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### **Biographical statements**

Ibiyemi Omeihe is a doctoral candidate at the University of the West of Scotland (UWS). Her research interests include leadership and leadership development, entrepreneurship and inter-organisational trust. Previous projects have focused on understanding the importance of entrepreneurial leadership and how the cultural dimensions of institutions enable and constrain leadership behaviour. A commitment to qualitative inquiry runs throughout her research. She finished as the valedictorian of the UWS MBA 2019 cohort, achieving a distinction and winning the overall court medal. Ibiyemi is the co-founder of Enterprise Partnership Africa Network and a member of the Centre for African Research on Enterprise and Economic Development. As a practitioner, she has worked across emerging markets as a business advisor.

Dr Christian Harrison is the programme leader of the MSc Leadership and Management in the School of Business and Creative Industries in the University of the West of Scotland. He is the author of numerous published peer-reviewed papers on Entrepreneurial Leadership which is his major research interest and serves as the Director of Studies of several doctoral students. He is also the Chair of the Leadership and Leadership Development Special Interest Group of the British Academy of Management. Christian works extensively as a consultant on leadership development within organisations. He is the founder of the NGO; The Leadership Mould Initiative International. The NGO supports students and moulds future leaders. He is also the author of the book entitled 'Leadership Theory and Research: A Critical Approach to New and Existing Paradigms', which is published by the globally renowned publishing company; Palgrave MacMillan.

Dr Amon Simba is an established scholar at Nottingham Business School, and he is an expert in entrepreneurship and strategy. He is an Associate Editor for the Journal of Small Business & Entrepreneurship (JSBE). He is also an Editorial Board Member of the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC).

Dr Kingsley Omeihe is an Assistant Professor of Entrepreneurship and Innovation at Edinburgh Napier University. He maintains research in the fields of entrepreneurship, leadership and economic sociology. As an academic, Kingsley champions the concept of student entrepreneurship and his 'Entrepreneurship Partnership Initiative' serves as a launch pad for promoting entrepreneurship across schools in the UK and Africa. Prior to joining Napier University, Kingsley was a faculty member at the University of the West of Scotland's School of Business. Kingsley's contribution to leadership and entrepreneurship studies relies on the use of institutional logics to critically analyse complex entrepreneurial behaviour in society. He has published articles in international peer-reviewed journals, in addition to ongoing authored books, as well as chapter contributions. He is the co-Chair of the Entrepreneurship-in-Minority Group, Special Interest Group of the Institute for Small Business and Entrepreneurship (ISBE).

## **The role of the entrepreneurial leader: A study of Nigerian SMEs**

### **Abstract**

Growing evidence points to the role of entrepreneurial leadership in enhancing positive business outcomes. Yet little is known about the entrepreneurial leadership attributes and skills exploited by entrepreneurial leaders within a developing economy context. This study examines the role of entrepreneurial leadership within fashion SMEs. It exemplifies the entrepreneurial leadership attributes and skills employed by entrepreneurial leaders within Nigerian fashion SMEs. Based on 14 semi-structured interviews of entrepreneurial leaders, we found out that: (1) five broad skills namely; technical, conceptual, interpersonal, entrepreneurial and expectation management skills are employed by entrepreneurial leaders ; (2) entrepreneurial leaders rely on 7 attributes namely; hard work, long term view, passion, length of service, creativity, innovation and vision in the pursuit of their business ventures; (3) creativity and innovation are key attributes within the fashion sector ; (4) vision is described as the most important attribute an entrepreneurial leader should possess. Finally, this study recognises the interaction between attributes and skills, which serves as a foundation for understanding the transition process of entrepreneurial leadership attributes to skills. In addition, it provides new insights on the classification of competencies and it presents an instructive entrepreneurial leadership model for guiding such a categorisation.

**Keywords:** Entrepreneurial Leadership, Entrepreneurial Leader, Attributes, Skills, Small and Medium sized Enterprise (SME), Entrepreneurship, Leadership, Developing Economy.

## **1. Introduction**

The significance of leadership in organisational effectiveness has broadened over the years. Interestingly, research has supported the premise that the success of small and medium sized enterprises is underpinned largely by the kind of leadership adopted by the entrepreneur or manager (Hejazi *et al.*, 2012). As an emerging paradigm, entrepreneurial leadership is located within key domains of leadership and entrepreneurship (Cogliser and Brigham, 2004; Fernald *et al.*, 2005; Harrison, 2018). As a concept, it developed to reflect the leadership challenges and opportunities within entrepreneurial settings. To date, academic interest has increased in the concept of entrepreneurial leadership as an approach for gaining sustainable competitive advantage (Van-Zyl and Mathur-Helm, 2007). This is due to its importance in the growth of small and medium sized enterprises (Sundararajan *et al.*, 2012; Koryak *et al.*, 2015; Simba and Thai, 2018).

Arguably so, it has been demonstrated that entrepreneurial leaders identify opportunities, manage failures and exploit limited resources in the pursuit of success (Carpenter, 2012; Freeman and Siegfried, 2015). Accordingly, Kuratko (2007) argues that entrepreneurial leaders are aggressive catalysts of transformation within the business context. Thus, it is a recognised leadership approach, geared towards achieving strategic value creation (Alvesson and Sveningsson, 2003; Harrison, 2018). In spite of the received knowledge on the importance of entrepreneurial leadership within SMEs, there exist a paucity of empirical insights that have explored the concept in developing economies (Agbim *et al.*, 2013; Abbas, 2014; Harrison *et al.*, 2018). This marginalised view alludes to the fact that academics are yet to contextualise entrepreneurial leadership research to accommodate wider debates outside the western context. The stark reality has necessitated the interest to examine entrepreneurial leadership by investigating the attributes and skills needed for SMEs success in a developing economy. There

is a need to contextualise such studies within a developing economy context (Dana and Dumez, 2015). This enthusiasm is underpinned by the pivotal role SMEs play in economic and social development of nations (Dana and Dana, 2005). Specifically, the paper seeks to address the research questions below as it relates to entrepreneurial leadership across Nigerian SMEs:

**RQ1:** What are the entrepreneurial leadership skills used by Nigerian SME owner/managers?

**RQ2:** What are the unique attributes of effective SME entrepreneurial leaders?

At an empirical level, the study adopts a qualitative approach towards uncovering insights from 14 fashion entrepreneurial leaders. Findings from the semi-structured interviews demonstrate that entrepreneurial leaders were keen to exploit specific skills and attributes shaped by contextual influences. The data collected was analysed through a three-stage coding technique resulting in the development of an empirical model that captured the relationship between attributes and skills. The study contributes to the entrepreneurial leadership domain by identifying essential competencies of entrepreneurial leaders peculiar to the developing economy context. It acknowledges the inconsistencies in distinguishing between attributes and skills, which has plagued the entrepreneurial leadership domain. In addition, it recognises the transition process of attributes to skills within the context of study. In sum, the paper makes a case for entrepreneurial leadership by providing empirical evidence on its broader relevance within a dynamic context. The organisation of this paper is structured as follows: firstly, the research background of study is presented, by giving an overview of the emerging themes in context of study. In the second section, the literature review of relevant studies sets the tone for the research approach. The final section describes the methodology, providing insights to the findings and analysis. The paper concludes with a description of relevance and perceived

limitations of the study. It is expected that the proposed structure would provide an understanding to the contribution of the research.

## **2. Research background**

Across the extant literature, diverse definitions are ascribed to the concept of Entrepreneurial Leadership. These definitions are underpinned by the perceived objectives of the entrepreneurial leader. Consequently, Gupta *et al.* (2004) describe it, as the creation of a visionary path that motivates people to action; while Surie and Ashley (2008) suggest that entrepreneurial leadership appraises complex scenarios with the main aim of problem solving. These definitions have generally not been further developed, based on the lack of contextualised knowledge, which has led to contributions being largely ignored. Interestingly, Bagheri and Pihie (2018) explore entrepreneurial leadership competencies in university entrepreneurship clubs and projects providing a fresh perspective to entrepreneurial leadership competency development. The study recognises two distinct types of entrepreneurial leadership competencies: personal competencies (entrepreneurial leadership self-efficacy, love of challenges and versatility) and leadership competencies (creating a caring interpersonal relationship, employing an enabling task delegation approach and building self-efficacy of the group members) respectively. Drawing from the above, the fundamental perspective of this article is the context of investigation; Nigeria. The role of context provides a fresh outlook to the broad role of entrepreneurial leadership which Harrison *et al.* (2016b) reports is limited across literature. Since the 1970's Nigeria experienced exponential growth of approximately 7 to 10% in GDP (IMF, 1975). This was however, accompanied by economic mismanagement and corruption. This led to decline in growth rates (Nwosa, 2014). Granted, SMEs play a fundamental role in the economic landscape of most countries, for instance, reports from the

Small Business Administration affirms that 672,000 new businesses were created in 2005; the highest in US (Kuratko, 2007). Hence, the SME sector serves as the backbone of major developed economies as it accelerates economic growth thus critical for developing economies as well (Quartey *et al.*, 2017). However, despite the studies on the problems encountered by small and medium sized business, the challenges still persist. Thus, requiring further investigation, due to the relevance of SMEs to the economy; in employment creation, increased earnings, poverty reduction and economic prosperity (Steel and Webster, 1991; Aryeetey, 1998; Abor and Quartey, 2010). In Nigeria, there are about 17.4 million SMEs which account for 96% of businesses and 84% of employment (PWC Report, 2020). Accordingly, the SME sector in Nigeria is positioned to improve per capita income, improve export earnings, enhance capacity utilisation in key industries and unlock economic expansion (Abereijo and Fayomi, 2005; Terungwa, 2010; 2011; PWC Report, 2020). This suggests that entrepreneurial leaders in addition to creating wealth with entrepreneurial ventures, are able to create employment and contribute positively to the transition of the Nigerian economy to a developed economy. This further reiterates the relevance of this study.

### **3. Literature review**

The nature of entrepreneurial leadership in itself suggests a close interaction between the domains of entrepreneurship and leadership. Accordingly, Harrison (2018) suggests that the concept emerged from the fields of both entrepreneurship and leadership. This aligns with Fernald *et al.* (2005) submission that the concept developed from the convergence of both fields. In a similar vein, Coglisier and Brigham (2004) suggests, that there is an overlap between the two fields, which lends further support to the proposition that entrepreneurial leadership emerged from a positive integration of both fields. However, entrepreneurial leadership is

distinct, as it highlights the importance of exploiting opportunities within a variety of contexts (Agbim *et al.*, 2013; Bagheri *et al.*, 2013; Simba and Thai, 2018). Though, there are several definitions of entrepreneurial leadership, it lacks consensual meaning (Fernald *et al.*, 2005; Harrison *et al.*, 2016b; Clark *et al.*, 2019). These definitions have explored the concept from diverse perspectives, emphasising key components and success factors. For instance, Gupta *et al.* (2004) define the concept as a form of leadership that generates visionary perspectives, which inspire followers to committed action in the creation of a preferred future. Similarly, Harrison *et al.* (2018) defines entrepreneurial leadership as a kind of leadership that recognises and exploit opportunities within the entrepreneurial context. Given the contextual elements in the definition, Harrison *et al.* (2016a) argue that entrepreneurial leadership is a dynamic concept, which supports the exploration of leadership activities and functions within the entrepreneurial environment.

### **3.1 Approaches to entrepreneurial leadership**

There has been some research in entrepreneurial leadership, however these studies have explored the concept from different perspectives. Harrison *et al.* (2018) identifies key approaches to the study of this concept. For the purpose of this study, only three perspectives on entrepreneurial leadership will be explored given the strong links to the research. It is expected that a richer understanding of the concept will be provided.

These perspectives are:

- 1) The integration of entrepreneurship and leadership;
- 2) The mental and social profile of entrepreneurial leaders;
- 3) The situational outlook of entrepreneurial leadership



*The integration of entrepreneurship and leadership:* This research is rooted in the convergence perspective of entrepreneurship and leadership proposed by Cogliser and Brigham (2004). Similarly, Becherer *et al.* (2008) suggest that these concepts are closely linked and the differences between the two may be attributed to differences in context. Fernald *et al.* (2005) identifies characteristics associated with both effective leaders and entrepreneurs respectively. These characteristics include, achievement orientation, flexibility, patience, risk-taking and vision (Bagheri and Pihie, 2010; Harrison *et al.*, 2016a) though there is limited research as only a few studies have proposed, how these characteristics can be developed. The table 1 below gives an overview of entrepreneurial characteristics identified in extant literature.

*Insert Table 1*

*The mental and social profile of entrepreneurial leaders:* Extant literature have focused on identifying the characteristics and attributes that are essential for entrepreneurial leaders (Nicholson, 1998). This has led to the identification of a plethora of competencies. Similarly, scholars have made several attempts to categorise attributes in terms of importance to business performance. A major limitation of this perspective is the seemingly endless list of identified attributes and particularly, its foundation in the traits approach which does not consider context (Harrison, 2018).

*The situational outlook to entrepreneurial leadership:* Entrepreneurial leadership is largely oriented to developed nations. Several authors have examined the concept in a variety of contexts. (Mapunda, 2007; Darling *et al.*, 2007; Choi, 2009). These contexts have ranged from geographical regions, to organisational settings and sectors. This suggests that entrepreneurial leadership is multidimensional, which cuts across several disciplines. For instance, Mapunda

(2007) examines the role of entrepreneurial leadership in local businesses in South Australia and Tanzania. A limitation of this perspective is that, scholars are yet to agree and specify the context where this leadership approach is most appropriate (Harrison *et al.* 2016a; Swiercz and Lydon, 2002). Furthermore, few studies have assessed entrepreneurial leadership from a dual perspective of leaders and followers.

### **3.2 Entrepreneurial leadership attributes**

Studies on entrepreneurial leadership attributes appraise the attributes and behaviours of the entrepreneurial leader within the entrepreneurial context (Bagheri and Pihie, 2009). Consequently, for the entrepreneurial environment, scholars have identified a multiplicity of attributes essential for the effective performance of entrepreneurial leaders (Guo, 2009; Carpenter, 2012). Similarly, it is acknowledged that the research remains fragmented, thus the incomplete description of the entrepreneurial leadership attributes.

Furthermore, there seems to be a consensus and reoccurrence of vision as a core attribute (Harrison *et al.*, 2016a; Choi, 2009; Carpenter, 2012). This is consistent with Winston and Patterson's (2006) proposition that vision represents the preferable future, which creates a sense of dissatisfaction with the present order and stimulates followers to action. It is worthy to note that, empirical studies on entrepreneurial leadership attributes are limited (Agbim *et al.*, 2013; Abbas, 2014; Harrison *et al.*, 2016a). It is even more difficult to find literature on entrepreneurial leadership attributes.

### **3.3 Entrepreneurial leadership skills**

The literature on entrepreneurial leadership has expanded its focus from the attributes of leaders to the skills, which have the capacity to be developed (Freeman, 2014; Guo, 2009; Bagheri *et*

*al.*, 2013; Bagheri and Abbariki, 2016; Bagheri and Pihie, 2018). Therefore, affirming that entrepreneurial leaders are unique and require skills to exploit opportunities (Darling and Beebe, 2007; Harrison *et al.*, 2018). In the same vein, Guo (2009) used the concept of competence to describe these capabilities, carefully avoiding the classification, which has plagued the entrepreneurial leadership domain. Paradoxically, though the literature on entrepreneurial leadership skills is sparse, studies have drawn inspiration from Katz skill-based model for empirical research in the field of entrepreneurial leadership (Harrison *et al.*, 2018). The skill-based model was proposed by Katz but developed further by Yukl (2010). The adoption of this framework, to entrepreneurial leadership reiterates its relevance in the field of leadership. For instance, Harrison *et al.*, (2018) adopts the framework, which led to the identification of the new skill set termed entrepreneurial leadership skills. Regardless of the different approaches adopted by scholars in the categorization of these competencies, it is affirmed in wider literature that entrepreneurial leadership skills are essential for entrepreneurial leaders (Bagheri, 2017).

### **3.4 Conceptual framework and research questions**

The fundamental proposition evidenced from the literature review suggests that there are diverse approaches to the study of entrepreneurial leadership. The three perspectives discussed affirm the lack of consensual meaning. This alludes to the fact that academics are yet to contextualise entrepreneurial leadership research to accommodate debates outside the western context. The stark reality has necessitated the interest to examine entrepreneurial leadership by investigating the attributes and skills needed for SMEs success in a developing economy context. Furthermore, the wider literature lacks a conclusive framework on entrepreneurial leadership skills and attributes, most of the existing models are trait based (Carpenter, 2012; Bagheri *et al.*, 2013; Gupta *et al.*, 2004). Following from the above, a conceptual framework

is presented in figure 1. This builds on the skill-based framework that was developed by Harrison *et al.* (2018) within the entrepreneurial leadership domain. This conceptual framework as shown below describes four categories of skills namely; technical skills, human skills, conceptual skills and entrepreneurial skills. These skills support business success by enabling appropriate interpretation of customer demands with efficient allocation of resources.

*Insert Figure 1*

Though essential to the conceptualisation of entrepreneurial leadership, these attributes and skills are broad. By undertaking a wholly qualitative research, the paper attempts to address the research questions below as it relates to entrepreneurial leadership across Nigerian SMEs:

RQ1: What are the entrepreneurial leadership skills used by Nigerian SME owner/managers?

RQ2: What are the unique attributes of effective SME entrepreneurial leaders?

#### **4. Methodology**

The paper addresses the research questions above as it relates to entrepreneurial leadership across Nigerian SMEs. Furthermore, the insights gained from the empirical findings contribute to the domain of entrepreneurial leadership studies. Social constructionism as a research approach argues that reality is defined from a personal perspective (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2015). This philosophy is entrenched in human experiences and was consequently adopted for this study. The philosophical stance of the study is rooted in the interpretivist perspective (Bell *et al.*, 2018) and this provided richer understanding towards the true interpretations of the perception of real actors (Guba and Lincoln, 1998; Saunders *et al.*, 2016). This is particularly

true as interpretivism is focused on understanding the uniqueness of human inquiry (Schwandt, 1994). The study draws on a qualitative method in examining the role of entrepreneurial leadership across Nigerian SMEs. It provides insight into the world of participants through the lens of entrepreneurial leaders (Saunders *et al.*, 2016). Interestingly, fashion is an international and globalised industry. Recently, the government of Nigeria began investing in fashion with the launch of the N1bn fashion fund for women entrepreneurs. This was implemented to accelerate the growth of SME clusters, which would positively impact the entire economy (Abereijo and Fayomi, 2005; BOI, 2015a; Terungwa, 2011). Therefore, if Nigeria is to experience sustainable growth in fashion SMEs, it is pertinent that entrepreneurial leadership attributes and skills are identified and developed (Reijonen and Laukkanen, 2010).

Data was collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews with identified entrepreneurs in the Fashion Industry in Nigeria. This allowed a structured approach to be followed and provided flexibility within exploring emerging trends. Given the exploratory nature of the study, flexibility was considered paramount and care was taken to ensure that the order of questions during the interview was logical, and that the language used was unambiguous and understandable.

#### **4.1 Context of Study**

The research examined SMEs in a developing economy context: Nigeria. This choice of context was guided by three gaps. Firstly, the dearth of studies on SMEs in developing countries and particularly Africa (Jones *et al.*, 2011) ; secondly, Nigeria SMEs usually operate in informal settings and are mainly one-man businesses (Johnson *et al.*, 2013) and finally , the growth of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) support national development (Aremu and Adeyemi, 2011). Contrary to expectation, there is a lack of consensus on the definition for SMEs. The diverse definitions of small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) have been based on the perspectives of the scholars (Lepoutre and Heene, 2006; Spence, 1999).

Regardless of the divergent parameters for describing and classifying SMEs, it is evident that SMEs play a fundamental role in the economic landscape of most countries, especially in the developing economies (Quartey *et al.*, 2017). Within the remit of this research, the major determinant would include number of employees and ownership structure. Consequently, the focus was on SME owner/manager within the remit of SME description by SMEDAN (2005) as they are tasked with key decision making. The Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency (SMEDAN) define SMEs in relation to the number of employees and assets of the enterprise. Accordingly, SMEDAN, (2005), describes three distinct categories of SMEs based on the number of employees and the value of their asset descriptions are micro, small and medium enterprises respectively. The micro enterprises employ 1 to 10 individuals with assets of 0 to 5 million. The small enterprises engage from 10 to 49 people with assets of 5 to 50 million. Furthermore, the medium enterprises employ about 50 to 199 people with assets of 50 to 500 million (SMEDAN, 2005). Drawing from the data on Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, Nigeria has 17,286,671 MSMEs. 17,261,753 or 99.87 per cent micro-enterprises, 21,264 or 0.12 per cent small enterprises, while approximately 1, 654 or 0.01 per cent are medium enterprises (Abereijo and Fayomi, 2005; Terungwa, 2011; BOI, 2015a; PWC, 2020). Micro enterprises form majority of the enterprises, which are in the informal sector. A trend that reflects the economic realities within Nigeria.

*The Fashion Industry:* It is argued that the performance of the fashion industry is essential for economic development of developed and developing countries (McKinsey, 2017). In recent years, the fashion industry has evolved into a multibillion-dollar industry across the world (McKinsey, 2017). Interestingly, Africa is seen as the future and the new frontier. This is because of growth of the industry, reinforced by the use of local materials, ideas and creative output by these fashion designers. Entrepreneurial leaders in this industry, are not exempted

from the challenges such as poor infrastructure, political instability, trade barriers and lack of financing (McKinsey, 2017; Quartey *et al.*, 2017) that plague developing nations. Though, Nigeria has been actively involved in the fashion industry, yet there exists a dearth of literature to support this rich history. In this new era, Lagos amongst other cities is placed on the fashion map as it has become evident that diverse cultures now influence the global fashion industry (McKinsey, 2017).

Despite these laudable efforts and growth, it is still a developing segment within the SMEs. Furthermore, Nigeria's apparel and footwear market are valued at over \$4.7 billion and is perceived as a major driver of economic growth (Euromonitor, 2016). However, the fashion industry has provided Nigeria an opportunity to diversify its economy, hence the launch of the 1 billion naira fund to support fashion cluster of businesses (BOI, 2015b). The focus of the Bank of Industry in the fashion industry is to exploit the opportunities, create jobs for the youth and grow the Nigeria fashion industry, hence it important that entrepreneurial leadership attributes and skills are employed.

## **4.2 Sampling**

The selection of these participants was based on non-probability sampling in line with the research questions (Marshall and Rossman, 1999). The research was not to make theoretical generalisations but to acquire a rich description of entrepreneurial leadership attributes and skills; which was attainable from the sample size chosen.

Scholars have recommended different number of sample sizes for qualitative interviews such as Bertaux (1981) which suggests 15 samples, similarly Guest *et al.* (2006) advocates for 12 samples for homogenous group. The study adopts 14 as the sample size based on reaching

theoretical saturation and the nature of the group being studied. Table 2 provides the demography of 14 cases selected. To reduce bias in the selection process, criteria was applied, which considered key aspects such as, year of business commencement, ownership of the business, age and formal training in fashion. The age bracket selected was between 30 – 62; because this represents the average age of the Nigerian youth, who have been compelled by the environment to create small businesses of their own in order to survive (UN Report, 2017).

An overview of the criteria for selection is stated below:

- The selection of the participants is based on geopolitical locations to ensure maximum variation and avoid chance associations (Saunders *et al.*, 2016). These two cities were selected based on population, commercial activities and development. These locations are both thriving cities, Lagos was the previous capital and Abuja is the current capital of Nigeria.
- The entrepreneurial leader should own her/his fashion SME, which has been operational for over a year which infers success.
- Most SMEs in Nigeria are not registered, a reality that is also mirrored in the fashion industry. This industry has over 500,000 enterprises yet only about 300 small business owners are registered and actively participating in the Nigerian Industry (Economic Confidential Report; 2018; GTB Report: 2019). The business selected must have at least 2 employees either contract or permanent staff as the sector is plagued with unavailability of human resources caused by low barrier to entry.

*Insert Table 2*



### **4.3 Data collection method**

The data was collected in the month of March 2019 using iterations from semi-structured interviews and this aided the recognition of emergent themes in the study. The interviews enabled a deep probing, uncovering further dimensions of entrepreneurial leadership (Saunders *et al.*, 2016). The target group was Nigerian SMEs within the micro and small medium enterprises, specifically SMEs that employ between 1 to 35 employees. The respondents are mostly educated; however, the data reflected that 3 respondents had no formal education. The years of operations of the participants varied between 1 – 32 years and most of the respondents had only one outlet with several distribution channels. Furthermore, the respondents were aged from 25 to 62 years of age. See Table 2 for the demographics of the respondents. The sample size of 14 respondents was drawn from contacts and influencers in the fashion industry. The interviews reached theoretical saturation after the tenth interview, but sessions continued as interview schedules had been confirmed but more importantly relying on the recommendation by scholars on the number of interviews adequate for qualitative study; which range from 12 – 15 interviews for homogenous groups. (Bertaux, 1981; Guest *et al.*, 2006; Saunders *et al.*, 2016) 14 interviews were conducted to avoid chance associations. These interviews were conducted in English via Skype, one of the remote video techniques and it lasted between 30 to 60 minutes. The chosen technique, though in its infancy, proved to be an invaluable tool as suggested by Matthews and Cramer (2008) who are pioneers in the use of personal webcam for research. In addition, Preto and Packnee (2008) affirm that it was the most dependable form of communication adopted in their research, which was apparent in this study. Semi-structured interviews were adopted, because it explored the interviewee's perspectives on entrepreneurial leadership (Saunders *et al.*, 2016). This provided flexibility and adaptability in the interview process (Barbour, 2008). Though flexible, its application was guided by structure,

evident in the interview guide. This was evident in the discussions, as the interviews enabled a deep probing of the subject matter uncovering further dimensions of entrepreneurial leadership. The interview guide was developed, which capture the key themes of the research using a predetermined set of questions to ensure consistency in the interview process (Blumberg *et al.*, 2011). The questions were developed from the literature review on entrepreneurial leadership. However, flexibility is critical, as the goal is to capture unplanned but relevant information (King and Horrocks, 2012) thus the designed questions gave respondents the opportunity to discuss extensively, though in a focused manner. Furthermore, the language and flow of the questioning was appraised, to ensure understanding and a seamless flow, in the line of reasoning. Consistent, with the interview guide and ethical guidelines, formal consent was obtained, and participants assured anonymity during the process. In addition, a critical incident technique was adopted, where all respondents were asked to recall the most significant challenge they had ever encountered in their business. To ensure reflexivity by ensuring suggestive questions were not asked, which may have reflected sentiments (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011).

#### **4.4 Data analysis**

This research adopts King and Horrocks' (2012) three stage process for thematic data analysis namely; descriptive coding, interpretive coding and defining overarching themes. The first step of descriptive coding is an initial categorisation of data into groups also known as descriptive codes (Tuckett, 2005). For the paper, the transcripts were sent to respondents for validation of accuracy. The next stage was a self-immersion in the data. After reading the transcripts, descriptive codes were assigned, for instance, Table 3 illustrates the application of the descriptive coding technique.

*Insert Table 3*

The second stage termed interpretive coding goes a step further to consider connotational meaning, thus interpretive codes are generated based on actual meaning; Table 4 illustrates the application of the interpretive coding technique.

*Insert Table 4*

The final step is defining the overarching themes, which involves the analysis of the initial two steps, descriptive and interpretive codes to unearth the predominant themes. For instance, Figure 2 illustrates the application of the overarching themes technique.

*Insert Figure 2*

Based on the example above, the overarching theme is conceptual skills. Merriam (1995) argues rigour must be evident in the empirical process within any study, in order to validate the findings and propositions. Consistent with the above, Lincoln and Guba (1985) propose a criteriology for the evaluation of qualitative research.

The parameters within this framework are credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability and were adopted in ensuring methodological rigour. This study adopted semi structured interviews to demonstrate credibility. Direct questions that affected the entrepreneurial leaders were asked to ensure a true representation of the respondents' perceptions and experiences during the data collection (Krefting, 1991). Similarly, supporting documents from the field research such as the transcripts were reviewed and were used to establish dependability. In addition, the study demonstrates confirmability by showing an audit trail in the narrative. Finally, this research provides adequate information to support transferability for future researchers (Bryman and Bell, 2011).

## **5. Findings**

The central proposition of this research is that entrepreneurial leadership skills and attributes support business outcomes. Central to this research is an evaluation of the entrepreneurial leadership attributes and skills that enable entrepreneurial leaders succeed. It is expected that the identification of these attributes and skills will drive the growth of SMEs. Hence, this was addressed by answering the two main research questions respectively.

### **5.1 Entrepreneurial leadership skills that drive business success**

The findings depict the responses of 14 fashion entrepreneurial leaders. These respondents described the entrepreneurial leadership skills, perceived as necessary for business success. In addressing the first research question: What are the entrepreneurial leadership skills used by Nigerian SME owner/managers? The research identified five broad skills which builds on the entrepreneurial leadership skill-based framework developed by Harrison *et al.* (2018).

The first four category of skills namely: technical/business, conceptual, interpersonal and entrepreneurial skills align with the skill based entrepreneurial leadership model developed by Harrison *et al.* (2018). However, the peculiarity of the context of study, led to the identification of other relevant skills, which have not been previously identified by literature. These skills are grouped under the term expectation management skills. Table 5 illustrates the frequency of skills highlighted:

*Insert Table 5*

The following sections describe these findings in greater detail.

**5.1.1 Technical skills:** The respondents confirmed that technical skills are key to their success. These technical skills are further subdivided into fashion designing and production skills respectively. Fashion designing skills include sewing, sketching and pattern drafting skills. All 14 respondents agreed these skills are essential to successful business outcomes. These skills require consistent practice and formal training as described by respondent 14, who learned the trade informally from her mother but had to go to a fashion school to develop the skill. Thus, formal trainings led to improved quality of products as described:

*“So, I had to go back to fashion school, to help myself, so that I will not become obsolete, you need formal learning. First of all, get the right knowledge that you need, it will contribute to the skills of maybe the natural talent” (Respondent 14).*

The respondents also described the importance of production skills. These skills include outsourcing and standardisation skills respectively. Seven respondents described the relevance of production skills, which impact how much expansion can be done by the fashion entrepreneurs. As respondent 8 states, that the tailors are not able to replicate designs correctly. Thus, fashion entrepreneurs are required to train and standardise the production processes, which is plagued with inconsistency.

**Business skills:** The respondents identified three categories of business skills namely; administrative, marketing and financial management skills. These skills were perceived as specialist, but necessary skills based on the different roles fashion entrepreneurs are required to assume.

This is aptly described by respondent 1:

*“Although some business hire people to do the front-facing work for them, but in a small business like mine, you are the owner, the admin, the HR. As admin. So, you will need to acquire different skills for the different roles” (Respondent 1).*

This reinforces the wide-ranging responsibilities fashion entrepreneurs are required to assume due to the nature of the sector.

**5.1.2 Conceptual skills:** are described as the core skills that sustain the fashion business. These skills are further subdivided into idea generation and problem-solving skills. Though, several conceptual sub skills were captured by the Katz (1955; 1974) and Harrison *et al.*, (2018) but only two of these skills are identified by the respondents. Problem solving skill is described as essential in ensuring customer loyalty and satisfaction by 10 respondents. Respondent 7 explained that in the past, she would abscond from the clients and this led to the development of problem-solving skills.

Similarly, idea generation often described as creativity or innovation is recognised as a critical skill by all 14 respondents. The respondents reiterated the importance of this skill to the business as described:

*“From the start, when given a fabric, you must know be able to conceptualise what outfit to make with it” (Respondent 1).*

Furthermore, respondents describe idea generation in two forms; firstly, the creation of completely new designs and secondly the re-creation of existing designs.

**5.1.3 Interpersonal skills:** are described as the ability to comprehend and manage human behaviour effectively. This research identified three key interpersonal skills namely; empathy, people management and communication skills. Empathy and communication skills though independent are closely linked to people management skills as it supports the human resource being managed. The respondents reiterated the importance of this skill to the business as described below:

*“You should also engage with customers actively and prevent transactional communication only but build relationships and after-sales engagement which shows that you really care about them not just their money” (Respondent 1)*

**5.1.4 Entrepreneurial skills:** This category of skill was identified by Harrison *et al.* (2018). In this study, five respondents acknowledged the importance of opportunity exploitation which is described as brand recognition attained through fashion exhibitions and shows. For instance, respondent 8 affirms the underlisted:

*“I got their attention, I registered as an exporter on their platform and they took me to the magic trade show, in Las Vegas” (Respondent 8).*

**5.1.5 Expectation management skills:** Majority of the respondents described the importance of meeting and exceeding customer expectation. For instance, respondents emphasise the need to understand the exact requirements of the clients and in a wider context the business objective of the enterprise. Several competencies were described as necessary for managing the expectations of the customers during the entire customer cycle. These new set of skills are categorised under expectation management skills.

This category is further divided into two subcategories namely quality management and time management skills. Six respondents described the importance of quality management skills. These skills are used by fashion entrepreneurs to develop their products with the sole aim of meeting the customers' expectation. For instance, respondents suggest that fashion entrepreneurial leaders consistently develop their craft to ensure optimum quality and satisfaction of the clients. This ensures clients are involved in the conceptual process of the product as described:

*“You now will conceptualize, you now will tell us, this is what I want. We always recommend to our, customers the need to make sure that they have access to someone that can-do alterations” (Respondent 6).*

In the same vein, respondents suggest that the experience of the client is important to expectation management. The evidence from the interviews illustrate the importance of time management and its apparent link to the satisfaction of customer expectation.

Five respondents argue that time management skills are essential in maintaining the customer portfolio in the fashion business.

## **5.2 Entrepreneurial leadership attributes**

To gain additional insights, entrepreneurial leaders were asked to identify entrepreneurial leadership attributes in themselves as well as employees identified as likely successors. A total of 28 categories of attributes were identified from both the self-appraisals and the identified successors. Table 6 outlines the identified attributes and frequency of these attributes respectively:



*Insert Table 6*

The complexity of the entrepreneurial environment requires specific attributes to thrive, though some of these competencies are identified in extant literature. The entrepreneurial leader relies on these competencies to create, drive and sustain business ventures. In addressing, the research question, three major findings were uncovered. Firstly, the respondents acknowledged there were seven attributes from the category of 28 attributes, which are fundamental to business success. These attributes are hard work, long term view, passion, length of service, creativity, innovation and vision. In addition, the entrepreneurial leaders affirm that their identified successors within their business must possess four of these attributes namely; hard work, long term view, passion and length of service. The fashion entrepreneurs were found to rely on these attributes in the selection of likely successors. These key attributes depict the successor's dedication, which has earned the trust of the fashion entrepreneur. The passion for fashion is a consistent theme with 12 respondents admitting that this attribute propelled them to this business sector. The respondents also described hard work as an expression of commitment. Interestingly, certain attributes are described as skills as respondents explained that these attributes could be learned from training schools and constant practice. The attributes in this category include creativity and innovation. Respondents explained that, though they possessed creative instincts, however creative techniques were learnt formally, in order to thrive in the business environment. All 14 respondents confirmed the creative attribute is critical for business continuity. Respondent 14 states that this attribute is required for longevity in business:

*“To run any business, you have to be very creative especially, in this our sewing business, you have to keep up with trends, if you want stay in the business” (Respondent 14).*

Six respondents suggested that creativity is a skill, amongst other skills due to its relevance to the business. Creativity is described as improvising and reinventing existing designs. While innovation is referred as the creation of completely new trends and designs. Respondent 11 describes these two concepts differently and states that innovation refers to designs that have never been done. Similarly, some respondents described innovation as a skill that should be developed to ensure relevance in the sector. The respondents emphasise the importance of creativity and innovation, thus, to be truly successful, respondents suggested that these attributes be developed. Interestingly, both creativity and vision were recognised by 14 respondents respectively, however vision was ranked higher because of its influence on all the other attributes and skills. Respondents affirmed that vision drives the entrepreneurial process. Respondent 5 states that vision drives creativity and motivation:

*“Having a vision, having a goal, drives your creativity because, if you know where you are going then you have to, find your way around it” (Respondent 5).*

The respondents emphasise that the vision must be clear and easy to understand by the team as it affects the communication and desirability of the brand.

## **6 Discussion**

### **6.1 Entrepreneurial leadership skills**

The research identified four broad skills which builds on the entrepreneurial leadership skill-based framework developed by Harrison *et al.* (2018). The study however identifies a fifth skill area named expectation management skills. These five categories of skills are discussed below.

*Technical / Business Skills:* The respondents described technical and business skills as essential for business operations. The respondents described technical and business skills as separate entities which support existing literature on the separation of these two categories of skills (Harrison *et al.*, 2018) though contradicting Katz's (1955, 1974) initial framework that described these two ideas as a single construct. The fashion designing skills are usually acquired initially through informal training and apprenticeship, but harnessed through formal trainings (Yukl, 2010). The respondents reiterate the importance of technical skills as the quality of the final product determines the brand perception and business growth. This supports extant literature on the importance of technical competency (Lord and Hall, 2005).

*Business skills:* Several respondents highlighted that business skills, enabled them function in several roles within their businesses, which supports wider literature, that business skills are essential (Harrison *et al.*, 2018). 11 respondents highlighted the importance of financial skills. In the ranking of the three skills, financial management ranked highly and permeated through all the interviews conducted. In the same vein, seven respondents argue that administration is also a necessary skill for the entrepreneurial leader which supports wider literature (Swiercz and Lydon, 2002; Harrison *et al.*, 2018).

This skill is fundamental to entrepreneurial leaders, especially SME fashion entrepreneurs who are plagued with the responsibility of managing all the aspects of their business as evidenced from the interviews. The findings support suggestions that exceeding customer expectation is critical for business continuity, which is only achievable through repeat customers (Swiercz and Lydon, 2002; Harrison *et al.*, 2018).

*Conceptual skills:* Conceptual skills were identified in two sub-skill sets namely; problem-solving and idea generation. A majority of the respondents (10) suggested that problem solving is an essential skill in the service industry and crucial to business success. This skill is necessary

for resolving conflicts with the customers amicably. The respondents described idea generation skill using different terms such as “improvise on existing ideas”, “creativity skills” and “innovation skills” etc. This aligns with entrepreneurial leadership literature (Carpenter, 2012; Agbim *et al.*, 2013; Harrison *et al.*, 2018) which emphasise the need for creativity expressed in several forms; development of new ideas, recreation of existing ones. The respondents also described the benefit of developing this skill to enable entrepreneurial leaders react appropriately to business demands. This supports Yukl (2010) assertion that, conceptual skills provide quick understanding and enable quick adaptation to business complexities.

*Interpersonal skills:* The respondents agreed that this is a core skill for business success, especially in the service industry. Empathy is an essential interpersonal skill as reflected in the responses of seven respondents. This skill is used to decode emotional nuances of both the customers and employees thus enabling fashion entrepreneurial leaders act appropriately. The respondents also described the importance of showing kindness to their employees and socialising with them to boost performance. Similarly, showing compassion to their customers, and acknowledging the emotional reactions associated with dissatisfaction of the clients.

This supports wider leadership literature that entrepreneurs should understand and value the emotional expectations of others (Lord and Hall, 2005; Yukl, 2010; Hejazi *et al.*, 2012; Harrison *et al.*, 2018).

*Entrepreneurial skills:* Harrison *et al.* (2018) identifies a skill set named entrepreneurial skills. The respondents suggest that opportunities were exploited by engaging in activities that positively promoted their brands, increased brand recognition and acceptance. This supports Surie and Ashley (2008) suggestion on the active exploitation of opportunities by entrepreneurial leaders, within the business environment. Similarly, Currie *et al.* (2008) lends

support to the assertion above on exploitation of opportunities by entrepreneurial leaders, which is evidenced from the findings.

*Expectation management skills:* The fashion industry involves significant creativity and innovation to thrive, whilst satisfying the criteria of both aesthetic design and utility to consumers. The peculiarity of this industry demonstrates the uniqueness of expectation management skill for survival and business longevity. Majority of the respondents described the importance of meeting and exceeding customer expectation. This highlighted, the need to understand the exact requirements of the clients and in a wider context business objective. More importantly, several competencies were described as necessary for managing the expectations of the customers during the entire sales and delivery customer cycle. These new set of skills are categorised under expectation management skills. In addition, Lippitt (1987) identifies guidelines including coping with change, a major component that drives expectation management.

## **6.2 Entrepreneurial leadership attributes**

In addressing, the research question, three major findings were uncovered, firstly the respondents identified seven critical attributes namely: hard work, long term view, passion, length of service, creativity, innovation and vision. These attributes have also been identified by scholars as essential attributes as evidenced in various studies (Ballein, 1998, Bagheri and Pihie, 2011; Carpenter, 2012). Secondly, respondents acknowledged the importance of creativity and innovation in the sector. This is particularly interesting as its relevance transcends a variety of contexts. A majority of the respondents suggests that these constructs are skills as opposed to attributes. Some studies have also separated creativity from innovation. For instance, Bagheri and Pihie (2009) identify three core entrepreneurial leadership attributes

namely; creativity, risk taking and innovativeness. Kuratko and Hornsby (1999) emphasise the importance of consciously developing innovation, which suggests a transitioning from attribute to skills. In the same vein, Fernald *et al.*'s (2005) model recognises creativity as a common characteristic of entrepreneurial leaders amongst other attributes, which include being visionary. Another major finding is the identification of vision as the most important attribute an entrepreneurial leader should possess. Vision is recognised as highly ranked over other attributes (Ballein, 1998; Harrison *et al.*, 2016a). The evidence from the research supports this ranking as respondents affirm that vision drives other aspects of the business. Carpenter (2012) identifies vision and describes entrepreneurial leaders as carriers of vision. This research also supports Choi (2009) affirmation that clarity of vision leads to global relevance and competitive advantage. Similarly, Freeman and Siegfried, (2015) affirm that vision drives success.

### **6.3 Entrepreneurial leadership model**

The evidence from the literature review proposes the concept of entrepreneurial leadership is at the initial phase of conceptual and theoretical development. This supports Bagheri and Pihie's (2011) assertion that, there is limited knowledge on its theoretical and conceptual foundations. Entrepreneurial leadership is an emerging concept, and most studies provide knowledge on the construct, only a few studies provide empirical data on the existence of this concept (Gupta, *et al.*, 2004; Harrison *et al.*, 2018). Hence, this suggests that the concept is at the evaluation/argumentation stage. In the field of entrepreneurial leadership, Harrison *et al.* (2018) developed an empirical skill-based model, which describes the interaction between skills and contextual variables in a developing economy context.

This study further legitimises this construct with creation of an empirical model on entrepreneurial leadership. The study builds on Harrison *et al.* (2018) model, however it also

recognises the interaction between attributes and skills as well as identifies a new skill set. This is illustrated in Figure 3 accordingly. The model serves as a foundation for understanding the transition process of entrepreneurial leadership attributes which is missing in the model proposed by Harrison and colleagues.

*Insert Figure 3*

The entrepreneurial leadership model describes the entrepreneurial leadership capabilities exploited by entrepreneurial leaders in the attainment of the organisational objective. The model describes a three-stage process in the exploitation of specific capabilities by the entrepreneurial leader. In the first phase, there are three principal influencing factors that determine the choice of specific capabilities by the entrepreneurial leaders. The three determinants are namely; the specific business requirements, context of operation and challenges or opportunities that influence how entrepreneurial leaders act in the entrepreneurial environment. Thus, this will vary from industry to industry. The peculiarity of the context of study, has attendant opportunities and challenges such as the low barrier to entry which requires creativity and innovation from the entrepreneurial leader to ensure relevance. Similarly, the nature of the business also requires the entrepreneurial leader to perform multi-functional roles within the organisation due to the unreliability of the human resource. The next stage describes how the entrepreneurial leaders exploit specific attributes and skills required to succeed in the role. It is important to note, in some instances specific attributes transition from its status as attributes to skills as a result of its consistent use. These entrepreneurial leadership capabilities impact the business outcomes of the organisation. The third stage is the transition phase, which is described in further detail below.

*Transition process:* The above figure demonstrates a gradual progression of attributes to skills as evidenced in the case of creativity and innovation. This is consistent with Northouse's (2010) definition of skills as abilities that can be developed. This interaction has been a subject of academic debate. As there have been several attempts by scholars to categorise these entrepreneurial leadership capabilities. Scholars such as Ballein (1998) have classified these characteristics into two distinct categories namely entrepreneurial leadership attributes and skills, others have ascribed general terms to the description such as Lippitt (1987) who describes attributes and skills as characteristics while Fernald *et al.*'s (2005) describes attributes as characteristics. There is also evidence from literature that scholars have described some perceived attributes as skills such as Harrison *et al.* (2018) description of opportunity recognition and exploitation as entrepreneurial leadership skills.

Though, this perception of transition is apparent on attributes of creativity and innovation, in contrast to the above suggestions, scholars have described creativity and innovation as attributes (Bagheri and Pihie, 2009; Agbim *et al.* 2013). In a similar vein, three respondents described patience as one of the skills transitioning, however this impression was not a salient theme in the research thus its exclusion from the discussion. The findings, however, submit that this transition process is stimulated by the specific business requirements, context of operation and the challenges or opportunities within the particular context.

## **7. Implication to theory, practice and policy**

The research makes key contributions to theory, practice and policy respectively. This is especially vital for studies involved in re-examining the African development process. The key contribution to knowledge is the development of the entrepreneurial leadership model, which describes five broad skill categories namely technical, conceptual, interpersonal, entrepreneurial and expectation



management skills. The study also highlights the interaction between attributes and skills in an entrepreneurial setting and describes how attributes transition to skills as a result of the deliberate actions undertaken by the entrepreneurial leaders. The practical implications of the study have demonstrated the need for entrepreneurial leaders to undergo formal training to harness their skills in a developing economy. This is relevant as it improves the quality of the work and provides visibility for the business. Consequently, this paper would serve as a valuable reference tool to the stakeholders in the industry. For instance, SMEDAN an institution tasked with the responsibility of developing policy ideas for small and medium enterprise expansion. In addition, endorsing development programmes, to accelerate the growth of SMEs (SMEDAN, 2005). The attributes and skills identified in the study can be used as a reference guide for the development of training programmes for the skill deficits within the sector which are essential for success.

Similarly, it recognises the challenges encountered by the entrepreneurial leaders in this sector, especially in relation to financing, which would drive policy interventions by relevant government institutions. The conclusion of the findings and other studies would be valuable in providing useful insights for the developing economy context which can serve as empirical and theoretical foundations for formulation of future research questions.

## **8. Limitations of research**

This study has limitations, which also serve as implications for future research. First, it is an empirical study to identify the entrepreneurial leadership skills and attributes necessary to attain growth in Nigeria SMEs, thus the findings may not reflect the business realities in other countries. Second, entrepreneurial leadership researchers seem to have focused overwhelmingly on identifying attributes of entrepreneurial leaders and the consequence of this

is an endless list of attributes and an ongoing debate on the classification of these characteristics into attributes and skills respectively.

The entrepreneurial model developed in the study attempts to describe the interlinked relationship between entrepreneurial leadership attributes and skills. This model should be subjected to further tests to observe the transition process of attributes to skills from various perspectives. Furthermore, the sample size though adequate for the research is not a description of the entire SMEs. In addition, data from larger samples should be collected, using a broader geographical base in order to draw inferences and validate the findings of this study. Despite these limitations, the study provides an interesting perspective on the interaction between entrepreneurial leadership attributes and skills.

## **9. Conclusion**

Entrepreneurial leadership developed to reflect the leadership challenges and opportunities within entrepreneurial settings. This research was focused on answering two main questions. The first research question sought to identify the entrepreneurial leadership skills that sustain business success. While the second research question sought to identify unique attributes of effective entrepreneurial leaders. The respondents identified five categories of skills namely; technical, conceptual, interpersonal, entrepreneurial and expectation management skills. These skills are exploited by the entrepreneurial leaders to ensure business viability. In addressing the second question, the respondents identified 28 attributes from both the self-appraisals and identified successors. Furthermore, this paper recognised seven essential attributes required to succeed in the industry. These attributes are hard work, long term view, passion, length of service, creativity, innovation and vision. This paper further highlights vision as the most important attribute both for the entrepreneurs and the chosen successors. This assertion is a

direct result of the research findings where respondents described the overall influence of envisioning by the entrepreneurial leader as a major determinant of business success, viability and sustainability.

The empirical findings within this paper strongly reinforce the fluid nature of attributes and skills within the entrepreneurial environment. This is further reinforced by how the entrepreneurial leaders align and exploit specific attributes in this context. Specifically, the attributes of creativity and innovation, which are described as transitioning to skills in the context of study. This paper argues that entrepreneurial leadership attributes and skills facilitate the interaction between entrepreneurial leaders and their business environments, which impact the business outcomes of these organisations.

Based on the forgoing an entrepreneurial leadership model was developed to capture the interactions of entrepreneurial leadership attributes and skills evidenced in the research. The exploitation of these specific attributes and skills are shaped by the specific business requirement, business context and the challenges or opportunities associated with the business venture. The model provides the scope to capture the entrepreneurial discretion of the entrepreneurial leaders upon strategic analysis of the entrepreneurial context. This is necessary as previous models did not provide for such a scope. In addition, it is expected that this suggested model will have important consequences for entrepreneurial leadership theories.

In summary, this paper contributes to the entrepreneurial leadership literature by exploring the relationship between entrepreneurial leadership attributes and skills and describing the transition of these capabilities, which has not been defined by wider literature. The framework

would be an essential tool in the exploration of other entrepreneurial contexts, and it will stimulate proactive engagement with other contexts of study.

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**Table 1 Entrepreneurial Leadership Characteristics**

<i>Author</i>	<i>Characteristics</i>
Bagheri and Pihie (2010)	Creativity, risk taking and innovation
Carpenter (2012)	Opportunity seekers, strategists and vision driven
Choi (2009)	Clarity of vision as a core attribute
Gupta et al. (2004)	Identified 19 attributes categorised into 5 core functions which are; creating a problem scope, identifying risks, creating an action plan, building commitments and stipulating the time constraints.
Hansson and Monsted (2008)	Charisma, networking, exploiting external influences and contacts for research dissemination, negotiation and self-confidence
Harrison <i>et al.</i> (2016a)	Vision, risk taking, opportunity recognition and exploitation
Karanian (2007)	Connection, vivid imagination, family and cultural background, ability to address confrontations and a unique gift of character
Lippitt (1987)	divergent thinking and learning from experience
Nicholson (1998)	Tough minded, assertive, focused

**Table 2. Demographic characteristics**

<b>Respondent</b>	<b>Years in business</b>	<b>Business location</b>	<b>Employees</b>	<b>Employee type</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Educational level</b>
Respondent 1	5	Abuja	3	3 Permanent and contract staff	35	F	First degree
Respondent 2	6	Abuja	2	Permanent	35	M	Informal
Respondent 3	5	Abuja and Kogi	7	Permanent	25	M	Informal
Respondent 4	2	Abuja	4	Permanent	32	F	MBA
Respondent 5	6	Kwara	7	Permanent	30	F	First degree
Respondent 6	12	Abuja / USA	2	2 Permanent and contract staff	31	F	MBA
Respondent 7	10	Lagos	15	Permanent	35	F	First degree
Respondent 8	7	Abuja	7	2 Permanent and 5 contract staff	30	F	First degree
Respondent 9	6	Abuja	Based on business needs	Contract	40	F	First degree
Respondent 10	4	Abuja	4	4 Permanent and contract staff	31	F	First degree
Respondent 11	1 year 6 months	Abuja	Based on business needs	All contract	30	F	First degree
Respondent 12	1	Abuja	4	4 Permanent and contract staff	30	F	First degree
Respondent 13	8	Lagos	10	Permanent	40	F	First degree
Respondent 14	32	Lagos and Onitsha	22	Permanent	62	F	Informal

Note: *All respondents were given pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality and anonymity*

**Table 3. Sample of descriptive coding**

<i>Quotation from Respondent 14</i>	<i>Descriptive code</i>
"I have been featured in several high-end fashion shows"	Attend social events
"If you can't keep up with those new, new styles"	Keeping up with trends
"My mother taught us how to tack and mend clothes which led to the interest in sewing".	Apprenticeship training

**Table 4. Sample of interpretive coding**

<i>Quotations from Respondent 14</i>	<i>Descriptive code</i>	<i>Interpretive code</i>
"I have been featured in several high-end fashion shows"	Attend social events	Branding opportunity
"If you can't keep up with those new, new styles"	Keeping up with trends	Idea generation
"My mother taught us how to tack and mend clothes which led to the interest in sewing".	Apprenticeship training	Informal training

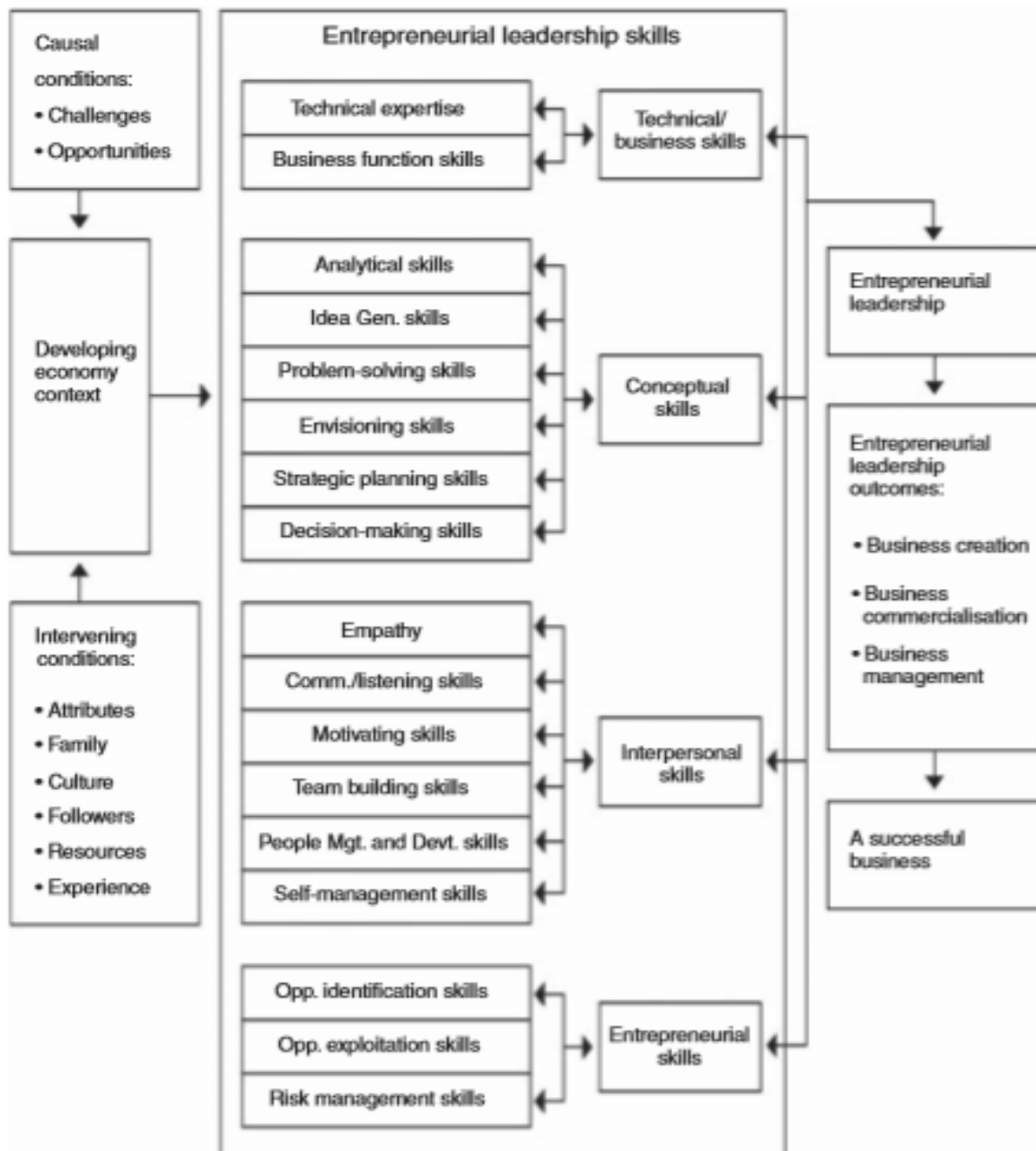
**Table 5. Frequency table of entrepreneurial leadership skills**

<b>Entrepreneurial leadership skills</b>	<b>Respondents</b>
<b>Technical/Business skills</b>	
<b>Technical skills</b>	
Fashion designing skills	14
Production skills	7
<b>Business skills</b>	
Administrative skills	7
Marketing skills	6
Financial management	11
<b>Conceptual skills</b>	
Idea generation skills	14
Problem solving skills	10
<b>Interpersonal skills</b>	
Empathy	7
People management skill	13
Communication /Listening skills	8
<b>Entrepreneurial skills</b>	
Opportunity exploitation	5
<b>Expectation management skills</b>	
Quality management skills	6
Time management skills	5

**Table 6. Frequency table of entrepreneurial leadership attributes**

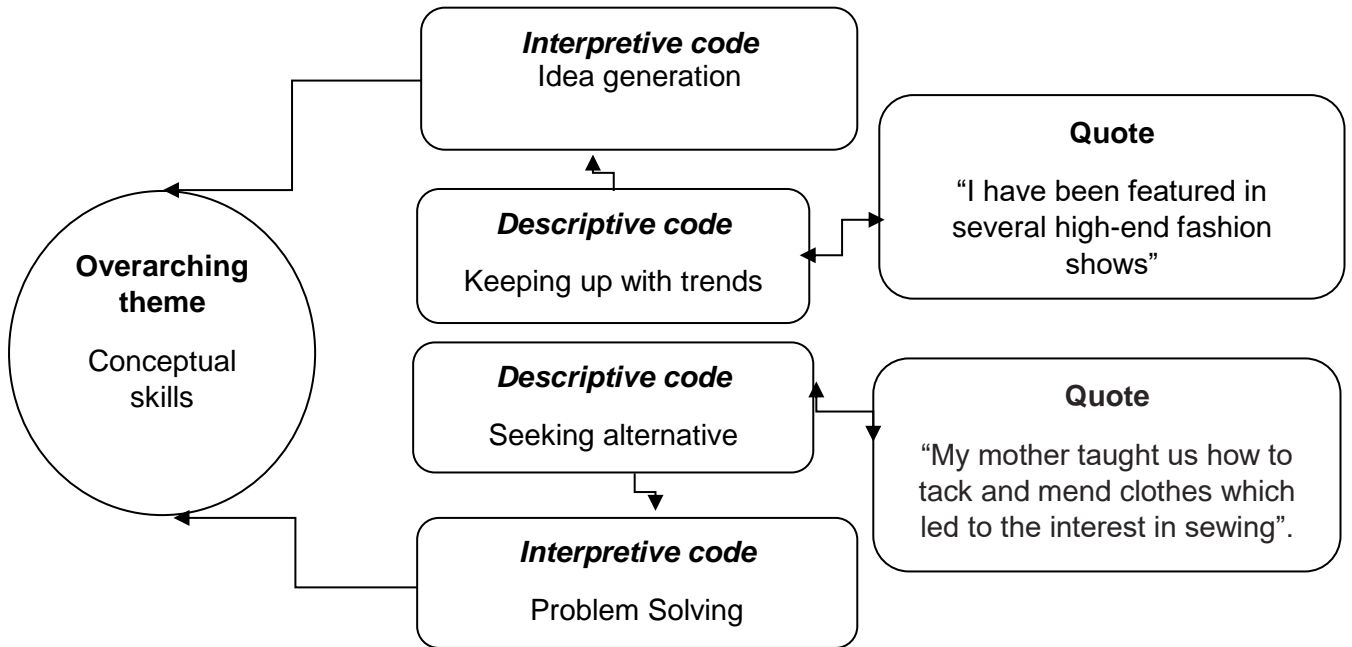
<b>Attribute</b>	<b>Other Descriptions</b>	<b>Respondents</b>
Authentic	Be true to yourself, your personal brand	5
Committed	Always goes the extra mile	6
Confident	Bold, courageous, don't doubt yourself	5
Consistent	Block the crowd, the noise and stick to your craft	8
Creative	Create something new, bring out designs, come up with something new, be original in your delivery, Ingenious	14
Determined	Never give up, can do attitude, strong willed	5
Enterprising	Diversity	2
Ethics	Ethical, work ethics	4
Excellent	Success in whatever I do, stand out	3
Fairness	See as equals	4
Fashion sense	Design good master pieces	6
Hard working	Eager to work	10
Humble	Willing to learn and relearn	7
Innovative	Forward thinking, new designs, introduce new trends	12
Intelligent	Quick study, technical knowledge	4
Integrity	Promise and deliver	6
Length of service	Loyalty	11
Optimistic	Expect things to work out	2
Passionate	Love the job, love for the craft	12
Patience	Calm	6
Perseverance	Persistence	7
Persuasion	Convince	7
Proactive	Naturally think, not wait for instructions	7
Reliable	Not dependable	7
Resilient	Stayed this long	8
Team player	Able to coordinate	8
Trustworthy	Based on length of service	7
Vision	Long term view	14

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework



Source: Harrison et al. (2018)

Figure 2 Sample of overarching theme



**Source:** All quotations are from respondent 14



**Figure 3** Entrepreneurial leadership model

