Int Journal of Social Sciences Management and Entrepreneurship 8(3): 304-313 2024

ISSN 2411-7323

www.sagepublishers.com

ENTREPRENEURIAL SKILLS AND GROWTH OF ORGANIC MICRO AND SMALL AGRIBUSINESS ENTERPRISES IN KIAMBU COUNTY, KENYA

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to assess entrepreneurial skills and growth of organic micro and small agribusiness enterprises in Kiambu County, Kenya. The study utilized a descriptive survey research design. The population consisted registered organic micro and small agribusiness enterprises in Kiambu County, Kenya. According to CIDP (2019) Kiambu County has a total of 2,647 SMEs and over 50,000 Micro Enterprises. Purposive sampling was applied as the sampling technique to determine the study sample from the twelve sub-counties including Gatundu North, Gatundu South, Juja, Kabete, Kiambaa, Kiambu, Kikuyu, Limuru, Lari, Ruiru, Thika East and Thika West. The study sample size was 384 as calculated using Yamane Formula. Primary data was used in this study and was collected using questionnaires. The research adopted drop and pick later method to issue the questionnaires and leaving them with the participants and later pick them after they were duly completed. The questionnaire was tested for validity proof and reliability by discussing with fifteen randomly selected respondents and applying the most common internal consistency measure known as Cronbach's Alpha (α) which was assessed using SPSS. The recommended value of 0.7 was used as a cut–off measure. From the pilot findings, all the variables had attained the minimum threshold of 0.7 and hence were qualified and thus accepted to be used in the study. Data was analyzed mainly by use of frequencies, descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics to be used included mean and standard deviation. Inferential statistical techniques to be employed in data analysis included correlation and regression analysis which was used to draw a causal relationship between the independent variables and client satisfaction. Data was presented using tables and figures. For the study findings all of the independent variables were all well fit as proxy variables for entrepreneurial skills and growth of organic micro and small agribusiness enterprises in Kiambu County, Kenya. Further, the study findings showed that growth was well fit as a response/dependent variable for assessing its relationship with entrepreneurial skills as indicated by majority of the respondents. All the independent variables did have an influence on growth of organic micro and small agribusiness enterprises in Kiambu County, Kenya. Additionally, all the independent variables were statistically significant and positively linked to growth of organic micro and small agribusiness enterprises in Kiambu County, Kenya. They were all qualified as important determinants of growth of organic micro and small agribusiness enterprises in Kiambu County, Kenya. The study recommends that another study can be carried out to determine other factors explaining these remaining factors in relation to growth of organic micro and small agribusiness enterprises in Kiambu County, Kenya in view of the study context and scope to establish if the findings will hold true.

Key Words: Entrepreneurial Skills, Growth, Organic Micro and Small Agribusiness Enterprises, Leadership, Innovation and Creativity

Background to the Study

Globally, Small and Medium Enterprises are recognized world over as the catalyst by which global economies are built. Although many countries regardless of the level of economic development are making serious effort to support entrepreneurship, the impact of entrepreneurship appears to vary (Ombongi & Long, 2018). Many times, these facts are underestimated by small entrepreneurs and overlooked by support programs for development of this size of entrepreneurship. Development and support programs for Small & Medium Enterprises (SMEs) should also focus on the area to help develop entrepreneurship skill and knowledge. However, due to lack of comparable result world-wide, there is need to understand how entrepreneurial skill identified elsewhere contributes to performance of SMEs in Kenya (Kilonzo & Ouma, 2017).

In Kenya, the Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) sector make significant contribution to GDP and in job creation, new products in the market and general economic growth for the industrialized and developing economies (Makau & Deya, 2019). The sessional paper No. 2 of 2005 outlines the vital role played by SMEs in Kenya in the development of Micro and Small Enterprises as a catalyst for economic development (GOK, 2005). The emphasis of SMEs on solving social economic issues in Kenya is a key priority of Vision 2030 which emphasizes on economic development and expects SMEs to achieve this growth through entrepreneurship (Vision 2030). SMEs offer employment to over 74% of the total jobs in Kenya and contributes 18.4% of the Country's GDP (Ombongi & Long, 2018). The Kenyan government has put legislations and mechanisms in regulating the development of SMEs according to the SMEs Act (Bosire, Namusonge & Nyang'au, 2020). The Act specifies the registration, recognition and positioning of the firms in doing government tenders.

Statement of the Research Problem

Small and Medium Enterprises play a significant role in creating employment opportunities to a large proportion of Kenyans more than any other sector (KIPPRA, 2023). Approximately 720,000 (86%) new jobs were created in the informal SME sector in 2015 as compared to 120,000 (14%) in the formal sector the same year. SMEs created 3.7 Million in 1999 which grew to 12.6 million in 2015. The value of the SME's output is estimated at Ksh 3,371.7 billion against national output of Ksh 9,971.4 billion representing a contribution of 33.8 per cent in 2021 (Wachira, Ngugi & Nyang'au, 2022). In terms of gross value added, the SMEs are estimated to have contributed Ksh1,780.0 billion compared to Ksh 5,668.2 billion for the whole economy (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2018).

According to Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, a total of 2.2 million SMEs were closed in Kenya in the last five years, businesses were closed at the age of 3.8 years (Wachira, Ngugi & Karanja, 2022). The dilemma then is what causes these SMEs to close shop. Some scholars have argued that the death of SMEs is because lack of skills by owners were identified as a major causes of SMEs failure rates. Others have said entrepreneurial skills is an important success factor for SMEs without which a business will fail (Ombongi & Long, 2018).

Various studies have been done on the entrepreneurial skills and SME growth. Dahlan (2022) explored the influence of innovation, creativity, and risk taking on entrepreneurial growth and SMEs performance in Sukabumi City and found that innovation and creativity significantly impacts SME growth and performance.

Mitra and Hamed (2018) studied the role of leadership in small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and found a positive and significant association between leadership and growth of SMEs. From the reviewed studies, research indicates that there is a relationship between leadership, innovation, and growth. However, the reviewed study suffers from a contextual gap as they were not conducted in organic micro and small agribusinesses in Kiambu County, Kenya but in other geographical scopes rendering paucity in literature in the area. This study focuses on entrepreneurial skills and growth in organic micro and small agribusinesses in Kiambu County, Kenya.

Objectives of the Study

The purpose of this study was to assess entrepreneurial skills and growth of organic micro and small agribusiness enterprises in Kiambu County, Kenya.

The study was anchored on the following research objectives;

i. To find out the effect of leadership on growth of organic micro and small agribusiness enterprises in Kiambu County, Kenya
ii. To investigate the influence of innovation and creativity on growth of organic micro and small agribusiness enterprises in Kiambu County, Kenya.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Literature Review

The Diffusion of Innovations Theory

This is a theory that tries to find in what way, what is the cause, and at what speed new techniques and technologies get to be known. The proponent of this theory was Everett Rogers (Fleck, Kakouris & Winkel, 2020). According to Rogers, (2003) he was a professor of communication studies. This theory estimates that arriving at judgments, giving of opinions and information provision is done by interpersonal relations and the media. Rogers argues that for an innovation to occur some elements must be in play; the technology or innovation, the channels of communication, period of time and interrelationships of individuals. Human resource is relied here heavily. The technology must be adopted immensely for it be self-sustaining (Marques, 2019).

Basing this research on this theory the aspect of communication comes into play, it dictates that for an innovation to be adopted it should be told over time in a given group of people in this case, the businesses and the farmers (Xu, *et al.*, 2020). The communication channel should be right and the timing is critical. The process of adoption relies heavily on human capital. Hence proper and adequate resources should be pumped into the personnel docket for the technology to be diffused properly. Tailor-made brochures with specific agricultural messages can be circulated to the farmers which are easy to read, easy to refer and easy to archive for future reference (Shin, 2018).

Agency Theory

The agency theory is the work of Jensen and Meckling (1976). Agency theory identifies the agency relationship where one party, the principal, delegates work to another party, the agent. Jensen and Meckling (1976) define an agency relationship as "a contract under which one or more persons, the principal(s) engage another person, the agent to perform some service on their behalf that involves delegating some decision-making authority to the agent" (Jensen & Meckling, 1976).

As Noreen puts it, "agency theory can be used to provide a series of instructive parables that illustrate the adverse consequences on social and economic systems of unconstrained opportunistic behavior" and can therefore be used as a way of building the case for ethical conduct in business relations. According to this perspective, individuals are capable of acting opportunistically, but are also capable of exhibiting restraint. The extent to which they do either is very much dependent upon circumstance, institutional context, and background culture (Dahlan, 2022).

Agency Theory addressed what had become a growing concern, that management engaged in empire building and possessed a general disregard for shareholder interest, what Michael Jensen called "the systematic fleecing of shareholders and bondholders" (1989), through providing prescriptions as to how the principal should control the agent to curb managerial opportunism and self-interest. As the market reacted positively to this change in logic, with

time the agency approach became institutionalized in the practice of Corporate Governance, within business education, research and media (Erna, Martinus & Syaiful, 2021).

This theory is relevant to this study as it tries to explain the agency problem between the entrepreneurs and their management in the agricultural SMEs. The management are agents of the entrepreneurs and as such the entrepreneurs are the principal. The management may not act in the best interests of the entrepreneurs as pertains to entrepreneurial role in the enterprise. As such the theory tries to explain that the management should be in such a way as to work impartially for overall success and growth in the businesses.

Empirical Review

Leadership and Growth

Phangestu, Kountur and Prameswari (2020) studied the moderating effect of entrepreneurial leadership and competitive advantage on the relationship between business model innovation and startup performance. Fifty-one respondents participate in the study with partial least square statistical technique is used to analyze the data, which was appropriate for parametric analysis for such a sample size. The analysis showed there are significant relationships of entrepreneurial leadership and competitive advantage to business model innovation. However, it shows no direct relationship between entrepreneurial leadership and start-up; the association is not direct but indirect. Both entrepreneurial leadership and competitive advantage were found to improve the relationship between business model innovation and start-up.

Nguyen et al. (2021) empirically examined the effect of entrepreneurial leadership, entrepreneurial orientation, and technological innovation capability on SMEs' performance. The consistent PLS-SEM approach was applied to analyze valid data collected from 182 small and medium IT enterprises operating at Quang Trung Software City, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. The empirical results reveal that entrepreneurial leadership via the full mediators of team creativity, dynamic capabilities, and competitive advantages can enhance the performance and growth of IT SMEs.

Erna, Martinus & Syaiful (2021) empirically reviewed the influence of entrepreneurial leadership on organizational performance in terms of three hierarchies: individuals, groups/teams, and the organization as a whole. According to the findings of the review, entrepreneurial leadership has a major impact on the individual performance of employees and teams, especially in terms of creativity and creative behavior. Entrepreneurial leadership has a significant effect on overall organizational growth and performance both in financial and non-financial dimensions.

Sunday (2018) studied the effect of leadership style and entrepreneurial orientation on the business performance of small and medium enterprises in Nigeria. Using information from 150 SMEs, the results obtained indicated that while leadership style and entrepreneurial orientation had a significant positive association with SME growth (employment and sales growth), most SMEs show a moderate level of entrepreneurial orientation. Also, following the leadership style and entrepreneurial orientation dimensions, the findings established the emergence of proactive innovation (a combination of proactiveness and innovativeness) which showed a significant positive association on sales growth.

Mitra and Hamed (2018) studied the role of leadership in small and medium enterprises (SMEs). The target population comprised 686 SMEs. A random sampling technique was used and a sample size of 200 was drawn. The data collected from the sample respondents were captured on Microsoft Excel and analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25.0. Several hypotheses were formulated and tested using the Pearson’s Chi-Square. The study established a positive and significant association between leadership and growth of SMEs.

Innovation and Creativity and Growth

Dahlan (2022) explored the influence of innovation, creativity, and risk taking on entrepreneurial growth and SMEs performance in Sukabumi City, Indonesia. A survey was conducted with 150 SMEs in the region to collect data on their innovation, creativity, risk-taking behavior, and performance indicators. The results suggest that innovation and creativity significantly impact SME growth and performance, while risk-taking has a weaker impact. These findings have important implications for policymakers and SMEs owners or managers in Sukabumi City and other regions with similar economic contexts, highlighting the need to promote and support innovative and creative practices among SMEs.

Juliana (2021) studied the impact of creativity and innovation on entrepreneurship development by gathering evidence from Nigeria. A valid sample of 257 impacted the study using Yemane sample size determination formulae. The research employed the Ordinary Least Square method and ANOVA Test for data analysis. The most significant variables in this research are technological advancement and strategy. From the results, the matrix analysis established a strong relationship between creative thinking and innovative ability, as well as technological advancement although was negatively estimated on entrepreneurship development. This indicates that technological advancement is support for creativity and innovation. However, its direct effect on entrepreneurship development was not significantly estimated.

Adam and Alarifi (2021) studied innovation practices for survival of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in the COVID-19 times Online questionnaire has been used to collect the data from 259 randomly selected SME managers in Saudi Arabia, and the data was analyzed using the SmartPLS3 software. The structural equation modeling results showed that the innovation practices adopted by SMEs to face the repercussions of COVID-19 had a positive impact on the performance and likelihood of business survival and growth. PLS-SEM bootstrap results indicated that external support aids strengthen the positive impact of SMEs' innovation practices on business survival and growth rather than its performance.

Lura (2016) explored the impact of innovation in the performance of Small and Medium Enterprises to be competitive in this dynamic world. A research of secondary data was been undertaken for the SMEs in Kosovo. The main contributor is the Business Support Centre Kosovo, who developed a survey for 500 SMEs in Kosovo done in December 2011 with the aim to analyze the profile of entrepreneurship and SMEs. The results showed that SMEs are focused in the improvement of the existing products. Only 19.6% of SMEs in 2010 conducted entrepreneurial activities during the past three years, while in 2011, it increased to 22.1%. During the past three years, 15.9% of new products and services were introduced in SMEs in 2010, while in 2011 it decreased to 8.5%.

Kimathi, Mukulu and Odhiambo (2019) studied the effect of innovation on the performance of small and medium enterprises in Kenya. The study adopted survey research design focusing on a population of 268,100 licensed small and medium enterprises in Nairobi County in Kenya, from which a sample of 400 firms were selected through a multi-stage probability sampling method where stratified sampling method was used first and then simple random sampling from the strata for the 17 constituencies under the Nairobi County. The regression results established that innovation had positive and significant effect of performance of small and medium size enterprises in Kenya

Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework in a pictorial/ diagrammatical manner simplifies the anticipated associations amid the independent and dependent factors in the research study (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003).

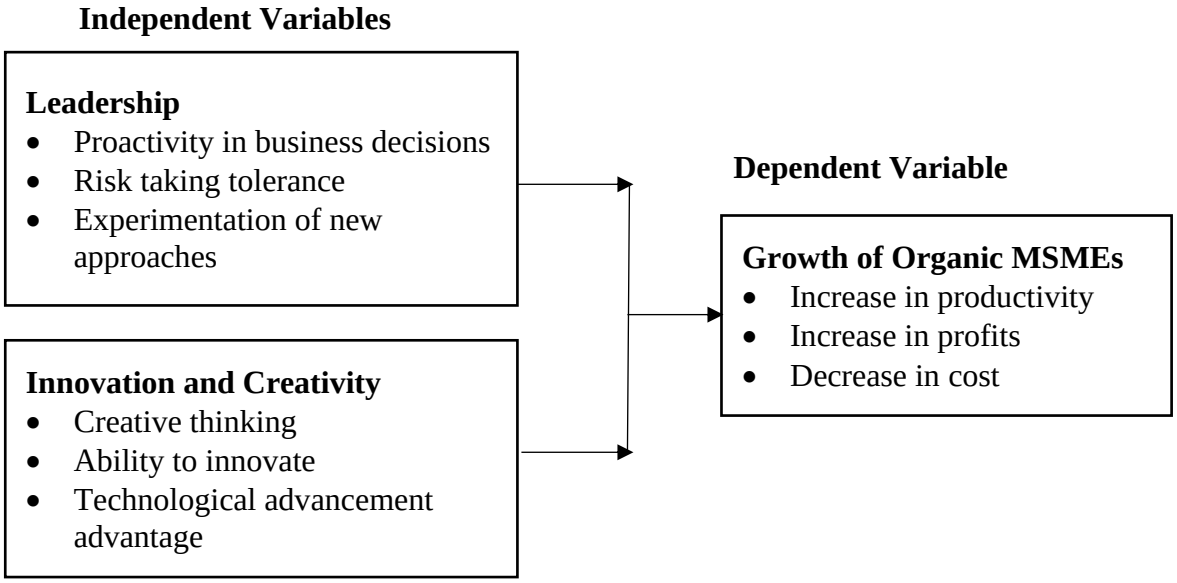

Figure 2.1: Conceptual Framework

METHODOLOGY

The study utilized a descriptive research design. The population consists of all registered organic micro and small agribusiness enterprises in Kiambu County, Kenya. According to CIDP (2019) Kiambu County has a total of 2,647 SMEs and over 50,000 Micro Enterprises. The researcher chose organic small and medium agribusiness enterprises in Kiambu County because they are highly concentrated within the county due to the fact that it is highly productive as it lies within a highlands terrain with close proximity to the country's capital (Nairobi). Purposive sampling was applied as the sampling technique to determine the study sample. Purposive sampling was employed to assess entrepreneurial skills and its effect on growth. The researcher targeted specific businesses which were agribusiness enterprises in the twelve sub-counties including Gatundu North, Gatundu South, Juja, Kabete, Kiambaa, Kiambu, Kikuyu, Limuru, Lari, Ruiru, Thika East and Thika West. To arrive at the sample size, the researcher adopted the Yamane formula to calculate the sample size of 348 respondents.

Primary data was used in this study. Primary data was collected using questionnaires. Data was collected from the participants via research questionnaires. Data was analyzed mainly by use of frequencies, descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics used included mean and standard deviation. Inferential statistical techniques employed in data analysis included correlation and regression analysis which was used to draw a causal relationship between the independent variables and client satisfaction. The data was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social sciences (SPSS) version 22 in order to determine and test the correlation between the dependent variable and each independent variable. The regression results were evaluated and interpreted as follows; the coefficient of determination (r squared) was evaluated to determine the explanatory power of the model and the f statistic was evaluated to determine the overall significance of the models. Data was presented using tables and figures.

FINDINGS, PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION

A successful response rate of 56.0% (195 respondents out of possible 348) was obtained. Babbie (2004) asserted that return rates of 50% are acceptable to analyze and publish, 60% is

good and 70% is very good. The study response rate was acceptable according to Babbie (2004) standards.

Descriptive Statistics

This section presents findings and results in line with the study variables.

Leadership and Growth

The study sought to investigate leadership and growth of organic micro and small agribusiness enterprises in Kenya. The findings were presented in table 1. Eighty-five percent of the respondents (85.1%) agreed that they were proactive in making business decisions. Majority of the respondents (94.9%) of the respondents agreed that they were not afraid of risk taking. Above ninety-two percent of the respondents (92.3%) agreed that they took charge of experimenting new approaches in their business. Eighty-six percent of the respondents (85.6%) agreed that they led in implementing their business's vision. Sixty-five percent of the respondents agreed that they provided guidance to their team when required.

The overall mean was 4.1 with a standard deviation of 0.88. These findings indicate that leadership as an independent variable was adequately measured by the statements as indicated by most participants who took part in the study. Further, the results imply that leadership was well fit as a proxy variable for entrepreneurial skills in measuring the influence of entrepreneurial skills on growth of organic micro and small agribusiness enterprises in Kenya.

Table 1: Leadership and Growth

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	Std. Dev
I am proactive in making business decisions	6.2%	3.6%	5.1%	56.4%	28.7%	4.0	1.02
I am not afraid of risk taking	0.0%	3.6%	1.5%	66.2%	28.7%	4.2	0.64
I take charge of experimenting new approaches in my business	0.0%	4.1%	3.6%	54.4%	37.9%	4.3	0.72
I lead in implementing the business's vision	1.5%	8.2%	4.6%	30.8%	54.9%	4.3	0.99
I provide guidance to my team when required	0.0%	19.5%	15.4%	41.5%	23.6%	3.7	1.04
Average						**4.1**	**0.88**

Innovation & Creativity and Growth

The study sought to assess innovation & creativity and growth of organic micro and small agribusiness enterprises in Kenya. The findings were presented in table 2. Majority of the respondents (72.8%) agreed that they encouraged creative thinking in their business. Eighty-nine percent of the respondents agreed that there was room for innovative ability in their business. Above eighty-four percent (84.6%) of the respondents agreed that they made use of technological advancement in their business. Majority of the respondents (82.6%) agreed that they encouraged brainstorming and collaboration in their teams. Eighty-eight percent (88.7%) of the respondents agreed that there had been value creation as a result of innovation in their business.

The overall mean was 4.1 with a standard deviation of 0.93. These findings indicate that innovation & creativity as an independent variable was adequately measured by the statements as indicated by most participants who took part in the study. Further, the results imply that innovation & creativity was well fit as a proxy variable for entrepreneurial skills in measuring the influence of entrepreneurial skills on growth of organic micro and small agribusiness enterprises in Kenya.

Table 2: Innovation & Creativity and Growth

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	Std. Dev
I encourage creative thinking in my business	2.1%	13.3%	11.8%	40.5%	32.3%	3.9	1.07
There is room for innovative ability in my business	1.5%	1.5%	7.7%	49.2%	40.0%	4.3	0.79
We make use of technological advancement in our business	2.6%	6.2%	6.7%	49.2%	35.4%	4.1	0.95
We encourage brainstorming and collaboration in our team	5.1%	2.1%	10.3%	51.8%	30.8%	4.0	0.98
There has been value creation as a result of innovation in our business	1.5%	6.2%	3.6%	59.0%	29.7%	4.1	0.84
Average						**4.1**	**0.93**

Growth of organic Micro and Small Agribusiness Enterprises

The study sought to assess growth of organic micro and small agribusiness enterprises in Kenya. The findings were presented in table 3. Ninety-two percent of the respondents agreed that they had experienced increased productivity in the recent past. Eighty ne percent of the respondents agreed that had been an increase in profits since they started their business. Majority of the respondents (81.1%) agreed that was a decrease in costs in the business since it started. Eighty-three percent of the respondents agreed that they had improved in community engagement. Eighty-four percent of the respondents agreed that their business operation had become more efficient over time. The overall mean was 4.1 with a standard deviation of 0.81. These findings indicate that growth as a dependent variable was adequately measured by the statements as indicated by most participants who took part in the study.

Table 3 Growth

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	Std. Dev
We have experienced increased productivity in the recent past	0.0%	0.0%	8.2%	67.2%	24.6%	4.2	0.55
There has been an increase in profits since we started the business	1.5%	5.6%	11.8%	50.3%	30.8%	4.0	0.89
There has a decrease in costs in the business since it started	1.5%	8.7%	8.7%	46.2%	34.9%	4.0	0.96
We have improved in community engagement	3.6%	2.1%	10.8%	54.9%	28.7%	4.0	0.90
The business operation shave become more efficient over time	0.0%	2.1%	13.8%	39.5%	44.6%	4.3	0.77
Average						**4.1**	**0.81**

Pearson's Correlation Analysis

Bivariate correlation indicates the relationship between two variables. It ranges from 1 to -1 where 1 indicates a strong positive correlation and a -1 indicates a strong negative correlation and a zero indicates lack of relationship between the two variables. The closer the correlation tends to zero the weaker it becomes. The findings were presented in Table 4. The correlation

between bank growth and all the independent variables; leadership, innovation & creativity 0.684, 0.554 and they were all also statistically significant with a significance level of 0.000. The findings imply that all the independent variables; leadership, innovation & creativity were important determinants of growth of organic micro and small agribusiness enterprises in Kenya.

Table 4 Pearson's Correlation Analysis

Variables		Growth	Leadership	Innovation Creativity
Growth	Pearson Correlation	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)			
Leadership	Pearson Correlation	0.684	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000		
Innovation Creativity	Pearson Correlation	0.554	0.498	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	

Regression of Coefficients

Regression of coefficients results were presented in Table 5. The results show that there is a positive relationship between growth of organic micro and small agribusiness enterprises in Kenya and all the independent variables leadership, innovation & creativity whose beta coefficients are 0.501, 0.259 respectively. The findings indicate that an increase in leadership leads to a proportionate increase with 0.501 units. An increase in innovation & creativity leads to a proportionate increase in growth with 0.259 units.

All the predictor variables; leadership, innovation & creativity were statistically significant as they had significance levels of 0.000, 0.001 respectively which was below the conventional level of significance of 0.05 for all the variables. The findings imply that leadership, innovation & creativity were important determinants of growth of organic micro and small agribusiness enterprises in Kenya.

Table 5 Regression of Coefficients

Variables	Unstandardized Coefficients (B)	Std. Error	t	Sig.
(Constant)	-0.498	0.313	-1.590	0.113
Leadership	0.501	0.071	7.016	0.000
Innovation and Creativity	0.259	0.079	3.297	0.001

Overall, the regression equation was as follows;

Growth = 0.501 Leadership + 0.259 Innovation & Creativity– 0.498

Conclusion

On leadership, the study concludes that leadership did have an influence on growth of organic micro and small agribusiness enterprises in Kiambu County, Kenya. Additionally, leadership was statistically significant and positively linked to growth of organic micro and small agribusiness enterprises in Kiambu County, Kenya. Further, leadership was an important determinant of growth of organic micro and small agribusiness enterprises in Kiambu County, Kenya.

On innovation and creativity, this study concludes that innovation and creativity did have an influence on growth of organic micro and small agribusiness enterprises in Kiambu County, Kenya. Additionally, innovation and creativity were statistically significant and positively linked to growth of organic micro and small agribusiness enterprises in Kiambu County, Kenya. Further, innovation and creativity were n important determinants of growth of organic micro and small agribusiness enterprises in Kiambu County, Kenya.

Recommendations

Another study can be carried out to determine other factors explaining these remaining factors in relation to growth of organic micro and small agribusiness enterprises in Kiambu County, Kenya in view of the study context and scope to establish if the findings will hold true.

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