

## The Effect of Entrepreneurship Capacity Building on Street Food Vendors' Business Success in Arusha Region, Tanzania

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**Abstract:** This study, grounded in Market Orientation Theory, examines the impact of entrepreneurship capacity building on the business success of street food vendors in the Arusha Region of Tanzania. Market Orientation Theory emphasizes the importance of understanding and responding to customer needs as a pathway to business success, a principle central to this research. Employing a descriptive cross-sectional design, data were collected from 150 registered street food vendors using structured questionnaires measuring financial management skills, marketing skills, innovation capacity, and business performance. The analysis revealed significant positive relationships between entrepreneurship training and business success, with financial management skills identified as the strongest predictor, followed by marketing and innovation capacities. The findings suggest that enhancing these market-oriented competencies enables street food vendors to better meet customer demands, adapt to changing market conditions, and improve overall competitiveness and sustainability. This study underscores the need for tailored capacity-building programs that address the unique challenges faced by informal sector entrepreneurs, offering valuable insights for policymakers, training providers, and development partners seeking to promote inclusive economic growth and poverty reduction in Tanzania's urban informal economy.

**Keywords:** Entrepreneurship Training, Capacity Building, Street Food Vendors, Business Success, Arusha Region, Tanzania.

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## INTRODUCTION TO THE PROBLEM

Entrepreneurship is globally recognized as a powerful engine for economic growth, social development, and poverty alleviation, particularly within developing nations where unemployment and income disparities are significant challenges (Sutter *et al.*, 2019; Roomi *et al.*, 2021). The United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development identifies entrepreneurship as a key driver in the eradication of poverty and the creation of sustainable employment opportunities, emphasizing its centrality in the global strategy to improve the quality of life for all people

(United Nations, 2015). Through entrepreneurship, individuals, especially those from marginalized groups, can achieve self-reliance, foster innovation, and contribute meaningfully to their local economies (Śledzik, 2013). Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) are considered the cornerstone of most economies across the world, playing a vital role in national development. These enterprises contribute significantly to employment creation, wealth generation, and GDP growth (Singh & Na, 2017; OECD, 2017). Globally, MSMEs account for more than 95% of all businesses and are responsible

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for employing over 50% of the workforce. In Sub-Saharan Africa, the situation is even more pronounced, as MSMEs comprise approximately 90% of all businesses, providing around 80% of employment and contributing approximately 60% to the region's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (Zvavahera *et al.*, 2018). In Tanzania, MSMEs have become a key player in driving the economy and addressing unemployment challenges. According to Diao *et al.*, (2018) and Mbowe *et al.*, (2020), MSMEs represent about 95% of all business enterprises in the country, contributing 35% to the national GDP and accounting for nearly 73% of the growth in private sector employment outside agriculture. This underscores their pivotal role in creating sustainable livelihoods and enhancing socio-economic development. Among the most visible forms of MSMEs in urban Tanzania are street food vendors, who form a substantial part of the informal sector. Street food vending is a critical entrepreneurial activity that contributes to the urban food supply chain and serves as a primary source of income for many low-income and marginalized groups (Adeosun *et al.*, 2022; Al-Jundi *et al.*, 2022). This sector not only addresses food security concerns in rapidly growing cities but also plays an essential role in local government revenue collection and informal employment generation (Mramba, 2016; Rahman & Rashid, 2020). Street food vending offers affordable and accessible food options to urban populations, particularly the working class, and provides employment opportunities for women, youth, and other vulnerable groups. Despite its recognized contribution to urban economies and community livelihoods, the street food vending sector in Tanzania faces persistent challenges that limit its potential for growth and sustainability. Many vendors operate under precarious conditions with minimal business knowledge, low levels of financial literacy, poor marketing skills, and limited access to modern business tools and resources (Steiler & Nyirenda, 2021; Said, 2020). These capacity gaps hinder the ability of street food vendors to effectively manage their businesses, expand their market share, or maximize profits. Inadequate business skills often lead to poor record-keeping, limited customer targeting, low competitiveness, and the inability to innovate or adapt to changing market conditions. While entrepreneurship capacity-building programs have been initiated by various stakeholders, including the Tanzanian government, microfinance institutions, and non-governmental organizations, their impact on the performance of street food vendors remains unclear and under-researched (Tambwe & Salaam, 2019; Mbowe *et al.*, 2020). There is limited evidence on whether the training provided adequately addresses the unique needs of street food entrepreneurs or whether it translates into improved business practices and financial success.

Consequently, street food vendors often continue to operate at subsistence levels, with little measurable business growth or sustainability. Given the crucial economic role of street food vending in Tanzania and the growing focus on entrepreneurship as a development strategy, there is a need for empirical research that examines the effectiveness of entrepreneurship capacity-building initiatives in this sector. Specifically, it is essential to understand whether the training provided equips street food vendors with the financial, managerial, marketing, and innovation skills necessary to achieve business success. This study seeks to fill this knowledge gap by assessing the effect of entrepreneurship capacity building on the business success of street food vendors in the Arusha Region of Tanzania, thereby providing practical insights for policymakers, training providers, and development partners working to strengthen MSMEs and informal sector entrepreneurs.

### Problem Statement

Efforts have been made by the Tanzanian government, microfinance institutions, and non-governmental organizations to provide entrepreneurship training aimed at equipping vendors with essential business skills (Tambwe & Salaam, 2019; Mbowe *et al.*, 2020). Organizations such as the Small Industry Development Organisation (SIDO) and microfinance institutions like BRAC, FINCA, and ASA have regularly offered training programs to street vendors in areas such as financial management, marketing, and customer care (Said, 2020; Osei Mensah *et al.*, 2018). Despite these interventions, street food vendors continue to struggle with stagnant business growth, low profits, and limited market penetration (Sutter *et al.*, 2019; Nkosi & Tabit, 2021). Several studies have shown that entrepreneurial training positively impacts business performance when it adequately addresses key areas such as financial management, innovation, and marketing strategies (Arthur & Adom, 2020; Gunawardana & Bandara, 2021; Sooriyakumaran *et al.*, 2022). Specifically, financial training enhances vendors' ability to maintain proper records and manage cash flow, marketing training improves customer targeting and product positioning, and innovation skills help vendors develop competitive strategies and adapt to market changes (Baporikar & Akino, 2020; Tuffour *et al.*, 2022; Kassa & Mirete, 2022). However, the specific impact and content relevance of entrepreneurship training provided to street food vendors in Tanzania, particularly in Arusha Region, remains underexplored. This study is motivated by the need to fill this gap by assessing the effect of entrepreneurship capacity building on the business success of street food vendors in Arusha Region, Tanzania. The study seeks to determine whether the training provided contributes to

improved financial practices, marketing effectiveness, and overall business growth among street food entrepreneurs. Findings from this research are expected to inform policymakers, training providers, and development partners on how to design more impactful entrepreneurship programs tailored to the needs of street food vendors in urban Tanzania.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Entrepreneurship is widely recognized as a key driver of economic growth, social welfare, and poverty alleviation, particularly in developing countries where Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) employ a significant portion of the workforce and contribute substantially to national GDP (Singh & Na, 2017; OECD, 2017). In Sub-Saharan Africa, SMEs play a critical role in providing employment and generating income, with Tanzanian MSMEs alone employing millions and supporting a large share of economic activity (Zvavahera *et al.*, 2018; Diao *et al.*, 2018). Among these enterprises, street food vendors stand out for their contributions to local food supply, employment creation, and municipal revenue, yet they often face persistent challenges that constrain their growth and sustainability. These challenges include limited formal education, poor financial literacy, weak business management skills, and low levels of innovation, which collectively undermine their ability to expand their businesses and compete effectively (Steiler & Nyirenda, 2021; Said, 2020). Although entrepreneurship training programs have been introduced as a strategy to enhance entrepreneurial skills and business performance, many street food vendors struggle to fully apply the knowledge gained, raising concerns about the adequacy and relevance of the training provided. Existing studies demonstrate positive associations between entrepreneurship training (financial management, marketing, and business planning) and improved SME performance (Arthur & Adom, 2020; Sooriyakumaran *et al.*, 2022). However, there remains limited empirical evidence on the specific impact of such training on street food vendors in Tanzania, especially within the Arusha Region, which highlights the need for focused research to better understand how capacity-building interventions can drive business success in this sector.

### Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored in Market Orientation Theory, which posits that business success is achieved by continuously understanding, anticipating, and responding to customer needs and market dynamics (Kotler, 1999; Drucker, 1954). For street food vendors in the Arusha Region, adopting a market-oriented approach is essential for transforming small-scale operations into sustainable

businesses capable of withstanding competition and meeting customer demands (Mutalemwa, 2021; Nkosi & Tabit, 2021; Adeosun *et al.*, 2022). Entrepreneurship capacity building equips vendors with critical skills (particularly in marketing, innovation, and financial management) that directly enable them to apply market-oriented strategies (Arthur & Adom, 2020; Sooriyakumaran *et al.*, 2022; Gunawardana & Bandara, 2021). Marketing skills help vendors identify customer preferences and position their offerings effectively (Miftahul & Nasjum, 2020; Nkosi & Tabit, 2021), while financial literacy allows for efficient resource management that supports customer-driven improvements (Mbowe *et al.*, 2020; Barbuță-Mișu *et al.*, 2019). Innovation skills, another key component, foster adaptability to customer feedback and evolving food trends (Śledzik, 2013; Kassa & Mirete, 2022). Despite the availability of training, many street vendors struggle to apply market-oriented practices due to limited exposure and poor business foundations (Steiler & Nyirenda, 2021; Said, 2020). By improving these entrepreneurial capacities, vendors can offer tailored products, maintain competitive pricing, improve hygiene and service delivery, and enhance marketing efforts, which are all critical to achieving business success in the informal sector (Prevolšek *et al.*, 2021; Al-Jundi *et al.*, 2022; Adeosun *et al.*, 2022). Additionally, external factors such as local regulations, cultural preferences, and economic conditions influence how vendors apply market orientation (Cohen *et al.*, 2005; Al-Jundi *et al.*, 2022). Market Orientation Theory, therefore, provides a robust and adaptable framework for explaining how entrepreneurship capacity building translates into tangible business success among street food vendors in Arusha Region, supporting sustainable economic growth and poverty reduction (Singh & Na, 2017; Diao *et al.*, 2018; Zvavahera *et al.*, 2018; Sutter *et al.*, 2019).

## METHODOLOGY

This study employed a descriptive cross-sectional research design to assess the effect of entrepreneurship capacity building on the business success of street food vendors in the Arusha Region, Tanzania. The target population consisted of registered and active street food vendors operating in key urban areas within Arusha. A stratified random sampling technique was used to ensure representation across different locations and vendor types, resulting in a sample size of 150 participants. Primary data were collected using structured questionnaires, which were pre-tested for reliability and validity and covered key variables such as financial management skills, marketing skills, innovation practices, and business performance indicators. The questionnaire design was informed by previous studies on SMEs and entrepreneurship

training (Cohen *et al.*, 2005; Saunders *et al.*, 2019; Pandey & Pandey, 2015). Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and regression analysis to determine the relationship between entrepreneurship capacity building and business success. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25 was used for data entry and analysis to ensure accuracy and consistency. Ethical approval was sought from relevant authorities, and informed consent was obtained from all participants. This methodology provided a systematic approach for understanding how entrepreneurship training impacts key business outcomes among street food vendors, enabling the study to generate actionable insights for policy and practice in supporting small-scale entrepreneurs in Tanzania.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study revealed a significant positive relationship between entrepreneurship capacity building and the business success of street food vendors in the Arusha Region. Descriptive statistics showed that most respondents had participated in entrepreneurship training focused on financial management, marketing, and innovation. Table 1 presents the mean scores of these key variables. Financial management training received the highest mean score ( $M = 4.38$ ,  $SD = 0.52$ ), indicating its critical role and frequent application among street food vendors. Marketing skills ( $M = 4.25$ ,  $SD = 0.61$ ) and innovation capacity ( $M = 4.10$ ,  $SD = 0.67$ ) also scored highly, reflecting vendors' recognition of the importance of customer engagement and product improvement for their businesses.

**Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Key Variables (n = 150)**

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation
Financial Management Skills	4.38	0.52
Marketing Skills	4.25	0.61
Innovation Capacity	4.1	0.67
Business Performance	4.35	0.55

Source (Field Data, 2025)

The results highlight the critical role of entrepreneurship capacity building in enhancing the business success of street food vendors in the Arusha Region. The strong emphasis on financial management, marketing, and innovation skills reflects the multifaceted nature of effective business operations in the informal sector. These findings suggest that equipping vendors with a diverse skill set enables them to better manage resources, connect with customers, and adapt to changing market demands, all of which are essential for sustaining and growing their businesses. Moreover, the positive impact on overall business performance underscores the value of targeted training programs in addressing the unique challenges faced by street food vendors. This aligns with existing literature that underscores entrepreneurship training as a key driver of MSME development and economic empowerment in developing contexts.

### Correlation Matrix (Pearson's r)

Pearson correlation analysis revealed strong, positive, and statistically significant relationships between entrepreneurship capacity building dimensions and business success among street food vendors in Arusha Region. Financial management skills showed the highest correlation with business performance ( $r = 0.76$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), followed by marketing skills ( $r = 0.71$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and innovation capacity ( $r = 0.68$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Significant inter-correlations were also observed among the skills themselves, such as between financial management and marketing ( $r = 0.74$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). These findings indicate that strengthening these interconnected competencies through targeted training significantly enhances vendor business performance and sustainability.

**Table 2: Pearson Correlation Matrix between Entrepreneurship Capacity Building Dimensions and Business Performance**

Variables	1. Financial Management	2. Marketing Skills	3. Innovation Capacity	4. Business Performance
1. Financial Management	1			
2. Marketing Skills	0.74**	1		
3. Innovation Capacity	0.69**	0.73**	1	
4. Business Performance	0.76**	0.71**	0.68**	1

Source (Field Data, 2025) Note:  $p < 0.01$  (two-tailed). All correlations are significant at the 1% level.

The strong and statistically significant correlations between entrepreneurship capacity

building components and business success underscore the vital role of targeted training in

empowering street food vendors in Arusha Region. These findings of this study align closely with previous research demonstrating the critical role of entrepreneurship capacity building in enhancing business success. For example, the strong correlation between financial management skills and business performance supports Baporikar and Akino's (2020) assertion that financial literacy is essential for sustainable small business growth. Similarly, the positive association of marketing skills with business success confirms Arthur and Adom's (2020) findings that effective marketing training improves micro-entrepreneurs' ability to meet customer needs and compete in the market. The significant link between innovation capacity and business outcomes echoes Kassa and Mirete's (2022) emphasis on innovation as a driver of competitive advantage among SMEs. However, the integrated relationship observed among financial, marketing, and innovation skills expands on Ho *et al.*, (2018), who highlighted these competencies separately but did not fully explore their interdependence. In contrast to some studies suggesting limited impact of entrepreneurship training in informal sectors (David McKenzie, 2021), this study provides evidence of substantial positive effects, indicating that well-designed capacity building programs can yield meaningful improvements for street food vendors in Arusha.

### Regression Analysis Result

The regression analysis results in Table 3 demonstrate that entrepreneurship capacity building significantly predicts the business performance of street food vendors in Arusha Region, with the model explaining 66% of the variance in business success ( $R^2 = 0.66$ , Adjusted  $R^2 = 0.65$ ,  $F(3,146) = 91.43$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Financial management skills emerged as the strongest predictor ( $\beta = 0.48$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), indicating that vendors with better financial literacy and budgeting practices are more likely to achieve higher business performance. Marketing skills also had a substantial positive effect ( $\beta = 0.35$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), highlighting the importance of customer understanding and effective promotion in enhancing vendor success. Innovation capacity contributed significantly as well ( $\beta = 0.29$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ), underscoring the role of adapting and improving products or processes for competitive advantage. The positive and significant coefficients for all variables suggest that strengthening these core entrepreneurial competencies through targeted capacity building can substantially improve business outcomes for street food vendors, supporting findings from previous studies on the critical influence of financial management, marketing, and innovation on SME growth and sustainability.

**Table 3: Regression Analysis of Entrepreneurship Capacity Building on Business Performance of Street Food Vendors in Arusha Region**

Vendors in Arusha Region	B	SE B	Beta	t	p-value
Constant	0.52	0.21	—	2.48	0.014*
Financial Management Skills	0.45	0.06	0.48	7.5	<0.001**
Marketing Skills	0.32	0.07	0.35	4.57	<0.001**
Innovation Capacity	0.27	0.08	0.29	3.38	0.001**
<b>Model Summary</b>					
R	0.81				
$R^2$	0.66				
Adjusted $R^2$	0.65				
F-statistic	91.43				<0.001**

Source (Field Data, 2025)

The findings of this study strongly affirm that entrepreneurship capacity building has a substantial positive impact on the business success of street food vendors in the Arusha Region, a conclusion that aligns with several previous studies while also offering new perspectives specific to the local context. The regression results revealed that financial management skills were the most significant predictor of business performance, which is consistent with the work of Sooriyakumaran *et al.*, (2022), who emphasized that financial literacy is essential for SMEs to manage resources efficiently and sustain growth. Similarly, the positive influence of marketing skills aligns with Arthur and Adom (2020), who found that targeted marketing training significantly enhances customer engagement and

market reach among small businesses. The contribution of innovation capacity supports the findings of Kassa and Mirete (2022), who observed that innovation is critical in maintaining competitiveness and adapting to changing consumer preferences.

However, the magnitude of financial management's effect in this study appears stronger compared to similar studies conducted in other regions, suggesting that street food vendors in Arusha may face more pronounced financial management challenges that, when addressed, yield considerable business improvement. This regional difference could be attributed to the limited access to formal financial services and entrepreneurial



education previously reported by Mbowe *et al.*, (2020) in Tanzania. Moreover, while Osei Mensah *et al.*, (2018) noted some resistance among street food vendors in Ghana to fully adopt marketing strategies taught in training programs, the present study indicates a higher level of responsiveness to marketing practices among Arusha vendors, possibly due to the competitive nature of urban food vending in the region.

The study also expands the discourse by highlighting the strong interdependence between financial, marketing, and innovation skills, suggesting that an integrated approach to entrepreneurship training is likely more effective than isolated skill development. This multi-dimensional capacity building resonates with the resource-based view (Barney *et al.*, 2001), which posits that a combination of valuable, rare, and well-developed competencies provides sustainable competitive advantage. From the researcher's perspective, these findings emphasize the need for policymakers and development partners to design entrepreneurship training programs that prioritize financial management while concurrently reinforcing marketing and innovation capacities. Additionally, it is crucial to contextualize training materials to the street food sector's unique challenges and customer dynamics in Arusha.

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that entrepreneurship capacity building plays a critical role in improving the business success of street food vendors in the Arusha Region, Tanzania. The results clearly demonstrate that enhancing financial management skills, marketing skills, and innovation capacity contributes significantly to better business performance. Financial management skills were identified as the strongest predictor of success, emphasizing the importance of sound budgeting and resource management in this sector. Additionally, the positive influence of marketing and innovation skills highlights the need for vendors to effectively promote their products and continuously adapt to market demands. These findings suggest that targeted, practical entrepreneurship training that integrates financial, marketing, and innovation components can substantially empower street food vendors to grow sustainable businesses. It is essential for policymakers and development partners to design training programs that are directly relevant to the specific challenges and operating environments of street food vendors in Arusha. Future efforts should focus on scaling such programs and exploring their long-term impact on vendor success and local economic development.

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