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# Entrepreneurial Orientation and Performance of Small Enterprises in Minna Metropolis

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## Abstract

*Nigeria is transitioning towards a private-sector-driven economy, where micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) play a crucial role in creating job opportunities, alleviating poverty, increasing internally generated revenue, and boosting foreign exchange in the international market. Literature has shown that a link exists between Entrepreneurial Orientation (EO) and enterprise performance, though the significance and direction of such relationships vary contextually. Therefore, this study examined the relationship between EO and small business performance in Minna Metropolis. Primary data was collected from 53 private secondary schools in the study area using a structured questionnaire. The data generated was analysed using both descriptive statistics and Pearson Correlation. The findings revealed that innovativeness (0.230), risk-taking propensity (0.188), and autonomy (0.101) had a significant positive relationship with student enrollment in private secondary schools. In contrast, proactiveness (-0.137) and competitive aggressiveness (-0.003) showed an insignificant inverse relationship with student enrollment in Minna Metropolis. The study, therefore, recommends adopting EO practices in private secondary schools in the study area to enhance their enrollment capabilities.*

***Keywords**: Entrepreneurial orientation, private secondary schools, small enterprise, performance*

## 1.0 Introduction

The survival and success of any enterprise is directly tied to its ability to consistently exhibit certain entrepreneurial skills and traits. For an enterprise to be competitive in the business environment of the 21st century characterized by dynamism and stiff competition, heterogeneity and unpredictability which pose a lot of challenges to business organizations and managers, it has to be entrepreneurial in its approaches. The business environments have become even more challenging in the wake of the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic. This makes the concept of entrepreneurial orientation (EO) a central issue in the entrepreneurial world for enterprises that have enhancement of performance as a primary goal. Performance is very critical as it determines organisational competitiveness and economic contribution (Otoo, 2024).

Contemporary businesses improve their performances through adoption of EO and leveraging their resources to create value for their customers and achieve competitive advantage. Among the dimensions of EO that have been identified to have bearings on enterprise performance are innovativeness, risk-taking propensity, proactiveness, autonomy, and competitive aggressiveness (Gorska-Warsewicz, 2024).

Empirical studies on the subject conducted by various researchers (Khan *et al.,* 2021, Nwagwu, 2021, Onikoyi *et al.,* 2023) have repeatedly reported a strong, direct link between entrepreneurial ventures and various measures of company performance. Therefore, managers began to notice the need for a greater orientation of their enterprises and EO became an important construct of research interest in entrepreneurship. Similarly, theories such as the Resource based theory, contingency theory and Dynamic capability theories are all theoretical efforts made by scholars in an attempt to fully comprehend the relationship between EO and business performance.

Despite this expanding literature, the theoretical mechanisms of EO and the channels through which EO exerts influence on firm performance have not been clearly or consistently specified (Covin and Wales, 2019; Thomran *et al.,* 2022). Most of the studies reviewed (Dwumah *et al.,* 2024; Khan and Belassi, 2024) concentrated on the effect of the first three variables introduced by Miller (1983) that is, innovativeness, risk-taking and pro-activeness on performance without much consideration for the other two dimensions introduced by Lumpkin and Dess (1996). Its disproportionate effect on different sizes of enterprises has not also been evenly investigated as evidence shows that small enterprises have not benefited much from research efforts in the area. Similarly, the link between EO and the performance of enterprises from the education sector has not been investigated despite the known relevance of the sector to the economy couple with the recent surge of private secondary schools in the current study area. Also noticeable in the reviewed literature is the fact that there is lack of unanimity among the researchers on the effect of the various dimensions of EO on business performance as some studies found a positive relationship while some found a negative relationship between some of the dimensions and business performance.

The summation of all the aforesaid is that research effort in this area has not been conclusive necessitating the conduct of more studies to increase empirical knowledge. Against this background therefore, the current study was carried out to further investigate the relationship between the dimensions of EO and small enterprise performance in Minna Metropolis with the education sector as a focus. To achieve this aim, the following specific objectives were pursued:

i. To assess the relationship between creativity and innovativeness and student enrolment of private secondary schools in Minna, Niger State.
ii. To investigate the relationship between risk-taking propensity and student enrolment of private secondary schools in Minna, Niger State.
iii. To examine the relationship between pro-activeness and student enrolment of private secondary schools in Minna, Niger State.
iv. To evaluate the relationship between autonomy and student enrolment of private secondary schools in Minna, Niger State.

v. To assess the relationship between competitive aggressiveness and student enrolment of private secondary schools in Minna, Niger State.

Based on these objectives, the following hypotheses were tested using Pearson Correlation:

$H_{o1}$: Creativity and innovativeness does not have significant relationship with student enrolment of private secondary schools in Minna, Niger State.

$H_{o2}$: Risk-taking propensity does not relate significantly with student enrolment of private secondary schools in Minna, Niger State.

$H_{o3}$: Pro-activeness has no significant relationship with student enrolment of private secondary schools in Minna, Niger State.

$H_{o4}$: Autonomy has no significant relationship with student enrolment of private secondary schools in Minna, Niger State.

$H_{o5}$: Competitive aggressiveness does not have significant relationship with student enrolment of private secondary schools in Minna, Niger State.

## 2 Literature Review

This section provides conceptual clarifications, theoretical review as well as a brief empirical review of relevant and recent studies conducted on the effect of EO on business performance.

### 2.1 Conceptual Review

Scholars (Lumpkin and Dess, 1996; Fazal, 2018) have always discussed the concept of EO with the sole aim of promoting better understanding of the concept and its effect on organisational performance. The section below is a brief review of such efforts.

#### 2.1.1 Entrepreneurial Orientation (EO)

Entrepreneurial orientation refers to a set of behaviors including willingness to take risks, innovativeness, pro-activeness, autonomy and competitive aggressiveness (Fazal, 2018). EO describes the orientation of an organisation towards novel entry and value creation, capturing the entrepreneurial decisions, methods, and actions actors use to create competitive advantage (Lumpkin and Dess, 1996; Wales *et al.,* 2020).

#### 2.1.2 Entrepreneurial Orientation Dimensions

EO is multidimensional in nature. There have been number of dimensions of EO that are provided in literature. Miller (1983) conceptualised EO as a variable with three different dimensions: innovativeness, risk-taking, and proactiveness that must directly vary together for an EO to be expressed. However, Lumpkin and Dess (1996) added the

autonomy and aggressiveness dimensions. This study also used the aforementioned dimensions to measure entrepreneurial orientation on the basis of current literature and due to the relevance of their application to performance of small enterprises in the educational sector.

Innovation in business is conceptualised as the implementation of something that is novel, but with potential effects on economic results. Innovativeness implies that organizations have to originate, enhance as well as look for innovative opportunities. It includes a propensity to take part in innovativeness and research through innovative work, Research, and Development (R&D) (Al-Henzab, 2018). Innovative enterprises are those that support creativity and experimentation, create new products or services, or build on existing ones, execute new technologies, and persistently make efforts to improve internal processes and procedures (Fil'a *et al.,* 2020). Small enterprises, unlike large enterprises, have a higher tendency to pursue and exhibit innovative behaviours in order to create new and profitable business opportunities as well as engage in novel business concepts to create new corporate procedures and arrangements to formulate fresh business resolutions (Lee *et al,* 2011). Innovation is regarded as a major factor that can lead to financial progress and expansion of entrepreneurial ventures (Ofem, 2014).

Risk taking is an important dimension of EO. The ability of management of organisations to deploy entrepreneurial approach can be seen from their readiness to take calculated risks even when the outcome is not yet certain. Such process requires energy and passion to better position the firm for gaining competitive advantage **(**Nwagwu, 2021). It assumes that an organisation can pursue strategies, even when there is a significant chance of costly failure and represents a readiness to turn from the beaten track and take initiatives with uncertain outcomes (Dai *et al*., 2014). It is characterised by the tendency to undertake brave actions such as moving into unfamiliar new markets, allocating vast amounts of resources to industries with insecurity, and the affinity to take heavy borrowings (Kaunda, 2012). Unlike large enterprises, small enterprises seem to have higher propensity to undertake risky investments (Al-Ansari, 2014). It has been assumed that firms that have a higher level of risk propensity would also have better performance (Dwumah *et al*., 2024).

Pro-activeness is conceptualised as the firms' desire to be in front of challenges when introducing innovative products services, or technologies. It is defined by the ability to antedate and search for novel new business opportunities and act in anticipation of future demands (Setiawan *et al*., 2015; Taheri *et al.,* 2019). It is the attitude of taking action and to be ready for situations that can arise instead of being reactionary after the incident (Ofem, 2014). Pro-activeness helps in tracking and monitoring changes in business environment, consumer tastes and preferences that are continually changing, and the development of technologies (Wales *et al.,* 2021).

Autonomy as a dimension of EO refers to the ability to make independent decisions and to continue to behave independently by members of the organisation at various levels of the structure, to undertake a new venture, business concept or vision (Khan and Belassi, 2024). It refers to the ability and the willpower to be independent in grasping openings, and it is usually affected by the business size, style of management or proprietorship. The members of any institute should have the liberty to work without limitations of resources,

strict managerial rules, and activities by competitors (Kaunda, 2012) in order to practice autonomy in an establishment. Lumpkin *et al.* (2009) opine that autonomy can bequeath on members of the organisation liberty and flexibility in creating and implementing entrepreneurial ideas, and ensures not only problem solving, but also real definition of the problem and business goals.

Competitive aggressiveness is defined as conscious efforts by an enterprise to work directly and assiduously so as to outperform its competitors. This is reflected in the actions and/or reactions to the actions of competitors and the use of one's own strength in relation to market rivals (Setiawan *et al*., 2015). Competitive aggressiveness is very close to pro-activeness. Some researchers lean toward to compare these two constructs (Wales *et al.,* 2021). However, some scholars see proactiveness as a response to opportunities and competitive aggressiveness as a reply to market coercions (Ogundare and Van der Merwe, 2024).

Competitive aggressiveness is identified as the power of the actions taken by a firm to achieve advanced statures than the industry competitors, which is demonstrated by a challenging standpoint using vibrant response to rival's activities (Kaunda, 2012). Therefore, the tendency of the establishment to be antagonistic in view of the rivals and challenging them is demonstrated by this feature. Al-Ansari (2014) itemizes the approaches usually adopted in aggressive competition to include improving quality, neglecting profits for dynamic selling at reduced prices, managing producing volume, having efficient product development activity, diversities of businesses and modernizations.

### 2.1.3 Small Business Performance

The concept of performance is very crucial as it lies at the pith of business strategy, affects the competitive position and determines the long-term economic sustainability of firms (Roffe and Gonzalez, 2024). Consequently, performance and its measurement are important variables to every small enterprise's success (Pnevmatikoudi and Stavrinoudis, 2016). A study of previous scholarly works indicate that the term 'performance' has been defined in a number of ways. Neely *et al.* as cited in Kanzari (2023) defined firm performance as "the process of quantifying the efficiency and effectiveness of action". Similarly, Rai *et al.* (2014) defined the term performance as "the degree to which a focal firm has superior performance relative to its competition". From organizations viewpoint, it is conceptualized as the capacity of an organisation to adapt to every one of the four basic processes that are related to its goal-oriented behavior. These areas are inputs, transformation, outputs, and feedback effects (Evan, 2019).

Every organisation has a set of goals and objectives which guides the application of its scarce resources and ensures the attainment of such goals. This therefore suggests differences in the goal pursuit of organisations; hence, performance becomes relative in its meaning among organisations (Taheri *et al.,* 2019). According to Kimuli *et al.* (2016), performance measurement of private secondary schools falls under these two broad groups. According to them, the financial perspective includes sales growth, market share and profitability. Whereas, the non-financial perspective may include geographical

expansion, infrastructural development, introduction of new services, enrolment of students and stakeholder satisfaction.

This study adopts Kimuli *et al.* (2016) student enrolment measure of performance to enable the researcher achieve a more realistic solution to the problem the research is aimed at solving regarding performance in the private school sector.

Having carried out a thorough conceptual review of literature, the current study develops the conceptual framework in Figure 2.1 to depict the functional relationship that exists between EO and small business performance.

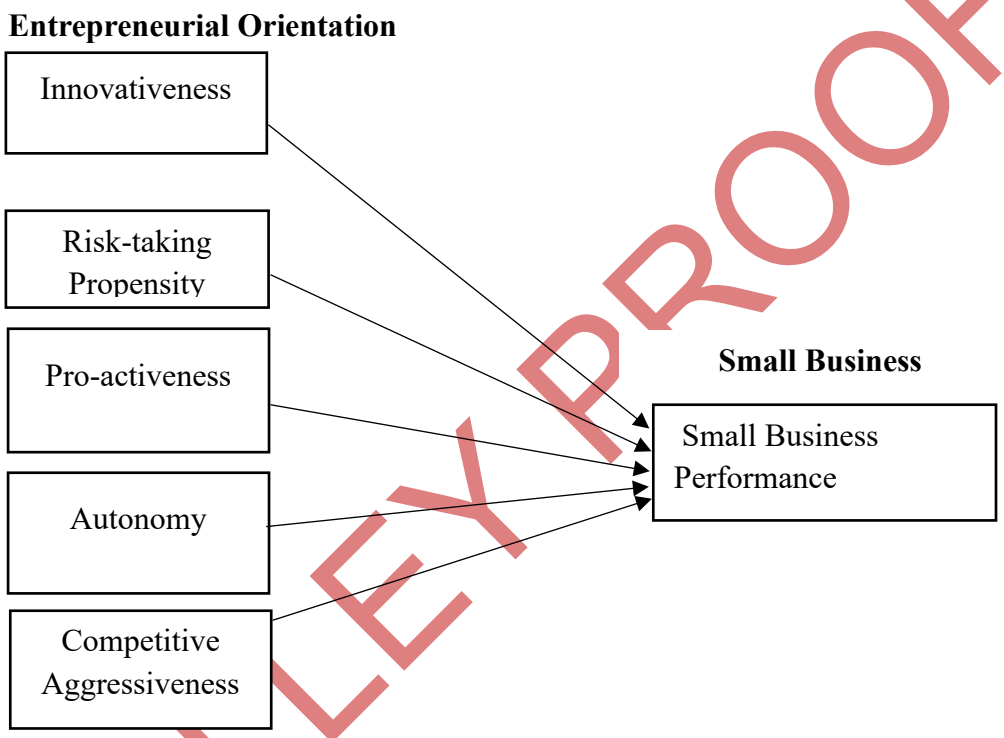


Fig 2.1 Conceptual Framework
Source: Researcher's compilation



Figure 2.1 shows that a direct relationship exists between EO proxied by its components (innovativeness, risk taking, proactiveness, autonomy, and competitive aggressiveness) and small business performance.

## 2.2 Theoretical Literature Review

Resource based theory was postulated in 1984 by a Danish economist and management theorist Birger Wernerfelt (Tabares *et al.,* 2015). Resource based theory states that resources that are valuable, rare, hard to imitate and difficult to substitute best positions an organization for sustained growth (Mitrega *et al*., 2021). RBT assumes that every organisation regardless of size is a unique embodiment of tangible and intangible assets, competences, capabilities and skills referred to as resource heterogeneity. Secondly, it is

further assumed that some resources especially intangible ones are difficult for rivals to imitate which is referred to as resource immobility (Khan *et al.,* 2020). In order to realize a superior performance, small and medium enterprises must come up with strategies that will help utilize maximally the firm's resources by adopting the entrepreneurial behaviour; become more innovative, take calculated risk and be more proactive. This will result to a sustained competitive advantage over all others. In the light of resource-based view (RBV) theory, entrepreneurial orientation is regarded as an intangible organizational resource that gives an organization a competitive advantage, which, in turn, contributes to superior performance (Barney, 1991).

RBT has attracted criticisms from some scholars. Critics of Resource based theory point to the fact that: its applicability is too limited, it has no managerial implications, implies infinite regress, sustained competitive advantage is not achievable and value of resource is too indeterminate to provide a useful theory (Schilke *et al.,* 2018).

### 2.3 Empirical Review

Gorska-Warsewicz (2024) studied the relationship between EO and business performance in Poland. The study used online questionnaire to obtain data from 266 respondents. Analysis of the data using PLS-SEM produced the findings that showed that the effect of innovativeness on business performance was positive and significant. In a similar study Ince *et al*. (2023) conducted research on the mediating role of innovation performance on the effect of EO and social capital on firm performance in Turkey. The primary data collected through a questionnaire from 298 firms and were analysed through the application of SEM. The finding of the study confirmed the positive effect of EO on business performance. Similarly, Nwangwu (2021) worked on the effect of EO on hotel performance in Abuja. The study applied regression analysis to analyse primary data generated from 250 owners/managers and supervisors of three-star hotels in Abuja. The result revealed that EO has significant positive effect on business performance. However, the results of Ojubanire and Idowu (2023) disagree with these previous findings by documenting an insignificant negative effect of innovativeness on the performance of medium-sized businesses in South-Western part of Nigeria. The study which utilised primary data collected from 384 respondents via a structured questionnaire was aimed at investigating the effect of EO on business performance in South-West Nigeria.

Examining the effect of risk-taking on business performance, Dwumah *et al.* (2024), exploring the association between entrepreneurial orientation and the performance of small and medium enterprises in Ghana using linear regression for the analysis of primary data collected from 201 respondents, reported that risk-taking had a positive and significant effect on small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) located in Ghana. Likewise, Okandi (2019), performed an investigation into the impacts of EO on the profitability growth of construction firms in Tanzania. Primary data obtained through questionnaire was generated from 132 construction firms. Employing STATA 13.0 Software, data generated was analysed using a multiple regression analysis. The results revealed that both innovativeness and risk-taking dimensions have a significant positive effect on the growth of profitability for local Tanzania's construction firms while proactiveness has a negative significant effect. In another effort to establish the effect of

EO on business performance, Rezaei and Ortt (2017) studied the effect of EO on firm performance in the Netherlands. The study applied t-test statistics in the analysis of the data gathered from 279 firms through a structured questionnaire and found that negative relationship existed between risk-taking and production performance. and Ball (2019) contradicted these results.

In another empirical study undertaken to measure the relationship between pro-activeness and business organisation, Khan and Belassi (2024) documented that proactiveness did not have a significant effect on the firm's performance in the electric fan manufacturing industry in Pakistan. In the same token, Okandi (2019), reported that proactiveness had an insignificant negative relationship with the growth of profitability for local Tanzania's construction firms. However, Dwumah *et al.* (2024) confirmed that proactiveness had significant positive effect on the performance of small and medium enterprises.

The effect of EO on firm performance was also the subject of investigations conducted by Okoli *et al.* (2021), khan *et al.* (2021) and Udayanga (2020) in Nigeria, Pakistan and Sri Lanka respectively. Focusing on the effect of autonomy as a dimension of EO on business performance, the outcome of these studies showed that autonomy has significant positive effect on business performance.

Finally, competitive aggressiveness is another important dimension of EO that researchers have investigated in terms of its effect on organisational performance. For instance, Poi (2024) examined the relationship between competitive aggressiveness and construction of construction companies in Port Harcourt, Nigeria, using primary data generated through structured questionnaire from 130 participants and analysed using Spearman Rank Correlation and found that competitive aggressiveness had a strong and direct relationship with productivity and delivery performance.

From above review of previous literature review, several gaps including inconsistencies in previous findings, use of sampling frames from drawn from other sectors without adequate representation for the educations sector, and excessive reliance on structural equation modelling for analysis to the negligence of other statistical methods have been established. In addition to these, most of these studies were conducted outside Nigeria. All these provide a basis for the conduct of this present study in order to fill the identified gaps.

## 3.0 Methodology

The study used a census research design because of the small size of the population. Therefore, the population of the study was the entire 63 private secondary schools in Minna as at the time of the research as obtained from the National Association of Proprietors of Private Schools (NAPPS) (2024), Niger State Chapter. Primary data was collected via a self-administered structured questionnaire. The questionnaire used a 5-point Likert scale items adapted from Al Mamun *et al.* (2017) and Hina *et al.* (2020). The dependent variable (performance) in the study proxied by school enrolment and dimensions of the independent variable were measure by adapting the scale developed by Al- Mamun *et al*. (2017) and Hina *et al.* (2020). A pilot study to establish the psychometric properties of the research instrument was conducted using 10% of the

population. To check for the reliability of the research instrument, it was pilot tested with a sample of 20 private secondary schools. The Cronbach's Alpha value obtained met the recommended 0.7 threshold.

Data analysis was split into descriptive analysis and inferential analysis. The inferential tool of analysis used in the study was the Pearson correlation coefficient given its effectiveness in determining the strength of relationship between variables.

## 4 Results and Discussion

### 4.1 Descriptive Analysis

The descriptive features of the respondents were done using percentages and charts as shown below:

#### 4.1.1 Administration and Collection of Research Instrument

The administration and collection of questionnaires administered on respondents is presented 4.1

**Table 4.1 Administration and Collection of Research Instrument**

| Features | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|---|
| No. of questionnaires returned and validly filled | 57 | 90 |
| No. of questionnaire returned but invalidly filled | 4 | 6 |
| No. of questionnaire not returned | 2 | 3 |
| **Total** | **63** | **100** |

**Source: Researcher's Computation,** 2024

Table 4.1 shows that a total of 57 (90%) of the 63 questionnaires administered on the private secondary schools in the study area were validly filled and returned. This falls within the acceptable retrieval rate and therefore forms the basis of the analysis, findings, conclusion and recommendations made by the researcher in the study.

#### 4.1.2 Demographic Features of Respondents

The analysis of the demographic features of the respondents including ownership, year of operation, number of employees, and location of business is presented in Table 4.2:

**Table 4.2 Demography of Respondents**

| S/N | Demographic Feature | Frequency | % |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | **Ownership** | | |
| | Individual (Male) | 22 | 41 |
| | Individual (Female) | 15 | 28 |
| | Partnership | 5 | 10 |
| | Faith-based | 11 | 21 |
| | **Total** | **53** | **100** |
| 2 | **Years of Operation** | | |
| | Less than 1 | 0 | 0 |
| | 1-3 | 9 | 17 |
| | 4-6 | 11 | 21 |
| | 7-9 | 15 | 28 |
| | 10 and above | 18 | 34 |
| | **Total** | **53** | **100** |

**Source: Researcher's Computation,** 2024

Table 4.2 reveals that 37 (69%) of the schools were owned by individuals out of which 22 representing 41% were male while the remaining 15 individuals representing 28% were female. Table 4.2 also shows that majority of the secondary schools used in the study had existed for some years. 38% of the schools have been in existence for 10 years and above while none of the private schools used in the study has less than 1 year of existence.

### 4.1.3 Diagnostic Tests

The analysis of the diagnostic tests performed to ensure the robustness of the findings is shown in Table 4.3:

**Table 4.3 Diagnostic Test Results**

| Variable | Tolerance | Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) |
|---|---|---|
| Innovativeness | 0.934 | 1.071 |
| Risk-taking propensity | 0.935 | 1.069 |
| Pro-activeness | 0.887 | 1.128 |
| Autonomy | 0.964 | 1.038 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Competitive Aggressiveness | 0.982 | 1.018 |
| Durbin-Watson = 2.157 | | |

**Source: Researcher's Extraction from SPSS (23) Output,** 2024

Table 4.3 shows that the tolerance levels of all the variables are less than 1 while their VIF are above the threshold of 1. These indicate the absence of multicollinearity which shows that the independent variables are not correlated (Sandhu *et al.,* 2011). Similarly, the Durbin-Watson Statistic of 2.157, though, slightly above the standard acceptable value of 2.0 shows no threat of autocorrelation.

### 4.2 Testing of Hypotheses.

The Pearson Correlation results generated using SPSS Version 23 is presented in Table 4.4.

**Table 4.4 Pearson Correlation Results**

| | SE | INN | RTP | PAS | ATM | CAG |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **SE** | **1** | | | | | |
| **INN** | 230 (0.048). | **1** | | | | |
| **RTP** | .188 (.008) | -.047(.037) | **1** | | | |
| **PAS** | -.137(.329) | .206 (.009) | -.236 (.040) | **1** | | |
| **ATM** | .101(.001) | -.104 (.460) | -.118 (.040) | .104 (.460) | **1** | |
| **CAG** | -.003(.082) | .071 (.061) | -.033 (.016) | -.096 (.044) | -.024 (.036) | **1** |

**Source: Researcher's Extraction from SPSS (23) Output, 2024**

#### 4.2.1 Test of Null Hypothesis 1:

*Creativity and innovativeness do not have significant relationship with student enrolment of private secondary schools in Minna, Niger State.*

The result indicates that the Pearson correlation coefficient value is 0.230 with an associated p-value of 0.048. This shows a direct but weak correlation between the two variables, though, the p-value of 0.048 demonstrates that this result is significant at 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected in favour of the alternative hypothesis

#### 4.2.2 Test of Hypothesis 2

*Risk-taking propensity does not relate significantly with student enrolment of private secondary schools in Minna, Niger State.*

The results show that risk-taking propensity has a coefficient of 0.188 while the p-value is 0.008. The coefficient indicates a positive but weak relationship between risk-taking propensity and private school enrollment. However, the p-value reveals that this relationship is significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected since the p-value indicates that this result is significant.

### 4.2.3 Test of Hypothesis 3

*Pro-activeness has no significant relationship with student enrolment of private secondary schools in Minna, Niger State.*

It can be observed from Table 4.4 that pro-activeness has a Pearson correlation coefficient of -0.137 with a p-value of 0.329 which is not significant. Given that the p-value is higher than 0.05, it shows that the negative relationship is not significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis was retained.

### 4.2.4 Test of Hypothesis 4

*Autonomy has no significant relationship with student enrolment of private secondary schools in Minna, Niger State.*

The result reveals a weak positive relationship between autonomy and student enrollment (r=0.101, p=0.001) of private secondary schools in Minna Metropolis. The p-value provides enough evidence to reject the null hypothesis that assumed a non-significant relationship between the two variables since it is lower than 0.05 level of significance.

### 4.2.5 Test of Hypothesis 5

*Competitive aggressiveness does not have significant relationship with student enrolment of private secondary schools in Minna, Niger State.*

Table 4.4 demonstrates that competitive aggressiveness has a coefficient of -0.003 and p-value of 0.082. This result indicates that an insignificant weak and negative relationship exists between competitive aggressiveness and private secondary school enrollment in Minna Metropolis. Since the p-value is above 0.05 significant level, the null hypothesis of no significant relationship between the two variables is retained.

### 4.3 Discussion of Results

The finding on the relationship between creativity and innovativeness and private secondary school enrollment in the study area showed that a significant positive relationship (0.230, p= 0.048) exists between the two variables. Consequently, the hypothesis of no significant relationship was rejected. This decision is in line with the finding Nwagwu (2021).

Furthermore, the study's finding on the relationship between risk-taking propensity and private secondary school enrollment in Minna Metropolis established a significant positive relationship between the variables. Therefore, the researcher rejected the null hypothesis of the study. This position is in consonance with the decision arrived at by

Udayanga (2020) and Ginting (2018) who examined the relationship between the variables and proved that risk-taking has a positive and significant effect of performance. However, the finding differs from that of Rezaei and Ortt (2017) who in their own study found a negative effect of risk-taking on the performance of high-tech SMEs that were used in the study. This difference in result could have arisen as a result of the difference contexts in which the studies were conducted. Emphasis has also been placed on the need for risk-taking to be wisely done in order to avoid plunging an enterprise into uncalculated and avoidable risks.

In addition, the study sought to investigate the significance of the relationship between pro-activeness and private secondary school enrollment in the study area. The result of the test demonstrates that pro-activeness has an insignificant weak negative relationship with private in the study area. Based on the insignificance of the relationship as revealed by the empirical test, the null hypothesis was retained. This decision contradicts the finding of Ball (2019) in a study that sought to establish the relationship between the dimensions of EO and performance in New York State. However, Okandi (2019) has also established a negative effect of pro-activeness on performance of the enterprises in Tanzania.

Further analysis indicated that autonomy has a significant positive relationship with student enrollment of private secondary school in Minna Metropolis. Consequent upon this finding, the null hypothesis was rejected. This decision can be supported with the findings of the study conducted by Kiyabo and Isaga (2020) in Tanzania using SMEs drawn from welding industry. It is also in agreement with the result of the research conducted by Khan *et al.* (2021) in Pakistan. Lastly, the result also indicated a very significant relationship between the two variables.

In sum, from the findings of the current study, three out of the five dimensions of EO examined in this study showed significant positive association with performance of small enterprises in Minna Metropolis. These three dimensions are innovativeness, risk-taking propensity and autonomy. The other two variables – pro-activeness and competitive aggressiveness, showed insignificant negative relationship. EO therefore, from this result can be seen to have an influence on business performance and should therefore be emphasised and encouraged to enhance the growth of small enterprises in the study area.

### 5.2 Conclusion and Recommendations

Going by the findings made from the inferential analysis as stated in section 5.1, the study concluded that EO has a noticeable relationship with the performance of private secondary schools measured in terms of their student enrollment.

The recommendations made below by the researcher derived from the findings of the study following the test of hypotheses:

i. Owners of school should be more innovative by investing in R&D so as to introduce new programmes in line with modern trend that could increase their share of student enrollment in the area.

ii. Proprietors of private secondary school in Minna Metropolis should improve on their risk management skills by attending relevant workshops, seminars and conferences so they can avail themselves all the benefits while reducing the disadvantages associated with uncalculated risk taking.

iii. Proprietors of private secondary schools in Minna Metropolis should always study modern trends of development in the education sector and be more proactive in their actions.

iv. proprietors should ensure that roles are well distributed among the staff and allow them a reasonable degree of independence in taking decisions.

v. Owners of private secondary schools in the study area should embark on positive competition that has the potential of adding values to their various enterprises.

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