

# PERCEIVED INFLUENCE OF ENTREPRENEURIAL SELF-EFFICACY ON PROFITABILITY, SUSTAINABILITY AND ORGANIZATIONAL EFFICIENCY OF SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES (SMES) IN GOMBE STATE

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## Abstract

*The study examined the perceived influence of entrepreneurial self-efficacy on profitability, sustainability and organizational efficiency of small and medium scale enterprises (SMES) in Gombe State. This study adopted a descriptive research survey design. The study was guided by three specific objectives, three research questions and three null hypotheses respectively. The study adopted a descriptive research survey design. The population of this study comprised 1,354 owners and managers of registered Small and Medium Enterprises (SMES) who are members of National Association of Small and Medium Enterprises (NASME), National Association of Small Scale Industries (NASSI), and Association of Small Business Owners of Nigeria (ASBON) across all the 11 local governments in Gombe State, who participated in the conduct of the study, a total number of 578 business owners and managers out of 1,354 in the selected local governments were purposively selected (sampled) for the study. The instrument used for data collection was questionnaire tagged Perceived Influence Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy, Profitability, Sustainability and Organizational Efficiency on Small and Medium Scale Enterprises was validated by three experts. A pilot study was conducted at Alkaleri Local Government area of Bauchi State using 30 registered small-scale businesses, to determine the stability of the instrument. A reliability coefficient of 0.82 was obtained using Cronbach alpha method. The study finds that the respondents perceive ESE as having a moderate influence on profitability, particularly through increasing sales growth by implementing fresh ideas. Item 2 has a mean of (Mean = 3.14), suggesting that organizational creativity driven by ESE moderately enhances the success and profitability of small businesses through increased return on sales. Moreover, the respondents generally perceived influence of Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy (ESE) as having a moderate influence on the sustainability of small and medium-scale enterprises (SMEs). Hence, the study recommends among others that while innovation is important, other factors might also play a significant role in business sustainability, combination of resources, tactical goal setting; and policy-driven actions are very crucial to ensuring that businesses remain viable and able to meet customer demands, while also increasing their net profit margins.*

**Keywords:** *Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy, Profitability, Sustainability, Organizational Efficiency, Small and Medium Enterprises (SMES)*

## Introduction

Entrepreneurship is the efforts of an individual to create value through the recognition of business opportunities, the management of risk-taking appropriate to the opportunity and through the communicative and management skills to mobilize human, financial and material resources necessary to bring a project to fruition. Entrepreneurship therefore requires sensitivity to surrounding happenings, creativity to address the happenings in ways that adds value to the people, through the floating of productive outfits or distribution of goods and services for the use of people.

Small scale businesses are increasingly being recognized as the principal means for achieving equitable and sustainable industrial diversification and dispersal. Firms are the means for realising entrepreneurial ambitions of individual entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurial ventures work on the principle

of profitability and growth with a long term desire of market dominance. This is based on innovation in products, processes or practices. The benefits of technological entrepreneurship cannot be overemphasized and the realization of this could be said to be the motivation behind government expenditure towards the programme (Reuben, Grace, & Baghebo, 2014; Shital, 2020).

Small businesses play a vital role in fostering economic growth and development. Small businesses have gained prominence around the world in both developed and developing economies, due to their net significance in employment around the world (Ramsey & Ibbotson, 2013). Nigerian government acknowledges the importance of small businesses in socioeconomic development by prioritizing several of its programmes. Notable among these are Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN), National Directorate of Employment (NDE), Microfinance Banks, National Economic Reconstruction Fund (NERFUND), National Bank of Commerce and Industry and the National Economic Empowerment and Development Scheme (NEEDS). The owners and managers of small business must possess personal desires or interest to attain the aims and objectives of setting up such venture. As human-being, there is inbuilt factor that ginger our interest to attain an utmost level in our daily endeavours. Therefore, Entrepreneurial Self-efficacy (ESE), Profitability, sustainability and organization efficiency have positive or negative influence in any business either sole proprietorship, small or medium, partnership or corporate venture. Schein and Schein (2021) opine that performance improvement is vital for small businesses, as organizational culture research indicates that weak performance can precipitate failure. One of such entrepreneurial traits that has received enormous interest in recent years is Entrepreneurial Self-efficacy (ESE) (Peggy and Maramark, 2013). It is important to state that the role of self-efficacy on profitability; sustainability and organization efficiency have significance influence on the outcomes of the business.

Self-efficacy is a psychological trait and a function of knowledge. The more a person knows about a vacation, the more such person is tempted to try his hands on it. In fact, exposure to practical and theoretical functions of the entrepreneur will enhance knowledge and promote self-efficacy. In fact, Entrepreneurial Self Efficacy (ESE) could be seen and described as an individual's beliefs regarding their capability in discovering and exploiting opportunities in the process of starting and growing a business. Moreover, ESE is an individual's belief in his/her capability to perform tasks and roles, which is aimed at entrepreneurial outcomes, plays a crucial role in determining whether individuals pursue entrepreneurial careers and engage in entrepreneurial behavior. While some researchers have looked at general self-efficacy (a global belief about one's capabilities to solve future tasks of any kind) to understand its effects, most experts agree that self-efficacy is domain-specific (for instance, targeted towards a certain behavior or outcome such as one's career or creative tasks). One type of occupation-specific self-efficacy is entrepreneurial self-efficacy (ESE). The agency perspective, informed by self-efficacy research, is seen as a leading meta-approach to entrepreneurship that helps us to understand an entrepreneur's actions and action-related beliefs (Gebaur, 2016).

According to Fraser (2012), entrepreneurial self-efficacy is an individual's belief in his or her ability to achieve various entrepreneurial tasks. In stable environments, where decision options are more certain due to higher levels of transparency and predictability, over-confidence is less likely to occur. In fact, a highly optimistic entrepreneur who is also high in entrepreneurial self-efficacy will be more successful. A pronounced gap exists in comprehending how the self-efficacy beliefs of SME leaders reflecting their confidence in capabilities to execute tasks and navigate challenges permeate strategic decision-making processes, risk management proclivities, innovation adoption, resource mobilization and allocation, and adaptive responses to environmental flux, all of which are germane to organizational outcomes including profitability, sustainability, and efficiency.

Profitability, a core desideratum for SMEs, is often contingent upon astute market positioning, cost management, and revenue generation strategies, areas where leader self-efficacy might exert considerable influence. Profitability is a core measure of the performance of a firm, and it constitutes an essential aspect of its financial reporting. It reveals the firm's ability and capacity to generate earnings at a rate of sales, level of assets and stock of capital in a specific period (Khan, 2015). Consequently, firms' profitability and modalities for improving it have generated serious debates in the

literature and have remained topical in the field of economics, finance, accounting and management. Profitable firms create value, hire people, tend to be more innovative, more socially responsible and are beneficial to the entire economy through payment of taxes. High rate of performance of firms indeed contributes effectively to income generation and overall development of an economy. Therefore, concerted efforts have been made by researchers to unravel factors driving profitability at both firm and industry level using novel and sophisticated theoretical models (Gloria, 2015). Maximization of profits will be surrounded by the quality setting up of the business that will enhance organization well-being.

The sustainability of an organization can be attributed to enhancement of the firm's self-renewal process which raises measures to initiate changes to address recent problems. Moreover, firms' sustainability comes in two facets: firstly, firms are like living things and therefore human life theories, such as Bandura's Social Learning Theory, Humanistic Theories, e.g. Rogers; Piaget's Cognitive Development Theory, et cetera) are applicable across firms. Secondly, firms need to pinpoint the traits which can ensure sustainability and longevity. In fact, sustainability, encapsulating economic resilience, environmental stewardship, and social responsibility, poses multifaceted demands on SMEs; the interplay between leader self-efficacy and the pursuit of sustainable practices remains underexplored. It has become frequent to see a lot of businesses last only for few years. To survive the unpredictable dynamic business climate, it is vital for firms to invest in attaining business success around managerial processes (McGee, Peterson, Mueller & Sequeira, 2019).

Organizational efficiency, denoting the effectiveness with which SMEs utilize resources to attain goals, is frequently imperative for survival amidst resource constraints; how self-efficacy shapes leaders' approaches to process optimization, human capital management, and financial stewardship is thus pertinent. This is why Omerzel (2014) defines organizational efficiency as something that has been achieved by the organization in a certain period, both related to input, output, outcome, benefits, and impact. The relationship between self-efficacy and organizational performance has direct implications for the development of entrepreneurial intentions and actions. It is imperative to say that several characteristics and factors with empirical evidence have been advanced as key determinants of small scale business survival across the country. It is on this premise that this study seeks to investigate influence of entrepreneurial self-efficacy on profitability, sustainability and organizational efficiency of Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SMEs) in Gombe State, Nigeria. The foregoing considerations underscore the necessity of examining the perceived influence of self-efficacy on profitability, sustainability, and organizational efficiency of SMEs, impelling inquiry into how leader beliefs in their capabilities intersect with strategic choices and performance outcomes in these enterprises, amid contextual specificities and challenges characterizing their operational landscapes. Such exploration could harbor implications for bolstering SME contributions to economic and social objectives.

Empirical elucidation appears limited, signaling a need for investigation yielding insights for stakeholders including policymakers, support ecosystems, and SME leaders. Unraveling self-efficacy's role holds theoretical and practical importance for bolstering SME contributions to economic and social objectives amid contextual challenges characterizing their operational landscapes. Examining this nexus could harbor implications for improving SME performance metrics critical to their viability and broader economic impact. Zhao, H., Seibert, S. E. & Lumpkin, G. T. (2017) stressed that any business can be globalized within a short period of time in every corner of the world. The customer from any place can reach business and industry of his choice just with one click. Hence, presence of SMEs business can be seen everywhere and at any time of the globe. However, Chackro and Harris (2015) affirmed that there is a growing need for SMEs in Nigeria to integrate into the global supply chain by adopting and utilizing digital marketing applications that will increase their productivity and efficiency. Hence, the researcher was motivated to investigate perceived influence of entrepreneurial self-efficacy on profitability, sustainability and organizational efficiency of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Gombe State of Nigeria to unravel where there is need for improvement.

## Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. To what extent does entrepreneurial self-efficacy influence the profitability of small and medium scale enterprises (SMEs) in Gombe state?
2. To what extent does entrepreneurial self-efficacy influence the sustainability of small and medium scale enterprises (SMEs) in Gombe State?

## Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated and tested in this study at 0.05 level of significance:

- H<sub>01</sub>:** There is no significant difference between the mean perception scores of male and female respondents regarding the influence of entrepreneurial self-efficacy on profitability of small and medium scale enterprises (SMEs) in Gombe state.
- H<sub>02</sub>:** There is no significant difference in the mean perception scores regarding the influence of entrepreneurial self-efficacy on the sustainability of small and medium scale enterprises (SMEs) based on their years of experience in Gombe state.

## Methods

This study adopted a descriptive research survey design. The population of this study comprised 1,354 owners and managers of registered Small and Medium Enterprises (SMES) who are members of National Association of Small and Medium Enterprises (NASME) Gombe State, National Association of Small-Scale Industries (NASSI) Gombe State; and Association of Small Business Owners of Nigeria (ASBON) Gombe State. They exist across all the 11 local governments in Gombe State. Three local governments with the highest number of SSBs (Gombe, Billiri and Akko) were used as the sample for this study. The samples size for the study comprised 578 respondents as revealed in using purposive sampling technique. A structured questionnaire tagged “Perceived Influence of Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy, on Profitability, Sustainability and Organizational Efficiency of Small and Medium Scale Enterprises” (*SEFPSOESMSE*) was designed by the researcher to gather data for the study and duly validated by three experts with a Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient of 0.82 was used to gather data for the study. The items were placed on a four-point rating scale, and the research questions were analysed using mean, and standard deviation. The hypotheses were tested using t-test for Hypothesis One and one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) statistics for Hypothesis Two at 0.05 level of significance.

## Results

**Research Question One:** To what extent does entrepreneurial self-efficacy influence the profitability of small and medium scale enterprises (SMEs)?

**Table 1: Mean rating of the Respondents’ perception on the extent of influence of Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy on Profitability.**

S/N	Items	Mean	SD	Remark
2.	Entrepreneurial Self-efficacy (ESE) has significant effect on profitability of small-scale businesses by increasing sales growth due to the implementation of fresh ideas.	3.17	0.66	Moderate Extent
3.	Entrepreneurial Self-efficacy (ESE) has positive impact on success of small-scale businesses by using organizational creativity which has resulted in an increase in sales.	3.14	0.73	Moderate Extent

4.	Entrepreneurial Self-efficacy (ESE) has significant impact on the profitability of small-scale businesses due to organization's efforts to be first in always introducing new products and services to the market.	2.72	0.81	Moderate Extent
5.	With ESE, the profitability of the company has increased tremendously with the use company's unique and relevant strategies put in place.	2.76	0.78	Moderate Extent
6.	With ESE, the company's sales continue growing using flexible approach regarding employees and the way in which they work on a day-to-day basis.	2.64	0.76	Moderate Extent
7.	With ESE, the profitability of the company has been influenced positively through taking calculated risks.	2.94	0.78	Moderate Extent
8.	Entrepreneurial Self-efficacy (ESE) has significant effect on productivity of small-scale businesses by developing financial system and internal controls.	2.27	0.75	Low Extent
9.	Entrepreneurial Self-efficacy (ESE) has significant effect on profitability of the small-scale businesses because the organization has a unit for monitoring entrepreneurial policy which has helped the business to grow in terms of the market share.	2.62	0.75	Moderate Extent
10.	With ESE, the effectiveness of the small-scale businesses has been influenced positively through the establishment of strategic planning.	2.67	0.69	Moderate Extent
	<b>Weighted Mean</b>	<b>2.77</b>		<b>Moderate Extent</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 1 reveals that Item 1 shows the highest mean value of (Mean = 3.17), indicating that respondents perceive ESE as having a moderate influence on profitability, particularly through increasing sales growth by implementing fresh ideas. Item 2 has a mean of (Mean = 3.14), suggesting that organizational creativity driven by ESE moderately enhances the success and profitability of small businesses through increased return on sales. Item 3 shows a mean of (Mean = 2.72), reflecting a moderate influence of ESE on profitability due to efforts in product and service innovation. Item 4 presents a mean of (Mean = 2.76), highlighting that unique strategies fostered by ESE moderately increase the profitability of SMEs. Item 5 with a mean of (Mean = 2.64) indicates that flexibility in employee management, guided by ESE, contributes to moderate growth in sales. Item 6 with a mean of (Mean = 2.94) suggests that calculated risks, a key aspect of ESE, moderately influence profitability. Item 7, with the lowest mean of (Mean = 2.27), suggests that respondents perceived the influence of ESE on productivity through financial systems and internal controls as having a low extent of impact on profitability. Item 8 (mean = 2.62) and Item 9 (mean = 2.67) indicate a moderate influence of ESE on profitability through policy monitoring and strategic planning, respectively. The overall grand mean score of (Mean = 2.77) indicates that, on average, respondents perceived Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy have moderate extent of influence on the profitability of SMEs in Gombe State. This suggests that ESE is recognized as contributing positively to profitability, its impact may vary across different areas of business operations.

**Research Question Two: To what extent does entrepreneurial self-efficacy influence the sustainability of small and medium scale enterprises (SMEs)?**

**Table 2: Mean rating of the Respondents on the perception on the extent of the influence of Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy on Sustainability**

S/N	Items	Mean	SD	Remark
1.	Entrepreneurial Self-efficacy (ESE) has significant effect on sustainability of small scale businesses by careful utilization of innovative capability.	2.79	0.68	Moderate Extent
2.	With ESE, the viability of the small scale businesses has been influenced positively because the organization always embark on aggressive combination of various resources towards production of the products of the business in meeting customers' needs.	3.04	0.69	Moderate Extent
3.	With ESE, the workability of the small scale businesses has been influenced positively because the organization's conduct marketing analyses from time to time.	3.01	0.65	Moderate Extent
4.	With ESE, the justifiability of the small scale businesses has been influenced positively by been very tactical towards meeting organizational goals.	3.04	0.67	Moderate Extent
5.	Entrepreneurial Self-efficacy (ESE) has significant effect on the reliability of the small scale businesses because their policies regarding their product/services, hence leading to increase in the net profit margin of the business.	3.04	0.71	Moderate Extent
6.	With ESE, the achievements of the small sale businesses have been greatly influenced because the organizational culture has often being given prior attention.	2.94	0.82	Moderate Extent
	<b>Weighted Mean</b>	<b>2.98</b>		<b>Moderate Extent</b>

**Source: Field Survey, 2025**

The mean values from Table 2 indicate that respondents generally perceived influence of Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy (ESE) as having a moderate influence on the sustainability of small and medium-scale enterprises (SMEs). For instance, Item 1, which focuses on the impact of ESE through the careful utilization of innovative capability, has a mean score of (Mean = 2.79), reflecting that respondents view innovation as moderately contributing to the sustainability of their businesses. This suggests that while innovation is important, other factors might also play a significant role in business sustainability. Several items, including Items 2, 4, and 5, have the highest mean values of (Mean = 3.04), indicating that respondents perceived ESE as having a substantial influence on business sustainability, particularly through the combination of resources, tactical goal-setting, and policy-driven actions. These factors are viewed as crucial to ensuring that businesses remain viable and able to meet customer demands, while also increasing their net profit margins. This highlights the importance of strategic planning and effective resource management as key contributors to the long-term sustainability of SMEs.

However, in Item 3, with a mean score of (Mean = 3.01), the respondents recognize that conducting regular marketing analyses, as influenced by ESE, plays an important role in sustaining their businesses. This suggests that businesses that regularly assess market trends and customer preferences are better equipped to adapt and remain competitive. Finally, Item 6, with a mean of

(Mean = 2.94), indicates that respondents perceived ESE as moderately influencing business achievements through the prioritization of organizational culture. This shows that while respondents recognize the importance of cultivating a strong organizational culture, it may not be the most critical factor in determining the sustainability of their businesses compared to other ESE-related factors like strategic planning and innovation. The overall weighted mean score of (Mean = 2.98) indicates that respondents perceived Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy as having a moderate extent of influence on the sustainability of SMEs in Gombe State. This suggests that ESE plays a key role in ensuring the sustainability and continued success of businesses, particularly through innovation, resource management, and strategic planning.

**Hypotheses**

**Ho1:** There is no significant difference between the mean perception scores of male and female respondents regarding the influence of Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy on the profitability of small and medium scale enterprises (SMEs).

Analyzing the difference in mean ratings of SME operators on the influence of entrepreneurial self-efficacy on profitability based on gender.

**Table 3: Summary of t-test result showing difference of SME operators on the extent of the influence of entrepreneurial self-efficacy on profitability based on gender.”**

Gender	N	Mean( $\bar{x}$ )	SD	F-value	p-value	Decision
Male	396	3.42	0.52	2.15	0.143	
Female	154	3.28	0.48			
*Population (N) =550*						Ho <sub>1</sub> rejected

Source: Field work, 2025

As presented and observable on table 3 shows SME operators depicted that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of SME operators based on gender ( $F(1,548) = 2.15, p > 0.05$ ). Since the male SME operators reported a mean rating of 3.42, while females reported 3.28, this means that “the difference in mean ratings is not statistically significant.

**Ho2:** There is no significant difference in the mean perception scores regarding the influence of Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy on the sustainability of SMEs based on their years of experience.

Analyzing the difference in mean ratings of SME operators on the influence of entrepreneurial self-efficacy on sustainability based on years of experience.

**Table 4: Summary of ANOVA result showing difference of SME operators on the extent of the influence of entrepreneurial self-efficacy on sustainability based on the years of experience.**

Years of experience	N	Mean( $\bar{x}$ )	SD	F-value	p-value	Decision
1-5 years	123	3.15	0.48	3.92	0.009	
6-10 years	186	3.38	0.50			
11-15 years	185	3.58	0.40			Ho <sub>2</sub> not ejected
16 years & above	56	3.78	0.45			
*Population (N) =550*						

Source: Field work, 2025

Looking at Table 4, SME operators with 16 years and above experience reported the highest mean rating (3.78) on the influence of entrepreneurial self-efficacy on sustainability. Moreover, those

within 1-5 years of experience reported the lowest mean rating (3.15). This means the Mean ratings increase with years of experience.

## **Discussions of Findings**

The first research question (Table 1) explored the extent to which entrepreneurial self-efficacy influence the profitability of small and medium scale enterprises (SMEs). The researcher posits that align Entrepreneurial Self-efficacy (ESE) with profitability has significant effect on profit of small and medium scale businesses by increasing sales growth due to the implementation of fresh ideas as well as using organizational creativity which resulted to increased return on sales. Frese and Gielnik (2014) found that proactive behavior and innovation, both strongly linked to self-efficacy significantly predict small business growth and financial performance.

Since the second research question that was analysed in Table 2 examined the extent to which ESE influence the sustainability of small and medium scale enterprises, it was observable from table 2 that respondents recognized the importance of cultivating a strong organizational culture but it may not be the most critical factor in determining the sustainability of their businesses compared to other ESE-related factors like strategic planning and innovation SMEs in Gombe State. This suggests that ESE plays a key role in ensuring the sustainability and continued success of businesses, particularly through innovation, resource management, and strategic planning.

The analyses of the first hypotheses revealed that no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female respondents regarding the influence of Entrepreneurial self-efficacy (ESE) on profitability. This suggests a shared perspective among both genders on the positive impact of entrepreneurial self-efficacy, as interpreted by the researcher. Moreover, the findings from the second hypotheses revealed no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female respondents on the influence of ESE sustainability based on their years of experience. Both genders beliefs that the more knowledge, skills, new ideas, innovation and technology an individual acquire or come across in life will enable him or her to retain and make more positive progress in the choosing venture. This implies that as entrepreneurs gain experience, they develop a stronger belief in their abilities, leading to better sustainability practices. Small scale business are able to maintain business sustainability due to fact that the following terms are well implemented like innovative capability, organizational system, resources, culture of the organization as well as strategy which help in shaping the growth of the business as a result of well-articulated ESE gathered from the responses of the respondents of the perception on the extent of the influence of ESE on sustainability that shows moderate extent (Roxas, Ashill & Chadee, 2017).

The possible implications of the research findings are, in the aspect of positive relationship, entrepreneurship self-efficacy (ESE) boosts small and medium enterprises (SME) performance and resilience. On the other hand, looking at its significant influence, entrepreneurship self-efficacy (ESE) is a key factor in achieving sustainability and efficiency in the choice of ventures by the individual business operators. Understanding the role of entrepreneurship self-efficacy can help SMEs and policymakers develop targeted interventions to enhance entrepreneurial skills and drive business growth.

## **Conclusion**

The study examined the influence of Entrepreneurs' Self-efficacy on Profitability, Sustainability and Organizational Efficiency on Small and Medium Scale Enterprises has three purposes, research questions and corresponding hypotheses. The extent of Entrepreneurship Self-Efficacy influence on profitability of Small and Medium Enterprises in Gombe State is moderate. The extent of Entrepreneurship Self-Efficacy Influence Business Sustainability of Small and Medium Enterprises in Gombe State is rated moderate extent which reveals that respondents are aware of the influence of entrepreneurship self-efficacy on business sustainability results in more creativity for the business environment. The extent of influence of Entrepreneurship Self-Efficacy on Organizational

Efficiency Small and Medium Enterprises in Gombe State as being of low extent, the implication of this is that employers and employees may not devote their energy and resources to that will enable the business to scale through because of poor monitoring from the owners of the business.

### **Recommendations**

1. There is the need to implement fresh ideas such as product and service innovations, taking calculated risks, policy monitoring and strategic planning towards increasing sales growth organizational creativity driven by ESE moderately enhances the success and profitability of small businesses through increased return on sales.

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