

Determinants of Entrepreneurial Orientation among Muslim Students in Kenya

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Abstract

This paper is drawn upon a study that sought to examine the determinants of entrepreneurial orientation among Muslim students at USIU-Africa. The study addressed the gaps in the knowledge between multiple dimensions of entrepreneurial orientation in the context of Muslim students in USIU-Africa. The study was steered along the following objectives: influences of pro-activeness on entrepreneurial orientation among Muslim students, influences of innovation on entrepreneurial orientation among Muslim students, and influence of risk-taking on entrepreneurial orientation among Muslim students in USIU-Africa. A descriptive quantitative research design was used for this study and the information gathered using questionnaires. The sample size constituted 120 Undergraduate and Graduate students in the various departments of USIU-Africa. The data collected from the sample was analyzed using SPSS and Microsoft Excel to generate statistics, frequency tables and percentages for clear interpretation of findings. A one sample t-test and Pearson correlation analysis were used to investigate the relationship between the variables of the study.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship, Entrepreneurship Orientation, Proactiveness, Risk Taking and Innovation

Introduction

The religion of Islam has its own entrepreneurship culture and guiding principles that are based on the Holy Quran and hadiths which gives direction in business operations. Islam encourages its followers to participate in productive entrepreneurial activities that are morally and socially accepted. Activities associated with alcohol, drugs, usury, gambling, prostitution and highly speculative business behavior are strictly prohibited (Maruf, Mahmud, & Yousuf, 2013). The influence of this culture depends on how strong an individual's faith is towards the religion in carrying out their daily activities as well as business activities (Mohd, Kamaruddin, Yahya, & Sanidas, 2015). Islam emphasizes on how an individual should earn their living to support oneself, family and society in a just and lawful way. Thus, engaging in entrepreneurial activities is a way of fulfilling religious obligation to please Allah (Hassan & Hippler, 2014).

It is a responsibility for every Muslim to acquire knowledge of the religion to carry out daily activities. An entrepreneur must obtain sufficient knowledge about the rules and guiding principles in Islam in order to run a successful business (Mohammed & Abdullah, 2013) "Excellence in knowledge regarding business is highly required to identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats relating to business which can ultimately help in devising necessary policies and strategies to make the business successful" (Mamun & Ahshanul, 2014). Entrepreneurship has become a topic of discussion with high priority all over the world (Luthje

& Franke, 2003). The most significant element in the concept of entrepreneurship is the creation of new business and venture development within an industry (Kroft, 2010).

In the 21st century, researchers, scholars, and government officials have acknowledged the existence of individual business startup especially those that were established by well-educated young people. At both the macroeconomic and individual level, entrepreneurial activities play a substantial role in job creation as well as technological advancement and wealth maximization (Fafaliou, 2012). Bili, Prka, and Vidovi (2011) stated that working in rapidly changing entrepreneurial and global environment is challenging due to external factors such as competition, technological turbulence, and demand uncertainty. An individual must therefore, constantly react to the dynamic challenges emanating from the markets to build and sustain competitive advantage in business (Wang, Hermens, Huang, & Chelliah, 2015).

The intention of starting a business depends on the individual perception observed from social groups such as family, friends and experts (Farouk, Ikram, & Sami, 2014). It also differs in individuals personality traits, personal experience, educational level, and societal beliefs (Ayub, Aslam, Razzaq, & Iftekhhar, 2013). According Bili, Prka, and Vidovi (2011), the knowledge gained from entrepreneurial exposure enables positive attitude towards improving entrepreneurship skills among students. Entrepreneurial education is an effective way to promote and boost the interest of entrepreneurship among university students. Entrepreneurship plays an important role in changing the mindset of an individual to look at opportunities, uncertainty and innovation in a strategic way to improve the standard of living among citizen of a country (Ammam & Fahad, 2013). Entrepreneurial orientation on the other hand is a necessity in the pursuit of new opportunities to enhance business performance (Su, Xie, & Wang, 2015). Adopting a strong entrepreneurial orientation is considered necessary but inadequate for wealth creation by new ventures due to large resources commitment.

The concept of entrepreneurial orientation and its influence on students have received significant attention in the globe (Wang & Altinay, 2012). Entrepreneurship in many developed and developing countries such as United State, United Kingdom, Russia, Brazil, India, Libya, China, and Africa has greatly contributed to economic and business development as a whole (Thanos, Dimitratos, & Sapouna, 2016). In Sweden for instance, children at a very young age are encouraged and motivated to develop entrepreneurial skills such as inquisitive, initiative and self-confidence (Thanos, Dimitratos, & Sapouna, 2016). In Kenya, the government has taken measures to create jobs for the youth in the long term. They have invested massive amount of money in development infrastructures, conferences and trainings that will enhance business performance, attract investors, create jobs as well as reduce the cost of business in the country (Harry, 2014).

The Kenyan Youth Survey Report (KYSR) stated that the youth unemployment rate is 55% which includes overall population of youth ranging from (18- 35) years. Most of the Kenyan youth are below 35years old which are about 80% of the population. High unemployment rate is massively increasing due to large number of graduate students in the country (Awiti & Scott, 2016). United States International University-Africa (USIU-Africa) is a private, and non-profit organization of higher education situated at Kasarani, Nairobi Kenya (Smith, 2016). The University has about 359 Muslim students which consists of senior undergraduate and graduate from both international and national students. The student population consist of 84.7% local students while 15.3% are international students (Smith, 2016). The USIU-Africa student population has successfully increased over the years and has generated development in the

services that the university offers with an outlay of improving itself and providing its students with an opportunity to build and prepare themselves for a better future.

Literature Review

Pro-Activeness

Pro-activeness is the ability of an individual to anticipate and act on the future events rather than reacting to events that already occurred in the market place (Madhoushi, Sadati, Delavari, Mehdivand, & Mihandost, 2011). Su, Xie, and Wang, 2015 defined proactivity as a state of mind which is largely driven by a person's desire to attain a vision, to develop a mission, to find solutions to challenging goals and to arrive at objectives. That proactivity, involves envisioning the use of strategic parameters to arrive at effective and efficient approach towards one's defined objectives.

Lumpkin and Dess (2011) explained pro-activeness to be a forward-looking perspective involving being ahead of competition in terms of new products or services while taking large market share. They also mentioned how it has been applied in the pursuit of various business opportunities, hence, enhancing entrepreneurship. It provides the answer to the question as to whether the creation of technology, products, and techniques shape the environment or just a merely action (Nurul, Muhammad, & Jaafar, 2013). Proactivity is associated with marketing, research and development in the process of new entry, customer discovery and satisfaction, and also acting opportunistically in order to shape the market environment (Lumpkin & Dess, 2001).

Proactive strategies enable individuals and organizations to dominate and have first movers' advantage and have extra ordinary high rate of returns in the investment. Nabila, Ambad, and Wahab (2013) stated that being the first mover in the market creates customer loyalty due to high switching cost or brand familiarity. Thus, it is very important for a firm to anticipate future needs and demands. This ability for future anticipation of challenges and demands, gives a firm the capacity to shape the environment and direction of competition to its advantage. They also highlighted that it is easier for start-up companies to use pro-activeness compared to already existing firms in the market (Nabila, Ambad, & Wahab, 2013).

An organization determines the level of entrepreneurial pro-activeness through its survival in the dynamic market especially with the use of scarce resource, research and development, and the ability to sustainably compete with large companies in an industry (Wang, Hermens, Huang, & Chelliah, 2015). An individual who thinks in a proactive manner can continuously improve on existing resources to introduce new products or services that are completely unique in the market environment. Also, it leads to better performance because entrepreneurs have greater understanding of customer needs and wants in the turbulent market. Amin (2015) stated that in the dynamic business environment an individual or a firm must possess strategic reactivity and responsiveness for unexpected circumstances. Pro-activeness has the capability of projecting the future, shaping the environment, and providing new advantages to existing competitive capabilities (Madhoushi, & Delavari, 2011).

Risk Taking

Noer, Syafi, and Hadiwijoyo (2013) defined risk taking as the process of taking bold steps in decision making, and action without adequate information of the outcomes, in venturing into unknown market. Risk taking is one of the most important entrepreneurial orientations in starting a business in the competitive environment which drives cash flows. Entrepreneurs are individuals who sacrifice their time, effort, wealth, and income to make business decisions in an uncertain dynamic environment (Koudstaal & Sloof, 2014). In addition, the basic factor that

separates entrepreneurs and employees is the ability to take risk of self-employment in an uncertain environment. They are known as risk takers in the process of making decisions to start a business which involves the use of personnel, raw materials, equipment, tools, skill, and money with expected revenue. These resources should therefore be utilized in a way that reduces cost and generates super normal profits in a business (Vesković, 2014). An entrepreneur is a risk taker that puts ideas and thoughts into practice without fear of uncertainty. Therefore, the higher the risk the higher the rate of return in an investment (MacKo & Tyszka, 2011). Risk requires bold intention to implementation of strategic plans and actions that an individual takes to maximize profits effectively and expand market share. Entrepreneurs must put in mind that the future is unpredictable and challenging, thus an individual must take calculated risk to venture into the competitive business environment regardless of the outcome (Mamun, & Ahshanul, 2014).

Lumpkin and Dess (2001) highlighted that individuals take calculated business opportunities when the outcome is not clearly stated immediately. Similarly, Wiklund and Shepherd (2005) argued that risk taking entrepreneurial orientation is the ability of an individual or a firm to willingly invest limited resources in a business project whose results are unpredictable. Lumpkin and Dess (1996) indicated that firms invest their financial assets with the aim of utilizing environmental opportunities and achieving higher returns. Individuals that are not entrepreneurial oriented are risk averse, less innovative and they imitate competitors for their survival and performance of the business (Miller, 1983). Positive risk orientation leads businesses toward success and better performance in the turbulent environment. Risk taking orientation enables individuals or firms to identify and seize market opportunities, attaining higher returns on investment and making incredible market deals (Lumpkin & Dess, 2001).

Risk taking entrepreneurial orientation varies from individual to individual as well as business to business in the ever changing market demand (Herranz & Krasa, 2013). The greatest challenge of an entrepreneur is the ability to cope with business risk in a competitive dynamic market in an industry. This arises due to uncertainty about the future expectations because of the ever changing technology, customer preference and taste, competition and other factors which have effect on the present decision (Vesković, 2014). Entrepreneurs are very focused and skillful towards minimizing risk by putting their best effort in the business. They evaluate and analyze the dynamic model of the business venture by selecting the firm size, capital structure and strategic management plan for better performance (Herranz & Krasa, 2013).

Grable and Lytton (1998) stated that education level of an entrepreneur is most important factor in determining the kind of risk to be taken in the business. Entrepreneurs with better education have greater aptitude when it comes to demonstrating knowledge on making decisions such as acquisition, assimilation, and transformation capability. Also, they are inclined to construct dignified procedures in their operations to maximize benefits and minimize losses as well as maintaining competitive advantage. In addition, entrepreneurs are very good at maintaining personal relationships and networks with trusted friends, family, colleagues, customers, suppliers, accountants, local politicians and banks managers for the purpose of sharing information and scarce resources for the survival of the business in the competitive environment (Wang, 2010). According to Zahra (2005), the whole entrepreneurial process is associated with risk taking which allows entrepreneurs to recognize the value of business activities.

Innovation

According to Lumpkin and Dess (2001) innovation is the “willingness to support creativity and experimentation to introduce new products or services, technological leadership, as well as research and development in developing new processes”. They described economic process of innovation as “creative destruction” which leads to introduction of new products and services in a business environment that cause other firms to grow due to continuous improvement of existing goods and services in competitive market as well as increases wealth (Bleeker, 2011). Innovation is one of the most important dimensions of entrepreneurial orientation that is often associated with individuals propensity to support new ideas, uniqueness, experiment, and creative process that may lead to improvement or invention of new products and services (Lumpkin & Dess, 2001).

According to Celik (2013) Innovativeness is the process of developing or inventing new ideas that turn into reality. Entrepreneurial orientation in relation to individuals or organizations is the willingness to accept new opportunities and responsibility that would have influence on change (Morris & Kuratko, 2002). Individuals with high degree of innovation are passionate about using new information and technologies than other people with low innovation. Many scholars in the field of entrepreneurship believe that innovation is the fundamental aspect of entrepreneurship that necessitates resources and makes new capabilities to explore new opportunities in the market (Walter, Auer, & Ritter, 2006).

Drucker (2002) discussed that innovation is an instrument of entrepreneurship process that both require creativity. Creativity is the ability to create new concepts or new solutions to an existing problem in a beneficial way. Creative individuals have the capability to look at things in a different way within the environment and seize the opportunity in the market. Creativity also deals with an individual attitude which has to do with accepting changes, newness and flexibility in formulating ideas in imaginative way. Okpara (2006) stated that individuals engage their minds in creative thinking to enhance productivity, efficiency, convenience, increase speed, maximize, comfort and so on.

Methodology

This study focused on Muslims students at USIU-Africa with the total population of 359(United States International University- Africa [USIU-A], 2016). The sample size constituted 120 students from all the departments within the selected universities. The sample size was selected by taking into consideration the time frame available and cost of data collection. This research used primary data to answer the research questions which was collected using questionnaires. The questionnaires were semi-structured with both open and closed ended questions. The questionnaire was constructed in sections which constitute general information on respondents and the subsequent sections based on the research questions. Likert scaling was used in the questionnaires to measure the level of agreement and disagreement of the respondents on the scale 1 to 7 where 1 was totally disagree, and 7 was strongly agree. The data collected from the sample was analyzed using SPSS for descriptive and inferential statistics.

Results

The result indicated that majority of the respondents were females 65% while 35% were males. It is also indicated that majority of the respondents were between the ages of 18-24 years at 75%. Respondents in age bracket of 25-34 years were 22%, between the age bracket of 35-46 years were 3% and 1% was above 36 years. The data analysis followed a two-step approach. First the measurement model was assessed and analyzed to confirm construct validity. The second step involved establishing the relationships between all latent variables using structural

equation modelling (SEM). PLS algorithm and Bootstrapping algorithm was run in SmartPLS 2.0

Measurement Model

The confirmatory factor analysis was conducted in order to assess the extent to which the observed data fitted the pre-specified theoretical model. The model fits for the measurement models in partial least squares (PLS) were validated using four criteria-uni-dimensionality, construct reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity.

Construct Uni-dimensionality

Construct uni-dimensionality was initially assessed by verifying that the measurement items measured the specific construct. Further construct uni-dimensionality was performed through the verification of the cross loadings of scales and constructs to ensure that the scales loaded heavily on the relevant constructs. The loadings and cross loadings are indicated in Table 1 below. All the loadings and cross loadings were adequate and demonstrated construct uni-dimensionality.

Table 1: Cross Loading

	Innovation	Pro activeness	Risk taking	T Statistics	P-values
NN1	0.858			11.366	0.000
NN2	0.931			39.334	0.000
NN3	0.908			29.577	0.000
PRO1		0.871		20.253	0.000
PRO2		0.788		10.293	0.000
PRO3		0.836		14.010	0.000
PRO4		0.846	0.706	14.453	0.000
R1			0.766	7.888	0.000
R2			0.732	8.408	0.000
R3			0.813	15.332	0.000
R4			0.665	6.991	0.000
R5			0.742	9.838	0.000
R6			0.721	7.833	0.000
R7			0.608	4.628	0.000

Construct Reliability

Construct reliability was assessed by computing the composite reliability and the Cronbach alpha of the constructs. Composite reliability measures were evaluated using SmartPLS. The Cronbach alphas were all above the 0.6 threshold as specified for PLS analysis (Hair, Celsi, Money, Samouel, & Page, 2011). This indicated good reliability and composite reliability of reflective items were all above the acceptable 0.7 threshold which means all the variables in the study exhibited construct reliability as presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Reliability of Constructs

Construct	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha >0.6	Composite Reliability >0.7
Innovation	3	0.881	0.927
Pro-activeness	4	0.856	0.903
Risk	7	0.847	0.884

Convergent Validity

Convergent validity refers to the degree to which two or more items that measure a construct in theory converge or share high proportion of variance in reality. It is measured by three measures; factor loadings, composite reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE). Convergent validity is achieved if composite reliability values for the construct are at least 0.7 and the average variance extracted (AVE) are at least 0.5. All factor loadings should be statistically significant and should be above 0.5, as indicated in Table 3 below.

Table 3. Convergent Validity

Construct	Factor loading	T Statistics	P-values	AVE
Innovation				0.809
NN1	0.858	11.366	0.000	
NN2	0.931	39.334	0.000	
NN3	0.908	29.577	0.000	
Pro-activeness				0.699
PRO1	0.871	20.253	0.000	
PRO2	0.788	10.293	0.000	
PRO3	0.836	14.010	0.000	
PRO4	0.846	14.453	0.000	
Risk taking				0.524
R1	0.766	7.888	0.000	
R2	0.732	8.408	0.000	
R3	0.813	15.332	0.000	
R4	0.665	6.991	0.000	
R5	0.742	9.838	0.000	
R6	0.721	7.833	0.000	
R7	0.608	4.628	0.000	

Discriminant Validity

Discriminant Validity is the extent to which items measuring one construct differentiate from items measuring other constructs. There are two criteria to assess the discriminant Validity. The first criterion is that the inter-construct correlation should not be higher than 0.9. The second criterion is the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) of the construct should be larger than its correlation with the other constructs. As in correlation matrix illustrated in Table 4, the diagonal elements are the square root of the average variance extracted of all the latent constructs. The discriminant validity is assumed if the diagonal elements are higher than other off-diagonal elements in their rows and columns. This situation is apparently the case in the correlation matrix and thus the discriminant validity is confirmed.

Table 4: Discriminant Validity

	Innovation	Pro activeness	Risk taking
Innovation	0.900		
Pro activeness	0.675	0.836	
Risk taking	0.671	0.707	0.724

Structural Model Estimation

Figure 1 below presents the model fit measurement statistics for the overall structural model for study variables.

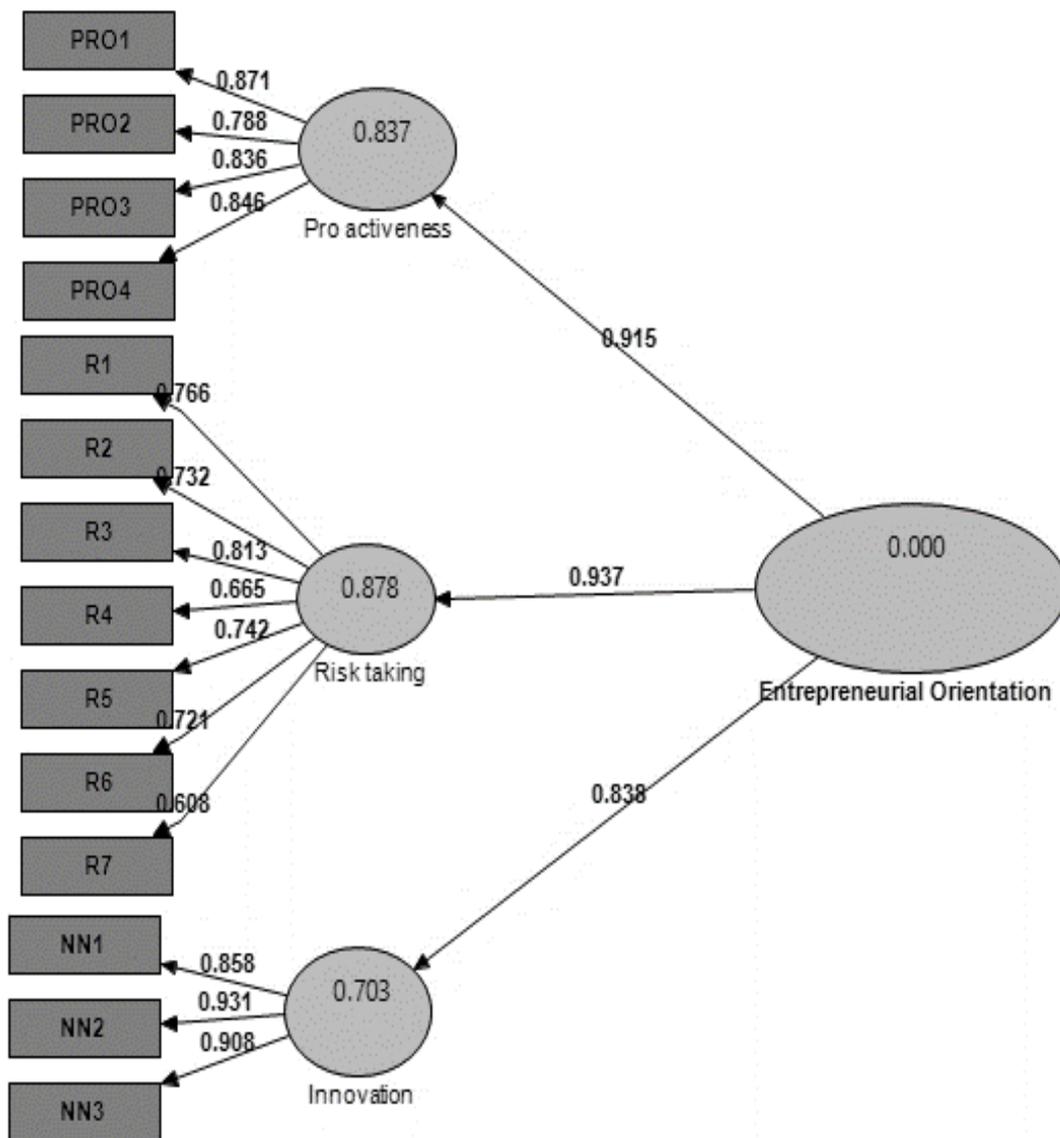


Figure 1: Path Coefficients

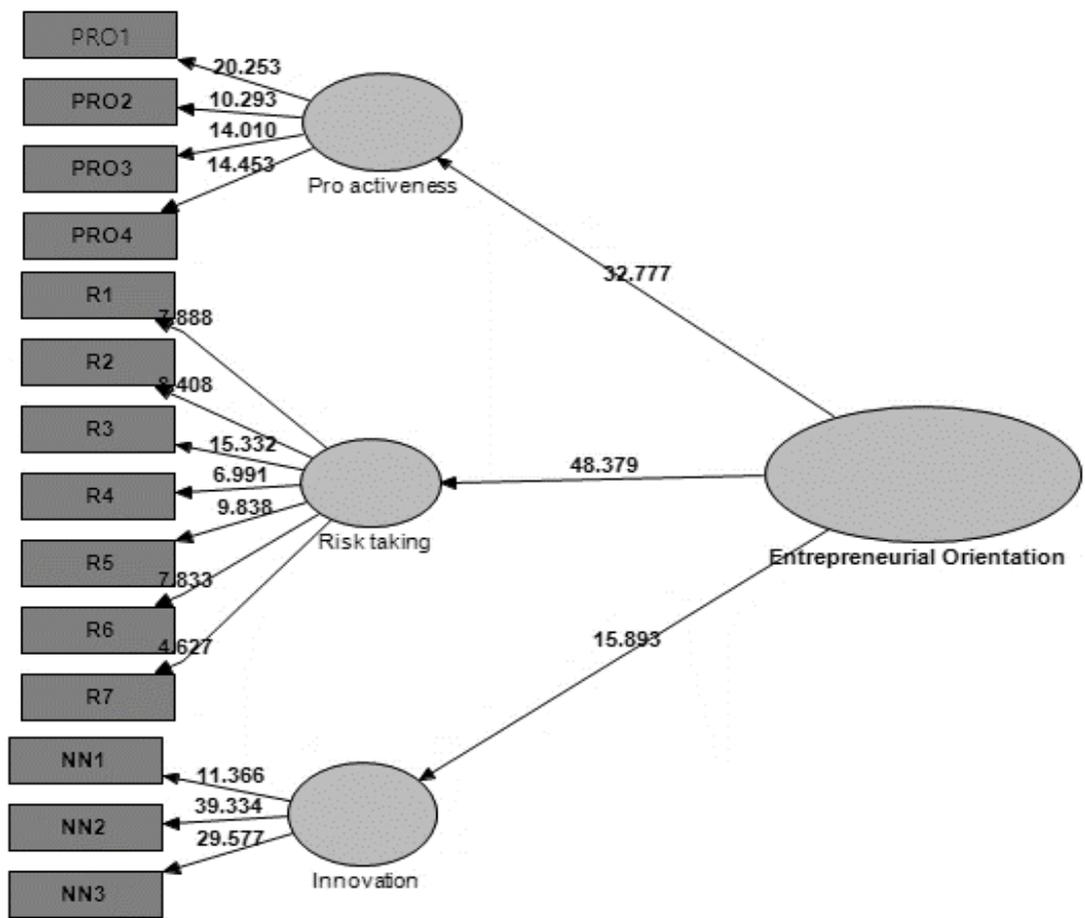


Figure 2: T-Statistics for the Path Coefficients

Table 5: Path Coefficients

Path	Path Coefficients	Standard Error	T-Value	p-values
Entrepreneurial Orientation -> Innovation	0.83834	0.052749	15.893088	0.00
Entrepreneurial Orientation -> Pro activeness	0.915143	0.02792	32.777489	0.00
Entrepreneurial Orientation -> Risk taking	0.936785	0.019363	48.378995	0.00

Pro-activeness and Entrepreneurial Orientation

Pro-activeness has a positive and significant standardized coefficient value ($\beta=0.915143$, T-value =32.777489, $p<0.05$) as indicated in Table 5 and Figure 1 and 2. This indicates that Pro-activeness is a statistically significant indicator of Entrepreneurial orientation. This indicated that Muslim students at USIU have great potential in seeking business opportunity in the uncertain environment.

Risk Taking and Entrepreneurial Orientation

Risk taking has a positive and significant standardized coefficient value ($\beta=0.936785$, T-value =48.378995, $p<0.05$) as indicated in Table 5 and Figure 2. This indicates that Risk taking is a statistically significant indicator of Entrepreneurial orientation. This also implies that the

degree at which a student take risk influences the degree to which they can venture into new business. Also, this indicated that most of the Muslim students at USIU are risk takers.

Innovation and Entrepreneurial Orientation

Innovation has a positive and significant standardized coefficient value ($\beta=0.83834$, T-value =15.893088, $p<0.05$) as indicated in table 5 and, figure 1 and 2. This indicates that innovation is a statistically significant indicator of Entrepreneurial orientation among USIU Muslim students. This indicated that the level of innovation and creativity of USIU Muslim students is very high which create competitive edge in the turbulent market.

Conclusion

The study findings have adequately shown that majority of the Muslim students from the different departments at USIU-Africa understand proactive entrepreneurial orientation which will make it easier for them to navigate through the competitive world. The study findings also revealed that the students are willing to take bold action towards venturing into the uncertain competitive market with inadequate resources. It enables students to effectively and efficiently manage the resource at hand for better performance as well as increase profits. Also, the findings indicated that risk taking significantly influence entrepreneurial intention among Muslim students. Therefore, Muslim students are urged to take calculated risk and mitigation to start a business. The world of business is full of uncertainty in today's world due to massive rate of aggressive competition, hence, not all students can deal with ambiguity in the fast-changing business environment. Risk taking dimension affects the ability of some of the Muslim students to start their own business firms.

The study findings also revealed that the students are very innovative towards business creation. The results indicated that Muslim Students were able to provide creative solution to difficult problems and implement creativity in managing and controlling resources available to them. Innovation has significant and positive correlation which influences entrepreneurial activities among Muslim Students. It enables students to develop new ideas or improve existing products/services into ever changing competitive environment, thus, leading to competitive advantage in the turbulent market. The study has sufficiently shown that students at USIU-Africa believe that innovation is the key to entrepreneurial success in the digital age.

Limitations and Further Studies

There are several limitations in the study identified due to methodological choices. The greatest challenge was data collection process since only cross-sectional data was collected. Longitudinal data would have provided better validity and support to the study. The next limitation was related to the fact that students were not selected at random and the characteristics of the sample - United States International University-Africa - which is one of the Kenyan leading universities. Following these limitations, this recommends that future studies should be carried out on different universities to ensure more accuracy and reliability of the data. It will also increase the statistical relevance of the study due to differences in their background, culture, and moral values of their societies.

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