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Entrepreneurial Orientation and Growth of Private Secondary Schools in North-Central Nigeria: The Mediating Role of Socio-Cultural Perception

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Abstract
The study symbolised the vitalness of entrepreneurial orientation (EO) as a rewarding element for the growth of private secondary schools in North-Central Nigeria. As a result, the structural equation model (SEM) was employed to examine the mediating role between entrepreneurial orientation and growth of private secondary schools in North-Central Nigeria. The findings divulged that, socio-cultural perception possessed a positive and significant mediating effect on the relationship between the EO variable and growth in terms of number of academic staff and number of students. Hence the study concluded that the EO components considered in the study are important variables in explaining growth of private secondary schools in North-Central Nigeria and socio-cultural perception partially mediated the relationship between EO and growth of privates secondary schools in North-Central Nigeria. The study recommended that notable actions be taken to ensure that the inherent societal perceptions endorse the exhibition of EO attributes which results in growth of private secondary schools in North-Central Nigeria.

Keywords: Socio-cultural perception, Entrepreneurial, Orientation, Growth, Nigeria

1. Introduction

Viewing the innovative dimension of entrepreneurial orientation, innovation entails the birth or establishment of new products, markets or practices (Uchenna et al., 2019). The sets of Innovation as stipulated by Schumpeter in 1934, are itemised as business model innovation, process innovation, product innovation, divestment and miner (Uchenna et al., 2019). Okoli et al. (2021) reiterated that business/ organisations endorse the deployment of unique strategies on the basis of knowledge gained on market players. Innovativeness as lauded by Okoli et al. (2021) stimulates a business/ organization to tilt towards an inventive approach that births new operations, experimentation of ideas, inception of novel production methods, fresh products and service that can be introduced into an existing or new market. Hence innovation scrupulously entails going against the wave and stirring towards a direction of optimum and genuine creativity that nudges an explosion of ideas, concepts, methods/procedures, products and service, techniques, technologies etc.; that can be ushered into the market after acquiring adequate knowledge of the market and appropriately embracing the relevance of sometimes spending on Research and Development (R&D) activities. In other words, institutional owners need to diverse innovative techniques that enhances learning procedures so as to boost the institutions growth and goodwill and as well gain adequate market coverage.

Kanja, (2018) puts forth that pro-activeness delves into taking up proper measures that boosts new opportunities and prospects in inventing products and services with the intention to projected demand, change, market etc. To reinforce this point, Ngoma et al. (2017) went further to state that pro-activeness is the capacity to seek out opportunities, possessing perceptive standpoint centred on the inception of lasts products/services ahead of competitors and acting with regards to projected demand. This invariably means that pro-activeness hinges on consciously been foresighted to actively disseminate strategic actions that pre-empts, understands and satisfies market demand to outpace competitors while deploying practicable resources, technologies at optimum capacity to attain competitive edge. Education Institution owners need this dimension of EO to adjust to dynamic and operational eventualities of the business environment. This initiative needs to be utilised by institution owners at appropriate instances during the course of running the business.

Uchenna et al (2019), pointed out that risk-taking entails venturing into an uncertain business by taking valiant steps which requires substantial funding and usage of resources while considering both local and foreign environmental challenges. Uchenna et al (2019), explicitly reiterated that organisations take up risk to prop up novel projects irrespective of the indicated uncertainties. Hence risk-taking involves venturing into daring business opportunities and environment with the knowledge of and awareness of uncertainties whose outcome could have an adverse effect or a lucrative outlook on the business. Education institution owners should be able to forecast, identify, assess and evade potential threats to minimize the vulnerability associated with the education industry.

Uchenna et al (2019), states that competitive aggressiveness involves a carefully articulated ploy to subdue and respond to competitors in an aggressive manner through utilisation of information from the industry. Based on this understanding, competitive aggressiveness warrants effectuating exceptional tactics and alertness inform of a head on confrontation and reactiveness in order to clap back to a competitive challenge. Education institution owners need this dimension of EO to enable them deploy uncommon tactics to challenge leading players in the educational sector by assessing their opponent's weakness while concentrating on growth of their own institution.

Education is deemed a sustainable resource that enables acquisition of: knowledge, values and skills set needed to make logical verdicts locally or internationally so as to enhance the standard of life now or in the future (Ngele, 2020). Today's entrepreneurial ecosystem, inclusive the educational sector, is gradually becoming demanding due the variability in the environment in which operations are conducted (Ngele et al., 2022). The relationship that exists between EO and growth has not been comprehensively accomplished (Kanja, 2018). Assumptions built on the premise that growth of private secondary schools is solely linked to the characteristics of an entrepreneur (i.e. the proprietor) is not entirely true as the growth of private secondary schools is dependent on the strategy making procedures that enables the deployment of EO dimensions such as Risk-taking, pro-activeness and innovativeness (Kanja, 2018). Though varied studies purported that enhancing the internal control would increase the competitiveness and growth; it is worthy to note that internal control are the strategic procedures and abilities which are said to be the make-up and characteristics of an entrepreneur who in fact, is regarded as the secret to growth (Kanja, 2018). Thus relevant studies have not totally established how the EO components are incorporated (Kanja, 2018).

The main objective of this study is to investigate whether socio-cultural perception plays a mediating role between entrepreneurial orientation and growth of private secondary schools in North-Central Nigeria. Delving further, this study is sectioned into literature review, methodology, findings and conclusion.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Entrepreneurial Orientation

EO in totality, is the entrepreneurial disposition of a firm that reflects in its decision making patterns, managerial credos and strategic composition. Ibrahim & Martins (2020) defined EO as the business-level stance that brings about the firms managerial ideologies, strategy formulation methods and firm conduct that are entrepreneurial in nature. Similarly, Nwachukwu et al. (2017) postulates that EO factors is the entrepreneurial attitude of an organisation as well as its behavioural composition.

Ferreira et al. (2021) views EO relating to Lumpkin and Dess perception that EO at firm level involves strategizing and execution of plans which positions the organisation to view unique opportunities entrepreneurially. The core dimensions of EO as reiterated by Muller are risk-taking, pro-activeness and innovativeness (Ferreira et al., 2021). Furthermore, EO is said to be an organisations' demeanours towards self-governed activities (i.e the organisations ability to take up entrepreneurial activities), risk-taking, innovative engagement, aggressive and pro-active reaction to surpass competitors in the market area (Ngoma et al., 2017).

The two preponderant founders of the dimensions of EO are Miller/Covin in 1989 and Lumpkin and Dess in 1996 (Wales, 2016). Covin and Miller instituted the three dimensions of EO i.e. risk taking, pro-activeness and innovativeness while Lumpkin and Dess in 1966 extended the dimensionality to accommodate autonomy and competitive-aggressiveness (Wales, 2016). Wales (2016) recognised that EO construct has advanced not just in entrepreneurship field but in management enquiry as it has been scholarly acknowledged and reappraised in varied literature. Wales (2016) noted that the historical foundation of EO concept has been adequately evaluated in contemporary scholarly enquires; on account of the foretasted reviews, EO, based on theoretical acknowledgement, views entrepreneurship beyond its singular view point such as the inception of lasts/novel innovation; hence it is deemed in totality as strategic demeanour. Lumpkin & Dess (1996) affirmed that a great number of entrepreneurship intellects have come forth with their own categorisation/interpretation of entrepreneurship. The categorisation delved deeper into the volatile composition of entrepreneurship with regards to the dynamic composure of the environment, individuals, organisations and how they affect the functionality of entrepreneurship. Though the collaborative exertions brought about the varied amplitude of entrepreneurship, yet the broad consonance of entrepreneurship categorisation remains unsettled; hence the impediment builds up on the breach to properly examine the relationship of entrepreneurship to performance/growth (Lumpkin & Dess, 1996).

Indisputably, EO is deemed as a deep-rooted attribute with unmatched value to both individuals and firms. Entrepreneurial orientation reveals those characteristics in an individual or firm that makes their actions seem entrepreneurial in nature. For instance, since some of the attributes of an entrepreneur entails: ability to pre-empt opportunities and potential threats, ability to identify needs that has not been satisfied or that is poorly satisfied, constantly undertaking innovative means that outshines competitors, fearlessly embarking on well calculated risky endeavours etc., when individuals or firms take up such initiative their actions itself are said to be entrepreneurial in nature while the attributes exhibited i.e taking risks (risk-taking), undertaking innovations that outshines competitors (innovativeness) and pre-empting (pro-activeness) etc. is deemed to be entrepreneurial orientation. EO attribute is best triggered when the desire or need to achieve something is born; when there is a yearn for something, it becomes evident that the EO components can be easily triggered to satisfy that need.

2.2 Risk-taking

Risk-taking entails making unflinching moves into an unpredictable business environment, obtaining sizeable funds to establish doubtful businesses while taking into cognisance local and international qualms in the business area (Uchenna et al., 2019). Risk-taking is an organisations' keenness to strengthen/sustain inventive projects notwithstanding the indicative uncertainties; organisations deploy risk-taking tactics to move away from the normality in the business environment so as to encounter remarkable accomplishments (Uchenna et al., 2019).

Okoli et al. (2021) asserted that risk-taking is attached to the willingness and propensity to dedicate substantial funds to harness or explore business techniques whose outcome is unrevealed. Risk-taking possess performance-related effect which is considered insubstantial compared to other components of EO; more so, the relationship between risk-taking and performance is deemed weak as opposed to innovativeness and pro-activeness (Okoli et al., 2021). Risk-taking is positively linked to the innovations put forth by a firm and as the firm's risk appreciates the propensity for creative innovation increases (Okoli et al., 2021). Risk-taking orientation illustrates a firm's dedication to undertaking daring projects, prompt plans to mitigate losses, tremendously deploying hefty resources in technologies and vending the firms produce/services in novel markets (Okoli et al., 2021).

Summatively, risk-taking stems from varied premeditated motives which could be regarded as voluntary risks (i.e. when an individual is aware of the associated threats that an activity constitutes and is still willing to undertake such activity); in a voluntary risk the risk taker/decision maker has some sort of control over situations/ decisions to be made and as such bears every brunt that comes with the risk or non-voluntary risks (i.e. risks undertaken under duress as the risk bearer has no control over the situation and is been forced to undertake an uncomfortable activity in response to/escape route to a harsh reality/painful ordeal. Thus a firms risk-taking disposition, means its capacity to embrace risks in anticipation of increased financial returns by devoting substantive corporate resources, creating and introducing products into the market, facilitating uncharted opportunities and technologies as well as accommodating a reality of a detrimental outcome.

2.3 Innovativeness

Innovativeness is a firm's aptness to come forth with inventive ideas and procedures which translates into new found technological processes, market and products (Ngoma et al., 2017). Thus innovation is the creation, adoption and execution of recent concepts, product/services and approaches (Ngoma et al., 2017). It is put forward that entrepreneurship cannot survive without without innovation as it is crucial for strategy formation and effectuation; hence innovation is built on the premise of improved approaches products and services (Ngoma et al., 2017). Innovation is vital for competitive edge of firms in the global arena as competitiveness via innovation proffers steady and superior market placement (Ngoma et al., 2017). Olaolu & Obaji (2020) conceived innovation to be devising ideas or better ways of doing things which saves money and time while offering competitive advantage to business in the market area.

Innovativeness and entrepreneurship are intertwined as entrepreneurship cannot be discussed without the inclusion of innovativeness. More so, without innovativeness the core basis of entrepreneurship and been an entrepreneur could be defeated. Innovativeness, a dimension of EO, can be said to be one of the power houses of a business and can be linked to the resilient innovative attitude of a business owner which is steered towards inventing new work processes that is time efficient, creation of unique: products, services, strategies,

production process, efficient delivery, prompt channel of material supply etc. thus all these procedures combined forms a unified technique composed in innovativeness.

2.4 Pro-activeness

Pro-activeness is focused on the initiative of foreseeing and ensuing latest opportunities relating to project demand and partaking in developing markets (Ngoma et al., 2017). Pro-activeness is the capacity to seek out opportunities, possessing perceptive standpoint centered on the inception of latest product/services ahead of competitors and acting with regards to projected demand (Ngoma et al., 2017). Pro-activeness emerges as a result of a firms cognisance and prompt response to market gesture; firms that possess pro-activeness make-up, sight more opportunities, exhibit inventive ideas that gives them more grounds than their rivals and such firms are inclined to charge more than their competitors (Ngoma et al., 2017).

Pro-activeness proffers businesses with a competitive leverage/advantage which is achieved via the ability of the business owner to scrupulously forecast unexplored opportunities, ideas, demands, markets, technologies e.t.c that sets their business at the limelight of affairs ahead of their competitors. Pro-activeness should not in any way be considered as a strategy adopted by advanced firms in top notch industries rather, this attribute should be embraced by all spheres of businesses as the means to conquer both environmental and financial constraints. Pro-activeness, entails adequately enhancing one's mind set to think and see beyond the normal circumstances/identify loopholes that can be turned into gainful opportunities. It can also be seen as the preparedness of the business owner to deploy substantial funds into uncommon/rare services and products in anticipation of forecasted demand of existing and potential competitors.

2.5 Growth measurement of secondary school

Okangi (2019) recounts that growth of a firm is significant to its size and output which invariably is closely associated with the firm's survival; EO is an essential facto that influences a firm's growth. In addition, Garba et al. (2019) echoes that the EO composition of an individual in a business determines the growth or failure of a business; as it remarks the growth prospects of the business as well as its strides in the market arena. Recently, varied literary works states that growth is deemed to be the end result of entrepreneurial attitude exhibited by small firms and that the growth of small firms can be attributed to a blend of basic properties namely: the small firm's composition/characteristics, the embodiment of the entrepreneur and lastly the strategies inculcated in the firm (Garba et al., 2019).

In relation to secondary educational institutions, Pretomode (2019) purports that success or ability of educational institutions to accomplish pre-set goals rests on the leadership efficacy of the school head. School heads, are perceived to be transformational leaders with the capacity to effectuate a conducive environment for delivery of quality learning and teaching services (Pretomode, 2019). School heads are appointed on the justification of extensive years of service, teaching record, experience and sometimes on the basis of familiarity instead of leadership possession (Pretomode, 2019).

Hence it is critical that stakeholders be focused on how school heads execute their jobs to achieve set goals and ensure that both teachers and principals are adequately equipped for their positions to avoid future distress which occur as a result of the dynamic composition of contemporary educational ecosystem (Pretomode, 2019). Dissecting the above statement, it invariably stipulates that pre-development grounding of school heads, teachers as well as their up to speed aptness and adaptiveness is crucial for environmental dynamism and constitutes growth in both number of teachers and students. Once more, Pretomode (2019) retells that training

enables staffs to be kept abreast with recent technologies, outshine competitors, instigate staff pro-activeness, escalated goodwill of the school, enable future orientation, captivate and retain valuable staffs.

The progression to a secondary school is considered a significant period as it depicts the adjustability in an adolescent educational orientation (Yeager et al., 2019). Academic success can be strengthened during the progression to secondary school via the social-psychological approaches; it refines the way teenagers view themselves, their course work and it motivates them to leverage on learning opportunities embedded in the school (Yeager et al., 2019). In this case, growth mind set intelligence mediation is of the essence as it pacifies the belief system teenagers have about the level of their intelligence and restructures their mind set to comprehend that intellectual capabilities are not fixated but should be cultivated with dedication, trying unique techniques and seeking for assistance (Yeager et al., 2019).

Holistically, the word growth is an intentional phrase meaning that for growth to occur one must be intentional in propelling growth. Recipes for attaining/achieving growth are: persistence/determination, dedication/commitment, viewing potential failures as steps to success, positively building one's mind-set irrespective of setbacks, understanding that growth is not instant but a gradual process, understanding the reason for failure, adequately addressing pitfalls to ensure that the mistakes that led to such failures are not repeated etc.
The educational sector is an industry that tremendously accrues/grows. Private secondary schools are not exempted from the benefits gained from the industry. owners of private secondary schools are tasked with the responsibility of ensuring that all staff (i.e. pricipals, teachers, non-academic staff e.t.c) work ceaselessly to propel growth. The leadership style of the school owner is usually essential as they are regarded as transformational leaders that pan out a conducive educational atmosphere that stimulates growth.

2.6 Socio-cultural Perception of Entrepreneurial Orientation

Socio-cultural assumption represents the cultural concepts, circumstances, amenities and system connected with urban philosophy (Anggadwita et al., 2021). Socio-culture is gauged as a blend of social and cultural factors that are constricted by cross-cultural dialogue and other behavioural composition (Anggadwita et al., 2021). Delicately, Anggadwita et al. (2021) addressed some socio-cultural dimension name: uncertainty avoidance and masculinity. Uncertainty avoidance is centered in people's degree of tolerance toward vague and uncertain situations as it reveals the magnitude of control culture exerts on individual which makes them relaxed or uncomfortable in vague/uncertain situation while masculinity focuses on the gender distributive roles, the aggressive and competitive attribute ascribed to the masculine nature and the simplistic and nurturing attribute ascribed to the feminine nature (Anggadwita et al., 2021). A socio-cultural atmosphere that consists of family background, education and religion positively impacts entrepreneurial orientation (Anggadwita et al., 2021).

Martins & Perez (2020)dissected entrepreneurial orientation in relation to individual context; it was uncovered that family judgement can influence an individual's capacity to recognise opportunities, procure resources and the decision to launch a business. Likewise the assessment of close friends and colleagues can equally have an impact on an individual's entrepreneurial orientation and their resolution to undertake entrepreneurial activities (Martins & Perez, 2020). Thus close judgements (i.e. perception from family, close tides, colleagues etc.) can favourably or unfavourably affect one's resolution to utilise inherent EO attributes towards venture pursuance. If family and friend's valuation of entrepreneurship is approving, the EO in an individual can be harnessed inform of self-confidence, personal encouragement and desire to tread on entrepreneurial path. On the contrary, social criticism on business failure notoriously disrupts an individual's EO composition and

entrepreneurial intention as there could be signalled hindrance in exploring entrepreneurial opportunities and risk perception due to scare of failure because in the social context, failure is unacceptable. Thus social norm on failure valuation is detrimental for EO disposition.

Similarly, Marques et al. (2018) asserted that social entrepreneurial intention is achievable via backing of favourable family background. Societal norms/value system are embedded in individuals as they are translated in their manner of conduct; likewise family upbringing with regards to parental occupation impacts on the lives of their wards as parental principles may or may not shape the behaviour/attitude of their children (Marques et al., 2018). Since parents are deemed to be mentors to their wards, it is expected that parents who are entrepreneurially equipped will exhibit a different level of social role model than parents who are government workers (Marques et al., 2018). Likewise, learning procedures in a family leaves an indelible imprint on one's behaviour and reasons to act; hence individuals raised in a business atmosphere have greater foundational development in entrepreneurship than those from non-business inclined homes (Marques et al., 2018).

Varied cultures view EO differently and their perception of EO is founded on the features of EO that are most significant to them (Wales et al., 2019). For instance, in Turkey, been industrious is a core entrepreneurial attribute and in India, been persistent is a major entrepreneurial attribute; thus the EO conceptualisation can be remodelled to capture the acceptable attributes of EO in those societies (Wales et al., 2019). Viewing EO from a cross-cultural/international perspective means embracing the alteration in EO conceptualisation though it may not construe the exact concepts constructed by Covin and Slevin (Wales et al., 2019).

Based on global outlook, the middle-eastern EO conceptualisation for instance is possibly centred on incorporation of rare features that communicates culturally significant values in their culture because such alteration proffers a genuine representation of what it truly means for firms to be entrepreneurially oriented within such socio-cultural environs (Wales et al., 2019). Marques et al. (2018) stipulated that exploration of entrepreneurial opportunities is dependent on gender and individual functionalities; it was disclosed that male and female possess propensity of taking up entrepreneurial venture when encouraged but patriarchal identity constitutes a crucial faction of EO in individuals with regards to gender.

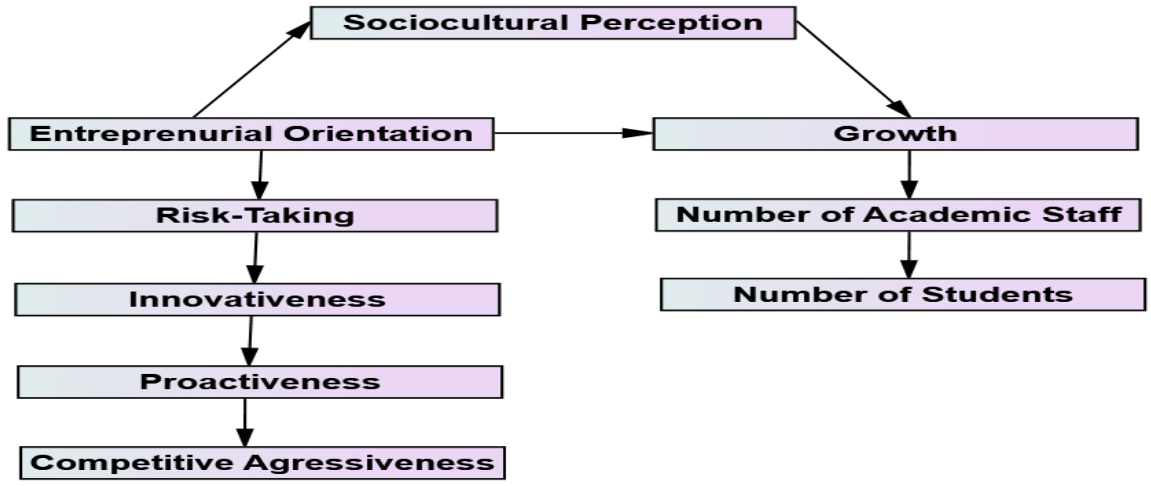


Figure 1: Conceptual Model with Sociocultural Perception as Mediating Variable

The visual representation of the expected relationship between the variables was developed based on the review of existing literature, in order to examine the relationship between entrepreneurial orientation and growth of private secondary schools in Northcentral Nigeria in terms of number of academic staff and number of students with the inclusion of sociocultural perception as a mediating variable in the model. It should be noted that mediation happens when sociocultural perception explains the relationship between entrepreneurial orientation and growth in terms of number of teachers and number of staff or it can simply be explained as a situation in which the independent variable (entrepreneurial orientation) affects the mediating variable (sociocultural perception), which in turn affects the dependent variable (growth). The above framework shows some important paths; the relationship between entrepreneurial orientation and growth (i.e. the total effect), the relationship between entrepreneurial orientation and growth while controlling for Sociocultural perception (also called the direct effect) and the mediation effect (i.e. Relationship between entrepreneurial orientation and sociocultural perception multiplied by Relationship between Sociocultural perception and growth while controlling for entrepreneurial orientation) (also known as the indirect effect).

2.7 Empirical Review

Ali et al. (2020) propelled an investigation on effect of entrepreneurial orientation, market orientation and total quality management on performance. The core goal pf the research was set on identifying the collaborative effect of total quality management (TQM), EO (i.e. pro-activeness, risk-taking and innovation) and market orientation (MO) in organisational performance of SME's in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Self-administered questionnaires were dispersed to SME owners/managers in the manufacturing industry situated in three districts (i.e. Riyadh, Eastern KSA and Mecca) in the kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA). 393 questionnaires were distributed to the surveyees of which only 371 were deemed useable. The population comprised of 5,820 firms enlisted in the archive of Saudi Arabia Ministry of commerce and Investment of which majority are deemed SME's.

The outcome of the findings indicated that EO, TQM, and MO are significantly positive and associated with the performance of organizations. Likewise TQM is said to have greatly initiated firm development directly followed by EO and MO respectively. The study recommends that managers/owners of SME's in KSA should develop optimum strategies and decisions that guides the execution of TQM practices and backed by solid EO and MO so as to enable them compete favourably with international companies within their local markets.

The role of entrepreneurial orientation to SME performance in Bangladesh was examined by (Hossain & Al Asheq, 2019). Convenience sampling was employed as data was gathered via SME foundation's (SMEF) directory in Dhaka Bangladesh. 300 listed SME owners were randomly selected and structured questionnaires were distributed accordingly. 227 responses were obtained but only 193 responses were considered credible for the study. Firm performance of SME's was evaluated by soliciting the aid of SME owners/managers in the clothing and boutique industry to rate the growth of sales revenue, employee number, profitability of their businesses, market position and progress made towards training and acquiring new customers. The EO components (i.e. competitive aggressiveness, pro-activeness, autonomy, innovativeness and risk-taking) were measured using 5-point Likert scale while correlation analysis and hierarchical regression was utilized to test the hypotheses. The findings revealed that EO components i.e. pro-activeness, autonomy, risk-taking and innovativeness except competitive-aggressiveness have significant positive effect on performance of SME's.

Ferreira et al. (2021) evaluates the moderating influences on the entrepreneurial orientation: business performance relationship in SME's. The study explores whether relationship between EO and SME

performance is affected/influenced by a few moderating factors. Data for the study was obtained via disseminating of questionnaires to SME's in Portugal focusing on 5 industrial sectors (i.e. services, commerce, extractive industry, distribution and manufacturing industry). 204 responses retrieved were utilized as they were deemed valid. Regression analysis was conducted to ascertain the direct impact of EO on performance and the part the moderators play in the relationship.

The hypotheses were tested using moderation regression analysis as well as R^2 and F tests. The analysis were carried out via SPSS software version 22. The proposed structure of the study contained deciphering how environmental components, experience of an entrepreneur, the entrepreneur's education level and network of the entrepreneur moderates the relationship between EO and performance. The findings showed that not all internal and external factor of EO possessed similar effect. Though an entrepreneur's experience (i.e. internal factors) and environmental characteristics (i.e. external factors) have not indicated any influence on the relationship between EO and SME performance; the study equally revealed that networks and education positively impacts the relationship between EO and an organization performance relationship.

An enquiry on entrepreneurial orientation and firm performance in Italian firm: the moderating role of competitive strategy was executed by (Galbreath et al., 2020). The study's purpose was to evaluate the relationship between EO and frim performance of Italy while the contingency standpoint focuses on competitive strategy as the moderating variable. Data sample of Italian firms were drawn from Aida-Bureau Van Dijk database was adequately utilized and from which 1,334 respondents indicated interest to participate in the survey. Data collection on EO and performance was implemented through online survey with the aid of Qualtrics (a professional research and survey company engaged in managing research processes and are deemed reliable for data from empirical investigations).

The targeted surveyees constitute top ranked managers believed to possess premium knowledge of a firms EO and performance. From the 1,334 surveys, 280 were returned completely filled. The independent EO variable captures (innovativeness, risk-taking and pro-activeness), with frim performance been the dependent variable respondents were asked to evaluate their performance in relation to nearby competitors as the questionnaires adopted 7-point Likert scale. The questions asked on performance were based on growth rates of sales, growth rate of profit, sales/profit ratio and return on investments. More so, secondary data obtained from Aida-Bureau Van Dijk database were relied on for competitive strategy. For low cost and differentiation strategy, proxies were developed. Based on emphasis on efficiency, cost efficiency was included and construed by cost of goods sold over total revenue, for low cost, capital intensity was construed by ratio of assets to total revenue and lastly capital expenditure was construed by net investment in plant and equipment over total revenue.

For differentiation strategy, based on emphasis laid on innovation and originality, research and development (R&D) intensity was included and construed by expenditure of R&D over total revenue, value of patents and intellectual property rights over total revenue. The control variables were stipulated as firm age, market share, firm size, ownership kind, and industry. The findings showed that EO associated positively with performance of firms captured in the sample. Furthermore, competitive strategy acts as a moderating influence: low-cost technique impacts the relationship negatively while differentiation techniques/strategies influences the relationship positively. The firm categorization/grouping does not seem to effect the results derived.

Marques et al. (2018) pursued an enquiry on entrepreneurship education, gender and family background as antecedents on the entrepreneurial orientation of university students. The study was initiated with the intent to assess the impact entrepreneurship education (EE) has on entrepreneurial orientation (EO)

of students in higher level education. The study views individual entrepreneurial orientation (IEO) as the student's disposition to proactivity, innovation and risk-taking as well as their perception of current opportunities and projection of their career path. Family background and gender (female and male) are indicated as moderating variables. The study represents students in a Portuguese University (i.e. the University of Tras-os-Montes and Alto-Douro) who are in their final year of undergraduate and graduate programmes. The sample denotes 135 students taken from 10 various degree programmes who had taken an entrepreneurship courses and 223 students from 31 various degree programmes who had not undertaken any entrepreneurship course.

The sample was divided into two batches on the premise of entrepreneurial education: students who had taken courses in entrepreneurship and students who had not taken any courses in entrepreneurship. The sample was equally divided and examined on academic field of students: social sciences and businesses 102 had entrepreneurship education (i.e. EE) and 138 had (i.e. no EE), and engineering 33 students had EE while 85 had no form of EE. The IEO psychological/psychometric construct and its compositions (i.e. risk-taking, innovation and pro-activity) were tested with confirmatory factor analysis while the projected structural model was valued via partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) while using Smart 3.0 software. The results stressed that EE basically holds higher impact on social sciences and business students while family background and gender possess positive influence on IEO.

The enquiry on linking entrepreneurial orientation to project success was implemented by (Martens et al., 2018). The study made use of explanatory research design to explain project success via EO. Survey was introduced to obtain quantitative data and experts responsible for project execution in both medium and large Brazilian cooperation in the manufacturing and service sector were utilized via non-probability sampling. Questionnaires were developed on the basis of EO and project success (PS) constructs; the 5-point Likert scale was inculcated for respondents to select their preferred level of agreement or disagreement with the outlined questions. The EO components articulated in the study were autonomy, competitive-aggressiveness, pro-activeness, risk-taking and innovativeness while the PS constructs adopted were efficiency, preparation for future, impact on customer, direct and business success and impact on team. Incipiently, data collection was implemented via web data bases of required project managers and social media medium such as LinkedIn. All needed respondents of the study were obtained Brazilian firms. Online links to the survey were sent to prospective surveyees employed in project management.

To attest to the sample prerequisite, the foremost active question written in the questionnaire is whether the participant is active in project management if the response was negative the questionnaire is nullified but if positive other questions can be completed. Pre-test was done with three project managers to assess the developed questionnaires; main links were sent and 101 valid and credible questionnaires were retrieved electronically. The structural equation modelling was adopted to analyse data brought back using SPSS v 21 and Smart PLS v 2.0 as the statistical tool for analysing returned data. The finding displays the positive correlation between entrepreneurial orientation and project success. As indicated in the study, the comprehension of pro-activeness, autonomy, risk-taking, innovativeness and competitive-aggressiveness adds to project success of a firm and could impact firm performance indirectly which could enable organisations attain competitive edge when harmonising connected factors.

Lastly, the result suggests that project management practices be aligned to an organisation's EO to ensure attainability of superior results in their operations and harness competitive advantage. On the contrary giving

the percentile impact (20.3%) of EO on project success stipulated in the study; it is deemed crucial that experts in project management extend their scope to capture factors inhibiting project success of a firm.

Cui et al. (2018) undertook a study on explicating the relationship of entrepreneurial orientation and firm performance. The study proclaimed that EO propels firms to formulate dynamic capacities of absorptive capacity (ACAP) and boundary-spanning (BS) which in turn elevates the performance of the firms. The focus of the study was centred on Chinese high tech SME's in business to business (B2B) markets where entrepreneurial activities are highly vibrant and crucial to the success and survival than as noticed with firms in consumer markets. The sample consisted of four long standing companies in the high tech business; cluster sampling was employed which comprised of Shenzhen high tech cluster, Tech Park, Jinan software cluster, Baotou SME venture Park and Beijing Zhongguancun science and tech Park. These high tech were dutied to supply intermediate products and services to streams of supply chain partners. 20,209 firms were presented in company list from administrative committees of the four high tech firms.

Meanwhile, random sampling was adopted to pick the sample relevant to the study. The multi-sourced data subset consists of archival information and survey; questions were previously formulated in English and later transcribed into Chinese by bilingual academics. The archival information employed in the study was derived from marketization indexes gained from the National Economic Research Institute (NERI) i.e. marketization index of Chinese districts/regions popularly utilised for strategic enquiry in Chinese standpoint. In the study, EO (the independent variable) was represented by innovativeness, pro-activeness and risk-taking conduct. The first mediator ACAP is reflected in firm's acquisition of knowledge, exploitation modification and assimilation procedures and finally the second mediator BS was reproduced in the managerial skills developed and employed to attain social affiliation with other organisations, government agents and research institutes like universities.

The various control variables included in the study were obtained from secondary data; the following control variables were measured by the following: firm size: number of employees; industry: Measured using dummy variables such as IT, new materials, Bio and Tech, energy, inventive industry, materials and other sectors; firm ownership: Firm's ownership status which were categorized as state controlled/state owned, foreign controlled, private and others. The data analysis was carried out through SEM. The results indicated that ACAP and BS positively mediates the effect of firm performance and that as formulation of marketing-supporting organisation enhances, the mediating effect of ACPA strengthens while the effect of BS depletes.

Genc et al. (2019) steered an enquiry on the impact of SME internationalisation on innovation: the mediating role of market and entrepreneurial orientation. The focus in the enquiry was to inspect and examine the degree of internationalisation (DOI) on innovative performance via the mediating components of market and entrepreneurial orientation from the perception of emerging economics. Survey was used to gather data from six owners and managers of SME's situated in Abu Dhabi Emirate who were interviewed and solicited for their perception on the wording comprehensibility and precision of each question contained in the questionnaire. The alteration to the questions were enacted and pilot test of 10 SME owners and managers excluding those from previous interviews was conducted and adjustments recommended were executed and dispatched.

The population/sample frame was derived from lists of businesses linked to Khalifa Fund for Enterprise Development (KFED) and firms invited at network of innovation and entrepreneurship research group at a national university in UAE. KFED is described as a non-profit, independent socio-economic development

government agency in Abu Dhabi that aids indigenous ventures in UAE by instilling investment culture amongst UAE nationals and assisting local firm to gain grounds outside the United Arab Emirates (UAE). SME's situated in AL Ain, Dubai and Abu Dhabi were considered for the study which composed of 425 firms as the total sample from 182 firms are connected KFED and 234 were linked to the research group. 255 responses were obtained and 20 rejected because they were not properly filled while the remaining 235 were considered valid for the study.

Firms were reached by phones and scrutinised to ensure they fit into the targeted population. Attached to the questionnaires were cover letters to the manager/owners introducing the work and its objectives. The questionnaire were personally distributed but were retrieved by two groups of research aids from the Middle-East and three from south Asia that are fluent in English and possess knowledge of firm creativity and innovation as well as internationalization activities of firms. The measurement of variables contained in the study are: dependent variable measured via the number of patents owned, degree of internationalization (DOI) measured using entry mode, export value, number of countries the firm exports to, internationalization years, the international experience of top managers (i.e. number of attended trade fairs, expos etc.), global vision (i.e. the companies' global and domestic orientation) and psychic/intellectual dissemination. The mediating variables EO and MO were measured using (pro-activeness, risk-taking and innovativeness for EO) while MO focuses of firms dedication to customer satiation.

The control variables stipulated in the study are firm size measured by number of employees, firm age and goods measured through customer, business etc. The study adopted partial least square-structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) approach and Smart-PLS software for its analysis. The outcome derived from the analysis reveals that degree of internationalisation positively impacts innovative performance and that the relationship is indirect and completely mediated by entrepreneurial and market orientation of MSE's. Thus the result lays bare the effect of degree of internationalisation on innovative performances of SMES's in emerging economies.

An investigation of entrepreneurial orientation, absorptive capacity and business performance in SME's was implemented by (Ibarra-Cisneros & Hernandez-Perlines, 2019). The papers' focus was to institute an influence of EO in business performance (BP) of small and medium sized enterprises in Mexico's manufacturing sector. A 5-point Likert scale questionnaire was developed and administered to manufacturing managers in Baja California Mexico. The population study was derived from Directorio Estadistico Nacional de Economic units (National statistical directory of Economic units). The directory is deemed the most efficient and complete database comprised of registered firms from all industries/sectors and only firms within 11 to 250 employee capacity were chosen for the study. 904 SME's were indicated in the region but was sieved to 814 firms due to inexistence, repetition etc. in the database.

Based on this, 262 firms were administered questionnaires of which 193 responded to the survey but only 165 were deemed certified for the study; the questionnaires were self-administered to managers who possessed knowledge required for the study. PLS-SEM Smart-PLS v 3.2.7 was used for data analysis. The inference derived disclosed that EO positively influences BP. Furthermore, ACAP has a moderating effect on the aforestated relationship. Thus it can be concluded that manufacturing sectors undertake proper practices that increases entrepreneurial competitiveness of firms.

Zhai et al. (2018) undertook the fact-finding of an empirical study on entrepreneurial orientation, absorptive capacity and SME's innovation performance. Choice SME's were selected from China's Yangtze River Delta

region. For six months, the survey was conducted and since information on EO, absorptive capacity, innovative performance, dynamic environment and technology cannot be attained directly, questionnaire was employed to assist relevant data retrieval process. Preliminary enquiry was done on 30 companies from the Yangtze River Delta region; the outcome received were revised in order to ascertain the accuracy of the items constituted in the questionnaire. After proper modifications on the questionnaires, invitations were dispersed to target staff beforehand providing valuable insights about the study and its purpose. To attain appreciable response rate, regular and personalised reminder emails were sent to suryees to nudge them to fill the questionnaires after which official questionnaires were distributed to 402 companies. The target respondents picked for the study were technical managers, marketing managers, chief-executive officer, personnel manager, other senior managers and financial managers. Out of 402 questionnaires dispersed to participating companies, 302 questionnaires were considered valid and usable for the study; the questionnaire adopted a 7-point Likert scale measurement.

The variables were measured as follows: EO (innovativeness, pro-activeness and risk-taking), environmental dynamism (supervision, customer, technology, economy, international research competition and social culture), absorptive capacity (exploitative learning, exploratory learning and transformational learning), innovative performance (new product introduction, new patents application and technological development and the control variables: age of firm (i.e. the number of years since its establishment), firm ownership (using dummy variable state owned tagged 0 and non-state owned tagged 1), financial performance (return on equity relative to core competitors), firm size (number of full-time staff compared to key competitiors) and research and development (degree/extent of R and D expenditure compared to focus competitors). Descriptive and Pearson correlation analysis was utilized in the study's data analysis. The result established that the relationship between EO and innovation performance is positively significant and that the absorptive capacity positively moderates the relationship. It was equally ascertained that when the external environment experiences high dynamism, the moderating effect of absorptive capacity is strengthened than when in low energy/dynamism.

An investigative query was executed on entrepreneurial orientation and growth potential of micro-enterprises in North-West, Nigeria by (Garba et al., 2019). The study's intent was to scrutinize EO and the growth potential/prospects of micro-enterprises. Survey technique was used to obtain data from owners of micro businesses from target states (i.e. Kano, Jigawa and Katisna) in North-West region of Nigeria. Due to the informal composition of micro-businesses, no sample frame was discovered to determine the study population, viable databases and lists of functional micro-businesses were not accessible. Non-probability sampling specifically purposive/judgemental sampling was utilised to derive the samples of micro-business owners.

A practical sample size of 800 participants was obtained from similar scholarly works. 770 questionnaires were realised of which 9 was rejected due to missing values and defective completion making a total of 761 valid questionnaires. For data analysis, multiple regression and multivariate analysis (MANOVA) was utilised in the study. EO was measured using all five components (i.e. innovativeness, autonomy, pro-activeness, competitive-aggressiveness and risk-taking) while the dependent variable growth potential was construed as profit growth potential, asset growth potential and employee growth potential. The outcomes of the query revealed that the growth prospects/potential of micro-business/ventures is influenced by all components of EO (i.e. autonomy, competitive-aggressiveness, risk-taking, innovativeness and pro-activeness) and that EO possess significant positive influence on growth potential of the micro-businesses across the three states in North-western region of Nigeria. It was recommended that policy makers in the varied states enunciate actionable policies that instigates conducive ecosphere which boosts entrepreneurial culture amongst

entrepreneurs via provision of industrial parks, business hub and incubation to serve as nurturing grounds for micro and small ventures. Secondly, provision of infrastructural amenities, market and financial accessibility as well as avenue for business opportunities is required to stimulate and ignite the entrepreneurial attitude of micro-enterprise owners. Finally, micro-business should be supported with relevant resources and provided an enabling business environment irrespective of their location.

3. Methodology

This study adopts a descriptive research design of a cross-sectional survey method. Besides being widely adopted in similar studies, the tenet/bases of this research design aligns with the central purpose of this study; to rely on survey data to describe, naturally, how entrepreneurial orientation affects growth of private secondary schools (Adeoye, Akande, and Lateef, 2018; Cuberes et al., 2019; Ijanada et al., 2020; Roseline et al., 2020; Victor et al., 2018). A descriptive research design is that in which observation and description of particular events are made without influencing it, hence the name, observational research design method.

Under descriptive design, data are collected and used to describe particular phenomenon (such as describing how entrepreneurial orientation affect the growth of private secondary schools in North-Central Nigeria). Descriptive research design involves collections of quantifiable information that can be tabulated or it can describe categories of information such as entrepreneurial orientation within Nigeria's entrepreneurial ecosystem. Descriptive research involves gathering data that describe events and then organizes, tabulates, depicts, and describes the data collection (Adebiyi and Abayomi, 2016). It is noted thatwhen in-depth, narrative descriptions of small numbers of cases are involved, the research uses description as a tool to organize data into patterns that emerge during analysis; those patterns aid the mind in comprehending a qualitative study and implications. Distinctively, descriptive research design usually, though not every time, relies on quantitative research method, variables are usually uncontrolled, involved cross-sectional study and provide basis for subsequent studies (Adebiyi and Abayomi, 2016).

Prominently, three methods of descriptive designs exist, namely, observational, case-study and survey methods (Atmowardoyo, 2018; Zhang et al., 2017). The observational method (also called field observation) which can either be naturalistic or laboratory, connotes close observation of animal and human behaviour in their natural environments (Atmowardoyo, 2018; Zhang et al., 2017). However, a case study method entails an in-depth analysis of an event, individual or group in to study uncommon event. It often leads to testable hypothesis. On the other hand, survey method involves the gathering of information using a tactfully designed research instrument.

Survey research method is much more comparatively effective and creditable than the other descriptive design methods because it statistically and systematically analysed collected survey data (from pool of respondents) in drawing meaningful deductions Atmowardoyo (2018), particularly for more rigorous and detailed quantitative study (Zhang et al., 2017). Unlike the survey method, case study and observation method are weak for making predictions due to high presence of personal bias, human error and an atypical respondent, thus, leading to weak generalizations and impractical conclusions (Atmowardoyo, 2018). Specifically, cross-sectional survey research is preferred, thus, adopted, because it enables the study to gather insights from targeted audience within particular interval for informed analysis.

The limitation of the adopted descriptive survey is that it only concentrates on describing current (quantitative) issues relating to entrepreneurial orientation and growth (Atmowardoyo, 2018). It does not capture or take not of dynamisms of the current issues which can impede on the findings (Zhang et al., 2017). Furthermore, survey research design is generally criticized for oversimplifying social reality. Specifically, the arbitrary

structuring of the survey instrument especially the multiple-choice questions laden with predetermined categories embodies a prejudiced and exaggeratedly simple reality view. Thus, data generated couple with the emanating mathematical analyses lacks real-life significance but a mystify reality.

The population of this study covers the entire private secondary school owners across the North-Central region of Nigeria with a total of 3715 private secondary schools was retrieved from the Federal Ministry of Education (2022). The North-Central comprises seven states (FCT, Niger, Kogi, Benue, Plateau, Kwara and Nasarawa. According to the Federal Ministry of Education (2022) report.

Considering the large number of participants involved in this study, Cochran (1963) sample size determination technique was used. Based on the calculated sample size, three hundred and eighty-five (385) private secondary school's owners are drawn for the survey. Considering the quantitative research approach adopted in this study, the probability sampling strategy was selected because, besides its suitability and usefulness for quantitative studies its sample typically represent the population, therefore, generalizability is very unlimited while stratified sampling was equally employed during the study(Erba, et al., 2019; Maheshwari, 2017).

Data was analysed using descriptive statistics such as measures of dispersion and measures of central tendency as well as frequencies and percentages in order to ensure comprehensive analysis. This method was appropriate because as (Saunders et al., 2007) noted, descriptive statistics enable us to describe

3.1 Model Specification

This research adapts the empirical work of Soomro & Shah (2019) in order to specify the functional form of the model and examine the effect of entrepreneurial orientation on growth of private secondary schools in north central Nigeria.

As stated above structural equation model was used to test the hypotheses for this research. To achieve this the independent variable which is entrepreneurial orientation proxied by Risk-taking (RT), Innovativeness (INV), Pro-activeness (PRA), Competitive aggressiveness (CA) while the dependent variable which is growth of private secondary schools in terms of number of staff (GPSSA) and number of students (GPSSS), and the mediating variable which is Sociocultural Perception (SCP). The model is presented below:

Therefore, in specifying a functional relationship, the model becomes;

$GPSS = f(EO)$ (3.1)

$EO = f(RT, INV, PRA, CA)$ (3.2)

$GPSS = f\ (GPSSA, GPSSS)$ (3.3)

Model 1

$GPSSA = f(RT, INV, PRA, CA)$ (3.4)

Model 2

$GPSSS = f(RT, INV, PRA, CA)$ (3.5)

However, with the introduction of a mediating variable, (SCP) the model becomes;

Model 1

$GPSSA = f(RT, INV, PRA, CA, SCP)$ (3.6)

Model 2

$GPSSS = f(RT, INV, PRA, CA, SCP)$ (3.7)

Transforming the functional form of the model into an econometric equation, the models becomes;

Model 1

$$GPSSA_t = \beta_0 + \beta_1 RT_{it} + \beta_2 INV_{it} + \beta_3 PRA_{it} + \beta_4 CA_{it} + \beta_5 SCP_{it} + \varepsilon_{it} \quad (3.8)$$

Model 2

$$GPSSS_t = \beta_0 + \beta_1 RT_{it} + \beta_2 INV_{it} + \beta_3 PRA_{it} + \beta_4 CA_{it} + \beta_5 SCP_{it} + \varepsilon_{it} \quad (3.9)$$

Where;

EO = Entrepreneurial Orientation
$GPSSA_t$ = Growth of Private Secondary Schools in terms of number of academic staff at time t
$GPSSS_t$ = Growth of Private Secondary Schools in terms of number of students at time t
RT_t = Risk-taking at time t
INV_t = Innovativeness at time t
PRA_t = Proactiveness at time t
CA_t = Competitive aggressiveness at time t
SCP_t = Sociocultural Perception at time t
f = functional relationship
ε = Stochastic term
β_0 = Model relationship Intercept
$\beta_1 - \beta_5$ = the coefficients of the explanatory variables

4. Findings

The constructs demonstrated an acceptable reliability because the composite reliability as well as the Cronbach's Alpha exceeded 0.70 while the average variance is above 0.50 which indicates that the model exhibit convergent validity refer table 1 below:

Table 1: Reliability and Validity Assessment

Factors	Items	Standardized factor loadings	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability CR	Average Variance Extracted AVE	
Risk-Taking	RT1	.720	.822	0.786	0.59	
	RT2	.705				
	RT3	.733				
	RT4	.674				
	RT5	.654				
Innovativeness	INV1	.785				
	INV2	.806	.888	0.884	0.605	
	INV3	.764				
	INV4	.779				
	INV5	.753				
Pro-activeness	PRA1	.760	.862	0.856	0.544	
	PRA2	.695				
	PRA3	.744				
	PRA4	.732				
	PRA5	.755				
Competitive-ag	CA1	.755		0.859	0.550	
	CA2	.731	.855			

	CA3	.773				
	CA4	.720				
	CA5	.727				
Growth of private school in terms of students	GPSSS1	.739				
	GPSSS2	.762	.875	0.861	0.555	
	GPSSS3	.799				
Growth of private school in terms of Academic staff	GPSSS4	.731				
	GPSSS5	.767				
	GPSSA1	.691	.884	0.872	0.578	
	GPSSA2	.785				
	GPSSA3	.757				
	GPSSA4	.732				
	GPSSA5	.755				
Socio-cultural perception	SCP1	.779				
	SCP2	.793				
	SCP3	.768	.878	0.775	0.563	
	SCP4	.798				
	SCP5	.786				

Fit indices: chi-Square/df = 3.630 NFI = .915 GFI = .935 AGFI = .907 CFI = .958 RMSEA = .063

"Note: **NFI** – Normed Fit Index by Bentler and Bonett (1980)
GFI – Goodness of Fit Index
AGFI – Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index
CFI – Comparative Fit Index
RMSEA- Root Mean Square Error Approximation"

4.2 Hypotheses Testing

Sociocultural perception does not play a mediating role between entrepreneurial orientation and growth of private secondary schools in North-Central Nigeria.

Table 2: Regression Weights: Parameter estimates and model fit

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
SCP	<---	RTa	.110	.030	3.714	***
SCP	<---	INVa	.263	.033	7.941	***
SCP	<---	PRAa	.150	.026	5.663	***
SCP	<---	CAa	.506	.051	9.866	***
GPSSA	<---	SCP	.978	.103	9.505	***
GPSSS	<---	SCP	.932	.102	9.167	***
Fit indices: chi-Square/df = 3.992			**NFI =** .962 **GFI = .939 AGFI =** .903 **CFI =** .949 **RMSEA =** .078			

Source: Amos Output, 2022

From the above model when RTa increases by 1, SCP increase by 0.11. With probability value that is less than 0.001. In other words, the regression weight for RTa in the prediction of SCP is significantly different from zero at the 0.001 level of significance.

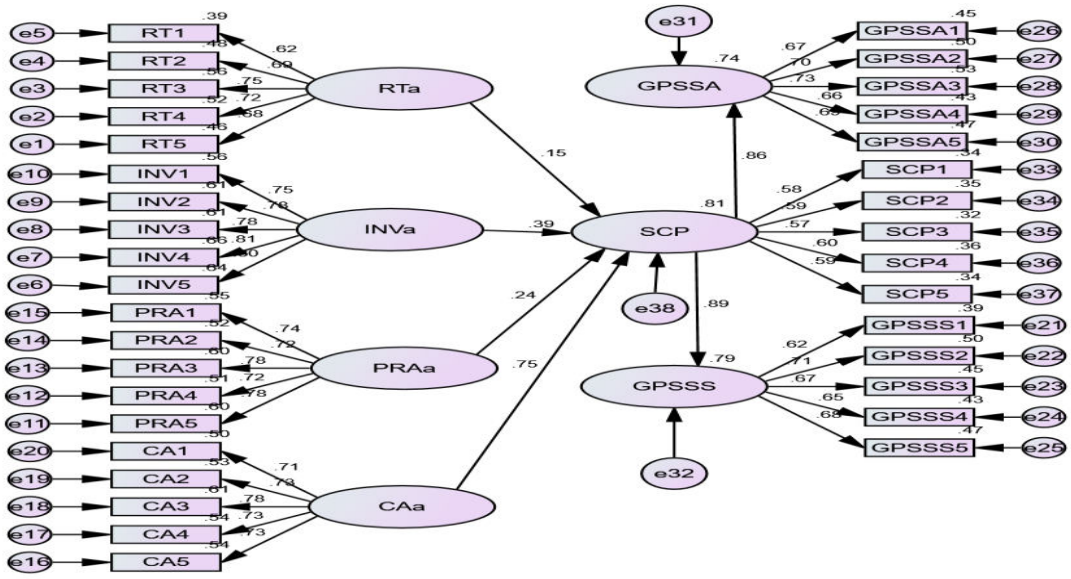
When INVa increases by 1, SCP also increases by 0.263. With the probability value of 0.001 which is less than 0.05%. In other words, the regression weight for INVa in the prediction of SCP is significantly different from zero at the 0.001 level of significance.

When PRAa increases by 1, SCP also increases by 0.15. With the probability value of 0.001 which is less than 0.05%. In other words, the regression weight for PRAa in the prediction of SCP is significantly different from zero at the 0.001 level of significance.

When CAa increase by 1, SCP increases by 0.506 with probability value of 0.001 which is less than 0.05%. In other words, the regression weight for CAa in the prediction of SCP is significantly different from zero at the 0.001 level of significance.

When Sociocultural Perception increases by 1, GPSSA increases by 0.978. With probability value of 0.001 which is less than 0.05%. In other words, the regression weight for SCP in the prediction of GPSSA is significantly different from zero at the 0.001 level of significance.

When Sociocultural Perception increases by 1, GPSSS also increases by 0.932. With probability value of 0.001 which is less than 0.05%. In other words, the regression weight for SCP in the prediction of GPSSS is significantly different from zero at the 0.001 level of significance.



Source: Amos Output, 2022

Figure 1: Structural Equation Model with the effect of Mediating Variable

4.3 Mediation Effect

From the above explanation it can be seen that socio-cultural perception gave a positive coefficient of 0.978 in terms of number of academic staff with P-value that is less than 0.05% level of significance for its mediating effect role on growth of private secondary school in terms of number of academic staff. This simply means that socio-cultural perception has a positive and significant mediating effect on the relationship between entrepreneurial orientation variables and the growth of private secondary schools in terms of number of academic staff.

Similarly, it was found that socio-cultural perception gave a positive coefficient of 0.932 in terms of number of students with P-value that is less than 0.05% level of significance for its mediating effect role on growth of private secondary school in terms of number of students. This simply means that socio-cultural perception has a positive and significant mediating effect on the relationship between entrepreneurial orientation variables and the growth of private secondary schools in terms of number of students.

It should be noted that the mediating variable i.e. sociocultural perception explains the process through which the variables are related in the research.

It can be concluded that the intermediate (socio-cultural perception) variable considered in the research perfectly explains the relationship between entrepreneurial orientation and growth of private secondary schools in terms of number of teacher and number of students in Northcentral Nigeria.

Further checked was the total, direct and indirect effects of the model refer Appendix III. For the total effect the estimate value was 0.886 the total effect lower bounds value was checked which 0.766 was. Then also checked was the total effect upper bounds value which gave the value of 0.989 and then also checked was the total effects-two tailed significance which gave a P-value of 0.007 which is significant. With this, it was concluded that there is a significant total effect it can be said that sociocultural perception does mediate the relationship between entrepreneurial orientation and growth of private secondary schools in North-Central Nigeria.

For the indirect effect of entrepreneurial orientation to growth through sociocultural perception was 0.221 then the indirect effect lower bounds value was checked which was 0.117. The indirect effect upper bound value was equally checked which gave the value of 0.604 and then the indirect effects-two tailed significance was checked which gave a P-value of 0.038 which is significant. With this, it was concluded that there is a significant indirect effect and it can said that sociocultural perception does mediate the relationship between entrepreneurial orientation and growth of private secondary schools in North-Central Nigeria since there was no zero value between the upper and lower bound estimates.

For the direct effect of entrepreneurial orientation to growth through sociocultural perception the estimated value was 0.665 then the direct effect lower bounds value was checked which 0.229 was. Then the direct effect upper bounds value was checked which gave the value of 0.884 and the indirect effects-two tailed significance was also checked which gave a P-value of 0.006 which is significant. With this it is concluded that there is a significant direct effect which means that sociocultural perception does mediate the relationship between entrepreneurial orientation and growth of private secondary schools in North-Central Nigeria.

Table 3: Summary of Mediation Model

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Label
SCP_MV	←-	OE_IV	.829	.069	12.074	***	
GPSS_DV	←-	SCP_MV	.267	.073	3.636	***	
GPSS_DV	←-	OE_IV	.665	.083	8.024	***	

Source: AMOS Output, 2022

From the above results it can be seen that entrepreneurial orientation has a significant relationship with growth (P= .267, P< .0001). This simply means that the influence of entrepreneurial orientation on growth is partially mediated through the construct of sociocultural perception. With this result it can be concluded that there is a partial mediation since both direct and indirect effects are significant.

5. Conclusion

Conclusively, the study used socio-cultural perception as a mediating variable in the structural equation model and it was found that sociocultural perception has a positive and significant mediating effect on the relationship between entrepreneurial orientation variables and the growth of private secondary schools in terms of number of staff and number of students.

With the result it was concluded that the intermediate (socio-cultural perception) variable considered in this research partially explains the relationship between entrepreneurial orientation and growth of private secondary schools in terms of number of teacher and number of students in North-central Nigeria. Since socio-cultural perceptions has an effect on entrepreneurial orientation and growth of private secondary schools in North-Central Nigeria it is recommended that, proprietors should take into account that the educational development of parents/guardians, family's socio-economic posture, value system dominant in the state, religious stance in the states and attitude of the community (habiting the private secondary school) towards secondary education is important and as such noteworthy actions should be taken to ensure that the inherent societal perceptions endorses exhibition of EO attributes which prompts growth of private secondary schools. More so, optimum sensitization by the government, educational bodies, proprietors etc. is required to emphasise the relevance of attaining at least the minimum level of education in less educationally inclined families and societies.

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