



COMBATING INSECURITY, THE MEDIATING ROLE OF ENTREPRENEURIAL ORIENTATION IN THE NORTH-EASTERN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT: *Insecurity is characterized by a lack of direction, uncertainty, and a reluctance to take preventative measures against threats that could put a person in danger. Thus, the entrepreneurial drive is to minimize the threat of insecurity by instilling in people a love for taking calculated risks. Consequently, the study included a survey and secondary research designs. Relevant academic articles were collected from trustworthy indexed journal sources, such as Google scholar, Research gate, Scopus, etc. An analysis of the PLS-SEM model was used for the analysis of data. To aid in decision-making, the significance threshold of 0.05 was applied. The study's findings demonstrate that an entrepreneurial orientation greatly enhanced reduction in insecurity. Since entrepreneurship promotes productivity and discourages idleness, it is crucial for reducing security risks as it lowers the crime rate. Second, the result further suggests that poverty reduction has a direct influence on insecurity reduction. Entrepreneurship orientation might help address poverty by transferring suitable skill sets, attitudes, and capacities, thereby fostering individual growth to promote successful entrepreneurship. Also, finding suggests that opportunity recognition has a direct significant influence on insecurity. Recognizing opportunities and taking risks have a major impact on insecurity reduction. Entrepreneurship-related endeavors improve living standards and add jobs for people. The government needs to put more effort into passing laws and initiatives supporting entrepreneurship while fighting corruption.*

KEYWORDS: Insecurity, Entrepreneurship, Orientation, Combating Insecurity, and Entrepreneurial Orientation.



INTRODUCTION

Everyone may, at a certain point, experience feelings of insecurity, which can originate from different factors. Nonetheless, eradication via entrepreneurial education is essential to a country's prosperity and long-term economic growth [1]. According to [2], insecurity is defined as fear, doubt and the absence of assurance. Multifaceted insecurity relates to a generalized feeling of doubt or fear over one's value, worth, capabilities, and worth as a person; it communicates the idea that one is defenseless to something or somebody. Insecurity can be detrimental to one's body, mind, or emotions. Without security, it is impossible to earn complete confidence or provide one's best [3]. Thus, entrepreneurial orientation stimulates business entities to behave and perform more entrepreneurially and offers a solid foundation for combating insecurity in Nigeria.

Insecurity persists despite all the efforts made by states, people, and charitable organizations. Nigeria is among the most unsafe states in the world because of the conflict between farmers and herdsmen, which is one of the most significant kinds of insecurity. For many years, there has been a chronic disagreement. The Boko Haram insurgency is typically expected to make Nigeria aware of the benefits of peaceful coexistence, heightened awareness, and security consciousness. However, the genuineness of the country's present state, particularly in light of insecurity, has demonstrated that neither the government nor its people have learned anything from Boko Haram [4]. Certain officials say that the same Boko Haram organization is responsible for many crimes against Nigeria and its citizens, which have had a detrimental effect on commercial endeavors.

Unemployment among youths is linked to the unfortunate level of insecurity in the country. [5] states that youth facing unemployment, poverty, and insecurity are not motivated or do not have the right attitude. Youth unemployment leads to economic displacement, which makes the youths idle and contemplate what to do with their circumstances. Occasionally, this leads the youths toward illicit behaviors.

In particular, many authors have claimed that unemployment is a significant issue that fuels insecurity in different regions of Nigeria [6] [7]. Given this circumstance, several writers proposed that entrepreneurship orientation might help to address insecurity by transferring suitable skill sets, attitudes, and capacities, fostering individual growth to promote successful entrepreneurship [8]. A culture of peace, a decrease in poverty, and the manifestation of positive values have all been linked to entrepreneurial education [6]. Developing a person's attitudes, actions, and capacities is the focus of entrepreneurship education [9]. It covers learning exercises that teach how to be resourceful, independent, daring, and adaptable [6]. It includes all encounters that provide students with the skills and knowledge to effectively access and transform business opportunities [7].

The high rate of graduates without employment and the problems of poverty, instability, and insecurity are concerns for a country that desperately needs entrepreneurs to help it accomplish its economic development objectives [10]. Given these contemporary difficulties, entrepreneurship has been seriously considered a potential solution to this societal problem [11]. According to earlier studies, entrepreneurship is vital to economic growth, which is why entrepreneurial culture has been introduced into Nigerian tertiary institutions. This is in line with the sustainable development target for learning about entrepreneurship [12] [13] [14] [15].



Nevertheless, the majority of this research yielded mixed or neutral results and concentrated mostly on SMES performance, entrepreneurial culture, and entrepreneurial education [13] [15] [6] [7] [16]. Therefore, additional study is required to better comprehend the characteristics of this cohort's entrepreneurial mindset to create effective strategies for overcoming insecurity. By closely investigating the mediating role of entrepreneurial orientation in the North-Eastern region of Nigeria in the fight against insecurity, the current paper closes important gaps in the literature.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

In an attempt to address insecurity globally, many countries have turned to entrepreneurial orientation. This could help to explain why education is perceived as a quick fix or a potent potion that can cure economic and social challenges when taken in the recommended dosages [17]. To achieve the above, several roles and techniques are needed among disciplines in the acquisition and distribution of knowledge.

A disciplined and methodical approach to teaching people the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to foster and advance their entrepreneurial potential is known as "entrepreneurship education" [18]. It entails imparting knowledge on all facets of entrepreneurship to learners, prospective business owners, and people who are interested in launching and running their own companies. These topics include risk evaluation, creative thinking, inventiveness, promotional activities, financing, and strategic planning [19].

Being exposed to risks is the state of being insecure. Lack of direction, uncertainty, and reluctance to taking precautions against dangers that could expose an individual or organization to risk are all signs of insecurity [4]. Nigerian insecurity has changed dramatically in the last few years. A few instances include acts of terrorism and insurgency, assaults, adolescent unrest, kidnappings, targeted killings, covert society activities, killing, vandalism, and public protests [20]. Even though many people have been victims of these problems, some individuals have managed to escape significant injury or death during one of the assaults. Insecurity and poor performance have been plagued by inadequate planning of strategies and entrepreneurship training [21].

Under the existing circumstances, neither the security nor the safety of the people living there, nor that of the rest of the community, can be guaranteed. This situation demonstrates the government's incapacity to safeguard the welfare and property of its constituents. Ignorance leads to a lot of insecure behaviors. Therefore, for Nigerian individuals to address insecurity, including economic insecurity, entrepreneurship education is essential.

Every facet of running a firm is covered by instruction in entrepreneurship, including startup, growth, diversification, and leadership. It also involves providing students with the necessary entrepreneurial skills [16]. The goal of entrepreneurship education is to instill in people a passion for taking calculated risks and starting, growing, and maintaining profitable businesses [22]. According to [7], entrepreneurship education can impact self-employment and hasten sustainable growth and development if it is properly implemented. Despite having enormous potential for development, the nation has struggled with recurrent problems related to monetary instability or financial insecurity [23].



Individuals with entrepreneurial abilities are better able to find meaningful jobs, which helps counteract instability, according to [24]. Nevertheless, the research was limited to only one local government in Rivers State. The study by [25] suggests that a decrease in crime and insecurity rates is associated with an increase in the number of individuals possessing entrepreneurial abilities. Obafemi Awolowo University and Lagos State Polytechnic hosted the study. Furthermore, the study by [26] in Ondo State, Nigeria found that the rise in entrepreneurship will significantly affect the level of insecurity.

Various studies have demonstrated the relationship between the inclination towards taking risks and many entrepreneurial results, including increased client satisfaction, corporate development, and improved societal recital [27], as well as the sustainability of corporations, innovative tenacity, and organizational learning [28].

The goal of entrepreneurship education is to give people the abilities, information, and perspective needed to spot opportunities, build long-lasting companies, and deal with the difficulties presented by a changing economic environment [29]. Entrepreneurship education empowers people to stop seeking jobs and start creating jobs instead by promoting a culture of creativity, risk-taking, and self-reliance, hence decreasing their dependence on a restricted number of formal employment options [30] and conventional moral conduct [31], since human confidence is ensured and business interactions both internally and externally are unrestricted.

Youths can benefit greatly from the possibilities and vital business skills that entrepreneurship provides. This empowerment may help with problems like juvenile unruliness and various types of criminal activities. Entrepreneurship becomes an effective way to harness youthful energy and creativity since it gives young people a platform to communicate their innovative ideas and the opportunity to participate in entrepreneurial activities. As such, it acts as a proactive tactic for addressing social concerns related to young unrest and criminal activities, and contributes to economic growth [32] [14].

Entrepreneurship Training and Economic Resilience in Nigeria: A Case Study Approach was studied by [29]. The study uses a qualitative case study methodology to investigate how entrepreneurship education affects people in Nigeria by lowering financial insecurity and boosting economic resilience. The research delves into how entrepreneurship education programs give participants the skills, knowledge, and mindset shift they need to navigate economic challenges, establish sustainable businesses, and reduce financial insecurity. It does this by conducting in-depth investigations and interviews. The Empowering Benefits of Entrepreneurship Training on Financial Insecurity in Nigeria were studied by [33]. In the study, empowerment was the technique of choice. This study examines how entrepreneurial education can help Nigerians feel less insecure about their financial future. The study shows that entrepreneurship education conveys useful business skills. It also builds self-efficacy and confidence, empowering people to take proactive measures to handle financial issues and seize economic possibilities. It does this by drawing on survey data and participant interviews.

In a nutshell, it is surprising how little is known about the theoretical foundations for why EO improves business performance and reduces insecurity in the literature. This shortcoming restricts the ability of EO scholars to make clear claims and clouds the issue of its fundamental processes [34]. Nonetheless, the study looked at a new value creation theory proposed by [35], which holds that institutional dedication to a new entrance behavioral style, which clarifies the development of novel value, is most directly and consequentially supported by entrepreneurial



beliefs, which will therefore indirectly improve new value creation [36] [37]. Consequently, the philosophy of generating new value through entrepreneurial orientation relies on market interaction to improve subsequent new entrants and spot overlooked possibilities that permit quick advancement in value production above rivals.

Nigeria may produce a new crop of entrepreneurs who are more prepared to withstand economic challenges, generate job prospects, and support viable prosperity by fostering an entrepreneurial mindset in young people and giving them the resources they need to succeed [5]. The following ideas is advanced in light of the previously described discussion:

H01: There is no positive significant relationship between entrepreneurial orientation and insecurity reduction in North-Eastern Nigeria.

H02: There is no positive significant relationship between poverty reduction and insecurity in North-Eastern Nigeria.

H03: There is no positive significant relationship between opportunity recognition and insecurity reduction in North-Eastern Nigeria.

H04: Entrepreneurial orientation did not significantly mediate between opportunity recognition and insecurity reduction in North-Eastern Nigeria.

H05: Entrepreneurial orientation did not significantly mediate the relationship between opportunity recognition and insecurity reduction in North-Eastern Nigeria.

METHODOLOGY

This study used a descriptive survey as its research design. This design permits the gathering and examination of statistical data that could be statistically evaluated to find unique patterns and relationships [38]. This design is justified since this methodology provides a measure of objectivity and explicability [39]. The questionnaire is the main tool that was used to collect the data. Thus, a self-administered questionnaire was used in the study. For the sample size, 67 respondents were chosen from Adamawa State, 61 respondents from Bauchi State, 59 from Borno State, 52 from Gombe State, 69 from Taraba State, and 72 from Yobe State, totaling 380 respondents' owners and management team of SMEs from the population of 1460 registered SMEs in North-East Nigeria. The study employed the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table. The instrument's validity and reliability were confirmed using Cronbach's alpha statistics, which produced a high-reliability coefficient of 0.85.

Academic databases, including Scopus-indexed journals, Web of Science, and Google Scholar publications, were also among the reliable sources from which pertinent academic articles, policy documents, and case studies were gathered. PLS-SEM equation models were used for the analyses. The significance criterion of 0.05 was applied to all results in the analysis to facilitate decision-making.



TEST OF HYPOTHESES AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The research is based on four key hypotheses. PLS-SEM equation modeling was mostly used to examine and interpret the hypotheses in light of the questionnaire results.

Measurement Model

In assessing the measurement model, internal consistency and reliability, convergent validity and discriminant validity for all the indicators were assessed [40]. The reliability, factor loadings, and Cronbach's alpha reliability indicate 0.70 and above [41]. Hence, the factor loading values are between 0.713 to 0.872, Cronbach's alpha 0.793 to 0.840, and AVE of 0.619 to 0.675 for all the variables, therefore, are desirable and no deletion required to improve the and AVE as suggested by [41].

Table 1: Internal Consistency, Reliability and Validity

Constructs	Item	Loadings	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Entrepreneurial Orientation	EO_1	0.832	0.834	0.888	0.666
	EO_2	0.807			
	EO_3	0.812			
	EO_4	0.812			
Poverty Reduction	PR_1	0.872	0.840	0.892	0.675
	PR_2	0.852			
	PR_3	0.793			
	PR_4	0.765			
Opportunity Recognition	OP_1	0.796	0.828	0.886	0.659
	OP_2	0.856			
	OP_3	0.822			
	OP_4	0.772			
Insecurity Reduction	IR_1	0.713	0.793	0.866	0.619
	IR_2	0.830			
	IR_3	0.867			
	IR_4	0.727			
	IR_5	0.788			

Source: Authors Computation, 2025.

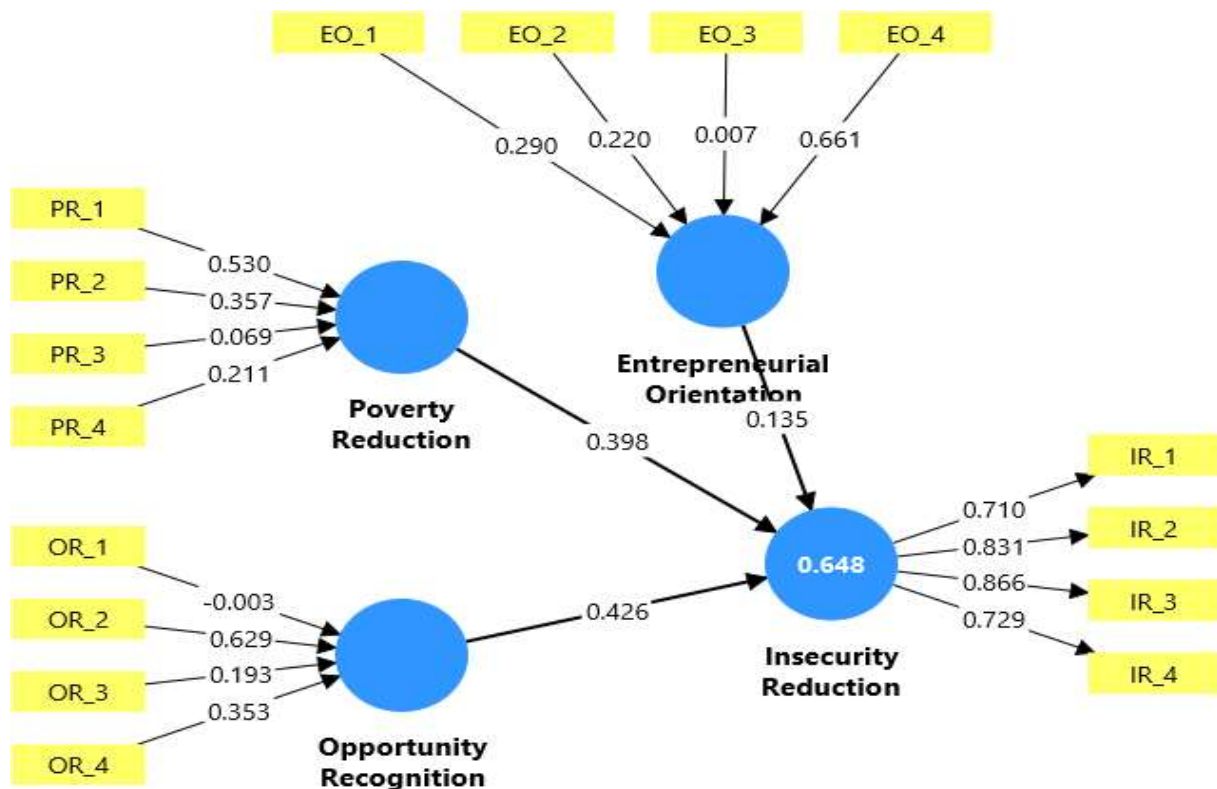
Figure 1 presents the graphical output of the measurement model and Table 1 presents the indicator reliability, internal consistency reliability and convergent validity. All the indicator values were above the threshold value suggested $\geq .7$ and $\geq .5$ [41], and no item was deleted for not meeting the recommended value. Hence, all items were retained for further analysis.

**Table 2: Discriminant Validity Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)**

	EO	IR	OR	PR
Entrepreneurial Orientation	1.000			
Insecurity Reduction	0.571	1.000		
Opportunity Recognition	0.465	0.831	1.000	
Poverty Reduction	0.570	0.823	0.547	1.000

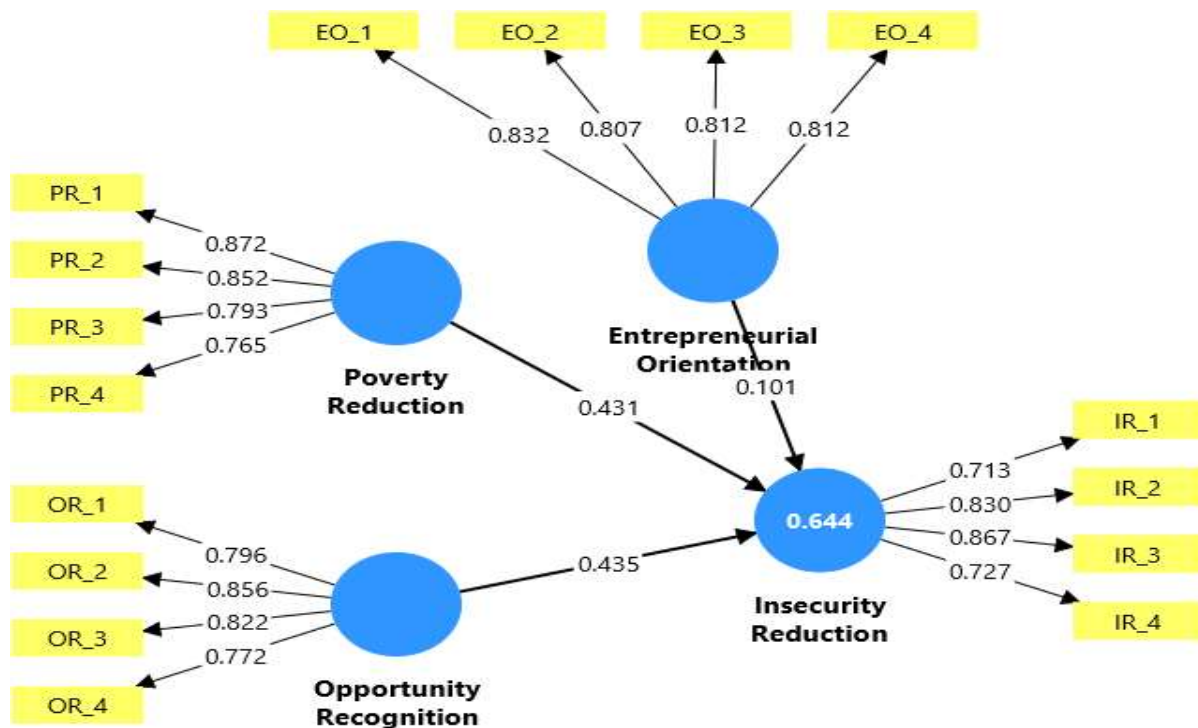
Source: Authors Computation, 2025.

Discriminant validity was achieved using HTMT following the recommendation of [41] that HTMT values should not exceed 0.850.

Figure 1: PLS Algorithm – Measurement Model

Structural and Bootstrapping Model

The structural model assesses the direct relationship in which the direct relationship between the exogenous variables and the endogenous variable, and testing the hypotheses stated. The model also assesses the coefficients of determination (R^2), significance and magnitude of path coefficients, and effect sizes (f^2) [42].

Figure 2: PLS Algorithm – Structural Model**Table 3: Test of Direct Relationship**

	Beta	SD	T-Statistics	P-value	Decision
EO -> IR	0.096	0.045	2.158	0.031	Rejected
PR -> IR	0.432	0.047	9.170	0.000	Rejected
OR-> IR	0.439	0.042	10.498	0.000	Rejected

Source: Authors Computation, 2025.

Table 3 reveals the direct relationship—H0₁ hypothesizes that there is no positive significant relationship between entrepreneurial orientation and insecurity reduction in North-Eastern Nigeria. However, the findings indicate that entrepreneurial orientation has a significant relationship with insecurity reduction in North-Eastern Nigeria; hence, we reject H0₁ with (Beta = -0.096, t = 2.158, p < 0.031). This suggests that entrepreneurial orientation has a direct influence on insecurity reduction in North-Eastern Nigeria. This finding is consistent with findings of [7], which suggest that entrepreneurship education can impact self-employment and hasten sustainable improvement in security and economic development if it is properly implemented. Table 3 further indicates the results of direct relationship (H0₂); there is no positive significant relationship between poverty reduction and insecurity reduction. Similarly, H0₂ indicates there is no positive and significant relationship between poverty reduction and insecurity reduction in North-Eastern Nigeria. Thus, H0₂ was rejected with (Beta = 0.432, t = 9.170, p < 0.000). This result suggests that poverty reduction has a direct influence on insecurity reduction in North-Eastern Nigeria.

This finding corresponds with the finding of [8] that proposed that entrepreneurship orientation might help address poverty as one of the proxies of insecurity by transferring



suitable skill sets, attitudes, and capacities, thereby fostering individual growth to promote successful entrepreneurship. Furthermore, hypothesis H0₃ states that there is no direct positive and significant relationship between opportunity recognition and insecurity reduction in North-Eastern Nigeria. However, the findings indicate a direct and positive significant relationship exists between opportunity recognition and insecurity reduction in North-Eastern Nigeria. Therefore, H0₃ was rejected based on (Beta = 0.439, t = 10.498, p < 0.000). This suggests that opportunity recognition has a direct significant influence on insecurity in North-Eastern Nigeria. This result is in line with research by [1] and [46], which indicates that opportunity recognition lessens insecurity by enabling people to identify economic opportunities, hence reducing unemployment and poverty, which can result in criminal activity and social instability.

Table 4: Coefficient of Determination

	f^2		R^2
EO -> IR	0.024	EO	0.276
OR -> EO	0.052	IR	0.648
OR -> IR	0.406		
PR -> EO	0.153		
PR -> IR	0.344		

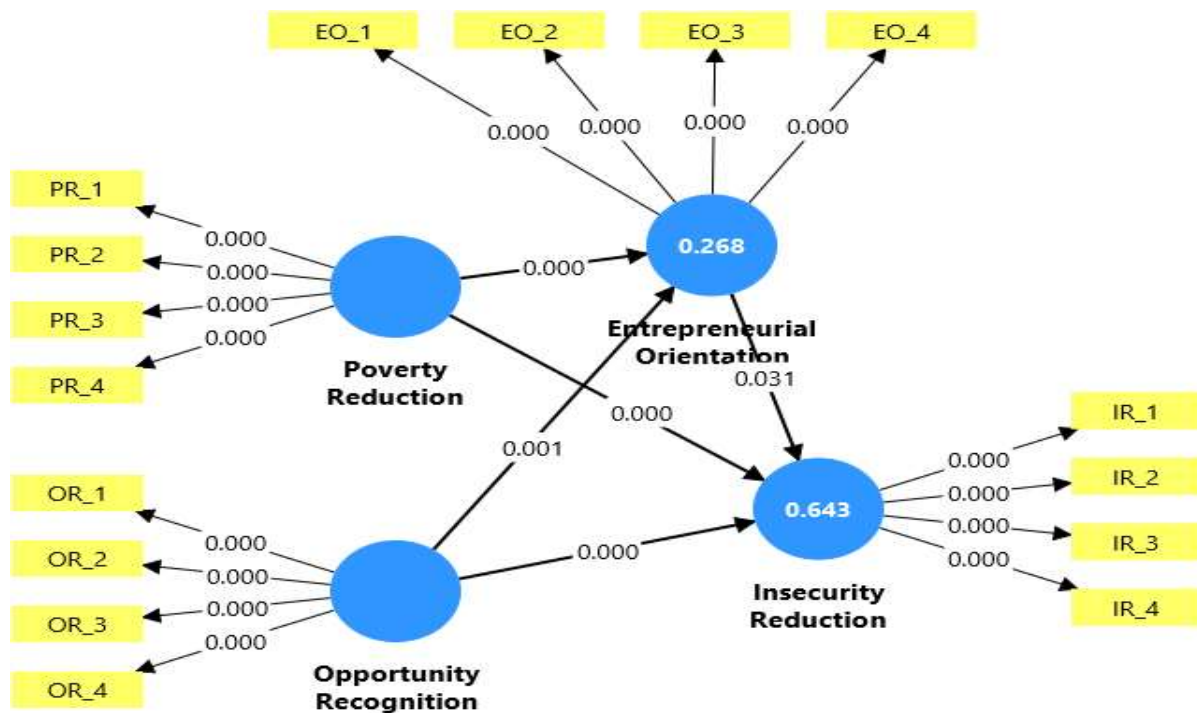
Source: Authors Computation, 2025.

The structural model further assesses R^2 and f^2 [42]. The coefficient of determination (R^2), indicates the variance explained by individual variables on the dependent variable [43]. This implies the total effect of all independent variables on the dependent variable [40] [44]. The adjusted R^2 value obtained from Table 4 is 0.648; this implies that all the variables in the study have moderate ability to predict the insecurity reduction. Precisely, entrepreneurial orientation contributed 27.6% in insecurity reduction, as suggested by [44]. R^2 values of 0.75, 0.50, or 0.25 as substantial, moderate, or weak respectively. Therefore, in this study the R^2 value falls within the moderate level.

Furthermore, f^2 is used to assess the effect of removing a particular independent variable on the dependent variable's R^2 value [44]. However, in the SEM-PLS path model, when an independent variable is removed from the model, f^2 is used to measure the variation in R^2 value to ascertain if the variable removed has a strong effect on the value of the dependent variable. From the output results in Table 4, though both opportunity recognition and poverty reduction indicate large effect size, opportunity is with the highest f^2 value of 0.406; this value falls within the category of large effect size, as suggested by [45] of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 for small, medium, and large degrees of predictive relevance, respectively.

Bootstrapping Testing Mediation and Moderation

The bootstrapping assesses the mediating and moderating relationship. This section details the assessment of the structural model for the direct relationship and the mediating relationship through bootstrap analysis.

Figure 4: Bootstrapping**Table 5: Test of Indirect (Mediation) Relationship**

Path	Beta	SD	T-Stat	P- Value	Decision
PR -> EO -> IR	0.384	0.064	5.944	0.000	Rejected
OR -> EO -> OP	0.211	0.066	3.227	0.001	Rejected

Source: Authors' Computation, 2025.

Table 5 shows the result of indirect effect (mediation analysis) run to examine the mediation effect of entrepreneurial orientation on the relationship between poverty reduction and insecurity reduction. Therefore, to achieve this, a test of mediation is necessary. The findings indicate that (H0₄) entrepreneurial orientation mediates the relationship between poverty reduction and insecurity reduction in North-Eastern Nigeria with (Beta = 0.384, t = 5.944, p > 0.000). Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that (H0₄) entrepreneurial orientation did not significantly mediate the relationship between poverty reduction and insecurity reduction in North-Eastern Nigeria is rejected. Similarly, hypothesis (H0₅) states that entrepreneurial orientation did not significantly mediate between opportunity recognition and insecurity reduction in North-Eastern Nigeria. However, after testing the hypothesis, the findings indicate that entrepreneurial orientation significantly mediates opportunity recognition and insecurity reduction; hence, H0₅ was rejected, based on the (Beta = 0.211, t = 3.227, p > 0.001). This implies that entrepreneurial orientation has an influence on the association between opportunity recognition and insecurity reduction, which is consistent with the findings of [1] and [46] and as well engender cultural integration and interorganizational collaboration [47], [48].



CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Entrepreneurship is meant to help Nigeria deal with its security issues. It has been determined that entrepreneurship plays a major role in tackling security issues in North-Eastern Nigeria. The results of this study centered on four themes: first, the findings suggest that entrepreneurial orientation has a direct influence on insecurity reduction. Entrepreneurship is essential for minimizing security issues since it discourages idleness and increases work among people, which lowers the crime rate. Second, the result further suggests that poverty reduction has a direct influence on insecurity reduction. Entrepreneurship orientation might help address poverty by transferring suitable skill sets, attitudes, and capacities, thereby fostering individual growth to promote successful entrepreneurship. Also, the findings suggest that opportunity recognition has a direct significant influence on insecurity. Recognizing opportunities and taking risks have a major impact on insecurity reduction. Activities related to entrepreneurship help raise people's living standards, generate income, and create jobs.

Finally, the findings imply that entrepreneurial orientation has an influence on the association between opportunity recognition and insecurity reduction. To solve security concerns, those in positions of authority should be aware of corruption, and the government should work harder to enact policies and programs that both encourage entrepreneurship and combat corruption. Also, corporate groups could help government initiatives by giving money, grants, and entrepreneurial training to young people so that they can become self-sufficient.

IMPLICATIONS AND CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE

Many theoretical and practical improvements are made by this work. By learning more about entrepreneurial orientation and adding to the body of research on this subject, which has recently gained international attention, the study has first demonstrated the importance of entrepreneurial orientation toward security reduction in general. According to earlier studies, entrepreneurial education can contribute to a decrease in security, which would improve Nigeria's overall economic growth. This study has focused some emphasis regarding the connection between entrepreneurial training and a decrease in insecurity. It would seem, then, that countries or organizations with an entrepreneurial mentality are more likely to be robust, imaginative, and prepared to go above and beyond the call of duty to stay relevant and promote economic growth.

But the argument for creating fresh value that underpins the study is that put forth by [35], who contend that entrepreneurial views will indirectly enhance novel value creation because they maximum straight and unavoidably encourage corporate dedication to a new entering behavior pattern, which in turn clarifies the creation of new value [36][37]. This is so because EO, as a theory of creating new value, relies on market interaction to improve subsequent new entrants and spot overlooked chances that allow for quick advancement in value creation above and beyond competitors.

The research has additionally demonstrated the applicability and significance of the theory of new value creation in the context of entrepreneurial orientation by demonstrating how it can directly and indirectly encourage organizational dedication to a trend in new entry patterns, which subsequently clarifies the creation of new value. This is so because early on, EO, as a theory of new value creation, relies on market contact to refine subsequent new entrants and



spot overlooked chances that allow for quick advancement in value creation beyond competitors.

Therefore, encouraging a reduction in uneasiness through an entrepreneurial mindset would be advantageous. Among the policy actions recommended to promote economic growth are awareness of corruption and a greater effort to implement policies and programs that stimulate entrepreneurship and combat corruption to address security issues. In practical terms, this study will benefit practitioners and educators by guaranteeing that students understand the benefits of entrepreneurship education. This study might encourage government organizations and private businesses to handle national development issues in novel ways.

LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE STUDY

Even if a study concludes well or makes a substantial contribution, certain limitations remain. Because of this, the sample's first shortcoming is that it only includes respondents from one region of North-Eastern Nigeria. Additionally, it focuses solely on entrepreneurial orientation as a means of lowering insecurity in Nigeria rather than on two or more factors. Future researchers may consider focusing on other topics of interest that could aid in the battle against insecurity in Nigeria.

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