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Mentoring and the Entrepreneurial Orientation of Nigeria Firms

Oyedokun Akintunde Jonathan^{1*}, Adele Hasimiyu Ademola², Dada Olaniyi Furo³

¹Ladoke Akintola University of Technology, Department of Management and Accounting, Ogbomoso Nigeria ²Ladoke Akintola University of Technology, Department of Management and Accounting, Ogbomoso Nigeria ³Oyo State College of Agriculture Igbo-Ora Nigeria

*Corresponding author

Oyedokun Akintunde Jonathan

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Abstract: Mentoring as a catalyst for stimulating and sustaining firms' entrepreneurial orientation is put into practice, it is considered to have significant impact on the entrepreneurial drive of firms. The study span across the six geo political zones in Nigeria with 314 participants. Structural equation model was used to analyse the data and construct. Following the model fit after a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), the path estimate of the hypothesis model indicates the significant relationship mentoring on entrepreneurial orientation. The findings revealed the importance of role modeling, psychosocial and vocational support in naturally boosting the entrepreneurial instinct of employees.

Keywords: Mentoring, Entrepreneurial orientation, Role modeling, Psychosocial support, Vocational support, confirmatory factor analysis, Structural equation model.

INTRODUCTION

The trend in business activities that necessitate the need for constant innovativeness of entrepreneur's, employees and business men has renewed the call for mentoring. To survive and sustain the growth and profitability of a business, the role of mentoring is thus inevitable. Mentoring was described as an association between people that has the goal of development of one person – usually less experienced – through their relationship with another more experienced person [1]. Mentoring occurs when a more experienced, senior employee (mentor) takes an active interest in supporting and encouraging a less experienced junior employee by providing direction and feedback regarding career plans and personal development [2-5].

Mentoring is a transactional process of transmitting information, advice, support and expertise from an experienced to a less- experienced individual [6]. It is concerns with career enhancement, professional development, building and maintaining a professional network, increasing competence and selfesteem [7, 8]. These views suggests that mentoring is not an individual effort but cooperation between the parties involve with known fact that ideas and other knowledge are shared by the parties. The outcome of a successful mentoring process is the emergence of successors and a sense of fulfilment leading to the sustainability of the firm's competitive position. The modern trend to the successful running of a business is innovation and this is the heart of entrepreneurship. Successful entrepreneurs must therefore be challenge to mentor upcoming entrepreneurs/employees on how only stimulating innovative by not entrepreneurial drive in them but also ensuring the passage of entrepreneurial orientation (EO) through their support, encouragement and expertise.

Entrepreneurial orientation a concept with three dimensions [9] namely innovativeness, proactiveness and risk-taking has been widely recognized by researchers as a firm-level construct that determines a firm's performance [10-13]. EO encapsulates the firm-level processes, practices, decision-making style [14], and strategic orientation [15] of an entrepreneurially-oriented firm. This accounted for the views that EO improve performance [16, 17]. Similar studies conducted by Naman and Slevin [18] affirmed the positive effect of EO on firm's knowledge-based resources and its performance. These findings affirmed why organisations strive to entrench EO in their system to boost entrepreneurial activities. Achieving this goal is almost impossible without robust mentoring as a driving force to oil the system. This study therefore opined that successful mentoring stimulate and nurture the EO of firms. As such we propose a strong relationship between mentoring and entrepreneurial orientation of firms.

LITERATURE REVIEW

One of the top priorities of today's CEOs and entrepreneurs is how to develop new ideas and innovations. This is a form of capability required to compete excellently in a volatile business environment as such the need to entrench and nurture this capability becomes imperative. A top approach used by CEOs to achieve and nurture this capability is the entrenchment of entrepreneurial orientation in their organisation policy. Entrepreneurial orientation (EO) is the strategymaking processes, structures and behaviours of firms characterised by innovativeness, proactiveness, risktaking, competitive aggressiveness and autonomy, facilitating the pursuit of opportunities [14, 19]. EO is a firm-level entrepreneurship focused on opportunity recognition and exploitation [20]. EO involves willingness to innovate search for risk, take self directed actions and be more proactive and aggressive than competitors towards new market opportunities [14, 17]. These opinions suppose that the process of discovering opportunities depends on people's ability and willingness while the deliberate effort at ensuring these policies materialize is EO. This perhaps justify why Lumpkin and Dess [14] perceived EO to be firm's strategy-making processes, structures and behaviours facilitates opportunity recognition exploitation. The process of promoting EO can be stimulated and nurtured through mentorship. These could be triggered through peer to peer mentorship or superior subordinate mentorship. This was based on the perception that mentorship provide a means to generate sustainable benefit [21] and it serves as a vehicle for nurturing personal career, and intellectual growth and development, improving corporate knowledge and making employees feel valued, as well as encouraging and challenging leadership potential and leadership opportunities, and preparing future leaders [22, 23]. The study propose that mentorship promotes entrepreneurship orientation of firms.

Dimension of Entrepreneurial Orientation

Entrepreneurial Orientation (EO) has been regarded as an antecedent of growth, competitive advantage and superior performance and this came out of the believe that entrepreneurial activities are essential in obtaining and sustaining competitive positions of firms. Entrepreneurial oriented firms venture into new or existing markets, with innovations that are either based on new or existing products and services, in a manner that is appreciative of the uncertainty and incurs risk in doing so. This accounted for why EO was perceived as a three-dimensional construct namely innovativeness, proactiveness and risk-taking [24, 18, 25, 26]. This study therefore opined that this dimensional construct entrepreneurship orientation (innovativeness,

proactiveness and risk-taking) can be stimulated and sustained through mentoring.

Dimension of Mentorship

Mentorship is perceived as having a generative influence, ensuring that important legacies, values and beliefs of the profession can be preserved and passed to successive generations [27]. Effective mentoring can be associated with positive work behaviours and to contribute to succession planning, because those who have been mentored are more likely to become mentors themselves [28]. Anderson [29] suggests that good mentors encourage employees to gain knowledge and experience and recognize different learning stages. This implies that effective mentoring tactics can help shape and develop subordinates' attitudes and mind set towards gaining, understanding demonstrating practical approaches innovativeness, proactiveness and risk-taking behaviours capable of sustaining the firm's competitive positions. Three general approaches for measuring mentoring as cited in Moore and Wang [30] were highlighted as vocational support (coaching), psychosocial support (encouraging), and role modeling (demonstrating). These approaches were ascertained to have play an important role in measuring and developing an environment for innovative thinking and risk-taking [31, 32].

METHODOLOGY

Study Area

The study was conducted across 10 industries in Nigeria such as healthcare, textiles, real estate, education, agriculture, food and beverages. The firms selected have been in business within a minimum of ten years and have a minimum of 25 employees excluding the founders. They are perceived to have been demonstrating high potential influence on the organization's level of Entrepreneurial Orientation. The study opined, they will be in an appropriate position to accurately judge or perceive organizational innovativeness.

Samples and data collection

The study initially made use of purposive sampling techniques to select 45 firms across Nigeria founded by the owners with titles such as founder, president, CEO, Entrepreneur. The number of firms eventually increased to 73 through referrer. The screening and data collection took place over 7 months, after which approximately 463 candidates qualified for the study. Only 314 participated by taking our questionnaire (a 68 percent response rate). Because of the national reach, participant cut across the geopolitical zones of the country South South 16 %, south east 17 %, southwest 19%, North east 15% North west 16% and North central 17%. The mentors of these firms were typically their founders, senior members, and outside experts.

Measures

Mentoring and Entrepreneurial orientation were considered as a latent multidimensional scale. Mentoring has three constructs each having four factor loadings while entrepreneurial orientation also has three constructs having four factor loadings each. The use multiple measures are consistent with extant literatures [24, 33, 34, [35] aim at reducing measurement error and improving the statistical estimate of the relationship between the concept understudy [36]. A total of six latent construct comprising 24 factor loadings was use for the analysis

Mentoring

The concept mentoring was perceived as a three higher order constructs vocational support (coaching), psychosocial support (encouraging), and role modeling (demonstrating). This is consistent with extant studies in literature [37, 31, 38, 30] that perceived mentoring as a socially based learning process between mentor and mentee. Respondents were asked to tick their choice on a 5point Likert scale statements relating to mentoring.

Vocational support

Vocational support was perceived as mentor desire to give special coaching on the job of an executive and special skills to employee by devoting their time for the firm's growth. Vocational support focusses on improving performance in a specific area by developing certain skills. This is consistent with the works of Scandura and Ragins [31], Taylor [39] and Serrat [40]. Statements such as:

- Mentor has devoted special time and consideration to my company
- My mentor provided me with challenges to improve and
- My Mentor gives me special coaching on the job of an executive were put forward to capture vocational support function through coaching.
- My Mentor actively and attentively listens to me without redirecting my discussion.

Psychosocial support

Psychosocial was viewed as what a mentor does to help the mentee develop a sense of competence and effectiveness through counseling and friendship. This act makes people feel understood and accepted by each other because everyone's view is listened to, even if it is in a minority. Participant are thus perceived to have a 'we are together' attitude. The approach is consistent with works Moore and Wang [30] and kraiger [41]. Statement such as:

- I socialize with my mentor after work.
- I exchange confidences with my mentor.

- I feel secure taking reasonable risk because there would not be any repercussions for failing
- I gain preliminary knowledge and confidence to kick start a new project.

Role Modeling

The role modeling was viewed as mentors' attitudes that serve as social prompts that activate, channel, and support modeled styles of behaviors towards teaching and learning by observation or social modelling [42]. These statements were perceived as human-driven, social activity [43] capable of boosting entrepreneurial orientation were advance to measure role modelling.

- I respect and admire my mentor.
- I agree with mentor's attitudes and values.
- My Mentor shows me how they would do something if they had to tackle a similar task,
- My mentors supportive behaviors, such as reassurance, praise, and positive feedback, contributes to my positive behaviors.

Entrepreneurial Orientation

Entrepreneurial orientation was conceived as a latent multidimensional construct comprising innovation, risk taking and proactive attitudes of employees in the firms that sustained their competitive position. This was consistent with the views of Miller [9] who noted that entrepreneurial activities are embedded in the innovative risk seeking and proactive activities of individuals. Thus, respondents were asked to tick their choice on a 5point Likert scale on statements relating to innovativeness risk taking and proactive behaviour of employees.

Innovativeness

Innovativeness was viewed as employee's tendency to engage in support of new ideas, novelty, experimentation and creative processes that may result in new product processes or technology.

This is consistent with the works of Wang [34] and Miller [9]. Statement such as:

- My firm actively responds to the adoption of new ways of doing things as encouraged by management or competitors
- My firm try new ways of doing things and seek unusual novel solutions
- My firm encourage us to think and behave in original and novel way

Risk taking

The study perceived risk taking as the extent to which employees will be willing to stick necks and take risk for the firm future performance. Statement such as:

- My organisation encouraged us to have strong propensity for high risk project and commitment with chances of high returns.
- My organisation encouraged me to willingly initially commit personal resources to support the organisation in their effort at identifying, discovery and exploiting opportunity.
- A change in the environment or shift in the firm's position was because of firms and employee's response to exploring risky and unknown alternatives leading to renewing capabilities were put forward to ascertain the extent to which employees take risk on behalf of the organisation. This approach is also consistent the study by Wang [34].

Pro-activeness

The construct proactiveness was perceived as the ability to pioneer new products or services, identify

and exploit new opportunities, create competitive advantage by anticipating changes in future demand [14] ahead of competitors. Respondents were asked to tick their opinions on a rated and tested scales adopted in extant literature.

- My firm introduce new product, services, administrative techniques and operating technology first business in the industry.
- My firm initiate actions which competitors later responded to by doing similar things.
- My firm identify and seize market opportunity early to be ahead of our competitors.
- We are ahead of others at introducing novel ideas

Model Specification

Following the construct specification, the measurement theory model to be tested was developed as indicated in figure-1 below.

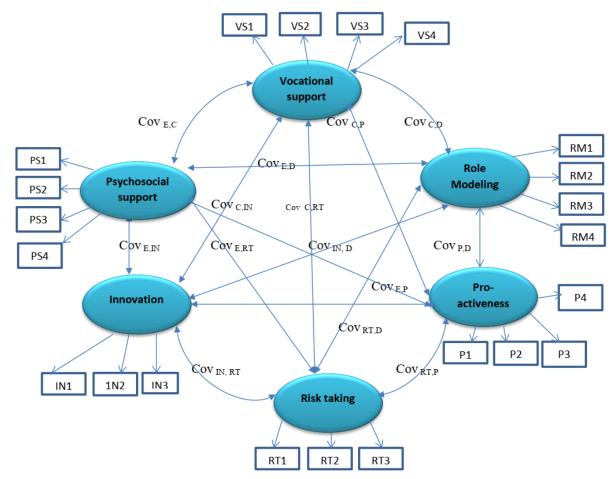


Fig-1: Measurement Model

The model displayed six latent constructs with 22 measured indicators. The construct correlate with all other construct. The constructs were reflective in nature since they are based on the idea that the latent construct caused the measured variables and that error resulted to the inability to fully explain the measured

variables [36]. The measured items loaded on only one construct. This is consistent with rules of unidimensional measures that a set of measured variables (indicators) can only be explained by one underlying construct [44]. The error terms are not also allowed to relate with any other measured variables.

The measurement model is congeneric and all construct are indicated by at least three major measured variables.

Reliability and validity

The study attempted to minimize measurement errors and bias by embarking on construct validity which requires the identification of a group of measurement items which were deemed to represent the construct in the study. Construct validity

seeks to establish the extent to which the indicators measure the construct. Series of test to measure the properties of the indicators (Unidimensional, Reliability and Validity) were tested using confirmatory factors analysis. Reliability was assessed using Croncbach alpha. All construct measures (Vocational support, Psychosocial, Role Modeling, Proactiveness, Innovation and Risk-taking) met the recommended level of 0.70 and are therefore specified enough in their representative of the construct.

Construct	Number of Indicators	Reliability		
PS	4	0.71		
VS	4	0.73		
RM	4	0.80		
P	4	0.76		
RT	3	0.84		
IN	3	0.75		

Notes: PS=Psychosocial; VS=Vocational Support, RM =Role Modeling; P= Proactiveness; IN= Innovativeness; RT=Risktaking.

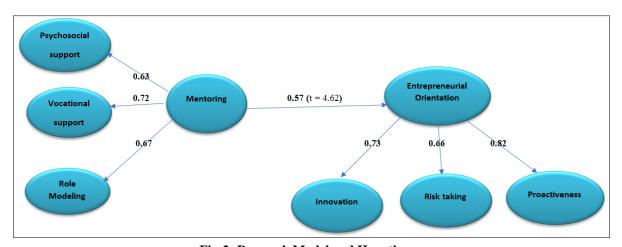


Fig-2: Research Model and Hypotheses

Measures	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6		
Mentoring	4.074	1.540								
Psychosocial	4.451	1.245	1.000	0.461	0.734	0.711	0.480	0.624		
Support										
Vocational	4.578	1.341	0.185	1.000	0.658	0.597	0.426	0.694		
Support										
Role Modeling	3.709	1.106	0.394	0,401	1.000	0.641	0.581	0.664		
Entrepreneurial	4.426	1.497								
Orientation										
Innovation	4.447	1.427	0.418	0.326	0.365	1.000	0.665	0.600		
Risk Taking	3.541	1.241	0.274	0.158	0.312	0.289	1.000	0.503		
Proactiveness	4.087	1.465	0.434	0.371	0.384	0.379	0.213	1.000		
CC! !	11	11	1.1	10 0.1		- 1				

Table-1: Correlation Coefficient and Shared Variances

Correlation coefficients are reported in the upper diagonal half of the matrix, and are significant at p<0.001 (2) The shared variances are reported in the lower diagonal half of the matrix

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The data analysis for this study follow a twostep procedure by assessing measurement model using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and assessing

path relationships using structural equation modeling (SEM). The model fit was assessed using normed chi square (χ^2/df), goodness of fit index (GFI), and the comparative fit index (CFI). Twelve (12) items were

included in the mentoring scale, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed with mentoring as a higher order latent construct consisting of three first order indicator. The measurement model resulted in a good fit. $x^2 = 127.012$, df =51, p = 0.001, $x^2/df = 2.249$

GFI= 0.931, CFI=0.948. The first order loadings ranged from 0.62 to 0.77 (t>1.96, p<0.001). The second order loadings ranged from 0.63 to 0.72 (t>1.96, p<0.001).

Ten (10) items were included in the entrepreneur orientation scale, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed with entrepreneurial orientation as a higher order latent construct consisting of three first order indicator. The measurement model resulted in a good fit. $x^2 = 66.010$, df =32, p = 0.001, $x^2/df = 2.063$, GFI= 0.901, CFI=0.926. The first order loadings ranged from 0.58 to 0.79 (t>1.96, p<0.001). The second order loadings ranged from 0.66 to 0.82 (t>1.96, p<0.001).

DISCUSSION

This study examined the influence of mentoring on the entrepreneurial orientation of firms. Mentoring was found to stimulate and enhance the entrepreneurial orientation of firms. Specifically, the study found that psychosocial support relative to vocational support, and role modeling had higher correlation coefficient with innovation (0.711) as shown in Table-1. Mentors attitude through counselling and friendship towards mentee help develop a sense of competence that spur mentee ability to support new ideas and have a sense of belonging in every process. How mentors socialize with their mentee after work shape mentees' approach and thought about innovation. This finding aligns with the views of Moore and Wang [30] that "we are together" attitude makes people feel understood and accepted as such it is easier to build and maintain entrepreneurial mindset among employees who have confidence in their employer. Psychosocial support also had a strong correlation coefficient with proactiveness (0.624) and a moderate correlation coefficient with risk taking (0.48). This observation further attested to the significant impact of Psychosocial support in entrepreneurial influencing orientation employees since mentees perception about their mentors pointed to the fact that mentor initiate an act fast towards implementing new ideas and processes that works in their favour before other competitors stepped in. However, the emergence of moderate correlation between Psychosocial support and risk taking confirms the fact that mentors took only calculated risk worth taken as such they were conservative, when it comes to risk taking these steps were also adopted by mentee.

Consistently, vocational support had a strong correlation coefficient with proactiveness (0.694) and innovation (0.597), while it had a moderate correlation with risk taking (0.426). This is the implication of the special coaching on the job given to mentee by mentors. The devoted time by mentors to coach mentee on special skills required on sensitive jobs factored in the need for proactiveness in order to achieve significant results. The challenges provided by mentors induce mentees' ability to develop and use their initiative in a timely and orderly manner to achieve results hence result achieve through proactive means and vocational support further encourage and boost the morale of employees. Similarly, the positive relationship between the time devoted to train mentors on special skills particularly in very sensitive domain exposes and encourage mentees to experiment on new ideas and processes that lead to new ways of doing things differently without compromising standard. The confidence to explore other means of growth increases as gradual value were added to the existing process. However. the moderate relationship between vocational support and risk taking suggest caution were taken to reduce waste of resources during experimentation without discouraging employees strive for innovativeness.

Role modeling had a strong correlation coefficient with innovation (0.641), risk taking (0.581) and proactiveness (0.664). The positive relationship between role modeling and innovation draws attention to how mentors attitude serves as a social prompt that activate the innovativeness of employees. Mentees admiration of their mentors' values, attitude and dispositions such as supportive behaviors, reassurance, praise, and positive feedback, contributes to mentee inspirational zeal towards innovativeness. These supportive attitudes also enable mentee to take calculated risk as exemplified by their mentors when attempting to be entrepreneurial. Mentors ability to show mentee how they would do something if they had to tackle a similar task displaying their inherent level of proactiveness was perceived as the result of strong positive correlation between role modelling and proactiveness.

CONCLUSION

Mentoring is critical for enhancing firm's entrepreneurial orientation. Managers should be aware of the strategic importance of mentoring in building and sustaining the entrepreneurial orientation of firms. Mentees admiration of their mentors' values, attitude and dispositions endeared them naturally and informally toward pursing the dreams and aspirations of their firms through entrepreneurship. This further confirm the fact that mentoring is not an individual effort. Effective mentoring will naturally lead to the emergence of capable successors whom much skills

and tutelage must have been passed on to as years role back.

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