



## Total Quality Management, Entrepreneurial Orientation and Small Enterprises' Performance in Abuja, Nigeria- A Research

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DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.8369306

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### Abstract

The influences and combined effects of Total Quality Management (TQM), Entrepreneurial Orientation (EO) on small enterprise's performance is the main concern of this paper as has been evident in the literature. Though, research findings on the relationship between these variables (TQM and EO) were reported in isolation. Yet, the finding is often described as contradictory and inconclusive. Therefore, this study investigated the combined effect of total quality management and entrepreneurial orientation on SMEs performance in Abuja, Nigeria. Data was collected from 171 owners/managers of small enterprises and analyzed using SPSS and PLS-SEM statistical tool of analysis. Findings revealed that has significant positive effect on small enterprise's performance. On the other hand, EO has significant negative effect on small enterprise's performance. Research implications were provided to small enterprises' owners/managers on the need to adopt TQM practices to strengthen the effect of EO on performance of small enterprises. Future researchers can examine the model using different sample sizes or apply the model in an entirely new research context.

**Keywords:** Total Quality Management, Entrepreneurial Orientation, Enterprises and Performance

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In today's complex business environment, the continued existence of small enterprises is fundamental for both industrialized and unindustrialized economies. SMEs are considered as the economy's driving force of both developing and industrialized economies (Ali & Johl, 2022). Also, the Nigerian government has realized the importance of SMEs in creating jobs, and reducing inequality, contributing 48 % of GDP and creating employment to 17.4 million people (Ali & Johl, 2022). Likewise, International Labour Organisation (ILO) has disclosed that SMEs contributed 48 percent of Nigeria's National Gross Domestic Product, accounting for 96 percent of businesses and 84 percent of employment (Mahmud, Hilmi, Mustapha & Abu Karim, 2019). Thus, SMEs contribute significantly to alleviating poverty and increasing job creation. Small enterprises also, are primary platforms for enterprises that play a crucial role to employment, wealth creation, and economic growth of the nation.

In general, SMEs as the backbone of any economy, has gained significant attention in the scholarly world, especially in today's age of digital economy, where total quality management and entrepreneurial orientation play a key role. Hence, Small enterprises performance is very vital to economic development of every nation, which have multiplied effect on job creation, income generation and increase in GDP (Alalawi, 2020). However, with the recession symptoms face globally, there has been a decline on the performance of small enterprises, which halted commercial and business activities (Pambreni, Khatibi, Azam & Tham, 2019).

SMEs performance is organizational concept that aims to incorporate all organizational tasks to objectively meet consumers' needs, achieve operational efficiency and increase firms' profitability. However, a greater number of small enterprises have been poorly performing (Jimoh, Oyewobi, Isa & Waziri, 2019). Accordingly, Salman and Yusuf (2018) contend that although, the number of small enterprises in Nigeria is increasing, literature shows that as a business entity,

Nigerian SMEs especially in Abuja are struggling with different barriers. Consequently, Niyi Anifowose, Ghasemi and Olaleye (2022) and Okoli Nwosu and Okechukwu (2021) emphasized on adoption of efficient total quality management and entrepreneurial orientation that would ensure improvement of performance of small enterprises in Nigeria.

In line with this, the effect of total quality management and entrepreneurial orientation on small enterprises performance has been established (Ibrahim & Mustapha, 2019). Hence, only few academics have addressed effect of total quality management and entrepreneurial orientation on small enterprises performance in Kano state, Nigeria (Bello Rogo, 2022; Hilman, Ali & Gorondutse, 2020). A number of scholars have established significant relationship between total quality management, entrepreneurial orientation and small enterprises performance (Olaleye et al., 2021; Tajeddini, Martin & Ali, 2020).

Nevertheless, Ali and Johl (2022) and Donbesuur, Boso and Hultman (2020) believes that total quality management and entrepreneurial orientation may have a negative effect on the performance of small enterprises. Therefore, the contradictory or inconsistent findings, need to be explored further. Again, more understanding of effect of TQM and EO within the performance context of Nigerian small enterprises will bring new insights on the relationship, especially when the two independent variables are researched concurrently with supportive empirical evidence from survey research (Fan et al., 2021; Hilman et al., 2020). Equally, studies that examine the effect of TQM and EO on small enterprises performance are limited. Therefore, this study empirically examines the effect of TQM and EO on small enterprises performance in Abuja, Nigeria.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Small Enterprise Performance**

Small enterprises performance is universally interconnected to the progress and improvement of a national economy (Karami & Tang, 2019). This explains the significance of this sector as a mechanism that can build not only economic growth in developing countries but already developed ones. Also, Small enterprises have been recognized globally as one of the major funding sector to GDP in the areas of employment generation, poverty reduction, and quick industrialisation, boost the spread of technology, innovation and wealth creation among citizens. Nigerian Small enterprises are perceived to have provided important economic benefits in the areas of employment and empowerment of the populace, proving about 90% of job opportunities to citizens (Mahmud, Hilmi, Mustapha & Abu Karim, 2019).

### **2.2 Total Quality Management (TQM)**

TQM is an integrative firm-wide management philosophy aimed at continuously improving the quality of the processes, products and services by focusing on meeting or exceeding customer expectations to enhance customer satisfaction and organizational performance (Sahoo & Yadav, 2018). Therefore, organizations had implemented TQM to improve their business success by differentiating their products and gaining a competitive position in the market. This leads to positive results with increasingly higher profits, market share and superior performance. TQM is a management approach which started in Japan in the early 1980s, that seeks to enhance quality and productivity in business firms. In 1990s, TQM gained popularity among firms, who started adopting this management philosophy which focuses upon customer satisfaction and improves firm's performance. Total Quality Management meticulously is denoted as machinery to enhance firms' performances. Hence, Organisations that practice TQM derive a competitive advantage over other firms (Hilman et al. 2019). Jimohet al. (2018), in their study, studied the association amidst TQM practices for incessant enhancement on diverse performance measurements among large-and small-scale construction companies in Nigeria. Affirmations were made regarding significant effects of TQM practices, as well as, mediating roles of strategies for incessant development in guaranteeing improved performances, which becomes imperious for organizations longing for competitive advantage due to quality management practices.

### **2.3 TQM and Small enterprises Performance**

In TQM research literature, most firms claim positive relationship between TQM and small enterprises' performance and yet some firms also report less than optimal results. Niu, Deng and Hao (2020) very few researchers have conducted empirical studies to understand TQM-performance relationship in the context of small enterprises. Some studies found that TQM could be adopted by small enterprises with considerable success. However other studies have also reported adverse impact of TQM on SMEs performance. These inconsistent findings in literature calls for further scholarly examination of the relationship between TQM and small enterprises performance (Sahoo & Yadav, 2018). A TQM movement cannot succeed unless employees are involved at various business processes and they are being trained to become more competent. Most researchers suppose that human resources (people) are essential to the implementation of quality management practices, since people are often the key elements in operations. In order to succinctly implement the philosophy of quality management within small enterprises, the recipient firm should harbor strong leadership traits capable of exhibiting excellent project management styles.

Salman and Yusuf (2018) some small enterprises misuse the total quality management practices and the main reason for this scenario lies in their internal issues such as lack of knowledge and their understanding of quality management practices, cultures, skills and so on, leading to use of wrong tool to solve a problem', use of same tool to solve all of the problem', and 'use of same set of tools on each problem. Total quality management practices for manufacturing industry are resource intensive and yield fruitful results in a long run. Therefore, manufacturing SMEs' entrepreneurs in Nigeria are unclear about the potential benefits of quality management practices (Uchenna, Sanjo & Joseph, 2019). Since scope of improvement through deployment of TQM within the manufacturing firm is improving, organizations could think of newer alternatives of integrating the business activities beyond the organizations boundary.

## 2.4 Entrepreneurial Orientation (EO)

Entrepreneurial orientation is an organization's strategic orientation that refers to detailed entrepreneurial aspects of policymaking styles, methods and practices; it sums up the features of an entrepreneurial firm (Salman & Yusuf, 2018). Also Okoli, Nwosu and Okechukwu (2021) added that entrepreneurial orientation (EO) is a fundamental factor to the success of organizations. It is seen as a process and decision-making movement used by managers that leads to new entrance and aid for business undertakings.

Entrepreneurial orientation is not negotiable for SMEs that want to prosper in competitive business environment (Pambreni, Khatibi, Azam and Tham, 2019). small enterprises must cultivate entrepreneurial orientation to increase their performance result from their innovation, proactiveness and risk taking which consists of the generation of a new ideas and its application in the form of development of new goods or process of service, which will eventually lead to growth in the market share of an organisation, and creation of pure profit for the ground-breaking enterprise. To be successful, small enterprises will have to take on riskier projects, even if it means doing away with the methods or products that have worked for other businesses. The idea of entrepreneurial orientation is to energize the small enterprises' performance which involves a combination of three aspects; innovativeness which is concerned with supporting and encouraging new ideas, experimentation and creativity that likely to result in new goods, services and or processes (Salman & Yusuf, 2018).

Firms are portrayed as having entrepreneurial orientation when they display entrepreneurial traits with adequate consistency in deriving a characterized organizational quality (Covin & Ridges, 2019). Being one of the attributes of organizations, EO penetrates firms' administrative method of insight and decision- making hones, its setup as organizational components, including key behavior. Prior studies debated on the bond between Entrepreneurial Orientation (EO) and Organizational Performance (OP) resolved that, enterprises having strong EO perform excellently than firms who fail to espouse EO (Shan et al., 2016).

## 2.5 EO and Small Enterprises Performance

Entrepreneurial orientation (EO) has been deliberated as crucial element of firms' competitive advantage, growth which influences performance the market share, sales volume, and profit growth represent high growth associated with a firm's entrepreneurial orientation (Tajeddini, Martin, & Ali, 2020). Therefore, firms' performance is aligned with the elements of entrepreneurial orientation: innovativeness, risk-taking, and proactiveness. Several studies have dedicated ample attention to the significant role of EO in the performance of firms (Salman & Yusuf, 2018), and empirically proved the strong association between them (Donbesuur et al., 2020). Yet, many areas remain to be addressed (Pambreni, Khatibi, Azam and Tham, 2019).

Entrepreneurship is related mostly with launching new products or services, while the notion of entrepreneurial posture can be considered as some practices and behaviours that strengthen the act to be entrepreneurial. An entrepreneurial behaviour, is deeply related to an orientation that the company follows, mainly by the founder; this posture, in literature, is named as "EO" and can be considered as the strategic posture that affects business performance (Karami & Tang, 2019),

Miller (2011) defines entrepreneurial orientation as "A way in which entrepreneurs behave in creating their new entry". The critical role played by the entrepreneurial orientation on successes of today's SMEs led to internationalization and performance of entrepreneurial activities in many developing economies. In the case of new ventures, Entrepreneurial orientation has a significant impact on the enhancement of the performance of organizations. Donbesuur et al (2020) found that opportunity discovery of entrepreneurship influence positively the relationship between entrepreneurial orientation and performance of new ventures in Africa. EO exert an influence on business and this indicated a positive relationship found between entrepreneurial orientation and organizational performance. In the same vein, a study conducted by Tajedini et al. (2020) suggest that entrepreneurial orientation positively affects the business performance when the firm is with strong social networking.

Despite the fact that the relationship between entrepreneurship orientation and business performance is not yet conclusive (Jiang et al., 2018), Baker and Sinkula (2009) concludes that entrepreneurial orientation enhance the profitability of the firm. Further, a study was conducted among Chinese e-commerce enterprises to analyze the market performance and found that entrepreneurial orientation positively affects the market performance (Niu et al., 2020).

## 2.6 Empirical Evidences

Hilman and Gorondutse (2020) have conducted a study on the relationship between TQM and SMEs' performance. The conceptual model for their study was developed based on the literature review of TQM and small enterprises performance. As the research framework, a self-administered questionnaire was used to collect data from managers/owners of SMEs in the Riyadh, Mecca and Eastern regions of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The instrument was evaluated for its validity and reliability. A structural equation model was designed to examine the relationships, using PLS 3.0. Statistical outcomes of the study add to the literature through displaying a positive direct effect of TQM and small enterprises' performance. However, the findings of their research provide insights into SMEs' owners/managers in today's dynamic manufacturing environment, focusing on TQM as a mechanism for improving their performance. The results can help small enterprises by providing guidance because of its effect on the successful implementation of TQM, therefore improving the level of small enterprises performance.

Kalogiannidis (2021) added that most global studies have to a greater extent underscored the importance of total quality management practices and some marketing aspects concerning organizational performance. Most studies have focused on establishing the level to which TQM practices influence customer satisfaction and not the whole organization or small enterprises. There is also little evidence on how marketing practices influence organizational or SMEs performance. Their study therefore seeks to assess the impact of Total Quality Management practices and marketing on small enterprises performance. Data was collected from a sample size of 289 respondents who were employees of the different small enterprises in Greece. Data was analyzed using SPSS and Pearson's rank correlation coefficient was used to establish the relationship between the study variables. Findings confirmed the presence of a relationship between TQM practices and SMEs performance. Similarly, there was a positive relationship between marketing practices and organizational performance. The study concluded that the TQM practices and marketing are great influencers of quality hence should always be applied in organizations. However, their study included some marketing aspects concerning organizational performance, such inclusion may drain the reliability on their study outcomes. Unlike the current study which solely relied on only the effects of TQM on small enterprises performance.

In the same vein, Olaleye, Ali-Momoh, Herzallah, Sibanda and Ahmed (2021) researched and explored that the nexus between Total Quality Management practices and Organizational Performance, and the mediating effect of the Entrepreneurial Orientation dimension on the relationship. A cross-sectional data was obtained from 549 small-scale manufacturing companies using convenience sampling. Data were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential techniques. Discovery unveiled through the PLS-SEM result, shows a tie of relationship existing between TQM and performance, as well as entrepreneurial orientation dimension. Since, firms had a high capacity for innovativeness, proactiveness, and risk-taking; they acquire a competitive advantage and realize greater performance. While their study looked at the study variables from various dimension the current study concentrated only on the dependent and independents variables to arrive at a dependable conclusion.

Uchenna, Sanjo and Joseph (2019) examined the effect of entrepreneurial orientation (EO) on micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) performance in Abia State, Nigeria. Using survey research design, through the administration of structured questionnaire to the chief executives of some selected MSMEs in Abia State, Nigeria. The findings revealed that innovativeness, risk-taking, proactiveness, autonomy, achievement and learning orientations are the critical dimensions of EO driving MSMEs performance in Abia State, Nigeria. While competitive aggressiveness does not significantly affect MSMEs performance. The adjusted R<sup>2</sup> revealed that EO dimensions account for 61% variation in MSMEs performance in Abia State, Nigeria. The researchers concluded that EO positively and significantly affects MSMEs performance in Abia State, Nigeria. The study contributes to the literature on EO, by examining EO from seven dimensions (innovative, risk-taking, proactive, autonomy, achievement, competitive aggressiveness and learning orientations). MSMEs should develop their innovative, risk-taking, proactive, autonomy, achievement and learning orientations toward attaining increased revenue. However, their study used seven dimensions of EO the current study is single dimension of EO which go a long way in ensuring reliability and dependability of EO as a variable in the current study.

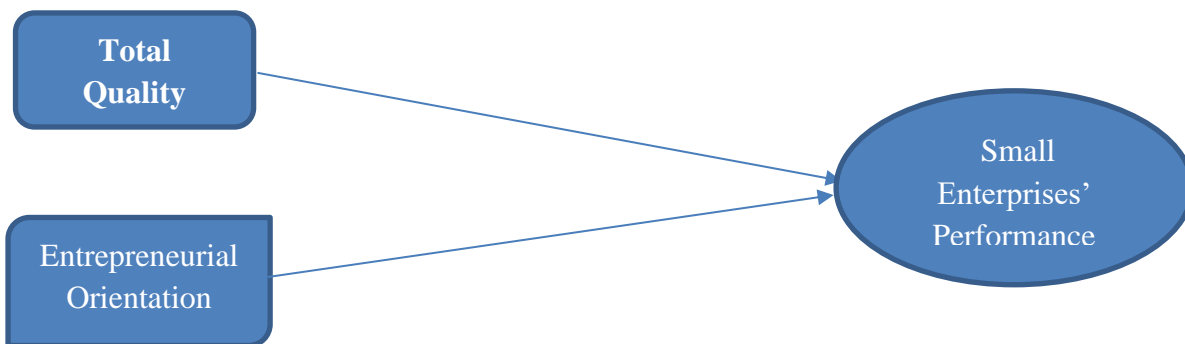
Similarly, Oman Alalawi (2020) also explored the effect of EO on organizational learning, innovation and firm performance, and the mediating role of both organizational learning and innovation and performance in the relationship between EO and firm performance. It applies to small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in an Omani context. The study employed quantitative method to gather information and data which are imperative for any typical study of a firm's performance. A questionnaire was distributed to gather data from 418 managers of SMEs in Oman. Structure Equation

Modelling (SEM) was used to analyze the collected data. The findings of the study indicated that organizational culture is a key determinant of EO in SMEs. Further, only hierarchical, rational and development culture bear direct correlation to EO whereas group culture has almost no effect. The results also depicted how EO contributes positively to the performance, organizational learning and innovation of a firm. Learning organization and innovation performance were also seen to deeply influence a firm's overall output. Finally, the results concluded that organizational learning and innovation performance play a mediating role in the relationship between EO and firm performance.

This study contributes to the current available theoretical knowledge pool and stresses the understanding and knowledge about the relationships that typically exist between the four different types of attributes, namely: organizational culture, EO, organizational learning, innovation performance and firm performance. The study also confirms the requirement of at least two mediators that further enhance the relationship between EO and firm performance, particularly in the context of small and medium enterprises in Oman.

In practical terms, this study will help the Omani SMEs in enhancing their performance by encouraging correct EO behaviours that support organizational learning practices, thereby improving innovation and performance. Further, it will help SMEs to improve their performance through the support of an outstanding organizational culture, thus enhancing EO and, in the process, encouraging managers and employees to follow a continuous learning approach. This study contextually though different but share some features with the current study.

## 2.7 Conceptual Framework of the Study



**Figure 2.1: The Conceptual Framework**

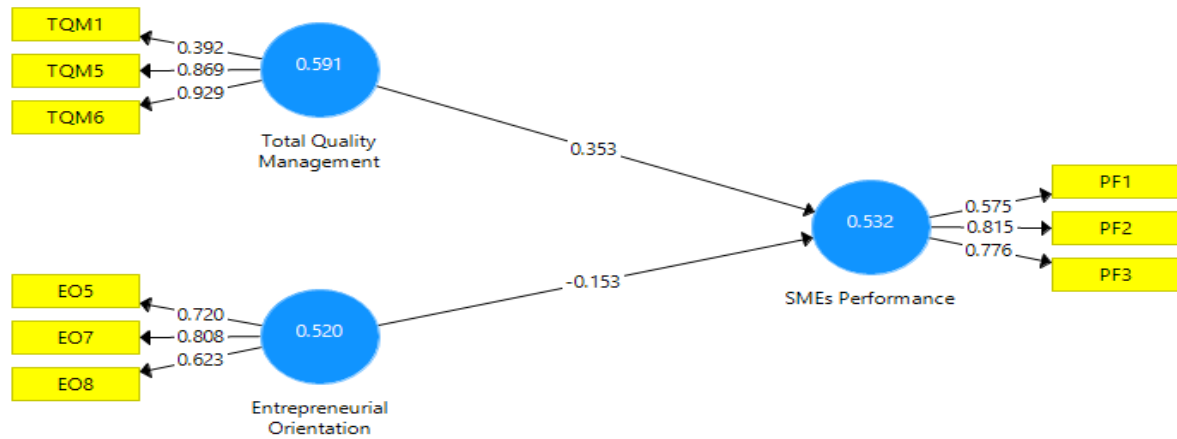
## 3. Methodology

The population of this study is 79,328 SMEs operating in three senatorial district of Kano state, Nigeria (SMEDAN, 2021). Abuja was chosen because it has a considerable portion of small enterprises in the region. Therefore, this study distributed questionnaires to randomly selected 332 SMEs based on Krejcie and Morgan (1970). All instruments in this study were adopted – SMEs performance (4 items), total quality management (6 items) and entrepreneurial orientation (8 items) were adopted from Cui et al. (2018), Saragih et al. (2020) and Abdullah and Mansor (2018). However, the study achieved 171 valid responses, accounting for 51.57% of the questionnaires – which is considered suitable for data analysis. Therefore, this study is quantitative survey design and primary data was collected from SMEs using hand delivery method. PLS (partial least square) – SEM (structural equation modelling) statistical analysis was employed in this study, because it is a non-parametric tool used for data analysis, which is robust in cause-and-effect analysis (Hair et al., 2014)

## 4. Data Analysis and Findings

To test the research hypotheses, this study used PLS Algorithm and bootstrapping techniques. On the other hand, descriptive statistics is run using SPSS (statistical package for social sciences) and result showed that 65% of the firms were owned by male; while, female owned 35% of the firms. Yet, result showed that 47% of the respondents have Diploma; 30% of the respondents have SSCE and 23% of the respondents have a Bachelor Degree. In addition, results showed that 65% of the surveyed firms have been in business for 10 years' period; while, 22% of the firms have been in operation for the past 5 years. However, 13% of the surveyed firms have been in operation for 10 years and above.





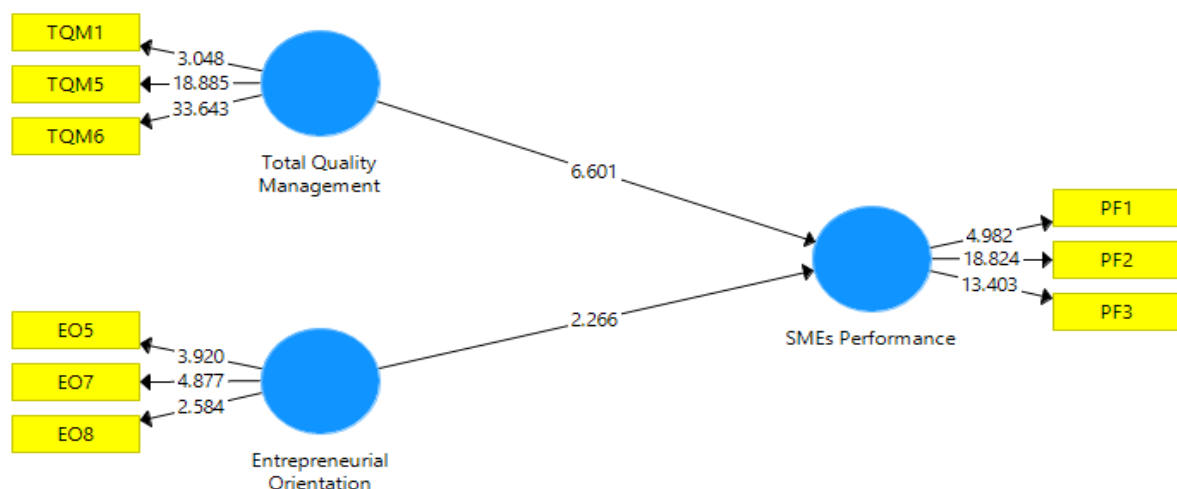
**Figure 4.1: Measurement Model Assessment**

According to PLS Algorithm, the constructs have adequate reliability and validity level. Looking at the AVE (average variance extract), composite reliability and discriminant validity, as in figure 4.1 and table 4.1, SMEs performance has AVE of 0.532 and composite reliability of 0.77. On the other hand, total quality management has AVE of 0.591 and composite reliability of 0.796. While, entrepreneurial orientation has AVE of 0.520 and composite reliability of 0.763. Additionally, results showed that all items that measure the constructs have adequate weight loadings. Hence, some items were deleted in order to achieve a satisfactory threshold level.

**Table 4.1 Validity and Reliability of Instruments**

	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
<b>Entrepreneurial Orientation</b>	<b>0.763</b>	<b>0.520</b>
<b>SMEs Performance</b>	<b>0.770</b>	<b>0.532</b>
<b>Total Quality Management</b>	<b>0.796</b>	<b>0.591</b>

Still, the outcome indicated that the R-square value is moderate as total quality management and entrepreneurial orientation explained 15.4% variance in SMEs performance. Similarly, the f square value for total quality is moderate, while; that of entrepreneurial orientation is low. Suggesting that total quality management has a greater effect on SMEs performance, than the effect exerted by entrepreneurial orientation on SMEs performance. Hence, total quality management and entrepreneurial orientation exercise a significant effect on the performance of SMEs in Kano State.



**Figure 4.1: Structural Model Assessment**

In addition, findings in figure 4.2 and table 4.2 have shown a supporting evidence that total quality management and entrepreneurial orientation have significant effect of SMEs performance. Hence, results established that total quality management is an important factor in determining the performance of SMEs ( $\beta = -0.153$ ,  $t = 2.266$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Likewise, results established further that entrepreneurial orientation is an important determinant of SMEs performance ( $\beta = 0.353$ ,  $t = 6.601$ ,  $p < 0.00$ ).

**Table 4.2: Hypotheses Testing**

	Original Sample (O)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics ((O/STDEV))	P Values
Entrepreneurial Orientation -> SMEs Performance	-0.153	0.068	2.266	0.012
Total Quality Management -> SMEs Performance	0.353	0.053	6.601	0.000

## 5. Discussion and Recommendation

This study tested the effect of total quality management and entrepreneurial orientation on SMEs performance in Kano, Nigeria. Accordingly, 2 research hypotheses were postulated and tested, and according to the findings the effect of total quality management on SMEs performance is established statistically. Also, the effect of entrepreneurial orientation on SMEs performance is established statistically. However, the findings indicate further that the effect of total quality management on SMEs performance is highly positive and significant; on the other hand, the effect of entrepreneurial orientation on SMEs performance is negative and highly significant.

Therefore, the results validate that of prior studies such as Abdullah and Mansor (2018) and Ali and Johl (2022), who found that total quality management and entrepreneurial orientation influence the performance of SMEs in various research contexts. The results revalidate prior studies on the contradictory effect of entrepreneurial orientation on SMEs performance. Hence, entrepreneurial orientation involves element of uncertainty and risk-taking and therefore, inability to predict situation correctly can have severe consequence on SMEs performance.

The study recommends that though, entrepreneurial orientation is significant in influencing the performance of SMEs; however, managers can also, effectively utilize total quality management in boosting the performance of SMEs. Further study can test the framework with a different sample size or revalidate the current findings in different setting.

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**CITE AS**

Hauwa A. G., Dr. Tafida.M, & Fatima U. (2023). Total Quality Management, Entrepreneurial Orientation and Small Enterprises' Performance in Abuja, Nigeria- A Research. *Global Journal of Research in Business Management*, 3(5), 1–8. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.8369306>