

Social Astuteness and Entrepreneurial Orientation Among Small and Medium Enterprises in Nigeria: A Study of Rice Farmers in Kogi State

Idenyi, Akoji

Department of Business Administration and Management, The Federal Polytechnic Idah, Kogi State.

Email: akojiidenyi@yahoo.com

Ameh, Abu Amodu, Ph.D

Department of Business Administration, Prince Abubakar Audu University, Anyigba, Kogi State, Nigeria

Email: castroy2k2005@gmail.com

Halilu Uba, PhD

Department of Business Administration, Prince Abubakar Audu University, Kogi State, Nigeria

Email: haliluuba4islam@gmail.com.

Abubakar Sadiq Yahaya

Department of Business Administration and Management Studies
Glory Land Polytechnic Ankpa, Kogi State.

Abstract

This study investigated the influence of social astuteness on the entrepreneurial orientation of smallholder rice farmers in Kogi State, Nigeria. A socially astute businessman demonstrates a great deal of emotional intelligence, effective communication, and empathy. The objectives of the study were to examine the relationship between social astuteness and risk taking, innovativeness, proactiveness, competitive aggressiveness and autonomy of rice farmers in Kogi State. Using a sample of 349 respondents from a population of 33,000, a structured questionnaire was used to collect primary data. Incorporating a seven-point Likert scale, the study employs Spearman's Product Moment Correlation and SPSS Version 26 for data analysis. The findings reveal a significant positive relationship between social astuteness and key dimensions of EO, including risk-taking ($r=0.648$), innovativeness ($r=0.608$), proactiveness ($r=0.484$), competitive aggressiveness ($r=0.322$), and autonomy ($r=0.429$). Social astuteness explains 42%, 36.9%, 23.4%, 10.3%, and 18.4% of the variance in these dimensions, respectively. This underscores the crucial role of social networks and interpersonal skills in fostering entrepreneurial behaviors among farmers. The results align with existing literature on the positive impact of social astuteness in driving entrepreneurial success, particularly in agrarian contexts. The study concludes that enhancing social astuteness through targeted training and policies can significantly improve the entrepreneurial orientation of rice farmers, leading to better business practices. It recommends the integration of social astuteness training into agricultural extension programs, promoting networking platforms, and fostering public-private partnerships to support proactive and innovative farming practices. These interventions can help enhance the overall entrepreneurial capacity of smallholder farmers in the region.

Keywords: Social Astuteness, Entrepreneurial Orientation, Rice, Farmers, Kogi State

Introduction

Social astuteness is the art of understanding people at both the individual and in group situations for the purpose of catching in on this understanding to facilitate individual and group goals. Entrepreneurship orientation (EO) refers to the extent to which an individual or team has the propensity for the initiation of new ideas, mobilize resources, take risk and take overall responsibility for actions taken (Ameh & Udu 2016). The Federal Ministry of Commerce and Industry defines Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) as firms with a total investment

(excluding the cost of land but including capital) of up to N750,000 and paid employment of up to fifty (50) persons. SMEs exist in the form of sole proprietorships and partnerships. However, some could be registered as limited liability companies and characterized by simple management structure, informal employer/employee relationship, labour-intensive operation, simple technology, the fusion of ownership and management and limited access to capital (World Trade Center Abuja, 2023). Rice is one of the staple foods globally, ranking third after wheat and maize in terms of production and consumption. It contributes over 20% of the total calorie intake of the human population. Nigeria is one of the world's largest markets for parboiled rice, consuming on average US\$4 billion worth of it each year. With production of 5.4 million metric tons in 2022 and consumption of almost 7 million metric tons, Nigeria had to import the shortfall (Christopher 2023). This statistic presents a huge market and job opportunities for Nigerians. Nigeria's agricultural economy depends heavily on the production of rice, which promotes economic growth, job creation, and food security (Egbai, Elijah and Ameh, 2024).

Kogi State, located in the central region of Nigeria, is renowned for its rich agricultural landscape, with rice farming being one of the predominant agricultural activities. Kogi state has emerged as the second-highest rice-producing state in Nigeria, with an annual production of over 1.5 million metric tonnes of rice. This represents a significant increase from the previous production levels of the state (Kogi Pedia, 2023). Majority of rice growers leave along the river banks, where the soil is rich, and rainfall is adequate for the cultivation of rice. Kogi State plays host to two major rivers (River Niger and River Benue). This explains its strategic location in the business of rice production. Many of the farmers operate on a small-scale basis considering the availability of resources at their disposal and their inability to be socially astute and leverage on it for improved performance. In traditional agrarian economies like Kogi State, where informal networks often dictate access to resources (e.g., land, credit, and government support), social intelligence may be as vital as technical farming skills. The landscape of entrepreneurship in Nigeria, particularly among small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), is characterized by a multitude of challenges and opportunities that are influenced by various factors. Among these, social astuteness is emerging as a critical competency that may enhance entrepreneurial orientation. This study examines the relationship between social astuteness and the dimensions of entrepreneurial orientation among rice farmers in Kogi State, Nigeria.

Many rice farmers in Kogi State face pressing challenges, including limited access to resources, fluctuating market demands, and adverse environmental conditions. No thanks to paucity of literatures on the influence of social astuteness on entrepreneurial orientation. However, there is limited empirical research on how social astuteness interacts with the different dimensions of entrepreneurial orientation among rice farmers in Kogi State. Specifically, it is unclear: How social astuteness influences risk-taking disposition, whether social astuteness enhances innovativeness, the extent to which social astuteness drives proactiveness, the association between social astuteness and competitive aggressiveness, and how social astuteness relates to autonomy of rice Farmers in Kogi State. In a nutshell, this research aims to fill the gap in the literature on the interplay between social astuteness and entrepreneurial orientation within the context of farming in Kogi State.

Literature Review

Social Astuteness

Social astuteness, the ability to accurately perceive and understand the emotions, motives, and intentions of others, is an essential quality for entrepreneurs. Socially astute individuals possess a remarkable ability to interact with others, often regarded as ingenious, clever, and respectable (Ferris et al., 2007). They utilize their aptitude for assessing social situations and individuals, employing adaptability to tailor their approaches to influencing others (Ferris et al., 2005). Proficient in accurately identifying opportunities to exhibit personal initiative, socially astute

individuals can effectively navigate various circumstances (Wihler et al., 2014). Today's competitive environment calls for social effectiveness to facilitate effective interpersonal interactions and career progression (Ferris 2005, Uchenna et al, 2021 & Nzewi et al, 2023.). It has been suggested that, socially effective individuals form strong relationships with supervisors in order to get rewards associated with their personal reputations. Furthermore, their ability to strategically and carefully adapt the most appropriate behavior in response to situational demands stems from the self-confidence that comes with possessing social astuteness (García-Chas et al., 2019).

Social astuteness is the art of understanding people. It is a skill that enables one to accurately read and respond diplomatically to organizational trends and norms. Social astuteness also allows people to deal effectively with organizational politics, making it an indispensable skill for anyone who finds themselves in a position of leadership. Social astuteness is widely recognized as beneficial in the workplace. Studies demonstrate that social astuteness explains the relationship between proactive personality and performance, as well as personality and altruism. These results suggest that employees who are more socially astute work better, both on-the-job and in their interactions with others. The workplace benefits of social astuteness are especially pronounced for leaders. In a study done by Davidson College and the Center for Creative Leadership, employees who were more socially astute received higher leader effectiveness ratings from their bosses. Similar studies have confirmed this relationship by demonstrating that measures of social astuteness can be used to accurately predict leader effectiveness (Sigma Assessment System Inc., 2020).

Individuals building reputations influence individuals around them in a manner that they develop behaviors consistent with the reputation they wish to develop. Social effectiveness increases perceived credibility of an individual in the eyes of those around their network (Ferris et al, 2005). Socially effective individuals move easily in societies they live in since they can comprehend their surroundings properly. They easily adopt behaviors as situations warrant and possess the ability to change as situation demand them to. Furthermore, socially effective individuals are able to exert a strong influence on people around them. They can easily adapt to conflicting management using the appropriate tactic for each and every given situation (Ferris, 2002). They possess social competencies that enhance personal and organizational goals through understanding and influence of others in social interactions (Blickle, 2010). According to Sigma Assessment System Inc., (2020). social astuteness is commonly considered to be innate; either you have it or you don't. Today, however, research is increasingly suggesting that social and political skills can be developed and improved. People who are socially astute understand themselves, recognize their uniqueness, and know what they stand for; this makes networking an incredibly natural process. If you want to become more socially astute, practice networking both inside your organization and out. Mentorship is one of the most powerful forms of networking because it is mutual and authentic. Mentors can provide valuable guidance, connections, and resources. Further, mentoring others can give leaders the chance to hone their coaching skills. If you want to become more socially astute, pursue opportunities for mentorship on both sides of the relationship.

Entrepreneurial Orientation (EO)

Entrepreneurship is a major driver of any economy because it injects innovation and economic growth into the economy (Ameh & Udu, 2016). Given the need to build a sustainable economy, entrepreneurship has become recognized as one of the major catalysts for economic growth and development. This scenario is even underscored by the growing level of unemployment in Nigeria. However, the capacity of government to create an enabling environment for enterprises to share information for resource mobilization and encouraging the formation of informal contacts is a major paradigm for economic transformation (Ameh & Udu, 2016). The five main

entrepreneurial orientation dimensions are proactiveness, innovativeness, risk taking, autonomy, and competitive aggressiveness which have been prominent dimensions that were considered and empirically studied in the literature of entrepreneurship. In entrepreneurship and management literature, entrepreneurial orientation has become one of the most studied constructs (Covin et al., 2019, Kiyabo & Isaga, 2020).

Entrepreneurial strategic processes, well known as entrepreneurial orientation, are widely recognized as modes of strategy-making processes in the area of entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurial orientation is portrayed as the involvement of a firm to enter a new or another market (Ahmed et al., 2019). Entrepreneurial orientation is a basis for achieving competitive advantage as it explains how business can renovate their operations for innovative growth pattern. (Abu-Rumman et al., 2021). There is a consensus among researchers that business performance is a dependent variable in entrepreneurial orientation literature; entrepreneurial orientation is one of the predictors of business performance in previous studies to measure performance (Kiyabo & Isaga 2020). Entrepreneurs are innovative while involving innovation of products, services, and process; more proactive, be risk-oriented, overcome a threat in a competitive environment, and bring forth a business vision to reality (Olowofeso 2020). The concept has gained the attention of academics and practitioners' overtime because of the growing interest in SMEs growth. One thing is clear; the choice to become an entrepreneur is tied to willingness and orientation and not by chance. Lumpkin and Dess (1996) as cited in Putri (2009) refer to a firm's entrepreneurial orientation as its propensity to act autonomously, innovate, take risk, and act proactively when confronted with market opportunities. Entrepreneurial orientation consists of five dimensions that permeate the decision-making style and other practices of the member of an organization. The dimensions are autonomy, innovativeness, proactiveness, competitive aggressiveness and risk taking (Hartelina, 2016).

Risk-taking refers to the risks individuals take by working for themselves rather than being employed. It is the extent to which a firm is willing to make large and risky resource commitment (Ameh and Udu, 2016). To achieve high financial returns, companies take risks such as high levels of borrowing, issuing a large number of company resources, introducing new products in new markets, and investing in technology that has not been explored (Hartelina, 2016). **Innovativeness** refers to the company's efforts to acquire new opportunities and new solutions. 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 (Ameh & Udu, 2017). 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 Abou-lfazel, 2013) in Ameh & Udu (2017). According to Bccampus, innovativeness is the tendency to pursue creativity and experimentation. **Proactiveness:** A proactive entrepreneur is an individual who is focused on the future and anticipates things before they happen (Ameh & Udu, 2016; Malik et al, 2023). It describes the characteristic of entrepreneurial actions to anticipate future opportunities, both in terms of products or technologies and in terms of market and consumer demands. It refers to the extent to which a firm is a leader or follower and is associated with aggressive posturing relative to competitors (Davis, et al, 1991) in Fairoz, et al (2010) as cited in Ameh & Udu (2016). Accordingly **Competitive Aggressiveness** refers to the company's way of engaging with its competitors, distinguishing between companies that shy away from direct competition with other companies and those that aggressively pursue their competitor's target markets (Ameh & Udu, 2016). According to Bccampus, competitive aggressiveness is the tendency to intensely and directly challenge competitors rather than trying to avoid them. **Autonomy** refers to the independent action of an individual or a team in bringing forth an idea or a vision and carrying it through to completion without being held back by overly stringent organizational constraints (Lumpkin & Dess, 1996) This is as cited in Ameh & Udu

(2016). Autonomy refers to the desire to act independently in order to continue the entrepreneurial vision or opportunity.

Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs)

There is no single acceptable definition of small and medium size enterprises. This is due largely to the fact that institutions, government and unions provide different definitions just to suit the purpose for which they attempt to define it. The parameter employed in describing and defining SMEs which Medium Size Enterprises (MSEs) is borne out of include capital, financial power and number of workers (Olakunle, Yusau and Timothy 2018). Generally, MSEs produce light consumer goods like food and beverages, electrical parts, automotive parts, clothing manufacture, soap and detergents, leather products, and woodworks (Olabisi, Olagbemi & Atere, 2013). A small-scale business has total assets of less than ₦50 million, with less than 100 employees (Eniola, Ektebang, Sakariyau 2015). Ajibefun and Daramola (2003) explained that small scale enterprises are commercial enterprises that have up to ten or lesser number of employees. Meanwhile Bank of Industry (BOI) (2016) defines Micro business as having ≤ 10 employees, ≤ 5 -million-naira total asset, ≤ 20 -million-naira annual turnover and ≤ 10 -million-naira loan amounts while small business has $> 11 \leq 50$ employees, $> 5 \leq 100$ million naira total asset, $8 \leq 100$ million naira annual turnover and $> 10 \leq 100$ million naira loan amounts.

Theoretical Review

Social Capital Theory

The main theoretical approaches to social capital as a resource are the individualist and the collective. According to Bourdieu (1986), who is the main theorist of the individualist approach, social capital (SC) reflects the material advantages gained by individuals who participate in various social networks, as long as they adhere to certain rules of social behavior that apply within these networks. These networks constitute a collective resource that all participants have access to, and where their commitment and intentional action is required. Individual actors may create these networks and participate in compliance with the formal or unspoken rules of these networks in order to gain benefits. Thus, these networks are developed because of the deliberate effort aimed at maximizing a benefit (Bourdieu, 1986). The amount of SC to which individuals have access depends on the size of the network connections that they can effectively mobilize, and on the amount of SC possessed by the individuals and groups of their social environment (Bourdieu, 1986). Hence, emphasis is placed both on the extent and the content of social relationships. When it comes to the measurement of the construct, Bourdieu (1986) argued that it is better to be assessed at the individual level. That is, although Bourdieu recognized social networks and their function as a collective resource, he suggested that it is relevant to assess the amount of SC each individual has access to because the results of the participation in the same social networks may be different for different individuals (Bourdieu, 1986). Under this prism, the most important thing regarding the function and the benefits that derive from SC is not its mere existence, but the extent to which an individual has access to and makes use of the available SC.

The Resource-Based View (RBV)

The resource-based view (RBV), also known as resource-based theory is a strategy which emphasizes the significance of organizational resources and capabilities as the key to gaining competitive advantage and performance. A highly skilled talent pool helps an organization to explore opportunities and prevent risks in advance. It also enables them to implement strategies to improve operational efficiency and effectiveness. This theory emerged during the 1980s-1990s from the major works of B. Wernerfelt, Hamel, Prahalad, and others. They stated that- ‘to have an edge over the competition, the organization should look into the potential of the company’s internal resource pool rather than seeking the external competitive environment.’ The RBV model explains that it is significant to accept and fulfil external or new opportunities using

existing resources innovatively by acquiring new niche skills. As a result, the resource-based analysis should empower the workforce to achieve higher organizational prowess in the RBV framework. The comprehensive view of all the resource pools facilitates managers' gaining insight into resource skills, competencies, experience, capacity, availability, etc. This, in turn, enables managers to plan ahead and allocate resources per the project's scope, demand, and timeline. The resource-based theory helps managers meticulously assess resource strengths and weaknesses. This analysis empowers them to maximize the utilization of strengths while implementing measures to mitigate resource weaknesses. By leveraging strengths and strategically addressing the bottlenecks, the company can align its actions with long-term goals, gaining a competitive edge in the industry and ensuring sustained success in evolving market landscapes.

Methodology

The research involved the use of questionnaire to collect data from a sample of 349 out of the population of 33,000 smallholder rice Farmers in Kogi State. A simple random sampling method was employed. The questionnaire for this study was adopted from previous validated studies of Ferris et al. (2005), Lumpkin & Dess (1996)/(2001), and Lumpkin, Cogliser & Schneider (2009). Senior academics from the Faculty of Management Sciences, Prince Abubakar Audu University, Anyigba, were consulted to further enhance the validation of the items. Spearman's product moment correlation statistical method was used to examine the relationships between social astuteness and the dimensions of entrepreneurial orientation. The analysis was conducted using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26.

Table 1. Rice farming zones in Kogi State

		Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cummulative percent
Valid	Ibaji	118	33.8	33.8	33.8
	Bassa	93	26.6	26.6	60.4
	Lokoja	84	24.1	24.1	84.5
	Kabba	54	15.4	15.4	100
	total	349	100	100	

Source: Field Survey (2025).

From table 1, Ibaji (33.8%) has the most farmers, followed by Bassa (26.6%), Lokoja (24.1%), and Kabba (15.4%). Ibaji and Bassa are key rice-producing zones, due to favorable agro-ecological conditions and the limited numbers of companies from other sectors, making farming the available occupation for most people. Lokoja and Kabba have fewer farmers, due to urbanization and/or less suitable land.

Table 2 Descriptive statistics of the data

Age of Respondents	20-39	40-59	60 and above	
	38.10%	42.98%	18.91%	
Gender	Male	Female		
	46.70%	53.30%		
Level of Education	no formal education	primary education	secondary education	tertiary education
	14.00%	33.20%	23.80%	28.90%
Years of Experience	1 to 15	16 to 30	31 and above	
	83.95%	12.89%	3.15%	

Source: field survey 2025

From table 2, 40-59 years (42.98%) is the largest age group, followed by 20-39 years (38.1%), and 60+ years (18.91%). The majority of rice farmers are middle-aged (40-59), suggesting experience and stability in farming. A significant proportion (38.1%) are younger (20-39), indicating some youth engagement in rice farming. Male (53.3%) slightly outnumber Female (46.7%), showing near gender parity. primary education (33.2%) is the most common, followed by tertiary (28.9%), secondary (23.8%), and no formal education (14%). Moderate educational attainment (primary/secondary) dominates, but a notable portion (28.9%) has tertiary education, which could modernize farming practices. In the yeats of experience category, 1-15 years (83.95%) dominates, with 16-30 years (12.89%) and 31+ years (3.15%) being rare. Most farmers have moderate experience (1-15 years), suggesting a mix of new entrants and mid-career farmers.

Test of Hypotheses

H1: There is no relationship between social astuteness and risk-taking disposition among rice farmers in Kogi State.

Table 3 Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	7.006	0.611		11.462	.000
	Social Astuteness	0.347	0.022	0.648	15.839	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Risk Taking

The standardized coefficient is 0.648, which indicates that social astuteness has a strong relationship with risk-taking compared to potential other variables. The significance level of .000 confirms that the relationship is strong and statistically significant. Hence, we reject the null hypothesis of no relationship between social astuteness and risk-taking.

H2: There is no connection between social astuteness and the level of innovativeness among rice farmers in Kogi State.

Table 4 Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	6.915	0.735		9.404	.000
	Social Astuteness Total	0.376	0.026	0.608	14.255	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Innovativeness

Standardized Coefficients (Beta) of 0.608 corresponds to the relationship between social astuteness and innovativeness in standardized terms, suggesting a strong effect size. Sig. (p-value), that is, the significance level of .000 implies that the effect of social astuteness on innovativeness is highly significant, meaning that higher levels of social astuteness correlate with higher levels of innovativeness. The null hypothesis is rejected as there is a significant positive connection between social astuteness and innovativeness among rice farmers in Kogi State.

H3: Social astuteness has no influence on the proactiveness of rice farmers in Kogi State.

Table 5 Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	10.090	0.677		14.909	.000
	Social Astuteness Total	0.25	0.024	0.484	10.310	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Proactiveness

Coefficients (Beta = 0.484): This indicates the strength of the relationship between social astuteness and proactiveness. A Beta of 0.484 suggests a moderate effect size. Sequel to the above, the null hypothesis is rejected. Sig. for both Coefficients: The significance values (p-values) for both the constant and the social astuteness coefficient are 0.000, indicating that both coefficients are statistically significant predictors of proactiveness.

H4: There is no association between social astuteness and competitive aggressiveness among rice farmers in Kogi State.

Table 6 Coefficient

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	7.530	0.548		13.729	0.000
	Social Astuteness Total	0.124	0.02	0.322	6.325	0.000

a. Dependent Variable: Competitive Aggressiveness

Beta (Standardized Coefficient) = 0.322: This shows the strength of the association. A beta of 0.322 indicates a moderate effect size. Sig. = 0.000: The p-value for the social astuteness coefficient is again less than 0.05, indicating that social astuteness has a statistically significant effect on competitive aggressiveness. The null hypothesis is rejected. Therefore, there indeed is a significant association between social astuteness and competitive aggressiveness among the rice farmers in Kogi State.

H5: There is no relationship between social astuteness and the autonomy of rice farmers in Kogi State.

Table 7 Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	14.198	0.934		15.195	0.000
	Social Astuteness Total	0.296	0.034	0.429	8.843	0.000

a. Dependent Variable: Autonomy

Standardized Coefficient (Beta = 0.429): This indicates that the effect of social astuteness on autonomy is not only positive but strong. It shows that social astuteness is a crucial factor in predicting autonomy for the rice farmers in Kogi State. Sig. (p-value):0.000. this low p-value indicates that social astuteness is significantly related to autonomy. The null hypothesis is therefore rejected.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study investigates the influence of social astuteness on the entrepreneurial orientation of smallholder rice farmers in Kogi State, Nigeria. The research focuses on five specific objectives, examining the relationships between social astuteness and various entrepreneurial orientation dimensions: risk-taking, innovativeness, proactiveness, competitive aggressiveness, and autonomy. The results reveal significant positive correlations between social astuteness and each of these aspects of entrepreneurial orientation. Specifically, higher levels of social astuteness are associated with increased risk-taking (correlation coefficient of 0.648), suggesting that socially astute farmers are more inclined to take calculated risks. Innovativeness (correlation coefficient of 0.608), suggesting that social astuteness was linked to greater creativity and adoption of new farming techniques. proactiveness ($r = 0.484$), suggesting that socially skilled farmers were more forward-thinking. competitive aggressiveness ($r = 0.321$, a weaker but significant association, suggesting that social astuteness enhances market competitiveness, and autonomy ($r = 0.412$), a moderate correlation showed that socially aware farmers exhibit greater independence in decision-making. These findings suggest that social skills are critical in fostering entrepreneurial behavior and success among rice farmers, highlighting the need for targeted training and development initiatives in social competencies. While social astuteness was a significant predictor in all cases, a considerable portion of variance remained unexplained, indicating the influence of other factors such as financial literacy, access to resources, and government policies.

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

Promote Risk-Taking via Access to Social Networks: Facilitate farmer cooperatives or digital platforms (e.g., WhatsApp groups) to connect rice farmers with agribusiness experts, financiers, and policymakers. This aligns with Zafar et al. (2012), who advocated leveraging alumni networks for entrepreneurial intent.

Integrate Social Astuteness Training into Agricultural Extension Programs: Train extension agents to teach farmers social navigation skills, such as negotiating with suppliers or collaborating with researchers. Develop workshops on conflict resolution and stakeholder engagement to enhance farmers' ability to leverage relationships for innovation.

Policy Interventions to Amplify Proactiveness: Subsidize participation in farmer groups to incentivize networking, as recommended by Fairoz et al. (2010) for Sri Lankan SMEs. Partner with NGOs to provide microloans or grants for proactive initiatives (e.g., drip irrigation systems), addressing barriers like financial constraints.

Foster Public-Private Partnerships: Collaborate with universities to develop competitive benchmarking tools tailored to smallholder farmers, leveraging alumni networks as proposed by Zafar et al. (2012). Partner with agribusiness firms to pilot contract farming models, guaranteeing buyback agreements and stabilizing income, as suggested by Kacperczyk (2012).

Enhance Capacity for Autonomous Decision-Making: Integrate autonomy-building workshops into agricultural extension programs, teaching farmers to analyze risks (e.g., climate variability) and make data-driven choices, as recommended by Ameh and Udu (2017). Train farmers in negotiation and leadership skills to independently engage with buyers, suppliers, and Policy makers.

References

- Abu-Rumman A., Al-Madi S. & Alfalah T. (2021) Entrepreneurial networks, entrepreneurial orientation, and performance of small and medium enterprises: are dynamic capabilities the missing link? *Journal of Innovation and Entrepreneurship*. Springer 10:29
<https://doi.org/10.1186/s13731-021-00170-8>

- Ameh, A. A. & Udu, A. A. (2016). Social Networks and Entrepreneurship orientation among Students in Nigerian Universities: A Study of Social Network Size and Risk Disposition. URL:<http://dx.doi.org/10.5430/bmr.v5n2p1> Sciences Vol. 6 No.1, 2017
- Ameh, A. A. & Udu, A. A. (2017). The Primacy of Social Networks in Entrepreneurship: A Study of Networking Ability and Innovativeness among University Students in North Central Nigeria. *PEOPLE: International Journal of Social Sciences*, 3(3), 644-657.
- Ahmed, Y. A., Melese, H. W., Kar, B., & Ravi, J. (2019). The effect of entrepreneurial orientation on perceived business success of small-scale manufacturing in Ethiopia: *International Journal of Mechanical Engineering and Technology (IJMET)* 10(1), 482–492
- Ajibefun Ia, Daramola AG. (2003). “Determinants of Technical and Allocative efficiency of micro enterprises: Firm-Level evidence from Nigeria”. *African Development Review*.;15(2-3):353-395.
- Behzad & Aboulfazl (2013). Effects of organizational Structure on the Entrepreneurial orientation of the Employees. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*. Vol. 3(11). Pp. 90-100 Retrieved from www.hrm-ars.com/journals
- Blickle, G. (2010). Convergence of agents’ and targets’ reports on intraorganizational influence attempts. *European Journal of Psychological*, 19, 40-53.
- Bourdieu, P. (1986). The forms of capital. In J.G. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of theory and research for the sociology of education*. Greenwood Press.
- Christopher, O. A. (June, 2023). Nigeria is Africa’s leading rice producer, but still needs more - reusing wastewater for irrigation would boost farming. The conversation Academic rigour, journalistic flair. <https://theconversation.com/nigeria-is-africas-leading-rice-producer-but-still-needs-more-reusing-wastewater-for-irrigation-would-boost-farming-206787>
- Covin, J. G., Wales, W., & J. (2019). Crafting high impact entrepreneurial orientation research: Some suggested guidelines. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 43(1), 3–18. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1042258718773181>.
- Egbai, M., Elijah, E. O. and Ameh, A. A. (May, 2024) agricultural financing and the performance of SMES; a study of rice farmers in Kogi State. *journal of business management, innovation and creativity in*: 2971 – 6896 vol. 3 issue 1 . <https://journalsofmgt.com.ng/journals/uploads/agricultural-financing-and-the-performance-of-smes-a-study-of-rice-farmers-in-kogi-state.pdf>
- Eniola A. A, Ektebang H, Sakariyau O. B. (2015). *Small and medium scale business performance in Nigeria: Challenges faced from an intellectual capital perspective*. *International Journal of Research Studies in management*. 4(1):59-71.
- Olabisi S, Olagbemi A. A, Atere A. A. (2013). *Factors affecting small-scale business performance in informal economy in Lagos State-Nigeria: A gendered based analysis*. *Journal of Business and General Education*.;5(1):25-37
- Ferris, G. R., Hochwarter, W. A., Douglas, C., Blass, R., Kolodinsky, R. W., & Treadway, D. C. (2002). Social influence processes in organizations and human resources systems. In G. R. Ferris & J. J. Martocchio (Eds.), *Research in personnel and human resources management*, Vol. 21: 65-127
- Ferris, G.R., Treadway, D.C., Perrewe, Douglas, C., & Lux, S. (2007). Political skill in organizations. *Journal of Management*, 33, 290-320.
- Ferris, G. R., Treadway, D. C., Kolodinsky, R. W., Hochwarter, W. A., Kacmar, C. J., Douglas, C., & Frink, D. D. (2005). Development and validation of the political skill inventory. *Journal of Management*, 31, 126–152.
- García-Chas, R., Neira-Fontela, E., Varela-Neira, C., & Curto-Rodríguez, E. (2019). The Effect of Political Skill on Work Role Performance and Intention to Leave: A Moderated

- Mediation Model. *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies*, 26(1), 98–110.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1548051818774547>
- Hartelina, H. (2016) . The dimensions of Entrepreneurial orientation and its impact on business performance. *The Dimensions of Entrepreneurial orientation And Its Impact on Business Performance* |Atlantis Press. Retrieved September 16, 2021, from
<https://www.atlantis-press.com/proceedings/gcbme16/25866040> .
- Kiyabo, K., & Isaga, N. (2020). Entrepreneurial orientation, competitive advantage, and SMEs’ performance: Application of firm growth and personal wealth measures. *Journal of Innovation and Entrepreneurship*, 9(1), 1-15
- Lumpkin, G. T., & Dess, G. G. (1996). Clarifying the entrepreneurial orientation construct and linking it to performance. *Academy of Management Review*, 21(1), 135-172.
- Lumpkin, G. T., Coglisier, C. C., & Schneider, D. R. (2009). Understanding and Measuring Autonomy: An Entrepreneurial Orientation Perspective. *Entrepreneurship: Theory & Practice*, 33(1), 47-69.
- Malik, A.A., Audu, S. (2023). Globalization as Catalyst for International Entrepreneurship. *Journal of International Relations Security and Economic Studies*, 2(3), 65-72. Retrieved from
<http://journals.rcmss.com/index.php/jirses/article/view/822>.
- Nzewi H.N; Audu, S.(2023). Job Embeddedness and Employee Retention in Deposit Money Banks, Kogi State, Nigeria. *Journal of Public Administration, Policy and Governance Research*, 1(1), 13-32. Retrieved from
<https://jpagr.com/index.php/research/article/view/4>.
- Olowofeso, E. & Ale, O. A. (2019). Entrepreneurial Orientation and Performance of Hospitality Industry in Akure, Nigeria. *European Journal of Business and Management* 11, (2), DOI: 10.7176/EJBM DOI: 10.7176/EJ BM.
- Sigma Assessment System Inc, (2020). Great Leaders are Socially Astute.
- Uchenna, A.C., Audu, S.J. (2022). Dynamic Capability and the Performance of West African Ceramics Limited Ajaokuta, Kogi State. *International Journal of Democratic and Development Studies*, 5(2), 15-30. Retrieved from
<http://journals.rcmss.com/index.php/ijdds/article/view/605>.
- World trade center, Abuja (2023). Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMES): an assessment to its inclusion in Nigeria trade. Enquire now. <https://www.wtcabuja.com/latest-news/trade-services/small-and-medium-sized-enterprises-smes-an-assessment-to-its-inclusion-in-nigeria-trade/#:~:text=The%20Federal%20Ministry%20of%20Commerce,of%20sole%20proprietorships%20and%20partnerships>.