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**MODERATING AND MEDIATING ROLES OF HUMAN  
CAPITAL AND COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE ON  
ENTREPRENEURIAL ORIENTATION, SOCIAL NETWORK,  
AND PERFORMANCE OF SMEs IN NIGERIA.**



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**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY  
UNIVERSITI UTARA MALAYSIA**

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**MODERATING AND MEDIATING ROLES OF HUMAN CAPITAL AND  
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SOCIAL NETWORK AND PERFORMANCE OF SMEs IN NIGERIA.**

**By**



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**Universiti Utara Malaysia**

**Thesis Submitted to School of Business Management,  
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## ABSTRACT

The main objective of this study is to examine the mediating role of competitive advantage (CA) and the moderating role of human capital (HC) on the relationships between entrepreneurial orientation (EO), social network (SN), and performance of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Nigeria. Data were collected from the SMEs operating in North Western Nigeria using a quantitative survey design. The study adopted a systematic random sampling, selected respondents from the population of 8,286 SMEs in Kano State Nigeria, and questionnaires distributed through the postal method. A total of 283 usable questionnaires were returned, giving a response rate of 38.45%. Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was used to test the study hypotheses. The findings revealed that EO, SN, HC and CA are important strategic orientations for the performance of SMEs in Nigeria. The findings also revealed that SME performance depends on the degree of EO, HC and SN of the firm. It further shows that EO, SN and HC positively influence performance, and human capital moderates the relationship between EO and firm performance, but the findings indicate that HC does not moderate the relationship between SN and SME performance. However, competitive advantage was found to mediate the relationships between EO, SN, and performance. The findings of this study provide important insights to owner/managers of SMEs, policy makers and researchers to further understand the effects of EO, SN, HC and CA on SME performance. SMEs should also be encouraged to improve their EO, SN and HC which may increase their performances. Finally, the study implications, limitations as well suggestions for future research are discussed.

**Keywords:** Small and medium enterprises (SMEs), entrepreneurial orientation, social network, competitive advantage, human capital.



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## ABSTRAK

Objektif utama kajian ini ialah untuk meneliti peranan pengantaraan kelebihan persaingan (KP) dan peranan penyederhanaan modal insan (MI) atas hubungan-hubungan di antara orientasi keusahawanan (OK), jaringan sosial (JS) dengan prestasi enterprais kecil dan sederhana (EKS) di Nigeria. Data dipungut daripada EKS yang beroperasi di Barat Utara Nigeria menggunakan rekabentuk tinjauan kuantitatif. Kajian ini mengguna pakai persampelan rawak bersistematik, memilih responden daripada 8,286 populasi EKS di Negeri Kano, Nigeria, dan mengagihkan soal selidik melalui kaedah pos. Sejumlah 283 soal selidik bolehguna dikembalikan, menjadikan kadar respon sebanyak 38.45%. PLS SEM telah digunakan untuk menguji hipotesis-hipotesis kajian. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa OK, JS, MI, dan KP adalah orientasi strategik yang penting untuk prestasi EKS di Nigeria. Dapatan juga menunjukkan bahawa OK, JS dan MI mempunyai pengaruh positif ke atas prestasi, tetapi MI tidak mempunyai pengaruh signifikan atas hubungan di antara MI dan prestasi EKS. Bagaimanapun KP didapati mengantara hubungan-hubungan antara OK, JS, MI dan prestasi. Dapatan daripada kajian ini menyediakan penemuan penting kepada pengurus/pemunya EKS, pembuat dasar dan penyelidik-penyelidik untuk memahami lebih lanjut kesan OK, MI dan KP ke atas prestasi EKS. EKS juga disarankan supaya meningkatkan lagi OK, MI dan JS yang mungkin boleh meningkatkan prestasi. Akhir sekali implikasi kajian, limitasi serta cadangan kajian masa hadapan dibincangkan.

**Kata kunci:** Enterprais kecil dan sederhana (EKS), orientasi keusahawanan, jaringan sosial, kelebihan persaingan, modal insan.



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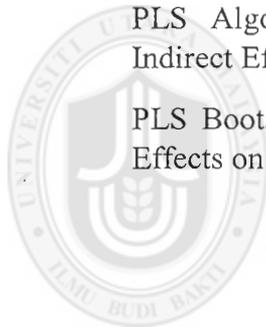
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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AVE	Average Variance Extracted
BF	Business Performance
CBN	Central Bank of Nigeria
CR	Composite Reliability
F <sup>2</sup>	Effect Size
FP	Firm Performance
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GoF	Goodness-of-Fit
HC	Human capital
NBS	National Bureau of Statistics
NPC	National Population Commission
NPC	National Planning Commission
OECD	Organizations for Economic Cooperation and Development
PLS	Partial Least Squares
Q <sup>2</sup>	Construct crossvalidated Redundancy
R <sup>2</sup>	R-squared values
RBV	Resource based View

RDT:	Resource dependency theory
SEM	Structural Equation Modelling
SmartPLS	SmartPLS Statistical Package
SMEDAN	Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria
SMEs	Small and Medium Enterprises
SN	Social network
SNT:	Social network theory
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Science
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Science
UNIDO	United Nation Industrial Development organization
US	United State of America
UUM	Universiti Utara Malaysia
VAF	Variance Accounted For
VIF	Variance Inflation Factor

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background of the Study

The performance of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) is creating a vast amount of discussion among practitioners, researchers, educators, and policy makers. The characteristics and determinants of the performance of SMEs have been and always will be a focus of debate and interest (McKelvie & Wiklund 2010). Due to the unique constraints and limitations faced by SMEs such as having a limited number of employees, insufficient financial resources, a lack of educational background and experience and a lack of managerial expertise, among other limiting factors (Samad 2007; Saleh & Ndubisi 2006; Abu Bakar *et al.*, 2006; Mohd Aris 2006), efforts are continuously being made to understand how the performance of SMEs could be developed and further enhanced. These efforts are important since this sector of the economy is recognized as one of the crucial engines of growth for a country's economy (Abu Kassim & Sulaiman 2011).

SMEs are extensively recognized as crucial mechanisms of national development in technologically advanced and unindustrialized economies (Aigboduwa & Oisamoje, 2013; Osalor, 2012; Lai & Arifin, 2011; Abrie & Doussy, 2006; Oyekanmi, 2003). They also serve as a backbone for economic revival of many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) (Babajide, 2011). SME Sector is featured by several micro and other small businesses and occupied a large number of labor force in an economy (Abiodun, 2003)

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