

Does Motivation Predict Entrepreneurial Behavior In Youth Samples?

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Abstract:

Entrepreneurial behavior has become increasingly vital in addressing economic and unemployment challenges in many parts of Nigeria. While studies have used different predictors on entrepreneurial behavior, however, studies linking motivation directly on entrepreneurial behavior are lacking. Therefore, this study examines the predictive role of motivation on entrepreneurial behavior in youth samples. Cross-sectional survey design was adopted while purposive sampling technique was used to select the study population. Data were conveniently collected from 220 youths using validated questionnaires and analyzed using simple linear regression $p < .001$ level of significance. The result indicates significant influence of motivation on entrepreneurial behavior, $F(1, 218) = 45.90, p < 0.001$. Further analysis reveals that motivation independently predicts entrepreneurial behavior ($\beta = .658, p < .001$). The study concludes that motivation is a robust predictor of entrepreneurial behavior in study participants. The study concludes that the government and private sector should create entrepreneurial hubs and incubators to motivate youths to engage in entrepreneurial behavior.

Keywords: *motivation, entrepreneurial behavior, youth samples.*

Abstrak:

Perilaku kewirausahaan menjadi semakin penting dalam mengatasi tantangan ekonomi dan pengangguran di banyak wilayah Nigeria. Meskipun berbagai penelitian telah menggunakan prediktor yang berbeda terhadap perilaku kewirausahaan, namun penelitian yang secara langsung menghubungkan motivasi dengan perilaku kewirausahaan masih kurang. Oleh karena itu, penelitian ini mengkaji peran prediktif motivasi terhadap perilaku kewirausahaan pada sampel pemuda. Desain survei lintas sektoral diadopsi, sementara teknik pengambilan sampel bertujuan digunakan untuk memilih populasi penelitian. Data dikumpulkan secara acak dari 220 pemuda menggunakan kuesioner yang telah divalidasi dan dianalisis menggunakan regresi linier sederhana dengan tingkat signifikansi $p < 0,001$. Hasil menunjukkan pengaruh signifikan motivasi terhadap perilaku kewirausahaan, $F(1, 218) = 45,90, p < 0,001$. Analisis lebih lanjut mengungkapkan bahwa motivasi secara independen memprediksi perilaku kewirausahaan ($\beta = 0,658, p < 0,001$).

Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa motivasi merupakan prediktor yang kuat terhadap perilaku kewirausahaan pada peserta penelitian. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa pemerintah dan sektor swasta harus menciptakan pusat dan inkubator kewirausahaan untuk memotivasi pemuda agar terlibat dalam perilaku kewirausahaan.

Kata Kunci: *motivasi, perilaku kewirausahaan, sampel pemuda.*

INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurial behavior refers to the planning, initiation, and management of income-generating activities by individuals, particularly those driven by innovation, opportunity, or necessity (Roberts et al., 2026). Entrepreneurial behavior includes street vending, digital marketing, operating barbing salons, food services, and clothing lines (Adeyeye et al., 2019; Okojie & Shimwaava, 2018). While some young individuals demonstrate significant entrepreneurial initiative, others remain passive or rely heavily on white-collar job expectations, even in the face of limited job availability. The decision to engage in entrepreneurial behavior is influenced by several factors including access to capital, government policies, and psychological variables (Adeyeye et al., 2018; Ehondor et al., 2024; Gielnik et al., 2014; Roberts et al., 2026).

The psychological factor considered in this study as a predictor of entrepreneurial behavior is motivation which is conceived as the psychological engine that drives individuals to initiate, persist in, and commit to their chosen goals (Roberts et al., 2026). In the context of entrepreneurial behavior, motivation determines not only the decision to start a business but it influences how individuals respond to setbacks, how innovative they are, and how long they remain committed to their entrepreneurial behavior (Uche & Chinedu, 2021). Entrepreneurial motivation could be intrinsic or extrinsic. It is intrinsic when it emanates from internal desires such as passion, autonomy, and personal satisfaction (Lim, et al., 2024). It is extrinsic when it is influenced by external rewards such as financial gain, social recognition, or family expectations (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Both types of motivations can stimulate business creation; however, they differ in their long-term implications for resilience, adaptability, and growth.

Some studies on motivation as a predictor of entrepreneurial behavior have been examined. For instance, Adejumo et al., (2021) in their post-COVID-19 study entrepreneurial motivation among Nigerian youths, found that those driven by intrinsic motives like independence and social impact were more resilient in sustaining businesses despite economic downturns. Their cross-sectional analysis included respondents from Rivers and Lagos States, providing relevance to the Obio/Akpor context.

On their parts, Carsrud and Brännback (2011) found that motivated youths are more likely to persist with entrepreneurial ventures despite inadequate government support, unreliable infrastructure, and economic instability. Furthermore, Nieman and Nieuwenhuizen (2019) found that Nigerian youths are more likely to pursue entrepreneurship when motivated by both necessity and opportunity. This means that some young people are driven into entrepreneurship out of survival needs such as unemployment or financial

hardship while others are motivated by the recognition of opportunities in the market.

Finally, [Amos and Onifade \(2013\)](#) found motivation to directly affect small business creation and growth among young people in Nigeria. This means that without adequate motivation, young entrepreneurs would lack the persistence required to establish businesses and push them beyond the start-up phase ([del Olmo García, et al., 2023](#)). Motivation, therefore, plays a dual role stimulating the initial decision to venture into entrepreneurship and sustaining efforts for business growth and expansion.

Drawing from the above findings, it is safe to conclude that, [Nieman and Nieuwenhuizen \(2019\)](#) showed Nigerian youths to be motivated by both necessity and opportunity. This was confirmed by [Amos and Onifade \(2013\)](#) that motivation directly drives business creation and growth while McClelland's Theory of Need for Achievement and Deci and Ryan Self-Determination Theory provide the theoretical backing that motivation sustains entrepreneurship.

Entrepreneurial behavior has remained low despite growing awareness of entrepreneurship as the ultimate route out of unemployment. While external factors have been examined as predictors of entrepreneurial behavior with mixed findings, psychological factors remain under-explored among youth samples in the Rivers State, leaving a gap in the literature. Therefore, this study explores the predictability of motivation on entrepreneurial behavior among youths in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area (LGA) in Rivers State, Nigeria. The study aims to provide an answer to the question: Will motivation independently predict entrepreneurial behavior among youths in Obio/Akpor LGA?

The study would provide insights into how motivation contributes to entrepreneurial behavior among youth samples. In addition, findings from this study would help decision-makers and other stakeholders to design and implement evidence-based programs that would integrate motivational training into entrepreneurial behavior for youths to take as their career paths. Training in motivation enhancement would equip youths with the confidence and resilience required to start a business of their own.

Two theories were incorporated in this study: [McClelland's Theory of Need for Achievement \(1961\)](#) and [Deci and Ryan's Self-Determination Theory \(1985\)](#). To begin with, McClelland's Theory of Need for Achievement offers a robust psychological explanation for entrepreneurial behavior. It helps to identify why some youth, despite facing similar environmental constraints, choose to pursue entrepreneurial behavior and persist through adversity ([Muñoz-Céspedes, et al., 2024](#)). Among the study population where structural support is lacking, fostering a strong internal drive for achievement would be a critical variable that differentiates potential entrepreneurs from others. This theory both enriches the conceptual framework of the current study and offers practical pathways for empowering youth to become proactive contributors to

economic development.

In addition, Deci and Ryan's Self-Determination Theory (1985) support the role of intrinsic motivation in shaping sustained entrepreneurial activity. The theory posits that individuals are more likely to commit to and persist in activities when motivated by internal factors such as personal satisfaction, growth, and autonomy, rather than external pressures alone. In entrepreneurial behavior, intrinsic motivation fosters creativity, resilience, and long-term commitment, which are essential for sustaining a venture beyond its early stages. The hypothesis tested was: Motivation will independently predict entrepreneurial behavior among youth samples in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area (LGA) of Rivers State, Nigeria.

RESEARCH METHOD

The study adopted cross-sectional survey design while validated questionnaires were used to gather data from study participants (Amoa-Gyarteng, & Dhliwayo, 2024). The independent variable was motivation and the dependent variable was entrepreneurial behavior (Omri, et al., 2024). This study was conducted in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area (LGA), Rivers State, Nigeria. Obio/Akpor is one of 23 LGAs in the state and forms part of the Port Harcourt metropolis. The area is characterized by a dense urban population, high commercial activity, and a vibrant socio-economic environment. While predominantly inhabited by the Ikwerre ethnic group, Obio/Akpor also hosts a diverse population due to internal migration and economic opportunities. Given its status as a hub for youth activities and small-scale entrepreneurship, the LGA provides a strategic context for examining entrepreneurial behavior among Nigerian youths.

The target population comprises youths between the ages of 18 and 35 years residing in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area who are either currently engaged in or have shown interest in starting entrepreneurial behavior. The sample size for this study was 220 youths. Purposive sampling technique was used to select the study population while convenient sampling was used to access the potential participants for data collection.

Data were collected using validated scales: Entrepreneurial Intention Questionnaire (EIQ, Liñán & Chen, 2009) was used to evaluate participants' motivation and entrepreneurial drive. The EIQ consisted of 38 items, measured on a 7-point Likert-type format ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Sample items include: "Being an entrepreneur implies more advantages than disadvantages to me" and "If I had the opportunity and resources, I would love to start a business" and "Amongst various options, I would rather be anything but an entrepreneur." The study obtained Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.85$.

Business Engagement Assessment (Leshinsky & Kase undated) assessed astudy participants' involvement in in entrepreneurial behavior. It is a 12- item scale, dealing with practical entrepreneurial participation, decision-making, and persistence. It is presented on a 7-point Likert's format that include strongly disagree to strongly agree. Example of items are :

1) "When I was young, I did not often need to be told by my parents what to do

when to do it, and how to do it” and

2) “Even if something makes me feel slightly nervous or uncomfortable, I typically do not have too much trouble getting myself to do it”. The study obtained Cronbach’s $\alpha = 0.80$.

Potential participants were approached at strategic locations such as youth centers, recreational hubs, shopping malls, and religious centers. The purpose of the study was explained to them, and informed consent was obtained prior to participation. Participants were informed that participation was voluntary and assured of the confidentiality of their responses. Only those who consented were given the questionnaire, which took approximately 14 minutes to complete. Completed questionnaires were collected immediately. A total of 225 questionnaires were distributed. During data screening and coding, 5 questionnaires were excluded due to incomplete responses, resulting in a final sample of 220 questionnaires used for analysis.

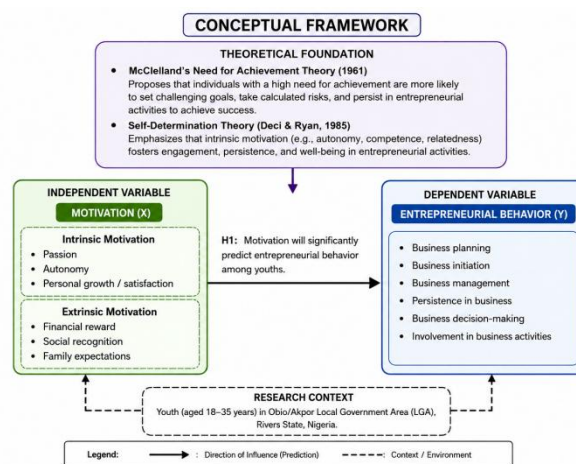


Figure 1 : Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this study explains the relationship between motivation and entrepreneurial behavior among youths in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area, Rivers State, Nigeria. The framework identifies motivation as the independent variable and entrepreneurial behavior as the dependent variable. Motivation is divided into two dimensions: intrinsic motivation, which includes passion, autonomy, and personal growth, and extrinsic motivation, such as financial rewards, social recognition, and family expectations. These motivational factors are believed to encourage youths to engage in entrepreneurial activities, including business planning, business initiation, management, persistence, and decision-making. The framework is supported by McClelland’s Need for Achievement Theory and Deci and Ryan’s Self-Determination Theory, which emphasize that individuals with strong internal and external motivation are more likely to pursue and sustain entrepreneurial activities. Therefore, the framework proposes that higher levels of motivation significantly predict stronger entrepreneurial behavior among youths and contribute to economic empowerment and self-reliance.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

Participants' demographic data

Table 4.1: Distribution of Respondents by Demographic Information (N = 220)

Category	Sub-Category	Frequency	Percent
Age	15-20 yrs	58	26.4
	21-27 yrs	92	41.8
	28-35 yrs	70	31.8
Gender	Male	108	49.1
	Female	112	50.9
Marital Status	Single	167	75.9
	Married	34	15.5
	Divorced	1	0.5
	Separated	8	3.6
	Widowed	10	4.5
Religion	Christian	192	87.3
	Muslim	10	4.5
	Traditional	18	8.2
Educational Level	FSLC	9	4.1
	SSCE	21	9.5
	Bachelor's	134	60.9
	Master's	42	19.1
	PhD	14	6.4
Total		220	100

Table 1 presents the demographics of study participants. The majority of the participants (42%) were aged 21-27 years, with females marginally higher (51%) than their male counterparts (49%). In terms of marital status, the majority of the participants (76%) were singles with 83% of the participants professing Christianity. Finally, 86% of the participants were degree holders.

To test the relationship between motivation and entrepreneurial behavior, zero-correlation statistics was conducted.

Table 1: Zero-order correlation of study variables

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2
Business Venture	45.2348	7.15069	-	-
Motivation	33.8338	7.54118	.658	-

Note: N = 220, *p <.001

Table 1 presents a zero-order correlation matrix of study variables. The result indicated that motivation significantly and positively correlated with entrepreneurial behavior among youth samples.

H1: Motivation will independently predict entrepreneurial behavior among youth samples in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area. The hypothesis was tested using simple linear regression analysis and the results are presented in

Tables2a-c.

Table 2a: Model of motivation on entrepreneurial behavior

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	RStd. Error of the Estimate
1	.658a	.433	.430	5.932

Table 2b: ANOVA of motivation on entrepreneurial behavior

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	1710.264	1	1710.264	45.90	.000b
Residual	2244.736	218	10.299		
Total	3955.000	219			

Table 2c: Coefficients of motivation on entrepreneurial behavior

Predictor	B	Std. Error	β	t	Sig.
(Constant)	12.954	1.668	-	7.76	.000
Motivation	0.463	0.068	.658	6.78	.000

Tables 2a-c present results of simple linear regression analysis of motivation on entrepreneurial behavior among youths in Obio/Akpor. The results indicated that regression analysis was significance $F(1, 218) = 45.90$, $p < 0.001$, explaining 43.3% of the variance ($R^2 = .433$). This means that for every one-unit increase in motivation, entrepreneurial behavior increased by .463 units ($\beta = .658$, $p < .001$). The result means that motivation independently predicted entrepreneurial behavior of youth in the study population. Therefore, the hypothesis was accepted.

Discussion

The hypothesis that motivation will significantly predict entrepreneurial behavior among youth samples was supported. The finding revealed that motivation explains 43% of variance in entrepreneurial behavior among study participants. This shows that motivation both intrinsic (passion, personal growth) and extrinsic (financial reward, social recognition) is critical in driving youths to engage in entrepreneurial behavior.

This finding aligns with that of [Shane et al., \(2003\)](#) who established that motivation is a critical psychological factor predicting entrepreneurial engagement. They found both intrinsic and extrinsic motivational drivers such as the need for achievement, desire for independence, and financial gain, in shaping their decision to start and sustain a business. Without strong motivation, individuals are less likely to take the risks, commit the time, and endure the setbacks inherent in entrepreneurship ([Basofitrah, et al., 2022](#)). Conversely, motivated individuals are more willing to transform ideas into entrepreneurial behavior, even in challenging environments.

In addition, the study lent credence to [Carsrud and Brännback \(2011\)](#) who found that while many individuals may initially venture into

entrepreneurship, only those with strong motivational endurance are able to overcome the inevitable challenges of limited resources, market fluctuations, and uncertainty about future outcomes. Motivation, therefore, serves not only as the trigger for starting a business but also as the fuel that keeps entrepreneurs resilient and committed over time.

Finally, the present finding corroborates [Nieman and Nieuwenhuizen \(2019\)](#) who found that entrepreneurship in Nigeria is not driven by a single motive but rather a blend of necessity-based and opportunity-based motivations, thus motivation remains a key determinant of whether youths would engage in entrepreneurial behavior or not. These studies strongly reinforce the hypothesis that motivation significantly predicts entrepreneurial behavior of youths in the study samples.

CONCLUSION

The study set out to examine the predictive ability of motivation on youth entrepreneurial behavior in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State. The study provides strong empirical data that motivation is an indispensable predictor of entrepreneurial behavior among youths in Obio/Akpor. It establishes that youths with strong motivational drive are significantly more likely to create, sustain, and grow entrepreneurial behavior. These findings both advance theoretical understanding of entrepreneurship and offer practical implications for policies and programs aimed at promoting youth entrepreneurship as a viable pathway for economic empowerment and community development among study participants and beyond. The study offers the following recommendations:

Managerial implications of these findings

Entrepreneurship support, organizations, incubators, and NGOs should use validated motivational assessment during recruitment. Targeting youth with high intrinsic and achievement motivation will improve the return on investment of training and funding programs because they are more likely to translate support into actual venture creation. In addition, since motivation drivers behavior, managers should structure programs around hands-on venture building, mentor ship, and immediate feedback rather than lectures. Finally, managers should match highly motivated youth with mentors who can maintain momentum, and monitor motivation levels over time to identify participants at risk of dropping out before acting on their ideas.

Practical implications of these findings

The schools and universities should go beyond business plan writing to incorporate experiential learning, startup simulations, and peer pitching that directly strengthen achievement motivation, self-efficacy, and opportunity recognition. Moreover, government youth schemes will have far reaching impact if they combine financial support with coaching, peer networks, and exposure to role models to activate motivation into behavior. Finally, government youth programs should be used to identify those who needs confidence-building and those who need resources so as to apply specific interventions to move the youths from intention to action.

The study's scope was limited to Obio/Akpor LGA, one of 23 LGAs in Rivers State. This restricts the generalizability of the findings. Future studies should expand coverage to multiple LGAs, and potentially to other states, to enhance external validity. Second, reliance on self-reported questionnaires may have introduced response bias. Subsequent research should incorporate focus group discussions and key informant interviews to triangulate data and improve validity. Moreover, the cross-sectional design limits causal inference. Longitudinal studies would be more appropriate for examining how motivation predicts entrepreneurial behavior over time. Finally, only one psychological trait was investigated while other factors such as social support, self-efficacy, personality traits were not directly investigated. These factors should be investigated in further study.

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