



The Effect of Business Communication Skills on Business Performance Among SMEs in Tanzania: A Case of Songea Municipality.

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Abstract— This study examines the effect of Business Communication Skills on Business Performance Among SMEs in Tanzania: A Case of Songea Municipality. Thus, dependent variable is business performance while independent variable is Business Communication Skills. The study used a cross-sectional survey research design and mixed research approach. From population of 4,200 SMEs, sample size of 108 respondents (SMEs Owners) were used. Questionnaires and Interviews were used as methods of data collection. The study employed descriptive statistical analysis and regression analysis for quantitative data and content analysis for qualitative data. Findings of regression show that business communication skills are statistically significant at the 1% level, with a positive coefficient of ($\beta = 0.748$). This suggests that a one-unit improvement in business communication skills corresponds to a 7.48% increase in business performance, assuming other factors remain constant (see Table 6). Overall, the findings conclude that enhanced business communication skills contribute positively to the performance of SMEs. This study suggested that, SME owners needed to invest in structured communication skills development programs. This included targeted training in verbal, written, and digital communication, along with workshops on interpersonal skills and active listening. SMEs should also establish clear internal communication channels and protocols to guarantee the well-organized flow of information across all levels of the business.

Keywords— Business Communication Skills, Business Performance, SMEs

I. INTRODUCTION

Business growth is the outcome of efficiently combining firm-specific resources, capabilities, and operational routines. In the background of Tanzania, the growth of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) depends largely on how well these enterprises utilize their resources such as labor, capital, and knowledge to create products and services that meet market needs (Fajarika, Trapsilawati, & Sopha, 2024). Growth opportunities for SMEs are associated to current production activities, yet they are also influenced by environmental uncertainties such as competition and fluctuating market conditions (Coad, 2009; Hakkert & Kemp, 2016). For SMEs in Songea, these uncertainties mean that owners must not only manage their operations effectively but also adapt quickly to changing conditions to sustain and enhance their performance.

Business environment in Songea, much like in other parts of Tanzania, is dynamic and characterized by rapid changes in technology, customer preferences, and regulatory frameworks. This creates a strong need for SMEs to adopt strategic management practices that guarantee they remain competitive and resilient (Tsuma, 2013). Strategic management involves setting clear long-term objectives, aligning resources effectively, and adapting strategies to external changes (Pandisha, Kombe & Kayunze, 2024). Within this process, business communication skills play a vigorous role. Effective communication facilitates coordination of activities, sharing of ideas, and building of strong relationships with both customers and employees. For SMEs in Songea, clear and timely communication not only reduces operational errors but also fosters teamwork and customer loyalty, both of which are essential for

sustainable growth. Communication contribute a noteworthy role in creating understanding and exciting interest and desire to purchase a product/service. It contributes to trademark parity by creating trademark images and embedding the brand in the consumer's memory (Nelson, Christopher, Teddy *et al.*, 2022).

Effective communication skills are essential for entrepreneurial success, as they enable entrepreneurs to identify market opportunities, build networks for accessing knowledge and resources, and apply negotiation and persuasion techniques crucial in business relationships, sales, and marketing (Wegulo *et al.*, 2023). Despite this acknowledged significance, many micro-firms still face performance and growth limitations due to gaps in both technical and soft skills (EmekaNwokeji, 2020). A major constraint in this regard is inadequate communication competence (Nasser *et al.*, 2022). Previous research has consistently linked communication skills to positive SME outcomes such as business survival, profitability, export performance, and job creation (Turyatamba *et al.*, 2022).

The knowledge-based theory suggests that the ability of a firm to create, share, and apply knowledge is a key determinant of sustained competitive advantage. In Songea's SMEs, communication serves as the primary channel for transferring both tacit and explicit knowledge within the business and between the business and its stakeholders (Penrose, 1959; Barney, 1991). For instance, when SME owners communicate effectively with suppliers, they negotiate better deals and ensure timely delivery of inputs, which improves operational efficiency (Gamage, 2022). Similarly, clear communication with customers helps in understanding their needs, addressing complaints promptly, and building trust, all of which contribute to improved business performance (Basiru, *et al.*, 2025).

Despite significant contribution of SMEs play in Songea's local economy, contributing to job creation, poverty reduction, and overall economic activity, numerous still face challenges that hinder SMEs growth. These include limited access to market information, inadequate business management skills, poor communication channels, and a lack of customer engagement strategies. Weak business communication skills, in specific, lead to misunderstandings, slow decision-making, and lost business opportunities. While studies in other regions have shown a strong positive link between communication and SME performance, for instance Musiimenta and Akampurira, (2024), Masecko and Kungu, (2020) and Mutuku, *et al.*, (2022); (Otoo, 2016), there is limited empirical evidence from Songea Municipal Council. This gap justifies the present study, which seeks to evaluate the effect of business communication skills on the performance

of SMEs in Songea, with the aim of providing recommendations that can strengthen their competitiveness and long-term sustainability.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review

This study guided by knowledge-based theories, developed by Penrose (1959) and later extended by Barney (1991) and Conner (1991). According to Rommer (2001), knowledge is a noteworthy driver of productivity in SMEs and the economy at large. Skilled and knowledgeable employees are more efficient at learning and applying new skills, which allows them to boost productivity, efficiency, innovation, and risk-taking capabilities within SMEs (Timmons, 1999). This theory distinguishes between two forms of learning: explorative learning, which takes place internally within the SME through operations or experiments (Zagra, Neilsen, & Bogner, 1999), and exploitative learning, which focuses on external knowledge acquisition.

The knowledge-based theory is founded on numerous assumptions. First, it suggests that knowledge is significant resource for any firm. Unlike traditional economic theories that prioritize tangible assets, this theory emphasizes intellectual capital and specialized knowledge as key resources (Ogutu, *et al.* 2023). It also highlights that differences in knowledge across firms are a major determinant of sustained competitive advantage (Purnamawati, Jie, Hong & Yuniarta, 2022). Furthermore, it assumes that knowledge-based resources are difficult to replicate, yet they play a pivotal role in creating and maintaining long-term competitiveness for a firm.

Regardless of its strengths, the theory has notable limitations. Developing and maintaining a knowledge-based system can be costly, requiring significant time, effort, and financial investment (Purnamawati, Jie, Hong & Yuniarta, 2022). This expense pose obstacle for SMEs, particularly smaller ones. Moreover, such systems inflexible, as they are frequently programmed with specific rules that make adaptation to new or changing situations challenging (Tajuddin, 2025). This firmness hinder SMEs ability to respond effectively to dynamic market conditions.

In the background of entrepreneurship, learning by doing plays a vital role in expanding knowledge. Education, particularly entrepreneurial training, helps integrate skills, attitudes, and behavior's important for business success (Middleton, 2010). A trained entrepreneur can make rational decisions on market entry, product selection, and pricing strategies. This theory, offers a valuable framework for understanding the contribution of entrepreneurship training in enhancing business performance. It underscores

the importance of knowledge acquisition and its influence on improving personal abilities, making it applicable in examining the relationship between entrepreneurship business communication skills and SME performance in Tanzania.

2.2 Empirical Review

This section presents the review related to influence of business communication skills on business performance. Business communication skills is a multi-dimension, and it has been categorized differently such as, financial skills, managerial skills, and creative thinking skills as soft skills. Effective business communication skills build trust among employees and enable business entity to attain its goals (Jiang *et al.*, 2020). Business communication can be either vertical or horizontal allowing employees to exchange ideas each other and it is divided into oral and written communication skills (Otoo, 2016). The ability to communicate ideas through verbal and non-verbal is very essential in business set-ups because the continuity of new entrants in the current competitive business environment requires timely skills, which includes communication skills. Thus, effective business communication skills must be learned otherwise there should be barriers to accomplish the set goals or objectives of the business entity. The existence of any business depends on the positive impact of regular customers, and to support and reinforce customer relationship, effective business communication with customers and other important stakeholders is very essential for the prosperity of the business (Otoo, 2016). Excellent communication is required within the entrepreneurship practices (Penanula & Penanula, 2014).

Musiimenta and Akampurira, (2024) examine the influence of communication skills on the entrepreneurial performance of SMEs in Kyengera town council. Their investigation used cross-sectional survey that targeted all formally registered small business owners operating in Kyengera Town Council. Findings of correlation between communication skills and the performance of SMEs was $(r) = 0.650$. Finding implies there was a high positive relationship among the two variables since the p-value was 0.000 which was less than 0.01 ($p < 0.01$). This implied that a positive change in communication skills outcomes in a corresponding positive change in the performance of SMEs

in Kyengera Town Council. and vice versa. Likewise, Mutuku, *et al.*, (2022) from Kenya, examine the influence of entrepreneurial skills on SMEs performance. Their research used primary data collected from 20 SMEs. This study used correlational survey design to collect data from a sample of 20 respondents in order to establish the effect of entrepreneurial skills on organizational performance. Findings revealed that entrepreneurial communication skills positive and statistically significant to influence SMEs performance. The positive relationship among entrepreneurial communication skills and performance of SMEs means that, as entrepreneurial skills increase among the SMEs in Nakuru city, their performance increases. It can also be concluded that majority of the firms in Nakuru city acknowledge the need for entrepreneurial skills in execution of their daily activities. More so, communication and entrepreneurial literacy skills are very paramount for good performance of SMEs.

Moreover, Masecko and Kungu, (2020) from Kenya investigated the influence of communication on the growth of SMEs in Wakulima Market. Their study used a descriptive survey research design and data collected from 576 SMEs. Regression findings show that, communication had a positive significance influence on the growth of SMEs. The study concluded that communication that is transparent, open, effective communication in an organization will create a sense of openness that builds trust across employee levels. a group of employees in a room and creating a plan for how the company interacts with employees.

2.3 Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 display the conceptual framework that show the relationship among the independent variables and the dependent variables. In this study, dependent variables is business performance which measured by indicators such as profitability, productivity and innovation while independent variables of business communication skills measured by indicator such as collaboration and negotiating. This study hypothesized that, business communication skills has positively effect on SMEs business performance as supported by Musiimenta and Akampurira, (2024); Masecko and Kungu, (2020) and Mutuku, *et al.*, (2022).

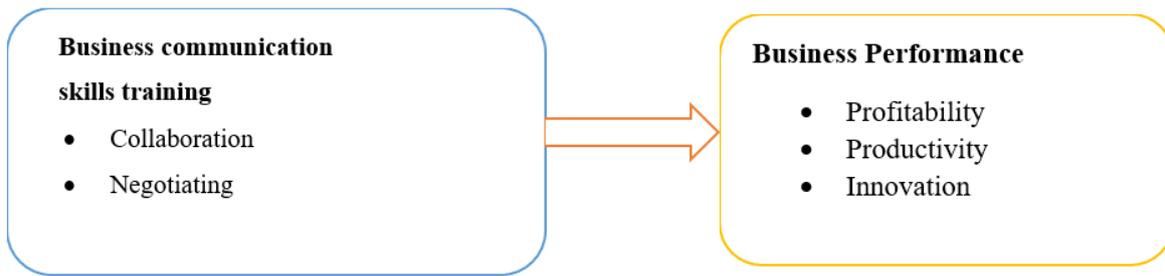


Fig.1: Conceptual Framework

Source: Researcher (2025)

III. METHODOLOGY

The current study examines the effect of business communication skills on business performance among SMEs in Tanzania, specifically study conducted at Songea Municipality in Ruvuma Region. This paper employed mixed approach (i.e. qualitative and quantitative approach). In research design, the current study used a cross-sectional research design where primary data from SMEs collection at a single point in time at Songea Municipal Council.

Population of this study consisted a total of 4,200 SMEs as reported by SIDO survey and preliminary reports from TRA. From population of 4,200 SMEs, study used sample size of 98 SMEs for quantitative data and a sample size of 10 participants for interview. In sample size selection, this study used simple random and purposive sampling technique to select 98 SMEs for quantitative data and 10 for qualitative data. In data collection, study used questionnaires and interview for collection of primary data. Moreover, content analysis used to analyse qualitative data collected by using interview which conducted with 15 participants while simple linear regression model used in analysis of quantitative data. This study used simple linear regression model due to single independent variable of business communication skills. Thus, regression model used to examine both magnitude and direction of influence of business communication skills on business performance among SMEs in Tanzania as showed in equation 1;

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \mu_i \dots\dots\dots (1)$$

Where, Y is dependent variable of business performance; β_1 is coefficient; μ is error term/residual; X_1 is business

communication skills. In addition, this study tested the several assumptions as recommended by Gauss-Markov theorem where in statistics states that under certain assumptions, the ordinary least squares (OLS) estimator for the coefficients in a linear regression model is the best linear unbiased estimator (BLUE). Those assumption included linear in parameters; multicollinearity, heteroscedasticity, autocorrelation and residual normality.

IV. FINDINGS

4.1 Finding of Descriptive Statistics

This section presents descriptive statistics of business communication skills on business performance. Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation values) of business communication skills were computed. Results from Table 4.5 shows that, “I have a good understanding of the collaborative tools and techniques introduced in the business communication skills training” scored first with mean 3.5918 and S.D of 1.4130. In addition, business communication skills training increase ability to communicate clearly and concisely in team collaborations scored second with mean of 3.5714 and S.D of 1.4714. Also, “there is an increase in the ability to build bond, trust and long-term relationships in business negotiation” scored second with mean value of 3.5612 and S.D of 1.4364. The composite mean is 3.5408 implies that most of participants agreed side based on each statement. Moreover, the composite mean of Standard Deviation (SD) is 1.4375 which is below the composite mean and this indicates that data were closely packed around the mean.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Business Communication Skills

Statement	Mean	S. D
Business communication skills training enhance ability to employ persuasive techniques during negotiations	3.4388	1.4292
Business communication skills training increase ability to communicate clearly and concisely in team collaborations	3.5714	1.4714
There is an increase in the ability to build bond, trust and long-term relationships in business negotiation	3.5612	1.4364
I have a good understanding of the collaborative tools and techniques introduced in the business communication skills training	3.5918	1.4130
Composite mean	3.5408	1.4375

4.2 Regression Estimates

This part present finding of regression model that intended to examine the influence of business communication skills on business performance. Before presenting the main results, the study first presents the model assumptions for instance the normality test, heteroskedasticity, multicollinearity, and autocorrelation.

4.2.1 Multicollinearity

This subsection presents the results of the Gauss–Markov theorem assumption of Multicollinearity. Table 2 display

Table 2: Multicollinearity

Variable	Tolerance	VIF
Business Communication Skills	1.000	1.000

4.2.2 Heteroscedasticity

Heteroscedasticity in a regression analysis refers to a condition where the variance of the dependent variable differs across different levels of the independent variables. This variance inconsistency complicates the analysis as regression models typically assume equal variance across all levels of the independent variables, a condition known as homoscedasticity. Also, heteroscedasticity does not bias coefficient estimates, it reduces their precision, affecting the reliability of results. Correcting for heteroscedasticity is crucial to ensure accurate regression analysis and valid statistical inferences. In this investigation, heteroscedasticity was identified using a scatter plot. If the scatter plot displays a pattern, for instance, a curve, it designates a violation of the assumptions of homoscedasticity. Figure 1 shows an asymmetrical structure, therefore there was no problem of heteroscedasticity, and the variance of residual is constant for all observations.

results of a collinearity test of business communication skills. Collinearity refers to the degree of correlation between predictor variables in a regression model. Findings of Tolerance is 1.000, and a value close to 1 means very low correlation with other predictors. Also, VIF is equal to 1.000 which means no multicollinearity at all. Multicollinearity becomes a concern when $VIF > 5$ (moderate) or $VIF > 10$ (severe). Since there is only one independent variable in this model, multicollinearity is mathematically impossible, so VIF is exactly 1.000.

4.2.3 Residuals Normality

Figure 2 show histogram which designates that residuals grouped around zero and formed a symmetric bell-shaped curve. So, the residual is normally distributed. Also, Table 3 displays the results of normality tests for both Kolmogorov-Smirnova and Shapiro-Wilk. Thus, probability value for the Kolmogorov-Smirnova test is 0.200, and the p-value for the Shapiro-Wilk test is 0.768. Generally, a probability value of less than 0.05 suggests that the residual is not normally distributed. However, in this case, the p-values are greater than 0.05, tell us that we cannot reject the null hypothesis of normality at the 0.05 level of significance. A higher p-value (greater than the typical significance level of 0.05) suggests that there is no significant evidence to reject the null hypothesis that the residuals follow a normal distribution. Therefore, the study conclude that the standardized residuals of the regression model are normally distributed.

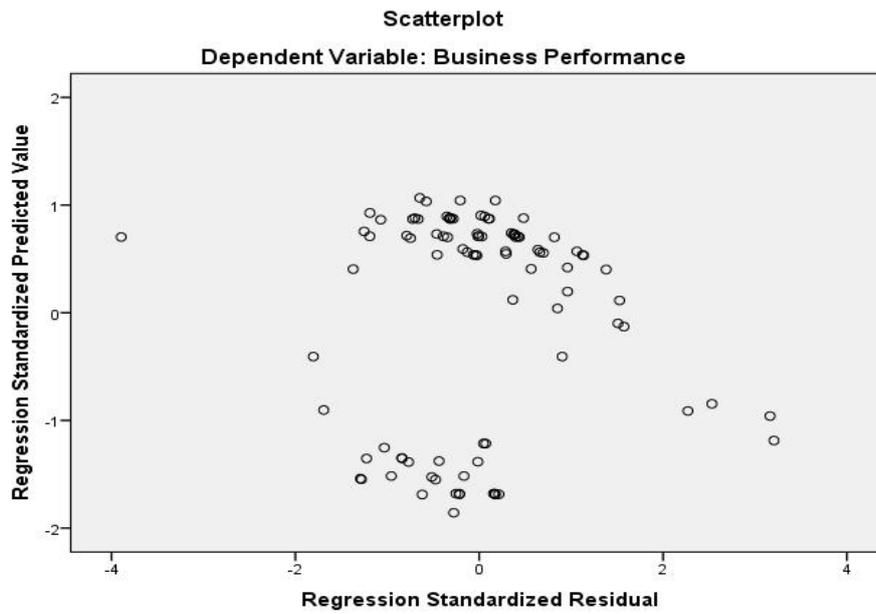


Fig.1: Scatter Plot

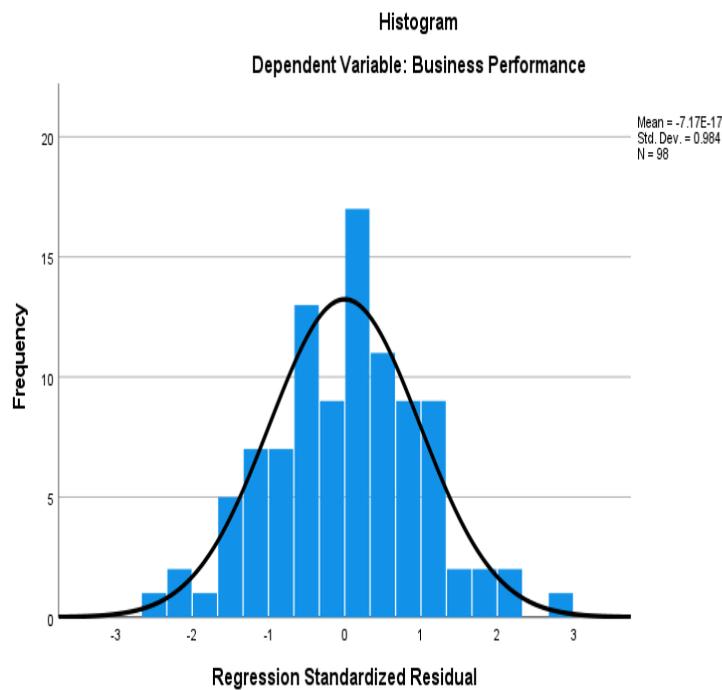


Fig.1: Histogram

Table 3: Test for Normality

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Unstandardized Residual	.069	98	.200*	.997	98	.768

*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.
a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

4.2.4 Autocorrelation

Autocorrelation in regression model refers to a situation where the error terms of a model are correlated with each other (Akpan & Moffat, 2018). This problem occurs in both time series and cross-sectional datasets, regularly due to clustering or grouping within the data. The presence of autocorrelation misrepresents regression outcomes, leading to misleadingly significant coefficients, inflated t-statistics, wrong correlations between variables, and unreliable standard errors (Gujarati & Porter, 2009). Such distortions compromise the validity of statistical inferences, making it essential to detect and address autocorrelation in regression models.

In this study, the Durbin–Watson (DW) test was employed to detect the presence of autocorrelation. The DW statistic ranges from 0 to 4, with values close to 0 indicating positive autocorrelation, values near 4 suggesting negative autocorrelation, and values around 2 implying minimal or no autocorrelation. According to Wooldridge (2010), any value falling significantly outside the expected range

indicates the presence of autocorrelation. In this study, the DW statistic was 2.241, which is close to the ideal value of 2. This result, as shown in Table 4 of the model summary, suggests that the model does not suffer from significant autocorrelation, thereby supporting the reliability of the regression estimates.

4.2.5 Model Summary

Table 4 outlines the outcomes obtained through a linear regression analysis. The R indicates the correlation coefficient representing the relationship among variables. Correlation coefficient (R) of 0.733, tell us presence of a positive and strong correlation between the independent variables and outcome variable. Likewise, R Square stands for coefficient of determination, which signifies the proportion of variance in the outcome variable that can be explained by the explanatory/independent variables. In this case, the R Square is 0.538, representing that 53.3% of the variation in "business performance" is explained by the explanatory variables Business communication skills.

Table 4: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.733 ^a	.538	.533	.69749355	2.241

a. Predictors: (Constant), Business communication skills

b. Dependent Variable: Business Performance

4.2.6 Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

This subsection presents the results of ANOVA. The ANOVA table for a regression model with the dependent variable of business performance and predictors business communication skills are presented. Finding of F-value of 11.62 with probability value of 0.000 specifies that, overall model is significant. The predictors (business

communication skills) explain a significant amount of variance in SMEs' business performance. The low p-value suggests that at least one of the predictors has a significant impact on business performance. In conclusion, based on this ANOVA table, there is strong evidence to suggest that the business communication skills significantly influence business performance.

Table 5: ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	54.304	1	54.304	111.621	.000b
	Residual	46.704	96	.486		
	Total	101.007	97			

a. Dependent Variable: Business Performance

b. Predictors: (Constant), Business communication skills

4.3 Regression Coefficients

This section presents the key findings of the study, which aimed to examine the impact of business communication skills on business performance. The results indicate that business communication skills are statistically significant at

the 1% level, with a positive coefficient of ($\beta = 0.748$). This suggests that a one-unit improvement in business communication skills corresponds to a 7.48% increase in business performance, assuming other factors remain constant (see Table 6). Overall, the findings conclude that

enhanced business communication skills contribute positively to the performance of SMEs. This conclusion consistency with the idea that effective communication supports SMEs coordinate operations more efficiently, convey ideas clearly, strengthen relationships with customers, and foster teamwork among employees. Clear and timely communication also decreases misinterpretations, increases decision-making, and advances customer satisfaction, all of which contribute directly to business growth. So, the statistical evidence supports the conclusion that stronger business communication skills are an important driver of SMEs' improved performance.

Findings is supported by interview results, as reported by Owner of a small manufacturing firm and Manager of a retail SME

"In my small manufacturing business, clear communication is everything. When I explain production schedules to my team in simple terms, we avoid costly mistakes and save time. Just last month, because everyone understood their roles clearly, we finished an urgent order two days ahead of schedule—and the client immediately placed a bigger order." Participant 1

"Good communication keeps our customers coming back. We make sure to explain product features and after-sales services in a friendly, transparent way. For instance, when a client bought our product, we gave clear instructions on use and maintenance. She later referred three of her friends to us, which increased our monthly sales." Participant 2

Findings consistency with Musiimenta and Akampurira, (2024) from Kyengera town council who examined the influence of communication skills on the entrepreneurial performance of SMEs in Kyengera town council. Their results show the presence of high positive relationship

among the communication skills and business performance since the p-value was 0.000 which was less than 0.01 ($p < 0.01$). This implied that a positive change in communication skills outcomes in a corresponding positive change in the performance of SMEs in Kyengera Town Council. and vice versa. Similarly, Mutuku, et al., (2022) from Kenya, revealed that entrepreneurial communication skills positive and statistically significant to influence SMEs performance. The positive relationship among entrepreneurial communication skills and performance of SMEs means that, as entrepreneurial skills increase among the SMEs in Nakuru city, their performance increases. Moreover, Masecko and Kungu, (2020) from Kenya show that, communication had a positive significance influence on the growth of SMEs. The study concluded that communication that is transparent, open, effective communication in an organization will create a sense of openness that builds trust across employee levels. a group of employees in a room and creating a plan for how the company interacts with employees.

From the viewpoint of the knowledge-based theory (Penrose, 1959; Barney, 1991), communication is not merely a transactional tool but an important mechanism for making, sharing, and applying knowledge within business. SMEs that develop strong communication skills are better equipped to transfer tacit and explicit knowledge across teams, align strategic goals, and respond swiftly to market demands. This effective knowledge flow transforms communication into a strategic resource that sustains competitive advantage. So, the statistical evidence from this study supports the theoretical premise that knowledge, when proficiently shared and used through effective communication serves as a vital driver of improved SME business performance.

Table 6: Regression Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	.043	.070		.606	.546
Business communication skills	.748	.071	.733	10.565	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Business Performance

V. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that, business communication skills associated with increased business performance. This strong and positive relationship suggests that communication is not just an operational necessity but a measurable driver of success in SMEs. Theoretically,

results consistency with the knowledge-based theory, which highlights the role of knowledge creation, sharing, and application as a source of sustained competitive advantage. Effective communication facilitates the smooth transfer of tacit and explicit knowledge within and outside the organization. In SMEs, this means better coordination of

operations, clearer articulation of ideas, stronger customer relationships, and more cohesive teamwork. These reduce misunderstandings, speed up decision-making, and increase customer satisfaction, all of which contribute directly to better business performance.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This study suggested that, SME owners needed to invest in structured communication skills development programs. This included targeted training in verbal, written, and digital communication, along with workshops on interpersonal skills and active listening. SMEs should also establish clear internal communication channels and protocols to guarantee the well-organized flow of information across all levels of the business. Also, fostering a culture that encourages open dialogue, feedback, and knowledge sharing can enhance both tacit and explicit knowledge transfer, in line with the knowledge-based theory.

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