

## **MOTIVATION AT INDIVIDUAL LEVEL: IMPLICATIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN NIGERIA**

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**ABSTRACT:** As the global economic crisis continues to rage, there has been increased call for countries to turn to entrepreneurship as a panacea to the economic challenges. This is due to the significant role that entrepreneurship plays in achieving economic growth. Entrepreneurship can create employment, increase production, and diversify sources of revenue for individuals and countries. Nigeria has joined other countries of the world to develop strategies and enact policies that encourage individuals to take to entrepreneurship to be able to create wealth through the development of small and medium scale enterprises. As a result, entrepreneurship has become part of the curriculum in many Nigerian universities. Considering the promise that entrepreneurship holds in revitalizing poor economies, it becomes imperative to focus on individuals as well as dispositional factors that stimulate entrepreneurship behaviours. Therefore, this paper evaluates the relevance of individual personality characteristics including proactivity, risk-taking ability, need to achievement, locus of control, and psychological capital that have been commonly used in entrepreneurial research and their potency to forge successful entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurial success is not got by chance; it takes personal commitment and sacrifices to start up and nurture small businesses.

**Keywords:** Entrepreneurship, Proactivity, Risk-Taking, Need for Achievement, Locus of Control

### **INTRODUCTION**

Entrepreneurship has become a global economic phenomenon that revamps economies and has created dynamic, complicated, and flexible market conditions (Kim, 2022; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2018). Nigeria has joined many other emerging economies that face similar development challenges in trying to open her economy to focus attention on entrepreneurship. It is the latest strategy adopted by various stakeholders as cornerstone for economic development and recovery strategies for many economies (Farabiyi, 2015). It has received widespread support and has been recognized as a significant contributing factor to prosperity and economic growth of a nation (Hindle & Rushworth, 2000). Onuoha (2007) defined entrepreneurship as “the act of beginning new organisations or renewing developed organisations, especially new businesses generally in response to unique opportunities” (p. 22). Fillion (2011) proposed that the definition of entrepreneurship should consist of six key components, which are innovation, opportunity recognition, risk management, action, use of resources and added value.

Entrepreneurship has become a very relevant instrument to promote economic growth and development in different regional and national economies. It is an essential catalyst for economic prosperity, typical in modern economies. Entrepreneurial activity builds industries

and businesses and transforms countries from dependent to independent and to economic world power (Naqi, 2003). To maximize these gains associated with entrepreneurship, universities in many developing countries now include entrepreneurship studies as a compulsory course in their undergraduate curricula. In fact, colleges and universities in developing economies have been challenged to establish Centres for Entrepreneurship. These centres are to offer academic training at mostly undergraduate level to arouse the interest of students towards considering entrepreneurial career when they leave school. It would be imperative to state that the goal of entrepreneurship education transcends just teaching students to run successful businesses. It is essentially about encouraging creative thinking, enhancing levels of innovation, and promoting a strong sense of self-worth and accountability (Heinonen, Kovalainen, & Pukkinen, 2006).

The idea of the introduction of entrepreneurship courses in universities might have arisen from the fact that the policy implications of Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM, 2001) reported that people with limited education are less likely to participate in entrepreneurial initiatives. In this vein, the Nigeria Universities Commission (NUC), the body that oversees the activities of the nation's universities reasoned that lack of a comprehensive policy framework for entrepreneurial education is a significant impediment to achieving a rapid progress. To this effect, it has made entrepreneurship studies compulsory to all the universities in the country. Many universities have already complied with comprehensive review of their curricula with entrepreneurship as a compulsory course. With such ultimatum to foster entrepreneurship, it is expected that Nigeria graduates who have received this training will leave school with a different mindset of less dependent on paid employment to pursue entrepreneurial career.

Similarly, Bygrave and Zacharakis (2004) asserted that entrepreneurship education should create a capacity for imagination, flexibility, creativity, willingness to think conceptually, and the art of assessing change as an opportunity. This is probably in recognition that education develops mental capacity, widens individual horizon, and sharpens individual creative ability to recognize and cash into opportunities. To maximize the opportunities and benefits embedded in entrepreneurship, university undergraduates have become the target for entrepreneurship training. This programme is critical in that if universities do not promote entrepreneurship education, it should then be expected that students would be less likely to pursue efforts towards starting new venture (Alvarez & Busenitz, 2004). Therefore, universities are aware of the importance of developing entrepreneurial potential (Vyakarnam, 2005) and competencies (Kirby, 2005) and now focuses on how to equip students with entrepreneurial skills and creating an awareness that there is an alternative way of employment (Galloway, Anderson, Brown, & Wilson, 2005). The purpose of this paper is to highlight individual qualities, characteristics, and motivation that can guarantee successful entrepreneurship in Nigeria.

### **Individual motivation as a catalyst for successful entrepreneurship**

Considering the promise entrepreneurship holds in revitalizing poor economy, it becomes imperative to focus on individual as well as dispositional factors that stimulate entrepreneurship behaviours among individuals. Individual personality characteristics have been linked to decision making process (Bonnett & Furnham, 1991; Johnson, 1990), and have been commonly used in entrepreneurial research. Although the results vary across studies, they often indicate a link between entrepreneurial intention and some personality factors,

including *proactivity, risk-taking ability, need to achievement, and locus of control, self-efficacy, hope, optimism, and resilience.*

### **Proactivity**

Proactive personality concept is defined as a relatively stable tendency to effect environmental change that categorize individuals based on the extent to which they take action to influence their environments (Bateman & Crant, 1993). Pro-activeness is the proclivity to anticipate and act on future opportunity (Schwartz, Teach, & Birch, 2005). Proactive individuals are relatively not constrained by environmental forces, and they identify opportunities easily, act on them, show initiative, and persevere until meaningful change occurs (Crant, 2000). Reverse is the case for individuals who are not proactive. They exhibit the opposite patterns: they fail to identify, let alone seize opportunities to change things. Crant (2000) gave a detailed description of less proactive individuals to be passive, reactive, and adaptive to situations rather than change them.

Numerous researchers have examined a range of potential outcomes of proactive personality at work. For example, Parker (1998) found that proactive personality was positively and significantly associated with participation in organizational improvement initiatives. Becherer and Maurer's (1999) study suggested that proactivity was significantly associated with three types of entrepreneurial behaviours: starting versus not starting the business, the number of start-ups, and the types of ownership. Kim, Hon and Crant (2009) examined the indirect effects of a proactive personality on career satisfaction and perceived insider status, determined the process by which newcomer creativity mediates these relationships. In addition, they found that the extent to which new employees possess a proactive personality was associated with their creativity (Kim *et al.*, 2009). Proactive personality has been associated with a number of desirable personal and organizational outcomes, and their findings provided evidence that employee creativity should be added to the positive correlates of a proactive disposition (Kim *et al.*, 2009). Most essentially, the results of their study extend current proactive personality literature by addressing the underlying process by which proactive personality ultimately manifests itself in individual outcomes such as successful entrepreneurship.

However, because a person is surrounded by an extended range of cultural, social, economic, political, demographical, and technological factors, personality traits cannot be isolated from these contextual factors. For instance, according to Hisrich (1990), people can be pushed or pulled by the situational factors, which are related with their personal backgrounds and present lives. From a broader point of view, the cultural and institutional frameworks also affect entrepreneurship (Wennekers & Thurik, 1999). Innovation refers to seeking of creative, unusual, or novel solutions to problems and needs. These solutions take the form of new technologies and processes, as well as new products and services (Vesper, 1980).

### **Risk taking**

Ideas and finances stimulate successful entrepreneurship. In a poor economy like Nigeria's where financial institutions are not very supportive to entrepreneurial ventures or demand high interest rate on loans, the risks associated with entrepreneurship becomes enormous. Risk taking involves the willingness to commit large resources to opportunities which have a reasonable chance of costly failure (Stewart, 2001). Such risks are many and varied. Financial

risks can be classified into funding risk, credit risk, and liquidity risk, the risk of changes in interest rates, foreign exchange risk, inflation risk and counterparty risk. With respect to the current social situation, only individuals who have self-confidence, self-assurance, self-believe, mental strain resistance, the ability to foresee, independent thinking, willingness to take risks, flexibility, social intelligence, and communication skills have high chances of becoming successful. While unsuccessful individuals emphasize restraints and find excuses, successful ones search for solutions. The successful ones know what they want and fully realize that they can reach their goal through hard and smart work. It is not enough to think, it is necessary to act. It is better to make hundred mistakes and succeed only once than languish the whole life thinking about the dangers associated with taking risks and how to be successful (Vesecký, 2014).

### **Achievement motivation**

Finances, wealth, power, name, fame, and achievement are considered at the locus of entrepreneurial motivation (McClelland, 1987). Motivation theories argue that behind all income earning activities, some needs, and motives such as safety, zeal, challenge, actualization of ability, power, and influence do play significant role. In other words, people wish to achieve their objectives through their work (McGregor, 1966). Murray (1943) defined achievement need as the need to work at achieving something important with rigorous energy and persistence; the need to strive and accomplish something creditable; the need to get ahead in business and to persuade and lead a group of people to create something new; and the need to undertake ambition manifested action. A few later studies followed the similar direction to examine motives and needs in different jobs, industries, and countries and had examined interrelationships between motivation and different aspects and approaches of managing the workforce (Kunnanatt, 2008; Wood & Vilkinas, 2004). Frank, Lueger, and Kornka (2007) asserted that need for achievement of individuals is important to successful entrepreneurship. In a meta-analysis, Stewart and Roth (2007) found that entrepreneurs exhibit a higher achievement motivation than managers. McClelland (1965) studied achievement motivation more extensively and provided some insight to the entrepreneurship mindset and problems, especially to the motivational disposition of the entrepreneurs. His theory of need for achievement, written symbolically as 'n Ach', has received great attention from social and behavioural scientists, and is conceived as a need that involves competition with a standard of excellence. N Ach is the need for achievement that motivates people to take risks and not to avoid that to achieve a feat and is necessary when one competes for personal accomplishment. It also refers to drive to excel, to strive for a success, and to achieve success in relation to a given set of standards.

High achievers acquire such motivations at early stages of their development through individual beliefs, values, and ideologies. These are also inculcated into their psychological systems in early childhood through parental guidance and within the family and social setups. McClelland (1965) found businessmen, scientists, and professionals generally rate above average on the achievement motivation front. Without personal responsibility, the high achiever gets little personal satisfaction for the successful achievement of goals. By taking moderately difficult tasks, he/she is most likely to maximize an inherent sense of personal achievement. When such an achiever takes on easy problems and succeeds, he/she derives very low level of satisfaction. On the other hand, if he/she takes on extremely difficult tasks and fails, he/she derives almost no satisfaction. Taking moderate risks is most likely to produce a steady record of successes. As McClelland (1965) argued, the feeling of

achievement motivation can be raised through inculcating a sense of what the individual thinks or perceives himself/herself to be as successful high achiever; establishing goals and explicit responsibility centres; keeping a constant positive attitude towards accomplishing a task; maintaining optimism constantly in adverse time, condition, and hostile situations; infusing moderate risks in goals for each individuals involved; keeping meaningful association with those who are popularly known for their high n' Ach motivation; assessing various elements of existing business and investment environments accurately; maintaining serious interests in selected problems constantly; and pursuing a realistic self-learning process through solving problems encountered. He further argued that an individual can make a deliberate attempt to create a need in him/her and in others, create a sense and feeling of achievement motivation, and make a favourable physical and mental environment to foster that. For this, perceiving a favourable state of mind is the first need, which the individual can convert into other required needs and desires (McClelland, 1990). Wu, Matthews, and Dagher (2007) investigated whether a need for achievement influences persistence behaviour among entrepreneurs, and whether a need for achievement and business goals interact to influence such persistence. They found that need for achievement is positively related to entrepreneurial persistence. Business goals are found to moderate the relationship between need for achievement and persistence.

### **Locus of control**

Locus of control refers to whether one believes that the outcome of an event is decided by one's own actions or by chance (Rotter, 1966). Locus of control means an individual's perception of control, which could be internal or external. Individuals with an internal locus of control consider their actions and behaviours to be predictors of their failures or successes (Tillman, Smith, & Tillman, 2010). They take responsibility for their own actions (McKnight & Wright, 2011), and thus is linked to higher work performance. Individuals with internal locus of control tend to have good self-esteem and are more disposed to managing failure and engaging in new activities such as entrepreneurship. Internal job control positively influences job demands and allows individuals to better handle stressful workplace scenarios without negative health consequences (Karimi & Alipour, 2011). Employees with internal job control are likely to be proactive in finding practical solutions to conflict, while employees with external job control tend to avoid conflict (Qiang, Bowling, & Eschleman, 2010). Interestingly, some research suggests that individuals are more comfortable in job situations where the locus of control to which they most identify is like that of the actual work environment (Byrne, 2011). Individuals with an internal locus of control may even be considered empowered with the increased job resources of control that mitigate the harmful effects of job demands (Jha & Nair, 2008).

Those who have low self-esteem engendered by external locus of control find it difficult to overcome feelings of disappointment and bitterness related to failure in business. Individuals with an external locus of control view others (supervisors, managers, parents, friends) as having control over their successes or failures and as such are more likely to develop burnout (Alarcon, Eschleman, & Bowling, 2009). For individuals that desire to be successful in establishing and growing ventures, it is important to be enterprising, i.e., to have certain dispositions and personal traits. Dispositions include abilities, knowledge, and skills in a sense of performance potential of the entrepreneur. Personal traits characterise the personality of the entrepreneur and include non-specific general attributes, such as clear record, trustworthiness, honesty, fairness, adherence to principles, consistency, politeness,

consideration, precision, and some specific ones such as decisiveness, dutifulness, and a spirit of initiative, goal orientation, persistence, self-reliance, responsibility, diligence, and social skills (Veber, Srpová, & Kolektiv, 2005). According to Frese and Gielnik (2014), entrepreneurs should be capable of having the features of several personalities at once and as one person to demonstrate resourcefulness to act as investors, inventors, accountants, dispute investigators, leaders, technologists, marketing specialists and top sellers. Thus, the more knowledge and skills entrepreneurs can demonstrate the higher their chances of becoming successful.

There has been resurgence of interests in the study of individual psychological capital and the role they play in creating successful business. Psychological capital or PsyCap represent individual motivational propensities that accrue through positive psychological constructs such as efficacy, optimism, hope and resilience (Luthans & Youssef, 2004; Luthans, Youssef, & Avolio, 2007).

### **Self-efficacy**

Self-efficacy represents individual believe that they possess the wherewithal to deal with obnoxious situations that they encounter in their daily lives. Self-efficacy is defined as the employees' conviction or confidence about his or her abilities to mobilize the motivation, cognitive resources or courses of action needed to successfully execute a specific task within a given context (Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998b). Self-efficacy is a psychological state generally defined as possessing self-confidence in performing a specific task. Self-efficacy has received attention in recent years as a key factor in explaining why some individuals are motivated to become entrepreneurs and others are not. In a meta-analytic study, Stajkovic and Luthans (1998a) found that self-efficacy had a strong positive relationship with work-related performance (also see Bandura & Locke, 2003). Self-confidence is not diminished even in the absence of feedback (Judge, Jackson, Shaw, Scott, & Rich, 2007). According to Bandura and Locke (2003), self-efficacy beliefs help to persevere in the face of obstacles and cope with distressing and self-debilitating emotional states that hinder in the execution of activities. Efficacious individuals are inventive and resourceful (Bandura, 1986) as well as creative (Tierney & Farmer, 2002). More specifically, several researchers have examined the role that self-efficacy plays in motivating entrepreneurial action. This line of inquiry into entrepreneurial intentions began with Boyd and Vozikis (1994) who theorized that self-efficacy in performing tasks associated with venture creation was instrumental in motivating an individual to engage in such activities. Zhao, Seibert, and Hills (2005) proposed a predictive model of entrepreneurial intentions in which self-efficacy plays a critical mediating role.

### **Hope**

Hope is defined as a positive motivational state that is based on an interactively derived sense of successful (1) agency (goal-directed energy) and (2) pathways (planning to meet goals) (Snyder, Irving, & Anderson, 1991, p. 287). Hope is akin to creativity, and this may be the reason several authors (e.g., Larson & Luthans, 2006; Luthans *et al.*, 2007) stated that hope possesses the willpower to perform creatively and the way power to creatively explore multiple pathways to reach the goals, thus, increasing the cognitive efforts towards goal attainment (Snyder, 1994). According to Snyder, Lapointe, Crowson and Early (1998) high hope individuals use agentic (goal directed) thinking to move along a pathway and continuing

to progress along. This agency and pathway thinking is iterative in nature (see Snyder, Harris, *et al.*, 1991). Hope has been positively related to positive individual and organisational outcomes. For instance, hope is found to be associated with academic and athletic performance, mental and physical health, and ability to cope with adversity (Snyder, 2000). High hope individuals tend to be independent thinkers (Luthans *et al.*, 2007). Hopeful individuals tend to take risks and look for alternative pathways when old ones are blocked (Snyder, 2002). Hopeful individuals seem more prone to work on creative ideas for solving problems and they look at problems and opportunities from different angles (Zhou & George, 2003). Luthans and colleagues (2007) have argued that hopeful employees tend to be creative and resourceful, even with poor finances.

In a series of studies by Snyder, Cheavans, and Sympson (1997), hope measures have predicted coping, well-being, and reported psychological health responses significantly beyond projections related to measures of anxiety, positive and negative affectivity, optimism, positive outcome expectancies, and locus of control (Luthans & Jensen, 2002). Scholarly reviews indicate that hope is conceptually independent and captures unique predictive powers in explaining how individuals cope and thrive (Magaletta & Oliver, 1999). Organizational research found that hope sustains innovation during major changes such as mergers and acquisitions (Ludema, Wilmot, & Srivastva, 1997); is related to profits, retention rates, follower satisfaction and commitment (Luthans & Jensen, 2002); to organizational citizenship behaviours (White-Zappa, 2001).

The basic premise of hope theory is that hope is comprised of not only emotion but thinking as well. Indeed, according to hope theory, thinking is at the core of hope (Snyder, 2002). While investigating the phenomenon of excuse making by individuals when they failed to perform well, it is discovered that even though these individuals had reasons for not doing well they also expressed the desire to establish positive goals (Helland & Winston, 2005).

### **Optimism**

Another positive organizational behaviour variable that has recently witnessed resurgence of interest within the entrepreneurial community is the concept of optimism. As organizations struggle in the face of a volatile economic environment to remain competitive, employee optimism may be what they need to remain in business. Since optimism seems to have the quality of sustaining one even in the worst of times, its essence in organizations is mostly needed now than ever (Higgins, Dobrow, & Roloff, 2010). Optimism is defined as the tendency to always expect positive outcome (Scheier & Carver, 1993). Seckinger, Langerak, Mishra, and Mishra (2010) defined it as the tendency to believe, expect or hope that things will turn out well despite current excruciating experience. Optimism is the belief that despite the present difficult situation employees may find themselves in, the future is still bright. Luthans, Avolio, Avey, and Norman (2007) summarized that “employees who are more optimistic may be more likely to ‘weather the storm’ of the type of dynamic global environment contexts confronting most organisations today” (p. 568). Optimistic individuals appraise daily hassles in a positive way by expecting gain or growth from such events (Joshi & Joshi, 2021). These individuals can cope with stress (Putri, 2018). Optimism has been related to several aspects of well-being and health (e.g., Panchal, Mukherjee, & Kumar, 2016; Terril, Ruiz, & Garofalo, 2010). It has also been associated with a vast range of positive outcomes, including physical and psychological health, coping and recovery (Seligman, 2002). Similarly, optimists keep on working hard and coping actively with the problems they

face while pursuing desirable outcomes (Kluemper, Little, & DeGroot, 2009). Optimists tend to take credit of and expect positive events in their lives and distant themselves from unfavourable life events. It may serve as a shield against future mental and somatic health problems (Giltay *et al.*, 2006), and improving coping strategies (Nes & Segerstrom, 2006). Research evidence has also shown that optimism is positively associated with important job behaviours such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and performance (Kluemper *et al.*, 2009). Hence, it is less likely that these individuals experience self-blame and despair when working on innovative solutions for their problems. Rego *et al.* (2011) found that optimism had a direct positive effect on creativity. From the foregoing, evidence abound that optimism is a veritable tool capable of fostering entrepreneurial venture.

### **Resilience**

Resilience is defined as the positive psychological capacity to rebound, to bounce back from adversity, uncertainty, conflict, failure or even positive change, progress, and increased responsibility (Luthans, 2002). Resilient individuals can positively cope and adapt during risk and adversity (Masten, 2001; Masten & Reed, 2002). According to Bandura and Locke (2003) — resilient individual believes that one has the wherewithal to succeed and provides the necessary staying power in the face of repeated failures, setbacks and skeptical or even critical social reactions that are inherently discouraging. Even during highly changing and uncertain situations, resilience helps individuals to become flexible and adapt themselves (Coutu, 2002). According to Tugade and Fredrickson (2004) resilient individuals tend to bounce back from setbacks and difficult situations. Resilient individuals are optimistic, energetic towards life, curious, and open to new experiences (Klohn, 1996). These individuals are humorous (Masten, 1994), and use creative exploration (Cohler, 1987). Resilient individuals elicit positive emotions in themselves as well as in others (Fredrickson, 2004) which may help them to create supportive environment that facilitates innovative behaviors. These individuals can positively adapt and adjust to change (Luthans *et al.*, 2007). Resilient leaders are likely to encourage themselves and even their sub-ordinates to take risks and to exhibit innovative behaviours (Peterson, Walumbwa, Byron, & Myrowitz, 2008).

Although, the demands for creativity and innovation may provoke stress and frustration among people (Sweetman *et al.*, 2010), positive psychological capital has the potential to cope with these stressful demands on one hand and develop and implement innovative ideas on the other hand. Even at the times of organizational change these individuals show positive engagement and organisational citizenship behaviours (OCBs) (Avey *et al.*, 2008). Viewed together, these resources have cognitive, affective, motivational, and decisional components (Bandura, & Locke, 200) that help them to successfully develop and implement innovative ideas. Besides, high PsyCap individuals, as the definition suggests, possess the cognitive capacity of self-regulation (Bandura, 1997) that provides initiative, pro-activeness, and self-discipline necessary to reach their goals (Luthans & Youssef, 2007). High PsyCap individuals have a built-in tendency to creatively develop multiple pathways to accomplish their goals and investing their efforts in generating, promoting, and realizing job-related innovative behaviours.

### **Conclusion**

Entrepreneurial success is not obtained by chance; it takes much commitment and personal sacrifice to be successful in starting one's own small business. There are numerous and



common characteristics often found in successful entrepreneurs. They can weather the ups and downs evidenced in every environment since situations never goes exactly the way the business plan described it. While help may come from some sources, in the end, entrepreneurs need to be self-motivated, resourceful enough to depend on themselves. Entrepreneurs are known for embracing risks, having big ideas and making major innovations that change how others do business. While anyone who starts up a business has a bit of the entrepreneurial spirit, true entrepreneurs are distinguished by a certain visionary quality. A stunning quality of entrepreneurs is that they are comfortable with risk. Taking such risk can lead to remarkable failures, but also dramatic successes. Entrepreneurs are willing to live without a steady paycheque and make short-term sacrifices for a long-term payoff. Being an entrepreneur may seem flashy and exciting, but a lot of hard work and long hours are required to launch something new. Would-be entrepreneurs should not be deterred by hard work characterised by entrepreneurship but should be driven by the pride of eventual success. It is therefore recommended that entrepreneurs should as a matter of importance consider these factors as a roadmap to success and therefore develop their capacity and/or sharpen their personal skills moving forward.

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