

**ENTREPRENEURIAL ALERTNESS AMONG SMALL
SCALE ENTREPRENEURS: THE ROLE OF
CREATIVITY AND INTUITION**

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ABSTRACT: The purpose of this study was to investigate the roles of creativity and intuition on the entrepreneurial alertness of 220 entrepreneurs who were drawn from markets in Enugu, Enugu State, Nigeria. Participants comprised of 125 males and 95 females with ages ranging from 20 to 75 years ($M = 37.23$; $SD = 11.24$). Three instruments were used; a modified Creativity Styles Questionnaire – Revised (CSQ-R) by Kumar, Kemmler and Holman (1997), a self developed Entrepreneurial Intuition Scale (EIS) and a modified Entrepreneurial Alertness Scale by Tang, Kacmar and Busenitz (2012). The Cross-Sectional Survey Design was employed while hierarchical multiple regression statistics was used to analyze data collected. Findings showed that entrepreneurial alertness of small scale entrepreneurs was significantly predicted by their level of creativity. However, intuitiveness did not significantly predict small scale entrepreneur's level of entrepreneurial alertness. The study reaffirmed the need for psychologists offering vocational guidance and counselling services to intending entrepreneurs to consider assessing the level of creativity of their clients as being creative can enhance entrepreneurial alertness which is germane to developing successful business organisations.

Keywords: Entrepreneurial Alertness, Creativity, Intuition, Small Scale Entrepreneurs, Enugu.

INTRODUCTION

Recently, Nigerians seem to be embracing entrepreneurship much more than in the past. This may be linked to the high rate of unemployment, increasing levels of job insecurity and the recent government programmes (e.g. YouWin, Anchor Borrowers Scheme, MarketMoni Scheme, N-power, etc) encouraging venture creations. As a result, entrepreneurial structures and programmes have been designed and executed in Nigeria to promote entrepreneurial activities (Akinyemi & Adejumo, 2018) thus entrepreneurship is now gaining intensive attention and interest among the populace as well as becoming a central focus for government and policy makers (Ikeije & Onuba, 2015). This trend is based on the fact that the activities of entrepreneurs have been associated with growing economic development, wealth generation, job creation for the nation and increased level of innovation.

Entrepreneurship refers to the capacity and attitude of a person or group of persons to undertake ventures with the probability of success or failure (Anyanwu, 2014).

Entrepreneurship has long been acknowledged as the basic engine for growth and wealth creation this is why several researchers have spent so much effort and time to explain this phenomenon through some perspectives (Mitchel, 2005). The success attained by an entrepreneur is largely dependent on his/her psychological preparedness. Psychologically, an entrepreneur could be analyzed as an individual typically driven by the need to obtain or attain a specific goal, to experiment, to accomplish, or perhaps to escape the authority of others (Oteh, 2009). Typical entrepreneurs anticipate the future trends of events in order to become successful in identified business opportunities. Entrepreneurial motivation is largely due to entrepreneur's mental ability to bear risks and ability to calculate the risks (Ikeije & Onuba, 2015).

However, entrepreneurs can only be successful if they are alert to information on market conditions and opportunity movements (Kirzner, 2008). Alertness is known to be a state of consciousness where one is ready to respond to stimuli (Pam, 2013). From the entrepreneurial perspective, Kirzner (1979) defined alertness as an individual's ability to identify opportunities which are overlooked by others. Entrepreneurial alertness is a process and perspective which helps some individuals to be more aware of the changes, shifts and opportunities which were overlooked by others. It is the cognitive engine driving the opportunity identification process. As developed by Kirzner (1989) entrepreneurial alertness does not imply that individuals are systematically and rationally searching their environment for competitive imperfections, rather, these individuals become aware of these competitive imperfections through their day-to-day activities.

Extant studies had identified some possible determinants of entrepreneurial alertness among individuals. Notably among these determinants are locus of control (Karabulut, 2016), psychological disposition (Minniti, 2004), personality traits and social networks (Ardichvili, Cardozo & Ray, 2003), self-efficacy (Tang, 2008) and knowledge acquisition through social network (Jiao, Cui, Zhu, & Chen, 2014). However, this study focussed on the role of creativity and intuition in predicting entrepreneurial alertness.

Creativity, as a concept describes the ways individuals perceive problems not as difficulties but merely as possibilities. It involves a generation of ideas, products or solutions that are both novel and useful (George, 2007; Hennessey & Amabile, 2010) which may also require the search and selection of novel ideas and solutions to resolve open-ended problems that have value for the individual or the society (Hennessey & Amabile, 2010; Shalley & Zhou, 2008).

The creative process begins with the psychological preparation of the individual through the accumulation of experiences and by going deep in situations that require decision-making and development of solutions to problems. Creativity influences alertness and it is an unfolding of the creative process (Ardichvili, Cardozo & Ray, 2003), however, new mental association is achieved by means of divergent thinking. Thus creative thinking emanates from the mind and translates into insight which then constitutes the essence of alertness. For the alert process to occur, the initial idea is subjected to evaluation, which may include a market assessment as well as an exchange of views with other people (Gielnik, Kramer,

Kappel & Frese, 2014). Hence, creativity combined with entrepreneurial alertness is an attribute that can create a competitive advantage and make the difference among competitors. Creative thinking can be generated through brainstorming, surveys, researches etc and results into innovation and growth

Intuition is the capacity to have direct and immediate insight without reason. It is the mode of consciousness wherein content is perceived by sudden, direct awareness (Sadowski, 2018). Intuitive awareness occurs to the conscious mind without any identifiable processing, cognitive or otherwise. When related to entrepreneurial alertness, intuitiveness could result to the experience of spontaneous or momentarily detection of a business opportunity. This is like the 'aha' experience in a new venture context. Intuitiveness could also be experienced in certain occurrences when an individual suddenly realises the right initiative to solving a problem that has been seemingly unsolvable or the moment when a solution suddenly becomes available to an individual through social network.

The intuitive process enables people to get rid of logical and analytical thinking and have a completely open mind for divergent thoughts and new possibilities (Ringel, 2004). Creative people are better at producing new ideas through associative processes compared to uncreative people (Benedek & Neubauer, 2013); entrepreneurs are better at using their intuition to make sense of associations to knowledge and surrounding information (Busenitz & Barney, 1997). Therefore, it seems necessary for entrepreneurs to embrace superior intuitive capability as entrepreneurs may rely on their intuition to generate new business ideas at the first place.

Statement of the Problem

Entrepreneurs play a critically and important role in the economy. By spotting opportunities and taking actions to exploit them, they drive the process of production and marketing thereby fulfilling the social and economic needs of the populace. But researchers currently lack a deep understanding of why some individuals are able to spot opportunities that most people cannot see, hence, only a limited number of studies are available on the concept (Sharma, 2019).

Numerous factors however have been responsible for the enhancement as well as the reduction in entrepreneurial alertness. Entrepreneurial alertness has been found to be of great interest in the world of business opportunity identification (Sharma, 2019) and therefore its reduction or decline could be detrimental to the world of business venturing.

In Nigeria, most individuals set up businesses that spring up and die off like flowers. Some individuals attribute this to problems such as; excessive and multiple taxations, poor business planning, inadequate and erratic power supply and several other mundane factors. These factors may not be the causative factors for sudden business failures. Some psychological determinants may be responsible. As a result of paucity of studies on the psychological predictors of entrepreneurial alertness, especially in Nigeria, there are needs to examine some factors that may determine it. Variables such as creativity and intuition

need to be examined as these are likely to be cognitively immersed in predicting and individual's level of entrepreneurial alertness.

Purpose of the Study

Generally, this study is aimed at investigating the roles of creativity and intuition on the entrepreneurial alertness of entrepreneurs from Enugu, Nigeria. Specifically, the study examined whether;

1. Creativity will predict entrepreneurial alertness among entrepreneurs from Enugu, Nigeria, and
2. Intuition will predict entrepreneurial alertness among entrepreneurs from Enugu, Nigeria.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Creativity and Entrepreneurial Alertness

Montiel-Campos (2018a) conducted an exploratory study on the antecedent of entrepreneurial alertness as well as the moderating effect of a creative personality. Samples consisted of 406 individuals with primarily business backgrounds in Mexico. Findings suggested that individuals with a higher degree of entrepreneurial passion were more likely to show greater entrepreneurial alertness; however, creative personality as a moderating variable had minimal effects on this relationship. In another study, Montiel-Campos (2018b) examined the role of creativity and support for creativity on entrepreneurial alertness among 278 middle-managers from medium and large firms. The results indicated that creative potential was significantly related to practised creativity; however, practised creativity was not significantly related to all dimensions of entrepreneurial alertness. In an earlier study on creativity as an intermediate variable existing within the relationship between entrepreneurial passion and entrepreneurial alertness, Montiel-Campos (2016) found a positive relationship between creativity and entrepreneurial alertness.

Ying (2016) explored how entrepreneurs differ from non-entrepreneurs regarding creative, rational, and intuitive thinking. After analyzing 68 entrepreneurs and 106 non-entrepreneurs from all over the world, the study found that entrepreneurs excelled in creative and rational thinking when compared to non-entrepreneurs. In a similar comparative study, Shrader and Finkle (2015) investigated differences in the levels of creative achievement and intelligence between students who have been entrepreneurs and those who have not been entrepreneurs. Notably, the study found that students who had been entrepreneurs had significantly higher Creative Achievement Quotient and performed significantly higher on the four measures of the Creative Achievement Quotient. Lușă-Tătaru (2014) identified a strong relationship between creativity and entrepreneurship concluding that an entrepreneur must be a creative person in order to succeed.

It is pertinent to note that most of the above studies have limitations as they were conducted with student samples except for Montiel-Campos (2018a). These studies also engaged an educated populace as samples. This is necessitated the present study to sample from actual entrepreneurs irrespective of educational background or level.

Intuition and Entrepreneurial Alertness

It is worth stating that not many researchers have taken up the challenge of empirically investigating intuition in entrepreneurial settings (Umukoro & Okurame, 2017). Ying (2016) in an exploratory study on how entrepreneurs differ from non-entrepreneurs regarding creative, rational, and intuitive thinking, found no significant difference regarding intuitive thinking between entrepreneurs and non-entrepreneurs. In another study, Gerber (2015) examined the impact of intuitive potential in predicting entrepreneurship comparing a sample of entrepreneurs and employees. The study identified that entrepreneurs have higher potential than employees, but do not differ in the preference for the intuitive decision-making over the analytical one. Ramirez, (2016) studied the role of Intuition in the Founding Team formation process. The study emphasized the importance of intuition when searching for potential co-founder. The study also identified that intuition guided participants in making correct choices and that intuition play a tangible and important role in the entrepreneurial team formation process. On their part, Umukoro and Okurame (2017) indentified that individuals who are entrepreneurially intuitive are expected to be successful in entrepreneurship ventures. They also identified the importance of career adaptability, ambiguity tolerance and mentoring support on entrepreneurial intuition.

Hypotheses

1. Creativity will significantly predict entrepreneurial alertness among entrepreneurs from Enugu, Nigeria.
2. Intuition will significantly predict entrepreneurial alertness among entrepreneurs from Enugu, Nigeria, and

METHOD

Participants

A total of 220 participants comprising of 125 males and 95 females from markets in Enugu, Enugu State, Nigeria were selected for the study using convenience sampling technique. The participants comprised of budding entrepreneurs such as tailors/fashion designers and shop owners dealing on different commodities. Participants' ages ranged between 20 – 75 years with a mean of 37.23 and standard deviation of 11.24. In terms of educational qualifications, 169 of the participants had tertiary education while 51 had secondary school education.

Instruments

This study employed three set of scales; Creativity Styles Questionnaire-Revised (CSQ-R), Entrepreneurial Intuition Scale (EIS) and Entrepreneurial Alertness Scale. The CSQ-R was originally developed by Kumar, Kemmler and Holman (1997) to measure beliefs about and strategies for going about being creative. The CSQ-R is a 78-item scale designed on a 5-point Likert scale response format ranging 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). Items 3, 13, 18, 19, 20, 37, 38, 39, 41, 42, 44, 49, 50, 51, 52, 54, 72, 73, 74, and 78 are scored in reversed while the rest of the items are directly scored. The CSQ-R has 7 subscales with reported Cronbach alphas ranging from .45 and .81 and a mean reliability of .74 (Kumar, Kemmler & Holman, 1997). Following a pilot study conducted using 40 entrepreneurs in Owerri, Nigeria, and subsequent factor analyses, the scale was pruned down to 11 items which yielded a Cronbach alpha of .74. Higher scores on the CSQ-R indicate high level of creativity and vice versa.

The second instrument, the Entrepreneurial Intuition Scale (EIS) is a self-developed measure designed to evaluate entrepreneurs' level of intuition. The EIS is also a 5-item Likert-type scale ranging 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). All items are directly scored. The validity of the EIS was ascertained after a pilot study involving 40 entrepreneurs in Owerri, Nigeria. Both face and content validity assessment for the instrument were acceptable. Corrected item-total correlation for the EIS ranged from .43 to .74 while a Cronbach alpha reliability of .71 was obtained. High scores obtained on the EIS indicate high level of intuition and vice versa.

The Entrepreneurial Alertness Scale (EAS) was developed by Tang, Kacmar and Busenitz, (2012) to measure individual's disposition and experience levels impact alertness to business opportunities. It is a 13-item scale which has three dimensions; scanning and searching for information, connecting previous information and evaluation of the information. All items were directly scored. The alpha coefficient obtained for the 3 dimensions ranged from .71 to .94 with the inter-correlations ranging in magnitude from .65 to .68 and the scale exhibiting acceptable construct, convergent and discriminant validities (Tang, Kacmar and Busenitz, 2012). To ascertain the reliability and validity of the EAS among Nigerian samples a pilot study was conducted among 29 male and 11 female (N = 40) entrepreneurs in Owerri with ages ranging from 20 – 45 years. Item analyses of the EAS showed that only 11 items had adequate corrected item- total correlations. During analysis 4 items were eliminated leaving the scale with 11 items. Cronbach alpha analysis obtained for the overall 11 items was .81 with factor analyses with varimax rotation of the items explained a total of 51.21% of variance with all items having positive loadings greater than .42 on the 3 dimensions. Scores higher than the norm indicate high level of entrepreneurial alertness.

Procedures

A total of 250 copies of questionnaires were administered within 2 weeks. The administration was carried out in six markets in Enugu (that is Mayor, Ogbete, Abakpa, Gariki, and Kenyatta Markets). Participants were approached by the researcher and two

research assistants in person during the distribution and administering of the questionnaires. Only business owners and or artisans with established stores were engaged in the study. Before administration of the questionnaire, the researcher sought and obtained the consent of each participant assuring them of the confidentiality of responses provided. Demographic information such as gender, age and educational level were also obtained from participants. Completion of each questionnaire took an average of 15 minutes. Only 235 copies of the questionnaires were returned given a response rate of 94%. Due to missing data found in some questionnaires, 15 copies were discarded leaving 220 copies that was utilised for data analyses. All the data collection processes were confidential and anonymous.

Design and Statistics

The design used in this study was the cross-sectional survey design as data was collected from a large sample of participants within a specific timeframe. The hierarchical multiple regression statistics was used because the study involves two continuous predictor variables and one outcome variable.

RESULTS

Table 1: Correlation of Variables Used in the Study

	Entrepreneurial Alertness	Creativity	Intuition
Entrepreneurial Alertness	1.00		
Creativity	.59***	1.00	
Intuition	.11	.17**	1.00

*Note: N = 220, ** $p < .005$, *** $p < .0005$.*

A correlation analyses of all variables used in the study is presented in Table 1 above. The results showed a positive correlation between entrepreneurial alertness and creativity ($r = .59, n = 220, p < .05$), creativity and intuition ($r = .17, n = 220, p < .05$). No significant correlation was found between entrepreneurial alertness and intuition ($r = .11, n = 220, p > .05$). The results imply that high level of entrepreneurial alertness is associated with high levels of creativity. Similarly, high levels of creativity results in high intuitiveness.

Table 2: Summary Results of Two Steps Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analyses for Entrepreneurial Alertness on Creativity and Intuition

Predictors	Entrepreneurial Alertness	
	Step1 β	Step 2 β
<i>Step 1</i>		
Creativity	.59*	.59*
<i>Step 2</i>		
Intuition		-.01
ΔF	115.24*	.006
R^2	.346*	.346
ΔR^2		.000
Df	1,219	1, 218
Dublin Watson	2.13	

Note: $N = 220$, $*p < .05$.

The result of a hierarchical multiple regression analysis as presented in Table 2 above tested the two hypotheses of the study. The overall model of the two step hierarchical regression analysis was significant [$R^2 = .35$, $F(1, 219) = 115.24$, $p < .05$; $R^2 = .35$, $F(1, 218) = 57.41$, $p < .05$]. The overall fit of the model shows that 34.6% of the variation in participants' entrepreneurial alertness has been explained. Also, the Durbin-Watson of 2.13 falls within the accepted range ($1.5 < D < 2.5$), indicating that there is no autocorrelation problem in the data and that the error term is independent.

In the first hypothesis, creativity was regressed into the model. Creativity explained 34.6% of the variations in entrepreneurial alertness. ($\beta = .59$, $p < .0005$; $t = 10.74$). This result shows that participants with higher level of creativity scored better in entrepreneurial alertness. Therefore, the first hypothesis is accepted implying that higher creativity is related to high entrepreneurial alertness.

However, analysis of the second hypothesis shows that intuition did not explain any percentage variation in entrepreneurial alertness ($\beta = -.01$, $p > .05$; $t = -.26$). The result shows that intuition is not a significant predictor of entrepreneurial alertness. This result implies that participant's level of intuitiveness does not significantly predict their level of entrepreneurial alertness. The second hypothesis is hereby rejected.

DISCUSSIONS

The present study investigated creativity and intuition as predictors of entrepreneurial alertness using entrepreneurs from six markets in Enugu, Enugu state. Two hypotheses were formulated and tested. The first hypothesized that creativity will significantly determine entrepreneurial alertness among entrepreneurs in Enugu. The result showed that creativity significantly predicts entrepreneurial alertness. This outcome was expected as creativity has always been considered as the 'lifeblood' of successful entrepreneurs (Ward, 2004). Lending

credence to this finding, Shrader and Finkle (2015) found that students who had been entrepreneurs were significantly higher in Creative Achievement Quotient and also performed significantly higher on the four measures of the Creative Achievement Quotient. In addition, Lupşa-Tătaru (2014) confirmed that entrepreneurs tended to continuously excel in creative ability. Similarly Montiel-Campos (2018b) and Montiel-Campos (2016) found significant linkages between creativity and entrepreneurial passion. In all, entrepreneurs who are alert to trends in their environment are very much likely to be creative hence this finding.

Regarding intuition, it was also hypothesized that intuition will significantly predict entrepreneurial alertness among entrepreneurs. The finding did not support this hypothesis as intuition did not show any percentage variation in entrepreneurial alertness. Offering support to this finding, Ying (2016) found no significant difference regarding intuitive thinking between entrepreneurs and non-entrepreneurs while Gerber (2015) identified that entrepreneurs do not differ from employees in terms of preference for an intuitive decision-making over an analytical one. However, in contradiction to this finding, Ramirez, (2016) identified that intuition guided participants in making correct choices and that intuition play a tangible and important role in the entrepreneurial team formation process. Taking a similar view, Umukoro and Okurame (2017) indentified that individuals who are entrepreneurially intuitive are expected to be successful in entrepreneurship ventures. Previous studies on intuition and entrepreneurship however have had inconsistent results. This may be attributed to the fact that there is a paucity of studies on intuition and entrepreneurship alertness.

Implications of the Study

Since creativity significantly predicts entrepreneurial alertness among entrepreneurs and with the strong relationship between intuition and creativity, it could be plausible to state that intuition is a key component leading to creativity. Further, as entrepreneurs' high intuitiveness results to higher creativity that can in turn add up to higher levels of alertness in entrepreneurial ventures. The research therefore concludes that level of entrepreneurial alertness is associated with high levels of creativity while high levels of creativity results in high intuitiveness.

Recommendations

The findings of this research could provide practical suggestions to organisations and the government in their pursuit for the establishment of viable entrepreneurial venture creation in the country. These findings will be very helpful in the designing of training programs and in offering support to potential and existing entrepreneurs as additional focus can include an assessment of prospective individual entrepreneurs' level of creativity. Selecting highly creative persons for assistance to setting up entrepreneurial ventures will be an additional boost towards ensuring that entrepreneurs succeed in their ventures.

Psychologists can assist, in no small measure, in advising organisations and government establishments vested with the role of providing support to potential and existing entrepreneurs by assessing their level of creativity as this has been shown to predict

entrepreneurial alertness and other entrepreneurial success factors. Also, psychological training programs should be carried out in order to train and encourage potential and existing entrepreneurs on how to increase their creativity level or creative ability in businesses. This is because an increased creativity increases the entrepreneurial alertness level to business opportunities and thus could lead or serve as a gateway to success.

Conclusion

This research focused on the predictability of creativity and intuition on entrepreneurial alertness among 220 entrepreneurs from markets in Enugu, Enugu State. Findings revealed that entrepreneurs' level of creativity was significantly related to their level of entrepreneurial alertness. Although, this is a relatively budding area in entrepreneurial studies in Nigeria, it is hoped that this research provided additional fundamental insight on entrepreneurial alertness and the role of creative and intuitive thinking. This study was however undertaken because of the researchers' interest in ascertaining the impacts of creativity and intuition as predictors of entrepreneurial alertness. This research was also embarked on as a result of noticeable failures in several business ventures across Nigeria. The findings of this study further remind entrepreneurs, prospective entrepreneurs, organisations supporting entrepreneurial ventures and the government that the potential successes of entrepreneurial ventures are likely tied to creativity.

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