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An In-Depth Investigation of the Complex Interplay between Entrepreneurial Leadership and Employee's Individual Outcomes: Uncovering the Multifaceted Dynamics of Organizational Success

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Abstract: The relationship between employee productivity and organisational success has become an increasingly prominent area of research. Numerous studies have demonstrated that individual employee outcomes are closely linked to business units and overall organisational performance. Creativity and innovation play a crucial role in an organisation's ability to gain and maintain a strategic advantage over competitors, particularly for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs), which are crucial to a country's economic and social development. While leadership is essential for employee motivation and organisational development, the precise nature of the relationship between leadership style and individual employee outcomes remains unclear. This study aims to establish a comprehensive framework for understanding the impact of leadership on employee performance, exploring novel motivations for achieving individual employee outcomes that ultimately enhance employee and organisational performance. Data were collected through interviews with 26 consenting employees, employing open-ended questions and note-taking, and were analysed using a thematic approach. Data analysis revealed five fundamental key themes that emerged from the collected data from various workers of SMEs concerning individual outcomes in the organisation. The outcomes of this study provide valuable insights for managers and leaders in SMEs as they strive to enhance employee performance and organisational effectiveness. The findings offer a fresh perspective on the relationship between leadership style and employee outcomes, highlighting the importance of novel approaches that encourage individual employee growth and development. The study's significance extends beyond the SME context, as its findings provide valuable insights for businesses seeking to improve their organisational performance.

Keywords: Entrepreneurial leadership, Employee's individual outcomes, Organizational success, Qualitative research, Employee performance

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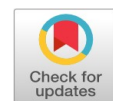
INTRODUCTION

In recent years, scholars have shown a growing interest in the relationship between employee productivity and organisational success (Mithulan & Opatha, 2023; Lei Wang & Chen, 2022). Research has demonstrated that individual employee outcomes are closely linked to business unit performance, which has implications for overall organisational performance (Bartlett et al., 2019; Demerouti et al., 2021). Ingenuity and creativity are crucial components for organisations to gain and maintain strategic advantages over competitors, and this can only be achieved through consistent corporate performance and individual employee results (Almheiri & Omar, 2022; F. Zhang et al., 2021). Small and large businesses are essential in providing valuable services, products, and tax revenues that contribute to community health, job creation, and economic growth (Fatima & Akhtar, 2023; Ge et al., 2022). Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are especially significant indicators of a country's economic

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and social development, as they create jobs, participate in global markets, and contribute to poverty alleviation efforts (Aitaa, 2023; Brodny & Tutak, 2022; Dey et al., 2022; Zheng et al., 2022).

In today's highly competitive and technology-driven business environment, innovation is critical to the sustainability and growth of SMEs (Salamzadeh et al., 2022; Tajpour et al., 2022). Previous research has highlighted the importance of creativity and innovation for gaining a sustainable strategic advantage over competitors (Islam et al., 2022; Kamel, 2022). SMEs must identify new innovative markets and develop sustainable relationships between organisational groups to succeed in this dynamic business world (Liu et al., 2022). Employee outcomes have recently become a more valuable and interesting research domain, with scholars exploring various motivations for enhancing individual employee outcomes (Yousaf et al., 2022). Leadership plays a critical role in employee motivation and organisational development, but the relationship between leadership style and individual employee outcomes remains ambiguous (Balkin & Werner, 2023; Edeh et al., 2023; Lin et al., 2022; Oc et al., 2023; Ribeiro et al., 2023; Sidorenkov et al., 2022; Y. Zhang et al., 2022). Entrepreneurial leadership entails distinct characteristics that set it apart from traditional leadership styles. It is distinguished by a visionary mindset, a willingness to take calculated risks, an emphasis on innovation, and an orientation towards recognising opportunities. Entrepreneurial leaders have a compelling vision that inspires and motivates their employees to achieve new levels of success. They cultivate a culture of creativity, agility, and adaptability, allowing employees to embrace change, experiment with new ideas, and strive for continuous improvement. To fill this knowledge gap, the present study aims to create a comprehensive framework of how and why leadership impacts employee performance. While prior research has identified various triggers for enhancing employee outcomes, the exact nature of these relationships remains unclear (Al-Qadasi et al., 2023; Farooq et al., 2010; Moy et al., 2023). Additionally, most qualitative research on leadership and employee performance has been conducted at the organisational rather than the individual level (Haq et al., 2010; Hudson et al., 2023; Lin Wang et al., 2021). Therefore, this study explores unexplored motivations for achieving individual employee outcomes that ultimately elevate employee and organisational performance.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Before collecting data, we determined the purpose of our research, its design, and its analytic strategy.

Participants

To ascertain the primary catalysts for augmenting Employee Individual outcomes, which were gauged in terms of performance expectation, job involvement, and organisational commitment, a total of 35 employees were recruited from small and medium enterprises in Pakistan. The sample was selected using a convenient method (Hair et al., 2019). Out of the 35 employees recruited, 26 consented to participate in the interview, deemed the optimal sample size (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Lune & Berg, 2017). Regrettably, four employees declined to partake in the interview due to official burdens. In comparison, the remaining two employees had to leave the interview halfway due to unexpected personal and professional challenges.

Data Collection

The study participants were interviewed at their workplaces, as it provided them with a sense of comfort. The venue for the interview was mutually agreed upon with the respondents.

Each interview lasted for 20-25 minutes. Data was collected through note-taking, as respondents objected to audio-visual recording. Before conducting the interviews, the research objectives were clearly explained to the participants, and open-ended questions were asked regarding employees' performance and the potential triggers to enhance their performance in small and medium enterprises. Additionally, several follow-up questions were asked at the end of each interview to clarify the responses.

Ethical Consideration

In every phase of the research, strict adherence to ethical guidelines was ensured because the disclosure of sensitive information could jeopardise employees' sense of security and well-being, and any unethical conduct could potentially damage the employees' reputation, which in turn could negatively affect their employment status (Aguinis & Henle, 2004). To mitigate these risks, a safety net of services was provided to the interviewees in conjunction with the interviews.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of the Research (n=26)

Group of Study Participants	LEF-MLT	LEF-FSD	LEF-LHR	Total	%
LEF-MLT	5			5	19.23
LEF-FSD		12		12	46.15
LEF-LHR			9	9	34.62
					100.00
Gender					
Male	4	9	7	20	76.92
Female	1	3	2	6	23.08
					100.00
Age of Research Participants					
20-25	0	2	1	3	11.54
26-35	2	6	3	11	42.31
36-45	1	2	1	4	15.38
46-60	1	1	2	4	15.38
60 and Above	1	1	2	4	15.38
					100.00
Education of Research Participants					
No formal Schooling	1	3	1	5	19.23
Primary to Matric	2	4	3	9	34.62
FSc to Bachelor	2	2	3	7	26.92
Bachelor and above	0	3	2	5	19.23
					100.00

Qualitative Data Analysis

The current study employed a case study analysis with observation as the primary method of data collection (Eisenhardt, 1989). Each interviewee was considered a case and referred to as a case study. All interviews were transcribed literally and independently, and an iterative process was used to generate definitional categories and explore aspects of their interrelationships using NVivo software version 11. Constant Comparative Thematic Analysis was also applied, and common approaches were used to code the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Lune & Berg, 2017).

Thematic Content Analysis (TCA) was used to present the qualitative data descriptively (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Qualitative data, such as interview transcripts and other identifiable writings that reflect experientially on the topic of investigation, were analysed. Textural data may be accompanied by video, picture, or other types of data, but this definition of TCA is confined to textural data. Various software applications are available to automate the labelling and categorising of texts, which is particularly beneficial for analysing large amounts of data. This research used Microsoft Office (Word and Excel) as the primary tool to create most of the TCAs.

The study team, which consisted of the research supervisor, primary researchers, and research assistants, underwent a series of content analysis phases. First, the team collectively and thoroughly read all transcripts and shared their understanding for better results. Second, after examining the transcripts, researchers used the coding method (Charmaz, 2006) to focus on the fruitful aspect of respondent replies and develop a spreadsheet. Third, researchers converted the codes into main groups based on continuous comparisons to uncover similarities and differences between participants' points of view. Fourth, larger themes were developed based on conceptual group categories, and these themes were labelled and revised many times. Lastly, the research team discussed all themes and developed a description of each theme with mutual consent. During the analysis process, no group or individual was prioritised, and the researchers provided equal privilege to each individual's comment on any specific question.

Trustworthiness

To ensure the credibility of the research, a peer review process was employed (Creswell & Poth, 2016). As part of this process, some transcriptions were sent back to the participants to be reviewed, which helped verify the data's accuracy (Birks et al., 2019). Additionally, various tools were utilised to enhance further the credibility of the

research, including careful selection of participants based on specific characteristics and ensuring the transferability of the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). These measures ensured that the research findings were firmly grounded in the data and could be confidently interpreted by the academic community.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The primary objective of this study was to identify effective leadership styles in SMEs and to determine other important factors that influence employee performance. The study found that individual employee outcomes, such as job involvement, expected performance, and organisational commitment, are significant determinants of individual performance and are largely based on five factors: Value-Congruence, Opportunity-Recognition, Entrepreneurial-Leadership, Entrepreneurial-Alertness, and Entrepreneurial-Environment. These factors were identified through questions of employees regarding the characteristics of effective leadership and the triggers of employee productivity in SMEs. The study's findings revealed that these specific motivators or triggers are important for workers' performance in SMEs and that the maturity of these constructs can lead to a more effective organisation, as reported by the participants.

A total of 26 respondents were interviewed, and their demographic information is summarised in Table 1. The main themes and constructs identified through the interviews are summarised in Figure 1. The results of this study provide valuable insights for managers and leaders in SMEs as they seek to improve employee performance and organisational effectiveness.
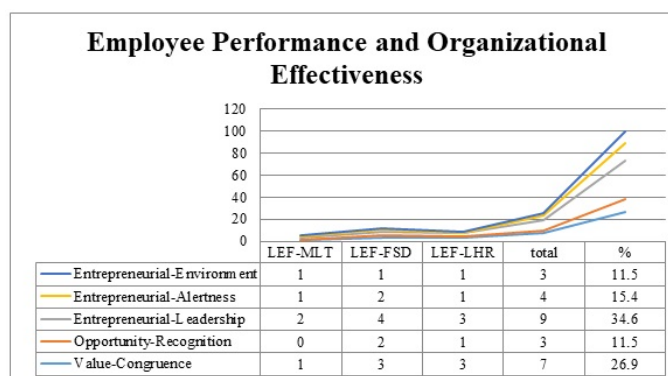

Figure 1: Employee Performance and Organisational Effectiveness

Entrepreneurial Leadership

One of the major respondent's points of view is that the leader must be a true leader, workers of SMEs, mostly LEF-FSD and LEF-LHR, expressed the perspective that the leader–employee relationship is critical in encouraging employee productivity; due to this, leaders have a visionary and multidimensional personality.

"I'm thrilled when my boss sets tough objectives for me and motivates me to attain them". (LEF-MLT-1)

"I am thrilled to be working with such a leader who is so considerate of us. I get the impression that he prioritises our needs before his demands and agenda". (LEF-FSD-10)

"My organisation's leader, in my view, is highly inventive and beneficial to us, which is why we remain loyal to them". (LEF-FSD-1)

"My employer is always willing to assist in implementing new ideas that improve our performance and confidence". (LEF-LHR-1)

"My company is becoming more capable of meeting everyday obstacles due to my boss's risk-taking conduct. He has imaginative qualities that constantly encourage and stimulate our performance" (LEF-FSD-12).

"SMEs workers decide that anytime we have difficulties in our given responsibilities, my management provides an appropriate solution and incorporates my thoughts" (LEF-LHR-9).

The theme extracted that Entrepreneurial leadership significantly impacts employee productivity, as it involves empowering and motivating employees to think and act like entrepreneurs. By encouraging employees to take ownership of their work and make decisions that impact the company's bottom line, entrepreneurial leaders create

a sense of purpose and engagement among employees. This, in turn, leads to higher levels of productivity and innovation as employees are more invested in their work.

Value- Congruence

Another theme from the study is value congruence and its impact on individual employee outcomes. Value congruence refers to the degree of alignment between an individual's and an organisation's values. According to participants' personal views, value congruence is directly related to individual employee outcomes because when employees perceive that their values are consistent with their organisation's values, they are more likely to experience job satisfaction, organisational commitment, and engagement.

"I am unhappy about my manager because he silences our voices and always values his decisions". (LEF-FSD-2)

"My supervisor could be better if he listens to us more because our commitment and involvement must defeat the current challenges effectively". (LEF-MLT-5)

"We agreed that leaders should listen to their employees, convey positive messages about their value to the organisation, and motivate employees". (LEF-FSD-10)

"I also noted, "Building good relationships with employees puts them at ease, and they get the job done more efficiently and effectively. Employees go above and beyond the call of duty when needed". (LEF-MLT-1)

"I have always supported this view by saying, "Although the leader, in an organisational context, is the ultimate authority, when leaders involve employees in decision-making, they feel valued, work harder and engage". (LEF-LHR-8)

"One of the respondents supported this notion by stating, "If employees are not involved in decision-making, distrust builds, and with distrust comes disengagement. Disengagement results in organisations having negative consequences". (LEF-FSD-8)

Based on participants' personal views, value congruence positively impacts individual outcomes such as job involvement, performance expectation, and organisational commitment. When employees' personal values align with their organisation's values, they are more likely to feel a sense of purpose and meaning in their work, which can lead to increased motivation and job performance. In summary, value congruence is essential in building a positive work environment and enhancing individual and organisational outcomes.

Opportunity Recognition

The third theme that emerged from the study is the recognition of opportunities. Respondents responded positively when asked about opportunity recognition and individual outcomes. All participants agreed that opportunity recognition drives individual outcomes through value alignment. Here are the thoughts of the participants:

"I enjoy working with my supervisor because he trusts me and gives me the opportunity to express my opinion". (LEF-MLT-1)

"I cannot work with someone who follows my mistakes and magnifies them while minimising my successes. . . Alhamdulillah, my manager does not do that" (LEF-FSD-4).

"If my manager not only finds mistakes, I feel that there is no distance between us" (LEF-LHR-5).

From my point of view, the only reason for my loyalty to this organisation is the special sensitivity to the new opportunities provided by my elders" (LEF-LHR-3).

As per participants' views, Opportunity recognition is the process of identifying and seizing opportunities for innovation, growth, and development. When employees can recognise opportunities that align with their personal values and beliefs, it can have a significant impact on their individual outcomes. It concludes that value congruence is a highly driven factor between opportunity recognition and individual outcomes.

Entrepreneurial Alertness

Another theme that emerged from the study is entrepreneurial alertness. Entrepreneurial alertness refers to the ability to recognise and act on potential opportunities. The keen awareness of environmental changes could lead to opportunities for creating new products or services. According to the participant's perception, Entrepreneurial alertness is a crucial factor connecting entrepreneurial leadership and opportunity recognition.

Entrepreneurial leadership involves identifying and pursuing opportunities to create value, while opportunity recognition is identifying potential business opportunities.

"I'm new in the company, but I can tell that my manager is a real leader who gives us timely reports and always tries to bring out the best from every employee, and that's very exciting for me" (LEF-FSD- 7).

"My manager sets clear goals for the team and keeps a close eye on our progress, and gives us the resources we need to accomplish our tasks, and that's a big motivator for me" (LEF-FSD-8).

"I commented that the communication strategy included a newsletter, quarterly staff meetings with the entire office, and mandatory weekly department and small group meetings. These interactions helped employees become committed and engaged". (LEF-MLT-3)

One worker suggested that an employee engagement strategy cannot work without an effective communication strategy implemented by company leaders". (LEF-LHR-1)

Effective entrepreneurial leadership requires the ability to identify and assess potential opportunities and the courage and confidence to take risks and pursue those opportunities. This is where entrepreneurial alertness comes into play. By being alert to environmental changes and trends, entrepreneurs can identify new opportunities to act upon. By staying alert and responsive to changes in the market, entrepreneurs can become better equipped to identify and capitalise on opportunities to create value and drive business success.

Entrepreneurial Environment

A final emerging theme of the study is Entrepreneurial Environment. Participants explained that the entrepreneurial environment is the context of entrepreneurial activity. The combination of external and internal factors shapes the opportunities, challenges, and resources available to entrepreneurs as they create, launch, and grow their businesses.

"I am always looking for new groups of workers and products around my workplace that benefit the organisation; this makes my boss appreciate me and increases my job involvement". (LEF-FSD -5)

"Realising new or emerging relationships between different pieces of information gives us pride and our strong commitment to the company". (LEF-FSD-10)

"Involvement in my job at the highest level. Whenever I give a suggestion or idea to my seniors and colleagues, they always encourage me and report positively on every official platform". (LEF-MLT-4)

"My manager ignites my energy and motivates me when he is available, which increases my commitment to the initiative". (LEF-FSD-12)

"We realised that in the current environment, employees are not satisfied with being just another number in an organisation. Leaders need to ensure that employees feel a sense of belonging to the organisation and are often connected to people, materials, or new combinations of products. Such connections result in employees feeling engaged and a sense of purpose". (LEF-LHR-6)

In an entrepreneurial environment, the values and beliefs of the organisation are often closely tied to those of the entrepreneurs who founded and led the company. This can create a sense of shared purpose and mission among employees, leading to higher value congruence. The entrepreneurial environment is critical in shaping the relationship between value congruence and individual employee outcomes.

Thematic Analysis

Data were analysed, and 5 basic key themes emerged from the collected data from different workers of SMEs concerning individual outcomes in the organisation. These themes were entitled employee's perceptions and beliefs impacting employee output.

Table 2: Thematic Analysis

Sr#	1st Order Construct	Description	Descriptive Statements
1	Individual Outcomes	Performance expectation	My boss always helps in implementing a new idea which enhances our performance and confidence
		Job Involvement	My supervisor can be better if he listens more to us because our commitment and involvement must beat the current challenges efficiently
		Organisation commitment	According to the opinion leader of my organisation is very creative and helpful to us that's why we are loyal to them.
2	Entrepreneurial-Environment	Positive work environment	My boss is positive; that's why the workplace environment is positive.
		good at fixing points	Whenever I got into trouble, my immediate was available for help
		Appreciated Thinking out of the box	In the case of seeking new opportunities for the organisation, they always encourage me
3	Entrepreneurial-Alertness	The way leaders communicate with their employees,	I commented that the communication strategy included a newsletter and quarterly staff meetings with the entire office.
		Help to seek upcoming opportunities	I am new in the company, but I can tell that my manager is a true leader who informs us timely and always tries to bring out the best in each employee, and that is very interesting to me
		Effective Communication	One of the workers suggested that the employee engagement strategy could not work without the effective communication strategy implemented by company leaders
4	Opportunity-Recognition	Productive Bound between supervisor and employees	I enjoy working with my supervisor because he trusts me, and allows me to share my opinions.
		Avoid depreciative behaviour at the workplace	I can't work with someone who chases my mistakes and enlarges them while underestimating my achievements.
		Motivated behaviour between supervisor and colleagues	A special sensitivity towards new opportunities provided by my seniors enhances my commitment.
5	Value-Congruence	A feeling of admiration	My organisation gives value to those things which are important to my life as well; this brings me happiness.
		Positive match between employee and organisation	We agreed that leaders must listen to their employees, communicate positive messages about their value to the organisation, and encourage employees.
		showing or having respect for all employees	If employees are not involved in decision-making, distrust develops, and with distrust comes disengagement.
6	Entrepreneurial Leadership	Having knowledge or skill in a particular field	According to the opinion leader of my organisation is very creative and helpful to us that's why we are loyal to them.
		The right person for the right job	I always feel that I am fit for this task and can help others due to sufficient skills related to my job.
		The ability to deal with, manage, express, and control.	My firm grows daily and can meet the daily challenges because of my boss and their risk-taking behaviour.
		capability to plan and accomplish things	whenever we face problems in assigned tasks, my manager provides a suitable solution and incorporates my suggestions

Frame Work Development

Multiple studies and meta-analyses have been conducted to identify the key triggers that can boost employees' individual outcomes (Antoniou & Agrafioti, 2023; Bartlett et al., 2019; Sidorenkov et al., 2022; Lin Wang et al., 2021). However, these studies have some limitations, and their ability to identify respondents' behaviour is still questionable (Balkin & Werner, 2023; Edeh et al., 2023; Ribeiro et al., 2023; Sidorenkov et al., 2022; Y. Zhang et al., 2022). Additionally, they do not provide a comprehensive framework outlining the exact sequence of related variables that can enhance individual-level performance. To address these limitations, there is a need for more clarity on the triggers that have a greater impact on employees' individual outcomes in small and medium-sized enterprises in Pakistan.

In this regard, we propose deploying more theoretical aspects for future development. Specifically, this study calls for more research using the person-environment fit theory proposed by Judge & Kristof-Brown (2006), employees who perceive a good fit between the demands of their work environment and their personal characteristics are more likely to experience positive outcomes, such as higher job satisfaction and commitment to the organisation. In this case, employees with a proactive personality and a high tolerance for risk may be a good fit for an entrepreneurial work environment, where they are encouraged to take the initiative and innovate (Jansen & Kristof-Brown, 2006). In conclusion, this study proposes using the person-environment fit theory to identify the triggers that can enhance individual-level performance in small and medium-sized enterprises in Pakistan. By doing so, we hope to contribute to this topic's theoretical and practical debate.

Implications for Theory

This study makes a theoretical contribution to the literature on Entrepreneurial Leadership (EL) by extending the scope of research to the individual level and elucidating the relationship between EL and individual outcomes. Moreover, the study extends the literature by investigating the impact of opportunity recognition and value congruence on the relationship between EL and individual outcomes, which is crucial for the sustainability and growth of small and medium-sized enterprises. Furthermore, this study offers opportunities for future researchers to explore the relationship between EL and individual outcomes using other valuable variables. By doing so, future research can expand our understanding of the impact of EL on individual outcomes and contribute to the development of the field. In conclusion, this study contributes to the theoretical development of the literature on EL and individual outcomes. It offers avenues for future research to explore this relationship further using various valuable variables.

Implications for Policy and Practice

From a practical perspective, this research article offers valuable guidelines for SME management to improve individual employee performance, which is crucial for the sustainability and growth of the organisation. Therefore, this study is particularly useful for managing human resources in SMEs and achieving the organisation's ultimate goal. Furthermore, this study offers novel strategies that SME management can implement to enhance individual employee performance, which is beneficial for the organisation's overall success. This research article provides practical insights that can help SME management improve individual employee performance, thereby contributing to the sustainability and growth of the organisation.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study demonstrate that individual-level employee performance significantly influences the growth and sustainability of organisations. Specifically, this performance is determined by three first-order constructs: performance expectation, job involvement, and organisational commitment, which are triggered by value congruence between employees and the organisation. Additionally, entrepreneurial leadership is critical in maintaining stable value congruence, facilitated by opportunity recognition. Entrepreneurial alertness and an entrepreneurial environment strengthen the relationship between entrepreneurial leadership and individual-level outcomes, which is essential for achieving the organisation's ultimate goals.

Therefore, it is crucial for top management to focus on the factors that yield satisfactory results from individuals, such as value congruence, which leads to opportunity recognition. Moreover, entrepreneurial leadership serves as the backbone of all relationships, necessitating top management's careful attention. To ensure these practices,

top management should introduce new policies and strategies for middle-line management and conduct multiple training sessions for both workers and their supervisors. These efforts can enhance the performance of individuals towards creativity and innovation, overcome job dissatisfaction, and control the turnover rate in the organisation, thereby promoting sustainability and higher growth.

Research Rigour, Limitations and Future Research

According to Maher et al. (2018) and Cypress (2017), the most important criterion for evaluating qualitative research is rigour, which includes four key elements: credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability. To enhance the credibility of this study, sustained involvement and persistent observation were used to understand the context of the phenomena and to reduce data distortions (Cypress, 2017; Maher et al., 2018). To increase transferability, a purposive sampling strategy was employed, and a full and accurate description of the participants was provided. Conformability was ensured by having an expert qualitative researcher analyse the transcribed material to validate the themes and descriptors discovered while maintaining dependability and reflexivity throughout the research process.

However, this study has certain limitations. Firstly, the findings cannot be generalised globally as the research was conducted only in Pakistan and focused solely on small and medium-sized enterprises. Secondly, the convenience sampling method limited the scope of the study. Additionally, as a qualitative study, the research relied on the researcher's interpretation of respondents' viewpoints and the establishment of relationships among variables and thus requires further testing through specific statistical methods. While this study is valuable, future research should employ other psychological methods to verify the truthfulness of respondents' viewpoints.

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