

Leadership Development and Entrepreneurial Perception of Small Scale Enterprises in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria

Alexander Godwin Ekpa, Dr. Christabel Brownson Divine and Prof. Don Baridam
Department of Business Administration, Faculty of Management Sciences,
Akwa Ibom State University, Obio Akpa.
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Abstract

Purpose: This study examined the effect of leadership on entrepreneurial perception in small scale enterprises in Akwa Ibom State. **Methodology:** The study adopted a descriptive survey research design and primary data were collected through Self-administered questionnaire. Sample size of three hundred and thirty one (331) respondents was drawn from the total population of 1918 small scale enterprises registered with Corporate Affairs Commission. Identified per local government area (Ikot Ekpene, Uyo and Mbo). The data collected were coded and descriptive statistics, analysis of variance and statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) were used to analyze the data. **Findings:** The regression analysis revealed that intuition ($B = 0.397, p = 0.000 < 0.05$), vision ($B = 0.111, p = 0.003 < 0.05$) and communication skills ($B = 0.168, p = 0.000 < 0.05$) significantly and positively influenced entrepreneurial perception. However, integrity did not show a significant relationship ($B = -0.059, p = 0.130 > 0.05$). **Originality/Value:** These results concluded that intuition, vision, integrity and communication skill are significant for fostering an entrepreneurial perception in small scale enterprises. Based on these findings, the researcher recommended that small scale enterprises should invest in leadership development programs that focus on enhancing intuitive decision-making, visionary thinking, and communication skill. Leaders should be encouraged to develop and articulate clear visions for their organizations. Workshops and strategic planning sessions should be conducted to help leaders re-define their vision and align their teams with the organizational goals.

Key Words: Leadership, Entrepreneurial perception, intuition, vision, integrity and communication skill.

1. INTRODUCTION

In today's rapidly evolving business environment, quality leadership development and entrepreneurial perception are fundamental to the growth and sustainability of small-scale enterprises. These factors are key drivers of growth and sustenance of small-scale enterprises. These factors shape how business owners and managers make decisions, adapt to challenges, and seize opportunities to enhance their enterprises' productivity, profitability, and resilience (Joshua et al., 2025). Leaders who emphasize long-term sustainability rather than short-term profits are more likely to implement strategic plans that promote growth, even amid fluctuating economic conditions (Northouse, 2025).

Leadership perception, particularly within small scale enterprises refers to how entrepreneurs view their roles, responsibilities, and the strategies needed to manage businesses successfully. Effective leadership development is crucial in addressing the unique challenges faced by small scale enterprises, such as limited access to finance, competition, and market volatility.

Entrepreneurs who exhibit strong leadership qualities tend to have a clearer vision and are better equipped to make strategic decisions that can positively affect their enterprise's survival and growth (Udom & Ekpouko, 2024).

Having understood the significant role of leadership in driving small scale enterprises' growth, entrepreneurial perception also plays an integral role in determining how entrepreneurs view opportunities, assess risks, and manage their businesses. Entrepreneurs who perceive favourable business environments and potential for growth are more likely to engage in proactive strategies that lead to the expansion and sustainability of their enterprises (Joshua et al., 2025).

Entrepreneurial perception is shaped by a complex set of factors, including personal experience, education, socio-economic background, and environmental influences (Brownson, 2022). Entrepreneurs in Akwa Ibom State are often driven by a necessity-based approach due to the limited employment opportunities in the formal sector, pushing them to create their own economic ventures. As Thomas et al., (2022) noted, many small-scale entrepreneurs in the state exhibit a strong sense of resilience and adaptability, enabling them to thrive in a challenging economic climate. These entrepreneurs must not only identify viable business opportunities, but also cultivate leadership qualities that foster innovation, employee engagement, and sound decision-making (Ita & Ekanem, 2023).

However, the success and sustainability of small-scale enterprises in Akwa Ibom State largely depend on the leadership and entrepreneurial capabilities of their founders and managers. Despite the important role that small scale enterprises play in economic development, they continue to face several obstacles. Access to finance remains one of the primary constraints for small scale enterprises in Akwa Ibom State. While the government and financial institutions have initiated programs aimed at promoting and fostering entrepreneurial development, the practical impact of these initiatives has been limited due to bureaucratic bottlenecks, poor policy implementation, and insufficient financial literacy among entrepreneurs. Furthermore, the informal nature of many small-scale businesses makes it difficult for entrepreneurs to scale their operations or access formal funding channels. As a result, many entrepreneurs rely on personal savings and informal loans, which often prove inadequate for business expansion (Brownson, 2022).

Another major challenge is the lack of technical and managerial expertise, which hampers productivity and limits the competitiveness of small scale businesses. Many small scale business owners do not have formal training in business management, resulting in poor strategic planning and inefficient use of resources (Ita & Ekanem, 2023).

In light of the significant impact that leadership and entrepreneurial perception have on the growth of small scale enterprises, this study seeks to explore the dynamics of leadership perception and entrepreneurial development in Akwa Ibom State. Many small scale enterprises in Akwa Ibom have shown a strong commitment to community engagement, contributing to local development and creating wealth, which enhances customer loyalty and long-term business viability.

Objectives of the study

The main objective of this study was to examine the effect of leadership development on entrepreneurial perception in small scale enterprises in Akwa Ibom. The specific objectives were:

- i. To examine the effect of intuition on entrepreneurial perception in small scale enterprises in Akwa Ibom State.
- ii. Ascertain the effect of vision on entrepreneurial perception in small scale enterprises in Akwa Ibom State
- iii. Examine the effect of communication skill on entrepreneurial perception in small scale enterprises in Akwa Ibom State
- iv. Ascertain the effect of integrity on entrepreneurial perception in small scale enterprises in Akwa Ibom.

2. REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

2.1 Conceptual Framework

The diagram below depicts the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. The concept of leadership and its measures represent independent variable and the concept of entrepreneurial perception represents dependent variable.

Independent Variables

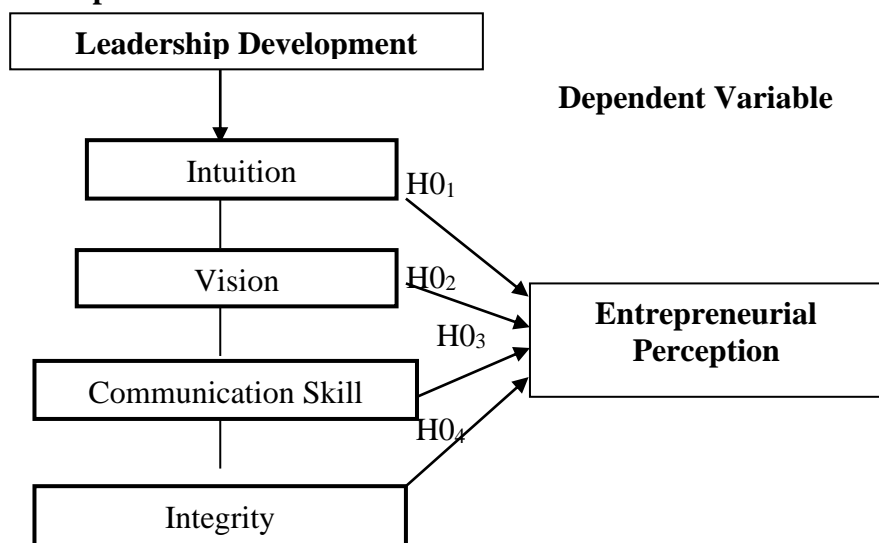


Figure (1) Conceptual Model of the study

2.2 Concept of Leadership

The concept of leadership has evolved in response to contemporary challenges, increasingly emphasizing adaptability, purpose, and the ability to cultivate trust and engagement. Leadership today is defined not just by authority but by the ability to foster a positive and productive organizational culture through integrity, clear communication, and resilience (Jayanagara, 2024). Leadership approaches also recognize the need for leaders to be agile and capable of leading through uncertainty, demonstrating both personal accountability and a focus on the collective success of their teams. This shift highlights the importance of authentic leadership, where leaders are transparent about their goals and vulnerabilities,

which in turn builds stronger trust with their teams (Varshney & Varshney, 2024).

As the workplace continues to adapt, leaders are encouraged to prioritize skills such as strategic thinking, inclusion, and the ability to drive both digital and human-centered growth. These elements underline the fact that leadership now requires a holistic approach to address complex organizational needs, blending traditional management skills with a strong ethical foundation and the ability to inspire and guide teams in a rapidly changing environment.

Measures of Leadership

i. Intuition

Intuition is a complex and multifaceted concept, often described as the ability to understand something instinctively, without the need for conscious reasoning. It involves making quick judgments or decisions based on subconscious information processing. While intuition has traditionally been viewed as a mysterious or even mystical faculty, modern psychology and neuroscience have provided more insight into how it works and its role in decision-making. (Manesh et al., 2021). Researchers have identified different types of intuition, which can vary based on the context in which they are used. For example, cognitive intuition involves unconscious pattern recognition and is commonly seen in experts who can make rapid decisions based on years of experience in their field. Emotional intuition refers to instinctual feelings or reactions to people or situations that are guided by unconscious emotional processes. Finally, spiritual or mystical intuition is often reported by individuals in religious or philosophical contexts, where they claim to have an instinctive connection to a deeper truth or meaning (Svenson, 2023).

ii. Vision

Vision is a fundamental quality in effective leadership, especially within entrepreneurial settings, as it empowers leaders to steer organizations toward ambitious, shared goals. A visionary leader can provide clear direction, motivation, and alignment across teams, which is essential for productivity and innovation. Leaders with a well-defined vision foster a unified purpose, enabling each team member to work towards common objectives, which significantly enhances organizational cohesion and focus (Addy et al., 2024)

Entrepreneurial leadership is particularly reliant on vision as it not only fuels motivation but also drives creativity, encouraging teams to innovate and challenge the status quo. This type of leadership inspires members to buy into the future goals of the company, fostering a culture of engagement and shared commitment. Leaders like Elon Musk have demonstrated how a compelling vision can unify teams, spark innovation, and ultimately lead to groundbreaking achievements (Preller, 2020)

iii. Communication skill

Communication skill is increasingly recognized as a cornerstone of effective leadership, particularly within entrepreneurial contexts where clarity and collaboration drive innovation and adaptability. Good communication enables leaders to articulate vision, align team objectives, and foster trust, which is crucial for managing relationships and achieving goals. Leaders who master communication skills can cultivate a supportive and productive work environment, leveraging open dialogues and transparency to boost morale and engagement (Kusbandono, 2024).

In entrepreneurial environments, where decision-making is swift and stakeholder engagement is high, clear communication becomes essential for conveying business strategies and

responding to challenges in real time. Studies emphasize that communication in these settings goes beyond verbal exchanges, incorporating non-verbal cues and active listening to foster mutual understanding and responsiveness in teams (Joshua et al., 2025).

iv. Integrity

Integrity is considered an essential quality for leadership effectiveness in today's professional environment, especially as organizations increasingly prioritize ethical standards and transparency. Leaders who consistently act with integrity create a culture of trust and respect that not only enhances team morale but also strengthens organizational resilience and ethical commitment. This trust is particularly crucial in entrepreneurial settings, where leaders' moral and ethical stances often define the organization's values and impact its long-term success (Abdulai et al., 2025).

Moreover, the impact of integrity on entrepreneurial success is also widely acknowledged. Entrepreneurs often operate under uncertain conditions and are expected to uphold transparent communication and accountability, building trust among investors, partners, and employees. This trust serves as a foundational asset that can lead to increased investment and a stronger market presence. By modeling ethical behavior, leaders signal to stakeholders that they prioritize organizational integrity, which is crucial for long-term sustainability and success (Gala & Kashmiri, 2022)

2.3 The concept of Entrepreneurial Perception

Entrepreneurial Perception (EP): Having carried a deeper research and still doing on the topic of entrepreneurial perception, the researcher decided to split it into three different parts viz: A perception; an Entrepreneur; and an Entrepreneurial perception respectively.

First, what is a perception? A perception is a set of attitudes or fixed ideas that shape how individuals perceive and respond to various situations, challenges, and opportunities. Essentially, it is the mental framework through which people interpret and engage with the world. Perceptions are influenced by experiences, upbringing, education, and culture, playing a crucial role in determining behavior, motivation, and success (Wang et al., 2021).

Entrepreneurial perception refers to how business owners interpret and understand the opportunities and challenges in their business environment, significantly influencing their decision to engage in entrepreneurial activities. It involves recognizing market opportunities, assessing risks, and evaluating personal capabilities to manage a business. According to Kuckertz et al. (2020), the way entrepreneurs perceive opportunities and risks directly shapes their intentions to start a business and how they respond to market conditions. For instance, entrepreneurs with a positive perception of risks are more likely to seize business opportunities, even in uncertain environments, because they view challenges as avenues for growth and innovation.

Moreover, entrepreneurial perception is influenced by external factors such as market trends, government policies, and the overall economic climate. Entrepreneurs with a keen understanding of the business environment can strategically position themselves to capitalize on favorable conditions. As Gartner and Teague (2020) explains, entrepreneurial perception is critical in shaping how individuals evaluate opportunities, risks, and their own abilities to execute their business ideas. This perception determines whether they will act on opportunities or retreat due to fear of failure, making it a fundamental driver of entrepreneurial behavior and success.

An entrepreneurial perception is resilient, resourceful, and solutions-oriented — even when

the conditions say otherwise. People with these perceptions are lifelong knowledge-seekers who are curious and creative, and they are critical thinkers, (Lee et al., 2023). Individual with entrepreneurial Perception help bolster economic development, create jobs, and invent products or services that can make the world a better place. Being a successful entrepreneur requires outside-the-box thinking and larger-than-life ideas. Thus, entrepreneurial perception is unique in that one must be creative, communicative, and highly motivated to succeed, yet open to risk and failure, (Farsi et al., 2024).

2.4 The relationship between leadership and entrepreneurial Perception

a. *Intuition and entrepreneurial perception*

The relationship between intuition and an entrepreneurial perception is a profound and intricate aspect of business leadership and decision-making. Both elements are essential in navigating the uncertainties and complexities of entrepreneurship, yet they operate in distinct yet complementary ways. Intuition is often perceived as a spontaneous, subconscious insight that guides decisions without the need for explicit reasoning, while an entrepreneurial perception encompasses the attitudes, skills, and behaviors that enable individuals to recognize opportunities, take risks, and innovate. Together, they form a dynamic synergy that empowers entrepreneurs to make bold, informed decisions that drive business success. Intuition plays a critical role in the entrepreneurial process, particularly in environments characterized by high uncertainty and rapid change. It is often described as a form of “knowing” that emerges from the subconscious, drawing on past experiences, tacit knowledge, and subtle cues from the environment. Unlike analytical reasoning, which relies on systematic evaluation of information, intuition allows entrepreneurs to make decisions quickly and confidently, even when data is incomplete or ambiguous (Joshua et al., 2025). Resilience, another key component of the entrepreneurial perception, also enhances the effectiveness of intuition in decision-making. Entrepreneurs face numerous challenges and setbacks, and the ability to remain resilient in the face of failure is crucial for long-term success. This resilience is often supported by intuition—an inner sense that guides entrepreneurs through tough decisions and helps them maintain focus on their goals despite obstacles. The entrepreneurial perception fosters a willingness to trust and act on these intuitions, even when the path forward is uncertain (Uwa, 2021).

b. *Vision and entrepreneurial perception*

The synergy between vision and an entrepreneurial perception lies at the heart of transformative business success. This relationship is not merely additive but is deeply interwoven, creating a dynamic interplay that fuels innovation, drives strategic direction, and sustains long-term growth. Understanding the interdependence of these two concepts is essential for comprehending how entrepreneurs navigate the complexities of modern markets and create value in an increasingly competitive environment (Aniediabasi, 2024).

Vision, in the context of entrepreneurship, extends beyond the simple articulation of goals; it is a cognitive framework that shapes how entrepreneurs perceive opportunities and challenges in their environment. A visionary entrepreneur operates with a heightened awareness of emerging trends, technological disruptions, and socio-economic shifts, which allows them to anticipate and influence the future of their industry. Vision is thus not a passive quality but an active, strategic tool that guides decision-making processes at every level of the organization (Zali & Rezaei, 2025).

c. Communication skill and entrepreneurial perception

Communication skills and entrepreneurial perception are critical for success in business. Effective communication enables entrepreneurs to convey their ideas clearly, build relationships, and inspire others. On the other hand, an entrepreneurial perception fosters innovation, resilience, and the ability to seize opportunities. Effective communication is the cornerstone of successful entrepreneurship. It involves the ability to express ideas clearly, listen actively, and engage with various stakeholders. According to Harvard Business Review, "leaders who can communicate their vision and strategy effectively are more likely to achieve their business goals" (Sharma & Arora, 2022).

d. Integrity and entrepreneurial perception

Integrity is a fundamental attribute for entrepreneurs, as it fosters trust, credibility, and sustainable success. When combined with an entrepreneurial perception, integrity can enhance decision-making, leadership, and stakeholder relationships. It involves adhering to moral and ethical principles, being honest, and demonstrating consistency in actions and values. For entrepreneurs, integrity is crucial in building trust with investors, employees, customers, and partners. (Curtin et al., 2024).

2.2 Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on transformational leadership theory and Joseph Schumpeter's entrepreneurship theory. Transformational leadership, first introduced by James V. Downton (1973) and later expanded by James MacGregor Burns (1978) and Bernard Bass (1980s), emphasizes a leadership style that inspires and motivates followers to achieve higher levels of performance, innovation, and personal growth. Transformational leaders foster an environment where employees feel empowered to take risks, think creatively, and contribute to entrepreneurial ventures. They align their followers' values with organizational goals, creating a shared vision that enhances productivity and innovation. This leadership approach is particularly relevant in entrepreneurship, where leaders must encourage adaptability, resilience, and proactive problem-solving to navigate dynamic business environments.

2.3 Empirical Review

Several studies have been conducted by some scholars on Leadership and Entrepreneurial Perception in Nigeria. Some of the studies are:

Olanipekun et al., (2024) studied on the transformational leadership theory and Resource-Based View (RBV) theory respectively. A sample size of one hundred and fifty respondents were selected using the convenience sampling technique and information were obtained through the survey method. The outcome of the study reflected that green-shared vision significantly affected employees' eco-affable behaviour and green self-efficacy has significant linkage with environmental attitude of the employees. The study concluded that leadership with green philosophies are positive forces for driving the developmental process of sustainable development. Thus, managements should foster an avenue for green oriented leaders to develop employees' competencies by instilling into them pro-environmental attitude and behaviours necessary for advancing sustainable development

Kehinde et al., (2024) examined the Role of Transactional Leadership in Fostering an Entrepreneurial Perception in Manufacturing Companies. The study adopted survey research design. The population of the study comprised all the manufacturing companies in Nigeria. The sample of the study entails 350 employees from different manufacturing companies in

Nigeria on the Stock Exchange over the period of 2014 to 2017. The researchers had targeted 5 employees from each company as respondents. Primary data were sourced for the study using a well-structured questionnaire that was distributed to 90 respondents in (18) industrial companies. The tool used in analyzing the collected data was Structural Equation Modeling. The results of the analysis revealed that Transactional leadership style positively influences the development of an entrepreneurial perception in managers. This study from the current study in terms of theoretical review, targeted population and unit scope.

Amah et al., (2020) explored the role of servant leadership and the work climate created by the leader in the reduction of employee turnover in SMEs.

The study involved 1,000 participants drawn from 200 SMEs in the city of Lagos. Cross-sectional data was acquired through questionnaire designed in such a way as to minimise common method variance. Results indicate that servant leadership reduced employee turnover, and that employee voice and the career growth dimensions partially mediated this relationship. The study variables explained 59% of the variance in employee turnover.

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research design

The descriptive survey design was applied in this study. The population of this study comprised 1918 small scale enterprises registered with Corporate Affairs Commission. The number of small-scale enterprises identified per local government area is as shown in table 1 below;

Table 1 Population distribution

S/N	LGA	No. of Registered SSE
1	Ikot Ekpene	652
2	Uyo	845
3	Mbo	421
Total		1918

Source: Researcher's compilation, 2024

It was not feasible to study the entire population of 1,918 small scale enterprises. Therefore, a sample size was determined using Taro Yamane's formula:

$$\text{given as } n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$$

Where: n = sample size required

N = Total population of interest (1918)

e = error margin (0.05)

From the formula above, the sample size of this study was computed as:

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{1918}{1+1918(0.0025)}$$

$$n = \frac{1918}{1+4.795}$$

$$n = \frac{1918}{5.795}$$

$n = 330.97$ (Approx. 331); Therefore, the sample size of this study stood at 331.

3.5 Sampling Technique

In order to proportionally allot copies of questionnaires to the respondents in the three (3) L.G.As., Bowley's formula for proportionate representation was adopted as thus:

$$nh = nNH$$

$$\text{Where; } n = \text{Sample size} = 331$$

$$NH = \text{Population of the strata} = ?$$

$$N = \text{Population} = 1918$$

$$\frac{331 \times 652}{1918}$$

$$\text{Ikot Ekpene} = \frac{331 \times 652}{1918} = 113$$

$$\text{Uyo} = \frac{331 \times 845}{1918} = 146$$

$$\text{Mbo} = \frac{331 \times 421}{1918} = 72$$

Table 2 Sample Distribution

S/N	LGA	No. of registered outlets
1	Ikot Ekpene	113
2	Uyo	146
3	Mbo	72
Total		331

Primary data was utilized for this study. The data was gathered through a structured questionnaire distributed to the respondents in the three LGAs, with 5-point likert scale which included: A = Agree, SA = Strongly Agree, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree, UD = Undecided. The questionnaire was arranged in two sections. Section one was on the personal information of the respondents and section two captured questions on the content matter which is leadership and entrepreneurial perception in small scale enterprises of Akwa Ibom State. The questions were closed-ended and were drafted in simple, explicit and concise language.

In order to determine the reliability of the instrument used in the study, a test-retest method was used. That is corrected questionnaire was administered randomly on selected staffs in the selected small scale enterprises. This approach was repeated with the same group after a month's period and there was high correlation indicating high test-retest reliability. In this case, the multiple regression analysis was used in measuring the extent to which leadership in selected enterprises in Uyo, Ikot Ekpene and Mbo local LGAs influenced entrepreneurial perception and the dependent variables.

Model specification and operationalization of variables

To achieve the stated objectives of the study, as well as testing the study hypotheses, a multiple regression model was adopted.

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \mu \dots \dots \text{eqn 1.}$$

Where: Y = **Entrepreneurial Perception** (Dependent Variable)

X = **Leadership Development** (Independent Variable 1)

Explicitly, the equation was defined as:

$$\text{Entrepreneurial Perception} = f(\text{Leadership Development}) + \mu$$

Therefore, the broad model for this study was modified as;

$$\text{EP} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{IN} + \beta_2 \text{IR} + \beta_3 \text{DM} + \beta_4 \text{EC} + \text{RL} \mu \dots \dots \dots \text{eqn 2.}$$

Where; EP = Entrepreneurial Perception, INT = Intuition, VS = Vision, COMS = Communication Skill, INTG = Intergrity, β_0 = Intercept or regression constant, $\beta_1, \beta_2, \beta_3$ = Regression coefficients, μ = Stochastic error term Each hypothesis (H₀₁, H₀₂, H₀₃, H₀₄) was tested through this regression model, with general expected criterion; accepted H₀ (null hypothesis) if the P-value is greater than 5% significant level and rejected H₀ if P-value is less than 5% significant level.

4. DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This section presents the data collected for this study, the statistical and econometric analysis of the data using different tools, testing of the hypotheses, making deductions from the testing and analysis of the data, and discussion of major findings.

4.1 Data presentation

The questionnaire was administered to the respondents identified and the summary shown in table 3 below, out of the total sample size from the Small and Medium scale Enterprises (SMEs) in the Local Government Areas representing the three senatorial districts in Akwa Ibom State, 112 questionnaires representing 34% were administered to Ikot Ekpene, 146 questionnaires representing 44% were distributed to Uyo, and 73 questionnaires representing 22% were directed to Mbo. All were correctly filled, resulting in a complete return of 331 questionnaires.

Table 3: Summary of questionnaire administered

Firm	Questionnaire Administered	Questionnaire Returned	Percentage (%)
Ikot Ekpene	112	112	34
Uyo	146	146	44
Mbo	73	73	22
Total	331	331	100

Source: Field Survey Data (2024)

Data Analysis of respondents' responses

Table 4: Percentage analysis of respondents' responses regarding intuition and Entrepreneurial perception

Questions	Agreed	Strongly Agreed	Disagreed	Strongly disagreed	Undecided	Total
Do you agree that intuition has a significant relationship on Entrepreneurial perception in selected small scale enterprises in Akwa Ibom State?	168 (50.8%)	99 (29.9%)	40 (12.1%)	14 (4.2%)	10 (3.0%)	331 (100%)
Do you believe that intuition plays a crucial role in shaping an entrepreneurial perception?	163 (49.2%)	95 (28.7%)	45 (13.6%)	13 (3.9%)	15 (4.6%)	331 (100%)
Do you agree that entrepreneurs who trust their intuition are more likely to take calculated risks and seize opportunities?	125 (37.8%)	92 (27.8%)	43 (13.6%)	12 (3.6%)	59 (17.8%)	331 (100%)

Source: Field survey Data (2024)

Table 4 shows that; 168 respondents representing 50.8% of the respondents agreed that intuition has a significant effect Entrepreneurial perception in selected small scale enterprises in Akwa Ibom State, 99 respondents representing 29.9% Strongly agreed, 40 respondents representing 12.1% were Disagreed, 14 respondents representing 4.2% Strongly disagreed while 10 respondents representing 3.0% Undecided.

Similarly, 163 respondents representing 48.6% of them also agreed to the assertion that intuition plays a crucial role in shaping an entrepreneurial perception, 95 respondents representing 28.7% Strongly agreed, 45 respondents representing 13.6% were Disagreed, 13 respondents representing 3.9% Strongly disagreed while 15 respondents representing 4.5% Undecided.

Equally, 125 respondents representing 37.8% of them also agreed to the assertion that entrepreneurs who trust their intuition are more likely to take calculated risks and seize opportunities, 92 respondents representing 27.8% Strongly agreed, 43 respondents representing 13.6% were Disagreed, 12 respondents representing 3.6% Strongly disagreed while 59 respondents representing 17.8% Undecided.

Table 5: Percentage analysis of respondents' responses regarding vision and Entrepreneurial perception

Questions	Agreed	Strongly Agreed	Disagreed	Strongly disagreed	Undecided	Total
Do you agree that vision has a significant relationship with entrepreneurial perception in small scale enterprises in Akwa Ibom State?	146 (44.1%)	129 (39.0%)	33 (10.0%)	2 (.6%)	21 (6.3%)	331 (100%)
Do you believe that having a clear vision is fundamental to developing an entrepreneurial perception?	144 (43.5%)	103 (31.1%)	38 (11.5%)	8 (2.4%)	38 (11.5%)	331 (100%)
Do you agree that entrepreneurs who possess a compelling vision are more likely to inspire others and attract resources to their ventures?	150 (45.3%)	93 (28.1%)	56 (16.9%)	16 (4.8%)	16 (4.8%)	331 (100%)

Source: Field survey Data (2024)

Table 5 shows that; 146 respondents representing 44.1% of the respondents agreed that vision has a significant effect on entrepreneurial perception in small scale enterprises in Akwa Ibom State, 129 respondents representing 39.0% Strongly agreed, 33 respondents representing 10.0% were Disagreed, 2 respondents representing 0.6% Strongly disagreed while 21 respondents representing 6.3% Undecided.

Similarly, 144 respondents representing 43.5% of them also agreed to the assertion that having a clear vision is fundamental to developing an entrepreneurial perception, 103 respondents representing 31.1% Strongly agreed, 38 respondents representing 11.5% were Disagreed, 8 respondents representing 2.4% Strongly disagreed while 38 respondents representing 11.5% Undecided.

Equally, 150 respondents representing 45.3% of them also agreed to the assertion that entrepreneurs who possess a compelling vision are more likely to inspire others and attract resources to their ventures, 93 respondents representing 28.1% Strongly agreed, 56 respondents representing 16.9% were Disagreed, 16 respondents representing 4.8% Strongly disagreed while 16 respondents representing 4.8% Undecided.

Table 6: Percentage analysis of respondents' responses regarding communication skill and Entrepreneurial perception

Questions	Agreed	Strongly Agreed	Disagreed	Strongly disagreed	Undecided	Total
Do you agree that communication skill has a significant relationship with entrepreneurial perception in selected small scale enterprises in Akwa Ibom State?	137 (41.4%)	89 (26.9%)	60 (18.1%)	20 (6.0%)	25 (7.6%)	331 (100%)
Do you believe that effective communication skills are integral to fostering an entrepreneurial perception?	140 (42.3%)	153 (46.2%)	16 (4.8%)	3 (.9%)	19 (5.7%)	331 (100%)
Do you agree that entrepreneurs with strong communication skills are better equipped to articulate their ideas, build relationships, and influence stakeholders?	147 (44.4%)	150 (45.3%)	10 (3.0%)	0 (0%)	24 (7.3%)	331 (100%)

Source: Field survey Data (2024)

Table 6 shows that; 137 respondents representing 41.4% of the respondents agreed that communication skill has a significant effect on entrepreneurial perception in selected small scale enterprises in Akwa Ibom State, 89 respondents representing 26.9% Strongly agreed, 60 respondents representing 18.1% were Disagreed, 20 respondents representing 6.0% Strongly disagreed while 25 respondents representing 7.6% Undecided.

Similarly, 140 respondents representing 42.3% of them also agreed to the assertion that effective communication skills are integral to fostering an entrepreneurial perception, 135 respondents representing 46.2% Strongly agreed, 16 respondents representing 4.8% were Disagreed, 3 respondents representing 0.9% Strongly disagreed while 19 respondents representing 5.7% Undecided.

Equally, 147 respondents representing 44.4% of them also agreed to the assertion that entrepreneurs with strong communication skills are better equipped to articulate their ideas, build relationships, and influence stakeholders, 150 respondents representing 45.3% Strongly agreed, 10 respondents representing 3.0% were Disagreed, 0 respondents representing 0% Strongly disagreed while 24 respondents representing 7.3% Undecided.

Table 7: Percentage analysis of respondents' responses regarding integrity and Entrepreneurial perception

Questions	Agreed	Strongly Agreed	Disagreed	Strongly disagreed	Undecided	Total
Do you agree that integrity has a significant relationship with entrepreneurial perception in selected small scale enterprise in Akwa Ibom State?	143 (43.2%)	91 (27.5%)	55 (16.6%)	19 (5.7%)	23 (6.9%)	331 (100%)
Do you believe that integrity is essential for fostering an entrepreneurial perception?	181 (54.7%)	120 (36.3%)	11 (3.3%)	2 (.6%)	17 (5.1%)	331 (100%)
Do you agree that entrepreneurs with a strong sense of integrity are more likely to succeed in the long run?	150 (45.3%)	137 (41.4%)	11 (3.3%)	6 (1.8%)	27 (8.2%)	331 (100%)

Source: Field survey Data (2024)

Table 7 shows that; 143 respondents representing 43.2% of the respondents agreed that integrity has a significant effect on entrepreneurial perception in selected small scale enterprise in Akwa Ibom State, 91 respondents representing 27.5% Strongly agreed, 55 respondents representing 16.6% were Disagreed, 19 respondents representing 5.7% Strongly disagreed while 23 respondents representing 6.9% Undecided.

Similarly, 181 respondents representing 54.7% of them also agreed to the assertion that effective communication skills are integral to fostering an entrepreneurial perception, 120 respondents representing 36.3% Strongly agreed, 11 respondents representing 3.3% were Disagreed, 2 respondents representing 0.6% Strongly disagreed while 17 respondents representing 5.1% Undecided.

Equally, 150 respondents representing 45.3% of them also agreed to the assertion that entrepreneurs with strong communication skills are better equipped to articulate their ideas, build relationships, and influence stakeholders, 137 respondents representing 41.1% Strongly agreed, 11 respondents representing 3.3% were Disagreed, 6 respondents representing 1.8% Strongly disagreed while 27 respondents representing 8.2% Undecided.

Descriptive statistics of variables

The independent variables were intuition, vision, communication skill and integrity while dependent variable was entrepreneurial perception.

Table 8: Descriptive Statistics

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
Entrepreneurial perception	331	1.7069	1.00389	2.115	4.525
Intuition	331	6.1148	2.55582	.724	-.195
Vision	331	5.9033	2.19290	.686	.392
Communication Skill	331	5.6677	2.43674	1.378	1.650
Integrity	331	5.2900	1.75306	.973	.818

Source: Researcher's computation (2024)

Table 8 shows that for the independent variables- Intuition, Vision, Communication Skill and Integrity, the mean values obtained for all the responses were 6.1148, 5.9033, 5.6677 and 5.2900 respectively. This shows the average scores of all the responses regarding these variables. Furthermore, variability of the distribution, these variables were obtained from the standard deviation values of 2.55582, 2.19290, 2.43674 and 1.75306 respectively. This indicates high variability in the scores of the responses regarding these variables.

Furthermore, the distribution for these variables- product concentration, market concentration, competitive differentiation and cost leadership were shown to be negatively skewed to the left with a skewness value of 0.724, 0.686, 1.378 and 0.973 respectively. The kurtosis values were also obtained for Intuition, Vision, Communication Skill and Integrity as -0.195, -0.392, 1.650 and 0.818 indicating that these variables were platykurtic.

For Entrepreneurial perception, the dependent variable, the mean value obtained for all the responses was 1.7069. This shows the average score of all the responses regarding this variable. Furthermore, variability of the distribution for the variable- was obtained from the standard deviation value of 1.00389. This indicates a high level of variability in the scores of the responses for this variable. Also, entrepreneurial perception was shown to be negatively skewed with a skewness value of 2.115 and kurtosis value was also obtained as 4.525 indicating a platykurtic distribution.

Model evaluation

Table 9: Model Summary^b

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.742 ^a	.550	.544	1.16651	2.075
a. Predictors: (Constant), Integrity, Communication Skill, Intuition, Vision					
b. Dependent Variable: Entrepreneurial Perception					

Source: Researcher's computation (2024)

This model summary in table 4.2.7 above indicates that the independent variables (Integrity, Communication Skill, Intuition, Vision) collectively have a significant impact on predicting the Entrepreneurial Perception, explaining 55% of its variance. The high R value (.742) and R Square (.550) indicate a strong model fit, suggesting that these predictors are substantial factors in determining the Entrepreneurial Perception. However, the standard error of 1.16651 also shows that there is still some prediction error, implying that other factors not included in

the model may also influence the Entrepreneurial Perception.

Analysis of variance

Table 10: ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	541.963	4	135.491	99.571	.000 ^b
	Residual	443.602	326	1.361		
	Total	985.565	330			
a. Dependent Variable: Entrepreneurial Perception						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Integrity, Communication Skill, Intuition, Vision						

Source: Researcher's computation (2024)

The results in table 4.2.8 shows F-statistic and probability values of 0.740 and 0.571 respectively. This indicates that the independent variables- Intuition, Vision, Communication Skill and Integrity have a combined significant effect on entrepreneurial perception in selected small scale enterprises in the three senatorial districts of Akwa Ibom State at 5% significance level.

Test of hypotheses

This analysis was conducted to test the relationship between the dependent variables and the independent variable in this study. In line with this, each hypothesis was tested based on the regression results obtained.

Table 11: Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.312	.256		1.222	.222
	Intuition	.397	.027	.587	14.532	.000
	Vision	.111	.037	.141	3.046	.003
	Communication Skill	.168	.031	.237	5.468	.000
	Integrity	-.059	.039	-.060	-1.520	.130
a. Dependent Variable: Entrepreneurial Perception						

Source: Researchers computation (2024)

i. Hypothesis one

H₀₁: Intuition has a positive effect on Entrepreneurial Perception.

The coefficient for intuition indicates a significant positive effect ($p < 0.001$), with a value of 0.397. The standardized coefficient (Beta) for intuition also demonstrates a strong effect at 0.587. This suggests that higher levels of intuition have a significant positive effect on Entrepreneurial Perception.

ii. Hypothesis two

H₀₂: Vision has a significant positive effect on Entrepreneurial Perception

The coefficient for intuition is 0.397 with a p-value of < 0.001 , so we reject the null hypothesis and conclude that intuition has a significant positive effect on Entrepreneurial Perception.

iii. Hypothesis three

H03: Communication Skill has a positive effect on Entrepreneurial Perception

The coefficient for communication skill is 0.168 with a p-value of < 0.05 , so we reject the null hypothesis and conclude that communication skill has a significant positive effect on Entrepreneurial Perception.

iv. Hypothesis four

H04: Integrity does not have a significant direct effect on Entrepreneurial Perception.

The coefficient for integrity is -0.059 with a p-value of $0.130 < 0.05$, so we fail to reject the null hypothesis and conclude that integrity does not have a significant effect on Entrepreneurial Perception.

4.2 Discussion of findings

a. Intuition and Entrepreneurial Perception

The coefficient for intuition is highly significant ($p < 0.001$), indicating a strong positive effect on Entrepreneurial Perception ($B = 0.397$, $Beta = 0.587$). This suggests that higher levels of intuition are associated with a stronger entrepreneurial perception.

This finding aligns with study of Yang and Chi (2019) that highlighted the importance of intuitive decision-making in entrepreneurial success, particularly in fast-paced and uncertain environments. Also aligns with study of Chen et al. (2024) who found that entrepreneurs often rely on intuition to identify opportunities and make rapid decisions, especially in situations where information is limited or ambiguous. Xiaobao et al., (2023) also Suggested that intuition complements analytical thinking in entrepreneurial decision-making, enabling entrepreneurs to navigate complex and dynamic business environments effectively.

b. Vision and Entrepreneurial Perception

The coefficient for vision is significant ($p = 0.003$), indicating a positive effect on Entrepreneurial Perception ($B = 0.111$, $Beta = 0.141$). This implies that having a clear vision is associated with a stronger entrepreneurial perception.

This finding aligns with study of McMullen et al., (2021) who emphasized on the importance of a clear vision in entrepreneurial ventures, suggesting that it provides direction and motivation for both the entrepreneur and their team. Also aligns with study of Lee et al. (2021) who found that entrepreneurs with a strong vision are better able to attract investors and partners, as they demonstrate a clear roadmap for the venture's future.

c. Communication Skill and Entrepreneurial Perception

The coefficient for communication skill is highly significant ($p < 0.001$), indicating a positive effect on Entrepreneurial Perception ($B = 0.168$, $Beta = 0.237$). This suggests that effective communication skills contribute to the development of an entrepreneurial perception.

This finding aligns with study of Wang et al., (2021) highlighted the importance of effective communication skills in entrepreneurship, particularly in building relationships with customers, suppliers, and investors. Also aligns with study of Joshua et al. (2022) who found

that entrepreneurs with strong communication skills are more successful in pitching their ideas and securing funding from venture capitalists.

d. Integrity and Entrepreneurial Perception

The coefficient for integrity is not significant ($p = 0.130$), suggesting no significant effect on Entrepreneurial Perception ($B = -0.059$, $\text{Beta} = -0.060$). This implies that integrity, as measured in this study, does not have a direct relationship with Entrepreneurial Perception.

This finding implies that Integrity, as measured in this study, does not play a meaningful role in shaping Entrepreneurial Perception. In other words, the level of Integrity demonstrated by a leader does not appear to influence how people perceive entrepreneurship. This suggests that Integrity may not be as directly impactful in shaping how people perceive entrepreneurship. Thus this finding disagrees with the study of Uwa, (2021) argue that Integrity is essential for entrepreneurship because it builds trust and credibility, which are critical for engaging customers and partners, Gala and Kashmiri, (2022) studied a context where Integrity is highly valued by stakeholders, such as customers and partners, and directly linked to business success.

5 CONCLUSION

This study examined the effect of leadership on entrepreneurial perception among small-scale enterprises in Uyo, Ikot Ekpene, and Mbo, Akwa Ibom State, by analyzing the influence of intuition, vision, communication skills, and integrity. The regression analysis revealed that intuition ($B = 0.397$, $p = 0.000$), vision ($B = 0.111$, $p = 0.003$), and communication skills ($B = 0.168$, $p = 0.000$) had significant positive effects on entrepreneurial perception, emphasizing their role in fostering innovation and business success. However, integrity ($B = -0.059$, $p = 0.130$) did not show a significant direct impact, suggesting the need for further exploration of its potential indirect effects. The study concludes that leadership attributes such as intuition, vision, and communication skills are crucial for enhancing entrepreneurial perception, while the role of integrity remains inconclusive.

Based on these findings, the study recommends that small-scale enterprises invest in leadership development programs focusing on intuitive decision-making, visionary thinking, and effective communication. Leaders should be encouraged to articulate clear organizational visions and improve their communication skills through training and strategic planning. Additionally, further research is needed to examine the indirect impact of integrity on entrepreneurial perception and explore other contextual factors such as industry type and market dynamics. It is also suggested that longitudinal studies be conducted to track how leadership attributes influence entrepreneurial perception over time. Furthermore, government and private sector stakeholders should collaborate to create mentorship and training programs that equip business leaders with essential skills to navigate the complexities of entrepreneurship. Finally, comparative studies across different regions or industries could provide deeper insights into the role of leadership in shaping entrepreneurial perception in diverse business environments.

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