



# Mentorship and Major Business Strategy of an Industry in Nigeria

**Sule, Olatunji Eniola\*<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Management Department, University Of Port Harcourt, Nigeria

**Alagah, Drusilia Adekemi<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>2</sup>Management Department, University Of Port Harcourt, Nigeria

**Oshi, Joseph E. O.<sup>3</sup>**

<sup>3</sup>Management Department, University Of Port Harcourt, Nigeria

*Corresponding Author: \*Sule, Olatunji Eniola*

## Abstract:

The relationship between mentorship as a dimension of entrepreneurial ecosystem and sustainable competitive advantage of certain segment of industry within Nigeria South-South region was investigated. Cross-sectional survey research design used with administrative staff of some firms in certain industry of Nigeria South-South as the study population. As a result, many of the target firms were research unfriendly, the population of the study was two hundred and ten administrative staff, as such, the researcher does not bother reduce the population as it could be easily covered. To administer the research instrument (questionnaire), we made use of simple random sampling technique. The hypotheses were tested with Structural Equation Modeling –AMOS. The findings revealed positive relationship between mentorship as entrepreneurial ecosystem and only operational excellence as a measure of sustainable competitive advantage. Therefore, it was suggested that mentorship ought to be fortified among entrepreneurs to be an impetus to improving only operational excellence as sustainable competitive advantage.

**Keywords:** Rootedness Operational Efficiency; Entrepreneurial; Product Leadership; Mentorship, Entrepreneurial Ecosystem; Sustainable Competitive Advantage; Disruptive Innovation.

## Introduction:

Every organization as a going concern needs to survive and this demands that those organizations should be adopting different strategies for them to survive and remain relevant in the market. In this era of high level of competitiveness, more organizations are striving to be global or national venture, but this cannot be achieved without being desperate and trying to do something, others have not and cannot easily do to favour the few customers everyone in the industry is struggling to catch. The firm should always be at its tows to analyze the business environment day-in day-out to know the next step to take for them to be relevant in the industry. Hence, there should be constant review of the SWOT analysis of the firm. “S” for strength of the firm and possibly the strength of the firm’s keen competitor(s), “W” for weakness the weakness of the firm and those of its competitors, “O” for opportunities available to the firm and its competitor(s) and “T” for threat that surround the firm and its competitor(s). Furthermore, many scholars had contended that governments have no business being in business. This is important in this part of the world with our African assumption that everything that belongs to government is national cake that need not be nourished and/or protected to multiply.....

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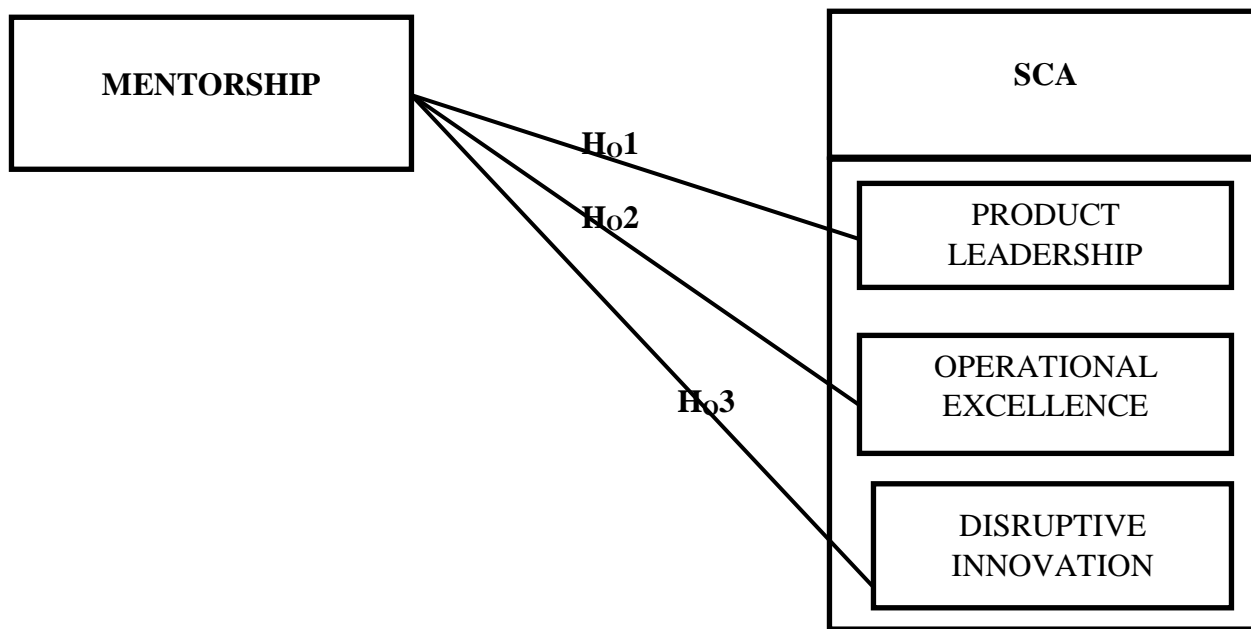
Some of them went further to assert that they are meant to be creating an enabling environment for survival of private individuals who are already in business and encouraging those still dragging their feet on the ground. Sule (2018) asserted that entrepreneurs involved in both small and medium businesses are encouraged by the Federal Government of Nigeria and possibly, unemployment reduction among Nigerian youth with introduction of different policies among which is the Trader Money directly supervised by the Nigeria Vice President, Professor Yemi Osinbajo. All these point to the fact that the more entrepreneurial businesses a nation have the higher the chances of growing faster, economically. Oduyoye, Adebola and Binuyo (2013) opined that Nigeria government had been emphasizing entrepreneurship as the growth engine of the economy as many people in the country are captured within this sector. In Sule and Onuoha (2019), it was also reiterated that they are tool for nation's industrialization as well as economic advancement.

**Aim of the Study:**

The study shall expose the association between mentorship and sustainable competitive advantage.

**Literature Review:**

**Operational Framework**



**Fig. 1:** Showing Association between Mentorship and Major Business Strategy (SCA) Researchers' Concept, 2022, **Dimensions** - Mujahid, Mubarik and Naghavi (2019), **Measures** - Moore (2002)

**Mentorship**

Mentor was described by Meman, Rozan, Ismail, Uddin and Daud (2015) as an individual person with certain definite abilities, a professional who supervises and teaches a fresher.

**Objectives:**

**The objectives include:**

1. Evaluating the association between mentorship and product leadership of an industry in Nigeria.
2. Examine the connexion between mentorship and operational excellence of an industry in Nigeria.
3. Determine the relationship between mentorship and disruptive innovation of an industry in Nigeria.

**Research Questions:**

1. How does mentorship relate with product leadership of an industry in Nigeria?
2. What is the relationship between mentorship and operational excellence of an industry in Nigeria?
3. What is the nature of the relationship between mentorship and disruptive innovation of an industry in Nigeria?

**Research Hypotheses:**

- **H01:** There is no relationship between mentorship and product leadership of an industry in Nigeria.
- **H02:** There is no relationship between mentorship and operational excellence of an industry in Nigeria.
- **H03:** There is no relationship between mentorship and disruptive innovation of an industry in Nigeria.

Mentoring is providing encouragement and support to people through the management of their own skill development and acquisition process to be able to maximize mentee potential, development of skills, performance improvement in order to

become the person they intend to be (Nicoleta & Chioncel, 2014).

Mentoring differ from other associated methods of detached support like coaching and teaching; for mentoring, the interest of the mentee is held as uppermost and paramount by mentor (Gibson,2005; Meman, Rozan, Ismail, Uddin & Daud, 2015). Accomplishing mentoring could be attained through different forms like assisting a youth or young person that is disturbed or struggling with something meaningful. Again, in many big firms, there exist programmers that are design to mentor basically for the development of the young and talented personnel professionally and psychologically (Meman, Rozan, Ismail, Uddin & Daud, 2015).

Mentor have a dictionary connotation of responsible and wise tutor that is better experienced in advising, guiding, inspiring, challenging, correcting and serving as a model (Nicoleta & Chioncel, 2014). Mentoring is a terminology used in different circumstances to relate to different practices. Again, Bozeman and Feeney (2007) in Nicoleta and Chioncel (2014) opined that psychosocial, social capital and knowledge information transmission process is simply referred to as mentoring. Mentoring could also be referring to a relationship between two people called mentee and mentor for giving the mentor the chance to share their personal and professional skills as well as experiences with mentee to enable the mentee to for the growth and development within the process. Most times, it entails one-to-one interrelationship (Nicoleta & Chioncel, 2014).

Scholars have not been able to agree on the a specific definition for mentoring and it must be noted that its workability have to do with different factors which is also linked with the level of how formal and structured its relationship appears to be, the settings of its place of occurrence, engagement length between mentees and mentors and the issue that are based on support (Nicoleta & Chioncel, 2014). A mentor is to guide and support mentee (Meman, Rozan, Ismail, Uddin & Daud, 2015). Sometimes mentee and mentor relationship can be identified from the way and manner people are admiring and seeking advices from someone despite the fact that such relationship might be informal.

Nicoleta and Chioncel (2014) went further to assert that the main role of this relationship is for updating the competencies of entrepreneur both beginning and subordinate. There are four (4) stages an effective mentoring relationship should go through. The minimum and maximum period to be spent at every stage varies based on relationship, though, essentially, every relationship must pass through the four mentoring stages (Kram, 1983; Ragins&Kram, 2007 in Meman, Rozan, Ismail, Uddin & Daud, 2015).

Nevertheless, mentee will always benefit from the outcome. Mentorship is similar to relationship of master/student/apprentice. The master had acquired the required skill, knowledge, and experience. Based on the love, mentor will spend precious energy and time to teach, direct, encourage, lead and motivate mentees to rise and possibly, forge ahead to become matured. With that, the products often accept the similar process by being there for others, as such, mentoring is a nonstop process (Nicoleta & Chioncel, 2014).

Mentoring is a common phenomenon among the Igbo extraction form the Eastern part of Nigeria, where an enterprising man in the urban area like Lagos, Port Harcourt or even, Onitsha comes back to the village (rural settlement) to pick a young man to train or groom for an agreed period of time. During this period such young man will be taught the same art and or profession the 'master' is into and the young man is expected to be fully involved in such business such that knowing the owner by an outsider might be too easy.

Nicoleta and Chioncel (2014) asserted that mentoring became collective exercise in the period of guides and trade traineeships when fresh individuals have attained methodological expertise often profited from the support of more knowledgeable and recognized specialists. Wrong and Prem kumar (2007) in Nicoleta and Chioncel (2014) deposited that most prosperous individuals in various works of existence probably must have had few people for few years that must have wielded a predominantly robust inspiration over others existence like their careers and lives.

### **Concept of SCA**

It is very important to understand the environment of anything one intends to manage to have a concrete and tangible outcome. Such environment knowledge include the economic, political, social, culture, technological as well as the knowledge of international relations relating to such firm. This will lead the leaders in such organization to proceed to policy formulation, which in most cases is referred to as strategies. Christensen *et al* (1974) in Onuoha (2015) submitted that strategy is the patterns of purposes, major policies backed with plans to attain those purposes, detailed in a manner to describe what commerce the firm is needed by enterprises in setting direction for itself, outwit competitors, exploit opportunities and man oeuvre through threatening environments.

The main concern in this definition is outwitting of competitors, that is, designing ways strategies to outsmart other competitors in the industry (Subrahmanyam & Azad, 2019). Onuoha (2008) asserted that competitors are corporate organization in the identical or connected industry that contends for resources with one another, essentially for customers' patronage. Onuoha (2008) continued that businesses may also contend for high quality manpower, breakthrough in technology andraw materials. In certain expanses of economic and human undertakings, government could also be seen as competitor. This is why activities monitoring of any the industry competitors is keen.

Any edge a firm possesses over other firms in the same industry could be referred to as competitive advantage (CA). This includes increment in the sales volume as well as its margin or the strength of such firm in holding on to its numerous customers as well as enjoying customers' loyalty Alharthi (2012). Different difficulties and challenges are being faced by organizations that require efficient and effective manner to edge out other competitors in the market. It is therefore, imperatives for managers in the organizations to understand the type of competitors they have in the market marched with exploration of such identified edge to achieve

image that could earn the company a distinctive recognition (Harmon, 2007 in Alharthi, 2012).

The most important strategies normally adopted by firms around the globe is Sustainable Competitive Advantage. This involves owning something that could be seen as asset that other firms in the industry does not have. Kraja and Osmani (2013) relying on Analou and Karami (2003) submitted that competitive advantages are those elements that a firm needs for the venture's success. CA according to Kraja and Osmani (2013) relying on Kotler (2000) is the firm's competency to carry out its business that is diverse like those other competitors cannot comprehend.

### **Product Leadership**

The focus of product leadership is on the product and the technologies used in producing them and its orientation could be assumed to be inwardly. It is generally viewed from the superior technological strength in an industry (Rant & Cerne, 2017 citing Christensen & Raynor, 2003). Product leadership could wrongly assume to be the same with product innovation, but they are distinct and different from themselves. It requires serious product and its process innovation as well as proficiency to improve the firm's market (Rant & Cerne, 2017 quoting Lew & Sinkovics, 2013). Miller (1988) in Rant and Cerne (2017) relying on Miller (1988) disclosed that product leadership can be effectively used as strategic rejoinder mostly in unsteady and multi faceted corporate environs since, such situation learning investigations from disappointment as well as confined exploration are the very actual methodologies to market development, tactic and competitive benefit (Rant & Cerne, 2017 citing Gavetti & Riv Kin, 2007).

Maintenance of super control over and above every other similar product produced within the same industry can easily describe product leadership and it must be noted that such product must meet the customers' needs in term of quality, superiority and possibly, price tag as a result of vigorous innovation. Santosa (2014) relying on Hopkin (2011a) opined that product leadership could arise as a result of the product team leader's ability to being able to lead and manage every resources to the firm's advantage. Though, the success of the product manager will be determined by the success of the product. Standard products will come out of flowing of ideas and quality leadership which will invariably, increase the firm's sales.

It was asserted in Santosa (2015) that product leadership is a particular market approach that depends on the superiority of product through innovative products deliverance to solve customers' ever-evolving quest. Santosa (2015) relying on Kalypso (2011) submitted that a new evolving marketing strategy is product leadership which leaves behind the conventional operating models like operational excellence and customer intimacy that depends on superiority like operational excellence and customer intimacy that depends on superiority of product through constant products innovation which rime with the ever-evolving needs of customers.

Santosa (2014) citing Cravens (2000) concluded that the basic intention of adopting product leadership is to have and

at the same time produce products that are not only the best but at the same time superior to other similar products. Essentially, products that are superior must be in conformity with the needs and desires of the target and distinctive customers. Santosa, 2014 citing Peter and Olson, 2002 as well as Assael, 1995 asserted that a product that appears to possess quality benefits and attributes, such product must stimulate the needs of customers into buying it. Peter and Olson (2002) as cited in Santosa (2014) also added that the more a products' impactful assistances and features, the higher its effects on the intellectual process of purchasing the product.

### **Operational Excellence**

At this critical period in the world economy, especially, the post COVID-19 pandemic, corporate organisations are fighting tooth and nail to survive as such, they are implementing diverse strategies to keep their organisations above the business environment sea level. One important strategy to at least break even is ensuring reduction in costs and wastages. To sustain the cost and wastage reduction, innovativeness now becomes the tradition of the organisation. Nowadays, every business organisation concedes to the fact that the economy is adversely strong to operate in and that the social condition is not encouraging too and therefore, they need productivity improvement (Muazu & Tasmin, 2017 citing Kandasamy, 2016; Ey, 2015; Fork-Yew & Ahmad, 2014). As such, corporate organisation will need to work on quality improvement, lead time minimizing, costs and wastage reduction, optimum utilisation of every available resources and efficient asset flexibility.

Muazu and Tasmin (2017) viewed operational excellence can be achieved by getting involve in innovating exercises within the organisation, working process improvement and ways in organisational knowledge handling; via leaders with thorough knowledge, knowledge culture, knowledge tools, knowledge procedure and knowledge dimension. From another angle, it was viewed operational excellence to involve having the capability management strategy, excellently executing plan with fast speed, very cheap manner and with long-term uninterrupted improvement. Six sigma, Total Quality Management (TQM), lean and continuous enhancement can be a flawless path to operational excellence (Muazu & Tasmin, 2017 quoting Russell & Koch, 2009). Abdul Wahab, Ismail and Muh ayiddin (2016) added that operational excellence is in total seclusion from lean administration and constant improvement as they are only on the look-out for elimination of waste and ensuring the firm becomes better day-in, day-out.

Operational excellence seems to be broad as a result of the business development which is usually the actual goal as well as the systematic approach provision for achieving excellence in the firms though it was asserted that operational excellence is more of reaching the highest level of operational efficiency by ensuring things are done better, cheaper and even, faster (Abdul Wahab, Ismail & Muhayiddin, (2016) quoting Russell & Koch, 2009). Conventionally, operational excellence reflects business processes optimisation, producing and developing products for satisfying the demand of their

customer, quality improvement as well as increasing productivity, effectiveness and efficiency. Currently, operational excellence specifies extensive as well as a very reliable route to attaining improvement in sales margin/profit and SCA. Abdul Wahab, Ismail and Muhayiddin (2016) relying on Russell and Koch (2009) as well as Yew and Ahmad (2014) submitted that it is imperative to know that operational excellence is not solely for day-to-day business management alone; it is also an apparatus to achieve activities unceasing enhancement within the firm.

### Disruptive Innovation

Technological innovation or if you like, paradigm shift in technological know-how is could be seen as the disruptive innovation philosophical background according to the person that brought the terminology into limelight - Christensen. This is the super power display of technology in form of innovation to add to the values derived from the product by the customers of a particular brand. For instance, the first set of phones brought to Nigeria comes with antenna and such phones could not be compared with the compact phones that came later and could easy link the internet. Likewise, the function of Android is incomparable with the functions of iPhones. Again, the first batch of Android phones had a big deficiency 9n terms of long lasting batteries that could withstand long time internet browsing but this was corrected in the new batch as well as making the phones' battery to be compact, that is, it is not removable and carry not be changed Disruptive innovation in any firm is driven by technology, marketing, market and at the end the product. Therefore, the stratagem for improving firms' productivity, profitability and performance (Nasqshbandi & Kaur, 2015).It is, therefore easy to submit to the idea that it is an approach and that the same time a process within a firm based on the assumption of Zentner (2012) relying on Christensen deposited that disruptive innovation is a process of initial taking root of product or service in simple presentations at the market

bottom and it move progressively to the market to displace other market contenders or competitors. It could be described as an approach as it is usually used by new market entrant to destabilize other market occupants and also by introducing such product into any unappealing or new market.

Sule and Amah (2021) asserted that creating prospects like staff retention, market share increase and many others could be said to be disruptive innovation. Invariably, most of these prospect creations makes up the parameters to measure corporate performance and readily, only viable firms can search and recruit reliable workers and even afford to give them good packages as remunerations; just as it is only employees that are satisfied that could subscribe to inventing new "things" in and for the organization. Skarzynski and Rufat-Latre (2011) in Zentner (2012) submitted that there are three (3) tactics through which disruptive innovation can beactivedwhich includes:

- I. Customer Needs That Are Not Met;
- II. Relating Innovation Methodologies And;
- III. Align Innovation To Strategy.

### Methodology:

Cross sectional survey research design that is an example of quasi-experimental design. Twenty oil and gas firms were approached for participation in the study, but it is only eight of them that obliged to take part in the study. Those that were ready availed researchers with the statistics sampling of administrative staff totaling two hundred and ten (210) as our population and sample as the number could easily be covered by the researcher. Note that the selection of those organizations studied was based on proximity, convenience and accessibility of the location. Data gathered with research instrument (questionnaire) was analyzed with Structural Equation Modeling - AMOS.

### Hypotheses Testing

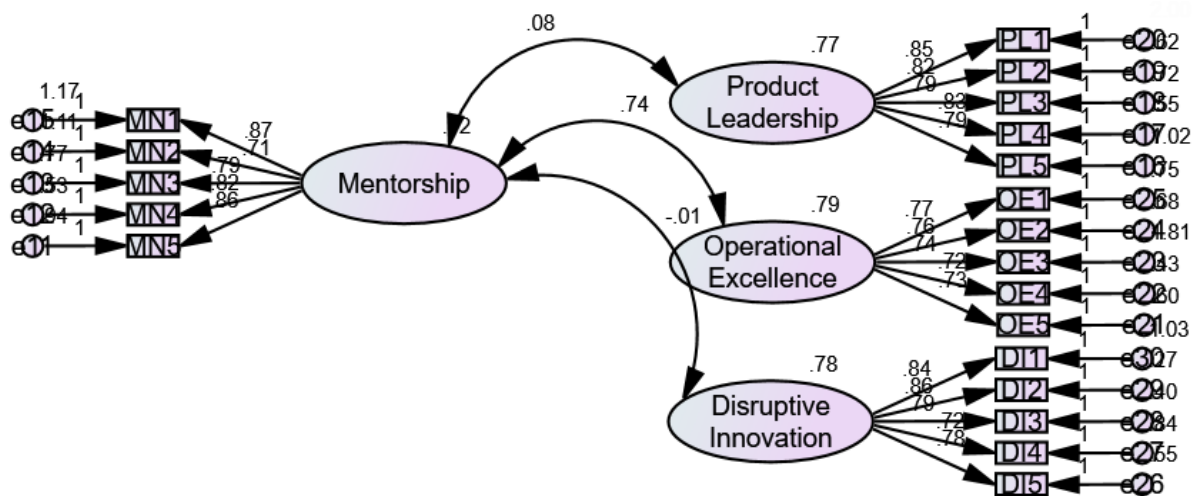


Fig. 2: Hypotheses Testing One - Three

| <i>Hypothesis</i> |      |                        | <i>Estimate (β)</i> | <i>S.E.</i> | <i>C.R.</i> | <i>p</i> |
|-------------------|------|------------------------|---------------------|-------------|-------------|----------|
| <b>Mentorship</b> | ---> | Product leadership     | .077                | .048        | 1.629       | 0.103    |
| <b>Mentorship</b> | ---> | Operational excellence | .739                | .028        | 26.338      | 0.000    |
| <b>Mentorship</b> | ---> | Disruptive innovation  | -.007               | .046        | -.152       | 0.879    |

**Table 1: Test of Hypotheses 1 – 3**(Source: SPSS-AMOS Version 23.0 Output, 2022)

**H<sub>01</sub>:** There is no relationship between mentorship and product leadership of an industry in Nigeria.

Mentorship and product leadership enjoyed covariance of 0.077 with a standard error of about .048 as well as 1.629 standard errors that is below zero. Getting critical ratio like 1.629 comes with probability of absolute value of 0.103. It, therefore, suggest that Mentorship and as well as product leadership covariance does not differ from zero at the 0.05 level (two-tailed). Research presupposed that negative link amongst mentorship and product leadership. Hence, we reject alternate hypothesis and null hypothesis accepted indicating that mentorship and product leadership does not enjoy any relationship in an industry in Nigeria.

**H<sub>02</sub>:** There is no relationship between mentorship and operational excellence of an industry in Nigeria.

Mentorship and operational excellence enjoyed covariance of 0.739 with a standard error of about .028 as well as 26.338 standard errors that is below zero. Getting critical ratio of 26.338 comes with probability of absolute value of 0.05. It, therefore, suggest that Mentorship and as well as operational excellence covariance does not differ from zero at the 0.05 level (two-tailed). Research presupposed that positive association amongst mentorship and operational excellence. Hence, we reject null hypothesis and alternate hypothesis accepted indicating that mentorship and operational excellence does not enjoy any relationship in an industry in Nigeria.

**H<sub>03</sub>:** There is no relationship between mentorship and disruptive innovation of an industry in Nigeria.

Mentorship and Disruptive Innovation enjoyed covariance of -0.007 with a standard error of about .046 as well as 0.152 standard errors that is below zero. Getting critical ratio like 0.152 comes with probability of absolute value of 0.879. It, therefore, suggest that Mentorship and as well as Disruptive Innovation covariance does not differ from zero at the 0.05 level (two-tailed). Research presupposed that negative relationship amongst mentorship and disruptive innovation. Hence, we reject alternate hypothesis and null hypothesis accepted indicating that mentorship and disruptive innovation does not enjoy any relationship in an industry in Nigeria.

## Results:

### Mentorship and Product Leadership

Hypothesis 1 analysis shows that Mentorship does not relate significantly with Product Leadership. The p-value of 0.103

is greater than our 0.05 significant level ( $p=0.103 > 0.05$ ) indicating an insignificant association amongst Mentorship and Product Leadership. The finding is somewhat does not alignment with that of Nicoleta and Chioncel (2014) that submitted that mentoring helps in improving productivity in individuals and brings about knowledge advancement, information availability, acquisition of skill, increment in ability, better resources management, sales increase, frustration and stress eradication, that give way to product leadership.

### Mentorship and Operational Excellence

The analysis of the hypothesis two shows association between Mentorship and Operational Excellence. This was inferred from the suggestion that the value was below 5% significance level ( $p=0.000 < 0.05$ ). Hence, we accept alternate hypothesis and null hypothesis rejected. Path constant value ( $\beta$ ) 0.739 suggests a high positive relationship between Mentorship and Operational Excellence. This indicates that alteration in Mentorship will have an impact on Operational Excellence. This finding agrees with the findings of Odiorne (1985) in Nicoleta and Chioncel (2014) disclosed that mentoring became collective exercise in the period of guides and trade traineeships when fresh individuals have attained methodological expertise often profited from the support of more knowledgeable and recognized specialists.

### Mentorship and Disruptive Innovation

Hypothesis three testing result did not show any relationship between Mentorship and Disruptive Innovation. The p-value of 0.879 is above 0.05 ( $p=0.879 > 0.05$ ) suggest that Mentorship and Disruptive Innovation did not have any relationship. The path coefficient ( $\beta$ ) value of -0.007 that Mentorship and Disruptive Innovation have negative correlation. The finding is not in alignment with the work of Nicoleta and Chioncel (2014) who asserted that mentoring is providing encouragement and support to people through the management of their own skill development and acquisition process to be able to maximize mentee potential, development of skills, performance improvement in order to become the person they intend to be.

## Conclusion:

From the study findings, it was exposed that mentorship as a dimension of entrepreneurial ecosystem only aid operational excellence as sustainable competitive advantage measures but it does not aid disruptive innovation and product leadership.

That is, with mentorship, operational excellence of entrepreneurs could be improved upon.

### Recommendations:

It is hereby recommended that firms that may be involved in energy and utilities business and intends nurturing their operation excellence as a sustainable competitive advantage should concentrate more on their mentorship abilities.

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