

PREDICTORS OF ENTREPRENEURIAL ACTION AMONG NATIONAL YOUTH SERVICE CORPS MEMBERS

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Abstract

The study investigated the impact of self-efficacy, decision making and networking on entrepreneurial actions of National youth service corps member in Ibadan, Oyo state, Nigeria. A survey research design using the ex-post facto type was adopted for this study. Three hundred corps members participated in the study. Data were collected with four valid and standardized questionnaires. These instruments includes: Entrepreneurial Self-efficacy Scale (ESS), Entrepreneurial Action Scale (EAS), Networking Scale (NS), and Decision Making Scale (DMS). Three research questions were raised in the study. Pearson product moment correlation (PPMC), and multiple regressions analysis were the statistical tools used. The result indicates that self-efficacy, decision making and locus of control were significantly related to entrepreneurial actions. These three independent variables accounted for 34.1% of the total variance of entrepreneurial action by the participants. However, self-efficacy is the most potent predictor of enterpreneurial actions. It is recommended that organizing orientation symposium, and training programmes based on self-efficacy, decision-making and networking for the new and substantive Corps members targeting entrepreneurial actions is highly beneficial

Keywords: Self-efficacy, Entrepreneurial Action, Networking, Decision-Making

Introduction

Entrepreneurial action is widely acknowledged as an essential driver of industrial dynamics and growth. The causal model of the construct is related to the functionalist paradigm that dominates entrepreneurship research (Grant & Parren, 2002). Traditional, studies have focused on how entrepreneurial action are caused by personal traits (Delmar & Davidsson, 2000), entrepreneurial intentions (Krueger, 2000), contextual pressure (Reynolds, 1997), and the direct and indirect effects of the entrepreneurial climate (Carter, Reynolds & Gartner, 2004). Entrepreneurs are defined as those who perceive situations differently, especially exercising good business judgment in the face of uncertainty (Casson, 2003). By virtue of having a unique understanding of certain situation, entrepreneurs not only understand situations differently; they also assertively exploit such differences. Entrepreneurship therefore requires action to convert ideals to reality.

Entrepreneurship is considered one of the most important factors contributing to economic development and has numerous benefits for the society. It drives innovation, creates jobs, and develops human potential, and satisfies new customer demands (European Commission, 2003). However, only a small percentage of the working population typically engages in entrepreneurship (Bosma & Levie, 2010). With the technological transformation of public and private sector organizations leading to the decline in some traditional occupations and skill and knowledge demands in others, young people have faced significant challenges over the last decade in gaining the qualifications and opportunities to participate on the global workplace. In Nigeria, the rate of unemployment is on the increase with the disappearance of jobs in the public service, the churning out of an estimated 170,000 graduates annually by Nigerian Universities and Polytechnics, lack of industrialization and so on.

As a result of unemployment, many youths have taken to criminal activities such as robbery, kidnapping, child trafficking, and extortion of money from people. Likewise, many National Youth Service Corpers (NYSC) graduates are unemployed and exposed to engaging in anti-development and unacceptable activities such as robbery, advance fee fraud, thuggery and prostitution. Although attempts have been made to find solution to the problem, these efforts are often politicized with little or no success. It is not yet understood how the phenomenon of entrepreneurial action could be the possible solution. Hence, how certain componential factors influence entrepreneurial action is not known. Therefore, this study seeks to ascertain to what extent and how certain factors such as self-efficacy, decision making and locus of control affect the entrepreneurial action of National Youth Service Corpers (NYSC).

Self-Efficacy and Entrepreneurial Actions

Self-efficacy is defined as people's beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives (Bandura, 1986). Self-efficacy beliefs determine how people feel, think, motivate themselves and behave (Bandura, 1991). Such beliefs produce these diverse effects through four major processes. They include cognitive, motivational, affective and selection processes (Bandura, 1991). Thus, people with high assurance in their capabilities approach difficult tasks as challenges to be mastered rather than as threats to be avoided. Such an efficacious outlook fosters intrinsic interest and deep engrossment in activities. They set themselves challenging goals and maintain strong commitment to them. They approach threatening situations with assurance that they can exercise control over them. Such an efficacious outlook produces personal accomplishment, reduces stress and lowers vulnerability to depression.

A growing body of research attests to the predictive power of entrepreneurial self-efficacy on entrepreneurial actions. For instance, Chen, Greene, & Grick (1998) demonstrated that entrepreneurs' self-efficacy is significantly higher than that of managers in two domains-innovation and risk taking. Krueger, Reilly and Carsrud (2000) associated self-efficacy with perceived feasibility and formation of entrepreneurial intentions, while Chandler and Jansen (1992) used self-efficacy to explain employment choice intentions. Summarizing the state of the field in a meta-analysis, Rauch & frees (2007) showed that entrepreneurial self-efficacy for starting a new business is a crucial factor for increasing the likelihood of business start-up activity. Tang (2009) examined how self-efficacy moderated effects of environmental munificence on entrepreneurs' alertness and entrepreneurs' commitment to their new ventures. Also examined are normative, social and cognitive effects of self-efficacy on entrepreneurial intentions in different geographical settings in order to show that self-efficacy and close social supports may be instrumental to enhancing entrepreneurial activity in some countries but not others (Baughn, Cao, Le, Lim & Neupert, 2006). Perhaps, self-efficacy may be the driving force for entrepreneurial actions among Corps members.

Networking and Entrepreneurial Actions

The current research defines networking by behaviors that are aimed at building, maintaining, and using informal relationships that possess the (potential) benefit to facilitate work related activities of individuals by voluntarily granting access to resources and maximizing common advantages (Wolff & Moser, 2006; Forret & Dougherty, 2004). The above definition of networking behaviors also describes building relationships with others who have the potential to assist individuals in their work or entrepreneur, whether or not assistance is ever provided. Although networking behaviors may be beneficial for improving other aspects of one's personal life, the

primary purpose of networking behaviors in the researcher's context is for the receipt of work benefits. The construct is defined on a behavioral level (Michael & Yukl, 1993; Wanberg et al., 2000; Witt, 2004) and can be considered a "behavior syndrome" (Frese, Fay, Hilburger, Leng, & Tag, 1997), that is, a set of interrelated behaviors that are consistently shown by individuals.

Accordingly, networking measures typically assess how often individuals show networking behaviors, e.g., discussing business matters outside of working hours or using contacts to get confidential advice. Theoretical accounts assume that these behaviors lead to informal, voluntary, and reciprocal relationships that in turn facilitate access to resources such as task related support, strategic information, or entrepreneur success. Literature suggest that networking behaviors, such as going out for drinks to discuss business matters informally, attending conferences, or staying in contact with former colleagues, are essential to entrepreneurial success (Nierenberg, 2002; Torres, 2005). It evince propensity for a significant impact on venture growth rate (Lee & Tsang, 2001). Similarly, scholarly research has shown that networking is positively related to objective and subjective measures of entrepreneurial success (Forret & Dougherty, 2004; Langford, 2000). Networking is also associated with favorable performance ratings (Sturges, Conway, Guest, & Liefhooghe, 2005; Thompson, 2005) and may be a viable entrepreneurial strategy (Wanberg, Kanfer, & Banas, 2000). Networking behaviors are used to build and maintain informal contacts that enhance entrepreneurial success (Forret & Dougherty, 2004).

Decision making and Entrepreneurial Actions

Decision making can be regarded as the mental processes (cognitive process) resulting in the selection of a cause of action among several alternative scenarios. Every decision making process produce a final choice (Reason, 1990). Human performance in decision terms has been the subject of active research from several perspectives. From a psychological perspective, it is necessary to examine individual decisions in the context of a set of needs, preferences an individual has and values they seek. From a cognitive perspective, the decision making process must be regarded as a continuous process integrated in the interaction with the environment. From a normative perspective, the analysis of individual decisions is concerned with the logic of decision making and rationality and the invariant choice it leads to (Triantaphyllou, 2000). Yet, at another level, it might be regarded as a problem solving activity which is terminated when a satisfactory solution is reached. Therefore, decision making is a reasoning or emotional process which can be rational or irrational, can be based on explicit assumptions or tacit assumptions.

It must be remembered that creating a venture is a process that begins with the individual's personal decision to implement it (Linan, 2007). Research has shown that values may cause behavior (Verplanken & Holland, 2002). In this sense, Feather (1995)

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argues that people's values induce variance on decisions and translate to possible actions. That is, actions become more attractive, more valued subjectively, to the extent that they promote attainment of valued decisions and goals. Sterman (2000). and Cooper and Kleinschmidt (1995) found that individuals often employ cognitive heuristics and simplifying strategies which may lead to cognitive biases especially in complex and uncertain decisions. Hence, entrepreneurs may be particularly prone to biases (Simon, 2000). That's because they unintentionally simplify their information processing to diminish the stress and ambiguity associated with the decision to start new ventures (Busenitz & Barney, 1997). Decision to start a new venture is therefore an individuals' decision-making process and is especially prone to biases which may affect risk perception (Palich & Bagby, 1995).

The National Youth Service Corp is an institution saddled with the responsibility of being the bridge between tertiary institutions and work life. Hence, the service programme constitutes a breeding ground for Nigeria's ever increasing youth population all through the years. The purpose of the scheme is primarily to inculcate in Nigerian Youths the spirit of selfless service to the community, and to emphasize the spirit of oneness and brotherhood of all Nigerians, irrespective of cultural or social background. The history of our country since independence has clearly indicated the need for unity amongst all our people, and demonstrated the fact that no cultural or geographical entity can exist in isolation. Nevertheless, the productivity of these youths has been in question as jobs are fast diminishing and unemployment rate is in the high. Developing patterns for churning these youths into entrepreneurs may be an added value to the scheme, the youths, the community and the nation's economic and scientific and social advancement. It is to this end that this study is designated.

Research Questions

Three research questions were raised in this study. These are;

1. What is the relationship between self-efficacy, networking, decision making and entrepreneurial action among N.Y.S.C. members?
2. What is the joint effect of self-efficacy, networking and decision making to the prediction of entrepreneurial action among N.Y.S.C. members?
3. What is the relative contribution of self-efficacy, networking and decision making to entrepreneurial action among N.Y.S.C. members?

Method

Design

A descriptive survey research design that made use of an ex-post-facto research design was adopted for the study.

Sample and Sampling Procedure

The sample for the study was drawn from four local governments within Ibadan metropolitan in Oyo state. The purposive random sampling technique was adopted for the study. Three hundred National Youth Service Corpsers were recruited as respondents for the study. They were 157 males and 143 females.

Instrumentation

The following instruments were used to carry out the research:

Decision Making Scale

This scale comprise of 21 items. Its mode of response is: (1) = very infrequently, (2) = infrequently, (3) = quite infrequently, (4) = quite frequently, (5) = frequently, (6) = very frequently. The instrument was adopted from French, West, Elander & Wilding (Melbourne Decision Making Questionnaire) 1982. The scale has been found to demonstrate a high internal consistency of Cronbach Alpha 0.87 to 0.90 (French et al., 1982) and a two-week test-retest reliability coefficient of 0.78.

Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy Scale (ESES)

Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy Scale (ESES) was used to measure the entrepreneurial self-efficacy of the undergraduate students. The entrepreneurial self-efficacy scale was developed by DeNoble *et al.*, 1999. This scale consists of 16 items measuring an individual's abilities in performing entrepreneurial tasks with each item measured on a 5 point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). Examples of items on the scale include: I can identify potential capital sources for the venture and 2. I can develop relationships with people who connect to sources. The scale has Cronbach alpha of 0.87(DeNoble *et al.* 1999) and a reliability coefficient of 0.77.

Networking behaviour Scale

The tool used as a measure was a self developed Networking behaviour scale. The scale is a 10-item scale patterned in a 5-point likert format. The response pattern ranges from 1=never, 2=seldom, 3=often, 4=very often and 5=always. Typical item in the scale is "how often are you connected to the career world", "how often do you attend conferences, workshops and symposium on career search. Increasing scores indicates less difficulty with networking while decreasing scores indicates difficulty with networking. The scale has reported a split half-coefficient alpha of .75.

Entrepreneurial Action Scale

This scale comprises of 21 items structured in a 5-point Likert format. Response to the items are strongly disagree (1), moderately disagree (2), slightly disagree (3), neutral (4), slightly agree (5), moderately agree (6), strongly agree (7). The

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questionnaire was formerly a 34 item scale used in University of Netherlands and was adapted for this study. After psychometric exposure, the scale reported a cronbach alpha of 0.70 and a reliability coefficient of 0.74.

Procedure

The researcher personally distributed and collected the completed questionnaire from the participants. Permissions were obtained from significant authorities (such as the local government head quarters) to facilitate the process. Participants were adequately informed of confidentiality and the need to be precise and truthful in filling the questionnaire. Three hundred and fifty questionnaires were administered on the participants in this study. However among these only 321 was returned, while 300 were valid for this study. Thus 93.5% returns of questionnaire were achieved. The entire procedure was carried out within two weeks.

Method of Data Analysis

Multiple Regression and Pearson Product Moment Correlational analysis were the major statistical tools in this study.

Results

Research question 1

1. Are there significant relationship between entrepreneurial self efficacy, locus of control, decision making and entrepreneurial action?

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics and Correlations among Variables.

	N	Mean	Standard deviation	Entrepreneurial Action	Entrepreneurial self efficacy	Networking Behaviour	Decision making
Entrepreneurial Action	300	81.27	11.03	1			
Entrepreneurial self efficacy	300	74.55	8.90	.386**	1		
Networking Behaviour	300	34.99	6.66	.241**	.157*	1	
Decision making	300	79.28	5.36	.344**	.143	.262**	1

**= correlation is significant at 0.05 (2-tailed)

From the table the correlation coefficients between all the variables were significant. The results further revealed strongest relationship between Entrepreneurial action and Entrepreneurial self efficacy and the lowest between Decision making and Entrepreneurial self efficacy.

Research question 2

2. What is the combined influence of entrepreneurial self efficacy, Networking Behaviour, and decision making on the entrepreneurial action among NYSC?

Table 2: Summary of Regression Analysis between Predictor Variables and Entrepreneurial Actions among NYSC.

	R	R²	Adj R²	F-Ratio	Beta	T	Sig
Combine effects	.588	.346	.341	7.04			
Entrepreneurial self-efficacy	300				.277	3.944	0.01
Networking Behaviour	300				.211	1.542	.011
Decision making	300				.241	2.336	.006

From the results presented in table 2, the independent variables collectively yielded a coefficient of multiple regressions (R) of .588, $R^2 = .346$ and an adjusted R^2 of .341. This shows that 34.1% of the total variance of entrepreneurial action by the participants is accounted for by the combination of the three predictive variables studied. The table as well indicates that the analysis of variance produced a significant F- ratio ($F(3,196) = 7.04; < .05$). The findings thus confirm that the three variables are significant predictors of the criterion measure.

Research question 3

3. What is the combined influence of entrepreneurial self efficacy, networking behaviour, and decision making on the entrepreneurial action among NYSC?

From the results displayed in table 2 above, each of the independent variables made significant individual contributions to the prediction of the criterion measure (entrepreneurial action) in varying weights. The results indicated that the following beta weights represent the predictive strength of the independent variables observed in accordance with the most effective to the least; Entrepreneurial self efficacy, ($\beta = .277$, $t = 3.944$, $P < 0.05$) Decision making, ($\beta = .241$, $t = 2.336$, $P < 0.05$) and networking behaviour ($\beta = .211$, $t = 1.542$, $P < 0.05$).

Discussions

The analysis of relationship among self-efficacy, decision making and locus of control and entrepreneurial actions as shown in the correlation matrix of Table 1 indicates that there is a positive and significant correlation among the variables studied and the criterion measure (entrepreneurial actions). This suggests that self-efficacy,

decision making, and locus of control could predict entrepreneurial actions among National youth Service corps members. As showed in Table 2, the multiple regression analysis indicates that self-efficacy, decision making and locus of control could predict entrepreneurial actions of National Youths Service Corps members. The magnitude of this relationship in predicting the entrepreneurial actions is reflected in the values of coefficient of multiple regressions (0.304) and in multiple R^2 adjusted (0.311) as shown in table 2. Thus, it can be said that (31.1%) of the total variance in the entrepreneurial actions of corps members is accounted for by the combination of self-efficacy, decision making, and locus of control. The F – ratio value of 5.120 is significant at 0.05 levels. This further affirms to the fact that the predictive capacity of the independent variables are not due to chance factor.

Concerning the extent to which each of the three independent variables contributes to the prediction, the beta weights and t-value as reported in table 2 indicates that self efficacy is the most potent contributor among the variables investigated. The finding is similar to diverse studies of Chen, Greene, & Grick, (1998), Krueger (2000), Chandler and Jansen (1992) and Tang (2009). Acknowledging theoretical populations, the result is not surprising. For instance Bandura (1986) noted that people who believe they can produce desired outcomes and avoid unpleasant ones have incentive to act. Thus participants with high self-efficacy, that is, those who believe they can perform well, are more likely to view difficult tasks (such as entrepreneurial actions) as something to be mastered rather than something to be avoided. Hence, participants with high self-efficacy often take a wider overview of an entrepreneurial action in order to take the best route of action.

Decision making is the second potent predictor of corps member's entrepreneurial actions. The theoretical and empirical studies of (Linan, 2007; Verplanken & Holland, 2002; Feather, 1995) are similar to this present finding. Starting a new venture is in the first place, an individual's personal decision. Understanding the decision-making process may provide some clues; individuals often employ cognitive heuristics and simplifying strategies which may lead to cognitive biases especially in complex and uncertain decisions. And entrepreneurs may be particularly prone to biases that's because they unintentionally simplify their information processing to diminish the stress and ambiguity associated with the decision to start a new ventures.

Networking behaviour as third predictor also reveals predictive capacity for corps member's entrepreneurial actions. Extending previous entrepreneurial actions research (Kanfer et al., 2001; Wanberg et al., 2000), the present finding corroborates previous studies (Adler & Kwon, 2002). Specifically, these prior studies noted that individuals with a larger social network and with stronger ties in their network reported spending more time on networking during entrepreneurial incubations, suggesting that

network structure is an important determinant of entrepreneurial actions and behaviour. A probable explanation is seen from the perspective of a social web which networking is founded on, increasing the potentials and chances of acquiring information about the world of works. Also, time spent networking was found to relate positively to number of job offers, demands and explained additional variance over time spent searching through print advertising, internet, and public employment services. Thus, individuals who spent more time networking received more job demands and offers. This suggests that networking as informal entrepreneurial behaviour provides individuals with work information that is non-redundant with information gathered by more formal search behaviours. In the African setting communal lifestyles govern daily activities such that affiliations are highly respected and encouraged. With such ambience, in order to have longer lasting positive attitudes, deal better with ambiguity and to be influenced by the future attainment of desired goals, it is common and often necessary to relate positively with people successfully. Further, networking dimensions could provide a foundation for the development of individual values that in turn influence people's attitudes and behaviors both at macro and micro levels of entrepreneurial actions.

Implications and Recommendations

It is important to mention the implication of the present study for educational and counselling applications. First the significant relationship and influence of self-efficacy, decision-making and networking on the entrepreneurial actions of Corps member indicate a possible route towards encouraging entrepreneurship and reducing maximally the problems of unemployment and restiveness among Corps member. Thus, the findings from the study has vital significance for policymakers, ministry of education, National Youth Service Corps, school administrators, students, counsellors, non-governmental organizations, the society and future researchers. As corps members often encounter frustrating situations in their entrepreneurial actions, having plan of action to reduce the burden is necessary. It is therefore considered necessary to organise orientation symposium, and training programmes based on self-efficacy, decision-making and networking for the new and substantive Corps members targeting entrepreneurial actions.

Conclusion

This study has investigated networking, decision making and self-efficacy as they influence corps member's entrepreneurial actions. While the influence of locus of control, self-efficacy and decision making have largely been seen as drivers of entrepreneurship action. Further investigations of how the aforementioned variables impact levels of entrepreneurship actions can help youths understand not only why some individuals choose to become entrepreneurs, but why they choose specific businesses to initiate. It is hoped that such investigations would glimpse of how

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networking, decision-making process as well as self-efficacy would provide guardrail for their entrepreneurial journey.

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