

## The Effect of Pro-Activeness on Growth of Selected Small and Medium Scale Enterprises in Ogun State Nigeria.

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**Abstract:** Leadership in itself does not yield into entrepreneurial orientation. However, each type of leadership present behaviours that have been linked to the entrepreneurship and such include proactive personality which is vital to the growth of any business venture. Meanwhile lack of entrepreneur's initiatives to take new opportunity and exploit it as a pro-activeness variable had the greatest negative effect on SMEs growth. This study looked into the effect of pro-activeness on growth of selected small and medium scale enterprises in Ogun state, Nigeria by employing data randomly drawn from selected enterprises based on size classification and growth measures. Methodology involved the use of Survey research design and structured questionnaire. Set of questionnaire on entrepreneurial pro-activeness and growth of SMEs were self-administered for the collection of the primary data. A group of 386 firms were analyzed. A pilot study was carried out to test the validity and reliability of the research instrument using Cronbach Alpha reliability test. The data collected were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The findings of this study revealed that Pro-activeness has positive significant effect on growth ( $\beta=0.527$ ;  $R^2= 0.358$ ;  $t_{(385)} = 14.622$ ;  $p<0.05$ ), and concluded that entrepreneurial pro-activeness affected growth of SMEs in Ogun State, Nigeria. Entrepreneurs are recommended to continue to be proactive by carrying out strategic environmental scanning for new opportunities in the market.

**Key- Words:** - Entrepreneurship; Growth; Performance; Pro-activeness; Small and Medium Enterprises,

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### I. Background of the study

The world has three kinds of people, said George Bernard Shaw: those who make things happen, those who watch what happens, and those who wonder what happened. The key differentiator among these distinctions is the extent to which behaviour--of people and firms--is proactive. This word has entered the management lexicon in a big way. Managers everywhere are exhorted to "be proactive," and SMEs are urged to create their futures proactively. Most recently, initiative and other proactive behaviours are the keys that distinguish star performers from average performers.

Globally, SMEs have been described as a vital engine for economic development, they are found to have contributed and performed significantly to the economic and social improvement of the nation-state, they are the bedrock upon which larger firms develop. They are recognised as pivotal to economic growth, job creation, poverty reduction and industrial development (Akhtar, Ismail, Hussain & Rehman, 2015; Okpara, 2009). It is accepted that in the world of today, there is persistent rate of SMEs growth in human consumption and all firms have from time to time search for new adventures for the purpose of having competitive advantages over their rivals (Oni, 2012). According to Chandy and Narasimhan (2011), nearly all firms including start-ups, global partner alliances and major corporations are determined to make full use of opportunities in the product market by the means of proactive behaviour.

Furthermore, the rapid changes in technological, social, economic and political trends sometimes result in improving entrepreneurial performance. An enterprise seems relevant to the society when it unveils its entrepreneurial pro-activeness toward achieving manageable levels of performance (Oni, 2012). He stated that, more than two decades now, Nigeria has been on the path to revolutionizing her entrepreneurship despite her depressed economy. Entrepreneurship concept dwells on capacity building which stresses value creation by bringing together unique package of resources to exploit an opportunity (Oni & Maiwada, 2009)

Also, entrepreneurial orientation of proactive leaders is what leads to firms venturing into new areas previously not part of their business lines as well as the formation of mergers. In view of the same, the various leadership styles have been connected by Nabi and Holden (2008) to the core characters that lead to entrepreneurship amongst individuals and firms. While some leaders emphasize on particular leadership styles, generally, it is the leader's individual traits developed over time that can move a firm or an individual into

taking hold of new opportunities and converting the same into profits and those traits include being proactive (Saher, 2013). Therefore, the capability of conducting oneself in an entrepreneurial manner is gaining importance in several work circumstances and several empirical investigations have been conducted measuring proactive behaviour and relating it to various measures of achievement, leadership, performance, and career outcomes. Advantage or opportunity that a particular company has over the other depends so on the degree to which its pro-activeness is controlled.

The study noted that entrepreneurial pro-activeness is an area in entrepreneurship that has long divided Nigeria companies since there is no sufficient empirical data/survey relating its significance with Firms, and those investigated have mixed results (Dean, Shook and Payne, 2007). This informed the study in finding out how entrepreneurial pro-activeness as strategy has effect on the sustenance of SMEs growth.

### **1.1. Statement of the Problem**

Several studies such as (Anderson & Eshima, 2013; Anlesinya, Eshun and Bonuedi (2015), Gurbuz & Aykol, 2009) have identified Entrepreneurial pro-activeness to strengthen firm's growth and the results have provided mixed results. Innocent, Paul, & Amaka (2018); Johnmark, Munene and Balunywa (2016); found significant positive effect of proactiveness on SMEs growth. However, Moreno and Casillas (2008); Musthofa, Sugeng, Naili and Ngatno (2017) revealed that proactive entrepreneurial orientation has no significant effect on business growth and performance. In spite of the growing knowledge on the effect of entrepreneurial pro-activeness on SMEs growth, there is still little published research directly investigating the effect.

According to Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN) (2013), SMEs have performed very poor and below expectation due to the problem associated with the attitude and habits of entrepreneurs for not being proactive to take prompt and strategic decision when faced with challenges. They lack poor scanning for change, low level of alertness, low discovery of future opportunities and poor capability to anticipate competitors' need. All these have affected the growth of SMEs. Also, only a small number of SMEs depict high growth potentials and contribute to the bulk of job creation, therefore they are unable to reap the rewards of growth (Neneh & Smit, 2013).

Furthermore, lack of entrepreneurial spirit drive, lack of alertness and proper planning and poor record system, which led to inadequate capital had contributed to the rate of SMEs failure and ill-timed demise of SME and was also found to affect the growth. Ayeni and Osho (2011); Mago and Toro (2013); Oke and Aluko (2015) among others, outlined some other factors that inhibit the success of SMEs to include, inability of entrepreneurs to anticipate and prevent problems, lack of entrepreneurs well-defined vision and mission, narrow thinking and quick-fix anticipations, absence of succession plan, insufficient market research had reduced entrepreneurs orientation, competence and overall growth of SMEs in Ogun state, Nigeria (Sandada, Poe, and Dhurup 2014). Oni, (2012) stated that entrepreneurs with high proactiveness have high performance while those with low entrepreneurial proactiveness always have low performance.

Supporting this view is Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria, SMEDAN (2013) which agreed that Entrepreneurs find it very difficult to get enough funds due to unwillingness and a poor state of mind towards accessing loans. In addition, SMEs are not considered when formulating loan policies and due to the bureaucracy involved in Nigerian loan policies, therefore, many SMEs in the country especially in Ogun State have continued to rely on internally generated funds Afolabi, (2013). Consequently the effect of these above problems has led to high costs of start-up, over concentration on one or two markets for finished products, lack of funding, low sales growth and poor performance and growth, and the remote causes related to entrepreneurship.

Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to examine the effect of pro-activeness on SMEs growth, and this research paper will respond to the questions such as what is the effect of pro-activeness on growth of the selected small and medium scale enterprises in Ogun State, Nigeria

## **II. Literature Review**

### **2.0. Pro-activeness**

Pro-activeness is taking initiative, anticipating and carrying out new opportunities, and creating new markets or participating in emerging ones, is also associated with entrepreneurship, and is an important dimension of entrepreneurial characteristics (Brownhilder, Neneh, and Van-Zyl, (2017). Osaze (2013), defined pro-activity as a state of mind and the will, largely driven by one's consciousness, to sustain a vision, to fulfil a mission, to attain a challenging goal and to achieve a define objective, as envisioning a future towards which one devices the strategic parameters for influencing, impacting and recreating the environment within which to operate in line with that vision, a determination to excel in one's own chosen field, and to pursue and attain one's own goal largely defined by one. Entrepreneurial pro-activeness can also be seen as alertness of the company.

According to Alvarez and Barney (2012), entrepreneurial pro-activeness is the ability of the firm to predict where products/services do not exist or have become unsuspected valuable to customers and where new procedures of manufacturing are unknown to others become feasible. Again, Barney (1991) defines entrepreneurial pro-activeness as the ability of the firm to predict where products or services no longer bring added value to customers or do not exist. Also, the first mover's advantages identified by Mark, (2005) concur with a definition of pro-activeness offered by Dess & Lumpkin, (2005), in that pro-activeness involves recognizing changes and having the willingness to act on those insights ahead of competitors in an attempt to gain higher profits. Agca, Topal & Kaya (2009), added that proactive firms are most likely to act and respond first to threats coming from its business environment as well as making the first move towards seizing market opportunities.

According to Aloulou and Fayolle (2014), the disadvantage and challenge of pro-activeness has been to investigate whether or not these concepts can be applied to all firms regardless of size. Pro-activeness is effective in creating competitive advantage because a company that is an initiator is able to penetrate the market first and its competitors are forced to respond to the initiators actions rather than initiate their own (Lumpkin & Dess, 1996). The characteristics of a pro-active enterprise involve aggressiveness and unconventional tactics towards rival enterprises in the same market segment, such enterprises shape their environments by actively seeking and exploiting opportunities

## **2.1. FIRM Growth**

Neneh and van Zyl (2014) emphasised that Growth is an organizational outcome resulting from the combination of firm-specific resources, capabilities and routines, A firm's growth opportunities are highly related to its current organizational production activities and its firm's growth is also uncertain due to environmental conditions such as competition and market dynamics and a firm's growth is the most vital source of new jobs and is considered a valuable measure of entrepreneurial success. Hardeep & Anupama (2013); Sakari (2015) viewed growth as an increase in amount, number or size. In the business or economic sense it means an increase in the value of goods or services produced and sold by a business or country. Levie and Autio (2013) and Alarape, (2013) add that if entrepreneurs do not have any intention of growing their businesses, their businesses will most probably not grow, given that achieving growth is very difficult. SMEs growth means expanding firm's products or expanding its target markets, or some combination of each. Any increase in the volume of activities of enterprises is a clear indication of growth. Businesses grow for a number of reasons including innate desire to grow, taking advantage of a gap in the market or to gain a competitive advantage (Fatoki, 2012). Growth is often measured in terms of turnover and profit, but can also occur in knowledge, in human experience, and in efficiency and quality (Antonites & Nonyana, 2012; Elumeh, Shobayo, & Akinleye, 2016).

There are several factors that lead to a firm growth. The age of the firm has an impact. Evans (2009) found that old firms, smaller firms have faster growth, and also have a positive coefficient of the interaction between size and age also found that age had negative effect on company's growth. Nelson and Winter (2011) noted that firms have routines which are transferred from one person to the other. Thus, successful routines which have been producing growth in the past would likely to continue in producing growth in the future. The interrelation of profitability and growth is illustrated by the fact that a basic operating principle is that growth can best be evaluated by examining profit and total sales. It is important that all firms must remember the need to maintain a balance between profitability and growth: it is crucial for any business to grow as well as be profitable in order to sustain and stay relevant in the marketplace (Chowdhry, 2016).

There is a general opinion that the use of growth as a measure of firm performance is based on the understanding that growth is an antecedent to the attainment of sustainable competitive advantages. Sales growth rate was used to capture firm performance because EO is essentially a growth orientation (Fitzsimmons, 2005; Lumpkin & Dess, 1996). Therefore, it is appropriate to measure the effectiveness of EO by using an indicator that reflects the success of a firm at converting entrepreneurial opportunities into growth road maps (Simon, Stachel & Covin, 2011). The belief is that firms that are undergoing growth phases have higher rates of survival and they enjoy the benefits associated with economies of scale which in turn will affect their profitability (Fitzsimmons, 2005).

## **2.2. Underpinning Theory**

The proponents of personality traits theory was by Coon (2004) who defined it as "stable qualities that a person shows in most situations". To the trait theorists, there are enduring inborn qualities or potentials of the individual that naturally make him an entrepreneur. Supporting the above was Weinberg & Gould, (1999) who stated that these traits or inborn qualities are characteristics and behaviours associated with entrepreneurs that are opportunity driven, proactive and thrive on competitive desire to excel and win. They also believe that they can make a difference, are individuals of integrity and above or visionary.

This theory was criticized by McClelland (1996) who explained that human beings have a need to succeed, accomplish, excel or achieve. Entrepreneurs are driven by this need to achieve, excel and not by inborn characters.

This theory is relevant because recent findings on pro-activeness strengthens earlier empirical studies which indicate that pro-activeness is a firm's effort to seize new opportunities and has been expressed as pioneering behaviour that results in initiative taking to pursue opportunities that lead to firm growth ( Dess&Lumpkin 2005). Also, this study adopted personality traits theory because it provided a robust basis to the study on the effect of pro-activeness on growth of selected small and medium scale enterprises in Ogun state Nigeria.

### **2.3 Pro-Activeness and Firm Growth**

According Brownhilder, and Johan, (2017), Entrepreneurial Orientation (EO) in term of pro-activeness has been widely touted as a fundamental ingredient for enhancing firm growth. Using information from 285 SMEs, the results obtained indicated that while EO had a significant positive association with SME growth (employment and sales growth), most SMEs show a moderate level of EO. Also in the study of Amaka, Paul & Innocent (2018), pro-activeness awareness of market signals and initiation and exploitation of new opportunities among SMEs in Abuja do not impact on their performance. Therefore the result revealed that,pro-activeness exerted a positive and insignificant relationship with the performance of SMEs. Kraus, Rigtering, Hughes, and Hosman (2012) examined the impact of EO on the performance of SMEs in the Netherland during the global economic and financial crisis and the result revealed that during the economic and financial crisis, proactive firm behaviour contributed positively to the performance of SMEs. Furthermore, Arisi,Elom,and Onyeizeugbe, (2016) investigated the impact of the dimensions of EO on the performance of Micro, Small and medium scale enterprises (MSMEs) in Ebonyi State, Nigeria. It revealed that pro-activeness had a significant correlation with customer performance.

Similarly, a study by Hughes and Morgan (2011)among automotive firms in United Kingdom measured pro-activeness based on taking initiative, opportunity recognition, and initiating actions to which other organizations respond. They found that pro-activeness has a positive impact on organizational growth in terms of both customer performance and product performance. Another study by Wu and Zhao (2014),(Kraus ,Rigtering , Hughes & Hosman,2012) Amin, (2015) and (Muthee-Mwangi&Ngugi 2014);Lumpkin (2009) found that effects of pro-activeness exist at significant levels, suggesting a perfect mediating effect of pro-activeness on growth. Furthermore, the authors found that the positive impact was stronger in early stage of a product, which suggests that pro-activeness has an important role especially in the introduction and growth stage of a product and that the pro-activeness vis-à-vis performance was strongest in a dynamic and hostile environment. Contrary to the above findings, the study of Kumarpeli and Semasingbe (2015) which examined the association between EO and growth of SMEs in Sri Lanka, the findings showed that pro-activeness has no significant impact on the growth of SMEs

### **III. Methodology**

This study employed survey research design and Multi-stage sampling technique was adopted to examine the effects of entrepreneurial pro-activeness on growth of selected SMEs in Ogun State, Nigeria,set of well-structured questionnaires and primary source were used for data collection. Adopting survey research design was necessitated as a result of the nature of the study and the characteristics of the respondents, it extensively describes the effects between the variables and it was the most frequently used research design approach in entrepreneurial studies.(Ariyo, 2005, Asikhia, (2010), Ogbuanu, Kabuoh&Okwu (2014).The population for this research comprised of1,794 Small and Medium Scale Enterprises that are registered with SMEDAN and are operating in Ogun state as at 2013, and total sample size was 412.Out of the 412 firms randomly sampled, only 386(93.69%) responded to the questionnaire. The instrument was administered among the owner-managers, managers and employees of various SMEsand data were analysed using the descriptive and inferential analysis

**Ho:** Pro-activeness has no significant effecton the growth of the selected small and medium scale enterprises in Ogun State, Nigeria

#### **Model Specification**

$$FG = \alpha_0 + \beta_1 PA + \mu_i$$

Where FG= Firm Growth, PA= Pro-activeness

### **IV. Analysis And findings**

The results of the analysis are presented in the following table 1 showing the effect of The results of the analysis are presented in the following table 1 showing the effect of Pro-activeness on Firm Growth small and medium scale enterprises in Ogun State Nigeria.

**Table 1: Regression Results for Pro-activeness and Growth**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	5.996	1.271		4.717	.001
	Pro-activeness	.527	.036	.598	14.622	.001
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson	
1	.598 <sup>a</sup>	.358	.356	3.250	1.554	

a. Predictors: (Constant), Pro-activeness  
b. Dependent Variable: Organizational Growth

Source: Field Survey Data (2018)

**Interpretations**

Table 1 shows a regression result of the effect of Pro-activeness on the Firm growth of the selected small and medium scale enterprises in Ogun State, Nigeria. The results of regression analysis showed that the coefficient of determination was 0.358 which implies that Pro-activeness explains 35.8% of the variations in growth of the selected small and medium scale enterprises in Ogun State, Nigeria (R<sup>2</sup> = 0.358). However, the regression did not explain 64.2% of the variation in growth of the selected small and medium scale enterprises which was attributed to other EO variables not captured in the model.

Furthermore, Durbin Watson (DW) test was 1.554 which lies between 1.5 and 2.5 commended value for independent observations (Garson, 2012). Therefore, there was no autocorrelation. The regression model estimated in Table 4.5 revealed that pro-activeness was statistically significant at β=0.527; t = 14.622; p = 0.001, therefore at 95% level of confidence, Pro-activeness has a positive and significant effect on growth of the selected small and medium scale enterprises. The regression model estimated in Table 4.5 for the effect of Pro-activeness is presented below:

$$\text{Growth} = 5.996 + 0.527\text{PRO} \dots\dots\dots \text{Equation}$$

Where: Growth = growth of the selected small and medium scale enterprises; PRO = Pro-activeness

The regression equation revealed that holding pro-activeness to constant zero, growth of the selected small and medium scale enterprises would be at 5.996. The equation also illustrates that a unit increase in Pro-activeness is responsible for increasing performance by 0.527. This implies that pro-activeness does significantly affect growth of the selected small and medium scale enterprises in Ogun State, Nigeria. Based on the result, the null hypothesis (H<sub>01</sub>) which states that Pro-activeness does not significantly affect growth of the selected small and medium scale enterprises in Ogun State, Nigeria was rejected.

**V. Discussion**

From the results of hypothesis one, it was found that pro-activeness has positive significant effect on growth of the selected small and medium scale enterprises in Ogun State, Nigeria. This result agrees and added value to the findings of Kiprotich, and Komen (2017), Okpara (2009), Fredrick, Birech, Loice&Omwono(2018). They agreed that pro-activeness has a positive effect on growth and performance of SMEs, and for SMEs to grow, they must be proactive to acquire new market opportunities. Also supporting the finding of this study are John, Micheal, &cassiu (2017) and Hughes and Morgan (2011), which asserted that pro-activeness has significant relationship to influence the survival, profitability, growth and sustainability of SME's. Researcher such as Fatoki& Oni (2014) aligns with the submission of other authors and noted that the extent to which SME's aggressively pursue opportunity and proactively repositioned its niche, have been linked to SME success and growth.

Also, this study is consistent with the research conducted by Arisi-Nwugballa, Elom, &Onyeizugbe, (2016), Matchaba-Hove and Vambe (2014), Kusumawardhani, (2013), Syed, Muzaffar&Minaa (2017) Johnson (2015) Angeline, Robert, Kenneth and Joseph (2015), revealed that Pro-activeness has significant positive influence on the success of the business and that, manufacturing sector especially SMEs, if they are pro-active to market changes can maintain their performance by maintaining their position in the market for increased growth.

Contrary to the study, Amaka, Paul& Innocent (2018); Kumarpeli and Semasingbe (2015) Musthofa, Sugeng, Naili&Ngatno (2017) did not align with the above, it was found that pro-activeness has no significant effect and impact on the growth of SMEs. Based on the findings and the supporting literatures, the null hypothesis which states that Pro-activeness has no significant effect on growth of the selected small and medium scale enterprises in Ogun State, Nigeria is rejected.

## VI. Conclusion And Recommendations

The study concluded that there was positive statistically and significant effect of entrepreneurial proactiveness on growth of small and medium scale enterprises in Ogun State, Nigeria with beta coefficient of 0.527. The entrepreneurial pro-activeness had helped to track down the cost drivers and enhanced growth of this level of business. This implied that awareness of market signals; initiation and exploitation of new opportunities among SMEs in Ogun State have a positive effect on growth. In view of the findings of this study, it was recommended, that to attain a high level of efficiency, entrepreneurs and managers should be proactive, by engaging in the development of new products and services, entry into new markets. Firms should consider entrepreneurial strategies as part of steps for improving growth and performance. Also, government should provide an enabling environment for proactive entrepreneurs and policy makers should consider adopting screening procedures to support programs that encourage entrepreneurs and managers carry out strategic scans for new opportunities in the market. This will ensure effective growth of SMEs. Further research is suggested in other countries and in different settings in order to validate the generalizability of our findings. Finally this study excluded financial considerations since we were unable to receive the necessary financial data such as sales volume and profits

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