

ENTREPRENEURIAL SKILLS AND FIRM PERFORMANCE: ANALYZING SALES TURNOVER IN WESTERN KENYA

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Abstract

In the context of global pandemics and disasters, entrepreneurial competencies are increasingly crucial for mitigating challenges and enhancing resilience. Entrepreneurial characteristics, such as age, gender, and education, have been recognized as significant factors influencing the performance of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) (Islam et al., 2011). The development of entrepreneurial competencies is essential in fostering economic rejuvenation, as they provide the motivation and skills necessary for venturing into self-employment. The cultivation of an entrepreneurial culture through the sensitization of the general population can lead to the creation of new ventures and innovative products and services that improve people's livelihoods (Omogbolahan, 2012). Entrepreneurial performance, which encompasses firm performance, personal wealth development, and social impact (Muindi et al., 2020), is a crucial aspect of entrepreneurial endeavors. This study focuses on measuring firm performance, specifically in terms of sales turnover, as a key indicator of entrepreneurial success.

Keywords: entrepreneurial competencies, firm performance, small and medium-sized enterprises, resilience, global pandemics, entrepreneurial culture.

1. INTRODUCTION

Global pandemics and various disasters call for development of competencies and skills that enhance mitigation measures and resilience. Islam et al. (2011) alludes that entrepreneurial characteristic such as age, gender and education play an important role in the performance of SMEs. Hence, the need for entrepreneurial competencies cannot be underestimated in the prevailing context. Competencies provide the drive and motivation to venture into self-employment which can thus result in economic rejuvenation. Sensitization of the general population in a country on the importance of entrepreneurship skills to cultivate an entrepreneurial culture can result in the creation of new ventures, innovative products and services which can improve livelihoods of the people (Omogbolahan, 2012). Muindiet al., (2020) defines entrepreneurial performance as firm performance, development of personal wealth and social performance. While Mahmudova, (2018) asserts that the objective of performance indicators is focus on the goal of the firm. The definition of entrepreneurship essentially focuses on the productive aspects of engaging in entrepreneurial activities. In the current study, firm performance is measured as sales turnover.

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Research Article

Small and Medium Enterprises take a central role in the transition to a market economy through innovation, income generation and dynamism in the economy through employment generation. Performance measurement is an important aspect given that it provides enterprises with the necessary information for operation to achieve their goals ([Mahmudova, 2018](#)). In this study performance represents the totality of objectively measurable achievements in sales turnover of an enterprise. According to [Mahmudova, \(2018\)](#) Etymologically, the word “performance” is derived from the Latin “performare” which means to accomplish an activity that has been ordered.

Venturing in entrepreneurship as a career path depends on a number of factors and not limited to the age factor and experience, but the entrepreneurs’ passion, vigour and good managerial skills ([Ikrama, 2019](#)). The demographic profile of entrepreneurs among them, gender, age, designation and education significantly influenced the skills type used in an enterprise ([Kamwiet al., 2018](#)).

Studies have shown that entrepreneurs should pay attention to demographic characteristics, such, age categorization, work experience and educational qualification depending on the type of business activity they are involved in ([Ibidunni et al., 2018](#)). Entrepreneurial factors such as lack of professional training and low level of education were among the factors that inhibited the performance of women entrepreneurs. [Modarresiet al., \(2016a\)](#) supports the argument that education, especially university level, gives the entrepreneur the needed self confidence to overcome the social barriers and hence venture into entrepreneurial activities. On the other hand, [Ganyaupfu, \(2013\)](#) suggests that educational qualifications, among other factors such as work experience, managerial competence, have positive effects on the success of SMEs. This finding demonstrates the importance of education as an input in the performance of an enterprise. According [Serra et al., \(2016\)](#) to entrepreneurial competencies can be developed through either formal training or education. It may be argued that training can complement the educational level of the entrepreneur thus enhancing entrepreneurial competencies vital in firm performance. Formal education has been found by [Serra et al., \(2016\)](#) not to show better short-term performance in firms. This could point to the potential theoretical perspectives derived from formal education resulting in limited experiential learning.

In a study on Differential Effects of Gender Groups on Entrepreneurship in a Developing Country Context*, carried out in western Kenya by [Nassiuma, Masasabi and Nangulu \(2017\)](#) it was found that the majority of respondents had attained a secondary school educational level. In another Exploratory Study of Critical Success Factors for SMEs in Kenya by [Douglas et al. \(2017\)](#) it was found that most respondents had post graduate level and university level of education while the least had college level education. In another study in Kenya, [OgegaNyaboke& Muturi Willy, \(2016\)](#) found that education is an important factor that when well used, has a positive relationship with the performance of SMEs. It has been argued that it is not the gender dimension that innovates hence, it is the intersection of gender and family responsibilities that may hinder the innovative capacity

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of women ([Alsos, Ljunggren and Hytti, 2012](#)) which in turn will affect the performance of an enterprise. [Nguyen, \(2018\)](#) asserts that the influence of education level on the entrepreneurial intention of an entrepreneur still remains doubtful, this suggests the need for further research.

Family challenges and some space for women to act independently were able to venture into entrepreneurship after the age of thirty years ([Agarwal Mukesh, Budheshwar Prasad Singhrau, 2018](#)). This perspective is supported by [Modarresiet al. \(2016\)](#) in a study on women entrepreneurship in Iran, which shows that most of them were married and aged older than 30 years and fifty per cent of them had a university level education. A study undertaken on Factors Affecting Business Success of Small & Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Thailand by [Chittithawornet al., \(2011\)](#) shows that the majority of respondents were aged between 31 to 40 years. In a study conducted in western Kenya, it was found that the majority of the respondents were aged between 28-32 years which suggests that the respondents were in the category of youth ([Nassiuma, Masasabi and Nangulu, 2017](#)). A study undertaken in Nyamira by [OgegaNyaboke& Muturi Willy \(2016\)](#) found that the average age that proved active in operating successful SMEs were in the age category of 25 years to 39 years.

The entrepreneurs experience can be gained through education or training programs ([Ali, 2019](#)) however; experiential learning could be more beneficial to the performance of the entrepreneurial venture. In most cases it could be that those entrepreneurs with a lower level of education could have spent more time in the operation of the enterprise thus gaining through experiential learning as compared to those with a higher educational levels. According to [Ntakobajira, \(2013\)](#) managerial experience is vital in attaining efficiency in the operations of a firm, since it enhances quality decision making that results in higher performance.

[Blackburn, Hart and Wainwright, \(2013\)](#) in a study in the United Kingdom found that over one-third of owner-managers were in their forties. This ownership and responsibility levels could suggest greater validity in the results from a study owing to the potential ability to respond to questions. The business experience of the owner managers plays an important role in the success of an enterprise especially when the owner has a high educational level ([OgegaNyaboke& Muturi Willy, 2016](#)). A study in the UK by [Blackburn et al., \(2013\)](#) reveals that younger business owners were more likely to have a higher education in comparison to the older owner managers. In the developing contexts unemployment could be major driver of the youth venturing into entrepreneurship. In addition, educational systems could also make a major contribution to the entrepreneurial career path among the youth. Apart from the owner-manager characteristics and business style being important in the operation of the firm, the business environment strongly determines firm performance ([Blackburn et al., 2013](#)). The degree of involvement of the business owner in the operation of the enterprise is critical to the success of the firm according to ([Chittithawornet al., 2011](#)) hence owner managed firms are likely to perform better.

The study was anchored on Baumol's Model of sales revenue maximization, ([Koutsoyiannis A., 1979](#)) which he considered to be an alternative to profit maximization. He argued from an ownership/management perspective,

wherein conclusion he observed that managers only ensure an acceptable level of profit in pursuing the goals which benefit them.

The conceptual framework of this study is presented in Figure 1. The study aims at identifying differentials in educational level, gender and age category on sale turnover among entrepreneurs in western Kenya. The analysis was based on Kruskal Wallis test to determine the differentials in the dimensions of the entrepreneur's profile. Arising from the literature review the four hypotheses were developed to guide the study:

Ho1: There is no significant difference in firm performance across different levels of education among entrepreneurs in western Kenya

Ho2: There is no significant difference in firm performance across age categories among entrepreneurs" in western Kenya

Ho3: There is no significant difference in firm performance across ownership and responsibility levels among entrepreneurs in western Kenya

Ho4: There is no significant difference in firm performance across business experience levels among entrepreneurs in western Kenya.

Entrepreneurs Profile

Performance

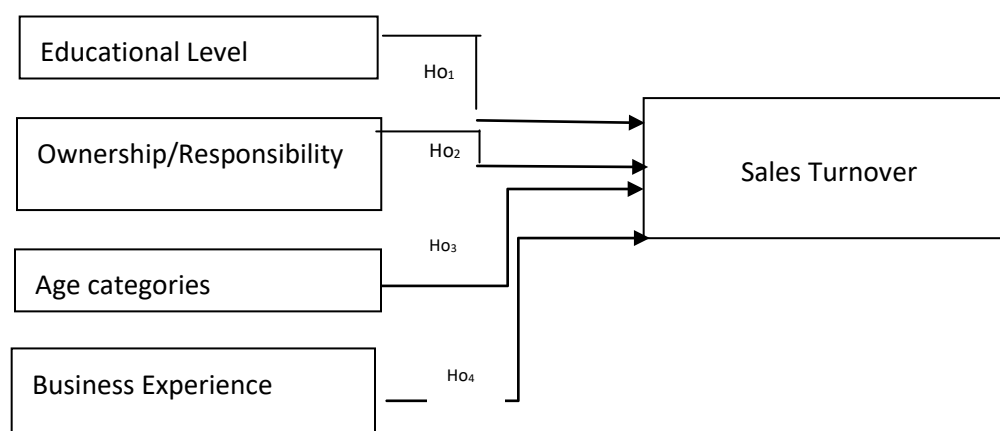


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

2.0 METHODS

The methods section consists of; study area, research design, participants, data collection instruments and data analysis.

2.1 Study Area

The study was undertaken in western Kenya counties of Uasin Gishu and Bungoma. It was purposively selected on the basis of a sustainable approach to livelihood improvement (ASALI) project sites.

2.2 Research Design

A survey research design was used in this study. The dependent variable was sales turnover while the independent variable was entrepreneur profile. We employed a cross-sectional design (Singleton & Straits, 2010) owing to the fact that data was collected at one point in time. Data was collected from entrepreneurs using a questionnaire. The independent variable was entrepreneurs' profile, with the dimensions; respondents' educational level measured at various levels; primary, secondary, diploma, undergraduate degree, master and doctorate. The responsibility and ownership as categorised as owner, owner-manager and manager. Age was categorised; 22-30, 31-35, 36-40 and 41-50. The final dimension was business experience categorised on the basis of years. The dependent variable was measured by sales turnover grouped in categories.

2.3 Participants

The study sample was 400 respondents comprising 200 respondents from Uasin Gishu County and another 200 from Bungoma county. The sample was distributed proportionately to the main trading centres in the two counties. Units of analysis were owner managers of micro and small enterprises. The researchers utilized stratified and systematic random sampling techniques to select the respondents.

First, the counties were stratified (Creswell, 2009) on the basis of the trading centres and then thereafter systematic sampling was used to pick the individual respondents.

2.4 Data Collection and Instruments

The primary data were measured on a nominal, ordinal scale and ratio scales. We collected data using a questionnaire. We ensured reliability through use of the Cronbach's alpha test on the instrument which scored a coefficient > 0.7 , hence we achieved reliability.

2.5 Data Analysis

Data collected in this study was analyzed using descriptive measures of central tendency which have been presented using means and standard deviation. Non-parametric statistical method- Kruskal Wallis test was used to compare group differentials among the various variables in the study. The use of Kruskal Wallis test is based on the data measurement level, that was ordinal, samples were random and the scaled distributions were identical (Aldrich & Cunningham, 2016). Kruskal Wallis test has been used to analyse gender differentials on performance in a study undertaken by Nassiuma, Masasabi and Nangulu, (2017) in western Kenya.

3.0 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The study findings are presented based on descriptive and inferential statistics. First, we present the descriptive statistics of the study as shown in Table 1. The results on educational level shows that the majority ($n=172$) had

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an undergraduate degree education level while the least (n=22) was diploma level. The age categories indicate that the majority (n=162) were in the age category of 22-30 years while the least (n=53) were in the age category of 36-40 years. The results on the ownership and responsibility show that the majority (n=170) were owners while the least (n=82) were owner managers. Results on the business experience showed minimal variations; the business experience category of 6-10 years had the majority (110) while 21-30 years had the least (30). The findings on the entrepreneur's profile suggests an upward trend on the educational level of the entrepreneurs in the study region. This finding contrasts with that of Nassiuma, [MasasabiNangulu \(2018\)](#) on the majority of the respondents who had a secondary educational level. This finding can be a pointer to the growing unemployment levels among graduates or alternatively the need to seek for additional sources of income among the employed in western Kenya.

Table: 1. Summary of Descriptive Statistics

<i>Statistic\profile</i>	<i>Educational level-#</i>	<i>Age-#</i>	<i>Res./ ownership-#</i>	<i>Bexperience-#</i>
<i>Secondary level</i>	125			
<i>Diploma level</i>	22			
<i>Degree level</i>	172			
<i>Master level</i>	81			
<i>Age cat. 22-30</i>		162		
<i>Age cat. 31-35</i>		97		
<i>Age cat. 36-40</i>		53		
<i>Age cat. 41-50</i>		88		
<i>Owner</i>			170	
<i>Manager</i>			148	
<i>Owner manager</i>			82	
<i>1-5 years</i>				100
<i>6-10 years</i>				110
<i>11-15 years</i>				102
<i>16-20 years</i>				58
<i>21-30 years</i>				30

The second part of the analysis presents hypothesis testing. In this section, four hypotheses were tested; differential in educational levels, age, ownership and responsibility and business experience on sales turnover in SMEs in western Kenya. The first hypothesis is as follows: -

There is no significant difference in sales turnover across different levels of education among entrepreneurs in western Kenya _

The hypothesis was set to find out if there exist differences in firm performance across different levels of education. To evaluate the differences across four levels of education, firm performance was tested using Kruskal

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Wallis test. The results in Figure 2 revealed significant differences (Asymp. sig =.000) in firm performance across the four educational levels (Master, n=81; Degree, n=172; Diploma, n=22 secondary, n= 125).

The null hypothesis was rejected which shows there were differences among educational levels on sales turnover. The diploma educational level had the highest sales turnover. The findings in this study are consistent with those in other studies on the role of education in promoting entrepreneurship. There seems to be an upward trend in the educational level of entrepreneurs as found in this study and as suggested in several studies (Modarresiet *al.*, (2016a); Ganyaupfu, (2013); Douglas *et al.* (2017). The results point to the significant role educational level plays in firm performance. However, as alluded by Serra, 2016 on formal educational level, the study findings point to the diploma level holders performing much better in comparison to other educational levels.

Table 2. Hypothesis test summary of sales turnover and educational level

Null Hypothesis	Test	Sig	Decision
The distribution of sales turnover is same across categories of educational level	Independent samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis

Asymptotic significance is displayed. The significance level is .05.

The second part of the analysis was the pairwise comparison which is presented in Figure 2 and Table 3. The independent samples median shows that; secondary level, were all below the median line, n =95; Diploma level were all above the median line, n=22; degree level had, n=103 below the median line while, n= 69 above the median line; master level, were all below the median line, n=75.

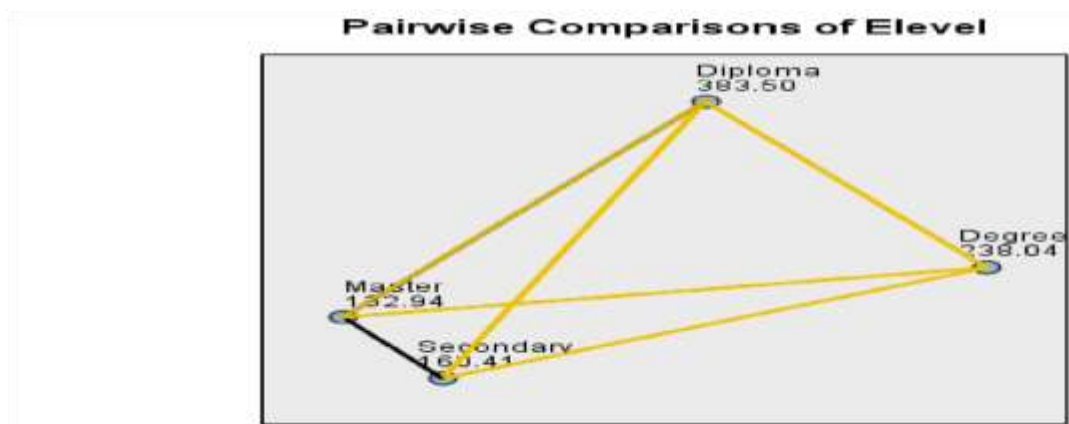


Figure 2. Pairwise comparison of educational level and sales turnover

The results on pairwise comparisons are presented in Table 3. The results show that all pairs were significant except master and secondary which had no significant differences.

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Table 3. Pairwise comparison

Sample 1-Sample 2	Test Statistic	Std. Error	Std. Test Statistic	SIG.	Adj. Sig.
Master- Secondary	32.235	16.026	2.011 .044	.266	
Master- Degree	70.817	15.140	4.677 .000	.000	
Master- Diploma	152.407	27.012	5.642 .000	.000	
Secondary-Degree	-38.582	13.206	-2.922 .003	.021	
Secondary- Diploma	-120.172	25.976	-4.626 .000	.000	
Degree-Diploma	81.590	25.440	3.207 .001	.008	

The second hypothesis is: -

There is no significant difference in sales turnover across age categories among entrepreneurs in western Kenya

The first part of the hypothesis was set to find out if there exist differences in sales turnover across age categories. To evaluate the differences across five age categories for sales turnover Kruskal Wallis test as applied.

The results in Table 4 revealed significant differences (Asymp. sig =.000) in sales turnover across four age categories (2-30, n=162; 31-35, n=97; 36-40, n=53; 41-50, n= 88). The null hypothesis was rejected which shows there were differences among age category levels on sales turnover. The results in Figure 3. Show that the sales turnover was highest in the age category of 36-40 years.

The findings in this study support findings in other studies on the age categories shows its influence on firm productivity (Modarresiet *al.* (2016); Chittithawornet *al.*, (2011); OgegaNyaboke& Muturi Willy (2016). The findings in this study support findings by Blackburn, Hart and Wainwright, (2013) on the majority of successful owners being in the age category of forties.

Table 4. Hypothesis test summary on age categories and sales turnover is presented below: -

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Null Hypothesis	Test	Sig	Decision
The distribution of sales turnover is same across categories of age	Independent samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis
Asymptotic significance is displayed. The significance level is .05.			

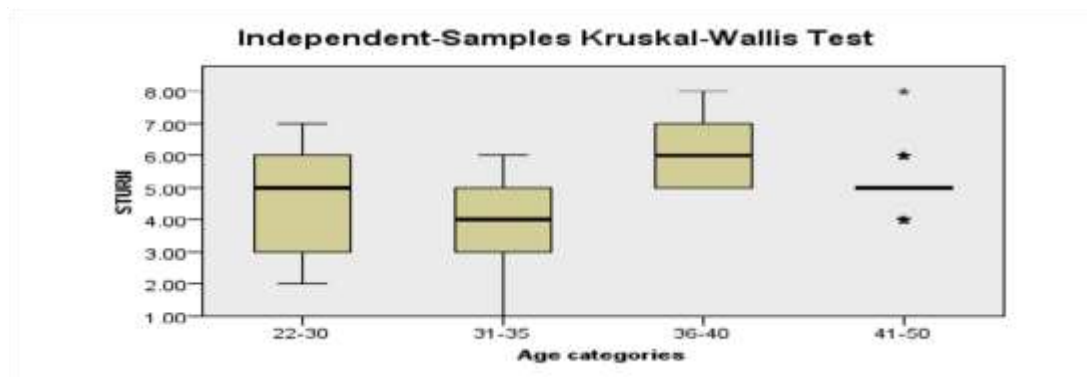


Figure 3. Independent samples Kruskal wallis test

A pairwise comparison was done to determine differences among categories. The results are shown in Figure 4 and Table 5 respectively. The results show that 31-35 and 22-30, 22-30 and 41-40 were not significantly different. While 22-30 and 41-50, 31-35 and 36-40, 22.30 and 41-50, 41-5- and 36-40 respectively were significantly different.

Pairwise Comparisons of Age categories

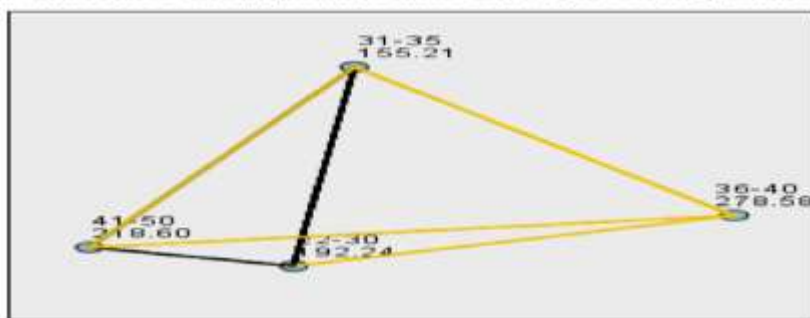


Figure 4. Pairwise comparison of Age categories

Table 5. Pairwise comparison of age categories in years

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Sample 1-Sample 2	Test Statistic	Std. Error	Std. Test Statistic	SIG.	Adj. Sig.
31-35-22-30	37.029	14.424	2.567	.010	.062
31-35-41-50	-63.391	16.540	-3.833	.000	.001
31-35-36-40	-123.364	19.191	-6.428	.000	.000
22-30-41-50	-26.362	14.878	-1.772	.076	.459
22-30-36-40	-86.335	17.779	-4.856	.000	.000
41-50-36-40	59.973	19.535	3.070	.002	.013

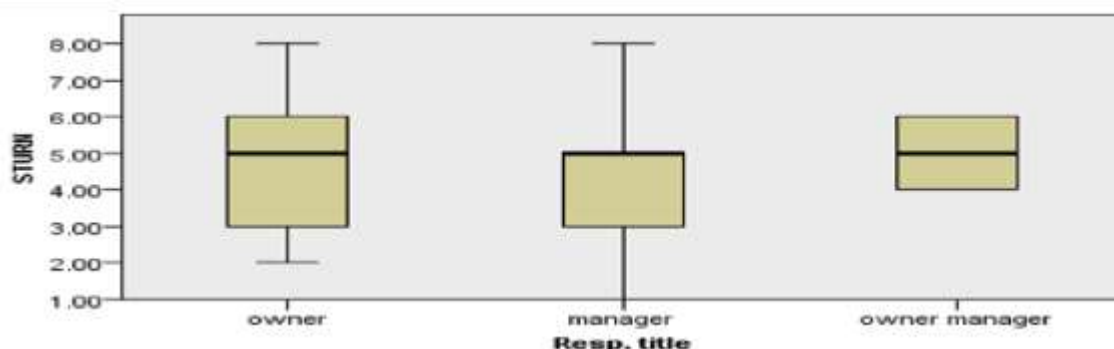
The third hypothesis is as stated below: -

There is no significant difference in sales turnover across ownership and responsibility levels among entrepreneurs in western Kenya

The hypothesis was set to find out if there exist differences in firm performance across different ownership and responsibility levels. To evaluate the differences across three levels of ownership and responsibility for sales turnover was tested using Kruskal Wallis test. The test results in Table 6. revealed significant differences (Asymp. sig =.000) in sales turnover across responsibility and ownership levels. The null hypothesis was rejected which shows there were differences among responsibility and ownership levels on sales turnover. The findings as shown in Figure 5. Indicate that the owner managers had the highest mean rank of 215.91. These findings imply that the owner manager devotes time and skills to oversee the operation of the enterprise.

Table 6. Hypothesis Test Summary

Null Hypothesis	Test	Sig	Decision
The distribution of sales turnover is same across categories of ownership and responsibility	Independent samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis
Asymptotic significance is displayed. The significance level is .05.			



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Figure 5. Independent –sample Kruskal Wallis Test on respondents’ responsibility and sales turnover

A pairwise comparison of responsibilities and ownership categories are presented in Figure 6 and Table 6. The results show that there were significant differences between manager- owner and manager and owner manager respectively while owner-owner manager had insignificant differences.

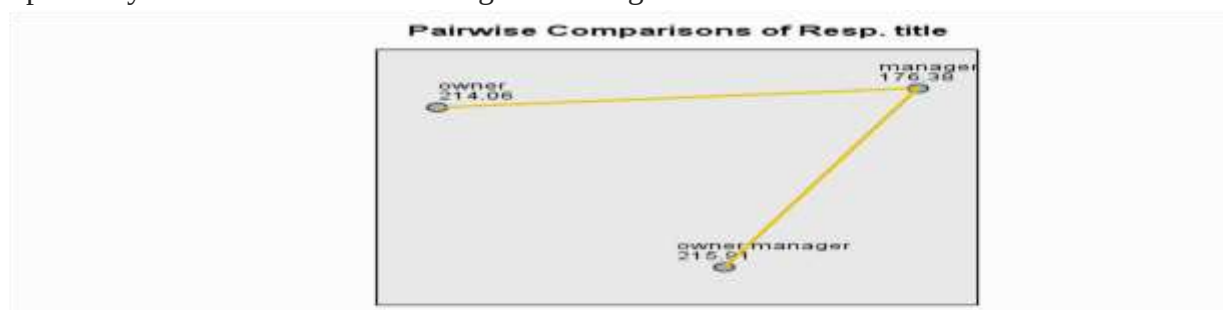


Table 6. Pairwise comparison of responsibility and ownership

Sample 1-Sample 2	Test Statistic	Std. Error	Std. Test Statistic	SIG.	Adj. Sig.
Manger-Owner	37.680	12.631	2.983	.003	.009
Manger-Owner manager	-39.533	15.467	-2.556	.011	.32
Owner-owner manager	-1.853	15.106	-.123	.902	1.000

The fourth hypothesis is as below: -

There is no significant difference in sales turnover across business experience levels among entrepreneurs in western Kenya

The hypothesis was set to find out if there exist differences in sales turnover across different levels of business experience among entrepreneurs in western Kenya. To evaluate the differences across five levels of business experience and sales turnover the Kruskal Wallis test. The test results in Table 7. revealed significant differences (Asymp. sig =.000) in sales turnover on business experience levels for the five levels (1-5, n=100; 6-10, n=110; 11-15, n= 102; 16-20, n= 58 and 21-30, n=30).

The null hypothesis was rejected which shows there were differences among entrepreneurs on business experience levels on salesturnover. The results in Figure 7. Show that the mean sales turnover was highest in the business experience category of 21-30 years.

Table 7. Hypothesis testing on business experience categories and sales turnover

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Null Hypothesis	Test	Sig	Decision
The distribution of sales turnover is same across categories of business experience	Independent samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis
Asymptotic significance is displayed. The significance level is .05.			

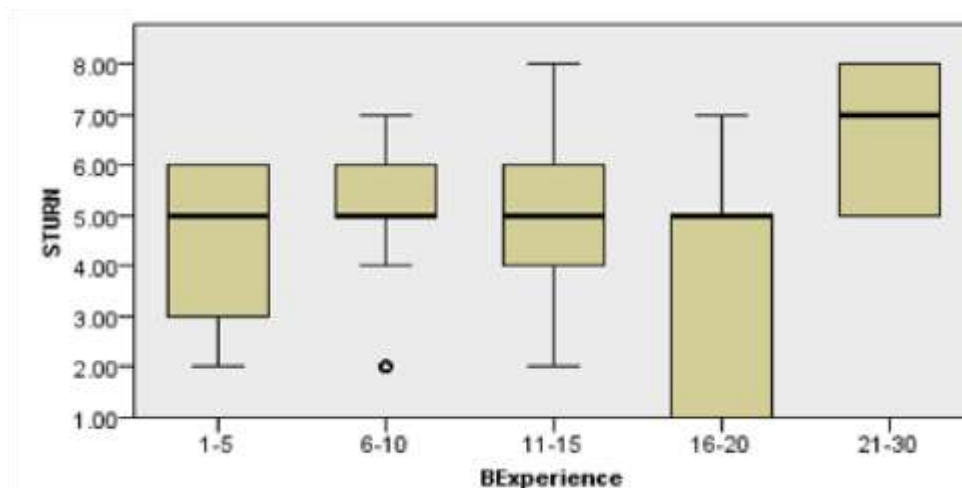


Figure 7. Independent –sample Kruskal Wallis Test

A pairwise comparison of business experience is presented in Figure 9 and Table 10. Respectively. The results show that there were significant differences between, experience categories of 16-20 and 21-30; 11-15 and 21-30; 1-5 and 6-10; and 6-10 and 21-30 respectively.

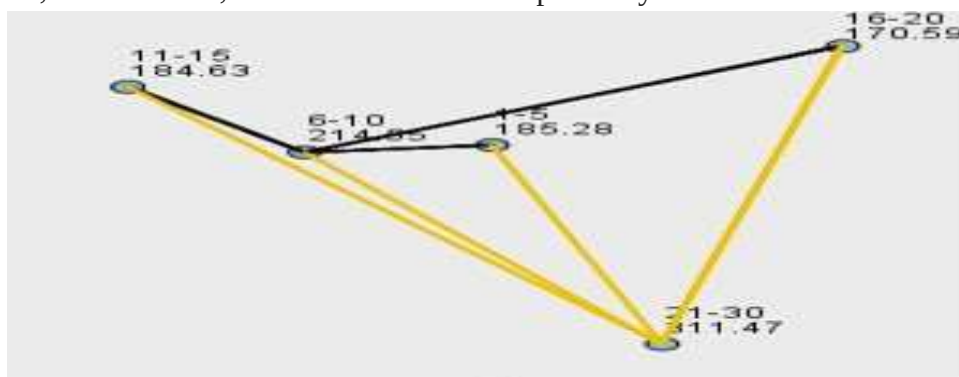


Figure 8. Pairwise comparison of business experience

The hypothesis was set to find out if there exist differences in sales turnover across different levels of business experience. To evaluate the differences across five levels of business experience on sales turnover, Kruskal Wallis

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test was used. It showed that there were significant differences among age categories; 6-10 & 21-30, 16-20&21-30, 11-15&21-30 respectively. While age categories of 16-20&11-15, 16-20& 1-5, 16-20&6-10, 11-15&1-5, 11-15& 6-10, 1-5&6-10 had insignificant differences.

Table 8. Pairwise comparison of business experience levels in years

Sample 1-Sample 2	Test Statistic	Std. Error	Std. Test Statistic	SIG.	Adj. Sig.
16-20-11-15	14.038	18.477	.760	.447	1.000
16-20-1-5	14.685	18.544	.792	.428	1.000
16-20-6-10	43.960	18.232	2.411	.016	.159
16-20-21-30	-140.872	25.267	-5.575	.000	.000
11-15-1-5	.648	15.811	.041	.967	1.000
11-15-6-10	29.922	1.811	.041	.967	.527
11-15-21-30	-126.834	23.335	-5.395	.000	.000
1-5-6-10	-29.275	15.524	-1.886	.059	.593
6-10-21-30	-96.912	23.142	-4.188	.000	.000

4. CONCLUSION

This paper aims at contributing to literature on the entrepreneurs' profiles that influence sales turnover among entrepreneurs in western Kenya through an empirical study. The study focus was on SMEs in diverse entrepreneurial activities. Our definition of business performance was anchored on sales turnover. The study examined the educational level, ownership and responsibility, age and business experience of the respondents in relation to sales turnover of the firm. Analysis was done using Kruskal wallis test to examine group differentials on sales turnover among entrepreneurs in western Kenya.

The study concludes that enterprisers profile group differentials have significant differences on sales turnover in firms in western Kenya. This conclusion is based on the evidence showing that all null hypotheses in the study were rejected. However, diploma educational level of the respondents resulted in a higher sales turnover among respondents as compare to all other educational levels. On the pairwise comparison, differentials the study concludes that there were no differentials between educational levels of secondary and master level. While on age categories there were no significant differences in youthful age categories, however, the youth and adult age categories showed some significant differences. The age category of 36-40 had the highest sales turnover suggesting that adult age influenced sales turnover in an enterprise. Ownership and responsibility, indicated nonsignificant differences between owners and owner managers. On the aspect of business experience; a higher business experience resulted in higher sales turnover in comparison to lower experience. While lower business experience categories were not significantly different on sales turnover. The study recommends further study to examine differentials in entrepreneurial traits and competencies on various performance areas in a firm.

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