



Business Environment and Survival of Small-scale Businesses in Nigeria: A Systematic Review

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Abstract

Small scale businesses have been adjudged as the major contributors to the gross domestic product (GDP) of any economy be it developed or developing economy, but the survival and performance of these small scale business have been threaten by the environment which these businesses operates, thereby influencing the SMEs performance, survival and their contribution to national's GDP. Employing the Systematic Quantitative Assessment Technique (SQAT) propounded by Catherine Pickering and Pickering and Jason Antony Byrne, this paper identified and analyzed 302 peer-reviewed Business Environment (BE) articles from six high quality academic databases published over the last decade (2011-2020) to give an insight into the influence of business environment on the performance and survival of Small Scale Business across the world. This article reviewed the time distribution, geographic distribution, types and data collection methods of this Business environment papers. The year 2017 and 2018 recorded the highest number of articles published on Business Environment while 2012 recorded the least article published on BE. Most of the studies took place in Asia and Europe while South America has the least number of studies in this area of interest. A significant number of BE articles were empirical in nature, with survey being the most favoured means of data collection method used, meaning that there is a need for more conceptual studies to aid understanding of the influence of BE on the Small Scale Business performance and survival, and this represent a gap for future research interest.

Keywords: Business Environment, Small Business Survival, Systematic Quantitative Assessment Techniques, Systematic Review.

JEL Code: 044, Q51, L26, Q56

Contribution/Originality:

This study provides a clear picture on the current state of business environment research and gives a direction on the areas future research needs to focus on, in order to create an enabling environment for SMEs performance. Thus, this paper has contributed to the enhancement of SMEs survival and performance as a major contributor to countries gross domestic product (GDP).

1.0 Introduction

The aggregation of all the factors, conditions and events that affect and influence the establishment, management and sustainability of businesses all over the world is regarded as business environment. Business operate and function on, and within a substratum that exerts a considerable influence on their performance and survival and by extension affects the contribution of these businesses to the gross domestic product (GDP) of a country. Businesses all over the world especially small-scale

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business are assumed to be the pivot on which other economic activities revolve and contribute meaningfully to a country's GDP, but this significant role played by SMEs is being threatened by the environment in which these SMEs operate. The survival and performance of small-scale business is a direct function of their operating environment which either makes or marks the business enterprise (Camilleri, 2017; Shah & Sankar, 2013).

The environment of business is the system the enterprise interface and interact with for its daily operations, where the enterprise inputs are raised and the output (enterprise products) return to for consumption. It's a system that shapes and directs the success or otherwise of the business (Rupidara & Darby, 2017).

Environment is expressed as the sum total of the forces that influence individuals, businesses and communities, it is summarized as the surrounding of a phenomenon which from time dictates and shapes the direction of the business. Business enterprise does not operate in a vacuum; it operates within the environment where the production and distribution of goods and services are carried out. As any other activity of the individual is greatly affected and usually controlled by his total social environment so is the business activity, in which individuals or groups of individuals participate, in the process, there is interaction between business and its environment. Environment represents the totality of the factors that affect, influence, or determine the operations or performance of a business, it's the major determinant of what is possible for the business enterprise to achieve within a given time period (Shah & Sankar, 2013).

Environment is the combination of many factors both tangible and intangible elements that provide lifeblood support for the organizational success through provision of market for its products and services and also by serving as a source of resources to others. Therefore, the environment of a business is the aggregation of the pattern of all the external and internal conditions and influences that affect the existence, growth and survival of the business (Martins and Nienaber, 2018).

According to Mahmood and Hanafi (2015), business environment in the field of management does not necessarily mean the surrounding but it covers all the factors and forces that affect business effectiveness in the process of producing an intended result.

Businesses all over the globe especially small scale business must take into account the environmental constraints, materials and human resources in their respective business in spite of their difference in status and that the effect of the environment varies from one situation to another because environment is made up of stable and unstable homogeneous, heterogeneous, rich and poor, complex and simple unpredictable situational variables, therefore venture managers' basic role is to be able to manage and control the venture in difficult emergency environmental situations. The manager must perceive the process and respond to the changing environment by re-arranging the internal organization structure so as to ensure growth and survival of the business venture (Saleh and Watson, 2017).

The need to constantly study the business environment is important considering the fact that business enterprises do not operate in a vacuum, effective management of complex and dynamic societies require the assessment of strength and weakness of the organization and the opportunities and threats posed by the challenges of the surrounding environment in order to enhance the growth and survival of the business venture (Cuervo-Cazurra, 2011; Ishengoma & Kappel, 2011; Reynolds & Rohlin, 2014; et al; Mbaye & Gueye, 2018).

With the convergence of thoughts among scholars (Saleh & Watson, 2017; Mbaye & Gueye, 2018; Shah & Sankar, 2013) on the consequence of the environment on the performance and survival of



businesses especially small scale business across the globe, this paper set-out to conduct a systematic review of the last decade(2011-2020) of the influence of business environment on the survival and performance SMEs in order to ascertain the level of interest business environment has generated in terms of the number of articles published in this area over the last decade, the geographic distribution of these articles, the types of articles being published whether empirical or conceptual papers, data collection methods used by these articles and the themes explored by these article in focus.

The main objective of this study is to determine the level of influence the business environment exerts on the performance and survival of SMEs in both developed and developing countries of the world. Diagnosing and dissecting these reviewed articles will surely identify research gaps in this area of interest that will provide a direction for further studies.

This paper is structured thus: methodology section which deals with the methods, process and procedures adopted in acquiring studies for this article and analyzed. The subsequent section focuses on the findings of the study, and also makes suggestions for further studies based on the findings and finally the conclusion of the study.

2.0 Methodology

This study adopted the Systematic Quantitative Assessment Technique (SQAT) propounded by Pickering and Byrne (2013). Systematic Quantitative Assessment Technique is unique in the way and manner articles are identified and assessed in terms of their exclusion and inclusion in the review process. SQAT laid emphasis on the quality of article used for analysis and therefore recommend strictly only peer-reviewed original journal publication (Pickering & Byrne, 2013). The uniqueness of this method (SQAT) is its flexibility in enabling researcher to identify vital geographic, scalar, theoretical and methodological gaps in literature (Pickering & Byrne, 2013).

The Systematic Quantitative Assessment Techniques recommends five vital steps to adhere to when conducting an effective systematic review. Each and every step applied in this study is described in Table 1.

Table 1: Description and Application of SQAT

S/n	Step	Application in current study
1.	Define Topic	Business Environment (BE) articles published between 2011 and 2020
2.	Formulate research questions	Five research questions <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What is the time distribution of BE article? 2. In which countries were these articles written? 3. What kind of BE articles were published? (Emp. Vs Concep) 4. What method was used to collect data? 5. What are the specific themes these articles explored, and what were the major findings in each theme?
3.	Identify key words	“Business Environment”
4.	Identity and search database	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Highly rank six databases utilized: Emerald, Elsevier, Sage, Springer, Taylor and Fransis, Wiley 2. “All in title search” using the phrase “Business Environment”



5. Read and assess publications
 1. Abstract of articles found were read to ensure that they were dealing with business environment
 2. Literature reviews, books chapters and conference proceedings were not included; only peer-reviewed conceptual and empirical articles.

Source: Authors review (2021)

A total of 302 peer-reviewed BE articles met the selection criteria from six world top rank academic journal publishers. Table 1 shows the topic of articles published between 2011 to 2020, the time distribution of the BE articles, countries where the articles were published, the kind of articles published, method of data collection used and the specific themes of the articles. Also the key words used for the search was BE, in the title page of the articles using the phrase “BE”. Reviewed articles abstract were read to ensured there were dealing with BE. Only peer-reviewed articles were included and not conference proceedings or book chapters. Table 2 presents the BE articles breakdown by publisher.

Table2. BE articles reviewed by publisher (2011-2020)

S/N	Database	Number of BE articles
1	Emerald	51
2	Elsevier	73
3	Sage	29
4	Springer	116
5	Taylor and Francis	06
	Wiley	27
Total		302

Source: Authors review (2021).

A search on Google Scholar with the phrase “Business Environment” using the top rank database (Emerald, Elsevier, Sage, Springer, Taylor and Francis and Wiley) between 2011-2020 reveals that Springer has the highest articles(116) published on BE within the period under review while Taylor and Francis has the least(6) articles published within the period.

3.0 Findings and Discussion

3.1 Time Distribution of Articles on Business Environment

Based on the study’s samples of three hundred and two (302) articles published between 2011and 2020, a time distribution analysis of business environment research was conducted. This analysis shows that 2017 and 2018 recorded the highest number of articles published in business environment (87 and 56 articles respectively representing 29% and 19% of the 302 articles published within the decades under review 2011-2020). The least number of articles were published in 2012 (5 article) representing 1.7%. Articles were published every year within the decade under reviewed (2011-2020). Figure 1 shows time distribution of articles on Business Environment.

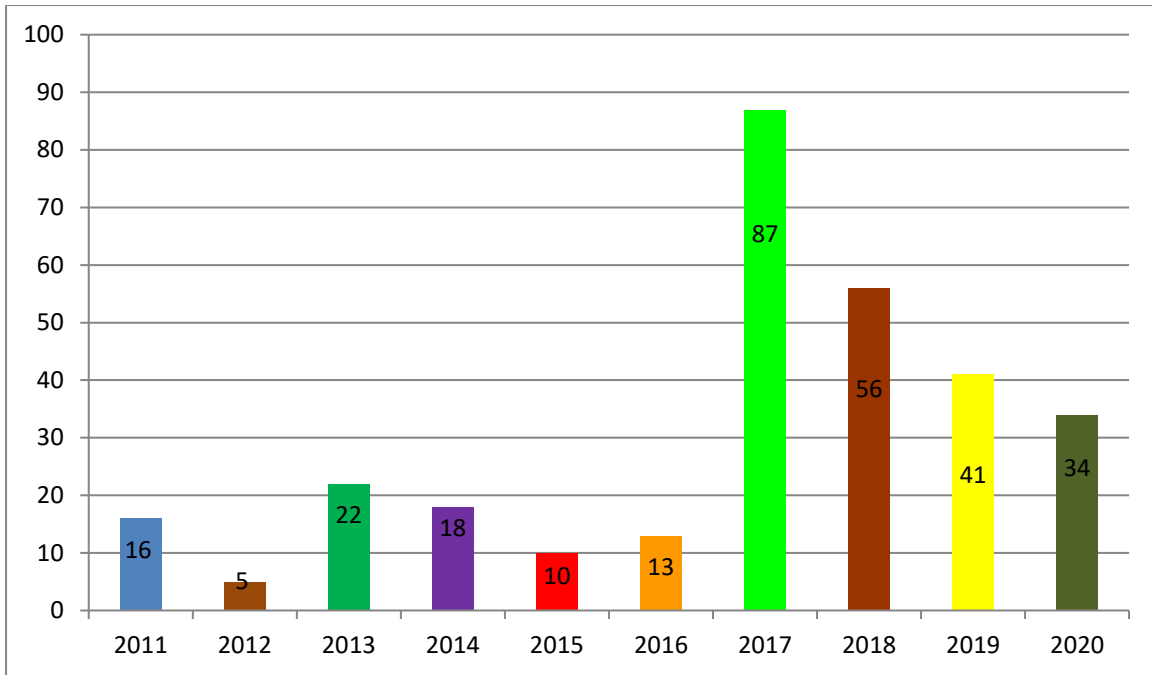


Figure 1: Time Distribution of Articles on Business Environment

Source: Authors review (2021)

3.2. Geographical Distribution of articles on Business Environment

Figure2: Continents break down of geographical distribution of the 302 articles reviewed in this paper.

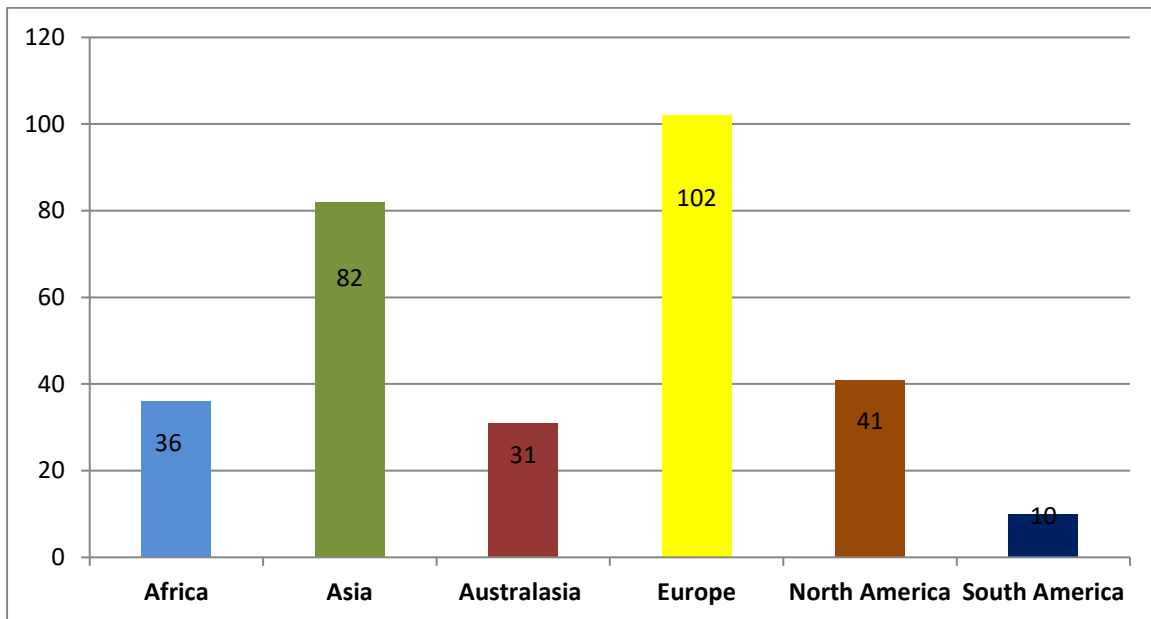


Figure 2: Geographical Distribution of Articles on Business Environment

Source: Authors Review (2021)



The reviewed articles as represented in Figure 2 reveal that Europe has the highest number of articles published (102) representing 33.8% within the reviewed time frame, followed by Asia 27.2%; North America 13.8%; Africa 11.9%; Australasia 10.2% articles and South America 3.3%. South America had the least number of studies in this area of interest, and this indicates a geographical gap in the business environment research. Previous studies (Al Khattab, 2012; Camilleri, 2017; Rupidara & Darby, 2017; Rialp-Criado & Komochkova, 2017) has described South America as a continent with the highest mortality rate of small scale business due to the harsh and unfriendly business environment which affect the ease of doing business in the continent. South America having the least articles published on business environment comes for more research interest in BE in order to narrow and address this geographical research gap.

From a country prism, the reviewed article shows that only sixty-seven (67) countries where BE articles were published and represented in the systematic review of Business Environment research. Figure 3 represent the top four countries where Business Environment research was conducted. The analysis reveals that China is the country with the highest number of articles (34) representing 11.2%, followed by Poland (8.6%); Finland (10.6%); Japan (6.9%); Portugal (2.6%) and India (1.9%). All top six countries belong to Europe and Asia continents and both continents have the highest numbers of Business Environment research (Figure 3)

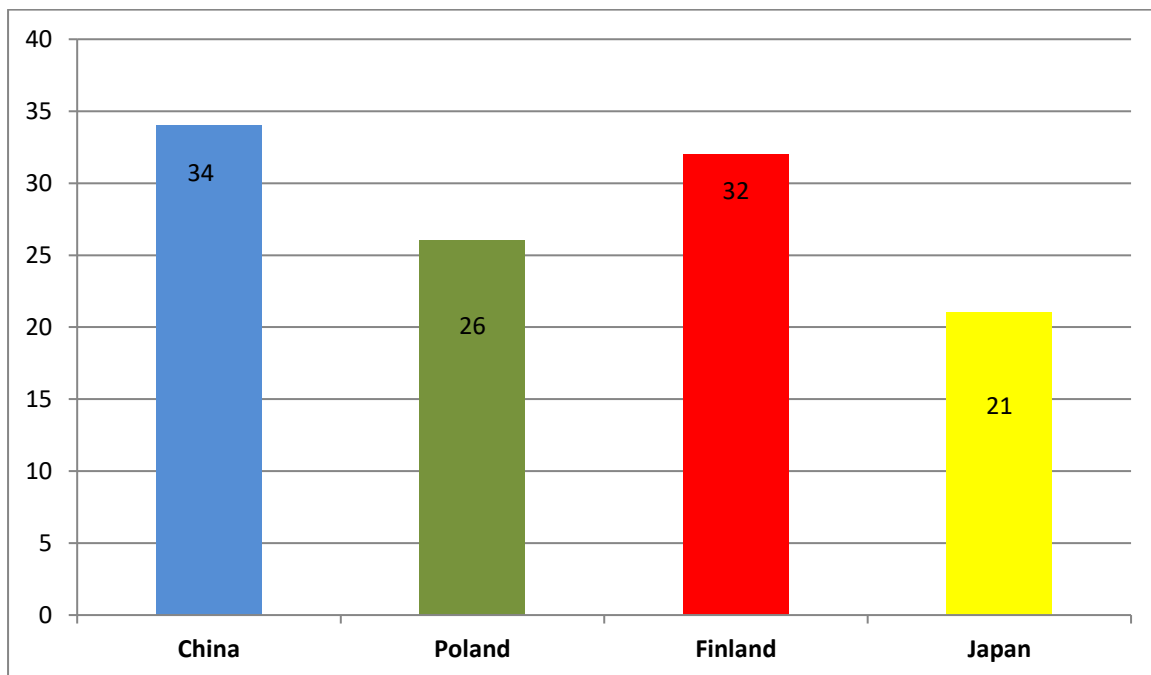


Figure 3: Top Four Countries by Research on Business Environment

Source: Authors review (2021)

A review of country analysis revealed that sixty-seven (67) countries had published Business Environment research; this number certainly is low when compare with the total number of countries in the world. There is presently over one hundred and ninety-six (196) countries in the world (World Map, 2019). To ensure the growth and sustainability of small businesses across the continents, an in-depth analysis of the Environment which these businesses operates becomes very apt. Hence, it vital for researcher in all countries of the world to conduct Business Environment analysis research in order to identify the level of influence the business environment exert on the survival and performance of small business in various countries of the world thereby improving the ease of doing business and by

extension improving the standard of living of the citizen all over the world especially in those counties and continent where there is little or no research attention in the area of business environment for the sustenance of small scale business.

3.3:Articles Types on Business Environment

Article Type

The three hundred and two (302) articles used in this systematic review were grouped into conceptual and empirical articles. Conceptual articles are those that offer theoretical discussions on the subject without data collection and data analysis, while empirical articles are those that involve data collection, data analysis and testing of hypotheses using any known statistical techniques (Fernandes, 2017). Empirical research is very vital because its relies mostly on original data collected for the research purpose, data collected are analyzed using known statistical tools and hypotheses are tested to validate an existing theory and concept. Conceptual papers on the other hand are very necessary for theory development

Figure 4 shows the breakdown of business environment articles based on the two groups (Conceptual and Empirical articles).

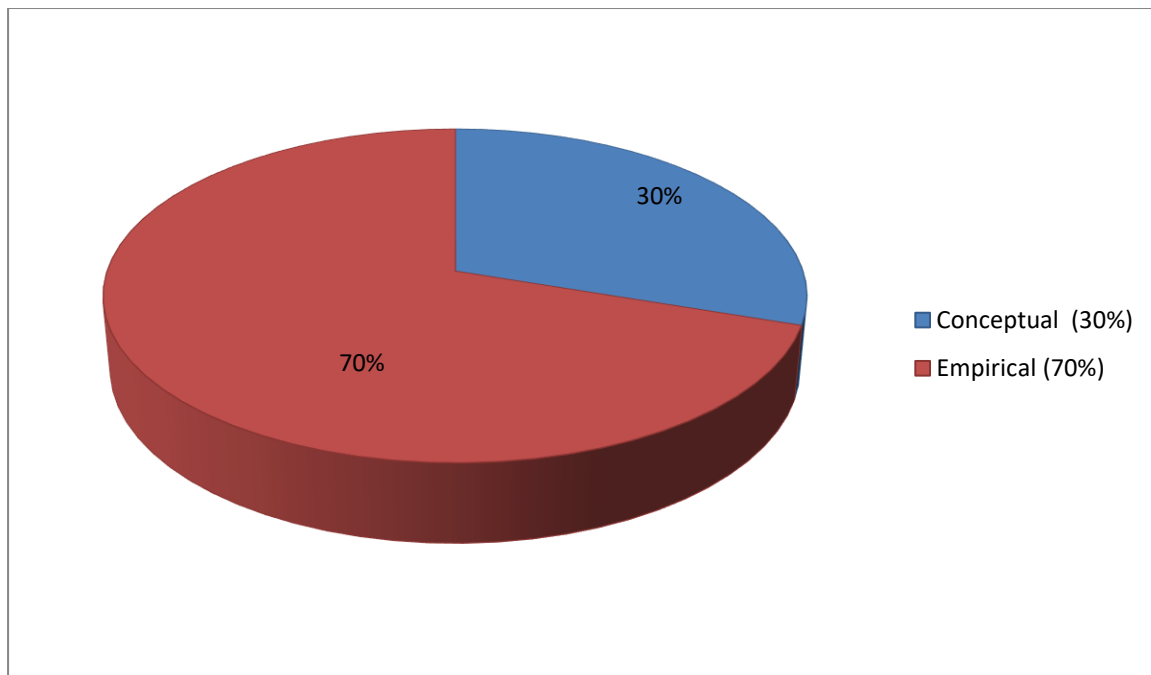


Figure 4: Article Type

Source: Authors review (2021)

Out of the three hundred and two (302) articles reviewed, two hundred and eleven (211) articles representing 70% were found to be empirical in nature while ninety-one (91) articles representing 30% were conceptual in nature.

Findings from Figure 4 shows a limited number of conceptual articles published on business environment within the period under review (2011-2020).Therefore more conceptual research work is required in this field of interest to enhance an in-depth understanding of the known and the unknown;



tested and untested theories on business environmental issues and the development of new theories in this field of study which will be tested by empirical research.

3.4 BE Theories

Figure 5 shows the various theories used by BE. Empirical studies were selected to understand the theoretical underpinnings of the BE studies

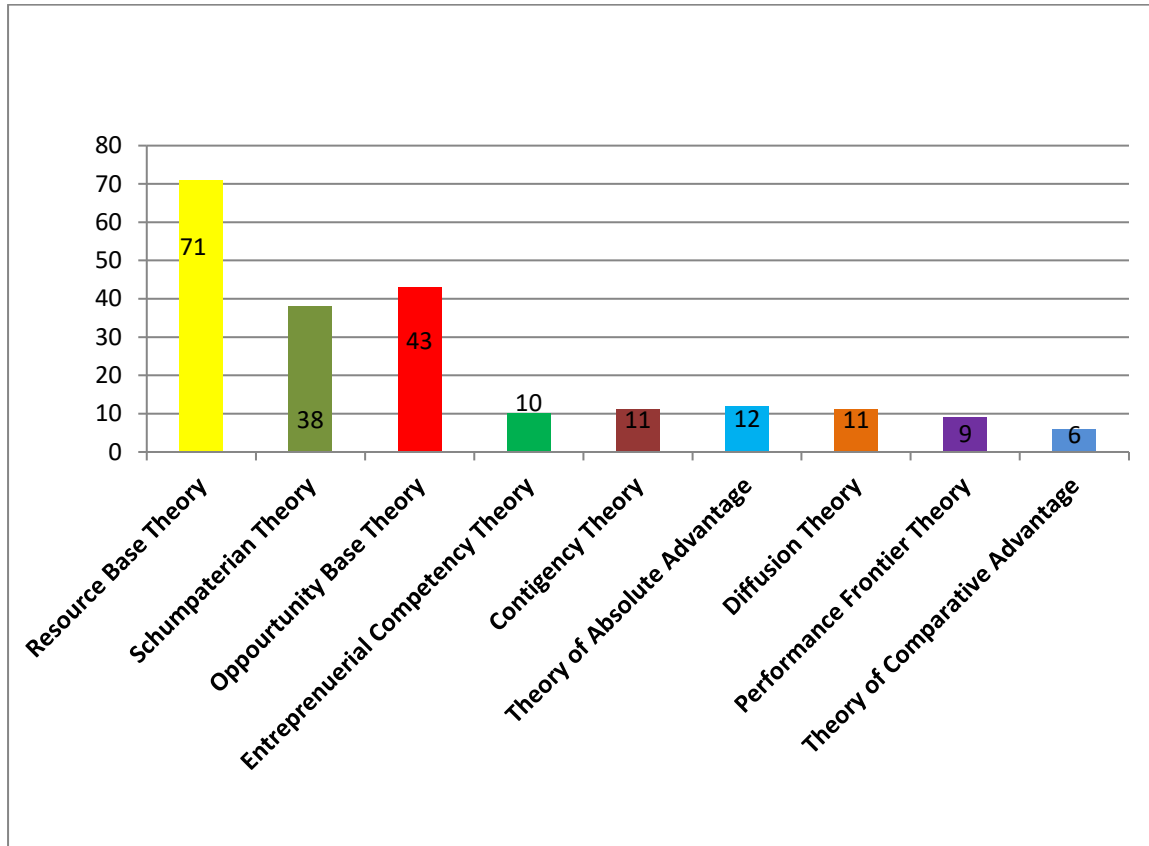


Figure 5: Theories used by Empirical BE studies

Source: Authors review (2021)

A breakdown of the theories explored by empirical BE studies reviewed articles shows that nine (9) theories were used in the studies. Out of the two hundred and eleven (211) empirical papers reviewed in this study, seventy-one (71) articles representing 33.6% adopted the resource-based view theory, making it the most utilized theory among business environment articles. The second most utilized theory was the Opportunity Based Theory used in 43 articles representing 20.3%, followed by Schumpeterian theory of Innovation, featuring thirty-eight (38) times representing 18.9%. Entrepreneurial Competency Theory and Theory of absolute Advantage were utilized ten (10) times each representing 4.9%. Other theories adopted by the empirical reviewed articles are, Performance Frontier Theory nine (4.2%) and Diffusion Theory featuring eleven times (5.2%), Contingency Theory used eleven times (5.2%) and Theory of Comparative Advantage being the least theory utilized in the reviewed articles (2.8%).

Resource Based View Theory provided an insight in to an organizational managerial business environment (MBE) which emphasis organizational capability and capacity (Kiichi, 2015; Kapoor and Sherif, 2012; Martins and Nienaber, 2018 et al). Schumpeterian Theory of Innovation was equally

adopted to explain the managerial business environment (MBE) of an entrepreneur to introduce a new product/service or introduce a new method or approach of production within a competitive business environment (Neves,2010; Apăvăloaie,2014; Georgescu& Popescul,2015) while Entrepreneurial Competency Theory was adopted to explain the Task business environment(TBE) which an entrepreneur used his/her competency to gain an advantage over his competitors and suppliers of raw material(Ishengoma, and Kappel,2011; Reynolds and Rohlin, 2014 et al). Opportunity Base Theory and Contingency Theory explain an entrepreneur ability, skills or traits to identified an opportunity in any environment, create value and make capital gain in the long run (Mbaye& Gueye,2018).

3.5 BE Research Themes

Analysis of the three hundred and two (302) business environment papers reviewed shows that five (5) business environment themes were explored: Figure 6 shows these themes.

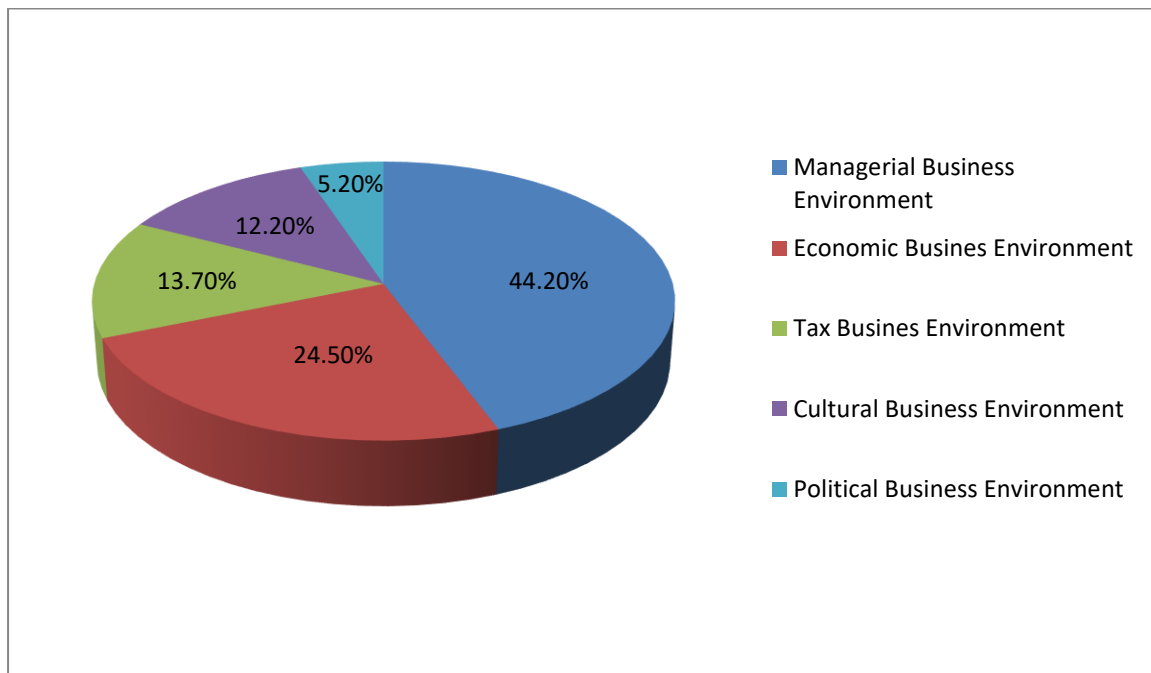


Figure 6: Business Environment Themes

Source: Authors review (2021)

The articles reviewed shows that 133 papers representing 44% focused on the managerial business environment (MBE). MBE is the business environment that focuses on the business owner’s capability and capacity to established and manage a successful business (Zhang &Huang, 2012; Martins & Nienaber, 2018). According to Rupidara and Darby (2017), the high mortality rate of small business is due to the fact that business owners tend to neglect this aspect of the business environment over which they have control and can manipulate to enhance the survival and performance of their businesses

Economic Business Environment was the second most common business environment theme explored (25%). The reviewed articles identified the economic environmental factors that affect the survival and performance of small scale business in various continent of the world to include interest rate, inflation rate, exchange rate, government expenditure among other factors (e.g..Zxiu&Wui,2011;Prajogo,2016;Ruoder,2019;Theodor,2020).These economic environmental



factors constitute both government fiscal and monetary policies which have direct and indirect impact on the establishment, management and sustainability of this small scale business (Rocha, 2012).

From the reviewed papers, it was observed that economics business environment is vital to the growth and survival of start-up business across the continents of the world. A change in the exchange rate regime of any currency affect the operational performance of small scales business in terms of their ability to source raw material and operational cost of production while a movement along the inflationary diagonal directly affect the purchasing power of small scale business and by extension their production capability. Small business owner should stay abreast of government monetary and fiscal policy which could have significant impact on the long-term financial sustainability of their businesses (e.g..Stening,2010;Rocha,2012;Camilleri, 2017;Ruoder,2019).

The third most explore theme was the task business environment theme (14%). The task business environment deals with the business customers, suppliers of raw materials, labour unions, competitors, financial and non-financial institutions, labour market among others that influence the survival and sustainability of the business mostly small scale businesses over a period of time(Vaughan,Yang & Tang,2012; Rocha,2012;Schroeder,2015;Ganguli,2019).

It was observed from the reviewed articles that only 42 articles representing 13.70% out of 302 considered task business environment as a theme of their article, implying that less attention is given to this aspect of business environmental factor and that was responsible for the mortality rate and poor performance of small scales business around the studied areas (Luo& Zhao, 2013).

Cultural business environment was the fourth business environmental research themes considered in the reviewed articles (12%). The articles reviewed reveal that cultural business environment was considered very low because small business owners pay little or no attention on the effect of cultural believes, cultural values and traditional implication to the production and consumption of certain product and services in certain locality (Cuervo-Cazurra,2011; Ishengoma & Kappel,2011; Reynolds & Rohlin, 2014). Most small business holders do not seem to understand the social norms in the environment they operate their business (Westney, 2011). Small scale business owners do not often put into consideration the impact of business location and potential customs of their products, this often result to low performance and survival of the business entity on the short run (Ney, Whitaker and Zentes, 2015).

Findings from the reviewed papers revealed that a sizeable number of small-scale business holders are currently becoming aware of the significance impact cultural business environment exert on the survival and sustainability of small-scale business across the globe. This is evidence by the substantial performance of small business growth all over the continent of the world (Camilleri, 2017; Ganguli, 2019; Reynolds & Rohlin, 2014).

Political business environment was the fifth and least business environment research theme used in the reviewed articles (5%). The mortality rate of small-scale business across the continents could be linked to the political atmosphere of such environment which the business is situated (World Bank, 2018).

Businesses all over the world flourished in a stables and peaceful environment. Small-scale business mostly are sensitive to the political temperature of every environment due to the strong influence polities exerts on the survival and performance of business irrespective of size and years of establishment (Apăvăloaie, 2014; Kapoor & Sherif, 2012; Ganguli, 2019 et al).



Findings of these reviewed papers shows a convergent of thoughts among scholars (Kim & Lim, 2011; Saleh & Watson, 2017; Schroeder, 2015; Shah&Sankar,2013; Tokuoka,2013; Westney,2011) that the survival and performance of business across the continent be it small, medium or large are a direct function of the political stability of the environment which the business is situated and operated.

3.6 Data Collection Method

Figure 7 present a summary of the data collection methods used in Business Environment research analysis of the two hundred and eleven (211) empirical articles reviewed

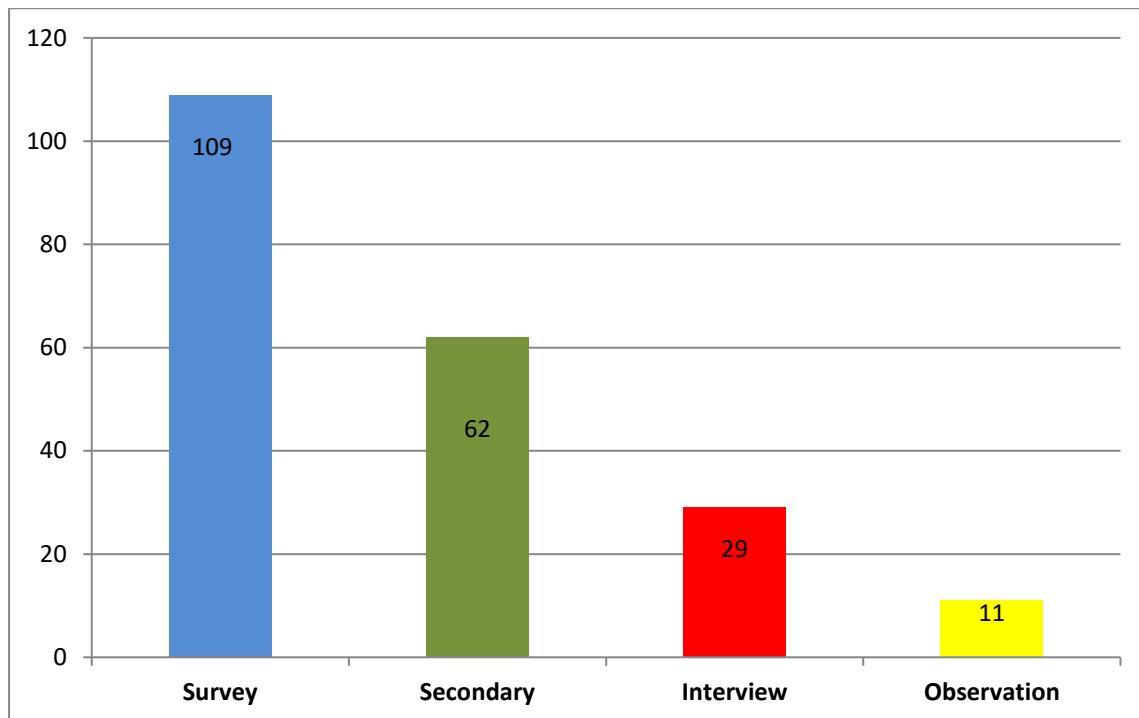


Figure 7: Data Collection Method

Source: Authors Review

Two hundred and eleven (211) empirical articles were reviewed in terms of the data collection method adopted by the researchers. Out of the reviewed articles, one hundred and nine (109) articles representing 51.7% employed survey as a method of primary data collection techniques for their study while sixty-two articles (62) representing 29.1% used secondary method of data collection for their studies. Others were twenty-nine (29) representing 13.7% of the reviewed article utilized interview method as a primary source of data collection and Eleven (11) articles (5.2%) employed Observation method as primary data collection techniques.

The reviewed analysis reveals that majority of the business environment articles adopted survey as their primary source of data collection, where questionnaires were designed and administered to the respondents to elicit the information needed for the study.

This method (survey) of data collection is usually associated with missing value (Data not available due to incomplete filling of the questionnaires by a respondent) and outliers (Extreme values) which often affect the result of the study (Hair et al, 2013).



Primary method of data collection mostly through interviews and the use of questionnaires are usually problematic due to the uncooperative and passive attitude of the respondents in filling the questionnaires and providing the information required by the researcher while secondary data collection method is associated with secrecy and bureaucratic bottleneck (George & Mallery, 2010; Meyers et al, 2016; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2017 et al).

Majority of the empirical articles reviewed (109) under data collection method used survey as primary source of data collection while 62 articles used secondary source of data collection method. Therefore, future studies in this area should adopt other methods of data collection methods like triangulation or mixed method of data collection to address the limitation of single method of data collection so that the findings thereof could be generalized.

Table 4 present the key findings of this systematic review of 302 BE articles published in the last decade (2011-2020).

Table 3. Summary of findings of reviewed 302 BE articles

S/N	Headings	Key Findings	Implication
1	Time Distribution (2011-2020)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BE articles were published every year from 2011-2020. • 2017 was the most productive Year with 87 articles published 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The last decade witness an increase interest in BE research
2	Geographic Distribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 67 countries had at least one BE article • China had the largest number of BE Articles (102) among contributing continents • Europe had the largest number of BE(102) While south-American had the least with (4) Articles and Africa (36) articles among contributing counties 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is need for more BE research in South-American and Australia as there were the least represented by article Reviewed.
3	Article Type	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Majority of the reviewed article were Empirical in nature(211 out of 302), while Only 91 were conceptual in nature 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More attention should be focus on conceptual articles in the coming decade for More theories development and to close the gap between empirical conceptual articles
4	Data collection Methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Four different data collection method were identified. • Survey was the most common Method used (109). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Future BE research effort should be channel toward other data collection Methods to give more inside Of BE phenomenon.



5. BE Themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Five distinct BE themes identified• About 84% of the article investigates the influence of BE on SMEs survival And performance• 93% of the reviewed articles that examine the BE influence on SMEs found that BE has a significant influence on SMEs Performance and survival	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• BE is very significant in the determination of the survival and Performance of SMEs across the world
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Source: Authors review.

4.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

The significance role played by small and medium scale business in economic growth and development of various countries of the world is being hampered by the environment which these businesses operate. Small Scale business are the pivot on which other economics activities revolves on and contribute meaningful to the country gross domestic product (GDP) by way of employment generation, availability of goods and service and by extension improvement in the standard of living of the citizen. But the survival and performance of these small-scale businesses is constantly under threat and this threat has been link to SMEs operating environment. Based on this background, a systematic review of the effect of business environment on the survival and performance of small-scale business over the last decade (2011-2020) was conducted.

This paper reviewed 302 peer-review journal articles on effect of business environment on SMEs. The articles were reviewed based on five key headings: time distribution of the articles, geographical distribution of the articles, article type, data collection methods and BE themes. The findings of the reviewed articles were discussed and suggestion for further studies proffered.

Most of the reviewed article shows a significance empirical evidence of the influence of business environment on the survival and performance of small-scale business across the geographical spread and time under reviewed. The major implication of the findings was the significance contribution of SMEs to economic growth and sustainability of various nations which is being threatened by the environment which these SMEs operate. Creating an enable business environment for the establishment, management and sustainability of SMEs will go a long way in solving unemployment problems, improving the standard of living of the citizen and increase the country's GDP.

The shortcomings (Gaps) of this study which future researchers should channel their effort and attention to address are: First, this study only relied on journal articles published between 2011to 2020 which is just one decade. Future research effort should include earlier years, as this may provide some useful insight to this area of research interest.

The second shortcoming of this study is that the study only relied on peer-review journal article published in only six most popular databases such as Emerald, Elsevier, Sage, Springer, Taylor and Francis and Wiley. Although, these databases contained high quality peer-reviewed articles, they certainly do not contain all peer-reviewed BE articles. Future research efforts can widen the scope of database to includes Jstor, Imgenta, Oxfort among others to gain further insight in BE research.



Another gap is that only journal article written in English language were included in the review; conference proceedings and books chapters were excluded. The adoption of SQAT methodology informed this decision to maintained high quality articles for the review. Nevertheless, conference proceedings and books chapter can provide very useful insight on the subject matter. Therefore, future research effort should do well to explore books chapters and conference proceedings.

Another short coming of this paper is the consideration of only sixty-seven (67) countries out of one hundred and ninety-six (196) countries of the world. Future research should cover more countries of the world mostly the countries not included in this review.

Another limitation of this review was that only articles with the phrase “Business Environment” in their title were included for selection; some BE articles might not have included that phrase in their title and therefore excluded for this review.

This reviewed is very necessary as it brings to the foe, the relevance of a conducive business environment to the survival and performance of SMEs as the backbone of economic growth and sustainability of both developed and developing countries across the world.

Based on the reviewed articles, it is therefore recommended that the environment which business operates especially small scale business should be given special attention to enhance SMEs performance and survival because the performance of any economy is directly link to the performance of SMEs in that country as a major contributors to gross domestic product(GDP).

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