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Relationship between Peer Mentorship and Growth of Small and Micro Business Enterprises in Uasin Gishu County, Kenya

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Abstract:
The paper empirically investigates the relationship between peer mentorship and the growth of small and micro business enterprise. The study was guided by three specific objectives: establish the relationship between peer interaction and the growth of small and micro business; establish the relationship between peer role models and the growth of small and micro business; establish the relationship between peer mentorship setting and the growth of small and micro business. Relational mentoring and Kram's mentor role theory grounded the study. Target population of the study comprised 4000 small and micro businesses operating in Uasin Gishu County, Kenya. The study employed explanatory survey research design. Random sampling technique was employed to determine the sample size. A questionnaire was used to collect data from 300 respondents. Data was analyzed by use of descriptive and inferential statistics; specifically, multiple regressions were used to test the hypotheses. The results revealed that peer interaction significantly influenced growth of small and micro business. Likewise, peer role model was also significantly associated with the growth of small and micro business. However, peer mentoring situation was found to be insignificant. The paper recommends that entrepreneurs and mentors should identify critical peer mentorship strategy, which can help in creating sustainable growth of small and micro business. The paper further recommends that mentors should involve mentees in deciding peer mentorship strategies beneficial to both parties. The study suggests that future researchers can investigate the phenomenon of small and micro business growth by adopting longitudinal and comparative approaches in a different setting.

Keywords: *Peer mentorship, role models, business growth, small and micro business enterprise*

1. Introduction

The World Bank (2012a) determined that around 200 million people are currently unemployed, and 600 million jobs need to be created by 2020 mainly in developing countries. A number of those jobs are expected to be generated in the micro, small, and medium enterprise (MSME) sector given its high labor intensity. For instance, Stein, Goland, & Schiff (2010) stated that in developing countries formal small and medium enterprises (SMEs) represent around 45 percent of employment and 33 percent of GDP (the contribution is higher when informal firms are accounted for). In turn, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (2004) stated that in their economies, MSMEs provide 60-70 percent of employment while accounting 55 percent of the GDP. In general, SMEs are often considered as engines for innovation, economic growth, employment and social mobility as stated by Innovations for Poverty Action [IPA] (2013), and Ayyagari, Demirguc-Kunt, & Maksimovic (2011).

Small and micro businesses contribute enormously through offering new jobs, increasing technological improvements and competitiveness, and providing more options of services and products (SMDC, 2012), as quoted by Azyabi et al., (2012). Entrepreneurs and non-entrepreneurs account for a substantial part of the development and performance of enterprises in today's global, as well as local economy. According to Kuratko (2007), entrepreneurship is one of the most important elements for a growing economy. Entrepreneurial activities are needed in order to create jobs and sustain product innovation, which in turn leads to improvement in living conditions and economic growth all over the world (McGrath, 2010).

However, since the emergence of the unregulated mentoring industry, it appears that very little mentoring literature has adopted empirically solid theoretical grounding (Grant & Cavanagh, 2007). At present, mentoring brings a wide range of theories and methodologies to practice from backgrounds such as business, consulting, counseling, human resources, training, and psychology (Greene & Grant, 2003). Perhaps surprisingly, coaches require no formal qualifications or credentials to practice. While it has been argued by some that individuals do not need to have business backgrounds in order to practice business and executive coaching (Zeus & Skiffington, 2002), without such a background, it would be difficult for coaches to empathize with commercial and organizational challenges faced by business owners (Brotman et al., 1998). Thus, it seems that understanding how SMEs proceed through periods of conceptualization, growth, and stability (Delmar, Davidsson, & Gartner, 2003) is an essential element of effective business mentoring. The ways in which business mentoring sessions are conducted have been heavily influenced by standard consulting frameworks with methods of operating, techniques, and delivery processes (Block, 2000). Business mentors experienced in commercial realities and contextual challenges are highly likely to be informed on the usage of such processes and techniques for effective interaction with appropriate leaders.

2. Literature Review

2.1. The Concept of Small and Micro Business Growth

Different countries and organizations use different measures to define Micro and small Enterprises with number of employees, sales turnover and size being the commonly used (Alkaeli, 2007). Enock, (2010) uses a growth indicator, level of employment and suggests that business units employing between 0-50 employees as an explanation as to who MSEs are. MSEs in Kenya are an informal sector undertaking employing a maximum of 50 persons (G.O.K, 2007). Any enterprise employing between 1- 20 persons and has a turnover of not more than Ksh. 30 million according to International Labour organization, qualifies to be classified as an MSE(ILO,1986).

Growth Fin (2007) report attempts to give a more comprehensive definition. They define an MSE as profit-driven entities whose financial needs are either too large or too complex for microfinance, and which have been excluded from mainstream financial institutions that consider the financial needs of MSEs either too small or too risky. The banks have in the last few years recognized MSE trade finance requirements as a clear growth area. It is however vivid that a large number of these banks are not prepared to devote the necessary time, energy and manpower to assist MSEs structure their operations. This is solid evidence that the growth of MSEs in Kenya is highly regarded by such aspects (Growth Fin, 2007).

While this paper focuses specifically on small firm growth, it does not assume that firm growth is always the most desirable outcome, nor that small firm growth, for its own sake, should be the objective of most private-sector development projects. Rather, it seeks to clarify in which cases firm growth, upgrading, or both may happen, and to stimulate thought about how and when MSE growth is a contributor to economic growth and poverty reduction. In some cases, MSE growth is not realistic; in others is may not be necessary. For example, some entrepreneurs may view their enterprises as important sources of household incomes and wish to avoid risk-taking. Others may actively seek to enter new markets and earn increased incomes; such activities may generate local investment. However, the firm may not always be the vehicle that takes the entrepreneur from start to finish; these goals may be achieved by individuals supported by social networks, or groups of firms working together.

2.2. Peer Mentoring

Peer mentoring is processes through which a more experienced individual encourages and assists a less experienced individual develop his or her potential within a shared area of interest. The resulting relationship is a reciprocal one in that both individuals in the partnership have an opportunity for growth and development (Wisconsin Council on Developmental Disabilities, 2006). Peers are individuals who share some common characteristics, attributes or circumstances. These may relate to age, ability, interests, etc. Peer mentors are individuals who have more experience within that common area along with additional training in how to assist another in acquiring skills, knowledge and attitudes to be more successful (Wisconsin Council on Developmental Disabilities, 2006). Peer mentors are generally slightly more advanced in their experience than peer mentees, and by using their own experiences and insights, they help young businesses, building a relationship which often lasts through the first year (Clark et al, 2011).Mentoring has a proven track record of success, especially for young people considered to be at-risk. Mentoring has helped at-risk youth improve outcomes related to; job skills, motivation and self-esteem, friendship, communication and assertiveness skills, problem solving and decision making, conflict resolution and resiliency (WCDD, 2006)

Karcher, (2007), posits that peer mentoring programs may operate best when the mentors are trained in a developmental approach to avoid becoming tutors; when mentors who report greater social interest and less self-interested motivations are strategically recruited; when mentors and mentees differ in age by at least two years; when programs provide mentors sufficient structure to keep the matches actively engaged, but the mentors' focus is clearly on strengthening their relationship; when mentoring interactions are monitored for signs of 'deviancy training'; when mentees are taught how best to utilize their mentors for support; and when mentors are required to participate in formal termination processes.

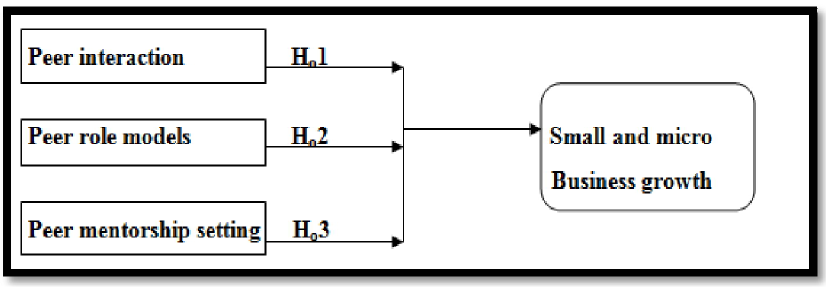

Figure 1: Research Model
Source: Self Conceptualization (2020)

3. Hypotheses Development

This section describes how the hypotheses were developed in relation to cause and effect relationship between the predictor and dependent variables

3.1. Relationship between Peer Interaction and Growth of Small and Micro Business

Peer interaction is critical in creating a feeling of importance. Peer interaction indicators such as; enabling quick acquisition of business skills, personal development, creation of passion for business, enhancement of business performance and integration of skills among mentees may determine small and micro business growth. The paper proposed that small and micro business owners who embrace peer mentorship display a greater potential to grow; thus, the following null hypothesis was postulated:

H01: There is no significant relationship between peer interaction and growth of small and micro business growth

3.2. Relationship between Peer Role Models and Growth of Small and Micro Business

Role models play a pivotal role to mentees. Peer role models constructs such as; strong relationships, inspiration during difficult business times, advice on business opportunities, sharing of experiences willingly and improvement of business competence. The paper suggested that these indicators may help small and micro business owners to improve their overall performance. Thus, the following null hypothesis was proposed:

- H02: There is no significant relationship between peer role models and growth of small and micro business growth

2.3. Relationship between Peer Mentoring Situation and Growth of Small and Micro Business

The situation under which mentoring occur may determine the outcome. Peer mentoring situation such as; instills confidence, great business exposure, enhance business performance, greater control of learning and quality of learning may influence the effectiveness of the learning process. Thus, the following null hypothesis was postulated:

H03: There is no significant relationship between peer mentoring situation and growth of small and micro business growth

4. Methodology

The study employed explanatory survey research design as it sought to describe and establish the associations among the key study variables, namely; peer interaction, peer role models, peer mentoring setting and business growth. The study was cross-sectional (that is, snapshot or one-shot) as the respondents were interviewed just once. Cross-sectional studies have been found to be robust for effects of relationship studies (Coltman, 2007).

Sampling and data collection

In this study, 22 survey items for four constructs in the questionnaire actually come from the prior empirical studies, and are modified to fit the context of peer mentoring and business growth (Luarn and Lin, 2005). The target population of this study was individual small and micro business owners. The survey instruments for this study were distributed to small and micro business owners located in Uasin Gishu County, Kenya. A total of 384 copies of the survey instrument were distributed. Out of these 384 samples, 84 samples were rejected due to partial response and/or missing data, thus giving a total response rate of 78.1 per cent.

4.1. Data Analysis

Multiple linear regressions were employed to test the hypotheses. This analysis is used to test the effects that arise due to a causal relationship. The analysis equation was written as follows:

$Y = a + \beta_1X_1 + \beta_2X_2 + \beta_3X_3 + e$

Where:

Y = Small and micro business growth

a = y-intercept (constant)

β_1, β_2, and β_3 = coefficient regression of each independent variables

X_1 = Peer interaction

X_2 = Peer role model

X_3 = Peer mentoring setting

e=Error Term

4.2. Profile of Respondents

The demographic profile of the surveyed respondents is presented on Table 1, which includes gender, age, academic qualification and duration the respondent has been in business. The total sample for the survey comprised of 300 respondents. The gender distribution of the survey respondents is 63.7 per cent males and 36.3 per cent females. The results also indicated that most of the respondents have higher national diploma at 26 percent. The results further indicate that most of the respondents have been in business for between 5-10 years, which comprise of 36.3 per cent.

Variables		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	191	63.7
	Female	109	36.3
Age	20-25 years	11	3.7
	26-30 years	24	8.0
	31-35 years	113	37.7
	36-40 years	124	41.3
	41-45 years	28	9.3
Academic qualification	Doctorate degree	9	3.0
	Masters degree	58	19.3
	Bachelor degree	66	22.0
	Higher national diploma	78	26.0
	Ordinary diploma	52	17.3
	Certificate	37	12.3
Duration in business	Less than one year	46	15.3
	1-5 years	92	30.7
	5-10 years	109	36.3
	10-15 years	49	16.3
	Over 15 years	4	1.3

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents
Source: Research Data (2020)

4.3. Scale Reliability and Factor Analysis

The reliability of the questionnaire was tested using Cronbach alpha measurements. The reliability coefficients of each variable are as follows: Peer interaction, PI (0.907); Peer role models, PRM (0.918); Peer mentoring setting, PMS (0.923) and business growth, BG (0.942). The reliability coefficients of all the variables are above 0.70, which concurs with the suggestion made by Nunnally (1994). Table 2 show the reliability coefficients of the items

Variable	Number of Measures	Cronbach alpha coefficient
Peer interaction	5	0.907
Peer role models	5	0.918
Peer mentoring setting	5	0.923
Business growth	7	0.942

Table 2: Results of Reliability Tests of the Variable Measures
Source: Research Results (2020)

Construct validity measures the degree to which a scale measures what it intends to measure (Garver and Mentzer, 1999) and it is assessed by factor analysis in this study. In order to assess the construct validity, the variables were examined by principal components extraction with varimax rotation. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) has a measure of 0.847, which is above the threshold of 0.5 (Field, 2005). The Bartlett's test is significant in this study with Chi square 6841.615 and (p-value < 0.05). Therefore, the KMO value of 0.847 and significance of Bartlett's statistic confirms the appropriateness of the factor analysis for the data set. Tables 3 show the factor loading for each item. The eigenvalue for each factor is greater than 1.0 (5.243, 5.608, 5.905 and 5.243), which implies that each factor can explain more variance than a single variable. The cumulative percentage of variance explained for each factor are; peer interaction (74.905), peer role models (80.118), peer mentoring setting (84.362) and business growth (74.896) per cent respectively. Based on above results, the construct validity is established.

Variable	Scale item	Factor loading	Eigen values	Percentage of variance
Peer Interaction	Quick acquisition of business skills	.909	5.243	74.905
	Improves personal development	.891		
	Creates passion for business	.902		
	Enhance business performance	.929		
	Integration of skills among mentees	.805		
Peer role models	Build strong relationships	.965	5.608	80.118
	Inspire during difficult business times	.875		
	Advice on business opportunities	.942		
	Share experiences willingly	.916		
	Improves my business competence	.798		
Peer mentoring setting	Instills confidence	.901	5.905	84.362
	Leads to great business exposure	.935		
	Enhance my performance	.930		
	Greater control of learning	.954		
	Improves the quality of learning	.924		
Business growth	Mentoring has led to increased sales	.842	5.243	74.896
	Mentoring has led to increased profits	.869		
	Mentoring has led to business expansion	.902		
	High returns on investment	.906		
	Increased assets	.890		
	Diversification of products and services	.759		
	Improved market share	.881		

Table 3: Factor Analysis Results of the Study Variables
Source: Research Results (2020)

4.4. Correlation Analysis

Since a single construct in the questionnaire was measured by multiple items, the average score of the multi-items for a construct was computed and used in further analysis such as correlation analysis and multiple regression analysis (Wang and Benbasat, 2007). Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between the variables (Wong and Hiew, 2005; Jahangir and Begum, 2008). As cited in Wong and Hiew (2005) the correlation coefficient value (r) range from 0.10 to 0.29 is considered weak, from 0.30 to 0.49 is considered medium and from 0.50 to 1.0 is considered strong. However, according to Field (2005), correlation coefficient should not go beyond 0.8 to avoid multicollinearity. Since the highest correlation coefficient is 0.779 which is less than 0.8, there is no multicollinearity problem in this study. All the associated pairs of variables were significant at level 0.05. All the hypothesized relationships developed were found to be statistically significant at level $p < 0.05$. Based on Table 4, the correlation between PI and PRM was the strongest (r-value = 0.779, $p < 0.05$. This is followed by the relationship between PI and PMS (r-value = 0.775, $p < 0.05$). The weakest relationship was between PI and BG (r-value = 0.635, $p < 0.05$).

	PI	PRM	PMS	BG	Sig (2-tailed)
PI	1				.000
PRM	.779**	1	1		.000
PMS	.775**	.653**	.687**	1	.000
BG	.635**	.669**			.000

Table 4: Pearson Correlation Coefficients of Study Variables
*Note: **. Correlation is Significant at the 0.01 Level (2-tailed), N= 300*
PI= Peer interaction, PRM= Peer role model, PMS= Peer mentoring setting, and BG= Business growth
Source: Research Results (2020)

4.5. Multiple Regression Analysis

Multiple regression analysis is applied to analyze the relationship between a single dependent variable and several independent variables (Hair et al., 2005). Multiple regression analysis was therefore selected as it is viewed as an appropriate method for this paper. The summary of results analysis is shown in Table 5. In order to test for multicollinearity among the predictor variables, variance-inflation factor (VIF) and tolerance were applied. The multicollinearity statistics showed that the tolerance indicator for Peer interaction (PI), Peer role models (PRM) and Peer mentoring situation (PMS) are all greater than 0.1 and their VIF values are less than 10. The result indicates that no multicollinearity problem has occurred (Ott and Longnecker, 2001). The F-statistics produced (F = 169.070) was significant at 5 per cent level (Sig. $F < 0.05$), thus confirming the fitness for the model. Therefore, there is a statistically significant relationship between the peer mentoring and small and micro business growth. The coefficient of determination R^2 was 72.9 per cent. Thus, peer mentoring can significantly account for 72.9 per cent in business growth. The results also show that PI ($p < 0.05$), and PRM ($p < 0.05$) significantly affect the growth of small and micro businesses. Based on Table 5, it indicated that the most important peer mentoring construct that affect small and micro business growth is PI (β= 0.709, p-value< 0.05), followed by PRM (β= 0.511, p-value< 0.05). Peer mentoring situation however, were found not to be significantly associated with the growth of small and micro businesses PMS (β= 0.023, p-value> 0.05). Hence, Ho1 and Ho2 are rejected since none of the βi's ≠ 0 and their p-values is less than α. On the other hand, the study failed to reject Ho3 since the p-value of peer mentoring situation is greater than 0.05.

Predictor variables	β	t-value	Std Error	Sig.	Tolerance	VIF
Constant	1.115	9.625	.116	.000		
Peer interaction	.709	1.595	.084	.000	.195	5.135
Peer role model	.511	2.016	.112	.035	.181	6.273
Peer mentoring setting	.023	3.598	.112	.063	.185	5.829

Table 5: Multiple Regression Results on Relationship between Peer Mentoring and Business Growth
Notes: Overall model F= 169.070; p < 0.05; R= 0.795; R2= 0.729; Adjusted R2= 0.726
Source: Research Results (2020)

5. Discussions

The relationship between peer interaction and growth of small and micro businesses was found to be positive and significant (β= 0.709, p< 0.05). The hypothesis was therefore rejected. The coefficient 0.709 implies that peer interaction significantly explains the variability in small and micro business growth. Likewise, the relationship between peer role models and growth of small and micro business was found to be positive and significant (β= 0.511, p< 0.05). The hypothesis was therefore rejected. The coefficient 0.511 implies that peer role models explain the variability in small and micro business growth. The study however found positive and insignificant relationship between peer mentoring situation and small and micro business growth (β= 0.023, p> 0.05). The study therefore failed to reject the hypothesis. Peer mentoring situation was found to have an insignificant effect on growth of small and micro business.

This study concluded that there was positive and significant relationship between peer mentorship and the growth of small and micro business enterprise. This is consistent with prior research, Rigg and O'Dwyer (2012) found that participants in peer mentoring who establish mentoring relationships performed better than those who did not. This study also agrees with (Allen, et al., 2004) who found that, entrepreneurial outcomes were higher among those who participated in peer mentoring.

6. Implications

Given that small and micro business growth is an important affective response embedded in mentorship processes, several implications can be advanced for small and micro business owners/managers and entrepreneurship practitioners. Small and micro business owners/managers who interact with mentors should endeavor to understand the mentors' role in the mentorship relationship. Small and micro business owners/managers should acknowledge that small and micro business enterprise growth; beyond the role of mentors, is a powerful assessment of an enterprise's performance. Furthermore, they must recognize that small and micro business growth is not a replacement for satisfaction, trust or attitudinal commitment; rather, it predicts the mentee perceptions of mentorship relationship quality. In most situations, mentee's evaluative reservations and negative feedback are not manifested at the spot, but appear later in the form of refusing to attend any mentorship program and/or negative word of mouth about mentorship, which may have adverse effects on the overall performance of the business due to lack of skills and knowledge. The effectiveness of mentorship strategies to build relationships with mentees and enhance business growth can be judged by identifying, recognizing and categorizing the growth of small and micro business enterprises generated in mentee through mentorship. Similarly, small and micro business owners/managers can determine the degree of perceived relationship quality with the mentor by recording the positive effects of the mentorship program on business growth.

Since the peer mentorship was found to be the most critical mentorship strategy, mentors and small and micro business owners should initiate critical peer mentorship programs which mentees will find valuable and usable to keep up with the increasing competition and ever-changing business environment. Design of the peer mentorship should be focused on the important and unique requirements of the mentee, such as personalization among others.

7. Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research

Due to the cross-sectional nature of this research, this paper does not capture long-term opinions on small and micro business growth. Future researchers might be interested in whether opinions on the growth of small and micro business are relatively short term, whether they decay over short intervals of time, and how peer mentorship assure long-term growth of small and micro business enterprise.

Future research could compare the growth of small and micro business in relation to peer mentorship practices in both developed and developing economies. This would test if there are differences in the intensity of small and micro business growth between different groups of people in response to the same type of peer mentorship practices. The context of small and micro business sector in Kenya places some limitations on the generalization of the findings of this study. Investigating other sectors in Kenya and other economies will improve the generalization of the findings.

The findings of this study are based on information generated from small and micro business owners that is self reported data. The information that business owners generates is not the only source of information about peer mentorship practices and small and micro business growth. It may be prudent to combine internal information with those collected from external sources namely mentors, competitors and relevant government agencies. To address this limitation, future researchers can combine the viewpoints of mentors, competitors and other stakeholders in order to generate more valid conclusions.

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