

# Sex Differences in Entrepreneurial Orientation: A Catalyst for Sustainable Development

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## ABSTRACT

Nigeria teeming youths and active age adults, either in an employment or not, often roam the streets in search of better employments that are almost nonexistent. Thousands of youths graduate from the Universities and end up in becoming cyber-criminals or engaging in yahoo activities that negatively impact the development of a nation. Worse still is the rush into marriages, that even crash in no distant time, by the girls who seem to hold the belief that their existence and survival is on the males they are married to. This trend is traceable to the fact that a number of them did not know that they could get self employed and become employers of labor afterwards, rather than assuming that the onus of employment rests solely on government. This study therefore sought to find out whether there are sex differences in entrepreneurial orientation among Nigerians using the survey method of research. Entrepreneurial orientation scale was administered to 231 research participants randomly chosen from Ado Ekiti, Nigeria. Results of data analysis revealed that sex differences existed in the entrepreneurial orientation of men and women. The finding was discussed in line with existing literature and recommendation was made.

**Keywords:** Sex, Entrepreneurial Orientation, Sustainable Development, Nigeria

## INTRODUCTION

It is evident that one of the current social problems in Nigeria is unemployment. And unemployment, as we know, is directly related to poverty.

In the parlance of the economists, it is employment that drives savings and investment to boost an economy and banish poverty.

On 19<sup>th</sup> February, 2024; for example, Damilola Aina and Damilola Oluwafemi reported in the Punch Newspaper that the available statistics from the National Bureau of statistics in Nigeria confirmed a surge in Nigeria's unemployment from 4.2 percent in Quarter two of year 2023 to 5.0 percent in the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter. Doris Dokua Sasu, a research expert working with Statista published in Nov 29, 2024 that unemployment is highest in Abia State, Nigeria and followed by the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja and Rivers State with as high as 18% rate (Statista.com, 2025). Nigeria misery index was also reported as being 38.3% in Q2 of 2024 (National Economic Summit Group, Nov., 2024). These, thus, suggests that many Nigerians are experiencing cost of living crisis, with about half of the population living in poverty.

To mitigate this poverty and unemployment crises, anecdotal evidences has proven that entrepreneurship is the key. Even the member nations of the United Nations realized this phenomenon when they met in the year 2015 to chart a course for progress among humanity and set the 2030 agenda for sustainable development. The member nations made a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure that by the year

2030, all people enjoy peace and prosperity. These, they believe are achievable by, among others, promoting entrepreneurial activities and orientation among members of societies of the world.

To promote the entrepreneurial activities, entrepreneurs are required. An entrepreneur is conceived of as an economic agent who unites all means of production (lands of one, the labor of another and the capital of yet another) to produce a product. Schumpeter (1934) defined an entrepreneur as an innovator who uses a process of shattering the status quo of the existing products and new services. To Drucker (1985), an entrepreneur searches for changes, respond to it, and exploit opportunities.

From the fore-going, it is implicit that an entrepreneur is a game changer, whose central activity is that of business creation; and those entrepreneurial activities are desirable to complement governmental efforts to drive the economy of any nation.

Olagunju, Ogbehi and Osarewense (2018), for example, argued that new ventures have a significant multiplier effect in terms of job creation. The World Bank reports (2021) too advised that developing countries should put measure in place to stimulate entrepreneurial activities among its citizens with a view to growing their economies.

To stimulate entrepreneurial activities however, the inhabitants of a polity must be high in their entrepreneurial orientations.

Entrepreneurial orientation refers to the propensity to engage in proactive, innovative, and risk-taking behaviors that lead to new products or services development, or entry into new markets. The orientation entails autonomy and competitive aggressiveness.

The phenomenon of unemployment is getting even worse in Nigeria because, for example, a number of multi-national companies that were producing goods and services in Nigeria and that employed a number of Nigerians have closed down their operations and relocated to other countries. Oluwakemi Abimbola, Edidiong Ikpiti and Justice Okamgba reported in the Punch Newspaper of Dec. 7<sup>th</sup> 2023 that Procter and Gamble, a multi-national consumer goods producer, announced their termination of operations in Nigeria. Other multi-national companies that have since moved from Nigeria include Sanofi, a pharmaceutical multi-national, and Bolt foods, among others.

The movement of the companies is accompanied by unemployment because many that were hitherto employed in such organizations lose their jobs and consequently widen the unemployment rate in Nigeria. The effect also impacts poverty as those that lose their jobs may not any longer have access to wages and salaries to spend on their families and loved ones.

Nigeria is often referred to as the giant of Africa with an abundance of human and material resources. Unfortunately, however, many roam the streets in Nigeria without any gainful employment. It is believed that entrepreneurial engagements can considerably help to mitigate the unemployment problems in Nigeria. Such engagements would require, however, that people are oriented towards being, proactive, innovative and taking risks.

Interestingly, Chukwuemeka, Nzewi, and Okigbo (2008) submitted that Nigeria and her citizenry lack entrepreneurship ability. Abdulahi (2012) too argued that the entrepreneurial related policies of Nigeria government and the environmental forces hinder entrepreneurship on Nigeria.

Also, Scherer, Brodzinski, and Wieber (1990) reported that men have higher self-efficacy than women in entrepreneurial orientation, but Sequeira, Mchree and Mueller (2005) did not support such report.

These inconsistencies in research findings on the influence of sex on entrepreneurial orientation therefore necessitated the present study.

## METHODS

**Research setting:** The study was conducted in Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria

**Participants:** A total of 231 research participants were involved in the study. They comprise 129 males and 102 females whose ages ranged from 18 to 70 years. The mean age of the participants is 33.43 years

**Sampling and Sample Selection:** The research participants were randomly selected from residents in Ado-Ekiti who are 18 years and above. The age criteria are considered to ensure that only adults in the context of Nigeria are involved in the study.

**Design:** The study adopted the ex-post facto research design because the independent variables (Sex and Employment Status) were not directly manipulated.

**Measures:** A questionnaire that is made up of two sections was used in collecting data for analysis.

Section A of the measure delve into the research participants' demographics such as sex, age, and employment status. Participants were also asked whether or not they are willing to start up and own their own businesses.

To measure entrepreneurial orientation, the Entrepreneurial Orientation Scale, a 17 items measure, developed and validated by Mamun, Kumar, Ibrahim, and Yusoff (2017), was used to measure entrepreneurial orientation. The measured is a Likert typed scale with response options ranging from (1) Strongly Disagree to (5) Strongly Agree. The authors reported an alpha coefficient of 0.93 internal consistency for the scale while Yaser and Mohammad (2022) reported a concurrent validity of 0.86 for the scale. It is contained in section B of the research questionnaire.

**Procedure:** A total of two hundred and fifty (250) copies of the research measure was administered on the research participants who volunteered to partake in the research after they were informed about the objectives of the study and the roles expected of them to perform. However, only 231 of the retrieved copies of questionnaire were found duly completed and fit for analysis.

**Data Analysis:** The generated data were subjected to analysis using the SPSS version 25. The two-by-two Analysis of Variance was used to test the hypotheses generated.

## RESULTS

**Table 1a** Descriptive Statistics

Dependent Variable: ENTREPRENEURIAL ORIENTATION

Gender	Job status	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Male	Employed	55.2841	8.91073	88
	Unemployed	50.2195	9.74554	41
	Total	53.6744	9.44736	129
Female	Employed	57.7313	8.50059	67
	Unemployed	54.8571	12.25259	35
	Total	56.7451	9.98185	102
Total	Employed	56.3419	8.79229	155
	Unemployed	52.3553	11.14116	76
	Total	55.0303	9.78570	231

**Table 1b** Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable: ENTREPRENEURIAL ORIENTATION

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	1444.416 <sup>a</sup>	3	481.472	5.311	.001
Intercept	600173.503	1	600173.503	6619.870	<.001
Gender	633.377	1	633.377	6.986	.009
Job Status	795.251	1	795.241	8.772	.003
Gender*Job Status	60.539	1	60.539	.668	.415
Error	20580.372	227	90.662		
Total	721570.000	231			
Corrected Total	22024.788	230			

R Squared = .006 (Adjusted R Squared = .053)

Results of data analysis suggested that contrary to Chukwuemeka et. al. (2008) opinion that Nigerians lack entrepreneurial ability, many Nigerians are willing to take up entrepreneurial activities; given the financial startup funds. This is captured in their responses to the item in the questionnaire that probe to know whether participants are willing to start up their own businesses to which a total of 159 (68.83%) responded ‘YES’.

It is also revealed, as shown on table 1b, that sex is a significant factor of Entrepreneurial Orientation among Ado Ekiti residents [ $F(1,227) = 6.986, p < .01$ ]. A comparison of the mean scores on table 1a revealed that females ( $X = 56.75$ ) are more entrepreneurially oriented than their male counterparts ( $X = 53.67$ ).

The table 1b also revealed a significant difference in the entrepreneurial orientation of the employed and unemployed residents of Ado Ekiti [ $F(1,227) = 8.772, p < .01$ ]. A comparison of the mean scores revealed that those residents who are currently employed ( $X = 56.34$ ) are more entrepreneurially oriented than their counterparts who are unemployed ( $X = 52.36$ ).

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study investigated to know whether there are sex differences in entrepreneurial orientation of Nigerians and whether that Nigerians actually possess the ability to run their own businesses; that, as they are aware, has to do with taking risks, being proactive, and being innovative.

Findings from the study revealed that many Nigerians (68.83% of research participants) are willing to own and run their private businesses. This finding is contrary to Chuwuemek et. al (2008) submission.

Onuoha (2010) too submitted that Nigerian entrepreneurs are hardworking, self-starting, confident, receptive to new ideas, assertive, information seeking, and attune to opportunities. These, no doubt, are some of the entrepreneurial traits identified by McClelland (1965) in his Need for Achievement Theory. Ogunleye and Osagu (2014) also found out that Nigerian entrepreneurs are high in tolerance for ambiguity. And Ogunleye, Ogunlade, Bankole and Oke (2021) reported that Nigerian employees are highly resilient. These traits are strong predictors of entrepreneurial orientation. More recently too, Vincze, Buzas and Szigeti (2019) found out that tolerance for ambiguity was positively related to entrepreneurial passion and intention.

Findings from the present study also revealed a significant sex difference in entrepreneurial orientation among Nigerian samples. Specifically, the comparison of the mean scores revealed that females scored higher on entrepreneurial orientation scale than their male counterparts. This finding is in consonance with the findings of Gatewood, Shaver and Gartner (1995) who found that the performance of females is significantly different

from those of males on entrepreneurial orientation. However, Gatewood et al's study reported a higher mean for males on entrepreneurial orientation.

Manolova, Carter and Gyoshev (2016) found out that there is no significant difference in entrepreneurial enthusiasm between males and females and Fayose, Ogunleye, Ogunlade and Aroso (2024) found no sex differences between males and females on entrepreneurial passion.

The expectation was that males will score higher on entrepreneurial orientation than their female counterparts; given the age long belief that men are bread winners with attendant social pressures exerted on them. It is, based on the expectation, believed that males should be at the fore front in entrepreneurial orientation and income generating ventures.

It seems to be, however, that the old age belief is being challenged nowadays especially given the prevailing economic realities that suggests both men and women to be actively involved in income generating ventures to give the family a good lease of life. The post COVID era too must have influenced the surge in entrepreneurial orientation of women, in particular, to realize that family finances cannot be entirely left in the hands of men. Also, in the present-day Nigeria, the removal of fuel subsidy, a recipe for high cost of living and roof-tearing inflation, may have toughened Nigerians in general and women in particular to become more innovative and adventurous.

The finding by Fayose et. al that reported no significant difference between men and women on entrepreneurial passion and the current study that found a significant difference between men and women on entrepreneurial orientation may be explained away by the fact that whereas Fayose et. al. engaged entrepreneurs as the research participants, the current study did not use entrepreneurs.

It is intriguing to find out that a significant difference existed between the employed and the unemployed on their entrepreneurial orientation where a comparison of the mean scores suggest that the employed are higher on entrepreneurial orientation than their unemployed counterparts. One would have expected that the individuals who do not currently have an identified means of livelihood should be more entrepreneurially oriented to be able to get a means of self-sustenance. That it turned out to be that the employed are the ones who score higher on entrepreneurial orientation may be due to their desire to expand their income level to be able to cater for their varied needs that may have been insatiable with their current earnings.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

The study concluded that sex differences exist in the entrepreneurial orientation of Nigerians and that Nigerians are not averse to entrepreneurial orientation and activities. It also posited that the employed and unemployed Nigerians are significantly different in the entrepreneurial orientation.

It then behooves that both sexes, including the employed and the unemployed, should be cognitively re-oriented to understand that one of the best means of escape from poverty and a mechanism to drive the economy of a nation; without much reliance on the government is entrepreneurship engagements. Engagements in entrepreneurship activities must be preceded by entrepreneurial orientation of members of the populace.

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