Determining entrepreneurs' characteristics towards psychological empowerment in Saudi Arabia

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Abstract

Human capital development and emancipation are recognized as the top priorities of not only Saudi Arabia's reforms and new plans but of all nations globally. However, most past research has concentrated on economic, social, and political empowerment, with little or no attention dedicated to psychological empowerment. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to examine, in the context of Saudi Arabia, the effect of the four entrepreneurial attributes of Self-esteem, Self-efficacy, Access to Information, and Job Autonomy on the Psychological Empowerment of the country's entrepreneurs. In this study, the researchers utilized the Meaning, Competence, Self-Determination, and Impact model of Spreitzer Psychological Empowerment. Using a web-based questionnaire issued with the assistance of Chambers of Commerce, the researchers gathered data from the Eastern Province governorates' entrepreneurs. The researchers used Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) to examine the data collected from 354 participants in this study. The findings indicate that Self-Esteem positively influences Meaning, Competence, Self-Determination, and Impact. Self-efficacy positively affects Psychological Empowerment (Meaning, Competence and Self- Determination). However, Self-Efficacy does not influence impact. In addition, Access to Information positively influences Psychological Empowerment to a limited extent (Impact). However, Meaning, Competence, and Self-Determination are unaffected. Job Autonomy has a favorable influence on Psychological Empowerment, Competence, Self-Determination, and impact to a limited extent. Nevertheless, Job Autonomy has little effect on meaning. The findings of this study advance the understanding of Psychological Empowerment's drivers and, in practice, aid policymakers in making informed decisions.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship; Psychological Empowerment; Self-Esteem; Self-Efficacy; Spreitzer model; Saudi Arabia

1. Introduction

Entrepreneurship has been a pillar of economic progress and individual empowerment for a long time, and this continues to this day. These stem from the novel concepts of entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurship enables individuals to control their destinies through self-employment options (Barkat et al., 2020) and the creation of entrepreneurial activity (Abdelwahed, Soomro, & Shah, 2022; Soomro, Shah, & Anwar, 2018). Entrepreneurs construct nations and shape their futures. This leads to better opportunities for family, society, and country development (Khanum, Mahadi, & Islam, 2022).

Consequently, empowering and enabling individuals to become entrepreneurs is a ground-breaking success in developing the nation's economy (Abdelwahed & Soomro, 2021). Entrepreneurship significantly contributes by empowering male and female entrepreneurs, promoting social stability and growth (Narayanan et al., 2022). Empowering men and women empowers them with real-world knowledge and benefits future generations (Eskildsen et al., 2017; McConnell et al., 2019; Shingla & Singh, 2015).

Similarly, and especially during the last thirty years, empowerment has been viewed as an essential notion for organizations to achieve their goals and for governments to alleviate poverty and reduce gender discrimination (Saeed Al-Ketbi, 2012). Specifically, empowerment is one of the modern development principles and a component of sustainable human growth. Empowerment encompasses multiple domains of study, including management, sociology, and psychology. Numerous aspects, including economic, social, political, legal, educational, environmental, and health empowerment, demonstrate its link (Ghasemi et al., 2019). In the literature, two dimensions of empowerment are identified. Psychological empowerment

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is a prerequisite for the second component, outward empowerment. Economic, social, political, legal, educational, environmental, and health empowerment compose the latter. Both dimensions require external interventions to help individuals achieve their goals. It is a pillar of human and sustainable development and a crucial part of society.

In Saudi Arabia, inequality and discrimination manifest in various forms. They have fought for their rights and made significant progress toward empowerment. To realize Saudi Arabia's 2030 vision, individuals attempt to gain access to education and enter the labor market. In this regard, the Saudi Arabian government has attempted to give equal chances for men and women to engage and be appointed to high-ranking posts in both the public and commercial sectors. For Saudi Arabia to be viewed as a great nation, the Saudi Arabi-an Government has also undertaken several programs to empower its people and, more specifically, the country's youth in terms of entrepreneurship (Al-Qahtani et al., 2020; Naseem & Dhruva, 2017). Suppose the 2030 vision is to be realized. In that case, the Saudi Arabian economy requires the participation of men and women and the development of human resources to enable the Kingdom to acquire a competitive advantage in business and other economic activities (Mangi, Shah, & Ali Soomro, 2019). However, the acceptance and implementation rates of these policies in many industries remain difficult. Several factors, such as income, employment, access to finance, microfinance, political participation, productive work, income-oriented activities, effective business policies, pro-female societal norms, and entrepreneurship, have been identified in the literature as promoting individual empowerment (Abdelwahed & Soomro, 2021; Khanum et al., 2022; Ng, Wood, & Bastian, 2021; Shingla & Singh, 2015; Spreitzer, 1995). In this regard, Spreitzer (1995) model illustrates that an intellectual and conceptual framework is essential to psychological empowerment. The four cognition constructs are significance, competence, self-determination, and influence. Entrepreneurial engagement and the characteristics of entrepreneurs, such as self-esteem, self-efficacy, access to information, and job autonomy, can significantly foster their development. Such a structure or construction can result in favorable individual and functional outcomes (Mishra & Sam, 2016).

What are the entrepreneurial characteristics that affect entrepreneurs' psychological empowerment in Saudi Arabia?

This study aims to answer the abovementioned question by examining the effect of entrepreneurial participation on the psychological Empowerment of Saudi Arabian entrepreneurs. This study presents an original contribution by providing a theoretical foundation for empirically confirming personal entrepreneurial traits that enhance psychological empowerment. This may be the first study to incorporate various dimensions of distinctive entrepreneurial characteristics and psychological empowerment, enriching the massive body of management and entrepreneurship studies. The findings of this study should assist the Saudi Arabian government and policymakers in understanding and promoting Psychological empowerment through entrepreneurship to realize the country's 2030 vision.

2. Literature Review and Conceptual Framework

Psychological empowerment is one modern idea that raises human capital in life. The essence of psychological empowerment consists of offering performance freedom, expanding involvement in responsibility-bearing, and increasing understanding of the significance of its function. This can result in favorable individual, organizational, and institutional outcomes (Mishra & Sam, 2016). Psychological empowerment boosts employees' (particularly women's) sense of personal control and job motivation (Menon, 1999).

In addition, a literature review revealed that psychological empowerment is a cognitive state defined by a sense of perceived control, views of competence, and the ability to integrate the organization's aims and objectives (Spreitzer, De Janasz, & Quinn, 1999).

Nevertheless, Zhang and Bartol (2010) characterizes psychological empowerment as a "Motivational Construct" or a four-cognition process. Specifically, these are Meaning, Competence, Self-Determination, and Impact (Zhang & Bartol, 2010). Similarly, Joo and Jo (2017) refer to psychological empowerment as either a psychic state or a set of perceptions an individual experiences. View psychological empowerment as a framework or architecture that favours an individual's personality and performance.

According to the preceding definitions, psychological empowerment is a cognitive or psychological condition characterized by good inner feelings and external motivation. It is the complete release of an individual's potential vitality through formal and technical external activities if the individual desires to attain them.

Notable is that psychological empowerment for individuals emphasizes the significance of the psychologically empowered workforce being driven to contribute to the organization's innovative plans. Additionally, psychological empowerment can define job

duties and enable individuals to feel capable of doing work-related tasks. In addition, psychological empowerment might influence the workplace decision-making process. Notable is that institution whose employees are psychologically empowered have exhibited increased productivity, a higher level of employee job satisfaction, a higher level of employee commitment to the organization, a reduction in employee stress and tension, and a lower incidence of syndrome burnout. Moreover, psychological empowerment is essential to global measures to battle and eradicate poverty (Menon, 1999).

It is important to note that the existing literature refers to empowerment as a process that can be either a result or a cause of multiple efforts, actions, and strategies implemented. Therefore, the research identifies numerous sources of empowerment that refer to various empowerment outcomes. For example, Yoopetch (2021) findings indicate that Korean organizations cultivate organizational citizenship behaviors through their employees' psychological empowerment, core self-evaluation, and perceived authenticity of leadership. Similarly, in the hospitality business, the study's empirical findings (Bandura, 1977) indicate that psychological empowerment, self-esteem, self-efficacy, and attitude toward risk-taking and subjective norms are significant and relevant developments of entrepreneurial aspirations. Female employees with a positive attitude toward risk-taking are the most likely to establish their firms. Therefore, Self-Esteem can be defined as the psychological prediction of an individual's sense of self. Its favorable effects extend to the workplace and result in good conduct (Wang, Zhang, & Jackson, 2013). The findings of Idrus, Alhabji, and Al Musadieq (2015) demonstrate that Self-Esteem positively predicts Psychological Empowerment.

Similarly, various studies (Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Kim & Beehr, 2017; Tastan, 2013) have explored psychological empowerment's positive and significant influence on self-efficacy and vice versa. Tastan examined the function of Self-Efficacy as a mediator between psychological empowerment and psychological well-being in (Kim & Beehr, 2017) studies. The outcomes of this study (Kim & Beehr, 2017) demonstrate a positive and statistically significant relationship between views of psychological empowerment and perceptions of Self-Efficacy. According to thirty studies, psychological empowerment develops as a motivational construct of self-efficacy. This study investigates the impact of Psychological Empowerment on leadership empowerment in terms of information-sharing practices. The findings of this study indicate that empowerment leadership has a significant favorable effect on psychological empowerment. These findings suggest that ethical leadership and leadership integrity positively affect employee performance, with psychological capital and psychological empowerment serving as moderators (Yazdanshenas & Mirzaei, 2022). While both professions in Sweden experienced management autonomy, according to Andersson, Eriksson, and Müllern (2022)'s qualitative research, nurses depended more on structural empowerment. Emotional commitment and job engagement are positively and substantially associated with the sense of Al Otaibi et al. (2022) empowering leadership in Saudi Arabia. In addition, these relationships are mediated by psychological empowerment. Friends and family support, employee resiliency, and supervisor support have all positively and substantially impacted COVID-19's ability to increase job engagement and psychological Empowerment (Fawehinmi, Ojo, & Mohd Yusoff, 2022).

Financial autonomy and social capital create enormous opportunities for women in social entrepreneurship ventures related to sustainable development objectives. These have increased socio-economic well-being and self-efficacy in the Malaysian environment (Shah & Mehta, 2019). The findings of Golzard (2019) indicate that technology, education, gender equality, and shifting cultural dynamics facilitate the empowerment of individuals. Indian women have low social Self-Efficacy when networking online, and this is especially true regarding business goals. In Iran, the internet creates new prospects for overcoming the obstacles of female unemployment. The internet has significantly impacted the economic lives of Tehrani women (Sharma, 2020) by empowering them to participate in new forms of online business. The core data obtained by Soomro, Anwar, and Rajar (2019) from interviews with female managers demonstrate the benefits of enhancing women's political empowerment through internal motives (personal ambitions), legal environment, family support or family environment, political environment, and information awareness. On the one hand, there are increasing opportunities for innovation and gainful employment for women through entrepreneurship. On the other hand, women entrepreneurs encounter several obstacles, including lack of access to technology and funding, lack of access to information, lack of management and government support, lack of experience and acceptance, and inadequate access to training (Baroi & Panday, 2015). Consequently, knowledge is the ultimate source of empowerment. In today's environment of rapid change, entrepreneurs cannot make life-altering decisions without access to information. It has been demonstrated that access to information is a significant component that enhances the ability of businesses to make independent decisions and profit from

the services offered by local government agencies (Nascimento & Beuren, 2014). On the one hand, the findings of Ghani, Hussin, and Jusoff (2009) indicate that while access to knowledge does not affect significance, competence, or impact, it has a favorable effect on self-determination. In contrast, the findings of Thakur, Vashista, and Shourie (2022) demonstrate that access to information is not one of the predictors of psychological empowerment.

In addition, the study by Ng (2006) investigated the relationships between psychological capital, self-leadership, and Psychological Empowerment among younger entrepreneurs, including 18 men and 17 women. The outcomes of this study indicate that, for both men and women, there is a positive and statistically significant relationship between these two dimensions (psychological capital, self-leadership, and psychological empowerment). Moreover, the outcomes of this study indicate that men entrepreneurs have more excellent correlation scores than female entrepreneurs. Similarly, the results of comparative research of young Egyptian male and female digital entrepreneurs illustrate the personal and relational empowerment of young male and female entrepreneurs. Again, Miniesy, Elshahawy, and Fakhreldin (2021) data indicate that there is a positive and statistically significant association between job autonomy and psychological empowerment because job autonomy is one of the predictors of entrepreneurs' psychological empowerment. Moreover, it is remarkable that, before the advent of digital entrepreneurship, young male entrepreneurs had significantly higher averages than young female entrepreneurs in practically all empowerment traits. However, female entrepreneurs had much higher standards after digital entrepreneurship when making health, education, and investment decisions. When each group's initial standing before digital entrepreneurship is contrasted, female entrepreneurs are more empowered than young male entrepreneurs (Kalnins & Williams, 2014). According to Haji, Valizadeh, and Karimi (2022), business owners appear more competitive. This statistically significant difference suggests that men entrepreneurs are more committed to multilateral competitiveness than female entrepreneurs.

The findings of Shankar, Onyura, and Alderman (2015)'s SEM analysis of 299 male and 76 female entrepreneurs indicate that psychological capital has a direct and positive effect on psychological empowerment. Additionally, psychological empowerment and psychological capital have a good and substantial impact on entrepreneurial spirit. In Kenya, a randomized trial comparing the sales performance of newly trained male and female entrepreneurs selling improved cook stoves confirms the effect of agency-based empowerment training on business activity. Women outsold males by nearly three to one ratio, and despite unfinished sales, they were more likely to continue to follow up on leads. Women can be active cook stove entrepreneurs in both urban and rural settings, according to the findings (Samad & Alharthi, 2022).

In addition, the findings of Al-Qahtani et al. (2021)'s study on Saudi Arabian women's involvement indicate that entrepreneurship involvement is influenced by several crucial elements, including empowering leadership, attitudes toward women's labor, and psychological empowerment. Self-efficacy and self-respect are significantly anticipated to increase the amount of empowerment. These are the basic blocks for defining Saudi Arabia's women empowerment programs and contributing to the country's 2030 KSA vision for human capital empowerment (Sabri & Thomas, 2019). At all phases of business, male and female attitudes toward entrepreneurship are the predominant characteristics. According to reports, female entrepreneurs are marginally more growth-oriented than their male counterparts (Arul Paramanandam & Packirisamy, 2015).

Consequently, several authors (Badghish et al., 2022; Bansal & Singh, 2020; Baroi & Panday, 2015; Pineda Duque & Castiblanco Moreno, 2021; Soomro et al., 2019; Spreitzer, 1995; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990) have suggested that diverse factors, such as attitudes toward entrepreneurship, leadership, technology, education, gender equality and shifting cultural dynamics, entrepreneurial self-efficacy, self-esteem, subjective norms, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), perceived behavioral control, adequate training, and government support, empower individuals to the fullest extent.

It is notable, however, that no previous studies have investigated the sources of psychological empowerment in the context of Saudi Arabia using Spreitzer's (1995) model regarding the development of the association between entrepreneurial characteristics (self-esteem, self-efficacy, access to information, and job autonomy) and psychological empowerment in terms of meaning competence, self-determination, and impact. Consequently, utilizing Spreitzer's (1995) model, the researchers have investigated these issues to determine the appropriate level of individuals' complete empowerment in support of achieving the 2030 vision's primary aim of human capital empowerment (Sabri & Thomas, 2019).

Based on the existing links and to address the gaps mentioned above in the literature, the researchers established the following hypotheses to investigate the relationships and effects of entrepreneurship qualities and

psychological empowerment resulting from involvement in entrepreneurial activities:

H1a: Self-esteem has a positive impact on meaning.
H1b: Self-esteem has a positive effect on competence.
H1c: Self-esteem has a positive effect on self-determination.
H1d: Self-esteem has a positive effect on impact.

H2a: Self-efficacy has a positive effect on meaning.
H2b: Self-efficacy has a positive effect on competence.
H2c: Self-efficacy has a positive effect on self-determination.
H2d: Self-efficacy has a positive effect on impact.

H3a: Access to information has a positive effect on meaning.
H3b: Access to information has a positive effect on competence.
H3c: Access to information has a positive effect on self-determination.
H3d: Access to Information has a positive effect on impact.

H4a: Job autonomy has a positive effect on meaning.
H4b: Job autonomy has a positive effect on competence.
H4c: Job autonomy has a positive effect on self-determination.
H4d: Job autonomy has a positive effect on impact.

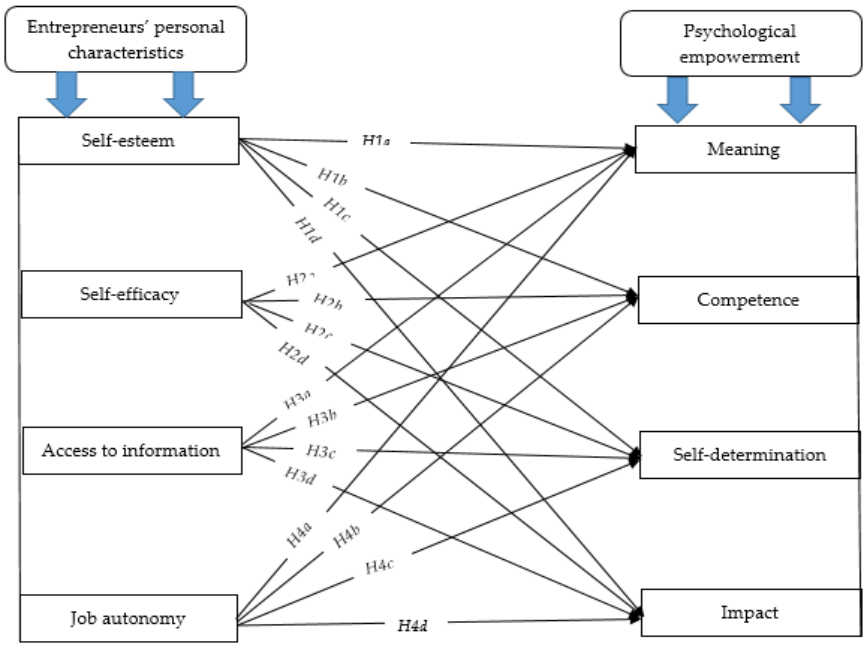

Figure 1. Conceptual model of the study
Source: Developed by the authors

3. Methods

3.1 Research questionnaire and its authentication

The researchers utilized the questionnaire as a credible way of collecting data and facilitating surveying respondents. A questionnaire is the most common approach employed in social and management sciences due to its efficiency as a data collection tool. The questionnaire is divided into three pieces. The first component contains demographic information, including gender, age, level of education, project type, project size, and project age. The second segment measures entrepreneurs' independent variable personnel qualities (self-esteem, self-efficacy, access to information, and job autonomy). In contrast, the third section measures the dependent variable psychological empowerment (meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact). The factors of the study were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 5 (strongly agree) to 1 (strongly disagree).

Before deploying the data collection instrument (the questionnaire), the researchers ran a pilot study with 30 entrepreneurs to determine the survey's reliability and validity. Using factor analysis and Cronbach's alpha, the researchers examined the internal consistency of the questions in this manner. Consequently, factor loadings and Cronbach's alpha appeared within acceptable limits as more significant than 0.70 (Hair et al., 2014).

3.2 Data collection and sample size

The Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia is home to around 15% of the country's total population. The significance of the Eastern Province to the Saudi economy stems from its status as the central oil-producing region. The Eastern Province possesses a collection of factors that boost its competitiveness and make it a desirable place for domestic and international investment. After Riyadh, 43% of Saudis are working in the Eastern Province (Hooper, Coughlan, & Mullen, 2008), which led the researchers to select it. By the end of the second quarter of 2022, the number of Small

and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) in Saudi Arabia had reached 892,000, with the Eastern Province accounting for around 13% of that total. Female entrepreneurs in Saudi Arabia play a more significant role in the SME sector. This is because there has been a significant rearrangement of the female portion of SME ownership in recent years, as women now own 45% of SME businesses compared to 55% held by men. There are people of all ages among the population of new entrepreneurs, although there are more young entrepreneurs.

The researchers disseminated the questionnaire to officials from the Eastern Province Chamber of Commerce in Dammam Governorate. The Chamber of Commerce of the Eastern Province has three branches in Jubail, Khafji, and Qatif. Officials of the Chamber of Commerce can communicate with entrepreneurs who profit from the Chamber of Commerce by gaining knowledge and expertise through coordinating meetings with consultants from various sectors. The researchers focused on respondents who had already existing projects and excluded those who intended to create pilot programs. Officials from the Chamber of Commerce decided to distribute the survey to social media groups to reach the most significant number of responders. Online surveys offer a faster response rate and lower expenses (Watkins, 2018).

The response rate was 79%, as the researchers gathered 354 completed questionnaires out of 450 distributed. The results indicate that men constitute the majority of the sample (n = 239, 67.5%), and women constitute the minority (n = 115, 32.5%). The oldest respondent was 50 years old, and over 70% of respondents (247 individuals) were over 30 years old. This was followed by 80 respondents (23%) between the ages of 20 and 30. The other ages comprised less than 7 percent of the study's sample. As regards education level, 75% of respondents possessed a bachelor's degree (n=267, 75.5%), followed by 12.4% with postgraduate studies (n=44) and 12.1% with middle education (n=43). Regarding the kind of project, commercial projects comprised the highest proportion of the study sample at 66.4%, followed by service projects at 25%, industrial projects at 6.5%, and agricultural projects at 2.2%. The researchers divided the project's scope based on the number of staff. The micro-project has fewer than six personnel; the small project has between six and forty-nine; the medium project has between fifty and two hundred and forty-nine; and the large project has more than two hundred and forty-nine. According to the findings of this survey, sixty percent are micro businesses. 30% are tiny businesses, whereas less than 10% are medium and large businesses. 45% of the project is less than two years old, 33% is between two and five years old, and 10% is between six and nine years old.

3.3 Measurement scales

We evaluated the people characteristics of entrepreneurs along four dimensions: self-esteem, self-efficacy, access to information, and job autonomy. Similar to Spreitzer's (1995) methodology, we measured psychological empowerment on four main dimensions: meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact (Spreitzer, 1995). The constructs are described in full in Table 1 below:

Table 1

Measures

Main construct	Sub-construct	No. of items	Adopted from
Entrepreneurs' personnel characteristics	Self-esteem	9	(De Noble, Jung, & Ehrlich, 1999)
	Self-efficacy	12	(Hackman & Oldham, 1980)
	Job autonomy	5	(Russell, Wendy, & Steven, 2003)
	Access to information	5	(Nayak & Narayan, 2019)
Psychological Empowerment	Meaning	2	(Spreitzer, 1995)
	Competence	2	
	Self-determination	3	
	Impact	3	

Source: Adopted by the researchers from the literature

4. Data Analysis and Results

The researchers analyzed the data using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 24 and Analysis of Moment Structures (AMOS) version 26. The researchers employed a variety of statistical tests for quantitative analysis and data interpretation (Brown & Moore, 2012; Hair et al., 2019).

4.1 Measurement model

As indicated in Table 2, we evaluated the measurement model to ensure its internal evaluation. Concerning factor

loadings, the majority of items appeared with leading scores ranging from 0.711 (slm4) to 0.894 (meg1), which exceeded the recommended values of 0.70 (Hair et al., 2014). However, slm3, slm7, slm8, sly5, sly6, sly10, jay2, and ati5 did not show the above-suggested values of 0.70; hence, these were omitted from the subsequent analysis (Kline, 2010). Similarly, we guarantee that the composite reliability (CR) for all variables ranges between 0.788 (JAY) and 0.878 (IMT), which is greater than 0.70; this range is acceptable (Hair et al., 1998). In addition, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) ranges from 0.719 (SLY) to 0.810 (SDN), which exceeds the recommended limit of 0.50 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Hair et al., 2014). Finally, we calculated the reliability or internal consistency of the items using Cronbach's alpha. Consequently, all factors (independent and dependent) appeared between 0.680 (CPT) and 0.896 (SLM), ensuring that Cronbach's alpha scores were within acceptable ranges (Hair et al., 2014).

Table 2

Measurement Model.

Factors	Item code	Loading score	CR	AVE	Cronbach's alpha (α) reliability
Self-esteem	slm9	0.884	0.844	0.782	0.896
[SLM]	slm2	0.882			
	slm6	0.863			
	slm5	0.836			
	slm1	0.782			
	slm4	0.711			
Self-efficacy [SLY]	sly8	0.893	0.819	0.719	0.887
	sly11	0.858			
	sly3	0.848			
	sly7	0.844			
	sly9	0.831			
	sly4	0.779			
	sly2	0.763			
	sly1	0.730			
	sly12	0.713			
Job autonomy	jay1	0.863	0.788	0.801	0.766
[JAY]	jay3	0.849			
	jay5	0.811			
	jay4	0.799			
Access to information	ati2	0.863	0.851	0.779	0.897
[ATI]	ati1	0.824			
	ati4	0.800			
	ati3	0.782			
Meaning	meg1	0.894	0.869	0.799	0.732
[MEG]	meg2	0.841			
Self-determination	sdn1	0.892	0.833	0.810	0.840
[SDN]	sdn3	0.868			
	sdn2	0.702			
Competence	cpt1	0.886	0.851	0.801	0.680
[CPT]	cpt2	0.843			
Impact	imt1	0.893	0.878	0.780	0.863
[IMT]	imt3	0.869			
	imt2	0.793			

Note(s): CR= Composite reliability; AVE= Average variance extracted; α= Cronbach's alpha.

In this study, multiple criteria were used to evaluate the goodness of fit indexes for the structural model, including the Comparative Fit Index (CFI), the normed fit index (NFI), the Goodness of Fit Index (GFI), the Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI), the Root Mean Square Residual (RMR), and the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSE) (RMSEA). Moreover, we ensured the model fit indices to assess the model's compatibility with the data (Tanaka, 1993) after the advice of various scholars (Khatoon et al., 2022). As shown in Table 3, all model fit indices fell within their respective acceptable ranges (Hooper et al., 2008; Sharma et al., 2005).

Table 3

Model fit indices

Model Fit	GFI	AGFI	CFI	NFI	RMR	RMSEA
Occurred values	0.929	0.889	0.948	0.936	0.037	0.028
Recommended value	≥ 0.90	≥ 0.80	≥ 0.90	≥ 0.90	≤ 0.08	≤ 0.08

4.2 Structural model

We applied a structural equation model to assess the proposed hypotheses. As mentioned in Table 4 and Figure 2, about H1a-H1d, we found a positive and significant effect of SLM on MEG, CPT, SDN and IMPT [(H1a=SE=0.093; CR=3.266; p=0.001) (H1b=SE=0.069; CR=4.998; p=0.000) (H1c=SE=0.085; CR=3.953; p=0.002) (H1d=SE=0.077; CR=4.216; p=0.000)]. Thus, H1a, H1b, H1c and H1d are supported. Likewise, we noticed a positive and significant effect of SLY on MEG, CPT, SDN [(H2a=SE=0.103; CR=2.398; p=0.006) (H2b=SE=0.076; CR=3.283; p=0.001) (H2c=SE=0.094; CR=3.659; p=0.000)]. However, the effect of SLY on IMT is not significant (H2d=SE=0.085; CR=1.106; p=0.269). As a result, H2a, H2b and H2c are supported, while H2d is not. Furthermore, the effect of ATI on MEG, CPT and SDN is not significant [(H3a=SE=0.068; CR=0.998; p=0.319) (H3b=SE=0.050; CR=1.414; p=0.157) (H3c=SE=0.062; CR=1.562; p=0.118)] and did not support the H3a, H3b and H3c. On the other hand, ATI has a positive and significant effect on IMT (H3d=SE=0.056; CR=3.361; p=0.000). Consequently, H3a, H3b and H3c are not supported, while H3d is supported. Finally, we did not find a significant effect of JAY on MEG, which not supported the H4a (H4a=SE=0.093; CR=1.168; p=0.243). However, we found a significant positive effect of JAY on CPT, SDN and IMT [(H4b=SE=0.069; CR=2.752; p=0.006) (H4c=SE=0.084; CR=2.493; p=0.030) (H4d=SE=0.076; CR=2.297; p=0.004)]. As a result, H4a is not supported, while H4b, H4c and H4d are supported (Table 4 and Figure 2).

Table 4

SEM estimations

S.No.	Relationships	Estimate	SE	CR	P-value	Decision
H1a	SLM → MEG	0.305	0.093	3.266	0.001	Supported
H1b	SLM → CPT	0.346	0.069	4.998	0.000	Supported
H1c	SLM → SDN	0.166	0.085	3.953	0.002	Supported
H1d	SLM→IMT	0.324	0.077	4.216	0.000	Supported
H2a	SLY → MEG	0.247	0.103	2.398	0.006	Supported
H2b	SLY →CPT	0.250	0.076	3.283	0.001	Supported
H2c	SLY →SDN	0.343	0.094	3.659	0.000	Supported
H2d	SLY →IMT	0.094	0.085	1.106	0.269	Not supported
H3a	ATI → MEG	0.068	0.068	0.998	0.319	Not supported
H3b	ATI →CPT	0.071	0.050	1.414	0.157	Not supported
H3c	ATI →SDN	0.096	0.062	1.562	0.118	Not supported
H3d	ATI →IMT	0.188	0.056	3.361	0.000	Supported
H4a	JAY → MEG	0.108	0.093	1.168	0.243	Not supported
H4b	JAY →CPT	0.189	0.069	2.752	0.006	Supported
H4c	JAY →SDN	0.211	0.084	2.493	0.003	Supported
H4d	JAY →IMT	0.175	0.076	2.297	0.004	Supported

Note: CR=critical ratio *** P<0.01, ** P< 0.05, * P<0.1

SML=Self-esteem; SLY=Self-efficacy; JAY=Job autonomy; ATI=Access to information; MEG=Meaning; SDN=Self-determination; CPT=Competence; IMT=Impact

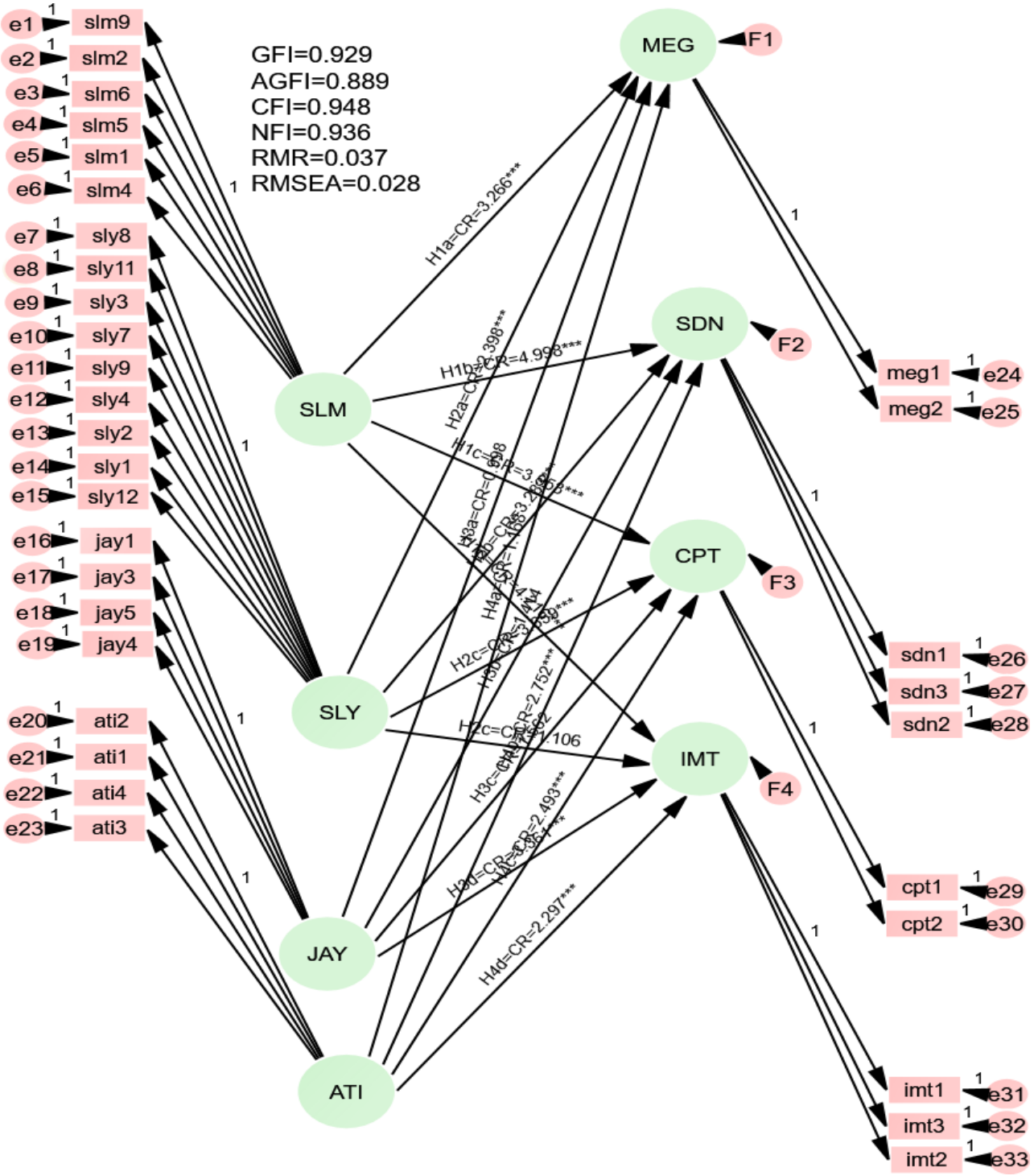

Figure 2. Structural equation model
Source: Authors' estimation
Note: CR=critical ratio; p***=significance level at <0.01.
SML=Self-esteem; SLY=Self-efficacy; JAY=Job autonomy; ATI=Access to information; MEG=Meaning; SDN=Self-determination; CPT=Competence; IMT=Impact

5. Discussion

In this study, the researchers studied the effect of entrepreneurial qualities on the psychological empowerment of entrepreneurs. The findings of this study indicate that entrepreneurial participation enhances the psychological strength of entrepreneurs. Therefore, this study's results show a positive and statistically significant relationship between entrepreneurial traits such as self-esteem, self-efficacy, job autonomy and psychological empowerment.

However, the data indicate that Access to Information partially affects the psychological empowerment of businesses. This may be due to restraints and restrictions imposed by specific regulations that limit entrepreneurs' access to information.

According to the findings of this study, entrepreneurs' self-esteem has a favorable and statistically significant relationship with their psychological empowerment. Therefore, self-esteem is one of the variables that may be utilized to forecast the psychological power of entrepreneurs. In addition, prior entrepreneurship research studies have revealed that individuals with high self-esteem are more likely to adopt proactive approaches to their ventures and are more psychologically empowered than those with low self-esteem. Consequently, the findings of this investigation are consistent with those of the (Idrus et al., 2015) study.

In addition, the results of this study are comparable with those of Spreitzer (1995), who revealed a substantial link between self-esteem and psychological empowerment. Individuals with high self-esteem may view themselves as assets to their organizations when self-esteem boosts feelings of self-efficacy. Therefore, these individuals are proactive in their work and acquiring new abilities, such as decision-making, communication, and relationship-building, which are advantageous to their initiatives. Consequently, this results in more empowered behaviors.

In addition, the statistical analysis related to hypothesis H2 indicates a statistically significant relationship between Self-Efficacy and the psychological empowerment of entrepreneurs. In contrast to the majority of prior studies (Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Kim & Beehr, 2017; Tastan, 2013) that explored the influence of psychological empowerment on self-efficacy, this study examined the opposite effect. The employees' perceptions of being informed and possessing the necessary skills to complete the duties correlate with their confidence levels. Consequently, this can affect their psychological empowerment.

The findings of this study indicate that access to knowledge influences the Psychological Empowerment of entrepreneurs. The H3 theory is therefore accepted. Although Access to Information does not affect the three components of psychological empowerment, meaning, self-determination, and competence, it does affect the fourth component of psychological empowerment, which is competence. Access to information increases entrepreneurs' ability to make independent judgments without question. However, businesses may have trouble gaining access to the relevant information and may require permission from specific authorities. The researchers feel that this result may be influenced by the Saudi Arabian environment, as Saudi Arabia's highly centralized procedures make it challenging to get information. This study's findings are consistent with those of a study that examined Bangladeshi citizens (Nascimento & Beuren, 2014); this study's findings are consistent with those of Ghani et al. (2009) in terms of access to information not affecting meaning and competence; and this study's findings are consistent with those of Ghani et al. (2009) in terms of access to information's effect on self-determination and impact. In addition, the results of this study differ from those of Thakur et al. (2022) in that the availability of knowledge is an inconsequential predictor of lecturers' psychological empowerment.

Moreover, the outcomes of this study reveal that job autonomy influences the psychological empowerment of entrepreneurs. Consequently, hypothesis H4 is somewhat supported, given that the findings of this study indicate that job autonomy does not affect meaning. Hypothesis H4a is therefore rejected. This suggests that entrepreneurs with a high level of Job Autonomy have greater confidence and a sense of security, which leads to more initiative. There is a favorable and statistically significant association between occupational autonomy and psychological empowerment, similar to the findings of Miniesy et al. (2021). Therefore, job autonomy is one of the predictors of psychological empowerment among entrepreneurs.

6. Conclusions

This study aimed to explore the effect of entrepreneurial characteristics on the psychological empowerment of entrepreneurs. The outcomes of this study highlight the impact of entrepreneurship practices and their characteristics on the psychological empowerment of individuals. The findings of this study contribute theoretically to the existing literature on entrepreneurship and empowerment. Specifically, the outcomes of this study indicate that the investigated entrepreneurship traits of Self-esteem, Self-Efficacy, Access to Information, and Job Autonomy can predict the Psychological Empowerment development of persons. Therefore, the researchers conclude that the development of entrepreneurship can enhance individuals' economic, social, and psychological empowerment.

Entrepreneurship is a dependable way of emancipation. The outcomes of this study urge the establishment of policies that encourage an entrepreneurial personality to boost psychological empowerment. In the end, these findings would strengthen the psychological empowerment of individuals by encouraging self-assurance and independence. The results of this study may also assist Saudi Arabia's policymakers in establishing new reforms

and measures that promote the participation of young people in entrepreneurial activities. The results of this study inspire legislators to make it simpler for entrepreneurs to get the knowledge that will assist them in developing their talents and discovering a sense of purpose, thereby increasing their psychological empowerment. The findings of this study could assist Saudi Arabia to accomplish its 2030 vision, which focuses on empowering women, enhancing the nation's human resources, and fostering entrepreneurship.

7. Limitations and Future Research Agenda

This study has several limitations because it only evaluated four entrepreneurial characteristics and Job Autonomy as potential features of entrepreneurs. This study used quantitative methods and a structured questionnaire to collect data. In addition, while collecting data from male and female entrepreneurs, the researchers did not analyze gender-based disparities. The ages of the respondents ranged from 18 to 50 years old. Geographically, this study is limited because it focused exclusively on Saudi Arabia's Eastern Province. In the future, it is suggested that similar research be conducted in other regions of Saudi Arabia. Additionally, the study is limited since it did not analyze the mediation channels or include a mediating variable that may have contributed to the link between entrepreneurial qualities and Psychological Empowerment. Finally, only psychological empowerment was examined in this study, not social, economic, or political empowerment.

The researchers suggest that future studies broaden the scope of the research to include additional entrepreneurial traits, such as locus of control, inventiveness, and risk-taking capacity, as these may potentially influence the entrepreneur's Psychological Empowerment. To validate the findings, the researchers urge that future studies utilize a similar methodology with bigger sample sizes. In addition, they suggest that other methods, such as a qualitative approach, be employed to collect new and more in-depth information about the various elements associated with entrepreneurship activities and their effects on Psychological Empowerment. Additionally, future research might focus on the disparities between male and female entrepreneurs regarding their entrepreneurial traits and the implications of improving their psychological empowerment. The researchers conclude by recommending that social, economic, and political empowerment be investigated directly through entrepreneurial traits and psychological empowerment as a mediator. In addition, the sampling methodology of this research can be applied to other industries, such as—small and medium-sized enterprises, health, and education.

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