

Place of Social Networks And Entrepreneurial Orientation Among University Students: A Study of Selected Universities in North Central Nigeria:

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Abstract: The research carried out a study on social networks and entrepreneurial orientation in selected universities in North Central Nigeria to establish a relationship between networking ability and risk taking disposition amongst students in the selected universities. The study used primary data that were generated via structured questionnaires that were administered on the selected respondents. Descriptive statistics, correlation and other diagnostics were used to analyze the data and to test the hypothesis. The study found a statistically significant relationship between networking ability and risk taking disposition ($r=0.514, p<0.05, n=402$). Based on the findings of the study it was recommended that students' networking ability should be encouraged by the universities, government, patrons, role models and policy makers, especially now that there is an increased need to shore up entrepreneurship in the quest to curb the upsurge in global youths unemployment. Networking ability should be incorporated into curricula of higher institutions as it has been discovered to facilitate risk taking, innovativeness and pro-activeness among members of the Network of African Student Entrepreneurs (NASE). Any higher institution that fails to key into the laudable activities of NASE risks being bereft of entrepreneurial ideas.

Keywords: Social Networks, Entrepreneurial Orientation, Networking Ability, Risk Taking, Network Of African Student Entrepreneurs

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I. Introduction

Social networks as social structures that enhance individual, organizational and societal gains may be new in the field of entrepreneurship, but not so new in fields of management and behavioral sciences. As early as 1893, Emile Durkheim and Ferdinand Tönnies proposed the idea of social networks through efforts at making their theories tilt towards the studies of social group dynamics and how social ties are formulated through having individuals with similar and direct social ties, values, beliefs, and norms who would want to further their courses in ways that would be beneficial to them (Breiger, 2004 and Aldous, 2002). They further stated that while Durkheim focused on non-personal and a less direct social link; implying that resources are not exclusively owned by individuals who belong to social groups or networks, Tönnies on the other hand focused on a direct and more personal social; implying that although individuals possess resources, those resources cannot completely satisfy individual needs and therefore they (individuals) would require resources from others. This forms a part of what was later known as social capital, which provides resources for individuals and group which may or may not be tangible; which also in the context of this study would be intangible and implying the entrepreneurial leanings enjoyed or benefitted as a reason for belonging to social networks.

Breiger (2004) showed that the path to modern day social networks could also be understood from a look at the 20th century, when Georg Simmel concentrated on the studies on networks and interactions within which individuals enjoy belonging to informal social networks rather than formal work groups, likely implying that work groups are usually the outcome of forced relationships where members belong to whether they like to or not, while informal social networks are outcomes of a quest for improving one's state of being, and again in the context of this study implies that individuals who belong to social networks seek a better state for their psychological cum economic capacities owing to the fact that Entrepreneurial Orientation (EO) enhances the cognitive, social and economic gains of individuals and organizations. Owing to the entrepreneurial dimensions of risk taking dispositions, innovativeness, pro-activeness, competitive aggressiveness, and autonomy, social networks are channels through which individuals come together to improve their abilities in advancing their lot futuristically and creating a sustainable economy.

Given the need to build a sustainable economy, entrepreneurship is one of the major catalysts for economic growth and development. Entrepreneurship is a major paradigm for value creation and sustenance in any economy. Entrepreneurs need to go in search of information, acquire capital, and develop skills as well as labor to be able to start business enterprises (Tesfom, 2006). That has been the reason for forming an enterprise fostering organization known as the Network of African Students Entrepreneurs (NASE). A major resource that entrepreneurs need to ensure success in entrepreneurship activities is political skill. It is important to look at the political skills managers deploy to navigate entrepreneurship activities. This view is important because even though performance and success of managers may be anchored on intellectual endowment and hard work, other factors come to play. For example, the manager has to have high astuteness and influence to be successful in entrepreneurship activities. Political skill according to Ferris, Treadway, Kolodinsky, Hochwarter, Kacmar, Douglas and Frink (2005), is the capacity to effectively comprehend others, and to utilize such wisdom to influence the other people to take action in ways that will promote the actualization of set objectives. To Ferris et al (2005) apparent sincerity, social astuteness, interpersonal influence, and networking ability are the dimensions of political skill. The focus of this work however is networking ability. Individuals that have strong political skill are experts at growing and utilizing diverse networks of people (Ferris et al, 2005). Indeed, Ferris et al (2005) believe that politically skilled persons easily grow friendships and develop firm, useful alliances and coalition. This is because by their subtle style they hold assets of value which are requirements of individual and organizational efficiency.

According to Pfeffer (1992) as cited by Ferris et al, (2005), persons that have high networking ability will ensure they are in a position to initiate and utilize the advantage of opportunities. Networking ability helps in ensuring unfettered access to other contacts through which additional resources can be acquired. It is also worthy of note that there should be a favorable atmosphere for organizations to disseminate ideas, thoughts and experiences for resource gathering and the encouragement of causal relationships and exchange of contacts through which new opportunities can be discovered. These informal contacts are referred to as social networks. In terms of definition Ameh and Udu (2016) citing Haas (2009) see a social network as a social structure made up of nodes (individuals or organizations) which are linked by one or more specific types of relationship or interdependence such as values, ideas, financial exchange, trade friendship, kinship, social role as well as affection or action relationship. Social networks can be viewed from two angles. They could be online or off-line. Hartshorn (2010) outlined some of the differences between online or social media and offline social networks. First, online social networks is a way of transmitting and sharing information with a broad audience, in which everyone has the opportunity to create and distribute any kind of information of interest to the person. All that may be required is to connect to the internet, whereas, off-line social networks is an act of engagement, where people of homophonous attributes come together to build a relationship. Second, in terms of communication style, online social networks are just a medium of communication like the TV, Radio etc that is not a location whereas off-line social networks are a two-way communication. In this type of social networks, people congregate to join others with the same experiences and backgrounds. Conversation is at the core of this type of social networks. Third, there is timely response in off-line social networks, because it is between and amongst people, and as such, it is richer, more purposeful and more personal. The focus of this work however is on off-line social networks; the size of the network has a great influence on entrepreneurial orientation as it promotes better access to information and resources. The network density also determines the extent to which members will know each other which to a great extent determines the level of trust members will have for each other.

In the same vein, network diversity gives a picture of how diverse the information and resources available to an entrepreneur are. The level of support members enjoy in a network will determine to a great extent the length of their stay in the network, while the level of independence enjoyed can facilitate autonomous and effective decision making and innovativeness by entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurial orientation is the propensity of the entrepreneur to initiate new ideas, mobilize resources, take risk and take overall responsibility for actions taken. Entrepreneurial orientation can be decomposed into risk disposition, pro-activeness, innovativeness, competitive aggressiveness and autonomy.

NASE is an association of budding students' entrepreneurs that is organized by students with like minds and similar resources, in order to enhance their abilities and skills to be able to grow into full fledged entrepreneurs. They exist in most universities in Nigeria but are very pronounced in universities in the North central part of Nigeria. Given that the zone is in dire need of economic transformation and development which is dependent to a large extent on the level of entrepreneurial activity, it becomes expedient to explore all avenues with the potential of ensuring heightened ability and acute awareness for recognizing opportunities especially among the youths. North central zone comprises Benue, Kogi, Kwara, Nassarawa, Niger, and Plateau states and Abuja. All the states in the North central geopolitical zone except Abuja have one Federal and State University respectively as public Universities in the zone. The zone also has some private universities scattered all over it.

This study was conducted on selected universities in this zone. The five universities selected are the ones that are registered with the Network of African Student Entrepreneurs (NASE).

Statement Of The Problem

The contextual issues that led to this study are borne out of very distinct concerns that have been neglected, parochially treated or inadequately addressed. For instance, the new curriculum for higher education spells out the need for entrepreneurship education for all students of Nigerian Universities, seeing that as a step towards making Nigeria an entrepreneurially driven country in the nearest future. As much as that is a step in the right direction, structures and systems have not been properly put in place to help these budding entrepreneurs (students) achieve as much as would be required to harness their entrepreneurial talents while on campus. One of those systems may be supporting groups of fellow students who have the same passion for entrepreneurship; whether these groups would lead to the development of the entrepreneurial mindset of these students or become another distractive association where students would rather regress entrepreneurially is basically what this study is about.

Another concern is information asymmetry or outright lack of it which is a major drawback in entrepreneurship, most especially with respect to the mobilization of resources which are critical for entrepreneurship development and business growth. Another concern is the fact that there seems to be little or no empirical work in Nigeria where the social network variable of networking ability; which is one of the constructs of the political skill inventory has been used to establish relationship with the EO dimensions of risk taking disposition amongst students. There is a need that this study is carried out so as to address the literary cum empirical gaps existing. The researchers see this as a problem because for Nigeria to know if her students (youths) are really the entrepreneurial leaders of the future, the issue of the entrepreneurial orientation of these students need to be addressed holistically.

Objective: The objective is to examine the relationship between networking ability and risk taking disposition among students in universities in North Central Nigeria

Hypothesis: There is no relationship between networking ability and risk taking disposition among students in universities in North Central Nigeria

Conceptual Reviews

Conceptualizing the Political Skill Inventory

It is a generally shared perception among scholars that organizations are fundamentally political arenas. This is largely based on the rationale that though performance, effectiveness and success in one's career are the products of hard works and probably intelligence, that there are factors within the organizational settings like social astuteness, positioning and savvy that distorts these norms (Ferris, Treadway, Kolodinsky, Hochwarter, Kacmar, Douglas, and Frink, 2005). This therefore implies as suggested by Pfeffer, (1992), that an understanding of skills of persuasion, manipulation and negotiation which make up political skill is needed if managers must be successful. Political skill as defined by Ferris et al., (2005) is "the ability to effectively understand others at work and to use such knowledge to influence others to act in ways that enhance one's personal and/or organizational objectives." Individuals that are highly skilled politically must therefore be able to mingle social astuteness with the ability to fine-tune their behavior to different and varying situational demands in a manner that appears to be truthful, inspiring, trustworthy, efficiently influence and control the responses of others. Political skill is generally decomposed into four dimensions (social astuteness, interpersonal influence, networking ability and apparent sincerity). Amongst these dimensions, the interest of this study is centered on the networking ability dimension of political skill.

Social Astuteness

Social astuteness recognizes the ability of individuals to astutely observe others and to be keenly attuned to different situations that involves socialization with other people. Individuals generally are able to understand social interactions and also precisely interpret their activities, as well as that of others, in social settings. Pfeffer as cited in Ferris et al, (2005) portrays this individuals' high sense of discernment of others behaviours as "sensitivity to others," ironically, their ability to identify with others is actually critical in obtaining things for themselves." Major characteristics of socially astute individuals includes that they are ingenious and clever in their dealings with other people. As a dimension of political skill, social astuteness in an organizational setting would be expected to relate most strongly to the evaluations of subordinates performance by the immediate supervisor. As it is in the world of work, individuals who have high social astuteness behaviours, tend to have proper appreciation of relational issues and interactions that manifest thereof.

Understanding Interpersonal Influence

This basically involves the general subtle and convincing personality of individuals to exert powerful influence on the people around them. Individuals who score high on this skill have the capabilities of fittingly adapting and adjusting their behaviour to suit each situation, so as to enable them to stimulate certain responses from other people. The interpersonal influence dimension of political skill reflects the ability to adapt one's behaviour so that it suits different targets of influence in different contextual conditions in order to achieve one's goals; otherwise known as "flexibility," (Ferris et al, 2005).

Apparent Sincerity

This reflects the tendency that individuals have to be seen by others as people with trusted moral rectitude and astuteness. Ferris et al, (2005) observe that such people have high levels of integrity, authenticity, sincerity, and genuineness. They appear to be, honest, open, and forthright. This dimension of political skill strikes at the very heart of whether influence attempts will be successful because it focuses on the perceived intentions (i.e., as assessed by the target of influence) of the behavior exhibited (i.e., by the actor). Indeed, perceived intentions or motives are important and have been argued to alter the interpretation and labeling of behavior. Jones (1990) cited in Ferris et al, (2005) notes that influence attempts will be successful only when actors are perceived as possessing no ulterior motives. Because their actions are not interpreted as manipulative or coercive, individuals high in apparent sincerity inspire trust and confidence in and from those around them.

Concept Of Networking Ability

The concept of social networks, has received increased attention from entrepreneurs, policy makers, businesses, managers, and academicians in recent times. This awakened interest points to the fact that no individual is an island of himself, and as such, for governments for instance to go into alliance with other governments that will enable them meet their obligations, there is need to attract the various resources that they require to achieve their goals of governance. Similar reasons apply for entrepreneurs; who must build strong relationships with others in their field in order to be able to achieve their goals of creating products or adding values. Also with managers that must establish affiliations with managers of other firms, that will enable them share experiences and as well as resources that will enable them excel in their managerial duties of making effective and efficient decisions. For academicians, these interests have emanated as a result of the lack of consensus amongst scholars as to what constitutes, or the appropriate domain and also the actual contributions of networking to the growth of, governing, business and entrepreneurial activities. To these effects, a plethora of descriptions of a social network have been advanced by different scholars; Huynh and Patton (2014) fronted a social network to be an embodiment of single nodes (actors) and as well as the linkages between these nodes. They also aver that a social network is the aggregate of both the real and latent resources that are entrenched within, accessible through, and resulting from the networks of relationships controlled by individual social units. This description of a social network views it from the angle that it has the tendency of creating a combination between a single individual with others, and as well as creating an access to both resources that are available and those that are expected for this individual due to the relationship that have been created with these other individuals.

Ameh and Udu (2016) espouse that in Nigerian settings social networks have become essential for entrepreneurship development and have also become a major paradigm for the mobilization of resources and the building of trust that is needed in business. They are also a major source of motivation, direction and increased access to new opportunities. Indeed, network relationships arouse entrepreneurship interests among budding entrepreneurs and create passion for would be entrepreneur. This is the case because in the course of network interactions within networks opportunities are created, ideas are shared, and thoughts are properly analyzed, resources are identified and probable challenges are noted and handled. The end result would be the entrenchment of entrepreneurial persons, groups or institutions confident in themselves as to add societal economic needed value. To this end, Singh, (2000) as cited in Klyver and Schott (2011) agree that network interactions help in building entrepreneurship intentions because as they interact and brainstorm, new idea recognition will begin to develop into new entrepreneurship opportunities.

However, networking ability or Social networking has been grossly misconstrued by many to mean the virtual social media like; 2go; Facebook; Twitter; Eskimi; Badoo, etc., that is rife in our society today. Networking ability/ Social networking on the contrary goes beyond that to include online or off-line social networking. Online social networks is a way of transmitting and sharing information with a broad audience, in which everyone has the opportunity to create and distribute as long as they have internet connection (Hartshorn 2010). Off-line social networks are a two-way communication. In this type of social networks, people congregate to join others with the same experiences and backgrounds. Conversation is at the core this type of social networks. Third, there is timely response in off-line social networks, because is between and amongst

people, and as such, it is richer, more purposeful and more personal. The focus of this work however is on off-line social networks. The rationale behind studying networking ability is hinged on the fact that individuals who have sound political will and skill are dexterous at developing and using sundry networks of people. The ability of such individuals to efficiently use their political skills well makes them affable, bridge builders and drivers of organizations.

NA of university students generally involves the amount of time and efforts that students spend at school creating networks with others; the ability of the student to build good relationships with influential people; the extent of network of colleagues and associates that a student can call for support that the student is able develop; the number of important people and as well as the important connection a student has; the amount of time a student spend in developing connections.

Concept of Entrepreneurial Orientation (EO)

Entrepreneurial orientation has been viewed as prerequisite for the development of an entrepreneurship inclination amongst firms, (Owoseni and Adeyeye, 2012). An EO best describes methods, exercises and different ways of taking decisions that give way to entrepreneurial actions. As a firm level idea, EO is associated with decision making at top level (Linton, 2016). EO has been seen by Schillo (2011) as the extent to which an individual firm or team displays the propensity for the initiation of new ideas; resources mobilization; risk taking; and the overall responsibility to take actions. EO's construct generally comprise innovativeness, risk taking disposition, pro-activeness, competitive aggressiveness, and autonomy. EO as can be deduced from the fore going is generally a firm's level entrepreneurial inclination, and may therefore not be appropriate to study in other contexts like the individual who is the entrepreneur, as the individual is different from the firm or the nation, as the nation is more concerned with macro issues like job creation and economic growth. This notion has been given credence by the various studies that have been done on EO; (Linton, 2016; Gathungu, Aiko, Machuki, 2014; Owoseni and Adeyeye, 2012; Schillo 2011; Rauchi, Wiklund, Freese and Lumpkin, 2004; Covin and Slevin, 1991), where it has been specified that the various ways through which firms pursue entrepreneurial activities, is by being; innovative, pro-active, risk inclined, competitively aggressive and autonomous.

It therefore becomes contentious as to whether EO can be studied amongst university students since they are not a firm. This is however not the case, because university students in this context are in an organized organization that sometimes engage in profitable ventures by being innovative, pro-active, risk inclined, competitive and autonomous. Secondly, although this does not seem to be a good enough justification, but what always comes to mind is the fact that even though entrepreneurship represents a broader concept than the actions of single entrepreneurs, firm-level EO formation cannot be detached from the behaviour of entrepreneurial individuals (Lumpkin and Dess, 1996). To this end, EO of university students was studied. Entrepreneurial Orientation (EO) on the other hand represents a firm's disposition towards entrepreneurship; i.e. a firm's involvement in activities that drag them into new markets (Lumpkin and Dess, 1996). The general organizational activities that reflect their abilities to innovate; be proactive; display aggressive initiatives in the face of competition; take risk and be autonomous is what constitute EO of a firm. These dimensions define the organizational processes, methods and styles through which a firm behaves in an entrepreneurial way. EO in the context of this study could be seen as the process through which National Association of Student Entrepreneurs (NASE) as an organization that is intended to develop students' mindsets about entrepreneurship do this by enhancing their abilities to; innovate, be proactive, be risk takers, be competitively aggressive and as well as autonomous.

EO of university students includes: students' strong proclivity for high-risk projects; the extent to which students in NASE are encouraged to take calculated risks with new ideas; emphasis on exploration of new areas; experiments with new opportunities; emphasis on research and development, the extent to which technology takes prominence in NASE; the amount of projects and programs embarked on by NASE; very strong emphasis on the development of new and innovative thinking.

Risk taking

Risk taking is the inclination of entrepreneurs to engage in business irrespective of the uncertainties attached. It is the willingness of entrepreneurs to channel resources into unpredictable opportunities (Owoseni and Adeyeye 2012). Risk taking ability implies exploring opportunities in new areas, committing resources towards such venture while expecting a payback which is dicey given the dynamic nature of the environment. According to Okpara (2009), risk taking depends on risk propensity and risk perceptions and every risk taking ability revolves around them. Risk propensity is the bent either to take risk or to be risk averse. Any decision on risk taking depends on the experience associated with such decision. While perception of risk is the uncertainties and possible losses which may come as a result of given set of behaviors. When there is higher risk taking propensity and lower risk taking perception, it will be more likely that risky decisions will be made (Okpara, 2009).

Coulthard (2007) in Li (2012), opined that risk taking may be seen as characteristics of firms that make huge and risky commitments towards future prospects with a probable high cost for failure. Firms that imbibe EO exhibit risk taking ability which propels them towards making business commitments for future prospects. Such future prospects may have high payoff and risk attached; which deters many firms from assigning its resources to such projects which may or may not be successful (Gunawan, Jacob and Duyster, 2013). It is clear that risk taking as a dimension of EO is the drive behind firm's swift following-up of opportunities, commitment of resources, and other courageous activities that could present more opportunities for the firm to explore.

Innovativeness

Innovativeness is the predisposition of a firm to support the creation of new ideas, experiment with new ways of doing things, renew technological methods, and advance existing products or services. According to Frishammar and Horte (2007) in Li (2011:327) stated that "innovativeness resembles culture, climate or orientation and may occur along a continuum rather than an outcome". Innovation is the tendency to explore and imbibe the culture of seeking new and better means of creating new opportunities. This implies that innovation is associated with creativity and could be linked to entrepreneurship because of commercial viability to be exploited. A firm that is innovative explores every avenue of creating new products or services and/or improving on existing ideas for commercial purposes (Behzad and Aboufazel, 2013). Firms that adopt innovative style favour change and predisposes themselves to support new ideas; embraces creativity in technology adoption and other internal processes that could place the firm on competitive advantage over others (Mahmood and Rufin 2005; Rauch, Wiklund, Lumpkin and Frese 2009; Baker and Sinkula 2009) in Jalali (2012). Innovativeness aids firms to think outside the box, forging means of adapting to dynamic and unpredictable environment; and this has been an instrument towards performance; booster for most firms above others (Miler 1983, Timmons and Spinel 2004 in Okpara, 2009). This has become evident in the development of new products for new or existing markets which could be seen as a measure of performance (Gunawan, Jacob and Duysters 2013). It is obvious that innovation is critical in supporting new "ideas and novelty"(Li, Huang and Tsai, 2009; in Madhoushi, Sadati, Delavari, Mehdivand and Mihandost 2011:311) and inspires thorough knowledge activities for discovering of new prospects.

Pro-activeness

Pro-activeness is the readiness to take adequate measures ahead to tackle situations that may be challenging to any organization. It involves the acquisition of relevant knowledge and skills that would aid proper actions that suits any circumstances. Owoseni and Adeyeye, (2012:154) stated that "pro-activeness is the ability to take initiative whenever the situation demands". It is one of the EO dimensions that bequeath the required competence of evaluating and handling in advance all sources of risks that may challenge the attainment of firms stated objectives (Owoseni and Adeyeye, 2012). Entrepreneurs rarely decide to bluntly take risks, they instead make thorough calculation of how to handle the probable challenges that may present themselves in the course of their activities; as such pro-activeness helps in the portraying of entrepreneurs as moderate risk handlers. Moreover, pro-activeness is much more than preparing ahead on how to tackle situations as it presents itself; it is equally "opportunity- seeking and forward looking perspective"(Kropp et al 2005: 197) that aids the development of new products or services and acting in expectation of demand(s) prospects (Okpara, 2009). This implies that pro-activeness is firm's ability to forecast and preempt opportunities that would be of benefit and predispose itself to explore it ahead of other competitors. As entrepreneurs are inclined to the development of business to chase their desired objectives (Kouriloff, 2000); Lumpkin and Dess, (2001) add that it is pertinent that they should be proactive in fashioning out a desired niche and providing the required resources to aid new entry. This involves looking into the future for unidentified opportunities and how to harness resources to explore such opportunities.

In forecasting future prospects, constant environmental scanning and monitoring is prerequisite in order to identify new developments. Li (2012) sees a proactive firm as always future oriented and takes advantage of being the prime mover in a competitive environment. An entrepreneurial firm gets ahead of others when it looks ahead of its current operations to develop new and/ or better means of serving the needs of its environment. Pro-activeness is related to determining to achieving first mover advantages by seeking to anticipate possible customer needs through improvement of products and services (Jalali,2012). It is the key for any firm or any organization to obtain a "first mover advantage" amidst other competitors (Paul, 2013). Being proactive enables firm to recoup their investment ahead of other competitors especially in the market place as it boosts their chances of controlling the market through its will and foresight. Antoncic and Hisrich (2001), see pro-activeness as the extent to which firms endeavor to be market leaders in such key business areas as the introduction of new ideas, products or/services, technological know-how, as well as management practices.

Competitive Aggressiveness (CA)

CA Refers to firms’ constant quest to outwit competitors; and is evident in contentious response towards a more appropriate position in the market. It is firm’s proclivity towards grabbing market leadership from competitors (Boohene, Marfo-Yiadom and Yeboah, 2012). Firms that want to be ahead of others usually follow and monitor trends closely and devise better and faster means of responding to changes and demands in their competitive environment. Venkatraman (1989) in Boohene et al. (2012) maintained that competitive aggressiveness manifest in the way firms allocate resources to obtain faster position in a particular market ahead of other competitors. Accordingly Boohene et al. (2012:79) stated that firms’ competitive aggressiveness can be evident in “product innovation, market development, and high investment to improve market share and to achieve competitive position”. Basically, competitive aggressiveness is all about striving to map out better means of being in control of happenings in a dynamic and competitive environment. Aggressive attitude towards competitors notwithstanding is not aimed at damaging competitors; but a means of obtaining competitive advantage over others through the ability to utilize opportunities in the environment. It involves the preparedness of the firm to engage other competitors in tough challenge so as to improve the situation of its own market (Shoghi and Safieepoor, 2013).

Autonomy

Autonomy refers to the ability of an individual entrepreneur or team to conceive an idea that is beneficial to the firm and the will to bring the idea to bear. Boohene et al (2012) referred to autonomy as the capacity of individuals or teams within an organization to be able to work beyond the regulations of their organization and lunch into beneficial ventures to the benefit of their organization. In an organization, members are usually subjected to thought patterns, a stipulated way of doing things; many of the members may find it difficult to initiate a conceived business idea(s) and nurture it till end, autonomy of the members’ aid in helping them to work independent of the laid down procedure. Autonomy is associated with the action of members of an organization as regards initiating new business ideas and methods of doing things that would benefit the organization (Lyon, Lumpkin and Dess 2000; Kabiri and Salehi, 2013).

Autonomy in an entrepreneurship sense is the ability of individuals and teams in an organization to think outside the box and work towards innovativeness, competitiveness and effectiveness of the firm (Madhoushi et al, 2011). This implies that autonomy is actions of individuals and teams independent of the organizational bottle neck that propels them to achieve more to the growth of the organization.

II. Theoretical Framework

Social Capital Theory

The evolutionary path of the social capital theory has been argued to have been developed by Karl Marx, whose classical theory explained social relations between the proletariat and bourgeoisie, down to Schultz whose human capital theory focused on the accumulation of surplus value by laborers to Bourdieu’s Cultural capital theory and then the Social Capital Theory of Lin, Burt, Marsden, Flap, Coleman, Putnam and Bourdieu.

Table 1: Understanding the Theories of Capital

	The Classical Theory	The Neo-Capital Theory			
		Human Capital	Cultural Capital	Social Capital	
Theorist	Marx (Lin, 2009)	Schultz(Lin, 2009), Becker(Lin, 2009)	Bourdieu(Lin, 2009)	Lin(Lin, 2009), Burt(Lin, 2009), Marsden(Lin, 2009), Flap(Lin, 2009), Coleman(Lin, 2009)	Bourdieu(Lin, 2009), Coleman(Lin, 2009), Putnam(Lin, 2009)
Explanation	Social Relations: Exploitation By The Capitalists (Bourgeoisie) Of The Proletariat	Accumulation Of Surplus Value By Laborer	Reproduction Of Dominant Symbols And Meanings (Values)	Access To And Use Of Resources Embedded In Social Networks	Solidarity And Reproduction Of Group

Capital	A. Part Of Surplus Value (In Consumption Market) And The Exchange Value (In Production-Labor Market) Of The Commodity. B. Investment In The Production And Circulation Of Commodities	Investment In Technical Skills And Knowledge	Internalization Or Misrecognition Of Dominant Values	Investment In Social Networks	Investment In Mutual Recognition And Acknowledgement
Level Of Analysis	Structural (Classes)	Individual	Individual/Class	Individual	Group /Individual

Source: Lin, N. (2009). Building a Network Theory of Social Capital. *Connections*, 22(1):28-51.

In line with recurrent and independent theoretical review (Portes, 1998), which shows that the words “social capital” were used first by Pierre Bourdieu and the foundations wherewith the theory stands were also brought to bear by Pierre, it is clear-cut that the social capital theory was propounded by Pierre Bourdieu in the year 1980. The theory was first explained in French and published in a paper titled “*Actes de la RechercheenSciencesSociales*”, it was not until 1985 that the theory was translated to English language, after which the theory gained wider acceptance. Bourdieu (1985:248 in Portes 1998:3) defined the concept of social capital as the “aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition”. This definition captures in absolute terms the tenets of this theory. It holds that social capital is linked to networks of relationships, with these relationships being of a human nature, where those that belong to the networks are provided with actual or potential resources, and where the network doesn’t have to be so formal, but must be durable to provide for mutual acquaintance or recognition of some sort. The assumptions of the theory are that social networks are not natural, but constructed; social capital is made up of social relationships and amount of resources accessible; these social resources are intangible and that it is network membership that creates social capital. More that social capitals are made of three elements that factors structure and action being structural (embeddedness), opportunity (accessibility), and action oriented (use).

The implications of this theory to the issues understudy hold that the ability to network portends the conscious or unconscious efforts at building social relationships amongst NASE members which is also targeted at benefitting from resources this relationship provides, which would enable these network members to start up whatever they want in the near future. This resource as spelt out is mostly intangible, which in this context could be the rub-off of entrepreneurial thinking or abilities known as development of entrepreneurial orientation like risk taking disposition, innovativeness, competitive aggressiveness, pro-activeness and autonomy. The theory is also related to this study, in that when students belong to structures like NASE, opportunities abound like the motivation they derive from discussions, practical field trips, knowledge sharing and even being able to learn from the strength of synergism; with this level of knowledge, the theory further holds that the students would need to use the accessible benefits garnered to enhance their lives as it concerns stating up their own entrepreneurial ventures. The spin-offs of the actions taken by these students would futuristically portray them as entrepreneurs eventually, thereby exhibiting the risk taking disposition, innovation, pro-activeness, competitive aggressiveness and autonomy dimensions of entrepreneurship orientation.

III. Methodology

The study adopted an exploratory correlation research design approach. This research design is basically aimed at formulating the problem for more precise investigation (Kothri, 2004). This approach is suited for studies where there is little experience about the selected instances of the phenomenon under study. More so, this design gives room for intensive study into the phenomenon under study by critically examining existing records and also room for generating first hand data by administering research instruments to respondents. Also in conducting this type of research, data gathering is done once and focus is usually on past experiences of respondents; thus, participants are often analyzed as a single group rather than as subcategories (Creswell, 2008). This approach was considered appropriate for this study because there is little experience about the selected instances of the phenomenon of interest of this study and then aimed at stimulating insight on the relationship between the two variables. The study was conducted on a total population of 1433 student members of NASE, based on information provided from the list of registered NASE members in the respective universities namely University of Ilorin, Kwara State; Benue State University, Makurdi, Benue State; Kogi State University, Anyigba. Kogi State; University of Mkar, Benue State and Bingham University, Karu, Abuja-Federal Capital Territory. Taro Yamane formula was used in determining the sample size, arriving at 435 respondents. The validity of the instrument was done using principal component analysis, showing the chi-square values of Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett’s test. The reliability of the instrument was

established through an internal consistency test carried out on the data gathered in the course of the survey that was conducted on the five selected universities; this was done using SPSS version 20. The internal consistency test revealed a Cronbach's alpha of 0.871 for networking ability which was well above the base line value of 0.5. This is an indication that the adopted and modified scale for this study was reliable, similarly, the same internal consistency test performed on the EO construct of risk taking gave a Cronbach's alpha of 0.727 this was well above the baseline of 0.5 which is also an indication that the adopted and modified EO scale for this study was reliable. A test of significance was applied to determine the acceptance or rejection of the stated hypothesis using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (r) to determine the strength of relationship between networking ability and risk disposition.

IV. Results

Table 2: Composite Data on Networking Ability

	SA	A	U	D	SD	TOTAL
Question 1	191	171	16	8	16	402
Question 2	56	255	71	3	17	402
Question 3	99	222	59	13	9	402
Question 4	51	246	81	10	7	395
Question 5	34	81	170	15	93	393
Question 6	234	91	46	17	14	402

Source: Author's Computation 2016

The table 2 shows the compilation of responses on question items measuring the level of networking ability of NASE.

Table 3: Composite Data on Risk Taking Disposition

	SA	A	U	D	SD	TOTAL
Question 1	204	41	67	50	40	402
Question 2	211	90	54	23	24	402
Question 3	311	17	40	17	17	402
Question 4	193	94	71	40	4	402

Source: Author's Computation 2016

Table 3 shows the compilation of responses on question items measuring the level of risk taking disposition of NASE.

Networking ability as measured by the six question items was correlated against the aggregate of the four question items on risk taking disposition, the result was $r = 0.514$; $p < 0.05$; $n = 402$ showing that there was a significant and positive relationship between networking ability and risk taking disposition, the null hypothesis was then rejected and the alternative hypothesis stating that there is a significant relationship between networking ability and risk taking disposition among students in universities in North-Central of Nigeria was accepted. In line with the formulated hypothesis, the researchers developed question items to measure the sole strand of social network which is networking ability, and one of the multi-dimensional scales of entrepreneurial orientation which is the risk taking disposition of students under the NASE umbrella. The question items developed for networking ability were 6, which loaded as a single construct during the Principal Component Analysis (PCA) test for factor loadings. It also had a 0.809 for the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test for sampling adequacy, with a chi-square value of 2154.934; $d.f=15$ and $p=0.000$; this implies that the sample size used to derive the factorial loadings was adequate and the expected scale for measuring networking ability was met. Also, the PCA test explained above which is 50% of the total distribution; it actually explained 89.154%, which is very strong as well. The reliability of the scale was also very high as the Cronbach's alpha coefficient accepted the 6 question items with a 0.871, which was well above the base line value of 0.5.

Also, the other scale of risk taking disposition of NASE had 4 question items, which loaded as one of the 5 constructs for entrepreneurial orientation during the Principal Component Analysis (PCA) test for factor loadings; it was actually the third loading amongst the five. It also had a 0.696 for the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test for sampling adequacy, with a chi-square value of 3682.917; $d.f=136$ and $p=0.000$; this also implies that the sample size used to derive the factorial loadings was adequate and the expected scale for measuring entrepreneurial orientation of which the risk taking disposition was a part of. Also, the PCA test explained 74.226% of the total distribution, which is very strong as well. The reliability of the scale was also very high as the Cronbach's alpha coefficient accepted the 4 question items with a 0.586, which was well above the base line value of 0.5.

The aggregated sums of these question items being correlated produced a result of $r = 0.514$, $p < 0.05$, $n = 402$. The implication of this result is that with a p -value ($p < 0.05$) the null hypothesis would be rejected and its

alternative accepted. The alternative hypothesis states that: There is a significant relationship between networking ability and the risk taking disposition of NASE in Universities in North Central Zone of Nigeria. With a positive correlation as shown above, the implication is that at the level of NASE, networking ability would positively improve their risk taking disposition. This means that naturally enterprising students may therefore need much more physical networking ability and an increased form of building linkages as these would ultimately enhance the risk disposition of these students. Pistrui (2011) in consonance with the finding of the above had formulated hypothesis which states that a network of students that deals with entrepreneurial ventures bolster their respective financial ability to take risks. This simply implies that networking and linkages amongst young people could aid these young ones with both the financial dimension of risk taking and the social dimension according to the social capital theory. Kabiri and Salehi (2013) had also supported this finding as they see the ability to deal with uncertainties as an entrepreneurial inclination which is not tied to the brilliance and ingenuity of just one person, but should be the sum of group efforts which in this context is the efforts of members of an entrepreneurially minded group such as NASE.

V. Conclusion

Based on the findings of this research, students networking ability should be encouraged by both patrons and role models, the school management and other policy makers especially now that there is an increased need for entrepreneurship world over in the quest to surmount unemployment amongst youth this would, to a large extent, increase the students' self-esteem, courage and drive towards taking risk that could result in higher benefit to them. This could also help the students to explore new ideas, conduct complex experiments and discover and venture into novel opportunities.

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