

Management Skills and Accessing to Finance: Evidence from Libya's SMEs

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Abstract

This paper aims to examine the effects of management skills of small and medium size enterprises (SMEs) on access to financing in Libya. We have used a quantitative research method based on 557 responses of 600 distributed questionnaires on SMEs in various regions in Libya. The findings of this study confirm that management experiences and education levels have significant positive effects on access to finance; in contrast, business planning, and political connection have no significant effect in regard to access to finance.

Keywords: Access to finance, Management skills, Libya's SMEs

1. Introduction

Small and medium size enterprises (SMEs) have enjoyed significant growth in both developed and developing countries. In Libya, they play a significant role. The Libyan's SMEs are often privately owned and enjoy a high level of independence in their operations. Although characterised by low sales volumes and few staff, they drive changes and development agendas within the society. Management skills for SMEs can be described as the ability of the management to steer their enterprise towards their goals and objectives and then go beyond such goals and objectives. The expertise of such management teams can be a significant determinant of access to finance by SMEs in Libya. Therefore, this study attempts to identify the impact of SMEs' management skills on access to financing in Libya.

The role of a manager has evolved over the years to its current position of playing a significant role in driving organisational success. The main roles of a manager include planning, organising, giving directions, acquiring appropriate staff members and controlling an organisation's activities for efficiency and effectiveness. To carry out these activities successfully, managers should have the requisite skills in leadership, communication, interpersonal and various technical areas. Management skills are necessary for an SME to, for instance, plan, organise, control and direct its operations. These are some of the basic skills for any manager, even those in large organisations. In managing SMEs, planning is critical given the limited availability of resources in terms of finances, labour, and technology and, sometimes, even time. Organising teams and tasks to achieve the highest level of efficiency are also a necessary skill for the success of any SMEs.

Given the myriad of challenges faced by SMEs and the central role played by their managers, who are often the owners of the business, having a skilful manager cannot be overemphasised. A number of researchers such as García (2005) and Pansiri and Temtime (2008) have found that a lack of appropriate skills for SME owner-managers is one of the main causes of failure for SMEs. Fatoki and Odeyemi (2010a) define managerial competencies as sets of skills, attitudes, behaviours and knowledge that contribute to the effectiveness of an individual. According to these two authors, managerial skills play a key role in the success of small enterprises as they determine its growth. Likewise, (O. O. Fatoki & Asah, 2011) point out that lack of managerial skills, personal qualities and skills are major contributors to the failure of firms. Lack of managerial competence reduces the ability to develop sound plans and strategies for effective management of SMEs. Fatoki and Odeyemi (2010a) explain that managerial skills influence business planning as well as the ability of the firm to obtain knowledge regarding sources of finance and means of obtaining it. As such, managerial skills do affect access by new small firms to financing.

There are some previous studies that sought to determine factors that influenced a firm's access to credit. Fatoki and Asah (2011) found that managerial skills, experience and education levels influenced the management capability of the entrepreneur to run an SME and the lack of these competencies largely accounted for failures in firms. According to these authors, banks before they provide loans often assess one's personal qualities and competence to run the firm and capability to manage funds. Studies show that there is a positive relationship between higher education, management experience and skills, as well as business planning, with business growth. Firms run by managers who have these qualifications find it easier to access financing because of their capability to achieve good performance.

Previous studies also show that political connections play a significant role in determining a firm's likelihood of accessing finance. Pandula (2011) explains that entrepreneurs who lack affiliations and who have made no effort to network not just with other enterprises but also influential individuals often find it hard to access financing. Moreover, he explains that politics play an important role; being associated with influential entities or persons makes it easier for SMEs to access financing. This is particularly the case in developing countries. This study will therefore try to identify the effects of management skills by examining how management and experience, business planning, education level, and the political connections of the entrepreneur influence access to financing for SMEs.

Following the introduction section 2 provides literature review; section 3 develops conceptual model and hypothesis; section 4 addresses the research methodology; section 5 analyses data and discusses the results, and the final section concludes the paper.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Management and Experience

Management of SMEs is an acknowledged challenge that has proved difficult to overcome (OECD, 2000). SME owners are often managers of their enterprises and usually have no formal qualifications in management and leadership (De Kok, Uhlener, & Thurik, 2006). Pansiri and Temtime (2008) observed that although most of them understand the concepts of their business goals and objectives, they may not necessarily make good managers. The management approach adopted by owners depends on the goals and personal expectations of these individuals (Collins & Clark, 2003). In most cases, SME owners do not foresee growth beyond a certain level. They aim to achieve their personal objectives with no effort put toward expansion (García, 2005).

Beaver and Hutchings (2005) observed that challenges faced in encouraging professionalism and distinguishing between ownership and management have hindered efficient management of SMEs. Al-Madhoun and Analoui (2003) found that most owners are resistant to advancing their management skills through training programs that aim to enlighten them on the importance of good management. Some are also reluctant to hire qualified and skilled or independent managers, which hinders the ability of SMEs to grow or, at times, survive (Devins & Johnson, 2003). In addition, Johnston and Loader (2003) found that lack of appropriate financial skills hinders proper and critical financial planning, often leading to bankruptcy. Most entrepreneurs lack experience managing SMEs and acquire experiences and skills 'on the job'. Often, SMEs have experienced unplanned growth attributable to planning failures on the part of managers. They are caught unaware and therefore feel overwhelmed in managing a larger enterprise (OECD, 2000). Patton, Marlow and Hannon (2000) observed that a management gap exists for SMEs that can only be filled by owner-managers relinquishing leadership to professional managers or by acquiring formal training on management and leadership.

2.1. Business Planning

Business planning involves setting up a firm's goals while stating the strategy on how to accomplish these goals (Temtime, 2002). A business plan may be either short term or long term. Both internal and external reasons exist for preparing a business plan for SMEs. External reasons usually arise from the need for SMEs to acquire funding from, say, a bank, donors or any other financial organisation (Pansiri & Temtime, 2008). Usually, SMEs prepare business plans for internal reasons such as to set guidelines on how best to achieve the laid-down objectives. Temtime and Pansiri (2008) observed that following the basic growth stages of a firm, including start-up, take off, harvest and renewal, the need exists to adopt different strategies during each phase. A good business plan provides the strategies and frameworks to be adopted at each stage.

In particular, SMEs need a well-defined business plan for any financier to release funding and to trust that the firm is headed for success (Kowanda, 2009). With this in mind, SME owners need to ensure that their business plan is realistic and easy to understand. In addition, Garcia(2005)advised that the business plan should provide information on the uniqueness of the idea, use of funds and analysis of the target market. In developing a good business plan for an SME, stating the mission of the firm is important (Pansiri & Temtime, 2008). A good business plan gives details on the operational structure of the SME, summarises the organisational structure and provides industry analysis, product descriptions and financials. Good business planning helps in decision making, as it already provides guidelines on any strategies to be adopted. Garcia (2005) argued that although many SMEs do not have long-term missions, owners must have a solid business plan that caters for uncertainties in the future. Business planning for SMEs is advantageous as it helps secure financing and the ongoing concern of the firm. In the event that owners become incapable of continuing to run the business, other individuals can easily continue to grow the firm.

2.3. Education Level

Temtime (2002) observed that education level for owners of SMEs may be a determining factor of the success of the ventures, although business owners with high levels of education are not guaranteed success. Devins and Johnson (2003) observed that most owners of SMEs adopt a trial-and-error approach to processes as they lack proper training in most aspects of running an organisation. Proper training enables entrepreneurs to adopt structured approaches, especially in the management and adoption of policies for long-term issues. De Kok, Uhlaner and Thurik (2006) found that a significant difference exists in managerial approaches adopted by entrepreneurs with varying educational levels (Temtime, 2002).Garcia's (2005)study reached similar conclusions, noting that owners who attained college training levels are better suited for management and policy making. Education levels have an impact on the innovation efforts in an organisation; however, Pansiri and Temtime (2008) argue that creativity is what matters most in innovation of SMEs. Patton, Marlow and Hannon (2000) shared a similar view that no strong relationship exists between education levels and innovation. Collins and Clark (2003) argued that education does impart the knowledge that provides the necessary skills to run an SME.

For instance, most organisations have recently begun to adopt information and communication technology (ICT) to help ease processes and operations. Entrepreneurs are encouraged to adopt new technologies to improve productivity and reduce operational costs. The (OECD, 2000)laments that many SME owners are unfamiliar with new technologies and thus are reluctant to adopt such developments. Most governments are cognizant of these problems and, in response, have instituted training programs to help enlighten SME owners on the business improvement opportunities brought about by technological innovations. Management training is also encouraged to help expand the owners' approach to management and to stay abreast of emerging trends. Such efforts are aimed at improving the long-term survival of SMEs.

2.4. PoliticalConnections

The political environment exerts a significant effect on the success of SMEs. It determines investor confidence and the expected returns that depend on the ability of a firm to operate profitably (OECD, 2000). Kowanda et al. (2009) explained that positive and solid reasons exist for seeking political connections. SMEs in various countries have diverse incentives for seeking any political connection (OECD, 2000). In regions with strict regulations and minimal government interference, the need to seek political connections is negligible. In addition, political stability promotes a good business environment and reduces the need for political assistance.

However, in regimes with strong political influence, SMEs should seek survival tactics. Most SME owners seek political connections for help in securing their investments, especially in the long term (OECD, 2000). Political connections might help SMEs gain insider information that is unavailable to competitors. Such information is vital in strategic planning and decision making. Politicians also provide private protection to an entrepreneur's properties, especially when legal security is inadequate (OECD, 2000). Owners of SMEs opt to have political connections that help in diversifying their enterprises. Securing funding is also easier with the assistance of politicians, creating an advantage for entrepreneurs. However, most SMEs are family-owned businesses, therefore, involving politicians in a firm's operations affects its structure (De Kok et al., 2006). Politicians may want to be part of the shareholding, thus diluting ownership. Owners must safeguard the independence of their enterprises by ensuring that decision-making is not transferred to outsiders.

Political connections may increase costs to entrepreneurs and may lead to increased risk of confidential information leaking to third parties, which can have a negative impact on a firm's growth. A study by Zhou (2011) indicated that political connection is the most important factor for SME sectors in developed and developing countries. Moreover, this finding indicates how and why political connections influence their relationships with SMEs in different countries to obtain access to finance. The result of this study also suggested that SME sectors with political connections or higher-level political connections lead to significantly higher reinvestment rates, particularly among smaller SMEs. Xu, Xu and Yuan (2010) indicated that the investment behaviour of SMEs and the influence of SMEs leads to political connections and their investments create a good relationship between SMEs and the economy, as shown through an analysis of 600 SMEs in China between 2001 to 2008. The analysis showed that under-investment arises from asymmetric information difficulties rather than over-investment from free cash flow difficulties in SMEs in China. Lack of funding and lack of access to financing means that political connections could help Chinese SMEs obtain access to financing. Another study focused on the relationship between access to financing and political connections. This means that owners/managers of small and medium who have a good political connection that helps to obtain access to funding and avoid some of the difficulties and problems that may occur on the small and medium company's investments (Wahab, Zain, James, & Haron, 2009).

3. The Conceptual Model and Hypothesis(H)

Literature has confirmed that management skills are significant determinants of access to financing by SMEs. The major management skills deficiencies of SMEs identified in the literature include poor strategic planning, inability to communicate with financial institutions as well as investors, lack of potential of the firm, and inability to network with other SMEs to obtain information regarding financing (Lyles, Saxton, & Watson, 2004). A study by Lyles, Saxton, and Watson (2004) on the importance of management competence in the success of small firms found that lack of managerial skills, personal qualities, experience, poorly thought-out business plans, and resource starvation were amongst the main reasons that firms have failed.

Fatoki(2010b) explored the determinants of access to business credit by SMEs in South Africa and found that managerial competencies – in particular, related experience and high education, relationship of the firm with banks, business plan, and location of the firm – to be key determinants of access to credit and financing by new SMEs. Management experience, business planning, education level, and political connection were utilised to measure management skills and their impact on access to financing. According to Wahab and colleagues (2009), political connections were identified by giving a score of 1 for directors or owners of firms who have some connection with the royal family in Libya; otherwise, a score of 0 was recorded. Moreover, according to Gonzalez, Lopez, and Saurina (2007), access to financing can be measured by the ratios of short-term debt to total debt and then total debt to total liabilities and debt-to-equity ratio. The issue of access to finance is still a challenge and source of concern for Libya's SMEs. Therefore, the following conceptual model and hypothesis are developed to explore the relationship between management skills and access to finance based on the literature review.

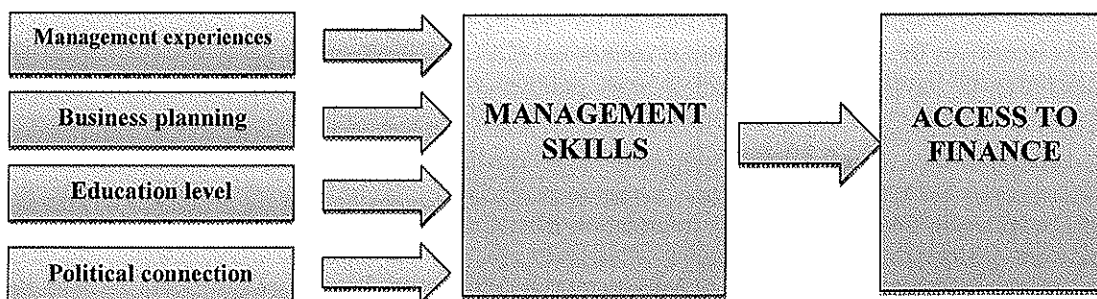


Figure: (1) conceptual model

Hypothesis (H): Access to financing for SMEs increases with the increase of management skills.
The following model has been estimated to test the validity of the hypothesis

$$ATF = \alpha + \beta_1 MEX + \beta_2 BPL + \beta_3 EDL + \beta_4 POC + \varepsilon \dots \dots \dots (1)$$

Where, ATF= Access to finance, MEX= Management Experience, BPL= Business planning, EDL= Education level, POC = Political connection. MEX, BPL, EDL and POC have been utilised to measure management skills and their impact on ATF.

4. Research Methodology

4.1. Description of Variables

4.1.1. Management Experience

The experience of management can be described as the period within which the management of the SMEs has served in similar capacities and how well they handled their duties and responsibilities in such capacities. Management teams with a clean and high quality track record can help the SMEs access finance more easily than those with poor track records (Thorsten Beck, Demirgüç-Kunt, & Maksimovic, 2008).

4.1.2. Business Planning

Planning is one of the most important characteristics of small and medium project management because without a business plan successful goal cannot be achieved. Therefore, business planning can be defined as the process of drawing a precise plan that contains a set of goals, the reasons behind the belief that such goals are attainable and the plans and processes that should be followed to attain such goals and objectives. SMEs with management teams that have high business planning skills are expected to have easier access to finance compared to those with poor business planning skills (Thorsten Beck, demirguc-kunt, Laeven, & Levine, 2008; Berger & Udell, 2006). On the other hand, the banks and other lending institutions assess and evaluate the ability of owners/managers to repay loans; thus managers are provided with the chance to show their management skills and expertise in this area (Burkart & Ellingsen, 2004). The management's business planning skills can be measured by the number of successful business plans that such management teams have drawn up and executed successfully.

4.1.3. Education level

Management's education level can be described as the number of academic and professional credentials that members of the management team possess such as Diploma degree, Bachelor degree, Masters or PhD degree, as well as business training and employment history and experience of SME managers/owners. Highly academically qualified SMEs owners/managers are deemed to be more efficient in their work and, as such, facilitates their access to finance more easily due to the fact that providers of funds are more likely to have more confidence in those with high academic qualifications than those with low qualification levels (Berger & Udell, 2006). Moreover, the education level of management can simply be measured by the highest level of education attained by the management and the number, type and level of professional qualifications possessed by such management teams.

4.1.4. Political Connections

Political connections may help SMEs obtain finance from banks and other financial institutions and may also help lower taxes for SMEs. Political connections of management teams can be described as the accessibility of such teams to those holding political leadership. Management teams that have high political connections with political leadership are more likely to win a higher number of government tenders, thus making the SMEs more attractive borrowers to providers of finance (Thorsten Beck & Demirguc-Kunt, 2006). The political connections of SME management teams can be measured by the number of political leaders that a member of the management team has in his network; and the positions of influence that such leaders have and the political affiliations of management.

4.2. Data

The approach of this study was to conduct a quantitative research method. Quantitative research is useful for deductive approaches, theory of research, and justification of variables or testing a hypothesis. The Libyan Economy and Trade have determined the SMEs population in all areas of Libya as 180,000.

Firstly, this study has used a pilot study: 60 questionnaires were distributed to owners and managers of SMEs in different sectors in Toowoomba City in Queensland, Australia. Before the questionnaire was distributed, the researcher reviewed all questions and made some revisions to develop a final questionnaire. Due to the large population size, a random sample was used. According to a study by Perry (1995), the optimal size of a sample for quantitative research using questionnaires is more than 350 participants. Data were collected by distributing 600 questionnaires to owners/managers in the manufacturing and service sectors in industrial cities in Libya, including Tripoli, Misurata, Zwara, Koms, and Sabha. The number of respondents was 557. Table 1 lists the responses to the survey questionnaires, representing two sectors: the industry sector and the service and manufacturing sector. Of these responses, 270 came from small businesses, and 287 were from medium-sized businesses. There were 199 responses from small businesses in the services sector and 71 from the industrial sector. For medium-sized businesses, 176 of the responses were from service businesses, and 111 were from industrial businesses.

Table 1: Responses from small and medium firms

| Size of firms | Type of sectors | | | | Total | |
|---------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------|
| | Service sector | Manufacturing sector | | | No. of questionnaires distributed | Total responses |
| | No. of questionnaires distributed | No. of responses | No. of questionnaires distributed | No. of responses | | |
| Small | 201 | 199 | 83 | 71 | 284 | 270 |
| Medium | 196 | 176 | 120 | 111 | 316 | 287 |
| Total | 397 | 375 | 203 | 182 | 600 | 557 |

Source: Field survey

No = number

Those questionnaires were employed to measure management skills in SMEs by independent variables: management experience, business planning, education level and political connection. The questions were multiple choices and used a Likert scale with five weights: 1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Uncertain; 4 = Agree; and 5 = Strongly Agree.

5. Data Analysis and Discussion

5.1. Reliability Evaluation of Management Skills in SMEs

Reliability refers to the ability of the instrument to provide the same information if it is used at different times or by different people (Roberts 2006). The internal consistency (relationship between all of the outcomes from a single test) of the instrument should also be assessed. Use of statistical procedures is one of the most widely used approaches to measure internal consistency of instruments. Cronbach's alpha coefficient is one of the approaches used and involves randomly splitting all the answers to a question in two sets, finding the total score of each set and calculating the correlation between the two sets (Roberts 2006). This method is known as split-half and will be used to ensure reliability for this data. Reliability refers to the amount of variability in a score that is as a result of variability in the true measure rather than due to an error. A reliability of 0.9 implies that 10 percent of the variability in the measured score is due to error while 90 percent is true. Most authors recommend a reliability of 80% to 90% for the majority of research purposes (Roberts 2006, p. 42).

In this study table 2 illustrates reliability statistics for management skills in SMEs. This table describes Cronbach's alpha test for the elements related to management skills in SMEs such as education level (EDL), management and experience (MEX), business planning (BPL) and political connections (POC). Cronbach's alpha displays how the elements relate to each other. The analysis of Cronbach's alpha is interpreted for education level (EDL) at 0.8 and deemed to be good Cronbach's alpha for management and experience (MEX) can be interpreted as excellent at 0.9. Business planning can be interpreted as good at 0.8 by evaluation of Cronbach's alpha; and Cronbach's alpha at 0.7 is interpreted as acceptable for political connection (POC). Therefore, all the items related to management were valid for study and analysis in the questionnaire.

Table 2: The validity results of each item of the questionnaire

| Number of item | Item-total correlation | Cronbach's Alpha (If an item deleted) |
|----------------|------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| EDL | 0.5135 | 0.8082 |
| MEX | 0.735 | 0.9114 |
| BPL | 0.4474 | 0.8193 |
| POC | 0.6433 | 0.7922 |

Education level = EDL, Management Experience = MEX, Business planning = BPL, Political connection = POC

5.2. Descriptive Statistics of Management Skills and Access to Finance in SMEs

Table 3 shows the descriptive statistics for management skills and access to finance for SMEs by five variables. This table illustrates that the mean of POC has the highest mean for the variable regarding management skills with mean (3.48) and maximum (5.00).

Table 3: Descriptive statistics of management skills and access to finance in SMEs

| | Descriptive Statistics | | | | |
|--------------------|------------------------|---------|---------|---------|----------------|
| | N | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std. Deviation |
| ATF | 557 | 15.00 | 38.75 | 28.2724 | 4.23616 |
| MEX | 557 | 1.00 | 5.00 | 3.3950 | 0.84511 |
| BPL | 557 | 1.00 | 4.75 | 3.4627 | 0.55504 |
| EDL | 557 | 1.00 | 5.00 | 3.1113 | 0.63345 |
| POC | 557 | 1.25 | 5.00 | 3.4888 | 0.51154 |
| Valid N (listwise) | 557 | | | | |

Access to finance = ATF, Management Experience = MEX, Business planning = BPL, Education level = EDL, Political connection = POC

On the other hand, the lowest value of the management skills of SMEs is *EDL* with a mean (3.11) and maximum (5.00). Furthermore, this table illustrates the minimum range of variables regarding management skills (MEX, BPL, EDL and POC) from 1 to 1.25. The Std. Deviation of Table 3 draws from four variables (MEX, BPL, EDL and POC) and is 0.845, 0.555, 0.633 and 0.511, respectively.

5.3. Correlation Coefficients of Management Skills and Access to Finance

Table 4 illustrates correlations statistics of management skills and access to finance in SMEs. As can be seen from Table 4, there are positive and negative correlations among the variable used in this part of the analysis. The ATF has positive correlation with MEX and EDL with values of (0.251, $P < 0.01$ and 0.189, $P < 0.01$) respectively. The MEX has positive correlation with BPL and EDL, and negative correlation with POL with values of (0.105, $P > 0.01$, 0.348, $P < 0.01$ and -0.084, $P > 0.01$) respectively. In a similar vein, the BPL of management skills has significant and positive correlation with MEX and POL with values of (0.237 < 0.01 , 0.090 < 0.05 and 0.106 < 0.05) respectively.

Table 4: Correlations Statistics of Management Skills and Access to Finance In SMEs

| Correlations | | ATF | MEX | BPL | EDL | POL |
|--------------|---------------------|---------|---------|---------|-------|-----|
| ATF | Pearson Correlation | 1 | | | | |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | | | | | |
| | N | 557 | | | | |
| ME X | Pearson Correlation | 0.251** | 1 | | | |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.000 | | | | |
| | N | 557 | 557 | | | |
| BPL | Pearson Correlation | -.034 | 0.105* | 1 | | |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.422 | 0.013 | | | |
| | N | 557 | 557 | 557 | | |
| EDL | Pearson Correlation | 0.189** | 0.348** | 0.067 | 1 | |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | 0.000 | 0.115 | | |
| | N | 557 | 557 | 557 | 557 | |
| POL | Pearson Correlation | -.062 | -0.084* | .0302** | 0.047 | 1 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.144 | 0.047 | 0.000 | 0.269 | |
| | N | 557 | 557 | 557 | 557 | 557 |

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed).

Access to finance = ATF, Management Experience = MEX, Business planning = BPL, Education level = EDL, Political connection = POC

5.4. Analysis of Results

To verify this hypothesis that denotes the relationship between management skills and its positive effect on financing in small and medium enterprise in Libya, this study has conducted an ANOVA analysis to clarify the relationship between the dependent variable (access to financing) and the independent variable (management skills). Table 5 shows that the overall model of the management experiences exhibits a positive significant relationship with access to finance.

Table 5: ANOVA Analysis of Management Skills (Equation 1) Related to Hypothesis

| ANOVA | | | | | | | | |
|------------|----------------|-----|---------------|----------------|-----------------------|-----------|------|-------|
| Model | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square F | R ² | Adjust R ² | Durbin -w | Sig | |
| Regression | 795.915 | 4 | 198.979 | 11.963 | 0.614 | 0.5911 | 1.67 | 0.000 |
| Residual | 9181.554 | 552 | 16.633 | | | | | |
| Total | 9977.469 | 556 | | | | | | |

a. Dependent Variable: ATF
b. Predictors: (Constant), POC, EDL, BPL, MEX

Access to finance = ATF, Management Experience = MEX, Business planning = BPL, Education level = EDL, Political connection = POC

Table 6 shows that coefficients of MEX and EDL are significant and have positive impact on ATF. In contrast, management experiences were found to have no significance with BPL and POC. In addition, this coefficient was found to have a negative relationship with management experiences with (-0.415 and -0.275) respectively.

However, the positive relationship of the coefficients between ATF and MEX and EDL means that with the increase of MEX and EDL by onepercent, the corresponding ATF will be increased by 1.062 and 0.804 percent, respectively.

Table 6: Coefficients of Management Skills (Equation 1) Related to Hypothesis

| Model | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | t | Sig |
|----------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|--------|-------|
| | B | Std. Error | Beta | | |
| Constant | 24.561 | 1.668 | | 14.727 | 0.000 |
| MEX | 1.062 | 0.221 | 0.212 | 4.8 | 0.000 |
| BPL | -0.42 | 0.33 | -0.054 | -1.257 | 0.209 |
| EDL | 0.804 | 0.292 | 0.12 | 2.752 | 0.006 |
| POC | -0.28 | 0.358 | -0.033 | -0.768 | 0.443 |

a. Dependent Variable: ATF

Access to finance = ATF, Management Experience = MEX, Business planning = BPL, Education level = EDL, Political connection = POC

Management skills are represented by MEX, BPL, EDL and POC factors; some of these factors (MEX and EDL) are found statistically significant to impact access to finance, and some factors have no relationship with access to finance (BPL and POC). These finding neither prove nor disapprove this hypothesis which claims that access to financing for SMEs increases with management skillsbecause half the factors of this hypothesis have materialized and the second half have not.

6. Conclusion

In this study, we have investigated the effects of small and medium size enterprises' (SMEs) management skills on access to financing in Libya. The study covers the relevant factors of management skills such as management experience, business planning, education level, and political connection. The study reveals management experience and education level to be significant factors regarding SMEs' access to finance in Libya. In addition, management experience is a very important factor in allowing owners/ managers of SMEs to obtain access to finance. Further, the higher level of education of SMEs' owners/managers is, the better is their access to finance. We found that business planning and political connections have no significant influence on the ability toaccess finance in Libya; in fact, these results are surprising and contrary to those of several existing studies. Further research, increasing the sample size, may provide letter outcome in this regard.

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