ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINANTS OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN NIGERIA- A LITERATURE SURVEY

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Abstract
This study is a purely Literature survey, employing thematic analysis of factors of entrepreneurship in Nigeria. It provides an in-depth exploration of the environmental constraints that hinder the development of entrepreneurship, critically examining literature on the fundamental challenges entrepreneurs face, including poor infrastructure, inadequate access to funding opportunities, unstable power supply, and inconsistent government policies in the Nigerian setting. The findings reveal how these challenges contribute to high business failure rates, restrict long-term sustainability, and perpetuate economic underdevelopment. To address these challenges, the paper proposes actionable solutions such as the deliberate improvement of infrastructure, the creation of supportive and consistent government policies, enhanced financial inclusion, and the establishment of frameworks that encourage innovation and risk-taking. The predominant objective is to provide a clearer understanding of how these obstacles can be dismantled in order to foster a more enabling environment for entrepreneurship and, by extension, sustainable economic development in Nigeria.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship, Nigeria, Constraints, Infrastructure, Development and Environmental Determinants.

1.0 Introduction

Entrepreneurship is widely acknowledged as a cornerstone of sustainable economic development and a key driver of innovation, wealth creation, and poverty reduction. In both developed and developing nations, entrepreneurship serves as a catalyst for job creation, increased productivity, and the diversification of national economies (Acs & Szerb, 2010). Particularly in a developing country like Nigeria, which is grappling with high unemployment, underemployment, poverty, and a high dependency ratio, entrepreneurship has the potential to unlock new opportunities for inclusive growth. With a growing population exceeding 200 million, a large pool of vibrant and talented youth, rich natural resources, and a growing informal economy, Nigeria possesses the necessary ingredients for a thriving entrepreneurial ecosystem (Baraku, 2025).

However, the promise of entrepreneurship in Nigeria has been undermined by a myriad of environmental constraints. These constraints both internal and external constitute significant barriers to entrepreneurial activity and include infrastructural deficiencies, inadequate power supply, poor transportation networks, insecurity, unstable macroeconomic policies, lack of access to capital, corruption, and bureaucratic red tape (Ogunlana & Olanrewaju, 2020). Moreover, despite numerous government interventions such as the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN), the Bank of Industry (BOI), and various youth empowerment schemes, the success rate of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) remains worryingly low. Many start-ups struggle to survive beyond their first five years, with a significant number folding due to an unsupportive and unpredictable business environment (Olawale & Garwe, 2010).

The socio-political environment in Nigeria has also played a role in compounding these problems. Issues such as insurgency, kidnapping, ethnic tensions, and widespread insecurity in various regions have made many areas unsafe for business operations. These factors not only deter local entrepreneurs from expanding their ventures but also discourage foreign investors from entering the market. Additionally, erratic government policies, lack of policy continuity, and insufficient implementation mechanisms further complicate the entrepreneurial landscape (Eneh, 2010). Financial institutions often consider SMEs high-risk borrowers, which restricts their access to credit and essential financial services (Olorunsola & Nwankwo, 2023). For young entrepreneurs, especially in rural and marginalized communities, these challenges are even more pronounced due to inadequate education, poor digital literacy, and lack of mentorship or professional networks (Taleat et al., 2025).

This complex web of environmental challenges has made it difficult for entrepreneurship to flourish in Nigeria, raising concerns about the country’s economic future and its ability to achieve the goals of sustainable development (Audu, 2017; Adeola & Jegede, 2017). While several studies have explored aspects of entrepreneurship in Nigeria, there remains a need to critically examine how the broader environment continues to inhibit its development and to identify practical and strategic solutions that can reverse this trend.

Despite the strategic importance of entrepreneurship to national development, Nigeria continues to struggle with creating a sustainable environment that supports the growth of small and medium-scale enterprises (SMEs). According to Olutunla (2001), SMEs play a vital role in promoting economic development by providing employment opportunities and contributing significantly to industrial output, yet their potential is often underutilized due to environmental barriers. Similarly, Ogujiuba (2004) emphasizes that SMEs serve as a backbone for economic diversification in developing nations but are frequently hindered by structural deficiencies and policy inconsistencies. Entrepreneurs often encounter systemic challenges that impede business establishment and expansion. These include poor infrastructure, limited government support, insecurity, corruption, and restrictive regulatory frameworks. These environmental constraints not only limit business success but also deter potential entrepreneurs, thereby weakening the country's economic resilience and reducing opportunities for job creation (Adebayo & Oviawe, 2016). The inability to overcome these constraints raises critical questions about the effectiveness of current policies and the future of entrepreneurship in Nigeria. Hence, the need to revisit these issues, for a practical solution.

The reviewed literature reveals that environmental constraints are widely acknowledged as critical challenges to entrepreneurship in Nigeria. According to Ihugba, et al, (2013), issues such as inadequate infrastructure, corruption, and poor institutional support remain significant barriers. However, existing studies often treat these constraints in isolation. For example, Sulaimon and Olayiwola (2016) examined government policy inconsistency and electricity supply without linking them to other constraints, while (Adeola & Jegede 2017) focused mainly on financial and environmental factors. Other scholars, such as Ikuemonisan (2024), have analyzed these challenges but without fully contextualizing their cumulative impact. Additionally, studies are divided Gumel (2019) argues that government policies and technology interventions are already reducing entrepreneurial difficulties, whereas Ihugba et al. (2013) maintain that poor implementation and bureaucratic inefficiency continue to worsen the situation.

This scholarly divide leaves a clear knowledge gap. There is limited research that simultaneously evaluates environmental barriers, their specific impacts on SMEs, the effectiveness of current interventions, and sustainable recommendations under a unified theoretical lens. This Paper addresses that void by offering an integrated and critical analysis, backed by recent evidence, to propose a comprehensive path forward for entrepreneurship in Nigeria.

By reviewing existing knowledge and expert opinions on these issues, this study aims to bridge the gap between theory and practical solutions, ultimately recommending strategic interventions that could foster a more enabling environment for entrepreneurship in Nigeria.

Therefore, the objectives of this paper are as follows:

1. To identify the key environmental constraints inhibiting entrepreneurial development in Nigeria.

2. To examine the impact of these constraints on small and medium-scale enterprises.

3. To analyze existing policies and interventions aimed at promoting entrepreneurship in Nigeria.

4. To propose strategic recommendations and the way forward for improving the entrepreneurial environment in Nigeria.

2.0 Literature Review

This literature review provides a conceptual and empirical analysis of recent scholarly works on environmental constraints affecting entrepreneurship in Nigeria. It is structured around the study's four core objectives. A theoretical framework is also presented to guide understanding of the subject.

Environmental Constraints Affecting Entrepreneurship in Nigeria

Entrepreneurship in Nigeria operates within a challenging macroeconomic environment. Scholars have identified infrastructural deficits, unreliable electricity supply, poor road networks, insecurity, and unstable government policies as major impediments to entrepreneurial growth (Okonkwo & Udo, 2023). Similarly, Adeboye and Ibrahim (2022) argue that the lack of access to clean water, transport, and telecommunication services significantly reduces the competitiveness of local SMEs.

Ifeanyi and Bolanle (2024) provide evidence from southern Nigeria, showing how poor infrastructure discourages young entrepreneurs from setting up businesses in rural areas. Additionally, Bello and Hassan (2022) contend that political instability and regulatory inconsistencies are core barriers preventing foreign direct investment and indigenous entrepreneurial ventures. While some authors, like Lawal et al. (2023), believe digital innovation is slowly mitigating infrastructural barriers, others such as Onuorah and Nwosu (2022) insist that deeper structural reforms are required before technology can be transformative.

Environmental barriers affect not only the birth of new ventures but also their ability to scale and survive. Umeh and Adekunle (2023) observe that over 60% of Nigerian SMEs fail within their first five years, largely due to environmental challenges. According to Olayinka and Dogo (2024), limited access to finance and erratic power supply are primary reasons why micro and small businesses struggle with operational costs.

Ezenwa and Adamu (2022) conducted a study on SMEs in Abuja and reported that insecurity—especially in the northern belt—has forced many entrepreneurs to relocate or shut down operations. Conversely, Salami and Oke (2023) suggest that digital entrepreneurs are more resilient to these barriers due to lower physical infrastructure requirements.

Each of the environmental factors is carefully discussed below.

-Economic and Infrastructural Barriers

Economic and infrastructural barriers remain some of the most persistent challenges to entrepreneurship in Nigeria. Egere (2024) observes that infrastructural decay, particularly poor electricity supply and unreliable transport systems, makes the cost of doing business prohibitively high and reduces the competitiveness of local firms. Similarly, Umar, et al, (2022) argue that inadequate road networks and weak information and communication technology (ICT) services hinder entrepreneurs from reaching wider markets. Abimbola, et al, (2011) further emphasize that infrastructural deficits are even more severe for rural entrepreneurs, especially those engaged in agribusiness, who face higher costs in transporting goods to urban centers. Audu (2017) adds that power shortages and inefficient telecommunication services force small enterprises to rely on costly alternatives, thereby reducing profit margins. Finally, Adeola and Jegede (2017) note that poor infrastructure is intertwined with broader economic instability, creating a hostile environment for entrepreneurial growth. Together, these scholars demonstrate that without strong infrastructure, entrepreneurship cannot thrive in Nigeria regardless of individual initiative.

-Government Policies, Interventions and Regulatory Frameworks

The role of government policies and regulatory frameworks in shaping entrepreneurship in Nigeria has been widely studied. Akinyemi (2018) argues that inconsistent government policies and frequent regulatory changes discourage long-term investments in small and medium-sized enterprises. Nwabuatu, et al, (2025) point out that bureaucratic red tape and unclear licensing procedures delay business registration and discourage informal operators from formalizing their enterprises.

Nigeria has introduced several entrepreneurship-supporting programs, such as N-Power, SMEDAN, and YouWin. However, the effectiveness of these initiatives remains under scrutiny. Adebisi and Nkanga (2023) examined the performance of SMEDAN and concluded that while the agency has trained many entrepreneurs, limited follow-up and funding challenges dilute its impact. Similarly, Musa and Abubakar (2022) criticize these programs as being urban-centric and politically driven rather than merit-based. In addition, Etuk and Kolawole (2023) argue that government interventions often lack stakeholder engagement and fail to address the specific needs of grassroots entrepreneurs. However, Amadi and Yusuf (2024) maintain that programs like the BOI Youth Entrepreneurship Support Scheme (YES-P) have shown promise in targeted skill acquisition.

Moreover, Akinyemi and Adejumo (2018) had earlier emphasized that although entrepreneurship support programmes exist, the lack of coordination among government agencies often leads to duplication and poor outcomes. According to Ihugba, et al, (2013), many entrepreneurship development schemes are undermined by corruption and inefficiency, meaning that intended benefits do not reach the target population. In addition, Umar et al. (2022) show that gaps in policy design and poor monitoring mechanisms result in interventions that are poorly tailored to the needs of entrepreneurs. Collectively, these a more authors indicate that Nigeria's regulatory and policy environment often stifles rather than promotes entrepreneurship.

Another major issue is the lack of consistency in government policies related to business registration, taxation, and regulatory compliance. Entrepreneurs often face bureaucratic bottlenecks that delay business approvals and create uncertainty in the business environment (Akinyemi, 2018; Nwabuatu et al., 2025). Literature also points to corruption within government agencies, where bribes and unofficial payments are sometimes required to move processes forward (Ihugba et al., 2013; Okafor, 2019; Achebe, 2010).

In all of these, one thing is clear: existing policies and government interventions have not yielded the expected results in entrepreneurship development in Nigeria.

-Access to Finance and Support Systems

Access to finance is consistently identified as one of the greatest obstacles to entrepreneurial success in Nigeria. Watse (2017) observes that the inability of small business owners to provide collateral often prevents them from obtaining loans from commercial banks. Gumel (2019) adds that while government agencies such as the Bank of Industry have tried to provide funding, these schemes often reach only a small fraction of potential beneficiaries. Aina (2025) highlights the rise of digital finance and fintech platforms as an emerging solution, but notes that access remains uneven and limited mainly to urban entrepreneurs. According to Olowe, Moradeyo, and Babalola (2013), microfinance institutions, though designed to serve small businesses, often charge high interest rates that discourage uptake. Similarly, Adeoti (2012) points out that financial literacy gaps reduce entrepreneurs' ability to take advantage of available opportunities, making support systems ineffective. The consensus among these authors is that without accessible and affordable finance, even the most innovative entrepreneurs struggle to sustain or expand their businesses.

-Weak Entrepreneurial Education and Cultural Barriers

There is also a gap in entrepreneurial education and mindset, especially among the youth. Many graduates lack the practical skills and exposure needed to start or sustain a business (Chukwuma-

Nwuba, 2018), even though entrepreneurship is a compulsory course taught in higher institutions of learning in Nigeria. Additionally, societal attitudes that favor white-collar jobs over entrepreneurship discourage innovation and risk-taking (Billy, 2019; Abimbola et al., 2011). Cultural expectations, particularly around gender roles, also limit the participation of women in entrepreneurial ventures (Okafor & Onuoha, 2016; WJARR, 2022).

-Security Challenges and Corruption

Security concerns and corruption constitute another significant barrier to entrepreneurship in Nigeria. Sanni (2023) notes that insecurity, including insurgency and armed banditry, raises the cost of doing business by discouraging investment and disrupting supply chains. In their study, Agbaeze, et al, (2023) show that frequent clashes in rural and semi-urban communities reduce the stability needed for small firms to grow. Corruption compounds these problems. Ihugba, et al, (2013) argue that bureaucratic rent-seeking by government officials creates an additional financial burden on entrepreneurs seeking access to public services or support funds. National reviews of corruption by Achebe (2010) also point to a culture of graft that permeates both public and private sectors, further discouraging innovation. Likewise, Okafor (2019) finds that entrepreneurs in Nigeria often have to pay unofficial fees to secure contracts or licenses, which increases the cost of starting and running businesses. As these authors suggest, security and corruption are deeply intertwined, creating an unpredictable environment that discourages both local and foreign entrepreneurs.

-Socio-Cultural Influences on Entrepreneurial Behaviours

Socio-cultural factors also play a decisive role in shaping entrepreneurship in Nigeria. Chukwuma-Nwuba (2018) emphasizes that cultural values and community expectations influence entrepreneurial intentions and often determine whether individuals are willing to take risks. Abimbola, Agboola, and Adejumo (2011) note that societal stigma attached to business failure discourages innovation, since entrepreneurs fear reputational damage. Billy (2019) reports that gender norms and family expectations can either limit or encourage entrepreneurial activity, with women often facing more restrictive barriers. Similarly, Okafor and Onuoha (2016) show that religious beliefs and traditional practices can affect decisions on investment, partnership, and business ethics. WJARR (2022) study highlights that while community networks sometimes provide support and social capital, they can also restrict expansion if entrepreneurs are pressured to prioritize communal obligations over business growth. Together, these works reveal that socio-cultural influences interact with economic realities, shaping the choices, opportunities, and limitations experienced by Nigerian entrepreneurs.

While these findings offer valuable insights into environmental constraints faced by entrepreneurs in Nigeria, they fail to provide a strategic and integrated approach to dealing with the issues raised. Hence, this study.

Theoretical Framework: The Ecological Systems Theory of Entrepreneurship

To ground this analysis, this Paper adopts the Ecological Systems Theory of Entrepreneurship proposed by Schoon and Duckworth (2012). This theory posits that entrepreneurship does not occur in a vacuum but is influenced by interrelated environmental layers—microsystem (individual skills), mesosystem (education, family support), exosystem (infrastructure, financial institutions), and macrosystem (culture, national policies).

Applying this theory to Nigeria, the environmental constraints faced by entrepreneurs can be understood as systemic interactions between personal capability and the surrounding economic and institutional structures. This theoretical lens enables a holistic analysis of the barriers to entrepreneurship, offering a foundation for multidimensional policy interventions.

3.0 Methodology

This is a literature survey based on documentary evidence. It is a content (thematic) analysis where literature on each subject is carefully analysed to ascertain the situation of each environmental factor of entrepreneurship in Nigeria. This method involves the critical examination and interpretation of existing literature, published research, government reports, policy documents, journal articles, and other credible secondary sources related to entrepreneurship and environmental challenges in Nigeria.

Through this method, the study examines a broad range of factors such as: economic and infrastructural barriers; government policies and regulatory frameworks; security challenges and corruption; access to finance and support systems; and socio-cultural influences on entrepreneurial behaviours. The findings of the various works are analyzed in the following session.

4.0 Discussion

Studies by Achebe (2010), Abimbola et al. (2011), Adeoti (2012), Ihugba et al. (2013), Olowe et al. (2013), Onuoha (2016), Audu (2017), Adeola and Jegede (2017), Watse (2017), Akinyemi (2018), Chukwuma-Nwuba (2018), Billy (2019), Gumel (2019), Okafor (2019), Umar et al. (2022), Agbaeze et al. (2023), Sanni (2023), Egere (2024), Aina (2025), and Nwabuatu et al. (2025) consistently highlight and reveal a range of interrelated environmental constraints that continue to inhibit the growth and sustainability of entrepreneurship in Nigeria, thus showing the major challenges faced by Nigerian entrepreneurs.

One of the most prominent issues of entrepreneurship in Nigeria is the poor state of infrastructure, particularly in areas such as electricity, road networks, and internet connectivity. Studies reviewed agree that irregular power supply significantly increases the cost of doing business, forcing many entrepreneurs to rely on alternative energy sources like generators, and solar panels which are expensive and sometimes unsustainable (Audu, 2017; Egere, 2024). Poor road conditions also hinder the transportation of goods and services, especially for entrepreneurs operating in rural areas (Abimbola et al., 2011; Adeola & Jegede, 2017; Umar et al., 2022). Government and private firms must wake up to their social responsibilities in this regard.

Limited access to affordable finance is another major barrier to entrepreneurship. Although several government schemes and microfinance institutions exist, the procedures for accessing these funds are often complex, and interest rates remain high (Watse, 2017; Olowe et al., 2013). Collateral requirements by commercial banks are beyond the reach of many small-scale business owners, especially youth and women entrepreneurs (Gumel, 2019; Aina, 2025; Adeoti, 2012). This calls for the attention of government, finance houses and private financial institutions in providing access to finance for entrepreneurs, especially start-ups.

The issue of insecurity was also emphasized in the literature. The rise in armed robbery, kidnapping, and insurgency in many parts of the country has discouraged investment and made it difficult for businesses to operate freely (Sanni, 2023; Agbaeze et al., 2023). This has led to the relocation or closure of businesses in high-risk areas, further weakening entrepreneurial activity (Ihugba et al., 2013). Corruption in obtaining loans and support from government through its officials have created a bottleneck in entrepreneurship development (Okafor, 2009; Achebe, 2010; and Ihugba et al., 2013). Nigerian government must wake up to its responsibility in providing security so as not to lase its sovereign state. More so as the issue is not just affecting entrepreneurship, but attracting global attention negatively.

Whereas, literature reveal that support systems such as mentorship, incubation hubs, and business development services are either lacking or insufficient in most parts of the country. This makes it difficult for startups to survive beyond the early stages, as they lack the guidance and structure needed to grow and scale their businesses (Adeoti, 2012; Gumel, 2019; Aina, 2025; Olowe et al., 2013; Watse, 2017). Support programmer should be readily available and accessible to encourage entrepreneurs. Again, government should spearhead these. However, private organizations and well-meaning individuals can contribute to the success of these programs.

Nevertheless, recent literature proposed several strategies to address entrepreneurship barriers in Nigeria, there is no consensus on which strategies are most practical or scalable. Ojeifo and Ibukun (2022) advocate for public-private partnerships to fix infrastructure, whereas

Njoku and Olaniyan (2023) emphasize education reforms to promote entrepreneurship from secondary school level. Others, like Tunde and Ogbonna (2024), propose tax relief, credit guarantees, and regional SME hubs as more viable paths to entrepreneurial revitalization.

However, this paper offers integrated strategies as a way forward. This is because entrepreneurship development in Nigeria requires an aggressive approach, combining both grassroots development and institutional reforms in order to offer both short term solutions and long-term sustainability frameworks; and calling for the cooperation of government and all stakeholders of the Nigerian economy in proffering solutions to the issues of entrepreneurship in Nigeria.

5.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

It is evident from the evaluation of the work of previous scholars, as shown above, that environmental constraints continue to cripple the growth of entrepreneurship in Nigeria, and unless these issues are addressed with urgency and sincerity, the dream of a thriving entrepreneurial ecosystem will remain distant. The objectives of this paper is to uncover the root causes of these constraints and to chart a path forward. Having reviewed the evidence and examined the realities, it is clear that Nigeria's entrepreneurial potential is not limited by a lack of ideas or ambition, but by the hostile environment in which these ideas are forced to survive.

The time for theoretical discussions and half-hearted interventions is over. Nigeria must take decisive steps to remove the barriers strangling entrepreneurship. Infrastructure must be fixed not later, but now. Constant power supply, accessible roads, and reliable communication networks are not luxuries; they are necessities for business survival. Government must stop paying lip service to development and start delivering visible, tangible results.

Policy inconsistency and bureaucratic red tape must be addressed. Entrepreneurs deserve a system that supports them, not one that frustrates them. Clear, stable policies and digital processes should be adopted across all regulatory and business registration agencies to eliminate corruption and delays. Those responsible for frustrating entrepreneurs through outdated systems and corrupt practices must be held accountable.

On access to finance, the study uphold that the Central Bank of Nigeria and commercial banks develop tailored funding programs for start-ups and small businesses with minimal collateral and business-friendly interest rates. Government must back these programs with guarantees and ensure funds are reaching genuine entrepreneurs, not political cronies.

Insecurity must no longer be treated as a distant problem—it is a direct threat to economic progress. The government must invest in intelligence, technology, and local security initiatives to protect business owners and restore confidence in the safety of lives and investments across the country.

Furthermore, the current education system must be restructured to reflect the realities of a modern economy. Entrepreneurial thinking, innovation, and practical skill acquisition must be part of every Nigerian student's training from an early age. Our youths must be prepared not just to seek jobs, but to create them.

Finally, support systems like mentorship, business incubators, and innovation hubs must be prioritized. Government should partner with the private sector, NGOs, and international organizations to build these systems in every state, especially in underserved areas. Entrepreneurs should not be left to navigate the journey alone they need guidance, networks, and resources to scale their ideas into sustainable ventures.

In conclusion, Nigeria cannot afford to continue on its current path if it truly desires economic independence and inclusive development. Entrepreneurship is the key to unlocking wealth, reducing unemployment, and driving innovation. The country must act boldly, decisively, and immediately to eliminate the environmental constraints that stand in the way. Anything less is a betrayal of the potential and resilience of millions of Nigerians ready to build, innovate, and lead.

6.0 Contribution to Knowledge

This study has made a significant contribution to the existing body of knowledge on entrepreneurship in Nigeria by critically examining the environmental constraints that continue to undermine the development of entrepreneurial ventures across the country. Unlike many previous studies that merely highlight these challenges in isolation, this work has taken a comprehensive, literature-driven approach to connect the dots between infrastructure deficits, policy instability, insecurity, lack of funding, cultural barriers, and weak support systems—all within the Nigerian context.

Focusing on documented literatures survey, this study fills a crucial gap in scholarly literature by synthesizing fragmented findings from various sources and presenting them as a unified narrative. It not only identifies the persistent challenges but also offers bold, actionable, and context-specific recommendations that reflect current realities rather than generic, theoretical solutions. This makes the study not just academically relevant, but also practically useful for policymakers, educators, financial institutions, and development agencies.

Furthermore, this study strengthens the argument that entrepreneurship in Nigeria cannot thrive in a vacuum. It must be deliberately supported by an enabling environment. By asserting this position clearly and strongly, the work challenges the prevailing notion that entrepreneurs fail solely due to personal inadequacies or lack of skills. Instead, it shifts the focus toward the structural and systemic issues that must be addressed as a matter of urgency.

In essence, this study contributes a strong, unremorseful voice to the ongoing discourse, demanding that environmental reforms must be the foundation for entrepreneurial success in Nigeria. It also lays the groundwork for future studies to build upon this framework and evaluate the implementation of the recommendations provided. Through this, the study serves both as a mirror reflecting current realities and as a map pointing the way forward.

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