



## Entrepreneurs Performance on Identified Small/Medium Scale Business in South Africa: Prospects and Challenges.

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**ABSTRACT:** People who are engaged in entrepreneurship develop new ideas and position themselves in shifting an untapped market where they find opportunities that others may have overlooked. However, they are often faced with several challenges. It is these challenges that deter them from achieving a well-structured business that assist in developing and creating job for many who are unemployed. The purpose of this paper is to identify business performance, growth and challenges experienced by entrepreneurs in fulfilling their business demands that assist them in maximizing their performance.

The study made use of quantitative approach. Through a closed ended questionnaire as well as judgmental sampling to obtain responses from the 406 entrepreneurial business owners. An SPSS technique was used as extraction method with preparation, data capturing, cleaning and coding and the data was analysed using frequencies and percentages.

The findings indicate that entrepreneurs irrespective of the type of business venture enjoy independence thus with their resources they can grow their business. It was also revealed that entrepreneurs have certain characteristics that positively influence their business growth. At the same time several challenges that also limits their performance level, such as lack of capital, lack of human resources management skills, crime and corruption, etc., these affects their competitive advantages. Therefore, there is need that government and other agencies should provide proper support mechanism, make provision for access to loan no matter how little and channel resources to entrepreneurs for them to actively grow their business.

**Keywords:** Entrepreneurs, Growth, Challenges, Business performance, South Africa

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### I. INTRODUCTION

Studies have indicated that entrepreneur aids in shaping the transformation that take place in the development of the country's economy and as such the growth indication and economic recognition of entrepreneurs in South Africa has increased over the years (Urban & Naidoo, 2012).

Ultimately, during the apartheid in South Africa, many action were used to grow the economy especially in the entrepreneurial sector (Chinomona & Maziriri, 2015). Several policies and measures have been aimed to enhance the smooth running of small businesses yet; this sector continues to face a wide range of pressure that limits them in achieving their objectives in the various aspects Urban and Naidoo (2012). This means that the new and existing entrepreneurs are not able to identify their weak spots in order to increase their chances of success and create values that will improve their performance (Galonska, 2015).

Most entrepreneurs have shown a reduction in the level of activities. They do not grow beyond the survival stage as compared to other countries and the number of entrepreneurial failures increased between 50% and 95% and almost 75% of advanced entrepreneurs not been entrenched in their business, this has become like the biggest in nature (Neneh, 2012).

To curb these impediments, the study seeks to explore and assimilate the growth and the challenges of entrepreneurs and to identify business approach that can be used to improve entrepreneurial businesses in South Africa.

## **II. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

The research objectives seek to:

- i. identify the challenges affecting entrepreneurial performances in Gauteng province
- ii. suggest the steps that will be taken to enhance the growth and performance of entrepreneurs in Gauteng province.

## **III. ATTRIBUTE AND MEASURES OF ENTREPRENEURS: CONCEPTUAL REVIEW**

An entrepreneur is defined as someone who is moved with a need to acquire benefit and have the capacity to engage in trade (Boyett, 1996). Herbert and Link (2009) defines an entrepreneur as that person that perform in a way that transacts business benefit when exercising work acumen in the era of worry. This worry takes place when they transact their goods at a particular amount and at a certain cost to gain, at a specific disparity which is to their benefit (Hamilton & Harper, 1994). An entrepreneur is someone who displays a "heroic creator" that is special people who achieve things that most people do not achieve (Johnsen & Sorensen, 2017). Their accomplishments are based on some special inner qualities. Manyaka-Boshielo (2017) views an entrepreneur as any individual who sees a gap and from their creative knowledge and even their inability to obtain resources, decides to use their skills to acquire success in the predominant economic situation in their environment.

More so, there is a global definition of entrepreneur which is that of an individual builder, who perceives new business opportunities, creates businesses where there was never business, directs the business by using their own and borrowed capital, takes the associated risk and enjoys profits as reward for the effort (Chinomona & Maziriri, 2015 and International Labour Organisation, 2015). Andersson (2011) and Oviatt & McDougal (2005) also add that an entrepreneur is a person who discovers, evaluate, enact and exploit space universally to build commodities.

In present-day, vying and developing commodities around the continent requires an entrepreneur to possess not only the required skills needed to start a business, but to have technical understanding needed for initiating and operating the business for the purpose of profit and growth Mahadea and Pillay (2008). Possessing certain attributes comes beyond looking outside of the ethnic environment which Altinay (2008) referred to as "breakout" into the mainstream markets. That is to become an innovator where new ideas are constantly used to address the need of the business. Many researchers have identified certain typology and characteristics or, at least, competencies that contribute to the establishing a new business or existing business and its influence on success. Among these attributes Pinho and Sampaio de Sa (2014), Werthes, Mauer and Brettel (2018), highlights the need for self-achievement, creativity and initiative, strong persuasive power and risk-taking, self-assurance and bearing authority, problem-solving ability, autonomy, desire efficiency and need, enduring belief, and individual goals and hard work. However, these attributes may vary according to importance. For example, Werthes, et al., (2018), Pinho and Sampaio de Sa (2014) established that self-possession, creativity and newness are crucial to the commitment for personal growth while Sarri, Bakourous and Petridou (2010) argue that innovation is an important aspect that relates to receiving what the business offers and optimizing the way it generates and delivers its output and entrepreneurs with high alertness tend to achieve higher levels of behavioural commitment. They are always on the lookout for new business information and engage in proactive and vigorous activities for their new business. Building on these attributes requires entire entrepreneur competencies like behaviour, values, intelligence, independency, individuality, expertise and the ability for an outstanding industrialism (Ahmad, Ramayah, Wilson & Kummerow, 2010).

Measuring the level of entrepreneurship is the key to enhance development in many develop and developing countries. This is done through identifying various economic impact performed by small businesses that aid towards job creation and redistribution of economic activity. GEM contends that measuring the sole proprietorship skills is a way that permits for knowledgeable continental correlational differences like looking at official new firm registration figures of countries.

The fear of failure rate is used to measure the positive nature of people who perceived opportunities but with fear believed they cannot set up a business. People start a business because they desired to engage in business. Media attention for entrepreneurship measures entrepreneurship by reporting success stories to the public about entrepreneurs who engage in new businesses and are successful. Nascent entrepreneur measures entrepreneurship using the actively involved entrepreneurs who set up their own business or co-own business but have not been able to pay earnings, conducts, or any other amounts for a long time not necessarily over a period of 42 months (Turton & Herrington, 2012). Early-Stage Entrepreneurial Activity (TEA) is believed to be a growing sole proprietor of a current trade. That is people who operate recent trade who have been in enterprise for a longer period (Herrington, Kew & Penny, 2014).

#### **IV. FACTORS CONDUCTIVE FOR AN ENTREPRENEURSHIP ENVIRONMENT**

Entrepreneurial environment plays an important role in the success of a business. Its role is even more critical for entrepreneurs, since the loss or gain of a single customer can often determine their survival (Franco, Santos, Ramalho & Nunes, 2014). The overwhelming need for entrepreneurs to operate in a conducive environment that has maximum level of efficiency cannot be estimated. Franco, et al., (2014) asserts that possessing the necessary skills is mandatory for a business owner to thrive. Anyone committed in the world of business must have knowledge about the capacities of the market, since in a competitive environment; no business manages benefit an advantage and retain customers without it. It is this knowledge that distinguishes them from their competitors. Omerzeland Antoncic (2008) explain that an entrepreneur who learn and notice changes in their business environment is less uncertain about happenings in their business.

Similarly, environmental factors that can influence the performance of entrepreneurs are identified as the population size, proximity to civic area, business links and practices, assets and local government support for small businesses. Other factors as mentioned by McDonough and Commins (2000) are knowledge, the size of firm's productive capacity, the state of trusting on the price of goods and intrinsically identical products.

Hill (2001) on the other hand point out that the size of an entrepreneur is another factor that allows entrepreneurs to obtain a competitive advantage. This is because the allocation of organizational authorities and responsibility within a firm are not strong, practical and difficult unlike in large organizations. Thus, most entrepreneurial business has easy structures and methods that allows them easy and urgent response needs, network command, and good knowledge of and a nurture to attend to the needs of their customer. These factors are under regular pressure for the entrepreneur to maintain a competitive environment both in national and global market (Sing, Garg & Deshmukh, 2008).

Again, the level of social and business networks influences business performance (Pinho & Sampaio de Sa, 2014). Social networking anticipates that business owners have access to other networks structures and these structures will enable them possess assets that they may use to keep their business going (Greve & Salaff, 2003). Network and networking on the other hand add to the business formation, expansion and surge of business owners. These chains were linked to businesses that makes use of high technology and those that are confused about the state of future (Pinho & Sampaio de Sa, 2014). With this network, it will increase the entrepreneur's knowledge of opportunities, increase the range of action, and have access to important assets (e.g.: customers, suppliers, finance and premises, etc.) as well as obtain essential knowledge that allows them to deal with business development obstacles (Pinho & Sampaio de Sa, 2014).

In addition, business owners may be moved by places where shared assets and materials are obtained for the advancement of their business Westhead and Bastone (1999). They may also be triggered by entrepreneurial activity such as job displacement, previous work experience and governmental influences (Segal, Borgia & Schoenfeld, 2005). Thus, the issue of entrepreneurial environment has become one of the greatest problems faced by small businesses in their operations, but at the same time, one of the most essential business factors for entrepreneurial growth and survival (Reijonen & Laukkanen, 2010).

#### **V. ENTREPRENEURS CHALLENGES**

Entrepreneurs are faced by several challenges that prevent their businesses from growing. Several studies such as Chinomona and Maziriri (2015), Adisa, Abdulraheem and Mordi (2014), Aigbavboa and Thwala (2014) posit that challenges are barriers that prevent movement or access that affects both starting-up and operating a business. According to Herrington, Kew and Kew (2009) South Africa's achievement beyond the main GEM indicator can be linked mainly to the effect of global economic issue.

Lekhanya (2015), Lekhanya and Mason (2014), Urban and Naidoo (2012), Abor and Quartey (2010) highlight these challenges as:

##### **5.1 Access to Finance and Credit**

Financial problems are reported as one of the main problem facing entrepreneurs. All business requires financial resources to start and survive their business. According to the Global Entrepreneurial Monitor report, lack of access to finance and poor profitability is apparent in research done in both developed and developing countries (Herrington et al., 2009). Lekhanya and Mason (2014) add that wider access to financial services is attainable through better credit delivery, but finances available for entrepreneurs from lending financial institutions are more restricted than for big businesses. This is because financial institutions view many entrepreneurial business as high-risk businesses with poor collateral and believed that lending to entrepreneurs means high administrative costs in relation to the size of the loan. In essence, they require collateral and formal business records as criteria for considering a loan. As a result, business owners who lack collateral or have not kept formal records for their business find it less likely to be successful in approaching the financial institutions. However, majority of entrepreneurial businesses raise finance through friends and family or through informal lenders and personal savings (Adisa, et al., 2014).

## **5.2 Human Resource and Management Skills**

Any business without productive human inputs and solid structures that allows steady growth will be affected by its growth and survival of the business (Ademola, Olaleye, Olusuyi&Edun, 2013). Business built around the owner who refuses to separate ownership from the business but surrounds himself with family and relatives who are not competent often operate under poor managerial skills. These managerial skills are set of knowledge, competencies, behaviours and attitudes that contribute to personal effectiveness for a business. These skills can be in form of problem-solving, interpersonal communication; decision-making, assertive conduct, conflict resolution and negotiation which are necessary for the growth and survival of a business (Adisa, et al., 2014).

## **5.3 Innovation and Technology**

Innovation and technology are another barrier that affects the growth of entrepreneurial businesses. In today's business, technology plays a crucial role in the development of new businesses (Abor & Quartey, 2010). It does not only assist in evolving a multi-prong strategy but also help in assisting business opportunities (Olawale &Garwe, 2010). One of the reason entrepreneurs are not able to utilize technology is because of the high cost of electricity and petroleum. This may result to high cost of production which can adequately affect growth. In most cases, entrepreneurs utilize foreign technology with a scarce percentage of share ownership or leasing. They usually obtain foreign licenses, because local patent is difficult to obtain (Abor & Quartey, 2010).

## **5.4 Economic Variables and Access to Markets**

The difficulties encountered by an entrepreneur in obtaining economic goods affects the potential ways of their business (Seda, 2016; Ademola et al., 2013 and Nwankwo, Ewuim&Asoya, 2012). Some of these difficulties are the fiscal and monetary integrities of the government, hike in prices, lending rates and rate of exchange. These aspects impede the need for goods and services and thus the surge of entrepreneurial business. South Africa is not only currently faced by the increased lending rates but also the decrease in the growth (low consumption) of high lending rates and reduction in rate of exchange (Olawale &Garwe, 2010).

## **5.5 Regulation and Laws**

An entrepreneur who intends to start a business face high increase in the cost of their business set up. This cost may include licensing and registration needs which can cause excessive and unnecessary burdens on entrepreneurs (Nwankwo, et al., 2012 and Abor & Quartey, 2010). The strict employment protection laws faced by entrepreneurs (especially in terms of hiring and firing) were also perceived to be high to growing businesses. As people require free access to transact their personal affairs and be their own boss, they are partially eroded because they must act differently to the need of their customer and in the same way endure many laws and regulations (Seda, 2016). Entrepreneurs especially in Africa face greater regulatory hurdles because of demanding laws and regulations, difficulties in obtaining property rights, inadequate courts, weak institutions and infrastructures when doing business. This minimizes the importance of entrepreneurship for future individuals as well as people investing in countries.

## **5.6 Crime and Corruption**

Brown (2001) highlight that small business is one of the most affected sectors that experience misconduct and attack. This misconduct deters business activity, heart and benefit of businesses which reduces growth recession, for instance theft of property and money directly affects businesses; it indirectly limits business boldness, failure of contribution, displacement and the stability of the economic cycle (Mahadea& Pillay, 2008). Corruption on the other hand is also attached to issues with managerial conformity of business (Olawale &Garwe, 2010) and possess a difficult problem when venturing into business.

## **5.7 Lack of Education and training**

Entrepreneurs often lack education and training in running their business (Nwankwo, et al., 2012). According to Herrington and Wood (2003) there has been a reduction in the level of education and training for managing upcoming businesses in South Africa. Most entrepreneurs go into business with little or no experience about the business and because they neglect obtaining sufficient information or required training, they face challenges in successfully growing the business. This type of behaviour is a common killer start-up for many entrepreneurs. Thus, entrepreneurs require not only technical competence, but also adequate training is the soul of business survival.

## **5.8 Infrastructure**

Infrastructure has always and continues to be a key constraint to economic growth and sustainability in many developing countries. One of the key limitations to entrepreneurial growth is the lack of availability of

physical infrastructures. Which pose serious impact to the cost of doing business. Infrastructure is a critical enabler factor for doing business such as utilities and transport, telecommunication, quality of housing, land or space at affordable prices and electricity (GEM South Africa report 2014).

**5.9 Limitations in Research and Development (R&D)**

Research and development abilities are necessary for an entrepreneurs’ development. This is because it determines the idea needed for them to develop a business (Seda, 2016). Research and development give businesses the opportunity to obtain ideas that will be used to solve their problems and find solutions to it. As Maas, De Coning and Smit (1999) confirm that businesses with great ideas are most likely to advance more than local start-up businesses.

**VI. METHODOLOGY**

In this study, quantitative method was employed using a closed-ended structured questionnaire to obtain information from the respondents. Using this method, the researcher will be able to use the quantitative or numerical data which can also be called nominal (yes/no) or ordinal data (strongly agree/agree/neutral/disagree/strongly disagree) to conduct the study (Zohrabi, 2013). The study used a non-probability sampling in the form of Judgmental sampling also known as purposive sampling. The targeted participants of this study were small and medium business owners and managers in Gauteng province. The identified group used in this study was 406 business owners/managers. The sample was collected from the three major cities in Gauteng, namely Tshwane, Ekurhuleni and Johannesburg. Therefore, in order to access more accurately the sample size, the following formula was in used:

$$n = \frac{(1.96)^2 pq}{d^2}$$

$\times \quad n = \frac{(1.96)^2 pq}{d^2} = \frac{3.8416 \times 0.5 \times 0.5}{0.05^2} = \frac{0.9604}{0.0025} = 384.16$

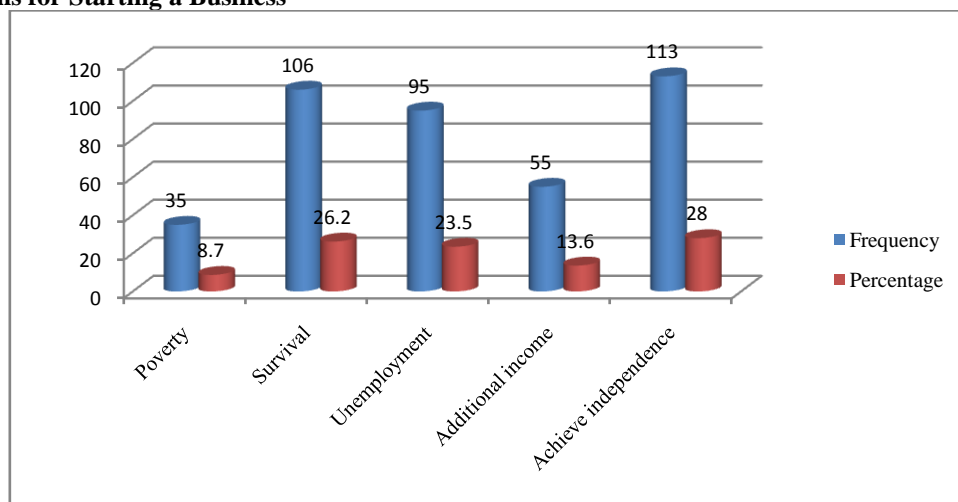
Thus, the minimum sample size would be 385

The business participant used for this study was a total of 406, because of the high number of business owners and managers engaged in small business. A SPSS technique was used as extraction method starting with preparation, data capturing, cleaning and coding (Njiro, Mazwai & Urban, 2010). The data were then analysed in terms of frequencies and percentages.

**VII. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

The key results obtained from the research conducted of the sampled business owners and managers include the growth and challenges of entrepreneurs in South Africa. The findings were summarized using frequencies and percentages as shown in the figure below.

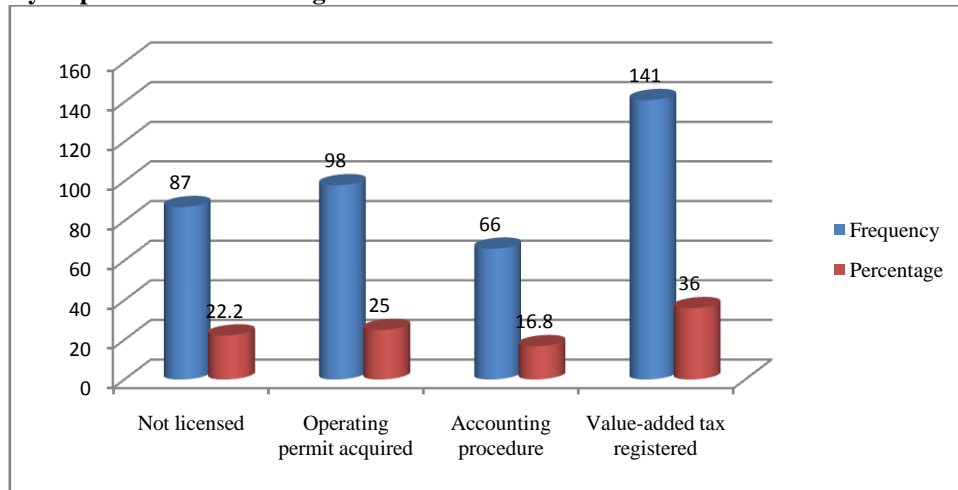
**7.1 Reasons for Starting a Business**



**Diagram (1)**

The result indicates that entrepreneurs start their businesses because of the need to become their own boss. This gives them the opportunity to be in control, manage and direct the affairs of their business. They become confident of their abilities, have internal drive towards success, and assume self-respect (Slocum, 1996). Seeking independence from others sometimes result in lack of motivation to perform actively in larger bureaucratic organization. In the work by Kirkwood (2009), Clark and Drinkwater (2003), they observed that the desire for self-owned is the ability to manage and control a business venture which is one of the most essential reasons entrepreneurs start a business.

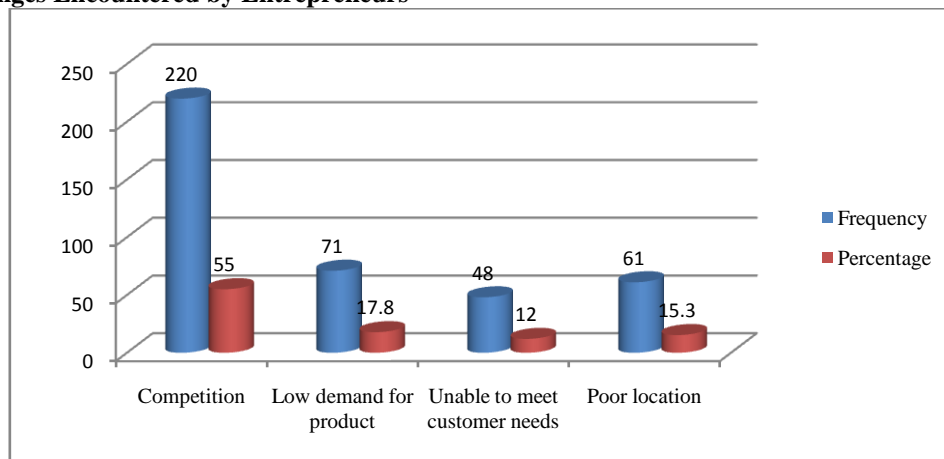
**7.2 Formality Experienced in Running a Business**



**Diagram (2)**

Majority of business owners who operate on their own usually go through registering their business. This gives them the ability to independently acquire, manage and utilize all necessary privileges needed for an entrepreneur business like the right to loan money from the bank or any financial institution to grow their business into a large business.

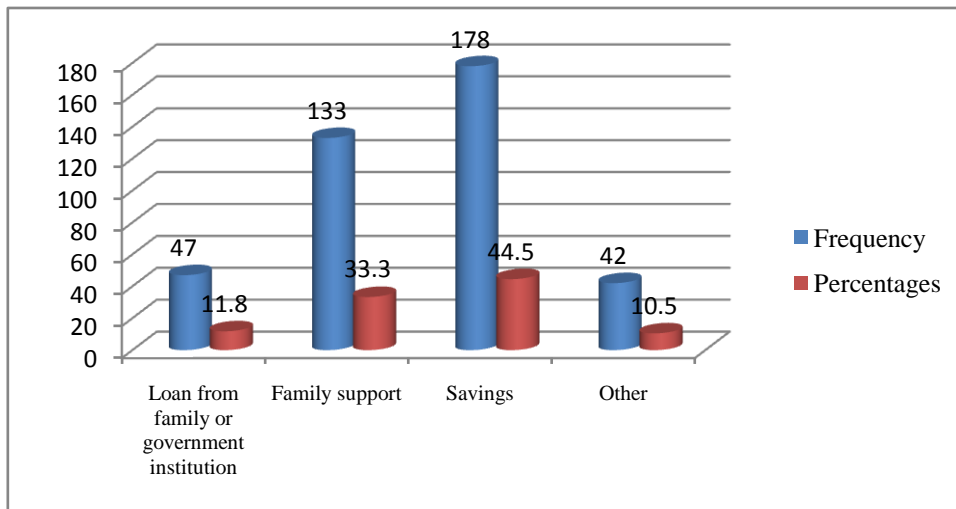
**7.3 Challenges Encountered by Entrepreneurs**



**Diagram (3)**

Every business needs competition to grow. Competition is one of the most powerful forces that drive entrepreneurs to improve their business. Entrepreneurs need to always be on top of their game in order to continuously grow and become successful in their business. Without competition, entrepreneurs will not be able to strengthen their innovative and creative skills to grow their business as well as retain their customers by so doing develop their value creation strategy. Businesses are great in creating values and making their own advantage by organizing ways to provide ways for upcoming value creation (Nickerson, Silverman & Zenger, 2007). With value creation, they can focus on the need of their customers or would be customers and attend to their makeshifts as well as maintain a competitive structure.

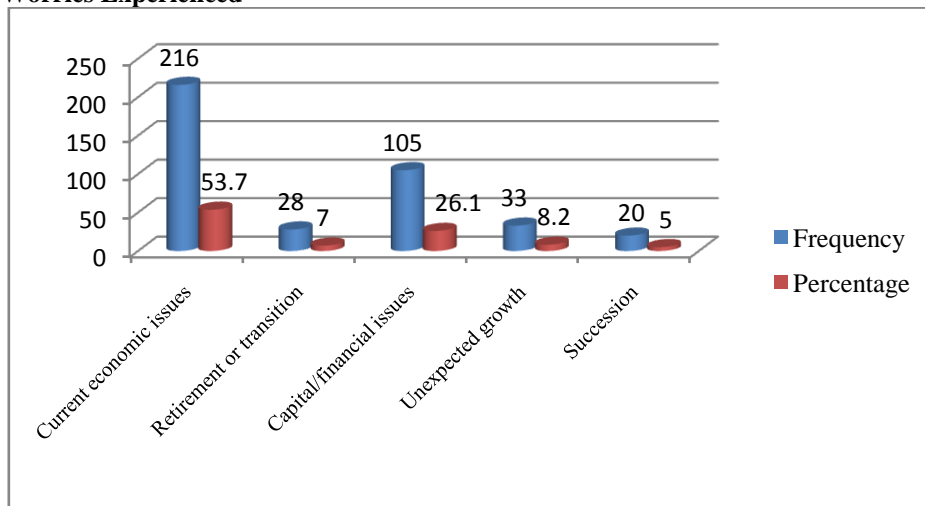
**7.4 Resource Availability**



**Diagram (4)**

The unavailability of finance and inadequate profits are one of the key reasons for business to fail. GEM South Africa 2014 report such, as lack of production of good business design like to finance institution, needy market research and lack of reasonable business idea has resulted many entrepreneurs to boycott borrowing money to saving money for their business has hindered the growth of many entrepreneurial businesses from going global (Herrington, et al., 2009). For a business to grow successfully, it is essential that both financially and physical support be injected into the business, thus balancing the inflow of goods and services to bring about business stability.

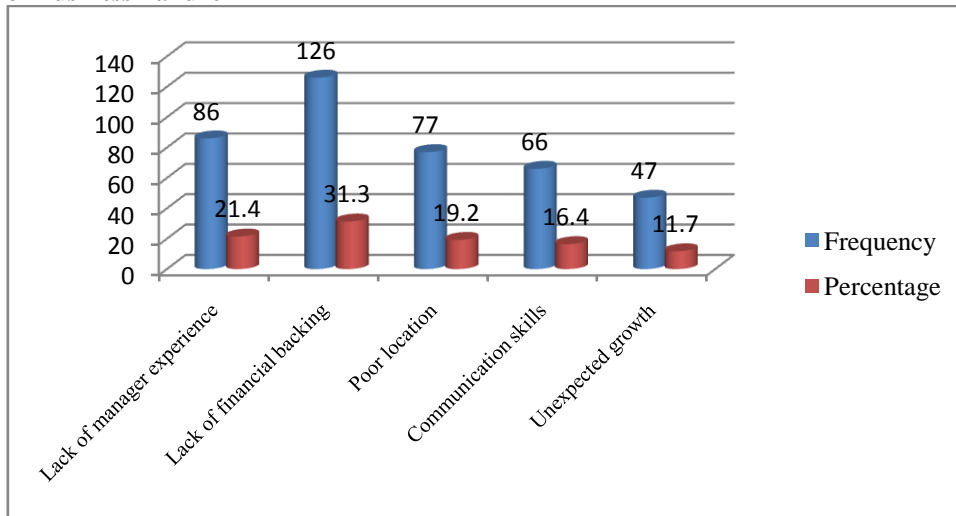
**7.5 Biggest Worries Experienced**



**Diagram (5)**

The economic instability is one of the biggest challenges entrepreneurs faces as a result of uncertainty in the business world (Thurik&Wennekers, 2004). Economic issues emanate from various aspects but most especially it is through government policies. Government may decide to introduce certain policies that will be difficult or contradicts a business owner’s idea or marketing principles; thereby limiting the owner from proper planning that can grow or impact positively to their business success (Akinruwa, Awolusi, &Ibojo, 2013). Government creates rules and frameworks compelling entrepreneurs to change the way they conduct their business. This government policy formulation system causes economic uncertainty that can promote innovation and new entrepreneur start-up. Thus, as part of government decisions to boost entrepreneurs’ performance, policy must be established to strengthen the financial support mechanisms of the entrepreneurs from the financial institution (Akinruwa et al., 2013).

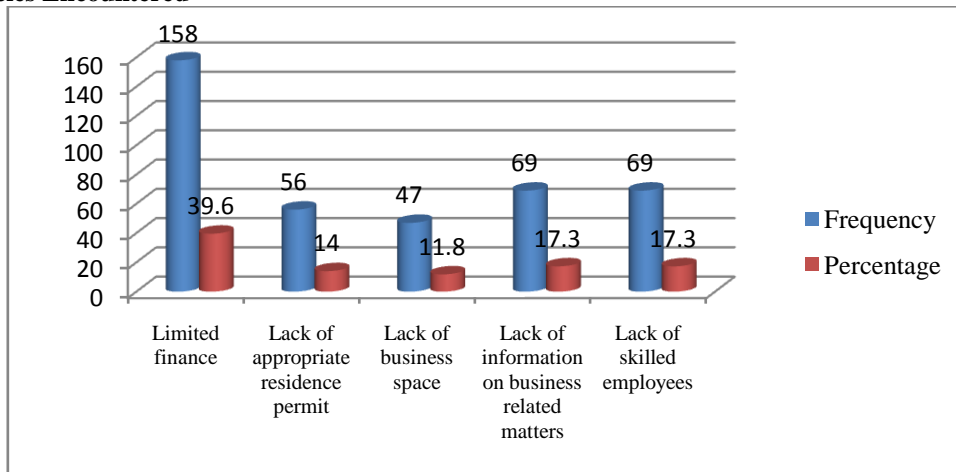
**7.6 Causes of Business Failure**



**Diagram (6)**

The lack of financial backing has become a great concern for every entrepreneur since it determines the performance of a business. All entrepreneurs require financial resource for effective functioning of their business. BanaboandKoroye (2011) highlight that through lending activities, funds are being injected into the economy for effective utilization of entrepreneurs’ performance. They presume that business owners can access appropriate finance that will be used to grow their business (Olawale &Garwe, 2010). Lack of financial backing or unavailability can hinder business growth. Therefore, the need to access finances either from families and friends, or from any formal known market source like the banks, business enterprises can positively make a great impact to the growth of entrepreneurs’ businesses.

**7.7 Obstacles Encountered**



**Diagram (7)**

Finance increases the performance of an entrepreneur by 25%. Most entrepreneurs do not grow because of the lack of finance and access to credit facilities (Ogunjuiba, Ohuche & Adenuga, 2004). The inability of an entrepreneur to access finance constitutes a great problem both on the enterprises and the owners. Therefore, the inadequate financial support will pose a huge problem towards the growth and development of a new business establishment.

**VIII. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This paper looked at the growth and the challenges encountered by entrepreneurial business performance in Gauteng province South Africa. From this finding, it was revealed that entrepreneurs have certain characteristics that positively affect their business growth. At the same time, they equally face several challenges that also limit their performance level. From the results obtained, it was seen that people engage in entrepreneurial business because they want to achieve independence and with their value-added tax registration



and savings, they can access and increase their resources to grow the business. This is a vital tool many upcoming and existing entrepreneurs should imbibe to remain in business. However, it was revealed that competition, with current economic issues, lack of financial backing and limited finance entrepreneurs continues to fail.

Therefore, there is need that government and other agencies should provide proper support mechanism, make provision for access to loan no matter how little and channel resources to entrepreneurs for them to actively grow their business. This can be done by obtaining information on education level of the entrepreneur to see they are not debt risk before assisting them financially. Government should also open centres that will specifically attend to entrepreneurs' challenges while at the same time giving advice on management of small business to both intending and existing entrepreneurs. Enforcing policies on entrepreneurial activities should not be too rigid in that it becomes difficult for them to operate their business. Again, corrective measures should be put in place when entrepreneurs find it difficult or fails to adhere to the policies by so doing, they become firm to adopt various related business policies. Finally, training of entrepreneurs should be an on-going activity because it will help boost their confidence level as well as enable them to develop managerial skills that will assist the growth and performance of their business.

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