issues as covered by my PESTEL framework namely technological awareness and technological innovation. Interviewees 1& 3 do not give any explanation about how the technological environment could help support their businesses. Interviewee 2 demonstrated awareness about the importance of the technological environment for the growth of her business in terms of marketing initiatives regarding her business. However, interviewee 2 does not explain any innovative idea regarding how to use the benefits that the technological environment comes with in order to foster the sustainable growth of her business. Improvement in the legal environment of Gambian owned SMEs, should be a clarion call for immediate action by the local authorities in the Gambia to start looking into fixing the legal environment.

10. CONCLUSION

I decided to divide the conclusion into different parts. The first part is to explain my research findings, and which was aimed to answer the research questions. The followed parts and or sections are the theoretical and practical implications of the study and their contributions. Furthermore, I discussed the societal, social, and ethical implications of the study. This was to highlight the moral and ethical issues which were factored in throughout the research study. Finally, I ended by discussing the limitations of the study and further stating my suggestions

for future research.

10.1 MAIN RESEARCH FINDINGS

My approach in this study has helped me find the answers for all my research questions and led me to fulfil the purpose of this study. The interviews help me to look into micro and macro issues that are affecting the sustainable growth of Gambian owned SMEs and help me gain some understanding towards answering my research questions. However, it is important to note that these findings will be a step closer in trying to understand and explain partially why Gambian - owned SMEs are finding it difficult to attain sustainable growth and not a conclusive nor a general overview of all the factors affecting the sustainable growth Gambian - owned SMEs.

10.2 Why do Gambian owned SMEs struggle to attain sustainable growth?

A lot of factors combined to clearly explain the current state of business for Gambian owned SMEs. As discussed in my analysis, it can be seen that both micro and macro factors combined to explain why some Gambian owned SMEs are struggling to attain sustainable growth. In the analysis of the micro factors, I focused on the Gambian as a person and assessed their capabilities to do business, their belief in social norms which affects their business decisions and their level of interactions with others to help grow their businesses. My data on this section of the analysis part reveals that necessity-based entrepreneurship is a dominant approach for business among Gambian SMEs. For example, 70% of the research participants have all demonstrated how they and their SMEs lack the vision and desire to pursue long term business objectives. Given my primary data, I have seen a high prevalence of lack of business skills among my respondents. For example, interviewees 1 & 3 all said they have ventured in business to simply satisfy their needs and that of their family. With such answers, I have seen a total lack of long-term vision and innovation in their approach to do business. What this indicates is that, over 50% of my respondents see doing business as an escape route when they cannot do well in their previous endeavours or careers. They decided to do business at the moment when they lose hope in other life careers that they pursued earlier and consider venturing in SMEs as an easy route that can earn them a livelihood without acquiring the prerequisite skills or resources needed to sustain and grow a viable business. Therefore, the businesses of these people struggle to attain sustainable growth because they lack the

knowledge and also the creativity needed to help their businesses attain sustainable growth. The importance of gaining business skills for an entrepreneur is paramount because as firms progress and experience growth, they also confront managerial challenges related to structural aspects and decision-making and for organizations that expand from very small and growing, these challenges become pronounced. As it can be clearly observed in my data, necessity-based entrepreneurship perfectly merges the approach of 70% of my research participants, as they all lack the prerequisite business knowledge and skills needed to cope with the challenging business environment they operate in. Secondly, in the analysis of micro antecedents, I am able to identify a total lack of understanding of the importance of cooperation and partnership in terms of business growth among my respondents. All my respondents fail to dwell on how partnership with other Gambian or non-Gambian businesses could help their business have access to external resources that can eventually help their business ventures grow. 80% of the interviewees talked about the unity between non-Gambian SMEs and how non-Gambian SMEs support each other but when it comes for them to unite and form similar alliances, my respondents state that they see other Gambian SMEs as competitors and do not trust each other. This attitude of Gambian SMEs as highlighted by my respondents will continue to make them weaker and lack competitive advantage in their own market. The third and final finding I am able to reach from the analysis of the micro antecedents is the high prevalence of inferiority complexes among Gambians based on what my interviewees narrated. For example, my respondents stated that there is a high adaptive expectation among Gambians that a Gambian SME is bound to fail as previous Gambian SMEs never make it - which is a sign of inferiority complex that is not helpful and needs to change for the good of Gambian SMEs. This way of perceiving and viewing Gambian SMEs has developed a special behaviour in which Gambian SMEs are approached, supported and patronize over the years as narrated by my research participants. It is because of this adaptive expectation, that many Gambians will take merchandise on loan from a fellow Gambian SME and will not pay for the loan items while they always pay in cash and carry in other stores owned by non-Gambians according to my respondents. Therefore, it is going to be very important that such attitudes and expectations are changed positively for Gambian SMEs to attain sustainable growth.

The other part of my analysis which focused on identifying issues affecting the sustainable growth of Gambian SMEs considered to be referred to as macro antecedents in these studies reveals the following findings. First, it is important to note that my analysis of the macro environment was done through the PESTLE framework and my focus was the political, economic, social, technological, and legal environment. In the political environment where I focused on issues like government policy, political stability, level of corruption in the country

and the tax policy, I was made to understand from my respondents that the government policies are existing but only there to serve the interest of a few giant Gambian businesses according to my respondents. Further, my respondents query the government tax policies and indicate it is too much to bear, especially when registering a business. Most of my respondents complain of the high level of corruption in most of the government business regulatory institutions, where they have to pay bribes or get delayed in registering their businesses. Further, my respondents see political stability as very positive but indicate that instead it serves as a boosting factor for Gambian SMEs growth, it is attracting foreign SMEs to the country who continue to have a firm grip on the Gambian market. Furthermore, from the macroeconomic environment analysis, I found out that 80% of my respondents complain of the high level of inflation in the country and the lack of price control. The high level of inflation relatively affects Gambian-owned SMEs who are mostly retailers and struggling to grow according to my respondents. In addition, the social norms and cultural beliefs that a woman is a wife material that men own them, and all their belongings is affecting our women entrepreneurs as stressed by interviewee 3. Because of this cultural practice, one of my respondents indicates that many of her husband's relatives use this social belief to take goods from her shop and never worries about paying for the goods, which ultimately hamper the growth of her business. Therefore, this has made us arrive at the conclusion that there are some cultural beliefs within the Gambian societies that are not helping the growth of Gambian SMEs. In addition, I have been able to understand from my respondents that they are not harnessing the full extent of benefits of the technological environment. Accordingly, their narrations reveal their inability to use the technologies available in today's business world and use it to grow their businesses through social media, internet and software applications. In the last part of the PESTLE analysis, I am able to understand how the legal environment lacks the mechanisms to protect Gambian - owned SMEs against unhealthy competition from non-Gambian businesses.

10.3 What can be done to make Gambian - owned SMEs attain sustainable growth?

First and most importantly, Gambian - owned SMEs should see doing business as a serious undertaking that requires one to be skillful and willing to sacrifice time and resources to succeed in it. Instead of necessity-based entrepreneurship practices, Gambian SMEs should pursue opportunity-based entrepreneurship in the sense that they need to be able to identify business opportunities, develop business plans, gather the necessary resources and pursue a business idea. The lack of opportunity-based entrepreneurship among a large majority of my research participants has clearly become the root cause of the subsequent challenges they face in their business life cycle. Opportunity based entrepreneurship will require an entrepreneur to have both short term and long-term objectives with a solid business plan and

clear sense of direction. This will require attaining some degree of business knowledge and skills and that is the gap that has to be filled by the government through effective policies aimed at local entrepreneur capacity development which should provide more training of both new and old Gambian SMEs and guide them to success. The way forward on this issue is that the Gambia government should try to develop the skills of Gambian entrepreneurs to be competent enough to run their businesses - because a pool of competent individuals is central to the initiation of entrepreneurship, and SMEs are very important players in enhancing steady economic growth of a country. Secondly, if Gambian SMEs are supported with an all-inclusive government policy that makes them pursue opportunity based entrepreneurial ideas, the next important thing they need to do is to start the creation of cooperation and networks among themselves. Because it is important to note that an entrepreneur's ability to effectively build networks and structural characteristics of those networks plays a crucial role in a firm's performance. Depending on the types of businesses they pursue, Gambian SMEs doing similar types of business can create constellations of networks that can support each other by sharing market information, resources, and technology. According to Borgatti & Foster (2003, p. 12-16), networking has the potential to provide firms with access to valuable intangible resources like social capital, embeddedness, network organizations and organizational networks, board interlocks and joint venturing or interfirm alliances. Therefore, networking will undoubtedly be a great catalyst for growth for Gambian entrepreneurs. Further, Gambian SMEs should not see each other as rivals or enemies that should never cooperate instead, they can gain more mutually by coming together to share ideas and resources, thus applying the concept of co-opetition to sustainably grow their businesses. Because according to Gnyawali & Robert, (2011, p. 652), competing firms possess relevant resources and face similar pressures, collaboration with competitors enables firms to acquire and create new technological knowledge and use the knowledge in pursuit of innovations, Gnyawali & Robert, (2011, p. 652). Therefore, appreciating the concept of co-opetition among Gambian SMEs just like networking will not only make Gambian SMEs a stronger force to reckon with in the Gambian market, but could to a large extent help change the narratives of adaptive expectations that my respondents claim Gambians have towards the Gambian SMEs as entities bound to fail, and they too will not allow anyone to take from their businesses without paying for the goods and services. Thirdly, it will be very important for the Gambia government to come up with laws that are meant to actively protect Gambian SMEs from exploitation by non-Gambian importers who condone preferential treatment and give more favours to their counterpart non-Gambian SMEs as highlighted by my respondents. The government needs to improve on its recognition of the significant role that the SMEs sector could have in the overall performance of the Gambian economy and most importantly the contribution of Gambian owned SMEs. It is evident that, to achieve the objective of economic integration through

competitiveness, employment generation and income distribution in most African countries, SMEs assume an important role, (Oluwayemisi et. al 2020, p.412). Therefore, the suppression of Gambian - owned SMEs leading to their underperformance by external competitors is a practice that the Gambia government can easily stop with proactive laws that encourage a level playing ground for all businesses operating in the Gambia. However, for this to be realized, the government needs to eradicate and punish corrupt practices within its institutions. Without such efforts by the government of the Gambia, it will be very difficult for Gambian entrepreneurs across the country to be able to have equal access to government support in terms of policies and infrastructures geared towards helping Gambian SMEs attain sustainable growth. For example, my respondents indicate that they are aware of the numerous opportunities for growth in the technological environment, but they are not able to still tap into these opportunities because of lack of reliable access and exorbitant charges they face from government business regulatory offices, which makes it hard for them to have reserved resources to use to explore opportunities in the technological environment.

10.4 Theoretical and Practical Implications

I would like to emphasize the numerous theoretical implications of this research study. First, there is little or no research findings on why the majority of Gambian-owned SMEs still struggle to become sustainable in the country. Though research studies are still conducted on the factors hindering the growth and sustainability of SMEs in the world, I was unable to find any study done on the Gambian context. Secondly, a lot of Researchers and Scholars have made significant findings on the challenges faced by SMEs. However, on my search for literature and articles on why Gambian-owned SMEs are less sustainable as compared to foreign-owned businesses, I was also unable to find any study on the topic 'why foreign-owned firms perform better in terms of growth and sustainability as compared to domestic-owned firms' and this might be that it is a very rare case for foreign-owned firms to dominate in a domestic market of another country. Note, I would also want to make it clear that my findings (interviews) were based on three (3) individuals of a population of 2.5million and that the perceptions of these individuals do not represent the whole population since The Gambia has some Gambian - owned SMEs that face little or no challenges and are very successful in their various businesses. This research study contributes to new understanding of the challenges affecting SMEs sustainability, especially in sub-Saharan Africa. A new knowledge and findings on the reasons affecting Gambia-owned SMEs towards sustainability were found and therefore, pave a way for future research. Moreover, the research study can be very helpful for future researchers who plan to contribute additional knowledge on the challenges faced by SMEs in

sub-Saharan Africa and more specifically on similar cases in The Gambia. Practically, the findings (interviews) in this research study are both from successful SMEs business owners and the ones who are still struggling to become successful in the market. Thus-it will help the struggling SMEs to learn and understand some of the challenges affecting them directly by learning from the successful ones in the market. In addition, this study can be beneficial for future aspiring Gambian business investors to also understand and find solutions to avoid being affected by similar challenges. Further, it provides an opportunity for institutions that support Gambian startups and SMEs businesses to understand the specific areas to support in terms of knowledge and finance. Theoretically, as mentioned above, this study can contribute to previous knowledge and increase knowledge in understanding the challenges in growth and sustainability of SMEs in Sub Saharan Africa and The Gambian in particular.

10.5 Societal, Social, and Ethical Implications

Ethical issues are present in any kind of research and therefore, very key for research to be conducted morally and responsibly (Orb, A, et al., 2001, p. 93). Violation of human rights in scientific research study has been among the darkest events in history (Orb, A, et al., 2001, p. 93). Thus, it is very significant to conduct research in an ethical manner and avoid any harm to both the Researcher and participants. There are some social, societal, and ethical implications included in this study. These implications were carefully considered, and which are discussed below. The societal and social implications are presented first and followed by the ethical implications.

10.6 Societal and Social Implication

This topic of research has a great potential impact on the economy of a country and thus has some social and societal implications. Researchers argued that development of SMEs can boost the growth of any country, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa. SMEs growth and sustainability are a societal issue and so have implications on the growth of the society. The challenges of SMEs have been a decade of discussion by many Researchers and all these discussions are geared towards developing the society. Despite the numerous research on the challenges affecting SMEs and significant literature on how these challenges can be mitigated, there are still thousands of SMEs still struggling to become sustainable. The aim of studying this important topic is to understand the specific challenges faced by Gambian-owned SMEs and which we believe can go a long way in developing the growth of the Gambian society. This study also has implications on how individuals interested in pursuing

entrepreneurship can understand what skills they need in order to be successful and to a large extent, it can also make the government business regulators understand the various issues affecting Gambian - owned SMEs at different macro environments in order to make informed policies and programs aimed at developing the business environment. Further, another important implication this study can have on Gambian SMEs business society is to promote the culture of unity for a common purpose, which seems to be currently lacking among them. On the social implications, the study has revealed some negative social interactions and beliefs that ought to change in order to help Gambian SMEs attain sustainable growth thus an important implication will be an improved social cohesion and triggering of positive perception directed towards Gambian - owned SMEs.

10.7 Ethical Implications

The nature of ethical issues in qualitative research is subtle and quite different as in quantitative research study (Orb, A, et., 2001, p. 93). Several ethical considerations were applied throughout the research study. First, all the participants in this study were well-informed about the purpose of the research, their participation and contribution to the study, and most importantly they were informed about the voluntary participation. The terms of confidentiality were well-stated in the interview guideline and were also explained to them verbally. The participants gave their consent to take part in the study and were also informed about their right to withdraw at any time they wished. Informed consent is dynamic, and respondents can exercise their rights to be anonymous and to voluntarily accept or refuse to partake in any research study (Orb, A, et al., 2001, p. 95). Therefore, in regard to informed consent, clear information was given to the interview respondents both written and verbally before and after their participation in the study. I further explained the terms of privacy, how their identity and any identifying information will be anonymous and well-protected. Moreover, another vital principle observed in this study was beneficence and, which is doing good and preventing harm. Any potential harm posed to Researchers and participants should be avoided and therefore, potential consequences and protection in revealing participants' identities is a moral obligation to Researchers (Orb, A, et al., 2001, p. 95). To achieve integrity and accuracy, the principle of transparency and openness was applied throughout the research study process. Information was clearly written, and participants were given the right to access information any time they wished. They were given the opportunity to ask questions in regard to the research study, how their data will be collected and saved, and further given chances to ask questions after the interviews. This was to ensure that there is trust between I as the researchers and the respondents. I believe building trust between me and the respondents will help me in getting accurate information and more credible data. Furthermore, since it is very difficult to

obtain data in Sub-Saharan African, it is therefore very important for Researchers to be honest, transparent, and truthful in their research process. In addition, since we faced some challenges in getting and convincing respondents in participating in my research study, I therefore maintain a high level of trust, honesty, transparency, and integrity throughout the research process. This was achieved by following various ethical consideration and principles.

References

1. Agarwal krishnukuma and upadhyay, rajeshkumar (2009), attitude of youth towards Entrepreneurship : A Caste Study of Varanasi, Journal of Entrepreneurship Development, Vol. VI, No. 2, The ICFAI University Publication.
2. Ahmed Zafar U. and Julian Craig C. (2012), International Entrepreneurship in Lebanon, Global Business Review, 13(1) 25-38, Sage Publication.
3. Alarape, A.A., (2007). Entrepreneurship programs, operational efficiency and growth of small businesses. Journal of Enterprising Communities: People and Places in the Global Economy, 1(3), pp.222–239.
4. Altinay, L. & Wang, C.L., (2011). The influence of an entrepreneur's socio-cultural characteristics on the entrepreneurial orientation of small firms. Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development, 18(4), pp.673–694.
5. Ananthram, S., Pearson, C. & Chatterjee, S., (2010). Do organizational reform measures impact on global mindset intensity of managers? Empirical evidence from Indian and Chinese service industry managers. Journal of Chinese Economic and Foreign Trade Studies, 3(2), pp.146–168
6. Anil K. Lal and Ronald W. Clement (2005). ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN INDIA: THE ROLE OF INDIVIDUAL ENTERPRISE (AND ENTREPRENEURIAL SPIRIT), Asia-Pacific Development Journal Vol. 12(2).
7. Anthony M. Endres & Christine R Woods, (2009). Schumpeter's "Conduct Model of the Dynamic Entrepreneur": Nature, Scope and Distinctiveness., Published online: 22 July 2009 © Springer-Verlag 2009 pp.1–40.
8. Aragón-Correa, J.A. et al., (2008). Environmental strategy and performance in small firms: a resource-based perspective. Journal of environmental management, 86(1), pp.88–103.
9. Audretsch David B., Boente Werner and Tamvada Jagannadha P. (2007), Religion and Entrepreneurship, Jena Economic Research Papers 2007-075, 2-27.
10. Barr, Michael S. (2008). "Policies to Expand Minority Entrepreneurship: Closing Comments." In Entrepreneurship in Emerging Domestic Markets: Barriers and Innovation, edited by G. Yago, J. R. Barth, and B. Zeidman, 141-50. The Milken Institute Series on Financial Innovation and Economic Growth, vol. 7. New York: Springer, 2008. [Based on comments delivered at the Conference on Entrepreneurship in Low- and Moderate-Income Communities, November 3-4, 2005.]
11. Basu, A., (2004). Entrepreneurial aspirations among family business owners: An analysis of ethnic business owners in the UK. International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behaviour & Research, 10(1/2), pp.12–33
12. Borooh V K, Hart M. (1999). Factors affecting self-employment among Indian and Black Caribbean

Men in Britain, *Small Business Economics* 13 (2), 111-129

13. Bowen, M., Morara, M. and Mureithi, S. (2009), Management of Business Challenges among Small and Micro Enterprises in Nairobi-Kenya, *Journal of Business Management*, Vol 2(1), 16-31.
14. Carland, J.A., Carland, J.W., & Stewart, W.H. (1996). Seeing what's not there: The enigma of entrepreneurship, *Journal of Small Business Strategy*, 7 (1), 1-
15. Carland, J.W., (2004). Economic Development: Changing the Policy to Support Entrepreneurship. In the Association for Small Business and Entrepreneurship 2004 Conference.
16. Carland, J.W., Hoy, F. & Carland, J.A. (1988). Who is an entrepreneur? Is a question worth asking? *American Journal of Small Business*, 12(4), 33-39.
17. Chelariu, C. et al., (2008). Entrepreneurial propensity in a transition economy: exploring micro-level and meso-level cultural antecedents. *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing*, 23(6), pp.405-415.
18. Chen, X.-P., Yao, X. & Kotha, S., (2009). Entrepreneur Passion and Preparedness in Business Plan Presentations: A Persuasion Analysis of Venture Capitalists' Funding Decisions. *Academy of Management Journal*, 52(1), pp.199–214
19. Chermak T., Lynham S. and Ruona W. (2001), A Review of Scenario Planning Literature. *Future Research Quarterly*, Vol. 17 No. 2, pg. 17-28.
20. Cole, A. H. (1969). Definition of entrepreneurship. In J. C. Komives (ed.). Karl A. Bostrom. Seminar in the study of enterprise. Milwaukee Center for Venture Management, 10-22.
21. Covin J. and Slevin D. (1988), The Influence of Organization Structure on the Utility of an Entrepreneurial, *Journal of Management Studies* 25:3, TOP MANAGEMENT STYLE.