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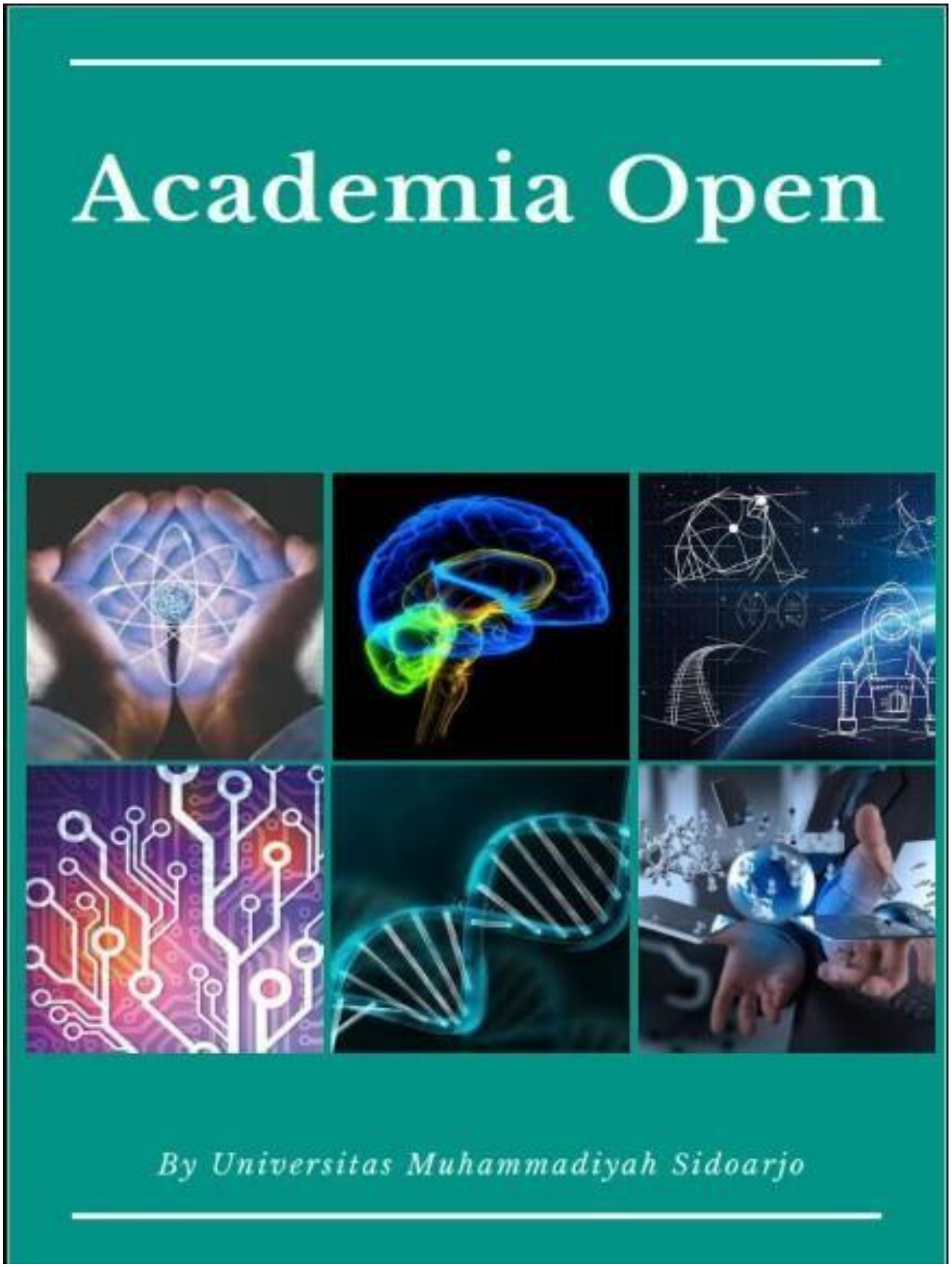

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Claims Processing Efficiency Drives Disability Management Outcomes in Nigerian Oil and Gas

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Abstract

General Background: Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) play a critical role in employment generation, poverty reduction, and economic development, yet their growth is often constrained by inadequate financing, limited managerial capabilities, and restricted market opportunities. **Specific Background:** In Nigeria, the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN) implements intervention strategies including access-to-financefacilitation, business skills development, and market access and cluster support to address these challenges among SMEs in the Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC). **Knowledge Gap:** Despite the implementation of these programs, limited empirical evidence exists regarding the combined relationship between SMEDAN's intervention strategies and business growth in AMAC. **Aims:** This study examined the relationship between access-to-finance facilitation, business skills development, market access and cluster support, and business growth among SMEs in AMAC, Federal Capital Territory, Nigeria. **Results:** Using a survey design, documentary review, and multiple linear regression analysis of data collected from 278 respondents, the findings revealed that access-to-finance facilitation significantly contributed to business growth (p=0.000), business skills development significantly supported business growth (p=0.001), and market access and cluster support significantly promoted business growth (p=0.018). The regression model explained 55.1% of the variation in business growth. **Novelty:** The study developed and tested an integrated resource-based model linking three SMEDAN intervention dimensions with business growth outcomes in AMAC. **Implications:** The findings indicate that coordinated intervention strategies contribute to revenue growth, job creation, business survival, and market expansion, highlighting the need for stronger finance linkages, continuous capacity development, and institutionalized market-linkage platforms.

Highlights:

- Access-to-finance facilitation recorded the strongest statistical relationship with enterprise expansion outcomes.
- Business training programs supported planning capability, record keeping, customer retention, and cost management.
- Networking initiatives and cluster-based support contributed to wider customer reach and commercial sustainability.

Keywords: SMEDAN; Access-To-Finance Facilitation, Business Skills Development, Market Access And Cluster Support, Business Growth

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1. Introduction

The small and medium enterprises (SMEs) have been key contributors to employment creation, inclusive production and poverty reduction in the world, but in recent years, the growth of these enterprises was constrained by inadequate finance, weak technological capacity, market disruption and poor managerial skills [20, 21]. HIV/AIDS constraints to small firms in Africa are multi-dimensional and enterprise policy has also shifted to integrated support, beyond credit – financing, training, digital tools, market access and cluster development. The MSME sector is vast at the national level as reported in the 2017 MSMEs survey by the NBS/SMEDAN, 41,543,028 MSMEs, 73,081 small and medium enterprises are present in the country [8] while the last survey conducted in 2021 reported that 39,654,385 MSMEs accounting for 46.3% of the Nigerian GDP and 87.9% of employment [9]. SMEs in Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC) are distributed in retail and services, agro-processing, food vending, fashion, ICT, transport and craft clusters and are facing the problem of rising operating cost, reliance on informal financial institutions, lack of formalisation and lack of access to public procurement opportunities [14],[15]. The conditional grants, business skills development, digital skills support, cluster development support, One-Stop-Shop advisory services and market-linkage programmes are the intervention strategies of SMEDAN in AMAC [1]-[7]. However, it has not yet been shown empirically that they have led to significantly more growth in business in AMAC; although there are policy claims that they enhance business finance, knowledge, tools and market access [1]. Studies revealed that SMEDAN finance and training boosted entrepreneurship development in Ebonyi State [12] while entrepreneurial mindset led to sales volume, employee size and profitability of MSMEs in AMAC [14]. Little empirical interaction with a model linking the specific interventions of SMEDAN and actual business growth in AMAC exists however. The present study thus, explores SMEDAN intervention strategies and growth of business in AMAC, FCT Nigeria.

This study looks at the impact of SMEDAN intervention strategies on the growth of businesses in AMAC, FCT, Nigeria. This is due to the challenges faced by SMEs to achieve growth which includes access to finance, managerial skills, market penetration, low digital capacity, poor record keeping and irregular business formalisation [8], [10], [14] and [15] faced by the SMEs in Nigeria and AMAC in particular. The study was undertaken to determine how much access to finance facilitation, business skills development and market access/cluster support help to address these challenges. Although, MSMEs dominate the enterprise landscape in Nigeria, the data show that the majority (99.8%) of enterprises recorded in 2017 are micro enterprises, which means that a majority of enterprises are small and not scaling up [8]. According to PwC MSME survey 2024, the share of micro enterprises is 96.9% and SMEs is 3.1% which is reflective of the continued structural constraints in scale-up. To meet these challenges, SMEDAN launched several measures, such as conditional grants for nano and micro businesses [3] and development of business skills through the Nano Business Skills Development Institute (NBSDI) [5], digital business training [6] and local-product promotion through the One-Stop-Shop advisory platform [2] and cluster development support [7]. The strategies are discussed to overcome considerations such as business development including sales growth and profitability, employment creation, business survival, business formalisation and market access [1,4,7]. Despite all these, empirical evidence on the direct effect of the SMEDAN intervention strategies in AMAC is still limited. The studies of access to finance, entrepreneurial mindset, digital transformation and micro-credit are recent ones that emphasize these factors as SME performance determinants [12]-[17]. However, most of the research has been done on other States, on general SME performance or on individual factors as opposed to the integrated interventions of SMEDAN in AMAC. Therefore, the problem statement is: What is the effect of SMEDAN's intervention programmes on business growth of AMAC FCT Nigeria.

The broad objective of the study is examined the impact of SMEDAN intervention strategies on businesses growth in AMAC, FCT, Nigeria. Specific objectives are to: examines the effect of finance facilitation on the development of businesses in AMAC; determine the extent to business skill development enhance business development in AMAC; evaluate the level of market access and cluster support strategies have improved business growth in AMAC.

This study answered the following research questions: What has been the impact of business access to finance facilitation on AMAC businesses growth? What is the effect of skill development of business on business growth in AMAC? Does the market access and cluster-support strategy result in significant improvement in the business growth in AMAC?

Based on the above, the following hypotheses were formulated for the study: H01: The access to finance facilitation is not significantly contributing to the growth of business in AMAC. H02: Business skills development does not significantly impact on business growth in AMAC. H03: Market access/cluster-support strategy has no significant impact on growth of AMAC business.

Academic, practical and policy significances are associated with this study. Academically, it contributes to the literature on SME-growth by incorporating SMEDAN-specific interventions with business-growth outcomes in AMAC in an empirical model. Concretely, it helps SME operators to learn, based on evidence, about the relevance of each of the intervention components for revenue growth, job creation and market expansion. It offers policies to SMEDAN, AMAC authorities, microfinance institutions and enterprise-support agencies of the FCT to help enhance targeting, monitoring and sustainability of enterprise intervention programmes. The results are also useful for future comparative studies in other area councils in the FCT.

The study covers the following scope:

This study covers content, geographical and time-frame scope. The content scope include SMEDAN intervention strategies, which include access-to-finance facilitation, business skills development and market access/cluster support, with business growth measured in terms of sales, profitability, employment creation, market reach and survival. Geographical area will

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comprise of AMAC, FCT, Nigeria and will be targeted at small businesses in Garki, Wuse, Gwarinpa, Maitama, Jabi, Karu, Nyanya and other business clusters. The time frame chosen is 2019-2026 as this period accounts for recent enterprise-support reforms, digital training as well as the recovery of SMEs from the pandemic.

2. Literature Review

SMEDAN Intervention Strategies: SMEDAN intervention strategies are identified as deliberate plans and programmes put in place by the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN) to empower MSMEs with knowledge, access to finance, tools and market access [1]. They are known as co-ordinated policy measures to promote, facilitate and support enterprises, especially through cooperatives, SMEs clusters and OLOPs [2, 4]. They are a combination of capacity-building, financial facilitation, digital skills, market linkage and advisory services to enhance MSME competitiveness [5]-[7]. They are a process that can be used by public agencies to clear barriers to formalising, growing and surviving for small companies [3,7]. They are known as business-development mechanisms, which enable entrepreneurs to think big, start small and prosper [1]. In this study, the description of SMEDAN intervention strategies as guided by the above summary of the definitions can be summarized as a set of measures being taken by SMEDAN to enable SMEs to access finance, business knowledge, markets, digital tools and cluster based productivity. The core dimensions for this study are the access-to-finance facilitation, business skills development and market access/cluster support as these are directly related to the agency's key programmes, and to the issues that businesses in AMAC encounter when attempting to scale up.

Business growth: Business growth is the enlargement of a business in terms of its sale, profit, market share, number of employees and assets [14, 16]. It is defined as the increase in scale and competitiveness of operations through the better access to resources, capabilities and market opportunities [18],[19]. Business growth is the ability to convert resources into useful results, in the form of increased turnover, employment and long-term survival [18]. It is a process that helps companies to acquire productive knowledge, invest in capability and expand the market size [18, 20]. This is referred to as multidimensional performance condition which consists of financial, operational and strategic changes [15,16]. From the above definitions it is concluded that the business growth in this study is defined as a continued increase in the sales, profitability, employment capacity, market reach and survival prospects in SMEs. This definition is suitable as not all SMEs in AMAC have audited financial statements and a mixed perceptual and operational definition more aptly reflects small business in the informal and semi-formal sector.

Theoretical Framework: The Resource-based view was adopted as the theory in this study. The idea stems from that of Penrose [18] and was extended by Barney [19]. The theory centrepiece is that the firm growth is a function of the efficient use of the firm tangible and intangible resources – financial, skills, managerial knowledge, technology, networks and organisational routines [18], [19] etc. Valuable, rare, imperfectly imitable and non-substitutable resources can provide a sustained performance advantage, according to the theory [19]. In this study it is assumed that SMEs grow as they acquire critical resources and that SMEDAN interventions will provide or facilitate these resources; that firms with better access to finance, skills and markets perform better than those that lack such resources. The theory has been challenged for its lack of sensitivity to institutional factors, which are external to the SME, in this study, an external agency can be used to help the SME gain access to growth-enabling resources. The reason why SMEDAN intervention strategies can influence the growth of businesses in AMAC therefore is explained by the resource based view.

Empirical Literature: Abah and Okike [12] studied SMEDAN and entrepreneurship development in Ebonyi State with the target of the entrepreneurs that benefitted from SMEDAN programme. The study used the survey research design, data was collected from the SME beneficiaries and hypotheses were analysed using correlation statistics. The study revealed that financing and training and monitoring significantly positively affects the SMEs with p-values of < 0.05 for financing and training respectively. It recommended for increased investment, frequent follow-up of beneficiaries and enhanced training support. A study conducted by Salami and his team [13] was done to evaluate the effect of SMEs micro-credit and loan repayment on the growth of SMEs in Nasarawa State, Nigeria. This study was conducted as a survey with questionnaire data being analysed via regression. It revealed that micro-credit played a vital role in the development of SMEs and recommended that there should be proper administration and supervision of the SMEs to recover the credit. Ngele et al. [14] carried out a similar study which was on entrepreneurial attitude and development of Micro Small Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in AMAC, FCT, Abuja. The study has been conducted using correlation and regression technique with a sample of 218 MSME owners out of 480 MSME owners. It concluded that entrepreneurial attitude influenced the volume of sales, number of employees and profit and it recommended that entrepreneurial orientation of the businessmen should be improved. In relation to the concepts of digital transformation and SME performance, Mohammed and others [15] investigated it based on operational efficiency, market reach and financial performance in AMAC. It was a quantitative research with sample of 400 SMEs and multiple regression analysis was used. It revealed that digital transformation positively impacted competitiveness, efficiency and performance. Adedipe and Akintimehin [16] examined how financial institutions' financing impacts the growth of small business in Oyo State. A sample of 152 SMEs, descriptive analysis, simple regression and ANOVA were employed in the study. It showed that the availability of financial resources led to a growth of small businesses, and suggested for easier access to formal finance. Amadasun [17] in a related international study explored the capability of market-driven strategy and financing condition on the competitive performance of SMEs in Lesotho and revealed that market-driven capability and financing condition were found to have positive effect on SMEs' competitive performance in Lesotho. Gap analysis studies: These studies have mentioned about SMEDAN, finance, entrepreneurial mindset, digital transformation and SME performance, but none of these studies focused on the same phenomena as those of the present study that includes access-to-finance facilitation, business skills development and market access/cluster support. They also differ in terms of Place, approaches, proxies and theory. This study has tried to fill this gap by employing a resource-based model and multiple regressions to examine the effects of SMEDAN interventions and the growth of

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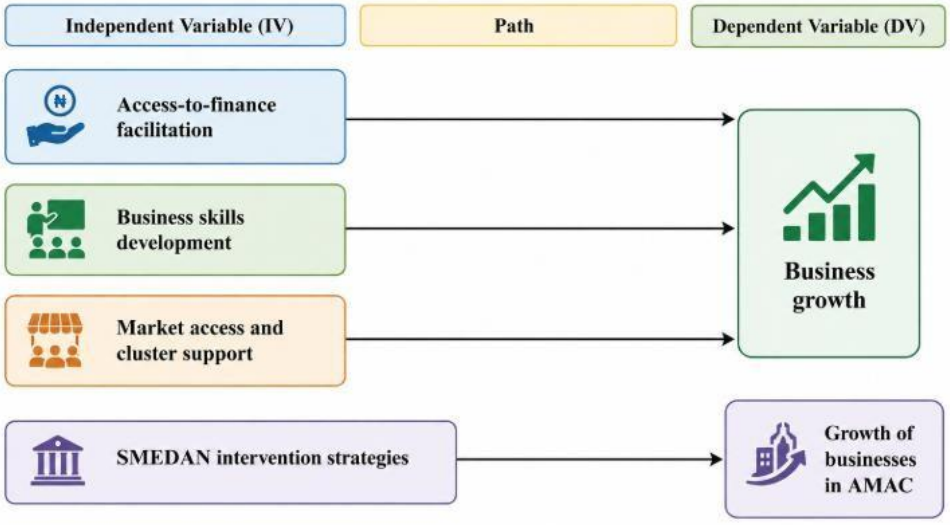
businesses in AMAC.

Gaps in Literature: The literature reviewed is empirical with methodological, geographical and conceptual gaps. The study by Abah and Okike [12] focused on SMEs that accessed SMEDAN programmes in Ebonyi State and discovered that financing, training and monitoring is crucial for SMEs to be relevant, but the study only covered Ebonyi State without considering peculiarities of AMAC market. Salami and associates [13] made an investigation on the micro-credit and loan repayment in Nasarawa State, however, with micro-credit alone which did not include the other components of the intervention package which are skills development, digital capacity, OLOP, cluster support. Ngele et al. [14] studied entrepreneurial mindset and growth of MSMEs in AMAC without establishing a correlation between the growth and the SMEDAN's intervention strategies. Mohammed and et al [15] studied digital transformation in AMAC SMEs, however, digitalisation was considered as independent variable instead of being one of the components of enterprise-development support. Finance and small business growth were investigated by Adedipe and Akintimehin [16] in Oyo State and market-driven strategies and access to finance were analyzed in Lesotho by Amadasun [17]. These studies jointly signify that resources, capabilities and market are significant for the growth of SMEs but there is no single empirical explanation of the intervention strategies of SMEDAN in AMAC. This study therefore fills this void by employing the resource based view, focusing on AMAC and incorporating three proxies to test the effect of these on business growth using multiple regression.

Research Model

Fig. 1: Research Model Showing SMEDAN Intervention Strategies and Business Growth



Source: Adapted from the resource-based view [18], [19] and SMEDAN programme framework [1]-[7].

The model illustrates the connection between the SMEDAN intervention strategies and business growth in AMAC. Independent variable is SMEDAN intervention strategies which has three measurable proxies. Access-to-finance facilitation includes the first proxy, which is grants, and credit facilitation, linkages with finance providers, and information support that allow firms to obtain working capital. Business skills development is the second proxy and stands for training in business planning, marketing, customer care, opportunity identification, financial skills, digital skills and regulatory compliance. Market access and cluster support is the third proxy, which encompasses OLOP, cluster development, market linkages, networking and cooperative approaches helping businesses achieve market access and mitigating operating isolation. Distinctly, business growth as measured in sales growth, profitability, employment creation, market penetration and business survival is the dependent variable. The model is based on resource-based view since resources like finance, knowledge, digital skills and networks can enhance the capability and performance of businesses [18, 19]. In the model, more relevant interventions for SMEs are assumed to lead to better opportunities to sell, to hire workers, formalise business, reach new customers and withstand competition. The model also assumes that interventions can vary in their intensity; finance could have a more immediate impact on outcomes, and skills and market access could have a more medium to long-term impact.

3. Research Methods

In this study, survey research design was used and supplemented by the use of documentary design. The method employed was survey design so that the researcher could have standardised responses from the operators of the SMEs on their experience with the SMEDAN interventions and documentary design was employed because the researcher required official documents, programme description and previous studies to contextualise the findings [1] to [10]. The design was appropriate in that it enabled for generalisation from the representative sample and triangulation with the primary responses and secondary evidence. The population of the study included SME operators in AMAC who benefitted from SMEDAN assisted SMEs, registered small business operators and enterprise-support officers. SME operators were relevant as they are directly impacted by access-to-finance facilitation, training and market linkage. Enterprise-support officers were

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relevant because they know what it takes to implement programmes and monitor beneficiaries. The estimated population was 1,420 and was based on AMAC business clusters, enterprise-support lists and contacts of SMEDAN beneficiaries in FCT. The total population was 1,420 and the sample population was computed using the Krejcie and Morgan sample size formula. Based on the standard table, 302 respondents are needed for a population of approximately 1,400. The sampling was done through a combination of stratified sampling and simple random sampling to identify business clusters and then the operators of SMEs. Interview participants were selected using purposive sampling as the programme officers and experienced beneficiaries were selected due to their knowledge of SMEDAN interventions. The data obtained in the study was taken from the primary sources such as questioner and interview. Secondary data was obtained from SMEDAN web resources, NBS MSME survey reports, PwC MSME survey, FATE/SMEDAN competitiveness materials and peer-reviewed journal articles [1]-[17]. Data collection was done both by primary and secondary means. The most important technique was the use of structured questionnaires with five-point Likert scale, and semi-structured interviews with 15 participants. The study validity was determined by content and face validity which was tested by academic experts in public administration and entrepreneurship studies. The instrument was pilot-tested to determine its reliability with the minimum value of 0.7 for Cronbach's alpha, and the value obtained was 0.82. Descriptive statistics were used to present the data with frequencies, mean and standard deviations and inferential statistics analyzed the data. Multiple linear regressions with 5% level of significance were used to test the hypotheses. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS v.27) was used to analyse the collected data.

Model Specification

The multiple linear regression model is stated as:

$$BG = \beta_0 + \beta_1 AFF + \beta_2 BSD + \beta_3 MACS + e$$

Where BG is business growth; β_0 is the constant or intercept; β_1, β_2 and β_3 are coefficients of the independent variables; AFF is access-to-finance facilitation; BSD is business skills development; MACS is market access and cluster support; and e is the error term.

Table 1: Accessible Population and Sample Distribution

Category of Respondents	Estimated Population	Sample Allocation
SMEDAN-assisted SME operators in AMAC	720	153
Registered small business owners in AMAC clusters	610	130
Enterprise-support officers and programme informants	90	19
Total	1,420	302

Source: Researcher's field compilation from AMAC business clusters and SMEDAN-related beneficiary categories, 2026.

4. Results and Discussion

Table 2: Descriptive Analysis of Access-to-Finance Facilitation

S/N	Statement	Mean	Std. Dev.	Decision
1	SMEDAN finance information helped my business identify funding opportunities.	4.18	0.74	Agree
2	Conditional grant or credit facilitation improved my working capital.	4.05	0.81	Agree
3	Finance-related advisory services improved my ability to prepare bankable plans.	3.96	0.86	Agree
4	SMEDAN linkages with finance providers supported business expansion.	3.88	0.91	Agree

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

Data from the respondents showed mean values ranging from 3.88 to 4.18 and standard deviations ranging from 0.74 to 0.91, indicating agreement that access-to-finance facilitation supports business growth. The highest mean was recorded for finance information, suggesting that many respondents first benefit from information and advisory support before obtaining actual finance. The results imply that funding facilitation contributes to working capital, planning capability and expansion prospects.

Table 3: Descriptive Analysis of Business Skills Development

S/N	Statement	Mean	Std. Dev.	Decision
1	SMEDAN training improved my business planning and record keeping.	4.22	0.70	Agree
2	Training on marketing and customer care increased my customer retention.	4.11	0.77	Agree
3	Digital skills training improved my online visibility.	3.94	0.88	Agree
4	Business skills development improved my ability to manage costs.	4.03	0.82	Agree

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

Data from the respondents showed mean values between 3.94 and 4.22, indicating agreement that business skills development enhanced growth-related capabilities. The highest mean was recorded for business planning and record keeping, which suggests that training helps small firms move from informal decision-making to more structured management. The results also show that marketing, customer care and digital skills are important channels through which training translates into business growth.

Table 4: Descriptive Analysis of Market Access and Cluster Support

S/N	Statement	Mean	Std. Dev.	Decision
1	Market-linkage support improved my access to new customers.	4.01	0.84	Agree
2	Cluster-support activities encouraged cooperation among SMEs.	3.89	0.90	Agree
3	OLOP-related support increased awareness of local products.	3.76	0.95	Agree
4	Networking opportunities improved my market reach.	3.98	0.87	Agree

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Source: Field Survey, 2026.

Data from the respondents showed mean scores between 3.76 and 4.01, showing agreement that market access and cluster support enhance business growth. The relatively lower mean for OLOP-related support suggests that while local-product promotion is useful, awareness and implementation coverage may still be uneven in AMAC. Overall, the results show that networking, market linkage and cluster cooperation are important growth channels for SMEs.

Regression Analysis

The hypotheses were tested using multiple linear regression at a 5% significance level. Business growth was the dependent variable, while access-to-finance facilitation, business skills development and market access/cluster support were predictors.

Table 5: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	0.742	0.551	0.546	0.421	1.893

Source: Field Survey, 2026. (SPSS 27)

The model shows a strong correlation (R=0.742) between the predictors and business growth. About 55.1% of the variance in business growth is explained by the model (R Square=0.551). The adjusted R^2 of 0.546 confirms a good model fit, while the Durbin-Watson statistic of 1.893 suggests no serious autocorrelation in the residuals.

Table 6: ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	59.842	3	19.947	112.534	0.000
Residual	48.572	274	0.177		
Total	108.414	277			

Source: Field Survey, 2026. (SPSS 27)

The overall ANOVA model is statistically significant, with regression sum of squares of 59.842, df of 3, mean square of 19.947, F-value of 112.534 and significance value of 0.000. Since the p-value is below 0.05, the model significantly predicts business growth in AMAC.

Table 7: Coefficient

Model	Unstandardized B	Std. Error	Standardized Beta	t	Sig.
Constant	0.612	0.188		3.255	0.001
Access-to-finance facilitation	0.386	0.060	0.402	6.433	0.000
Business skills development	0.291	0.071	0.284	4.099	0.001
Market access and cluster support	0.184	0.077	0.156	2.390	0.018

Source: Field Survey, 2026. (SPSS 27)

Constant: The constant has an unstandardized coefficient of 0.612 with a standard error of 0.188. The result of hypothesis one indicates that the unstandardized coefficient of 0.386, standard error of 0.060, beta of 0.402, t-value of 6.433 and p-value of 0.000. The value of Prob < 0.000 is less than 0.05 and hence the null hypothesis is rejected that means there is significant impact of access-to-finance facilitation on business growth. Hypothesis two results indicate that business skills development has an unstandardized coefficient of 0.291, a standard error of 0.071, a beta value of 0.284, a t value of 4.099 and a p value of 0.001. Since 0.001<0.05, we reject the null hypothesis, and conclude that business skills development has a significant impact on business growth. The result of hypothesis three is that the market access and cluster support is unstandardized coefficient is 0.184, standard error is 0.077, beta is 0.156, t is 2.390 and p is 0.018. Since 0.018 < 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected, so the market access and cluster support significantly improves the growth of businesses in AMAC.

Discussion

The analysis of finding of hypothesis one showed t=6.433 and p=0.000 which is below the threshold level of 0.05. From the result it can be seen that the access to finance facilitation had a significant effect on the growth of the business in AMAC. This finding is in line with Abah and Okike [12] who found that there was a positive significant effect of the financing of SMEs through SMEDAN on SMEs in Ebonyi State. It also supports the findings of Adedipe and Akintimehin [16] that financial institutions' financing helped to improve small businesses in Oyo State. The result is substantiated by the resource-based view which posits that finance is a valuable resource which can be used by firms to increase their productive capacity [18] [19]. The result of the finding of hypothesis two showed that the t value was 4.099 and P value was 0.001. This validates that business skills development had a great impact on business growth. This finding is consistent with the findings of Abah and Okike [12] which indicated that there was a positive significant effect of SMEDAN training on SMEs and similarly, Ngele et al [14] concluded that SMEs' entrepreneurial mindset has a significant impact on the sales volume, employee size and profitability of AMAC. The result of hypothesis three showed that the t value was 2.390, while p value was 0.018. This means that there is a strong impact on business growth. The result is consistent with Amadasun [17] who reported that market-driven strategies and finance enhanced the competitive performance of SMEs and Mohammed et al [15] who found that the digital transformation strategy enhanced SMEs market reach and performance of AMAC SMEs. The findings in

general, justify the fact that the interventions of SMEDAN bring about the provision of finance, capabilities and market resources for the growth of SMEs.

5. Conclusion

The study was concluded that SMEDAN intervention strategies significantly affect the growth of businesses in AMAC, FCT and Nigeria. It also found that access to finance facilitation positively impacts the most on business growth, followed by business skills development and market access/cluster support. The study's objectives were accomplished as the three proxies had positive and statistically significant impact on the growth of business. Hence, SMEDAN interventions assist in the growth of revenue, job creation; survival and market penetration of the SMEs in AMAC. The study recommends on the basis of the above the following: SMEDAN should be intensified in creating access to finance facilitation service for AMAC SMEs by linking them to grants, micro-finance, credit guarantee and bankable business plan advisory service. SMEDAN should ensure that business skills development is a continuous process in AMAC particularly in record keeping, digital marketing, customer care, financial literacy and regulatory compliance. SMEDAN should be extended to cover market access and cluster-support programmes that will deepen OLOP, cooperative support, participation in trade-fairs and linkage with digital marketplace for AMAC businesses.

Contribution to Knowledge

This study is theoretical in contributing to the knowledge because it is the development and testing of integrated model SMEDAN intervention strategies and business growth in AMAC. It does so in an empirical manner, by illustrating the relative impact of finance facilitation, skills development and market access/cluster support, and in a theoretical way by initiating the application of the resource-based view to public enterprise-support interventions.

Practical Implications

The takeaway is that finance should not be the only way to support SME growth. Funding, training, digital tools, and market-linkage platforms should be combined by SMEDAN, AMAC and FCT enterprise-support institutions. The implications for business owners are that involvement in training and networks can help to maximise financial resources.

Ethical Consideration

Ethical issues were adhered to in the conduct of the research. Respondents were during the time of the study informed with the purpose of the study and given the opportunity to participate voluntarily. None of the respondents were compelled to give information. Before questionnaires and interviews were given, informed consent was obtained. The anonymity of the respondents and firms was maintained in the analysis to ensure confidentiality. The questionnaire contained no questions that would reveal private business secrets or financial records. Participants were told that the information gathered would only be for academic purposes. The study provided the aggregated responses to avoid fabrication of field responses. To avoid plagiarism, the secondary sources were referenced according to the IEEE referencing system. The researcher also made sure that there were no discriminatory or offensive words in the instrument. If interviewees were not willing to answer a question, they were not obligated to do so. All data was kept secure and used only for the specified scientific research. This was done to enhance the confidence of the respondents and to shield the integrity of the research process.

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