



## ROLES OF VIRTUAL OFFICE TOWARDS NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT: A STUDY OF NIGERIA

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**Abstract:** *This study adopted a correlational research design to investigate if there is relationship between the roles of virtual office and national development in Nigeria. A population of 80 workers were drawn from 16 virtual offices in Nigeria, and a purposive sampling technique adopted in using the entire population of 80 as sample size. A self-designed instrument was used with a five point scale. Based on the findings of the study, it was discovered that there was high level of roles played by virtual office and high level of services provided towards national development in Nigeria. Among other things, the study recommends that more virtual offices should be built in Nigeria to assist in proving services to young and new entrepreneurs in the country with Government regulation.*

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**Keywords:** *Roles, Virtual Office and National Development*

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### Introduction

A virtual office provides communication and address services for a fee, without providing dedicated office space. It differs from "office business centres" or "executive suites", which do provide physical office space and/or meeting rooms (Wikipedia, 2019). Given the developments in technology and the opportunities that are available, virtual offices are becoming more and more popular. With an increase in entrepreneurs and more small businesses starting up each year, the traditional model of a corporate office is changing. This process has been underway since the 1990s, but recent technological progressions and the current economic climate have contributed to a much quicker pace of change in the past few years (Smallbusinesscan.com, 2014). A virtual office provides a business with access to office services and facilities without the need for business owners to actually go to or be in a physical office. This allows small business owners to increase their reputation and productivity without the same level of cost that is typically incurred when renting or buying an actual office. A virtual office is merely a physical location that houses all of the things you would want in your own

physical office building, however in a virtual office you do not occupy the office necessarily. You use certain services and may share with others to have the functionality of a full service office without the cost of employees and equipment to bear. This cost is shared by all of the users of the office space, equipment and services.

According to Target Offices (2019), virtual offices provide companies with the use of prestigious address anywhere in the world so that they can establish a regional or international presence. Services offered included telephone answering and mail forwarding. According to Wikipedia the free Encyclopedia (2019), virtual office is part of the flexible workspace industry that provides businesses with any combination of services, space and/or technology, without those businesses bearing the capital expenses of owning or leasing a traditional office. Virtual office services started in the 1960s as serviced offices and have evolved with technology to include a wide variety of personnel, physical space, and digital storage and communication services. Customers pay a contract fee for these services which may be offered as packages or membership subscription.



The concept is popular with companies of all sizes, including self-employed entrepreneurs. One of the primary allures of the virtual office is the flexibility it offers for employees and freelancers to work from a satellite office, home office, remote location or even on-the-go via a mobile device. At the same time, a company can offer its clients and employees a stable home office with access to amenities such as receptionist, conference rooms, desk space, mailboxes, printing and faxing at a permanent address, which are owned and maintained by the virtual office provider or a third party. Virtual office providers may also include digital capital such as cloud storage, web hosting, email and other web-based applications with contributions to nations. National development is the ability of a county or countries to improve on the social welfare of the people e.g., by providing social amenities like quality education, potable water, transportation, infrastructure and medical care, etc. It adopts a framework of inclusive growth, which is high growth that is sustained, generates mass employment, and reduces poverty (Slideshare.net, 2019).

This is what virtual office has done and still doing. The objective of national development according to (Slideshare.net, 2019) are:

- a). Rapid growth of incomes of the population in general
  - b). Poverty alleviation/reduction (rapid growth of the incomes of the poor)
  - c). Satisfaction of basic social and economic needs
  - d). Sustainment of a democratic and fully participatory society
- Given the still-lagging state of our economy, substantial increases in incomes, in the sense of purchasing power, will be essential to permit our citizens to realise their talents and aspirations. For that reason, promotion of economic growth has to play a central role in the Strategy, all these are the role of virtual office towards national development.

#### **Review of Related Literatures**

##### **Brief History of Virtual Office**

The concept of a virtual office has its roots before and during the Industrial Revolution, where parallels to current work styles, specifically working from home, have been drawn. The virtual office concept is an evolution of the traditional executive suite (Wikipedia the free Encyclopedia, 2019). As an executive suite lease became increasingly impractical for certain types and stages of business, it naturally opened the door to a virtual office concept. In the mid-20th century, professionals and executives began to examine ways to make more efficient use of the rising cost of real estate, personnel and other capital. In 1962 the first known serviced office company, OmniOffices Group was created.

#### **Types of Virtual Office**

According to Smallbusinesscan.com (2014), the following are the types of virtual office

##### **Remote Receptionist**

A remote or virtual receptionist can be based anywhere that there is an Internet connection. Alongside this person, you can have a geographical phone number for your business. This gives the appearance of a physical location and makes it easier for people to contact you by phone. Having a dedicated person to handle all of your calls with the advantage that calls can be connected on to relevant external phones if necessary. Additionally, if you or anyone that receives a call is in a meeting or travelling, the receptionist will handle the call in a professional manner and messages can be taken if needed.

##### **Virtual Assistant**

Virtual assistants go further than remote receptionists by offering pretty much service you can imagine. They can make travel arrangements for you, book meetings, or simply provide administrative support for your business. You are then free to continue to do the things that matter most to you, while knowing that the day-to-day essentials are being looked after effectively.

##### **Mail Forwarding/Virtual Address**

While more and more small businesses are being run from home, many people still prefer to deal with more established and reputable companies that operate from a traditional office. One way around this is to get a virtual office address. This means that your business has the appearance of occupying a premise in a respected area, while you will not have to incur any of the associated costs, as well as being able to create business cards with that address on them. You can have any incoming mail forwarded to you no matter where you are.

##### **Co-working Spaces**

Although they are not really virtual, co-working spaces are becoming increasingly common and usually attract a very different type of business owner. Generally speaking, these people are running the business by themselves and simply want a space with a desk to work from and access to basic office conveniences like Internet and photocopying. Thinking of taking your business mobile? A virtual office is most definitely the way to go. Saving on money and stress while allowing for more freedom and flexibility, they are revolutionising the way in which people do business.

Alliance Virtual Offices ( 2018), outlined the following virtual offices and the types of services they provide:

##### **Business Address + Mail Forwarding**



This is a low-cost entry level Virtual Office plan. It is a business mailing address that is handy if you want a point of contact in a specific city, especially for companies expanding into new cities or setting up branch offices in multiple locations. As such, it is ideal for large multinational firms; but it works just as well for start-ups and freelancers looking for a budget solution that separates business from home. A business address you can use it on your website, business cards and marketing material, daily sorting of incoming mail. Mail is forwarded on a daily, weekly or monthly basis to your preferred destination, typically another business location or sometimes your home, Access to conference rooms or workspace on-site (payable by the hour).

#### **Virtual Office + Part-Time Workspace**

This plan gives you all of the above (business address, mail sorting and mail forwarding) with a certain amount of pre-paid access to workspace each month. These plans go by different names, depending on the operator. Alliance calls it 'Platinum Plus', and it's includes 16 hours of Meeting Room or Private Office time each month. A business address and daily sorting of incoming mail. Mail is forwarded on a daily, weekly or monthly basis to your preferred destination, typically another business location or sometimes your home. A certain amount of prepaid access to workspace and/or meeting rooms at your Virtual Office centre.

#### **Co-working Virtual Office**

Virtual Offices were born out of the traditional business centre model. They have been around a long time, much longer than co-working. Today the worlds of business centres and co-working have merged, and most co-working spaces now offer Virtual Office plans as part of their flexible workspace offering. A business address at a co-working venue. Daily sorting of incoming mail. A certain amount of prepaid access to shared co-working space and/or meeting rooms. In some cases, mail forwarding.

#### **Virtual Address**

These plans are similar to a standard P.O Box service. You get a business address, which you can use as a mailing point. It is low-cost and basic with no frills or added extras. It enables you to separate your business from your home life, protect your home address and cut down on corporate mail. It gives subscribers a business address often in a retail centre.

#### **Live Receptionist + Phone Services**

Whichever type of virtual office plan you go for; most operators now offer receptionist and phone services that can be bolted onto your package. The most common and by far one of the most valued is a Live Receptionist Call Answering

service. Generally, incoming calls are answered from Monday to Friday up to a set amount of time (usually counted in minutes). As part of the plan, you will typically get a local or toll-free phone number along with a VoIP phone service.

According to Executive Centre (2014), you can find a lot of different size and locations of office suite and they rent different services by the hour, week or month. The services you would find in this type of facility are generally:

#### **Virtual Receptionist**

This is a type of virtual office helper that you pay a fee to use for their service. They may answer phones, receive mail, forward mail, pay bills and so on. The list of services for a virtual receptionist is limited only by your budget and your imagination.

#### **Telephone Answering Service**

This service generally provides you with a local number that you can use as your own. The company will answer the phone as if you occupied the building. They will use your name or your business name when answering and basically give the impression that you are in the office. Messages will be taken and relayed to you. They may even transfer calls directly to you, once again giving the impression that you are in the building.

#### **Virtual Office Address**

One of the biggest reasons smaller businesses or business owners may seek a virtual office is for an address. Nothing smells of small time more than using a home address or PO Box. You might as well announce that you are a one-man show. With the variety of nice office suites and office building addresses you can give the impression that you have a location in most any area in the United States or the world for that matter. And, in combination with the services shown above, nobody will know that you are not in a large premium office space with employees and all.

#### **Conference Rooms and Meeting Space**

If you have access to a virtual office company in your general vicinity, one of the nice offerings is the ability to use a professional fully equipped conference room. When meeting with a client or business associate who wants to meet at Starbucks? With many companies willing to rent premium meeting rooms at a reasonable price, it only makes sense to put your best foot forward. Often times these conference rooms come with coffee and tea, white boards, conference phone, big screen monitors and other big dollar features. It is a great way to offer the professional appearance that you want for your prospects or associates. Many other services are offered, things like shared office suites, time-share type office



space, couches, chairs, phones etc. If someone wants to rent it by the hour it is almost certainly available

### Statement of the Problem

Countries of the world have been grappling with problem of unemployment Nigeria seems to be the worse in her national development. National development is the ability of a county or countries to improve the social welfare of the people e.g. by providing social amenities like quality education, potable water, transportation infrastructure, medical care, etc. National development adopts a framework of inclusive growth, which is high growth that is sustained, generates mass employment, and reduces poverty in a country. This study tries to find out the role of virtual office towards national development in Nigeria.

### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to investigate roles of virtual office towards national development in Nigeria. The study specifically sought to:

1. Find out the roles of virtual office towards national development in Nigeria
2. Find out the types of virtual offices and services provided towards national development in Nigeria

### Research Questions

To lead this study, the following research questions are posited

1. What are the roles of virtual office towards national development in Nigeria?

2. What are the types of virtual offices and services provided towards national development in Nigeria?

### Hypotheses

Two directional hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 levels of significance

1. There is significant relationship between the roles of virtual office and national development in Nigeria
2. There is significant relationship between the types of virtual offices as well as services provided and national development in Nigeria

### Method

This study adopted a correlational research design. This is because it focussed on finding out if there is relationship between the variables under investigation. The population of the study was drawn from Argent Liquide Global Concepts, Primacy Edge Hub, CubeHub, Ringo Telecoms Limited, Vconnect guarantee, CapitalSquare, Chase Executive Business Services, First Business Alliance, Gobanos Limited, Smart X Business Hub, The Cedar Centre, Virtual Hub, BI Executives, BOSS Offices, Bradfield Limited and Savvy Instant Offices, numbering 80 workers. The population is as displayed below using exploded pie-in-3D:

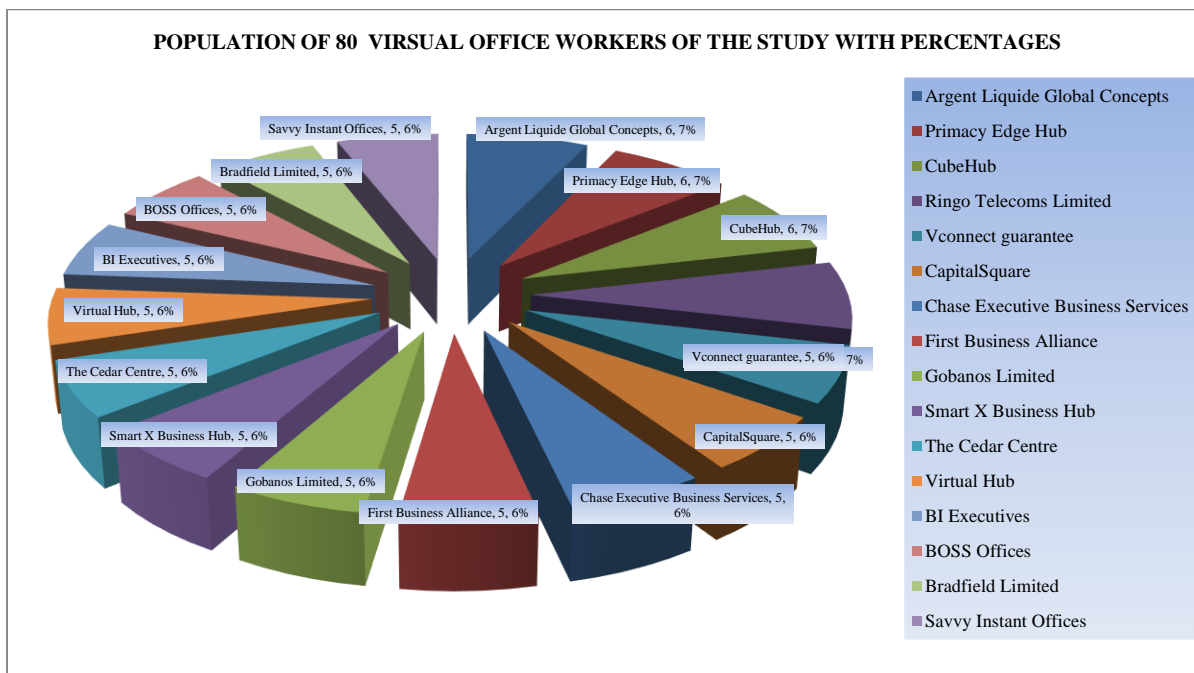


Figure 1 : Population of 80 virtual office workers of the study with percentages



The sample technique used was purposive sampling technique of using the entire population since the population of 80 workers is small. The sample of the study is as displayed using exploded pie in 3-D:

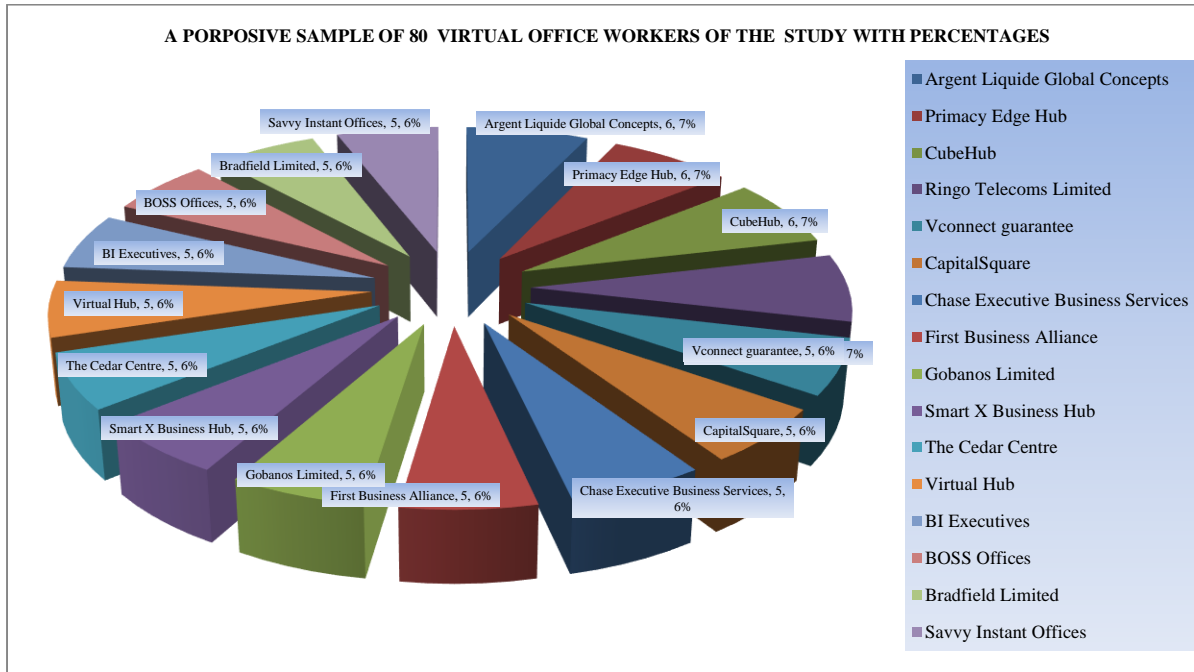


Figure 2: A purposive sample of 80 virtual office workers of the study with percentages

The research instrument used for gathering data was a structured questionnaire entitled “Roles of Virtual Office Towards National Development in Nigeria”, (ROVOTNDIN). A five point scale was adopted. Mean scores from 4.50 to 5.00 was seen as Very High Level of Roles (5 points), 3.50 to 4.49 High Level of Roles (4 points), 2.50 to 3.49 Moderate Level of Roles (3 points), 1.50 to 2.49 Low Level of Roles (2 points) and 0.50 to 1.49 Very Low Level of Roles (1 point). The instrument was subjected to be face and content validation by three experts from department of Business Education, Rivers State University. The modifications, corrections and inputs of the experts formed the validity of the instrument for this study. To ascertain the reliability and consistency of measurement, a pilot study was carried on 16 workers through phone calls. The respondents were administered questions on through phone calls. Mean statistics was used to analyse the research questions and Standard Deviation used to find out the extent in which scores in the distribution clustered around the means. Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to analyse the hypotheses. Any calculated value of (r) that is greater than > the critical table value of 0.113 at 0.05 significant levels such directional hypothesis (H<sub>1</sub>) will be accepted and vice versa.

**Results**

**Research Question 1:** What are the roles of virtual office towards national development in Nigeria?

**Table 1: Computed Mean and Standard Deviation of the Roles of Virtual Office Towards National Development in Nigeria**

| SN | Items Statements                           | N = 80   |         |         |        |         | Total Number of Responses | X   | SD  | S   | Remark |
|----|--|----------|---------|---------|--------|---------|---------------------------|-----|-----|-----|--------|
|    |  | VHLR (5) | HLR (4) | MLR (3) | LL (2) | VLL (1) |                           |     |     |     |        |
| 1  | Provides communication and address service | 70(350)  | 10(40)  | 0(0)    | 0(0)   | 0(0)    | 390                       | 4.8 | 0.9 | 2.1 | HLR    |
| 2  | Increase entrepreneurs                     | 60(300)  | 20(80)  | 0(0)    | 0(0)   | 0(0)    | 380                       | 4.7 | 0.9 | 2.1 | HLR    |



|                   |  |         |        |      |      |      |     |            |     |     |            |
|-------------------|--|---------|--------|------|------|------|-----|------------|-----|-----|------------|
| 3                 | Small businesses starting  | 70(350) | 10(40) | 0(0) | 0(0) | 0(0) | 390 | 4.8        | 0.9 | 2.1 | HLR        |
| 4                 | Business with access to office services and facilities                         | 80(400) | 0(0)   | 0(0) | 0(0) | 0(0) | 400 | 5.0        | 1.0 | 2.2 | HLR        |
| 5                 | Allows small business owners to increase their reputation and productivity     | 75(375) | 5(20)  | 0(0) | 0(0) | 0(0) | 395 | 4.9        | 0.9 | 2.2 | HLR        |
| 6                 | Cost is shared by all of the users of the office space, equipment and services | 70(350) | 10(40) | 0(0) | 0(0) | 0(0) | 390 | 4.8        | 0.9 | 2.1 | HLR        |
| 7                 | Provide companies with the use a prestigious address                           | 80(400) | 0(0)   | 0(0) | 0(0) | 0(0) | 400 | 5.0        | 1.0 | 2.2 | HLR        |
| 8                 | Space and/or technology  | 80(400) | 0(0)   | 0(0) | 0(0) | 0(0) | 400 | 5.0        | 1.0 | 2.2 | HLR        |
| 9                 | Cloud storage, web hosting   | 70(350) | 10(40) | 0(0) | 0(0) | 0(0) | 390 | 4.8        | 0.9 | 2.1 | HLR        |
| 10                | Creates wealth through small scale businesses                                  | 80(400) | 0(0)   | 0(0) | 0(0) | 0(0) | 400 | 5.0        | 1.0 | 2.2 | HLR        |
| <b>Grand Mean</b> |  |         |        |      |      |      |     | <b>4.8</b> |     |     | <b>HLR</b> |

**Survey, (2019)**

In analysing research question one, the grand mean of items numbered 1-10 showed 4.8, representing High Level of Roles. This is accepted because it is above the benchmark of 3.0 (Moderate Level of Roles). This means that there was high level of roles played by virtual office towards national development. The highest Standard Deviation was 1.0 this indicated closeness in the views of the respondents. The highest Standard Error was 2.2 and the least was 2.1, these are very low, showing a true sample mean of the data used as drawn from the population of the study

**Research Question 2:** What are the types of virtual offices as well as services provided towards national development in Nigeria?

**Table 2: Computed Mean and Standard Deviation of the Types of Virtual Offices as well as Services Provided Towards National Development in Nigeria**

| SN | Items Statements                | N = 80  |        |      |      |      | Total Number of Responses | X   | S   | S   | Remark |
|----|---------------------------------|---------|--------|------|------|------|---------------------------|-----|-----|-----|--------|
|    |                                 | VHL     | HLR    | ML   | LL   | VLL  |                           |     |     |     |        |
| 1  | Remote Receptionist             | 80(400) | 0(0)   | 0(0) | 0(0) | 0(0) | 400                       | 5.0 | 1.0 | 2.2 | HLR    |
| 2  | Virtual Assistant               | 70(350) | 10(40) | 0(0) | 0(0) | 0(0) | 390                       | 4.8 | 0.9 | 2.1 | HLR    |
| 3  | Mail Forwarding/Virtual Address | 80(400) | 0(0)   | 0(0) | 0(0) | 0(0) | 400                       | 5.0 | 1.0 | 2.2 | HLR    |
| 4  | Co-working Spaces               | 70(350) | 10(40) | 0(0) | 0(0) | 0(0) | 390                       | 4.8 | 0.9 | 2.1 | HLR    |



|                   |                                      |        |        |      |      |      |     |           |    |     |            |
|-------------------|--------------------------------------|--------|--------|------|------|------|-----|-----------|----|-----|------------|
|                   |                                      | 0)     | )      |      |      |      |     | 8         | 9  |     |            |
| 5                 | Business Address + Mail Forwarding   | 60(30) | 20(80) | 0(0) | 0(0) | 0(0) | 380 | 4.        | 0. | 2.1 | HLR        |
|                   |                                      | 0)     | )      |      |      |      |     | 7         | 9  |     |            |
| 6                 | Virtual Office + Part-Time Workspace | 70(35) | 10(40) | 0(0) | 0(0) | 0(0) | 390 | 4.        | 0. | 2.1 | HLR        |
|                   |                                      | 0)     | )      |      |      |      |     | 8         | 9  |     |            |
| 7                 | Live Receptionist + Phone Services   | 80(40) | 0(0)   | 0(0) | 0(0) | 0(0) | 400 | 5.        | 1. | 2.2 | HLR        |
|                   |                                      | 0)     |        |      |      |      |     | 0         | 0  |     |            |
| 8                 | A Telephone Answering Service        | 75(37) | 5(20)  | 0(0) | 0(0) | 0(0) | 395 | 4.        | 0. | 2.2 | HLR        |
|                   |                                      | 5)     |        |      |      |      |     | 9         | 9  |     |            |
| 9                 | Conference Rooms and Meeting Space   | 70(35) | 10(40) | 0(0) | 0(0) | 0(0) | 390 | 4.        | 0. | 2.1 | HLR        |
|                   |                                      | 0)     | )      |      |      |      |     | 8         | 9  |     |            |
| 10                | Virtual Address                      | 80(40) | 0(0)   | 0(0) | 0(0) | 0(0) | 400 | 5.        | 1. | 2.2 | HLR        |
|                   |                                      | 0)     |        |      |      |      |     | 0         | 0  |     |            |
| <b>Grand Mean</b> |                                      |        |        |      |      |      |     | <b>4.</b> |    |     | <b>HLS</b> |
|                   |                                      |        |        |      |      |      |     | <b>7</b>  |    |     |            |

### Survey, (2019)

In analysing research question two, the grand mean of items numbered 1-10 showed 4.7, representing High Level of Roles. This is accepted because it is above the benchmark of 3.0 (Moderate Level of Solutions). This means that, virtual office played high level of roles with those items numbered 1 to 10 on table two. The highest Standard Deviation was 2.0 which clustered around the mean and indicated closeness in the views of the respondents. The highest Standard Error was 2.2 and the least was 2.1, these are very low, showing a true sample mean of the data used as drawn from the population of the study.

1. There is significant relationship between the roles of virtual office and national development in Nigeria

**Table 3: Summary of Calculated (r) Between the Roles of Virtual Office and National Development in Nigeria**

| SN | Variable             | N  | X   | SD  | Df        | Alpha level | r-cal.       | r-crit.      | Remark Decision             |
|----|----------------------|----|-----|-----|-----------|-------------|--------------|--------------|-----------------------------|
| 1  | Virtual Office       | 80 | 4.8 | 1.0 | 0.1       |             |              |              |                             |
|    |                      |    |     |     | <b>78</b> | <b>0.05</b> | <b>1.445</b> | <b>0.113</b> | <b>Significant Accepted</b> |
| 2  | National Development | 80 | 4.8 | 1.0 |           |             |              |              |                             |
|    |                      |    |     | 0.1 |           |             |              |              |                             |

### Field survey, (2019)

The result on table 3 revealed that the (r) calculated value is greater than r-critical value. Since the r-calculated value of 1.445 is greater than the r-critical value of 0.113. Therefore, the directional hypothesis which stated that there is significant relationship between the roles of virtual office and national development in Nigeria is accepted. This means that there is significant relationship between the roles of virtual office and national development in Nigeria.

2. There is significant relationship between the types of virtual offices as well as services provided and national development in Nigeria

**Table 4: Summary of Calculated (r) Between the Types of Virtual Offices as well as Services Provided and National Development in Nigeria**

| SN | Variable       | N  | X   | SD  | Df        | Alpha level | r-cal.       | r-crit.      | Remark Decision    |
|----|----------------|----|-----|-----|-----------|-------------|--------------|--------------|--------------------|
| 1  | Virtual Office | 80 | 4.7 | 1.0 | 0.1       |             |              |              |                    |
|    |                |    |     |     | <b>78</b> | <b>0.05</b> | <b>1.575</b> | <b>0.113</b> | <b>Significant</b> |



Accepted

|   |                      |    |     |     |
|---|----------------------|----|-----|-----|
| 2 | National Development | 80 | 4.7 | 1.0 |
|   |                      |    |     | 0.1 |

### Field survey, (2019)

The result on table 4 revealed that the (r) calculated value is greater than r-critical value. Since the r-calculated value of 1.575 is greater than the r-critical value of 0.113. Therefore, the directional hypothesis which stated there is significant relationship between the types of virtual offices as well as services provided and national development in Nigeria is accepted. This means that there is significant relationship between the types of virtual office as well as services provided and national development in Nigeria.

### Discussion of the Findings

From the analysis of research question 1, the findings showed that there was high level of roles played by virtual office towards national development. The opinions of the respondents are in agreement with Wikipedia (2019), Smallbusinesscan.com (2014), Target Offices (2019) and Wikipedia the free Encyclopedia (2019) who identified provides communication and address service, increase in entrepreneurs, small businesses starting, business with access to office services and facilities, allows small business owners to increase their reputation and productivity, cost is shared by all of the users of the office space, equipment and services; provide companies with the use of prestigious address, space and/or technology, cloud storage, web hosting and email and other web-based applications as roles played by virtual office towards national development.

From the analysis of research question 2, the findings showed that virtual office played high level of roles too. The views of the respondents are in agreement with Smallbusinesscan.com (2014), Alliance Virtual Offices (2018) and Executive Centre (2014), who saw types of virtual office as remote receptionist, virtual assistant, mail forwarding/virtual address, co-working spaces, business address + mail forwarding, virtual office + part-time workspace virtual address, receptionist + phone services, telephone answering service and conference rooms / meeting space as services provided by virtual office towards national development.

### Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it is concluded that there was high level of roles played by virtual office and high level of services provided towards national development in Nigeria.

### Recommendations

1. More virtual offices should be built in Nigeria to assist in providing services to young and new entrepreneurs in the country.
2. Government should regulate the activities of virtual offices in the areas of registration to avoid fake addresses and defrauding of subscribers in the country.
3. Subscribers should always make enquiry on the services available and the cost implication before subscribing to them.

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