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# Effect of Opportunity Recognition Competence on Youth Empowerment in Selected States in Northeast Nigeria

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## Abstract

The objective of this study was to evaluate the effect of opportunity recognition competence on youth empowerment in Bauchi, Gombe and Yobe states in Northeast, Nigeria. Some researches have reported that many youths in Northeast, Nigeria do not engage in entrepreneurship practice and are at the fore front of those carrying out most of the deadly attacks and committing social vices that have rocked the Northeast zone for many years. The population consisted of 1,694 indigenous youth from Bauchi, Gombe and Yobe states who participated in training at the skill upgrading and vocational training center from 2017-2021. A sample size of 322 was determined using Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample size determination table. Given the heterogeneity of the population for each state, Bowley's sample allocation formula was applied for the determination of proportionate sample size for each state while stratified and simple random sampling techniques were adopted for selecting the study participants. The quantitative data were collected through standardized questionnaire adapted from previous related studies and analysed through descriptive statistics and path analysis. All measurement items on the adapted questionnaire were carefully reworded then subjected to the criticisms of experts in the field for content and face validity. The construct reliability and internal consistency of the instrument was determined through Cronbach's alpha coefficient. Out of 322 copies of questionnaire administered, 305 representing 94.72 percent were returned. However, out of this number, only 289 copies of questionnaire representing 89.75% were correctly filled and thus suitable for data analysis. The results showed that opportunity recognition skill had a significant effect on youth empowerment ( $\beta=-0.307$ ,  $P>.001$ ) in selected states in the Northeast, Nigeria. The paper recommends that Northeast state governments of Bauchi, Gombe and Yobe and community leaders should engage in vigorous media literacy to mobilize greater youth participation in skill acquisition programmes and also establish well-funded vocational training centers along with industrial parks in each state. Successful indigenous

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entrepreneurs should be encouraged with tax holidays in exchange for providing apprenticeship training to interested indigenous youths over a stipulated time frame.

**Keywords:** *Opportunity recognition, Skill acquisition, Youth empowerment, Northeast Nigeria*

## 1.1 Introduction

Issues concerning youth empowerment in different zones in Nigeria have been in the front burner of academic research for some decades. Presently, there is a youth bulge in many countries of the world including Nigeria which now creates serious concerns since these young people, who make up a significant portion of a society's economic activity, are not sufficiently involved in economic activities due to sociocultural and political convictions. Ochonogor (2010), Muhammed, Salihu and Alhassan (2018) decried the increase in the number of crimes and other social vices including banditry, armed robbery, prostitution, abduction and hostage snatching for ransom, thuggery, the destruction of petroleum pipelines, advanced fee fraud, and computer fraud that have resulted from high rate of unemployment of youths, especially in Northeast Nigeria. The North-Eastern zone Nigeria comprises of the present states of Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Taraba and Yobe. This area occupies a total of 103,639 square miles, representing 29.1 % of the total area of Nigeria and shares various geographical, economic, social and political features as well as being plagued with common challenges ranging from high rate of unemployment, financial hardship and vulnerability for social vices committance. The zone also has a population of about 26m which is 12% of Nigerian total population yet about 14.2% of youth in the zone could not secure job (Federal Ministry of Youth and Sports Development, 2021). Though the youth have been considered the prime movers of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) due to their creative ability, energy, and drive to achieve, their desire for economic independence and self-reliance has been severely hampered by observed inadequate entrepreneurial climate in the zone.

According to the Youth Entrepreneurship and Employment Support Services Programme (YESS) (2018), the high unemployment rate among educated and uneducated youth and the ensuing financial hardship point to the need to increase skill and vocational training to expose the youth to various entrepreneurial opportunities for self-reliance as well as to better prepare them to meet labour market requirements. Youths are a country's most significant and precious resource (Oyekan, 2015) whose creative capabilities and intrinsic abilities would boost their entrepreneurship engagement that may promote small business enterprises and economic growth. Micro, small, and medium-sized firms (MSMEs) have been tested in China, India, Indonesia, South Africa, Egypt, Bangladesh, and others, and those experiments have shown that entrepreneurial skill can be a significant factor in job creation and economic growth. Against the backdrop, the Sustainable Development Goals' (SDGs) 2030 agenda for sustainable development includes 169 related goals and 232 development indicators with the employment of young people being one of the top priorities where immediate action is required to achieve sustainable progress in human development.

Many reasons could be adduced for the current state of youth unemployment in Northeast Nigeria. These include sociocultural and political convictions, low levels of education, industrial base and government investments; insurgent violence and terrorism and inadequate entrepreneurial climate (Adebayo, 2015; Hossain, 2010; Ibe, 2020). According to Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (as cited in Lackeus, 2015), obstacles to improvement in the living conditions of youth may be accounted for by lack of entrepreneurship skills and social attitudes

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among several other barriers. However, Omeje, Jideofor and Ugwu (2020) averred that youth in Nigeria can overcome these obstacles confronting them if they learn to be creative, inquisitive and brave through education and training in entrepreneurial skills that result in competence for opportunity recognition and innovative thinking. According to Onyeaghala and Okorie (2018) skill acquisition involves accumulation of knowledge and abilities required for opportunity recognition, opportunity assessment and value creation. The degree to which the skills development and vocational training program has influenced the opportunity recognition competence of youth in Northeast Nigeria's in addressing the prevailing socioeconomic challenges in the region thus influencing youth empowerment through engagements and job creation is still in question and warrants this study.

### **1.1 Problem Statement**

Over 200 million people live in Nigeria, with about 39 million of them being children and young adults of which about 7.4% of that population lives in poverty (World Bank, 2021). The high unemployment rate in Nigeria today affects all of the country's zones, but the North generally has been identified with the highest level of poverty and youth vulnerability. Recently, in addition to the continuous conflict with insurgency groups, Boko Haram has been carrying out attacks in Northeast Nigeria since 2009 which has undermined the zone's economic stability and security. The youth and young generation are those who are reported to be the main perpetrators of these attacks and disturbances; many of them lack formal education (aside from the Almajiri system of training), are school dropouts, or have left school early, and may not be equipped to compete for the already scarce job openings. Therefore, it is obvious that youth unemployment is one of the most troubling issues impeding sustainable economic growth and development in Northeast Nigeria, and that it may be caused by a lack of the requisite entrepreneurial skill of opportunity recognition for job creation leading to self-reliance. Therefore, government has continued to provide skill development programmes and entrepreneurial environments that may impact positively on youth socioeconomic wellbeing. However, the training programmes are voluntary, and accessing, participating, learning and adapting the opportunity recognition skills learnt would be necessary for anticipated positive effect on youth empowerment in the zone.

Studies have found that entrepreneurial competencies such as opportunity recognition has positive effect on youth empowerment or self-employment (Alabi, Sanya & Adekanmbi, 2021; Gill, Aftab, Rehman & Javaid, 2019; Mbah & Okeke, 2020; Omeje, Jideofor & Ugwu, 2020; Pettifor, Wamoyi, Balvanz, Gichane & Maman, 2019). However, other studies like Jegede, Irewole and Dada (2019) found that entrepreneurial programs have not yielded much positive outcomes due to high rate of poverty and unemployment in Nigeria. Yahaya, Inuwa and Hamza's (2021) study in Northeast argued that youths' enrollment in training programmes may be poor without parents' encouragement and that acquisition may not lead to enterprise creation. In addition, most other related studies (Ajose, 2021; Alabi, Sanya & Adekanmbi, 2021; Deebom & Daarego, 2020; Enimola, Orugun & Nafiu, 2019; Mbah & Okeke, 2020) were carried out in other zones of Nigeria. Also, other studies (Afolabi, Kareem, Okubanjo, Ogunbanjo & Aninkan, 2017; Eze, Ezenwafor & Igberaharha, 2016; Oboreh & Nnebe, 2019; Onyeaghala & Okorie, 2018) were conducted in higher institutions among undergraduates and graduates who had taken courses in entrepreneurship education development as a requirement in the curriculum for graduation as against the voluntary participation in skill acquisition offered at government training centers. Besides, studies that used the construct of opportunity recognition as proxy of skill acquisition (e.g. Alabi, Sanya & Adekanmbi, 2021; Mbah & Okeke, 2020; Neumeyer & Santos, 2018; Rekarti, Bahari, Zahari,



Doktoralina & Ilias, 2019) are limited and were not conducted in the Northeast, Nigeria in particular. Therefore, there is paucity of research on the extent to which opportunity recognition competence impact youth empowerment in selected states in Northeast since the citing of the skill upgrading and vocational training center in Bauchi in 2009. On this premise, this study is aimed at investigating the effect of opportunity recognition on youth empowerment in selected states in Northeast Nigeria.

## **2.0 Literature Review**

### **2.1 Theoretical Framework**

#### **Thorndike's Stimulus Response Theory of Learning (1897)**

Thorndike's Stimulus Response Theory of Learning (1897) underpins this study. Stimulus response theory is a type of learning, where another person, either verbally or through exemplification, communicates what the learner is supposed to do. To acquire an entrepreneurial skill, and a hierarchy of behavioral units to be constructed and fused together to form a skilled performance, the instruction may be given in bits, units, modules, or stages. As a result, stimulus response theory is used to explain skill acquisition as a type of learning in which skilled behaviors can become routinized, even automatic, under certain conditions. According to Theodore (2022) the theory is premised on effect-exercise-readiness connectivity and emphasizes participation and observation method. The law of effect states that if responses to stimuli produce a satisfying effect, they will likely be repeated and avoided if not satisfying. There is also the law of readiness which states that relationship between stimulus and response is strengthened based on the subject's readiness to learn. Stimulus Response Theory is used in the study to gain understanding of youths' behavior towards entrepreneurship. The study seeks to understand the decision making process of youths in Northeast, Nigeria in response to an entrepreneurial skill development programme for gaining opportunity recognition for their socioeconomic emancipation and wellbeing.

### **2.2 Opportunity Recognition Competence**

Finding market opportunities requires a range of skills, including identifying unmet client needs, figuring out what services and goods clients desire, seizing excellent prospects, and researching services and products that benefit clients (Hallyyev, 2019). According to Gaglio (2018), opportunity recognition is the perception of profit potential through the founding and formation of new ventures as well as the material enhancement of existing ventures. This definition highlights that seeing opportunities is a continuous process that involves perception, discovery, and invention rather than just an entrepreneur's one-time action (Fast, 2021). According to Vanstone, Monteiro, Colvin, Norman, Sherbino, Sibbald and Peters (2019), an idea might abruptly solidify as it develops into full-fledged company concepts. This concept places a strong emphasis on the activity of opportunity recognition during the first stages of a business. Though successful entrepreneurs have a number of traits and vital competencies, opportunity-related abilities (Biberhofer *et al*, 2019) constitute one of the most distinctive skills for entrepreneurs. Sharing a similar view, Urbano, Audretsch, Aparicio and Noguera (2020) argue that the capacity to recognize and seize chances is most crucial for entrepreneurial jobs. Entrepreneurship is about spotting and seizing chances (Reuber, Knight, Liesch & Zhou, 2018; Shepherd, Wennberg, Suddaby & Wiklund, 2019). Entrepreneurs, who are able to recognize opportunities in the business world, launch their own companies (Cho & Lee, 2018).

Jones, Ratten and Hayduk (2020) explain that entrepreneurship frequently emphasizes the active pursuit of opportunities regardless of the resources in one's control or actions related to the identification and/or exploitation of business possibilities (Ploum, Blok, Lans & Omta, 2018). Even though not all entrepreneurs are necessarily businesspeople, creating new social or economic value is a common definition of what entrepreneurs do (Daulay & Sjafrizal, 2019). Accordingly, a person who can turn an idea into a business is considered to be an entrepreneur. Entrepreneurial success then depends on a number of factors including an entrepreneur's capacity to generate a variety of fresh ideas in order to deal with a variety of new situations and the success of the business they establish. Because of this, some academics believe the ability to see opportunities is a crucial element of entrepreneurship (Rauch, Fink & Hatak, 2018). The ability to see opportunities aids in not just differentiating between ideas and possible business prospects but also points the entrepreneur in the direction of turning those opportunities into profitable endeavours.

### **2.3 Youth Empowerment**

According to Sovacool and Brisbois (2019), youth empowerment is an attitude-based, structural, and cultural process that gives young people the authority and agency to make decisions and bring about change in their own lives as well as the lives of those around them. Young people being the driving force behind societal advancement are renowned for possessing distinctive qualities that make them stand out from earlier generations. Their change-seeking, enthusiasm, radicalism, curiosity, hard work, ego, and ambition are some of these characteristics that make for this distinction. Young people should be involved in decisions that will affect them because, if their minds are focused in the right direction, the economy and society would develop, and young people would have the opportunity to feel self-fulfillment as a result (Ezeani, 2012).

Youths are empowered when enabling conditions are created and supported under which they can act on their own behalf and terms and their motivation to perform is enhanced (Adiat & Akintayo, 2013; Gill, Aftab, Rehman & Javaid, 2019). Punjab Youth Policy (2012) furthering this assertion explains that the empowerment happens when youth come to realize there is enhancement in their abilities to control, influence or cope with their economic, social and political roles and in economic sense, this would involve creating an environment that allows young people to realize their potential in terms of productivity and intellect (Inyang & Agwadu, 2017). Therefore, empowerment for young people is generally achieved when they recognize their ability to make choices in life, understand the potential consequences of those choices, make informed decisions, take action on those decisions, and take responsibility for the resulting outcomes. Enabling conditions for youth empowerment include a strong value system, access to knowledge, information, and skills, as well as a stable environment of equality, peace, and democracy. Additionally, they consist of political will, sufficient resource allocation, a strong economic and social foundation, and accommodating judicial and administrative frameworks (Sasaki, 2006).

Conceptualizing empowerment is essential for better understanding as the term "empowerment" is used in a range of contexts and fields, including community development, psychology, education, economics, and research on social movement and organization, according to Das and Chatterjee (2020), and how it is interpreted differs depending on the viewpoint (Hofstetter et al., 2021). But the majority of literature links empowerment to having personal control over the resources that affect one's own lives and, more generally, to having more choice and power to shape one's own life (Cavalier, 2018; Schmietow & Marckmann, 2019).

According to Emejuru (cited in Okonkwo, Nwokike, & Nwafor, 2021), youth empowerment involves providing beneficial training and education, and can be broken down into three key steps: educating young people in life coping skills, teaching them entrepreneurial skills, and instilling in them a sense of self-sustainability. In order to empower the young people to make changes in their life and the lives of others, this requires changing their attitudes and belief systems. According to Brieger, Bairo, Criaco, and Terjesen (2021), youth empowerment is defined as involving young people and promoting ideals that allow them to contribute to the economic, social, and cultural growth of their families, nations, and themselves. When a person accepts that they have the power to choose in life and that those choices have an impact, they become more empowered. They gain power when they willingly make an informed decision, follow through on it, and accept accountability for their deeds. The creation and upkeep of an atmosphere that promotes young people acting independently and within their own bounds constitutes the second step.

Though previous literature have linked empowerment to having personal control over the choices and resources that affect personal lives (Cavalier, 2018), and more generally, to having more choice and power to influence one owns life (Schmietow & Marckmann, 2019) in different climes and zones through skill acquisition, there is paucity of research to support the claim in Northeast, Nigeria. Also, since Emejuru (as cited in Okonkwo, Nwokike & Nwafor, 2021) asserted that the process of youth empowerment entails beneficial training in life coping skills and various types of trades, occupations, and professions as well as inculcating self-sustaining conscience, then further investigation on the impact of opportunity recognition skills on youth empowerment resulting from training offered at the skill upgrading and vocational training center in Northeast, Nigeria is called for.

## 2.4 Empirical Studies

Alabi, Sanya and Adekanmbi (2021) found that personal perception and opportunity recognition significantly influence enterprises performance in Oyo State and recommended improvement in entrepreneurial training activities that present more ways of generating business ideas and opportunities that can enhance excellent performance. In Nigeria south-eastern states, Mbah and Okeke (2020) discovered that youth empowerment is significantly influenced by innovation and opportunity recognition and recommended that government provide adequate training facilities that would provide skills for recognizing a business opportunity, inculcate innovative culture and contribute to the development of the economy. Fatoki (2019) found that the skills acquisition programme has provided employment opportunities for youth beneficiaries, reduced their involvement in social vices as well as improved their standard of living. On the contrary, Jegede, Irewole and Dada (2019) found that though youth entrepreneurial programmes have not yielded many positive outcomes due to high rate of poverty and unemployment in Nigeria, they have offered young people opportunities to develop important life skills and participate in the community development schemes and decreased likelihood of engaging in risk-behaviors.

Onyeaghala and Okorie's (2018) study showed a significant strong positive relationship between entrepreneurial skills acquisition and the measured efficacy indicator of identification of business opportunities. But the entrepreneur's past knowledge, entrepreneurial marketing seeking behavior and awareness all play a role in the categorization of opportunity recognition (Ma, Yang, Chen, You, Zhang & Chen, 2020). Consequently successful entrepreneurs must have the ability to perceive and envision opportunities and take action on them (Akeke, Oche, Akuegwu & Ushie, 2022; Urbano *et al.*, 2020). We therefore, hypothesized that:

H1: Opportunity-recognition skill has no significant effects on youth empowerment in selected states in Northeast, Nigeria.

Mbah and Okeke (2020) found that through innovation and opportunity recognition, skill acquisition had a significant impact on youth empowerment in south-eastern Nigerian states. Ojo, Abayomi and Odozi (2014) discovered that providing individuals with adequate training will enable creativity and innovative relevance to skill acquisition, which encourages self-employment and self-reliance. Aja-Okorie and Adali (2013), the overall goal of entrepreneurial education is to provide students and youth with the right attitudes, knowledge and skills to act entrepreneurially as a result of which they are empowered and prepared to thrive in today's unstructured and uncertain environment, this is not consistent with situations in Northeast where the number of crimes and other social vices has increased as a result of banditry and terrorism perpetrated mostly by youth (Muhammed, Salihu & Alhassan, 2018). However, Minai, Raza, bin Hashim, Zain and Tariq (2018) found that entrepreneurial skills and competencies including opportunity recognition competence are insufficient to ensure firm success and survival, then these studies have shown inconsistent results, and this calls for this study on the impact of opportunity recognition competence on youth empowerment in selected states in Northeast, Nigeria.

### **3.0 Methodology**

#### **3.1 Survey Procedures**

Explanatory survey research design was adopted for this study. From a population of 1,694 beneficiaries from Bauchi, Gombe and Yobe states who underwent skill upgrading and vocational training from 2017 to 2022, a sample of 322 was determined based on Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample size determination table. Stratified simple random sampling technique was employed in recruiting the study participants. Data for the study was collected using adapted structured questionnaire from previous related studies. From the 322 questionnaires administered, 305 were returned but only 289 were usable and used for the analysis. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and Path Analysis. The construct reliability and internal consistency of the instrument was determined through Cronbach's alpha coefficient. Opportunity recognition competence had Cronbach's alpha of 0.72 and Alpha for youth empowerment was 0.684.

#### **3.2 Measures**

The independent variable for this study is opportunity recognition. Opportunity recognition is a measure of skill acquisition which is conceptualized as competences that individuals need to acquire in order to develop value adding ideas and organize resources for successful business operation for profit. Opportunity recognition competence is defined as the ability to spot market chances, figuring out what services and goods clients desire, seizing excellent prospects, and researching services and products that benefit clients (Hallyyev, 2019). Its dimensions include opportunity recognition, product innovation, tenacity/perseverance, creative problem-solving/imaginativeness, business operational skills; financial and budgeting skills; marketing skills; human relations competencies resilience, self-efficacy, and building and using networks (Mitchelmore & Rowley, 2010; Morris, Webb, Fu, & Singhal, 2013). Opportunity recognition competence was measured by four items stated in the questionnaire which were adapted from previous empirical work (Wasdani & Manimala, 2015). In the questionnaire, item one sought to evaluate whether respondents seize high-quality business opportunities. The second item assessed whether they perceive unmet consumer needs. The third item sought to assess whether they treat new problems as opportunities. The fourth item sought to assess whether they actively look for



products or services that provide real benefit to customers. All the measures were tapped on a 6-point likert scale.

The dependent variable, youth empowerment was defined by the Commonwealth Secretariat (as cited in Gill, Aftab, Rehman & Javaid, 2019) as creating and supporting the enabling conditions under which young people can act on their own behalf, and on their own terms, rather than at the direction of others. It is proxied by starting a business and building wealth (Kutzhanova, Lyons & Lichtenstein, 2009); with two important caveats ( business is built around an innovation with entrepreneur’s goal of growth as focus (Schumpeter, 1934) under enabling environment that allow young people to act independently and under their own authority rather than at the whim of others (Sovacool & Brisbois, 2019). This includes supportive monitoring and administrative frameworks (Sasaki, 2006). Youth empowerment was measured by three items adapted from the studies of Martínez, Jiménez-Morales, Masó and Bernet (2016). In the questionnaire, item one sought to evaluate whether Government supply enough tools, machines and other materials needed by the beneficiaries to start off their own businesses (enabling conditions). Item two assessed whether respondents can take actions to create their business based on skill acquired and accept responsibility for their actions. The third item sought to assess whether the youth empowerment scheme provides monitoring, counseling and retraining to the beneficiaries.

Because both path analysis and regression are based on linear statistical models (Suhr, 2022), the following linear regression model was employed to achieve the study objective.

$$YE=f(ORS)$$

where

YE= Youth Empowerment

ORS = Opportunity Recognition Skill

Therefore, to achieve the study’s specific objective, the following linear regression model was used

$$YE=f(SH-qBO, PUCN, TNPO, APBCN)$$

$$YE= \beta_0+\beta_1SH-qBO, + \beta_2PUCN + \beta_3TNPO + \beta_4APBCN= +\mu_t.....(5)$$

Where

$\beta_0$  = Constant term

$\mu_t$  =Error Term

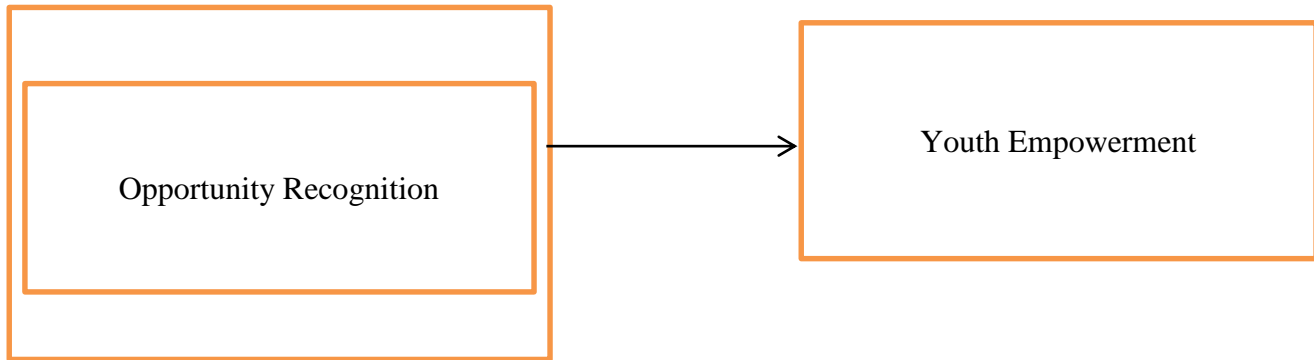
SH-qBO= Seize High-quality Business Opportunities

PUCN=Perceive Unmet Consumer Needs

TNPO=Treat New Problems as Opportunities

APBCN= Actively Provide Beneficial Customer Needs

The Conceptual Model for this study is presented in Figure 1.



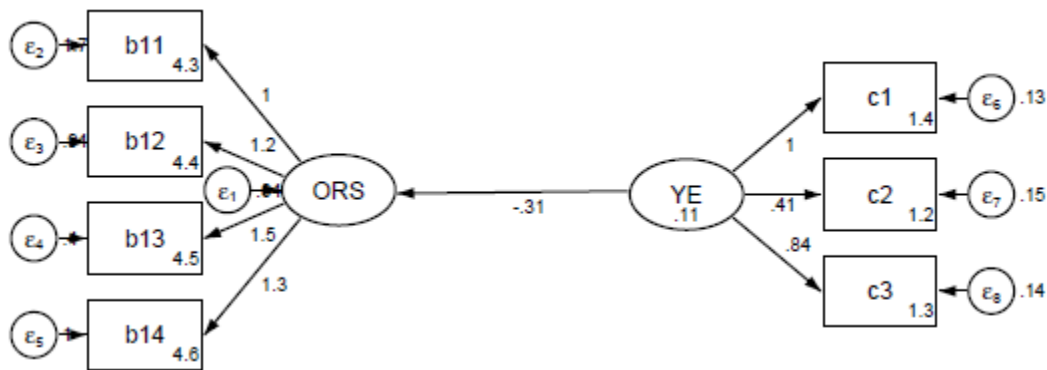
**Figure 1. Conceptual Framework**

**4.0 Data analysis and Results**

**Test of Hypotheses**

**Ho:** Opportunity recognition competence has no significant effect on youth empowerment in selected states in Northeast, Nigeria.

**Objective:** Evaluate the effect of opportunity-recognition competence on youth empowerment in selected states in Northeast, Nigeria



*Figure 2. Structural equation model for opportunity recognition skill and youth empowerment.*

Table 1

*Standardized Estimates for Opportunity Recognition Skill and Youth Empowerment*

		Coef.	Std. Err.	Z	P>z	[95%Conf.Interval]	
Structural	YE	-.3069	.2078	-1.48	0.140	-.7142	.1003
Measurement	ALL						
B11	ORS	1					
	_cons	4.2803	0.0908	47.15	0.001	4.1023	4.4582
B12	ORS	1.2179	0.1458	8.35	0001	0.9320	1.5038
	_cons	4.3598	0.0810	53.8	0001	4.2010	4.5187
B13	ORS	1.4751	0.1940	7.6	0001	1.0948	1.8554
	_cons	4.4913	0.0792	56.69	0001	4.3361	4.6466
B14	ORS	1.2754	0.1711	7.45	0001	0.9400	1.6107
	_cons	4.6435	0.0852	54.5	0001	4.4766	4.8105
C1	YE	1					
	_cons	1.4359	0.0292	49.23	0001	1.3788	1.4932
C2	YE	0.4137	0.1169	3.54	0001	0.1845	0.6430
	_cons	1.2249	0.0246	49.87	0001	1.1768	1.2730
C3	YE	0.8368	0.2306	3.63	0001	0.3849	1.2887
	_cons	1.3183	0.0274	48.11	0001	1.2646	1.3720

The initial structural equation model has 289 observations. There are seven observed variables with latent variable youth empowerment used as reference indicators and therefore fixed at 1.0 for the unstandardized solution. In standardized solution, both the latent and the observed variables are rescaled automatically to have a variance of 1.0, which allows standardized estimates for each of the loadings for the measurement model. All seven of these are strong, 0.307 to 1.48. These results are included in figure 1 above. The tests showed that all the loadings are statistically significant. For the structural part of the model, the study observed that opportunity recognition competence has a strong effect on youth empowerment  $\beta = -0.307$ . It has a significant effect with p-value of 0.001. For the measurement part of the model, all observed variables were having significant impacts on the youth empowerment, they were three observed variables, all were significant at 0.001, while all the four observed variables for the latent variable opportunity recognition competence also made significant impacts at 0.001 as depicted in table 5 above.

#### 4.1 Discussion of Findings

Previous studies, posited that entrepreneurial competencies alone are not enough to ensure the survival and success of businesses (Minai, Raza, bin Hashim, Zain & Tariq, 2018), that entrepreneurial opportunity discovery only fully mediates the relationship between entrepreneurial

orientation and new venture performance (Donbesuura, Bosob & Hultmane, 2020). Vijay and Ajay (2011) as well claimed that vision and personal goals are believed to affect the way entrepreneurs run their organization. The finding of this study reinforced previous studies in Southeast, Nigeria and Kenya (Kamuri & Ngugi, 2019; Oboreh & Nnebe, 2019). Opportunity recognition was found to be a significant determinant of performance of value-system actors in the leather industry in Kenya (Kamuri & Ngugi, 2019). Similarly, this study showed that opportunity recognition skill had a significant effect on youth empowerment in selected states in Northeast, Nigeria. Specifically, reported skills to seize high-quality business opportunities, perceive unmet consumer needs, treat new problems as opportunities and actively look for products or services that provide real benefit to customers have contributed to youth empowerment in states in Northeast, Nigeria.

## 5.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

The study concludes that opportunity-recognition skill by youths positively influences their empowerment in selected states in Northeast, Nigeria. Accordingly, Northeast state governments of Bauchi, Gombe and Yobe and community leaders should engage in vigorous media literacy to mobilize greater youth appreciation and participation in skill acquisition programmes. The government should also establish well-funded vocational training centers along with industrial parks in each state. Successful indigenous entrepreneurs should be encouraged with tax holidays in exchange for providing apprenticeship training to interested indigenous youths over a stipulated time frame. This will encourage and engender greater participation of the youths in self-employment practices.

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