

## Igbo Apprenticeship Business Model and Sustainability of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) in Southeast Nigeria

Chris Chukwuebuka Emeali<sup>1</sup> Emmanuel Kalu Agbaeze<sup>2</sup>  
Bethel Udoka Oganezi<sup>3</sup> Nicholas I. Achilike<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University of Nigeria Nsukka, Enugu State, Nigeria

<sup>2</sup>University of Nigeria Nsukka, Enugu State, Nigeria

<sup>3</sup>Alex Ekwueme Federal University Ndufu-Alike, Ebonyi State, Nigeria

<sup>4</sup>Alex Ekwueme Federal University Ndufu-Alike, Ebonyi State, Nigeria

**Corresponding Author: Chris Chukwuebuka Emeali**

**DOI: 10.54882/7520237511196**

---

---

### **Abstract**

*The study investigated the effects of Igbo Apprenticeship Business Model on the Sustainability of SMEs in Southeast, Nigeria. The study adopted survey research design with a total population of 10114 which was reduced to a sample size of 370 respondents using Freund and William's statistical formula. The study also adopted stratified sampling technique to reach out to different strata using structured questionnaire. Cronbach's Alpha Statistic was used to test the reliability of the instrument, of which the results were all above 70% respectively. The primary data collected were collated and subjected to statistical test using regression analysis with the aid of SPSS. The study found that Igbo Apprenticeship Business Model has a significant effect on the sustainability of SMEs in Southeast, Nigeria. Thus, the study, inter alia, recommended that Governments should begin to encourage initiatives that actively preserve and promote traditional crafts and trades in the region, providing incentives and recognition for artisans and craftsmen and also implement sociocultural education programmes in schools to ensure younger generations appreciate and understand the social, historical and cultural significance of these traditional trades and business customs and practices and the significant roles Igbo Apprenticeship Business Models plays in economic development of the region.*

**Keywords:** *Igbo Apprenticeship Business Model, Sustainability of SMEs*

---

---

## 1.0 Introduction

Socioeconomic landscape of Southeast Nigeria is underpinned by a distinctive entrepreneurial culture, notably manifested in the Igbo apprenticeship business model. Rooted in the historical and cultural context of the Igbo society, this age-old system has played a crucial role in shaping the business ethos of the region (Igwe, 2021). Igbo people of Southeastern Nigeria, by their very nature, have been described as enterprising. This is owing to their entrepreneurial ingenuity, industry, being among first to discover new businesses/ first to enter new markets by either adopting innovative new technologies or inventing new ideas, among others (Igwe, Newbery, Amoncar, White, & Madichie, 2018). This entrepreneurial behaviour of Ndigbo (Igbo people) has been exemplified variously across industry by their apprenticeship business model (Adeola, 2023).

As the sustainability of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) becomes an increasingly critical global concern, understanding the intricate dynamics of indigenous business behaviours and practices, such as the Igbo apprenticeship model, takes on heightened significance. The Igbo apprenticeship model is a complex and deeply ingrained system, blending traditional values with entrepreneurial endeavours. Apprenticeship, in this context, extends beyond a conventional learning process; it is a holistic approach encompassing skill acquisition, business acumen, and social interconnectedness (Amaechi, Iwara, Njoku, Raselekoane & Thobejane, 2021; Anoke, Osita, Okafor & Agagbo, 2022 and Adeola, 2021). Young aspiring entrepreneurs undergo immersive, hands-on training, guided by established business owners who serve as mentors, imparting not only technical expertise but also cultural and ethical values (Igwe, 2021; Ejo-Orusa, & Mpi, 2019; Iwara, Amaechi, & Netshandama, 2019). Adeola (2023) opines that Igbo Apprenticeship Business Model grooms the apprentices at a very young age to become great businessmen and businesswomen. The apprenticeship system according to the study, is a framework of formal and informal indentured agreements between parties that ultimately facilitate burgeoning entrepreneurial communities within the Igbo people of Nigeria (Adeola, 2023; and Adekunle, 2023). Igwe, Ochinanwata & Emeordi (2023) whose study focused on the indigenous Igbo people of Nigeria, observe that Ndigbo (Igbo people) are renowned for successfully establishing transgenerational business legacies and indigenous business clusters across West Africa subregion and are also known for their cultural devotion and belief in their *Chi* or *Chukwu* (God), gods, spirits known as "*alusi*"; their ancestors known as "*ndiichie*" and the oracle known as deities. Thus, the majority of Igbo personal names contain the word 'Chi'. Igbo cultural ideals are grounded on the spiritual maxims of '*Onyeghana Nwanneya*' (do not leave your brother behind), '*Onyebiri beyabiri*' (live and let live) and '*Akuruo uno*' (let the wealth reach home). Thus, those characteristics make the Igbos a distinctive population to reckon with. Igwe, Madichie & Amoncar (2020) suggest that in assessing the "Igbos transgenerational business legacy" puzzle through "familiness" approach is apt, and that recent studies have also established a strong nexus between entrepreneurial legacy, defined as "the family's rhetorical reconstruction of past entrepreneurial achievements or resilience." The acknowledgement of family firms' interaction with their localized environment is part of a broader move in the entrepreneurship literature to understand how situational context informs both the nature and the characteristics of entrepreneurial activities and behaviours.

The Igbos, located in the Southeastern region of Nigeria, have been described as ingenious in economic business activities and can be found throughout Nigeria and West Africa (Igwe, Onjewu & Nwibo, 2018). Ndigbo by their culture, are homogeneous society and their business tend to be organized along with a strong family pattern (Igwe, Madichie & Amoncar, 2020). Worthy of mention here, is that, this entrepreneurial culture of Ndigbo can be traced as far back as the era of the slavetrade business from the 15<sup>th</sup> century, and by 1800s, about 320,000 Ndigbo have been traded in slave trade at Bonny, as well as 50,000 at Calabar and Elem Kalabari

(Ohadike, 1998). This process of slave trade continued, nonstop, until the abolition of slave trade in the 1900s. Unlike most African communities, slaves from the Igbo ethnic group were exposed to entrepreneurial activities by their owners to be trading commodities such as: spices, sugar, tobacco, cotton for export to the Americas, Europe and Asia (Adamu, 1979; Ohadike, 1998). This action ignited the entrepreneurial spirit of Ndigbo and spurred them to quickly venture into numerous forms of entrepreneurial activities during the precolonial era (Ejo-Orusa, & Mpi, 2019; Iwara, Amaechi, & Netshandama, 2019). The colonial era saw the Igbos as the foremost exporters of palm oil and kernel, including: craftsmen, traders, merchants, cottage entrepreneurs, etc. Thus, this entrepreneurial culture has therefore continued till the present age through what is now known as the apprenticeship framework (Ohadike, 1998).

This study endeavours to delve into the historical roots and contemporary implications of the Igbo apprenticeship business model on the sustainability of SMEs in Southeast Nigeria. By examining the evolution of this traditional system and its adaptability to the modern economic landscape, the study seeks to illuminate its influence on the establishment, growth, and enduring viability of SMEs in the region. The Southeast, predominantly inhabited by the Igbo ethnic group, has long been renowned for its entrepreneurial prowess (Igwe, Madichie & Amoncar, 2020). The Igbo people have a rich history of commerce, and the apprenticeship system stands as a testament to their resilient spirit in the face of economic challenges. The system, characterized by a symbiotic relationship between mentors and apprentices, not only facilitates the transfer of skills but also instills a sense of communal responsibility and support others (Igwe, Newbery, Amoncar, White, & Madichie, 2018). Through a blend of historical analysis, and contemporary assessments, this research aims to contribute nuanced insights into the Igbo apprenticeship business model. By addressing critical questions surrounding its impact on SMEs, the study aims to provide valuable perspectives for academia, policymakers, and business practitioners. In doing so, it seeks to offer a balanced understanding of the intersection between tradition and modernity, unraveling the implications of the Igbo apprenticeship system for the sustainable development of SMEs in Southeast Nigeria. However, while the model provides some significant prospects such as intergenerational business mentoring; cash infusion as startup capital; knowledge transfer/skill acquisition; startups incubation; community support and so on, the model's velocity for economic activities, in recent times, has begun to wane and nosedive with young potential apprentices looking for alternative career paths. The major consequence is that if these issues bedeviling the Igbo Traditional Business Model are left to persist and fester and not nipped in the bud, sustainability of this burgeoning and beautiful traditional Igbo business model that has taken thousands of people out of poverty, risks sliding into extinction. Therefore, these issues mean that there are serious problems and thus call for concerted research efforts in ensuring that the model is rescued from going into extinction and this should be done very urgently too. It is on this premise that this study investigated the prospects provided by this Igbo traditional business model, vis-à-vis their impact on the sustainability of SMEs in Southeast, Nigeria. By this investigation, the study seeks to put forward some recommendations that can address those issues and ensure continued success and relevance of the apprenticeship system in promoting sustainable development of SMEs in the southeast region. Thus, the study addresses four questions:

- RQ1:** To what extent does Igbo traditional business culture foster sociocultural sustainability of SMEs through traditional crafts & trades in Southeast, Nigeria?
- RQ2:** Does intergenerational business mentoring of the Igbo Apprenticeship Business Model Foster Startups incubation in Southeast, Nigeria?
- RQ3:** Does cash-infusion as a means of startup capital contribute to economic sustainability of SMEs in southeast, Nigeria?

**RQ4:**To what degree does knowledge transfer / skill acquisition within the apprenticeship system ensure human capital sustainability of the SMEs in southeast, Nigeria?

By exploring the four questions above, the study aims to enrich our understanding of the sociocultural sustainability of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Southeast Nigeria by investigating the extent to which Igbo traditional business culture, particularly through traditional crafts and trades, fosters such sustainability. Additionally, the research seeks to give insights into the role of intergenerational business mentoring within the Igbo Apprenticeship Business Model in promoting startup incubation in the region. Furthermore, the study explores the impact of cash infusion as startup capital on the economic sustainability of SMEs in Southeast Nigeria. Finally, it aims to contribute insights to the existing body of knowledge on the degree/extent to which knowledge transfer and skill acquisition within the apprenticeship system ensure human capital sustainability, providing a comprehensive perspective on the multifaceted factors influencing the success and longevity of SMEs in the region.

The structure of the study is as follows: First, after the introductory part which dealt with the general background/problem statement/ research question, the study discusses the literature and arguments around the Igbo traditional Business Model and its effect on SMEs. Second, the study describes the methodology adopted. Thirdly, it presents the data analysis. Fourth, the study presents results and discussion of findings and finally, conclusion and recommendations follow thereafter.

## **2.0 Literature Review**

### **2.1 Igbo traditional business culture and sociocultural sustainability of SMEs through traditional crafts & trades in Southeast, Nigeria**

The Igbo traditional business culture holds a significant role in fostering the sociocultural sustainability of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) engaged in traditional crafts and trades in Southeast Nigeria. Rooted in historical practices, this cultural framework establishes a strong foundation for the economic endeavors of SMEs, contributing to the preservation and promotion of Igbo cultural identity. Igwe (2021) emphasizes the historical evolution of Igbo entrepreneurship, highlighting the enduring nature of familial and communal ties, as well as the apprenticeship system, which forms the basis for SME growth. Traditional crafts and trades, deeply embedded in Igbo culture, are not merely economic activities; they serve as vital components in preserving cultural heritage (Alike &Orjiako-Umunze, 2019, Antwi& Obeng, 2021, and Ezeajughu, 2021), The intricate blend of economic pursuits with cultural practices creates a symbiotic relationship, positioning SMEs as integral elements within a broader sociocultural ecosystem. Community support and solidarity, as explored by Igwe, Ochinanwata&Emeordi (2023), Igwe (2021), Igwe, Madichie&Amoncar (2020), Igwe, Newbery, Amoncar, White, &Madichie (2018), further enhance the sociocultural sustainability of these enterprises, weaving them into the fabric of the local community and ensuring their resilience in the face of external challenges. As SMEs continue to navigate the complexities of modern economic landscapes, the effects of Igbo traditional business culture on sociocultural sustainability emerge as a dynamic force, fostering not only economic viability but also the enduring cultural richness of Igbo people of Southeast Nigeria.

## **2.2 Intergenerational business mentoring of the Igbo Apprenticeship Business Model and Startups incubation in Southeast, Nigeria**

The Igbo Apprenticeship Business Model, characterized by intergenerational business mentoring, exerts a profound influence on the incubation and development of startups in Southeast Nigeria. The mentorship system inherent in the Igbo cultural ethos plays a pivotal role in shaping the entrepreneurial landscape of the region (Okafor, Ekoja, & Agbaeze, 2023 and Igwe, Ochinanwata & Emeordi, 2023). Neuwirth (2018) underscores the importance of the apprenticeship system in transferring not only technical skills but also cultural values, establishing a unique form of entrepreneurial incubation. This intergenerational mentoring, as articulated by Osita, Akam & Dike (2022), Agbionu, Emejulu & Egolum (2015), Jaques, Avila & Miralles (2014), ensures the continuity of entrepreneurial traditions across generations. Startups benefit from the wealth of knowledge and experiences passed down through this mentor-apprentice relationship, creating an environment conducive to the incubation of new ventures. The resilience embedded in the Igbo Apprenticeship Business Model becomes particularly evident in startups, as noted by Agbionu, Emeka & Ogbemudia (2018), Brimah, Rabi, Bamidele & Sheu (2020), Igwe, Madichie & Amoncar (2020), Igwe, Newbery, Amoncar, White, & Madichie (2018). Through the intergenerational transfer of knowledge, startups are equipped to navigate challenges, drawing on the accumulated wisdom of previous generations. This resilience is a critical factor in the sustainability and success of startups in Southeast Nigeria. The continuity of business practices fostered by the Igbo apprenticeship system, according to Agbionu, Emejulu & Egolum (2015) Jaques, Avila & Miralles (2014), Uma, Onwusogbolu and Obidike, (2015) contributes to the adaptability and success of startups. The transfer of skills and knowledge from mentors to apprentices not only accelerates the learning curve for new entrepreneurs but also ensures that startups are firmly rooted in the cultural and business traditions of the Igbo people. Thus, influence of intergenerational business mentoring within the Igbo Apprenticeship Business Model on startups incubation in Southeast Nigeria is a dynamic and essential aspect of the region's entrepreneurial ecosystem. The transfer of knowledge, values, and experiences from one generation to the next not only facilitates the growth of startups but also contributes to the cultural and economic sustainability of the entrepreneurial landscape in the region.

## **2.3 Cash-infusion as a means of startup capital and economic sustainability of SMEs in southeast, Nigeria.**

The contribution of cash infusion as startup capital plays a pivotal role in determining the economic sustainability of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) in Southeast Nigeria. Adequate startup capital is widely recognized as a catalyst for the establishment, growth, and long-term viability of businesses in the region (Orogbu, Onyeizugbe, & Onuzulike-Chukwumeka (2021). Anigbogu, Onwuteaka & Okoli (2019), Eneh, Chris-Nnamchi & Otiji (2020), Farayibi (2021), Nwanna & Osakwe (2021), Onyima, Nzewi & Chiekiezie (2018) highlights the crucial role of initial financial support in propelling SMEs into viable economic entities. The availability of sufficient startup capital not only facilitates the establishment of businesses but also contributes significantly to their ability to withstand economic challenges. Access to finance emerges as a critical factor in the economic sustainability of SMEs in Southeast Nigeria, as emphasized by Orogbu, Onyeizugbe, & Onuzulike-Chukwumeka (2021), Ugwu, Njeze & Oluka (2023). Improved access to startup capital enables businesses to make essential investments in resources, technologies, and market outreach, thereby solidifying their economic sustainability in the long term. Insufficient capital can hinder the growth potential of SMEs and limit their capacity to seize market opportunities or respond to competitive pressures. Policy interventions also play a significant role in shaping the contribution of cash infusion to economic sustainability. Eneh, Chris-Nnamchi & Otiji (2020), Farayibi (2021) highlight the implications of policy initiatives in ensuring the availability of startup capital. Government support and initiatives by financial institutions are instrumental in providing funding opportunities, creating an environment where SMEs can thrive economically. Strategic policies that address the specific financial needs of startups contribute to the overall economic sustainability of SMEs in Southeast Nigeria. Thus, contribution of cash-infusion as startup

capital is a critical determinant of economic sustainability for SMEs in Southeast Nigeria. Adequate financial support, coupled with improved access to finance and supportive policy frameworks, enhances the capacity of businesses to establish themselves, grow, and navigate the complex economic landscape, ultimately contributing to the economic sustainability of SMEs in the region.

#### **2.4 knowledge transfer / skill acquisition within the apprenticeship system and human capital sustainability of the SMEs in southeast, Nigeria.**

The effectiveness of knowledge transfer and skill acquisition within the apprenticeship system is a critical factor in ensuring the human capital sustainability of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) in Southeast Nigeria. The apprenticeship system, deeply rooted in the Igbo cultural tradition, serves as a comprehensive framework for imparting not only technical skills but also cultural values and business acumen. Eze, Muogbo&Obananya (2021), Ezenwakwelu, Egbosionu, Ezezue&Okwo (2019) highlight the holistic nature of skill transfer within the apprenticeship system. The mentor-apprentice relationship is designed not only to convey specific technical expertise but also to instill a broader set of skills, including leadership, decision-making, and problem-solving. This comprehensive approach contributes to the creation of well-rounded entrepreneurs, fostering the sustainability of human capital within SMEs. Ifechukwu-Jacobs (2022), Mbanefo&Eboka (2018), Ugwu&Mbah (2022), explore the long-term implications of the apprenticeship system on human capital development. The sustained transfer of knowledge across generations ensures a continuous pool of skilled individuals, contributing to the sustainability of human capital within SMEs. This continuity becomes a key element in the adaptability and growth of businesses, as successive generations build upon and refine the skills acquired through the apprenticeship system. Okoli&Udogu (2023), and Osita, Akam& Dike (2022). delve into the challenges faced by the apprenticeship system and its adaptability to modern economic landscapes. Understanding and addressing these challenges are essential for ensuring the sustained effectiveness of knowledge transfer. The evolving nature of industries and technologies requires continuous learning and adaptation within the apprenticeship model to maintain the relevance of skills acquired and enhance human capital sustainability. Thus, effectiveness of knowledge transfer and skill acquisition within the apprenticeship system is instrumental in ensuring the human capital sustainability of SMEs in Southeast Nigeria. The holistic approach to skill development, coupled with the long-term continuity of knowledge transfer, positions the apprenticeship system as a cornerstone for building and sustaining a skilled workforce, contributing to the economic and cultural vibrancy of the region.

#### **3.0 Methodology**

The study adopted survey research design. The population of the study was 10114 SMEs in Southeast Nigeria. Sample size of 370 respondents was used, which was determined using Freund and William's statistical formula. The study adopted stratified sampling technique to reach out to different strata using a structured questionnaire. The research instrument was validated using face and content validity. Cronbach's Alpha Statistic was used to test the reliability of the instrument, of which the results were all above 70%. The primary data collected were collated and tested using regression analysis at 5% level of significance with the aid of SPSS version 23.

#### 4.0 Data Analysis

##### 4.1 Testing of Hypothesis One

**Ha<sub>1</sub>:** Igbo traditional business culture significantly fosters sociocultural sustainability of SMEs through traditional crafts & trades in Southeast, Nigeria.

##### Model Summary for Hypothesis One

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.994 <sup>a</sup>	.988	.988	.11904

a. Predictors: (Constant), Igbo Traditional Business Culture

##### ANOVA for Hypothesis One

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	415.877	1	415.877	29350.410	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	5.115	361	.014		
	Total	420.992	362			

a. Dependent Variable: Sociocultural Sustainability through Traditional Crafts and Trades

b. Predictors: (Constant), Igbo Traditional Business Culture

##### Coefficients for Hypothesis One

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-.041	.023		-1.759	.079
	Igbo Traditional Business Culture	1.008	.006	.994	171.320	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Sociocultural Sustainability through Traditional Crafts and Trades

##### 4.2 Testing of Hypothesis Two

**Ha<sub>2</sub>:** Intergenerational business mentoring of the Igbo Apprenticeship Business Model significantly foster Startups incubation in Southeast, Nigeria.

##### Model Summary for Hypothesis Two

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.993 <sup>a</sup>	.987	.987	.12241

a. Predictors: (Constant), Intergenerational Business Mentoring

**ANOVA for Hypothesis Two**

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	401.943	1	401.943	26825.560	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	5.409	361	.015		
	Total	407.352	362			

a. Dependent Variable: Startups Incubation

b. Predictors: (Constant), Intergenerational Business Mentoring

**Coefficients for Hypothesis Two**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-.004	.024		-.178	.859
	Intergenerational Business Mentoring	1.001	.006	.993	163.785	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Startups Incubation

**4.3 Testing of Hypothesis Three**

**Ha<sub>3</sub>:** Cash-infusion as startup capital significantly contribute to economic sustainability of SMEs in southeast, Nigeria.

**Model Summary for Hypothesis Three**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.998 <sup>a</sup>	.997	.997	.06130

a. Predictors: (Constant), Cash Infusion as Startup Capital to the Apprentices

**ANOVA for Hypothesis Three**

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	414.952	1	414.952	110441.219	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	1.356	361	.004		
	Total	416.308	362			

a. Dependent Variable: Economic Sustainability of SMEs

b. Predictors: (Constant), Cash Infusion as Startup Capital to the Apprentices

**Coefficients for Hypothesis Three**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-.010	.012		-.866	.387
	Cash Infusion as Startup Capital to the Apprentices	1.002	.003	.998	332.327	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Economic Sustainability of SMEs

**4.4 Testing of Hypothesis Four**

**Ha<sub>4</sub>:** Knowledge transfer / skill acquisition within the apprenticeship system significantly enhance human capital sustainability of the SMEs in southeast, Nigeria.

**Model Summary for Hypothesis Four**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.998 <sup>a</sup>	.997	.997	.06174

a. Predictors: (Constant), Knowledge Transfer/ Skill Acquisition

ANOVA for Hypothesis Four

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	414.932	1	414.932	108864.418	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	1.376	361	.004		
	Total	416.308	362			

a. Dependent Variable: Human Capital Sustainability of SMEs

b. Predictors: (Constant), Knowledge Transfer/ Skill Acquisition

**Coefficients for Hypothesis Four**

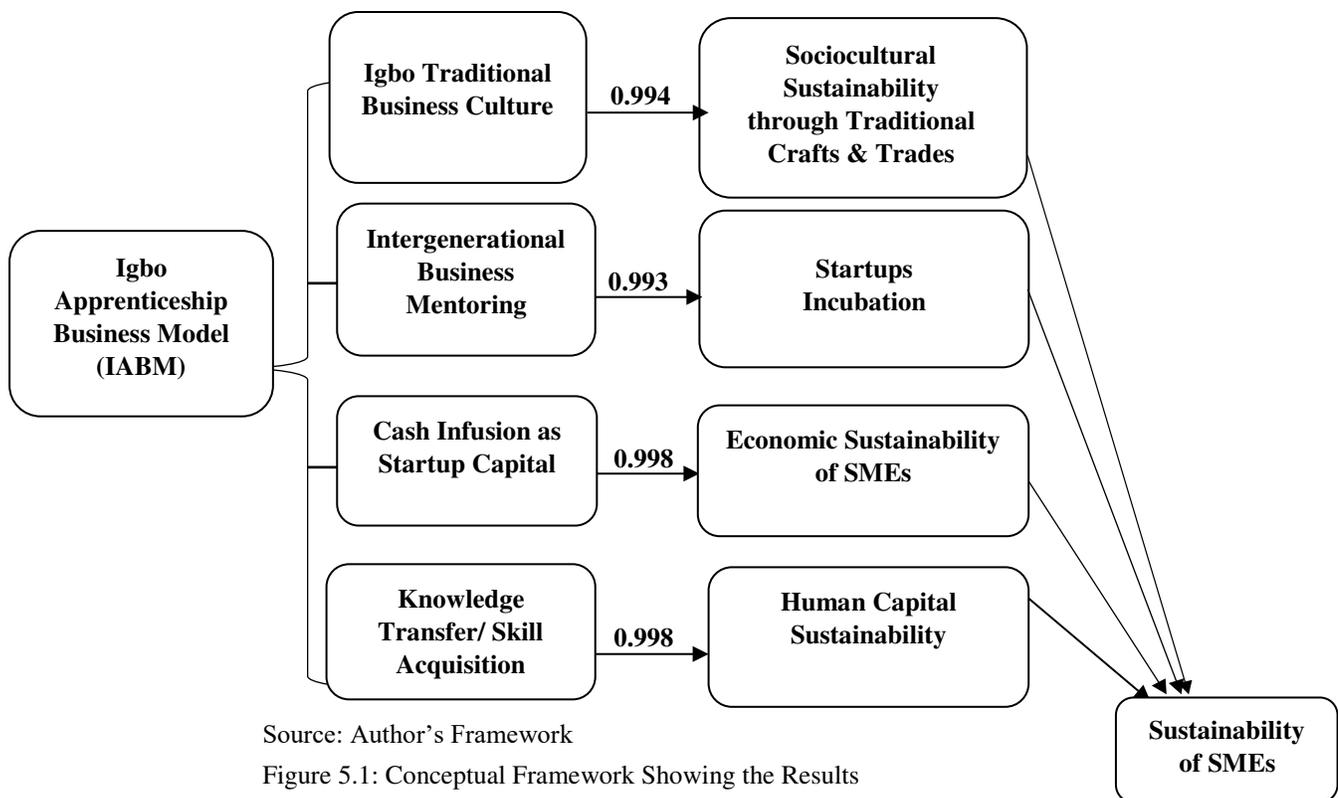
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-.037	.012		-3.080	.002
	Knowledge Transfer/ Skill Acquisition	1.008	.003	.998	329.946	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Human Capital Sustainability of SMEs

## 5.0 Results and Discussion

### 5.1 Results/ Implications

Igbo traditional business culture positively and significantly fostered sociocultural sustainability of SMEs through traditional crafts & trades in Southeast, Nigeria, ( $\beta = 0.994$ ); ( $p < 0.05$ ), which implied that that business culture of Ndigbo plays an important role in fostering sociocultural sustainability through traditional crafts and trades. Intergenerational business mentoring of the Igbo Apprenticeship Business Model had a positive and significant effect on Startups incubation in Southeast, Nigeria, ( $\beta = 0.993$ ); ( $p < 0.05$ ), which implied that business mentoring enhances startup incubation. Cash-infusion as startup capital significantly contribute to economic sustainability of SMEs in southeast, Nigeria, ( $\beta = 0.998$ ); ( $p < 0.05$ ), which implied that mentors' provision of startup capital plays a crucial role in economic sustainability of the SMEs. Knowledge transfer/ skill acquisition within the apprenticeship system significantly enhance human capital sustainability of the SMEs in southeast, Nigeria, ( $\beta = 0.998$ ); ( $p < 0.05$ ), which implied that acquiring of skills and business knowledge enhance human capital development and sustenance.



## 5.2 Discussion

### 5.2.1 Igbo traditional business culture and sociocultural sustainability of SMEs through traditional crafts & trades in Southeast, Nigeria

The first objective examined the effects of Igbo traditional business culture in fostering sociocultural sustainability of SMEs through traditional crafts & trades in Southeast, Nigeria, and found that Igbo tradition and culture of doing business significantly influence SMEs in southeast, Nigeria. The findings indicated that the Igbo Apprenticeship Business Model has played a pivotal role in preserving and fostering traditional trades and crafts in Southeast Nigeria. The findings also revealed that the model has served as a cultural institution that transmits specialized knowledge, skills, and cultural values from one generation to the next. Thus, apprenticeships have become integral to the survival of traditional crafts, such as tailoring, weaving and trading, which might have otherwise declined. Furthermore, this cultural significance extends beyond the economic realm, as it is deeply intertwined with the identity and heritage of the Igbo people. With respect to its historical influence, the Igbo Apprenticeship Business Model has a rich historical legacy dating back some centuries. It has been an integral part of Igbo society, with roots that predate colonial times. This historical influence underscores the enduring nature of the apprenticeship system.

Also, in respect of its cultural significance, this apprenticeship model has shown that it is not merely an economic practice but a cultural institution. It embodies and reinforces Igbo cultural values, traditions, and customs. It serves as a platform for the transmission of cultural knowledge from one generation to the next. The study found that one of the primary roles of this model is the preservation and promotion of traditional trades and crafts. These include “nkanauzu” (traditional science and technology) such as: Shoemaking, Akwete cloth making (woven textile production), blacksmithing, pottery, cobra, weaving, and indigenous artwork, which are essential components of Igbo culture. Therefore, it is worthy of note here, and no gainsaying that the apprenticeship system is closely intertwined with the cultural identity of the Igbo people and as such serves as a living testament to the resilience of cultural practices in the face of modernization and globalization. It is therefore safe to state that the historical and cultural influence of the Igbo Apprenticeship Business Model in fostering traditional trades and crafts in Southeast Nigeria is profound. Indeed, it has been a driving force in preserving cultural heritage, promoting economic sustainability, and reinforcing the cultural identity of the Igbo community. These current findings are also in line with the findings of previous researchers such as: Alike &Orjiako-Umunze (2019), Antwi& Obeng (2021), Kanu (2019), Ezeajughu (2021), Igwe, Ochinanwata&Emeordi (2023), Igwe (2021), Igwe, Madichie&Amoncar (2020), Igwe, Newbery, Amoncar, White, &Madichie (2018), Kanu, I. A. (2022).

For instance, the study of Igwe, Ochinanwata&Emeordi (2023) which focused on the indigenous Igbo people of Nigeria, found that Ndigbo are renowned for effectivelycreating transgenerational entrepreneurial legacies and indigenous business clusters across West Africa and are also known for their cultural and traditional devotion and belief in *Chi* or *Chukwu* (God), *etc.* Thus, the majority of Igbo personal names contain the word ‘Chi’. Again, as mentioned before, Igbo cultural values are based on the spiritual maxims of ‘*Onyeaghananwanneya*’ (do not leave your brother behind), “*Onyebiriibeyabiri*” (live and let live) and “*Akuruno*” (make wealth reach home). Igwe, Ochinanwata&Emeordi (2023) posit that these features make Ndigbo a unique population. Also, Alike &Orjiako-Umunze (2019) found that the high success rate of Igbo apprentice-turned entrepreneurs and increasing attachment of these entrepreneurs are linked to their culture. Their study also found that while apprenticeship did have a significant effect on pre-founding activities when the enterprise was kicking-off, it is worthy of mention that social capital became important when the business had been established and it is geared towards training novices in specific craft or trade skills while socializing them to join the social and cultural elite represented by master craftsmen. This is in

line with the findings of the current study. The study of Antwi& Obeng (2021) also found that business activities of the transnational Nigerian immigrant-entrepreneurs in Ghana are entrenched in their own 'sociocultural heritage'. This finding was based in multiple logics. First is the belief of transnational commercial activity that is ethnologically and culturally inspired. Secondly, the enterprises are inseparably entrenched in informality and deeply rely on informal power brokerage system. Ezeajughu (2021) also found that the performance of Ndigbo with respect to their entrepreneurial activities is accentuated by their economic cultural beliefs and values, which equally, are highly existential in their ethnology and belief system. The findings of Igwe (2021) equally revealed that Igbo indigenous people of southeast Nigeria have motives for entrepreneurship, as well as exhibit modern entrepreneurial behaviours such as wealth-seeking, risk-taking, and entrepreneurial learning. Apart from institutional factors, community, family and culture are the most important three determinants of forces that influence Indigenous entrepreneurial behaviour.

The findings of Igwe, Madichie&Amoncar (2020) is also in tandem and in *paripassu* with the findings of the current study. The study found a culture that places high emphasis on male child and particularly the first son and how sons are preferred and prepared to succeed the businesses. In the third theme, the study found that there is a culture of familiness, trust and cohesion among extended families. Igbo family unit in Igboland provides an entrepreneurial leadership platform, which influences youths through role models, providing mastery experiences, and socialization and then, the extended family provides a safe environment for creativity, risk taking, and innovation. Lastly, Nwanegbo-Ben & Ozoigbo (2021) also found that in Nigeria, Igbo entrepreneurship is an embodiment of the principle of Igbo cosmology. This principle, according to their finding, is called the "Cubana Principle". The principle is a variant of the Igbo traditional entrepreneurial life that derived its name from a procedure applied by a popular businessman – Obi Cubana (Obinna Iyiegbu) in giving assistance to youths in entrepreneurship training in their various vocations to showcase the reach traditional belief and cultural heritage of *onyeaghalanwanneya*. All of these studies are in *pari passu* with the findings of the current study and therefore testament to the fact that there is a significant influence that culture has on the traditional Igbo Business School otherwise known as *igbaboi*.

### **5.2.2 Intergenerational business mentoring of the Igbo Apprenticeship Business Model and Startups incubation in Southeast, Nigeria**

The second objective investigated the influence of intergenerational business mentoring of the Igbo Apprenticeship Business Model on Startups incubation in Southeast, Nigeria, and found that intergenerational business mentoring of the Igbo Apprenticeship Business Model has a significant positive contribution on Startups incubation in Southeast, Nigeria. The study found that intergenerational business mentoring within the Igbo Apprenticeship Business Model has been instrumental in sustaining the Igbo cultural mode of conducting business, facilitating the seamless transfer of cultural values, ethics, and practices from older generations to younger ones. This mentoring has not only preserved traditional business methods but has also adapted them to contemporary market demands. It reinforces the communal nature of Igbo society and demonstrates how cultural values can coexist with modern business practices. Intergenerational business mentoring serves as a key mechanism for the preservation of Igbo cultural practices related to business. It ensures that traditional knowledge and methods are passed down from one generation to the next. The study also found that mentoring is central to the transfer of specialized knowledge and skills related to Igbo business practices. Experienced master craftsmen pass on their expertise to young apprentices, ensuring the continuity of traditional methods. Also, the mentoring process instills cultural values and ethics in apprentices. These values include hard work, integrity, respect for elders, and a strong sense of community. Mentors serve as role models in upholding these values. Furthermore, intergenerational mentoring plays a vital role in sustaining traditional trades and crafts. Without this mentorship, many of these skills and

professions could face extinction in the face of modernization and globalization. The mentor-apprentice relationship fosters a sense of community cohesion. It creates a bond between generations and encourages mutual support among community members. This cohesion is essential for the sustainability of cultural modes of conducting business. While rooted in tradition, intergenerational business mentoring has shown adaptability to modern times. It allows for the integration of modern business practices and technologies while preserving the core cultural aspects of Igbo business. Traditional modes of conducting business, often passed down through mentoring, contribute to the economic sustainability of the community. The continuation of these practices ensures livelihoods for many families. Additionally, intergenerational mentoring reinforces the cultural identity of the Igbo people. It demonstrates the resilience of cultural practices in the face of external influences and globalization. The success and sustainability of the Igbo Apprenticeship Business Model itself rely heavily on intergenerational mentoring. Without a new generation of apprentices, the model would not endure. Conclusively, the study found that intergenerational business mentoring is a linchpin in the sustainability of the Igbo cultural mode of conducting business, ensuring the transmission of knowledge, values, and skills critical to the preservation of traditional practices. This mentoring process fosters continuity, community cohesion, and economic sustainability, contributing to the endurance of Igbo cultural modes of conducting business. These findings are in tandem with the studies of Agbionu, Emeka & Ogbemudia (2018), Brimah, Rabi, Bamidele & Sheu (2020), Igwe, Madichie & Amoncar (2020), Igwe, Newbery, Amoncar, White, & Madichie (2018), Osita, Akam & Dike (2022), Agbionu, Emejulu & Egolum (2015), Jaques, Avila & Miralles (2014), Uma, Onwusogbolu and Obidike, (2015) whose studies were hinged on apprentice's mentoring and are all tilting in the same direction that intergenerational business mentoring has become part of Igbo culture of raising the young ones in trades, crafts and vocations.

**5.2.3 Cash-infusion as a means of startup capital and economic sustainability of SMEs in southeast, Nigeria.** The third objective assessed the influence of cash-infusion as startup capital provided to the mentees by their mentors on economic sustainability of SMEs in southeast, Nigeria and found that cash-infusion as startup capital provided to the mentees by their mentors has a significant positive influence on the economic sustainability of SMEs in southeast, Nigeria. The study found that cash-infusion provided to mentees by their mentors significantly influences the economic sustainability of SMEs and that startup capital empowers new business owners to invest in infrastructure (shops, equipment, goods, etc.) and innovation, thus enhancing their competitiveness. The availability of capital reduces financial constraints, enabling SMEs to weather economic challenges and seize growth opportunities. The provision of cash-infusion as startup capital addresses one of the most significant challenges faced by aspiring entrepreneurs—the lack of initial capital. This capital injection empowers mentees to establish and grow their businesses. Cash-infusion ensures that SMEs have a solid financial foundation to develop their business ideas and allows for the purchase of necessary equipment, materials, and inventory, increasing the likelihood of business viability. Again, start-up capital enables SMEs to enter the market with confidence and expand their operations. It provides resources to explore new markets, invest in marketing, and scale up production. Adequate startup capital helps mitigate the financial risks associated with starting a business and provides a cushion for unexpected expenses, reducing the likelihood of business failure. The study found that SMEs are significant contributors to job creation in Southeast Nigeria and the provision of startup capital supports the growth of these enterprises, leading to more employment opportunities within the community. Successful SMEs contribute to local and regional economic growth. They generate income, pay taxes, and stimulate economic activity in the areas where they operate, ultimately contributing to the economic sustainability of the region. Adequate startup capital positions SMEs to compete in the competitive market. It allows them to adopt modern technologies, improve product quality, and meet international standards, enhancing their global competitiveness. Successful SMEs, nurtured through cash-infusion, often engage in community development initiatives. They

support local schools, infrastructure projects, and other community needs, further fostering economic sustainability.

Furthermore, the study revealed that the provision of startup capital ensures that the Igbo Apprenticeship Business Model remains sustainable and equally encourages new apprentices to enter the system, as they see the potential for financial support and business success. For mentors, providing startup capital is an investment. They expect mentees to succeed and eventually become established business owners. This creates a cycle of investment and economic growth within the community. As a final note therefore, cash-infusion as startup capital has a profound influence on the economic sustainability of SMEs in Southeast Nigeria. This is because, it addresses financial barriers, fosters business viability, stimulates economic growth, and contributes to community development. This financial support mechanism is integral to the success of the Igbo Apprenticeship Business Model and the economic sustainability of the region. This findings are on all fours with the findings of Long and Lei (2020), Anigbogu, Onwuteaka&Okoli (2019), Eneh, Chris-Nnamchi&Otiji (2020), Farayibi (2021), Nwanna& Osakwe (2021), Onyima, Nzewi&Chiekezie (2018), Orogbu, Onyeizugbe, &Onuzulike-Chukwuemeka (2021), Ugwu, Njeze&Oluka (2023). All of these studies tilted towards one direction which is the fact that provision of startup capital is vital to the economic sustainability of SMEs in the southeast Nigeria.

#### **5.2.4 Knowledge transfer / skill acquisition within the apprenticeship system and human capital sustainability of the SMEs in southeast, Nigeria.**

The fourth objective analyzed the effectiveness of knowledge transfer / skill acquisition within the apprenticeship system in equipping the apprentices with the requisite tools to ensure human capital sustainability of the SME's necessary to adapt to modern business practices/ changing market demands in southeast, Nigeria. The findings demonstrate that knowledge transfer and skill acquisition within the apprenticeship system significantly equip apprentices with the requisite tools for ensuring human capital sustainability of SMEs. Apprentices gain practical skills, business acumen, and industry-specific knowledge that enhance their adaptability to modern business practices and changing market demands. This effective transfer of knowledge contributes to the resilience and longevity of SMEs, positioning them to thrive in dynamic business environments.

Knowledge transfer and skill acquisition are at the core of the apprenticeship model. Apprentices undergo continuous learning, gaining expertise in traditional trades and crafts while also adapting to modern techniques. This ensures that human capital remains dynamic and responsive to evolving market needs. The apprenticeship system equips SME owners with the ability to adapt to market trends. As they acquire new skills and knowledge, they can pivot their businesses to meet changing consumer demands, ensuring the sustainability of their enterprises. The transfer of knowledge encourages innovation within SMEs. Apprentices who learn from experienced mentors often bring fresh perspectives and ideas to traditional businesses, fostering modernization and competitiveness.

The apprenticeship model ensures that traditional expertise is preserved. This expertise is valuable, particularly for SMEs specializing in traditional crafts, as it sets them apart in the market and appeals to consumers looking for authentic products. Knowledge transfer secures the continuity of human capital within the apprenticeship model. As experienced craftsmen pass on their skills, they create a new generation of skilled workers who can eventually take over the business. The combination of traditional skills and modern knowledge creates skills complementarity within SMEs. This versatility allows them to diversify their product or service offerings, increasing their sustainability. SMEs with well-trained human capital have a competitive advantage. They can provide high-quality products or services, leading to customer loyalty and long-term

sustainability. The knowledge transfer process fosters a sense of community. It strengthens the bonds between mentors and apprentices and creates a supportive network that enhances the sustainability of SMEs. Skill acquisition within the apprenticeship model not only prepares individuals for traditional trades but also equips them with entrepreneurial skills. This dual focus enables apprentices to become successful business owners. SMEs with a strong foundation in traditional knowledge and modern skills are more resilient in the face of economic and market changes. They can adapt to challenges and remain sustainable.

Conclusively therefore, knowledge transfer and skill acquisition are instrumental in ensuring the human capital sustainability of SMEs within the Igbo Apprenticeship Business Model. These processes foster adaptability, innovation, and competitiveness, all of which are essential for SMEs to thrive in a dynamic business environment. Human capital continuity and the preservation of traditional expertise are key outcomes of this effective knowledge transfer, contributing to the overall sustainability of SMEs in Southeast Nigeria. These findings are on all fours with the findings of Eze, Muogbo&Obananya (2021), Ezenwakwelu, Egbosionu&Okwo (2019), Ifechukwu-Jacobs (2022), Mbanefo&Eboka (2018), Ugwu&Mbah (2022), Okoli&Udogu (2023), and Osita, Akam&Dike (2022), Nnonyelu, &Onyeizugbe (2020). These studies as well as this current study found knowledge transfer / skill acquisition within the apprenticeship system as veritable tools in equipping the apprentices with the requisite business tools to ensure human capital sustainability of the SME's necessary to adapt to modern business practices/ changing market demands in southeast, Nigeria.

## **6.0 Conclusion and Recommendations**

### **6.1 Conclusion**

In the dynamic landscape of Southeast Nigeria, the Igbo Apprenticeship Business Model emerges as a resilient and culturally rich system that significantly influences the sustainability of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs). This study delved into various facets of this model, shedding light on its historical and contemporary significance, its impact on SME sustainability, and the challenges it faces in the modern world. The Traditional Business Model, deeply rooted in the historical and cultural fabric of the Igbos in Southeast Nigeria, has proven to be a stronghold for preserving traditional trades and crafts. Through mentorship and knowledge transfer, it has acted as a custodian of indigenous practices, ensuring their continuity across generations. One of its remarkable strengths lies in intergenerational business mentoring. This mentorship system not only sustains the model itself but also imparts vital skills, values, and cultural heritage to aspiring entrepreneurs, thus contributing to the perpetuation of Igbo business traditions. The provision of startup capital by mentors upon graduation emerges as a crucial catalyst for the economic sustainability of SMEs. It jumpstarts these businesses, allowing them to weather initial challenges and thrive in a competitive market. Effective knowledge transfer and skill acquisition mechanisms embedded within the apprenticeship system foster human capital sustainability. Apprentices gain the expertise required to adapt to modern business practices and respond to evolving market dynamics. Community support and collaboration form the bedrock of socially responsible SMEs within this model. The collaborative spirit fosters an environment where businesses can thrive sustainably, while the broader community benefits from economic growth and cultural preservation. However, the model faces contemporary challenges that demand attention. The lack of institutional support presents hurdles for the model's overall sustainability. The changing aspirations of the younger generation, marked by an intergenerational shift in career paths, pose challenges for the succession of Igbo SMEs and their continuity within the model. Additionally, the deliberate denial by /refusal of some

masters to honour their own part of the obligation of the social contract of providing startup capital to the apprentices upon graduation significantly has a negative effect on the sustainability of the startups. Conclusively, the Igbo Apprenticeship Business Model stands as a cultural treasure and an engine of economic growth. It has evolved over centuries, adapting to changing times while remaining rooted in tradition. To ensure its continued relevance and the sustainability of SMEs within its framework, it is imperative for stakeholders, including policymakers, community leaders, and business owners, to address these challenges. Addressing these challenges by way of nipping them in the bud, will ensure not only the sustainability of the SMEs but also more attractive so that youths can still find the model appealing enough to continue to pass down the tenets of the traditional business model down the ladder, from generation to generation. Thus, a harmonious blend of cultural preservation and adaptation to modern demands can pave the way for a future where the Igbo Apprenticeship Business Model continues to empower entrepreneurs, preserve cultural heritage, and contribute to the economic vibrancy of Southeast Nigeria. It is a model that holds the potential to thrive in a dynamic global landscape while remaining deeply connected to its roots.

## 6.2 Recommendations

In line with the findings, the following recommendations were made:

- 6.2.1 Governments should begin to encourage initiatives that actively preserve and promote traditional crafts and trades in the region, providing incentives and recognition for artisans and craftsmen. They should also implement sociocultural education programmes in schools to ensure younger generations appreciate and understand the social, historical and cultural significance of these traditional trades and business customs and practices.
- 6.2.2 State governments, local governments and already established SMEs should develop structured intergenerational mentoring programs within the model, encouraging experienced business owners to pass on their knowledge and values to the younger generation. There should also be offer of incentives and recognitions for mentors to actively engage in intergenerational mentoring, ensuring the sustainability of Igbo business traditions.
- 6.2.3 Government should provide financial literacy training to mentors and mentees to ensure that startup capital is used effectively and that mentees understand the financial aspects of running a business. They should also Implement systems to monitor the use of startup capital.
- 6.2.4 SMEs and government must collaborate to develop structured training modules within the apprenticeship system to ensure that apprentices acquire the necessary skills and ensure required knowledge transfer to adapt to modern business practices. They should also Introduce certification and recognition for apprentices who complete their training successfully, enhancing their marketability.

## Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

## ORCID iDs

1. Chris Chukwuebuka Emeali: <https://orcid.org/0009-0003-7253-823X>
2. Emmanuel Kalu Agbaeze: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8952-7612>

3. Bethel Udoka Oganezi: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7312-4683>
4. Nicholas I. Achilike: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9837-5905>

## References

1. Adamu, M. (1979). *The Delivery of Slaves from the Central Sudan to the Bight of Benin in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries*. In: Gemery, H. A.; Hogendorn, Jan S. (1979). *The Uncommon Market: Essays in the Economic History of the Atlantic Slave Trade*. New York: Academic Press, 163-180.
2. Adekunle, S. (2023). *Why Igbo Apprenticeship is world's largest business incubator system-Don. Punchng News online of 1<sup>st</sup> September, 2023.*
3. Adeola, O. (2021). *Indigenous African Enterprise: The Igbo Traditional Business School (I-TBS)*. *Advanced Series in Management*. Vol. 26, pp.3-12. Emerald Group Publishing..
4. Adeola, O. (2023). *Decolonising Africa's Business Practices: Pro-Indigenous Marketing Pathways to a Paradigm Shift. The 15<sup>th</sup> Inaugural Lecture of the Lagos Business School, Pan Atlantic University, Lagos, held on 1<sup>st</sup> of September, 2023.*
5. Agbionu, C. U., Emejulu, G. & Egolum, P. C. (2015). *Mentorship and business performance among Igbo entrepreneurs in Nigeria*. *Worldwide Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Development*, 1(5); 40 – 45.
6. Agbionu, U. C., Emeka, J. O. & Ogbemudia, B. I. (2018). *Apprenticeship orientation and performance of micro-business in Anambra State*. *Worldwide Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Development*, 4(12); 26 – 33.
7. Alike, M. & Orjiokor-Umuze, I. (2019). *Social-economic philosophy of contemporary Igbo apprenticeship system*. *Nnadiesube Journal of Philosophy*, 13(1); 1 – 14.
8. Amaechi, E., Iwara, I. O., Njoku, P. O., Raselekoane, R., & Thobejane, T. D. (2021). *The Igbo traditional business school and success of IGBO-run small and medium size enterprises in diaspora: evidence from limpopo province, South Africa*. *Academy of Entrepreneurship Journal*, 27(6), 1- 18.
9. Anigbogu, T. U., Onwueateaka, I. C. & Okoli, I. M. (2019). *The Igbo man perspective of apprenticeship and entrepreneurial development in Southeast Nigeria: Implication to economic growth*. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Applied Science (IJRIAS)*, 4(10); 90 – 99.
10. Anoke, A. F., Osita, F. C., Okafor, J. N. & Agagbo, O. C. (2022). *Business mentoring as a strategy for entrepreneurship growth in Abia State, Nigeria*. *Journal of Business and Management (IOSR-JEM)*, 23(27); 60 – 67.
11. Antwi, B. T. & Obeng, B.A. (2021). *Socio and ethno-cultural embeddedness of transnational Nigerian immigrant entrepreneurs in Ghana*. *CMS*9, 55.
12. Brimah, B. A., Rabiu, O., Bamidele, A. G. & Shay, M. O. (2020). *Fostering entrepreneurial mentoring culture for sustainable leadership performance in Nigeria: Evidence from selected SMEs in Ilorin Metropolis*. *Business Ethics and Leadership Journal*, 4(3); 73 – 80.
13. Ejo-Orusa, H. & Mpi, D. L. (2019). *Reinventing the "Nwaboi" apprenticeship system: A platform for entrepreneurship promotion in Nigeria*. *International Journal of Advanced research in Management and Social Sciences*, 8(9); 98 – 130.
14. Ekesiobi, C., Kalu, U. D. & Nwokolo, C. (2018). *"Industrial clusters and industrialisation in Nigeria: A micro-assessment of the Nnewi Automotive Component Industrial Cluster, Anambra State"*. *The Nigerian Journal of Economic and Social Studies*, 60(3): 126–56.
15. Eneh, N. C. J., Chris-Nnamchi, J. N. & Otiji, C. (2020). *The effectiveness of the igbo apprenticeship system in achieving sustainable business education. A conference proceeding titled: Exploring multi-sectoral responses to a global economy in recession at Enugu.*

16. Eze, S. U., Muogbo, U. S. &Obananya, C. G. (2021). *Business mentoring and entrepreneurship development in Anambra State, Nigeria. Journal of Business and Management (IOSR-JBM). 23 (10), 24-31.*
17. Ezeajughu M. C. (2021). *The Igbo apprenticeship system: Nigeria's gateway to world business dominance. International Journal of Research Culture Society. 5 (3), 46-50.*
18. Ezenwakwelu, C., Egbosionu, N., Ezezie, B. &Okwo, H. (2019). *Apprenticeship training effects on entrepreneurship development in developing economies. Academy of Entrepreneurship Journal, 25(1); 1 – 21.*
19. Farayibi, A. O. (2021). *Innovative informal sector financing: Empirical evidence from the capital sharing model of Igbo Apprenticeship System in Nigeria. DBN Journal of Economics & Sustainable Growth. 4(1).*
20. Ifechukwu-Jacobs, C. J. (2022). *Effect of Igbo Trade Apprenticeship System on unemployment reduction in Onitsha. International Journal of Business Systems and Economics. 13 (7), 96-107.*
21. Igwe, P. A. (2021) *Cross-cultural tribes, Community and Indigenous entrepreneurship. In: The International Dimension of Entrepreneurial Decision-Making, Cultures, Contexts, and Behaviors (ed.) Caputo, A., Pellegrini, M., Dabić, M., & Dana, L-P. (2021). Springer Nature Switzerland AG. www.springer.com*
22. Igwe, P. A., Madichie, N. O. &Amoncar, N. (2020). *Transgenerational business legacies and intergenerational succession among the Igbos (Nigeria), Small Enterprise Research. Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.*
23. Igwe, P. A., Ochinanwata, C. &Emeordi, R. (2023). *Religion and spiritual influence on Igbo entrepreneurial behaviour and persistence. Journal of Small Business & Entrepreneurship. 1-24.*
24. Igwe, P. A., Onjewu, A-K., &Nwibo, S. U. (2018). *Entrepreneurship and SMEs' Productivity Challenges in the Sub-Saharan Africa. In L-P. Dana, V. Ratten, & B. Q. Honyenuga (Eds.), African Entrepreneurship - Challenges and Opportunities for Doing Business (1 ed., pp. 189-221). Palgrave.*
25. Igwe, P. A., Newbery, R., Amoncar, N., White, G. R. T. &Madichie, N.O. (2018). *Keeping it in the family: Exploring Igbo ethic entrepreneurial behaviour in Nigeria. International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behaviour and Research.*
26. Iwara, I. O., Amaechi, K. E. &Netshandama, V. (2019). *The Igba-boi apprenticeship approach: Arsenal behind growing success of Igbo entrepreneurship in Nigeria. Ubuntu: journal of Conflict and Social Transformation, 7(11); 1 – 12.*
27. Jaques, T. M. N., Avila, N. R., Miralles, I. T. (2014). *Mentoring in the acquisition of professional skills through practices in companies by degree students. Multidisciplinary Journal of Education, Social and Technological Sciences, 1(2); 124 – 141.*
28. Kanu, I. A. (2019). *Igbwebuikeconomics: The Igbo apprenticeship system for wealth creation. An African Journal of Arts and Humanities 5(4); 56 – 70.*
29. Kanu, I. A. (2022). *"Igba boy": An Igbo indigenous structure for community development and social welfare. Journal of innovation research & advanced studies. 18(2), 31-42.*
30. Mbanefo, M. C. &Eboka, O. C. (2018). *Acquisition of innovative and entrepreneurial skills in basic science education for job creation in Nigeria. Science Education International Journal, 28(3); 207 – 213.*
31. Neuwirth, R. (2018). *Igbo apprenticeship system that governs AlabaInternational Market is the largest business incubator platform in the world. Ted talk, TedGlobal. Available online at: www.tekedia.com*
32. Nnonyelu, A. N. &Onyeizugbe, C. U. (2020). *Reimagining Igbo apprenticeship: Bringing it up to speed with contemporary realities. European Journal of Business and Management Research, 5(3); 1 – 8.*
33. Nwanegbo-Ben, J. &Ozoigbo, B. I. (2021). *Entrepreneurship and the "Cubana Principle" As the Basis of Igbo Cosmology. Journal of Humanities and Social Policy. 7(1), 36-40. www.iiardpub.org*

34. Nwanna, I. O. & Osakwe, C. I. (2021). *Apprenticeship, venture capital and mentorship as a model of financing small and medium enterprises (SMES)*. *International Journal of Business Management and Economic Review*, 4(2), 31-42.
35. Obunike, C. L. (2016). *Induction strategy of Igbo entrepreneurship and micro-business success: A study of household equipment line, Main Market Onitsha, Nigeria*. *Acta Universpaientie Economics and Business*, (4)1; 43 – 65.
36. Ohadike, D. C. (1998). " 'When slaves left, owners wept': Entrepreneurs and emancipation among the Igbo people". *Slavery & Abolition*, 19 (2): 189–207.
37. Okafor, C. A., Ekoja, G. O., & Agbaeze, E. K. (2023). *Strategic succession planning and sustainability of registered family owned business in Southeast, Nigeria*. *The Seybold Reports*, 18(08), 1577 – 1597.
38. Okoli, I. A. & Udogu, P. C. (2023). *Appreciation of the Igbo apprenticeship system (Imu-Ahia) as a microcosm of soft skills*. *Nnadiesube Journal of Education in Africa (NJEA)*, 8(2), 92-99.
39. Onyima, J. K. C., Nzewi, H. N. & Chikezie, O. M. (2018). *Effects of apprenticeship and social capital on new business creation process of immigrant entrepreneurs*. *Review of Public Administration and Management*, 2(3); 1 – 11.
40. Orogbu, L. O., Onyeizugbe, C. U. & Onuzulike-Chukwuemeka, N. F. (2021). *Apprenticeship and Entrepreneurship Development among Igbo Traders in Nigeria*. *International Journal of Trend in Scientific Research and Development (IJTSRD)*, 5 (6), 999-1007.
41. Osita, F. C., Akam, G. U. & Dike, G. N. (2022). *Igbo Model of Business Mentoring: A Gateway to Sustaining Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) In Anambra State, Nigeria*. *Journal of Economics, Finance and Management Studies*, 5(10): 2847-2854.
42. Ugwu, F. I. & Mbah, P. C. (2022). *An assessment of Igbo apprenticeship schemes on development of SMEs in Enugu state*. *Advance Journal of Business & Entrepreneurship Development*, 6(4); 52-71.
43. Ugwu, F. I., Njeze, V. A., & Oluke, U. K. (2023). *An examination of the influence of the igbo apprenticeship schemes on development of SMES in Enugu state*. *Advance Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences*, 6(2). OL. 9, pp 74 – 83.
44. Uma, K. E., Onwusogbolu, R. D. & Obidike, P. C. (2015). *A review of mentoring and entrepreneurship: impact on Nigeria's economic development*. *International Journal of Innovative Science, Engineering and Technology*, 2(9); 41 – 55.