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CONTRIBUTION OF CONSTRUCTION SMES TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT: *Construction firms SMEs are the majority players in most construction industries. Thus, improvement in their performance will have a major impact in the overall performance of the construction industry and the sustainable development of a country. Construction Industry determines the nature and pace of national development by it is significant contribution to socio-economic development and Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and plays an important role towards the attainment of sustainable development goals. This paper explores the contribution of construction SMEs towards attainment of sustainable development in Nigeria. The study adopted a review technique of related literature that highlights contribution of the construction SMEs in the area of social, economic and employment generations. This was complimented with a questionnaire survey of 125 construction SMEs constructing the federal government mass housing projects in the seven North-West states of Nigeria. The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics to draw conclusion that highlights the important contributions of construction SMEs to sustainable developments such as social, economic and employment generation. The study recommends increased patronage and support to construction SMEs in order to achieve their full contribution towards sustainable development of Nigeria.*

KEY WORDS*:* contribution, construction SMEs, performance improvement and sustainable developments

INTRODUCTION

According to World Bank estimates, global wealth within the past decades had almost doubled. However, half of the world population still subsists on less than two ($2) United States dollars per day (World Bank, 2015). Thus, poverty remains a major challenge towards sustainable development, environmental security and global stability. However, Lopes (1998) highlighted that, the construction industry has linked with the process of economic growth and sustainable development. He defined economic growth of a nation as a sustained increase in population and product per capita. The growth in population necessitate the need for more products i.e. food, clothes and shelter. The increase in per capita and global production is related to the construction sector in the sense that various activities of the construction industry provide the facilities indispensable for developing other sectors of the economy. The construction industry is one of the most significant and multi-purpose in impact to the sustainability of the human beings among all

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other industries. Its value added chain encompasses vast activities within the society, economic sectors and the environment. The relationship and contribution of construction industry to economic growth and sustainable development has been documented by other writers and the World Bank (WEF, (2016); Ogunlana *et.al*, (2003); Fox, (2003); Kirmani, (1988); Turin, (1973); Ofori, (1991,1998 and 2001); Wells, (1986); World Bank, (1984, 2009 and 2015).

Sustainable growth and development has been a global concern for some time and gained momentum during the 1990's (Octive, 2006). Thus, it's argued that improving the performance and sustainability of Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SMEs) will help to achieve sustainable growth and development. This is because SMEs are considered as the backbone of economic activities. SMEs that are well managed and healthy creates employment opportunities, generate wealth and tax revenue as while as contributing to social stability and peace (WBCSD, 2004).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Nigerian Construction Industry

Nigeria is a vast country with enormous potentials for sustainable development as noted by Eteama, (2011) it comprises 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), where the capital city (Abuja) is located. Nigeria is classified as a mixed emerging market economy and has already reached lower middle income status according to the World Bank, with its abundant supply of natural resources, well-developed financial, legal, communications, transport sectors and stock exchange which is the second largest in Africa (World Bank, 2013). Nigeria was ranked 21st in the world in terms of GDP (PPP) in 2015 and it is the United States' largest trading partner in sub-Saharan Africa. It is one of two countries from Africa among 11 Global Growth Generators Countries.

The construction industry strongly affects the economy, the environment and society as a whole. It touches the daily lives of everyone as the built environment heavily influences quality of life. The construction industry account of six (6) percent of global GDP (Isa *et.al*, 2013; W.E.F. 2016). The industry is regarded as a potent motivator of the national economy, it provide the driving force necessary for sustaining a buoyant economy or reviving a depressed one (Olayeni and Omuh 2010). The construction industry is so strategic to the general economic development of any country so much that, the tempo of construction activities served as the barometer of overall development in any country (Okereke, 2006).

However, despite it is significant position within the national economy, its performance in Nigeria has been and continues to be very poor. Although studies conducted by the World Bank confirmed that construction should normally account for between 3% and 8% of GDP in developing countries (World Bank, 1984; WEF, 2016) the contribution of the industry to Nigeria's GDP has hovered steadily at around 2%- 4% (Okoye *et.al*, 2016). Similarly, although the contribution of the

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construction industry to employment average 3.2% in developing countries, the industry contribution to employment has remain consistently at 1% in Nigeria (Idrus and Sodangi, 2010). Ofori and Lean (2001) shared the view that, the economies of many developing countries are confronted by severe difficulties owing to a combination of lower commodity prices, higher energy costs, falling exchange rates and rising inflation. At the same time, the countries face immense social problems such as rising urban population and unemployment that are putting pressure on the nation resources and capabilities. The construction industry in most developing countries is facing reduced level of patronage because of adjustment programmes, which invariably involve cuts in government's capital investment. The challenge, as Ofori (1993) highlighted is that, the construction industry can do well despite the severe constraints in its operating environment. Moreover, the construction industry must help the national economics to recover and contributes to the easing of the social problems existing in a society. Construction SMEs are the majority players within the construction industry (Fatai, 2015; Maloka, 2015; Dlungwana and Rwelamila, 2016). In addition, Osotimehin *et.al* (2012) observed that, there is strong correlation between the degree of poverty, hunger, unemployment, economic well-being of the citizens of countries and the degree of vibrancy of the respective country's small-scale enterprises. Thus, Larcher (1999) noted that, there is a growing interest in developing construction SMEs as a method for improving the scale and efficiency of the construction industry, which invariably leads to sustainable development.

Construction SMEs holds the greatest potential for increasing construction capacity and sustainable economic development. However, construction SMEs have serious challenges that tend to limit their survival and growth. These challenges ultimately impact negatively on construction SMEs contribution towards providing solutions to the deepening levels of poverty, equality and unemployment particularly in the disadvantaged communities (Maloka, 2015). Measures have been implemented in order to improve the performance of Small and Medium Scale (SMEs), however the result of the measures on the performance of construction SMEs are negligible. But with the rising emphasis and growing interest of stakeholders on bridging Nigeria's infrastructure gap, the future growth of construction as a tool for sustainable economic development is somewhat optimistic. (Oluwakiyesi, 2011; Isa *et.al*, 2013).

Contribution of Construction SMEs to Sustainable Development

World Bank Report (2009) suggested the need for developing countries to concentrate efforts in diversifying their economies from mono product and natural resources based, towards more sustainable human resources that can create jobs for the vast youth population. To achieve this, human and infrastructure developments must be enhanced for growth and development of small-scale industries and internal micro economic development. Building and construction sector is one of the top five sectors used in measuring the National Gross Capital Formation (NGCF) and the GDP of any country and its effect on every other sector, makes it a significant front for sustainable development. The industry's size, the nature of its operation, the job creation potentials and its

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presence in every developmental activity have made construction an attractive area for experimentation in enhancing the effectiveness of governance and cooperative works towards sustainable economic development (Mosaku *et.al*, 2006; Isa *et.al*, 2013). Construction SMEs as the majority players in the Nigerian construction industry contributes significantly in sustainable development in the following areas;

Societal Relevance

Construction is one of the first businesses that humans developed and it continues to shape our daily life in unique ways. As noted by Klepeies *et.al*, (2001), virtually all other businesses rely on the construction industry to provide and maintain their accommodation, plants and infrastructure. Construction activity determine where and how almost everyone lives, works and plays. For nearly the entire population of the world, the built environment heavily influences quality of life. In the United States, for instance, people on average spend nearly 90% of their time indoors. (WEF, 2016). Developing countries perceived SMEs as the key to economic growth, poverty alleviation and employment generation. Small-scale construction firms are part of the SMEs sector.

Economic Relevance

The construction industry plays a key role in the economy of both developing and developed countries (Ibrahim, 2011). With a global annual revenue of almost $10 trillion and benefits of $3.6 trillion, the construction industry accounts for about 6% of global GDP. More specifically, it accounts for about 5% of total GDP in developed countries, while in some developing countries it tends to account for more than 8% of GDP. The industry generates vast amount of employment and wealth, globally more than 100 million people are currently employed in the construction industry. (Ibrahim 2011, World Bank 2015 and WEF 2016). According World Bank (2015) and World Economic Forum (2016) projections the industry is expected to grow greatly in the coming years to estimated revenues of $15 trillion by 2025.

Past research had stressed the importance of both small and medium scale enterprises in Nigeria's development, in social and economic terms; it employs not less than 25% of the total work force and the largest employer of construction labour in Africa (Ibrahim 2011). Furthermore, considering the importance of the construction industry to GDP, problems of foreign exchange earning in a mono economy as that of Nigeria, coupled with the capital flight associated with the engagement of foreign construction firms. Ibrahim 2011; Abhulimhen 2011; Arinaitwe, 2006, Mafimidowo and Iyagba 2015 stressed that, the empowerment of construction SMEs need to be supported in order to perform effectively and to operate at par with their counterparts in other nations, who are contributing significantly towards their nation's economic fortunes.

Environmental Relevance

A report by the World Economic Forum (2016) cited the World Steel Association report (2015) that, the construction industry is the single largest global consumer of resources and raw materials.

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It consumes about 50% of global steel production and, each year 3 billion tonnes of raw materials are used to manufacture building products worldwide. The WEF, (2016) further reported that, a report by Environmental and Energy Institute in 2014 indicates that, about 40% of solid waste in the United States was derived from construction and demolition and such waste involves a significant loss of valuable minerals, metals and organic materials. Therefore, there is great opportunity to create closed material loops in a circular economy. While for energy use, buildings are responsible for 25-40% of the global total, thereby contributing hugely to global warming.

As noted by the World Economic Forum (WEF 2016) report on Construction Industry Transformation, value lies in improving the quality of construction and the quality of materials used, in contributing to a healthier indoor environment, increasing its sustainability and reducing its cost. Therefore, any effort towards this goal will generate welcome benefits, whether for families investing in their first private home or governments embarking on a giant infrastructure project. Small-scale construction firms as the majority players in every construction industry could play an effective role in achieving these objectives.

Objectives and Method of the Study

The study aims at exploring the contribution of construction SMEs towards the attainment of Nigeria sustainable development objectives. The evaluation was achieved through accessing several reports on sustainable developments and a questionnaire survey of 125 construction SMEs constructing the federal government mass housing projects in the seven North-West states of Nigeria. These reports included that of the International organizations and individual researchers. Attention was paid to the findings of government and non-governmental agencies studying sustainable development issues. The survey data was analyzed using descriptive statistics to draw conclusion that highlights the important contributions of SMEs to sustainable development such as social, economic and employment generation. Furthermore, specific indices of the contribution and attainment of sustainable developments were generated from secondary data. This allow for predicting future trend and as well as evaluating barriers and limitations to the attainment of sustainable development in Nigeria. Inferences were drawn descriptively based on the qualitative and quantitative data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The administered questionnaires sought background information on construction SMEs surveyed. Questions were asked about the company registration with Corporate Affairs Corporation (CAC), whether they have handle construction projects in the past, their area of specialization, number of employees and annual turnover. The results tabulated in figure 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 below;

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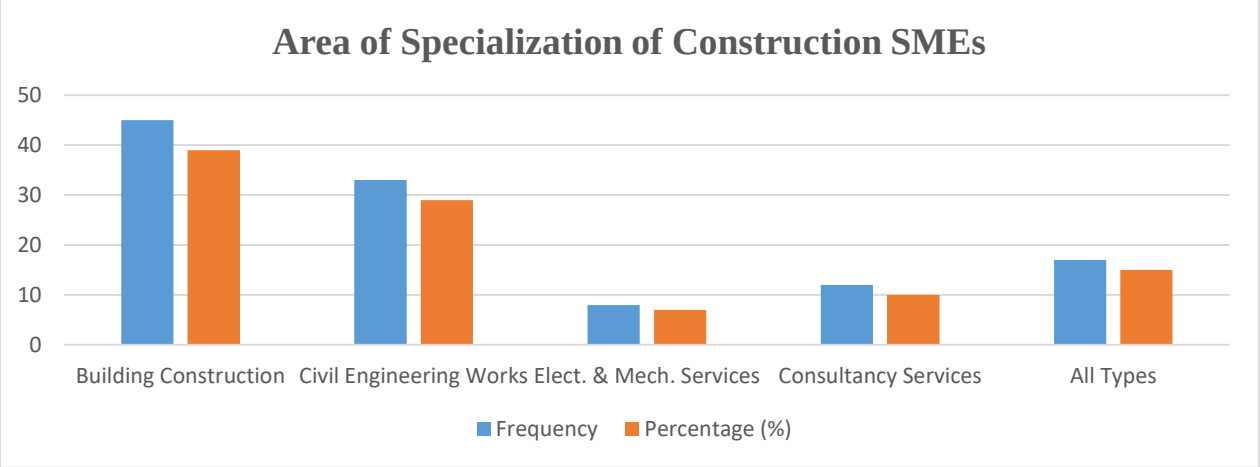

Fig. 1 Showing Specialization of Construction SMEs

Figure 1 indicate that most Construction SMEs are involved in building construction works (39%) especially in the areas of maintenance and renovation of existing buildings. While 29% are engaged in minor road maintenance projects, 10% are engaged in consultancy services, 7% in mechanical and electrical services and 15% are involved in all nature of construction works. This indicates that, there are more construction SMEs within the construction industry than most other construction specializations perhaps because there are more available building construction projects within the construction market and ease of entry into the business.

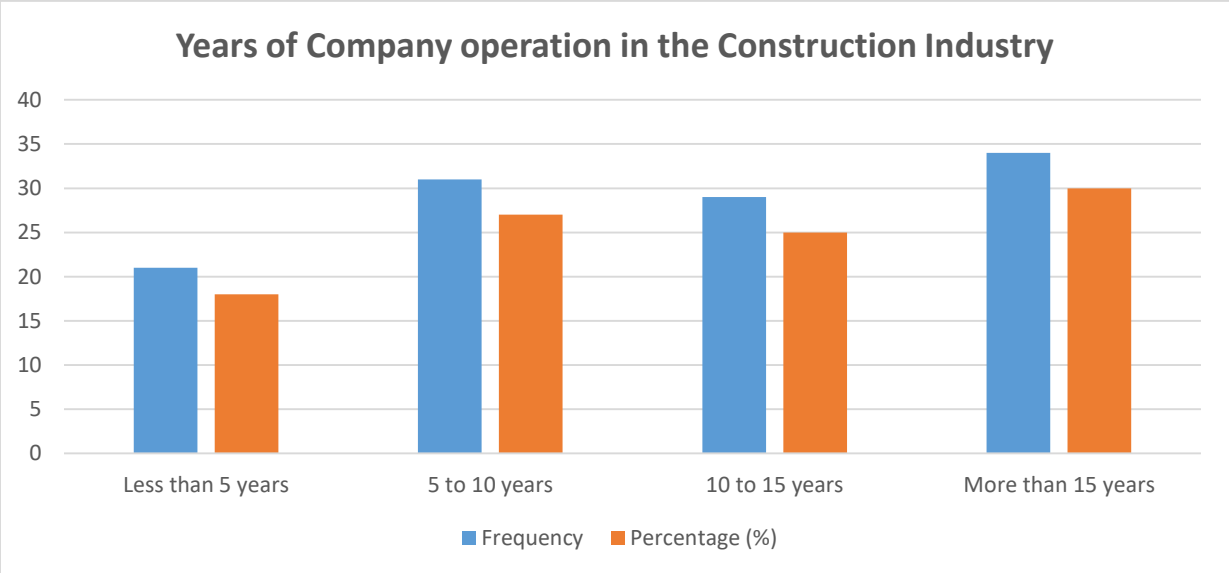

Fig. 2 Showing Years of Operation of Construction Firms

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While, figure 2 shows that only 18% of construction SMEs have less than 5 years' operating experience in the construction industry and 30% have more than 15 years' experience. This shows the firms had survived the initial teething problems of operations within the risky construction market and therefore, capable of growing and expanding their operations given the needed supports.

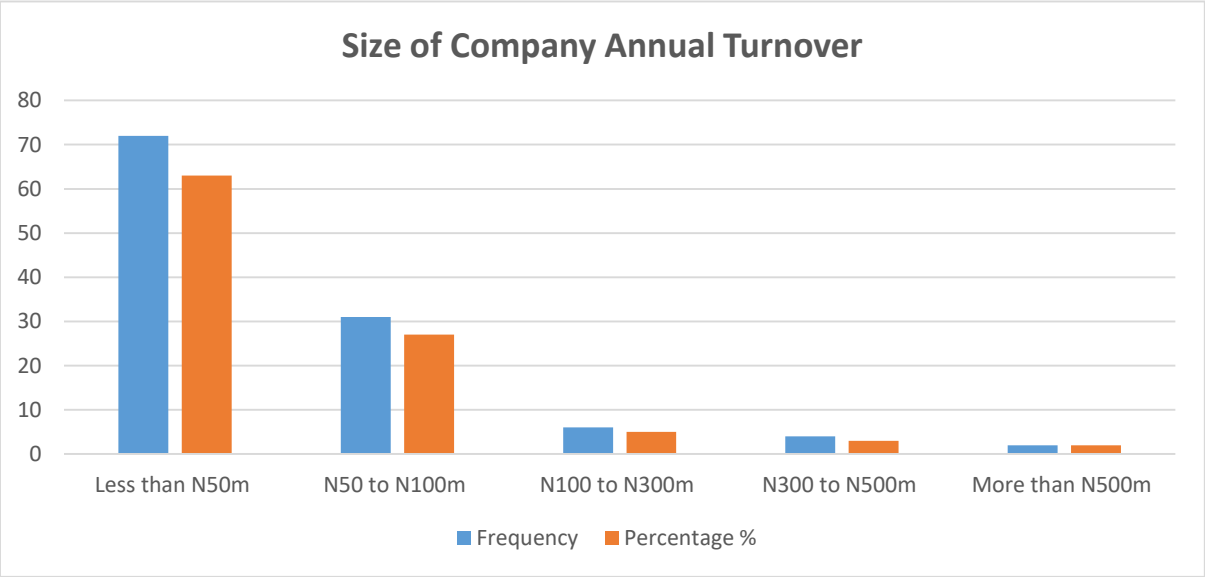

Fig.3 Showing Size of Annual Turnover of Construction Firms

Figure 3 indicate that most (63%) of the construction firms operating in Nigeria are very small with an annual turnover of less than **N**50 million (**$**175,000). While 27% have a turnover of between **N**50 to **N1**00 million **(**$175,000 to **$**350,000**)** and only about 2% have a turnover of more than **N**500m (**$**1,650,000). The implication of this low turnover of construction firms is that, they will not have the ability to acquire plants, implement incentive schemes and retain qualified personnel that can improve their performance.

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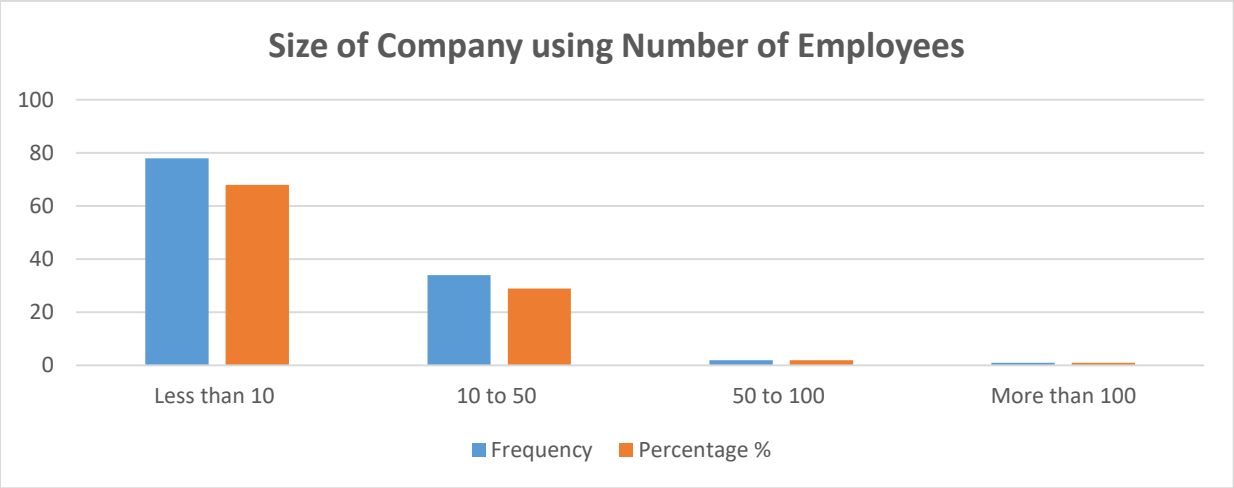

Fig.4 Showing Size of Company using number of Employees

Figure 4 indicate that about 68% of construction SMEs have less than 10 employees perhaps because of their low annual turnover. This tends to limit their employment generation capability therefore, worsening the current issues of unemployment in Nigeria.

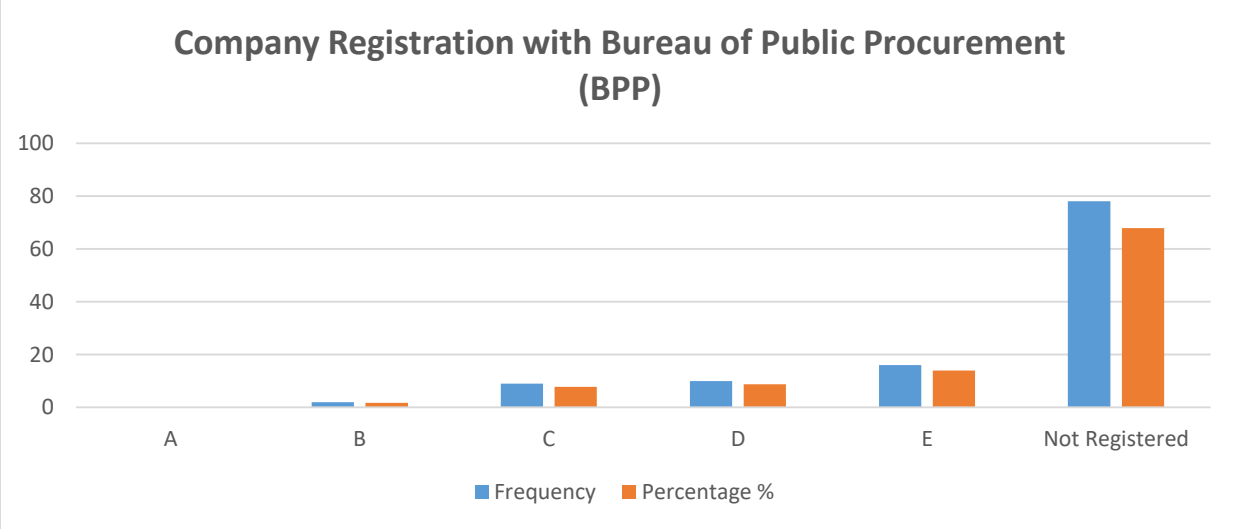

Fig. 5 Showing Company Registration with BPP

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Figure 5 indicated that about 68% operating in Nigeria are not registered by the agency in charge of federal government procurement that is the biggest single construction market in Nigeria. The lack of registration by construction SMEs could be because of the stringent conditions and requirements for registration. Thus, limiting the potential of construction SMEs contribution towards economic and social development.

SMEs Contribution to Sustainable Development

Table1 below shows the trend of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of Nigeria at market prices estimated by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) with figures in USD (billions). While Table 2 below shows the trend of the global ranking of the Nigerian economy, in comparison with other countries of the world, derived from the historical list of countries by GDP (PPP). The table shows the gradual improvement in the global ranking of the Nigeria's economy as the government implements economic reforms and eliminate corruption.

Table 1 showing Trend of Nigeria Gross Domestic Product (GDP)

Year	Gross Domestic Product (PPP in billions)	US Dollar exchange rate	Inflation index (2000=100)	Per capita income (as % of USA)
1980	*58	1 Naira	1.30	7%
1985	*82	3 Naira	3.2	5%
1990	*118	9 Naira	8.10	2.5%
1995	*155	50 Naira	56	3%
2000	170	100 Naira	100	3.5%
2005	291	130 Naira	207	4%
2010	392	150 Naira	108	5%
2012	451	158 Naira	121	7%
2014	972	180 Naira	10	11%
2015	1,089	220 Naira	10	10%
2016	1,093	280 Naira	17	10%
2017	1,125	360 Naira	5	10%

Source; (https;//en.wikipedia.org)

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Table 2 Showing the Ranking of Nigerian Economy in the World

Year	World ranking
2005	52
2006	47
2007	38
2008	37
2009	34
2010	31
2011	31
2012	30
2013	23
2014	20
2015	21
2016	22
2017	23

Source; (https;//en.wikipedia.org).

While Okeye *et.al*, (2016) reported that as a result of restructuring and rebasing of Nigeria national account at 2010 constant basic price, Nigeria economy become the largest in sub-Saharan Africa and consequently its GDP rose from 18% in 2009 to 32% in 2013, thereby out pacing the South African economy that used to be the largest in Africa. The real GDP growth and the contribution and growth of construction sector to GDP is shown in Table 3.

Table 3 Showing Real GDP and Construction Sector Growth

REAL GDP			**CONSTRUCTION**	**SECTOR**	
Year (Quarterly)	**Real GDP (N million)**	**GDP Growth GDP (%)**	**Total Output (N million)**	**%Contribution to GDP**	**Construction Growth (CNS) (%)**
2010 q1	12,583,478.33	-	401,383.32	3.19	-
2010 q2	12,934,530.67	2.79	388,550.30	3.00	-3.20
2010 q3	14,304,438.44	10.59	369,190.91	2.88	-4.98
2010 q4	14,789,816.74	3.39	411,848.73	2.78	11.55
2011 q1	13,450,716.68	-9.05	423,202.98	3.15	2.76

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2011 q2	13,752,732.02	2.28	396,928.67	2.89	-6.21
2011 q3	14,819,619.26	7.72	409,7798.04	2.30	3.24
2011 q4	15,982,973.81	4.48	587,900.13	3.80	43.46
2012 q1	13,915,506.08	-10.12	464,084.99	3.33	-21.06
2012 q2	14,323,049.77	2.93	554,283.07	3.87	19.40
2012 q3	15,645,434.73	9.23	457,864.51	2.93	-17.40
2012 q4	16,045,904.57	2.56	513,256.12	3.20	12.10
2013 q1	14,535,420.95	-9.41	532,140.14	3.66	3.68
2013 q2	15,096,763.55	3.86	628,357.70	4.10	18.08
2013 q3	16,454,372.46	8.99	520,965.60	3.17	-17.09
2013 q4	17,132,164.77	4.12	590,913.19	3.45	13.43
2014 q1	15,438,679.56	-9.68	627,286.61	4.06	6.16
2014 q2	16,084,622.31	4.18	695,565.83	4.32	10.88
2014 q3	17,479.127.58	8.67	579,913.75	3.32	-16.63
2014 q4	18,150,356.43	3.84	665,968.56	3.67	14.79
2015 q1	16,650,601.38	-11.57	697,366.62	4.34	4.76
2015 q2	16,963,341.91	2.57	740,204.22	4.50	6.14
2015 q3	17,976,234.59	9.19	579,297.92	3.22	-21.74
2015 q4	18,533,752.09	3.10	663,347.24	3.58	14.51

Source; Okoye *et.al*, (2016)

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Table 4 SMEs Contribution to GDP by Economic Sector

SECTOR		MICRO	SMALL	MEDIUM	TOTAL
1	Agriculture	86.53	6.53	3.95	97.01
2	Mining and Quarrying	0.28	0.39	3.60	4.27
3	Manufacturing	14.28	21.27	19.98	55.53
4	Water supply, sewage, Waste management and Remediation	25.44	6.63	2.51	34.57
5	Construction	0.52	2.02	7.68	10.22
6	Trade	36.34	14.39	8.68	59.41
7	Accommodation and Food Services	4.23	27.98	13.68	45.90
8	Transportation and Storage	50.73	5.60	12.03	68.36
9	Information and Communication	0.00	2.38	9.57	11.95
10	Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	47.35	28.20	22.26	97.82
11	Finance and Insurance	1.05	1.39	3.69	6.13
12	Real Estate	31.00	13.25	11.29	55.55
13	Profession, Scientific and Technical Services	13.25	2.08	5.28	20.61
14	Administrative & Support Services	8.55	15.20	65.76	89.51
15	Education	2.09	14.69	24.48	41.26
16	Human health and social Services	18.24	20.06	20.96	59.25
17	Other Services	80.76	17.01	2.23	100.00

Source; SMEDAN/ NBS, (2013)

Table 3 indicates that as one of the major sectors of the economy, the construction sector is influenced by the economic trends and shows the contribution of the construction sector to GDP growth in Nigeria is far below the 8% contribution in many developing countries (WEF, 2016). This indicates the needed support by construction industry towards attainment of economic development. In addition, it be seen from Table 4 that, the total contribution of construction SMEs under construction sector stood at merely 10%, mainly due to lack of patronage and support, however their potential contribution to GDP can be seen under the real estate sector with 56% contribution. This is because of the increasing population especially in urban cities, which resulted in huge demand for residential accommodation and the impact of public private partnership (PPP) towards financing of real estate development. Furthermore, Table 5 shows the dismissal performance of construction SMEs towards employment generation in Nigeria as against all expectations mainly because of lack of patronage and support.

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Table 5 Employment Generation in Economic Sector by SMEs

SECTOR	Male		Female		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Agriculture	5,763,161	16.35	1,232,210	5.45	6,995,371	12.10
Mining and Quarrying	162,877	0.46	14,954	0.07	177,832	0.31
Manufacturing	4,796,232	13.61	2,869,744	12.70	7,665,976	13.25
Water Supply, Sewerage	7,875	0.02	61,913	0.27	69,788	0.12
Construction	1,139,901	3.23	72,417	0.32	1,212,318	2.10
Wholesale and Retail	16,122,951	45.75	14,155,462	62.66	30,278,413	52.35
Transportation and Storage	2,224,601	6.31	133,773	0.59	2,358,374	4.08
Accommodations and Food Services	1,107,644	3.14	1,826,697	8.09	2,934,341	5.07
Information and Communication	459,337	1.30	157,619	0.70	616,956	1.07
Administration and Support Services	301,778	0.86	62,209	0.28	363,987	0.63
Education	261,087	0.74	194,445	0.86	455,532	0.79
Arts, entertainment and Recreation	606,658	1.72	225,805	1.00	832,463	1.44
Other Services	2,156,202	6.12	1,539,746	6.82	3,695,948	6.39
Total	**35,245,162**	**100.00**	**22,591,229**	**100.00**	**57,836,391**	**100.0**

Source; SMEDAN/ NBS, (2013).

CONCLUSION

The research make an in depth specific study on the contribution of construction SMEs towards sustainable development. The research mainly focus on construction SMEs, thus shifting studies from looping SMEs in all sectors towards specific sector SMEs studies. This has the potential to provide positive implications for future studies and help in introducing new measures to the concept of improving SMEs performance by policy makers. Because of their significant role in creation of new jobs, rise in GDP, entrepreneurship and innovation, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are recognized as the drivers of socio-economic growth and development.

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However, due to poor support and patronage, construction SMEs in Nigeria only make marginal contribution to economic and employment generation. Therefore, there is need for governments and other stakeholders to increase their support and patronage to local construction firms to achieve the desired sustainable development of Nigeria.

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