



The Influence of Entrepreneurial Training and Innovation Drive on Sustainable Employment Outcomes in Non-Oil-Producing Western States of Nigeria

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Abstract

This study investigates the influence of entrepreneurial training and innovation drive on sustainable employment outcomes in the non-oil-producing western states of Nigeria. Employing a quantitative research design, primary data were collected through structured questionnaires from 346 entrepreneurs across the targeted regions. The analysis employed descriptive statistics, correlation, and regression techniques. Findings reveal a significant positive relationship between entrepreneurial training and sustainable employment, with a correlation coefficient of 0.816 ($p = 0.001$), underscoring the critical role of targeted skills development in youth employment. Additionally, the innovation drive was identified as a vital factor in job generation and unemployment reduction, with innovation strategies positively influencing employment outcomes. The study is underpinned by human capital theory and innovation diffusion theory, which support the premise that investments in skills and innovative practices enhance enterprise resilience and productivity. The results imply that strategic policy interventions focused on entrepreneurship education and fostering innovation can substantially contribute to reducing unemployment in Nigeria's non-oil economy, thereby promoting sustainable economic growth.

Keywords: Entrepreneurial training, Innovation drive, Sustainable employment outcome, human capital, Non-oil economy, Nigeria western states.

Introduction

The catalyst for economic expansion, poverty alleviation, and unemployment eradication is entrepreneurship. The vital role that entrepreneurship plays in sustainable economic growth is highlighted by the Global Entrepreneurship and Development Institute, which provides information on the growth and performance of entrepreneurial ecosystems at the national and provincial levels (Akinwale et al., 2020). Furthermore, Martins et al. (2023) contended that entrepreneurship has a significant effect on the economy by creating sustainable wealth and business prospects. These findings underscore the need for policymakers to foster an environment that encourages innovation and supports new ventures. By investing in education, infrastructure, and access to capital, governments can enhance entrepreneurial activities, ultimately driving economic resilience and social progress.

In this study, entrepreneurship is conceptualized as the process of identifying business opportunities and raising the necessary funds to launch a new enterprise or revitalize an existing one in the face of risks and uncertainties with the goal of turning market or business opportunities into revenue under private ownership. To put it simply, entrepreneurship is the combining of limited resources under private ownership made feasible by innovative, profit-driven ideas and practical actions. The menace of unemployment and its related stigmas has remained a viral affliction of most economies. This persistent issue not only affects individual livelihoods but also hampers overall economic growth and social stability. As communities grapple with high unemployment rates, the stigmas associated with joblessness can lead to feelings of rent-seeking behavior and despair among those affected. According to Ayoade & Agwu (2016), unemployment remains a major challenge of modern economies around the world today; Nigeria is no

exception. Resulting from poor enterprise culture, the unemployment situation in Nigeria is now a major driver of poverty and social vices. Nigeria's unemployment rate has become a multifaceted issue that affects people of various ages, educational levels, and geographic locations. The unemployment issue in Nigeria is indeed hydra-headed, as most critical stakeholders, decision-makers, and governments at all levels are struggling to address the severe challenges brought on by the scourge across diverse economies. In the same vein, it has been posited that unemployment is one of the challenges that confronts every developing nation (economy), which includes but is not limited to Nigeria. The impacts, however, are more visibly present among the teeming young people largely referred to as the youths. This was confirmed by Oviawe (2010). He asserted that more than half of the Nigerian population is under the age bracket of 30; this implies that the nation's economy is driven by its young people (youths). However, this phase of the nation's population is the worst hit by the virus of unemployment. According to Emeh, Nwanguna, & Abaroh (2012), the young folks in Nigeria are largely confronted with the challenges of unemployment and poverty as well as a lack of relevant skills, awareness, and ability required to progress and add value to the economy. Apparently, the difficulties occasioned by unemployment and a dearth of productive capacities make it hard to maintain productive and meaningful lifestyles, which has a detrimental effect on the rate of national development. However, the perceived dearth of productive capacities among the growing Nigerian population, practically in the western non-oil-producing state, could be addressed by entrepreneurial training and innovation initiatives in both the long and short run.

There are torrent of evidence on entrepreneurship's positive propensity to foster economic growth and development in the Nigerian economy. The imperative of most of this literature hosts the fact that entrepreneurship has been discovered to be a prime indicator of economic growth, development, and sustainability; this is practically manifested in developing economies such as Nigeria. Adding credence to the above postulates, Adebayo & Jenny (2013) posited that entrepreneurship drives developing nations' economic advancement and sustainability by means of job creation and unemployment diminution. However, Arogundade (2011), cited in Ayoade & Agwu (2016), affirmed the contributory role of entrepreneurial initiative to employment provision but ventilated that entrepreneurship, which would have saved the Nigerian economy from unemployment woes, is not receiving desired support from various levels of government. Recognizing the efficacy of entrepreneurial ventures in job creation, most Nigerians,

especially the youth, have embraced it to carve a niche for themselves in the economy. This corroborates the submissions of Oni & Daniya (2012). The duo posited that Nigerians without jobs have turned to self-help and starting their own enterprises as a way to support themselves. This further stresses the positive nexus of entrepreneurship with job generation. Tijani-Alawiye (2004) emphasizes that entrepreneurship boosts the supply of the host of industrialists, and the upshots in the files of industrialists could result in the manner of SMEs or large-form enterprises, which are present in the economy and should be strong, innovative, and have the push to nurture the diverse businesses so as to develop and realize socio-economic development goals in an economy. Adenutsi (2023) contends that in low-income economies, entrepreneurship is the engine of economic growth and development by reducing poverty, creating jobs, and empowering people.

Entrepreneurial training and innovation initiatives are two strategic hubs for unemployment diminution in developed, developing, and less developed economies. This corroborates the view of Mitra (2011), cited in Gamede & Uleanya (2019), who posited that the value-adding potentials (contribution) of entrepreneurship to economic growth and development are a result of or stem from knowledge acquisition as well as entrepreneurial training. In essence, in both developed and developing economies, education is viewed as an investment that promotes growth. This demonstrates that when nations work to expand their training systems to support the development of entrepreneurship abilities, they will be able to accelerate their economic development and lessen the rate of unemployment (Abari, Mohammed & Olufemi, 2016). In addition to adding value to the nation's economic growth and development, entrepreneurship training and innovation initiatives are drivers of employment generation via the provision of skills and mindsets essential to generate and sustain businesses, while innovation drives productivity and competitiveness.

Nigeria, a country historically reliant on oil revenues, is grappling with high youth unemployment and regional disparities in economic performance. Particularly in non-oil-producing southwestern states, such as Osun, Ekiti, and Ogun, employment challenges persist despite significant entrepreneurial potential. As global economies pivot toward innovation-driven employment, understanding how entrepreneurial training and innovation drive sustainable employment outcomes becomes critical. This study explores the extent to which entrepreneurial training and innovation drive—two pillars of the human capital and innovation systems theories—can foster sustainable employment in these under-resourced, non-oil-producing regions.

Objective of the Study

This research is powered by the following objectives:

- a. **General Objective:** To investigate the nexus between entrepreneurial training and diminution of unemployment in Non-Oil Producing western States of Nigeria.
- b. **Specific Objectives:**

- (i) To determine the correlation between ET and diminution of unemployment in Non-Oil Producing western States of Nigeria.
- (ii) To find out whether innovation drive contribute to diminution of unemployment in Non-Oil Producing western States of Nigeria.

Hypotheses of the Study

The pursuit and achievement of the stated objectives of the study is guided by the postulated hypotheses below:

Hypothesis 1

H_0 : There exists no positive and significant nexus between ET and diminution of unemployment in non-oil-producing western states of Nigeria.

H_1 : There exists a positive and significant nexus between ET and diminution of unemployment in non-oil-producing western states of Nigeria.

Hypothesis 11

H_0 : There is no positive and significant correlation between innovation drive and diminution of unemployment in non-oil-producing western states of Nigeria.

H_0 : There is positive and significant correlation between innovation drive and diminution of unemployment in non-oil-producing western states of Nigeria.

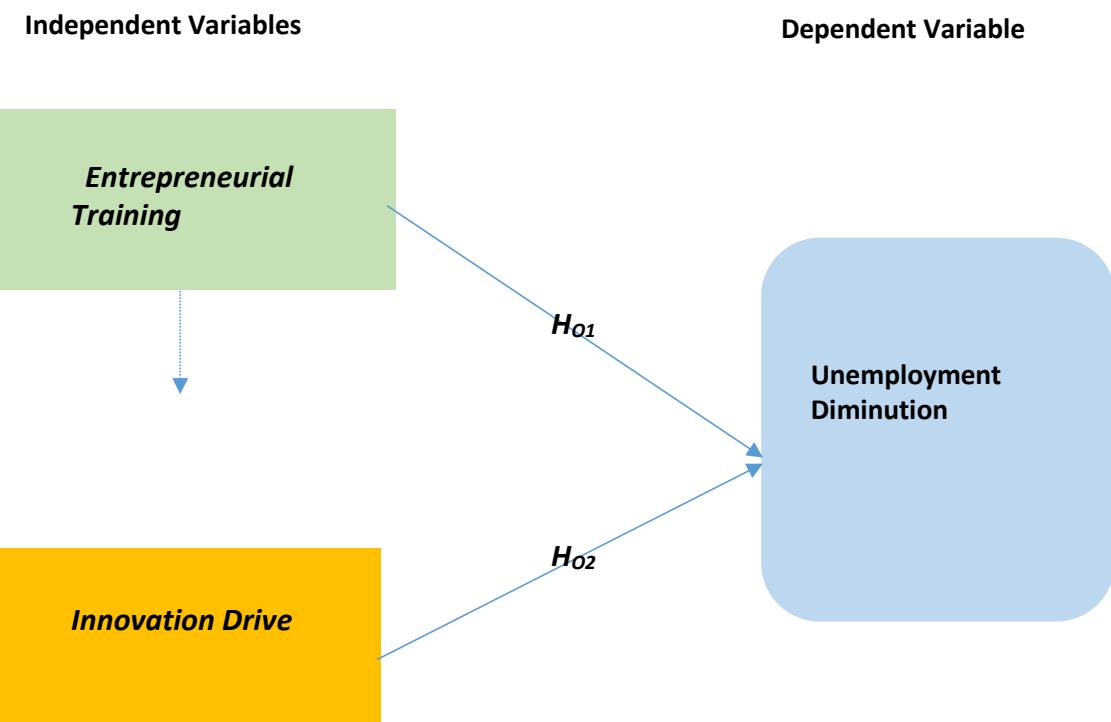
Research Questions

The following questions were stated to provide a lucid guidance for the research.

To what extent does ET influence/contribute to diminution of unemployment in non-oil-producing western states of Nigeria?

Does innovation drive contribute to diminution of unemployment in non-oil-producing western states of Nigeria?

Review of Related Literature and Conceptual Clarification



Source: Author's Conceptualization, 2025.

Entrepreneurial Training and Sustainable Employment Outcomes

Studies have indicated that individuals who are actively involved in skill- and perspicacity-based training usually demonstrate or exhibit higher and better entrepreneurial potential and intentions and are very likely to start and manage their enterprises more effectively and efficiently (Neck & Corbett, 2018). This suggests that fostering these skills in educational and professional settings could significantly enhance the entrepreneurial landscape. By prioritizing such training, we may empower a new generation of innovators and business leaders.

Entrepreneurial training, which other scholars refer to as entrepreneurial education, is skills- and perspicacity-driven; hence, it becomes positively effectuous for participants who sincerely embrace and key into it. In a broader facet, it's shaded as a "capacity" building initiative that liberates individuals or groups of individuals from intellectual and skills debt burdens in developing economies such as Nigeria and other developing nations. These foster a sense of competence and ability that enables participants to be self-reliant and job creators, thereby resulting in unemployment diminution. Entrepreneurial training cuts across the acquisition of business cutting-edge skills, resourceful information, opportunity identification, financial literacy, and risk management. According to Fayolle and Gailly (2015), such training enhances entrepreneurial intention and capacity. In contexts with limited formal employment, these skills are indispensable for job creation. They asserted that these training exercises improve participants' problem-solving, leadership, and decision-making abilities by bridging the gap between academic understanding and actual business difficulties (Rideout & Gray, 2019). According to research, students who participate in experiential learning exhibit better risk-taking skills, more entrepreneurial intents, and increased confidence when starting their own companies (Fayolle & Gailly, 2015).

Innovation Drive and Sustainable Employment Outcome

Innovation drive refers to the capacity and motivation to adopt new ideas, technologies, or processes. Drucker (1985) argues that innovation is the specific instrument of entrepreneurship. In sub-Saharan Africa, innovation has been shown to mediate the impact of training on business scalability and job-wealth creation (Akinwale, 2018). This suggests that fostering innovative practices can significantly enhance the effectiveness of training programs, ultimately leading to more robust economic growth in the region. Apparently, innovation involves more than just introducing new services or products in the business environment; it largely encompasses

embracing or adopting innovative enterprise strategies (models), approaches, and collaborations that support sustainable performance and growth. Enterprises that integrate and incorporate sustainability firmly into their innovation practices are more likely to excel, generate outstanding and better financial results (performance), and add to an environment and society that are healthier and more responsive to emerging trends. By prioritizing innovation, businesses can adapt more readily to market demands and expand their operations. Adding credence to innovation's sterling attributes for driving sustainable growth, Onsel (2015) posits that innovation is not just more closely associated with problem-solving but instead typically related to improving competitiveness and economic success, and it is frequently spurred by technology. This correlation existing between innovation and technology highlights the significance of promoting an environment that promotes creative experimentation and thinking. By investing in research and development, enterprises can improve their skill power and align themselves favorably in an ever-evolving market environment. Nambisan (2015) asserts that the effect of innovation is so significant that a plan or strategy can be evaluated based on how it directs and affects the innovation activities of the firm. This perspective emphasizes the importance of aligning organizational goals with innovative practices to foster growth and adaptability. By doing so, companies can better navigate market changes and enhance their competitive edge.

Innovation is seen as a crucial component of business success. According to Harper and Becker (2013), innovation led to a substantial advance in the actual product, process, or service-preferably one that outperformed the impact of earlier successes. These writers also suggested that innovation promoted sustainable corporate management.

Sustainable Employment Outcome

In the context of this study, sustainable employment is characterized as, or it simply means, sustainable job or employment creation that addresses the economic and financial yearnings of ateeming populace. It is a job or employment that is created by an individual or group of individuals from empowerments (such as skills training, innovation, and other initiatives) that can stand the test of time with a financial and economic dropdown menu to better the lot of the holder of such job(s). It is a sign of economic and financial fulfillment and independence on the part of such an entrepreneur or enterprise administrator. In a nutshell, this form of job creation (employment) not only aids or betters the lot of the individual but also greatly contributes to the society and economy in general. By encouraging or fostering a climate where skills and innovation thrive, we can pave the way for long-lasting job opportunities

that enhance overall well-being. The following criteria are used to define sustainable employment outcomes (SEO): (i) employment quantity (net job creation/retention); (ii) employment quality (earnings above local living-wage benchmarks, formal contracts, social protection); (ii) skills development and progression pathways; and (iv) inclusivity (youth/women participation). This acknowledges the reality of SMEs while adhering to the principles of decent labor. According to Deeya & Ojha (2025), sustainability employment is the ability of the employee to provide added value for an organization now and in the years to come (future), while also experiencing added value themselves. Van, Karen, Vuuren & Kemps (2017) see sustainable employment as the extent to which employees are able and willing to stay in work over time. Kellard et al. (2001) & Lengnick-Hall, Gaunt & Kulkarni (2008), cited in Aksnes & Ulstein (2023), posit that several aspects related to individual work ability and attributes, employers' attitudes and practices, and labor market characteristics can influence sustainable employment.

Theoretical underpinnings

The underpinning theories of the study are the human capital theory (HCT) and innovation diffusion theory (IDT). The study incorporates HCT advanced by Becker (1964) and the IDT proposed by Rogers (2003). The underpinning and relevance of these models to this present study is premised on the ground that human capital investments (training) are found to have a positive correlation with improved productivity, agility, and performance versatility, while innovation diffusion facilitates adaptability, flexibility, and competitiveness. These combined models advance that enterprises that give priority attention to employee skills and competence building and embrace innovative cultures (practices) are more likely to excel, respond quickly, and thrive in changing (dynamic) markets. This comprehensive approach not only improves individual effectiveness but also cultivates a culture of ongoing improvement and adaptability. Businesses are therefore more equipped to handle obstacles and take advantage of possibilities in quickly evolving settings. By encouraging a skilled and informed workforce and fostering a notion of innovation, enterprises can position themselves strategically for sustainable progress, growth, and long-term success.

Methods

This study was designed to assess the contributions of ET and ID to unemployment reduction in selected non-oil-producing western states in Nigeria. That is, to determine whether the above constructs assist in combating the menace of unemployment. To realize this goal, the paper adopted the survey research design.

The design was used owing to the fact that the research revolves around the impression and is targeted at gathering information from selected entrepreneurs of non-oil-producing western states in Nigeria. The description of non-oil-producing states connotes states that have no oil deposits; this also includes states that have no current oil mineral exploration activities taking place in their coverings, and therefore they are not major contributors to Nigeria's crude oil output, such as Lagos, Ogun, Oyo, Osun, and Ekiti. The rationale underpinning the selection of these non-oil-producing states hinges on the notion that youths from the oil-producing states are more concentrated on oil and oil-related dealings, thereby neglecting entrepreneurial ventures. Hence, entrepreneurial activities seem not to thrive well compared to the non-oil-producing actors (states). This disparity suggests that there is a significant opportunity for youth in the non-oil-producing states to engage in diverse economic activities. By fostering entrepreneurial spirit and innovation, these regions could potentially enhance their economic resilience and contribute more substantially to Nigeria's overall development. The population of the study comprised all entrepreneurs in western non-oil-producing states in Nigeria. To arrive at a reliable sample frame, the study applied a non-probabilistic sampling model; thereafter, a purposive sample of 367 entrepreneurs was selected and used for the study. Selected entrepreneurs include both males and females of different enterprise outfits, races, tribes, ages, and educational profiles. The different categories of criteria adopted were apt, as they assisted in generating non-biased responses for ascertaining the influence of ET and ID on unemployment reduction in Nigeria. The study relied on primary data; therefore, a structured and cross-examined questionnaire complemented by in-depth interviews constituted the tools for data gathering. The instrument yielded a Cronbach alpha of 0.8401, a value above the 0.70 threshold, therefore indicating that the instrument is internally consistent and reliable. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used for data examination. Here, the DS was adopted as a metric of central tendency and variability scrutiny. The DS is composed of mean, standard deviation, minimum, and maximum values. While the inferential statistics took care of the correlational statistical scrutiny. SPSS and STATA were used for descriptive and postulated hypotheses scrutiny.

Model Specification

The study's composite model specification, which shows the functional relationship between the independent and dependent variables, is provided below.

Unemployment	Diminution=
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f (Entrepreneurship training and Innovation drive).

eq. 1

The following models were later specified in order to successfully test the hypotheses that were proposed for the study:

Model 1

$$\begin{aligned} UempD &= f(EntT) & \text{eq.2} \\ UempD &= \alpha_0 + \beta_1 EntT + \epsilon_t & \text{eq.3} \end{aligned}$$

Variable Descriptions

UempD	= Unemployment Diminution
EntT	= Entrepreneurship training
InD	= Innovation drive
α_0, β_1	= Regression coefficients of the model
ϵ_t	= Error term.

Demographic profiles of respondents

Table 1: Respondents sex profile

Sex	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	208	60.1
Female	138	39.9
Total	346	100%

Source: SPSS Output 2025.

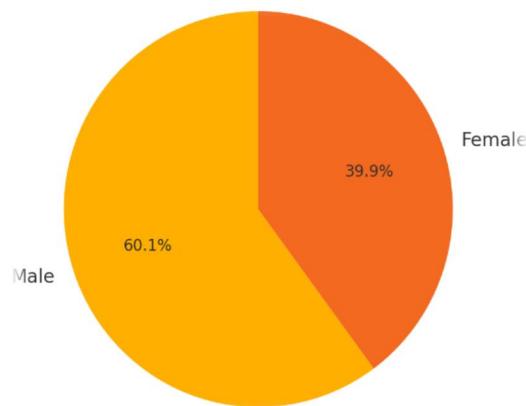


Figure 1: Pie Chart depicting the Sex profiles of sampled respondents.

Table 1 and figure 1 above present a copious profiles of studied respondents. From information contained therein, there are more male respondents (208), accounting for 60.1% than their female counterpart (138) representing 39.9%. The implication of this

Model 2

$$\begin{aligned} UempD &= f(InD) & \text{eq.4} \\ UempD &= \alpha_0 + \beta_1 InD + \epsilon_t & \text{eq.5} \end{aligned}$$

This model is predicated on the idea that innovation and entrepreneurship training in Nigeria's western non-oil-producing states directly contribute to the decline in unemployment.

Table 2: Marital Profile of Respondents

Marital Status	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Married	267	77.2
Single	63	18.2

statistics is that, there are more male entrepreneurs in the Western Nigeria non-oil producing states. This suggests that male individuals dominate the respondent group, indicating possible gender dynamics in the informal business sector surveyed/studied.

Marital Status Frequency Percentage (%)		
Others	16	4.6
Total	346	100%

Source: SPSS Output 2025.

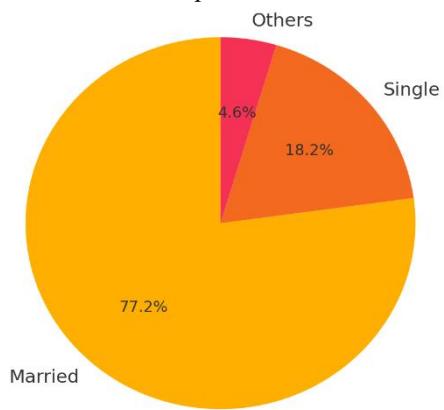


Figure 11: Pie Chart indicating the marital dispositions of studied respondents.

It is evident from the above statistics ably conveyed by table 2 and figure 2 that majority of the surveyed respondents (267) representing 77.2% are married, and closely followed by 18.2% single and 4.6% in other

categories, indicating a mature, civilized, and possibly stable business demographic. This could reflect a level of life stability that correlates with longer-term enterprise commitment and engagement.

Table 3: Respondents Age Profile

Age Group Frequency Percentage (%)		
26–35	179	51.7
15–25	68	19.7
36–45	51	14.7
46–55	28	8.1
56+	20	5.8
Total	346	100%

Source: SPSS Output 2025.

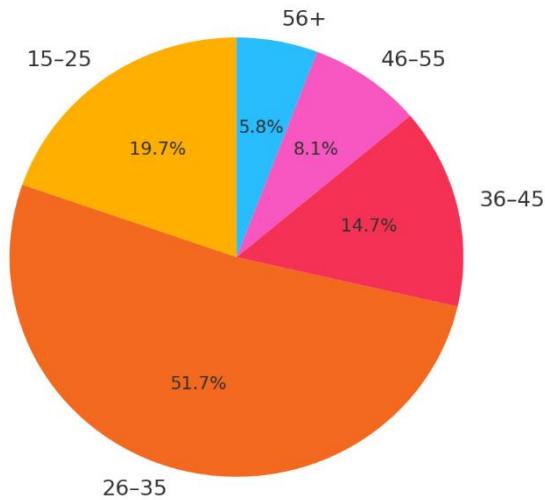


Figure 111: Pie Chart indicating the age status of investigated respondents.

The statistics displayed in table/figure 111, showed that more than half of the studied respondents (179) accounting for about 51.7% of the total population, are within the 26-35 age bracket/group, indicating an agile, young, and active/vibrant business enterprise

population. Thereby indicating them as the most economically active age range. This implies that the entrepreneurial landscape of western Nigeria non-oil producing states are largely youth/ young people dominated.

Table 4: Years in Business/Work Experience

Years in Business Frequency	Percentage (%)
16-25	38.7
6-15	25.4
1-5	19.7
26-35	11.0
36+	5.2
Total	100%

Source: SPSS Output 2025.

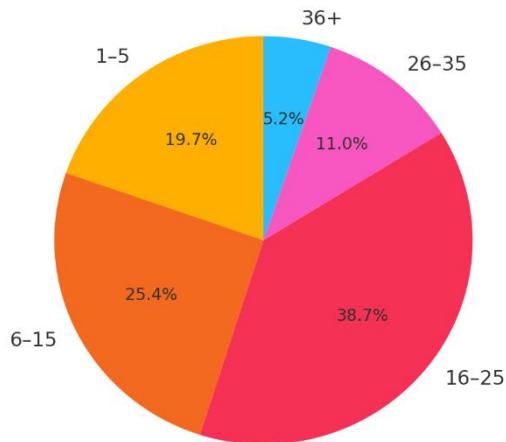


Figure 1V: Pie Chart representing sampled respondents' work experience/years in business

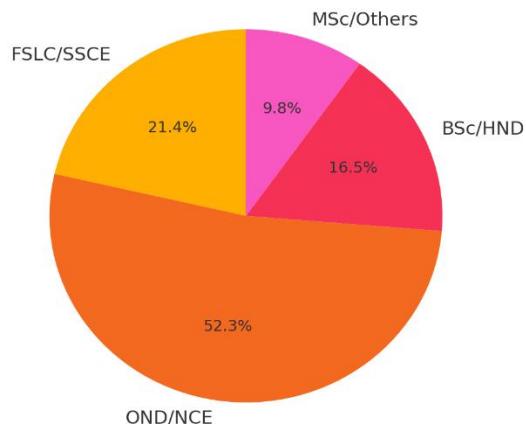
Apparently, the statistical information disclosed in table/figure IV indicated that vast numbers of respondents, representing 38.7% of the outright sampled audience, have been in practice of business for between 16 and 25 years. This is closely followed by those that have been in the practice of enterprises for 6-15 years, representing 25.4%. On the other hand, it was equally ascertained that a very few and limited number have been in the practice and organization of business

ventures for a period of over 36 years, accounting for a paltry 5.2% of the given population. A cursory gaze at the above statistics suggested that experienced enterprise managers and owners dominate the population of entrepreneurs in Nigeria's western non-oil-producing states. This indicates a developed and expanding business environment necessary for a nation-building.

Table 5: Educational Profile of Respondents

Education	Frequency	Percentage (%)
OND/NCE	181	52.3
FSLC/SSCE	74	21.4
BSc/HND	57	16.5
MSc/Others	34	9.8
Total	346	100%

Source: SPSS Output 2025.



Table/figure V presents the educational dispositions of respondents of this study. The statistics established that a significant facet number, or vast majority of respondents, reflecting 52.3% of the study's given population, possessed the ordinary national diploma and national certificate for education (OND/NCE) qualifications. This is immediately succeeded by 21.4% accounting for respondents with a first school leaving certificate and senior school certificate examination (FSLC/SSCE). These results largely established the overall education/academic level of the enterprise/business environment studied, copiously

showing that the entrepreneurship landscape of the non-oil-producing western state of Nigeria is moderately schooled and educated, with a very minimal/smaller number holding higher education (university) degrees. It can be deduced from this result that the vast majority of higher education degree/certificate holders in the surveyed environment may not show interest in exploring the economic creams of the informal sector, thereby giving the impression that they're either seeking white-collar jobs or embracing the jakpa syndrome, which may be detrimental to overall nation-building.

Table 6: Descriptive Statistics of Entrepreneurial Training and Sustainable Employment Outcomes

Stats.	q1	q2	q3	q4	q5	q6
Mean	4.38	4.32	4.282341	4.23	4.53	4.461208
Std.Dev	.6654743	.7213733	.7675819	.8322119	.7833619	.7723765
Max	6	6	6	6	6	6
Min	1	1	1	1	1	1

Source: Field Survey, 2025

It is indicated from table 6 above that item 5 accounts for the highest mean score (mean = 4.53), closely followed by item 6 (4.46), while item 7 has the lowest mean score (4.23). Generally, in overall terms, it can be adduced that all items (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6) beat the benchmark or mean threshold of 2.50 rating outcomes. That is, items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 have their respective mean scores within the range of 2.50-4.53. The above result establishes that entrepreneurial training is a critical factor that contributes and can be used to drive

sustainable employment outcomes. This further establishes copiously that ET is a contributory variable for unemployment diminution in the non-oil-producing western states of Nigeria. This suggests that enhancing entrepreneurial skills through targeted training programs can significantly reduce unemployment rates in these regions. Consequently, policymakers should prioritize the implementation of such training initiatives to foster economic growth and job creation in the non-oil-producing western states of Nigeria.

Table 7: Descriptive Statistics of Innovation drive and Sustainable Employment Outcomes

Stats.	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	Q11	Q12
Mean	4.443217	4.337709	4.38	4.21	4.51	4.490151
Std.Dev	.6162832	.6531375	.6285843	.7341154	.7439628	.6741643
Max	6	6	6	6	6	6
Min	1	1	1	1	1	1

Source: Field Survey, 2025

It can be observed from table 7 above that item 11 generated the highest mean score (4.51) and was immediately succeeded by item 12, which churned out a mean score of 4.49, while item 10 generated the lowest mean score (4.21). Without mincing words, in overall perspective, it can be asserted that all items (7, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12) perform above the suggested mean score threshold of 2.50. That is, items 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12 have their respective mean scores within the range of 2.50-4.53. The outcome of this analysis indicated that innovation drives results in employment generation and unemployment diminution. The findings suggest that fostering innovation can play a

crucial role in creating job opportunities and reducing unemployment rates. Therefore, policymakers and business leaders should prioritize innovative strategies to enhance economic growth and workforce development.

Testing of Hypotheses and Discussions

The sterling target of the study was to empirical ground truth the Influence of Entrepreneurial Training and Innovation drive on sustainable employment outcomes. That is, whether these two constructs or proxies contributes to unemployment diminution in Nigeria. To achieve the aforementioned, the following hypotheses were postulated and tested.

Alternative: There exists a positive and significant nexus between ET and diminution of unemployment in non-oil-producing western states of Nigeria

Table 8: Correlation of Entrepreneurial Training and Sustainable Employment Outcomes

	Variables		Entrepreneurial Training	Sustainable Employment Outcomes
Spearman's rho	Entrepreneurial Training	Correlation Coeff... Sig. (2-tailed) N	1 346	.816** .001 346
	Sustainable Employment Outcomes	Correlation Coeff... Sig. (2-tailed) N	.816** .000 346	1 346

***Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed) **

Table 8 established copiously that there exists a positive and significant nexus between Entrepreneurial Training and Sustainable Employment Outcomes ($r = 0.816$, $n = 346$, $p = 0.001$). This finding underscores the importance of providing comprehensive entrepreneurial training programs, as they can lead to improved job security and career advancement

opportunities for participants (entrepreneurs) via technical, adoptive, and ICT skills. These aptitudes enable them create and manage their own enterprises effectively. As a result, investing in such training initiatives could be a crucial strategy for enhancing overall employment sustainability in the area. In a nutshell, ET has a positive contribution to

unemployment diminution. Nonetheless, given that correlation does not equate to causation, a straightforward/simple regression analysis was

employed to assess the influence of ET on sustainable employment outcomes within the non-oil-producing western states of Nigeria

Table 9 Summary of a Simple Regression Analysis of Entrepreneurial Training and Sustainable Employment Outcomes

	R Square	Adjusted R ²	Coefficient	F-stat	F-sig.	T-stat	t-sig.	D.W
Sustainable Employment Outcomes	.587	.497	.446	19.770	.000 ^b	4.703	.000	1.947

Source: SPSS Output, 2025

Table 9 demonstrated that the coefficient of determination, or R-squared value, for the impact of ET on sustainable employment outcomes was .587. This figure indicates that ET contributes to or explains a 58.7% growth in sustainable employment outcomes (SEO) at the non-oil-producing western states (NOPWS) of Nigeria. Other factors not covered by the model account for the remaining 41.3% of the causes of employment generation at NOPWS of Nigeria. After adjusting for the degree of freedom, the coefficient of determination came out to be .497, or roughly 49.7%. This indicated that ET accounts for approximately 49.7% of systematic variation in SEO after adjustment to degrees of freedom. The regression analysis's Durbin-Watson score of 1.947 indicates that serial autocorrelation is absent, and the model can be relied on/trusted to inform policy decisions pertaining to the subject matter. The results of the regressions showed that, on average, there are statistically significant linear

relationships between ET and SEO at the NOPWS of Nigeria, according to the F-statistic test of 19.770 at prob (Sig) = .000b performed at the 5% level of significance. Likewise, the SEO model's t-statistics of 4.703 at a p-value (sig) of 0.000, which is below the 5% level of significance, showed a significant correlation/nexus between SEO and ET at the NOPWS of Nigeria. This further established that the NOPWS of Nigeria will witness a 44.6% growth in SEOs for every 1% increase/improvement in ET, according to the coefficient of .446.

Hypothesis 11

Null: There is no positive and significant correlation between innovation drive and diminution of unemployment in non-oil-producing western states of Nigeria

Alternative: There is a positive and significant correlation between innovation drive and diminution of unemployment in non-oil-producing western states of Nigeria

Table 10: Correlation of Innovation Drive and Sustainable Employment Outcomes

	Variables		Innovation Drive	Sustainable Employment Outcomes
Spearman's rho	Innovation Drive	<i>Correlation Coeff...</i> Sig. (2-tailed) N	1 346	.816** .000 346
	Sustainable Employment Outcomes	<i>Correlation Coeff...</i> Sig. (2-tailed) N	.814** .000 346	1 346

***Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed) **

Table 10 revealed that there exists a positive and significant correlation between innovation drive and SEO ($r = 0.814$, $n = 346$, $p = 0.000$). This result implies that regions or enterprises that prioritize a strong focus/attention on innovation have a high propensity to experience improved efficiency in search engine optimization and economic boom as well. Therefore, cultivating/fostering an innovative culture and enabling avenues could be key tactics or crucial strategies for improving the impact of innovation and digital skills on entrepreneurial development and, by extension, enhanced dependable job and wealth creation. As such,

investing in such an initiative could be a veritable tool for improving overall employment generation and sustainability in these Nigerian western states. Therefore, innovation drive has a positive impact on unemployment diminution. However, owing to the grounds that correlation does not apparently translate to causation, a simple regression analysis was therefore used to evaluate the impact of innovation drive on sustainable employment outcomes within the non-oil-producing western states of Nigeria using the metrics of R^2 and adjusted R^2

Table 11: Summary of a Simple Regression Analysis of Innovation Drive and Sustainable Employment Outcomes

	R Square	Adjusted R ²	Coefficient	F-stat	F-sig.	T-stat	t-sig.	D.W
Sustainable Employment Outcomes	.472	.469	.531	19.671	.000 ^b	4.667	.000	1.839

Source: SPSS Output, 2025

The influence of ID on sustainable employment outcomes was shown to have a coefficient of determination (R-squared value) of .472 in Table 11. According to this data, ID is responsible for or explains a 47.2% increase in sustainable employment outcomes (SEO) in Nigeria's non-oil-producing western states (NOPWS). The remaining 52.8% of the reasons of employment creation at NOPWS of Nigeria are due to other factors that are not included in the model. When the degree of freedom was taken into account, the coefficient of determination was .469, or about 46.9%. This showed that, after adjusting for degrees of freedom, ET explains roughly 46.9% of the systematic variation in SEO. The model may be trusted to influence policy decisions related to the topic because serial autocorrelation is absent, as indicated by the regression analysis's Durbin-Watson score of 1.839. The F-statistic test of 19.671 at prob (Sig) = .001b, conducted at the 5% level of significance, indicated that, on average, there are statistically significant linear correlations between ID and SEO at the NOPWS of Nigeria. Similarly, a significant correlation or relationship between SEO and ID at the NOPWS of Nigeria was demonstrated by the SEO model's t-statistics of 4.667 at a p-value (sig) of 0.000, which is below the 5% level of significance. This further established that the NOPWS of Nigeria will witness a 53.1% growth in SEOs for every 1% increase/improvement in ET, according to the coefficient of .531.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this research confirm that entrepreneurial training has a significant and positive impact on sustainable employment outcomes in Nigeria's non-oil-producing western states. The high correlation coefficient suggests that well-structured entrepreneurship programs can effectively enhance participants' capacity to establish and manage enterprises, leading to job creation and reduced unemployment. These results align with existing literature emphasizing the importance of skills development in fostering entrepreneurial activity and employment, particularly in regions less reliant on oil revenues. Furthermore, the study establishes that innovation acts as a catalyst for employment by encouraging new business models, improving productivity, and addressing regional economic disparities. The innovation drive was shown to be a

significant predictor of employment expansion, reinforcing the importance of fostering an innovative culture in entrepreneurial ecosystems. The demographic profile indicating a predominantly educated but moderately schooled population suggests opportunities and challenges; while education lays a foundation, targeted entrepreneurship training is vital in translating knowledge into productive activities. The regional focus on non-oil states, which tend to lag behind oil-producing regions in employment, highlights the potential for growth through strategic capacity-building initiatives. These findings support the applicability of human capital theory-investing in skills enhances productivity-and the diffusion of innovation framework-adopting innovative practices sustains competitive advantage and job creation. Overall, the research underscores that concerted efforts in entrepreneurial education and innovation can significantly mitigate unemployment challenges.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study concludes that both entrepreneurial training and innovation drive substantially contribute to reducing unemployment and promoting sustainable employment in Nigeria's non-oil-producing western states. The strong positive relationships underscore the necessity for policymakers and stakeholders to prioritize capacity-building initiatives that enhance entrepreneurial competencies and foster innovative business practices. Addressing the regional employment deficit through these interventions can accelerate economic diversification, resilience, and inclusive growth. The following recommendations therefore, were suggested: To effectively reduce unemployment and promote sustainable economic growth in Nigeria's non-oil regions, it is essential for policymakers to develop and implement comprehensive policies that support entrepreneurial training and innovation, ensuring these programs are relevant and accessible. Enhancing curricula to include ICT and technical skills, fostering innovation hubs and access to finance, and integrating entrepreneurial education at all levels are crucial steps. Additionally, encouraging partnerships among government, academia, and the private sector, coupled with establishing robust monitoring and evaluation systems, will ensure continuous improvement, scalability, and sustainability of these initiatives. Collectively, these strategies will strengthen the entrepreneurial ecosystem and drive long-term employment and economic

resilience. Implementing these recommendations could significantly enhance the entrepreneurial ecosystem in Nigeria's non-oil regions, leading to meaningful reductions in unemployment and fostering sustainable economic development.

List of Abbreviations

DS - Descriptive Statistic

ET - Entrepreneurial Training
ICT - Information Communication technology
ID - Innovation Drive
NOPWS- Non-oil-producing western states
SEO- Sustainable Employment Outcomes
SMEs - Small and medium scale enterprises
SPSS - statistical package for social sciences

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