



**IMPACT OF ENTREPRENEURIAL ORIENTATION ON YOUTH  
EMPOWERMENT AND POVERTY ALLEVIATION IN KOGI  
CENTRAL.**

**BY**

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**Abstract**

*Youth unemployment and poverty remain persistent challenges in Nigeria, particularly within Kogi Central, despite numerous entrepreneurship initiatives aimed at fostering inclusion and sustainable livelihoods. Existing studies have focused more on access to finance and policy support, with limited attention to the behavioural and strategic dimensions of entrepreneurship that drive empowerment outcomes. This study examines the impact of entrepreneurial orientation capturing innovativeness, risk-taking, and proactiveness on youth empowerment and poverty alleviation in Kogi Central. Using a quantitative, cross-sectional design, data were collected from 312 youths and analyzed through Structural Equation Modelling using Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS). Findings reveal that innovativeness ( $\beta = 0.218$ ,  $p < 0.000$ ) and proactiveness ( $\beta = 0.456$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ) significantly enhance youth empowerment, while risk-taking ( $\beta = 0.212$ ,  $p < 0.000$ ) exerts a moderate effect. This revealed that youth empowerment through the light of entrepreneurial orientation can leveled down poverty, with the model explaining 59.8% of the variance ( $R^2 = 0.598$ ). The study concludes that strengthening entrepreneurial orientation among youth enhances opportunity utilization, business resilience, and socio-economic inclusion, the study recommends that Government and non-governmental agencies should target their youth empowerment and poverty alleviation project towards innovation-driven ventures through grants, incubation hubs, and technical training to enhance creativity and value addition among youths in Kogi Central, Nigeria.*

**Keywords:** Impact, Entrepreneur, youth, poverty, alleviation



## Introduction

Worldwide poverty is ravaging all societies, and every national government is fighting back, which has become a major concern for world leaders, governments, international organizations, non-governmental bodies, individuals, as well as researchers (Olajide & Okunbanjo, 2021; Imene & Denedo, 2024). Poverty is one of the greatest challenges confronting the globe. This aligns with the ancient assertion of Aristotle who stated that “Poverty is the parent of revolution and crime,” underscoring the dangers poverty poses to social and economic stability across nations (Adeyemi & Popoola, 2022; Ademiluyi, 2023). Nigeria has one of the highest rates of poverty in the world, with recent reports indicating that more than 40 percent of its population lives below the poverty line (National Bureau of Statistics, 2020; Komolafe *et al.*, 2022). Despite the country’s abundant natural and human resources, economic inequality, high unemployment, and structural inefficiencies continue to deepen poverty. The Nigerian government has initiated several poverty alleviation and empowerment programmes such as the National Social Investment Programme, the Youth Entrepreneurship Support programme, and the Bank of Industry funding schemes. While these initiatives are designed to promote entrepreneurship and reduce poverty, their impact has been limited and poverty levels remain stubbornly high (Komolafe *et al.*, 2022; Arejiogbe *et al.*, 2023; Ifechukwu-Jacobs & Okeke, 2025).

Poverty and unemployment are particularly severe among the youth, who make up more than half of Nigeria’s population (National Bureau of Statistics, 2020). Youth unemployment has remained persistently high, with the World Bank (2019) estimating a rate of 29.9 percent. This has posed serious threats to Nigeria’s socio-economic stability, fueling insecurity, militancy, kidnapping, and other forms of criminality (Ifechukwu-Jacobs & Okeke, 2025). Over the years, several government programmes such as the National Poverty Eradication Programme, the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy, the Graduate Internship Scheme, and the Youth Enterprise with Innovative Ideas in Nigeria were introduced with the aim of tackling unemployment and poverty. However, despite their commendable intentions, these programmes have produced minimal impact, leaving the unemployment and poverty crises largely unresolved (Ibrahim *et al.*, 2022; Ifechukwu-Jacobs & Okeke, 2025). In 2016, the Federal Government of Nigeria launched the N-Power programme under the National Social Investment Programme, with the goal of empowering youth through human capital development and job creation (Ibrahim *et al.*, 2022). The initiative sought to address poverty alleviation and youth empowerment by providing training and opportunities in education, health, and agriculture. One of its core components, N-Power Agro, was designed to connect research to farming practice, build agribusiness capacity, and support agricultural productivity (Apkor-Robaro *et al.*,



2023). Although official reports highlight some successes of the programme, its long-term effectiveness remains uncertain, as there has been little empirical evidence to validate its actual impact on youth empowerment and poverty alleviation. Globally, poverty reduction has been more successful in developed economies, where deliberate policies have integrated entrepreneurial orientation into youth development strategies (Sutter *et al.*, 2019; Khodor *et al.*, 2024). These approaches have empowered young people to create sustainable income, reduce dependency on government or donor support, and contribute productively to their societies (Sutter *et al.*, 2019; Khodor *et al.*, 2024). In contrast, poverty remains deeply entrenched in developing economies, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, where weak institutions, poor policy implementation, and limited entrepreneurial opportunities hinder sustainable empowerment.

In Nigeria, and more specifically in Kogi Central, empowerment programmes have too often taken the form of short-term material distributions, such as motorcycles, tricycles, sewing machines, grinding machines, or even stipends, with little or no attention to entrepreneurial training, innovation, or skill-building. While these items provide immediate relief, they rarely translate into sustainable sources of livelihood, as many beneficiaries end up selling them off or lack the knowledge and orientation to convert them into long-term ventures (Isiaka, 2022; Achimugu & Adamu, 2024). The outcome is a recurring cycle of poverty, disempowerment, and unemployment. This challenge is compounded by the absence of empirical research and evidence-based frameworks to guide empowerment strategies that align with entrepreneurial orientation principles. Unlike developed economies that rely on research-driven and tested policy models, many Nigerian empowerment programmes remain politically motivated, short-lived, and unsustainable. It is against this backdrop that the present study seeks to investigate the impact of entrepreneurial orientation on youth empowerment and poverty alleviation in Kogi Central. By bridging the gap between theory, policy, and practice, this study aims to provide empirical insights into how entrepreneurial orientation can foster innovation, resilience, and sustainable income generation among the youth population, thereby contributing to poverty reduction and long-term empowerment in the region.

### **Problem Statement**

Youth unemployment and widespread poverty remain persistent socio-economic challenges in Kogi Central, undermining sustainable development and fueling insecurity in the region (Achimugu & Adamu, 2024). Despite the introduction of various empowerment programmes such as the National Social Investment Programme, N-Power, and other initiatives, their impact has been minimal. Poverty and unemployment levels remain stubbornly high because many interventions are



short-term, material-centered, and politically motivated, focusing on distributing items like motorcycles, tricycles, and sewing machines rather than creating entrepreneurial orientation and knowledge. Such approaches often provide temporary relief but fail to create sustainable livelihoods, resulting in recurring cycles of poverty, disempowerment, and joblessness (Sutter *et al.*, 2019).

Evidence from developed economies shows that entrepreneurial orientation and knowledge on innovativeness, risk-taking and proactiveness plays a significant role in poverty alleviation and youth empowerment by fostering creativity, resilience, and opportunity recognition (Sutter *et al.*, 2019; Khodor *et al.*, 2024). However, in Kogi Central, empowerment strategies rarely incorporate these entrepreneurial dimensions, leaving beneficiaries without the orientation needed to transform resources into long-term ventures. Compounding this challenge is the absence of empirical studies that specifically examine the role of entrepreneurial orientation in addressing poverty and empowering youth in the region. This gap in evidence-based policy and practice highlights the need for an empirical investigation into how entrepreneurial orientation can enhance poverty alleviation and youth empowerment in Kogi Central. Understanding this relationship is crucial for designing sustainable strategies that move beyond temporary interventions, foster innovation and resilience among youths, and contribute to long-term socio-economic development in the region.

### **Research Question**

Does entrepreneurial orientation have impact on youth empowerment and poverty alleviation in Kogi Central?

### **Research Hypothesis**

To achieve the objectives of the study the following hypothesis has been formulated for testing.

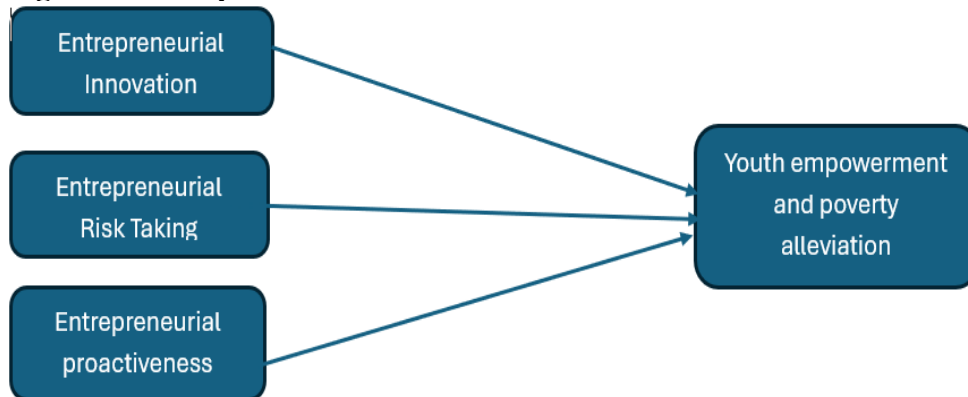
H<sub>0</sub>: Entrepreneurial innovation has no significant impact on youth empowerment and poverty alleviation in Kogi central.

H<sub>0</sub>: Entrepreneurial risk taking has no significant impact on youth empowerment and poverty alleviation in Kogi central.

H<sub>0</sub>: Entrepreneurial proactiveness has no significant impact on youth empowerment and poverty alleviation in Kogi central.



**Figure1: Conceptual framework**



Source: Author (2025)

### **Schume Peters Theory of Innovation and Resources Based View**

The current study is anchored on Two theories to establish a theoretical background. Firstly, Schumpeter's Innovation Theory of Entrepreneurship (1934), which emphasizes that economic development is driven by innovation and creative destruction. Schumpeter argued that entrepreneurs play a central role in introducing new products, processes, and markets that disrupt the status quo and stimulate growth. This theory directly supports the role of entrepreneurial innovation, risk-taking, and proactiveness as drivers of youth creativity, opportunity exploitation, and resilience. By fostering innovation and encouraging youths to pursue new ventures despite uncertainties, these entrepreneurial behaviours empower them to establish sustainable livelihoods, thereby contributing to poverty alleviation. Secondly, the study is also anchored on Resource-Based View by Barney (1991), which focuses on firms' ability to gain competitive advantage through unique, valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable resources. In this context, innovativeness, risk-taking, and proactiveness are intangible resources and capabilities that strengthen youths' capacity to create competitive ventures. When properly harnessed, these entrepreneurial resources empower young people to convert limited inputs into viable enterprises, enhancing productivity and income generation. Thus, resources-based view links entrepreneurial orientation directly to youth empowerment and indirectly to poverty reduction by positioning entrepreneurial capabilities as critical resources for survival and growth. The two theories highlight the mediating role of youth empowerment in translating entrepreneurial orientation into poverty alleviation. Innovation builds problem-solving skills, proactiveness fosters initiative and independence, while risk-taking strengthens resilience, all of which empowers youths to overcome socio-economic constraints. Empowered youths, in turn, leverage these capabilities to generate sustainable income, reduce dependency, and contribute to community



development. Together, these theories provide a coherent framework that links entrepreneurial orientation to youth empowerment and poverty alleviation.

### **Concept of youth empowerment and poverty alleviation**

Extant studies have conceptualized Poverty as a multidimensional condition that extends beyond income deprivation to include limited access to education, healthcare, and opportunities for social participation (Isiaka, 2022; Olusegun *et al.*, 2022; Arejiogbe *et al.*, 2023). Eyeh (2024) conceptualized poverty as relative deprivation, arguing that it reflects an inability to engage in the normal activities of society. Similarly, Ilori *et al.* (2023) revealed that poverty is the absence of substantive freedoms and capabilities necessary to lead a life one values. This perspective moves the discourse away from a narrow focus on financial resources toward a broader concern with human potential and wellbeing.

Also, the measurement of poverty has equally evolved to capture its multidimensional nature. The Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI), developed by Alkire and Santos (2010), also reveals the simultaneous deprivations in health, education, and living standards, providing a more holistic picture of who is poor and why. Studies further demonstrate that while income-based measures remain useful, multidimensional approaches are more effective in informing targeted interventions (Ravallion, 2016). These insights underscore that poverty alleviation strategies must be context-specific and should tackle both material and capability deprivations to achieve long-term sustainability. Research also highlights that effective poverty alleviation requires integrated approaches that combine income support, human capital development, and access to productive assets. Evidence from conditional cash transfers and skill-building interventions reveals that sustainable poverty reduction is more likely when individuals are empowered with resources and the ability to create value (Fiszbein & Schady, 2009). In the light of this, the current study sorts to investigate the impact of entrepreneurial orientation on youth empowerment and poverty alleviation in context of Kogi Central, where youth unemployment and dependence on short-term empowerment programs remain prevalent.

### **Concept of Entrepreneurial Orientation**

Entrepreneurial orientation is a strategic posture that reflects the extent to which individuals and organizations adopt innovative, risk-taking, and proactive behaviors in the pursuit of opportunities (Aziz *et al.*, 2020). In the context of youth empowerment and poverty alleviation, entrepreneurial orientation provides a framework through which young people can develop entrepreneurial mindsets and capabilities, positioning them as active contributors to economic growth rather than passive recipients of support (Qasim *et al.*, 2025). By cultivating innovativeness, risk-taking, and proactiveness, youths are better equipped to create sustainable ventures, generate income, and uplift their communities (Miah *et al.*, 2024; Qasim





*et al.*, 2025). Innovativeness as one of the proxies of entrepreneurial orientation refers to the ability of youth to embrace creativity, generate new ideas, and translate them into practical ventures. This quality enables young entrepreneurs to design unique products and services, utilize technology in business, and establish differentiated solutions that respond to local challenges (Olajide & Okunbanjo, 2021; Qasim *et al.*, 2025). innovativeness enhances competitive ability, a crucial tool for empowerment to break cycles of dependency and create sustainable sources of livelihood, thereby reducing poverty levels (Olajide & Okunbanjo, 2021; Adeyemi & Popoola, 2022).

Risk-taking captures the willingness of individuals to engage in ventures with uncertain outcomes but high potential rewards (Ifechukwu-Jacobs & Okeke, 2025). By embracing calculated risks, young entrepreneurs can enter new markets, adopt novel business models, and invest in opportunities that may initially appear uncertain yet transformative (Ademiluyi, 2023). This disposition is critical for overcoming barriers to resource access and economic participation. In poverty-alleviation contexts, risk-taking provides individual youths the courage to transcend survival-based activities and pursue ventures that generate long-term wealth and employment opportunities. Proactiveness is a forward-looking behavior, where youths identify and exploit emerging opportunities before others (Imene & Denedo, 2024). This dimension fosters leadership, resilience, and adaptability, which are vital for surviving in volatile economic environments (Imene & Denedo, 2024). proactive individuals act ahead of competitors, anticipate change, and create pathways for inclusive growth (Ademiluyi, 2023; Jimoh *et al.*, 2025). In the context of the current study, proactiveness translates into empowerment by enabling them to take initiative in addressing unemployment, innovating community-based enterprises, and contributing to the broader fight against poverty. By integrating innovativeness, risk-taking, and proactiveness, entrepreneurial orientation equips young people with the skills, mindset, and opportunities necessary for empowerment. More importantly, it provides a pathway for poverty alleviation by fostering self-reliance, wealth creation, and sustainable development (Isiaka, 2022; Olusegun *et al.*, 2022; Arejiogbe *et al.*, 2023; Eyeh 2024; Jimoh *et al.*, 2025). A review of existing studies reveals notable gaps in literature in entrepreneurial orientation, youth empowerment, and poverty alleviation. Most extant studies focus on examining entrepreneurial orientation in relation to firm performance, innovation, or sustainability, with limited attention given to its role in empowering youths and reducing poverty, particularly in developing economies. Much of the empirical evidence originates from developed economies and a few urbanized centers in Nigeria, leaving rural and semi-urban areas such as Kogi Central underexplored despite their unique socio-economic realities. These gaps highlight the need for context-specific evidence that demonstrates how dimensions of



entrepreneurial orientation proxies like innovativeness, risk-taking, and proactiveness translate into empowerment outcomes and poverty alleviation among youths in Kogi Central.

### **Methodology**

The data for this study is obtained through structured questionnaires administered to youths across the five Local Government Areas of Kogi Central Senatorial District Adavi, Ajaokuta, Okehi, Okene, and Ogori-Magongo. These respondents include young business owners, unemployed youths who are beneficiaries of empowerment programmes, and members of youth associations, whose experiences reflect entrepreneurial orientation and its role in youth empowerment and poverty alleviation. Based on the Nigeria population commission (2020), the combined population of the five local government area is approximately 1,251,700 specifically, Adavi has 292,800, Ajaokuta has 165,000, Okehi has 301,300, Okene has 438,900 and Ogori-Magongo has 53,700. Using the national benchmark from the National Baseline Youth Survey, which estimates youths to be individual withing the ages of 15–35 years which constitute about 45.6% of the Kogi Central population, the youth population of Kogi Central is estimated at 571,220. applying Taro Yamane's (1967) formula for finite populations. With an estimated youth population of 571,220 in Kogi Central Senatorial District and a 5% level of precision, the formula produced a sample size of approximately 400 respondents. To enhance reliability and account for potential non-response, an additional 10% was added, bringing the adjusted sample size to 440 respondents. This sample size is considered adequate for representing the views of youths across the five Local Government Areas of Kogi Central in assessing the impact of entrepreneurial orientation on empowerment and poverty alleviation. Data collected from the survey were analyzed using the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) technique. This analytical approach is suitable for predictive modeling and for testing complex relationships among latent constructs, particularly in exploratory research with relatively small samples (Jimoh *et al.*, 2025).

### **Result**

This section presents the analysis of data collected through survey in the study area beginning with the response rate and statistical analysis of demographic variables. A total of 440 questionnaires were administered to individual business owners and unemployed youths in the five local governments of Kogi central. At the conclusion of the data collection exercise, 419 complete questionnaires were retrieved and deemed valid for analysis, yielding a response rate of approximately 95.23%, depicting that the study has a high level of data integrity (Jimoh & Ijaiya, 2021; Jimoh *et al.*, 2025).





**Table 1:**

*Nature of empowerment received by Respondent in Kogi state*

Empowerment received ever in Kogi central		Frequency	Frequency%	Percent
None received		156	37.23	100
Material empowerment		139	33.17	100
Government Training		73	17.42	100
Empowerment				
Entrepreneurial incubation		51	12.17	100
training				
Total		419	100	

Table 1 reveals the youth empowerment in Kogi Central. majority of the respondents at about 37.2 have received no form of empowerment while 33.17% of the respondents have received material support such as motorcycles, sewing machines, or stipends. Only 17.4% of the respondents benefited from government training programmes, and a smaller share of 12.2% accessed entrepreneurial incubation training. These forms of empowerment are more strongly aligned with entrepreneurial orientation, as they promote innovativeness, proactiveness, and risk-taking attributes that are critical for sustainable youth empowerment. The limited reach of such programmes suggests that entrepreneurial orientation is not yet adequately integrated into empowerment initiatives in Kogi Central. This gap undermines the potential of empowerment to translate into sustainable livelihoods and poverty reduction, highlighting the need for policies that shift focus from short-term material interventions to skill-driven, innovation-based, and incubation-oriented empowerment strategies.



## Measurement model

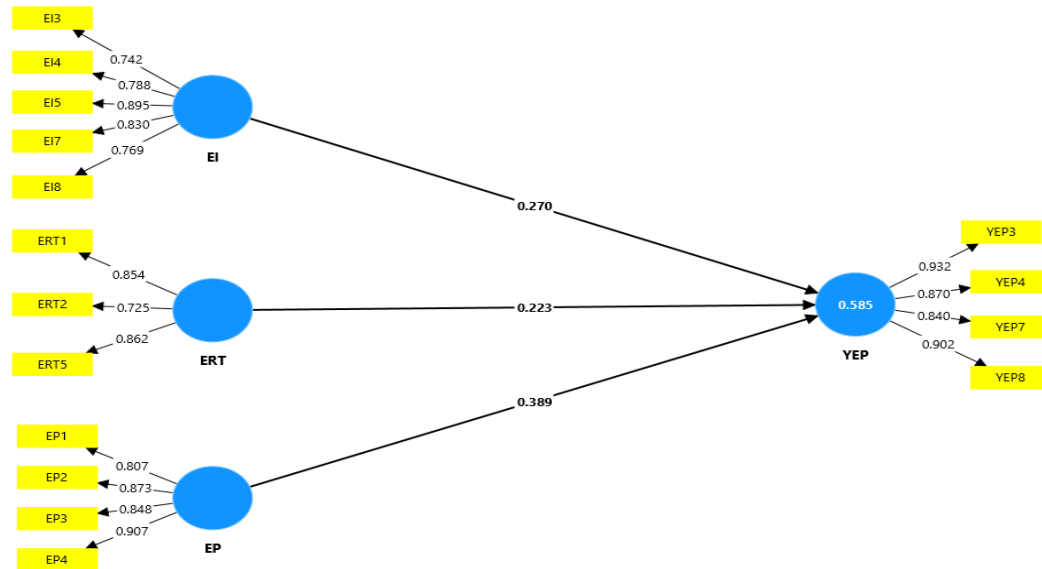


Figure 2: Assessment of Measurement Model

Source: Author (2025)

The assessment model is evaluated in terms of reliability Indicator, internal consistency reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. All indicators with outer loadings below the minimum threshold of 0.60 were removed, leaving all indicators that demonstrated satisfactory loadings, ranging from 0.725 to 0.932, which exceeds the acceptable minimum of 0.70 (Hair *et al.*, 2019). This revealed an adequate reliable indicator for all items used in accessing Entrepreneurial Innovativeness (EI), Entrepreneurial Proactiveness (EP), Entrepreneurial Risk-Taking (ERT), and Youth Empowerment and Poverty alleviation (YEP). Internal reliability consistency was evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability (CR). The Cronbach's Alpha values ranged from 0.747 to 0.909, while the Composite Reliability value ranges between 0.762 to 0.936. All these values exceeded the minimum recommended threshold of 0.70, showing that the indicators consistently represent their respective constructs.

Discriminant validity was assessed using both cross-loadings and the Fornell Larcker criterion. The cross-loadings table shows that each item loaded highest on its assigned construction compared to other constructs, thereby satisfying the discriminant validity requirement. In addition, the square roots of the AVE values (EI = 0.806; EP = 0.860; ERT = 0.816; YEP = 0.887) were higher than their



respective inter-construct correlations, further confirming discriminant validity. These results indicate that the constructs are empirically distinct and measure unique dimensions of entrepreneurial orientation and youth empowerment and poverty alleviation, despite exhibiting moderate correlations. Overall, the survey results confirm that the assessment model possesses strong reliability and validity. This revealed that the model is suitable for further analysis in the structural model. Table 4.3.3, Table 4.3.4, and Table 4.3.5 present the results of the indicator reliability, internal consistency reliability, and discriminant validity respectively.

**(I) H<sub>0</sub>: Entrepreneurial Innovativeness has no significant impact on youth empowerment and poverty alleviation in Kogi Central.**

Result of the survey reveal a path coefficient of 0.270, indicating that entrepreneurial innovativeness has a positive relationship with youth empowerment and poverty alleviation in Kogi Central. The T-statistic value of 6.080, which is greater than the critical value of 1.96, and the *p*-value of 0.000, indicate that entrepreneurial innovativeness is highly significant in influencing youth empowerment and poverty alleviation in the study area. This implies that entrepreneurial innovativeness significantly and positively influences youth empowerment and poverty alleviation. A unit increase in entrepreneurial innovativeness will lead to a 0.270 unit increase in youth empowerment and poverty alleviation. Hence, the study rejects the null hypothesis. This finding supports the study by Elnadi and Gheith (2021), who established that entrepreneurial innovativeness fosters business creativity and sustainability, ultimately improving youth empowerment and livelihood outcomes.

**(II) H<sub>0</sub>: Entrepreneurial Risk-Taking has no significant impact on youth empowerment and poverty alleviation in Kogi Central.**

The result of the study shows a path coefficient of 0.223, suggesting that entrepreneurial risk-taking has a positive relationship with youth empowerment and poverty alleviation in Kogi Central. The T-statistics of 5.860 exceed the benchmark value of 1.96, and the P-value of 0.000 confirms that the relationship is statistically significant. This shows that entrepreneurial risk-taking significantly and positively affects youth empowerment and poverty alleviation in Kogi central. A unit increase in entrepreneurial risk-taking will result in a 0.223 unit increase in youth empowerment and poverty alleviation in Kogi Central. Consequently, the study rejects the null hypothesis. This result supports the submission of Najib (2021), who found that entrepreneurs' willingness to take calculated risks enhances their



ability to create opportunities and sustainable ventures, thereby improving youth livelihood.

**(III) H<sub>0</sub>: Entrepreneurial Proactiveness has no significant impact on youth empowerment and poverty alleviation in Kogi Central.**

Findings reveal a path coefficient of 0.389, revealing that entrepreneurial proactiveness has a positive relationship with youth empowerment and poverty alleviation in Kogi Central. The T-statistic value of 9.209 is well above 1.96, and the *p*-value of 0.000 indicates a highly significant effect. This result suggests that entrepreneurial proactiveness significantly and positively influences youth empowerment and poverty alleviation. A unit increase in entrepreneurial proactiveness will lead to a 0.389 unit increase in youth empowerment and poverty alleviation. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. This finding corroborates Sanchez-Garcia et al. (2024), who reported that proactive entrepreneurs tend to anticipate market trends, seize opportunities, and enhance socio-economic development, thereby contributing to youth empowerment and poverty reduction.

**Table 3**

*Path Coefficient Significance Tested Using Bootstrapping Method*

Measures	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
Path Coefficient	0.557	0.567	0.026	21.831	0.000
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.598	0.563	0.026	21.385	0.000

The path coefficient of 0.557 indicates a strong positive effect between the constructs under study. The *t*-value of 21.831 (greater than 1.96) and *p*-value of 0.000 confirm that the relationship is highly significant at the 5% significance level. Similarly, the Adjusted R<sup>2</sup> value of 0.598 suggests that approximately 59.8% of the variance in the dependent variable is explained by the model, indicating strong explanatory power and reliability of the structural model.

**Conclusion**

The findings from the PLS-SEM result analyzed reveal a statistically significant and positive relationship between entrepreneurial orientation proxies specifically entrepreneurial innovativeness, entrepreneurial risk-taking, and entrepreneurial proactiveness and youth empowerment and poverty alleviation in Kogi Central.



The structural model shows a path coefficient of 0.557 and an adjusted  $R^2$  of 0.598, indicating that 55.7% of the variance in youth empowerment and poverty alleviation can be explained by entrepreneurial orientation. The T-values and P-values ( $t = 21.831$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ) indicate that these effects are statistically significant and robust. Among the predictors, entrepreneurial innovativeness ( $\beta = 0.218$ ,  $p < 0.000$ ) emerged as a strong determinant of youth empowerment and poverty reduction, demonstrating that innovative business activities significantly enhance livelihood opportunities and self-sufficiency. Entrepreneurial risk-taking ( $\beta = 0.212$ ,  $p < 0.000$ ) also shows a positive and significant effect, suggesting that calculated risk behaviour contributes to wealth creation and job generation among youths. Similarly, entrepreneurial proactiveness ( $\beta = 0.456$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ) displays the highest coefficient, indicating that forward-looking and opportunity-driven behaviour strongly drives empowerment and income diversification among young entrepreneurs. These results validate the principles of the Endogenous Growth Theory (Romer, 1986), which posits that internal drivers such as innovation, knowledge, and human capital development propel sustainable growth. In this context, entrepreneurship serves as an internal engine for social and economic transformation, particularly in developing economies where external opportunities are limited. By fostering innovation, encouraging risk-taking, and promoting proactive market behaviour, communities can achieve sustainable poverty alleviation and inclusive youth development.

### **Recommendations**

Finally, based on the empirical findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Government and non-governmental agencies should target their empowerment and poverty alleviation project towards innovation-driven ventures through grants, incubation hubs, and technical training to enhance creativity and value addition among youths in Kogi Central.
2. Financial organizations should design flexible credit schemes and risk-sharing mechanisms that will motivate youths to take calculated risks in businesses without fear of total loss.
3. Entrepreneurship Training programs should focus on strategic planning, market scanning, and anticipation of future opportunities to strengthen proactive behaviour among youths.
4. Policymakers should focus on providing enabling environments such as infrastructures, mentorship, and access to technology to stimulate youth-led enterprises that can drive community-based poverty alleviation.



5. Further studies could investigate moderating or mediating factors such as access to finance, education level, or government policy to better understand the mechanisms linking entrepreneurial orientation to youth empowerment and poverty alleviation in Kogi Central.

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