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Character-Building through Self-Training

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Abstract:

Within business management, there is a vast amount of literature on desirable leadership and managerial qualities. Yet, there is not a commensurate amount of work within the discipline on how to go about cultivating those qualities even though they are critically important. So then, how can one develop them? It is easy to say, “be calm” and “be compassionate,” but training oneself to acquire and strengthen qualities of calmness and compassion is a whole different matter especially for someone who is lacking in those areas.

Of course, there are seminars, programs, and courses offered by various institutions for formal leadership and managerial training; however, in this paper, I argue that self-training is of greater importance for an aspiring leader or manager to commit to. Certainly, the existing literature on leadership and managerial self-training is even more sparse. So, I aim to help bridge the gap by answering the question of how to train oneself and build one’s character toward better leadership and management. In this paper, I gather, organize, and analyze material from different sources including works on self-help and self-transformation, and disciplines including psychology and philosophy to integrate into a set of methods and approaches that is useful in the context of business management.

I find that self-awareness, self-introspection, good habits, self-discipline, and even breathing and meditation are important ingredients for cultivating desirable qualities. Even exercise can have a direct effect on one’s positivity. The human character does not change easily. Serious leaders or managers who truly want to make a positive impact in their positions of authority ought to embark on a path of self-training and self-development to strengthen their virtues and lessen their shortcomings. Otherwise, uttering words such as integrity, strength of character, resilience, and so on would only be to pay lip service. The world would be a better place to be if there were better leaders and managers.

Economic Pathways To Escaping Poverty In Nigeria: An Empirical Review

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Abstract

Poverty, as a global catastrophe, affects more than 3 billion people. It denies people access to basic human necessities, making it impossible for poor people to lead a normal life. This study on the economic pathways to escaping poverty in Nigeria aims to understand the economic pathways of escaping poverty in Nigeria at the macroeconomic level. The study covered the years 1990 to 2023, using timeseries data from poverty rate (PVR), human capital development index (HDI), small and medium enterprises (SME), grants to business/SMEs (GRB), and agricultural mechanization (AGM) as the key economic variables. Using the ARDL regression analysis, the study found that there is a negative but significant relationship between PVR and HDI, SME, and AGM while there is positive and significant relationship between PVR and GRB. The study concludes that grants to businesses/SMEs do not achieve the expected goal regarding poverty reduction. The study recommends, amongst others, that policies to improve HDI, SME, and agricultural mechanization must be vigorously pursued as they can be used to fight poverty at the macroeconomic level in Nigeria.

Keywords: *poverty rate, human development index, agricultural mechanization, grants, macroeconomy*

Digital Marketing in the UAE Franchising Sector: Managerial Implications for Consumer Behavior and Business Performance

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Abstract:

The influence of digital marketing—especially social media, email marketing, and sponsored advertising—on changing customer behaviour is examined in this paper. From the theoretical frameworks of the Consumer Decision-Making Process Model, Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) Theory, Relationship Marketing Theory, and Franchise Business Model Theory, the study conceptualizes digital marketing as an independent variable that impacts consumer awareness, decision-making, brand engagement, and loyalty, which mediate franchise business success. Data were gathered using a structured survey sent to 200 customers who interact regularly with franchise businesses online. The study specifically looks at: (1) the degree to which different kinds of franchise businesses adopt digital marketing technologies; (2) the relative impact of different digital marketing strategies on consumer purchase decisions; and (3) the relevance and efficacy of digital marketing participation in directly changing consumer behaviour outcomes.

Using both correlation and regression analysis, a quantitative research methodology is applied to empirically evaluate the null hypothesis—that there is no association between customer purchase intentions and digital marketing initiatives. The predicted results should include empirical data showing how well smart digital marketing campaigns improve consumer involvement, purchase behaviour, brand loyalty, and satisfaction. Furthermore, the findings try to show how well-integrated digital strategies support long-term corporate sustainability, competitive positioning, and better franchise sales performance.

Although the study provides evidence-based advice for franchisors and franchisees trying to maximize digital marketing strategies, theoretically, the study adds insights from digital franchising environments, thereby enriching the consumer behaviour literature. The study aims to offer practical solutions to promote sustainable business expansion in a technologically advanced and ever more competitive environment. Additionally, it emphasizes the need for continuous innovation in digital marketing approaches to keep pace with evolving consumer expectations, ensuring franchises remain relevant, resilient, and profitable in the digital age.

Keywords: *Digital Marketing, Consumer Behavior, Franchising, Purchase Intent, Social Media Marketing, Technology Acceptance Model*

Finance-Income Inequality Nexus In Sub-Saharan African Countries: Does The Financial Kuznets Curve Exist?

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Abstract

In this study, we examine the link between financial development and income inequality in sub-Saharan African (SSA) countries within the context of the classical Kuznets curve. According to the Kuznets curve hypothesis, an inverted U-shaped relationship exists between economic growth and income inequality. In other words, as a country develops, income inequality increases until a certain point, beyond which further increases in economic growth result in a fall in income inequality as the country implements redistributive measures, which combine taxes and welfare expenditure (Kuznets, 1955). In the Kuznets hypothesis, the link between economic growth and income inequality is expected to be positive during the early stages of development and negative at later stages.

In this study, we use the principles of the Kuznets Curve to examine the relationship between financial development and income inequality, using data from the sub-Saharan African region, which is home to some of the countries with the highest levels of income inequality in the world. Overall, the study aims to test the validity of the Financial Kuznets Curve (FKC) hypothesis in SSA countries within the context of the inverted U-shaped Kuznets Curve. For this purpose, we employ a quadratic specification in a stepwise fashion to examine this linkage. Unlike most of the previous studies, we use various proxies of financial development, namely FDI - Financial development index, FII - Financial institutions index, and FMI - Financial markets index. We also use two proxies for income inequality: Gini post-tax and Gini post-transfer. In addition, we employ a wide range of modern panel data techniques to examine this relationship. Some of the key panel data techniques used include: i) four cross-sectional dependence tests - Breusch-Pagan LM, Pesaran scaled LM, bias-corrected scaled LM, and Pesaran CD; ii) the second-generation unit root test based on Pesaran's CIPS approach; iii) second-generation cointegration tests proposed by Westerlund (2007); iv) Driscoll-Kraay standard errors for robust inference; and v) the recently developed Dynamic Common Correlated Effects (DCCE) approach by Chudik and Pesaran (2015). Departing from the majority of the previous studies, we decompose SSA countries into low- and middle-income countries, thereby estimating three specifications: i) low-income SSA countries; ii) middle-income SSA countries; and iii) all SSA countries. Our preliminary findings show that the relationship between financial development and income inequality within the inverted U-shaped context depends mainly on the estimation techniques used and the country's level of income.

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Olufemi Muibi Omisakin

Abstract

This study examined the motivational factors for African immigrants in New Zealand becoming entrepreneurs and factors that ensured their business success. Data was collected from 117 participants through survey questions designed and prepared through Qualtrics and its link sent to invited participants in the Auckland region. Auckland region was considered for data collection being the most populated and the business nerve centre of New Zealand. The research was conducted on a descriptive and quantitative approach. Data collected was analysed using mean, standard deviation, and percentage distribution. Consistency and the reliability of the 21 items of the study were tested through Cronbach Alpha. From the analysis the study found among other factors: passion for business entrepreneurship, flexibility, financial independence, generic independence, autonomy, being one's own boss are the most motivational factors for African immigrants in New Zealand to opt for business ownership. The study also found that six highest rated reasons for African immigrants entrepreneurial business success in New Zealand are "Always ready to make sacrifice to succeed" (Mean of 4.58), "always give the best in everything to be done" (mean of 4.56), "what counts is action" (mean of 4.54), "everything is possible if entrepreneur believe he/she can do it" (mean of 4.51), "challenge self when take on new project" (mean of 4.5), "learn lesson from past failure" (mean of 4.5). This study calculated the percentage distribution of participants reaction to the 5-Likert scale questions put to them and found combined percentages of Somewhat Agree and Totally Agree of these twelve items: twelve items: challenge myself when take on a new project; curious and continually search for discovery; where others see problems, see possibilities; when faced with difficulties, look for alternative solutions; what counts is action; always imagine how to make things work; always try to learn lessons from failures; everything is possible if you believe you can do it; after a failure, pick myself up and start over; always be ready to make sacrifices to succeed; always give the best of yourself in everything you do having between 90% to 95%. These are interpreted as the most important factors helping African immigrant business owners in New Zealand to attain entrepreneurial/business success.

This research opine that the results found shed light on why African migrants' go into business and success factor for their entrepreneurial/business success in New Zealand.

Keywords: *Push-pull, Motivational-factors, Entrepreneur, Immigrants, Migrant-paradigms, African entrepreneur.*

AfCFTA: Empowerment Through Knowledge – Advancing Women and Youth in Trade

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Abstract: The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) is a transformative initiative designed to create a single African market, facilitating trade, investment, and economic integration. However, women and youth face considerable challenges in accessing and benefiting from these opportunities due to financial barriers, limited market intelligence, and socio-cultural constraints. This presentation explores strategies for empowering women and youth through targeted knowledge dissemination, capacity-building programs, and enhanced access to finance and market intelligence.

Key Discussion Areas:

- Understanding the AfCFTA framework and its impact on economic development
- Addressing challenges faced by women and youth in cross-border trade
- Enhancing financial literacy and developing tailored financing solutions
- Leveraging technology to bridge trade and market access gaps
- Policy recommendations to foster inclusive trade participation
- The role of diaspora engagement in supporting AfCFTA objectives

Objective: This presentation aims to contribute to the global academic discourse on trade, development, and financial empowerment by offering evidence-based strategies to enhance inclusive economic participation. By engaging academics, policymakers, and industry professionals, the session will provide actionable insights to improve trade accessibility and promote sustainable economic growth across Africa.

Relevance to WEI: The WEI conference provides an esteemed platform for the dissemination of impactful research in economics, finance, and management. This presentation aligns with the conference's mission by addressing pressing socio-economic issues, fostering interdisciplinary dialogue, and encouraging knowledge-sharing to benefit scholars, policymakers, and business practitioners worldwide.

Expected Outcomes:

- Increased awareness and understanding of AfCFTA's implications for women and youth entrepreneurs
- Practical frameworks for implementing inclusive trade policies
- Opportunities for international collaboration on research and policy development
- Contribution to WEI's mission of advancing academic excellence in business and economics

"Integrating Agile Project Management Practices into Entrepreneurial Ventures in the UAE: A Strategic Framework for Sustainable Startup Growth"

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Abstract

Fueled by innovation, government initiatives, and a strategic emphasis on economic diversification, the UAE's entrepreneurial ecosystem has experienced significant growth. However, the dynamism and competitiveness of the market create unique hurdles for startups, including limited resources, market instability, and the constant need to adapt. Agile Project Management (APM) practices, celebrated for their adaptability, customer focus, and iterative approach, have proven successful in overcoming these challenges across various industries worldwide. This paper investigates the integration of Agile methodologies into entrepreneurial ventures within the UAE, focusing on developing a strategic framework that fosters sustainable startup growth.

By analyzing case studies of UAE-based startups and incorporating global best practices, this paper demonstrates how APM enables startups to rapidly respond to market shifts, optimize decision-making, and efficiently allocate resources (Schwaber & Sutherland, 2017; Highsmith, 2009). The core of this paper lies in the creation of a strategic framework that tailors APM principles to the specific needs and challenges of entrepreneurial ventures in the UAE. This framework advocates for a hybrid approach, blending Agile methodologies like Scrum and Kanban with traditional project management techniques to enhance adaptability and scalability (VersionOne, 2020). This is especially relevant in the diverse UAE startup ecosystem, encompassing sectors from technology to healthcare and green energy.

Furthermore, this paper addresses the specific cultural and organizational factors that impact the adoption of Agile practices in the UAE. Given the diverse workforce, comprising professionals from various cultural backgrounds and work ethics, implementing Agile practices requires a nuanced understanding of these dynamics to effectively adapt methodologies (Dybå & Dingsøy, 2008). The research also examines the roles of leadership and team structures in fostering an Agile mindset within startups, highlighting the importance of collaboration, transparency, and consistent feedback loops.

In addition, the paper emphasizes the strategic role of Agile in cultivating a culture of innovation and resilience, essential for startups striving to remain competitive in a rapidly changing market. The UAE's Vision 2030 underscores innovation, economic diversification, and the development of a knowledge-based economy, making the integration of Agile methodologies vital for startups to contribute to these national objectives (Alam, 2019). By providing insights into the practical application of Agile principles, this paper offers valuable guidance for entrepreneurs, project managers, and policymakers seeking to implement Agile practices within the UAE's startup environment.

Keywords: *Agile Project Management (APM), Entrepreneurship, Startup Growth, UAE, Strategic Framework, Innovation, Sustainable Development, Scrum Methodology, Kanban, Cultural Dynamics, Project Management Practices, UAE Vision 2030, Entrepreneurial Ecosystem, Leadership in Startups, Knowledge-Based Economy, Agile Adoption in UAE, Business Transformation.*

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