



ETHICS, ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Converging Perspectives and Insights

Editors

Ikechukwu Anthony Kanu, PhD
Timothy Dokpesi Adidi, PhD
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Ogochukwu Agatha Okpokwasili, PhD

Foreword by Patrick Utomi

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2025

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ISBN: 97897877788677

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Foreword



The study of man's material progress or economic development has evolved through a variety of paradigms. In the post-colonial era following WWII, some of the dominant frameworks for explaining development include the Modernization thesis, much advanced by Walt W. Rostow; the Dependency or Underdevelopment thesis; Washington Consensus-inspired neocon markets and open economy order.

In spite of their prescriptions, growth has remained slow, and underdevelopment has persisted in Africa. My research suggests that all of the development models they have proposed do not adequately incorporate entrepreneurship and the means of making markets work. That should indicate how priced I consider entrepreneurship.

This volume focuses on matters of ethics and sustainability in venture creation. The dimension is worthy of consideration as it ensures disciplined value creation.

In the face of significant global issues such as climate change and social inequality, the convergence of ethics, entrepreneurship, and sustainable development has become increasingly vital. “Ethics, Entrepreneurship and Sustainable Development: Converging Perspectives and Insights” presents a timely and in-depth examination of this intersection, illuminating the intricate connections between entrepreneurial innovation, ethical responsibility, and environmental care.

This publication underscores the growing acknowledgment that entrepreneurship can serve as a formidable catalyst for positive change, fostering sustainable development and enhancing human welfare. By exploring the ethical aspects of entrepreneurship alongside sustainable development, the authors offer a more wholesome perspective on the challenges and opportunities that come with entrepreneurial activities, aligning with social and environmental goals.

Readers will discover valuable insights into how entrepreneurs can leverage their creativity and innovative spirit to tackle some of the most urgent global challenges, all while navigating the intricate ethical terrain and the question of sustainable development.

This work acts as a rallying cry, encouraging entrepreneurs, policymakers, and

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academics to reevaluate their strategies for sustainable development, emphasizing the importance of ethics, accountability, and long-term vision while facilitating quantum leaps in value creation.

As we endeavor to create a more just, equitable, and sustainable future, this book presents a persuasive vision of how entrepreneurship can contribute to building a better world for everyone.

Patrick Okedinachi Utomi

Lagos Business School

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Introduction: Ethics, Entrepreneurship, and Sustainable Development

Ikechukwu Anthony KANU, PhD



The world is facing unprecedented challenges, from climate change and environmental degradation to social inequality and economic instability (Miller 2020). As we navigate these complexities, it has become clear that business-as-usual is no longer sufficient (Gorbachev 2002). A new paradigm is emerging, one that prioritizes ethics, sustainability, and social responsibility alongside economic growth and innovation (Jonker 2023). This book brings together a diverse group of scholars and practitioners to explore the intersection of ethics, entrepreneurship, and sustainable development. Through a range of theoretical and empirical perspectives, these contributors examine how values-driven entrepreneurship can contribute to a more just, equitable, and sustainable world.

The underlying principle of this book rests on the triple bottom line sustainability framework that revolves around people, planet, and profit (Kenton 2024). The concept “triple bottom line” was coined by John Elkington, who also popularized the term in 1994, at that time when he was challenging businesses to expand their focus beyond profits to improving the conditions of people (Elkington 2018; Gimenez, Sierra & Rodon 2012). It was also Elkington's way of measuring performance in corporate America (Elkington, 1998). The theory holds that by maximizing all three bottom lines, organizations are more likely to have a positive impact on the world while still improving financial performance (Willard 2012). It holds that business outcomes cannot be measured by just the financial bottom line, but must also consider the well-being of people and the ecological system (Elkington 1997, Correia 2019).

The fundamental questions that this book of chapters responds to are: How do ethical principles inform entrepreneurial decision-making, and what are the implications for business practice? How can entrepreneurs contribute to sustainable development, and what are the challenges and opportunities associated with this goal? How do religious and cultural values shape entrepreneurial behaviour, and what are the implications for business ethics and sustainability? What new business models and innovations are emerging to address sustainability challenges, and how can entrepreneurs contribute to this effort?

While this work responds to the above questions, among others, it also unveils the relationship between ethics, entrepreneurship, and sustainable development (Dhahri & Anis 2018; Dhahri, Sana & Anis 2021; Gupta & Mridul 2022; Hartog, Simon, van Stel & Roy 2010). Ethics in relation to entrepreneurship provides a foundation for entrepreneurial decision-making, ensuring that business activities align with moral principles and values, encourages entrepreneurs to consider the social implications of their actions, promoting responsible business practices that benefit stakeholders and the broader community and helps entrepreneurs build trust with customers, employees, and partners, fostering a positive reputation and long-term success.

Entrepreneurship, with reference to sustainable development, drives innovation, which is critical for addressing sustainability challenges and developing solutions that promote environmental and social well-being, contributes to sustainable development by creating jobs, stimulating economic growth, and reducing poverty, develops sustainable business models that reduce waste, promote resource efficiency, and support environmental sustainability. Ethics with regard to sustainable development, provides a moral framework for understanding the importance of sustainable development and the need to protect the environment and promote social justice, encourages decision-makers to prioritize long-term sustainability over short-term gains, ensuring that development is equitable, just, and environmentally conscious, and emphasizes the importance of respecting human rights and dignity, which is essential for promoting sustainable development that benefits all people and communities (Sreenivasan & Suresh 2024; Elmonshid & Sayed 2024). The relationships between ethics, entrepreneurship, and sustainable development foster a more holistic and integrated approach to business and development, one that prioritizes human well-being, environmental sustainability, and social justice.

This book features contributions from a diverse range of scholars and practitioners, including experts in philosophy, business ethics, sustainable development, entrepreneurship, and innovation. The contributors bring a wealth of experience and expertise to the table, ensuring that this work provides a comprehensive and authoritative exploration of the intersection of ethics, entrepreneurship, and sustainable development. It is hoped that the chapters of this book will inspire readers to think more deeply about the role of values-driven entrepreneurship in creating a more just, equitable, and sustainable world.

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Ethical Imperative of Environmental Entrepreneurship

Mark Omorovie Ikeke, PhD



Executive Summary

It is well acknowledged today that there is an environmental crisis facing the planet Earth and its peoples. The environmental crisis is so dire today that it has resulted in serious climate disasters such as intense hurricanes and cyclones, environmental refugeeism, global warming, massive biodiversity loss, deforestation, and so forth. Much of the environmental crisis plaguing the earth arises from the activities of humankind, such as mechanised agriculture, oil exploitation and other extractive industries, poor management of solid and chemical waste, violence and war over natural resources, industrialisation, urbanisation, etc. Many of these activities come from entrepreneurial initiatives, people harnessed resources and began businesses, and created employment opportunities for others. This study uses critical analytic, hermeneutic, and evaluative methods to argue and show that entrepreneurs should be engaged in environmental protection and engender businesses that will promote environmental friendliness. The concern of the chapter is not just with entrepreneurs who produce environmentally based products, but rather that all entrepreneurs, no matter their line of business or venture, should engage in environmental corporate responsibility. The chapter finds that environmental entrepreneurship is needed in mitigating the environmental crisis. The paper concludes that environmental entrepreneurship will create a more environmentally healthy planet.

Keywords: Ecology, Ethics, Environment, Entrepreneur, Entrepreneurial Initiatives, Environmental Entrepreneurship (EE).

Introduction

In much of the discussion on entrepreneurship, the discussion often will be on the creation of more products, goods, and services to advance the welfare and well-being of humanity. The environmental impact of entrepreneurial activities/production, especially the negative ones, will often not be discussed. Entrepreneurship is good and

useful, and without it, humanity will be diminished. The advances in technology, science, artistic endeavours, the humanities, etc, are all outcomes of entrepreneurial engagement. It is human beings who began/started different initiatives that brought about all of these. While acknowledging the glowing achievement of entrepreneurship, it is imperative to propose that all entrepreneurs should equally make a turn towards nature. This should be seen as a moral duty/responsibility, for it is in the natural world that all entrepreneurship takes place. Entrepreneurship on a polluted earth will gravely endanger human lives and the planet. No matter the amount and quantity of goods and services that are created through the efforts of entrepreneurs, human lives will be threatened with sickness and diseases on a polluted earth and an earth subject to climate change.

The core argument of this chapter is that the environmental dimensions of all entrepreneurship should always be taken into consideration. Entrepreneurs should work to ensure that the process of production of goods and services causes minimal damage to the earth, for most forms of production will always have some negative effects on the earth. There is also a need to emphasize that there needs to be more entrepreneurial activism that focuses on the creation of goods and services that mitigate environmental pollution and climate change.

In carrying out the objectives of this paper, the critical analysis, evaluation, and hermeneutics are adopted. The issues in the chapter are examined and unravelled for a deeper and greater understanding. By way of procedure, the chapter shall make some conceptual clarification. The Earth's environmental context in which all entrepreneurship takes place will then be examined. The chapter shall also look at the ethical imperative of fostering environmental entrepreneurship and the ways to promote this environmental entrepreneurship. It is only when that has been done that the chapter will be brought to a conclusion. The focus of the chapter is on Africa, though it has implications for the entire global community. This chapter is written having in mind that environmental entrepreneurship can help to address the global environmental crisis.

Conceptual Clarifications

Key concepts on which this study revolves are ethical imperatives and environmental entrepreneurship (EE). Ethics is etymologically derived from the Greek word (*ethos*), and it means habitual manner, habit, action; presently, ethics deals with human behaviour in terms of right and wrong (Njoku, 2018). Ethics is concerned with what is valuable, worthwhile, praiseworthy, good, and cherished in human affairs. The

unethical is what is unacceptable, ignoble, evil, and contravenes what society cherishes. Ethics could also be seen as a normative science and a branch of philosophy that studies human conduct (Chukwuma, 2020). Stated in another way, “ethics studies the norms of human behaviour and gives one skill in performing good acts of the will. It seeks to examine and bring to light the rational and deliberate aspects of human behaviour” (Ekwutosi, 2006: 3). Human beings are considered to be free-acting agents and freely decide what they desire and want. It is difficult to hold persons accountable when actions are not taken in freedom but under duress. Humans are expected to act rationally and make the right decisions. The concept of ethical imperative means:

...a principle or practice taken to be ethically required of one. The binding character of the principle or behavior may result from a perceived logical or rational necessity, as in the categorical imperative defined by Immanuel Kant, or it may seem to arise from some set of empirical facts; for example, energy conservation may seem to be an ethical imperative given that one accepts the evidence of global warming (APA Dictionary of Psychology, 2018, para 1).

When something is necessary, especially from a moral standpoint, it is considered an ethical imperative, such as fidelity in marriage (Alleydog, n.d). An ethical imperative is what ought to be done. It is a moral necessity. When you say something is an ethical imperative, then it is no longer voluntary or optional. To say something is imperative is to assert that this is how a human person ought to act.

The next concept requiring clarification is environmental entrepreneurship. The word, environment is used to designate “our physical surroundings and the characteristics of the place where we live. Also known as the earth's natural or physical environment, the word further describes the wider natural world of lithosphere, hydrosphere, and atmosphere” (Ahiabor, 2022: 1). The environment is “everything which surrounds us... The air that we breathe, the soil on which we stand, water, living and non-living things around, and the environment have influenced and shaped our lives since time immemorial. It is from the environment that we get food to eat, water to drink, air to breathe, and all necessities of day-to-day life” (Asthana & Asthana, 2010: 3). All human activities take place in the environment, including entrepreneurial activities and ventures. Indeed, the earth or land in classical economics is called a factor of production that entrepreneurs need to be able to carry out their work.

An entrepreneur is a person who taps into his/her innate potential, gifts, and talents and uses them to pull resources together to create values or products; such a person is action-oriented, taps into opportunities, and brings into existence a venture, business,

enterprise using his or her creativity, innovation and enthusiastic motivation (Okpara, 2005). An entrepreneur harnesses his/her innate potential and gifts, mobilises capital, takes risks, and ventures into establishing a business, enterprise, or venture (Oghenechovwen, 2020). The venture of the entrepreneur does not necessarily have to be something mighty or gigantic. It can be as small as running a kiosk to sell provisions, running a bookshop, creating a poultry farm, running a fish pond, or gathering and selling information. Entrepreneurship refers to the “process whereby an individual or group of individuals use organized efforts to pursue opportunities to create value and grow by fulfilling wants and needs through innovation and uniqueness, no matter what resources the entrepreneur currently has” (Coulter, 2006: 6). After looking at different definitions of entrepreneurship, the following author concluded: “entrepreneurship is a human-creative act by which enterprises or organizations come into existence and involving the efforts of an individual in identifying viable business opportunities in an environment and managing and exploiting the opportunities” (Egbule, 2018: 4). The entrepreneur takes risks and his or her interest is not in having a job but in creating a job, and defining the market (Johnson, 2013). Every job, business, market, etc, is created by an entrepreneur. And so, when the environmental responsibilities of employees, business people, and those who engage in markets are spoken of, it equally implies the responsibilities of entrepreneurs. Without entrepreneurs, all these would not take place. The entrepreneur has a responsibility to ensure that his or her business premises, the market in which he/she operates, etc, are informed by environmental values.

EE refers to persons or legal entities who, despite the risks involved, take responsibility to design and create “environmental protection products” in offering environmental services and works such as environmental insurance, environmental audit, eco-tourism, etc (Anisimov and Matytsin, 2022). In some quarters, EE is called Ecopreneurship or Eco-Capitalism, and it refers to the operation of business while at the same time protecting the planet's wellness, promoting environmental stewardship, and a sustainable future (Harris, 2024). It can be argued that it is a push from pure capitalism and arose in the wake of the heightened environmentalism from the 1960s. What drives EE is the need to pay attention not just to profit but also to environmental priorities, for the environment is also important to human lives (Harris, 2024). But in this paper, the frontiers of the meaning of EE are being expanded. Even if you are not directly engaged in EE, the fact that you carry out your work in the environment requires that you have certain interests in environmental protection. You may not be involved directly in creating environmental products and services, but that does not excuse you from your environmental duties as a human person and your organization from corporate social responsibility. The ethical imperative of EE, as spoken of in this

chapter, extends to all businesses and even employees.

The Environmental Context of Entrepreneurship

All entrepreneurship as we know it today occurs on planet Earth, the natural world. Entrepreneurs ignore this natural context to their peril. Whatever happens to the Earth affects the work of entrepreneurs. In traditional economics, it was taught that there are four factors of production- land, labour, capital, and entrepreneurship. The three other factors of production (labour, capital, and entrepreneurship) need the land to operate. Labour and human resources need the Earth's platform to operate their activities. Capital also needs land. It is human beings who create and use capital. They will use the capital for the production of goods and services for the human good on earth. Entrepreneurs will generally not carry out production activities in empty spaces. The land is so crucial to all entrepreneurship matters. The state of that land affects what the entrepreneur, the manager of land, labour, and capital, can do. Even though entrepreneurs like to take risks and be creative and innovative, they equally love to put in their capital where it is safe and secure and where they can make more profits. If, for instance, an entrepreneur notices a land that is filled with health and other physical hazards, the entrepreneur is likely going to avoid that land for their business. The geo-locational area of a business matters for an entrepreneur as it can affect his/her profit levels. Unless the entrepreneur is specifically investing in that hazardous location to create something out of it. The land matters.

The environment in which entrepreneurs operate is currently facing a crisis. Right from the 1950s/1960s, greater awareness has been created on the plight of the earth, the poorest of the poor. The Earth is facing one of the worst periods in the earth's history. The environmental crisis that the Earth is facing can be seen in its various manifestations. Among these various manifestations are climate change (which is now the earth's gravest crisis), global warming, deforestation, environmental pollution, overpopulation, unplanned urbanization, environmental refugeism, mismanagement of solid and chemical waste, destruction of biodiversity, species extinction, climate-induced environmental disasters, and catastrophes etc. These are some of the things that entrepreneurs should pay attention. If not attended to, these environmental problems will gulp up the profits from entrepreneurship. According to Ikeke, it is imperative to note that:

The works of employers and employees in times of environmental crisis cannot be judged by profitability and productivity. Businesses have a great impact on the

environment. The reality is that most of the predicaments that humanity and the environment are facing now are caused by businesses. The obligations and responsibilities of employers and employees have to be judged by their levels of ecological responsibility (Ikeke, 2013: 27).

Every organism on Earth, including human beings, is part of the planetary system. The food chain is necessary for every organism and life form to sustain itself and survive in the ecosystem. Human beings have a right to make use of the things of nature. If one adopts a biblical perspective, in the beginning, God, the creator, commanded that human beings could use the things of the earth. The passage states:

And God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.' And God said: 'Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.' And it was so. And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, a sixth day" (Genesis 1:28-31, RSV).

From this Biblical command, there is an inter-relationship between humans and non-human lives. Humans will depend on human lives also for their existence. The power to have dominion includes the power to discover and advance in science and technology. It includes the power to discover new knowledge in the humanities, social sciences, and business and management sciences. Human beings have no context outside the Earth. The point being argued is that human beings are not intruders or vandals on earth.

Yet, the right of human beings to make use of the resources and things on earth does not give humans an unlimited and unwarranted right to vandalize and destroy the earth in the name of survival. Even if one does not believe in biblical stories or other religious stories that affirm a created universe, the fact remains that in the ecosystems, everything, including humans, has its place and role. If humans were to in the name of dominion over-exploit the resources of the earth and over-populate the earth, it would be to the detriment of human beings. This is one of the reasons why business and entrepreneurial ventures cannot just carry on exploiting Earth's resources without

restraint. In the biblical mandate in Genesis Chapter 1, the command to have dominion is not definitive, it must be interpreted in the light of the command found in Genesis Chapter 2, verse 15, “The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it” (RSV). The command to have dominion is incomplete without the command to cultivate and till the earth.

The earth, then, is the fundamental context in which all human activities, including entrepreneurial activities, take place. It is painful to note that the Earth's context has suffered from environmental degradation and pollution as a result of human and business activities. A word on some of the degradation and harm that the earth, in which entrepreneurship takes place, is important here. The Earth is presently undergoing an unprecedented environmental crisis. Right from the late 1950s and the early 1960s, the Earth crisis became prominently recognized as environmental ethics were growing. It is not that before that time, the Earth was not suffering from environmental problems. It was in these periods that voices became louder in recognizing the plight of the Earth. Carson (1962) queried the use of chemicals in agriculture that were polluting, killing the environment, and endangering various species, thus creating a silent spring. Carson's book brought to the limelight to negative effects of the agricultural revolution. Berry (1988) has forcefully argued that entrepreneurs have often not considered environmental protection; rather, the technology discovered by entrepreneurs has been used to explore and devastate the earth. Entrepreneurs cannot be exempted from the cause of the environmental crisis. It is the instruments, equipment, and other materials discovered and invented by entrepreneurs that have been used to exploit the earth for resources. Keep in mind that: “Scientific and technological advancements in contemporary times have created unintended harmful consequences for the natural environment. Indeed, the capacity of science and technology to manipulate nature has reached its unprecedented dimensions in the history of humanity” (Ezedike, 2020: 1). The coming of the industrial revolution has brought a lot of products such as airplanes, super computers, prefabricated building structures, plastics, air conditioners, furniture, cars, and other modern conveniences, and all these require harvesting more resources from the earth (Ahiabor, 2022). Every entrepreneurial venture or enterprise created to produce any of these products or other products such as books, shoes, clothes, food, religious articles, drinks, etc, will always involve using primary resources from the earth or resources already harvested from the environment.

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) (2022) draws statistics from different sources to show that: 1.6 Earth is needed to maintain the human lifestyle and it is difficult for the ecosystems to meet this demand- UNEP document on *Becoming Generation Restoration*; 8 million plant species and animals are facing extinction-IPBES;

up to 75% of the earth's land has been altered by humans -IPBES; human activities such as pollution and fisheries have impacted 65% of the oceans; approximately 90% of global marine stock have been exploited and depleted -UNCTAD; agriculture from which food comes threatens 24,000 species-Chatham House and UNEP. These grave effects on life on Earth that threaten both human and non-human lives are caused by human activities that arise from entrepreneurial ventures. Entrepreneurship is not a neutral venture. It cannot be a bystander in the Earth's crisis. Environmental problems are caused by activities such as land clearing, fertilization, crop production, development activities, etc (UNEP, 2022). The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change to indicate that human-induced climate change is causing weather extremes leading to damage and loss to humans and nature; global warming is likely to reach 1.5°C between 2030 and 2035; the poor and vulnerable populations in Africa and many so-called developing regions will be worst hit by climate change (Cooper, 2023). It is precisely because of human impact, especially industrial activities, created by entrepreneurs that have a devastating impact on the Earth, that the United Nations (1972) enunciated that development should be sustainable and should not deprive future generations of the ability to meet their own needs.

The Ethical Imperative of Environmental Entrepreneurship

While it is true that traditionally or in its normal meaning; environmental entrepreneurs are those who purposefully create new jobs and opportunities to create products that mitigate environmental damage/pollution, mitigate climate change, and foster environmental conservation such as solar products, products that are easily recyclable, etc; this paper moves the argument beyond this. The paper argues that environmental entrepreneurship is not only for those who intentionally and purposefully create environmental products. Rather, all entrepreneurs should see it as part of their corporate social responsibility to humanity and the communities in which they operate. Even entrepreneurs who classically may not be called environmental entrepreneurs should see themselves, to a certain degree, as “environmental entrepreneurs.” All are stakeholders in the Earth project. All are affected by what is happening to the Earth. They should show interest in eradicating environmental pollution. They don't have to produce environmental products first. All businesses should cultivate environmentally friendly values. If people and industries, for instance, fail to manage both solid and chemical waste properly in their physical environment, it will also affect them. Employers and workers will get sick. Manpower will be lost. Productivity will be slowed down. It is important, then, that every business and enterprise invest in environmentally friendly products and values. When the Earth is protected, businesses

are invariably also protected.

It should be realized that people matter and should come before profits. The well-being of the Earth is also important. Entrepreneurs should not just think of profit. Without a healthy environment that promotes human health and well-being, profit can become meaningless. The profit that is made in business can be used to treat sickness and diseases in a polluted environment. It can become a case of “penny-wise, pound-foolish.” Though it may add to the cost of a business, businesses invariably benefit from a healthy environment. A healthy environment produces healthy and productive workers. Take, for instance, the manpower lost and the decrease in production for days when many workers in places like China, India, etc, when cars are restricted from movement as a result of air pollution that has reduced visibility in industrial cities.

Not only does the Earth's context affect entrepreneurship. The activities of entrepreneurs affect the Earth either positively or negatively. Entrepreneurs make use of resources. These resources come from the earth. Resources are classified into two categories: renewable and non-renewable resources. It is generally understood that the Earth's carrying capacity is not infinite. Non-renewable resources can be used up unless they are used sustainably. This implies that entrepreneurs can deplete the very resources that they depend on for productivity. No business or entrepreneurial venture does not affect the earth. Those engaged in the wood business harvest the wood from the earth. Those in the mining and extractive industries harvest minerals from the earth. Those engaged in agricultural enterprises use resources from the earth. Animals have to feed, and they are often fed on grasses and other materials from the earth. The fashion industry depends on materials from the earth. Businesses and entrepreneurs have a toll on the earth. With all the economic advancement and development that has brought an end to diseases and many blessings to human civilization, the natural world has paid a huge price (Speth, 2008). Capitalist entrepreneurship has created a world that is filled with waste and filth. What we have today is a throwaway culture in which business and human productions have generated waste in homes and businesses, demolition, and construction sites, and our current industrial system is finding it difficult to cope with the waste generated (Francis, 2015).

The fact is that much of today's entrepreneurship is driven by the spirit that also drives global capitalism. And that is the spirit of profit-making. No entrepreneurs, unless for charitable and philanthropic or humanistic reasons, will set up a business if not for profit. This spirit of profit-making often makes entrepreneurs want to make a profit by all means, ignoring environmental impacts. Take oil and gas industrial entrepreneurs, for instance. They go prospecting and exploiting oil and gas mainly for the profit they will make. They are willing to disregard environmental regulations to maximize their

profits. Capitalism, it should be noted is what drives today's political economy rooted in "private employers hiring workers to produce products and services that the employer owns and then sell to make profit" with all its competitive markets, price mechanism, modern corporation, consumer society, and materialistic values" (Speth, 2008). The drive for profit is often at environmental expense. Capitalism is a major culprit in the environmental crisis, for without the materials of the earth, it cannot survive. Capitalism cannot operate without innovative and creative entrepreneurs. This paper is not calling for the abolishment of entrepreneurs, but for entrepreneurs who are eco-humanists and who are concerned for the well-being of the earth, the well-being of ecosystems, and the survival of non-human lives on earth.

In Nigeria, for many years now government has made laws to end gas flaring, but to date, the oil and gas companies are still flaring gas. They are willing to pay fines because it is easier for them. But this is not ethically the best or the right thing to do. Gas flaring has caused a lot of health hazards in the Niger Delta of Nigeria. These health hazards have implications for not only the oil-bearing communities but also the oil and gas entrepreneurs and their relatives. It is the same air polluted by gas flaring and oil spills that the oil and gas entrepreneurs will breathe when they enter the region. These equally apply to other mining and extractive industries. When mining and extractive industries degrade the environment in which their enterprises are situated, it also affects them. It affects the workers who directly work for them in the location of their businesses. As workers in any business venture suffer from environmental and industrial hazards in the premises of their work, their productivity in the workplace is also affected. This is a fundamental rationale for why entrepreneurs should engage in some forms of environmental entrepreneurship. There should be a place for enlightened self-interest in businesses. The entrepreneur benefits from environmental protection. Environmental conservation not only benefits human beings but also all non-human life. When nature is protected, natural resources will be well-positioned to serve the needs of humans and future generations, and this is where the doctrine of sustainable development comes into play (Ahiabor, 2022).

The Way Forward in Promoting Environmental Entrepreneurship

Something must be done to promote environmental entrepreneurship. The Earth crisis is essentially caused by human beings. Human beings must also find solutions to remedy the situation. This is where, especially all entrepreneurs, have a role to play. The first step proposed here is environmental education, the creation of awareness on the impact of entrepreneurs on the Earth, and the raising of consciousness. People's minds

and hearts need to be awakened to the fact that the health of the Earth matters and that there is a need to mitigate the negative human, industrial, and business activities. It is not that human beings will not carry out their activities, but the risks to the earth should be minimized. Entrepreneurs need to be systems thinkers and operate from the perspective of holism. They should act as corporate social responsibility persons and lead their organizations in that direction. Entrepreneurs should think of the whole, the whole earth/environment, and not just their business venture. Their entrepreneurial activity is just a part of the whole Earth.

It is also proposed here that companies should invest in nature-based solutions and triple these by 2023, large-scale restoration of ecosystems, making agriculture more sustainable, companies should create new models of sustainable business, and insert sustainability into all business decisions, etc (UNEP, 2022). Companies should rise to the challenge of creating environmental solutions. In a place like the Niger Delta, many of the environmental problems such as oil spillage, gas flaring, pollution of land and water, petroleum fire, etc are caused by oil multinational companies or corporations. It amounts to environmental racism for oil companies to subject themselves to higher environmental standards abroad, but when they come to Nigeria, they do less because of poor environmental law enforcement (Ikeke, 2024). As noted earlier, businesses must exercise corporate social responsibility. One way they can do this is by helping to mitigate global climate change. Much of the global warming causing global climate change comes from the activities of industries, factories, companies, etc.

The ethical imperative of environmental entrepreneurship requires taking into consideration some ethical principles that should guide all entrepreneurial activities, especially major ones. These principles are the precautionary principle, environmental impact assessment, etc. It should be known that: “In order to protect the environment, the precautionary approach shall be widely applied by States according to their capabilities. Where there are threats of serious or irreversible damage, lack of full scientific certainty shall not be used as a reason for postponing cost-effective measures to prevent environmental degradation” (United Nations, 1972, art 15). All businesses and companies, and indeed all entrepreneurial ventures, should apply the precautionary principle. The implication is that entrepreneurial ventures that engage in projects that will adversely affect the Earth should take into consideration the precautionary principle. Even if they are not fully sure of the extent of the impact of the project, they must ensure measures to protect the environment. States must ensure this. Hence, human beings should recognize and fit themselves into their ecosystem. It can be argued that:

Any business activity that contributes, even incrementally, to
a reduced fitting of humans into the natural system does not

contribute to a better standard of living. It may gradually imperil human survival. An upset of Earth's carrying capacity is a prospect for today and tomorrow that was seldom a business fear yesterday (Rolston, 1998: 291).

Entrepreneurial or business activities should not just be carried on as it was before. It should consider the Earth's context. It is in this light that Rolston (1998) proposes a naturalistic ethics for businesses and this ethics involves: respecting ecosystems as efficient economy, rarer environments should be treated more lightly, more beautiful environments should be treated, more fragile environments should be treated more lightly, respect sentient life, respect life of species more than the individual, see nature more as a community first than as a commodity, and loving your neighbour includes the environment. There may indeed be complexities, as Rolston (1998) notes in implementing these ethics, but for the present author, it is not within the scope of this study to discuss those complexities.

There is a need for Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) in business and entrepreneurial ventures, especially in major ventures. No entrepreneurial venture should take place, especially the major ones, without assessing the impact of the venture on natural ecosystems and the Earth's community. The United Kingdom Department of Environment to state that environmental impact assessment is “a technique and a process by which information about the environmental effects of a project is collected, both by the developer and from other sources and takes into account by the planning authority informing their judgements on whether the development should go ahead” (Rim-Rukeh, 2009: 501). EIA is a requirement of the law in many countries, such as Nigeria, South Africa, Ghana, etc.

Governments in various countries, including Nigeria, have many environmental agencies and have made many policies. These policies must be implemented and enforced to protect the Earth. When environmental regulations are not enforced, businesses and entrepreneurial ventures are likely to violate environmental regulations. It is a delight to hear that in a place like Lagos State, Nigeria, environmental agencies enforce regulations on noise pollution, waste management, etc. It is also on record that many environmental agencies in different States in Nigeria, such as Delta State, enforce environmental sanitation laws on both individuals and businesses. fully enforced. The government has promised times without numbers and given different deadlines for gas flaring to stop, but gas flaring has continued unabated as the gas companies prefer to flare and pay fines. The role of government in regulating businesses/entrepreneurial ventures should not be overlooked. Wenz (2001: 21) writes that: “Governments make the rules that create, sustain, and regulate free markets as we know them... Because

government involvement is integral to the free market as we know it, we can address many environmental problems through alteration of market rules.” Business, entrepreneurship, and the markets cannot just be left on their own for the sake of the common good. There must be some ethical regulation of all these.

Conclusion

The study examined the ethical imperative of environmental entrepreneurship. It was shown that the Earth is endangered by environmental problems such as climate change, global warming, deforestation, environmental refugeeism, atmospheric and land pollution, etc. The study showed that the context of all entrepreneurial ventures is the Earth, as a home of living and existing for everyone. If the Earth is polluted and suffers from various devastations, it equally affects the work of entrepreneurs and employees. Enlightened self-interest requires entrepreneurs to work to protect the Earth from harm and damage. It was indicated clearly that health hazards coming from a polluted earth can cause employees and even employers to be sick, reduce productivity, and cost entrepreneurs more money and manpower. It is an ethical imperative for all entrepreneurs and not just those engaged in environmental production, to ensure a healthy and safe Earth and environment. It is part of their corporate social responsibility. The study also proposed that companies should keep the precautionary principle in mind and conduct an environmental impact assessment. Governments that create social and economic policies must ensure there are enabling policies and enforcement of environmental regulations to protect the Earth. Environmental education is also important in helping individuals and companies realize their duties to the earth. If all entrepreneurs rise up to their responsibilities about the environment, a healthier and safer Earth will be created for the well-being of humans and all life on Earth.

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Ethnic and Gender Diversity in Entrepreneurship: Insights from a Mixed Methods Study in Lagos, Nigeria

Catherine Chiugo Kanu, PhD & Nwandu Lilian Ogechi



Executive Summary

With advancing globalization, significant demographic shifts in workforce composition, and dramatic changes in customer bases, diversity and inclusion have emerged as a critical strategy for pooling talent from various sources. While Nigerian SMEs attract personnel from diverse backgrounds, little is known about the inclusion frameworks operating within these organizations. This study utilized a classic explanatory mixed methods design to investigate the perceived inclusion of employees working in Nigerian SMEs. The study was conducted in Lagos State, Nigeria. The quantitative component of the study entailed a descriptive survey of 102 employees of 6 SMEs. The instrument used for data collection was the Perceived Group Inclusion Scale developed by Jansen et al. (2014). The internal consistency was determined using the Cronbach α reliability test, which gave an index of .90. The collected data was analysed using mean, standard deviation, and t-test at a 0.05 significance level. The qualitative component consisted of 18 interviews with ethnic minorities in the firms who also participated in the quantitative study. Thematic analysis of the qualitative data was conducted to identify pertinent themes. Analysis of quantitative data revealed that, taken together, all employees felt included in the firm. However, there was a significant difference between the mean scores of Ethnic majority employees and those of ethnic minority employees on their perceived inclusion across the entrepreneurial stage in their workplaces. The ethnic majority felt more included than the ethnic minority employees. It was also found that there was no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female employees on their perceived inclusion in their workplaces. Analysis of interview data revealed that stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination were prevalent across the studied organizations. Negative stereotypes influenced decision-making processes, resulting in discriminatory practices with detrimental organizational impacts. It was concluded that SMEs had weak cultural diversity practices and policies that were making their diversity efforts backfire. It was, therefore, recommended that SMEs with diverse employee populations should build a corporate culture that values diversity and change their policies, processes, and systems to support diversity.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship, SMEs, Diversity, Inclusion, Stereotyping, Discrimination

Introduction

Entrepreneurship – the act of starting and managing a business – is a prominent economic development strategy that has been recognized across the globe as a key driver of economic growth. It is an essential contributor to the urgently required solutions to some of the world's most formidable environmental and social challenges (Hill et al, 2025). In specific terms, entrepreneurship creates jobs, generates wealth, and contributes substantially to the development of economies worldwide (Zahra, Wright, & Abdelgawad, 2019). Entrepreneurship involves creativity and innovation in identifying opportunities, planning, funding, risk-taking, execution, scaling, social responsibility, etc. Thus, entrepreneurship has been defined as the development of something novel and valuable by identifying, assessing, and capitalizing on opportunities, management efforts, and risk-taking (Chrisman, Chua, & Steier, 2015; Morris, Kuratko, & Covin, 2019). Similarly, OECD defines entrepreneurship as the dynamic process of identifying economic opportunities and acting upon them by developing, producing, and selling goods and services, as well as the willingness to take risks with new or innovative ideas to generate new products or services. (United Nations, nd). Thus, Entrepreneurship is a process of value creation and appropriation led by entrepreneurs in an uncertain environment (Mishra and Zachary, 2014).

Tripathy emphasizes that the concept of entrepreneurship encompasses various categories, including small businesses, scalable start-ups, large companies, and social enterprises. This study focuses on the small and growing enterprises, commonly referred to as small and medium-scale enterprises. According to the Central Bank of Nigeria (2018), SMEs are business firms that have working capital of between N5 million to N200 million (excluding land) and between 11-100 employees. These firms contribute significantly to Nigerian African economic development, making significant contributions to GDP and job creation. World Economic Forum (2025) noted that SMEs account for 95% of all registered businesses and contribute about 50% to the total GDP of sub-Saharan countries. According to Hansen et al 20), African SMEs will create most of the private sector jobs that a rapidly growing labor force is craving; meet surging African demand for products and services; enable local entrepreneurial talent will grow and realize itself; and become the future champions of African industries.

However, SMEs in Africa face difficult challenges that limit their performance. These challenges resulting from weak resource configuration and difficult business

environment include: lack of human skills, managerial capability, technology, and capital, as well as unstable institutions, weak contractual environments, corruption, and failing to support industries (Biggs et al., 2006). Studies on African enterprises have also revealed that failure rates of African manufacturing enterprises were very high and that most of them faced closure within the first five years (Marlow, 2009). Overcoming these challenges, which are still obtainable (or even worse) today, requires African firms to retreat and transform themselves from the inside out.

Empirical research has shown that the economic success of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in many countries derives from the degree to which they can overcome market and institutional failures. While external challenges such as ineffective regulatory frameworks and poor business support systems are not within the control of SMEs, African SMES can knock off internal weaknesses, especially those of unskilled human resources. By improved human capital - knowledge, skills, and experience - organisations can transform and enhance the value of other resources. Skilled professionals can effectively manage challenging business landscapes. By fostering complementary teams, they can transform external vulnerabilities into competitive advantages. According to Kanu (2019), this approach guarantees sustainable growth, creates broader capabilities, reduces risks, strengthens organizational resilience, and ultimately shields the business from external threats.

Therefore, in addition to all that successful entrepreneurs should have included passion, determination, trustworthiness, and deep knowledge of area (Hatten, 2009) as well as intelligence, hard work, and ability to adapt to challenges, entrepreneurs must be able to attract retain and reward skilled human resources from anywhere in the world and build diverse and inclusive workforce. An organization is diverse when it employs people of different genders, cultures, ages, ethnicity, sexual orientations, religions, and education, and it is inclusive when all its employees are treated equally and with respect, and everyone should have access to the same resources, training and opportunities (Lewis, 2024).

However, managing diversity has been a challenge in many organizations around the world, especially concerning differences in gender and ethnicity. According to Estrada and Schuber (2022), women entrepreneurs are active agents for positive change, but significant differences persist in the number of women and men as owners and managers of SMEs. The authors state that gender disparities in entrepreneurship stem from deeply enshrined legal, socioeconomic, and cultural discriminatory gender norms and practices. Similarly, scholars have found ethnic and racial discrimination in workplaces (Cortina, 2008; Zanoni, 2010; van Lear and Janssens, 2011). Scholars in diversity research have studied how and under which conditions people in diverse

workplaces feel included (e.g., Lirio, Lee, Williams, Haugen, & Kossek, 2008; Roberson, 2006), but such research has not focused on African enterprises. Thus, it is still unclear how and when in the entrepreneurial process people feel included in African SMEs. This study fills this gap by exploring employee inclusion levels throughout the entrepreneurial journey.

Research Questions

1. To what extent do ethnic majority and minority employees and male and female employees agree that they are included at the three stages of entrepreneurship in SMEs in Nigeria?
2. What differences exist between ethnic majority and minority employees' perceived inclusion at the various stages of entrepreneurship in SMEs in Nigeria?
3. What differences exist between male and female employees' perceived inclusion at the various stages of entrepreneurship in SMEs in Nigeria?

The Entrepreneurial Process

Scholars in entrepreneurship have described entrepreneurship as a creative process (Baron, 2018), a strategic process (Ireland & Webb, 2015), and a dynamic process (Ratten, 2023; Venkataraman, 2017) of identifying opportunities and nurturing the opportunities to create successful businesses. Rwigema and Venter in Mfam and Anabogu (2023) identified five stages of the entrepreneurial process, namely: identifying, measuring and refining opportunity; formulating a business plan; marshalling the resources; organizing and mobilizing a team; overseeing the new venture creation and growth. Bozward and Rogers-Draycott's (2017) enterprise creation model includes seven stages, namely: discovery, modeling, start up, existence survival, success, adaptation, independence, and exit. Hatten (2009) identified stages similar to Bozward and Rogers Draycott but divided the stages into two phases – entrepreneurship and small business management. According to Hatten (2009), the entrepreneurship phase includes innovation, triggering event, and implementation, while the small business management phase includes growth, maturity, and harvest stages.

After synthesizing the above opinions, and considered the fact that entrepreneurship is not just about starting a new business (Mishrak and Zachary, 2014) because the benefits

of entrepreneurship are not realized by only identifying opportunities and starting a new business but are realized when the new business is strategically managed to survive and succeed, **entrepreneurship is conceptualized in this study as a creative, dynamic and strategic** process of developing and managing ventures to create value for individuals, groups and nations. Following this perspective, the process of entrepreneurship adopted in this study is a combination of Hatten's entrepreneurship and small business management process, and for easy application, streamlined into three phases namely: Entrepreneurial opportunity Identification and innovation (EOII); Launch and Scale (LS) and Business optimization and harvesting (BOH).

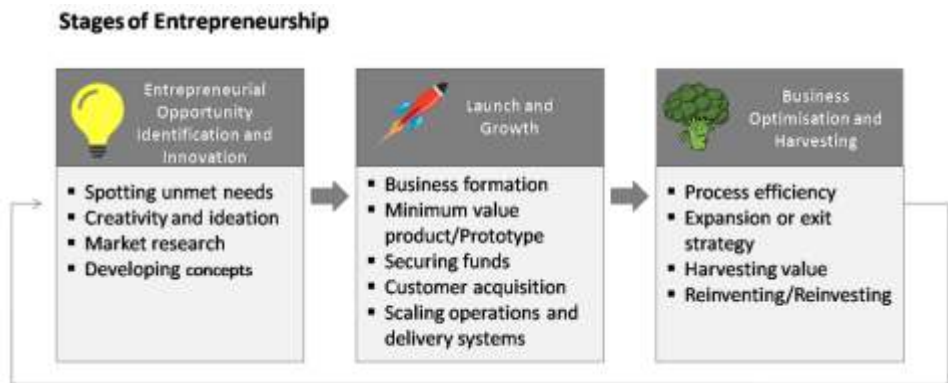


Figure 1: Stages of entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurial Opportunity Identification and Innovation → "Launch and Growth" → "Business Optimisation and Harvesting" creates a logical, coherent, and concise entrepreneurial process and provides a solid and intuitive framework for understanding the entrepreneurial journey from beginning to end. The entrepreneurial opportunity identification and innovation (EOII) stage is the creative discovery stage that represents the inventive aspect of entrepreneurship. It involves the identification of market gaps or needs, the determination of which opportunities are viable, as well as the development of novel solutions. In a natural progression, Launch and Growth (LG) follows the opportunity identification and innovation stage. It captures both initial market entry and subsequent expansion and represents the operational implementation of the recognised opportunity. Being the middle stage, it bridges the gap between ideation and value capture. Lastly, business optimization and harvesting represent the end-stage activities and highlight the dual nature of mature business management. It includes operational improvements (optimisation), expansion strategy, value extraction, as well as reinventing and reinvesting strategies that connect back to the EOII stage.

Diversity and Inclusion in Entrepreneurship

Diversity is a characteristic of groups of two or more people and typically refers to demographic differences of one sort or another among group members (McGrathB, Erdahl & Arrow, 1995) Diversity represents all the ways that people differ including age, gender, ethnicity religion as well as education, work experiences, among others. These differences affect the way people think, what they believe, and how they behave. Therefore, managing diversity involves recognizing, appreciating, valuing, and utilizing the unique talents and contributions of all individuals. Effective diversity management is crucial for organisational success in the 21st century for many reasons. Due to globalization, competition is becoming broader and more intense by the day, especially with the rising global labour market. There are more women, tribes, religions, and immigrants seeking job opportunities anywhere in the world. In addition, dramatic changes in customer base require diverse operatives. As organizations are serving increasingly diverse communities/customers, they require a diverse workforce population. Moreover, the public views diversity as the right thing to do, and organizations that manage diversity are seen as reputable.

Researchers in the field of diversity have highlighted inclusion as a crucial component (Lirio et al., 2008; Miller, 1998; 2004; Roberson, 2006). Inclusion means going beyond mere hiring of people of various demographic characteristics to empowering all of them equally to perform. Both diversity and inclusion are essential in fostering creativity, improving decision-making, and enhancing organizational culture. While diversity provides the potential for these benefits, inclusion ensures that this potential is realized by integrating diverse perspectives and creating an environment where all individuals feel valued and empowered. Shore et al. (2011) comprehensively define inclusion as "the degree to which individuals experience treatment from the group that satisfies their need for belongingness and uniqueness". Belongingness is the experience of being wholly accepted and treated as an insider by others in the system (Pelled et al. 1999; Althof, 2020) People feel that they belong when: (1) they have access to necessary information and other resources they need to perform their responsibilities; (2) when they have opportunities to advance in their career just like others in the system; and (3) when they feel valued and respected by others. Thus, belongingness is made up of group membership and group affection. In contrast, uniqueness is the need to have a distinctive self-concept (Jansen et al, 2014). In this study, "Inclusion refers to the balanced duality between belongingness and uniqueness in organizational settings, where individuals simultaneously experience the security of group acceptance and the freedom to express their authentic, distinctive selves. It is this harmonious integration that allows employees with varied backgrounds and perspectives to contribute to creating a broader range of ideas, fostering creativity and innovation, making better

quality decisions, and ultimately leading to a more successful and profitable business.

The benefits of a diverse and inclusive workforce have been empirically confirmed. diversity and inclusion have been found to improve creativity and innovation (Leroy et al., 2022) as well as enhance decision making and overall performance (Galinsky et al., 2015; Leuhery et al, 2024). With a diverse and inclusive employee population, organizations can obtain the best talent in a competitive environment, compete effectively in the global marketplace, strengthen their resilience in changing environmental conditions, create dynamic work environments through a variety of perspectives, and help organizations understand how to effectively interact with their client base. These ultimately lead to higher performance. A study conducted by Hunt et al. (2015) based on financial data and leadership demographics from hundreds of organizations and thousands of executives in the United Kingdom, Canada, Latin America, and the United States found a statistically significant relationship between a more diverse leadership team and better financial performance. According to Hunt et al (2015), the companies in the top quartile of gender diversity were 15 percent more likely to have financial returns that were above their national industry median while companies in the top quartile of racial/ethnic diversity were 35 percent more likely to have financial returns above their national industry median.

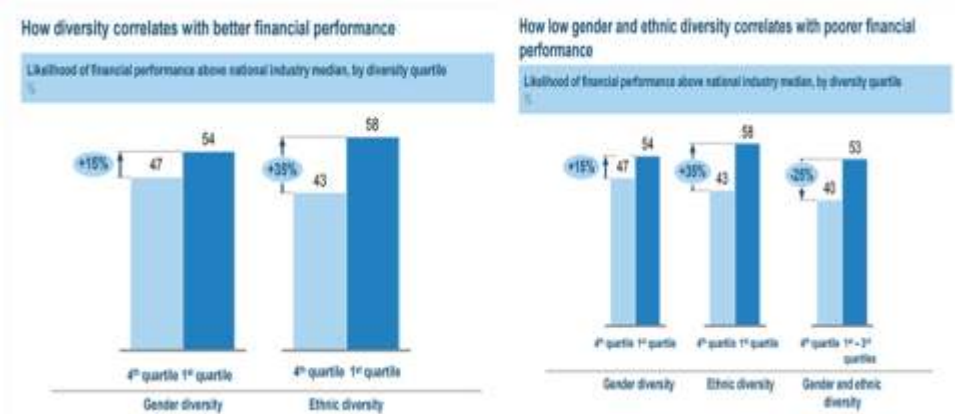


Figure 2: How diversity correlates with performance.

Source: McKinsey Diversity Database



Figure 3: Performance of males vs females in entrepreneurship

The statistics in figure 2 reveal a compelling investment paradox regarding gender in entrepreneurship: Female-founded or co-founded companies receive significantly less funding (\$935,000 on average compared to \$2.1 million for male-founded companies)—less than half of what their male counterparts receive. Despite this funding disadvantage, women-led startups demonstrate superior financial performance, generating 10% higher cumulative revenue over a five-year period (\$730,000 vs \$662,000). Most impressively, women-led startups are dramatically more capital-efficient. They generate 78 cents of revenue per dollar invested, compared to just 31 cents for male-founded companies—a 2.5x better return on investment. These figures highlight a significant market inefficiency in venture capital allocation, suggesting potential bias in investment decisions despite the stronger financial performance of women-led ventures. Strengthening women in entrepreneurship is not a human right but also an economic imperative (Estrader and Schuber, 2022). Beyond this empirical evidence, entrepreneurs have shared practical experience of diversity (Box 1).

BOX 1: Benefits of Diversity: Evidence from Industry

"We're a company of builders whose diverse backgrounds, ideas, and points of view are critical to helping us invent on behalf of our customers. But it's not only that diversity and inclusion are good for our business. It's more fundamental than that – It's simply right."
-Jeff Bezos, Amazon founder and Washington Post Owner

"In the past year, we have focused on growing organically and developing an already existing diverse and talented workforce. This has allowed us to harness a variety of perspectives and skills to our business, resulting in more innovative and effective solutions to serve our customers and consequently deepen business value."

- Gloria Byamugisha, group chief Human Resources Officer, Dangote Group

"Diversity fosters creativity. We need to generate the best ideas from our people in all levels of the company and incorporate them into our business practices."

-Frédéric Rozé, chief executive officer, L'Oréal USA

"We are in 75 countries and we want to hire the best talent in each locale. Diverse teams and companies make better decisions."

-Eileen Taylor, global head of diversity, Deutsche Bank

"We couldn't have gone through all of the mergers and acquisitions and continue to be successful without having a diverse workforce. It's important to our business strategy and it makes us more innovative and competitive."

-Debbie Storey, senior vice president of talent development and chief diversity officer, AT&T

"Our goal is to be the world's best bank, in terms of the value we represent and the innovativeness of the products we offer. Having a diverse workforce is very important to our strategy. It allows us to capture new clients and address the needs of our existing businesses."

-Niki Kesglou, head of diversity and inclusion, Asia Pacific, Credit Suisse

"We want our management to be culturally prepared. We have a vast amount of diversity that comes into work every day in order to create and build technology that plays out around the world."

-Rosalind Hudnell, director of global diversity and inclusion, Intel

Sources: Grenoble (2025), Byamugisha (2022) & Forbes (nd)

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in two pivotal theories: the Entrepreneurial Value Creation Theory by Mishra and Zachary (2014) and the Social Identity Theory by Tajfel and Turner (1979). The Entrepreneurial Value Creation Theory offers a comprehensive view of the entrepreneurial journey, encompassing the initial intention and opportunity recognition to the development of entrepreneurial competence and the realization of rewards. It delineates a two-stage framework. Stage one of the framework (Venture Formulation) is the phase in which entrepreneurs identify potential business opportunities or possess the intention to establish a new venture. Key activities include recognizing unmet market needs, assessing available resources, and conducting feasibility studies. This stage emphasizes aligning opportunities with resources to craft a viable business concept. Stage two of the framework (Venture Monetization) is a stage in which a solid foundation is established and entrepreneurs may seek external

resources, such as venture capital or strategic partnerships, to drive growth. This phase focuses on developing a robust business model, delivering value propositions, and generating revenue. The theory underscores that entrepreneurship extends beyond mere venture creation to include the monetization and sustainability of the business.

Complementing this, the Social Identity Theory posits that individuals derive a sense of identity and self-esteem from their group memberships and how this affects intergroup behaviour. Tajfel and Turner's theory elucidates how group memberships influence self-perception and intergroup dynamics, explaining tendencies like in-group favoritism and potential biases against out-groups. In organizational contexts, Social Identity Theory sheds light on phenomena such as unconscious biases in recruitment and promotion, feelings of isolation among minority groups, and challenges in collaboration due to "us versus them" mentalities. It also provides insights into resistance faced by diversity initiatives from dominant groups perceiving threats to their status. Understanding this theory equips professionals to foster overarching identities that bridge subgroup differences, acknowledge and value the multifaceted social identities of employees, minimize the emphasis on divisive categorizations, and promote positive intergroup interactions to dismantle stereotypes

Methodology

Study Design

The sequential explanatory mixed methods approach was used in this study to determine the perceived inclusion of majority and minority employees in SMEs in Nigeria. The study commenced with quantitative data collection. Subsequently, qualitative data were obtained through interviews. According to Wisdom and Cresswell (2013), a mixed research design is an emergent methodology of research that advocates the systematic integration of quantitative and qualitative data within a single study. The mixed methods approach provides insights and traction into a topic of interest and allows a researcher to examine both the content and context of a study (Albrigh, Getcher & Kempe, 2013). Thus, integrating quantitative and qualitative data allows for a holistic outcome that is statistically reliable and generalizable, as well as offering depth, context, and nuance. In this study, mixed mixed-methods approach allowed the researcher to quantify inclusion disparities (quantitative) while also understanding the lived experiences and underlying mechanisms creating those disparities (qualitative). For these reasons, the mixed-methods approach was considered suitable for this study.

Study Location

This study was conducted in Lagos State, one of the 36 states in Nigeria, and the commercial centre of the Country. Lagos State is the most populous State in Nigeria with a population of 17,156,400 (World Population Review, 2025). According to the Lagos State Ministry of Agriculture (2025), Lagos State contributes 70% of the Country's total industrial investment, 65% of its commercial activities, and houses the largest market in Sub-Saharan Africa (Lagos State Ministry of Agriculture). Lagos State also houses the highest number of SMEs, accounting for 7.3% of the total number of SMEs in Nigeria (Almona, 2023). In terms of demographic composition, Yoruba is the dominant ethnic group in Lagos State, but there are more than 250 ethnic groups in Lagos, including Hausa, Igbo, and Fulani, with small minorities of American, British, East Indian, Chinese, and white Zimbabwean (World Population Review, 2025). Greek, Syrian, Lebanese, and Japanese are also present in the city. Lagos State's rich cultural, age, and religious diversity informed the choice of the State for this study.

Participants and Context

Professional staff in six SMEs in Lagos State, Nigeria, participated in the study. The firms included a construction firm, a Restaurant, a marketing firm, an IT firm, a Fintech company and a consulting firm, an Information and communication service firm, a financial technology company, and a consulting firm. The SMEs were chosen based on the following criteria: (1) the firm must have been founded 10 years or earlier (2) Even with a dominant ethnic group, the business would have employees of other ethnic groups (3) The Human resources manager must approve for the study to be conducted in their firm. These conditions allowed the researcher access to people who could provide the information required and to conduct the study ethically and flawlessly. In the firms, an ethnic group is considered the majority when more than 50% of the employees are from the same ethnic group. The majority of ethnic groups in the six companies studied varied, including ethnic groups in different parts of Nigeria.

The Construction Firm: The construction firm had a mission to deliver high-quality construction solutions. The firm was family family-owned business that began operations in 2002, The firm transitioned to the next generation in the last five years. Although the topmost management position in the firm was held by a family member, the firm had people of other ethnic groups working across various levels. It had 23 professional staff at the time of our study, who were mostly field engineers (18). Five of these engineers were the pioneer staff of the company.

The Restaurant: The restaurant business sells cooked African and continental dishes to consumers to satisfy every customer. The restaurant is a partnership, co-founded by two friends of the same ethnicity in 2018. It formerly operated through a single channel, physical storefronts, but introduced an online channel in 2020 following their COVID experience. At the time of data collection, the company had 13 professional staff, including chefs, customer service personnel, marketers, and operations staff/managers. Working on a shift basis, morning/afternoon shifts (dine-in and online).

Marketing and Advertising: The firm helped businesses to create and implement strategies to promote their products or services and increase brand awareness. The firm's services included content creation, digital marketing, social media management, branding services, market research, and media planning, among others. The firm is a sole proprietorship, founded in 2015. It was still founder-managed at the time of our study. The business had experienced a major transformation and expansion initiative within the last 5 years. It had 17 professional staff at the time of data collection. Five of these employees were part-time workers doing mainly content creation.

The Information Technology Service Firm: The IT firm was founded in 2013 with a mission to empower businesses and individuals by delivering reliable and secure technology-based services and solutions. The firm was owner-managed, offering services such as software development, network management, cybersecurity, data analytics, and IT consulting. The firm had diverse employees across levels. At the time of the study, the firm had 21 professional staff, made up of 15 permanent and 6 part-time staff. Four of the staff who participated in the study were pioneer staff of the company.

The Fintech Company: The financial technology company was founded in 2015 with a mission to deliver innovative financial services. The company offers savings, loans, investment advice, general finance management, as well as financial education and consultancy services to small businesses and individuals. At the time of the study, the firm was owner-managed and had 16 professional staff out of whom 4 occupied management positions. The company is renowned for offering secure, reliable, and fast solutions.

The Consulting Firm: The consulting firm, founded in 2005, was a joint venture that provided expert advice, strategic guidance, and practical solutions to organisations and individuals. The firm specialises in business management, Consumer research and database management, marketing, training, and human resource management - including recruitment and selection. The two founders were of the same ethnic group.

The firm had 12 professional staff at the time of this study, who were mainly analysts and consultants

The number of questionnaires that were sent to each company was based on the number of employees they had. In total, therefore, 102 copies of the questionnaire were sent to the companies, but only 69 were returned. Generally, the percentage of questionnaires returned by each company differs from one company to another. Table 1 lists the organisations that participated and the number of questionnaires sent and returned. It also showed the demographic composition in terms of gender and ethnic orientation.

Firm	Number of Questionnaires Sent	Number of Questionnaires Returned	Participant Characteristics			
			Male	Female	Ethnic Majority	Ethnic Minority
Construction	23	14	8	6	8	6
Restaurant	13	10	4	6	7	3
Marketing Firm	17	11	6	5	8	3
Information & Technology Service	21	15	9	6	9	6
Financial Technology	16	10	6	4	6	4
Consulting	12	9	5	4	5	4

Data collection and analysis of quantitative data

Questionnaire was used for quantitative data collection. The survey questionnaire was divided into two parts – 1&2. Part 1 elicited information about respondents' demographic information, while Part two had three sections – A, B, and C. Section A elicited information on employees perceived inclusion during entrepreneurial opportunity identification and innovation (Section A); launch and growth (Section B); and Business optimisation and harvesting (Section C). The scale used to measure employee perceived inclusion across the three stages was the Perceived Group Inclusion Scale (PGIS) scale developed by Jansen, Otten, van der Zee, & Jans (2014). The 16-item PGIS was developed to measure the two-dimensional concept of perceptions of inclusion, belonging, and authenticity. According to Jansen et al, the PGIS appeared to be a reliable measure of inclusion and was demonstrated to possess both nomological and predictive validity. The instrument is made up of four subscales measuring group membership (Items 1-4), group affection (Items 5-8), room for authenticity (Items 9-12), and value in authenticity (Items 13 – 16). The instrument was

designed based on a 5-point scale rating of strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree with assigned weights of 1, 2,3,4,5, respectively. Two research assistants participated in the data collection to ensure timely data collection. The research assistants were briefed on the objectives of the study, the contextual meanings of the variables, as well as how to approach participants to get their cooperation. The questionnaire was then made available for completion by the participants. Participants completed the questionnaire within 2 days. t-test statistics were employed to analyse the hypotheses, while research questions were analysed using the mean and standard deviation. The validity of the instruments used in this study was determined by three specialists from the faculty of vocational and technical education at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The internal consistency of the items was determined using Cronbach's alpha method. The coefficient obtained was $\alpha = 0.92$, which indicates that the reliability level of the instrument was consistent. In addition, a bar chart (figure 1) was used to explain the level of mean difference between the majority and minority.

Data collection and analysis of qualitative data

Based on the results obtained from the survey using the perceived group inclusion scale, an interview guide was developed to guide interviews aimed at gaining deeper insights into minority employees' perceived inclusion. All the interviews were face-to-face in English, and each session lasted for about 20 minutes.

Table 2: Interview Guide

Primary Prompt Questions	Follow-up Questions
Tell me about the behaviours or circumstances that made you feel excluded in your workplace.	How did you feel? / What did you do?
Then tell me how your inputs are valued in team discussions and decisions	How did that affect your work?
How do these behaviours and circumstances affect relationships in your workplace?	How did that affect the team's performance?

Data Collection and Interview data were analysed using thematic and critical discourse analysis. At the beginning, the data were organized into categories through the use of the discourse thematic content analysis method. This involved coding the texts into thematic categories based on content (Leedy & Ormond, 2005; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Following this stage, a Critical Discourse Analysis method was applied in listening/watching the interview text again (Fairclough, 1995, 2003; Janks, 1999). This also helped to analyse non-verbal communication and uncover the social context, hidden power relations, and ideologies embedded in the narratives provided by the participants (Mengibar, 2015).

Results

Research Question 1: To what extent do ethnic majority and minority employees and male and female employees agree that they are included at the various stages of entrepreneurship in SMEs in Nigeria?

Table 3: Mean responses with standard deviation of ethnic majority and minority employees on perceived inclusion at entrepreneurial opportunity identification and innovation stage

S/N	Items: This organization	Majority		Minority		$\bar{X}_G$	Decision
		$\bar{X}_1$	SD	$\bar{X}_2$	SD		
1	gives me the feeling that I belong	3.58	.731	2.85	.732	3.30	Agree
2	gives me the feeling that I am part of the firm	3.63	.757	2.88	.766	3.35	Agree
3	gives me the feeling that I fit in	3.81	.732	2.96	.871	3.49	Agree
4	treats me like an insider	3.86	.833	3.08	.845	3.57	Agree
5	likes me	3.88	.851	3.04	.958	3.57	Agree
6	appreciates me	3.93	.768	3.19	.895	3.65	Agree
7	is pleased with me	4.12	.823	3.27	.778	3.80	Agree
8	cares about me	3.86	.675	3.19	.801	3.61	Agree
9	allows me to be authentic	3.98	.740	3.15	.784	3.67	Agree
10	allows me to be who I am	4.02	.672	3.27	.827	3.74	Agree
11	allows me to be my authentic self	3.98	.672	3.15	.881	3.67	Agree
12	allows me to present myself the way I am	3.95	.653	3.08	.796	3.62	Agree
13	encourages me to be authentic	4.05	.722	3.04	.824	3.67	Agree
14	encourages me to be who I am	3.91	.750	3.12	.864	3.61	Agree
15	encourages me to be my authentic self	3.98	.707	2.96	.958	3.59	Agree
16	encourages me to present myself the way I am	3.93	.704	3.04	.774	3.59	Agree

Table 4: Mean responses with standard deviation of ethnic majority and minority employees on perceived inclusion at launch and growth stage.

S/N	Items: This organization	Majority		Minority		$\bar{X}_G$	Decision
		$\bar{X}_1$	SD	$\bar{X}_2$	SD		
1	gives me the feeling that I belong	3.72	.766	2.92	.744	3.42	Agree
2	gives me the feeling that I am part of the firm	3.72	.701	2.96	.774	3.43	Agree
3	gives me the feeling that I fit in	3.88	.697	3.04	.916	3.57	Agree
4	treats me like an insider	3.93	.828	3.12	.816	3.62	Agree
5	likes me	3.93	.828	3.08	.935	3.61	Agree
6	appreciates me	3.95	.754	3.27	.919	3.70	Agree
7	is pleased with me	4.12	.793	3.27	.778	3.80	Agree
8	cares about me	3.98	.636	3.23	.765	3.70	Agree
9	allows me to be authentic	4.19	.627	3.31	.788	3.86	Agree
10	allows me to be who I am	4.12	.662	3.27	.827	3.80	Agree
11	allows me to be my authentic self	4.02	.672	3.15	.881	3.70	Agree
12	allows me to present myself the way I am	4.00	.690	3.08	.796	3.65	Agree
13	encourages me to be authentic	4.05	.722	3.04	.824	3.67	Agree
14	encourages me to be who I am	3.91	.750	3.15	.834	3.62	Agree
15	encourages me to be my authentic self	4.00	.690	3.46	.647	3.80	Agree
16	encourages me to present myself the way I am	4.07	.704	3.23	.710	3.75	Agree

Table 5: Mean responses with standard deviation of ethnic majority and minority employees on perceived inclusion at business optimization and harvesting stage.

S/N	Items: This organization	Majority		Minority		$\bar{X}_G$	Decision
		$\bar{X}_1$	SD	$\bar{X}_2$	SD		
1	gives me the feeling that I belong	3.35	.720	2.65	.745	3.09	Agree
2	gives me the feeling that I am part of the firm	3.51	.668	2.85	.834	3.26	Agree
3	gives me the feeling that I fit in	3.72	.701	2.92	.845	3.42	Agree
4	treats me like an insider	3.79	.833	3.04	.824	3.51	Agree
5	likes me	3.77	.841	3.04	.958	3.49	Agree
6	appreciates me	3.84	.721	3.15	.925	3.58	Agree
7	is pleased with me	4.05	.785	3.23	.815	3.74	Agree
8	cares about me	3.79	.600	3.15	.732	3.55	Agree
9	allows me to be authentic	3.93	.704	3.15	.784	3.64	Agree
10	allows me to be who I am	3.98	.707	3.27	.827	3.71	Agree
11	allows me to be my authentic self	3.56	.548	3.08	.796	3.38	Agree
12	allows me to present myself the way I am	3.95	.688	3.08	.796	3.62	Agree

13	encourages me to be authentic	4.00	.724	3.04	.824	3.64	Agree
14	encourages me to be who I am	3.84	.785	3.12	.864	3.57	Agree
15	encourages me to be my authentic self	3.56	.590	2.85	.834	3.29	Agree
16	encourages me to present myself the way I am	3.77	.649	3.08	.796	3.51	Agree

The results in Tables 3-5 show perceived inclusion among ethnic majority and minority employees across the three stages of entrepreneurship – Entrepreneurial Opportunity Identification and Innovation (EOII), Launch and Growth (LG), and Business Optimization and Harvesting (BOH). At the EOII stage, the mean of responses ranged from 3.30 to 3.80; Launch and growth - 3.42-3.86; and Business Optimisation and Harvesting, 3.09 - 3.74. This shows that the employees felt included across the three entrepreneurial stages.

However, the tables show that across the three stages, the means of the responses for minority employees in the first four items were lower, with some falling below the cut-off mark of 3.0. This means that the minority employees disagreed with those statements. Consistently across the stages, the items – ...gives me the feeling that I belong, and gives me the feeling that I am part of them were below the cut-off point of 3.0 while the items ... gives me the feeling that I fit in and treats me like an insider were either below the cut-off point or slightly above the point. According to Jansen et al (2014), these first four items measure group membership. Thus, it can be inferred that the minority employees do not agree that they are members of the SMEs they work for. Tables 6-8 below show the mean scores of the employees by gender. All the mean values obtained from the EOII to BOH stages were above the cutoff point of 3.0.

Table 6: Mean responses with standard deviation of male and female employees on perceived inclusion at entrepreneurial opportunity identification and innovation stage.

S/N	Items: This organization	Male		Female	
		$\bar{X}_1$	SD	$\bar{X}_2$	SD
1	gives me the feeling that I belong	3.32	.904	3.29	.693
2	gives me the feeling that I am part of the firm	3.34	.745	3.35	.950
3	gives me the feeling that I fit in	3.47	.893	3.52	.890
4	treats me like an insider	3.53	.951	3.61	.882
5	likes me	3.55	1.005	3.58	.958
6	appreciates me	3.58	.919	3.74	.855
7	is pleased with me	3.76	.998	3.84	.779
8	cares about me	3.66	.878	3.55	.675
9	allows me to be authentic	3.66	.909	3.68	.791

10	allows me to be who I am	3.82	.865	3.65	.755
11	allows me to be my authentic self	3.66	.847	3.68	.871
12	allows me to present myself the way I am	3.58	.826	3.68	.832
13	encourages me to be authentic	3.61	.823	3.74	.999
14	encourages me to be who I am	3.61	.790	3.61	.989
15	encourages me to be my authentic self	3.63	.883	3.55	1.028
16	encourages me to present myself the way I am	3.66	.878	3.52	.811

Table 7: Mean responses with standard deviation of male and female employees on perceived inclusion at launch and growth stage.

<i>S/N Items: This organization</i>		<i>Male</i>		<i>Female</i>	
		$\bar{X}_1$	<i>SD</i>	$\bar{X}_2$	<i>SD</i>
1	gives me the feeling that I belong	3.37	.942	3.48	.724
2	gives me the feeling that I am part of the firm	3.34	.781	3.55	.850
3	gives me the feeling that I fit in	3.53	.893	3.61	.882
4	treats me like an insider	3.53	.951	3.74	.855
5	likes me	3.58	1.004	3.65	.915
6	appreciates me	3.61	.916	3.81	.833
7	is pleased with me	3.79	.991	3.81	.749
8	cares about me	3.63	.852	3.77	.669
9	allows me to be authentic	3.79	.875	3.94	.727
10	allows me to be who I am	3.82	.865	3.77	.805
11	allows me to be my authentic self	3.66	.847	3.74	.893
12	allows me to present myself the way I am	3.58	.826	3.74	.893
13	encourages me to be authentic	3.61	.823	3.74	.999
14	encourages me to be who I am	3.58	.758	3.68	.979
15	encourages me to be my authentic self	3.74	.685	3.87	.763
16	encourages me to present myself the way I am	3.79	.811	3.71	.824

Table 8: Mean responses with standard deviation of male and female employees on perceived inclusion at harvest stage.

<i>S/N</i>	<i>Items: This organization</i>	<i>Male</i>		<i>Female</i>	
		$\bar{X}_1$	<i>SD</i>	$\bar{X}_2$	<i>SD</i>
1	gives me the feeling that I belong	3.08	.850	3.10	.746
2	gives me the feeling that I am part of the firm	3.34	.745	3.16	.860
3	gives me the feeling that I fit in	3.37	.852	3.48	.851
4	treats me like an insider	3.45	.891	3.58	.923
5	likes me	3.47	.979	3.52	.926
6	appreciates me	3.50	.862	3.68	.871
7	is pleased with me	3.74	.978	3.74	.773
8	cares about me	3.58	.793	3.52	.626
9	allows me to be authentic	3.63	.883	3.65	.755
10	allows me to be who I am	3.82	.865	3.58	.765
11	allows me to be my authentic self	3.32	.662	3.45	.723
12	allows me to present myself the way I am	3.58	.826	3.68	.871
13	encourages me to be authentic	3.61	.823	3.68	.979
14	encourages me to be who I am	3.61	.790	3.52	.996
15	encourages me to be my authentic self	3.29	.732	3.29	.824
16	encourages me to present myself the way I am	3.53	.830	3.48	.724

Research Question 2: What differences exist between ethnic majority and minority employees' perceived inclusion at the various stages of entrepreneurship in SMEs in Nigeria?

Research Question 3: What differences exist between male and female employees' perceived inclusion at the various stages of entrepreneurship in SMEs in Nigeria?

Table 9: Overall, between-group comparison independent samples t-test for ethnic orientation groups and gender as measured by the perceived group inclusion scale.

Inclusion Stages		Group	N	M±SD	95% CI	t	Decision
Innovation Stage	Ethnic Orientation	Majority	43	62.47±8.91	59.72 – 65.21	5.66	0.000 (SG)
		Minority	26	49.27±10.13	45.18 – 53.36		
	Gender	Male	38	57.42±11.92	53.50 – 61.34	-.058	.954 (NS)
		Female	31	57.58±10.74	53.64 – 61.52		
Launch and Growth Stages	Ethnic Orientation	Majority	43	63.58±8.41	60.99 – 66.17	5.76	0.000 (SG)
		Minority	26	50.58±9.47	46.75 – 54.40		
	Gender	Male	38	57.92±11.44	54.16 – 61.68	-.652	.517 (NS)
		Female	31	59.61±10.11	55.91 – 63.32		
Harvest Stage	Ethnic Orientation	Majority	43	60.40±8.10	57.90 – 62.89	5.35	0.000 (SG)
		Minority	26	48.69±9.87	44.70 – 52.68		
	Gender	Male	38	55.89±10.69	52.38 – 59.41	-.080	.937 (NS)
		Female	31	56.10±10.30	52.32 – 59.87		

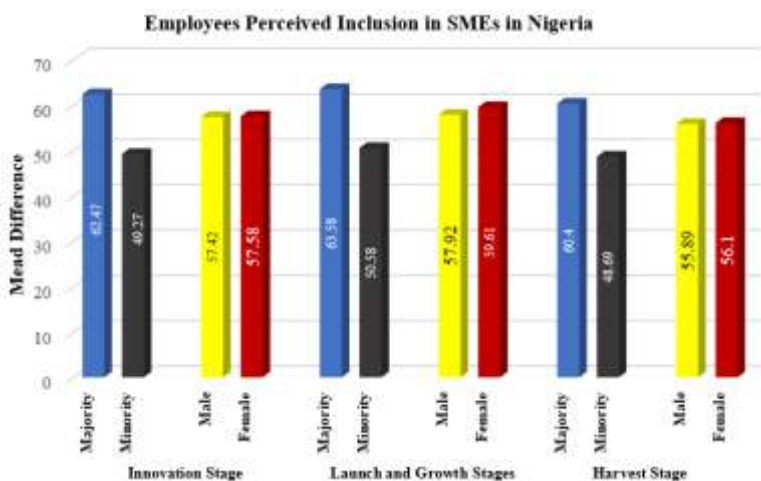


Figure 1: Between-group bar chart showing the perceived inclusion mean difference between majority and minority groups and male and female grouping at the innovation, launch, and harvest stages.

Table 9 and Figure 1 show a significant difference between the mean responses of the ethnic majority employee group and the ethnic minority employee group concerning their perceived inclusion across the three stages of entrepreneurship. As shown, significant differences exist between the majority and minority employees' perceptions of their inclusion in all the stages of entrepreneurship. However, a significant difference was not observed between male and female employees' perception of their inclusion in their organisations.

Interview Results

Analysis of the Interviews conducted to determine the factors that contribute to the observed differences in perceived inclusion between ethnic majority and minority employees revealed first and second-order themes as shown in the interview data structure in Figure 3.

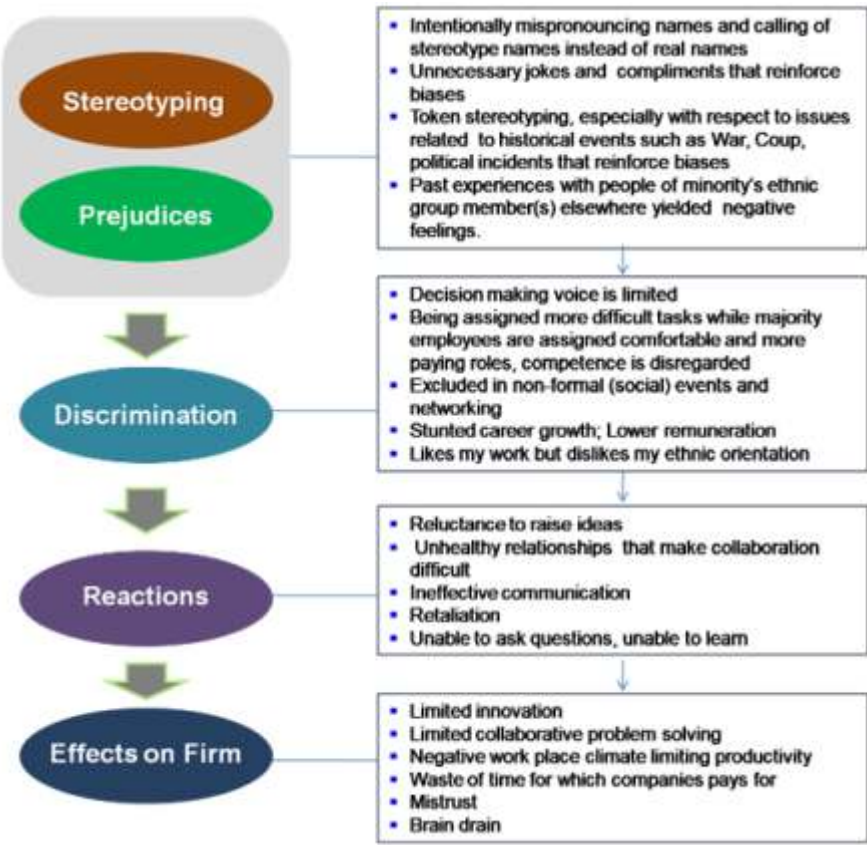


Figure 2: Interview Data Structure

Figure 2 presents the results of the interview with the minority group aimed at explaining their feelings of exclusion.

Stereotypes and prejudices

Participants shared experiences of stereotyping and prejudices, especially Intentionally mispronouncing names and calling of stereotype names instead of real names (n=8), unnecessary jokes and compliments that reinforced biases (n=11), participants also reported being taken as a representative of their ethnic group and usually asked to explain stories from historical events such as War, Coup, political incidents (n=8). Participants also reported that the majority of employees' past experiences with people of their ethnic group yielded negative feelings towards them (n=4). Some narrations by participants are:

“Some people here don't call me by my name; they just call me 'Aboki'. I always tell them I know 'Aboki' is positive because it means “friend,” but please call me by my name because I am not sure you want to call me your friend.”

“There are always comments and jokes from the Biafran War or from one coup event like that, and they will be there narrating and evaluating the stories. Sometimes they expect me to explain or justify some of the things that happened. Honestly, I usually wonder – is it for me to explain or justify? Sometimes I felt like asking them to keep shut up and face their tasks, but they were senior colleagues, so I just let them be. ...I wondered why senior staff in a business would spend so much time discussing issues that add nothing to the company until I discovered that all those talks were laying the foundations for discrimination. So when it comes, I don't have to ask why the discrimination – the war or coup or even one election or the other already explains it.”

“Most times when I get my food to eat, some colleagues will ask me is this soup not too oily? And someone else may say - is that not swallow, why is it soft like pap? These comments normally come as jokes so I found my jokes too so when they start I'll tell them something like - yes, it's better to eat this soft one than to swallow hard moulds and still not drink water, and we all laugh over it but the fact that they are always asking the same questions all the time is my problem. And sometimes even when the food is not oily, they still bring up the issue of excess oil. That's how I knew that they are just trying to emphasise that we are different.

“The language 'your people', our people – those kinds of languages – are common in this Firm. They tell me your people like money too much (even when I am one of least paid Engineers in the firm and I am still working with commitment); your people don't have respect (even when I thought I was one of the most respectful in the Firm); your people did not vote for our son, different things - your people this, your people that. It's always “your” and “our”. Sometimes they will even say your brother said... I quickly recall I am an only son, then I quickly recall again ok, I am now in Nigeria, but it didn't make sense because I thought that coming back to Nigeria, I came back to my people.”

Discrimination

Participants reported various forms of subtle and blatant discrimination, not allowing them to participate in decision making or disregarding their opinions, being assigned more difficult and less rewarding tasks, exclusion from social events such as birthday parties, and often asked to and often required to explain what happened in a historical event like war and coup. and appreciating one's work, but the person. Participants narrated thus:

“One thing I have noticed here is that they reserve the juicy positions for someone of their tribe – that is, positions that provide a lot of exposure and learning, and networking opportunities that can lead to promotion. Minority staff are assigned more difficult and less promising roles that give little or no visibility. I believe that the best way to assign jobs is according to skills and competencies, but they don't consider that, and it's affecting productivity because some of the people assigned those juicy roles don't perform optimally”.

“Mine is this problem of not involving minorities when taking some important decisions, especially when the expert in the area where the decision is being made belongs to the majority group. Sometimes they don't seek my opinion, sometimes they disregard it without explanations, and sometimes discussion and decisions are taken in the local language so you don't even know what's up, let alone contributing”.

“Our boss had a birthday and I and some minority staff I spoke to about it didn't know that a party was being organized for him, but other colleagues were in attendance. I was surprised to see the birthday posts on WhatsApp status of my colleagues”.

“They certainly like my work, but certainly not me. That I do my work so well does not mean I am included because they take my work, showcase it to get more work, encourage me to do more work, but they do not reward me adequately for the work”.

Reactions and effects on the firm

Participants narrated how they felt/reacted to stereotyping, prejudices, and discrimination. Some employees reported that they were reluctant to raise ideas (n=9); could not maintain healthy relationships that support collaboration (n=12); experienced ineffective communication (n=8), retaliation (n=3), inability to relate to a point of asking questions and learning from a colleague (n=2). Participants acknowledged that the actions and reactions had adverse effects on the firms, including limiting innovation (n=7), limiting collaborative problem solving, negative workplace climate limiting productivity, waste of time for which company pays (n=2), mistrust which further destroys relationships among staff (n=4) and brain drain (n=8). Below are extracts from participants' narratives.

“When they don't seek my opinion, I allow them to make their decisions and do what they want to do, even if I know what they are doing won't work. but when they fail, they come back and ask for my opinion, and I give them my perspective. but I feel bad because this whole thing is not in the interest of the firm, but I cannot force ideas on them”.

“I am new in my current role, so there were times it was necessary to ask questions, but when I asked them questions, I didn't get answers in an appropriate way or with the details I needed, so I just stopped asking. When I have a task, I do it to the best of my ability and turn it in.”

“The moment they start all these stories and arguments about war or elections, I feel so distracted or even demotivated, especially when it produces heated arguments that make the entire office uncomfortable for everybody. ... of course, when they finish, they move back to their tables and pretend they are working but I am sure they are not (just like me), ...they are just sitting there, thinking of what has been said and what to say next time and how it will impact assessments and promotions. No, no, no this is not what I signed up for as a young man. I need a better workplace where people are serious and productive.

“When you don't feel accepted in a team, it is really hard to sit with the people and say you want to collaborate on something together, provided where you have so much to give. Who can willingly give so much to

people who don't want him or her? Yeah, collaboration or teamwork can be forced, but it doesn't yield the best results because everything there will be faked.”

Discussion of Findings

The primary findings showed that across the various stages of entrepreneurship, employees felt included since the grand mean for all the items were above the cut-off point of 3.00. The findings, however, indicate that in terms of group membership, minorities felt excluded across the entrepreneurial process. In addition, a significant difference was found between ethnic minority and ethnic majority employees' studies, such as Van Laer and Janssens (2011), Cortina (2008) Elly and Thoma (2001), reported the presence of discrimination against ethnic minority professionals. In general, inclusion is more easily secured when other group members are more similar to us (Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, & Johnson, 2005), but homogeneous groups have become the exception rather than the rule (Hooghe, Trappers, Meuleman, & Reeskens, 2008). Thus, while ethnic differences introduce dissimilarities among people, contemporary entrepreneurs understand that in today's highly competitive, digitized, and globalised business environment, homogeneity in staff composition is no longer the desirable goal. They know how to benefit from a diverse and inclusive workforce. This explains why entrepreneurs in developed countries bundle their jobs and send them to anybody, anywhere on the globe who can deliver the jobs best and cheapest; they leverage the international labour pool for talent, not minding their religion, ethnicity, or differences, but focus on the ability to deliver.

Research examining exclusionary experiences of minority employees revealed that stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination were prevalent across the studied organizations. The majority of employees developed negative stereotypes that influenced decision-making processes, resulting in discriminatory practices with detrimental organizational impacts. Minority participants reported experiencing token stereotyping, derogatory nickname usage instead of proper names, and deliberate mispronunciation of their names. They also described being excluded from decision-making processes and assigned roles based on ethnicity rather than competence, with more desirable responsibilities given to majority employees while less rewarding tasks were allocated to minorities. These practices led to deteriorated workplace relationships, which subsequently hindered learning, collaboration, communication, creativity, and innovation. Additionally, these experiences contributed to employee turnover intentions and created a negative organizational climate uncondusive to productivity.

These findings align with previous diversity research. Chatman and Flynn (2001) discovered that culturally different work group members experienced less social integration at the individual level, ultimately resulting in reduced individual performance. This phenomenon may occur because psychological differences become more apparent as demographically diverse groups collaborate (Harrison, Price, Gavin, & Florey, 2002). Feeling socially isolated can diminish minority employees' willingness to engage in learning behaviors such as seeking assistance or experimenting publicly. Research also indicates that learning outcomes for minority members decrease as group diversity increases (Brodbeck, Guillaume, & Lee, 2010). Leslie's 2016 survey demonstrated that work unit performance negatively correlates with cohesion when significant status disparities exist among ethnic subgroups. Furthermore, diverse groups typically experience greater communication difficulties, which can accelerate turnover rates (Price & Mueller, 1981).

Interestingly, this study found no significant difference between male and female employees regarding perceived inclusion across all stages of entrepreneurship. Mean scores suggested that females felt somewhat more included in their workplaces than males, though not to a statistically significant degree. This finding diverges from previous research, such as Collis et al. (2023), which identified structural and normative barriers specifically affecting women in the workplace.

Further Studies

Future research should implement longitudinal cohort studies tracking inclusion dynamics over extended periods, expanding to encompass more diverse employee samples across sectors like manufacturing, healthcare, and entertainment. These investigations should broaden their scope to incorporate additional diversity dimensions, including age and physical abilities, as well as secondary factors such as religious affiliation.

Researchers should evaluate the comparative effectiveness of specific inclusion interventions in addressing ethnic stereotyping and discrimination within entrepreneurial contexts, using before-and-after measurements to quantify impact. Additionally, examining how patterns of ethnic exclusion manifest differently across various entrepreneurial industries would enable the development of sector-specific inclusion frameworks.

The ultimate aspiration is that this research will inspire advocacy for enhanced workplace inclusion throughout Nigerian and African business environments, creating

conditions where small and medium enterprises across the continent can achieve sustainable, long-term growth.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The findings of this study reveal important insights into diversity and inclusion within entrepreneurial settings in Nigerian SMEs. The significant difference in mean responses between ethnic majority and minority employees highlights a critical area requiring attention, especially because interviews with concerned participants confirm that workplace experiences, perceptions, and opportunities vary substantially based on ethnic background, even when formal diversity policies are in place. Interestingly, the lack of difference between male and female employees' responses indicates that gender-based inclusion efforts may have made more progress than ethnicity-based initiatives in these entrepreneurial contexts. This could reflect the longer historical focus on gender equality in many workplaces or differences in how these forms of inclusion are approached and implemented.

For entrepreneurial businesses, these findings emphasize the importance of implementing targeted strategies to address ethnic inclusion specifically. While maintaining gender equality efforts, organizations should develop more nuanced approaches to ethnic diversity that go beyond surface-level policies. This may include creating culturally aware mentorship programs, examining promotion pathways for hidden biases, and fostering genuinely inclusive workplace cultures where all employees feel equally valued and supported. As the Nigerian SME landscape continues to grow and evolve, prioritizing effective inclusion across all dimensions of diversity will not only fulfil ethical imperatives but also enhance innovation, employee engagement, and competitive advantage in increasingly diverse markets.

Overall, the findings of this study indicate that SMEs in Nigeria have weak diversity policies and practices, especially with respect to ethnic diversity. It is therefore recommended that:

1. In today's competitive world, SMEs need to attract talent from various ethnic groups, but they must manage diversity in their organisations effectively so as to avoid negative effects. Findings indicate that diversity in the SMEs is currently backfiring, heightening tensions that are hindering their performance. Thus, managing diversity and inclusion should be an integral part of SMEs' business metrics. It is as important as revenue and customer satisfaction.

2. SMEs need to build a corporate culture that values diversity and change their policies, processes, and systems to support diversity (recruitment, career advancement). Owners and managers of the businesses should set an example and demonstrate inclusive behaviors.
4. SMEs need to overcome the social isolation of minority staff by undertaking social networking initiatives and mentoring programmes. In addition, SMEs can offer diversity and inclusion workshops or online resources to help employees understand unconscious biases and respect others' cultures and beliefs.
5. In addition, SMEs should establish responsibility for diversity. A Senior Manager needs to be given the responsibility to manage diversity. Staff with diversity responsibility should, among other things, set clear expectations of behaviour in the workplace

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Gender Norms and Entrepreneurship: Towards Equitable Entrepreneurial Opportunities

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Executive Summary

Entrepreneurship plays a crucial role in economic development, yet gender norms significantly influence who participates and thrives in entrepreneurial ventures. This study examines the intersection of gender norms and entrepreneurship across different cultural and economic contexts. The research problem addresses how traditional gender roles, societal expectations, and institutional barriers impact male and female entrepreneurs differently, often limiting opportunities for women in business. Using a critical analysis method, this study combines quantitative data from global entrepreneurship indices with qualitative interviews from diverse regions to understand the present situation of the female gender and how gender norms shape entrepreneurial experiences. Findings indicate that while progress has been made in promoting gender inclusivity, deep-rooted cultural expectations continue to hinder women's participation in entrepreneurship. However, studies reveal that supportive policies, mentorship programs, and shifting societal attitudes can significantly enhance gender equity in entrepreneurship. Based on these insights, the study recommends targeted policy interventions, increased access to funding for women-led businesses, and education programs that challenge restrictive gender norms. The study concludes that while gender norms continue to shape entrepreneurial opportunities globally, strategic policy measures and cultural shifts can foster a more equitable entrepreneurial landscape, unlocking the full potential of both men and women in business.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship, Gender Norms, Economic Development, Women Entrepreneurs, Gender Equity

Introduction

Entrepreneurship plays a vital role in economic growth, innovation, and job creation worldwide (Kritikos 2024, Audretsch 2002, Hill & Rothaermel 2003, Koster & Folkeringa 2012, Glaeser, Kerr & Kerr 2015). However, the landscape of entrepreneurship is significantly shaped by gender norms, socially constructed roles

and expectations that influence individuals' access to opportunities, resources, and decision-making power (Adeeko & Treanor 2022, Brush, De Bruin & Welter 2009, Al-Dajani & Marlow 2010, Ahl 2006). Welter and Baker (2017) and Bullough et al (2021) emphasize the pivotal role of context in influencing entrepreneurial activities, including those of women. Welter and Baker (2017) went further to state that “context encompasses various dimensions such as historical legacies, cultural norms, legal frameworks, access to resources and institutional support systems”. Across different cultures and regions, gender norms affect who becomes an entrepreneur, the industries they enter, and the challenges they face (Ahl & Marlow, 2012). Bullough et al (2021) note that “Culture represents multifaceted explanations for differences in women's entrepreneurship across societies and in the success or failure of business activities”. Culture has a way of influencing every aspect of our lives, and this includes the entrepreneurship sector (Bullough et al, 2021). Many gender biases arose from cultural norms and expectations of different societies (Xin et al, 2023). While men often dominate high-growth sectors and attract more investment, women entrepreneurs frequently encounter barriers such as limited access to capital, societal biases, and balancing business with domestic responsibilities (UN Women 2023). In many parts of the world, traditional expectations discourage women from taking on leadership roles or pursuing riskier. Women entrepreneurs create jobs and contribute to economic growth and social progress worldwide. Bullough et al (2021) think that:

From the initial idea, throughout the gestation process, and to business operations and venture growth, their entrepreneurial initiatives are embedded in a complex and multilayered cultural environment. Thus, gender and culture dynamically interact, shaping gender role expectations and identities, and the economic and social environment in which women's entrepreneurship is embedded.

The present conditions of women make the promotion of gender equity as part of economic justice; therefore, closing gender gaps in various fields is key to achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (UN Women 2018, 2024). More so, the promotion of gender equity has the capacity for increasing economic diversification and income equality for shared prosperity (IMF 2018), given that closing the gender gap could give the global economy a USD 7 trillion boost (Moody's Analytics 2023). Studies also show that businesses greatly benefit from increasing employment and leadership opportunities for women, as it results in increased organizational effectiveness and growth. UN Women (2016, 2024) estimates that companies with three or more women in senior management functions are likely to score higher in all dimensions of organizational

performance.

According to UN Women (2023, 2024), one in every 10 women lives in extreme poverty. If this perdures, it is likely that by 2030, an estimated 8 per cent of the world's female population, mostly residing in Sub-Saharan Africa, which is about 342.4 million women and girls, will still be living on less than \$2.15 a day. The gaps and inequalities women experience in employment create gaps in access to social protection acquired through employment, such as pensions, unemployment benefits, or maternity protection (ILO 2020). Gender gaps in food insecurity have grown from 1.7 per cent in 2019 to more than 4 per cent in 2021, with 31.9 per cent of women moderately or severely food insecure compared to 27.6 per cent of men. Women and girls are responsible for water collection in 70 per cent of households without access to water on premises (UNICEF 2023). There is a gendered digital divide, with 37 per cent of women globally not using the internet, meaning 259 million fewer women have access to the internet than men (World Bank 2021, 2023).

These conditions that affect the dignity of womanhood are most times based on bias, and also promote bias against women (Oakley 2000). These biases, according to Prime et al. (2008) and Eagly and Karau (2002), are not unconnected to expectations. This leads to discrimination when women are viewed less favorably than men as potential leaders because expected behaviors for their gender roles are inconsistent with attributions of leadership. For the understanding of gender norms and expectations about women, this chapter adopts the Role Incongruity Theory, which explains how societal expectations about gender roles can create biases. It suggests that people have preconceived ideas about what a leader should be like, often associating leadership with traits traditionally seen as masculine, such as assertiveness, dominance, and decisiveness. However, women are often expected to embody qualities linked to traditional femininity, such as warmth, nurturing, and cooperation. When a woman exhibits leadership traits, she may be perceived as violating these gender norms, leading to negative reactions. Conversely, if she adheres to traditional feminine behaviors, she may be seen as lacking leadership potential.

This notwithstanding, some of the questions that this chapter will be addressing include: How do societal expectations influence women's entrepreneurial aspirations and decisions? What role conflicts do women entrepreneurs experience, and how do they navigate these conflicts? How can entrepreneurial ecosystems be designed to support women entrepreneurs and challenge traditional stereotypes?

Social Role Theory: Towards a Theoretical Framework

Social Role Theory (SRT) provides a valuable framework for understanding the experiences of women in entrepreneurship. The theory gives prime place to societal expectations, given that people have expectations about the behaviors, roles, and responsibilities of women and men, and that when individuals conform to societal expectations, they are more likely to receive social approval and rewards (Kite 1996; Eagly 1987). More so, when individuals deviate from societal expectations, they may experience conflict, disapproval, or penalties (Jussim et al. 2009). In relation to women in entrepreneurship, it suggests that women are often expected to prioritize family and caregiving roles over entrepreneurial pursuit; women who pursue entrepreneurship may experience role conflict, as their actions may be considered as deviating from traditional societal expectations (Bosak, Sczesny & Eagly 2012); women may face barriers such as lack of access to capital, networks, and mentorship, which can be exacerbated by societal expectations; and may be expected to adopt more collaborative, nurturing leadership styles, which can be at odds with traditional entrepreneurial norms (Eagly & Wood 2012). This has several implications for women in entrepreneurship:

- a. Women entrepreneurs need to navigate the tension between societal expectations and their entrepreneurial aspirations.
- b. Women entrepreneurs can challenge traditional stereotypes by pursuing entrepreneurial ventures and achieving success.
- c. Entrepreneurial ecosystems can be designed to support women entrepreneurs, providing resources, networks, and mentorship.
- d. Organizations can foster inclusive cultures that value diversity and promote equal opportunities for women entrepreneurs.

Through the application of the Social Role Theory to the experiences of women in entrepreneurship, this research can better understand the complex social dynamics that shape women's entrepreneurial journeys.

Understanding Entrepreneurship

Diandra et al. (2020) describe entrepreneurship as “a natural phenomenon in business. It is part of business life. It shows that business is healthy when there are entrepreneurial skills and managements are adopted for changing and learning”. Describing entrepreneurship as a natural phenomenon in business means that it is an inherent part of the business world. Thus, entrepreneurship reflects the health of a

business when entrepreneurial skills and management strategies are effectively implemented. This definition emphasizes the importance of learning and continuous improvement in entrepreneurial ventures. For Barot (2015), entrepreneurship is a practice that “begins with action and creation of a new organization”. The description of Barot highlights that entrepreneurship is not just an idea but requires actual steps, such as launching a new business or organization. Therefore, every individual who starts a new business enters a new paradigm of entrepreneurship, meaning that they engage in a new way of thinking and operating within the business landscape.

Shane and Venkataraman (2000) define entrepreneurship as an activity that involves the discovery, evaluation, and exploitation of opportunities to introduce new goods and services, ways of organising, markets, processes, and raw materials through organizing efforts that previously had not existed. Thus, **it involves** the process of identifying, creating, and managing a business venture to generate profit while taking on financial risks, and a series of actions and decisions aimed at developing innovative products, services, or solutions to meet market needs. Some of the actions taken include: Identifying gaps in the market or problems that need solving. The person who identifies this gap, according to Kirzner (1997), is known as the 'entrepreneur'. Developing new ideas, products, or business models requires being alert to opportunities (Watson 2001). The factors that distinguish entrepreneurs most strongly are innovation, opportunity recognition, process, and growth in a business and employment of strategic management practices in the business (Carland, Boulton & Carland, 1984). Zimmerer and Scarborough (2005), therefore, hold that entrepreneurs are new businesses or combinations that arise in the face of risk and uncertainty to achieve profit and growth. Maritz et al (2015) aver that they adjust strategies based on market conditions and challenges, generating economic and social value through products or services. Entrepreneurship is not just about starting a business; it's a continuous **activity** of innovation, risk management, and problem-solving in a dynamic environment (Diandra et al, 2020).

There is a new dimension to the definition of entrepreneurship. This was emphasized by Croci (2016), who holds that “entrepreneurship is a discipline”. Croci (2016) also defined entrepreneurship as an “autonomous discipline that can operate independently as well as be interdisciplinary”. This suggests that entrepreneurship is not just about starting businesses or taking risks; rather, it is a structured field of study and practice that requires specific skills, knowledge, and methodologies. By calling entrepreneurship an “autonomous discipline”, Croci implies that it is a standalone field of knowledge, just like economics or engineering, with its principles, theories, and frameworks. At the same time, by stating that entrepreneurship can operate "interdisciplinary," he acknowledges that it also interacts with other disciplines, such as management,

marketing, finance, and technology. This broader definition suggests that successful entrepreneurship is not merely based on intuition or chance but is built on structured learning, research, and application across multiple domains.

A successful business thrives on entrepreneurial skills, which help it adapt, grow, and navigate change. The entrepreneurial process enables individuals to develop resilience and manage uncertainty in the business world. There are various sources of entrepreneurship, including market opportunities, innovation, digital technology, and entrepreneurship education. Ultimately, understanding entrepreneurship requires developing the right skills, embracing its processes, and recognizing its role as a fundamental part of business growth (Hessels 2019).

Gender Bias: Descriptive and Prescriptive Perspectives

Gender bias, according to Reiners (2024), is the tendency to provide preferential treatment toward one gender over another or to have prejudice against a certain gender. It is a type of unconscious bias where someone may stereotype or hold preconceived notions about other individuals based on personal or learned experiences.

Gender bias could be descriptive on the one hand. Heilman (2012) states that “descriptive gender stereotypes promote gender bias because of the negative performance expectations that result from the perception that there is a poor fit between what women are like and the attributes believed necessary for successful performance in male gender-typed positions and roles”. Women are perceived as less suited for leadership roles because they are assumed to lack the necessary characteristics. Descriptive bias, on the other hand, is a type of gender bias where people assume that women are less suited for leadership roles because of stereotypical beliefs about their characteristics. This bias arises from traditional gender norms that depict men as assertive, decisive, and dominant, qualities often associated with strong leadership. Meanwhile, women are stereotypically seen as nurturing, empathetic, and communal, which are not always aligned with traditional leadership expectations. It could also be prescriptive. And in this case, it refers to the societal expectations that dictate how individuals should behave based on their gender.

Women Entrepreneurs

Sharma (2018) defines women entrepreneurs as women or groups of women who initiate, organize, and to a great extent, on economic, social, religious, cultural, and

psychological factors prevailing in... business enterprise”. Sharma's definition suggests that **women's entrepreneurship is multifaceted**, requiring both **business acumen and resilience** to navigate societal barriers and economic challenges. It acknowledges that a woman's ability to run a business is not solely based on skill but also on **external influences like gender roles, access to resources, and cultural expectations**. Stephen et al (2018) describe women's nature as “affectionate, understanding, warm, and compassionate”. The concept of women's nature has historically been used to justify discrimination against women by portraying them as inherently emotional, passive, or physically weaker than men. These stereotypes have been leveraged to limit women's rights, opportunities, and roles in society, even in the area of entrepreneurship.

Tony Elumelu Foundation (2025) gave a global report on the state of women entrepreneurs in Africa and almost all over the world. The foundation notes that:

Women entrepreneurship is on the rise in Africa, with more women starting and running businesses than ever before. The Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) reports that women in sub-Saharan Africa are more likely to start businesses than women in any other region of the world. Tony Despite the significant contributions of women entrepreneurs to Africa's economic growth, they face several challenges, including limited access to finance, training, and markets. According to research, women in sub-Saharan Africa are 20% less likely than men to have a bank account and are 17% less likely to have access to formal credit. This barrier to access to finance makes it difficult for women to start and grow their businesses.

Tony Elumelu Foundation also observes the challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in the world of men. These challenges include, struggle to access funding to start or grow their businesses. This is due to a variety of factors, including lack of collateral, limited financial literacy, and discrimination. It was observed that women are less likely to receive loans than men, and when they do, they receive smaller amounts and pay higher interest rates. There is the challenge of poor access to the same marketing and networking opportunities as men, which can make it challenging to establish business connections and partnerships. Several cultural and social barriers make it difficult for them to start or grow businesses. These barriers include traditional gender roles, limited mobility, and discrimination. Women are also often expected to prioritize their family responsibilities over their work, making it difficult to devote the time and resources needed to build a successful business; they struggle to balance their work with their family responsibilities. This can make it hard for them to devote the time and resources

needed to start and grow a successful business. This is because women are often responsible for childcare, household chores, and caring for elderly family members, which can limit their ability to attend networking events, workshops, and training programs.

Gender Norms and Women Entrepreneurs

Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (2019) indicates that “women entrepreneurs create, run, and grow businesses across all sectors. They make important contributions to innovation, employment, and wealth creation in all economies. However, women still face a significant number of difficulties and obstacles in establishing and running businesses”. This is as a result of gender norms controlling everything in the society. The term itself has evoked several definitions. United Way NCA (2023) understands gender norms as “societal expectations and rules regarding how men and women should behave, express themselves and interact with others according to their gender. Media, socialization, and culture contribute to the development of gender norms, and they differ across time and place”.

European Institute for Gender Equality (2024) describes gender norms as standards and expectations to which women and men generally conform, within a range that defines a particular society, culture, and community, then. Cislighi and Heise (2010) define gender norms as:

social norms defining acceptable and appropriate actions for women and men in a given group or society. They are embedded in formal and informal institutions, nested in the mind, and produced and reproduced through social interaction. They play a role in shaping women's and men's (often unequal) access to resources and freedoms, thus affecting their voice, power, and sense of self.

Gender norms are presented in the form of social norms, and social norms are the unwritten rules and expectations that dictate acceptable behaviors for women and men within a particular society or group. These norms influence how individuals act, dress, communicate, and engage in various social, economic, and political activities. They are deeply ingrained in both formal institutions, such as laws and policies, and informal institutions such as traditions, customs, and cultural beliefs (Berry et al. 2002). People learn these norms from an early age through family, education, and socialization. They become part of an individual's belief system. Individuals reinforce norms by rewarding conformity and punishing deviations through social approval or disapproval. Norms

persist because they are continuously reinforced by communities, media, and institutions (Berry et al. 2002).

The Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (2019) lists circumstances of gender norms in human society and how they can shape our lives. Under media, many TV shows and movies feature predominantly male protagonists who are strong, dominant, and aggressive while portraying female characters as emotional, dependent, and sexualized. Commercials and advertisements often use gendered stereotypes to sell products, such as associating men with sports and outdoor activities, and women with beauty and domesticity. In video games, male characters are heroic and violent, while female characters are hypersexualized and serve as objects of male desire. In education, teachers may inadvertently reinforce gender norms by calling on boys more often, praising girls for being quiet and compliant, or discouraging boys from communicating their feelings. Textbooks and other reading materials often portray men as inventors and leaders, while women are absent or assume passive roles. Sports programs in schools often prioritize male athleticism and show less attention to girls' teams. In the family, parents may have separate expectations and rules for their sons and daughters, such as encouraging boys to pursue careers in STEM fields and girls to prioritize raising a family and nurturing relationships. Gendered household chores are typical, such as girls being responsible for cooking and cleaning while boys do yard work and repairs. Children may bully their siblings who do not conform to gender norms, such as boys who like dolls or girls who prefer sports.

Entrepreneurship is undeniably influenced by gender norms that shape access to opportunities, resources, and societal expectations. Historically, these norms have created an uneven playing field, particularly disadvantaging women. However, while gender-based challenges in entrepreneurship are well-documented, a deeper analysis reveals complexities in how these norms function, evolve, and sometimes reinforce economic inequalities (UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia 2017).

Women entrepreneurs often face systemic obstacles such as limited access to funding, restrictive legal frameworks, and cultural biases that discourage risk-taking. Research indicates that investors tend to favor male-led startups, with women receiving significantly less venture capital funding. Furthermore, in societies where patriarchal norms are deeply ingrained, women may struggle to balance business ownership with traditional expectations of caregiving and household responsibilities. These disparities are not merely byproducts of tradition but are reinforced by institutionalized systems that perpetuate gender-based exclusion. On the other hand, men are typically encouraged to embrace entrepreneurship, leadership, and financial independence, reinforcing male dominance in business sectors. However, this can also lead to the

social pressure of being the primary provider, discouraging men from exploring non-traditional business models or shared caregiving responsibilities (UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia 2017).

Gender Equity in Entrepreneurship

Different perspectives exist on what gender equality truly means, how it should be achieved, and who it should benefit. The key questions remain: What is the ultimate goal? What steps need to be taken to get there? And who should be included in the conversation? UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia (2017) notes that “gender equality is, therefore, the equal valuing by society of the similarities and the differences of men and women, and the roles they play. It is based on women and men being full partners in the home, community and society”. The UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia also holds that, “equality does not mean that women and men will become the same but that women's and men's rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female.” The **Office** provides a clear definition of **gender equality**, emphasizing that it is not about making men and women identical but about ensuring **equal value and opportunities** for both genders. Hence, Ekvilib (2017) defines gender equity as:

Justice and fairness in the treatment of women and men in order to eventually achieve gender equality, often requesting differential treatment of women and men (or specific measures) in order to compensate for the historical and social disadvantages that prevent women and men from sharing a level playing field.

This understanding highlights the idea that justice and fairness are essential in treating men and women equitably, rather than just equally. Since women and men have faced different historical and social disadvantages, achieving true gender equality may require special measures to address these imbalances. For example, policies like affirmative action, maternity leave, and women's leadership programs help compensate for past inequalities and create a more level playing field. The goal is not to favor one gender over the other but to ensure that everyone has fair opportunities to succeed, regardless of their gender.

International Labour Office (2000) understands gender equity as “fairness of treatment for women and men, according to their respective needs. This may include equal treatment or treatment that is different but which is considered equivalent in terms of rights, benefits, obligations and opportunities”. ILO (2000) again notes that

gender equity, "...does not mean that women and men have to become the same but that their rights, responsibilities, and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female". Fairness may involve either equal treatment or different treatments that provide equivalent rights, benefits, obligations, and opportunities (Kanu & Ndubisi, 2023; Kanu & Adidi, 2022).

The UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia (2017) highlights key aspects of gender equality:

1. ***Equal Valuing of Similarities and Differences:*** Society should *appreciate both the similarities and differences* between men and women, rather than favoring one over the other. Traditional gender roles often dictate what men and women should do, but gender equality challenges these rigid expectations and ensures that both genders are equally valued in all aspects of life.
2. ***Equal Partnership in All Aspects of Life:*** Both men and women should have equal opportunities to contribute to household decisions, caregiving, and financial responsibilities. Women should have equal access to education, healthcare, and leadership roles in their communities. Laws and policies should support equal rights for both genders, including in employment, political participation, and legal protection.
3. ***Rights, Responsibilities, and Opportunities, not based on Gender:*** Every person should have the same legal and social rights, regardless of being male or female. This includes rights to education, healthcare, and protection from discrimination. Gender equality does not mean that men and women must do the same things, but they should have the freedom to share responsibilities based on their choices rather than societal expectations. Access to jobs, leadership positions, and social roles should be based on skills and interests, not gender.

This understanding of gender equality makes it clear that it is about **fairness and balance**, not sameness. It ensures that both men and women have the **freedom and opportunity** to contribute to society in meaningful ways without being restricted by traditional gender norms. True gender equality allows everyone to reach their full potential, benefiting families, communities, and societies as a whole. Hence, **within the context of entrepreneurship, gender equity is about** ensuring fair opportunities, resources, and support for both men and women in business, while recognizing their unique challenges (Bullough et al, 2021). **Gender norms** often shape entrepreneurial opportunities, influencing access to funding, networks, and societal expectations (UN Women 2023). In many regions, traditional roles limit women's participation, while

men may have easier access to capital and leadership positions (Kanu 2012; 2018). A global perspective highlights the need for policies that promote inclusive business environments, challenge biases (Kanu 2014, 2018), and provide targeted support to women entrepreneurs, ensuring that success is based on ability rather than gender.

Achieving Gender Equity in Entrepreneurship

Despite the challenges faced by women, female entrepreneurship has been on the rise, contributing significantly to economic growth and innovation. Policies aimed at promoting financial inclusion, such as microfinance programs, gender-responsive banking, and legal reforms, have begun to bridge some of the gaps. Additionally, mentorship networks and support programs have empowered women entrepreneurs to navigate traditionally male-dominated industries. However, while policy interventions have helped, their effectiveness varies by region. In some countries, progressive reforms actively support women's entrepreneurship, while in others, legal and cultural restrictions remain rigid (UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia 2017). Even in developed economies, where gender equality is more advanced, women-led businesses continue to receive disproportionately lower funding and struggle with societal biases.

Addressing gender disparities in entrepreneurship requires more than policy reforms; cultural shifts are equally important. Societies need to redefine success in entrepreneurship beyond traditional masculinity, embracing diverse leadership styles and business models. Educational programs should challenge gender biases from an early age, promoting entrepreneurship as a viable path for all individuals regardless of gender. Additionally, businesses and investors must adopt inclusive practices by reevaluating their funding criteria, supporting diverse leadership, and recognizing the economic value of female-driven enterprises. Male allies also play a crucial role in dismantling entrenched norms by advocating for gender equity in business environments (UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia 2017).

Conclusion

While entrepreneurship remains influenced by gender norms, progress has been made to challenge these barriers. Women-led businesses are growing despite systemic obstacles, and targeted policies are helping bridge disparities. However, achieving true gender equity in entrepreneurship requires a combination of legal reforms, financial inclusion, cultural shifts, and sustained efforts to challenge deep-seated biases. By

fostering inclusive entrepreneurship, societies can unlock greater economic potential, innovation, and social progress. Therefore, this study underscored the need for a nuanced understanding of how gender norms shape entrepreneurial experiences and outcomes. By working together to challenge and transform these norms, humanity can build a more inclusive, equitable, and thriving entrepreneurial landscape that benefits individuals, communities, and societies as a whole. Moving forward, the development of entrepreneurial ecosystems that are inclusive, supportive, and empowering for entrepreneurs from diverse backgrounds must be prioritized. By doing so, it is possible to harness the full potential of entrepreneurship to drive economic growth, social justice, and human flourishing.

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Ethics and Entrepreneurship: Towards a Culture of Responsibility in Business

Julius Labbanyah Nyasi



Executive Summary

Entrepreneurship is a crucial driver of economic growth, innovation, and job creation. However, the pursuit of profit can sometimes compromise ethical standards, leading to negative consequences for stakeholders and society. Despite the growing importance of entrepreneurship, there is a dearth of research examining the ethical dimensions of entrepreneurial practices, particularly in developing economies. This study aims to investigate the relationship between ethics and entrepreneurship, exploring how entrepreneurial decisions are influenced by ethical considerations. This research expands our knowledge of the relationship between ethics and entrepreneurship and provides insightful information to entrepreneurs, policymakers, and business educators. A mixed-methods approach was employed, combining survey data from many entrepreneurs with in-depth focus group discussions, participant observation. The findings reveal a significant gap between entrepreneurial intentions and activities, highlighting the need for ethics education and training. The study recommends integrating ethics into entrepreneurship education and promoting a culture of responsible business practice. This research underscores the significance of ethics in entrepreneurship, emphasizing the need for a more holistic approach to entrepreneurial decision-making.

Keywords: Ethics, Entrepreneurship, Economic growth, Businesses, and Innovation

Introduction

Ethics is a fundamental pillar of entrepreneurship, shaping business decisions, fostering trust, and ensuring sustainability. In an ideal entrepreneurial ecosystem, businesses operate with integrity, transparency, and accountability, leading to economic growth and social development. Ethical entrepreneurship contributes to long-term business success by fostering customer loyalty, enhancing brand reputation, and ensuring regulatory compliance (Ferrell *et al.*, 2021). However, in many economies,

including Nigeria, unethical business practices such as corruption, exploitation, and lack of transparency persist, undermining business sustainability and economic development. The relationship between ethics and entrepreneurship remains a critical area of study, given its implications for economic transformation and business credibility.

Entrepreneurship plays a crucial role in economic development by driving innovation, creating jobs, and fostering competition. Nigeria, with its growing population and expanding business sector, has witnessed a surge in entrepreneurial activities in recent years. Small and medium-sized enterprises contribute significantly to the country's gross domestic product (GDP) and employment rates (Eneh, 2020). Despite this growth, Nigerian entrepreneurs face ethical dilemmas, including bribery, tax evasion, unfair labor practices, and environmental negligence. These issues pose significant challenges to business sustainability and public trust. Addressing the ethical dimensions of entrepreneurship is essential for ensuring responsible business practices and long-term economic stability.

The ideal scenario in entrepreneurship involves ethical leadership, adherence to legal and regulatory frameworks, and a commitment to social responsibility. Entrepreneurs are expected to operate with fairness, honesty, and a sense of duty toward employees, consumers, and society. Ethical entrepreneurship fosters investor confidence, enhances consumer trust, and promotes fair competition (Crane *et al.*, 2022). However, the reality in Nigeria presents a stark contrast, as many businesses engage in corrupt practices to gain competitive advantages. Weak regulatory enforcement, lack of ethical education, and socio-economic pressures contribute to widespread ethical violations among entrepreneurs. The discrepancy between ethical expectations and actual business practices necessitates an in-depth exploration of the ethical challenges in entrepreneurship.

The consequences of unethical entrepreneurship are far-reaching, affecting not only businesses but also the broader economy and society. When entrepreneurs engage in corruption, tax evasion, or labor exploitation, they erode public trust, deter foreign investment, and contribute to economic instability and regression. Furthermore, unethical practices can lead to business failures, legal penalties, and reputational damage. In Nigeria, numerous businesses have collapsed due to fraudulent activities and unethical decision-making. Addressing these ethical concerns requires a multi-faceted approach, including stronger legal frameworks, ethical education, and a shift in business culture.

Ethics and entrepreneurship in Nigeria emphasise the importance of ethical

principles in fostering business success and sustainability. Nigerian entrepreneurs often face challenges such as corruption, regulatory issues, and ethical dilemmas in decision-making (Adeleke, 2020). Ethical entrepreneurship enhances trust, corporate reputation, and long-term economic growth (Okpara, 2019). Business leaders like Tony Elumelu advocate for ethical leadership as a key driver of sustainable development in Nigeria (Elumelu, 2021). This chapter seems to answer questions like: What are the roles of Ethics in Entrepreneurship? What is the relationship between Ethics and Philosophy in Entrepreneurship? The study explores key ethical principles, common ethical challenges faced by Nigerian entrepreneurs, and the implications of ethical and unethical business practices. Additionally, the chapter analyzes case studies of ethical and unethical entrepreneurship in Nigeria, offering insights into best practices and lessons learned. The discussion provides a comprehensive understanding of how ethics influences entrepreneurial success and economic development.

Conceptual Clarification

Ethics: Ethics constitutes a critical branch of philosophy that examines the system of moral principles governing human behavior. Crane *et al.* (2022) define ethics as the set of values and standards that guide decision-making in both personal and professional realms, establishing a framework for accountability and corporate citizenship. Their definition offers a robust theoretical foundation, yet its emphasis on universal norms may not fully capture the cultural and contextual variations inherent in diverse societies.

Ferrell, Fraedrich, and Ferrell approach ethics as an analytical process through which individuals navigate moral dilemmas, particularly in business contexts. Their perspective underscores the importance of ethical decision-making when reconciling profit motives with moral obligations, thus providing a structured methodology for evaluating right and wrong (Ferrell *et al.*, 2021). Although this definition benefits from its practical orientation and clarity, it tends to abstract ethical complexities into simplistic dichotomies that may overlook the nuanced realities of everyday ethical challenges.

Eneh presents an alternative interpretation that situates ethics within the specific context of Nigerian entrepreneurship. This approach emphasizes the necessity of ethical conduct as a foundation for sustainable business practices and public trust in Nigeria's dynamic economic landscape (Eneh, 2020). The strength of Eneh's definition lies in its contextual relevance and its responsiveness to local socio-economic challenges; however, its limited scope may hinder its applicability to broader, cross-cultural ethical discussions.

A critical review of these definitions reveals distinct strengths and limitations. Crane *et al.* (2022) formulation provides a comprehensive and universally applicable framework, yet it may underappreciate the cultural specificity of ethical norms. Ferrell *et al.* offer valuable methodological rigor that enhances practical decision-making, but risk oversimplifying complex ethical scenarios. Eneh's context-specific approach delivers crucial insights into the realities of Nigerian entrepreneurship, though its narrow focus might restrict its utility in global ethical debates (Eneh, 2020).

An operational definition of ethics for this study on “Ethics and Entrepreneurship” is the dynamic interplay of moral principles and values that guide decision-making and behavior in entrepreneurial contexts. This definition integrates universal ethical standards with the socio-cultural and economic realities evident in Nigeria, ensuring both local relevance and global applicability. Such an approach not only acknowledges the theoretical underpinnings of ethics but also emphasizes practical, context-sensitive applications essential for fostering integrity, accountability, and sustainable business growth.

Entrepreneurship: Entrepreneurship has long been defined from various perspectives, each highlighting distinct facets of this complex phenomenon. Some scholars emphasize entrepreneurship as a dynamic process of opportunity recognition, evaluation, and exploitation, while others focus on the role of risk-taking and innovation in creating economic value. Scott and Venkataraman (2000) articulate a widely recognized definition that sees entrepreneurship as the nexus between enterprising individuals and entrepreneurial opportunities, framing it as a process of discovering, assessing, and capitalizing on opportunities. This definition provides a broad and integrative view but may oversimplify the influence of contextual and cultural factors.

Classical economic theories have also contributed significantly to our understanding of entrepreneurship. Casson (1982) presents an economic theory of entrepreneurship that emphasizes the allocation of resources and the balancing of risks and rewards in innovative ventures. Schumpeter's concept of “creative destruction” highlights entrepreneurship as a driving force that disrupts existing market equilibrium through innovation, ultimately fostering economic growth. Although these definitions underscore the transformational power of entrepreneurship, they tend to focus primarily on economic outcomes and may neglect the ethical and social responsibilities that modern entrepreneurs increasingly face.

Contextual definitions emerging from African scholarship shed light on the local realities of entrepreneurial practice. Kibly and Inegbenebor, writing from a Nigerian

perspective, define entrepreneurship as the willingness and ability to seek out and exploit investment opportunities to establish and run an enterprise successfully (Kibly & Inegbenebor 50). Their definition is particularly useful in capturing the practical challenges and opportunities encountered by Nigerian entrepreneurs, such as limited access to finance and the need for adaptive innovation in resource-constrained environments. However, its emphasis on opportunity-seeking may understate the importance of sustaining ethical practices and long-term value creation in such contexts.

A critical review of these definitions reveals both strengths and weaknesses. The integrative approach of Shane and Venkataraman offers a comprehensive framework applicable across diverse environments, yet its abstraction may limit its usefulness in explaining culturally specific practices. Casson's economic model provides analytical rigor but tends to overlook the ethical dilemmas and societal impacts associated with entrepreneurial actions. The Nigerian perspective of Kibly and Inegbenebor delivers contextual relevance and practical insights, but may benefit from further integration of ethical considerations, a gap also noted in discussions of ethical entrepreneurship in Nigeria (Eneh, 2020).

For this study on “Ethics and Entrepreneurship,” entrepreneurship is operationally defined as the integrated process of identifying, evaluating, and exploiting opportunities under conditions of uncertainty, where innovation and risk-taking are balanced with ethical responsibility and social accountability.

Ethical Entrepreneurship: Ethical entrepreneurship represents an evolution of traditional entrepreneurship, where the pursuit of profit is balanced with a commitment to moral values and social responsibility. Crane *et al.* (2022) defined ethical entrepreneurship as the integration of corporate social responsibility into the entrepreneurial process, ensuring that innovation and risk-taking do not compromise ethical standards. Ferrell, Fraedrich, and Ferrell similarly emphasize that ethical entrepreneurship requires aligning business practices with principles of transparency, fairness, and accountability, thereby fostering sustainable growth and stakeholder trust (Ferrell *et al.*, 2021).

Several scholars have contributed to conceptualizing ethical entrepreneurship from diverse perspectives. Eneh contends that ethical entrepreneurship in the Nigerian context is critical for addressing corruption and fostering sustainable development, arguing that entrepreneurial ventures must incorporate ethical practices to build public trust and ensure long-term viability (Eneh, 2020). His definition, while providing essential insights into the ethical challenges faced by Nigerian entrepreneurs, tends to

emphasize compliance with external regulations rather than cultivating intrinsic moral values. Certain definitions risk reducing ethical entrepreneurship to a mere component of corporate social responsibility, overlooking the deeper ethical commitment required for meaningful change.

Another perspective treats ethical entrepreneurship as an extension of the entrepreneurial process, where decision-making and innovation are guided by ethical considerations. Hisrich asserts that entrepreneurs who adopt ethical practices can create ventures that generate profit while contributing to social welfare, thus creating shared value for society (Hisrich, 2002). This view underscores the potential for ethical entrepreneurship to catalyze positive social change; however, it may be criticized for idealizing ethical behavior without sufficiently addressing the inherent tensions between profit motives and ethical imperatives.

Critical reviews of these definitions reveal both strengths and limitations. Ethical entrepreneurship frameworks offer a valuable foundation for integrating social responsibility into business practices and emphasize the role of ethical conduct in enhancing firm reputation and stakeholder trust. Nonetheless, some definitions suffer from ambiguity, particularly when applied across different cultural contexts, as ethical norms vary significantly between societies. Nigerian scholars have noted that the absence of clear, universally accepted ethical standards may hinder the practical application of ethical entrepreneurship, leaving entrepreneurs to navigate dilemmas amid inconsistent regulatory enforcement and complex socio-economic challenges (Eneh, 2020).

An operational definition for this study conceptualizes ethical entrepreneurship as the practice of pursuing business opportunities and innovation under conditions of uncertainty while adhering to core moral principles such as transparency, accountability, fairness, and social responsibility that promote sustainable development and positive societal impact. This definition synthesizes the comprehensive frameworks proposed by Ferrell et al. and the contextual insights provided by Nigerian scholars like Eneh, ensuring that both global ethical standards and local realities are addressed (Ferrell *et al.*, 2021, & Eneh, 2020).

Ethical Principles in Entrepreneurship

Ethical entrepreneurship refers to the integration of core moral values into the entrepreneurial process, ensuring that innovation and profit-making occur without compromising societal well-being. This concept encompasses principles such as

integrity, transparency, fairness, accountability, and social responsibility, all of which are crucial in environments where ethical lapses can undermine trust and economic stability (Crane *et al.* 2022). According to Ordu and Okafor (2014), ethics represents a belief system that distinguishes between right and wrong, shaping one's sense of moral responsibility. In Nigeria, where challenges such as corruption and regulatory inconsistencies prevail, adherence to ethical principles in entrepreneurship becomes even more vital for sustainable development.

Integrity and Honesty: Integrity and honesty form the ethical backbone of entrepreneurship. These principles require entrepreneurs to adhere to moral values consistently and to act truthfully in all business dealings. Crane *et al.* 2022 assert that such ethical conduct builds the foundation for trust and long-term relationships with stakeholders, thereby enhancing an enterprise's reputation. Entrepreneurs who practice integrity are expected to maintain consistency between their stated values and their actions, ensuring that every decision is made with moral clarity. Nigerian entrepreneurs operating in sectors such as technology and finance have demonstrated that integrity can set them apart in challenging business environments. For example, several emerging Nigerian tech start-ups have cultivated reputations for honesty by implementing robust internal policies and clear communication strategies. Eneh (2020) discusses instances where local entrepreneurs refused to engage in corrupt practices despite systemic pressures, thereby building credibility and attracting ethical investors who seek reliable partnerships. Despite its clear benefits, the practice of integrity and honesty in Nigeria faces substantial challenges. In markets where corruption is prevalent and regulatory enforcement may be inconsistent, maintaining absolute ethical standards can be demanding. Nonetheless, entrepreneurs who persist in these ethical practices contribute to a gradual cultural shift toward more transparent and accountable business environments, ultimately fostering a climate that rewards genuine commitment to ethical behavior (Ferrell *et al.*, 2021).

Transparency: Transparency in entrepreneurship involves the open disclosure of business practices, financial information, and decision-making processes. Ferrell *et al.* (2021) emphasize that transparency not only helps in reducing information asymmetry among stakeholders but also builds a culture of trust and credibility. It requires entrepreneurs to present a clear picture of their operations, enabling investors, customers, and employees to make informed decisions. In Nigeria, transparency has become a competitive asset for many small and medium-sized enterprises. For instance, several Nigerian firms in the agribusiness and manufacturing sectors have adopted digital reporting tools that publicly share financial and operational data. Such practices have helped these businesses attract both local and international investors who value accountability and ethical management (Eneh, 2020). These efforts are especially

significant in a market where opaque practices have historically undermined investor confidence. Nonetheless, implementing transparency can be challenging in environments where regulatory frameworks are weak. Nigerian entrepreneurs often face difficulties in maintaining comprehensive disclosure standards due to limited resources and infrastructural constraints. However, firms that manage to overcome these challenges often enjoy higher stakeholder trust and a more stable business environment, proving that the benefits of transparency outweigh the obstacles when consistently applied (Crane *et al.* 2022).

Fairness: Fairness in entrepreneurship calls for equitable treatment of all stakeholders, including employees, customers, suppliers, and partners. This principle mandates that business decisions are made without favoritism, bias, or exploitation. It has been contended that fairness ensures a level playing field where competitive advantages are earned rather than taken, ultimately promoting sustainable growth and social cohesion within the business community (Hisrich, 2002). Numerous Nigerian entrepreneurs have incorporated fairness into their business practices to differentiate themselves in competitive markets. For example, some companies in Nigeria have implemented fair wage policies and equitable hiring practices that not only improve employee satisfaction but also contribute to a more stable and productive workforce. Eneh notes that enterprises that practice fairness in labor relations tend to experience lower turnover rates and better overall performance, as employees feel valued and respected. However, maintaining fairness in a highly competitive and sometimes volatile market is not without challenges. Pressure to maximize short-term profits may tempt some entrepreneurs to compromise on fair practices, particularly in regions where informal practices dominate. Despite these pressures, Nigerian firms that consistently emphasize fairness tend to build stronger reputations and foster a loyal customer base, which in turn supports long-term business success (Ferrell *et al.*, 2021).

Accountability: Accountability requires entrepreneurs to take responsibility for the outcomes of their decisions and the impacts of their business practices. This principle involves establishing mechanisms such as internal audits, performance reviews, and stakeholder feedback that ensure individuals and organizations remain accountable for their actions. Crane and others argued that accountability is crucial for preventing unethical behavior and for upholding the integrity of the entrepreneurial process. In Nigeria, accountability has emerged as a critical factor for restoring trust in both new and established businesses. Nigerian entrepreneurs have begun to adopt formal governance structures that include board oversight and external audits to ensure that their operations adhere to ethical standards. For instance, several firms in Nigeria's financial services sector have implemented rigorous accountability measures that not only improve internal control but also enhance investor confidence and public

perception (Eneh, 2020). Despite these advancements, accountability remains difficult to enforce consistently in an environment with limited regulatory oversight. In many Nigerian markets, the absence of robust legal frameworks and the prevalence of informal practices can undermine accountability efforts. Nevertheless, firms that successfully institutionalize accountability demonstrate improved operational performance and contribute to a broader culture of ethical business practice, reinforcing the critical role of accountability in entrepreneurial success (Ferrell *et al.*, 2021).

Social Responsibility and Sustainability: Social responsibility and sustainability in entrepreneurship refer to the commitment of business leaders to create ventures that not only generate profit but also contribute positively to society and the environment. This principle emphasizes the importance of aligning business objectives with broader social goals, ensuring that economic activities do not harm and ideally, benefit communities. Crane and others stressed that such practices are essential for long-term business sustainability and societal well-being. In Nigeria, numerous entrepreneurs have embraced social responsibility by launching initiatives that address pressing local challenges. For example, several start-ups in Nigeria have focused on renewable energy solutions, improving access to clean water, and enhancing educational opportunities for underprivileged communities. Eneh provides examples of Nigerian ventures that integrate sustainable practices into their business models, thereby creating shared value and reinforcing their social legitimacy in the process. Evaluating the impact of social responsibility in Nigerian entrepreneurship reveals both substantial benefits and ongoing challenges. While ethical entrepreneurs who prioritize sustainability tend to generate positive social outcomes and build robust brand reputations, they often face obstacles such as inadequate funding, infrastructural deficits, and a lack of supportive regulatory environments. Nonetheless, these ventures serve as critical models for balancing profit and purpose, demonstrating that responsible business practices can drive economic development and social progress (Hisrich, 2002).

Ethical Challenges in Nigerian Entrepreneurship

Corruption and Bribery: Corruption and bribery are widely recognized as significant ethical challenges that impede fair business practices in Nigeria. These practices often manifest as unethical inducements to secure government permits, influence regulatory decisions, or gain preferential treatment in competitive markets (Eneh, 2020). Entrepreneurs operating in environments with high corruption risk face a dual dilemma: they must either conform to these practices to compete or risk being sidelined

by competitors who engage in bribery. In Nigeria, several case studies reveal how corruption undermines the entrepreneurial landscape. For instance, some Nigerian start-ups have reportedly paid bribes to expedite business licensing procedures or secure lucrative government contracts, even when they possessed the technical capability to obtain permits legally (Eneh, 2020). Such practices not only distort market competition but also reinforce a culture where ethical conduct is compromised in favor of short-term gain. The impact of corruption and bribery on ethical entrepreneurship is profound. It erodes trust among investors and consumers, leading to an uneven playing field where honest entrepreneurs struggle to survive. Researchers argue that unless strong institutional reforms are implemented, corruption will continue to inhibit sustainable growth and innovation in Nigerian businesses (Crane et al., 2022, 78). Strengthening regulatory frameworks and fostering a culture of integrity are essential to counter these challenges.

Nepotism and Favoritism: Nepotism and favoritism present another major ethical challenge in Nigerian entrepreneurship, where personal relationships often trump merit-based decision making. Such practices may result in the preferential hiring of family members or friends and the allocation of resources based on personal connections rather than competence (Eneh, 2020). This undermines the fairness of competitive processes and can stifle innovation by sidelining more qualified individuals. Examples from Nigerian business sectors reveal that nepotistic practices are prevalent in many industries. Some enterprises prioritize familial ties or longstanding personal relationships when selecting business partners or key employees. This practice not only marginalizes talented individuals who lack connections but also perpetuates an environment where unethical practices become the norm. In sectors such as oil and gas or construction, where high stakes and close government ties are common, favoritism can have particularly detrimental effects. The consequences of nepotism and favoritism extend beyond individual firms; they hinder broader economic development by reducing overall productivity and innovation. Organizations that rely on these practices often suffer from low morale among employees and a lack of accountability, which in turn damages the reputation of the entrepreneurial sector. To foster a truly competitive market, Nigerian entrepreneurs and policymakers must strive to promote meritocracy and implement transparent recruitment and partnership practices (Ferrell et al., 2021).

Financial Mismanagement and Fraud: Financial mismanagement and fraudulent practices are persistent ethical issues that plague many Nigerian enterprises. These challenges include activities such as misreporting financial performance, engaging in tax evasion, and the misallocation or embezzlement of funds (Crane et al. 2022). Such practices not only violate ethical norms but also compromise the integrity of the

business, leading to long-term economic instability. In Nigeria, several high-profile cases have demonstrated how fraudulent practices can undermine investor confidence and damage reputations. For example, some small and medium-sized enterprises have been implicated in financial scandals where funds were misappropriated to mask poor performance or secure additional funding under pretences. These incidents have far-reaching effects, discouraging potential investors and stifling the growth of honest enterprises in a highly competitive market. The evaluation of financial mismanagement and fraud reveals a significant barrier to sustainable entrepreneurship in Nigeria. Such unethical practices lead to inefficiencies and misallocation of resources, ultimately hindering economic development. Moreover, these issues create a cycle of distrust, where stakeholders become wary of investing in ventures that lack rigorous financial oversight. Strengthening internal controls, implementing strict auditing processes, and ensuring legal accountability are essential steps toward mitigating these challenges (Ferrell *et al.*, 2021).

Weak Regulatory Oversight: Weak regulatory oversight is a critical challenge that facilitates unethical practices in Nigerian entrepreneurship. In many cases, the existing regulatory frameworks are either insufficiently enforced or riddled with loopholes, allowing unethical behavior such as corruption, fraud, and exploitation to go unchecked. This regulatory weakness not only undermines market confidence but also creates an environment where unethical practices can become normalized. The Nigerian regulatory environment often struggles to keep pace with rapid entrepreneurial growth. Many sectors experience delays and inconsistencies in law enforcement, which entrepreneurs may exploit to secure competitive advantages. For example, inconsistent enforcement of business regulations has been noted in areas such as environmental protection and labor standards, where entrepreneurs might bypass legal requirements to reduce costs and increase profits (Eneh, 2020). This inconsistency creates uncertainty, making it difficult for ethical entrepreneurs to compete on an even playing field. Evaluating the impact of weak regulatory oversight reveals that it can significantly hinder sustainable business practices. The absence of stringent regulatory control often leads to a proliferation of unethical behavior that undermines public trust and stifles fair competition. Strengthening institutional capacity, reforming outdated regulations, and ensuring consistent enforcement are crucial steps that Nigerian policymakers must undertake to support ethical entrepreneurship and promote economic stability (Crane *et al.* 2022).

Exploitation of Workers and Unethical Labour Practices: Eze (1996) analyzed pre-colonial African ancestral behavior through the lens of fundamental psychological shortcomings. According to Rodney (1976), Arab traders arrived in Africa in the 4th century primarily for trade and commerce. During their interactions, they observed

that African chiefs and community leaders were already involved in the practice of selling slaves and performing human sacrifices. Seizing this opportunity, the traders began purchasing slaves, marking the onset of the transatlantic slave trade. The acts of human sacrifice and the commodification of fellow human beings represented some of the most profound ethical transgressions of that era. Zarembo and Mabry (1997) described the prevailing culture in Zaire under Mobutu Sese Seko as a "grab-what-you-can" system, emphasizing widespread corruption and self-enrichment. They recounted an anecdote in which a World Bank executive reportedly suggested that Mobutu lend money to his own country, to which he responded that he would, but had no confidence in being repaid. This entrenched culture, they argued, posed a significant challenge for the rebels who eventually overthrew him. Similarly, Edefah (1997) argued that the legacies of Nigeria's political figures, Chief Obafemi Awolowo, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, and Alhaji Ahmadu Bello created long-standing challenges for the nation. Oseni (1993) examined corruption within the Nigerian Police Force, emphasizing that it reflected broader societal issues. Ogundele (2000) further identified bribery, corruption, and general indiscipline as key obstacles to the success of indigenous entrepreneurs in Nigeria. Cunningham (2002) highlighted the transformative impact of e-business, describing it as a crucial tool for enhancing communication between employees, customers, and business partners. Through self-service applications, organizations can efficiently disseminate relevant information, improving business operations. Slywotzky and Morrison (2002) reinforced this view, asserting that both traditional and digital businesses can thrive by adopting digital business design principles. They outlined eight key benefits of digital transformation, emphasizing its role in reshaping various aspects of organizational performance. These perspectives collectively underscore how unethical behaviors hinder national development and business growth while technological advancements, when leveraged ethically, can enhance organizational performance.

Exploitation of workers and unethical labor practices are pervasive challenges in Nigerian entrepreneurship that affect both business performance and societal well-being. Such practices may include underpayment, poor working conditions, and a lack of benefits, as entrepreneurs often prioritize cost-cutting measures over employee welfare (Hisrich, 2002). Unethical labor practices undermine worker morale and contribute to an environment of distrust between employers and employees. In Nigeria, industries such as manufacturing, agriculture, and informal trade have been particularly noted for poor labor conditions. Reports indicate that some Nigerian businesses exploit workers through excessive overtime without fair compensation and by neglecting occupational safety standards. These practices not only diminish the quality of life for workers but also hinder the overall productivity of the enterprise.

Workers' exploitation further exacerbates socio-economic disparities and can lead to industrial unrest and reputational damage for the businesses involved. The long-term consequences of unethical labor practices are far-reaching. Exploitation of workers can lead to high turnover rates, reduced employee loyalty, and a weakened organizational culture, all of which adversely affect the firm's performance. Ethical entrepreneurship requires that business leaders recognize the intrinsic value of human capital and invest in fair labor practices that foster a stable, motivated workforce. Addressing these challenges necessitates both self-regulation within firms and stronger enforcement of labor laws to ensure that workers are treated with dignity and respect (Ferrell *et al.*, 2021).

Neglect of Social Responsibility and Sustainability: Neglecting social responsibility and sustainability represents a critical ethical challenge that undermines the broader contributions of entrepreneurship to societal well-being. This challenge is characterized by the failure to consider the social, environmental, and community impacts of business activities. When entrepreneurs focus solely on profit maximization without regard for the broader societal consequences, the resulting business practices may lead to environmental degradation, resource depletion, and social dislocation (Eneh, 2020). In Nigeria, several enterprises have been criticized for neglecting social responsibility. For example, some manufacturing firms have faced public outcry for poor waste management practices that contribute to environmental pollution and negatively impact community health. Such practices not only damage the local ecosystem but also tarnish the reputation of the businesses involved, making it difficult for ethical firms to gain a competitive edge. The lack of sustainable practices can lead to long-term economic costs, as degraded environments ultimately reduce the quality of life and limit market opportunities. Evaluating the neglect of social responsibility and sustainability reveals significant implications for ethical entrepreneurship in Nigeria. Businesses that fail to integrate sustainable practices risk alienating key stakeholders, including customers, investors, and community members, who increasingly expect corporate actions to contribute positively to society. Promoting social responsibility requires that entrepreneurs adopt a long-term vision that balances profit with purpose, implementing strategies that enhance both environmental stewardship and community development. Achieving this balance is essential for creating resilient enterprises capable of driving sustainable economic growth (Crane *et al.* 2022).

Solutions and Recommendations

- i. **Strengthening Legal Frameworks:** Nigeria's entrepreneurial landscape is significantly hampered by a weak regulatory environment that often permits

unethical practices to go unchecked. Stricter enforcement of business ethics laws is essential to ensure that all market participants abide by clear standards of conduct. Enhanced legal frameworks can reduce instances of corruption and fraud, fostering an environment where ethical behavior is rewarded rather than penalized. For example, consistent enforcement of anti-corruption laws could help level the playing field for honest entrepreneurs and encourage fair competition in sectors where bribery and illicit payments have become commonplace (Eneh, 2020). Reforming Nigeria's legal and regulatory institutions is critical for building investor and public confidence. Strengthening regulatory oversight involves not only enacting robust laws but also ensuring that enforcement agencies are adequately funded and staffed, and that they leverage modern monitoring technologies. Such reforms could provide a solid foundation for ethical entrepreneurship, reducing the prevalence of unethical practices and ultimately supporting sustainable economic development (Ferrell *et al.*, 2021).

- ii. **Entrepreneurial Ethics Education:** Integrating ethics education into business training programs is a crucial strategy for cultivating ethical entrepreneurship in Nigeria. By incorporating ethics modules into the curricula of business schools and entrepreneurship programs, future entrepreneurs can develop a solid understanding of moral principles such as integrity, transparency, and accountability. This approach ensures that ethical considerations become an inherent part of the entrepreneurial decision-making process (Eneh, 2020). For instance, some Nigerian universities have begun to include courses on corporate social responsibility and business ethics, which equip students with the necessary tools to navigate ethical dilemmas in a competitive market. Beyond formal education, professional development programs and startup incubators can also play a pivotal role in promoting ethical entrepreneurship. Regular workshops, seminars, and mentorship initiatives that focus on ethical business practices can help emerging entrepreneurs internalize these values and apply them in real-world settings. This holistic approach to ethics education not only benefits individual entrepreneurs but also contributes to a broader cultural shift toward greater transparency and accountability within Nigeria's business community (Ferrell *et al.*, 2021).
- iii. **Promoting Ethical Leadership:** Ethical leadership is essential for setting the tone and culture of an organization, particularly in environments prone to unethical practices. In Nigeria, prominent business leaders like Tony Elumelu and Jim Ovia have exemplified how ethical leadership can significantly drive

sustainable growth and strengthen corporate reputation. Their commitment to ethical business practices has not only contributed to the success of their ventures but has also set benchmarks for others to follow (Hisrich, 2002). Such role models provide tangible examples of how adhering to ethical standards can lead to long-term business success, thereby inspiring a new generation of entrepreneurs. Mentoring and continuous leadership development further support the propagation of ethical values. Programs that focus on ethical leadership training can help leaders navigate complex moral dilemmas and instill a culture of responsibility within their organizations. In Nigeria, leadership development initiatives that incorporate ethical decision-making modules have shown promise in transforming organizational cultures, ultimately leading to more resilient and socially responsible enterprises (Crane *et al.* 2022).

- iv. **Encouraging Consumer Awareness:** Educating consumers on their rights and on the ethical practices that should be expected from businesses is a critical solution for promoting accountability in Nigerian entrepreneurship. Increased consumer awareness empowers individuals to demand transparency and fairness from companies, thereby exerting market pressure on entrepreneurs to uphold high ethical standards. Public campaigns and community outreach programs can educate consumers about red flags in unethical business practices and inform them about the benefits of supporting ethical enterprises (Ferrell *et al.*, 2021). Civil society organizations and social media platforms have an important role to play in disseminating this information and in mobilizing collective action. In Nigeria, consumer advocacy groups are increasingly active in highlighting cases of unethical practices and pressuring companies to adopt more responsible behavior. This heightened level of consumer vigilance can drive ethical reforms in the business sector and create an environment where ethical entrepreneurship is not only valued but expected (Eneh, 2020).

Conclusion

Ethics is a crucial component of entrepreneurship, particularly in Nigeria, where the interplay of ethical values and business practices can determine not only the success of individual ventures but also the broader economic and social development of the nation. The study has underscored that ethical entrepreneurship, grounded in principles such as integrity, transparency, fairness, accountability, and social

responsibility, is essential in building trust among stakeholders and fostering a sustainable business environment. How have business leaders like Tony Elumelu and Jim Ovia demonstrated ethical entrepreneurship in Nigeria? The key points examined in this study reveal that ethical business practices not only enhance corporate reputation and investor confidence but also mitigate the negative consequences of unethical behaviors such as corruption, nepotism, financial mismanagement, and worker exploitation. Case studies from Nigeria illustrate that entrepreneurs who adhere to ethical standards, such as Tony Elumelu and Jim Ovia, have achieved remarkable success, while those engaging in unethical practices have faced significant setbacks. These findings reaffirm the critical role that ethics plays in determining the long-term viability of entrepreneurial ventures, especially in challenging market environments. What policies can the Nigerian government implement to promote ethical entrepreneurship? A call to action emerges from this analysis: Nigerian policymakers, business leaders, and educational institutions must work collaboratively to strengthen legal frameworks, incorporate ethics into entrepreneurship education, promote ethical leadership, and raise consumer awareness. Such coordinated efforts are essential to cultivating an entrepreneurial ecosystem that not only generates profit but also contributes to national development and social progress. Embracing ethical entrepreneurship is not merely a business strategy; it is a transformative approach that can drive sustainable growth and elevate the overall standard of living in Nigeria.

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Balancing Profit and Responsibility in a Globalized Economy: Towards an Ethical Entrepreneurship

Yusuf Adeniyi Jamin



Executive Summary

Entrepreneurship is often associated with innovation, risk-taking, and economic growth. However, beyond financial success, entrepreneurs face significant ethical dilemmas in their decision-making processes. This study explores the intersection of ethics and entrepreneurship, focusing on how business leaders navigate moral challenges while striving for profitability and sustainability. Drawing from philosophical theories such as utilitarianism, deontology, and virtue ethics, this research examines the ethical foundations of entrepreneurial decision-making. It investigates the tension between profit maximization and social responsibility, analyzing how ethical considerations shape strategic choices, corporate governance, and stakeholder relationships. The study also delves into contemporary challenges such as environmental sustainability, labor rights, and fair trade, emphasizing the need for ethical frameworks in guiding business practices. Furthermore, the paper explores real-world case studies of entrepreneurs who have successfully integrated ethical values into their business models. It discusses how ethical leadership fosters long-term success, enhances brand reputation, and contributes to social well-being. Additionally, it highlights the role of entrepreneurship education in instilling ethical consciousness among future business leaders. By bridging philosophical inquiry with entrepreneurial practice, this study contributes to the discourse on responsible business conduct. It offers insights for entrepreneurs, policymakers, and scholars seeking to create a business ecosystem where ethical considerations are not secondary but central to decision-making.

Keywords: Ethical entrepreneurship, Business ethics, Corporate social responsibility, Sustainable entrepreneurship, Ethical decision-making.

Introduction

Entrepreneurship serves as a fundamental driver of economic growth, job creation, and innovation, playing a critical role in fostering societal development (Schumpeter,

1934). Entrepreneurs identify opportunities, create value, and stimulate competition, contributing significantly to economic transformation (Acs & Audretsch, 2003). In a globalized economy, the role of entrepreneurs extends beyond financial gain to include social responsibility, ethical conduct, and sustainable business practices. However, in many developing economies, including Nigeria and broader Africa, the pursuit of profit often intersects with complex ethical dilemmas arising from weak regulatory frameworks, corruption, and socio-economic disparities (Adegbite et al., 2012). Thus, ethical considerations in entrepreneurship are particularly crucial in Africa, where businesses operate within a context of significant economic challenges, institutional weaknesses, and cultural diversity (Amaeshi et al., 2006). Ethical lapses in business can lead to negative consequences such as environmental degradation, labor exploitation, and consumer distrust, ultimately hindering long-term economic development (Crane et al., 2019). Thus, understanding and promoting ethical entrepreneurship is vital for fostering sustainable development and ensuring that business activities contribute positively to society.

Defining Ethical Entrepreneurship

Ethical entrepreneurship refers to the practice of conducting business in a manner that is not only legally compliant but also morally sound, prioritizing the welfare of stakeholders, society, and the environment (Freeman et al., 2004). This approach involves adhering to principles such as fairness, transparency, accountability, and social responsibility (Carroll & Shabana, 2010). Ethical entrepreneurs integrate these values into their business strategies, ensuring that their operations align with both economic objectives and ethical imperatives. In the African context, ethical entrepreneurship also involves cultural sensitivity and a commitment to addressing local socio-economic challenges. Given the continent's unique historical, political, and economic landscape, ethical entrepreneurs must navigate issues such as informal economies, limited access to capital, and governance deficiencies while maintaining integrity in their business practices (Edoho, 2016). By embedding ethical considerations into their operations, entrepreneurs can contribute to sustainable development, enhance stakeholder trust, and promote inclusive economic growth (Visser, 2008).

Ethical Frameworks in Entrepreneurship: Moral Dilemmas

Entrepreneurship is not just about innovation and profit-making; it also involves making ethical decisions that impact employees, customers, communities, and the

broader economy. Entrepreneurs often face moral dilemmas, such as whether to prioritize profit over environmental sustainability or to pay bribes to expedite business operations. To navigate these challenges, ethical frameworks such as **Utilitarianism, Deontology, and Virtue Ethics** provide guiding principles for decision-making. This article explores these frameworks and how they shape ethical entrepreneurship in Nigeria and across Africa.

1. Utilitarianism: Maximizing the Greatest Good

Utilitarianism, developed by philosophers **Jeremy Bentham** and **John Stuart Mill**, is a **consequentialist** ethical theory that argues that an action is morally right if it produces the greatest happiness or benefit for the largest number of people (Mill, 1863). In an entrepreneurial context, this means that business decisions should be based on their overall impact on society rather than just personal or financial gain.

How Entrepreneurs Apply Utilitarianism: Entrepreneurs who follow a utilitarian approach evaluate their business decisions based on their outcomes. For instance, a Nigerian startup deciding whether to **outsource production to a cheaper but unethical supplier** must consider the broader consequences: **short-term profit vs. long-term impact**. Does outsourcing create jobs in Nigeria, or does it exploit workers in another country? **Customer satisfaction vs. ethical sourcing:** Would customers prefer lower prices, or do they value ethical supply chains?

Real-Life Example: Ethical Apparel Africa (Ghana & Benin). A good example of utilitarian ethics in action is **Ethical Apparel Africa (EAA)**, a social enterprise that ensures fair wages, safe working conditions, and sustainability in West Africa's textile industry (Pybus, 2020). By prioritizing the **well-being of workers and environmental impact**, EAA applies utilitarianism, benefiting the greatest number of stakeholders while still running a profitable business.

Limitations of Utilitarianism in Entrepreneurship: While utilitarianism promotes the greatest good, it sometimes justifies unethical means if the ends are beneficial. For instance, a businessman might argue that **laying off workers** is justified if it ensures the company's long-term survival, even though it harms employees in the short run. This challenge forces entrepreneurs to balance **ethical decision-making** with economic realities.

2. Deontology: Following Moral Duties and Principles

Deontology, developed by **Immanuel Kant**, argues that morality is based on **rules, duties, and principles** rather than consequences (Kant, 1785). In entrepreneurship, this means that business owners should follow ethical principles **regardless of the**

outcomes. Entrepreneurs guided by deontology believe that some actions, such as fraud, bribery, or exploitation, are always wrong, no matter the business benefits.

How Entrepreneurs Apply Deontology: Entrepreneurs following deontological ethics make decisions based on fundamental **moral rules** such as honesty, fairness, and respect. For instance, a Nigerian entrepreneur deciding whether to **pay a government official to secure a business permit** faces a moral dilemma: **Utilitarianism might justify the bribe** if it speeds up the process and creates jobs. **Deontology, however, rejects bribery** as inherently wrong, even if it delays business operations.

Real-Life Example: Jason Njoku and iROKOTv (Nigeria): Jason Njoku, founder of **iROKOTv**, revolutionized Nollywood's film industry by promoting **legal streaming platforms** rather than relying on piracy, which was rampant in Nigeria (Njoku, 2015). Even though piracy was a quicker way to make profits, Njoku adhered to deontological principles by respecting **intellectual property rights**, ensuring that filmmakers were fairly compensated.

Limitations of Deontology in Entrepreneurship: While deontology ensures strong ethical foundations, **strict rule-following can sometimes be impractical** in African markets where corruption, bureaucratic bottlenecks, and informal economies are widespread. Entrepreneurs might struggle to remain competitive if they refuse to engage in practices that competitors exploit.

3. Virtue Ethics: Building Moral Character and Integrity

Virtue ethics, originally developed by **Aristotle**, focuses on **developing good character traits** such as honesty, fairness, courage, and compassion (Aristotle, 350 BCE). Unlike utilitarianism and deontology, which focus on specific actions, virtue ethics emphasizes the **moral character of the entrepreneur** and their long-term development as an ethical leader.

How Entrepreneurs Apply Virtue Ethics: Entrepreneurs following virtue ethics focus on being **role models** in their industries. They make ethical decisions not just because of rules (deontology) or consequences (utilitarianism), but because they want to **become good people**. For instance, a Nigerian entrepreneur running a **social enterprise** might prioritize ethical hiring, environmental sustainability, and fair wages not because of laws or financial benefits, but because they believe in doing the right thing.

Real-Life Example: Elizabeth Masiyiwa and Simba Education (Zimbabwe). Elizabeth Masiyiwa, co-founder of **Simba Education**, integrates virtue ethics by using technology to improve **early childhood education** in Africa. Instead of just making

profits, she prioritizes **social impact, accessibility, and affordability** (Masiyiwa, 2021). Her approach embodies virtues like **compassion, justice, and integrity**, inspiring other African entrepreneurs.

Limitations of Virtue Ethics in Entrepreneurship: One challenge with virtue ethics is that **moral character is subjective**; what one entrepreneur considers ethical may differ from another's perspective. Additionally, in highly competitive environments, **virtue-driven businesses may struggle against those prioritizing profits over ethics**.

Balancing Ethical Frameworks in Entrepreneurship

Ethical entrepreneurship in Nigeria and Africa requires a careful balance of **utilitarianism, deontology, and virtue ethics**. While **utilitarianism** ensures maximum benefits, it may justify questionable means. **Deontology** enforces strong moral rules, but it can be rigid in complex business environments. **Virtue ethics** fosters long-term integrity but relies on personal values, which may vary. Entrepreneurs must navigate these ethical frameworks **based on their industry, cultural context, and long-term vision**. By integrating the best aspects of these ethical theories, entrepreneurs can build sustainable businesses that benefit both **themselves and society at large**.

The Importance of Ethics in Entrepreneurial Decision-Making

Ethics play a pivotal role in entrepreneurial decision-making, influencing business sustainability, stakeholder trust, and overall societal impact. Entrepreneurs operate within dynamic environments where ethical considerations affect their reputation, regulatory compliance, and ability to create long-term value (Freeman et al., 2020). In the African context, where historical concerns about corruption, regulatory inefficiencies, and socio-economic challenges persist, maintaining ethical integrity is essential for entrepreneurial success (Amaeshi et al., 2016).

1. Building Trust and Reputation: Ethical practices enhance the credibility of entrepreneurs, fostering trust among customers, investors, and the community. Trust is a fundamental currency in business, particularly in economies where corruption and fraud have eroded confidence in enterprises (George et al., 2016). In Nigeria, for example, the banking sector has experienced trust deficits due to financial scandals, such as the 2009 banking crisis, where unethical lending practices led to the Central

Bank of Nigeria (CBN) intervening to rescue failing institutions (Sanusi, 2010). Entrepreneurs who prioritize ethical decision-making can differentiate themselves in the marketplace, attracting loyal customers and long-term investors. A case in point is **Aliko Dangote**, Africa's richest man and founder of the Dangote Group. His commitment to ethical business practices, transparency, and corporate social responsibility (CSR) has significantly contributed to his company's dominance in industries such as cement, sugar, and flour (Oqubay, 2015). Dangote's adherence to ethical principles has strengthened investor confidence, enabling the group to expand beyond Nigeria into multiple African countries.

2. Sustainable Business Growth: Ethical entrepreneurs are more likely to engage in business practices that ensure the longevity of their enterprises. This includes fair labor policies, environmental sustainability, and socially responsible supply chains (Crane et al., 2019). Sustainable business practices not only help mitigate risks but also improve competitiveness in global markets where ethical considerations influence trade partnerships. For instance, **Tony Elumelu**, founder of Heirs Holdings and the Tony Elumelu Foundation, emphasizes entrepreneurship that prioritizes social impact and ethical leadership. Through his foundation, he has invested in African startups committed to ethical business models, ensuring that businesses grow in a way that positively impacts communities (Elumelu, 2020). By fostering ethical entrepreneurship, businesses are more resilient to external shocks, such as economic downturns or policy changes.

3. Legal and Regulatory Compliance: Adhering to ethical standards helps entrepreneurs navigate the complex regulatory landscapes of many African countries, reducing the risk of legal penalties and fostering smoother business operations. Regulatory compliance not only prevents legal disputes but also builds a strong corporate image that attracts responsible investors and business partners (Carroll & Brown, 2018). A clear example is **MTN Nigeria**, which faced a \$5.2 billion fine from the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) in 2015 for failing to disconnect unregistered SIM cards, raising concerns about national security and regulatory compliance (Reuters, 2015). This incident highlights how ethical lapses in regulatory adherence can have severe financial and reputational consequences. Ethical entrepreneurs, on the other hand, proactively comply with industry regulations, ensuring their businesses operate within the boundaries of the law.

4. Social Impact and Responsibility: Ethical entrepreneurship contributes positively to society by addressing social challenges, creating employment opportunities, and engaging in community development. This is particularly significant in African nations where government resources are limited, and the private sector plays a crucial role in

development (Mair & Marti, 2006). One notable example is **Mo Ibrahim**, founder of Celtel, a telecommunications company that expanded mobile access across Africa. Ibrahim is known for his ethical approach to business, emphasizing transparency, fair employment practices, and reinvestment into communities (Ibrahim, 2008). After selling Celtel, he established the **Mo Ibrahim Foundation**, which promotes good governance and ethical leadership in Africa, demonstrating how ethical entrepreneurship can lead to broader societal transformation. Additionally, **Flutterwave**, a Nigerian fintech company, has built its reputation on ethical business practices, ensuring secure, transparent, and accessible financial services across Africa. By adhering to regulatory standards and ethical data management, Flutterwave has gained international trust, securing partnerships with major global payment platforms like Visa and PayPal (TechCrunch, 2021).

Therefore, the role of ethics in entrepreneurial decision-making is not just about moral correctness; it is a strategic advantage that drives business sustainability, regulatory compliance, and social impact. Entrepreneurs who prioritize ethical business practices foster trust, enhance their long-term growth prospects, and contribute meaningfully to society. In Africa, where challenges such as corruption, weak regulatory enforcement, and socio-economic disparities persist, ethical entrepreneurship is even more crucial for driving inclusive and sustainable development. As demonstrated by successful entrepreneurs like Aliko Dangote, Tony Elumelu, and Mo Ibrahim, integrating ethics into business decision-making is a key determinant of lasting success and social impact.

Ethical Challenges Facing Entrepreneurs in Nigeria and Africa

Entrepreneurs in Nigeria and across Africa operate in environments where ethical challenges are deeply intertwined with economic, political, and social realities. While entrepreneurship is a vital driver of economic growth and innovation, ethical dilemmas often emerge due to systemic corruption, weak regulatory frameworks, cultural expectations, and resource limitations. Understanding these challenges is essential for fostering ethical entrepreneurship that contributes to sustainable development in Africa (Amaeshi et al., 2016).

1. Corruption and Bribery: Corruption remains one of the most significant ethical hurdles for entrepreneurs in Africa. In many cases, entrepreneurs are pressured to engage in bribery or informal payments to obtain business permits, secure contracts, or expedite bureaucratic processes (Transparency International, 2022). This culture of corruption not only distorts fair competition but also discourages foreign investment and stifles economic progress. For instance, in Nigeria, the **Ease of Doing Business**

rankings have often been negatively impacted by widespread corruption in government agencies. Entrepreneurs frequently face demands for "facilitation fees" when dealing with licensing authorities, customs officials, and tax agencies (World Bank, 2021). However, some businesses have chosen to stand firm against these pressures. An example is **Interswitch**, a Nigerian digital payments company that has built its reputation on transparency and compliance with regulatory standards, proving that ethical business practices can lead to long-term success (Okonkwo, 2019).

2. Regulatory Hurdles: Many African countries have complex and inconsistent regulatory frameworks, making it difficult for businesses to operate smoothly without encountering bureaucratic roadblocks (Khan, 2020). These regulatory inefficiencies sometimes push entrepreneurs toward unethical shortcuts, such as falsifying documents or bypassing legal procedures, to survive in the market. A case in point is **MTN Nigeria**, which was fined \$5.2 billion in 2015 by the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) for failing to disconnect unregistered SIM cards (Reuters, 2015). The fine highlighted the tension between business growth and regulatory compliance, as some companies struggle to navigate unclear or suddenly enforced policies. Ethical entrepreneurs must remain proactive in ensuring compliance while advocating for transparent and fair regulatory systems.

3. Cultural Norms and Practices: Entrepreneurs in Africa often navigate a fine line between respecting cultural traditions and adhering to modern ethical business standards. In some communities, nepotism or favoritism in hiring and contract allocation is expected, even though it contradicts principles of meritocracy and fairness (George et al., 2016). Additionally, some traditional labor practices conflict with international standards for worker rights and fair wages. For example, in some Nigerian and Ghanaian industries, it is common for family members to be given jobs, even if they lack the necessary qualifications. While this practice supports community solidarity, it can undermine efficiency and professionalism in business operations. Ethical entrepreneurs must strike a balance between respecting cultural expectations and maintaining ethical business integrity. One company that has successfully navigated this challenge is **Dangote Group**. While deeply rooted in Nigerian culture, the company implements strict corporate governance policies that prioritize professionalism, merit-based hiring, and ethical leadership (Oqubay, 2015).

4. Resource Constraints: Limited access to capital, infrastructure, and skilled labor often forces entrepreneurs to make tough ethical decisions. Some businesses may resort to cost-cutting measures that compromise employee welfare, environmental sustainability, or product quality. For example, entrepreneurs in the textile and manufacturing sectors may face pressure to use cheaper, substandard materials or

underpay workers to remain competitive (Crane et al., 2019). A notable ethical success story is the **Solar System**, a Nigerian social enterprise that provides women entrepreneurs with clean energy solutions while maintaining ethical business standards. Despite financial challenges, the company ensures fair pay, sustainable practices, and transparency in its operations (Solar Sister, 2021). This demonstrates that ethical entrepreneurship is possible even in resource-constrained environments.

Case Studies of Ethical Entrepreneurship in Africa

Despite these ethical challenges, many African entrepreneurs have demonstrated that ethical business practices can lead to sustainable success and societal impact. Below are three case studies of businesses that have upheld ethical values while thriving in competitive industries.

1. Ethical Apparel Africa (Ghana and Benin): Ethical Apparel Africa (EAA) is a textile manufacturing company co-founded by **Keren Pybus**, dedicated to ethical labor practices and environmental sustainability. The company collaborates with international brands to establish a responsible supply chain in West Africa, ensuring that local factories meet high ethical standards. EAA ensures:

- a) Fair wages and safe working conditions for factory workers.
- b) Compliance with environmental sustainability practices, such as waste reduction and responsible sourcing of raw materials.
- c) Capacity-building programs for African garment manufacturers to improve ethical labor standards (Ethical Apparel Africa, 2022).

By setting a benchmark for ethical manufacturing, EAA challenges the exploitative labor practices that have historically plagued the textile industry in Africa.

2. iROKO Partners (Nigeria): Founded by **Jason Njoku**, iROKO Partners revolutionized the Nigerian entertainment industry by offering a legal platform for Nollywood films. Before iROKO's emergence, the Nigerian film industry struggled with piracy, leading to massive revenue losses for content creators. Njoku's ethical stance involved:

- a) Paying Nollywood filmmakers fairly for their content.
- b) Offering legal streaming services that discouraged piracy.
- c) Establishing transparent revenue-sharing models for producers and directors (Njoku, 2018).

Despite resistance from some industry players accustomed to informal distribution models, iROKO's commitment to ethical business helped reshape Nigeria's digital entertainment industry, attracting international investment and partnerships.

3. *Simba Education (Zimbabwe):* Simba Education, co-founded by **Elizabeth Masiyiwa**, is an EdTech company that enhances early childhood education through digital tools. The company focuses on:

- a) Providing affordable mobile-based educational resources to underprivileged schools.
- b) Ensuring fair pricing for teachers and students.
- c) Promoting gender inclusivity in education by developing learning solutions tailored to girls and marginalized groups (Masiyiwa, 2020).

Simba Education's ethical approach to business highlights the role of entrepreneurship in addressing Africa's developmental challenges while maintaining financial sustainability.

Thus, ethical entrepreneurship in Africa is not without challenges, but successful business leaders have demonstrated that profitability and ethics can coexist. Entrepreneurs who resist corruption, comply with regulations, respect cultural contexts, and manage resources responsibly can build sustainable businesses that contribute positively to society. While systemic obstacles persist, businesses like Ethical Apparel Africa, iROKO Partners, and Simba Education serve as inspiring examples of how ethical entrepreneurship can thrive in Africa.

Effects of Unethical Practices on Entrepreneurship

Unethical business practices have far-reaching consequences, not only for individual entrepreneurs but also for the broader economy and society. In Nigeria and across Africa, where entrepreneurship plays a crucial role in economic development, unethical behavior such as corruption, fraud, labor exploitation, and tax evasion can undermine business growth and discourage investment (Transparency International, 2022). This section explores the key effects of unethical practices on entrepreneurship.

1. *Loss of Trust and Reputation:* Trust is one of the most valuable assets for any entrepreneur. Customers, investors, and business partners are more likely to engage with businesses that uphold ethical standards. However, when entrepreneurs engage in dishonest practices, such as selling substandard products, making false claims, or engaging in fraud, they risk losing credibility. For example, in Nigeria, the collapse of

Wonder Banks (Ponzi schemes) eroded public confidence in investment opportunities. Many people lost their savings due to fraudulent financial schemes, making them wary of new entrepreneurial ventures, even legitimate ones (Oladokun, 2021). Once trust is broken, it is difficult to rebuild, and businesses may struggle to recover from reputational damage.

Real-life Example: The **Volkswagen emissions scandal** is a global example of how unethical business practices can damage a reputation. The company was caught manipulating emissions data to make its cars appear more environmentally friendly. This led to lawsuits, fines, and a decline in consumer trust, ultimately impacting sales and profitability (Ewing, 2017).

2. Financial Losses and Business Failure: Unethical practices can lead to severe financial consequences, including fines, lawsuits, and loss of revenue. When businesses engage in illegal activities such as tax evasion, bribery, or financial misrepresentation, they expose themselves to penalties that can cripple their operations. In many African countries, businesses caught engaging in unethical activities have faced regulatory sanctions, leading to the closure of their operations. For instance, **several Nigerian pharmaceutical companies** were shut down by the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) for producing fake and substandard drugs, leading to significant financial losses and legal actions (NAFDAC, 2020).

Real-Life Example: The **Enron scandal** in the United States remains one of the most infamous cases of corporate fraud. The company engaged in massive financial misrepresentation, which led to its bankruptcy and the loss of billions of dollars for investors and employees (McLean & Elkind, 2003). This case highlights how unethical practices can destroy even large and successful businesses.

3. Legal Consequences and Business Restrictions: Entrepreneurs who engage in unethical practices often face legal consequences, including fines, business shutdowns, or even imprisonment. Governments and regulatory agencies in Nigeria and Africa have become more proactive in enforcing laws against unethical business behavior. For example, in 2019, the **Federal Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (FCCPC)** fined multiple companies for deceptive advertising and unfair pricing strategies, forcing them to pay penalties and issue refunds to customers (FCCPC, 2019). Such legal actions not only hurt businesses financially but also damage their credibility in the industry.

Real-Life Example: The **MTN Nigeria fine** in 2015 illustrates the impact of regulatory penalties on businesses. The telecom giant was fined \$5.2 billion by the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) for failing to disconnect unregistered

SIM cards, which was a violation of regulatory directives. This fine affected the company's stock price, financial stability, and long-term investment plans in Nigeria (NCC, 2016).

4. Reduced Customer Loyalty and Market Share: Customers value ethical businesses and are more likely to remain loyal to brands that demonstrate honesty and corporate responsibility. When a business is exposed for unethical practices, it risks losing customers to competitors with better reputations. A good example is the **poor handling of customer complaints by some Nigerian airlines**, leading to customer dissatisfaction and a preference for international carriers (Adewuyi & Fadugba, 2021). When businesses prioritize short-term profits over customer satisfaction, they eventually lose their market share to more ethical competitors.

Real-Life Example: In 2018, **Facebook faced backlash** after it was revealed that millions of users' data had been misused by Cambridge Analytica. This scandal led to a decline in trust, public scrutiny, and even the #DeleteFacebook movement, where users abandoned the platform due to privacy concerns (Isaak & Hanna, 2018).

5. Hindered Access to Funding and Investment: Investors and financial institutions are less likely to support businesses with a history of unethical behavior. Many funding organizations conduct due diligence before investing in startups or established businesses, and a negative ethical track record can disqualify entrepreneurs from receiving financial support. For example, many Nigerian entrepreneurs struggle to secure loans because their businesses lack transparency in financial reporting. Some microfinance banks have reported high rates of loan defaults due to fraudulent activities, making lenders more cautious about issuing loans (Central Bank of Nigeria, 2021).

Real-Life Example: In South Africa, **Steinhoff International**, a major retail company, lost billions in investments after it was revealed that executives had manipulated financial statements. The scandal led to a drastic drop in share prices, lawsuits, and a loss of investor confidence (Business Day, 2019).

6. Negative Social and Economic Impact: Beyond individual businesses, unethical practices harm the larger economy. When entrepreneurs engage in corruption, tax evasion, and unfair labor practices, they contribute to economic instability, job losses, and poor working conditions. For example, illegal mining activities in Ghana have led to environmental degradation, loss of livelihoods, and conflicts between local communities and business operators. Similarly, counterfeit goods in Nigeria have hurt local industries, making it difficult for legitimate entrepreneurs to compete (World Bank, 2020).

Real-Life Example: The **collapse of Lehman Brothers** in 2008, due to unethical financial practices, contributed to a global economic crisis. The banking sector suffered, millions of people lost jobs, and businesses around the world struggled to recover (Blinder, 2013). Conclusively, unethical business practices have devastating consequences on entrepreneurship, ranging from financial losses and legal penalties to reputational damage and reduced customer loyalty. In Nigeria and Africa, where entrepreneurship is crucial for economic growth, ethical behavior is not just a moral obligation, it is a business necessity.

Entrepreneurs who prioritize integrity, transparency, and social responsibility are more likely to build sustainable businesses that attract investment, gain customer trust, and contribute positively to society. By learning from past failures and global examples, entrepreneurs can avoid the pitfalls of unethical behavior and create enterprises that thrive in the long run.

Strategies for Promoting Ethical Entrepreneurship in Nigeria and Africa

Entrepreneurship is a key driver of economic growth and development in Nigeria and across Africa. However, fostering a business environment where ethical principles thrive requires deliberate effort from individuals, institutions, and governments. Ethical entrepreneurship does not merely mean avoiding corruption; it involves actively promoting integrity, social responsibility, and sustainability in business practices (Amaeshi et al., 2016). To create an ethical entrepreneurial ecosystem, the following strategies are essential:

1. Education and Training: A strong ethical foundation begins with education. Many entrepreneurs in Africa enter the business world with little formal training in business ethics, making them more vulnerable to unethical practices. Incorporating ethics into school curricula, entrepreneurship programs, and business training workshops can instill moral responsibility from an early stage (Crane et al., 2019). For example, universities and vocational institutions can introduce case studies on ethical dilemmas, exposing students to real-world challenges and ethical decision-making processes. Initiatives such as the **African Management Initiative (AMI)** provide online and in-person training programs that integrate ethics into business management courses, helping entrepreneurs understand the long-term value of ethical business practices (African Management Initiative, 2022). Additionally, business incubators and accelerators should prioritize ethics training as part of their mentorship programs. This ensures that emerging entrepreneurs are equipped with the knowledge and skills to navigate ethical challenges while maintaining integrity.

2. Strengthening Legal Frameworks and Law Enforcement: Weak regulatory environments and inconsistent law enforcement encourage unethical business behavior, including bribery, tax evasion, and labor exploitation (Transparency International, 2022). Governments in Nigeria and other African nations must strengthen anti-corruption laws and ensure that legal frameworks are transparent, fair, and consistently enforced. One successful example is **Rwanda's anti-corruption reforms**, where strict policies and digital governance initiatives have significantly reduced bribery and bureaucratic inefficiencies (World Bank, 2021). The adoption of e-governance systems, such as electronic tax filing and digital business registration, minimizes direct interactions between entrepreneurs and government officials, thereby reducing opportunities for corruption. Furthermore, regulatory agencies should simplify business registration and licensing processes to remove unnecessary bureaucratic obstacles that may tempt entrepreneurs to resort to unethical shortcuts (Khan, 2020).

3. Access to Resources and Financial Support: Many unethical business decisions stem from financial constraints. When entrepreneurs struggle to access funding, they may resort to exploitative labor practices, substandard production methods, or dishonest dealings to cut costs and stay afloat (George et al., 2016). Providing easier access to capital, training, and infrastructure can significantly reduce these pressures. Governments, banks, and private investors should create funding opportunities that reward ethical business practices. Ethical investment funds, impact investing, and microfinance institutions can offer capital to entrepreneurs who demonstrate a commitment to ethical operations (Oqubay, 2015). For example, the **Tony Elumelu Foundation (TEF)** provides funding and mentorship to African entrepreneurs, emphasizing integrity and social impact in its selection criteria (Tony Elumelu Foundation, 2022). Additionally, establishing cooperative societies and community-based savings groups can help small entrepreneurs pool resources and access funding without resorting to unethical means.

4. Cultural Sensitization and Community Engagement: Ethical entrepreneurship must be culturally relevant. In many African societies, business practices are influenced by deep-rooted cultural values and traditions, which can sometimes conflict with modern ethical standards (Amaeshi et al., 2016). Rather than imposing rigid external standards, businesses should engage with local communities to align ethical business practices with cultural values. For instance, in regions where extended family responsibilities play a significant role in business operations, ethical entrepreneurs can create structured support systems, such as employee welfare programs or profit-sharing models, rather than engaging in nepotism or favoritism. Companies like

Dangote Group have successfully integrated corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives that align with community expectations while maintaining ethical integrity (Oqubay, 2015). Moreover, public awareness campaigns highlighting the benefits of ethical business practices can foster a culture of accountability and transparency within local communities.

5. Mentorship and Ethical Role Models: Aspiring entrepreneurs often look up to successful business leaders as models of success. Highlighting ethical entrepreneurs who have built profitable businesses without compromising integrity can inspire others to follow suit. Storytelling is a powerful tool for ethical influence, and showcasing real-life examples of ethical entrepreneurship helps normalize honesty and responsibility in business (Njoku, 2018). Organizations such as the **African Leadership Academy** and **Ashoka Africa** provide mentorship programs that connect young entrepreneurs with ethical business leaders who can guide them through the challenges of maintaining integrity in competitive markets (African Leadership Academy, 2021). Governments and private sector organizations can also establish awards and recognition programs for ethical businesses. For instance, the **African Corporate Governance Network (ACGN)** recognizes companies that demonstrate strong corporate governance and ethical leadership, thereby encouraging more businesses to adopt similar practices (ACGN, 2021).

Conclusion

Balancing profit and ethical responsibility is a complex but essential endeavor for entrepreneurs in Nigeria and across Africa. Ethical entrepreneurship is not just a moral obligation; it is a strategic advantage that fosters trust, attracts investment, and ensures long-term sustainability. Entrepreneurs who uphold ethical standards contribute to resilient economies and equitable societies, proving that integrity and success are not mutually exclusive. By investing in education, strengthening legal frameworks, improving access to resources, respecting cultural contexts, and promoting ethical role models, Nigeria and Africa can create a thriving ecosystem of ethical entrepreneurs. These efforts will not only benefit individual businesses but also drive collective progress, shaping a future where entrepreneurship is synonymous with integrity, sustainability, and social impact.

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Communication Ethics for Entrepreneurial Decision-making

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Executive Summary

This study examined the ethical implications of entrepreneurial decision-making: a communication perspective. This study was anchored on the stakeholder theory. This study adopted a qualitative research method. The population of the study comprised entrepreneurs in various industries in Nigeria, especially those who have experienced ethical dilemmas in their business operations. A purposive sampling technique was used to select 15 entrepreneurs, ensuring that participants have relevant experience in ethical decision-making and stakeholder engagement. The method of data collection involves semi-structured email interviews. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data collected, whereby responses were systematically categorized into themes to identify patterns and key insights. The results show that entrepreneurs are massively exposed to ethical challenges, including the lure of short-term gains at the expense of long-term sustainability, the management of expectations of different stakeholders, and the new ethical issues brought about by digital platforms, such as data privacy and consumer rights. Quite often, this will involve an entrepreneur in a trade-off between financial pressures and the responsibility to maintain transparency and ethical standards in business operations. The study concluded that ethical challenges for an entrepreneur bring complexity in balancing profitability with moral responsibility, where often decisions are to be made concerning conflicting stakeholder interests and pressures. Entrepreneurs need to set clear ethical frameworks that direct their decision-making processes and make sure that business practices are carried out according to long-term ethical standards, not merely considering short-term financial gains. The study recommended that entrepreneurs should develop and implement strong ethical guidelines and decision-making frameworks that will help them navigate the complex ethical challenges they encounter.

Keywords: Business, Ethics, Entrepreneurship and Decision-Making, Communication

Introduction

Ethical decision-making in entrepreneurship is the factor on which business sustainability, stakeholders' trust, and the well-being of society rest. Entrepreneurs are usually exposed to ethical dilemmas originating from conflicting interests, motives for profit, and constraints imposed by regulations (Trevino & Nelson, 2021). Ethical considerations in business decision-making concern the issues of moral reasoning, corporate social responsibility, and compliance with prescribed ethical standards (Ferrell et al., 2022). Communication is, therefore, at the core of how entrepreneurs negotiate these ethical nuances since open and responsible discourse consolidates ethical business practice (Crane, Matten, et al., 2019).

Ethical decision-making in entrepreneurship implies a process where business owners weigh moral considerations in making business-related choices (Rest, 1986). It is the balance between financial goals and ethical obligations to employees, customers, and the greater society (Schwartz, 2017). The most common areas of ethical dilemmas that entrepreneurs face include fair labor practices, environmental sustainability, and honest marketing (Donaldson & Walsh, 2015). Those decisions impact business reputation, customer loyalty, and long-term profitability, reinforcing the need for ethical clarity in decision-making processes.

Effective communication is an important requirement in the process of ethical decision-making for entrepreneurial activities. Ethical business communication incorporates honesty, accountability, and openness, which strengthens the relationships of businesses with their stakeholders (Heath, 2018). Failure in proper communication regarding ethical considerations may lead to misinformation, distrust, and ultimately harm the reputation of entrepreneurs (Christensen et al., 2020). The modern digital era highlights the need for ethical communication because transparency and corporate responsibility are under constant scrutiny by consumers and regulatory bodies (Brenkert, 2019).

Several ethical theories provide frameworks for understanding how entrepreneurs go about making decisions. Utilitarianism posits that ethical decisions should be based on outcomes that maximize overall good (Mill, 1863), while deontological ethics emphasize duty and moral principles regardless of consequences (Kant, 1785). Virtue ethics, championed by Aristotle (350 BCE), holds that ethical decision-making should stem from good character and moral virtues. Hence, it implies that entrepreneurs have to navigate these theories to align business practices with ethical considerations, ensuring that their actions benefit stakeholders and uphold integrity (Audi, 2009).

Many of the ethical issues arise due to pressures to gain financial success and maintain a

competitive advantage. Practices like bribery, tax evasion, and labor exploitation are common, especially in developing economies that have a weak regulatory framework in place (Transparency International, 2023). Start-ups and small businesses face enormous resource constraints and high competition; therefore, some businesses tend to compromise on ethical principles just to pull through (Murphy & Schlegelmilch, 2013). Ethical communication acts as a mitigating factor that assists entrepreneurs in handling these challenges while preserving business integrity.

With the view of preserving business integrity, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) plays a vital role in ethical entrepreneurial decision-making since it integrates ethical considerations into business strategies. CSR encompasses voluntary actions by businesses to address ESG issues beyond legal requirements (Carroll & Buchholtz, 2015). Ethical communication in CSR guarantees stakeholders' perception of businesses as socially responsible, which fosters consumer trust and loyalty (Porter & Kramer, 2011). Entrepreneurs who can successfully communicate CSR initiatives contribute to positive brand reputation and long-term business sustainability.

The rise of digital entrepreneurship has brought to the fore a new set of ethical dilemmas involving data privacy issues, algorithmic bias, and misinformation (Zuboff, 2019). Ethical decision-making in this digital space entails entrepreneurs navigating through complex issues regarding user data protection, online transparency, and fair digital marketing practices (Floridi, 2020). Ethical communication strategies, therefore, include clear privacy policies for consumers and responsible Artificial Intelligence (AI) deployment to gain consumer trust and ensure compliance with regulations (Gorwa, 2019). Entrepreneurs with an ethical framework in digital business models increase the dimensions of accountability and social responsibility.

The complexities of ethical decision-making in entrepreneurship call for structured communication frameworks to guide responsible business practices. Ethical communication models like stakeholder theory (Freeman, 1984) and dialogic ethics (Kent & Taylor, 2002) emphasize transparency, mutual understanding, and inclusiveness. These principles of communication need to be integrated into the decision-making processes by entrepreneurs to ensure that their businesses are run ethically. A strong ethical communication culture is one that not only prevents corporate scandals but also furthers sustainable business growth and positive societal impact. The value of this study is that it delves into the area of how, through a communication lens, ethical decision-making in entrepreneurship impacts business sustainability, stakeholder trust, and corporate reputation. In this way, it gives insight to entrepreneurs, policymakers, and scholars on fostering ethical business practices, enhancing CSR, and navigating ethical dilemmas in the digital economy.

Statement of the Problem

Ethical decision-making is a critical determinant of business success, sustainability, and societal impact; however, for many entrepreneurs, balancing profit motive with ethical considerations proves to be very challenging. Business owners are prone to dilemmas such as deceptive advertising, unfair labor practices, environmental neglect, and data privacy violations in an increasingly competitive and globalized market. While ethical lapses may give way to possible legal consequences, loss of reputation, and diminution in consumer confidence, ethical business practices engender sustainable development and loyalty among stakeholders. Yet, despite being instrumental in encouraging, guiding, and reinforcing ethical decision-making by entrepreneurs, communication remains grossly understudied as it opens a path toward transparency, accountability, and involvement of the stakeholders.

The digital economy has further complicated the process of making ethical decisions for entrepreneurs, with issues of misinformation, algorithmic bias, and corporate social responsibility in online spaces. Digital platforms propagate information quickly, and business practices considered unethical can bring a company under public scrutiny at great speed, affecting both consumer perceptions and regulatory interventions. When entrepreneurs fail to communicate effectively on ethical considerations, it could spur financial losses and a reputational crisis. While existing literature has explored the domain of business ethics at large, what is still needed is a focused examination of how communication strategies influence ethical decision-making in entrepreneurship.

Without an intentional and structured ethical communication framework, too many entrepreneurs will be acting in unintentional, unethical ways or otherwise fail to communicate ethics. Unethical communication breeds misunderstanding and distrust among stakeholders and destroys the credibility of businesses. Hence, the current study explores how strategic communications can improve the ethical decision-making of entrepreneurs towards responsible business practices in tandem with societal values. The study addresses this gap and hence provides insights toward the communicative dimensions of ethical entrepreneurship, presenting strategies to cultivate ethical awareness, build trust, and inculcate corporate social responsibility.

This paper tries to achieve three main objectives. First, it tries to analyze the influence of ethical decision-making on entrepreneurial success and stakeholder perceptions, particularly in relation to trust, corporate reputation, and long-term business sustainability. The study will also consider real cases and ethical dilemmas that demonstrate the challenges entrepreneurs face in balancing profit motives with ethical obligations. This is the first study to attempt an assessment of the role of

communication in ethical entrepreneurship through an evaluation of how transparency, accountability, and stakeholder engagement inform business ethics. It reflects on the impacts of digital communication, corporate disclosures, and responsible branding on ethical awareness and reputational risks within entrepreneurial ventures. Finally, this paper attempts to propose a framework based on communication in ethical decision-making in entrepreneurship. It identifies good practices and ethical communication strategies that give a guideline for entrepreneurs to respond to ethical challenges, improve CSR efforts, and increase business credibility in an evolving global market.

Meaning of Ethics

Ethics refers to the systematic study of moral principles that govern human behavior and decision-making in various contexts, including business and entrepreneurship. It involves distinguishing between right and wrong, as well as understanding how moral values influence individual and collective actions. According to Beauchamp and Bowie (2021), ethics encompasses normative frameworks that guide individuals in making choices that align with societal values and professional standards. Ethics is also deeply rooted in philosophy, with classical scholars such as Aristotle emphasizing virtues like honesty, fairness, and responsibility as fundamental to ethical conduct (Aristotle, 350 B.C.E./2009). In the modern business environment, ethical considerations play a crucial role in ensuring transparency, trust, and long-term sustainability. Entrepreneurs who adhere to ethical principles are more likely to build reputable brands, maintain stakeholder confidence, and achieve sustainable growth (Ferrell & Fraedrich, 2022).

Beyond personal morality, ethics extends to organizational and societal levels, influencing policies, laws, and business practices. Ethical decision-making requires a balance between self-interest and the welfare of others, which is often reflected in corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives and regulatory compliance (Crane et al., 2021). In entrepreneurial settings, ethical dilemmas frequently arise, such as conflicts of interest, deceptive advertising, and fair labor practices. Business ethics frameworks, such as utilitarianism and deontology, provide structured approaches to resolving these dilemmas by emphasizing consequences and duty-based principles (Kant, 1785/1998). Ethical entrepreneurship not only fosters legal and social legitimacy but also enhances business resilience by mitigating risks associated with unethical conduct, such as legal penalties and reputational damage (Trevino & Nelson, 2021). Therefore, ethics serves as a fundamental pillar in guiding responsible decision-making in entrepreneurship.

Ethical Decision-Making in Entrepreneurship

Ethical decision-making in entrepreneurship entails the way business owners perceive the moral dimension while making strategic and operational decisions. Many times, ethical dilemmas related to fair labor practices, corporate transparency, environmental sustainability, and consumer protection arise in the line of entrepreneurship (Ferrell et al., 2022). Business owners in the world of entrepreneurship are driven by innovation, market competition, and financial sustainability, so conflicts may arise between maximizing profit and doing what is ethical (Schwartz, 2017). Ethical decision-making, therefore, involves a balance between financial goals and moral obligations, ensuring that business practices are in line with legal requirements and societal expectations.

Different ethical theories may help in the understanding of entrepreneurs' decision-making. Utilitarian theory focuses on a particular action based on its consequences; it proposes an action that, when implemented, results in the greatest possible good for everyone (Mill, 1863). In contrast, deontological ethics focuses on principles and duties by stating that some business actions are inherently right or wrong irrespective of their outcomes (Kant, 1785). Virtue ethics, as suggested by Aristotle, inspires entrepreneurs to develop good character and integrity in business (Audi, 2009). Such ethical theories help entrepreneurs make decisions that support fairness, justice, and the good of society while ensuring sustainability in their businesses. Despite the gravity of ethical decision-making, entrepreneurs are likely to encounter challenges in the form of corruption, regulatory loopholes, and financial pressures that may give way to the temptation to engage in unethical behavior (Donaldson & Walsh, 2015).

Start-ups and small businesses, in particular, might be constrained by resources, something that might force some to compromise on ethical principles to gain an upper hand in the market (Murphy & Schlegelmilch, 2013). Ethical failures in entrepreneurship lead to damage to reputation, legal penalties, and distrust from consumers, hence the need for a structured approach to making ethical decisions. In this respect, entrepreneurs should integrate ethical issues within their business models and corporate governance structures. Ethical leadership, corporate social responsibility, and compliance with laws and industry standards are the best ways through which business owners can navigate the ethical dilemma maze effectively (Carroll & Buchholtz, 2015).

Moreover, a strong ethical culture in an organization motivates both the employees and stakeholders to give importance to ethical behavior for credibility in business and to ensure long-term success. Ethical decision-making has been one of the critical components for responsible and sustainable business practices as entrepreneurship

further evolves in this digital era.

The Role of Communication in Ethical Entrepreneurial Decision-Making

While communication is at the core of the process, it ensures ethical decision-making in entrepreneurship, since it promotes transparency, accountability, and trust between a business and its stakeholders. Ethical business communication involves the responsible dissemination of information to the respective business decisions of employees, customers, investors, and the general public transparently and honestly (Heath, 2018). Entrepreneurs with ethical communication have increased credibility, built stakeholder confidence, and reduced the risk of reputational damage (Christensen et al., 2020). On the other hand, deceptive or misleading communication may result in consumer distrust, regulatory scrutiny, and long-term instability in business.

One important aspect of ethical communication relevant to entrepreneurship is corporate transparency. To be transparent, companies should make any information concerning their policies, financial performance, and initiatives related to social impacts accessible to all (Brenkert, 2019). Companies that effectively communicate their ethical values and corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives build a stronger relationship with stakeholders and improve brand loyalty (Porter & Kramer, 2011). With the increased accessibility to corporate information by consumers in the digital economy, ethical communication becomes even more imperative in maintaining a good business reputation today (Floridi, 2020). Ethical communication also plays a key role in handling crises and ethical dilemmas in business.

In cases of product recalls, data breaches, or public scandals, how entrepreneurs communicate with stakeholders determines the extent of reputational damage and recovery (Gorwa, 2019). Companies that apply proactive and responsible crisis communication strategies, such as issuing timely apologies, taking corrective actions, and engaging with affected stakeholders, are more likely to restore public trust and maintain business resilience (Kent & Taylor, 2002). On the other hand, companies that do not show transparency in their communication during crises risk losing consumer confidence and suffering heavy financial losses. This role of communication in ethical decision-making extends to digital ethics, where businesses have to navigate online marketing ethics, consumer data protection, and social media transparency (Zuboff, 2019). The digital platforms of entrepreneurs should also be ethically sound, including clarity of privacy policies, truthful advertising, and consideration of issues related to algorithmic bias (Florida, 2020). As ethical scrutiny in the business world rises, the integration of ethical communication frameworks into entrepreneurial decision-

making processes becomes necessary to further responsible business practices, stakeholder trust, and long-term sustainability.

Stakeholder Theory

Stakeholder theory is the theoretical model advanced by Edward Freeman in 1984, which has been applied here to interrogate the values of entrepreneurship in relation to the communication process in business. According to the stakeholder theory, businesses should not be concerned only with maximizing shareholder profits but must consider the interests of all stakeholders: employees, customers, suppliers, communities, and investors (Freeman, 1984). Key tenets include stakeholder inclusivity: businesses must recognize and address the needs of all stakeholders, rather than just those of shareholders. Ethical Decision-Making: There is a need to incorporate ethical dimensions in the strategic planning process for fairness and transparency. CSR: Businesses ought to contribute positively to society beyond what is required by law. Long-term Value Creation: Ethical interaction with stakeholders, through which companies build trust, reputation, and sustainability in their business operations. Stakeholder Dialogue: Communication helps in the management of the relationship, addressing the concerns of each other, and maintaining the integrity of business ethics (Donaldson & Preston, 1995).

Stakeholder Theory Assumptions: Businesses work within a complex grid of relationships where different stakeholders drive corporate decisions (Freeman, Harrison, & Zyglidopoulos, 2018). Ethical decision-making improves business sustainability through increased stakeholder trust and cooperation. Open and responsible communication is critical to dealing with stakeholder concerns and ethical issues. Stakeholder engagement contributes to organizational success by improving public perception and reducing reputational risks.

Criticism of Stakeholder Theory: Despite its relevance, stakeholder theory has been criticized by many. Ambiguity in the definition of a stakeholder, critics argue that the theory is not clear about who a stakeholder is and how to prioritize interests when they are in conflict (Jensen, 2002). Implementation challenges: It can be difficult for businesses to balance multiple stakeholders' demands, especially in highly competitive markets. Profitability vs. Ethical Responsibility: There are arguments that an over-emphasis on stakeholder management reduces financial performance as well as the value of shareholders (Sundaram & Inkpen, 2004). Lack of Clear Measurement: The theory does not provide a concrete framework through which the outputs of stakeholder engagement can be measured (Mitchell et al., 1997). Stakeholder Theory is

of utmost importance to this research study because it helps in setting the framework for ethical decision-making and communication within entrepreneurship.

Entrepreneurs have to navigate through complex ethical issues while keeping good relations with all sorts of stakeholders. The theory emphasizes the role of transparent and responsible communication in dealing with ethical issues, building trust, and enhancing corporate reputation. Moreover, stakeholder theory provides a theoretical framework for understanding how ethical business practices contribute to long-term success, which is in line with the purpose of the study to explore the communication-based framework for ethical entrepreneurship.

Empirical Review

Ferrell (2022) conducted a study on *Business Ethics: Ethical Decision Making and Cases*. The study analyzed how ethical decision-making impacts business sustainability, consumer trust, and corporate reputation. The study was conducted qualitatively by including case studies of businesses that went through ethical dilemmas and their respective decision-making processes. It was discovered that companies making an effort to include ethical considerations in the decision-making process are more likely to maintain good stakeholder relationships, stay away from legal challenges, and sustain long-term profitability. The study above and the present one underline the role of ethical decision-making in business sustainability and stakeholders' trust. While the study reviewed was directed to business ethics in general in different fields, this present study specifically investigates the aspect of ethical decision-making in entrepreneurship from a communication perspective.

Christensen et al. (2020) conducted a study on *Corporate Communication: A Strategic Approach to Building Reputation*. The study sought to find the effect of corporate communication strategies on ethical business practices, reputation management, and stakeholder engagement. A mixed-method approach was adopted that combined surveys from corporate executives with content analysis of corporate communication strategies. The results showed that effective communication enhances the transparency of the corporate body, reduces risks to its reputation, and enhances stakeholder relationships, more so in managing crises. Both the study reviewed and the pioneer study underline the role of communication in ethical business practices concerning transparency and reputation management. Concerning the reviewed study, which approached corporate communication in large organizations, this study specifically aims at communication as a tool for ethical decision-making in entrepreneurial settings.

Moreover, Porter and Kramer (2011) researched *Creating Shared Value: How to Reinvent Capitalism and Unleash a Wave of Innovation and Growth*, which looked at how companies integrate corporate social responsibility with ethical decision-making in core strategies that drive not only profitability but also societal impact. The researchers followed a case study approach, basing their analyses on companies that have successfully put shared value initiatives into operation. The research found that businesses that align their profit-making strategies with social good tend to experience long-term growth and enjoy brand loyalty and enhanced stakeholder trust. Both the reviewed study and the present study emphasize the role of ethical decision-making in fostering business success and sustainability. The focus of the reviewed study was on shared value in large corporations, while in this manuscript, the focus is exactly on ethical decision-making in entrepreneurship from a communication-centered perspective.

Summary of Review

The literature review discussed key concepts related to ethical decision-making in entrepreneurship highly relevant to promoting stakeholder trust, corporate sustainability, and responsible business practices. It collated such theories as utilitarianism, deontology, and virtue ethics in the explanation of how diverse moral perspectives shape entrepreneurial decisions (Ferrell et al., 2022). Moreover, the role of corporate transparency, stakeholder engagement, and corporate social responsibility in shaping ethical business practices was reviewed (Porter & Kramer, 2011). Other ethical challenges identified were the financial pressures, inconsistent regulatory demands, and competitive market demands that entrepreneurs have to negotiate while making decisions.

What is more, the review highlighted the communication aspect of ethical entrepreneurship concerning transparency, reputational risks, and addressing the concerns of stakeholders. Scholars have pointed out that organizations with ethical communication frameworks have better stakeholder relationships, improved brand loyalty, and long-term market success (Christensen et al., 2020). Research in this field of corporate communication strategies emphasizes clear and responsible messaging as a factor of ethical credibility, mainly in crisis management and corporate governance. Moreover, the digital era has also introduced new ethical issues, which have brought more structure to the need for ethical communication in business: for example, online misinformation, privacy, and algorithmic bias.

Gap Identification

Despite much research into the area of ethical decision-making within a business and corporate ethics framework, there remains a significant knowledge gap in understanding ethical decision-making specifically within entrepreneurial settings from a communication perspective. Most of the literature has focused on large corporations and their ethical frameworks, thus creating a knowledge gap on how small businesses and start-ups navigate through ethical challenges by implementing communication strategies (Murphy & Schlegelmilch, 2013; Sundaram & Inkpen, 2004).

While stakeholder theory and corporate ethics frameworks emphasize openness and accountability, little work has explored the direct influences of communication tools and strategies on ethical decision-making by entrepreneurs. Much of the literature discusses ethics in broad business terms, whereby little is said about the communicative mechanisms that constitute ethical entrepreneurial behavior (Freeman et al. 2018). What is more, the rise of digital entrepreneurship and social media-driven businesses has brought new challenges in ethics, such as online reputation management, consumer privacy, and misinformation. However, there is a lack of literature on how entrepreneurs can strategically use communication to surmount these challenges while preserving ethical integrity in their decision-making processes (Zuboff, 2019; Gorwa, 2019). This paper tries to fill these gaps by investigating ethical decision-making in entrepreneurship through a communication-centered approach, hence serving to provide insights into how entrepreneurs can use communication strategies to enhance transparency, stakeholder trust, and ethical business practices.

Methodology

A qualitative approach was adopted for the study, using email interviews to explore the ethical implications of entrepreneurial decision-making from a communication perspective. This study made use of a qualitative approach to explore how entrepreneurs navigate ethical challenges through strategic communication. The population of the study comprised entrepreneurs across various industries in Nigeria, with emphasis on those who have encountered ethical dilemmas in their business operations. A purposive sampling technique was followed in the selection of the 15 entrepreneurs to ensure that participants have relevant experience concerning ethical decision-making and stakeholders' engagement. This data collection method involved semi-structured email interviews, allowing participants to respond in detail at their convenience while ensuring clarity and depth in their perspectives. The interview questions revolved around ethical communication strategies, stakeholder management,

transparency, and how these have been affected by digital media. Thematic analysis was used to analyze data by systematically categorizing responses into themes to outline patterns and key findings. This way, one has an all-inclusive view of how communication impacts ethical decision-making in entrepreneurship, one that has implications for ethical business practices.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Themes were deduced deductively following the research objectives. The following themes were deduced: Ethical decision-making and entrepreneurial success; the role of communication in ethical entrepreneurship; and developing a communication-based framework for ethical decision-making. These were presented and discussed below:

Ethical Decision-Making and Entrepreneurial Success: An Exploration of the Relationship between Ethical Business Practices, Stakeholder Trust, Corporate Reputation, and Long-Term Sustainability. Entrepreneurs face a host of ethical issues when balancing profitability with what is considered moral. Interviewee A stated that one big challenge is the urge to cut corners to drive down costs, which sometimes conflicts with the responsibility to provide quality products or services. For example, entrepreneurs have had cases where using cheaper, lower-quality materials would increase margins, but entrepreneurs voted against it because it would tarnish the reputation of the business in the long run. The pressure to meet financial targets can sometimes blur ethical judgment and make it hard to prioritize ethical practices over short-term gains.

The other major challenge would be the management of stakeholder expectations. Investors and partners will always push strategies that maximize short-term profits, sometimes even urging less ethical practices such as aggressive marketing tactics or exploiting regulatory loopholes. These demands go against my belief in transparency in business practices and a long-term sustainable model. Sometimes, in addition, employee rights come into play, cutbacks in compensation or benefits may be an easy solution to improve margins, but undermine the kind of trust and loyalty an entrepreneur prizes within my team. And finally, on the rise, digital platforms only create new, more complicated dimensions of ethical conundrums, particularly within the boundaries related to data privacy and consumer protection.

The digital space is full of opportunities, but it can be quite tricky to ensure that personal data is handled ethically. Entrepreneurs are faced with the dilemma of balancing innovative marketing techniques, data mining, and targeted ads, with respect

for customer privacy. These challenges require careful thought and a commitment to ethical decision-making frameworks that are transparent and put the well-being of all stakeholders involved first.

The Role of Communication in Ethical Entrepreneurship – Looking into the influence of transparency, accountability, and stakeholder engagement on ethical decision-making within a business setting. Communication also plays an important role when it comes to dealing with ethical dilemmas in entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurs practice transparent communication with stakeholders, be they customers, employees, or partners, especially in addressing any ethical issues. For instance, when our company encountered an issue with a third-party vendor that did not meet our environmental standards, entrepreneurs went ahead to make the issue public to our customers. By doing so, entrepreneurs made sure they understood the situation, the steps we were taking to resolve it, and how we would prevent it in the future. With that transparency, we were able to sustain the trust even after the setback.

Another strategy is to provide clear ethical guidelines for the company through a code of conduct, which an entrepreneur regularly communicates to the employees and stakeholders. Such guidelines include a commitment to practices of fair labor and sustainability, as well as transparency in business operations. Therefore, by incorporating such ethical values into internal communications, entrepreneurs ensure that all employees of an organization are guided by the same ethical standards, which ultimately helps to identify and act on dilemmas proactively. Regular discussions and workshops around these values also provide a platform for employees to voice concerns or dilemmas they may face in their roles. Social media has become another crucial tool for communication, especially for addressing ethical issues in real time.

In the event of a customer complaint or an issue concerning product quality or unethical business practices, responding quickly on our social media sites ensures that we show responsibility. Rather than shying away from these difficult conversations, entrepreneurs much prefer to get in front of customers, describing what went wrong, how we fixed it, and how we are committed to doing the right thing. This proactive communication helps not only to resolve individual problems but also strengthens our general image in the public view.

Developing a Communication-Based Framework for Ethical Decision-Making – Proposing strategies and best practices for integrating ethical communication into entrepreneurial decision-making processes demands ethical consciousness toward the values of human relationships. Communication significantly influences ethical decision-making by providing clarity, guidance, and support to entrepreneurs as they

navigate complex decisions. When faced with difficult choices, entrepreneurs heavily rely on communication to clarify the situation with their team and stakeholders. Entrepreneurs have a strong belief that ethical decisions are mostly the result of shared dialogue, where all perspectives are considered. Such was the case when we had to decide on a new product line that would hurt the environment. After open discussions with the team and stakeholders, we managed to weigh the ethical implications and finally decided against it, realizing the long-term damage it could cause both to our reputation and the environment.

Besides, communication helps an entrepreneur institute an organizational culture of valuing ethics. "As an entrepreneur, one communicates the importance of ethical behavior in our day-to-day operations; hence, it's not a set of rules but an integral part of our business identity. An entrepreneur uses regular meetings, emails, and newsletters to outline success stories where ethical decisions lead to positive outcomes, encouraging employees to do the same. This constant reinforcement creates an atmosphere in which ethical decision-making becomes second nature. Finally, communication also enables entrepreneurs to keep in touch with their wider community, like customers and colleagues in the industry, without whom ethical decision-making cannot be enforced. Such transparent and responsible communication with those groups enables entrepreneurs to receive insights into what society expects, what the legal environment requires, and what consumers value - all relevant to guide decisions. This connection ensures that decisions are in line not only with business goals but also with societal and ethical expectations, thus making the entrepreneur accountable for their actions and less likely to deviate from ethical standards.

Discussion of Findings

The findings highlighted that entrepreneurs are significantly faced with ethical challenges, such as the desire to prioritize short-term gains over long-term sustainability, conflicting stakeholder expectations, and the emergence of ethical issues brought about by digital platforms concerning data privacy and consumer rights. Most of these challenges, therefore, put entrepreneurs in a position where they have to balance financial pressure with their responsibility to run business operations with transparency and conformance to ethical standards. This finding is in tandem with the study of Ferrell et al. (2022), in which their study, *Business Ethics: Ethical Decision Making and Cases*, examined how the ethical challenges in decision-making impact business sustainability. Their study shed light on the pressure entrepreneurs face when making

profit-driven decisions that run against ethical considerations, such as cost-cutting practices and the temptation to exploit regulatory loopholes. This is in line with the finding that entrepreneurs find it difficult to balance profitability with ethics, especially in highly competitive market environments. The finding on ethical challenges in entrepreneurial decision-making strongly relates to Freeman's (1984) Stakeholder Theory, which emphasizes that entrepreneurs should consider the interests and ethical concerns of diverse stakeholders (e.g., employees, customers, and investors) in making business decisions. The theory helps explain the difficult balancing act that entrepreneurs face in dealing with conflicting stakeholder expectations and making decisions that are consistent with ethical values while ensuring business success. The finding that entrepreneurs face significant ethical challenges implies that entrepreneurs need to be equipped with a strong ethical framework and decision-making strategies to navigate through complex situations. This is an indication of the need for entrepreneurship education and training to emphasize ethical reasoning and for setting up an ethical guideline within the business so as not to compromise integrity for short-term gains.

These findings also highlighted various strategies that entrepreneurs use in dealing with ethical dilemmas, such as open communication with stakeholders, setting a clear code of ethical guidelines within the organization, and the use of social media to publicly address and solve ethical issues that arise. Those are relevant strategies for gaining trust, aligning internal practices with ethical values, and reputation management, ensuring that ethical standards are upheld in all aspects of business. This will align with Christensen et al. (2020), in *Corporate Communication: A Strategic Approach to Building Reputation*, in considering the function of communication in dealing with the ethical dilemmas of business. Their study only re-emphasized that clear and transparent communication, apart from the ethical guidelines within the organization, shall be effective in addressing the ethical challenges and hence provide security for the corporate reputation. This will provide support for the finding that communication strategies, such as transparency and stakeholder engagement, are quite fundamental in addressing ethical dilemmas in entrepreneurship. The finding that communication strategies play a vital role in addressing ethical dilemmas implies that entrepreneurs should focus on transparent and proactive communication with all stakeholders. Entrepreneurs may establish and foster trust, handle crises effectively, and make sure that the actions of their business are congruent with ethical values by instilling clear ethical standards within the organizational culture and utilizing communication as a tool for the open airing of issues.

The findings indicated that communication is a very important component in increasing ethical decision-making, as it promotes transparency, encourages open

dialogue, and strengthens ethical values within an organization. Entrepreneurs can make more informed ethical decisions through frequent communication with stakeholders and team members who are in line with both business objectives and societal expectations. This finding supports Porter and Kramer (2011) in their work *Creating Shared Value*, where they discussed how communication between businesses and stakeholders influences ethical decision-making, particularly in the context of aligning profit-making with social good. They noted the requirement for constant communication to ensure that within the organization, ethical values are maintained, which is similar to the finding that communication promotes transparency and helps align business decisions with ethical principles. This would, therefore, mean that the finding implies entrepreneurs should create an environment for open dialogue and ethical transparency within their organizations. Informed by continuous stakeholder engagement and the reinforcement of ethical principles through communication, entrepreneurs can make better decisions for both business goals and societal expectations.

Conclusion

The conclusion of the study was that the ethical challenges entrepreneurs face are very complicated in the balance of profitability against moral responsibility, where most of them need resolution within the conflicting interests and pressures of stakeholders. In establishing an ethical framework in their decision-making processes, entrepreneurs have to make sure that business practices will concur with long-term ethical standards rather than short-term financial gains.

The study has established that communication strategies are inherent in dealing with the ethical dilemmas in entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurs, by considering transparency, ethical guidelines, and stakeholder engagement, are better prepared to respond to ethical challenges, build trust with stakeholders, and protect the reputation of the business. A strategic approach to communication ensures that ethical values are upheld consistently within an organization and throughout its interactions with external parties.

Finally, the study justified that communication plays a pivotal role in enhancing ethical decision-making by fostering transparency, accountability, and dialogue within the business. Entrepreneurs able to use communication to align business decisions with ethical principles are better placed to make informed decisions that not only benefit the company but also meet societal expectations, ensuring long-term sustainability and stakeholder trust.

This paper fills the gap in knowledge by bringing into the open important insights regarding the complex relationship that exists between entrepreneurial decision-making and ethics from a communication perspective. It flags how entrepreneurs negotiate ethical challenges about the balancing of profitability with moral responsibility and the large role that communication plays in those decisions. It would also help in the development of systematic ethical decision-making tools, guiding entrepreneurs in practices that place long-term sustainability and social responsibility over short-term gains. These findings provide a wide understanding of how communication strategies such as transparency, stakeholder engagement, and ethical guidelines may mitigate ethical conflicts and advance responsible entrepreneurship.

This study also contributes to the literature by placing communication in a critical role in shaping entrepreneurial ethical decision-making. The findings illustrate that communication is not just a tool for crisis management but a proactive process in shaping the ethical environment of the business. The study is useful in understanding how communication serves to increase ethical behavior, from which entrepreneurs may derive actionable insights on how best to apply strategies that ensure consistent ethical values. This contribution takes the literature further and offers a framework that is actionable for entrepreneurs to align their decision-making with ethical principles, building trust and sustainable business practices that resonate with both internal and external stakeholders.

Recommendations

From these findings, the following recommendations are suggested.

1. Entrepreneurs develop and implement strong ethical guidelines and decision-making frameworks that will help negotiate through the complex ethical challenges they have to meet.
2. Transparency in communication by entrepreneurs towards the stakeholders can be an effective way to handle ethical dilemmas and sustain trust.
3. Entrepreneurs should create an environment of open communication and ethical transparency within their organisation that will facilitate informed and ethical decision-making.

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Entrepreneurship, Ethics and Economic Recession in Nigeria: Intersections and Implications

Michael Noel Buki & Marib Ishaya Emmanuel



Executive Summary

This study examined the intricate relationships between entrepreneurship, ethics, and economic downturn in Nigeria. By adopting an expository and qualitative research approach, it examined the interplay between innovative business ventures and ethical decision-making, particularly in the context of resource scarcity, unemployment, and weakened institutional frameworks that often characterize economic downturns. The study highlighted how unethical practices, such as corruption, hoarding, overpricing, exploitation, and short-term profiteering, breed and exacerbate economic downturn within the Nigerian context. The study suggested the need for stakeholders and policymakers to promote ethical entrepreneurship practices, strengthen institutional frameworks, and foster a business environment that encourages sustainable economic growth. Using virtue ethics, consequentialism, and deontology theories, the study analysed the implications of entrepreneurial ethical decisions during economic downturn in Nigeria. This study concluded that fostering an ethical entrepreneurial ecosystem is critical for mitigating the adverse effects of economic downturns and unlocking Nigeria's potential for inclusive growth and development.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship, Ethics, Economic Downturn, Nigeria, Economic Growth

Introduction

Nigeria, Africa's largest economy, is a paradox of vast potential and persistent challenges. The Nigerian economy has experienced and continues to experience numerous challenges, including economic downturns, corruption, and unethical business practices. These factors have hindered the country's ability to achieve sustainable economic growth and development. Entrepreneurship, which is a crucial driver of economic growth, has been particularly affected by these challenges.

Entrepreneurship has long been a lifeline for Nigeria's population, yet economic downturns driven by oil price volatility, currency devaluation, and global shocks test its

resilience. As Peter Drucker noted, “The entrepreneur always searches for change, responds to it, and exploits it as an opportunity” (Drucker, 1985). However, the ethical dimensions of these responses remain underexplored, particularly in crisis contexts. Furthermore, the economic downturn has exacerbated these challenges, making it difficult for entrepreneurs to operate efficiently and effectively.

Thus, this study seeks to explore the intersections and implications of entrepreneurship, ethics, and economic downturn in Nigeria. By examining the relationships between these concepts, the research aims to provide insights into the challenges facing entrepreneurship in Nigeria and the implications of these challenges for sustainable economic growth and development. Interrogating how Nigerian entrepreneurs navigate ethical dilemmas in a collapsing economy, and what are the implications for individual agency and societal progress. Through a philosophical lens, it examines how these elements intersect and shape implications for individuals, society, and the state, analyzing their implications for economic recovery and societal well-being. Drawing on deontological ethical theory, virtue ethics, and utilitarianism, this analysis illuminates the philosophical stakes of entrepreneurial action in Nigeria's troubled landscape.

This study contributes to the existing literature on entrepreneurship, ethics, and economic downturn in Nigeria. The findings of this research will provide insights for policymakers, entrepreneurs, and other stakeholders on the importance of promoting ethical entrepreneurship practices and strengthening institutional frameworks to foster sustainable economic growth and development

Entrepreneurship as a Human Endeavor

Entrepreneurship is one of the most distinctly human pursuits, blending creativity, risk-taking, and problem-solving into a single endeavor. At its core, it is about identifying needs or gaps in the world and marshaling resources, time, skills, capital, and networks to address them. It is not just about making money; it is about creating value, often from scratch, in a way that reflects the entrepreneur's vision, persistence, and adaptability.

It is also deeply social. Entrepreneurs do not operate in a vacuum; they persuade investors, inspire teams, and convince customers. That dance of trust and communication is pure human territory. Even the failures, which are more common than the wins, reveal something essential: the willingness to bet on oneself and learn from the wreckage. Hegel might see it as the individual spirit clashing and collaborating

with the collective beings or entities, as in a process of dialectic where personal ambition meets historical context. No entrepreneur succeeds alone; they are shaped by culture, markets, and the labor of others. Yet they also disrupt those structures; Schumpeter's "creative destruction" comes to mind. This tension between creation and destruction is fascinating in entrepreneurship.

It is also an existential act of self-definition. Sartre writes, "Man is nothing else but what he makes of himself" (1946: 28). In a nation where formal jobs are scarce and economic downturn erodes security, many Nigerians forge their essence through enterprise. Yet, this freedom is fraught with tension. As Sartre notes, "We are condemned to be free" (p. 34), a condemnation intensified by structural barriers: erratic power, limited credit, and bureaucratic hurdles. The entrepreneur becomes Albert Camus' Sisyphus, pushing a boulder uphill in defiance of an absurd economic reality. Camus urges us to "imagine Sisyphus happy" (1942:123), suggesting that meaning lies in the struggle itself.

This existential framing reveals entrepreneurship as a dual-edged sword, as liberation from systemic failure and a burden of relentless adversity, an option for self-definition and development. The implication is profound, in the Nigerian context; entrepreneurial action is not just economic survival but a philosophical assertion of human dignity also. Entrepreneurship is almost the ultimate expression of freedom and responsibility. Sartre argues that it is humans defining themselves through action, rejecting a preordained essence. When someone starts a venture, say, a small bakery or a tech startup, they're not just baking bread or coding software; they're asserting, "This is who I am, this is what I choose to bring into existence." The entrepreneur also bears the weight of that choice, and the absurdity of it, pouring everything into something that might fail, echoes Camus' defiance in the face of an indifferent universe.

On the other hand, a more Aristotelian view might frame it as a pursuit of *eudaimonia*, flourishing through the exercise of virtue and reason. Building something valuable requires courage, practical wisdom (*phronesis*), and a *telos*, a purpose beyond mere survival. The entrepreneurs are not just chasing profits, but striving to actualize potential, simply for their living and that of society. Nietzsche could take it darker or brighter, depending on the lens. The entrepreneurial "will to power" might be the *Übermensch* in action, overcoming obstacles, rejecting mediocrity, and crafting a world in their image.

It's also about time and uncertainty. Heidegger's "being-toward-death" lurks in the background, entrepreneurs act knowing their time is finite, then projecting their ventures in a fragile manner. They throw themselves into the future, betting on what

could be, not what is. They are leaping into the unknown and feel quintessentially human, a refusal to be passive spectators in our existence.

So, where do these conceptions of the individual as an entrepreneur land us existentially? Entrepreneurship seems to embody our highest capacities, imagination, agency, connection, and our flaws: hubris, shortsightedness, and the temptation to prioritize self over system. On the flip side, it is not all noble. Entrepreneurship can be chaotic, selfish, and even destructive. Think of the “move fast and break things” ethos that leaves collateral damage in its wake.

Ethical Decisions in Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship is often celebrated as a realm of innovation and ambition, where visionaries transform ideas into tangible value. Yet, beneath the pursuit of profit and progress lies a deeper challenge: the ethical decisions that define not only the success of a venture but its impact on the world. At its core, entrepreneurship is a moral endeavor, a negotiation between self-interest and the common good, requiring a delicate balance of pragmatism and principle.

As Warren Buffett famously said, "In looking for people to hire, you look for three qualities: integrity, intelligence, and energy. And if they don't have the first, the other two will kill you." This highlights that ethical behavior is not just a moral stance; it's a practical necessity. Entrepreneurship often grapples with the tension between profit and social responsibility.

The 18th-century philosopher Immanuel Kant offers a foundational lens through which to view ethical decision-making. In his *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785), Kant argues that actions must be guided by a categorical imperative: "Act only according to that maxim whereby you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law." For the entrepreneur, this raises a provocative question: Could the principles behind my business decisions, whether cutting costs, prioritizing stakeholders, or marketing a product, be universally applied without contradiction or harm? Consider a startup that exploits lax labor laws to maximize profit. While lucrative in the short term, Kant might caution that such a maxim, if universalized, would erode trust and dignity, destabilizing the very society that sustains commerce. Contrast this with the utilitarian perspective of John Stuart Mill, who in *Utilitarianism* (1861) posits that ethical actions should aim to produce "the greatest happiness for the greatest number." Entrepreneurs often face decisions where stakeholder interests clash, employees, customers, investors, and communities all competing for priority. Mill's

framework demands a calculus of consequences, urging the entrepreneur to look beyond immediate gains toward long-term societal well-being. Yet, this approach can falter in practice: How does one quantify happiness, and who decides whose happiness matters most?

The tension between deontological and consequentialist views mirrors a real-world entrepreneurial dilemma: the pursuit of profit versus the cultivation of purpose. As the philosopher and economist Milton Friedman argued, "The social responsibility of business is to increase its profits" (Friedman, 1970). However, this view has been criticized for prioritizing shareholder interests over social and environmental concerns. A more nuanced approach, advocated by scholars such as Michael Porter and Mark Kramer, emphasizes the importance of creating shared value that benefits both business and society (Porter & Kramer, 2011).

As the renowned entrepreneur and philanthropist Richard Branson once said, "Doing good is good for business" (Branson, 2011). This statement highlights the interconnectedness of ethics and entrepreneurship. By prioritizing ethical decision-making, entrepreneurs can build trust, foster loyalty, and create long-term value for their stakeholders. Ethical decision-making is a critical component of entrepreneurship, requiring leaders to balance competing interests, prioritize virtues, and consider the long-term consequences of their actions. By embracing ethics as a core aspect of their business strategy, entrepreneurs can build trust, foster loyalty, and create sustainable value for their stakeholders.

Economic Downturns and Entrepreneurship in Nigeria

Nigeria's economic downturn in recent years has significantly shaped the entrepreneurial landscape, presenting both challenges and opportunities. The country has faced persistent issues such as high inflation, currency depreciation, unemployment, and a heavy reliance on oil revenue, which have been exacerbated by global events like the COVID-19 pandemic and domestic policy shifts, including the removal of fuel subsidies in 2023. As of early 2025, inflation hovers around 34%, and youth unemployment remains alarmingly high at over 50%, creating a tough environment for economic stability and traditional job creation. However, these conditions have also fueled a surge in entrepreneurship, often out of necessity rather than opportunity.

The economic downturn has hit small and medium enterprises (SMEs) hard, which are the backbone of Nigeria's economy, accounting for nearly 50% of GDP and over 80%

of employment. Rising operational costs, driven by fuel price hikes, unreliable electricity, and a weakened naira, have forced many businesses to shut down, with reports suggesting millions of SMEs have folded since 2023. Economic downturns have presented significant challenges for entrepreneurs in Nigeria, including reduced access to funding. Economic uncertainty has made it harder for entrepreneurs to access funding, as investors become more risk-averse. Also, there has been a decrease in consumer demand due to reduced purchasing power, affecting businesses' revenue and profitability. Additionally, higher inflation rates and currency fluctuations have increased the cost of doing business, reducing profit margins.

Yet, this adversity has spurred resilience and innovation. Economic uncertainty can drive innovation, as entrepreneurs seek new solutions to existing problems. Entrepreneurs are adapting by focusing on sectors with consistent demand and have increased focus on local production, reducing reliance on imports, and promoting economic growth, such as agriculture, renewable energy, and digital technology. For instance, food-related ventures like poultry or fish farming remain viable due to the persistent need for affordable nutrition, while solar energy startups address the chronic power shortages that plague businesses and households alike. In the same vein, entrepreneurs diversify their businesses to reduce dependence on a single industry or market.

It is then worth noting that economic downturns present significant challenges for entrepreneurs in Nigeria. However, they also offer opportunities for innovation, diversification, and growth. By understanding these challenges and opportunities, entrepreneurs can develop strategies to navigate economic uncertainty and build successful businesses.

Implications of Entrepreneurial Ethical Decisions during Economic Downturn in Nigeria

Economic downturns pose existential threats to entrepreneurs worldwide. In Nigeria, these crises amplify the stakes of entrepreneurial decision-making. The ethical choices entrepreneurs make during such periods transcend mere business strategy, engaging profound philosophical questions about virtue, consequences, duty, and the human condition. In analyzing the implications of entrepreneurial ethical decisions during economic downturns in Nigeria, there is a need to employ some ethical theories, virtue ethics, consequentialism, and deontology, while situating these perspectives within Nigeria's unique socio-economic and cultural context.

The Virtue Ethics Perspective: Character amid Crisis: Virtue ethics emphasizes the cultivation of moral character over adherence to rules or outcomes. For Nigerian entrepreneurs facing economic downturns, this perspective frames ethical decisions as expressions of habitual excellence. An entrepreneur who resists laying off workers despite financial strain, or who maintains fair pricing amid inflation, embodies virtues like justice, courage, and compassion.

In Nigeria's context, where trust in institutions is eroded by corruption, evidenced by its 2023 Corruption Perceptions Index score of 25/100 (Transparency International, 2023), virtuous entrepreneurship carries amplified significance. Alasdair MacIntyre's modern reinterpretation of virtue ethics is instructive: "The virtues are those goods by reference to which we define our *telos*" (MacIntyre, 1984). The *telos*, or purpose, of Nigerian entrepreneurs might extend beyond profit to include community upliftment and economic stability. For instance, a small-scale manufacturer who sources materials locally during a downturn, despite cheaper illicit imports, not only sustains jobs but also models integrity. Ethical conduct builds stakeholder trust, a critical asset when formal systems falter.

Yet, virtue ethics faces challenges in Nigeria's high-pressure environment. The temptation to "hustle" unethically, bribing officials or evading taxes, can seem a survivalist necessity, not a moral failing. Ethical decisions emerge from balancing self-preservation with communal duty. The virtuous entrepreneur, then, is not a saint but a pragmatic idealist, striving for excellence within Nigeria's imperfect reality. The implication is twofold: such entrepreneurs foster personal and business resilience while seeding a moral counterculture to systemic amorality.

The Consequentialist Perspective: Weighing Outcomes in a Fragile Economy: Consequentialism, epitomized by John Stuart Mill's utilitarianism, judges actions by their outcomes: "Actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness, wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness" (Mill, 1861). During Nigeria's economic downturns, such as the 2020 contraction of 1.8% (World Bank, 2021), entrepreneurs face stark choices: cut costs unethically to survive or uphold principles at the risk of collapse. A consequentialist lens evaluates these decisions by their impact on stakeholders: employees, customers, suppliers, and the broader community.

Consider a Nigerian retailer during a downturn. Raising prices to offset losses might maximize short-term profit (happiness for the entrepreneur) but deepen poverty for consumers. Conversely, maintaining affordable prices could sustain customer welfare and loyalty, promoting collective happiness. Amartya Sen's capability approach refines this view, arguing that "economic development is not just about increasing income, but

also about expanding freedom" (Sen, 1999). An ethical entrepreneur who prioritizes fair wages over mass layoffs enhances workers' capabilities, freedom to eat, learn, and live, contributing to Nigeria's recovery.

However, consequentialism's application in Nigeria is muddled by unpredictability. For instance, illegal cross-border trade employs thousands yet undermines formal economic growth. An entrepreneur joining this trade might alleviate immediate suffering but perpetuate a "parallel economy" that stalls national progress. Mill's utilitarian calculus falters here, as Nigeria's opaque systems, where "corruption is not stealing" (Ordu & Okoroafor, 2014), obscure long-term outcomes. The implication is a moral tightrope: ethical consequentialism demands foresight and restraint, fostering societal well-being but requiring entrepreneurs to bear short-term sacrifices in a context that rewards expediency.

The Deontological Perspective: Duty in the Face of Adversity: Deontology, as articulated by Immanuel Kant, anchors ethics in duty and universal principles: "Act only according to that maxim whereby you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law" (Kant, 1785). For Nigerian entrepreneurs, this perspective insists on adherence to moral rules, honesty, fairness, and respect for contracts, regardless of economic pressures. During a downturn, an entrepreneur who honors supplier agreements despite cashflow woes or refuses to bribe for a government contract upholds a duty-based ethic. Kant's categorical imperative suggests that if all entrepreneurs acted thus, Nigeria's economy would gain stability through trust and accountability.

This resonates with Kwame Gyekye's African philosophy of personhood, which ties moral identity to integrity, specifying that: "The African concept of personhood emphasizes the importance of moral character and integrity" (Gyekye, 1997). In Nigeria, where judicial enforcement is weak, Lynskey (2002) notes the need for "adequate enforcement of contracts", deontological ethics offers a self-imposed standard. An entrepreneur rejecting corruption, even when it delays a critical permit, preserves their moral personhood, aligning with cultural values while challenging systemic decay.

Yet, deontology's rigidity clashes with Nigeria's survivalist ethos. Kantian duty assumes a rational moral community, but in a downturn, when 33.3% of Nigerians are unemployed (National Bureau of Statistics, 2023), survival often trumps principle. The entrepreneur who pays a bribe to expedite goods might argue it's a duty to their family or employees. Here, "ethical leadership" bridges the gap: deontology in Nigeria requires not blind rule-following but a contextual duty to resist injustice while sustaining life. The implication is a moral anchor: ethical entrepreneurs uphold

integrity as a bulwark against chaos, potentially inspiring systemic reform.

These perspectives (virtue, consequentialism, and deontology) intersect dynamically in Nigeria's downturns. Virtue ethics cultivates the entrepreneur's character, consequentialism weighs their societal impact, and deontology grounds their actions in duty. Together, they reveal a spectrum of implications. Ethically grounded entrepreneurs build trust; entrepreneurship is an option for solving unemployment problems among Nigerian youths. By modeling fairness, they attract investment and loyalty, countering the 80% informality of Nigeria's economy (World Bank, 2022). Conversely, unethical shortcuts, like tax evasion or worker exploitation, erode trust, deepening economic fragility. Entrepreneurial ethical decisions during economic downturns in Nigeria are philosophical crucibles, testing character, consequences, and duty. Martin Luther King Jr.'s words resonate: "The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy" (King, 1963). The implications are profound: ethical entrepreneurship not only ensures business survival but also redefines Nigeria's socio-economic narrative. It challenges corruption, empowers communities, and aligns with African philosophies of personhood and communal good.

Conclusion

Entrepreneurship, ethics, and economic downturns in Nigeria are deeply intertwined. Ethical lapses deepen crises, while ethical entrepreneurship offers a path to recovery. As Yunus (2007) envisioned, integrating social good into business can transform Nigeria's economic future. Stakeholders must prioritize ethics to unlock good and ideal business and development potentials. Entrepreneurship in Nigeria's economic downturn is a philosophical crucible, blending human striving, ethical negotiation, and societal resilience. It reveals the tension between freedom and constraint, virtue and pragmatism, individual agency and collective duty. Philosophically, it demands reflective praxis, a conscious melding of action and ethics. Nigeria stands poised to redefine entrepreneurship not merely as economic survival but as a force for moral and material renewal. The question remains: Can its entrepreneurs, and its society, rise to this call, transforming adversity into an opportunity for justice and flourishing?

This study, through a philosophical analysis, examined the existential nexus of entrepreneurship, ethics, and economic downturn in Nigeria. The findings highlighted the complex relationships between these concepts and their implications for policymakers, entrepreneurs, and other stakeholders seeking to promote entrepreneurship and economic development in Nigeria. While corruption and bribery

are major challenges facing entrepreneurship in Nigeria, economic downturn has had a significant impact on entrepreneurial activities too, forcing entrepreneurs to make decisions that help them navigate through the time. Therefore, the study's results exposed the need for policymakers, entrepreneurs, and other stakeholders to prioritize ethical entrepreneurship decisions and practices and strengthen institutional frameworks to promote economic development. The findings also underscored the importance of addressing corruption and bribery and promoting a culture of transparency and accountability.

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Igwebuikepreneurship: Towards an African Social Capital Model

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Executive Summary

Social capital refers to the resources and benefits that individuals and groups can access through their social relationships and networks. However, African Social Capital Theory (ASCT) of entrepreneurship is a framework that explains how social relationships and networks influence entrepreneurial behavior and success in African contexts. While there are several social capital theories of entrepreneurship, such as Coleman's Social Capital Theory, Burt's Structural Holes Theory, social learning theories like Bandura's Social Learning Theory and Krueger's Entrepreneurial Learning Theory, this paper distinguishes itself by focusing on an African (indigenous) Social Capital Theory, which does not only emphasize the resources and benefits that individuals and groups can access through their social relationships and networks, but also the importance of context in shaping entrepreneurial behavior and success, including cultural, social, and economic factors. It adopts the Social Capital and Social Learning theories for the interpretation of Igwebuikepreneurship. Having established the ontological foundation of Igwebuikepreneurship, it argues that it has four basic features, which include community-drivenness, collaboration, social responsibility, and contextuality. The paper concludes that Igwebuikepreneurship can inform the development of cooperative economic models that prioritize community well-being and collective prosperity.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship, Igwebuike, Philosophy, Indigenous, Social Capital Theory

Introduction

Over the years, several social capital theories have emerged. Among these is that of James Coleman (1926 – 1995), an American sociologist who was primarily interested in the sociology of education and public policy (Claridge 2015). Coleman (1986) expressed interest in different types of capital and their

interaction, namely human, physical, and social, to import the economists' principle of rational action for use in the analysis of social systems without discarding social organization in the process. Coleman (1990) understood social capital as essentially residing in the social structure of relationships among people, where the actions of individuals benefit the whole. He, therefore, conceptualized social capital as a collective asset of the group. Coleman (1988) holds that individuals engage in social interactions, relationships, and networks for as long as the benefits persist. In this sense, social capital is both a private and public good benefiting everyone in the group (Coleman 1987; Claridge 2015).

Ronald Burt, an American sociologist and economist, developed another version of the social capital theory known as the Structural Holes Theory (Bentley 2018). It is a theory developed to explain how to benefit from social networks and their intersecting relationships (Burt, 1992; Adams et al, 2014; Ahuja, 2000). It shows how different entities like individuals, organizations, corporations, groups, and entrepreneurs are tied to each other, and how one can benefit from these ties (Burt, 1992; Goyal & Vega-Redondo, 2007; Obstfeld, 2005). He holds that it is in the exploration of the holes around and between tight networks that individuals are likely to find the greatest benefits in bridging the hole to another individual to access non-redundant information and resources (Burt, 2004; Liu, Chiu, & Chiu, 2010; Cowan & Jonard, 2007). The theory emphasizes existing internal and external social networks and positions ideas and innovation in areas where structural holes might exist within an organization, that is, where there are two or more disconnected parties (Burt, 1992, 2004). Establishing connections where needed creates the aperture for the emergence of new and non-redundant information, which can be shared, often resulting in 'aha' moments (Ebberts, 2014; Martinez & Aldrich, 2011; Aarstad, 2014).

Amid these developments within the parameters of social capital theory with their roots in the United States of America, questions have arisen as regards the possibility of Indigenous models (Kim & Berry 1993; Davison & Martinsons 2016; Alves & Pozzebon 2013). Thus, Smith (2001) argues that indigenous peoples need to develop theories and methodologies that are grounded in their own cultures and experiences. Atran and Medin (2008) explore the importance of indigenous knowledge systems and the need for models that are grounded in indigenous cultures and experiences. Davison and Andrade (2018) hold that theoretical perspectives reflect the circumstances of a particular context, and that accepted universal knowledge often overwhelms and confines, if not

silences, local expressions of knowledge.

Hindle and Moroz (2007) observed that “as recently as 2001, there was no extant concept of 'Indigenous entrepreneurship' in the scholarly literature of entrepreneurship and related disciplines.” (p.1) However, the efforts of Peredo, *et al.* (2004) and Dana and Anderson (2007) will always be remembered as pioneer breakthroughs in the development of indigenous entrepreneurship studies, even though they remain non-extant in capacity. It is within this context of deficiency that this paper makes an extant attempt at articulating an Indigenous entrepreneurship perspective that is based on an Igbo-African Indigenous philosophy: Igwebuike philosophy, which manifests the Igbo-African social capital theory essentially residing in the social structure of relationships among people, where the actions of individuals benefit the whole.

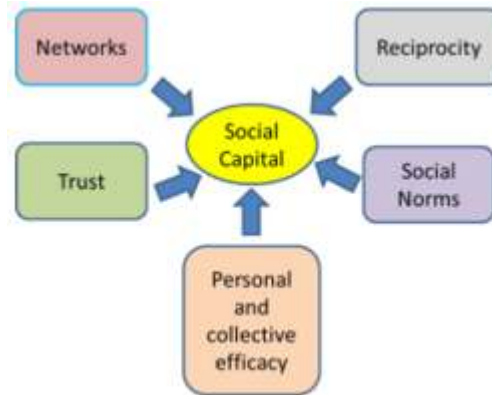
The significance of an Indigenous social capital model is that it allows for a deeper understanding and analysis of economic activity within Indigenous communities, considering their unique cultural contexts, social structures, and historical experiences, which are often overlooked by mainstream entrepreneurship theories (Corntassel & Woons, 2018). This is anticipated to enable more effective strategies for economic development tailored to the indigenous people's specific needs and challenges (Dana & Anderson, 2007), particularly highlighting the importance of community-based initiatives, resource utilization, and cultural values in driving entrepreneurial ventures within indigenous populations.

Social Capital Theory: Towards an Indigenous Framework

Social capital theory is a sociological and economic theory that examines how social networks can benefit individuals, groups, and society (Bourdieu 1986, 1984, Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992, Lin 1994, 1995, 1998). It originated from the time small communities were formed and humans interacted with the expectation of reciprocation and trust (Coleman 1990; Lin 1990; 1992). However, the term in its present form and associated meanings was popularized through the efforts of the following scholars, among others, Coleman (1988), Granovetter (1973), Lin (1986, 1980), and Putnam (1993; 1995). The theory assumes that social networks are a resource that can be used to achieve social and economic goals, and emphasizes the importance of the structure and quality of relationships between people (Putnam 1995; Granovetter 1982; 1985). The shared values it thrives on include: trust, reciprocity, and shared

norms that facilitate cooperation, the importance of social processes in influencing outcomes, and the need for working together can achieve more than working alone (Wellman 1979; Granovetter 1992).

Figure 1: Illustration of Social Capital Theory



Social Capital (2025)

The social capital theory, which has a mainstream Western background, has been employed by this paper as a theoretical framework for the development of Igwebuikepreneurship, an indigenous social capital theory that draws from the Igwebuike philosophical perspective built around the Igbo-African philosophy of relationality and complementarity (Kanu 2018; 2019; 2020).

Understanding Igwebuikepreneurship

Igwebuikepreneurship is based on Igwebuike indigenous philosophy, which holds that reality is complementary, interconnected, and interrelated (Kanu 2018; 2019; 2020). *Igwebuike* is an Igbo proverb and a typical Igbo name. It is a combination of three words: *Igwe*: number; *bu*: is; *ike*: power or strength. From the foregoing, *Igwebuike* means *there is strength in number* or *number is power* (Kanu 2016, 2017). Beyond the linguistic and literal expression of the word, *Igwebuike* is a deeper meaning, which provides an ontological horizon that presents being as that which possesses a relational character of mutual relations (Kanu 2021; 2018; 2019). It means *otu obi* (one heart and one soul) – *cor unum et anima una* (Kanu 2023; 2020), describing the core or operative condition of the African reality. *Igwebuike* is based on the thermodynamics of the Igbo world. It is a world in which relationships is organic and holistic: a world that interacts with itself. The sky, the spirits, the earth, the physical world, the living, and the deceased all act, interact, and react in consort (Kanu 2020; Tempels, 1969; Stayne, 1990; Turaki, 2000; Mbiti, 1970;

Adibe, 2008; Enekwe, 1987).

As an indigenous theory of entrepreneurship, while it understands entrepreneurship as the ability and readiness to develop, organize, and run a business enterprise, along with any of its uncertainties to make a profit or generate an economic value, it emphasizes and places this within the context of social relationships and networks as basic elements that facilitate the entrepreneurial process. It strongly holds that entrepreneurs learn through observation, imitation, and reinforcement from others, such as mentors, role models, and peers. It, therefore, makes a combination of the elements of the social capital theory and social learning theory.

Igwebuikepreneurship operates through social networks, essentially viewing strong socialities and connections within a community as a valuable asset that can be used to achieve personal and collective goals, particularly in areas of making a profit and generating economic value. The theory emphasizes the idea that the structure of social relationships can facilitate action and benefit individuals within that structure, acting as a public good where everyone within the network can benefit from the collective social capital. The dimension that Igwebuikepreneurship brings to the table is the emphasis on the importance of community and collective well-being.

Ontological Foundations of Igwebuikepreneurship

The understanding of connections within a community as a valuable asset that can be used to achieve personal and collective goals, particularly in areas of making profit and generating economic value that Igwebuikepreneurship conceptualizes, is anchored on basic human conditions manifest in Igwebuike philosophy. The first is that the world in which we live is one in which we encounter several needs, however, with very few resources to take care of the needs. This limitation calls for the mobilization of other forces outside of the self, a social fellowship for the satisfaction of particular needs (Kanu 2021). The second is that nature has placed in us the likeness for fellowship. This is based on the fact that we were created by God in His image and likeness (Kanu 2022). The third is that, although we are equal essentially, we have different gifts and abilities. What I may be able to do, another may not be able to do, meaning that my relationship with the other complements what is lacking in me (Kanu 2022). The fourth is that collaboration with the other is grounds for becoming, as everything takes a bit of another to make itself. It is a ground for staying alive and transforming the universe (Kanu 2021).

Human fellowship and cooperation are a reality that is rooted in human nature, and to

keep away from relating is to limit our being. It is, therefore, a unit of order inscribed in human nature for survival. The more a person relates, the more he or she lives out his or her being to the full. Cooperation and fellowship in society increase protection, assistance, etc. Being in the company of others reduces the burden that nature imposes on a person as an individual.

Features of Igwebuikepreneurship

There are four observable basic features of Igwebuikepreneurship, which include community-drivenness, collaborative business model, social responsibility, and Indigenous entrepreneurship.

1. Community-Driven

Igwebuikepreneurship encourages entrepreneurs to prioritize community well-being and collective prosperity. As a community-driven entrepreneurship, it espouses an approach that prioritizes the needs and interests of the community, rather than solely focusing on profit maximization. It emphasizes the importance of engagement with the community, including listening to their needs, concerns, and ideas, creating positive change, and improving the quality of life for community members. It is grounded on the belief that collaboration with community members, organizations, and stakeholders to co-create solutions and drive positive change, and empowerment of community members, providing them with the skills, resources, and support needed to take ownership of their economic and social development.

Table 1: African Proverbs and Implications for Community

S/N	PROVERBS	IMPLICATIONS
1	A lizard that moves far away from the tree will be caught	Community protects individual interests
2	I am because you are, and since you are, therefore, I am	Other persons complete us
3	It is the human being that counts. I call gold; it does not answer. I call the cloth; it does not answer. It is the human being that counts	The presence of others makes our burdens lighter
4	The spoonful of relish gets tasty if it goes around from one to another	Others give meaning to our lives
5	There is strength in number	The presence of others makes our burdens lighter

Author Created

The value that Igwebuikepreneurship brings is that of buy-in and support, leading to increased loyalty and advocacy, positive change, and improved quality of life for community members, collaboration and co-creation, leading to innovative solutions that meet community needs, long-term social and environmental impact over short-term profits. Even though this might come with the challenges of balancing social impact with financial sustainability, which can be a challenge, engaging with diverse community stakeholders, which can be time-consuming and challenging, and maintaining community engagement and social impact while expanding operations, it comes with enduring values for general well-being.

2. Collaborative

In recent studies, collaboration has been increasingly considered a better option to competition both for individuals and firms (Contractor and Lorange, 1988 & 2002), based on intellectual and social considerations (Faulkner & Rond, 2000). Gray (1985 & 1989) understands collaboration as a pooling of resources (capital, labor, knowledge) by two or more partners. This sense of collaboration is at the heart of Igwebuikepreneurship. The principles of Igwebuikepreneurship can inform business models that emphasize cooperation, mutual support, and collective ownership.

Table 2: African proverbs and implications for Collaboration

S/N	PROVERBS	IMPLICATIONS
1	If you want to know the way, ask the one who has walked it	Relating with others makes the journey possible
2	If the right hand washes the left hand, the left hand will wash the right hand	You need others to make it
3	It is a pot of water that is already half full that the world would like help in filling to the brim	Collaboration is better when you have something to contribute
4	One foot isn't enough to walk with	You need to collaborate with others
5	A Person Is a Person Because of Other People	It is collaboration that makes us

Author Created

A collaborative business model, as in the case of Igwebuikepreneurship, involves partnering with others, such as customers, suppliers, or competitors, to achieve common goals and share resources. It also involves shared goals and objectives among partners, shared resources, such as expertise, technology, or assets, co-creation of value through joint innovation, product development, or service delivery, benefiting mutually

from the collaboration, etc. (Mayoux 2010; Edmondson 2012). This model can drive innovation through the sharing of ideas and expertise, improve efficiency by reducing duplication of effort and sharing resources, enhance competitiveness by providing access to new markets, technologies, or expertise, and sharing risk among partners.

3. Socially Responsible

Igwebuikepreneurship principles encourage entrepreneurs to prioritize social responsibility, environmental sustainability, and community engagement. It is a socially responsible entrepreneurship that has the practice of starting and running a business in a way that is ethical, sustainable, and responsible towards society and the environment. It prioritizes creating positive social impact, such as improving education, healthcare, or environmental sustainability, environmental sustainability, such as reducing carbon footprint, waste, and pollution, ethical business practices, such as fair labor standards, transparency, and accountability, stakeholder engagement, such as involving employees, customers, suppliers, and communities in decision-making processes, etc. These prioritizations also serve the interest of the business by improving a company's reputation and brand image, increasing customer loyalty and retention, and cost savings through reduced waste, energy efficiency, and improved supply chain management.

Table 3: African Proverbs and Implications for Social Responsibility

S/N	PROVERBS	IMPLICATIONS
1	If relatives help each other, what evil can hurt them?	Responsibility towards others protects the general interest
2	We are not put on this earth for ourselves, but are placed here for each other	We have a responsibility to help others through our existence
3	If you are always there for others, then in times of need, someone will be there for you	If you stand for others, others will also stand for you
4	He who wishes to secure the good of others has already secured his own	One's good is achieved through working towards the good of others
5	Caring has the gift of making the ordinary special	Responsibility towards others distinguishes one from others

Author Created

4. Contextual (Indigenous)

Indigenous entrepreneurship refers to the business and economic activities of Indigenous peoples, including the creation and management of Indigenous-owned businesses, and Igwebuikepreneurship inspires entrepreneurs to develop innovative

solutions that are rooted in Indigenous knowledge systems and cultural practices. The idea of an Indigenous perspective does not cover a single perspective, but rather a community of perspectives referred to as Indigenous (Dana & Anderson, 2007; Ruotsola, 2007; Benedict, 1934; Renshaw, 2002; Dana, 2007). Specifically, scholars like Nkongolo-Bakenda (2007) observed differing approaches to entrepreneurship among the Nande, Luba-Kasai, and Kumu in northern Congo. Olurode (2007), who wrote about the Yoruba of Nigeria, attests to the distinct character of Yoruba entrepreneurship in which members of society are introduced to work from childhood.

Table 4: African Proverbs and Implications for Contexts

S/N	PROVERBS	IMPLICATIONS
1	The farmer who has never ventured beyond his field says his methods are the best	Every context has value
2	A bird that does not know its own nest will be lost in the storm	One who doesn't understand his or her context will have a crisis
3	One must row in whichever boat one finds oneself	One needs to operate within his or her context
4	It is a child who has never traveled who says that only his mother prepares tasty meals	Every context has value
5	Let not what you cannot do tear you from what you can do	Begin from your context

Author Created

Igwebuikepreneurship is based on Indigenous cultural values, traditions, and knowledge, and prioritizes community benefit and development over personal gain, connected to the land and natural resources, with a focus on sustainable management and stewardship. It involves innovative and adaptive approaches to business and economic development. Like other indigenous theories that are close to nature and in some cases depend on immediately available resources (Hukkinen *et al.* 2006; Simeone 2007; Sejersen 2007; Pennewiss 2007), like African proverbs, sayings, parables, songs, etc. It is environmentally sustainable (Harris 1974; Morgan 1999), has a propensity for community and cooperation (Dana & Light 2011), and satisfies the growing demand for Indigenous products and services, such as Indigenous art, crafts, and tourism, and the increasing recognition of Indigenous rights, including the right to self-determination and economic development. This indigenesness always provides a uniqueness that is often incompatible with the basic assumptions of mainstream

theories, which may be based on different sets of cultural values (Dana & Light 2011; Light & Dana 2013; Ndemo 2007; Degen 2007; Rønning 2007).

Conclusion

This paper has studied entrepreneurship from an Igbo-African perspective based on the Igbo philosophy of Igwebuike, which holds that reality is complementary, interconnected, and interrelated. Igwebuikepreneurship, which takes its basis from the basic principles of Igwebuike philosophy, while understanding entrepreneurship as the ability and readiness to develop, organize, and run a business enterprise, strongly holds that entrepreneurs learn through observation, imitation, and reinforcement from others, such as mentors, role models, and peers. It, therefore, makes a combination of the elements of the social capital theory and social learning theory, anchoring Igwebuikepreneurship on four basic pillars: collaboration, social responsibility, community, and context.

Comparing Igwebuikepreneurship with other entrepreneurial models, it is observable that it can inform the development of cooperative economic models that prioritize community well-being and collective prosperity. It can also inspire social entrepreneurs to develop innovative solutions that address pressing social and environmental challenges. At the level of cultural revitalization, it can inform efforts to promote indigenous cultural practices and knowledge systems through entrepreneurship. Igwebuikepreneurship can also contribute to the development of African-centered entrepreneurship models that not only prioritize community well-being but also cultural revitalization and social responsibility.

The value that Igwebuikepreneurship brings is that of buy-in and support, leading to increased loyalty and advocacy, positive change, improved quality of life for community members, collaboration, and co-creation. This can bring about innovative solutions that meet community needs, and long-term social and environmental impact over short-term profits. It can also drive innovation through the sharing of ideas and expertise, improve efficiency by reducing duplication of effort and sharing resources, enhance competitiveness by providing access to new markets, technologies, or expertise, and sharing risk among partners.

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Ethics, Artificial Intelligence and Entrepreneurship: Towards a Biblical Perspective on Just Labour

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Executive Summary

The intersection of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and entrepreneurship presents both promise and risk in the modern economy. While AI can drive efficiency and innovation, it also threatens to deskill workers, automate jobs, and consolidate power among a few corporations. This study explored AI's impact on work and labour from a theological and ethical perspective, emphasizing the biblical principle of justice in employment. In this regard, Ecclesiastes 3:13 states, "That each of them may eat and drink, and find satisfaction in all their toil – this is the gift of God." The paper posited that the verse serves as a foundation for analyzing how AI can either enhance or diminish the fulfillment and dignity derived from work. The study employs a qualitative, theological-ethical analysis, drawing on scripture, ethical theory, and case study illustrations from contemporary AI-driven industries. Through this approach, the research examined both the theological implications of AI's disruption of labour and the practical considerations for entrepreneurship in the digital economy. The study argued that AI should be leveraged to support workers rather than replace them, ensuring that entrepreneurship remains an avenue for meaningful labour and equitable economic participation. Policies and strategies that prioritize job security, fair wages, and worker empowerment in AI-driven enterprises are proposed as solutions.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence (AI), Work, Labour, Entrepreneurship, Human Dignity, Economic Justice.

Introduction

The rise of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the 21st century represents one of the most profound technological transformations since the Industrial Revolution. Across industries and economies, AI technologies are reshaping the nature of work, entrepreneurship, and human engagement with labour. Automated systems, machine learning algorithms, and data-driven platforms are well-received for their capacity to increase efficiency, generate innovation, and facilitate the emergence of new business

models (Russell & Norvig, 2021; Kanu & Paul, 2024). However, this technological revolution also raises pressing ethical, social, and theological questions regarding the future of human labour and economic justice. Meanwhile, entrepreneurship, which has always been appreciated as a source of creativity and opportunity, is increasingly endangered by the prospects of automation. While AI provides entrepreneurs with tools to optimize processes, improve enterprises, and access global markets, it simultaneously introduces risks that threaten the dignity of workers (Acemoglu & Restrepo, 2020). These risks include job displacement, de-skilling, reduced wage opportunities, and the growing concentration of economic power among technology-driven corporations (Bakwaph & Eze, 2022). In this context, the role of theological reflection becomes essential in examining the moral assumptions and ethical implications of an AI-driven economy.

This paper seeks to contribute to this emerging discourse by situating the challenges and opportunities of AI within a biblical-theological framework. Specifically, it draws attention to Ecclesiastes 3:13. This verse encapsulates a vision of work not merely as an economic activity or a means to survival, but as a divinely ordained avenue for human fulfillment, dignity, and relational engagement with the world (Wong, 2021). The biblical call for just labour affirms that work is intended to be both meaningful and equitable – a domain where human beings encounter purpose and provision under God's sovereignty. Thus, the study examines how technology can enhance or undermine the biblical concept of work as a gift from God, focusing on the rapid expansion of AI technologies in various fields such as manufacturing, logistics, creative industries, and information and knowledge work (Bakwaph & Tor, 2022).

Emerging evidence suggests that while AI has the potential to augment human capabilities, it also poses ethical dilemmas regarding surveillance, worker alienation, and the marginalization of vulnerable populations within the labour market (Crawford, 2021). This paper employs a qualitative theological-ethical methodology that draws on scripture, Christian ethical thought, and real-world case studies from AI-driven industries. This approach facilitates a critical engagement with both the promises and perils of AI innovation. It also allows for an exploration of how theological principles can inform ethical entrepreneurship in a digital economy, particularly those centered on justice, human dignity, and the sanctity of labour (Brock, 2019).

By and large, this study argues that the future of AI and entrepreneurship must be guided not solely by technological expertise but by a moral vision rooted in biblical justice. AI should not become a tool for exploitation or the erosion of meaningful labour, but rather a means to promote human flourishing, equitable participation, and community well-being. To that end, the paper proposes policy recommendations and

strategic interventions aimed at ensuring that AI-driven enterprises uphold the dignity of workers, provide fair compensation, and promote inclusive economic growth (Schwab & Malleret, 2020). In so doing, this research contributes to a growing body of theological and ethical scholarship that addresses the intersection of faith, technology, and economic life. It offers a framework for Christian entrepreneurs, policymakers, and scholars to engage critically and constructively with AI, ensuring that technological advancement serves the higher calling of justice, human dignity, and the common good.

Conceptual Framework

a) Artificial Intelligence (AI) as a Technological Force

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has emerged as a powerful technological force that is reshaping industries, economies, and the very structure of work itself (Kanu et al., 2024; Agrawal et al., 2018). As a driving force of innovation and automation, AI is revolutionizing traditional labour practices and opening the door to unprecedented levels of efficiency and scalability. Through automating repetitive tasks, optimizing decision-making processes, and enabling new business models, AI is transforming the way organizations operate, often leading to faster production cycles, reduced costs, and the creation of entirely new markets. However, while AI presents exciting opportunities for growth and innovation, it also introduces significant challenges (Mamman & Bakwaph, 2015). One of the most pressing concerns is the risk of job displacement, as machines and algorithms take over roles traditionally performed by human workers (Susskind & Susskind, 2015). This transformation raises fears of dehumanization in the workplace, where labour becomes increasingly mechanized and workers are viewed less as individuals and more as components in an automated system. The risk of inequality is heightened, as those with access to advanced technology and specialized skills reap the benefits of AI, while others may face economic marginalization.

AI plays a critical role in enhancing productivity across multiple sectors by enabling faster data processing, improving accuracy, and reducing human error. Its ability to transform labour practices is evident in industries like manufacturing, healthcare, and finance, where tasks once requiring human intervention are now automated. However, this evolution also comes with ethical concerns, particularly around worker exploitation and the potential replacement of human jobs with machines (Chui et al., 2021). Companies may prioritize cost-cutting through automation without considering the social and economic impacts on their workforce. Thus, while AI is a transformative

force with the power to revolutionize industries and create new opportunities, it also demands careful consideration of its social and ethical implications. Balancing technological advancement with human-centered values is essential to ensure that AI serves to enhance human potential rather than diminish it.

b) Entrepreneurship as Economic Agency

Entrepreneurship is widely regarded as a key driver of economic agency, enabling individuals to participate actively in the marketplace, promote innovation, and generate wealth (Audretsch & Keilbach, 2007). It provides a platform for creativity, risk-taking, and the development of new ideas that can lead to economic growth and societal progress. Entrepreneurs often create new products, services, and business models that not only meet consumer needs but also contribute to job creation and community development (Bakwap, 2020). However, when entrepreneurship is shaped by biblical principles, it takes on an added dimension of responsibility and stewardship. This perspective views business not merely as a means of profit generation, but as a calling to care for others, including employees, customers, and the broader community (Van-Duzer, 2010). Biblically-informed entrepreneurship emphasizes ethical practices, treating employees with dignity, and ensuring that profit-making does not come at the expense of justice, fairness, or human well-being. Wealth creation, in this light, is not just for personal gain but for the common good.

Entrepreneurship also plays an essential role in creating sustainable businesses that are mindful of their long-term impact on society and the environment (Pilani & Kanu, 2025). In today's technology-driven economy, this includes the responsible use of AI in entrepreneurial ventures. While AI offers tremendous potential for improving efficiency and expanding business capabilities, it also raises ethical questions regarding privacy, job displacement, and fair treatment of workers (Moroz & Hindle, 2012). Ethical entrepreneurs must be intentional about how they integrate AI into their operations, ensuring that technology enhances rather than harms human flourishing. Balancing innovation with ethical labour practices is crucial in this context. Entrepreneurs are called to pursue creativity and advancement while maintaining a commitment to fair wages, healthy work environments, and respect for human dignity. In doing so, entrepreneurship becomes not only a means of economic participation but also a reflection of values that prioritize both innovation and compassion.

c) Just Labour

Just labour is grounded in the understanding that work is not merely a means of survival or economic exchange, but a divine gift that contributes to both human flourishing and the well-being of society. From a biblical perspective, labour is designed

to provide for our physical needs while also offering a sense of purpose, fulfillment, and participation in God's ongoing creation (Cosden, 2018). Work, therefore, holds deep spiritual significance, shaping both individual identity and community life. Central to the concept of just labour is the principle of biblical justice, which calls for fairness, equity, and compassion in all economic relationships. Fair wages and just treatment of workers are essential aspects of this vision. Employees are not to be exploited or undervalued but are to be compensated in ways that reflect their contributions and ensure their ability to live with dignity. This includes providing safe working conditions, respecting workers' rights, and creating environments where people can thrive both personally and professionally.

Additionally, the biblical view of labour affirms the inherent dignity of every worker, recognizing that all people are created in the image of God (Keller & Alsdorf, 2012). This perspective calls for workplaces to promote a sense of human fulfillment, where individuals can use their gifts and talents meaningfully rather than being reduced to mere instruments of productivity. Work should contribute to a person's sense of purpose, creativity, and well-being. Moreover, labour demands the establishment of ethical economic structures that support equitable access to resources and opportunities. Systems that perpetuate injustice, exploitation, or inequality stand in direct opposition to biblical labour principles (Forster, 2022). Instead, businesses, organizations, and governments are called to create economic frameworks that uplift all members of society, especially the vulnerable and marginalized. In embracing just labour, work becomes more than a transaction – it becomes a sacred calling that honours God, serves others, and contributes to a more just and compassionate world.

Methodology

This paper adopts a qualitative, theological-ethical methodology. The approach integrates biblical exegesis, ethical reflection, and analysis of contemporary case studies from AI-driven industries. Sources include scripture, theological scholarship, ethical frameworks on justice and work, and current literature on AI's socio-economic impacts. The method provides a critical viewpoint for assessing how AI intersects with theological principles of dignity, justice, and the value of labour.

Literature Review

In the last decade, scholarship has paid considerable attention to the transformative impact of Artificial Intelligence (AI) on work and employment. Authors such as

Brynjolfsson and McAfee (2014) argue that technological advances in AI and automation are ushering in a “second machine age,” characterized by unprecedented productivity but also significant disruption to traditional labour markets. Studies by Frey and Osborne (2017) have projected that up to 47% of jobs in the United States alone are at risk of automation. Such literature highlights both the capacity of AI to augment human work and its potential to render vast swathes of the workforce obsolete. Moreover, the rise of platform capitalism and algorithmic management (Srnicsek, 2017) has intensified debates about worker surveillance, gig economy precarity, and the erosion of traditional employment relationships. The literature suggests that the convergence of entrepreneurship and AI often privileges efficiency and profit over worker welfare, raising ethical concerns about justice, inclusion, and human dignity.

Meanwhile, Christian ethicists and scholars in technology ethics have long grappled with the moral challenges posed by technological innovation. Jacques Ellul (1964) was among the earliest to warn of the autonomy of technological systems and their capacity to reshape human societies beyond ethical control. More recent work by Shannon Vallor (2016) and Nick Couldry & Ulises Mejias (2019) addresses the “data colonialism” and ethical vacuum that can emerge in digital economies lacking robust moral frameworks. In theological circles, Volf (1991) has emphasized the redemptive role of work in human life, arguing that labour is a participation in God's creative activity. Conversely, Miroslav Volf also warns that work devoid of justice becomes alienating and destructive. The ethical reflection on labour is often grounded in biblical texts that affirm the dignity of work (Genesis 2:15; Proverbs 22:29) and call for just treatment of workers (Deuteronomy 24:14-15; James 5:4).

Additionally, the theological literature underscores that work is a vital component of human vocation within God's created order. Ecclesiastes 3:13 affirms that finding satisfaction in one's toil is a divine gift, situating labour within a framework of purpose, provision, and justice. The Old Testament consistently emphasizes economic justice, care for the poor, and protection of workers from exploitation (Isaiah 58:6-10; Amos 5:11-15). Liberation theologians, such as Gustavo Gutiérrez (1973), have also argued that any theological engagement with economics must center the marginalized and critique systems of oppression. In the contemporary context, this theological imperative demands a critical evaluation of AI-driven entrepreneurship to ensure it does not exacerbate inequality or dehumanize workers.

Moreover, emerging scholarship on “ethical entrepreneurship” and “AI ethics” calls for integrating human-centric design, transparency, and fairness in technology deployment (Floridi et al., 2018; Binns, 2018). Christian business ethics literature, including the

work of Michael Cafferky (2015), contends that entrepreneurship must embody virtues such as justice, compassion, and stewardship. However, there remains a significant gap in the literature connecting AI, entrepreneurship, and biblical ethics of labour. Few studies explicitly engage scripture, particularly texts like Ecclesiastes 3:13, to develop a theological-ethical critique of AI's impact on work. This study seeks to address that gap by offering a biblically grounded framework for ethical entrepreneurship in the age of AI. In sum, while existing literature provides valuable insights into the socio-economic impact of AI and the ethical challenges of technological innovation, there is a pressing need for theological reflection that integrates biblical principles of work, justice, and human dignity. This study contributes to this emerging discourse by offering a theological-ethical analysis of AI's role in entrepreneurship, framed around Ecclesiastes 3:13 and the biblical call for just labour.

Exegesis of Eccles 3:13

Hebrew Text of Eccles 3:13

*W'gamkol-hā'ādāmsbeyyō'kahv' shātāh
n' rā'ābṭōb'kol-'amālōmattat' elōhīmḥī'*

English Translation

“That each of them may eat and drink and find satisfaction
in all their toil – this is the gift of God” (NIV).

The Literary Context of Eccles 3:13

The Book of Ecclesiastes is a part of Wisdom Literature, a genre that explores philosophical reflections on human experience, morality, and divine governance. It presents a unique perspective, often adopting a skeptical or existential tone, emphasizing the limitations of human knowledge and the transience of worldly pursuits (Longman, 2018). However, the book also affirms human work and divine blessing, as seen in Ecclesiastes 3:13. Work is framed as a divine gift rather than a mere burden, offering a counterbalance to the book's broader themes of transience and uncertainty. This affirmation suggests that while life may be fleeting, the ability to experience fulfillment in work is an essential part of God's design, aligning with the wisdom tradition's emphasis on ethical dimensions of labour, fairness in economic structures, and the moral obligations of employers and workers.

Ecclesiastes 3:13 is a biblical passage that emphasizes the cyclical nature of human

existence and God's sovereign control over time and human activities. It addresses the existential dilemma of whether human effort has real meaning if all events are predetermined by God. The passage offers a theological resolution that humans can find joy and fulfillment in their labour, as this ability is a gift from God (Seow, 2019). The text also reflects the tension between human limitation and divine sovereignty, between toil and enjoyment, and between frustration and fulfillment. Instead of dismissing labour as meaningless, it affirms that God has designed work to be necessary and rewarding, provided it is carried out within an ethical and divinely oriented framework. The passage also subtly critiques economic injustice, suggesting that work should not be exploitive or dehumanizing but rather a means of genuine sustenance and fulfillment. Ecclesiastes 3:13 finds theological continuity with Genesis 2:15, which establishes the divine mandate for work, portraying labour as an integral part of human existence before the Fall. By linking Eccles 3:13 with Genesis 2:15, a broader biblical theology emerges, emphasizing that work is part of God's creation order, meant to be fulfilling, and should align with divine purpose, ensuring that economic activities reflect justice and equity (Brown, 2017).

Content Analysis of Ecclesiastes 2:24

The Hebrew verb *yō'kal*, presented here in qal imperfect form, typically translated as “may eat,” functions as more than a mere description of consumption. In its biblical context, particularly within wisdom literature, *yō'kal* presents the fundamental economic provision resulting from labour. The jussive form suggests not merely permission but rightful entitlement – the worker's claim to the fruits of their labour (Wolff, 2016). This concept connects directly to ancient Near Eastern economic systems, where labour and sustenance were intimately linked. Unlike modern capitalistic separations between work and compensation, the Hebrew worldview presupposes an organic relationship between labour and its natural outcome (Collins, 2018). The worker who plants should harvest; the labourer who toils should eat.

Complementing *yō'kal*, the term *shātāb* extends beyond literal drinking to include a broader sense of contentment and well-being. This verbal form suggests an ongoing state rather than a momentary action – labour should produce lasting satisfaction (Brueggemann, 2014). The imagery of drinking conveys a refreshment that restores vitality and brings pleasure, not merely survival. In the agricultural context of ancient Israel, drinking often symbolized celebration and abundance beyond mere necessity (Meyers, 2017). The pairing of eating and drinking forms a hendiadys expressing complete satisfaction – fulfillment of both basic needs and deeper desires for

enjoyment. This challenges utilitarian views of labour that reduce work to mere survival mechanisms.

The phrase *rā'āhṭōb* (find satisfaction/see good) introduces a profound dimension to the theology of labour. Translated as “see good,” this expression conveys perceiving or experiencing goodness, finding genuine satisfaction in one's work. The term encompasses aesthetic appreciation and moral approval, suggesting that labour should provide not merely physical sustenance but also psychological and spiritual fulfillment (Brown, 2019). This concept challenges both ancient and modern reductive views of labour as mere drudgery or economic necessity. Instead, *rā'āhṭōb* establishes work as a potentially transformative experience through which humans participate in creation and find meaning. The ability to “see good” in one's labour represents an elevated consciousness that recognizes inherent value beyond instrumental utility.

The culminating phrase *mattat'elōhīm* (gift of God) establishes the theological foundation for the entire concept of labour. By defining work and its rewards as divine gifts, this expression removes labour from purely human economic systems and places it within a sacred framework (Davis, 2015). The construct form indicates both possession and source – these satisfactions come from God and belong to God's economy rather than merely human transactions. Thus, the theology of Just Labour is a framework that redefines labour, establishing inherent dignity in all forms of work, challenging exploitative labour systems, suggesting satisfaction in labour as spiritual attunement, and removing ultimate ownership claims from human institutions.

This comprehensive theology addresses economic, psychological, aesthetic, and theological dimensions, focusing on the progression from physical sustenance to emotional well-being and meaningful satisfaction, culminating in divine blessing (Levenson, 2017). This framework challenges ancient exploitative labour systems and modern capitalistic reductions of work to mere economic function, presenting labour as a multidimensional human experience with theological significance, rather than just fulfilling material needs.

Biblical Criteria for Just Labour in an AI-Driven Economy

From the foregoing, it is clear that the biblical understanding of work provides a crucial starting point for examining the intersection of AI, entrepreneurship, and just labour. The biblical analysis above presents work not as a burden but as a divine gift, integral to human existence. This theological foundation is rooted in the wisdom literature of the Old Testament, which affirms that while human life is transient and often marked by

toil, there remains an inherent dignity in labour (Pilani, 2024). This is further reinforced by Genesis 2:15, which highlights that work was part of God's original creation order even before the fall of humanity. In this view, labour is not merely a means to survival but a divinely ordained activity through which humans participate in the ongoing care and cultivation of creation. Thus, the theological foundation challenges modern economic paradigms that reduce labour to mere utility or profit generation. Instead, it establishes that meaningful work is a human right and a spiritual vocation, calling for systems that respect and promote worker dignity.

Thus, the ethical deployment of AI and the structuring of entrepreneurial ventures must align with specific biblical criteria for just labour. The Hebrew terms explored in the exegetical analysis of Ecclesiastes 3:13 provide a robust framework for applying these principles in contemporary settings. Applying these biblical criteria in an AI-driven economy challenges modern labour systems to prioritize human dignity, communal well-being, and ethical integrity over technological efficiency and profit maximization.

Ethical Implications of AI in Work

Again, an argument is made that the integration of AI into the world of work brings with it profound ethical implications. On the one hand, AI holds immense potential to drive innovation, increase productivity, and improve workplace conditions. AI-powered tools can streamline operations, reduce human error, and perform hazardous tasks, thereby enhancing worker safety and efficiency (Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2014). However, the same technology poses significant threats if applied without an ethical framework. The automation of jobs risks the displacement of workers, particularly in industries heavily reliant on routine or manual tasks (Frey & Osborne, 2017). Moreover, AI could lead to the deskilling of workers, limiting their creative engagement and reducing their roles to monitoring or maintaining automated systems (Autor, 2015). This technological shift also risks consolidating economic power in the hands of a few corporations, exacerbating inequality and creating exploitative labour conditions (Korinek & Stiglitz, 2021). Without ethical guidelines rooted in a theology of just labour, the deployment of AI may undermine human dignity, alienating workers from the fruits of their labour, contrary to the biblical vision presented in Ecclesiastes 3:13.

Discussion on Contemporary Entrepreneurship and AI

Contemporary entrepreneurship is integrating Artificial Intelligence (AI) to streamline

operations, improve efficiency, and innovate services. However, there is a growing responsibility to ensure AI supports human labour rather than replacing it (Acemoglu & Restrepo, 2019). The ethical application of AI in business requires a commitment to using technology as a tool that enhances human potential, rather than one that devalues or displaces workers for profit (Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2014). Entrepreneurs and business leaders are expected to create sustainable and ethical workplaces where technology serves people, not the other way around (West, 2018). This means designing AI policies guided by principles of economic justice, maintaining job dignity, providing new opportunities for employee growth, and creating environments that foster collaboration between human creativity and machine efficiency (Schwab & Zahidi, 2020). Responsible leadership requires foresight and intentionality in how technology is integrated into daily operations, ensuring it contributes to a just and humane economy (Floridi et al., 2018).

Worker well-being and fair compensation must remain at the heart of AI-driven entrepreneurship. A biblical model of business recognizes that human labour is valuable beyond its economic output, and entrepreneurs should prioritize fair wages, safe working conditions, and mental and emotional well-being (Van Duzer, 2010). AI should be harnessed to improve work life, reduce burdens, and create meaningful opportunities for human contribution (Daugherty & Wilson, 2018). True economic prosperity in the age of AI is defined by just treatment of workers, ethical stewardship of technology, and a workplace that reflects compassion, fairness, and respect for human dignity (Keller & Alsdorf, 2012).

Evaluation: Policy and Strategic Recommendations

In light of the theological and ethical considerations discussed, it becomes essential to outline specific policy and strategic recommendations for ensuring just labour in the context of AI and entrepreneurship. In this connection, ethical AI design should be a foundational principle, requiring that technology is created and implemented with human well-being at its core. This includes developing AI systems that augment rather than displace human workers, preserving jobs while enhancing productivity (West, 2018). Furthermore, inclusive entrepreneurship should be promoted by creating platforms and programs that enable marginalized groups to participate in AI-driven economic opportunities. This calls for initiatives that democratize access to AI education, funding, and technological infrastructure (Acemoglu & Restrepo, 2019). Worker empowerment is another critical area, necessitating policies that prioritize skills development, job security, and fair compensation. This may involve partnerships

between governments, businesses, and educational institutions to provide continuous learning opportunities that prepare workers for evolving technological landscapes (Koros et al., 2023; Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2017). Finally, justice-oriented business models should replace traditional profit-maximizing approaches. These models emphasize purpose-driven entrepreneurship, ethical governance, and corporate social responsibility, aligning business practices with the biblical vision of work as a divine gift (Schwab & Davis, 2018). By adopting these strategies, society can create an AI-driven economy that upholds the values of justice, equity, and human dignity central to Ecclesiastes 3:13.

Entrepreneurship in an AI-driven economy should be re-envisioned as a form of stewardship rather than mere capital accumulation. From a theological perspective, entrepreneurs are seen as stewards of resources, talents, and technological advancements entrusted to them by God. Their responsibility extends beyond profitability to the care of employees, the community, and creation itself (Pope Francis, 2020). In light of Ecclesiastes 3:13, entrepreneurs are called to ensure that AI serves humanity, enhancing rather than replacing human labour. This stewardship model necessitates that entrepreneurs design business models and technological applications that support worker empowerment, skills development, and meaningful engagement in work (Mamman & Bakwaph). Instead of viewing AI as a cost-cutting mechanism aimed at maximizing shareholder value, ethical entrepreneurship positions AI as a tool for human flourishing (Floridi et al., 2018). Through the promotion of equitable participation in economic opportunities, entrepreneurs fulfill their theological mandate to create spaces where labourers can “eat and drink and find satisfaction in all their toil,” recognizing this as a gift from God.

Conclusion

The rise of AI in entrepreneurship presents both opportunities and ethical challenges. While AI can enhance human creativity, optimize production, and promote economic growth, it also poses significant implications for labour dignity, economic power distribution, and the future of work in society. The biblical affirmation of work as a divine gift, as outlined in Ecclesiastes 3:13, provides a critical lens for evaluating AI's role in the modern economy. This paper calls for a shift in technological innovation towards serving people, communities, and the common good. Ethical analysis suggests that entrepreneurship, guided by theological principles of justice and compassion, can harness AI for human empowerment rather than worker replacement. AI should augment human capabilities, promoting work environments that promote creativity,

engagement, and shared prosperity. Policy interventions and ethical frameworks are needed to safeguard workers in an AI-driven economy. Fair wages, job security, continuous skills development, and worker participation in decision-making processes are essential for responsible entrepreneurship in the digital age.

The future of AI and entrepreneurship must be shaped by a moral imagination rooted in scripture, ethical reflection, and a commitment to the dignity of all people. Technological progress without theological and ethical discernment risks reducing humans to mere production instruments. Integrating AI within a vision of work as a gift from God can advance Kingdom values of justice, equity, and human flourishing in the modern world. Entrepreneurs, theologians, and policymakers are encouraged to engage courageously with AI challenges, shaping the future of entrepreneurship as an avenue for meaningful labour, ethical innovation, and the realization of God's purposes for work and human community.

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Leveraging Artificial Intelligence (AI), Entrepreneurship, and Faith for Ethical Leadership in Nigeria

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Executive Summary

This research work examines how Artificial Intelligence (AI), entrepreneurship, and faith can address Nigeria's leadership challenges, particularly in a globalized era marked by corruption and inefficiency. Leadership studies in Nigeria often neglect the potential synergy among these elements in nurturing and bolstering ethical governance. To bridge this gap, the study employs qualitative methods, involving interviews with Nigerian policymakers, including legislators and government officials, entrepreneurs, and religious leaders, and a review of existing literature. Using Transformational Leadership Theory, the assessment incorporates phenomenological and digital content analysis approaches to explore AI-driven solutions for transparency, entrepreneurial strategies for economic empowerment, and faith-based moral guidance for instilling integrity in leaders. Findings reveal AI's potential in enhancing decision-making transparency, entrepreneurship's role in generating sustainable economic opportunities, and faith's impact on promoting ethical leadership. The study recommends policies that incorporate AI ethics, entrepreneurship education, and interfaith collaborations into Nigeria's leadership development programs to nurture and advance a culture of accountability and integrity.

Keywords: Transformational Leadership, Governance, Entrepreneurship, Faith, Artificial Intelligence, Globalized World, Ethical Leadership

Introduction

In Nigeria, the challenges facing leadership are profound and multifaceted. Anazodo et al (2015) and Kure (2020) express that the nation's history has been marked by struggles with corruption, mismanagement, and a lack of transparency in governance, contributing to widespread public disillusionment. Yet, against this backdrop, there is an emerging sentiment of hope, driven by the potential for technology, innovative thinking, and religious influence to reshape the political landscape. As Nigerians steer

through these turbulent times, the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI), entrepreneurial endeavors, and faith offers new pathways to address longstanding issues and build a more resilient society.

Technology can transform governance by streamlining administrative processes, improving decision-making, and bolstering greater accountability. In a rapidly evolving world, where digital solutions are becoming increasingly central to both public and private sectors, Nigeria has the opportunity to leverage its growing tech-savvy population to facilitate effective governance. Coupled with entrepreneurial initiatives, these digital innovations can drive sustainable development and create opportunities for economic growth that are not only inclusive but also capable of addressing pressing social challenges.

While technological advancements and business opportunities play critical roles, faith remains an integral force in shaping society and influencing public behavior. Religious institutions, in particular, offer guidance that can promote ethical leadership and moral values essential for effective governance. As Nigeria seeks to negotiate its complex challenges, the principles of faith can serve as a foundation for cultivating trust, promoting integrity, and guiding decisions that reflect the comprehensive interests of society. The dynamics between faith and modern governance strategies represent a unique opportunity to build a society that is both progressive and deeply rooted in values that support collective wellbeing.

Addressing Nigeria's leadership challenges requires a multi-faceted approach that integrates AI, entrepreneurship, and faith. A comprehensive understanding of how these elements interact is crucial for designing innovative, culturally sensitive policies and strategies. Insights from these domains can guide solutions that tackle immediate issues while laying the groundwork for long-term stability and prosperity. Since the aforementioned assertions are what this study is poised to achieve, it employs qualitative methods, including interviews with Nigerian policymakers, entrepreneurs, religious leaders, and a review of relevant literature. Utilizing Transformational Leadership Theory, the study incorporates phenomenological and digital content analysis to explore AI-driven transparency, entrepreneurial strategies for economic empowerment, and faith-based moral guidance to foment integrity in leadership.

Theoretical Framework

This study appropriates the Transformational Leadership Theory in bolstering its premises. According to Bass (1990a), Burns (2004) and Ugochukwu (2024), the

Transformational Leadership was initially introduced by James V. Downton, the first to coin the term “Transformational Leadership”, a concept further developed by leadership expert and presidential biographer James MacGregor Burns in 1978; and later expanded upon by Bernard Bass in 1985. The Transformational Leadership Theory centres on the idea that leaders can inspire and motivate followers to rise above self-interest for the collective good. This leadership style emphasizes vision, innovation, and the development of commitment through personal example and intellectual stimulation. Transformational leaders aim to challenge the status quo, encourage fresh perspectives, and cultivate an environment where followers can realize their full potential. In Nigeria's contemporary context, where leadership often grapples with corruption, inefficiency, and distrust, applying transformational leadership principles can be instrumental in promoting ethical governance and social advancement.

The intersection of transformational leadership and Artificial Intelligence (AI) presents a promising opportunity to strengthen ethical leadership in Nigeria. AI, through its advanced data analytics and predictive capabilities, can significantly enhance transparency, decision-making, and accountability in governance. A transformational leader skilled in AI can utilize these technologies to improve public service delivery, optimize resource distribution, and reduce opportunities for corruption. For instance, AI systems could monitor government projects, ensuring their alignment with public interest and ethical standards. AI can also increase citizen engagement by providing platforms for real-time feedback and transparent communication, helping to close the gap between leaders and the public. Leaders who embrace AI as part of their leadership style can demonstrate how technological advancements can work in tandem with ethical governance, thus setting an example for integrity and accountability in leadership.

Entrepreneurship, which plays a pivotal role in economic development, aligns naturally with the principles of transformational leadership. A transformational leader in Nigeria can harness the entrepreneurial drive to implement economic reforms and promote a culture of innovation and ethical responsibility. Entrepreneurs are often at the forefront of addressing societal challenges, particularly in rapidly developing nations like Nigeria. Through integrating entrepreneurial strategies into leadership practices, Nigerian leaders can encourage sustainable business models that prioritize ethical standards, social responsibility, and inclusivity. Supporting entrepreneurship also presents an opportunity to create jobs, reduce unemployment, and tackle poverty, which are critical issues for Nigeria's future. Furthermore, entrepreneurship offers a platform to instill ethical values in business practices, motivating leaders to prioritize both profitability and social impact, contributing to overall societal progress.

Faith, given Nigeria's religious diversity, stands as a powerful tool in shaping ethical leadership. Many of Nigeria's leadership challenges stem from moral corruption and a disconnect between leadership practices and ethical principles. Transformational leadership, when aligned with faith, can act as a catalyst for embedding values such as integrity, honesty, and service into governance. A faith-driven leader can inspire citizens to unite for the common good, reinforcing the belief that leadership is a service, not a privilege. Faith-based initiatives, integrated with transformational leadership, can drive policies centered on justice, equality, and human dignity, addressing core societal issues like inequality and social unrest. Faith thus serves as a moral guide for leaders, helping them manoeuvre ethical dilemmas in governance while creating a more just and harmonious society. The combination of AI, entrepreneurship, and faith through transformational leadership can significantly elevate the ethical standards of leadership in Nigeria, offering a pathway toward sustainable change.

Synthesis of Research and Data-Driven Insights

Leadership and governance in a global context reflect complex, evolving paradigms influenced by social, political, and technological factors. Scholars like Northouse (2018) emphasize that leadership must address dynamic changes in society, shifting from traditional top-down structures to more inclusive and collaborative forms. Bass (1990b) underscores the importance of transformational leadership in nurturing trust and innovation within organizations, which is vital for effective governance. These global perspectives highlight the need for adaptive leadership models to cope with emerging challenges in governance, such as corruption, inequality, and lack of accountability, particularly in developing nations like Nigeria.

Moreover, effective leadership capable of addressing global irregularities and Nigeria's entrenched corruption must adopt a multifaceted approach that combines wisdom, tenacity, rationality, patience, and empathy for societal needs. Such leadership requires a profound understanding of the complexities of global socioeconomic and sociopolitical systems, coupled with insights into transnational advancements in science and technology, alongside nuclear and war-related dynamics, to manoeuvre crises effectively and promote sustainable development. Leaders must also possess advanced academic grounding to integrate innovative strategies, ensuring alignment with global standards and addressing local challenges. Scholars like Sobratee (2018), Akil (2021), and Farhan (2024) emphasize that leadership rooted in these principles is better positioned to mitigate structural corruption and enhance governance. The authors articulate that contemporary functional leaders must also have a global

mindset, enabling them to address challenges effectively and champion equitable progress through informed and empathetic decision-making.

The integration of AI into governance has the potential to revolutionize decision-making processes by enhancing transparency, reducing corruption, and promoting accountability. According to Brynjolfsson et al (2014), AI-driven systems can process vast amounts of data, enabling leaders to make informed decisions quickly and with greater accuracy. Furthermore, Chui et al (2018a) argue that AI facilitates more transparent governance by making the decision-making process more open and less susceptible to human biases. Noteworthy is Gonzalez et al (2023) and Walter (2024) that the integration of AI in governance highlights diverse strategies across regions and nations, with pivotal contributions from China, the United States, the European Union, the G7, and Southeast Asia. They accentuate that China's Global AI Governance Initiative (GAIGI), targeting Belt and Road countries, and the United States' Executive Order on Trustworthy AI emphasize innovation and equitable benefits, while the European Union's AI Act advances high-risk application oversight. Concurrently, Southeast Asian nations, exemplified by Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand, embrace pragmatic AI governance streamlined to their rapid digitalization, with initiatives like the ASEAN Guide on AI Governance and Ethics reflecting business-friendly policies and socio-cultural inclusivity. These approaches underscore a global, multilateral interplay, with Southeast Asia synthesizing elements from dominant models to align with economic and ethical imperatives, projecting AI's potential for inclusive growth in Asia, Europe, and North America.

In the context of Nigeria, AI can improve the monitoring of public spending and the allocation of resources, significantly improving governance and public trust. Irrespective of the fact that this may seem a challenge to Nigeria, the country can still achieve a pragmatic, business-friendly AI governance model by implementing streamlined policies that align ethical standards with rapid digitalization and global frameworks, supported by strategic investments, collaborative stakeholder efforts, and capacity-building initiatives.

Entrepreneurship plays a crucial role in driving economic growth and empowerment, particularly in emerging economies. According to Schumpeter (1934), entrepreneurship drives innovation, leading to the creation of new industries and job opportunities. Moreover, Kuratko (2016) highlights that entrepreneurship can empower individuals by providing them with the means to create wealth and contribute to economic development. In Nigeria, where unemployment and underemployment are significant issues, entrepreneurship can serve as a viable path for economic empowerment, particularly through the application of technology and innovation,

which can lead to sustainable solutions for social and economic challenges. Blessed with a vibrant entrepreneurial ecosystem, the Nigerian government can leverage its entrepreneurs' expertise to drive innovation, economic growth, and sustainable national development.

Faith-based leadership offers a unique approach to governance, particularly in societies with strong religious identities. According to Lewis (2012), faith-based leaders can play an instrumental role in promoting ethical governance by cultivating moral values, integrity, and accountability. Just as Okeke (2020) and Campbell (2021) assert, in Nigeria, where religious influence is pervasive, leaders who incorporate faith principles into their governance strategies are more likely to uphold ethical standards and uphold societal trust. The role of faith in leadership extends beyond religious institutions, with faith-based organizations advocating for social justice, human rights, and sustainable development, contributing significantly to the ethical governance landscape in the country.

Ijewereme (2015) and Afunugo et al (2024) assert that unethical leadership in Nigeria, characterized by the absence of stewardship, rampant embezzlement of public funds, and systemic corruption, has created a cycle of stagnation, underdevelopment, and socio-economic instability in the country. Afunugo (2023) avers that these irregular issues associated with unethical leadership in Nigeria contribute significantly to widespread unemployment, insecurity, and a deteriorating economic climate, driving many citizens to seek better opportunities abroad. O. Nweke, E. Okafor, I. Ademowo, R. Adebisi, S. Aliyu and D. Omelona (personal communication, December 15th, 2024) accentuate that in foreign lands, Nigerians willingly engage in various menial occupations, including mortuary attendants, care-giving, sanitation work, and security services, which they might reject in Nigeria due to the undervaluation of their currency, inadequate wages, and societal pride. This duality underscores the devastating impact of endemic corruption, which erodes both individual dignity and national prosperity. Adopting an entrepreneurial mindset and integrating basic AI knowledge into skill development can provide viable solutions to these structural issues. Moreover, religious institutions, known for promoting moral discipline and community values, have a vital role in reshaping societal attitudes toward work and integrity. This combined approach emphasizes pragmatic solutions that address both individual empowerment and collective responsibility. Leveraging innovative technologies alongside virtues such as accountability and perseverance, Nigeria can mitigate the adverse effects of unethical leadership and redirect its human capital toward sustainable progress.

Strategic Deployment of Artificial Intelligence to Enhance Transparency and Optimize Efficiency in Public Governance

AI has become an integral tool in addressing the complexities of achieving transparency in governance. Margetts et al (2019) aver that advanced algorithms and machine learning models are now employed to analyze and interpret vast datasets, enabling real-time monitoring of government activities. These technologies uncover patterns of inefficiency and potential corruption through predictive analytics, thereby promoting accountability. Xu et al (2019) equally assert that blockchain, an AI-compatible innovation, ensures immutable records of transactions and decisions, facilitating audits and reducing opportunities for mismanagement. Moreover, natural language processing (NLP) supports transparency by converting legal documents, policies, and budgets into user-friendly formats for the general public, empowering citizens with actionable knowledge, as Chui et al (2018b) illustrate.

The integration of AI technologies in governance enhances both transparency and operational efficiency. Bughin et al (2018) express that tools such as robotic process automation (RPA) streamline repetitive bureaucratic processes, ensuring consistent and error-free execution of tasks. West (2020) elucidates that public engagement platforms, powered by conversational AI, enable governments to directly interact with citizens, increasing the inclusivity of decision-making processes. In addition, geospatial AI supports the transparent allocation and monitoring of resources in critical sectors such as infrastructure, education, and healthcare as Goodchild et al (2012) enunciate. Ethical considerations and biases within AI systems remain crucial challenges, necessitating frameworks that ensure accountability and fairness, just like O'Neil (2016) articulates.

Several case studies demonstrate the transformative impact of AI on public sector efficiency. For instance, World Bank (2020) enlightens that AI-powered analytics have been instrumental in tax administration, detecting anomalies, and enhancing compliance in countries such as India and Estonia. Benevelo et al (2016) add that Predictive maintenance systems for public infrastructure, implemented in cities like Barcelona, minimize operational costs while ensuring uninterrupted service delivery. Similarly, AI-driven platforms in Rwanda have revolutionized land registry systems, reducing fraudulent claims and expediting title transfers, as UNDP (2018) intimates. Spectacularly, the October 24, 2024, memorandum, issued by President Joe Biden Jr., outlines a strategic directive to position the United States as a global leader in Artificial Intelligence, leveraging its capabilities to enhance national security, economic growth, and public welfare. It emphasizes the integration of AI into federal operations to modernize governance, streamline decision-making, and bolster cybersecurity.

Additionally, the memo prioritizes stimulating public trust in AI by ensuring its safety, ethical application, and regulation through collaboration with industry, academia, and international allies. This initiative underscores AI's transformative potential while addressing risks such as bias, misuse, and security vulnerabilities, aligning innovation with democratic values. These examples underscore the role of AI in redefining public sector operations, offering innovative pathways to achieving governance that is both transparent and efficient. This is feasible and can be equally actualized in Nigeria.

Promoting Economic Growth through Entrepreneurship Education, Empowerment, and Policy

Entrepreneurship serves as a critical driver of economic empowerment, particularly in developing economies like Nigeria. Effective entrepreneurship strategies can contribute to sustainable development in Nigeria through job creation, innovation, and improved living standards. Empowering Nigerian citizens with access to capital, skills training, and market opportunities is essential to harnessing entrepreneurial potential. Strategic initiatives should focus on creating enabling environments, including robust infrastructure, access to finance, and supportive legal systems, to ensure that entrepreneurs can thrive and expand their businesses, as Kaufmann et al (2023) entail. The government's role in providing incentives, such as tax breaks and grants, is also vital to stimulate entrepreneurial growth.

Entrepreneurs play a pivotal role in driving economic development through increased productivity and wealth creation. Identifying market gaps and developing innovative solutions allows entrepreneurs to contribute to heightened competition, which drives productivity improvements and efficiency across various sectors. Additionally, entrepreneurs help diversify the economy by establishing new industries and reducing dependency on specific sectors. As highlighted by Bhardwaj et al (2022), entrepreneurship also enhances export capabilities, attracts foreign investment, and encourages technological progress, all of which are essential for long-term economic growth. Their efforts in generating employment further reduce poverty and social inequalities, making them indispensable agents of economic transformation.

Entrepreneurship education shapes individuals' entrepreneurial mindsets and equips them with the skills necessary for business success. Integrating entrepreneurial curricula into formal education systems in Nigeria alongside offering specialized training and mentorship programs enhances the citizens' ability to recognize opportunities and effectively manage businesses. According to Wilson et al (2021), entrepreneurship education should cover practical aspects, such as business planning,

marketing strategies, and financial management, while also emphasizing soft skills like leadership, resilience, and risk management. To further support entrepreneurship, Nigerian policymakers, for instance, must prioritize creating regulatory environments that reduce barriers to business formation and ensure access to essential resources, including affordable credit.

Entrepreneurship is a key catalyst for economic empowerment and development. While entrepreneurship strategies should aim to equip individuals with the necessary skills, resources, and opportunities, government and policy interventions play a central role in creating environments conducive to business growth. Effective entrepreneurship education empowers individuals to build successful businesses that contribute to economic diversification, innovation, and job creation. Governments and Nigerian authorities should significantly, therefore implement policies that promote entrepreneurship, ensure access to finance, and encourage an entrepreneurial culture to maximize their potential. These actions will significantly enhance the socio-economic development of nations, especially Nigeria, which is faced with innumerable socio-economic challenges.

Faith, Ethics, and Interfaith Collaboration in Leadership

Saluun et al (2024) and Koko et al (2024) suggest that in the Nigerian context, faith-based moral guidance plays a crucial role in shaping ethical leadership, especially as religious beliefs hold significant cultural weight in the country. Religious principles often provide a clear moral compass that guides decision-making, urging leaders to align their actions with divine mandates. This sense of duty to a higher moral order encourages leaders to resist the temptations of corruption and misconduct, focusing instead on justice, accountability, and service to the people. The integration of faith into leadership practices becomes especially relevant in a country like Nigeria, where trust in political institutions can often be tenuous. When religious leaders exemplify ethical conduct, their influence extends beyond the pulpit, offering a model for secular leaders to emulate in governance.

Religious beliefs significantly influence ethical decision-making processes in Nigerian leadership, as they are deeply intertwined with personal values, community expectations, and national identity. In a multi-religious society, the various religious faiths situated therein provide configurations that encourage leaders to act with integrity and moral righteousness. These beliefs serve as a check against decisions driven solely by personal gain or political expediency, advocating instead for policies that benefit the collective good. While challenges in interpreting and applying these

religious teachings may arise, the moral guidance they offer remains a critical anchor for ethical leadership. Although F. Oseyi, J. Meludu and K. Ekezie (personal communication, December 28th, 2024) observe that some past Nigerian leaders, hardly relied on the teachings of their faith while discharging their administrative obligations, which eventually resulted in their shortcoming alongside setback; demonstrating the positive impact of religious virtues on public service and governance when upheld.

Interfaith collaborations in Nigeria have the potential to promote integrity and strengthen ethical leadership, especially in addressing issues of corruption and societal injustice. Given the diverse religious landscape of Nigeria, efforts to bring together religious leaders from different faiths can create a unified stance on common ethical values that transcend sectarian differences. Hence, Okoro (2020) and Oye-Oluwafemi (2024) insist that ecumenism as an approach for interreligious collaboration advances peace by addressing intolerance and extremism, thereby promoting ethical leadership and harmonious coexistence in Nigeria's religiously pluralistic society. Such collaborations encourage mutual respect and understanding, empowering religious communities to jointly advocate for integrity in leadership. These partnerships can also challenge leaders to rise above personal and religious biases, advancing a national ethos where ethical conduct is prioritized. Through interfaith dialogue, Nigerian religious communities can collectively influence public policy, ensuring that ethical principles guide the decisions that affect the nation's future. It is commendable that the President-elect of the United States, Donald Trump, has emphasized the inclusion of Christian religious values in the nation's academic syllabus and governance endeavors, as Valley (2024) and Lubin document. This approach aligns with the growing recognition of religious virtues as essential tools for developing leaders with integrity, compassion, and a sense of accountability, addressing the moral deficits often observed in contemporary leadership. Integrating these values into education and public policy lays a foundation for ethical leadership and societal transformation. This initiative has the potential to set a global precedent, inspiring other nations to explore the use of religious principles as catalysts for ethical governance and societal cohesion. In a world grappling with ethical crises, the projection of religious values within educational and political institutions will contribute significantly to the cultivation of virtuous leaders and the reinforcement of moral standards worldwide.

Shaping Nigeria's Future through AI, Entrepreneurship, and Faith for Ethical Leadership in a Globalized Era

To shape Nigeria's future through AI, entrepreneurship, and faith for ethical leadership, a foundational shift in leadership and governance is necessary. AI can be leveraged to enhance transparency and accountability within government systems. Implementing AI-driven solutions can aid in monitoring and auditing financial transactions, identifying corrupt practices, and ensuring the equitable distribution of resources. Moreover, AI can assist in the development of efficient public service systems, reducing human error and corruption in the administrative processes. As technology becomes a part of daily life, it can act as a watchdog, limiting the space for corrupt individuals to manipulate the system for personal gain.

Entrepreneurship needs to play a central role in reshaping Nigeria's economy and governance. Encouraging innovation through entrepreneurial initiatives can shift the focus from government dependence to self-sustainability. Nigeria ought to establish platforms that enable young entrepreneurs to develop businesses that promote ethical practices, transparency, and trust. This entrepreneurial drive can also facilitate the development of local solutions for local problems, from community-based renewable energy projects to digital platforms that allow citizens to report corruption. The cultivation of an entrepreneurial mindset will create job opportunities, reduce economic disparity, and provide avenues for citizens to engage in the growth of the country.

Faith, particularly in the context of Nigeria's diverse religious communities, has the potential to guide ethical behavior in leadership and business practices. Religious institutions should take a strong stand in promoting integrity and justice, teaching their followers to adhere to moral principles that transcend mere religious observance. Bishops, Imams, and other religious leaders cum clerics must emphasize personal responsibility, honesty, and service to others in their sermons and teachings. This moral reformation, when rooted deeply within the fabric of society, will encourage the collective rise above the corrupt practices that have plagued Nigeria for generations, replacing self-interest with communal welfare.

Addressing the constitutive corruption ingrained in Nigeria's institutions and society demands a comprehensive approach to both legal and social reform. Strengthening legal mechanisms that criminalize corruption, combined with widespread public education campaigns on ethics and integrity, will empower citizens to hold public officials accountable. Education should be streamlined to inculcate values of honesty, respect, and social responsibility from a young age. With the right balance of

technology, entrepreneurship, and ethical faith-based teachings, Nigeria can establish a future where leadership is characterized by transparency, justice, and morality in all sectors of society.

Conclusion

This study highlights the critical correlation of AI, entrepreneurship, and faith in shaping ethical leadership, particularly in Nigeria. The focus on these three pillars offers a comprehensive blueprint for addressing Nigeria's leadership challenges while promoting a vision for sustainable development and governance. As a developing nation in Africa, Nigeria's future hinges on the ability to harness innovative technologies like AI, project entrepreneurial ecosystems that are conducive to growth, and integrate faith-based values that guide decision-making towards moral and just leadership. This study underscores the importance of ethical leadership in a globalized world, where the pressures of modernization and technological advancement must be balanced with cultural and religious values to ensure a just and prosperous society.

While this research offers valuable insights, it is not exhaustive in its exploration of the multidimensional aspects of Nigeria's leadership challenges. The complexity of AI's influence on governance, the dynamic nature of entrepreneurship in the Nigerian context, and the multifaceted role of faith in public life require further investigation. The study has examined key themes and provided practical recommendations, but a deeper dive into each pillar, especially the synergy between faith, governance, and technological progress, would enrich the understanding of their collective impact on Nigeria's leadership. Additionally, an extensive comparative analysis of other African nations could offer further perspectives on the generalizability of the findings.

Future studies could focus on the role of AI in transforming governance in African countries, with an emphasis on policy implementation and ethical considerations. Exploring the potential for faith-driven entrepreneurship as a catalyst for economic growth and job creation would also provide valuable insights into the development of ethical business practices in the region. Furthermore, a longitudinal analysis of the evolving relationship between technology, leadership, and faith in Nigeria could offer critical lessons for other developing countries striving to align modern advancements with ethical governance. This study paves the way for deeper engagement with these critical issues, contributing to the ongoing discourse on leadership and development in Africa.

Recommendations

Pertinent to the deliberations of this study, the following recommendations are posited:

1. The federal government of Nigeria should embrace AI without apprehension. Recognizing its vast potential to drive innovation and improve public services, AI can be an essential tool in transforming Nigeria's economy and governance. With AI's ability to enhance decision-making, optimize resource allocation, and support technological advancements, it is critical for the government to overcome any fears and uncertainties, investing in AI-driven solutions that can address societal challenges and propel the nation toward modernization.
2. The federal government of Nigeria should collaborate with other nations where AI is contributing to accountability, good governance, and ethical leadership. For instance, Estonia has successfully integrated AI into its public administration, allowing for more transparent and efficient government services, while the United Arab Emirates has adopted AI to improve public sector operations, reduce bureaucratic inefficiencies, and promote ethical leadership. Such collaborations would allow Nigeria to learn from successful models, adopt best practices, and build a more accountable and transparent governance structure using AI technologies.
3. Religious institutions in Nigeria should adopt a pragmatic, praxis-centered approach, practicing what they preach. This would position them as the Oracle of God in the eyes of both the government and the citizens. When religious leaders and organizations align their actions with their teachings, they gain credibility and trust, inspiring moral living among the populace. This alignment would also strengthen their role in guiding the government and citizens toward ethical conduct, reinforcing the importance of integrity, honesty, and social responsibility in all spheres of life.
4. Career Development Studies should be incorporated into Nigeria's educational system from an early age, exploring diverse paths for personal and national growth. The curriculum should focus on equipping individuals with practical skills that prepare them for a wide range of careers, reducing the nation's over-reliance on oil revenue. Through cultivating, alongside advancing entrepreneurship, vocational skills, and technological expertise, Nigeria can create a more diverse and sustainable economy. Additionally, this approach would discourage citizens from seeking opportunities abroad while reducing the allure of online fraudulent activities and internet prostitution,

offering instead a future filled with opportunity and ethical work.

5. The quest for ethical leadership in Nigeria must be a joint effort between the citizens and the federal government. There needs to be a collective acknowledgment that the nation's challenges are not solely the fault of one group or another. Rather than pointing fingers, Nigerians must embrace a shared responsibility to work towards solutions, rebuild trust, and bolster integrity in leadership. Both citizens and the government must collaborate to implement integrated reforms that promote transparency, fairness, and ethical conduct in all aspects of governance.

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Creativity, Innovation, Ethics, and Entrepreneurship

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Executive Summary

Creativity, innovation, and entrepreneurship are fundamental drivers of economic and social transformation, and model industries, markets, and human progress. As the world evolves, the interconnectedness of these concepts becomes essential in maintaining sustainable development and competitive advantage. This chapter examines the dynamic relationship that exists between creativity, innovation, and entrepreneurship, examining how they meet to generate novel ideas, products, and business ventures. From individual creative expression to large-scale entrepreneurial ecosystems, this chapter explores the factors that influence innovative thinking and successful enterprise creation. Key areas of focus this chapter brings out include the role of technological advancements, market demands, leadership styles, and policy frameworks in shaping entrepreneurial success. Additionally, this chapter examines the challenges associated with fostering creativity and innovation within organizational and societal structures, including resource constraints, risk aversion, and regulatory barriers. The findings of this chapter, however, provide valuable insights for entrepreneurs, policymakers, and business leaders seeking to harness creativity and innovation as strategic tools for growth. By analyzing these interrelated concepts, this chapter aims to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of their role in driving economic resilience and long-term sustainability in an ever-evolving global landscape.

Keywords: Innovation, Creativity, Entrepreneurship, Economy

Introduction

Entrepreneurship, creativity, and innovation are three powerful forces shaping the world we live in today. They are not only important for growing businesses or improving the economy, they are essential tools for solving real problems, creating new opportunities, and shaping a better future. This chapter explores the deep connection between these three ideas, showing how they work together to drive change. Creativity

begins with ideas, innovation turns those ideas into something useful, and entrepreneurship brings them into the real world where they can make an impact. From small businesses to global companies, these forces influence how people think, work, and live. But beyond economics, they touch the very heart of human existence, our desire to build, to create, and to leave a mark. In this study, we look at how these concepts have evolved, how they operate today, and why they matter more than ever in the 21st century. Through examples, theories, and thoughtful analysis, we aim to show that everyone has the potential to be creative, to innovate, and to act entrepreneurially; not just to make profit, but to make a difference.

Entrepreneurship: An Overview

The term entrepreneurship has emerged as a buzzword in recent years, this is because many scholars have diverse views/perspectives on it. Entrepreneurship has sparked interest across various disciplines, it influences different fields of study ranging from economics, sociology, management, psychology, philosophy, and even religion, e.t.c. This is because of its relevance to the 21st-century economy, politics, society, and its development. Entrepreneurship is more than just starting a business; it is a mindset characterized by opportunity recognition and value creation.

Etymologically, according to Adekemi (2014), “the word 'entrepreneur' was derived from the French verb 'entreprendre' which means 'to undertake'. This is pinpointing to those who 'undertake' the risk of enterprise. The enterprise is created by an entrepreneur and the process is 'entrepreneurship’” (4). Based on the principle of contextualization, we can say that, this term was used to describe someone who took on a venture or project involving high risk and uncertainty. Furthermore, "undertake" in this sense could be seen as: to take responsibility for something, to embark on a risky venture or to assume the risks and challenges associated with a particular endeavor. This view of Adekemi (2014) was furthermore buttressed by Brewer (2015) when he observed that, 'the term “entrepreneur” has a rich history that stretches back to the 13th century. Its earliest recorded use was in France, where it emerged in the context of economic and military endeavors. During this period, an entrepreneur was referred to as a person who undertook a project or venture, often involving high risk and uncertainty. This sense of undertaking and risk-taking remains a core aspect of entrepreneurship today. This implies that an entrepreneur is willing to:

1. Take calculated risks
2. Face uncertainty and ambiguity

3. Assume responsibility for the success or failure of their venture

The term entrepreneur was later popularized by a French economist, Jean-Baptiste Say, in the 18th century. Say defined the term as an individual who "shifts economic resources out of an area of lower and into an area of higher productivity and greater yield" (Say, 1803, 322). Say's definition emphasized the entrepreneur's role in allocating resources and creating value. The concept of entrepreneurship continued to evolve throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, influenced by the works of economists such as Carl Menger, Ludwig von Mises, and Joseph Schumpeter (Menger, 1871; Mises, 1949; Schumpeter, 1934).

Entrepreneurship is often seen as the domain of business and economics, a field driven by profit, innovation, and market competition. But beneath this surface lies a more profound inquiry. Entrepreneurship is not only a commercial activity; it is a philosophical journey, one that engages with the very questions of being, knowing, acting, and flourishing. It is a lived experience rooted in the human condition, in our desires to create, to overcome, and to find meaning.

Essentially, entrepreneurship is about **becoming**, it is a process of transformation, not a fixed status. Ontologically, reflecting on the nature of the entrepreneur, it becomes clear that the entrepreneur is not a mere economic agent, but should be viewed as a dynamic being in the world, that is, a being who chooses to act amid uncertainty. The act of launching a new venture is not merely an economic function; it is a declaration of presence in a way that states, *I am here or I exist, and I choose to shape my future*. This sense of intentionality and projection into the future aligns entrepreneurship with the existential project of self-creation. In Heideggerian terms, the entrepreneur embodies *Dasein*, a being who is "thrown" into the world and must navigate existence by making authentic choices (Heidegger, 1962). Hence, the entrepreneur is not born but made through engagement with challenges, opportunities, and the world itself. In this sense, the entrepreneur is an evolving self who is constantly reshaping identity and reality through action.

Also, the entrepreneurs often act on intuition, imagination, and practical knowledge rather than strict logic or calculation. This opens a philosophical inquiry into the *epistemology* of entrepreneurship (how do entrepreneurs know what they know?) Michael Polanyi (1966) emphasizes "tacit knowledge", the kind of knowledge that cannot be fully articulated but is known through doing. Entrepreneurs rely on this deeply personal, experiential knowledge. Entrepreneurship is filled with uncertainty and risk. Jean-Paul Sartre (2007) argues that individuals are "condemned to be free." This implies that we are always responsible for our choices. Entrepreneurs exemplify

this freedom as they create new paths in new territories. They are not merely adapting to reality; they are shaping it, and in doing so, they bear the weight of responsibility for their creations.

Entrepreneurship, then, is an existential mode of being-in-the-world. It reflects an attitude of **readiness-to-act** and a drive to impose meaning or form where none yet exists. The entrepreneur does not passively accept the status quo; instead, they recognize unrealized potential and respond with creativity, innovation, courage, and resilience. Furthermore, entrepreneurship represents a relational existence. The entrepreneur exists not in isolation but in interaction with markets, with communities, with cultures, with people, with the world. These interactions shape the entrepreneur's identity just as the entrepreneur shapes the world around them. Indeed, when entrepreneurship is rooted in purpose and aligned with human values, it becomes more than a profession; it becomes a life project. It is an interesting endeavour in which both self and world are transformed.

The entrepreneurial spirit embodies traits such as risk-taking, resilience, and adaptability. the bedrock of Entrepreneurship is creativity and innovation. Failure does not stop the Entrepreneur. Failure, in this context, when viewed through a philosophical lens, is not an obstacle but a necessary counterpoint to creativity and a precursor to authentic innovation. It reveals the boundaries of current understanding and challenges the assumptions underlying our ideas. Creativity thrives on risk, and with risk comes the inevitability of missteps. Yet, it is precisely through these missteps that innovation becomes clear and deepens, because it is in failing that we learn, grow, and evolve. Philosophers like Søren Kierkegaard and Friedrich Nietzsche understood failure as integral to growth; without the confrontation of limits, the human spirit cannot transcend them. In this sense, failure is not the opposite of success, it is its raw material, it provides the essential ingredient needed for success.

Types of Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship is not a monolithic pursuit; it manifests in diverse forms, each shaped by intention, context, and scale. While the spirit of creativity and value creation is constant, how it expresses itself varies. Understanding the different types of entrepreneurship enriches our appreciation of its reach and relevance.

1. **Small business entrepreneurship** is perhaps the most familiar form, including family-run shops, artisans, and local service providers. These ventures may not aim for global dominance, but they are vital to community economies and cultural continuity.

2. **Scalable startups**, on the other hand, begin with big visions. These are the tech-driven companies born in dorm rooms or garages, aiming to disrupt entire industries. Their focus is exponential growth, backed by innovation and investor funding.
3. **Corporate entrepreneurship**, or intrapreneurship, happens within existing organizations. Here, individuals act entrepreneurially, innovating, experimenting, and challenging norms while operating inside structured environments. It's a reminder that entrepreneurial thinking is not confined to startups; it can thrive within institutions.
4. **Social entrepreneurship** seeks not just profit but purpose. These entrepreneurs identify pressing social or environmental challenges and build ventures that create sustainable solutions. Their metric of success is impact, measured not only in revenue but in lives changed and systems transformed.
5. **Green entrepreneurship**, closely linked to social entrepreneurship, is grounded in ecological consciousness. It emphasizes sustainability, renewable energy, and ethical production, reflecting an evolving awareness that profit must be aligned with planetary care.
6. **Innovative Entrepreneurship**: This type emphasizes creating new and original ideas, products, or services, often through technological advancements or disruptive business models.

These various forms illuminate the many faces of entrepreneurship. What binds them is not structure, but spirit, a willingness to act, to create, and to contribute meaningfully to the world

Entrepreneurship in the 21st Century

In the 21st century, technology is no longer a tool but a partner in the entrepreneurial journey. The digital revolution has reshaped not only the “how” but also the “what” and “why” of entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurs now operate in a world of real-time global communication, artificial intelligence, blockchain, 3D printing, and platform economies.

Fundamentally, technology extends the entrepreneur's creative reach. It transforms ideas into scalable realities with unprecedented speed. An app developed in Lagos can serve users in London, New York, and Nairobi. A single digital storefront can access a global market once limited by geography. Philosophically, this evolution redefines the

boundaries of agency. The entrepreneur is no longer just a local actor but a node in a complex web of digital interdependence. With this comes both empowerment and responsibility. Technological innovation invites bold imagination, but it also demands ethical foresight. The same algorithms that drive efficiency can unintentionally perpetuate bias. The same AI that optimizes a process can also replace human labour.

Yet, technology, like entrepreneurship itself, is neutral until shaped by human hands. It amplifies intention. For the entrepreneur grounded in purpose, it becomes a force for meaningful transformation. For others, it risks becoming a pursuit of disruption for disruption's sake. Because of this, today's entrepreneur must not only be technologically savvy but ethically awake. In a world where machines can learn and systems evolve autonomously, the entrepreneur remains the moral compass, a human in control, deciding not just what *can* be built, but what should be built.

The Essence of Creativity

The concept of creativity has undergone significant transformation over the years. In ancient metaphysical and theological traditions, creativity was regarded as a divine attribute—*creatio ex nihilo*, or creation out of nothing, was a capacity attributed solely to God. Human beings were imitators, not originators. However, from the Enlightenment onward, creativity began to be understood as a distinctly human faculty, associated with reason, freedom, and the capacity for innovation.

Etymologically, the term "creativity" stems from the Latin word *creare*, meaning "to create" or "to bring forth" (Harper, 2022). Its Proto-Indo-European root *kere* implies growth, productivity, and increase (Watkins, 2000, p. 42). By the 17th century, the English term "creativity" emerged, referring to the human ability to bring something new into being (Oxford English Dictionary, 1989). These origins point to a consistent thread: creativity is not simply novelty, but purposeful emergence, a core aspect of entrepreneurship.

Creativity involves generating new ideas that have value. It is not merely an artistic endeavor but a fundamental aspect of human cognition. It imparts various domains of human endeavor, including science, technology, and everyday problem-solving. In the realm of philosophy, we dare not see creativity as a tool for art or inventory only, there is more to it. Creativity becomes for the philosopher a means for rethinking and reshaping our assumptions, values, and knowledge. It's a way to innovate, interrupt, and transform our understanding of reality. This nature of approach aligns with the view that creativity is fundamental to the evolution of knowledge and culture, catalyzing

progress and innovation. As Paul and Kaufman (2014) note, creativity is the mark of individuality and the engine of progress in every human endeavor. For Immanuel Kant, the imagination (*Einbildungskraft*) is a central faculty through which the mind synthesizes sensory data and constructs reality (Kant, 1781). His view positions creativity not only as an expression of art but as an epistemological structuring (that is, an active engagement with the world). Heidegger, too, in his treatment of poiesis, aligns creativity with the ontological process of *bringing-forth* (a movement from concealment to revelation) (Heidegger, 1977).

Creativity is not an unexpected flash of inspiration or a special, mysterious gift granted to some; instead, it is a unique capacity that can be developed over time. It is a continually developing process rooted in human reasoning, emotion, and experience. In other words, even though it is inherent to some, creativity is still and can be a learned process. Engaging in creative activities, embracing curiosity, and practicing problem-solving can significantly enhance one's creative abilities. This is so because ideas are thought, formed, planned, through then carried out. A more refined model that explains this process is given by Graham Wallas (1926). He states that creativity unfolds in stages, beginning with **preparation**, where an individual gathers knowledge and explores the problem; followed by **incubation**, a period of reflection where the mind unconsciously works on the idea. Then comes **illumination**, the moment when a novel connection or insight emerges, and finally, **verification**, where the idea is evaluated, refined, and possibly implemented. Thus, creativity is less about personal exceptionality and more about a constant engagement with problems, possibilities, meanings, and solutions. As such, it is a fundamentally human activity that reflects our desire not only to understand the world but to re-construct it.

Ultimately, creativity serves as the bedrock upon which both innovation and entrepreneurship rest. Within entrepreneurial ecosystems, creativity becomes the catalyst that initiates the transformation we talk about, and not just of products and services, but of possibilities themselves. Understanding creativity as a process allows us to appreciate **the evolution of innovative ideas**, from the initial spark to the final product or service. It makes us see the importance of patience, experimentation, and even failure as essential parts of the creative journey.

Innovation as the Nexus Between Ideas and Reality

Innovation is the practical application of creative ideas resulting in new products or processes. It stands as the crucial bridge between imagination and implementation, between the conceptual and the concrete. While creativity thrives in the realm of

possibility, innovation is what grounds these possibilities in reality, giving them shape, value, and impact. It represents the transformation from potentiality to actuality (A concept explored by Aristotle in his metaphysics). Innovation is what makes creativity functional, applicable, and socially impactful. It is creativity in motion!

The word innovation is derived from the Latin word “*innovare*,” which means to “to renew” or “to restore.” This Latin word has its root in the prefix “*in*” (meaning “into” or “within”) and the verb “*novare*,” meaning “to make new” or “to change.” The word “innovation” first appeared in the English lexicon in the 15th century, which by then was used to mean “the act of introducing new things or methods.” Over time, the term has evolved to encompass a wider variety of meanings, including:

1. The process of creating new ideas, products, or services.
2. The act of improving or refining existing ideas, products, or services.
3. The implementation of new or improved ideas, products, or services.

Peter Drucker, a pioneer of modern management, once remarked that “innovation is the specific instrument of entrepreneurship.” It is this instrument that enables entrepreneurs to respond to needs, reconfigure resources, and push boundaries. It is the action that follows the vision. Innovation can occur in various contexts, including businesses, organizations, and communities. We can say that Innovation is a transformative process that generates value and uniqueness for stakeholders by developing and implementing groundbreaking procedures, solutions, products, services, and commercialization strategies.

Philosophically, innovation can be situated within the broader discourse of becoming, transformation, and process. In the Aristotelian tradition, *technē* (referring to art, craft, or skill). represents not only the application of skill but the harmonization of human intention with material realization. In this sense, innovation is not just utilitarian or technical; it is ontological. It involves not only producing what did not previously exist, but also reshaping the conditions of existence through emergent artifacts, systems, or ways of life. Innovativeness entails creativity and experimentation that result in new products, new services, or improved technological processes (Dess and Lumpkin, 2005). This makes innovation arguably the most essential component of entrepreneurship, as entrepreneurs cannot do without it.

Innovations continually evolve from initial drafts into refined solutions that address specific needs. This cycle of ideation, development, and implementation not only creates value but also adapts to environmental shifts, ensuring that the final output is both relevant and sustainable (Schumpeter, 1942). This process involves both analytical

thinking and intuitive leaps, it is rarely linear. What distinguishes innovators is not only the originality of their ideas but their resilience and commitment to the long journey from thought to impact. As observed by Desouza, Dombrowski, Awazu, Baloh, Papagari, Kim, and Jha, (2007) in May I. Nwoye, Inegbedion, J.O., Adewale A., Nura M., & Henry Ude, et al., identify the following five essential phases of successful innovation:

1. Idea Generation and Mobilization

This phase is the starting point for new ideas. Successful idea generation should be stimulated by the pressure to compete and by the freedom to explore. Once a new idea is generated, it is conveyed to the mobilization phase, wherein the idea travels to a different physical or logical location. Because most inventors are not also marketers, a new idea often needs someone other than its originator to move it along. This phase is crucially important to the progression of a new idea, and omitting it can delay or even sabotage the innovation process (Desouza et al., 2007).

2. Advocacy and Screening

According to the authors, this phase is the period for weighing an idea's costs and benefits. Advocacy and screening have to take place simultaneously to weed out ideas that lack potential without allowing stakeholders to reject ideas impulsively solely based on their novelty. Firms will have more success when the evaluation process is transparent and standardized, because employees feel more comfortable contributing when they can anticipate how their ideas will be judged.

3. Experimentation

The experimentation phase assesses the sustainability of ideas for a particular firm at a particular time and in a particular environment. In this phase, it is essential to determine who the customer will be and what he or she will use the innovation for. With that in mind, the firm might discover that although someone has a great idea, it is ahead of its time or just not right for a particular market. However, it is important not to interpret these kinds of discoveries as failures – they could be the catalysts of new and better ideas (Desouza et al., 2007).

4. Commercialization

In this phase, the firm should look to its customers to verify that innovation actually solves their problems and then should analyse the costs and benefits of rolling out the innovation. According to Desouza et al (2007), an invention is only considered an innovation once it has been commercialized. Therefore, the commercialization phase is

a significant one, similar to advocacy, in that it takes the right people to progress the idea to the next developmental phase.

5. Diffusion and Implementation

According to the authors, diffusion is the process of gaining final, company-wide acceptance of an innovation. Implementation is the process of setting up the structures, maintenance, and resources needed to produce it. According to Loewe and Dominiquini (2006), good innovation processes share the following characteristics: Allow divergence and exploration at the front end. This helps ensure that the new ideas generated are not simply a repeat of what has been done before. Synthesize individual ideas into bigger platforms before selecting individual ideas to develop further. This enables the company to avoid "gambling the farm" on one idea without first learning about the larger opportunities at hand.

Creativity, Innovation, and Entrepreneurship: A Driving Force for Change

The terms creativity and innovation have become increasingly intertwined, covering the subtle yet important distinctions between the two concepts. Despite their interconnectedness, creativity and innovation are not synonymous, with creativity focusing on idea generation and innovation emphasizing the implementation and commercialization of those ideas. According to the "Innovation Process Model", creativity acts as the starting point, where ideas are born, but innovation is the process that turns these ideas into real-world applications, and entrepreneurship provides the channel for these applications to reach the marketplace (Utterback, 1994).

Creativity is the ability to bring something new into existence. This emphasizes the "ability," not the "activity, of bringing something new into existence. A person may, therefore, conceive of something new and envision how it will be useful, but not necessarily take the necessary action to make it a reality. Innovation, on the other hand, is the process of doing new things. It is the conversion of creative ideas into a marketplace reality that people are ready to buy. This distinction is significant to note. Ideas have little value until they are converted into new products, services, or processes. In addition, every tangible reality on earth is a product of an idea in a man's mind before they are converted into a feasible reality. Thus, we can say that the metaphysical aspect of reality to which ideas belong is an essential aspect of entrepreneurship. Like Kant posited, what we perceive as "reality" is deeply influenced by our cognitive faculties. He argues that we do not passively receive information from the external world; instead, our mind organizes and structures that information. (Kant, 1781)

Therefore, we can argue that innovation is one of the major key drivers of entrepreneurship. In his "Creative Destruction theory," Schumpeter (1942) argued that innovation disrupts existing market structures, replacing old products or methods with new, more efficient ones. Entrepreneurs are seen as agents of this destruction, as they identify opportunities for these innovations and transform them into commercially viable products or services. This constant disruption is what drives economic growth and moves industries forward. And as entrepreneurs seek to identify and capitalize on new opportunities, entrepreneurship, in turn, provides the context and motivation for innovation.

More so, creativity and innovation are two cognitive human activities that significantly shape human experience. They assist in driving progress in every human endeavor, most especially in entrepreneurship. Hence, the basis of creativity and innovation is criticality. Criticality is the ability to speculate, analyze, ponder, or examine a phenomenon with the intent of having a holistic understanding of the phenomenon. With this, we can say that creativity is a metaphysical aspect of reality, as it deals with ideas, while innovation is empirical, as it deals with the conversion of ideas into tangible reality.

One notable example of creative innovation for entrepreneurship is the success of Paystack, a Nigerian fintech company that revolutionized the payment processing industry in Africa. Founded by Shola Akinlade and Ezra Olubi in 2015, Paystack started as a solution to the difficulties faced by Nigerian businesses in accepting online payments. The founders identified a gap in the market for seamless payment systems that could support local businesses in an increasingly digital economy. Their creativity in designing a solution tailored to the specific needs of Nigerian business owners was the key to their success. The company's innovative approach to payment solutions attracted significant investment, and by 2020, Paystack was acquired by Stripe, a global leader in payment processing, for over \$200 million (Stripe, 2020). Paystack's story demonstrates the power of creativity in identifying market gaps and the role of innovation in turning an idea into a globally recognized product. Indeed, innovation and creativity are the cornerstone of entrepreneurship. Thus, they empower trailblazing entrepreneurs to stand out from the crowd by pioneering groundbreaking methods, revolutionary ideas, and game-changing products.

Furthermore, the influence of creativity, innovation, and entrepreneurship on Nigeria's economy is major. These elements are driving economic diversification, creating jobs, and improving living standards. According to the World Bank (2020), the Nigerian economy is highly dependent on oil exports, but the growth of sectors like fintech, agriculture, and manufacturing (driven by creative entrepreneurs) can provide more

sustainable economic opportunities.

Entrepreneurship also plays a crucial role in addressing societal challenges. Nigerian entrepreneurs are tackling issues such as unemployment, poverty, and education through innovative solutions. For example, Bridge International Academies, a low-cost private school chain, provides quality education in underserved communities across Nigeria, using technology to deliver lessons and improve educational outcomes. Their innovative approach to education is not only transforming lives but also contributing to the country's human capital development.

If change is what is needed, especially for the Nigerian, it is very possible and close. All that is needed is an awakening of creative and innovative entrepreneurs. It takes no special skill for anyone can become. Surely, not everyone can make it a habit to take risks, but everyone can birth an idea. Rome cannot be built in a day, but it started with one thought-- the thought to build Rome. And on a broader scale, this amplifies why the discipline of philosophy should be taught to everyone at different educational levels; the constant quest to understand our world pushes us to make new inquiries. This push keeps the mind engaged and in touch with reality, which generates enough ideas. The reason is this: there is still more to know, there is so much more about reality that is yet to be uncovered, and Man's inquisitiveness pushes him to touch and see, and know, and all these raise questions which build ideas. All we have ever needed was always within us after all.

The Ethics of Creativity and Innovation in Entrepreneurship

The interconnection of creativity, innovation, and ethics in entrepreneurship is not simply a theoretical consideration but a practical necessity. At its core, ethical innovation involves the conscientious development and implementation of new ideas, products, or services that align with societal values and respect individual rights. This approach recognizes that while innovation can drive economic growth and improve quality of life, it can also inadvertently cause harm if not carefully managed. For instance, the deployment of artificial intelligence (AI) in various sectors has raised concerns about data privacy, algorithmic bias, and job displacement. Entrepreneurs must, therefore, anticipate potential ethical dilemmas and proactively address them to foster trust and ensure sustainable success.

Transparency is a cornerstone of ethical entrepreneurship. By openly communicating intentions, methodologies, and potential impacts, entrepreneurs build trust with stakeholders and the broader community. Accountability complements transparency

by ensuring that entrepreneurs take responsibility for their actions and decisions. This includes acknowledging mistakes, learning from failures, and implementing corrective measures when necessary. Such practices not only uphold ethical standards but also enhance the credibility and resilience of entrepreneurial ventures. More so, while pursuing innovation, entrepreneurs often draw inspiration from existing ideas and creations. While building upon prior work is a natural part of the creative process, it is essential to respect intellectual property rights. Unauthorized use or replication of another's work reduces the integrity of the entrepreneurial ecosystem and can lead to legal repercussions. Ethical entrepreneurs diligently seek permissions, provide appropriate attributions, and contribute to a culture that values originality and fairness.

Entrepreneurs have a significant influence over societal norms and structures. As such, they bear the responsibility of ensuring that their innovations promote inclusivity and address the needs of diverse populations. This involves engaging with various communities, understanding their unique challenges, and designing solutions that are accessible and equitable. For example, incorporating inclusive design principles can lead to products and services that cater to individuals with disabilities, thereby broadening market reach and fostering social equity. The environmental impact of entrepreneurial activities is also vital. From resource extraction to product disposal, each stage of the innovation lifecycle has ecological implications. Ethical entrepreneurs should prioritize sustainability by adopting eco-friendly practices, minimizing waste, and striving for carbon neutrality. By integrating environmental considerations into their business models, entrepreneurs not only contribute to the preservation of the planet but also appeal to a growing segment of environmentally conscious consumers.

Ultimately, the ethical orientation of an entrepreneurial venture is often a reflection of its leadership. Leaders who model ethical behavior set the tone for organizational culture, influencing how employees approach decision-making and problem-solving. By fostering an environment that encourages ethical reflection, open dialogue, and continuous learning, leaders can cultivate a workforce that is both innovative and morally grounded. This alignment between ethics and innovation increases organizational coherence and long-term viability.

Barriers and Challenges in Creative and Innovative Entrepreneurship

While creativity and innovation are vital to entrepreneurship, they do not always guarantee success. Entrepreneurs face numerous challenges that hinder their ability to fully exploit their creative ideas. Some of the most significant barriers include limited access to funding, unreliable infrastructure, and regulatory challenges. Access to

finance remains one of the biggest obstacles for entrepreneurs. Many businesses struggle to obtain the necessary capital to fund their ventures, particularly in the early stages of development. According to the Nigerian Bureau of Statistics (2020), small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Nigeria represent over 90% of businesses, yet most face difficulties in securing loans due to high-interest rates and a lack of collateral. For some, it is a pure case of corruption or favouritism. This financial challenge stifles innovation, as entrepreneurs may have brilliant ideas but lack the resources to turn them into reality.

Another barrier is unreliable infrastructure. As it is in Nigeria currently, where power supply is notoriously unreliable, entrepreneurs in sectors such as manufacturing and tech often face regular power outages. The lack of consistent electricity, roads, and internet connectivity creates additional costs and delays, hindering the speed at which innovations can be developed and brought to market. Consider the recent hike in mobile subscriptions; this can affect the plans and effectiveness of entrepreneurs who use mobile data and the internet.

Regulatory issues also pose significant challenges. In Nigeria, the regulatory environment can be difficult and unpredictable, with frequent changes in policies and a lack of enforcement of business-friendly laws. This creates uncertainty for entrepreneurs and can delay the commercialization of innovative ideas. More to that, innovation isn't always ethically positive; it's two-sided. While it can solve big problems and improve lives, it can also lead to moral concerns like privacy invasion, job loss, or environmental harm if unchecked. Its impact depends on the values and intentions behind it. So, innovation needs to be guided by ethics to ensure it uplifts rather than undermines humanity. For instance, machine guns are highly creative and innovative ideas, but they cause harm.

Eventually, for creativity, innovation, and entrepreneurship to thrive, strong leadership and a supportive organizational culture are critical. In many successful entrepreneurial ventures, the role of leadership is pivotal in nurturing a culture of creativity and risk-taking. Leaders must encourage employees to think outside the box and explore unconventional ideas. They must also create an environment where failure is seen as a learning opportunity, not a setback.

In Nigeria, we see this in the leadership styles of entrepreneurs like Folorunso Alakija, one of the wealthiest women in Africa. Alakija's success in the oil and fashion industries is a testament to how visionary leadership can drive innovation. Her ability to adapt to changing circumstances, from fashion design to oil exploration, shows the importance of flexibility and adaptability in entrepreneurship. She has also emphasized the value of

empowering others, particularly women, in her leadership style, which has created a ripple effect in Nigerian business culture.

Ultimately, as technology continues to advance, its influence on creativity, innovation, and entrepreneurship will only grow. Emerging technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), blockchain, and the Internet of Things (IoT) are transforming industries and creating new opportunities for entrepreneurs. In Nigeria, the rise of tech hubs such as Andela and TechCabal is a sign that innovation-driven entrepreneurship is becoming more prominent.

AI, for example, is being used to streamline business operations, improve customer experiences, and create new products. Nigerian entrepreneurs are beginning to integrate AI into sectors like healthcare, finance, and logistics, offering solutions that can address local challenges more efficiently. Blockchain technology is also beginning to make an impact, particularly in areas such as supply chain management, finance, and secure transactions. Nigerian fintech companies are leveraging blockchain to provide secure and transparent financial services, which could revolutionize the way money is transferred, stored, and accessed across the country. There is therefore much we can be and become with just the power of a thought, A thought that is made into a reality and implemented.

Conclusion

In conclusion, creativity, innovation, and entrepreneurship are the cornerstones of modern economic and social progress. Creativity fuels ideas, entrepreneurship channels those ideas into ventures, and innovation transforms them into real-world solutions, and together, they constitute a powerful engine for change, development, and human advancement. This is an ample essence of philosophy- a mental activity with the aim to understand ourselves and the world we live in by affecting and being in touch with it.

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Biblical-theological Perspectives on Entrepreneurial Skill Acquisition and Education for African Sustainable Development

Victor Umaru



Executive Summary

This study addresses the pressing issues of poverty, unemployment, and economic inequality in Africa. The problem lies in the limited integration of biblical principles into entrepreneurial education, skill acquisition and development, and economic empowerment initiatives despite the church's significant role in African society. It examines biblical teachings on work, skill development, stewardship, and perspectives on entrepreneurship as empowerment and develops a sustainable development grounded in biblical principles. Through analytical discussion, the findings reveal that the Bible promotes work as a divine calling, skills as gifts for societal development, and entrepreneurship as stewardship of resources. A biblically informed approach to entrepreneurship, creativity, service, and empowerment is a pathway to sustainable economic development in Africa. The study recommends that churches play a more active role in entrepreneurial education by establishing skill development programmes and integrating biblical principles into business training. It also calls for faith and development agencies to promote holistic empowerment.

Keywords: Biblical perspectives, skills development, entrepreneurship, economic empowerment, sustainable development, African society

Introduction

Skills development and entrepreneurship have become indispensable tools in addressing the socio-economic crises that plague many African nations. Despite the continent's rich natural resources and cultural ingenuity, pervasive challenges such as high unemployment, widespread poverty, and income inequality hinder sustainable development. Various efforts, including state-led initiatives, private sector partnerships, and civil society engagements, have sought to encourage entrepreneurship and provide skills training. However, the persistence of structural challenges such as inadequate educational systems, limited access to capital, socio-political instability, and cultural norms that stifle creativity calls for a more holistic intervention. Faith-based

institutions, mainly Christian, hold significant historical and social influence in Africa. They have played crucial roles in providing education, healthcare, and support. Yet, the integration of principles into entrepreneurial development remains underdeveloped. This study addresses the need for biblical entrepreneurship with Africa's socio-economic realities, as well as sustainable and centered economic empowerment.

Biblical teachings provide work, skill acquisition, and entrepreneurial ethics. The creation mandate (Genesis 1:26-28) is the human vocation of stewardship over creation, a call not only to cultivate and manage natural resources but also to human and innovation resources. This stewardship mandate is in numerous passages that stress the virtue of diligence, creativity, and industriousness, such as Proverbs 22:29, which extols the value of skilled labour, the parable of the talents (Matthew 25:14-30), the importance of resource multiplication, risk-taking, and accountability, which are central tenets of entrepreneurship. The Bible also promotes a communal ethic of equity and care, as demonstrated in Acts 2:44-45, where the early church shared resources with no one in need. These principles are God's vision for human flourishing and a blueprint for entrepreneurship to uplift the entirety.

The study constructs a theology for skills development and entrepreneurship, using biblical principles and being attuned to the realities of contemporary African society. It shows how scriptural teachings on work, stewardship, and resourcefulness can be harnessed to address Africa's pressing socio-economic challenges. It also analyses biblical models of economic empowerment, such as the craftsmanship of Bezalel and Oholiab (Exodus 31:1-6) and the entrepreneurial ingenuity of the Proverbs 31 Chapter 31's woman. These models were examined for their relevance to creativity and financial stewardship in African entrepreneurship. The study evaluates the intersection of biblical ethics and global development initiatives such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly in promoting sustainable economic systems that are equitable and just. Finally, this research has practical recommendations for integrating entrepreneurial skill-building and economic empowerment into African church ministries, education, and faith-based programmes. Through this exploration, the study provides a biblically grounded and contextually relevant pathway for sustainable economic transformation in Africa, driven by faith, integrity, and social responsibility.

Sustainable Development, Human Work and Entrepreneurial Skill Acquisition

Sustainable development is a multidimensional concept that seeks to balance economic growth, social equity, and environmental protection. It is defined as the ability to meet present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their

own needs (Brundtland Commission, 1987, 43). This definition is the development perspective, the importance of resource conservation, social justice, and economic progress. Sustainable development is not merely an abstract goal but requires deliberate policy formulation and practical implementation across various sectors. In the context of human work and entrepreneurial skill acquisition, sustainable development becomes an essential paradigm for self-reliance, reducing poverty, and enhancing the economy. This is particularly relevant in Africa, where unemployment, underemployment, and economic instability remain pressing challenges (Sachs, 2015, 98). Without sustainable strategies for employment and entrepreneurship, economic disparities continue to widen, further entrenching cycles of poverty.

The foundation of sustainable development rests on three interconnected pillars: economic sustainability, social sustainability, and environmental sustainability. Economic sustainability means that economic activities generate consistent value and stability through job creation, financial security, and equitable distribution of resources (Todaro & Smith, 2020, 211). This involves industries that promote productivity, innovation, and adaptability to changing economic conditions. To achieve economic inclusion, sustainable economic systems should provide fair wages, encourage entrepreneurship, and invest in human capital development. **On the other hand, social sustainability** prioritizes inclusive growth by reducing inequalities and upholding human rights, particularly in labour practices and business ethics (Sen, 1999, 87). It demands that workers be treated with dignity and respect, have safe working conditions, equal opportunities, and policies that prevent exploitation. **Environmental sustainability is** responsible for resource management, eco-friendly production methods, and the minimization of environmental degradation (Goodland, 1995, 10). About human work and entrepreneurship, sustainable development requires economic models that promote ethical labour practices, environmentally responsible business operations, and financial stability (Jackson, 2017, 145). If these principles are effectively integrated into work and business practices, societies experience holistic development that benefits individuals and future generations.

Human work is fundamental to economic growth, social transformation, and personal fulfilment. From a theological perspective, work is regarded as a divine mandate, as expressed in Genesis 2:15, where God commands humanity to cultivate and care for the earth. This biblical foundation is the sacred nature of labour and humans' responsibility to contribute meaningfully to the world. Beyond the spiritual dimension, work serves as a vehicle for economic empowerment, innovation, and social cohesion (Schumacher, 1973, 56). When labour is structured within sustainable development, individuals are fairly compensated, provided with opportunities for skill enhancement, and integrated into stable, productive economic systems.

Sustainable development goes with the dignity of labour by advocating for fair wages, ethical work conditions, and continuous professional growth. The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) on Decent Work and Economic Growth seeks to promote employment opportunities that offer job security, equitable pay, and career development (United Nations, 2015, 19). Without these provisions, labour markets become exploitative, leading to systemic poverty and economic stagnation. Also, industrialization and innovation (SDG 9) play a crucial role in technological advancements and equipping individuals with the necessary skills to work in job markets (Stiglitz, 2018, 112). This shows that workers remain competitive and adaptable in an increasingly knowledge-driven economy. Another key aspect is Reducing Inequalities (SDG 10), which addresses social and economic disparities in employment and business ownership. Marginalized communities, particularly women, youth, and persons with disabilities, face structural barriers to economic participation. Sustainable labour policies work to dismantle these barriers so that all individuals, regardless of background, can access economic opportunities (Piketty, 2014, 134).

Entrepreneurship is a critical driver of sustainable development, as it is creativity and economic independence. Unlike traditional employment, entrepreneurship enables individuals to take control of their economic future by creating job opportunities for themselves and others (Drucker, 1985, p. 28). This shift from job-seeking to job-creation is essential in economies where formal employment opportunities are limited. Entrepreneurial skill acquisition equips individuals with the knowledge, competencies, and confidence to establish and manage businesses successfully. Such skills include financial literacy, business planning, risk management, and market adaptation strategies (Hisrich, Peters, & Shepherd, 2017, 89). Many aspiring entrepreneurs struggle to sustain their ventures without these competencies, leading to high failure rates in small and medium enterprises (SMEs).

Beyond individual economic empowerment, entrepreneurship promotes innovation and adaptability by encouraging business models that respond to evolving market demands while maintaining sustainability (Porter, 1998, 102). Entrepreneurs who develop unique and competitive products contribute to economic diversification and industrial growth. Also, entrepreneurship reduces poverty by generating employment opportunities and income distribution (Yunus, 2007, 47). When empowered to start businesses, individuals create wealth and provide jobs and services that strengthen local economies. The ripple effect of successful entrepreneurship is increased economic participation, reduced dependence on government aid, and improved community development.

Biblical Teachings on Human Work and Skill Development

Work and skill development in the biblical narrative is humanity's divine vocation to contribute meaningfully to creation. The Bible presents work not as a necessity for survival but as a sacred calling in God's creative design that reflects His character. From the creation mandate in Genesis to the wisdom literature's exaltation of diligence and mastery, Scripture is the spiritual dimension of human labour. As outlined in Genesis 2:15, the creation mandate establishes a foundational theology of work, framing human labour as a divine vocation rather than a burdensome necessity. The text reads: "The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it" (ESV). The use of the Hebrew terms '*avad* (עָבַד, "to work, cultivate") and *shamar* (שָׁמַר, "to keep, guard") has a dual responsibility, productive engagement with creation and its preservation. According to Beale (2011, 75), the garden is a sacred space, and humanity's role within it mirrors the priestly duties of cultivation and protection. Thus, work is an extension of God's creative activity, the divine intention for humanity to sustain and beautify creation with God. The placement of this mandate before the fall (Genesis 3) is crucial in understanding the intrinsic goodness of work. As Ryken (1995, 22) observes, "work was not a result of sin; rather, it was part of the original design for human flourishing". This negates any dualistic thinking that separates spiritual endeavours from economic or manual labour, a dichotomy that has historically hindered vocation (Volf, 2001, 67). Work, in essence, is both a sacred duty and a form of worship, providing humanity with the opportunity for God's creativity and stewardship.

The mandate implies the necessity of skill development and the pursuit of excellence in one's labour. Wright (2004, 98) argues that stewardship necessitates learning and refining skills, as creation is dynamic and requires creative responses. This understanding with the idea of humans as *imago Dei* (image-bearers of God), who embody God's wisdom and creativity through the development of their talents, Hahne (2019, 41) states that skill development is not merely a human endeavour but a divine expectation, as seen in the craftsmanship of Bezalel and Oholiab, who were filled with the Spirit of God for artistic work in Exodus 31:1-5.

Proverbs 22:29 states, "*Do you see a man skillful in his work? He will stand before kings; he will not stand before obscure men*" (ESV). This proverbial wisdom encapsulates a principle: diligence and competence in one's vocation leads to distinction, recognition, and influence. The Hebrew term rendered "skilful" (*mabir*, מְבִיר) denotes not merely talent but developed expertise, achieved through rigorous discipline, intentional learning, and constant refinement of one's craft (Waltke, 2005, p. 349). This emphasis on vocational mastery suggests that work, when performed with excellence, has an inherent value that

transcends material gain and enters the realm of spiritual worship and divine stewardship. Proverbs 22:29 challenges any false dichotomy between spiritual and secular work by saying that all labour glorifies God when executed with diligence and integrity. As Bruce Waltke (2004, 377) asserts, skillfulness in this context is inseparable from the concept of covenantal faithfulness; mastery in one's vocation is an act of obedience to God's creative and redemptive mandates. The wisdom literature of the Old Testament consistently elevates work as a means of participating in divine creativity, whereby human ingenuity is the *imago Dei* (the image of God). Therefore, skill development is not merely a utilitarian endeavour but a spiritual discipline that the worker with God's purposes in the world.

Diligence is more than sustained hard work, it embodies disciplined focus, moral integrity, and resilience in facing challenges. Kidner (1964, 167) describes the transformational nature of diligence, noting that its character cultivates virtues such as patience, perseverance, and humility. Standing "before kings" symbolizes the social mobility and influence that competence brings. However, this recognition is not for personal aggrandizement but for serving the broader and divine order in human affairs (Longman, 2006, 218). In the African context, where educational and economic disparities pose significant challenges to upward mobility, the church has a crucial role in promoting biblical principles of diligence and skill acquisition as pathways to societal transformation. Okoye (2019) argues that African societies need a renewed vocational ethic grounded in integrity and excellence, countering cultures of corruption and mediocrity that impede economic growth and social cohesion (p. 94). Proverbs 22:29, when applied through Christian discipleship programmes, inspires individuals to pursue excellence in various fields, recognizing their work as a service to humanity and God.

In Matthew 25:14-30, a master entrusts three servants with varying amounts of "talents", a significant unit of currency in the ancient world, according to their abilities. Upon his return, the master rewards the two servants who invested and doubled their resources, referring to them as "good and faithful." However, the servant who buried his talent out of fear receives harsh condemnation for failing to steward the master's resources. This narrative explains the relationship between divine gifting, human agency, and accountability in economic empowerment and societal development. First, the parable is that God entrusts all resources, abilities, and opportunities for stewardship. This trust signifies divine ownership of all material and immaterial resources, while humanity is a custodian of those endowments. According to Wright (2010, 274), the parable is a broader biblical principle that God's blessings are not to be hoarded or left dormant but are meant to be invested for the flourishing of both individuals. This understanding of stewardship extends beyond financial resources to

include time, skills, and vocational opportunities.

A critical aspect of this stewardship is the role of risk-taking and innovation. France (2007, 982) argues that the commendation of the two faithful servants lies not merely in their success but in their willingness to take bold and strategic action with what they had been given. Their investments symbolize human participation in creative work and the interdependence between divine sovereignty and human agency. In African contexts, where economic instability and social pressures may deter entrepreneurial risk, this teaching challenges fatalistic mindsets and promotes a theology of innovation. Faithfully using God-given talents necessitates boldness, adaptability, and a readiness to engage with opportunities, even in uncertain circumstances. The parable is a stark warning about the dangers of fear, passivity, and stagnation. The servant who buried his talent represents a mindset that fails to recognize the goodness and generosity of the master. Nolland (2005, 1150) contends that the servant's inaction is in a distorted view of God, which projects harshness and judgment rather than grace and empowerment. This is particularly relevant in cultures where fear of failure, social judgment, or systemic oppression may inhibit initiative and creativity.

Keener (2009, 745) notes that the multiplication of talents in the narrative was intended not only for the master's profit but for the broader economic and social benefit. Churches, therefore, play a pivotal role in cultivating programmes that equip individuals with vocational and entrepreneurial skills grounded in biblical stewardship principles. Another crucial dimension of this teaching is its eschatological emphasis on divine accountability. The master's return and judgment are the biblical principle that all individuals must account for how they manage the resources entrusted to them. Wright (2013, 321) states that biblical stewardship encompasses material success and faithfulness to God's redemptive purposes in the world. This accountability promotes integrity, transparency, and excellence in economic and vocational endeavours.

Biblical Models of Entrepreneurship

The Bible has various models of entrepreneurship that illustrate creativity, diligence, resource management, and adaptability, all of which are essential qualities for economic empowerment and societal development. These models are not confined to financial gain but a holistic vision of work and business as divine callings. Key examples include the entrepreneurial skills of Bezalel and Oholiab, the resourcefulness of the Proverbs Chapter 31's woman, and Apostle Paul's tentmaking ministry, all of which provide value for contemporary engagement in business.

The first example is the narrative of Bezalel and Oholiab in Exodus 31:1-6, which illustrates a foundation for divinely inspired entrepreneurship and craftsmanship. Bezalel is filled with “*the Spirit of God, with wisdom, with understanding, with knowledge, and with all kinds of skills*” (Exodus 31:3, NIV), specifically to construct the Tabernacle. Oholiab is appointed to work alongside him, and together, they lead a group of artisans in creating sacred objects. This account suggests that vocational work, artistic or entrepreneurial, is a secular endeavour and a spiritual calling in divine empowerment. As Wright (2010, 256) argues, the *imago Dei* (image of God) is in human creativity, positioning work and innovation as acts of divine participation. The entrepreneurial skills demonstrated by Bezalel and Oholiab also include leadership, a key principle in modern entrepreneurship. Their partnership and delegation of responsibilities show that successful ventures rely on teamwork and the distribution of tasks according to individual strengths. According to Kessler (2018, 122), effective entrepreneurial leadership involves not just individual brilliance but also the ability to harness the talents of others through mentorship. Also, the work of Bezalel and Oholiab was purpose-driven, aimed at constructing a sacred space for communal worship. This emphasis on mission-oriented entrepreneurship challenges the notion of business as purely profit-driven. Instead, it advocates for businesses with social values, contributing to well-being. Volf (2001, 134) argues the importance of integrating spiritual purpose into vocational work, arguing that faith-infused enterprises are more likely to produce economic value and social transformation.

The second example is the Proverbs Chapter 31's woman, a paradigmatic figure of entrepreneurial excellence and strategic leadership in the Hebrew Scriptures. Her economic activities include real estate investments, textile production, agricultural management, and understanding market dynamics and resource stewardship: “*She considers a field and buys it; out of her earnings, she plants a vineyard*” (Proverbs 31:16, NIV). This portrays several critical entrepreneurial principles that are essential for the contemporary marketplace. One of the most striking aspects of the Proverbs Chapter 31 woman's entrepreneurial acumen is her strategic diversification across multiple industries. Keener (2009, 712) observes that this diversification is a deliberate strategy to stabilize her household's economy in the face of market fluctuations. Modern financial theory shows the value of such diversification in reducing vulnerability to economic shocks. This principle remains highly relevant to contemporary entrepreneurs, particularly in African contexts marked by economic volatility. moreover, her calculated approach to risk-taking with entrepreneurial principles prioritizes foresight and prudence. Unlike reckless speculation, her actions are informed by diligent assessment and informed decision-making. According to Wright (2010, 98), the Proverbs Chapter 31 woman's ability to anticipate market needs and act

decisively exemplifies biblical wisdom in business, one that balances boldness with discernment. In today's entrepreneurial ecosystems, this balance is essential for rapidly shifting economic landscapes.

The Proverbs Chapter 31's woman is not merely a passive participant in economic activities; she actively innovates to maximize opportunities. Her adaptability in leveraging different skill sets demonstrates a forward-thinking approach to entrepreneurship. Osborn (2018, 145) states that her proactive engagement in various sectors mirrors contemporary entrepreneurial best practices: agility and responsiveness to evolving market trends. This adaptability is particularly crucial in modern African economies, where entrepreneurs must constantly adjust to technological advancements and shifting consumer preferences. Her capacity for innovation is evidenced by her ability to create value in previously untapped areas. For instance, her work in textiles, “*she makes linen garments and sells them*” (Proverbs 31:24), suggests technical skill and a keen understanding of supply chains and market demand. This innovative spirit calls for modern entrepreneurial creativity, particularly in the fashion, agriculture, and technology industries. African women should be inspired by their model to pioneer new industries, create sustainable livelihoods, and engage in faith-driven innovation.

Perhaps most notably, in Proverbs Chapter 31, a woman's entrepreneurship is guided by an ethic of care and social responsibility. Her economic activities are not conducted in isolation; they are directed toward the holistic flourishing of her household and the wider. Volf (2001, 134) argues that integrating social considerations into business practices represents a theology for redemptive work that transforms economic activities into acts of service and justice. This dimension of social responsibility is particularly relevant to African women entrepreneurs today. Obengo (2022, 89) contends that entrepreneurship, according to biblical principles, empowers women to become agents of social change, promoting equity, sustainability, and economic justice. Churches and faith-based organizations are crucial in nurturing such initiatives through mentorship programmes that promote business ethics, engagement, and spiritual resilience.

The third example is Apostle Paul's tent-making ministry, described in Acts 18:1-3, which is a bi-vocational entrepreneurship model on how vocational work complements and sustains ministry endeavours. Paul, a trained tentmaker by trade, leveraged his skills to provide financial self-sufficiency while fulfilling his apostolic mission. This dual approach alleviated financial dependency and embodied a work of integrity, diligence, and service. Paul's refusal to become a financial burden on the churches was his commitment to self-sufficiency and business conduct. In 2 Thessalonians 3:7-9, Paul

presents his work ethic as a moral and spiritual example: *“For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example. We were not idle when we were with you, nor did we eat anyone's food without paying for it”* (NIV). Paul's insistence on earning him keep the credibility of his ministry demonstrated the inherent dignity of labour. France (2007, 951) asserts that Paul's commitment to financial independence meant his ministry was free from accusations of financial exploitation, a common criticism of religious leaders in his time. This principle remains highly relevant in African contexts, where financial mismanagement and dependency undermine the church's credibility. Paul's tent-making was not simply a means of livelihood but a strategic tool for advancing the gospel. His ability to integrate business with ministry enabled him to establish relationships with diverse social groups, opening new avenues for evangelism and discipleship. As Paul moved from city to city, his work as a tentmaker allowed him to embed himself within the local community without relying solely on external support. This bi-vocational approach created opportunities for gospel witness in both public and private spheres. France (2007, 951) discusses Paul's entrepreneurial model as a paradigm for mission-driven businesses, where commercial activities are intentional with spiritual goals. For African entrepreneurs and ministers, this integration of faith and business facilitates holistic ministry that addresses spiritual and material needs. Social enterprises, for instance, become platforms for transformation, providing employment and spiritual mentorship while advancing kingdom values.

Paul's adaptability and resourcefulness made his ministry remain financially stable in various circumstances. He demonstrated resilience in the face of economic challenges, choosing to work with his hands when necessary to avoid being a financial burden (1 Corinthians 9:12). This sustainability mindset, prioritizing viability over gains, provides a valuable lesson for entrepreneurs seeking to build enduring businesses. Osborn (2018, 243) states that sustainable business practices require adaptability, prudent financial management, and a commitment to value creation. Paul's model exemplifies these qualities, as he balanced his ministry responsibilities with the economic realities of his time in African contexts, where many pastors and missionaries face financial instability, embracing bi-vocational ministry, self-reliance, and economic resilience.

Paul's tentmaking model is a pragmatic solution for African pastors and church leaders, where economic challenges and limited resources hinder full-time ministry. Churches are vital in promoting entrepreneurial initiatives that equip ministers with vocational skills and financial literacy. Vocational ministry models help bridge the gap between the church and engagement with local economies. When church leaders actively participate in the marketplace, they model economic stewardship and create relational touchpoints for evangelism and social impact. This approach transforms churches into hubs of economic empowerment, nurturing resilience and self-sufficiency.

Entrepreneurship and Economic Empowerment

According to biblical principles, entrepreneurship is a transformative model for economic empowerment. Scripture presents work as both a divine calling and a practical means of overcoming poverty, as well as business practices and communal economic responsibility. The Apostle Paul's admonition in 2 Thessalonians 3:10, "If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat", provides an understanding of work and social dimensions. At its core, this directive is about the sacred nature of human labour and its role in promoting dignity, self-sufficiency, and economic stability. Paul's teaching on work in God's creative mandate in Genesis 1:28 calls humanity to "fill the earth and subdue it." This divine charge imbues work with purpose and significance, positioning it as a fundamental aspect of human flourishing and societal development.

Paul's exhortation is not punitive but corrective, addressing the specific challenges of idleness within the Thessalonian. Contextually, some members had ceased working due to eschatological misunderstandings, believing that the imminent return of Christ negated the need for daily labour. According to Marshall (2011, 328), Paul's response is the necessity of productive work as a means of self-reliance and avoiding dependency. He teaches work's moral and spiritual dimensions, framing it as a commitment to God. In Paul's view, work carries a moral imperative beyond mere economic survival. It demonstrates integrity and responsibility while cultivating virtues such as diligence, perseverance, and stewardship (Colossians 3:23-24). Paul warns against the dangers of idleness, which leads to negative social behaviours such as gossip and exploitation of others (1 Timothy 5:13). Thus, his theology of work is communal, both personal well-being and collective harmony within the body of Christ.

Biblical entrepreneurship is inherently grounded in principles of God's justice, holiness, and compassion. These principles are encapsulated in passages like Proverbs 11:1: "*The LORD detests dishonest scales, but accurate weights find favour with him.*" This verse shows the significance of fairness and transparency in all economic dealings and the moral responsibility of entrepreneurs to conduct business with honesty and integrity. In a biblical context, entrepreneurship is not solely about profit but about serving others and contributing to the common good. Business practices are, therefore, integral to God's character in the marketplace. Integrity and honesty are essential virtues for entrepreneurs, as business operations are conducted transparently and equitably. As Lloyd-Jones (2014, 212) points out, businesses built on foundations are more likely to trust, which is critical for establishing healthy economic relationships. Trust enhances stakeholder cooperation, customers, employees, and suppliers, thereby promoting long-term sustainability.

In contrast, dishonest practices erode social bonds and undermine economic stability, leading to exploitation and social discontent. Compassion is another key biblical value that informs business practices. Throughout Scripture, God's concern for the poor, marginalized, and vulnerable is evident (Isaiah 1:17; James 1:27). Entrepreneurs are called to this compassion by fair wages, humane working conditions, and equitable treatment of all employees. Entrepreneurship also extends beyond internal operations to social responsibility initiatives that uplift. Businesses that operate with compassion and justice become agents of social transformation, addressing systemic inequalities and inclusive economic development.

In African contexts, corruption, exploitation, and economic inequality are significant barriers to progress. These challenges stem from practices such as bribery, embezzlement, and nepotism. Entrepreneurs play a transformative role by integrating biblical values into business operations, thereby modelling a countercultural approach to commerce. Entrepreneurship, according to biblical values, also promotes social justice. Micah 6:8 encapsulates this mandate: *“He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God.”* Acting justly in business means fairness in pricing, preventing exploitation of vulnerable populations, and advocating for equitable economic opportunities. When entrepreneurs embody these values, they become stewards of God's resources and agents of His justice.

The economic practices of the early Christians, as described in Acts 2:44-45, are a model of communal economic empowerment. The passage that *“all the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need.”* This radical approach to resource-sharing was not merely an act of charity but a declaration of economic equality, mutual care, and the sacredness of communal well-being. Wright (2010, 276) states that the early church's communal economic practices represent a countercultural form of social justice, where wealth was redistributed to meet the needs of the most vulnerable. This model sought to eliminate economic disparities by mobilizing resources collectively, demonstrating that wealth is not a private possession but a tool for promoting the common good. The Acts 2 model also challenges contemporary capitalist notions of wealth accumulation by promoting a theology of stewardship rather than ownership. This perspective shifts the focus from personal wealth accumulation to shared prosperity, where every member is uplifted. Such a mindset of dignity and equity means that all individuals, regardless of their socio-economic status, have access to basic needs and opportunities for advancement. The early church's communal ethos provided an opportunity to address systemic poverty and inequality in modern contexts. Adeyemo (2006, 512) states that the early Christian approach to resource-sharing was not coercion but voluntary generosity and

sacrificial love. Social enterprises and charitable funds should also be established to support widows, orphans, and the unemployed, creating a safety net for those in need. Another critical aspect of the Acts 2 model is its emphasis on holistic empowerment—economic, spiritual, and social. The early church's communal practices were not limited to financial assistance but also relational bonds and spiritual support.

Application to African Church Contexts

Biblical entrepreneurship principles within African church contexts: a holistic approach to economic empowerment and sustainable development. In regions where unemployment and poverty are persistent challenges, churches are catalysts for economic transformation through training, job creation, and integration of entrepreneurship into education.

Equipping Members with Entrepreneurial Skills

Equipping church members with entrepreneurial skills in biblical stewardship and integrity principles is a critical tool for economic empowerment. Biblical teachings emphasize the importance of hard work and resource management, as seen in Proverbs 22:29, which is the diligence that leads to success, and Matthew 25:14-30, which encourages the faithful use of talents for growth. As social and spiritual hubs, churches are uniquely positioned to promote entrepreneurship that honours God during economic self-sufficiency. Entrepreneurial empowerment helps reduce economic vulnerability and promotes self-sufficiency, particularly in African contexts where unemployment and poverty are prevalent. Kato (2004, 67) argues that empowering congregants with entrepreneurial skills reduces their dependence on external support, allowing them to focus on spiritual and communal growth. Churches implement financial literacy workshops covering essential topics such as budgeting, saving, investing, and managing debt, which are crucial for business sustainability in economically challenged environments. Adeyemo (2017, 142) states that such workshops equip individuals with the tools to make informed financial decisions and economic resilience. Entrepreneurial initiatives should prioritize business practices grounded in biblical values such as honesty, fairness, and integrity (Proverbs 11:1). Lloyd-Jones (2014, 212) asserts that businesses with these values tend to enjoy greater trust, credibility, and long-term sustainability. Entrepreneurship is vital for economic progress, particularly in contexts where systemic corruption remains a significant obstacle. Special attention should be given to equipping women with entrepreneurial skills, as women face unique challenges in accessing economic opportunities in African

societies. Dube (2018, 58) states that women play critical roles in many African economies but are excluded from formal economic participation due to cultural and structural barriers.

Technological literacy is essential for business growth and sustainability in today's digital economy. Adeyemi (2020, 123) argues that online marketing, social media management, and e-commerce are critical tools for expanding market reach and enhancing business visibility. Churches provide training on leveraging digital tools for business operations, equipping members to thrive in modern, technology-driven markets. These skills are particularly relevant in Africa, where mobile technology and internet usage are rapidly expanding, creating new opportunities for small businesses and entrepreneurs.

Church-Led Initiatives for Job Creation and Skills Training

Churches in Africa have a unique opportunity to address the challenges of unemployment and poverty through initiatives focused on job creation and vocational training. These efforts are integral to a holistic ministry that addresses spiritual and material needs, embodying the church's human dignity and development mission. Oduyoye (2015, 131) states that job creation should be viewed as an essential aspect of the church's mission to meet the holistic needs of its members, especially the marginalized and economically disadvantaged. With the biblical mandate found in Isaiah 58:6-7, this approach calls believers to “lose the chains of injustice” and “share your food with the hungry.” Churches prioritizing job creation provide economic opportunities and help individuals with dignity and self-worth. The early Christians described Acts 4:32-35 as a biblical model of communal support and resource-sharing. Job creation is not merely an economic activity but also an expression of love, service, and justice within the body of Christ.

Vocational training centres established by churches play a transformative role in equipping members with practical, market-relevant skills. These centres train in agriculture, crafts, construction, technology, and other industries vital to local economies. Adeyemo (2017, 156) argues that skill development is a critical component of poverty alleviation, as it empowers individuals to become economically self-sufficient and less dependent on external aid. In addition to technical skills, these centres incorporate training in financial literacy, business ethics, and leadership development. Such holistic training allows participants to gain the necessary competencies for employment and develop character and values in biblical principles.

Microfinance programmes and cooperatives are effective for entrepreneurship and financial inclusion, especially in rural and underserved areas. Access to credit is a

significant barrier to economic empowerment in many African regions, as traditional financial institutions exclude the poor and marginalized. Church-led microfinance initiatives provide small loans with low interest rates, enabling members to start or expand small businesses. Cooperatives, in particular, promote collective ownership and shared responsibility with the biblical stewardship principles. Such models describe the interdependence and mutual support described in Galatians 6:2, “Carry each other's burdens, and in this way, you will fulfil the law of Christ.” Churches that establish cooperatives have a sense of solidarity and shared purpose that strengthens economic resilience and social cohesion. Partnerships are essential for scaling church-led job creation initiatives. Churches partner with local businesses, government agencies, educational institutions, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to expand their reach and impact. Kato (2004, 75) states that partnerships provide access to additional resources, technical expertise, and funding, which are crucial for sustainable development. For example, partnerships with vocational training institutes enhance the quality of training programmes, while government agencies facilitate access to grants, subsidies, and employment services.

In the context of the digital economy, technology plays a crucial role in expanding job opportunities and innovation. Adeyemi (2020, 134) argues that equipping church members with digital skills, such as coding, digital marketing, and e-commerce, helps them access high-demand jobs and entrepreneurial opportunities. Churches that invest in digital training centres and online learning platforms bridge the digital divide and empower members to participate in the global economy. Technology also enables innovative business models, such as online marketplaces and social media-based enterprises, which provide new income streams and reduce dependence on local economic conditions. Churches cultivate a culture of entrepreneurship by celebrating creativity, innovation, and risk-taking within their congregations. This culture is through regular sermons and teachings of the biblical principles of diligence, stewardship, and perseverance (Proverbs 10:4; Ecclesiastes 9:10). Entrepreneurship is a means of economic empowerment and a vehicle for advancing the Kingdom of God. Churches that nurture entrepreneurial talent contribute to spiritual and economic transformation.

Integrating Entrepreneurship into Theological Education

Integrating entrepreneurship into education, especially education, is a transformative approach to ministry preparation and broader empowerment. Education incorporating entrepreneurial principles helps future church leaders and congregants develop sustainable livelihoods and enhance ministry effectiveness. This integration means ministers are equipped for spiritual leadership and addressing their material

challenges. African institutions expand their curricula to include business ethics, financial management, social entrepreneurship, and economic development courses. Adeyemo (2017, 94) states that training ministers in entrepreneurial leadership equips them to address spiritual and material poverty, creating sustainable and relevant ministries to their social contexts. Training in financial literacy, resource management, and leadership development is essential for the modern church. One biblical model for entrepreneurial ministry is Paul's tentmaking example in Acts 18:1-3. Bivocational models are especially relevant in economically challenged contexts, where church leaders may need supplemental income to sustain their families and ministries. This model also promotes integrity, independence from external funding, and the ability to focus on mission-driven objectives rather than financial survival.

Integrating entrepreneurship into general education also plays a vital role in empowering congregants with life skills that promote economic resilience. Schools and seminaries establish entrepreneurial programmes that equip students with the knowledge and tools to start small businesses or engage in social enterprises. These programmes include workshops on identifying market opportunities, developing business plans, and managing finances. Adeyemi (2020, 78) asserts that entrepreneurship education, creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills are vital for economic challenges in African contexts. Entrepreneurship education should focus on social responsibility and business practices. Entrepreneurs must operate with integrity and fairness, embodying biblical stewardship principles, honesty, and service. Courses on business ethics help future church leaders and entrepreneurs avoid exploitative practices and promote justice and equity within their (Proverbs 11:1).

Vocational training programmes within educational institutions provide practical skill development alongside traditional academic studies. For example, technical training in agriculture, carpentry, tailoring, or digital marketing provides students with income-generating skills that enhance their financial independence. Equipping students with spiritual and technical competencies creates holistic leaders capable of transforming them through ministry and entrepreneurship. These vocational programmes also act as incubators for innovation, where students test business ideas and on-driven solutions to social problems. Entrepreneurial success stories should be shared as case studies to inspire students and to highlight the value of integrating faith and entrepreneurship.

Partnerships with businesses, government agencies, and financial institutions enhance entrepreneurship education by providing access to resources, mentorship, and funding opportunities. Initiatives include business competitions and internships that expose students to real-world entrepreneurial environments. Kato (2004, 89) emphasized the importance of mentorship in developing entrepreneurial leaders who are both

competent and compassionate, as mentorship provides practical guidance and spiritual accountability. Networking opportunities with successful Christian entrepreneurs also help students build relationships and gain insight into the challenges and opportunities of running businesses with a kingdom-minded approach. These networks facilitate innovation and encourage collaboration across different sectors of society.

Integrating entrepreneurship into education should also include the role of work, wealth, and stewardship in the life of faith. Students should be encouraged to follow biblical teachings on poverty, generosity, economic justice, and the redemptive value of business and entrepreneurship. Passages such as Matthew 25:14-30 (the Parable of the Talents) should be studied to show the importance of using one's gifts and resources wisely for the glory of God and the benefit of others. Such helps future church leaders develop a balanced perspective on wealth and prosperity, avoiding both the excesses of the prosperity gospel and the limitations of poverty-driven mindsets. This balanced approach empowers leaders to promote economic empowerment in ways that are in biblical truth and with God's purposes for human flourishing. Beyond institutions, entrepreneurship education can be integrated into general education systems at the primary, secondary, and tertiary levels. School entrepreneurship clubs, business incubators, and hands-on projects that encourage students to apply entrepreneurial principles in real-world contexts. National education policies also prioritize entrepreneurship as a core competency that students graduate with the skills needed to thrive in dynamic and competitive economies.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study has revealed the transformative role of entrepreneurship as a tool for holistic development within African church contexts. The church's role extends beyond spiritual edification to economic empowerment, social upliftment, and development. Church-led job creation and vocational training initiatives have been critical to addressing unemployment and promoting social justice in African societies. Integrating entrepreneurship into general education is pivotal in producing spiritually and economically empowered leaders to lead sustainable, mission-driven ministries. These initiatives take a holistic approach that addresses spiritual and material needs, helping them with contemporary economic challenges while remaining faithful to biblical teachings.

Churches have a unique opportunity to be centers for entrepreneurship and empowerment. First, they should establish regular workshops and seminars on entrepreneurial skills, including financial literacy, business ethics, and market strategies.

Churches should connect aspiring entrepreneurs with experienced Christian business leaders who provide practical guidance and innovation, and help build a culture of accountability and resilience. Job creation initiatives are another critical area where churches make a difference. They establish cooperatives, microfinance programmes, and social enterprises that offer employment while promoting social justice and fair wages. These enterprises are designed to biblical values of fairness and compassion while providing sustainable income sources. Moreover, stewardship, wealth, and poverty should be key to church teachings.

Entrepreneurs in the church should embody Christian values in their business practices. Business operations in honesty, integrity, and fairness will foster trust and transparency, essential for long-term success. Social entrepreneurship should be encouraged, especially in African contexts where businesses address social challenges such as poverty, inequality, and environmental degradation. Continuous learning is also essential for entrepreneurs. Staying informed about market trends, innovations, and best practices helps businesses remain competitive and adaptable. Entrepreneurs should also seek resources that biblical values in business management, their ventures, and their faith commitments in principle and practice. Educational reforms are a necessary first step. Entrepreneurship education should be incorporated into national curricula to promote creativity, innovation, and self-reliance from an early age. Vocational training centres should also be supported to provide specialized skill sets for young people and entrepreneurs. Partnerships between government agencies, churches, and businesses should be promoted to amplify the impact of job creation and vocational training initiatives. These provide members of the society with a broader range of resources and opportunities, particularly those in underprivileged or rural areas. Churches that integrate economic empowerment into their missions provide a holistic understanding of God's purposes for humanity, encompassing spiritual renewal and material well-being. Biblical principles of stewardship, generosity, and social justice guide entrepreneurship, helping people thrive without compromising their faith commitments. When churches promote economic empowerment, they fulfil their biblical mandate to care for the poor, seek justice, and uphold human dignity.

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Musicpreneurship: The Intersection of African Gospel Music and Entrepreneurship

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Executive Summary

African music, deeply woven into the socio-cultural fabric of the continent, serves as a powerful medium for expression, identity, and economic growth. Traditional African music, passed down orally and aurally through generations, plays a vital role in all domains of life. The evolution of African gospel music has expanded the scope of musical expression, merging spiritual themes with contemporary sounds to engage wider audiences. This paper, using the multi-dimensional approach, explores the intersection between African gospel music and entrepreneurship. Gospel music, once confined to religious settings, has become a multi-billion-dollar industry. However, despite its economic potential, findings reveal that gospel musicpreneurship faces numerous challenges, including a lack of creativity, insufficient funding, limited opportunities, poor specialization, adaptability to trends, a saturated market, quality control issues, and complexities surrounding contracts, royalties, and intellectual property rights. This paper explores these challenges through a survey conducted among upcoming gospel music entrepreneurs in Jos, Nigeria, using interviews as a preferred method. The study identifies solutions like self-reinvention, financial support from churches and individuals, use of church platforms, specialization, adaptability to trends, leveraging digital media, and maintaining quality standards. Additionally, understanding the legal framework governing contracts and royalties is important for protecting the intellectual property of artists. By way of recommendation, there is a need for a more structured and supportive framework for gospel Musicpreneurs. Secondly, addressing these challenges and implementing strategic solutions, African Gospel musicpreneurship can continue to thrive as both a spiritual force and a viable entrepreneurial industry, fostering economic empowerment and creative expression.

Keywords: Vivacious, Intersectionality, Entrepreneurship, African Music, African Gospel Music, Musicpreneurs, Musicpreneurship.

Introduction

African gospel music reverberates within homes, church buildings, schools, offices, public places, and across borders, evoking emotions and inspiring unity; serving as a potent catalyst for religious experience and entrepreneurship. The intersectionality of African gospel music and entrepreneurship reveals a revitalizing landscape where spirituality and creativity encounter commerce, creating opportunities for novelty and economic growth both locally and globally. African gospel music entrepreneurs harness technology to amplify their reach, particularly the social media platforms like TikTok, X, Spotify, Audiomack, and YouTube, among many others. These entrepreneurial ventures promote culture, community engagement, and evangelism. This intersection is a testimony to the resilience, creativity, and ingenuity of African gospel musicians.

In examining this vivacious interplay, this paper uncovers how music not only captures the essence of life but also empowers individual artists and groups to create new paths in a dynamic global economy. This paper uses a multi-dimensional approach in analyzing variables; this provides the opportunity for using many approaches to analyze data, as aptly put by Danfulani (1999), “A masquerade is not watched from one spot”. Gospel music, once confined to religious settings, has become a multi-billion-dollar industry. This paper explores challenges and solutions around music entrepreneurs; data is gathered through unstructured interviews conducted among upcoming gospel music entrepreneurs in Jos Metropolis; people who are gospel music artists, gospel music producers, and or gospel video producers, and they must have recorded or produced at least one music album.

Music and African Culture

Music is the heartbeat of the universe, a melodic breeze that stirs the spirit and paints the silence with the sound of joy and sorrow; William Shakespeare describes it as the food of love. The traditional music of Africa, given the vastness of the continent, is historically ancient, rich, and diverse, with different regions and nations of Africa having many distinct musical traditions (Janvier, 2007). Janvier (2007) considers Africa as a musically rich continent that has penetrated all sections of society. Few continents have such a great appreciation for music as the African continent. Music, singing, and dancing reach deep into the innermost parts of the African people.

Traditional music in most of the continent is passed down orally. Different types of songs are sung during religious activities for different purposes, ranging from calling

the attention of people, signifying a change in activity, to signifying the end of an event or even the worship itself, to establishing communication with the subject or object of worship. At other times, it invokes the deity into the worship atmosphere, who takes control of the sequence in the procedure of worship, blesses, and possibly facilitates the possession of the worshipper (Tongs, 2017). Events in the life of an individual, such as birth, puberty, marriage, and death, are marked with particular types of music (Aning, 1973). Music is life in Africa; every facet of the life of an African, starting from birth to internment, is covered musically, and there are inherent values in all the music performed at each of the stages.

Traditional music in Nigerian society embraces all aspects of life such that every stage of one's life, from childhood to adulthood usually involves one type of music or another, whose messages often point to social codes, norms and values related to the function of validating social institutions and religious rites (Keke & Obiekwe, 2012). This phenomenon is reflected in both foreign and indigenous religions. Onwochei (2007) supports this view when he says that music has been part of religious services and ceremonies in all continents for centuries, and there is hardly any religion that excludes all forms of music in its religious worship. Music has always been an important cultural and social factor throughout human history, with a very remarkable, continuous connection that has helped in instilling values in people.

The idea of an African without music is unthinkable (Ewens 1991). In trying to link this relationship between music and culture, Akpan (2012) identifies music and culture as having a primordial relationship and bond that has been developing and continues to develop to serve as a unique premise for education and cultural expressions, which is rarely seen in Western culture. It is indeed more factual than farcical that wherever there is musical sound, there is the African. Music accompanies the African from the womb to the tomb (Onwuegbuna, 2012). From traditional rhythms to contemporary genres, music plays a dynamic role in social cohesion and cultural identity. As Africa develops economically, the music industry emerges as a momentous sector contributing to entrepreneurship among other things.

Concept of African Music

Scholars differ on what African music is. While some argue that African music is any music by an African either at home or in diaspora (Timothy 2020), others hold that African music is any music written (composed) on the continent either by an African or by a non-African (Austin, 2011). In addition, Akpabot (1977) opines that what distinguishes African music more than anything from other music is its use in the social

and ceremonial life of the people. Music is used in the everyday life of Africans in recreation, festivals, work, religious worship, leisure, and many other activities; and it thus becomes a cultural activity that reveals a group of people organizing and involving themselves with their communal relationships. The most important thing about any type of African music is that it has the beauty of form and is intended to communicate some emotion (Nettle, 1956).

Aning (1973) classifies a variety of African Music under two major categories. The first category is the Traditional African music that he sees as the musical heritage of contemporary Africa. The second category is what he terms Contemporary, Popular, or Modern African Music. According to Onwuegbuna (2015), African popular music today refers to the corpus of sounds, songs, and dance music crafted by both African professional and non-professional musicians at home and diaspora. These compositions are in response to the political, economic, spiritual, and social needs of the burgeoning modernity that started in the late nineteenth century and is still in being. Contemporary and Popular African music are used interchangeably here. Both represent the same thing, except that Popular music comes with a broader definition.

Concept of Entrepreneurship

The word 'entrepreneur' has become popular in daily usage in relation to economics. It originated from “a French word, *entreprendre*, where an entrepreneur was an individual commissioned to undertake a particular project”; the central idea rests on the *entreprendre* (entrepreneur) undertaking a project or task with the sole aim of achieving specific goals. The activity of the entrepreneur is what is referred to as entrepreneurship (Bantie, Chane, Mohammed, & Birhanu, 2019). Entrepreneurship brings about the existence of new commodities, techniques, and goods, propelling progress forward and rendering the old outdated. This leads to the extinction of old industries and the birth of new ones. These inventions have played significant roles in producing cheaper and better products for daily human use (Robert et al, 2007).

Indira, Raju, & Jagannadha, (2017) define entrepreneurship as “the process of creating something different with value by devoting the necessary time and effort, assuming the accompanying financial, psychic, social risks and receiving the resulting rewards of monetary and personal and satisfaction and independence”; this is because one gets to work for him/ herself and is a creator of wealth. A general idea behind entrepreneurship is the fact that it visualizes and realizes new ideas by talented people who can bring their vision to fruition through their ability to harness information and resources around them.

Kalu, Nahonotu, & Onwerekwe (2020) see entrepreneurship as the ability of an individual or group to take a bold and confident decision to embark on a business venture, being ready to bear the risk outcome in either profit or loss. According to Bantie et al. (2019), entrepreneurship is defined as “the process of identifying opportunities in the marketplace, arranging the resources required to pursue these opportunities, and investing the resources to exploit the opportunities for long-term gains”. They further summarize into five points the process of entrepreneurship. These are: the ability to perceive an opportunity, the ability to commercialize the perceived opportunity, i.e., innovation, the ability to pursue it on a sustainable basis, the ability to pursue it through systematic means, and the acceptance of risk or failure. Below is the beautiful definition that captures the essence of entrepreneurship:

Entrepreneurship is generally viewed as a process of creating something new. Doing this involves a lot of time and effort devoted to ensuring the task at hand, and the resultant effects include monetary and personal satisfaction as well as independence. Entrepreneurship involves a creation process, conscious devotion of time and effort, it involves risk and has some rewards. (Ojeifo 2012:79)

Concept of African Gospel Music

Indigenous African church music was created in an attempt to make the music used in Christian worship more relevant to worshippers by highlighting the inherent values and virtues of African society. Church music was so important that it became the foundation upon which general popular music in Nigeria stands and thrives (Euba 1976). The Anglican church and other mission schools became the training grounds for church musicians. Early church composers include Ekundayo Phillips, the Reverend Canon J. J. Kuti, the Reverend T. A. Olude, Akin George, Emmanuel Sowande, Nelson Okoli, and Ikoli Harcourt-Whyte. The composition of these musicians gave birth to the creative expression of written music in Nigeria (Bode & Sowande, 1998). Nigerian gospel music emerged in the 1970s as a distinctive genre when choral groups moved their performance from liturgical settings in churches into the public domain (Effiong 2022).

Many musicians have made their presence known in the Nigerian gospel music scene; these musicians come from different genres of music. Some have syncretized backgrounds, while others are originals, with gospel music as their only base. According to Nobelie (n.d), the most visited Christian media website, “the majority of our secular artists began their musical career in the choir. Some went into secular music because

people like listening to it, while others went in for the money”. A few of the gospel artists that shifted base from secular to gospel music include Chidinma Ekile, a pastor's daughter who entered the quest for fame in 2010. She won the third season of MTN Project Fame, a West African Singing competition, from there she entered the Nigerian music industry. She became a force to reckon with after the release of the songs titled “*Jankoliko*”, “*Emini Bola*”, and “*Kedike*”. Chidinma left the secular for the gospel musical scene in 2021 when she asked her followers to call her 'Mummy G.O' or 'Endtime Soldier', stating that the old Chidinma has turned a new leaf after being called by God. Under this new rebrand, she dropped her first official gospel song titled “*Jehovah Overdo*” (Nobelie n.d.). Nathaniel Bassey used to sing in Church, later he joined a jazz band, “*Spectrum 4*”. He combined both performances in secular and church music.

Everything changed for Nathaniel Bassey when he was asked to write a song on the day Stella Obasanjo was set to worship and pray at his church; that was the turning point in his life. After hearing the composition played, he realized that this was what he should be doing with his life. (Nobelie n.d.)

Another artist worthy of mention in this category is Mercy Chinwo, who participated and won in the 2021 edition of Nigerian Idols; she was known as Mecindo by her admirers. She did not go on to record any secular singles but did star in a movie. Later in the year, she released gospel singles like “*Excess Love*”, “*Akadimelu*”, and “*Obinasom*”. A few others to mention in this category are T.Y. Bello, Ebenezer Obey, Sonny Okosun, and Kcee, among others. Within the north-central region of Nigeria, without any specific timelines, some veteran artists are worth mentioning among many others; Panam Percy Paul, a Jos-based gospel musician who runs a music school (Adedeji and Loko 7), others are Lani Stephens, Jerry Jinang, Bulus Datiri, Earnest Dades, Ezra Jinang, Dorcas Bentu, Pam Monday, Kefas Diyals, Rahila Sarauniya, Solomon Damulak, Daps, Pic Onwochei, Amik Adam, Emma James, and Joseph Michael (Effiong 2022).

Musicpreneurship

Okadigwe and Okeke (2022) see music entrepreneurship as an interrelationship of two different specialized areas of human endeavor, and as a result, there exist several intricacies regarding its functionality. The musician creates music, the entrepreneur ensures a thriving career from the music. Combining a passion for music with business skills to create financial opportunities for the benefit of people involved in the chain of production and consumption within and outside the music industry is music

entrepreneurship, simply referred to as 'musicpreneurship' in this study (Veluchamy, 2022). African gospel music deals with contemporary themes and has a very strong economic force; it enjoys worldwide patronage. It is a multi-billion-dollar-a-year business, it is primarily driven by commercial gains and the entertainment, enjoyment, and spiritual upliftment of the consumers (Forchu, 2014). The major concern of music artists, music producers, and marketers is the financial benefits achievable at the end of the process; the commercial essence and entertainment purpose drive the content of popular African gospel music (Ibitoye, 2018).

African gospel music also serves the function of mobilization and Empowerment for Youths. Today, there are a lot of youths in the church because music has drawn their attention; a sizeable number of them do not find interest in prayer meetings, Bible study, and other activities. They have learned how to operate these musical instruments and other gadgets, and they are being paid for it. This way, they are being mobilized and empowered. Some people make a living out of these musical activities. As an offshoot of these musical activities, musical studios litter the town. Music producers get their cut, back-up singers make their cut, printers make their cut from printing of CD/DVD jackets, and event planners also share in the benefits coming from the venture.

Over the years, people have eked out for themselves fame and fortune through musicpreneurship, leading to streams of active and residual income, thereby improving their quality of life and social status. In this case, the active income is earned as an immediate reward for the commodity produced, whether it is the music itself or any of the paraphernalia associated with the music production process. For instance, as is common in Nigeria, a day of music launch is fixed, dignitaries are invited, and funds are raised for the music artist. Passively, the rewards keep coming in the form of royalties long after the date of the production. For instance, a piece of music is put on YouTube or Audio Max, people need to pay to have the right to download. This way, the artist still makes money continuously, sometimes for generations, depending on the quality and relevance of the music. The evolution of music is aptly captured thus:

Since the turn of the century, several advancements have occurred in the music industry: the cassette, radio, vinyl, television, CD, and more recently, the internet, MP3 streaming, and even social media. Rapid technological improvements, particularly those connected to Web 2.0 and 3.0, have successfully obliterated any potential barriers between the artist and his audience. (Veluchamy 2022:1)

Emergence of Music-Related Entrepreneurship

The music investor in Nigeria usually has enough contracts that fetch him income. Performances were usually live with about six instruments; these are drums, keyboard, lead guitar, bass guitar, trumpet, and saxophone, sometimes it could be fewer or more. The fees are not usually fixed but determined by the capacity of the celebrants and organizers of the programmes at hand. Traditionally, musicians earn income through the multiplicity of ceremonies surrounding weddings. The offshoots from one wedding could follow the lines of a traditional wedding, a white wedding in church, a reception, after party, and a thanksgiving. An extra source of income is realized through money sprayed by guessed when the vibes of the music hit hard (Okadigwe & Okeke, 2022).

The rise of digital technology has transformed the landscape of African Gospel music, fostering the growth of music-related businesses. Entrepreneurs are now leveraging platforms like social media and music streaming services to promote and distribute their work. Nigerians spend an average of 31.1 hours per week consuming music, which includes music genres like afrobeat, gospel, pop, R & B, Makossa, and Amapiano, among others; This streaming raked in an average of ₦11bn on Spotify alone in 2022 (Hansen, Para.3).

Emerging entrepreneurs in the music industry are not only musicians but also producers, managers, promoters, and music educators. This category covers every single individual or group of people involved in the music process from the start to finish. Music impacts positively and negatively on society, it is therefore important for music educators and professional instructors to guide young musicpreneurs towards a positive use of their skills to help them acquire entrepreneurial prowess (Onwuegbuna & John, 2023).

Nigerian musicpreneurs are establishing record labels, event management companies, and merchandising businesses that contribute to the economy (Loko, 2013). For instance, Nigerian artists have successfully launched their record labels, providing opportunities for other aspiring musicians and fostering creative collaborations. Record labels are business entities created to make a profit from creating, distributing, and promoting music. A few among these music labels are Kennis Music, Storm Records, Chocolate City, and Mavin Records, among many others (Jamaldeen, 2021).

Entrepreneurial Effect of African Gospel Music on Other Commercial Activities

It is common to find business people making use of African Gospel music to draw people's attention to their business activities, most especially for businesses located around Christian-dominated areas. This is usually because of the effects music has on the human mind. Music will alter your buying habits, make you buy beyond your budget, and make you spend money beyond normal during celebrations. It can make you work more efficiently. It can even affect your eating habits (Kraeuter 2011). A 72-year-old indigenous woman in Jos, Mama Hamsatu, has attained fame through her songs sung during her 'manual quarry' work; always singing to 'ginger her swagger'. The rhythm of her song has inspired her and others to efficiency. The song titled *Takama* was produced by Jos-based music producer Mr. Kleb and released in January 2021. It became a digital hit, trending as a social media challenge on TikTok and other platforms (Onowu, 2022).

Singing indigenous folksongs while advertising has served social needs and also increased sales of goods. The proceeds realized from advertisements depend on individual participation. Advertisement provides essential income for both the farmers and traders in the society. The use of indigenous folksongs in trade advertisements brings about togetherness, friendliness, and partnership. They also create an environment for social interaction and promote the spirit of concerted efforts in society (Efurhevwe, 2008-2009). This way, a complete symbiotic relationship is created in the entrepreneurial ecosystem. The musicpreneurs benefit, and other people also benefit from using the musicpreneurs' products to enhance their lives through their businesses.

Challenges Facing African Gospel Musicpreneurs

The sacredness of gospel music has always been upheld, separated from the challenges experienced in the secular music sphere. It is usually given the respect of a higher calling. The ideal can sometimes feel naïve in this age of multi-million dollar streaming deals, big budget concerts, and industry-savvy brands. The reality, however, is that:

Music-no matter the genre-is a business first. While the audience may hold on to the idea of gospel music as pure, untainted ministry, artists-like their pop or Afrobeats counterparts-must navigate the complexities of contracts, royalties, and intellectual property rights. (Samson, 2025)

Despite the burgeoning opportunities, African music entrepreneurs face several challenges; these challenges are faced by different people at different levels of their entrepreneurial development. A few are fortunate to overcome most of the challenges, and a vast majority end up at the level of a 'wannabe'. A survey within Jos metropolis on some 'upcoming Gospel musicpreneurs', referring to artists who have produced and launched at least an album but yet to attain regional or national recognition by fans, highlights the following:

Lack of Creativity

Ben Douglas, a music producer and an artist, identifies one of the challenges faced by Gospel Musicpreneurs as the inability to create a brand that makes one different from other people, creating a unique identity for the artist. There is usually something that makes an artist stand out; these could be the genre of music performed, either gospel, reggae, gospel makossa, gospel afrobeat, gospel hip-hop, among others (Oral Interview, 2025). Helen John adds that another reason that could make an artist stand out is a choreographic style that goes along with the performances during concerts and other events. Consistency in producing quality videos for the songs and promotional materials (Oral Interview, 2025).

Insufficient Funds

Matthew John identifies securing funds for production as a major challenge faced by artists. Studio sessions are books per hour in most cases. Different fees are made for mastering the recorded songs, purchase and dubbing of CD/DVD, logistics for the launch, all consume a lot of funds. The bigger the launch plans, the more money is needed to execute such (Oral Interview, 2025). Eventually, when resources are secured, properly managing same is also a challenge faced by Gospel musicpreneurs; high-quality musical instruments are expensive to buy. Even after purchase, they are not cheap to maintain. These resources are also used for transportation from one venue to another, and different people involved in the music process are not being catered to because the resources are too lean or not even available. Yohanna Joseph cites the example of how music artists mismanage resources secured during launch programmes. In some cases, the artist feels that he/she has 'blown' and will end up blowing all the whole money within a short period by upgrading his/her level of life; using the funds realized to buy cars or move to a more expensive part of town (Oral Interview, 2025).

Lack of Opportunities

Ishaku Dandudu mentions that exposure and opportunities are difficult to come by. The artist tries to write his songs and produces them, but his church platform may be small in terms of audience reach, and bigger stages for concerts may not provide the artist with the opportunity to perform because he is not known; sometimes the artist may be required to pay for such opportunities (Oral Interview, 2025). Sometimes, there are gifted songwriters, musicians, and instrumentalists in churches who are not able to get the opportunity to showcase their talents. Some churches usually insist on every musically talented person joining the choir, the churches do not allow solo or group performance outside the choir. Most youths do not like the traditional choir; therefore, they just keep their talents to themselves, untapped; this has led to the waste of many talents in potential musicpreneurs.

Lack of Specialization

Ziggy Zikman identifies a lack of consistency as a challenge faced by Gospel Musicpreneurs. His line of thought centers on the inability of artists to specialize in a style or pattern of music. Some artists sing reggae music, later they move to makossa, and at some other time they transition to Slow Rock or R&B. A music album of seven songs could have as many as four different genres in it; they are not known for any style in particular. Sometimes they are active in the studios and on the stage, other times they are away attending to other life challenges. The zeal, stamina, and creativity to push on fail them, and success becomes elusive (Oral Interview, 2025). It is important that music artists are known for particular genres and styles; there should be an expectation when a name is mentioned. For instance, when the name of the Device is mentioned anywhere on stage, everyone knows that he will be performing reggae music; similarly, when Exodus Band is mentioned, then the expectation is makossa/soukous music.

Adaptability to Musical Trends

According to Talatu Yakubu, a gospel musicpreneur's ability to adapt to trends is another challenge. The music industry, particularly in Nigeria, is dynamic, and the changes are very rapid. For an artist to remain relevant continuously, he or she has to adapt to the new trends and technologies for music productions, streaming, and engagement with fans. These changes are mostly seen in how the youths appreciate music. As a new trend emerges, the youths easily switch, but the adults usually prefer the status quo. The challenge is for the artist to cater to the needs of the different segments

of the fan base (Oral Interview, 2025).

Saturated Market

Another challenge identified by Oluchi Ezenwamadu is the difficulty in making a mark in an already saturated market. Every church has its music artists, and sometimes there are as many as four to seven individual music artists in a single church, depending on its size; when music concerts are organized, opportunities are only given to the already established artists. There is a music album launch almost every Sunday in one church or the other. This saturation makes it difficult for gospel musicpreneurs to maintain a loyal fan base. Fans will quickly move to an artist who is better established with better content (Oral Interview, 2025).

Cost of Affording Quality

Nanpe Kangkum adds that there are times when artists try to make high-quality content that costs a fortune to meet international or national standards, but the consumers of the products are not willing to pay the worth of the content. Some music producers use cheap and substandard equipment, thereby producing substandard music and videos. Other people in the line of production do the same; for example, substandard CDs/DVDs are sometimes used. Comparisons are made with similar products that have cheaper rates. While some artists are willing to compromise standards just to sell, others would not, and it becomes difficult for them to break even (Oral Interview, 2025).

Complexities of Contracts, Royalties, and Intellectual Property Rights

On the flip side, there are countless successful musicpreneurs, whether singers or producers also have their share of challenges. Recently, there has been a raging battle between Mercy Chinwo and the music label that signed her up. This is a case of a fight between musicpreneurs (singer and producer); as reported by Rita Okoye in the Sun Nigeria, an online news outlet, the dispute is centered on an understanding of the guiding principles enshrined in their contract agreement, with both parties claiming rights. Mercy Chinwo accused her music label of pressuring her to extend her contract from five years to twelve. She recounted instances of “verbal and emotional abuse, claiming that Onyedikachukwu had threatened to “deal with her” and “shut her up” if she did not comply with his demands” (Samsonn). The label, represented by Ezekiel

Onyedikachukwu, the CEO of Eezee Tee Global, popularly known as Eezee Tee, accused Mercy Chinwo of “failure to fulfil her contractual obligations, including delivering a third studio album and withholding funds from events and royalties due to the label” (Okoye, 2025).

Solution to Some of the Challenges

The music industry is a complex ecosystem that comprises stakeholders like artists, music producers, managers, record labels, distributors, and even consumers. It is of utmost importance that this landscape is properly understood. All stakeholders must understand the roles of other stakeholders. Findings reveal the following as solutions to the challenges already identified.

Self-Reinvention

Where there is a lack of creativity, Ishaku Dandudu, an artist and a music producer, advocates for self-reinvention. Through this process, the artist needs to develop a unique identity and style that draws on his abilities, experience, influences, and ability to bring together various musical elements into something original and unique. This could require an artist moving away from traditional norms, bringing into existence something entirely different and novel. For example, Mallam Razphil with the thrilling song '*gyara masa parking*', is a national sensation; he dresses in a *babbanriga* with a turban around his head, giving him the look of an emir. His style is distinct and unique to him (Oral Interview, 2025). This could lead to a breakthrough and a journey of personal growth and fulfilment, so long as the artist remains true to his re-invented identity, no matter the difficulties posed.

Leverage on Individuals and the Church for Funds

All aspects of music production require intensive capital at all stages. The artist needs to pay for studio sessions and other costs, the music producer needs to procure high-quality equipment, which does not come cheap. Surmounting the financial hurdle is usually a herculean task. Jerry Jinang opines that the church can fund musical programmes of its members, particularly for artists who have demonstrated an appreciable level of talent. This is because the church also stands to benefit from the success of the artist. This success brings about publicity to the church and empowerment for the music artist. The church could also set up standard music

recording studios where easy opportunities are provided for talented music producers, and upcoming music artist to try their abilities at little or no cost (Oral Interview). Lonkat Ephraim adds that wealthy church members or groups could help sponsor upcoming artists. This could also take youths off the streets. Where it becomes difficult for an individual to provide full sponsorship, two or more people could jointly sponsor the artists either in part or fully (Oral Interview, 2025).

Use of Church Platforms to Create Opportunities

Nanpe Kangkum opines that there is no better opportunity for an upcoming artist to showcase his ability than in the church. There are many musical groups in the church that a potential artist could join and get their talent and skills honed. He cites examples from some already established artist who started their musical career in the church. For instance, Jeremiah Gyang, Pam Monday, and Earnest Dades. When crusades and revival programmes are organized in the church, upcoming artist should be given the platform to express their talents. They can also leverage live performances at festivals, weddings, and 'freedom parties' to gain exposure. In the same way, young music producers should be allowed to produce artists (Oral Interview, 2025). Matthew John gives an example of Nuhu Mohammed (Tuco), who started producing songs for music artists when he was just 13 years of age, using a YAMAHA PSR 640 keyboard, Fruity Loops, and Sonar 5 to record and mix songs within Jos metropolis. (Oral Interview, 2025). Opportunities abound at different levels; artists and producers can start from the lower level till they attain greatness. Artists should not look down on small opportunities; the key to having a breakthrough may be found in small opportunities.

Build Specialization

Different genres and styles of music abound within the Nigerian music scene. Common genres include reggae, slow rock (worship), highlife, afrobeats, makossa, soukous, and hip hop, among others; these genres appeal to different groups of people depending on the occasion, time, and place. Addressing this particular challenge, Akim Gushe posits that artist should take time to develop their abilities in specific areas of their ability. He finds it funny that one artist has as many as 3-6 genres or styles of music in an 8-track music album. To him, there is no specialization; an artist should concentrate his energy on a particular style and be known for it anytime and any place. He cites the example of Exodus Band in Jos, a group that made waves many years ago, whose name is synonymous with Gospel Makossa music, which they were known for;

also, Dave Azi and the Bible Voice are synonymous with Gospel Reggae music (Oral Interview, 2025). Specialization leads to success; however, it requires persistence and patience in the face of disappointing outcomes.

Adaptation to Trends

Unarguably, the music world is dynamic with rapid changes, and these changes render many artists irrelevant and obsolete in their content. Yusuf Audu opines that a panacea to this challenge lies in the ability of artists to develop themselves in terms of versatility to be able to switch to any trend at any point in time without too much stress. He adds that one sure way of doing so is in the area of collaboration with artists who have already recorded success in the trending vibes. When a new trend emerges and some other artists are beginning to make giant strides, upcoming artists should seek to do a song or an album together. The successful artist should always be ready to bring up struggling artists. One may not be able to start a trend as an individual, but the artist can watch out with keen interest what is obtainable around the fan base, and also be quick to plug in and be a part of the trend instead of insisting on outdated trends (Oral Interview, 2025). Music artists need to know when to move to another trend and also be able to remain loyal to their fan base from the previous genres by still engaging them with songs that are relevant to them. Let it be that the artist does not lose the fans he /she already have in the process of trying to get more.

Saturated Market

It is believed that the sky is wide enough for every bird to fly. It is also true that success may not be for everyone. Talatu Yakubu believes that music is all about creativity, and every individual is gifted in a certain way, which makes him/her different with unique abilities. Projecting an individual's uniqueness should be the key for an individual to make a mark where there seem to be too many people. She further advocates for the use of social media like Instagram, TikTok, X, Spotify, and YouTube, among others, by music artists to connect with fans and share music. The internet is wide enough to connect everyone. Additionally, upcoming artists can build relationships with social media influencers to help market their content to a wide range of consumers across the world (Oral Interview, 2025). Some individuals have thousands of friends on Facebook; a single post by such a person can have an unimaginable coverage.

Improvisation and Quality Control

In the Nigerian Pidgin English parlance, it is often said, '*better soup, na money kill am*'; this statement drives home the importance of maintaining quality. That being said, Thomas Agile insists that some aspects of music production can be improvised without necessarily affecting the quality of production and performance. For example, He argues that music loudspeakers can be purchased within the country from local producers without necessarily importing such from China or other countries. The loudspeakers have been tested to produce the same quality of sound and sometimes even better, and for lower prices compared to imported loudspeakers. He also adds that foams could be used to pad the walls of the recording room instead of importing padding boards, which are more expensive (Oral Interview, 2025). Brando Moses weighs in on this discourse to say that music production may not necessarily be about the quality of equipment used, but about the man behind the equipment. Older recording software and hardware for music production for example are cheaper compared to the newer versions, but an experienced producer who is used to the older software /hardware will give a better production than the inexperienced producer with a more expensive and sophisticated equipment, Improvisation comes in here in making use of the available with professionalism (Oral Interview, 2025).

Daniel Nathaniel advises that the church and evangelism ministries should invest in music by procuring good musical equipment. Experts should be trained to handle the use of the gadgets to ensure quality output. Observing the equipment in most churches, they are of poor and substandard quality; the sound quality is usually not good. This could be attributed to insufficient funds, lack of technical knowledge, or even misplaced priorities. If the church must meet the musical needs of its members for quality religious experience and evangelism, care and attention must be given to the procurement of quality musical equipment, and users of this equipment must be standardly trained for effectiveness (Oral Interview, 2025).

For this, Brando Moses advises that aspiring gospel musicians should not be in a hurry to produce music tracks or albums or be on stage for ministration without proper grooming. Some aspiring talents have crashed even before they got started. Discipline, training, and divine guidance are very important for all upcoming gospel musicpreneurs. This usually happens when their activities are motivated by the financial benefits perceived to be achievable through such musical ventures. Poor quality studio productions are done by amateurs, the musician has poor vocal prowess, sometimes singing off-key, lyrical contents are poor and theologically incorrect, and the finished product becomes a disappointment to everyone with good musical ears (Oral Interview, 2025).

Orientation on Complexities of Contracts, Royalties, and Intellectual Property Rights

What is the whole gist about contracts, royalties, and intellectual property? A contract is a promise or set of promises to which the law attaches legal obligations (Morawetz, 1925). It outlines the ownership, usage, and transfer of intellectual property. The contract protects their intellectual property. Royalty represents the payment made to an individual or company for the ongoing use of their property, including copyrighted works, franchises, and natural resources (Banton, 2020). Intellectual properties are inventions of the mind, innovations, literary, and artistic work, symbols, names, and pictures utilized in commerce (Dhokare, 2020). Upcoming musicpreneurs need to know what all these are about, because it will guide them in their interaction with music labels. They will get to know what standard practices are in comparison to sharp practices in their business pursuits, thereby avoiding stories that touch.

Conclusion

Gospel music in Africa is not only a means of religious expression but also a powerful economic driver, fostering opportunities for musicpreneurs. The digital revolution has further expanded the reach and impact of African gospel music, enabling artists to engage global audiences and earn through the internet. The rise of musicpreneurship has provided financial benefits for stakeholders and reshaped the landscape of African gospel music. Through musicpreneurship, many artists have transitioned from mere performers to business moguls, record label owners, and mentors, creating pathways for the next generation of musicians. The synergy between African gospel music and entrepreneurship has created an ecosystem of mutual benefits, where all stakeholders participate in a cycle of economic and social exchange.

However, musicpreneurs face momentous challenges. These range from financial constraints, lack of exposure, saturated markets, and inadequate specialization, to adaptability issues, contractual complexities, and poor-quality control. To navigate these challenges, several solutions have been proposed. Artists must focus on self-reinvention, specialization, and leveraging digital platforms to expand their reach. Churches and individuals can provide financial backing and mentorship, ensuring that talented gospel artists have access to quality training and resources. Collaboration with successful artists can help musicpreneurs gain exposure and credibility.

Recommendation

African gospel music has proven to be a powerful economic and cultural force, influencing other commercial activities and creating employment opportunities; by way of recommendation:

- There is a need for a more structured and supportive framework for gospel musicpreneurs. For example, there should be mentorship programmes guiding other experienced professionals.
- There should also be collaborative network opportunities for partners and knowledge sharing within the African gospel music industry.
- There should also be a resource center where upcoming musicpreneurs can run to for help on legal advice and resources on copyright laws, music distribution, and industry standards. Musicpreneurs should also be able to get feedback and evaluation from this center.
- By addressing these challenges and implementing strategic solutions, African gospel musicpreneurship can continue to thrive as both a spiritual force and a viable entrepreneurial industry, fostering economic empowerment through building sustainable careers for individual stakeholders and contributing more meaningfully to Africa's general creative economy.

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Names of Interviewees

SS/ No	Names	Ssex	Age Range	Occupation	Marital Status	Date of Interview	Place of Interview
11	Akim Gushe	MM	41-45	Civil Servant	Single	8/3/2025	Jos-North
22	Ben Douglas	MM	41-45	Music Producer/Musician	Married	5/3/2025	Jos-North
33	Brando Moses	MM	46-50	Music Producer	Married	12/3/2025	Jos-North
44	Daniel Nathaniel	MM	21-25	Student	Single	12/3/2025	Jos-North
55	Helen John	FF	36-40	Musician	Married	12/3/2025	Jos-North
66	Ishaku Dandudu	MM	51-55	Civil Servant	Married	6/3/2025	Jos-North
77	Jerry Jinang	MM	55 and above	Civil Servant	Married	6/3/2025	Jos-North
88	Joseph Akuson	MM	41-45	Civil Servant	Married	5/3/2025	Jos-North
99	Lonkat Ephraim	MM	36-40	Music Producer/Civil Servant	Single	10/3/2025	Jos-North
110	Matthew John	MM	41-45	Self Employed	Single	10/3/2025	Jos-North
111	NanpeKankum	MM	36-40	Video Producer	Married	8/3/2025	Jos-North
112	Oluchi Ezenwa-madu	FF	41-45	Civil Servant	Married	5/3/2025	Jos-North
113	Talatu Yakubu	FF	51-55	Musician	Single	10/3/2025	Jos-North
114	Thomas Agile	MM	55 and above	Civil Servant	Married	10/3/2025	Jos North
115	Yohanna Joseph	MM	51-55	Civil Servant	Married	8/3/2025	Jos-North
116	Ziggy Zikman	MM	46-50	Musician	Married	6/3/2025	Jos-North

Evolution of Entrepreneurship in Nigeria: From Pre-colonial Trade to Modern Day Innovation

Chinaemelum Ijeoma Okafor, PhD



Executive Summary

This article provides a comprehensive analysis of the evolution of entrepreneurship in Nigeria, tracing its transformation from pre-colonial communal trade systems to contemporary technology-driven innovation. Drawing on historical analysis, the paper explores how socio-political shifts, colonialism, globalization, and digitalization have shaped entrepreneurial practices. The study highlights the interaction between tradition and modernity in Nigeria's entrepreneurial ecosystem. The impact of structural challenges and the transformative potential of modern innovation. This paper emphasizes the resilience, adaptability, and transformation of Nigerian entrepreneurs across different historical phases, emphasizing the role of policy, globalization, and digital transformation in shaping the current entrepreneurial landscape.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship, informal economy, pre-colonial trade, colonialism, fintech innovation

Introduction

Entrepreneurship in Nigeria has evolved through distinct historical phases, from pre-colonial trade networks that connected regional kingdoms to trans-Saharan and Atlantic commerce. Guilds of artisans, gender-inclusive market systems, and communal wealth-sharing practices laid the groundwork for an entrepreneurial culture centered on collective prosperity (Falola, 1999; Mba, 1982). However, British colonialism (1900–1960) dismantled these indigenous systems, reorienting the economy toward resource extraction and imported goods, while simultaneously spurring hybrid forms of adaptive entrepreneurship (Ekundare, 1973; Forrest, 1993). Post-independence Nigeria grappled with the paradox of oil wealth, which fueled corruption and neglect of small enterprises, pushing millions into an informal economy that now employs over 60% of the workforce (Oyelaran-Oyeyinka, 2020; SMEDAN, 2022).

In the 21st century, Nigeria has emerged as a hub of digital innovation, with startups like Flutterwave and Farmcrowdy leveraging technology to address structural gaps in finance, agriculture, and healthcare. Yet, entrepreneurs continue to navigate infrastructural deficits, gender disparities, and regulatory hurdles that echo historical inequities (GSMA, 2020; UNDP, 2022). This article traces this evolution, arguing that Nigeria's entrepreneurial spirit, rooted in pre-colonial collectivism and tested by colonial and post-colonial crises, remains a vital force for inclusive growth in the digital age. By examining continuities and disruptions across four phases, the study highlights how Nigeria's past informs its present and future entrepreneurial landscape.

Pre-Colonial Entrepreneurship (Before 1900)

Before European colonization, Nigeria's diverse ethnic groups, including the Yoruba, Igbo, and Hausa, developed sophisticated economic systems. The robust trade networks were facilitated by kingdoms such as the Nri, Benin, and Oyo. These societies engaged in regional and trans-Saharan trade, exchanging goods like palm oil, ivory, textiles, and metals (Falola, 1999). The Oyo Empire's expansive trade routes and market systems exemplified sophisticated economic organization, with guilds regulating artisanal production (Akinjogbin, 1967). Entrepreneurship was community-centric, emphasizing collective prosperity over individual gain (Falola, 1999).

Trade Networks and Regional Markets

Indigenous trade networks in pre-colonial Nigeria were intricate systems that facilitated economic exchange, cultural interaction, and political cohesion long before European colonization. These networks were shaped by geographic diversity, ethnic specialization, and socio-political structures, enabling the circulation of goods, ideas, and technologies across regions.

The trans-Saharan trade connected northern Nigeria to North Africa, facilitating exchanges of kola nuts, textiles, and salt (Falola, 1999). The Oyo Empire (15th–19th century) leveraged its cavalry to dominate regional trade, while the Nri Kingdom specialized in ritual and craft economies (Akinjogbin, 1967). Markets like Kano's Kurmi and Onitsha's Ose became hubs for artisans, farmers, and long-distance traders.

Northern cities such as Kano, Katsina, and Zaria served as hubs in the trans-Saharan trade network linking West Africa to North Africa and the Mediterranean. Caravans transported salt, textiles, kolanuts, leatherworks, and slaves to exchange for North

African glassware, silks, and horses (Falola, 1999). The Kanem-Borno Empire (9th–19th century) dominated this trade, monopolized the salt and horse trade, leveraging its strategic position near Lake Chad to control Saharan crossings by using camels to traverse the Sahara (Njoku, 2001)

For the Niger River trade, the river facilitated commerce between the Nupe Kingdom and coastal communities, exchanging fish, pottery, and iron tools (Akinjogbin, 1967). The Niger River acted as a lifeline, connecting inland communities like the Nupe and Igala kingdoms to coastal regions. Canoes transported goods such as fish, pottery, palm oil, and iron tools between riverine communities. While the Benue River connected eastern regions to the Niger Delta.

The Yoruba Oyo Empire (1400–1837) dominated regional markets from the coast to the savannah, taxing caravans through a network of toll routes and ensuring safe passage for goods like ivory, cocoa, and handwoven cloth (Law, 1977). The Yoruba Oyo Empire controlled trade routes linking coastal ports (e.g., Badagry) to inland markets. The Igbo Aro Confederacy in the southeast used its religious influence via Arochukwu Oracle (Ibini Ukpabi) to establish trust and mediate disputes, enabling long-distance trade in slaves, palm oil, and metal goods. (Njoku, 2001). Similarly, the Hausa used dillali (trusted brokers) to mediate between traders.

Indigenous trade was organized around marketplaces, which regulated production, quality, and pricing. Markets operated on rotating cycles (e.g., 4-day or 8-day weeks) to avoid overlap. Major markets like Kano's Kurmi Market (still operational today) attracted thousands from across West Africa. Cowrie shells, manilla bracelets, and iron bars served as mediums of exchange. The Yoruba used cowries for small transactions, while the Igbo favored okpogho (bronze rods). (Falola, 1999). Women dominated certain trade sectors. Hausa karuwai (female traders) controlled textile markets, while Igbo women oversaw palm oil trade through the Omu (female market leader) system (Mba, 1982).

Trade goods reflected regional diversity and artisanal specialization:

North: Salt (mined from the Sahara), kolanuts, textiles, leather goods (e.g., Kano morocco leather), and horses (imported from Arab traders) (Falola, 1999).

Southwest: Palm oil, cocoa, kolanuts, ivory, handwoven textiles, adire (indigo-dyed cloth) produced by Yoruba artisans (Basden, 1966).

Southeast: Bronze artifacts (e.g., Igbo-Ukwu ceremonial vessels), slaves (pre-19th century), iron tools, and palm kernels (Njoku, 2001).

Coastal Regions: Fish, salt (from seawater evaporation), and cowrie shells (used as currency) (Hogendorn & Johnson, 1986).

Craft Guilds and Social Entrepreneurship

In pre-colonial Nigeria, craft guilds were the backbone of artisanal production, serving as both economic institutions and custodians of cultural heritage. These guilds organized labor, maintained quality standards, and ensured the transmission of specialized skills across generations. Rooted in ethnic traditions, they operated as closed, hierarchical systems that balanced innovation with strict adherence to cultural norms. Craft guilds regulated production quality and apprenticeship systems. For example, Benin's brass casters and Igbo blacksmiths operated under guilds that ensured skill transmission and equitable resource distribution (Ekeocha, 2021). Entrepreneurship was community-oriented, with wealth redistribution mechanisms such as the Yoruba *esusu* (savings clubs) fostering collective prosperity (Falola, 1999). Guilds were often clan-based, with membership restricted to lineages believed to possess ancestral knowledge. For example, the Awka blacksmiths in Igboland permitted only male descendants of the Umu-Ezeana lineage to join because they are believed to possess ancestral metallurgical knowledge. (Osagie, 2015).

Craft guilds were hierarchical medieval organizations comprising apprentices, journeymen, and masters, each with distinct roles in training, labor, and oversight to regulate trades, maintain quality, and control production standards.

For the master category, they are referred to as Master Craftsmen (Oga/Diokpa). They are at the top hierarchy and were master artisans who oversaw production, trained apprentices, and liaised with political authorities. In the Benin Kingdom, the Igun-Eronmwon guild of bronze casters operated under royal patronage, producing ceremonial objects exclusively for the Oba (king) and his court (Osagie, 2015).

Next in the sequence are the Journeymen Skilled workers who had completed apprenticeships but not yet achieved master status. They produced goods under supervision and often specialized in specific techniques (Osagie, 2015).

Then, at the lower cadre are the apprentices, typically young initiates from artisan families. Apprentices underwent rigorous training lasting 5–10 years. Training began with menial tasks (e.g., gathering materials) before progressing to technical skills like wax modeling in bronze casting (Osagie, 2015).

Benin Bronze Casters

The Igun-Eronmwon guild in Benin perfected the *cire perdue* (lost-wax) technique to create bronze plaques and sculptures for royal use. These works documented historical events, such as military victories and royal ceremonies, and served as political propaganda (Uhakheme, 2021). The guild's affiliation with the palace societies (Iwebo, Iweguae, and Ibiwe) ensured their output met the monarchy's needs, from ceremonial swords (eben) to architectural adornments (Osagie, 2015).

They practiced Wax Modeling, where Artisans sculpted intricate designs in beeswax. Clay Molding, where a wax model was coated in layers of clay, forming a mold. Metal Casting Molten bronze (a mix of copper, tin, and lead) was poured into the mold, melting the wax and filling the cavity. The clay mold was broken to reveal the bronze piece, which was polished and engraved. These works, depicting royal ceremonies, warriors, and deities, were commissioned exclusively by the Oba and served as political propaganda and spiritual artifacts (Bradbury, 1957).

Kano Indigo Dyers (Yan Taba)

The Yan Taba guild in northern Nigeria specialized in indigo-dyed textiles, known as Babar Rigaa or "Kano Blue." Using century-old dye pits over 30 feet deep filled with fermented indigo leaves, ash, and potassium, cloth was dipped repeatedly over weeks to achieve deep blue hues, then sun-dried and beaten to a glossy finish. Kano indigo cloth was exported across West Africa and the Sahara, becoming a luxury item for Tuareg nobles and Hausa elites (Shea, 1975).

Igbo-Ukwu Metalworkers

The Igbo-Ukwu guild in southeastern Nigeria (9th–11th century) produced sophisticated bronze and copper artifacts, including ritual vessels and jewelry. Archaeological finds reveal advanced metallurgical techniques, such as wire-weaving and hammering, which were unparalleled in contemporaneous Europe (Osagie, 2015). Objects like the Roped Pot and Leopard Skull were buried with elites, symbolizing wealth and divine favor (Shaw, 1970).

Apprenticeship Systems

Guilds relied on apprenticeships to preserve technical knowledge. The apprenticeship system in precolonial Nigeria was a cornerstone of entrepreneurship and skill acquisition. It was deeply rooted in the socio-cultural fabric of various ethnic groups, such as the Igbo, Yoruba, and Hausa communities. This system involved young individuals learning trades, crafts, or professions under the guidance of experienced

masters. The training was practical and hands-on, ensuring that apprentices gained the necessary skills to become self-reliant and contribute to their communities' economic development (Uwameiye & Iyamu, 2002).

For instance, the Igbo apprenticeship system, known as "Igba Boi," was particularly notable for its role in fostering entrepreneurship. It was based on informal agreements between the apprentice and the master, often involving the apprentice living with the master to learn not only the trade but also the values and ethics associated with it. Upon completing the apprenticeship, the master would often provide the apprentice with startup capital or resources to establish their own business, thus perpetuating a cycle of economic empowerment (Eze, 2023).

Apprentices underwent rites to honor ancestral guild founders. For example, Yoruba weavers offered kolanuts to the deity Ogun (god of iron) before handling tools. Training progressed from basic tasks like gathering clay for potters to mastering complex techniques. A Benin bronze-casting apprentice might spend years learning wax modeling before attempting casting. Successful apprentices presented a "masterpiece" to guild elders. In Kano, dyers gifted a specially dyed cloth to their mentors, symbolizing skill mastery (Shea, 1975). Skills like bronze casting were passed orally and through hands-on practice, ensuring continuity despite the absence of written records (Osagie, 2015).

This system was not limited to commerce but extended to various crafts, including farming, fishing, blacksmithing, and weaving. It was an integral part of the informal education system, ensuring that skills and knowledge were passed down through generations. The apprenticeship system also emphasized community involvement, as the success of an apprentice was seen as a collective achievement (Antai et al., 2024).

Social Entrepreneurship and Communal Wealth

In precolonial Nigeria, entrepreneurship was rooted in communal welfare. The Yoruba *esusu* (rotating savings clubs) and Igbo *isusu* pooled resources for collective projects like market construction (Basden, 1966). The *Omu* (female market leaders) in Igbo societies mediated disputes and enforced ethical trade practices (Mba, 1982). Social entrepreneurship and communal wealth in precolonial Nigeria were deeply intertwined with the socio-economic structures of various ethnic groups. Social entrepreneurship in these circumstances involved initiatives aimed at addressing communal needs, fostering economic development, and ensuring social cohesion.

Communal wealth was a fundamental aspect of the economy. It was built on systems of

reciprocal exchange, communal farming, and shared resources. For example, the Yoruba people practiced "Aaro," a system of communal labor where members of the community worked together on farms or other projects to ensure collective prosperity. Similarly, the Igbo people engaged in cooperative trading and shared profits to support community development (Ajiola, 2015).

Social entrepreneurship also manifested in the form of traditional guilds and associations that provided training, resources, and support to their members. These groups were instrumental in promoting skills acquisition and economic empowerment. They operated on principles of mutual aid and collective responsibility, ensuring that wealth was distributed equitably within the community (Ajiola, 2015).

The emphasis on communal wealth and social entrepreneurship in precolonial Nigeria highlights the importance of community-oriented approaches to economic development. These practices not only fostered social harmony but also laid the foundation for sustainable economic systems that prioritized the well-being of all members of society (Webb, 2024).

Colonial Era: Exploitation and Adaptation (1900–1960)

British colonialism restructured Nigeria's economy to serve imperial interests, disrupting indigenous entrepreneurship. During this period, indigenous economic systems were disrupted and reshaped by colonial policies, the introduction of new industries, and the global demand for raw materials. While entrepreneurship continued to thrive in some areas, significant challenges arose due to the restrictive and exploitative nature of colonial rule redirected economies toward cash crop production (e.g., cocoa, groundnuts) and mineral extraction. Infrastructure projects, such as railways, served colonial interests, marginalizing local entrepreneurs (Ekundare, 1973). Imported goods undermined traditional industries, though some Nigerians adapted by entering the retail and transport sectors (Forrest, 1993). Colonial policies entrenched dependency, stifling autonomous industrial growth (Ekundare, 1973).

Cash Crops and Infrastructure

Colonial policies prioritized export crops (e.g., cocoa, palm oil, mineral extraction (tin, coal)). Indigenous entrepreneurs were relegated to petty trade, while Europeans monopolized large-scale commerce.

British colonial policies prioritized resource extraction, dismantled indigenous systems. Cocoa, palm oil, and groundnut production replaced subsistence farming, displacing 2

million farmers by 1930 (Ekundare, 1973). The colonial economy was structured to serve the interests of the British Empire. Emphasis was placed on the extraction of raw materials such as palm oil, cocoa, groundnuts, and rubber for export. Indigenous entrepreneurs, who were previously involved in these trades, were often relegated to subordinate roles, as colonial corporations dominated production and distribution. For example, the Royal Niger Company controlled trade routes and resources, significantly limiting opportunities for indigenous entrepreneurs (Falola, 1996).

Moreover, the introduction of a monetary economy disrupted traditional systems of exchange and wealth accumulation. Taxes were imposed on local communities, compelling many Nigerians to work as laborers in colonial industries to meet their tax obligations.

Despite the challenges, the colonial era witnessed the growth of small-scale businesses, particularly in urban areas. The influx of people into cities like Lagos, Kano, and Port Harcourt created opportunities for petty trading, tailoring, carpentry, and other small enterprises. Women, in particular, played a significant role in this sector, engaging in market trading and food processing (Johnson, 1982). The Abokis (middlemen in the north and Ndi Ahia (traders) in the southeast thrived in retail and distributed European goods, often bypassing colonial restrictions (Schatz, 1977; Forrest, 1993). The Agbero (motor park touts) emerged to manage logistics for colonial goods, later forming influential transport unions. Also, Figures like Herbert Macaulay invested in newspapers and real estate, blending activism with entrepreneurship (Coleman, 1958).

The emergence of these businesses demonstrated the resilience and adaptability of indigenous entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurs sought to navigate the colonial economy by leveraging their skills and networks to create livelihoods for themselves and their families.

Colonial policies often hindered the growth of indigenous entrepreneurship. For instance, land tenure systems were altered to favor colonial enterprises, making it difficult for locals to acquire land for commercial purposes. Additionally, transportation infrastructure, such as railways and ports, was developed primarily to facilitate the export of raw materials rather than to support local trade (Mabogunje, 1971). These railways were built to transport goods to ports and marginalized local markets (Ekundare, 1973).

Moreover, discriminatory practices limited access to capital and credit for indigenous entrepreneurs. Colonial banks and financial institutions primarily catered to European businesses, leaving Nigerian entrepreneurs reliant on informal savings and credit systems.

The colonial period also brought cultural and social changes that influenced entrepreneurship. The introduction of Christianity and Western lifestyles altered traditional values and practices, leading to shifts in consumption patterns and business opportunities. For example, the demand for imported goods increased, creating a new market for retailers and middlemen who facilitated trade between colonial suppliers and local consumers.

Anti-colonial movements integrated economic grievances. Igbo women protested taxation and monopolistic practices of British firms (Van Allen, 1972). The Nigerian Youth Movement (1934) promoted “buy Nigerian” campaigns to counter colonial imports (Afigbo, 1972)

Post-Independence Entrepreneurship (1960–1980s)

The post-independence era in Nigeria witnessed significant changes in entrepreneurial activities as the country transitioned from colonial rule to self-governance. This period was characterized by efforts to strengthen the economy, promote indigenous entrepreneurship, and reduce reliance on foreign control. However, economic challenges and policy changes also shaped the trajectory of entrepreneurship during this time.

Government Policies and Nationalization

Upon gaining independence in 1960, the Nigerian government sought to assert control over its economy by introducing policies aimed at promoting indigenous participation in key sectors. One of the landmark initiatives was the Indigenization Decree of 1972. This policy mandated the transfer of ownership of certain businesses from foreign to Nigerian hands, fostering the growth of local entrepreneurs (Ekpo, 1995).

The government also invested in the establishment of state-owned enterprises (SOEs) to control critical industries, such as oil, Ajaokuta Steel, and telecommunications. While these efforts were intended to boost economic independence, they often faced challenges, including inefficiency, corruption, and poor management.

Expansion of Industries

The discovery of oil in commercial quantities in the 1950s and its subsequent exploitation in the 1960s and 1970s significantly impacted entrepreneurship in Nigeria. The oil boom of the 1970s led to rapid urbanization and the rise of a consumer-driven economy. Indigenous entrepreneurs ventured into sectors such as retail, transportation, and construction to meet the growing demand for goods and services

(Falola & Heaton, 2008).

Additionally, the manufacturing sector expanded during this period, with the government encouraging the establishment of factories to produce consumer goods such as textiles, beverages, and plastics. However, this growth was often concentrated in urban areas, leaving rural communities with limited opportunities for entrepreneurial development.

Social Entrepreneurship and Women's Roles

The post-independence era also saw the continuation of social entrepreneurship and the important roles of women in the informal sector. Market women, particularly in the southern regions, played a pivotal role in sustaining local economies through trade and small-scale enterprises (Johnson, 1982). Organizations like market women's associations not only facilitated economic activities but also advocated for the rights and interests of their members.

Structural Adjustment and Economic Reforms (1980s–1999)

The period between the 1980s and 1999 was a turning point for entrepreneurship in Nigeria, marked by significant structural adjustments and economic reforms. During this era, the country faced economic crises that led to the adoption of drastic measures, including the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP). These changes shaped the entrepreneurial landscape in both positive and negative ways, as the Nigerian economy grappled with challenges while also fostering opportunities for resilience and adaptation.

Structural Adjustment Program (SAP)

Introduced in the mid-1980s under the military administration of General Ibrahim Babangida, the SAP was implemented to address Nigeria's economic instability and external debt crisis. The program, backed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, aimed to liberalize the economy, reduce government intervention, and encourage private sector-led growth (Ekpo, 1995). Key components of the SAP included:

Currency Devaluation: The Nigerian naira was devalued to make exports more competitive, but this also increased the cost of imports, affecting entrepreneurs reliant on foreign goods.

Privatization and Commercialization: State-owned enterprises were privatized to

reduce the financial burden on the government, creating opportunities for private investors and entrepreneurs to take ownership of these businesses.

Trade Liberalization; Import restrictions were relaxed, exposing local entrepreneurs to global competition while also creating opportunities for the importation of machinery and raw materials.

While the SAP aimed to revitalize the economy, it led to significant challenges, such as inflation, unemployment, and social unrest, which affected the entrepreneurial environment.

Growth of Informal Entrepreneurship

The economic difficulties of this era spurred the growth of the informal economy as Nigerians sought alternative means of livelihood. Street trading, small-scale manufacturing, artisanal mining, motorcycle taxis (Oyelaran-Oyeyinka, 2020), and other informal activities became widespread, reflecting the resilience and adaptability of Nigerian entrepreneurs (Olomola, 1999). Women played a particularly prominent role in this sector, engaging in petty trading, food processing, and other ventures to support their families.

The informal sector became a vital component of the economy, contributing to employment generation and income distribution. However, it also faced challenges such as limited access to credit, lack of infrastructure, and regulatory constraints.

Emergence of Entrepreneurial Role Models

The 1980s and 1990s saw the rise of notable entrepreneurs who demonstrated resilience and innovation in navigating the challenging economic environment. Individuals like Aliko Dangote began their entrepreneurial journeys during this period, leveraging opportunities in industries such as trading and manufacturing. These figures served as role models and inspired a new generation of entrepreneurs.

Microfinance and Cooperative Systems

In response to limited access to formal credit, many entrepreneurs turned to microfinance institutions and cooperative societies for financial support. These systems provided small-scale loans and savings opportunities, enabling entrepreneurs to start or expand their businesses. The success of microfinance and cooperatives highlighted the importance of community-based financial solutions in fostering entrepreneurship. (Onyekwelu & Ugwuanyi, 2014)

Contemporary Entrepreneurship (2000s–Present)

The 21st century has witnessed a transformative shift in entrepreneurship in Nigeria. This era is marked by rapid technological advancements, a burgeoning youth population, and increasing integration into the global economy. Despite persistent challenges such as infrastructure deficits and access to funding, contemporary entrepreneurship in Nigeria has thrived, with innovation and resilience defining the landscape.

Technology and Innovation

The advent of technology has significantly impacted entrepreneurship in Nigeria. With the proliferation of mobile phones and internet access, Nigerian entrepreneurs have leveraged technology to create innovative solutions for local and global markets. The rise of fintech companies such as Flutterwave, Paystack, and Interswitch has revolutionized financial transactions, making it easier for businesses to access and provide digital payment solutions (Onyekwelu & Ugwuanyi, 2014).

Additionally, e-commerce platforms like Jumia and Konga have transformed the retail space, enabling entrepreneurs to reach a wider audience and streamline business operations. Social media platforms have also become powerful tools for marketing and customer engagement, providing visibility for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

Startups like Flutterwave (payment solutions), Paystack, and Andela (tech talent) have attracted over \$2 billion in venture capital since 2015 and process 50% of Africa's digital payments (GSMA, 2020). Lagos's Yabacon Valley hosts incubators such as CcHub, which supports over 120 startups annually (Ekeocha, 2021). The 2022 Nigerian Startup Act provides tax incentives and funding frameworks to bolster innovation. (Daibu, 2023). Digital entrepreneurship bridges gaps in finance, healthcare, education, and agriculture, reflecting adaptive resilience (Ekeocha, 2021). Dangote's \$20 Billion Refinery, Africa's largest oil refinery, aims to reduce fuel imports and spur ancillary industries (Dangote Group, 2023).

Youth Entrepreneurship

Nigeria's youth population, which constitutes a significant proportion of its demographics, has been a driving force in contemporary entrepreneurship. Young people have embraced entrepreneurship as a means of addressing unemployment and creating economic opportunities. Sectors such as the creative industry, including music, film, and fashion, have seen exponential growth, with Nigerian entrepreneurs gaining international recognition.

For example, artists like Burna Boy and Wizkid, alongside filmmakers in Nollywood, have turned their talents into global brands. Youth-led startups in technology, agriculture, and renewable energy have also contributed to job creation and innovation (Okoye, 2017).

Government Initiatives

The Nigerian government has introduced various programs and policies to support entrepreneurship. Initiatives such as the Youth Entrepreneurship Development Programme (YEDP) by the Central Bank of Nigeria and the Nigerian Youth Investment Fund (NYIF) aim to provide funding, training, and mentorship to young entrepreneurs. Agencies such as the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN) have been instrumental in fostering the growth of SMEs through capacity-building programs.

However, the effectiveness of these initiatives is often hampered by bureaucratic bottlenecks, corruption, and inconsistent policy implementation (Adamu & Adamu, 2020).

Global Influence

Nigerian entrepreneurs have increasingly gained recognition on the global stage, showcasing the potential of the country's entrepreneurial ecosystem. For instance, Flutterwave achieved "unicorn" status in 2021, while Paystack's acquisition by Stripe highlighted the global appeal of Nigerian startups. The diaspora community has also played a crucial role in promoting Nigerian businesses internationally, fostering cross-border collaborations and investments. (Ughulu, 2024)

Moreover, events like the Lagos Startup Week and international competitions have provided platforms for Nigerian entrepreneurs to network and secure funding from global investors.

Entrepreneurial Resilience and Adaptability

One of the defining characteristics of contemporary entrepreneurship in Nigeria is resilience. Entrepreneurs have found ways to navigate these challenges through creativity, resourcefulness, and innovation. For instance, the adoption of renewable energy solutions, such as solar power, has helped mitigate the impact of unreliable electricity on business operations. Additionally, entrepreneurs are increasingly forming cooperatives and partnerships to pool resources and share risks.

Conclusion

Nigeria's entrepreneurial journey is a compelling narrative of resilience, adaptation, and innovation across centuries. From the communal trade networks and artisanal guilds of pre-colonial societies to the digital disruptors of today, entrepreneurship has been a cornerstone of Nigeria's economic identity. The pre-colonial era laid the groundwork for a culture of collective prosperity, where trade was intertwined with community welfare and gender-inclusive practices. Colonialism, while exploitative, inadvertently spurred hybrid forms of entrepreneurship as Nigerians navigated imposed economic structures, blending tradition with necessity.

Post-independence aspirations for industrialization were overshadowed by oil dependency and political instability, pushing millions into an informal economy that remains a testament to survivalist ingenuity. The structural upheavals of the late 20th century revealed both vulnerabilities and the unyielding spirit of Nigerian entrepreneurs, particularly women, who dominate informal markets and sustain households amid systemic neglect.

In the 21st century, Nigeria's tech revolution has redefined entrepreneurship, positioning the country as Africa's fintech leader. Startups like Flutterwave and Farmcrowdy exemplify how innovation can address longstanding gaps in finance, agriculture, and healthcare. Yet, this progress coexists with enduring challenges erratic infrastructure, gender disparities in funding, and regulatory inefficiencies that echo historical inequities.

The path forward demands a deliberate fusion of lessons from Nigeria's past and the opportunities of its digital future. Policymakers must prioritize inclusive growth by investing in critical infrastructure, formalizing the informal sector through technology, and championing gender equity in access to capital. Equally vital is leveraging Nigeria's vast diaspora network for knowledge exchange and investment.

Ultimately, Nigeria's entrepreneurial evolution is not just an economic story but a cultural one. It reflects a society that has continually reinvented itself, drawing on communal values to navigate global challenges. By addressing systemic barriers and nurturing its innovative spirit, Nigeria can transform its entrepreneurial legacy into a blueprint for equitable, sustainable development, proving that resilience, when paired with vision, can turn historical adversity into future triumph.

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Broadcast Media for Entrepreneurial Growth and Business Success

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Executive Summary

This study is an examination of how entrepreneurs can effectively harness broadcast media to enhance creativity, drive innovation, and achieve business success. The uses and gratifications theory was anchored in this study. The findings revealed that entrepreneurs utilise broadcast media, particularly radio and television, to creatively engage their audience through unique advertisements, product launches, and storytelling, which fosters innovation by incorporating real-time feedback and adapting to customer needs. The study concluded that broadcast media serves as a vital tool for entrepreneurs to enhance creativity and innovation in their business strategies, then offering a platform for unique marketing approaches that foster deeper connections with their audience and drive business transformation. The study recommended that entrepreneurs should continue to leverage broadcast media as a creative platform, ensuring their marketing strategies are innovative and engaging to capture the attention of their target audience.

Keywords: Broadcast Media, Entrepreneurial Growth, Creativity, Innovation, Business Success

Introduction

The rapid evolution of broadcast media has significantly influenced entrepreneurial growth in contemporary society. The interplay of creativity, innovation, and business success has become increasingly relevant in the digital age, where media platforms serve as essential tools for business communication, marketing, and customer engagement. According to McQuail (2010), broadcast media encompasses radio, television, and digital streaming services, all of which play pivotal roles in shaping consumer perceptions and fostering business visibility. Entrepreneurs leverage these media platforms to reach broader audiences, promote their brands, and establish competitive advantages in various industries.

Creativity and innovation are crucial drivers of entrepreneurial success, particularly in the media-driven economy (Amabile & Pratt, 2016). Creativity involves generating unique ideas, while innovation entails transforming these ideas into practical solutions that enhance business performance. Entrepreneurs who effectively integrate creative strategies with media exposure often achieve higher market penetration and brand recognition. This dynamic process underscores the significance of broadcast media in fostering entrepreneurial ventures, especially in emerging economies like Nigeria, where media consumption is on the rise (Nwabueze & Ezeibunwa, 2019).

The influence of broadcast media on entrepreneurship extends beyond advertising and branding. It encompasses storytelling, audience engagement, and interactive communication, which are essential for business sustainability (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Television and radio programs dedicated to business discussions, start-up mentorship, and investment opportunities have contributed to the growth of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) by providing entrepreneurs with valuable insights and networking opportunities. These media platforms not only serve as promotional channels but also facilitate knowledge transfer and business education, thereby enhancing entrepreneurial capabilities.

Moreover, the emergence of digital broadcasting and social media integration has revolutionized how businesses interact with their target audiences. Entrepreneurs now have access to multiple media channels, allowing them to tailor their messages for specific demographic groups (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). This shift has democratised business promotion, enabling start-ups and small businesses to compete with larger corporations by utilising cost-effective advertising strategies. Research indicates that businesses with strong media presence are more likely to attract investors and customers, leading to increased profitability and long-term sustainability (Chaffey & Smith, 2022).

Despite the advantages of broadcast media in entrepreneurial development, several challenges hinder its full potential. High advertising costs, media saturation, and regulatory constraints often limit the accessibility of media platforms for small businesses (Obijiofor & Hanusch, 2018). Additionally, media credibility and consumer trust are critical factors influencing business success. Entrepreneurs must navigate these challenges by adopting innovative media strategies that ensure authenticity, transparency, and audience engagement. Studies have shown that businesses that prioritise ethical advertising and interactive content experience higher customer loyalty and brand advocacy (Solomon et al., 2017).

The interplay of creativity, innovation, and business success in broadcast media is

evident in the strategies employed by successful entrepreneurs. For instance, companies that leverage storytelling and emotionally compelling advertisements tend to generate stronger customer connections and brand loyalty (Heath & Heath, 2007). The effectiveness of such approaches highlights the importance of aligning media strategies with consumer psychology to maximise business impact. Entrepreneurs must continuously adapt to evolving media trends to maintain relevance and competitiveness in their respective industries.

In addition to traditional media platforms, digital transformation has expanded opportunities for entrepreneurs to utilise video streaming, podcasts, and interactive online broadcasts. These formats allow businesses to engage with audiences in real time, fostering a sense of community and customer participation (Jenkins, 2006). The shift from passive media consumption to active audience engagement underscores the need for entrepreneurs to embrace innovative content creation techniques that resonate with their target markets.

Furthermore, the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) and data analytics in broadcast media has revolutionized business marketing strategies. Entrepreneurs can now analyse consumer behavior patterns, optimize advertising campaigns, and personalize content delivery based on audience preferences (Davenport & Harris, 2017). This data-driven approach enhances marketing efficiency and ensures that businesses allocate resources effectively for maximum media impact. As a result, broadcast media have become a powerful tool for strategic business growth and competitive positioning.

Given the increasing role of broadcast media in entrepreneurial development, it is essential to explore its impact on business growth and sustainability. This study examines how entrepreneurs harness media platforms to enhance their creativity, drive innovation, and achieve long-term success. By analysing real-world case studies and industry trends, the research provides insights into effective media strategies that contribute to business expansion. The findings offer practical recommendations for entrepreneurs, policymakers, and media practitioners seeking to optimise the use of broadcast media for economic growth.

Broadcast media serve as a critical enabler of entrepreneurial growth by fostering creativity, innovation, and business success. The evolving media landscape presents both opportunities and challenges for entrepreneurs, necessitating adaptive strategies for sustainable business development. This study bridges the gap between media influence and entrepreneurial practices, offering a comprehensive understanding of how broadcast media can be effectively harnessed to drive economic progress.

The significance of this study lies in its exploration of how entrepreneurs can strategically harness broadcast media to drive creativity, innovation, and business success, offering valuable insights for business owners, media practitioners, policymakers, and scholars. By examining the intersection of media influence and entrepreneurial growth, this study provides a framework for optimizing media engagement, enhancing brand visibility, and fostering economic sustainability, particularly in emerging markets like Nigeria. Additionally, it contributes to the academic discourse on media entrepreneurship, equipping future researchers with empirical data and practical recommendations for leveraging broadcast media as a catalyst for business development.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the increasing role of broadcast media in business promotion, many entrepreneurs struggle to fully harness its potential for sustainable growth and competitive advantage. Traditional and digital broadcast platforms offer vast opportunities for brand awareness, customer engagement, and market expansion, yet many small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) face challenges in effectively integrating creativity and innovation into their media strategies. High advertising costs, limited media literacy, and regulatory constraints often hinder entrepreneurs from leveraging broadcast media optimally. Additionally, the oversaturation of content in the media space makes it difficult for businesses to stand out, leading to ineffective marketing efforts and reduced consumer engagement. While large corporations with substantial budgets can dominate media spaces, smaller businesses often lack the resources to create compelling, innovative content that resonates with target audiences.

Furthermore, there is limited empirical research on how broadcast media specifically influences entrepreneurial success, particularly in emerging economies like Nigeria. While studies have explored digital marketing and social media's role in business growth, the nuanced impact of broadcast media such as radio and television on creativity, innovation, and business performance remains underexplored. Many entrepreneurs fail to align their media strategies with evolving consumer behaviours, technological advancements, and competitive market dynamics. This study, therefore, seeks to bridge this knowledge gap by analysing how entrepreneurs can effectively harness broadcast media to enhance business creativity, drive innovation, and achieve long-term success. By identifying key challenges and best practices, the research provides practical recommendations that empower businesses to maximise the benefits of broadcast media for entrepreneurial growth.

Aim and Objectives

This study aims to examine how entrepreneurs can effectively harness broadcast media to enhance creativity, drive innovation, and achieve business success. The objectives are:

1. To analyse the role of broadcast media in enhancing creativity and innovation among entrepreneurs.
2. To examine the impact of broadcast media on business growth and market expansion.
3. To identify the challenges entrepreneurs face in utilising broadcast media and propose effective strategies for overcoming them.

The Role of Broadcast Media in Entrepreneurial Growth

Broadcast media play a crucial role in entrepreneurial development by providing a platform for brand visibility, market expansion, and customer engagement. McQuail (2010) describes broadcast media as a mass communication channel that includes television, radio, and digital streaming services, all of which significantly influence business success. Entrepreneurs leverage these media platforms to promote their products, create awareness, and establish credibility in competitive markets. Through targeted advertising and promotional content, businesses can reach a wider audience and enhance their market penetration, particularly in emerging economies like Nigeria (Nwabueze & Ezeibunwa, 2019).

Also, broadcast media serve as an essential tool for entrepreneurial education and networking. Business-related radio and television programs provide entrepreneurs with valuable insights into market trends, consumer behaviour, and investment opportunities (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Shows like *Business Today and Market Trends* offer expert advice, case studies, and success stories that inspire and guide aspiring entrepreneurs. By disseminating industry knowledge and best practices, broadcast media fosters business literacy and enhances decision-making among entrepreneurs. This role is particularly relevant in developing economies where access to formal business education may be limited.

Additionally, the integration of digital broadcasting and interactive media has transformed how entrepreneurs engage with their target audiences. Platforms like YouTube, online radio, and live-streaming services enable businesses to create dynamic, engaging content that resonates with consumers (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

The shift from traditional media consumption to digital interactivity allows entrepreneurs to receive real-time feedback, customize their messaging, and build stronger customer relationships. This evolution highlights the indispensable role of broadcast media in driving entrepreneurial growth in the 21st century.

Creativity and Innovation as Drivers of Business Success in Media Entrepreneurship

Creativity and innovation are essential components of business success, particularly in media entrepreneurship. Amabile and Pratt (2016) define creativity as the ability to generate novel and valuable ideas, while innovation involves the implementation of these ideas into products, services, or processes that enhance business performance. Entrepreneurs who leverage creative storytelling, visually appealing advertisements, and emotionally compelling content tend to capture audience attention and foster brand loyalty. Broadcast media provides a dynamic platform for entrepreneurs to experiment with innovative marketing strategies that differentiate their businesses from competitors.

The interplay of creativity and broadcast media is evident in successful advertising campaigns that utilise unique storytelling techniques and audience engagement strategies. Heath and Heath (2007) argue that memorable content often relies on emotional appeal, simplicity, and unexpectedness. Entrepreneurs who create compelling advertisements that resonate with consumer values and aspirations are more likely to achieve business growth. Television commercials, branded radio segments, and influencer partnerships are some of the creative strategies businesses use to maximise their impact through broadcast media.

Moreover, the rapid advancement of digital media technologies has expanded opportunities for creative entrepreneurship. Interactive advertisements, virtual reality (VR) marketing, and artificial intelligence-driven content personalisation are reshaping how businesses connect with consumers (Davenport & Harris, 2017). Entrepreneurs who embrace these technological innovations enhance their competitive edge, improve customer engagement, and drive business success. Therefore, integrating creativity and innovation into broadcast media strategies is fundamental for sustaining entrepreneurship in an evolving market landscape.

Challenges and Opportunities in Harnessing Broadcast Media for Business Growth

While broadcast media offers significant opportunities for business growth, entrepreneurs often face various challenges in maximising its potential. One of the primary obstacles is the high cost of media advertising, which limits access for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) (Obijiofor & Hanusch, 2018). Television and radio advertisements require substantial financial investment, making it difficult for start-ups with limited budgets to compete with larger corporations. As a result, many small businesses struggle to gain visibility in mainstream media, hindering their ability to attract customers and scale operations.

Another critical challenge is media saturation, where an overwhelming volume of advertisements reduces audience engagement and effectiveness. Kotler and Keller (2016) note that consumers are often bombarded with multiple promotional messages, leading to information fatigue and reduced brand recall. Entrepreneurs must develop innovative content strategies that stand out in crowded media spaces. Personalised messaging, interactive content, and niche-targeted advertising can help businesses overcome this challenge and maintain audience attention.

Despite these challenges, emerging digital broadcasting platforms present new opportunities for cost-effective media engagement. Social media live streaming, podcast marketing, and influencer collaborations provide affordable alternatives for entrepreneurs to reach their target audiences (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). By leveraging these tools, businesses can bypass traditional advertising barriers and connect with consumers more authentically. Therefore, understanding both the challenges and opportunities in broadcast media is crucial for entrepreneurs seeking to optimize their media strategies for business growth.

The Uses and Gratifications Theory

The Uses and Gratifications Theory, proposed by Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch in 1973, is a communication theory that explores how individuals actively seek out media to satisfy specific needs and desires. Unlike traditional media theories that view audiences as passive recipients of media messages, this theory posits that media consumers are active participants who use media to fulfil personal and social needs, such as entertainment, information, and social interaction (Katz et al., 1973). The theory outlines several key tenets, including the idea that media consumers have the freedom to choose how they engage with different media, the assumption that they

seek media content that fulfils their needs, and that media consumption is goal-directed, intentional, and based on individual preferences. The theory also emphasises that media use is influenced by individual differences, such as age, education, and socio-economic status.

The relevance of the Uses and Gratifications Theory to this study lies in its application to understanding how entrepreneurs use broadcast media to achieve specific business goals. Entrepreneurs actively choose media platforms (e.g., television, radio, social media) to meet their needs for visibility, brand promotion, and customer engagement (McQuail, 2010). This theory helps explain how entrepreneurs tailor their media strategies based on the audience's preferences and their objectives, thereby fostering creativity and innovation in business practices. However, a criticism of the theory is that it overly emphasises the autonomy of media consumers while neglecting the influence of media producers or external factors, such as regulatory frameworks and market pressures (Katz et al., 1973). Despite this, the theory's focus on active audience engagement and media selection provides valuable insights into how entrepreneurs use broadcast media to influence business success, making it highly applicable to understanding the dynamics of media and entrepreneurship in the context of this study.

Empirical Review

Nwabueze and Ezeunwa (2019) did work on *Digital Media and Entrepreneurship in Nigeria*. The study investigates how digital media platforms (social media, websites, and blogs) are used by entrepreneurs in Nigeria to enhance business visibility, attract customers, and foster growth. The researchers employed a mixed-method approach, using surveys and in-depth interviews with Nigerian entrepreneurs. The survey data was analysed quantitatively, while the interview data was analysed qualitatively to provide deeper insights. The study found that digital media significantly contributed to business growth by enabling entrepreneurs to engage with a broader audience, build their brands, and promote their products with relatively low costs. However, challenges such as limited media literacy and the oversaturation of digital content were identified as barriers to maximizing the effectiveness of digital media. Like the current study, this research also focuses on how media, particularly digital platforms, support entrepreneurship. Both studies emphasize the importance of media in driving business success and fostering creativity. While the current study concentrates on broadcast media (radio and television), this review study focused primarily on digital media platforms like social media and websites. The use of traditional media is not explored in

its context.

Oso & Adegboye (2018)'s *The Impact of Media Advertising on the Growth of Small and Medium Enterprises in Nigeria*. The study examines the impact of media advertising (television, radio, and print) on the growth of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Nigeria. The study employed a quantitative approach, using structured questionnaires distributed to SMEs in Lagos and Port Harcourt. Data was analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics to measure the relationship between media advertising and business growth. The findings revealed that media advertising, especially television and radio, had a positive impact on the growth of SMEs by increasing their customer base and improving sales. However, the cost of media advertising was identified as a major challenge for small businesses. Both the reviewed study and the present study focus on the role of broadcast media (particularly radio and television) in enhancing business success and creativity. They also address the issue of the high cost of media advertising as a barrier for SMEs. This reviewed study mainly focused on the overall impact of media advertising on business growth, while the current study delves deeper into the interplay of creativity, innovation, and entrepreneurial success through broadcast media.

Adebayo & Olayinka (2020) conducted a study on *Leveraging Radio for Entrepreneurial Success in Rural Nigeria*. This study ascertains how entrepreneurs in rural Nigeria use radio broadcasts to promote their businesses and drive innovation in their respective sectors. The study used a qualitative case study approach, conducting interviews with rural entrepreneurs who actively use radio for business promotion. The data was analysed thematically to identify patterns and insights. The study found that radio, due to its wide reach and affordability, is an effective tool for entrepreneurs in rural areas to communicate with their target audience. Entrepreneurs were able to drive innovation by tailoring radio programs to local preferences, but challenges like limited content production capacity and unreliable infrastructure were also identified. Both reviewed and current studies examine the use of broadcast media (radio) in fostering entrepreneurial growth and creativity, particularly in local contexts. Both studies also identify the limitations and barriers faced by entrepreneurs in utilising media effectively. This reviewed study focused on rural entrepreneurship, while the current study considers entrepreneurship in a more urbanised setting, examining broader media types like television in addition to radio.

The existing body of literature highlights the significant role of broadcast media in promoting entrepreneurship and driving business success. However, much of the research primarily focuses on the impact of digital media platforms such as social media, websites, and blogs, leaving a noticeable gap in understanding the specific

influence of traditional broadcast media, particularly radio and television, in fostering entrepreneurship (Nwabueze & Ezebunwa, 2019). While there are studies that acknowledge the relevance of radio and television for small and medium enterprises (SMEs), there is limited exploration into how these media platforms specifically contribute to creativity, innovation, and sustained business growth. Moreover, the studies that do exist often concentrate on urban-based businesses, with little attention given to the unique challenges and opportunities faced by entrepreneurs in less urbanised regions or emerging markets.

Furthermore, while some studies have examined the challenges entrepreneurs face in utilising broadcast media, there is a lack of comprehensive research that addresses how these challenges, such as high advertising costs, media saturation, and limited media literacy, affect the interplay between creativity, innovation, and business success. Previous research also fails to provide detailed recommendations on how entrepreneurs can overcome these challenges to optimise their use of broadcast media. This gap presents a significant opportunity for the current study to explore not only the role of broadcast media in entrepreneurship but also the creative strategies and innovations entrepreneurs can employ to maximise the effectiveness of these media platforms. By bridging this gap, the study offers new insights into how broadcast media can be leveraged for entrepreneurial growth in both urban and rural contexts.

Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative research method, specifically in-depth interviews, to explore how entrepreneurs harness broadcast media for creativity, innovation, and business success. The population for this study will consist of 2,545 entrepreneurs in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria, who actively engage with broadcast media, including radio and television, as part of their business strategies. The target population included both small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) from various sectors, such as retail, manufacturing, and services that have utilised broadcast media for marketing, brand promotion, or customer engagement. These entrepreneurs were selected based on their experience in using broadcast media as a key tool in their business practices, ensuring a rich and relevant data set.

A purposive sampling technique was employed to select 20 entrepreneurs who were actively engaged with broadcast media, ensuring that the sample represents diverse sectors and entrepreneurial experiences. Purposive sampling was appropriate for this study as it allows for the selection of participants with specific knowledge and experience that directly align with the research objectives. Data were collected through

semi-structured in-depth interviews, which allowed participants the flexibility to share detailed insights into their experiences and strategies when utilising broadcast media. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim for analysis. Data analysis followed thematic analysis, where common themes related to the use of broadcast media, challenges, innovations, and business growth were identified and analysed. This method provided a deep understanding of how entrepreneurs perceive and interact with broadcast media to foster creativity and business success.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Themes were deduced deductively following the research objectives. The following themes were deduced: Role of Broadcast Media in Creativity and Innovation; Impact of Broadcast Media on Business Growth and Challenges and Strategies in Using Broadcast Media for Business Success. These were presented and discussed below:

Role of Broadcast Media in Creativity and Innovation: This theme explores how entrepreneurs use broadcast media to enhance creativity and foster innovation in their business strategies, focusing on the various forms of media (radio, television) and their impact on business development. In the interviews, many entrepreneurs explained that they actively use broadcast media, particularly radio and television, as platforms to showcase their products and services in unique and creative ways. For example, some entrepreneurs mentioned collaborating with radio stations to air creative commercials or stories that resonate with their target audience. These advertisements are often designed to engage listeners by incorporating storytelling, humour, and cultural references that appeal to the local community. By making their content more relatable and memorable, entrepreneurs believe they can spark innovation in how their businesses are perceived and connect with a wider audience.

Further, several participants shared that radio and television are used to launch new products or services through innovative media campaigns. Entrepreneurs see these platforms as effective tools for announcing product innovations, new business models, or unique service offerings that differentiate them from competitors. One entrepreneur noted how they used a local radio station to host a live product demonstration, inviting listeners to participate in real-time feedback, which provided them with innovative ideas for improving the product. Such creative uses of broadcast media contribute to the business's innovation by fostering real-time interaction with potential customers.

Additionally, broadcast media provides entrepreneurs with the opportunity to

continuously evolve their business approaches. Through consistent engagement with media platforms, entrepreneurs are able to receive direct feedback from their audience, which they can use to refine their offerings. This feedback loop often leads to new strategies, creative marketing approaches, and innovative business models that were previously unconsidered. Entrepreneurs often incorporate consumer insights gained from these media interactions into their product development, which leads to constant improvement and adaptation.

However, a few entrepreneurs acknowledged that using broadcast media to foster creativity requires substantial investment and effort in content production. One participant highlighted the challenge of ensuring that content remains fresh, engaging, and aligned with their brand's evolving image. While broadcast media offers a platform for creative expression, the pressure to stay innovative in a highly competitive environment is an ongoing challenge. Despite these challenges, entrepreneurs view the ability to leverage broadcast media as essential in fostering creativity and driving innovation in their business strategies.

Impact of Broadcast Media on Business Growth: This theme examines the influence of broadcast media on business expansion, customer engagement, and overall market success, emphasising the contribution of media in driving business growth. The majority of entrepreneurs emphasised the significant role that broadcast media, particularly radio and television, play in driving business growth. Entrepreneurs explained that these media platforms provide them with an unmatched level of visibility and reach, which is crucial in expanding their customer base. One entrepreneur noted that their sales significantly increased after airing a targeted advertising campaign on a popular local radio station. By reaching a broader audience, they were able to attract new customers who might not have been exposed to their products otherwise.

Moreover, broadcast media were frequently cited as a powerful tool for enhancing brand recognition. Entrepreneurs who regularly use television and radio to promote their businesses shared that these platforms help establish a strong brand identity by providing consistent exposure. As one entrepreneur explained, when people hear or see your name repeatedly on the radio, it becomes easier for them to remember and trust your brand. This familiarity fosters consumer confidence, leading to increased business loyalty and repeated sales, which are key factors in business success.

In terms of growth, broadcast media also provides entrepreneurs with an avenue to network and collaborate with other businesses. Several participants mentioned how local radio programs allow them to form strategic partnerships, such as joint

promotions or sponsorships that enhance their brand visibility. These collaborations can increase business growth by attracting cross-industry customers. For example, an entrepreneur in the fashion industry described how they partnered with a local radio station to sponsor a lifestyle segment, which introduced their brand to a whole new market segment.

However, despite these positive impacts, some entrepreneurs expressed concerns about the high cost of utilising broadcast media. While the returns are often substantial, the financial investment required for sustained media engagement can be a challenge for smaller businesses with limited budgets. Entrepreneurs discussed how they had to carefully manage their resources to balance broadcast media expenses with other business needs. Despite these financial challenges, entrepreneurs overwhelmingly agreed that broadcast media is a key driver of business growth, making it an invaluable tool for success.

Challenges and Strategies in Using Broadcast Media for Business Success: This theme addresses the obstacles entrepreneurs face in leveraging broadcast media, such as cost, media saturation, and limited media literacy, as well as the strategies they employ to overcome these challenges and optimise media usage for business success. Many entrepreneurs cited the high cost of advertising on broadcast media as one of the primary challenges they face. Radio and television advertisements can be expensive, and for small businesses, the financial strain can be significant. Entrepreneurs shared that the cost of airtime, production of quality content, and the ongoing need for advertising campaigns can become overwhelming, especially when there is uncertainty about the return on investment. As one entrepreneur put it, "We have to be very strategic and selective with our advertising budget to ensure we are getting the best value for our money."

Another challenge that surfaced was media saturation and the difficulty of standing out amidst a sea of competing advertisements. Entrepreneurs acknowledged that in highly competitive industries, many businesses are using the same broadcast platforms, leading to audience fatigue. This saturation makes it harder for a business to capture the audience's attention and effectively communicate its message. One participant described how their business struggled to break through the noise on the radio, noting that audiences often tune out advertisements. To combat this, they emphasised the need for creativity in their content to ensure it grabs attention.

To overcome these challenges, many entrepreneurs adopted creative strategies to maximise the impact of their media campaigns. One common strategy was to collaborate with media outlets to create tailored content that aligned with the station's

programming, such as sponsorship of a popular radio show or integration into TV programming. By aligning with a well-established media personality or program, entrepreneurs could benefit from the existing audience's trust and attention. Another strategy involved negotiating with broadcast stations for lower airtime costs or opting for off-peak times when advertising rates were more affordable.

Additionally, some entrepreneurs relied on building long-term relationships with radio and television stations, which allowed them to negotiate better terms over time. For instance, entrepreneurs who had developed a strong presence on local radio stations noted that they were able to negotiate discounts or special packages for continued media exposure. Another strategy was to diversify media usage by incorporating social media alongside broadcast media, ensuring a more comprehensive and cost-effective marketing approach. These strategies helped entrepreneurs mitigate some of the challenges posed by high costs and media saturation, allowing them to continue leveraging broadcast media for business success.

Discussion of Findings

The study found that entrepreneurs utilise broadcast media, particularly radio and television, to creatively engage their audience through unique advertisements, product launches, and storytelling, which fosters innovation by incorporating real-time feedback and adapting to customer needs. The findings of Nwabueze and Ezebunwa (2019) align with the findings of the current research, as they similarly highlight how digital media fosters creativity and innovation by providing entrepreneurs with platforms to enhance visibility and engage with a broader audience. Both studies emphasise the importance of media in driving creative and innovative marketing approaches, though the current study focuses specifically on broadcast media like radio and television. The uses and gratifications theory supports the first finding by suggesting that entrepreneurs actively choose broadcast media to fulfil their need for creativity and innovation in business marketing. According to this theory, individuals use media to gratify specific needs, such as the desire to engage their audience creatively through advertisements and content that resonates with their target demographic. This finding implies that entrepreneurs should prioritise using broadcast media as a tool for creative marketing, leveraging its unique capabilities to engage customers, foster innovation, and stay competitive in a rapidly evolving market, ultimately enhancing their business strategies.

The study revealed that broadcast media significantly contributes to business growth by providing entrepreneurs with broad visibility, enhancing brand recognition, attracting

new customers, and facilitating strategic collaborations, although the high cost of media engagement remains a challenge for some businesses. This study's findings resonate with the findings of the current research, which highlights the positive impact of broadcast media on business growth. Oso and Adegboye's (2018) research also underscores the role of media advertising, particularly radio and television, in boosting business visibility, customer engagement, and sales, showing a direct link between media exposure and business success. This finding aligns with the uses and gratifications theory, which posits that entrepreneurs use broadcast media to satisfy their need for increased visibility and business growth. Broadcast media serves as a tool for reaching a broad audience and building a strong brand presence, fulfilling the entrepreneur's need for recognition and customer engagement, ultimately driving business success. This finding implies that broadcast media is a crucial driver of business growth, encouraging entrepreneurs to incorporate radio and television into their marketing strategies to increase visibility, attract new customers, and build brand recognition, while also considering cost-effective ways to maximize media impact.

The study showed that entrepreneurs face challenges such as high advertising costs, media saturation, and limited media literacy, but they employ strategies like content creativity, strategic partnerships with media outlets, and cost negotiation to overcome these obstacles and maximise the effectiveness of broadcast media for business success. Adebayo and Olayinka's (2020) study supports the finding regarding the challenges entrepreneurs face in utilising broadcast media, particularly in rural settings, such as media saturation and limited resources. Their research also discusses strategies to overcome these obstacles, like collaborating with media outlets, which aligns with the current study's findings on how entrepreneurs creatively mitigate challenges to maximise broadcast media's business potential. This finding is reinforced by the uses and gratifications theory, which suggests that entrepreneurs encounter challenges when the media does not fully meet their needs or expectations. However, the theory also explains how individuals actively seek alternative strategies such as content creativity, partnerships, and cost-effective media use to better fulfil their goals and overcome barriers to effective media usage for business success. This finding implies that while entrepreneurs face challenges like high costs and media saturation, they can overcome these obstacles through strategic partnerships, creative content, and effective negotiation, ensuring that broadcast media continues to be a valuable resource for business success.

Conclusion

This study concluded that broadcast media serves as a vital tool for entrepreneurs to enhance creativity and innovation in their business strategies, offering a platform for unique marketing approaches that foster deeper connections with their audience and drive business transformation.

The study established that broadcast media play a key role in business growth by providing entrepreneurs with broad visibility, greater brand recognition, and access to a larger customer base, making it an indispensable asset for businesses seeking to expand and succeed in competitive markets.

In conclusion, although entrepreneurs face significant challenges in utilising broadcast media, such as high costs and media saturation, their ability to adopt creative strategies and navigate these obstacles demonstrates the continued importance of broadcast media for sustained business success and innovation.

This study contributed to the existing body of knowledge by providing a comprehensive understanding of how entrepreneurs can leverage broadcast media, specifically radio and television, to enhance creativity, innovation, and business growth. It expands on the existing literature by focusing not only on the benefits of media engagement but also on the challenges entrepreneurs face, such as high costs and media saturation, while offering practical strategies for overcoming these obstacles. By emphasising the unique role of traditional broadcast media in comparison to digital platforms, the study highlights its continued relevance in fostering entrepreneurship in both urban and rural settings. Furthermore, it offers new insights into how entrepreneurs can strategically utilise broadcast media for sustained business success, thus enriching the discourse on media's role in entrepreneurial development and providing actionable recommendations for future business practices.

Recommendations

Given the findings from the work essay, the following recommendations have been made.

- 1) Entrepreneurs should continue to leverage broadcast media as a creative platform, ensuring their marketing strategies are innovative and engaging to capture the attention of their target audience.
- 2) Entrepreneurs should be encouraged to invest in broadcast media to enhance their visibility, build brand recognition, and attract new customers, while

exploring cost-effective strategies to maximise the return on investment.

- 3) Entrepreneurs should develop strategic partnerships with media outlets, create unique content, and negotiate affordable airtime to overcome the challenges of high costs and media saturation, ensuring optimal use of broadcast media for business success.

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Creativity, Innovation, and Entrepreneurship in Library Services

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Executive Summary

This chapter examines the evolving role of libraries in a digital and rapidly changing society, emphasizing the necessity for creativity, innovation, and entrepreneurship in library services. Traditionally seen as repositories of knowledge, libraries are now positioned as dynamic community hubs that facilitate lifelong learning and foster innovation. The chapter explores the interplay between creativity and innovation in enhancing library services, particularly through entrepreneurial approaches that address the diverse needs of contemporary users. By highlighting libraries' critical role in promoting a culture of creativity and innovation, ultimately underscoring their significance in knowledge preservation and dissemination. The chapter suggests that by embracing new ideas and technologies, libraries can improve service delivery, engage diverse populations, and stimulate economic growth, particularly in developing regions. This chapter contributes to the understanding of how libraries can adapt to societal changes and maintain their relevance as essential institutions in the information economy.

Keywords: Creativity, Entrepreneurship, innovation, Library Services.

Introduction

In an increasingly digital and fast-paced world, library services are compelled to adapt and thrive through creativity, innovation, and entrepreneurship. As custodians of knowledge, libraries have traditionally served as community hubs for information dissemination and learning; however, the rapid evolution of technology has necessitated a paradigm shift in their operational models. This research paper seeks to explore the multifaceted relationship between creativity and innovation within library services and the entrepreneurial approaches that can enhance their relevance in contemporary society. Throughout this analysis, the interplay of these elements will be examined to better understand how libraries can harness new ideas and technologies to improve service delivery and engage diverse user populations. By investigating

successful case studies and innovative practices, this study will highlight the essential role of libraries in fostering a culture of creativity and innovation, ultimately positioning themselves as critical players in the preservation and dissemination of knowledge.

Definition of Terms

Creativity

Creativity is a complex and multifaceted concept that has been defined in various ways across different disciplines, including psychology, education, philosophy, and history. Most definitions focus on the product. According to one common approach, persons or processes are creative to the extent that they produce creative products, and a product is creative if it meets two conditions: in addition to being new, it must also be valuable. Many theorists argue that novelty is not sufficient, because something can be new but worthless (e.g., a meaningless string of letters), in which case it doesn't merit the compliment of being called “creative”. Immanuel Kant is often cited as anticipating this definition of creativity in his discussion of (artistic) genius. According to a common interpretation, Kant defines (artistic) genius as the ability to produce works that are not only “original”, since “there can be original nonsense”, but also “exemplary” (Kant, 1790).

Philosophers have refined that point with examples that suggest that novelty isn't really necessary for creativity. For instance, Newton's discovery of calculus was creative even if, unbeknownst to him at the time, Leibniz got there first, one of many examples of what are called “multiples” in the history of science (Simonton, 2004).

It is often described as the interaction among aptitude, process, and environment that produces an idea, act, or artifact perceived as novel and valuable within a specific sociocultural context (Dublin City University, 2025). This definition emphasizes that creativity can be fostered, expressed in varying degrees, and is influenced by personal traits and environmental contexts. Furthermore, creativity can refer to both a product and a process, highlighting its dynamic nature. The Four Ps of creativity, Process, Product, Person, and Press, provide a framework for understanding the different facets of creativity. The process focuses on the mental mechanisms involved in creative thinking, the product pertains to the tangible outcomes of creativity, the person examines the traits that contribute to creative potential, and the press refers to the environmental factors that facilitate or hinder creative expression (Dublin City University, 2025; Sear *et al.*, 2025).

In educational contexts, creativity is often linked to the production of something new and useful, although this definition raises questions about the criteria for novelty and utility. Therefore, a working definition that encompasses the various dimensions of creativity is essential for educators aiming to cultivate a creative culture in their classrooms (Dublin City University, 2025).

Schubert (2021). defined creativity as a process that particular, leads to the production of a novel, useful idea or product which is distinct from reproduction or non-production. He further conceptualized creativity into four components: (1) ability (to create), (2) intentionality (to create), (3) a context in which the creativity occurs, and (4) a product is generated that is novel and useful (Walia, 2019; Runco & Jaeger, 2012).

Mazeh (2020) posited that creative people can change normal things into outstanding things. Creativity and resourcefulness come through genuine determination, constant hours of hard work, adequate training, high-level objectives, and months of practical experience. It requires many things: intellectual abilities, knowledge, styles of thinking, personality, motivation, and environment. The fostering of creativity in the classroom and promotion of creativity with cognisance of the congenial environment will promote space for exploration.

Cropley (2020) opined that creativity involves doing these things in ways that are, on the one hand, *novel* and the other, *effective* in achieving a desired result and the result are abstract actions such as communication of a feeling, arousal of aesthetic admiration, provocation of a new way of looking at something, development of new understandings of experience or existence, to concrete results such as the making of works of great beauty or imagination, the design and construction of improved or novel devices, machines, buildings or structures, improved processes or systems, more efficient operation of something, even enhancement of profits or preservation of national security. In library settings, creativity is seen as a special approach to the use of technology that involves both “creative” access and “creative” provision strategies. These strategies facilitate easy access to information resources without visiting the library building through repositories and data storage centers available online to aid research, teaching, and learning.

Innovation

There are a significant number of definitions of innovation that are used across different fields in academia, industry, government, and service provision. The academic literature available relates to a wide spectrum of disciplines and can cut across discipline areas. For this chapter, it is important to have a definition of innovation that is suitable for the subject.

To do this, different definitions of innovation in the literature has been examined to establish an understanding of the components that make up the concept of innovation and specifically in relation to social Innovation is seen as the process of translating creative ideas into tangible products, services, or processes that provide value and meet the needs of users or markets. This is why Innovation is closely linked to creativity because it gives entrepreneurs the effective application of new solutions, processes, and products. Innovation manifests in diverse forms, each serving unique purposes and delivering distinct benefits Product innovation, Process, Innovation, Service Innovation, Incremental Innovation, Disruptive Innovation, Open Innovation, Sustainable Innovation, Social Innovation, Digital Innovation, Technology Innovation, and Computing Innovation (Brown & Taylor, 2022; Jain, 2023; Kogabayev & Maziliauskas, 2017).

According to Jain (2023), innovation is defined as the process of bringing about new ideas, methods, products, services, or solutions that have a significant positive impact and value. It involves transforming creative concepts into tangible outcomes that improve efficiency and effectiveness or address unmet needs. Innovation is not limited to technological advancements and encompasses novel approaches to problem-solving, processes, organizational practices, or business model innovations. At its core, innovation involves challenging the status quo, thinking outside the box, and taking calculated risks to drive progress and achieve breakthrough outcomes.

Similarly, Taylor (2017), viewed innovation as the introduction of new elements into a service, new knowledge, new organization, new management/skills, core components which is “the creative process whereby new or improved ideas are successfully developed and applied to produce outcomes that are practical and of value” meaning any innovation brought into library services must add value and be practical in usage to ensure smooth delivery of information for diverse information users making use of library resources.

Entrepreneurship

There is no universal consensus on defining entrepreneurship. Scholars and studies have been defined in various specialties and disciplines. The word is derived from a French verb, “Entreprendre,” which means 'to undertake,' and Richard Cantillon is said to have first coined the phrase in his manuscript in 1730 (Vaggi & Groenewegen, 2003). A substantial amount of research on entrepreneurship has focused on the economic importance and risks of entrepreneurship. These economic definitions of entrepreneurship focus on the economic significance of entrepreneurship and the economic environment. For Drucker, entrepreneurship means the creation of a new

business, and anyone who manages to establish a new business is an entrepreneur outright (Drucker 1985). Shane and Vankataraman (2000) defined entrepreneurship in a slightly different manner. For them, “entrepreneurship involves the study of sources of opportunities; the processes of discovery, evaluation, and exploitation of opportunities; and the set of individuals who discover, evaluate, and exploit them”. For their definition, an entrepreneur does not necessarily need to be a manager or founder of a firm, as has been assumed in much of the research on entrepreneurship.

Entrepreneurship is seen as the process of identifying and pursuing opportunities to create new products or services. It can also refer to the person who starts a business, identifying opportunities to sell and make a profit, and their involvement in making decisions about location, form, and resource use. Entrepreneurship in library services is the process of using resources to create new services and products to meet user needs. It can also involve developing a business idea and turning it into a viable business. By provision of in-house workshops training for staff on attitudinal change and mindset that allows library professionals to pursue opportunities, leveraging on available resources to create new services and products, along with ensuring a sustainable business model like Information consultancy and bibliographic services for libraries and information seekers, Library personnel management consultancy services, Library establishment information consultancy, Book publishing and vending, Private public subscription library, Library digitalization consultancy, Periodical subscription agency, Book distribution agency. These aforementioned services go far beyond just working in the library, but are also a key ingredient in all library services across the globe.

Library Services

Library is the heart of any institution, due to its uniqueness for provision of access to reading materials for all ages and groups, assist users find and use library materials and its resources, provide information to meet the needs of users, students and faculty, for personal, educational, business, and other purposes, and critically to support and develop the curricula of tertiary institutions.

The library and information service are fundamentally concerned with the provision and dissemination of information to clients of the library. It is not only concerned with or preoccupied with the collection and organization of information resources (Onu, 2010). Library services encompass a range of activities and resources provided by libraries and information centers to meet the informational, educational, and recreational needs of their communities, including access to digital resources, reference services, and community programming (Hussain, 2023).

According to Onu (2010), entrepreneurship in Library and Information Services has brought new innovation and the need for people to be self-independent and practice global trends of information provision due to the global economic meltdown, governments promoting the creation of innovative ideas and implementing them. The dynamics of business practice could now be introduced in the hitherto free zone of library and information service to a fee-based quality library and information service. With profit-maximization, it is hoped that the provision of this social service would be of high quality, which would attract the customership of researchers and other categories of information users.

Kumar (2014). defined library services as Services provided by the library to online students can include instruction on how to access and use library materials; reference services to provide quick and in-depth answers to students' questions; and materials delivery services that provide students with access to library materials online or items delivered to students' homes. Library services are the resources and activities that libraries offer to meet the needs of their users. These services may include lending materials, providing information, and offering educational and recreational materials. Some of the library services include instruction on how to access and use library materials. The library services/facilities include Circulation Service, Reference Service, Online reservation of books, Recommendation of library material, Current Awareness Service, Inter Library Loan Service, Photocopying / Printing Service, Orientation and Information Sessions, Selective Dissemination of Information, Audio Visual Service, and Multimedia Section.

Materials and Methods

The methodology of research is based on document analysis of literature sources related to creativity, innovation, and entrepreneurship. The chapter explored the definitions of Creativity, innovation, entrepreneurship, and library services. In order to answer this question, this chapter explored from literature on the internet with definitions to understand the concept of creativity, innovation, and entrepreneurship, with the definitions within the existing literature.

Creativity, innovation, entrepreneurship, and library services are interconnected concepts that contribute to societal advancement. Creativity fuels innovation by providing the original ideas necessary for developing new products and services. Entrepreneurship leverages these innovations to create businesses that fulfill market needs, while library services support this ecosystem by providing access to information and resources that foster creativity and innovation (Brown & Taylor, 2022; Crompton, 2020; Taylor, 2017).

Overview of the Role of Libraries in Modern Society

In contemporary society, libraries serve as vital hubs for creativity, innovation, and entrepreneurship, transcending their traditional roles as mere repositories of books. They are increasingly recognized as dynamic centers that foster lifelong learning and community engagement. By providing access to diverse resources, including digital media and technology, libraries empower individuals to develop new skills and ideas that are essential in an ever-evolving job market. As highlighted in recent studies, the services provided by libraries are crucial in stimulating innovation systems and encouraging entrepreneurial initiatives within communities (Frag *et al.*, 2023). Moreover, libraries play an instrumental role in education by enhancing entrepreneurship training within Library and Information Science (LIS), particularly in developing regions like Nigeria, where LIS graduates are encouraged to harness their skills to stimulate economic growth and societal advancement (Abdullahi *et al.*, 2021). This transformation illustrates libraries' commitment to adapting to societal needs and driving sustainable progress.

Creativity in Library Services

The evolution of library services has increasingly called for creativity as a fundamental component in meeting diverse community needs. Libraries are no longer mere repositories of books; rather, they have transformed into dynamic spaces that foster learning, innovation, and entrepreneurial thinking. This shift underscores the necessity for library professionals to adopt creative approaches in the design and delivery of services that resonate with users. For instance, the integration of technology and information resources enables libraries to offer unique programs aimed at skill development and entrepreneurship education, particularly in regions like Nigeria, where innovative Library and Information Science (LIS) graduates can leverage their knowledge to create economic opportunities (Abdullahi *et al.*, 2021). Jbara (2024) posited that creative behavior is a fundamental catalyst for success. This is because it allows library administrators and management to transcend mere ideation and master strategic innovation. This creative ethos is particularly evident when considering the diverse motivations behind its creation. Furthermore, creativity empowers libraries to implement effective marketing strategies, enhance user engagement, and maximize resources, ultimately positioning them as vital players in community development and information economies (Badrin *et al.*, 2024).

Role of Creativity and Innovation in Entrepreneurship

According to McGoldrick (2025) posited that creativity and innovation assist individuals in developing new ways of improving an existing product or service to optimize the business. In a library setting, bringing in new successful innovations is the driving force that allows library administrators to brainstorm outside the box and beyond the traditional solutions for information services for all its clientele. Through these unique ways and boundless new, interesting, potential, yet versatile ideas come up. Overall, creativity and innovation form an integral part of entrepreneurial success because they empower libraries to discover opportunities, solve problems, differentiate themselves, adapt to constant change, and to continuously improve their growth and development from information sourcing, provision, and satisfaction. By embracing creativity and fostering an innovative mindset, libraries can build successful services established to meet the ever-evolving information landscape.

Entrepreneurs and Creativity

Creativity is an indispensable trait for entrepreneurs. It drives idea generation, opportunity recognition, problem-solving, innovation, and differentiation. Creative entrepreneurs embrace risk, communicate effectively, and continually learn and adapt. By harnessing their creativity, entrepreneurs can navigate challenges, seize opportunities, create new solutions, and build successful and impactful ventures.

But creativity does not only assist entrepreneurs in the initial stages of coming up with a business idea. Creativity will also be a driving force and highly valuable in terms of: Entrepreneurs and innovation go hand in hand. Innovation is a key driver of entrepreneurial success, and entrepreneurs play a critical role in bringing innovative ideas to life. They adapt to change, solve problems, and fuel business growth through innovation. By embracing innovation, entrepreneurs can create disruptive solutions, differentiate themselves in the market, and ultimately achieve entrepreneurial success. Having a good hold on innovation and, as a result, innovative ideas, is very important for entrepreneurs. Not only will an innovative mindset be advantageous in coming up with products, services, and business ideas, but it will also be exceptionally helpful when it comes to adapting to change and finding new and improved ways of doing things in your business structure.

Strategies for Fostering Creativity among Library Staff

Developing a culture of creativity among library staff is essential for adapting to the evolving landscape of information services. One effective strategy is to encourage collaboration through interdisciplinary teams, which can enhance the exchange of ideas and innovative problem-solving approaches. By facilitating regular brainstorming sessions and workshops, libraries can activate the creative potential of their employees, leading to novel service offerings and improved user experiences. Additionally, professional development opportunities that focus on creativity and entrepreneurship can equip staff with the necessary skills to implement innovative solutions. As cited in the research, initiatives that align with university innovation and entrepreneurship can serve as a model for libraries, inspiring staff to engage in creative practices that drive library services forward (Farag *et al.*, 2023). Furthermore, integrating technology into library processes fosters an environment where experimentation and adaptability thrive, ultimately contributing to workforce dynamism (Antoncjak & Carraz, 2024).

Innovation in Library Services

In the evolving landscape of library services, innovation plays a pivotal role in enhancing user engagement and operational efficiency. As libraries adapt to the demands of the digital age, they are increasingly implementing advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence and automation to streamline services and improve user experiences. This evolution not only modifies traditional job profiles but also necessitates new skill sets for library professionals, thereby elevating the overall quality of service offered to patrons (Sima *et al.*, 2020). Furthermore, the emphasis on sustainable management within library operations allows for a more adaptive framework that aligns with the rapid technological changes impacting education and information access (Segura *et al.*, 2020). By fostering an environment that embraces creative solutions and entrepreneurial approaches, libraries can effectively address contemporary challenges while remaining vital community hubs that promote lifelong learning and innovation.

Implementation of Technology-Driven Solutions in Libraries

The integration of technology-driven solutions in libraries is not merely a trend but a fundamental shift that fosters creativity and innovation in library services. By leveraging digital tools, libraries can enhance user experience, streamline operations, and provide access to a broader range of resources. Initiatives such as digital archives and electronic resource management systems exemplify how technology can

revolutionize traditional library functions. Moreover, academic leadership plays a crucial role in cultivating an environment conducive to innovation by encouraging faculty and staff to adopt cutting-edge practices and share their knowledge effectively, ultimately preparing students to become future innovators (Machtley *et al.*, 2017). Additionally, events like those orchestrated by the Helen Hamlyn Centre for Design illuminate the importance of collaborative learning and diverse perspectives in fostering technological advancements within library contexts (Bichard *et al.*, 2011). In sum, the strategic implementation of technology not only modernizes library services but also cultivates an entrepreneurial spirit essential for adapting to the evolving information landscape.

Design thinking is a method to focus the design and development decisions of a product on the needs of the library patrons, typically involving an empathy-driven process to accommodate diverse library users ranging from library users with special needs, disabilities those with wheelchair raft, special librarians available to attend to their information needs whenever they visit the library, this alone solves defined complex problems and create solutions. Recognising the importance of design thinking will provide solutions to problems that can be solved with enough money. For example, the British Library a well renowned library in the United Kingdom have a possession artifacts, scripts, historical documents and to encourage user to constantly visit and use it resources had introduction of information literacy class, cultural events, workshops, tours and event for teachers and schools, families (family Station) and learners of all ages and this promoted the use of the library not just a monumental center of information storage and preservation (British Library, 2025).

The Future of Creativity, Innovation, and Entrepreneurship in Library Services

As libraries evolve in the 21st century, their role as hubs of creativity, innovation, and entrepreneurship is increasingly prominent. This future landscape envisions libraries not just as repositories of information but as dynamic spaces that facilitate collaboration among diverse stakeholders, including individuals, startups, and educational institutions (Hözl *et al.*, 2005). By embracing 21st-century technologies and methodologies, libraries can foster entrepreneurial ecosystems that encourage the development of new ideas and services. For instance, integrating makerspaces, digital literacy programs, and entrepreneurial training workshops can empower community members to explore their creative potential and launch innovative projects. Furthermore, libraries can leverage data analytics and community feedback to curate responsive services that meet the changing needs of their patrons, ensuring sustained

relevance. Ultimately, the future of library services hinges on their ability to create adaptive environments that stimulate imagination and promote economic growth within their communities.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the intersection of creativity, innovation, and entrepreneurship within library services has emerged as a vital framework for addressing contemporary challenges and opportunities in the sector. As libraries adapt to rapidly changing technological landscapes and user needs, fostering an entrepreneurial mindset among library professionals is paramount. This evolution is supported by insights such as those from the National Council for Graduate Entrepreneurship, which emphasizes the importance of merging innovative thinking with practical skills in higher education frameworks. The creative industries, as highlighted in recent studies, also provide a fertile ground for libraries to cultivate interdisciplinary collaborations, enhancing their relevance in a digital age. By embracing these principles, libraries can transform into dynamic community hubs capable of driving social change and offering enriched experiences, ultimately redefining their roles in society and ensuring their sustainability in the future.

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ABOUT THE BOOK

Entrepreneurship has traditionally been dominated by empirical and quantitative approaches, focusing on issues like startup success, innovation, and economic growth. However, a growing recognition of the importance of philosophical inquiry in understanding the entrepreneurial mindset and its implications has led to a surge of interest in the philosophy of entrepreneurship. This edited volume brings together a diverse group of scholars from philosophy, business, religion, entrepreneurship, etc., to explore the philosophical foundations of entrepreneurship, and to examine the intersection of entrepreneurship with various philosophical traditions. Through a range of perspectives, this book showcases the richness and diversity of philosophical thought on entrepreneurship. It brings a wealth of expertise and experience to the table, ensuring that this book provides a comprehensive and authoritative exploration of the philosophy of entrepreneurship.

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