

ABSTRACT

Limited literature is available on the relationship between entrepreneur characteristics and performance of non-timber forest products small and medium enterprises raising debate whether the link is tenable with such firms. Thus, a study covering 314 small and medium enterprises in nine counties in Kenya was conducted to explore the relationship. The coefficient of determination, F statistic, and the t-value and their significance levels were used in presenting the relationship between entrepreneur characteristics and firm performance. The results show that that firm performance is significantly affected by entrepreneur characteristics of age, managerial skills, industry experience and social skills. Thus, it is concluded that entrepreneur characteristics and performance of non-timber forest products small and medium enterprises are empirically related. Firms run by relatively young, well-experienced and skilled entrepreneurs register better performance. It is necessary, therefore, that the non-timber forest products small and medium enterprises match their strategic decisions with characteristics of owners/managers to enhance their competitiveness and performance. The implications of this study are that specific policy measures are necessary to encourage the many well trained but unemployed young people to engage in businesses. Additionally it also implies that specific training programmes are necessary to equip the practitioners with necessary theoretical and practical capacities to enhance performance of their firms.

Key words: entrepreneur characteristics, firm, non-timber forest products, performance, small and