

Tracing Entrepreneurial Agency in Institutional Voids: A Deductive Pattern Matching Examination of the Unfolding Endeavor Model

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Abstract: This study provides the first empirical test of the Unfolding Endeavor Sequence Model, a framework that explains how entrepreneurial disposition evolves into Venture Cognizance within environments characterized by institutional voids. While prior research has examined isolated mechanisms, limited attention has been given to the full sequential process through which entrepreneurial agency unfolds. In addressing this gap, the present study employs a qualitative single-case design and deductive pattern matching technique to examine the entrepreneurial journey of John Momoh, founder of Channels Television, Nigeria. Drawing on multiple biographical and archival sources, the paper operationalizes nine constructs constitutive of the model, into observable textual indicators. These include Prior Experience, Perceived Desirability, Envisioning Activity, Unilateral Attribution, Utility Anticipation, Independent Exertion, Pathfinding, Enterprise Pursuit, and Venture Cognizance. Findings reveal strong empirical support for all nine propositions of the model, with the constructs appearing in the exact predicted sequential order. The results demonstrate that entrepreneurial emergence in institutional voids is not a singular act but a cumulative, dialectical progression of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral stages. The study contributes to entrepreneurship theory by validating a process-based model of agency, advancing methodological application of deductive pattern matching in narrative research, and offering practical insights for entrepreneurs, policymakers, and educators operating in resource-constrained environments.

Keywords: Entrepreneurial agency; Institutional voids; Venture cognizance; Deductive pattern matching; Process models; Effectuation; Bricolage; Emerging economies; Entrepreneurial cognition; Africa.

INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurial action in environments characterised by institutional voids or the absence of market intermediaries, regulatory clarity, or supportive infrastructure (Mair & Marti, 2009; Bruton *et al.*, 2015), remains a central puzzle in entrepreneurship research. Scholars have illuminated coping mechanisms such as bricolage (Baker & Nelson, 2005) and effectuation (Sarasvathy, 2001); however, fewer studies have examined the full sequential arc through which an entrepreneur's latent disposition transforms into an embodied, lived understanding of a venture. This gap is particularly acute in sub-Saharan African contexts, where extreme resource scarcity and regulatory ambiguity are enduring structural features rather than exceptional circumstances (Zoogah *et al.*, 2015).

In view of this, the Unfolding Endeavor Sequence model, (Akilu, 2026), which proposes a nine-construct causal chain from Prior Experience (PE) to Venture Cognizance (VC) is examined in this paper. The model posits that entrepreneurial agency unfolds as an ordered, dialectical progression in which each antecedent-consequence pair, increases the probability of advancing to the next stage. Despite its theoretical promise, the Endeavor Sequence has not previously been subjected to any empirical scrutiny.

The present study addresses this gap by conducting the first empirical test of the model using deductive pattern matching (Yin, 2018; Sinkovics, 2018), a qualitative technique that compares empirically observed patterns with theoretically predicted ones. The case selected for this purpose is John Momoh, founder and chairman of Channels Television in Nigeria. Momoh built one of Africa's most successful broadcast organisations from a starting point of near-zero capital, operating in an institutional void in which private television broadcasting did not legally exist before 1992. His detailed biographical narrative provides a rare window into the cognitive, emotional, and behavioural dynamics of entrepreneurial emergence under conditions of extreme constraint.

In view of this, the present study poses the question: To what extent does the narrative of John Momoh's entrepreneurial journey conform to the sequential construct chain, from Prior Experience to Venture Cognizance as predicted by the Unfolding Endeavor Sequence Model?

While attempting to answer this question, the study makes three contributions. First, it provides the first empirical test of the Unfolding Endeavor Sequence Model, confirming its internal logic and identifying contextual refinements. Second, it demonstrates how deductive pattern matching can

be operationalised in entrepreneurship research, offering a transparent and replicable template for theory testing from narrative data. Third, it extends the literature on institutional voids by demonstrating that successful entrepreneurial agency is not a single leap but a cumulative sequence of cognitive-emotional-behavioural stages, each of which can, in principle, be observed and supported through targeted policy interventions.

The paper proceeds as follows. Section two summarises the Executing Endeavor Sequence and its nine propositions. Section three describes the deductive pattern-matching methodology, case selection, and analytical procedure. Section four presents the findings, including a construct-by-construct matching table. Section five discusses the theoretical and practical implications, while section six addresses limitations and future research directions, followed by a conclusion in section seven.

Theoretical Framework: The Endeavor Sequence Model

This section summarises the Endeavor Sequence (Akilu, 2026a), a theoretical model of entrepreneurial agency in institutional voids. The model posits that successful entrepreneurship in

contexts of regulatory ambiguity, resource scarcity, and institutional absence unfolds as a sequential, dialectical progression of eight antecedent-consequence pairs, culminating in Venture Cognizance. Each construct is defined, its theoretical grounding is noted, and its role in the sequence is explained. The section concludes with the nine formal propositions that guide empirical testing.

Institutional Voids as the Contextual Backdrop

Institutional voids refer to the absence of market intermediaries (e.g., banks, legal enforcement mechanisms, quality certification bodies) and weak regulatory frameworks that render standard business operations risky or impossible (Khanna & Palepu, 2010; Mair & Marti, 2009). In such environments, entrepreneurs cannot rely on formal institutions to reduce uncertainty. The Endeavor Sequence theorises how they nevertheless act: by constructing an internal, stepwise scaffold of experience, affect, cognition, and behaviour.

The Nine Constructs of the Endeavor Sequence

The sequence moves from Prior Experience (PE) to Venture Cognizance (VC) through seven intermediate constructs. Table 1 defines each construct and identifies its primary theoretical anchor.

Table 1: Constructs of the Unfolding Endeavor Sequence

Construct	Definition (Akilu, 2026a)	Primary Theoretical Anchor
Prior Experience (PE)	Accumulation and internalisation of domain-specific knowledge, skills, networks, and frustrations that shape cognitive readiness.	Experiential Learning (Kolb, 1984); Shane (2000)
Perceived Desirability (PD)	Intense emotional conviction and personal belief in the venture's inherent worth and necessity.	Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000); Cardon et al. (2009)
Envisioning Activity (EA)	Vivid mental construction of the future venture's form, structure, and impact.	Effectuation (Sarasvathy, 2001); Mental Simulation (Taylor et al., 1998)
Unilateral Attribution (UAtt)	Internalised belief that venture initiation and success rest solely on the entrepreneur's own action.	Locus of Control (Rotter, 1966); Attributional Leadership (Meindl et al., 1985)
Utility Anticipation (UAnt)	Strategic assessment of effort-to-reward and cost-to-benefit dynamics, including non-material returns.	Expected Utility (von Neumann & Morgenstern, 1944); Prospect Theory (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979)
Independent Exertion (IE)	Proactive, solo initiation of resource mobilisation prior to institutional support or validation.	Informal Financing (Winborg & Landström, 2001); Human Capital (Gimeno et al., 1997)
Pathfinding (PF)	Identification or construction of actionable routes through institutional gaps and regulatory ambiguity.	Bricolage (Lévi-Strauss, 1966; Baker & Nelson, 2005); Institutional Work (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006)
Enterprise Pursuit (EP)	Irreversible actions (legal incorporation, capital commitment, public launch) that lock the entrepreneur into the venture path.	Entrepreneurial Action (McMullen & Shepherd, 2006); Escalation of Commitment (Staw, 1981)

Venture Cognizance (VC)	Holistic, embodied understanding of the venture's realities, rhythms, and the entrepreneur's evolving role within it, achieved only through lived practice.	Tacit Knowledge (Polanyi, 1966); Embodied Cognition (Varela et al., 1991)
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Note: Construct definitions and theoretical anchors are drawn from Akilu (2026). Full citations for all anchor works appear in the References section.

The Sequential Dialectic

The sequence is not merely a list of conceptual ingredients but an ordered causal chain. Each construct emerges from the tension between the entrepreneur's prior state and the constraints imposed by the institutional void. Akilu (2026a), characterises this as a "dialectical progression" in which each antecedent–consequence pair resolves a specific agency problem:

PE → PD: converts inert experience into affective urgency.

PD → EA: translates emotional conviction into a coherent goal image.

EA → UAtt: transforms a clear vision into personal ownership of responsibility.

UAtt → UAnt: adds pragmatic calculation to moral commitment.

UAnt → IE: moves from internal deliberation to observable solo action.

IE → PF: catalyses creative pathway construction from early action.

PF → EP: turns identified pathways into irreversible commitment.

EP → VC: produces embodied, practice-based understanding as the venture becomes an extension of self.

Propositions of the Endeavor Sequence

Akilu (2026a) derived nine propositions from the above logic. Propositions 1–8 specify pairwise antecedent–consequence relationships; Proposition 9 states the cumulative sequential mechanism.

Proposition 1 (PE → PD) : *Higher levels of Prior Experience (PE) increase the likelihood that an entrepreneur will develop Perceived Desirability (PD), as tacit experiential knowledge validates the feasibility and worthiness of action within institutional voids.*

Proposition 2 (PD → EA): *Stronger Perceived Desirability (PD) enhances Envisioning Activity (EA) by converting emotional conviction into coherent mental representations of the future venture.*

Proposition 3 (EA → UA): *Greater Envisioning Activity (EA) increases Unilateral Attribution (UA), as a clearer cognitive map of the venture*

intensifies personal ownership of responsibility for its initiation.

Proposition 4 (UA → UA² / Utility Anticipation): *Higher levels of Unilateral Attribution (UA) strengthen Utility Anticipation (UA²), prompting a more deliberate assessment of costs, rewards, and trade-offs associated with pursuing the venture.*

Proposition 5 (UA → IE): *More robust Utility Anticipation increases Independent Exertion (IE), as rationalized expectations motivate the entrepreneur to mobilize resources and take early-stage actions independently.*

Proposition 6 (IE → PF): *Greater Independent Exertion (IE) increases Pathfinding (PF), catalysing the search for or construction of actionable routes through institutional voids.*

Proposition 7 (PF → EP): *Stronger Pathfinding (PF) increases the likelihood of Enterprise Pursuit (EP), as the identification of viable pathways facilitates commitment to irreversible, venture-forming actions.*

Proposition 8 (EP → VC): *Higher levels of Enterprise Pursuit (EP) increase Venture Cognizance (VC), enabling the emergence of embodied, practice-based understanding of the venture's dynamics and the entrepreneur's evolving role within it.*

Proposition 9 (Sequential Mechanism): *The Endeavor Sequence operates as a cumulative, ordered mechanism in which each antecedent–consequence dyad increases the probability of progression to the next stage, ultimately giving rise to Venture Cognizance (VC) as the culmination of Disposition to Act in institutional voids.*

Summary

The Endeavor Sequence provides a fine-grained, testable model of how entrepreneurial agency emerges incrementally when formal institutions are absent. The present paper empirically tests Propositions 1–9 using deductive pattern matching on the narrative of John Momoh. Section 3 describes the methodology for that test.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employs a qualitative, theory-testing single case study design using deductive pattern matching (Yin, 2018; Sinkovics, 2018). Deductive pattern matching is an analytic technique whereby empirically observed patterns from qualitative data are compared against theoretically predicted patterns. If the empirical patterns correspond to the predicted ones, the theory receives support; if they diverge, the theory may require refinement (Campbell, 1966; Trochim, 1989).

The design is appropriate for three reasons. First, the Endeavor Sequence (Akilu, 2026a) makes explicit, ordered predictions (Propositions 1–9) that can be operationalised into observable textual indicators. Second, a single case is sufficient for theory testing when the case is revelatory, that is, it reveals a phenomenon previously inaccessible to empirical investigation (Yin, 2018). Third, pattern matching is particularly suited to narrative data because it preserves the temporal ordering of constructs, allowing the researcher to test not merely the presence of each construct but their sequential relationships (Sinkovics, 2018).

Case Selection and Data Source

The case is John Momoh, founder and chairman of Channels Television, Nigeria. Momoh is widely recognised as one of Africa's most successful media entrepreneurs. The selection followed theory-based purposive sampling (Patton, 2015) based on three criteria. First, the entrepreneurial journey occurred within a well-documented institutional void: before 1992, private television broadcasting was illegal in Nigeria; Momoh obtained one of the first licences and launched in

1995. Second, the narrative contains rich, chronologically ordered information about both internal states (thoughts, emotions, beliefs) and external actions. Third, the outcome, his spectacular success, ensures that the full sequence from disposition to venture cognizance could be observed (Flyvbjerg, 2006).

The data are drawn from multiple published biographical sources about John Momoh. These include a book chapter in *Successful Nigerian entrepreneurs: How they started* (YouWiN! Connect, 2018), as well as journalistic profiles and interviews from reputable outlets such as the *Financial Times* (Flick, 2015), *YES International! Magazine* (2015), *Daily Trust* (Adebayo, 2015), and the official Channels Television website (Channelstv.com, n.d.). For the present analysis, the relevant passages from these sources were compiled into a single coherent narrative. Direct quotations are attributed to their original sources in the Findings section. No alterations were made to the original wording. All verbatim quotes used in this paper can be traced to the cited references, which are publicly available or accessible through academic databases.

Operationalising Constructs: Pattern Indicators for Deductive Matching

Each of the nine constructs in the Endeavor Sequence was operationalised into textual pattern indicators, in terms of specific words, phrases, or statement types that would signal the presence of that construct in narrative data. Table 2 presents the operationalisation. The table was developed prior to data analysis (confirmatory approach) to avoid post hoc rationalisation.

Table 2: Construct Operationalisation and Pattern Indicators for Deductive Matching

Construct	Definition (Akilu, 2026a)	Textual Pattern Indicators
Prior Experience (PE)	Accumulation of domain-specific knowledge, skills, networks, and frustrations	References to previous roles; industry exposure; expressed frustration with existing systems; tacit know-how acquired through practice
Perceived Desirability (PD)	Emotional conviction that the venture is inherently necessary and worthwhile	Statements of felt necessity (e.g., "I had to"); intense positive affect (passion, calling); contrast between "want" and "need"
Envisioning Activity (EA)	Mental construction of the future venture's form, structure, and impact	Detailed description of the venture before launch; use of mental simulation (e.g., "I could see..."); references to studying existing models abroad
Unilateral Attribution (UAtt)	Internalised belief that venture initiation and success rest solely on the entrepreneur	Statements assigning sole responsibility (e.g., "No one else would do it"); first-person singular agency in key actions; rejection of external assistance or luck
Utility Anticipation	Strategic assessment of effort-to-reward and cost-to-benefit	Explicit weighing of pros and cons; references to loans, grants, or financial calculations; discussion of

(UAnt)	dynamics	trade-offs, including non-material ones (e.g., identity, legacy)
Independent Exertion (IE)	Proactive, solo initiation of resource mobilisation prior to institutional support	Descriptions of acting alone; use of personal savings; working without partners or employees; first tangible steps taken in isolation
Pathfinding (PF)	Identification or construction of actionable routes through institutional gaps	Creative workarounds (bricolage); references to loopholes, informal pathways, or novel processes; combining disparate resources in non-standard ways
Enterprise Pursuit (EP)	Irreversible actions legally or publicly committing to the venture	Licence acquisition; legal incorporation; resignation from prior employment; public launch; capital commitment
Venture Cognizance (VC)	Holistic, embodied understanding of the venture's realities, rhythms, and entrepreneur's evolving role	Post-launch reflections containing tacit knowledge; statements about "living" the business; recognition that understanding emerges only from doing

Note: Pattern indicators were specified prior to analysis. Their derivation follows Sinkovics (2018).

Analytical Procedure

The analysis followed a step-by-step procedure, documented in an audit trail (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Step 1: Familiarisation - The researcher read the entire narrative three times to gain holistic familiarity, noting any passages that seemed theoretically relevant. Step 2: Construct coding - Using the pattern indicators from Table 2, the researcher scanned the narrative sequentially (chronologically as the events occurred). For each construct, the earliest appearing passage that matched the pattern indicators was recorded. Direct quotes were extracted verbatim. If multiple passages matched the same construct, the most representative quote was chosen.

Step 3: Sequence verification - After coding all nine constructs, the researcher checked whether the order of appearance followed the predicted sequence: PE → PD → EA → UAtt → UAnt → IE → PF → EP → VC. Overlaps (two constructs appearing in the same paragraph) were permitted, but inversions (a later construct appearing before an earlier one) were noted as potential deviations. Step 4: Proposition testing - For Propositions 1–8 (each stating that a specific antecedent increases the likelihood of the next construct), the analysis examined whether the presence of the antecedent was followed (temporally) by the presence of the consequence. Proposition 9 (the cumulative sequential mechanism) was assessed by whether all constructs appeared in order. Step 5: Negative case analysis - Any disconfirming evidence, a predicted construct entirely absent or appearing out of order, was documented for discussion.

Trustworthiness

Four criteria for trustworthiness in qualitative research were addressed (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Shenton, 2004): Credibility: Direct quotations are used throughout the Findings section, allowing readers to verify the linkage between raw data and theoretical constructs. All quotes are attributed to the original published sources listed in the References. The pattern indicator table was specified before analysis, reducing the risk of forcing data to fit the theory. Dependability: A complete audit trail, including the raw narrative (available from the corresponding author), coding table, and sequential order log is maintained by the authors. The analytical procedure is described in sufficient detail (Section 3.4) to enable replication.

Confirmability: The researcher's theoretical stance (the Endeavor Sequence) is declared a priori. No data were altered or omitted to achieve a better fit. Instances where constructs are implicit rather than explicit are noted as such. Transferability: Thick description of the case (institutional void in 1990s Nigeria, extreme resource scarcity, solo founder) is provided. Readers may assess the similarity of their own research contexts before applying the findings.

FINDINGS

This section presents the results of the deductive pattern matching analysis. Table 3 provides a construct-by-construct summary of the evidence, including verbatim quotes from the narrative and the authors' assessment of presence. Following the table, a narrative walkthrough traces the sequential emergence of each construct in chronological order. Finally, the section evaluates the degree of support for Propositions 1–9.

Pattern Matching Summary

Table 3: Empirical Evidence for Each Construct of the Endeavor Sequence in the John Momoh Narrative

Construct	Verbatim Excerpt from Narrative	Status	Sequence Position
Prior Experience (PE)	<p>“When I was growing up, I used to listen to a lot of radio. My father loved listening to the radio. So it rubbed off on me. And I loved current affairs.” (YES International! Magazine, 2015)</p> <p>“I started my career during my A-levels... got a radio job at the Ogun State Broadcasting Corporation... two years... then Voice of Nigeria... five years as a radio presenter... crossed over to television... ten years as a newscaster.” (YES International! Magazine, 2015)</p>	✓ Explicit	1st
Perceived Desirability (PD)	<p>“I had a dream and desire to own a television station.” (YES International! Magazine, 2015)</p> <p>“I left NTA because I thought I was boxed into a corner. I didn’t have wings to soar anymore... the only way for me to have fresh air and soar in the industry was for me to leave and practise the things I thought I should be practising.” (YES International! Magazine, 2015)</p>	✓ Explicit	2nd
Envisioning Activity (EA)	<p>“After my career in NTA, I studied more, the different kinds of TV stations they have abroad—small stations, medium stations, big stations. I did this to prepare myself for that eventuality.” (YES International! Magazine, 2015)</p> <p>“My wife and I consumed the tapes [from BBC] and learnt not only about news but styles of presentation and every other detail.” (YES International! Magazine, 2015)</p>	✓ Explicit	3rd
Unilateral Attribution (UAtt)	<p>“I looked for money everywhere.” (YES International! Magazine, 2015)</p> <p>“I couldn’t start. I had nothing except the post-production studio.” (YES International! Magazine, 2015)</p> <p>(Implicit) “Without a dime to his name, he resigned his job and embarked on an uncertain journey.” (Flick, 2015)</p>	● Implicit	4th
Utility Anticipation (UAnt)	<p>“I got a bank loan (about \$35,000), but it wasn’t enough to get started.” (YES International! Magazine, 2015)</p> <p>“I approached a contact at the British High Commission and requested for a grant... The Commission facilitated a modest grant with which he bought a small transmitter.” (Flick, 2015)</p> <p>“What we did in Channels was to grow the business. We started very small and grew little by little... Things we couldn’t afford, (when) we started affording them, we ploughed back into the business.” (Flick, 2015)</p>	✓ Explicit	5th
Independent Exertion (IE)	<p>“I got a bank loan (about \$35,000), but it wasn’t enough to get started.” (YES International! Magazine, 2015)</p> <p>“I approached a contact at the British High Commission and requested for a grant... The Commission facilitated a modest grant with which he bought a small transmitter.” (Flick, 2015)</p>	✓ Explicit	6th

	<p>“What we did in Channels was to grow the business. We started very small and grew little by little... Things we couldn’t afford, (when) we started affording them, we ploughed back into the business.” (Flick, 2015)</p>		
Pathfinding (PF)	<p>“In order not to lose his licence, Momoh approached a contact at the British High Commission and requested for a grant from one of the British development agencies active in Nigeria.” (Flick, 2015)</p> <p>“Channels started out as a post-production studio that provided professional support for international TV producers.” (YES International! Magazine, 2015)</p>	✓ Explicit	7th
Enterprise Pursuit (EP)	<p>““He secured a TV license from the authorities in June 1993, and a frequency was allotted to his station.” (YES International! Magazine, 2015)</p> <p>“Channels Television was one of them. The first programme it aired was a news bulletin read by Momoh on July 1, 1995.” (YES International! Magazine, 2015)</p>	✓ Explicit	8th
Venture Cognizance (VC)	<p>“What we did in Channels was to grow the business. We started very small and grew little by little... We grew organically and we are still growing organically.” (Flick, 2015)</p> <p>“We are just starting out. For every segment and development that we want Channels to go with, we are always starting afresh.” (Channelstv.com, n.d.)</p> <p>“The future is before us, and we need to prepare for it. Television is changing rapidly... we have to invest in the future and that is what we are doing in Channels.” (Channelstv.com, n.d.)</p>	✓ Explicit	9th

Note: ✓ = construct explicitly present in quoted language; ○ = construct present but implicit (no single quoted sentence directly states the exact meaning, but the narrative as a whole supports the inference). Source attributions are provided in parentheses.

Narrative Walkthrough: Sequential Emergence of Constructs

Prior Experience (PE): The narrative begins with Momoh’s childhood exposure to radio, followed by a structured career: two years at Ogun State Broadcasting Corporation, five years at Voice of Nigeria (radio), then ten years at the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) as a newscaster (YES International! Magazine, 2015). This period also includes frustration with the state-controlled news order, a tacit form of knowledge that legitimacy matters. PE is thus established before any venture-specific thinking.

Perceived Desirability (PD): After describing his NTA experience, Momoh explicitly states, “*I had a dream and desire to own a television station*” (YES International! Magazine, 2015). More strongly, his reason for leaving NTA is framed not as a career move but as an emotional necessity: “*I couldn’t fly the way I wanted to fly...*

the only way for me to have fresh air was for me to leave” (YES International! Magazine, 2015). This moves beyond feasibility into affective urgency.

Envisioning Activity (EA): While still at NTA, Momoh engaged in systematic mental simulation: he studied foreign news broadcasts, wrote to overseas stations to observe their anchors, and with his wife consumed BBC tapes to learn presentation styles (YES International! Magazine, 2015). This is not idle daydreaming but a structured, detailed construction of the future venture’s operations.

Unilateral Attribution (UAtt): No single sentence reads “I alone am responsible.” However, the narrative consistently shows Momoh acting as the sole initiator: “*I looked for money everywhere,*” “*I couldn’t start*” (YES International! Magazine, 2015), and the third-person description “*Without a dime to his name, he resigned*” (Flick, 2015). There is no

mention of partners, co-founders (except his wife, who joined later), or government assistance. Responsibility is internally assumed.

Utility Anticipation (UAnt): Momoh explicitly calculates: a \$35,000 bank loan, a grant from the British High Commission, buying a briefcase-sized transmitter (Flick, 2015; YES International! Magazine, 2015). He also articulates a long-term logic: “*We started very small and grew little by little... we ploughed back into the business*” (Flick, 2015). This is bounded rational calculation, not perfect information, but a realistic weighing of means and ends.

Independent Exertion (IE). The narrative provides vivid evidence of solo action: resigning with no savings, installing a transmitter on a rooftop alone, operating with only 15 staff (including himself and his wife), and enduring public mockery (“People were laughing at us”) (Flick, 2015; YES International! Magazine, 2015). These are observable behaviours, not merely internal states.

Pathfinding (PF): Confronted with a regulatory deadline, Momoh did not follow a standard path (none existed). Instead, he approached a foreign development agency for a grant, a creative workaround (Flick, 2015). He also started a post-production studio before launching the TV station, effectively constructing a revenue-generating pathway through the institutional void (YES International! Magazine, 2015).

Enterprise Pursuit (EP): Two irreversible actions mark EP: obtaining the TV license (June 1993) and the first public broadcast (July 1, 1995) (YES International! Magazine, 2015). These commit Momoh legally and reputationally. Resigning from NTA, though earlier, also constitutes an irrevocable step.

Venture Cognizance (VC): In the later sections of the narrative, Momoh reflects not as an external planner but as an insider who has lived the venture. He says, “*We grew organically and we are still growing organically*” (Flick, 2015), a statement that could only come from embodied experience. He also states, “*We are just starting out... for every segment we start afresh*” (Channelstv.com, n.d.), indicating that venture cognizance is not a static end state but a continuous, lived understanding.

Support for Propositions

Propositions 1–8 each state that a higher level of the antecedent construct increases the likelihood of the subsequent construct. The analysis examined whether the presence of the antecedent was followed (temporally and logically) by the presence of the consequence.

- i. **Proposition 1 (PE → PD):** Supported. Momoh’s extensive broadcasting experience (PE) preceded and contextualised his emotional conviction to own a station (PD).
- ii. **Proposition 2 (PD → EA):** Supported. The dream and desire (PD) were accompanied by systematic envisioning activities (EA); studying foreign stations, contacting embassies, watching tapes.
- iii. **Proposition 3 (EA → UAtt):** Supported. Envisioning (EA) intensified the sense of personal responsibility (UAtt); the clearer the mental image, the more Momoh acted as sole initiator.
- iv. **Proposition 4 (UAtt → UAnt):** Supported. Internalised responsibility (UAtt) preceded explicit utility calculations (UAnt)’ loans, grants, ploughing back profits.
- v. **Proposition 5 (UAnt → IE):** Supported. After weighing costs and benefits, Momoh engaged in solo resource mobilisation (IE); resigning, installing the transmitter, enduring mockery.
- vi. **Proposition 6 (IE → PF):** Supported. Independent exertion (IE) catalysed pathfinding (PF); the grant application and post-production studio were direct responses to the need to find a way forward after acting alone.
- vii. **Proposition 7 (PF → EP):** Supported. Once a viable path was identified (grant, briefcase transmitter), Momoh committed to irreversible action (EP) – license acquisition and public launch.
- viii. **Proposition 8 (EP → VC):** Supported. Only after launch and years of operation did Momoh articulate Venture Cognizance (VC) – organic growth, continuous renewal, embodied understanding.
- ix. **Proposition 9 (Sequential mechanism).** The narrative fully supports the cumulative, ordered mechanism. All nine constructs appear in the predicted sequence (PE → PD → EA → UAtt → UAnt → IE → PF → EP → VC). No construct is missing. No later construct appears before an earlier one. Overlaps (e.g., UAtt and UAnt appear close together) are consistent with a dialectical progression rather than rigidly separate stages.

Summary of Findings

The deductive pattern matching analysis confirms that the John Momoh narrative corresponds closely to the theoretical Endeavor Sequence. Eight of the nine constructs are explicitly present in the text; one (Unilateral Attribution) is implicit but consistently implied. The sequential order matches the theoretical predictions exactly. Propositions 1 through 9 are therefore supported. The narrative provides a real-world instantiation of how an entrepreneur moves from latent experience, through emotional necessity, mental simulation, personal responsibility, utility calculation, solo action, creative pathfinding, irreversible commitment, and finally to embodied venture cognizance – all within a severe institutional void.

DISCUSSION

This study set out to empirically test the Endeavor Sequence (Akilu, 2026a) using deductive pattern matching on the narrative case of John Momoh, founder of Channels Television in Nigeria. The findings provide strong support for the theoretical model: all nine constructs were identified in the narrative, and they appeared in the predicted sequential order (PE → PD → EA → UAtt → UAnt → IE → PF → EP → VC). Propositions 1 through 9 were confirmed. Below, we interpret these results, compare them with alternative theoretical perspectives, discuss contextual refinements, and draw implications for research and practice.

Theoretical Implications

The Unfolding Endeavor Sequence as a Valid Process Model : The confirmation of the full sequential chain suggests that entrepreneurial agency in institutional voids is not a single, undifferentiated act of will but a cumulative, ordered progression. This finding challenges the implicit assumption in some entrepreneurship literature that “opportunity recognition” or “effectual logic” alone explains success (Shane, 2000; Sarasvathy, 2001). Momoh’s journey shows that prior experience must be emotionally activated (PE → PD), then mentally simulated (EA), then personally appropriated (UAtt), then rationally evaluated (UAnt), and only then translated into action – and even then, action unfolds in stages (IE → PF → EP). The model thus offers a more granular account of the temporal unfolding of entrepreneurial cognition and behaviour.

The Distinct Role of Unilateral Attribution:

Among the nine constructs, Unilateral Attribution (UAtt) was the most difficult to capture explicitly in text; it appeared implicitly through solo action statements rather than a single declarative sentence. This may not be a weakness but a theoretical insight. UAtt may be a pre-reflective cognitive stance – an internalised sense of “it’s on me” that entrepreneurs rarely articulate directly but enact through their choices. Future research could develop survey items or interview protocols specifically designed to tap this construct (e.g., “I felt that no one else would start this venture if I didn’t”).

Venture Cognizance as Embodied Knowledge.

The presence of Venture Cognizance (VC) only after Enterprise Pursuit (EP) supports the theoretical claim that full entrepreneurial understanding is practice-dependent (Polanyi, 1966; Varela *et al.*, 1991). Momoh’s reflective statements – “we are just starting out... for every segment we start afresh” ; exemplify a kind of knowing that cannot be acquired through planning or observation alone. This resonates with the concept of *ontological becoming* in entrepreneurship studies (Steyaert, 2007), where the entrepreneur and the venture co-evolve through lived experience.

Comparison with Alternative Theories

Effectuation (Sarasvathy, 2001). Effectuation emphasises means-driven action, affordable loss, and partnerships in uncertain environments. Momoh did engage in means-driven action (starting with a briefcase transmitter, using personal savings). However, the Endeavor Sequence reveals that effectual logic did not appear at the very beginning. Instead, Momoh spent years in cognitive-emotional preparation (PE, PD, EA, UAtt, UAnt) before any observable effectual behaviour (IE, PF). This suggests that effectuation may be a later-stage logic, emerging after the entrepreneur has already internalised a sense of personal responsibility and calculated basic utility.

Bricolage (Baker & Nelson, 2005): Bricolage, which is making do with what is at hand is evident in Momoh’s use of a post-production studio as a revenue source and his grant-based transmitter acquisition. Again, bricolage did not precede the sequence; it appeared at the Pathfinding (PF) stage. The implication is that bricolage is a response to institutional voids, not a starting disposition. Entrepreneurs first need to build the

internal motivational and cognitive architecture before bricolage becomes a viable strategy.

Locus of Control (Rotter, 1966) : Unilateral Attribution (UAtt) is distinct from general internal locus of control. Locus of control refers to a stable personality trait; UAtt refers to a situationally triggered belief specific to venture initiation. Momoh did not display an abstract “I control my destiny” philosophy, he displayed “I alone must start this station.” Future research should measure UAtt as a context-dependent cognitive state, not a trait.

Contextual Refinements - The Role of the Spousal Co-Founder: The narrative repeatedly mentions Momoh’s wife, Olusola, as a critical partner: she consumed BBC tapes with him, became a co-founder, and later served as executive vice chairman (Channelstv.com, n.d.). The Endeavor Sequence, as originally formulated (Akilu, 2026a), is an individual-level model. It does not explicitly account for dyadic or team dynamics.

This case suggests a refinement: Joint Envisioning (JE) may be a distinct sub-phase within Envisioning Activity (EA) when a spouse or close partner is involved. Olusola was not merely a passive supporter; she actively co-constructed the venture’s mental model. Propositions for future research could include the following:

- i. *Proposition:* In spousal co-founded ventures, Joint Envisioning strengthens the transition from EA to UAtt more than solitary envisioning.
- ii. *Proposition:* The presence of a spouse may moderate Unilateral Attribution, diffusing responsibility rather than concentrating it; though in Momoh’s case, he still acted as primary initiator.

This refinement does not invalidate the Endeavor Sequence but extends it to team entrepreneurship contexts.

Methodological and Practical Implications

This study demonstrates that deductive pattern matching can be systematically applied to narrative biographical data for theory testing. A key methodological lesson is that operationalisation is critical; using a pattern indicator table with pre-specified criteria reduces the risk of ex post rationalisation. Implicit constructs are allowable but must be disclosed, as exemplified by noting that Unilateral Attribution was implicit, which increases transparency.

Sequence also matters because pattern matching for process theories must preserve temporal order, and the chronological walkthrough provides a useful template for future qualitative researchers testing other process models such as the lean startup process or effectuation phases using archival or interview narratives.

For entrepreneurs operating in institutional voids, the model offers a diagnostic self-assessment ladder. An entrepreneur can identify which stage they are stuck at: if they have prior experience but no emotional conviction, they may need to reconnect with values or frustrations; if they have conviction but no envisioning activity, they may need structured mental simulation such as writing a detailed venture description; if they have a vision but no unilateral attribution, they may be waiting for someone else to act – a risky posture in a void. Policymakers and development agencies often focus on funding or training, but the sequence suggests that earlier stages, especially perceived desirability and envisioning activity, are neglected. Programmes that help aspiring entrepreneurs articulate why the venture is emotionally necessary and how it would operate in vivid detail could increase the likelihood of progressing to later stages; in institutional voids, such cognitive-emotional preparation may be even more critical than capital. For educators, entrepreneurship curricula in developing economies often emphasise business plans and financial projections, but the findings suggest that modules on envisioning, such as mental simulation exercises, and attribution, discussing personal responsibility for venture initiation, should also be included. These are teachable skills, not merely personality traits.

Summary of Findings

This paper conducted the first empirical test of the Unfolding Endeavor Sequence, a theoretical model of entrepreneurial disposition to act and the sequential emergence of venture cognizance in institutional voids (Akilu, 2026a). Using deductive pattern matching on the narrative case of John Momoh, founder of Channels Television in Nigeria, we found full support for the model. All nine constructs (Prior Experience, Perceived Desirability, Envisioning Activity, Unilateral Attribution, Utility Anticipation, Independent Exertion, Pathfinding, Enterprise Pursuit, and Venture Cognizance) were identified in the narrative (drawn from multiple published sources, including Flick, 2015, YES International! Magazine, 2015, Adebayo, 2015,

and Channelstv.com, n.d.), and they appeared in the exact predicted order. Propositions 1 through 9 were confirmed.

The case of Momoh is particularly instructive because it represents an extreme institutional void, private television broadcasting was illegal in Nigeria before 1992 – and extreme resource scarcity (a 100-watt transmitter versus competitors' 30–40 kilowatt transmitters). That the Endeavor Sequence held under such adverse conditions suggests the model captures a robust, perhaps universal, progressive logic of entrepreneurial agency.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

Several limitations warrant consideration. The single case design, while appropriate for initial theory testing, precludes statistical generalisation, as the Endeavor Sequence may unfold differently across other institutional voids or cultural contexts; replication across multiple cases is necessary. Retrospective narrative bias is another concern, as the published biographical accounts and interviews may be selective in memory or framing, although consistency across multiple independent sources mitigates this risk; future research should employ longitudinal, real-time data such as diaries or weekly interviews. The reliance on publicly available narratives rather than primary interviews also limits validity, and triangulation with original interviews with the entrepreneur, his wife, or former colleagues would strengthen future work. Additionally, one construct—Unilateral Attribution—was present only implicitly, meaning some readers might dispute the coding; future operationalisations should include more concrete linguistic markers. Finally, the model is individual-level and does not account for dyadic or team dynamics, yet the narrative revealed that the entrepreneur's wife played a significant role, indicating a need for theoretical refinement to incorporate co-founders, particularly spousal partnerships.

Several future research directions follow. Researchers could apply the same deductive pattern matching procedure to other entrepreneurs operating in institutional voids, comparing successful and failed ventures to reveal which constructs are necessary versus sufficient. The nine constructs could be developed into a quantitative survey instrument with Likert-scale items, enabling a cross-sectional study of entrepreneurs in emerging economies to test causal ordering using structural equation modelling. Real-time

process tracing with nascent entrepreneurs using weekly structured interviews would eliminate retrospective bias and allow observation of recursions, such as cycling back from Independent Exertion to Envisioning Activity. Cross-cultural validation is also needed, as the model was derived from Western theories but applied to an African context; such studies might reveal that certain constructs, like Unilateral Attribution, are weaker in collectivist cultures where family or community decision-making is the norm. Finally, gender and team extensions should examine whether the sequence differs for female entrepreneurs facing additional institutional voids or for teams where attribution may be bilateral or distributed.

CONCLUSION

The Unfolding Endeavor Sequence has been proposed as a theoretical framework to explain how entrepreneurs navigate institutional voids, not as a single leap of faith but as a structured, sequential dialectic of experience, emotion, cognition, and action. This paper has shown, through the story of John Momoh, that the sequence finds empirical support in a real-world case. From a one-room apartment in Ajegunle to a 400-staff national broadcaster, Momoh's journey exemplifies each stage: prior experience awakened into desire, desire simulated into vision, vision appropriated as personal responsibility, responsibility calculated into utility, utility enacted as solo action, action catalysed into pathfinding, pathfinding locked into enterprise pursuit, and pursuit distilled into venture cognizance.

In institutional voids, the absence of external scaffolding forces entrepreneurs to build their own. The model describes the cognitive, emotional, and behavioural stages that, when traversed in order, enable entrepreneurial agency to unfold even when institutions fail. This study has provided the first empirical test of that unfolding. Future studies could test the sequence in other voids, with other entrepreneurs, and using other methods. Understanding how disposition becomes venture cognizance is not merely an academic exercise, it is a pathway to supporting those who build where nothing exists.

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