ENTREPRENEURIAL ORIENTATION AND GROWTH OF SMEs IN KOGI STATE, NIGERIA.

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DOI: https://doi.org/10.7118/ajbam-03-2024-55

ABSTRACT

The paper investigates impact of entrepreneurship orientation and growth of SMEs in Kogi state. The research utilized a survey approach and administered questionnaires to gather and analyze data. In analyzing the data descriptive and inferential statistics were employed, and the regression analysis with the aids of Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26.0 to test the hypotheses. Results revealed that Entrepreneurial Orientation contributes positively and significantly to growth of SMEs in Kogi state. The research concludes that entrepreneurship orientation has positive and a significant effect on development of SMEs in Kogi state. It was recommended in the study that promoting creativity among business owners will foster innovation, supporting small entrepreneurs with government policies, and considering individual characteristics that may influence the impact of entrepreneurship orientation on SME growth.

Keywords: Entrepreneurial orientation; proactive; innovativeness; SMEs, Business Growth

INTRODUCTION

Businesses are expanding rapidly, yet many countries still approach investment and development in a linear fashion. Governments and policymakers globally are emphasizing the advancement of SMEs to encourage economic advancement and growth (Ngek and Vanzyl, (2014). SMEs have consistently proven to be the drivers of economic growth and advancement in many countries of the world. According to government agency, the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN), that SMEs has contributed approximately 48% to national GDP in the last five years. SMEs also account for about 50% to 60% of industrial jobs and about 80% to 90% of enterprises in the manufacturing sector (SMEDAN, 2021). The SME concept was

introduced in the early 1940s to boost trade and industrialization in now-developed countries.

The term SME varies by country, small business in the U SA, Germany, or Japan might be tagged as medium or large-scale enterprises in Nigeria context (Onuoha, 2010). Many Nigerians are now leveraging opportunities in SMEs, though there are differences in terms of funds, financing, capital, profit, market share, and capital involved. According to Etuk, Etuk, and Baghebo (2014), SMEs can be conceptual as quantitative or qualitative in measurements. The quantitative measures include the followings; firm size within industry, No of employees, and the capital based, while qualitative measures encompass employee qualities and characteristics (Emelah and Onuoha, 2018). And that drives business performance and economic growth. SMEs are crucial for Nigeria's economic advancement, expansion, and transformation, aligning with the Federal Government's goals for economic development (Ifeanyi *et al.,* 2021).

The primary challenges impeding SME growth in the world, especially Nigeria includes bad or inconsistent government policies, multiple taxes, lack of technologies, inaccessible markets, insufficient business development services, inadequate infrastructure, and lack of access to finance (SMEDAN, 2013). African Development Bank Group (AfDB, 2019) notes that Nigeria's business environment suffers from market collapse, leading to SME underfunding, making it essential to provide financial support to SMEs through reliable local banks. Firm growth and expansion is a key driver to economic development, as well as wealth creation, and employment generation globally (Ngek Neneh and Johan Van Zyl, 2017). It is a major source of job creation and a valuable indicator of entrepreneurial success (Olabanji *et al.,* 2019).

SMEs growth in Nigeria is vital for strengthening the economy and empowering youth. Successful SMEs lead to reduced crime, and reduce unemployment rate. It is stated that with proper entrepreneurial orientation, SMEs in Nigeria can evolve from sole proprietorships to larger-scale enterprises (Emelah and Chima, 2018). A company's growth is viewed as its success and a source of survival and wealth creation. Enhancing entrepreneurial orientation (EO) is a key way to foster SME growth. Organizations with higher EO levels perform better than those with lower levels (Leboi, 2019). Sarker and Palit (2015) highlighted that firms with strong EO experience greater growth. Businesses are increasingly embracing entrepreneurship in order to bring innovativeness, creates value, encourage rapid growth, gain competitive advantage, and improved efficiency and productivity. Research consistently revealed a positive and significant relationship between EO and firm growths (Neneh & Van, 2017; Gupta & Batra, 2016; Kim *et al.,* 2015).

Okangi (2019) highlights critical importance of entrepreneurial orientation (EO) for firm profitability, particularly noting that, there is a positive and a significant relationship between innovativeness and growth of construction companies. Scholars generally agree that EO contributes to growth, success and profitability of firms (Islam *et al.,* 2011). EO involves decision-making and operations aimed at driving business initiatives at the organizational level (Ifeanyi *et al.,* 2021). It is considered a key concept in entrepreneurship for recording success, achieving profitability, and growth of SMEs.

The main dimensions of EO are said to be three: innovation, risk-taking, and proactiveness. Expanding this to five dimensions, Miller (1983) includes competitive aggressiveness, autonomy, proactiveness, risk-taking, and capacity for innovation. Haider *et al.* (2017) emphasize that entrepreneurial orientation is characterized by innovativeness and proactiveness, a view shared by Simon, Stachel, and Covin (2011). Entrepreneurial oriented businesses bring innovative and proactive (Boso, Story, & Cadogan, 2013), and these traits are developed through training (Zehra, 2016). Achieving sustainable business growth requires special innovation, and businesses are more likely to succeed if owners possess strong entrepreneurial orientation. This orientation benefits start-ups and remains valuable throughout a business's lifecycle (Eunice *et al.,* 2018). Firms can attract more customers through high levels of

innovativeness in their products and service delivery.

Objective of the Study

Aim and objectives of the study is to carry out an investigation in the relationship between Entrepreneurship Orientation and Growth of SMEs in Kogi State. Specific objectives are as follows;

i. To examine the influence of entrepreneurship innovativeness on the growth of SMEs in Kogi East, Kogi state.
ii. To evaluate relationship between entrepreneurship proactiveness and the growth of SMEs in the Kogi East Kogi state.

Research Hypothesis

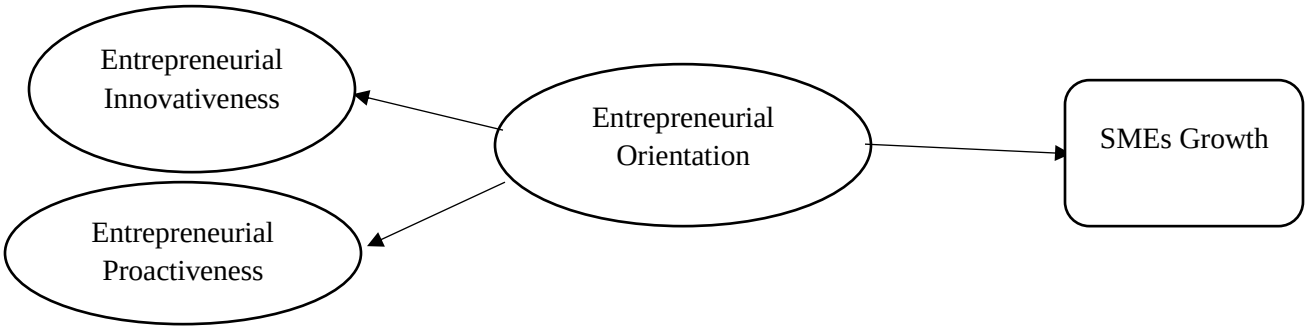
The following hypotheses are raised for the purpose of this study;

Ho_1: There is no any significant relationship between entrepreneurial innovativeness and the growth of SMEs in Kogi East, Kogi state.

Ho_2: There is no any significant relationship between entrepreneurial pro-activeness and the growth of SMEs in Kogi East, Kogi state.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

The Conceptual Framework



Source: Author Design, 2023

In this study the independent variable is Entrepreneurial Orientation and dependent variable is growth of SMEs, which focuses on innovativeness and proactiveness. The entrepreneurial process is described as a strategies, activities, practices, and managerial decision-making styles that organizations used entrepreneurially (Lumpkin and Dess, 1996). Scholars suggest that organizations with high levels of entrepreneurial activities perform better than those with low levels of entrepreneurial activities. The entrepreneurial orientation encompasses policies as well as practices that form the stage for entrepreneurial activities, decisions and actions. From another school of thoughts, entrepreneurial orientation is expressed as a strategy-making processes which key leaders use in defining their organization's vision, their purpose, and create competitive advantages (Rauch *et al.*, 2019).

Despite numerous studies on EO within entrepreneurship, there are gaps in high-value-added EO studies, most of the studies previously have used EO as independent variable and used SMEs performance as dependent variable. The ability or capacity of firms to sustain their competitive

advantage is linked to their innovativeness and proactiveness, indicating the extent of their growth.

Innovation and SMEs Growth

According to OECD (2016), innovativeness is said to be major driving forces for productivity, it sustains the growth of SMEs. Innovativeness contributes positively to inclusive growth by removing barriers to productivity and narrowing the pay gap between employees in SMEs and large firms. While it's generally believed that SMEs are less innovative than large firms, some scholars argue that size doesn't matter, as certain SMEs are more innovative and productive than larger companies. Firms experience significant growth when they effectively implement their strategies, benefiting from government support that ensures a conducive business environment and sound systems for executing internal strategies. Welsch and Stoica (2013) note that large firms increasingly outsource various business activities to seek innovation, creating new opportunities for SMEs. Innovativeness remains a central theme in entrepreneurship, reflecting a tendency for initiatives that support new ideas, new experimentation, as well as fundamental processes that can lead to new goods, services, or expertise.

Pro-activeness and SMEs Growth

Pro-activeness is a process of taking initiatives steps to anticipate as well as pursue a new change that is related to future demands and current business markets. This involves anticipating products, customer demands, and market technologies (Schillo, 2011). As expressed by Alvarez and Barney, (2012) pro-activeness is an effort firms puts into ensuring its products and services reach new or untapped markets and populations before competitors identify these niches. It also involves identifying low-cost production areas to gain better margins. Aloulou and Fayolle (2014) note that one existing challenge is determining whether pro-activeness is a uniform characteristic to all firms regardless of their size or nature. Pro-active firms employ innovative strategies against competitors of similar size and in the same industry, actively seeking to capture new markets and customers. Another scholar conceptualized pro-activeness as related to leadership style and taking initiatives, practical initiatives which involving seizing fresh opportunities, although this is not always the case (Oyeku *et al.*, 2014).

Pro-activeness involves exploiting market opportunities by taking initiatives and decisive actions to reshape the environment, influence trends, and create demand. These characteristics of a pro-active initiative include aggressive, unconventional tactics and act decisively against rival firms in the same industry. Such firms shape their business environments by actions which seeking and utilizing new opportunities, introducing new products, new technologies, and new administrative methods to influence the entire business environment rather than merely reacting to it.

Theoretical Review

Several scholars have suggested different theories, in this study, Schumpeter theory and Resource Based theory will be extradited.

Schumpeter's Innovation Theory

Schumpeter (1942), Innovation Theory stated that changes is important to entrepreneurship development. Schumpeter describes innovation as a process by which creative destruction takes place. The process of creative destruction occurs when the market existing structures is disrupted, whenever a new product. goods or services are introduced to marketplace and offered to potential consumers. The innovation theory is considered most suitable to this study has it established how companies can leverage strategic renewal approaches through the lens of innovativeness for them to remain competitive in the dynamic business environment. Schumpeter's innovation theory has played an important role in the acceleration of firm growth through the lens of innovativeness.

Resource-Based Theory

Resource-Based Theory emphasizes that a firm's assets are crucial for achieving competitive edges and company's performance. The resource-based theory is based on two main assumptions: firstly, is that companies within an industry may differ in the resources they control, and secondly, is that resource heterogeneity can prevail over time because the

resources used to implement company strategies are not perfectly mobile. The resource heterogeneity is essential for resource bundle to contribute to competitive advantage. However, immobility and heterogeneity alone are not sufficient enough for gaining competitive edge. Integrating the Resource-Based View (RBV) theory with Entrepreneurial Orientation can significantly improve business performance, innovativeness, and proactiveness. This integration would help SMEs maintain a competitive advantage in the market.

Empirical Studies

This study reviews the existing past studies that is related entrepreneurial orientation and the growths of SMEs.

Federico *et al.* (2022) carryout a study on the relationship between access to credit, lending, and entrepreneurship orientation (EO) are key elements of financing a venture. The research utilized the survey of Austrian as well as Italian SMEs, providing enough data (information) on access to credit, entrepreneurial orientation dimensions, the relationship of lending, and the firm-level characteristics. The study used stepwise logistic regressions in determine may entrepreneurial orientation influences SMEs access to finance and how the relationship lending enhances their interaction. The study finds that while proactiveness is important, it has a weaken effect on the autonomy in order reducing credit rejection rates. This indicated the ability of small banks to mitigate SMEs impenetrability by incorporating simple information into the credit scoring systems. Both entrepreneurial orientation dimensions and type of lending technology is more crucial for the financial success of SMEs, as they help reduce credit constraints

Gao *et al.* (2018) conducted a study on impacts of pro-active orientation and strategies on the entrepreneurial performance using 235 start-ups in China. Findings of the study revealed that when organizations lack competition, there seems to be a good relationship for pro-active orientation and the entrepreneurial performance. The moderating effect of moderate strategy and competitive strategy is positive. On the contrary, the relationship between pro-active orientation and the entrepreneurial performance does not follow a linear relationship.

Adesoga *et al.* (2018) carried out research focusing on the effect of pro-activeness and growth of selected SMEs in Ogun State, Nigeria. It argued that leadership style does not yield into the entrepreneurial orientation. The scholars used OLS with aids of SPSS version 24 to check extent or relationship. It was found that lack of entrepreneurs' initiatives in order to take advantage of new opportunities and exploit it as pro-activeness variable had a setback and negativity (effect) on SMEs growth. It was recommended proactiveness must fully practice by SMEs as a measure of growth. From the review of literature, it is pertinent that no work or studies had been conducted in Nigeria and none is being carried out in Kogi State.

METHODOLOGY

In the words of Behling, the methodology is said to be the authority base of the studies. It is straight, clear and vivid road in which anyone who follows it will get to the destination. The network of roads followed below constitutes our methodology. This current research adopted a survey research design, the reasons for choosing survey research design method is informed by the fact that the population and sample of the study were scattered in different location (Saddiq, 2012). Therefore, the only way to reach the targeted population was through survey method. Survey method enables a researcher to study the objects in their scattered location. The method is also considered suitable for the study, the reasons been that, it involves gathering data about the targeted population and generalizing the findings obtained from an analysis of the sample to the entire targeted population. The current study examined Entrepreneurial Orientation and Growth of SMEs in Kogi East, and five selected SMEs namely West Africa Ceramic Plc, P and L Nigeria Plc, Itobe, Kogi Cement Plc, Itobe. The Federal Polytechnics Idah Ventures Plc, and KSU Business Ventures Plc, all in Kogi East, Kogi State, North-Central, Nigeria. The

total population covers the entire employees in the selected SMEs. The selected SMEs with their locations and percentage of populations as obtained from their offices as of June 2023 are as follows:

SMEs	Locations	Population	Sample Size	Percentage (%)
WEST AFRICA CERAMIC	Itobe	284	84	30.2
P and L NIG. PLC	Itobe	252	56	25.5
KOGI CEMENT PLC	Itobe	266	62	28.0
FPI BUS. VENTURES PLC	Idah	110	6	5.2
KSU BUS. VENTURES PLC	ANYIGBA	116	12	11.0
	Total	1028	220	100.0

Source: Field survey, 2024

The random sampling procedure was employed in this study to select the samples from the total population in each of the SMEs covered. Some branches of the SMEs were selected. In each of these SMEs, with the use of the table of Random Numbers, the subjects were selected from staff. To this end, the frame, which is a comprehensive listing of all the subjects in the population (as far as the SMEs are concerned) were constructed. As for the employees, copies of the questionnaire were deposited at the SMEs for distribution to them. The researcher believes that random sampling procedure would drastically reduce the degree of error, thus enhance the chance of obtaining representative opinions on the subject under study. Based on the above procedure, 220 employees was used for this current study. In determining sample size for this study, Freud and William (1986) formula was adopted. The total selected number of the five SMEs (West Africa Ceramic Plc, P and L Nigeria Plc, Itobe, Kogi Cement Plc, Itobe, The Federal PoIytechnics Idah Ventures Plc, and KSU Business Ventures Plc). The sample size was approximately 220 and these were distributed among five SMEs in the proportion of each SMEs locations. Primary source of data collection was employed in the study. In analyzing data, correlation coefficient is the statistical tool used and also to test the significance of the values of correlation coefficient obtained with the aid of SPSS version 26.

Modelling

The General Linear Model is usually estimated by using Ordinary Least Square (OLS) which is commonly used analytic techniques in any social science (Cleary and Angel, 1984). Majority of the statistics used in social sciences are linear models, that means trying to fit a straight-line data collected. Ordinary least square was also used in predicting a function that relates independent variable (X) and one or more independent variable (X_1, X_2, …….X_n). It uses linear function that can be expressed as:

$Y = a+bX_i +\varepsilon_{ij}$,

Where;

a : Constant;

b : Slope of the line;

Y : Dependent variable;

X_i : Independent variables;

ε_{ij} : Error term. Therefore, to assess the contribution of different determinants in firm growth, Linear Regression Model can be expressed as follows:

$Y = a + bX_i + \varepsilon_{ij}$, Y (Entrepreneurial Orientation) = a (constant) $+X_i$ (Customer patronage) + X_2 (Increase in Numbers of Employees) +……..X_n+ ε_{ij} (Error term).

4. Results and Discussion of Findings

Table; 1

The Descriptive Statistics:

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Entrepreneurial Orientation	2.8253	1.27682	220
Business Growth	3.1613	1.37593	220

Correlations

		Entrepreneurship Orientation	Customer patronage
Entrepreneurial Orientation	Pearson Correlation	1	.712(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	220	195
Customer patronage	Pearson Correlation	.712(**)	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N		195

The correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 1 shown descriptive statistics of relationship between entrepreneurial orientations on SMEs growth proxied by customer patronage. Acceptance in SMEs and customer patronage with means response of 3.1613 and standard. deviation of 1.27682 and mean response of 3.1221 and standard deviation of 1.37593, with the numbers of the respondent (220) with a careful observation of standard deviation values, it shows no differences in terms of standard deviation scores. What it signifies is, there is about same variability of data points between the independent variables and dependent variables. **Table I** representing Pearson Moment of the correlation coefficient in relationship between entrepreneurial orientation in SMEs with customer patronage. Correlation coefficient showed 0.712, which indicated that the correlation has significant value at 0.05 level (2tailed) and shows there was significant and a strong positive relationship between entrepreneurship orientation and customer

patronage (r = .712). Since p-value is less than 0.05, therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected and concluded there was a positive significant relationship between entrepreneurship orientation in SMEs and patronage. (r =0.712, P<0.05).

Decision Rule

The decision rules stand to either reject null hypothesis if the computed r is less than the table r, otherwise, null hypothesis is rejected.

Decision

Since the computed value r=0.712 shows that its higher than the table value of r=0.195, null hypothesis is rejected and alternate hypothesis is accepted. Therefore, there was a positive significant relationship between entrepreneurship orientation in SMEs and customer patronage (r =0 .712, p<0.05).

Hypothesis two

Ho: no significant correlation between entrepreneurship orientation and increase in number of employees of SMEs.

Ha: no significant correlation between entrepreneurial orientation and increase in number of employees of SMEs.

Table II

Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	Standard Deviation	N
Entrepreneurship orientation	1.212	.308	220
Increase in number of employees	2.129	1.0543	220

Correlations

		Entrepreneurship orientation	Increase in number of employees
entrepreneurship Orientation	Pearson Correlation	1	.611(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	220	220
Increase in number of employees	Pearson Correlation	.611(**)	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	220	

Source: SPSS Version 26.00.

The above table II showed the descriptive statistics of the correlation between entrepreneurial orientation and the increase in numbers of employees of SMEs. Proxy entrepreneurship orientation with means responses of 1.212 and standard deviation of .308 and increases in number of employees with mean response of 2.129 and standard deviation of 1.0543, with the observations of standard deviation values, there is no differences in terms of standard deviation scores, it signifies that, there is about same variability of data points between independent variables and the dependent variables. The Table shows the Pearson moment coefficient between entrepreneurship orientation SMEs and increase in number of employees. The correlation coefficient shown 0.611. The value indicated the correlation is significant at 0.05 level (2tailed), it implied there was strong positive significant relationship between entrepreneurial orientation and increase in number of employees (r =0 .611) since p-value is less than 0.05, null hypothesis was rejected and concludes there was significant correlation between entrepreneurial orientation in SMEs and increase in numbers of employees (r =0.611, P<0.05).

Decision Rule

The decision rule of the correlation coefficient stated that if value of the coefficient (r) is greater than zero (positive), the variables are correlated, so the alternate hypothesis (H_1) was accepted while the null hypothesis (H_0) was rejected. Conversely, if the correlation coefficient (r) is less than zero (negative), the variables are not correlated, and null hypothesis (H_0) was not rejected. The results in the correlation table indicate a correlation between entrepreneurial orientation and an increase in employees (r=0.611, p=0.001<0.05).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It is concluded that entrepreneurial orientation characteristics such as the need for self-reliance, achievement, internal locus of control, and extroversion do not impact a company's performance. However, innovativeness and proactiveness do influence SME growth. The hypothesis tests indicate that innovativeness has a greater effect on SMEs than proactiveness. It is recommended to enhance the creativity of business people by providing a conducive environment, less stringent policies, and tax holidays. Additionally, there is a need to support small entrepreneurs with innovative ideas to help them implement these ideas. Furthermore, it is essential to consider certain individual characteristics that may moderate the impacts of entrepreneurial orientation dimensions on SMEs growth.

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