

MSc Business
Administration
Research
Digest 2021

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| The Impact of a Learning Orientated Work Culture on Employee Engagement and Innovative Work Behaviour: Insights from Saudi Arabia Abeer Alkassim Dr. Caroline McGroary 2021 | 5 |
| A Study to Investigate the Level of Realization and Adaptation of Agility in Saudi Arabia Ashwag Shdaiyd Dr. Rajáa Clouse 2021 | 10 |
| The Relation Between the Perceived Human Resource Practices in Work-Life Balance and the Self-Reported Employees' Commitment. A Case of a Semi-Government Organization in Riyadh Dalal Almotlag Dr. Rajáa Clouse 2021 | 13 |
| The Impact of The Covid-19 Pandemic on Saudi's Consumer Behaviour Toward Purchasing Luxury Goods In Riyadh, Saudi Arabia Deema AlTuraif Dr. Sarah Fraser 2021 | 16 |
| Financial Literacy In COVID-19 Pandemic: The Impact on The Youth In Saudi Arabia Khloud Alhudaibi Dr. Caroline McGroary 2021 | 19 |
| The Perceived Impact of Corona Virus (COVID-19) Pandemic on Ecommerce Buying Behaviour For Chinese Products In Riyadh Latifa Alnuzhah Dr. Sarah Fraser 2021 | 23 |
| Exploring The Relationship Between Business Resilience, Self-Efficacy, Burnout And Turnover Intentions Of Saudi Entrepreneurs During Covid-19 Manal Turki Alturki Dr. Caroline McGroary 2021 | 26 |
| The Association Between The Social Media Influencers And Consumer Behaviours Among Young Saudi Arabia Adults. Maram Alqasem Dr. Sarah Fraser 2021 | 31 |
| The Perceived Importance of Leadership Role on Saudi Female Entrepreneurs Maryam Aldawsary Dr Sarah Fraser 2021 | 34 |
| Investigating The Relationship Between Employees' Perception Of TQM Effectiveness And Their Level Of Change Readiness: A Select Sample Of Healthcare Institutions In Saudi Arabia Nada Abdulaziz Al-Hassoon Dr. Rajáa Clouse 2021 | 39 |

| | |
|--|----|
| Exploring The Relationship Between Transformational Leadership, Personal Resilience And Employee Engagement: Insights From Saudi Arabia | |
| Nora Aloraini Dr. Caroline McGroary 2021 | 43 |
| The National Transformation Plan and Women Labor Force Participation: An Exploration of The Perceived Positive Role of The National Transformation Plan On The Opportunities For Women Entrepreneurs In Saudi Arabia | |
| Nouf Aljarallah Dr Caroline McGroary 2021 | 47 |
| The Impact Of COVID-19 On the Tourism Industry in Saudi Arabia | |
| Noura Bin Jumah Dr. Caroline McGroary 2021 | 51 |
| The impact of commercial advertisements from the influencers on user behaviour in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia | |
| Reham Aldosari Dr. Sarah Fraser 2021 | 55 |
| Consumer's Attitudes Towards Personalized Social Media Advertisement in the Kingdom's Retail Sector | |
| Sama Alhoshan Dr. Sarah Fraser 2021 | 58 |
| Remote Working and Its Effect on Business in Saudi Arabia | |
| Sara Ahmed Alsheaibi Dr. Caroline McGroary 2021 | 62 |
| Impact of Covid-19 on Digital Transformation in Saudi Arabia | |
| Shaikha ALDahash Dr Sarah Fraser 2021 | 66 |
| An Examination in The Cybersecurity in KSA | |
| Afrah Alhakami, Elham Alkhaldi, Ruaa Almuhanha, Sara Medhish Dr. Caroline McGroary | 70 |
| Investigating The Relationship Between Perceived Workforce Gender Diversity And Perceived Organizational Performance: A Case Of An Automation Solutions Company In Saudi Arabia | |
| Salwa Al khathami, Reem Ali Aldosari, Nourah Almagid Dr. Rajáa Clouse | 74 |
| Understanding the Influencing Factors on Unicorn in the MENA Region: An Interpretive Structural Modelling Approach | |
| Albandari Alotaibi, Amjaad Aljassas, Munirah Almulhim, Raghd Alsowayna Dr. Rajáa Clouse | 77 |



جامعة الأميرة نورة بنت عبد الرحمن
Princess Nourah bint Abdulrahman University



The Obstacles of Female Social Entrepreneur in Saudi Arabia

Abrar Khaled Alrayes, Haneen Tarig Aolagi, Reem Mohammed AlFurhud Sarah Abdulrahman

Alhussain | Dr. Sarah Fraser 80

Research Digest

The Impact of a Learning Orientated Work Culture on Employee Engagement and Innovative Work Behaviour: Insights from Saudi Arabia

Abeer Alkassim | Dr. Caroline McGroary | 2021

Abstract

This study seeks to explore the impact of a learning orientated work culture on employee engagement and innovative work behaviour in organizations in Saudi Arabia. The value of the study is vital for Human Resource Development (HRD) specialists who are interested in successful and effective growth of the organization.

The study adopted a quantitative approach through the use of survey analysis. The survey consisted of the following sections/scales: (1) the learning orientated work culture was measured using the Dimension of Learning Organization Questionnaire (DLOQ); (2) work engagement was measured using the 9-item Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES-9) and (3) work innovative behaviour was measured using the 6-item work innovative behaviour scale. The survey was administered via an online survey platform (Qualtrics) which resulted in a total sample of 139 participants. Data analysis was carried out using SPSS where the study hypotheses were tested through hierarchical regression analysis.

The findings showed that work engagement mediates the relationship between learning orientated work culture and innovative work behaviour in organizations in Saudi Arabia. Furthermore, the results of the linear regression testing showed that there was a positive linear relationship between learning-oriented work culture and work engagement in organizations in Saudi Arabia. Furthermore, the relationship between work engagement and innovative work behaviour is also positive. In addition, learning orientated work culture also had a positive impact on innovative work behaviour. These results were explored using the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) theory. The results of this study were in line with the theory which outlines that resources lead to increased engagement and positive work outcomes. Therefore, the results indicate that organisations which are willing to foster and promote a learning-oriented work culture are more likely to have employees who are more engaged in their work which leads to increased levels of innovation. These findings make an important contribution to the academic literature, as they build on the current body of research and provide insights into the work of organisations in Saudi Arabia.

Keywords: Learning orientated work culture, Job Demands-Resources theory, Work Engagement, Work Innovative Behaviour, Human Resource Development, Saudi Arabia

Literature review

Over the past year the concept of employee work engagement has gained a lot of attention given concerns over the engagement levels of employees as a result of working from home. However, the reality is that this concept has gained significant attention over the years in the academic literature and there are many studies which explore the factors that both increase and decrease employee work engagement. While there is extensive literature in this field there is very little research done on this concept in Saudi Arabia. Therefore, this study identified a gap in the literature and sought to explore the relationship between a learning orientated work culture, work engagement and innovative work behaviour.

The reason for selecting the antecedent and outcome variables is due to the calls in the literature for more research that explores how the workplace climate impacts on employee engagement (Bernsen, Segers and Tillema, 2009; Kyndt et al., 2009; Macey and Schneider, 2008; Meyer et al., 2008). Furthermore, there seems to be strong empirical support for the view that a working environment which promotes learning and development has a more highly engaged workforce (Bernsen, Segers and Tillema, 2009; Meyer et al., 2008). This may be driven by autonomy which then fosters interest, enthusiasm and dedication (Meyer et al., 2008; Bernsen, Segers and Tillema, 2009). Furthermore, a culture of supportive learning, high-quality training, developing coaching skills, resource allocation and relationship development were considered important to the improvement of employee engagement and promoting innovative work behaviour (Aguinis and Kraiger, 2009).

The Job Demands Resources (JD-R) theory has received significant support as a theory to explore the role of resources in the motivational process leading to engagement and positive work outcomes (Demerouti et al., 2001). Consequently, it was used as the theoretical framework to frame this research and to explore the relationship between the three variables of interest.

Objective

In light of the above, the overall aim of this study is to explore the impact of a learning orientated work culture on employee engagement and innovative work behaviour in organizations in Saudi Arabia. In doing so it seeks to answer the following research questions:

- 1) What effect does a learning orientated work culture have on work engagement in organisations in Saudi Arabia?
- 2) What effect does a learning orientated work culture have on employees' innovative work behaviour in organisations in Saudi Arabia?

- 3) Does employee work engagement positively impact on innovative work behaviour in organisations in Saudi Arabia?
- 4) Does employee work engagement mediate the relationship between a learning orientated work culture and innovative work behaviour in organisations in Saudi Arabia?

Methodology

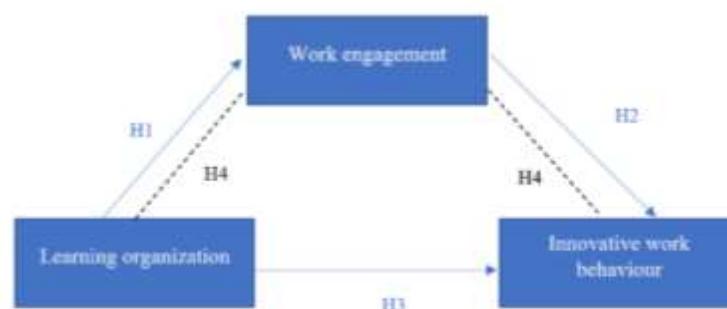
The study adopted a quantitative approach through the use of survey analysis. The survey consisted of the following sections/scales: (1) the learning orientated work culture was measured using the Dimension of Learning Organization Questionnaire (DLOQ); (2) work engagement was measured using the 9-item Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES-9) and (3) work innovative behaviour was measured using the 6-item work innovative behaviour scale. The survey was administered via an online survey platform (Qualtrics) which resulted in a total sample of 139 participants. Data analysis was carried out using SPSS where the study hypotheses were tested through hierarchical regression analysis. The study hypothesis are outlined below.

H1 A learning orientated work culture has a positive impact on work engagement in organisations in Saudi Arabia?

H2 Work engagement is positively related to innovative work behaviour in in organizations in Saudi Arabia.

H3 A learning orientated work culture is positively related to innovative work behaviour in organizations in Saudi Arabia.

H4 Work engagement mediates the relationship between a learning orientated work culture and innovative work behaviour in organizations in Saudi Arabia.





Analysis and Findings

This study found support for all the hypotheses outlined above. These results are in line with JD-R theory that supports the view that when there is abundant resources which are valued by employees, which in this case is a learning orientated work culture, this leads to increased engagement and performance.

In doing so this study has made a number of contributions to both to the academic literature and on a practical level. Firstly, this work contributes to the current body of literature that looks at the relationship between these three variables, however, does so in a new context, Saudi Arabia. These findings are also important from a practical perspective given Vision 2030. Saudi Arabian organisations are rapidly growing and to achieve the goals of Vision 2030 it is important that organisations better understand how they can promote employee engagement and higher performance. This study now helps provide insights into how that can be done.

Conclusions

This study has succeeded in exploring the impact of a learning orientated work culture on employee engagement and innovative work behaviour in organizations in Saudi Arabia. The results revealed that all study hypotheses were supported. JD-R theory helped in explaining the role of antecedent variables in the motivational process leading to work engagement as well as the outcomes of innovative work behaviour. There are a number of contributions of this work as outlined in the section above.



Reference

- Aguinis, H. and Kraiger, K., 2009. Benefits of training and development for individuals and teams, organizations, and society. *Annual review of psychology*, 60, pp.451-474.
- Bakker, A.B., Demerouti, E. and Euwema, M.C., 2005. Job resources buffer the impact of job demands on burnout. *Journal of occupational*
- Bernsen, P., Segers, M. and Tillema, H.H., 2009. Learning under pressure: Learning strategies, workplace climate, and leadership style in the hospitality industry. *International Journal of Human Resources Development and Management*, 9(4), pp.358-373.
- Demerouti, E., Bakker, A.B., Nachreiner, F. and Schaufeli, W.B., 2001. The job demands-resources model of burnout. *Journal of Applied psychology*, 86(3), p.499.
- Kyndt, E., Dochy, F., Michielsen, M. and Moeyaert, B., 2009. Employee retention: Organisational and personal perspectives. *Vocations and Learning*, 2(3), pp.195-215.
- Macey, W.H. and Schneider, B., 2008. The meaning of employee engagement. *Industrial and organizational Psychology*, 1(1), pp.3-30.
- Meyer, F., Paarmann, D., D'Souza, M., Olson, R., Glass, E.M., Kubal, M., Paczian, T., Rodriguez, A., Stevens, R., Wilke, A. and Wilkening, J., 2008. The metagenomics RAST server—a public resource for the automatic phylogenetic and functional analysis of metagenomes. *BMC bioinformatics*, 9(1), pp.1-8.

Research Digest

A Study to Investigate the Level of Realization and Adaptation of Agility in Saudi Arabia

Ashwag Shdaiyd | Dr. Rajáa Clouse | 2021

Abstract

Over the past few years, agile software development methodology has successfully made its way in the software development industry and research field as several research studies have been conducted to explore the degree of realization and adoption of the subject methodology by software developers. However, majority of the studies have been conducted in the well-established western software development markets while a very few have considered the software markets in the developing regions for the same investigation. To the researcher's best knowledge, no study has been conducted in Saudi Arabian software development market to investigate the widely considered aforementioned phenomenon. Thus, this study aims to investigate the level of realization and adoption of agile software development methodology among Saudi software developers. The main research questions of the study are as followed:

- Are Saudi software players aware of Agile software development methodology?
- Do Saudi software players adopt Agile software development methodology in their programming processes?

The research study has adopted descriptive and exploratory research design. Non-random convenience sampling approach was used to select the study participants. An online survey was conducted where in 22-itemed questionnaire was sent through email to 80 software developers of three local software houses. However, only 63 questionnaires were fully responded which were considered as the part of the study data.

The study has found that over 93% of the participants are aware of Agile software development Methodologies and over 89% of the sample have adopted agile software methodology. Investigation of the rationale behind using agile methodology has revealed that majority of the software developers consider this methodology for boosting morale of project team, minimizing and cost risks, and maximizing the productivity. Main rationales for not adopting agile methodologies include Absence of proper leadership and Conventional organizational culture. Moreover, the study has revealed that the Saudi software practitioners have favorable behaviors towards Agile software methodology.

This study was intended to critically examine the current level of realization and adoption of agile software development methodology among the software developers in Saudi Arabia. The study findings have revealed that the players in the software developing industry of Saudi Arabia are aware of agile software methodologies. This study provides an Ariel view insight into the emerging



software development market of Saudi Arabia. Future research studies could focus on case studies of successful or emerging software houses in the market to broaden knowledge about the realization and adoption of Agile in this largest market of the Middle East.

key terms/ keywords: Agile software development methodology, agile realization, agile adoption

Literature Review

Overall, the majority of the studies conducted to explore the level of adoption of agile software development methodologies have been conducted in the western world or the well-established software markets such as Baddoo and Hall (2002), Beecham, Sharp, Badoo, Hall, and Robinson (2007), Chow and Cow (2008), Maryam, Naseem, Haseeb, Hameed, Tayyab, and Shahzaad (2017).

However, only a few studies considered Eastern developing software industries, for example, Boehm and Turner (2005), Petersen, Feldt, Mujtaba, and Mattsson (2008), França, Carneiro, and da Silva (2012), and Dieste, Raura, and Rodríguez (2017). However, to the best of my knowledge, not even a single study was conducted to explore the level of realization and adoption of agile software development methodologies in the Saudi Software industry specifically when the Saudi software industry is moving forward for making significant contributions in the transition of the local economy from the oil-dependent to the diversified one.

Objective

This research study intends to explore the level of realization and adoption of agile software development methodology among Saudi software developers. Thus, this study intends to investigate and respond to the following research question:

- Are Saudi software players aware of Agile software development methodology?

- Do Saudi software players adopt Agile software development methodology in their programming processes?

Methodology

The research study has adopted descriptive and exploratory research design. Non-random convenience sampling approach was used to select the study participants. An online survey was conducted wherein 22-itemed questionnaire was sent through email to 80 software developers of three local software houses. However, only 63 questionnaires were fully responded which were considered as the part of the study data.

Analysis and Findings

The study has found that over 93% of the participants are aware of Agile software development Methodologies and over 89% of the sample have adopted agile software methodology.

Investigation of the rationale behind using agile methodology has revealed that majority of the software developers consider this methodology for boosting morale of project team, minimizing and cost risks, and maximizing the productivity. Main rationales for not adopting agile methodologies include Absence of proper leadership and Conventional organizational culture. Moreover, the study has revealed that the Saudi software practitioners have favorable behaviors towards Agile software methodology. Note that the results indicate that the majority of the respondents on the questionnaire hold managerial position in their company.

Conclusions

This study was intended to critically examine the current level of realization and adoption of agile software development methodology among the software developers in Saudi Arabia. The study findings have revealed that the players in the software developing industry of Saudi Arabia are aware of agile software methodologies. This study provides an aerial view insight into the emerging software development market of Saudi Arabia. Future research studies could focus on case studies of successful or emerging software houses in the market to broaden knowledge about the realization and adoption of Agile in this largest market of the Middle East.

Research Digest

The Relation Between the Perceived Human Resource Practices in Work-Life Balance and the Self-Reported Employees' Commitment:

A Case of a Semi-Government Organization in Riyadh

Dalal Almotlag | Dr. Rajáa Clouse | 2021

Abstract

Employees who have low work-life balance are likely to face numerous challenges in the workplace and may significantly impact their commitment levels. This study aims to examine the relation between Human Resource practices in Work-Life-Balance and employees' commitment. The study also seeks to examine the levels of agreement of employees on the Work-Life-Balance subconstructs and the relation between these sub-constructs. To achieve this, a quantitative correlational research design is adopted while committing to using reliable scales from the literature to measure the variables of the various constructs. The key findings of the study showed that there is a positive correlation between work-life balance and organizational commitment among employees. Thus, we concluded that employees who have low work-life balance are likely to face numerous challenges in their workplaces, which may significantly affect their commitment levels.

Keywords: Work-Life-Balance (WLB), Organizational Commitment (OC)

Literature review

Work-life balance increases over time as employers hold to rigid working conditions (Gragano et al. 2020). Having fixed full-time working hours, lack of holiday and rigidity on working is proving to be strenuous. Employers are therefore seeking ways to enhance the work-life balance through workplace programs and sessions, vacations and flexible working hours and policy adjustment and flexibility. Fisher and Bulger (2009) further include that various social trends and influences within different societies affect employees' work-life balance, including issues such as childbearing, marriage, and other non-family responsibilities. Thus, work-life balance presents a serious concern for employees and the HR.

Objective

The study will be guided by the following general research question:

what is the role of human resources practices in work-life balance within organisations in increasing employees' commitment in semi-government organisations in Riyadh?

The objectives include:

- What is the level of agreement of the employees on the work-life balance?
- What is the relation between the various sub constructs of the work-life practices?
- Which of the subconstructs of the work-life balance practices is positively correlated with organisational commitment?

Methodology

To measure the main research question of the study that focuses on investigating the relationship and the impact of the Work Life Balance on Organizational Commitment, a quantitative research design was adopted. The survey was compiled by adopting scales from the literature that measure the variables needed to answer the research questions. The analysis plan is to run correlations and linear regression analyses.

Analysis and findings

From the literature, it was noted that work-life balance had implications on various employee-related aspects such as productivity and commitment. A linear regression analysis testing for the impact of work life balance on organizational commitment produced a P-value of (0.000) (less than 0.0 and led to rejection of the null hypothesis that states there is no impact and consequently led to accepting the alternative hypothesis that finds a significant effect of work life balance on the Organizational Commitment at 1% level of significance.

The correlation analyses also depicted a positive correlation between work-life balance and organisational commitment.

Conclusions

Our research findings show a relationship between organizational commitment and the proper work-life balance policies in an organisation. The employees must have an excellent work-life balance to reduce the personnel's costs and increase the profit effectively. Future studies should explore more organisations from various industry sectors and under different contexts of human resources practices or with employees from various demographic backgrounds.



References

- Fisher, G. G. & Bulger, C. A. (2009). Beyond Work and Family: A Measure of Work/Nonwork Interference and Enhancement. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 14, 4, 441– 456
- Gragnano, A., Simbula, S., & Miglioretti, M. (2020). Work–Life Balance: Weighing the Importance of Work–Family and Work–Health Balance. *International journal of environmental research and public health*, 17(3), 907.

Research Digest

The Impact of The Covid-19 Pandemic on Saudi's Consumer Behaviour Toward Purchasing Luxury Goods In Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

Deema AlTuraif | Dr. Sarah Fraser | 2021

Abstract

Purpose and Objectives: The world have been hugely impacted by the Coronavirus disease, which is also referred to as Covid-19. The paper aims to study the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the Saudi consumer behaviour towards the purchase of luxury goods in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

Methodology: This study adopted a methodology of quantitative approach. It used a descriptive correlational design.

Findings: 40.9% of the total study sample purchases luxury goods once a year. 16.9%, purchases luxury goods more than twice a year, 16.3% purchases luxury good twice a year and 25.9% never purchases luxury goods, showing a significantly decline in purchasing of luxury goods during the crisis.

Conclusions and recommendations: The e-market achieved amazing and unprecedented record growth. The effects of the Covid-19 pandemic forced consumers to shift from and highly preferred physical to online store purchases. Moreover, since Covid-19 spread, purchasing habits of customers had been changed and the level of awareness increases as the Saudi consumer became wiser and focused more on purchasing basic products without directing towards buying luxury goods. The Consumer purchasing behaviour towards luxury goods during the Covid-19 pandemic significantly declined during the crisis.

Key terms/keywords Corona Virus (Covid-19), Luxury Goods, Purchasing Behaviour, Consumer Behaviour, Pandemic.

Literature Review

The consequences of lockdowns, travel restrictions, and social distancing that the country imposed have also had a catastrophic effect on luxury goods, specifically the luxury shopping behaviour, and channel dynamics, leading to the closure of some retail stores and businesses. As the pandemic causes social distancing during movement restrictions in Saudi Arabia, consumers are adapting into the new regulations and circumstances (Abolfotouh et al., 2021). Consumers fear contagion in luxury retail spaces, while others see no need to buy

personal luxury goods (Danziger, 2020). When analysing the change in consumer behaviour in response to a crisis or pandemic, it is important first to understand consumer decision-making processes (Pichère, Anne-Christine Cadiat and Probert, 2015). Under Maslow's hierarchy of needs



model, a consumer's satisfaction behind a need or want is viewed by the way they prioritize their spending (Loxton, 2020).

Objective

- To gather empirical evidence if consumer purchasing behaviour towards luxury goods during the Covid-19 pandemic will decline as depicted in previous crises.
- To critically review Maslow's hierarchy of needs to analyse if the consumer purchasing behaviour during the Covid-19 pandemic would focus on consuming essential goods, thus prioritizing Maslow's lower-order needs.
- To identify if the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic will force consumers to shift from and highly prefer physical to online store purchases.

Methodology

A cross-sectional design using a customized web-based survey quantitative method used. To analyse this study, the method used is the descriptive-analytical method. A total of (455) people were randomly selected from the target group. Saudi 18 years and above who lives in Riyadh district, Saudi Arabia.

To identify study sample attitudes towards the posed question, the following statistical methods used:

Frequencies, percentages: to get to know the personal and functional characteristics of the study population and identify study sample individuals' responses to phrases of the main themes contained in the study.

Weighted arithmetic mean: To find out how high or low responses study population for each phrase of the main variables of the study. Pearson correlation coefficient person Correlation: to know the degree of correlation between the resolution and phrases that belongs to all the words of her words and the total score of the questionnaire. Alpha Cronbach coefficient: to test the reliability of study tool.

Analysis and Findings

The Crises negatively impact consumers' disposable income inflicting a fall in wage growth and an ultimate prioritization of spending, they became more sensitive to product prices and also worry more about product prices because of a decrease in disposable income.



Conclusions

The Consumer purchasing behaviour towards luxury goods during the Covid-19 pandemic significantly declined during the crisis. Following Maslow's hierarchy of needs, the consumer purchasing behaviour during the Covid-19 pandemic focused more on consuming essential goods and prioritizing Maslow's lower-order needs.

Recommendations

To proceed with periodic studies to follow the change in customers' behaviour toward purchasing luxury goods.

To move toward e-commerce to reduce losses caused by Covid-19.

To reinforce advertising campaign to raise the awareness of the Saudi society about the disadvantages of fake products.

Research Digest

Financial Literacy In COVID-19 Pandemic: The Impact on The Youth In Saudi Arabia.

Khlood Alhudaibi | Dr. Caroline McGroary | 2021

Abstract

Aim: The main aim of the research study is to explore the financial literacy levels of the youth in Saudi Arabia and to explore the risks they may face as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The financial literacy levels of the Saudi youths were explored from three perspectives: financial attitudes, financial behavior, and financial knowledge. As financial literacy is a topic that has received a lot of attention globally, it was useful to explore this objective in the context of the OECD financial literacy benchmarks and to determine whether the youth in Saudi Arabia, were above or below these benchmarks.

Methods: The research study used a mixed method research design, with a dominant quantitative research approach and a supplementary qualitative research approach. The generation of quantitative data was from survey (questionnaires), while the generation of qualitative data was from the interviews conducted.

Results: The results of the quantitative statistical analysis showed that the financial attitudes of Saudi youth are lower than the OECD benchmark, the financial behavior of Saudi youth are lower than the OECD benchmark, and the financial knowledge of Saudi youth are lower than the OECD benchmark. While the results of the interviews' analysis showed that the COVID-19 pandemic has a significant positive effect in increasing the interest of Saudi youths toward obtaining financial literacy.

Conclusions: Interestingly, the results of this study revealed that the youth in Saudi Arabia have been encouraged to develop their financial skills as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, and also, they have known the importance of being financially literate. There has been an investment in learning more about savings, financial planning, and engaging in positive financial behaviors, such as rationalizing consumption and savings. As a result, this has a significant positive impact on these youths and will benefit them in the time of crises just like COVID-19 pandemic.

Key-terms: Financial literacy, Financial attitudes, Financial behavior, Financial knowledge, Financial inclusion, and Financial exclusion.

Literature review

Financial literacy has a significant impact on the economy through investments and savings. Lusardi (2019) argues that financial literacy assists individuals to be independent and self-sufficient citizens by managing their own finances wisely. Positive financial attitude of individuals

significantly affects financial literacy levels (Kim, Anderson, and Seay, 2019). Financial behavior as a component in financial literacy can improve the responsibility of financial management of an individual (Yong, Yew, and Wee, 2018). While, financial knowledge assists individuals to choose the right financial products, manage budgets, and prepare for the life-time events such as retirement and buying a house home (Moreno-Herrero et al., 2018). According to the study conducted about financial literacy in Saudi Arabia before COVID-19, the financial literacy of the youths is below average comparing with the other 28 countries in the East (Sundarasan et al.,2020). Therefore, there is a strong need to carry out this research.

Objective

The overall objective of this study is to explore the financial literacy levels of the youth in Saudi Arabia and the risks they may face as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. This objective has led to the following research questions and hypotheses.

Research questions/objectives

1. Are the financial knowledge levels of the youth in Saudi Arabia below that of the OECD benchmark?
2. Are the financial behaviour levels of the youth in Saudi Arabia below that of the OECD benchmark?
3. Are the financial attitudes levels of the youth in Saudi Arabia below that of the OECD benchmark?
4. What impact has the Covid-19 pandemic had on the financial literacy levels of the youth in Saudi Arabia and what are the main concerns of this group?

Research Hypotheses

H1 The financial attitudes of Saudi citizens are lower that the OECD benchmark. (survey)

H2 The financial behaviours of Saudi citizens are lower that the OECD benchmark. (survey)

H3 The financial knowledge levels of Saudi citizens are lower that the OECD benchmark. (survey)

H4 The Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in more Saudi citizens being at risk of financial exclusion. (Interview)

Methodology

This study used a mixed-method research design, with a dominant quantitative research approach and a supplementary qualitative research approach. The generation of quantitative data was from surveys (questionnaires), while the generation of qualitative data was from the interviews conducted. In the quantitative analysis, the first section of the analysis involved descriptive statistical analysis to determine the characteristics of the (152) respondents. While the second section was analyzed by following the methodology described in the OECD/INFE Toolkit for measuring financial literacy. All quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS 24 and Microsoft Excel software. In the qualitative analysis, four respondents interviewed through phone calls and zoom platforms. After conducting the interviews, the recorded responses were translated into the English language and then analyzed using a qualitative analysis tool, i.e., content and thematic analysis. The content analysis was done manually using Microsoft word software.

Analysis and findings

The statistical quantitative results showed the financial attitudes of Saudi youth are lower than the OECD benchmark, the financial behavior of Saudi youth is lower than the OECD benchmark, and the financial knowledge of Saudi youth are lower than the OECD benchmark. So, the most of Saudi youth lack the necessary financial knowledge and financial flexibility that help them deal with day-to-day financial management. However, the interviews' analysis showed that the COVID-19 pandemic has a significant positive effect in increasing the interest of Saudi youths toward obtaining financial literacy and improve their attitudes, behaviors, and financial knowledge in a way that contributes to reducing financial exclusion, increasing financial inclusion, and providing economic security.

Conclusions

This study concludes that COVID-19 pandemic has a significant positive impact in increasing the interest of Saudi youths towards obtaining financial literacy. The youths in the Saudi Arabia are encouraged to be financially literate by developing financial skills. There has been an investment in learning more about savings, financial planning, and engaging in positive financial behaviors, such as rationalizing consumption and savings. This study recommends the government together with other key stakeholders to promote financial literacy among the citizens especially the youth by supporting the financial literacy campaign and incorporating financial literacy into the education system at all levels.



References

- Kim K.T., Anderson, S.G. and Seay, M.C., 2019. Financial knowledge and short-term and long-term financial behaviors of millennials in the United States. *Journal of Family and Economic Issues*, 40(2), pp.194-208.
- Lusardi, A., 2019. Financial literacy and the need for financial education: evidence and implications. *Swiss Journal of Economics and Statistics*, 155(1), pp.1-8.
- Moreno-Herrero, D., Salas-Velasco, M. and Sánchez-Campillo, J., 2018. Factors that influence the level of financial literacy among young people: The role of parental engagement and students' experiences with money matters. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 95, pp.334-351.
- Sundarasan, S., Chinna, K., Kamaludin, K., Nurunnabi, M., Baloch, G.M., Khoshaim, H.B., Hossain, S.F.A. and Sukayt, A., 2020. The psychological impact of COVID-19 and lockdown among university students in Malaysia: Implications and policy recommendations. *International journal of environmental research and public health*, 17(17), p.6206.
- Yong, C.C., Yew, S.Y. and Wee, C.K., 2018. Financial knowledge, attitude and behaviour of young working adults in Malaysia. *Institutions and Economies*, 10(4)

Research Digest

The Perceived Impact of Corona Virus (COVID-19) Pandemic on Ecommerce Buying Behaviour For Chinese Products In Riyadh

Latifa Alnuzhah | Dr. Sarah Fraser | 2021

Abstract

The main trend topic worldwide is the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic since it has spread globally, causing numerous issues that have affected economies, societies, and people's lives. Therefore, the study has focused on analysing the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on two variables: the eCommerce market, whereas it aimed to understand the type of effect that COVID-19 caused in the Riyadh eCommerce market, and the second variable is the buying behaviour for Chinese made products, where the analysis aimed to investigate the type of effect that COVID-19 caused in people's buying behaviour for Chinese made products in Riyadh.

Data were collected using a survey as the data collection tool for carrying out the survey questionnaire, and using the five-point Likert scale as the questionnaire scale. A total number of 65 valid responses were obtained and analysed. The data analysis showed that there is a positive impact established on the eCommerce market in Riyadh city due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The positive impact has resulted for different reasons ranging from the payment options available on the websites and online stores that prevent using cash, to the advantage eCommerce has of not contacting people directly, to that the eCommerce was the only option available to purchase at the time when the government issued the decision to close physical malls and stores. As for the buying behaviour for Chinese products, the study has found that the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the buying behaviour for Chinese products in Riyadh has differed from one situation to another and from a period of time to another, as it has been noticed that the participants were afraid to buy and deal with the Chinese products, but their behaviours have been changed after a while of time and at the time when they have adapted with the pandemic situation and have noted how to deal with it.

Keywords: Coronavirus (COVID-19), eCommerce, Chinese products, Buying behaviour.

Literature review

The Coronavirus (COVID-19) disease has spread far beyond Chinese borders to almost all countries worldwide (Rupani et al., 2020; Tahir and Batool 2020). COVID-19 has severe influences on health and business (Rupani et al., 2020), which has resulted in affecting and reaching the global eCommerce industry (Elrhim and Elsayed, 2020).

Furthermore, COVID-19 has impacted people's buying behaviour (Salem and Nor, 2020), where it has changed due to the situation (Alflayyeh and Belhaj, 2020). Moreover, COVID-19 pandemic has significantly affected Chinese products as it has sharply slowed manufacturing which has a result in affecting consumer confidence (Baldwin and Di Mauro, 2020).

Objective

The study focuses on studying the impact of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on e-commerce buying behaviour for Chinese products in Riyadh. More precisely, it studies whether and how the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic impacts e-commerce buying behaviour for Chinese products.

Methodology

The study has adopted the descriptive quantitative research approach as it aimed for gathering appropriate information on the impact established on the e-commerce buying behaviour for Chinese products in Riyadh. Additionally, the data has been collected through a survey questionnaire with closed-ended questions that have used the five-points Likert scale as the rating system of the questions.

A sample size of 65 valid participants were used as a representative of Riyadh citizens and residents from both genders, their ages between 18-34, and who used to purchase and deal with e-commerce as well as the websites that produce or sell Chinese products.

Analysis and Findings

The analysis of the questionnaire responses has found that the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has increased the number of e-commerce purchases behaviour in Riyadh which means there is a positive impact on the e-commerce market due to COVID-19 pandemic, and this finding is somewhat agrees with what has found in the literature review. Furthermore, the analysis found that people were afraid of buying the Chinese products at the beginning of the pandemic, but after they have adapted to the situation and did not differentiate them that other from other countries, and this finding is somewhat disagrees with what has found in the literature review.

Conclusions

The study was built on the concept of that the eCommerce and the buying behaviour for Chinese products, have faced an effect due to Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Thus, the study aimed to investigate the type of effect.

As a result, the findings discovered that there is a positive impact established on eCommerce in Riyadh due to COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, the findings indicated that the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has on the buying behaviour for Chinese products has been differed from one situation to another and from a period of time to another, where the reasons here could be investigated through a future study.



References

- Alflayyeh, S. and Belhaj, F.A., 2020. The Impact Of Coronavirus (Covid-19) Pandemic On Retail Business In Saudi Arabia: A Theoretical Review. *European Journal of Molecular & Clinical Medicine*, 7(1), pp.3547-3554.
- Baldwin, R. and Di Mauro, B.W., 2020. Economics in the Time of COVID-19.
- Elrhim, M.A. and Elsayed, A., 2020. The Effect of COVID-19 Spread on the e-commerce market: The case of the 5 largest e-commerce companies in the world. Available at SSRN 3621166.
- Rupani, P.F., Nilashi, M., Abumalloh, R.A., Asadi, S., Samad, S. and Wang, S., 2020. Coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19) and its natural environmental impacts. *International Journal of Environmental Science and Technology*, pp.1-12.
- Salem, M.A. and Nor, K.M., 2020. The Effect Of COVID-19 On Consumer Behaviour In Saudi Arabia: Switching From Brick And Mortar Stores To E-Commerce. *International Journal of Scientific & Technology Research*, 9(07), pp.15-28.

Research Digest

Exploring The Relationship Between Business Resilience, Self-Efficacy, Burnout And Turnover Intentions Of Saudi Entrepreneurs During Covid-19.

Manal Turki Alturki | Dr. Caroline McGroary | 2021

Abstract

Aim: The aim of this study is to explore the relationship between business resilience, self-efficacy, burnout and turnover intentions of Saudi entrepreneurs during Covid-19.

Background: Entrepreneurial activity is an essential element to economic progression. It creates jobs which contribute to the growth and expansion of the economy. In Saudi Arabia, Vision 2030 has specifically focused on developing the entrepreneurial sector. However, the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic has presented unprecedented challenges for entrepreneurs. Therefore, drawing on the work psychology literature it was considered important to explore the possible psychological impact of COVID-19 on entrepreneurs. This literature outlined that individual personal resources such as resilience and self-efficacy can help individuals have more control over stressful situations and decrease levels of burnout. It was also considered that it could minimize the impact of strain (burnout) which may reduce the turnover intentions of entrepreneurs. Therefore, these variables were explored in this study.

Methods This research adopts a quantitative methodological approach. It used a descriptive correlational design. The data was collected through the use of surveys. The survey incorporated a number of validated scales including: The Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale to measure resilience, the Entrepreneurial self-efficacy scale to measure self-efficacy, the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI-GS) scale to measure burnout and the Turnover intentions scale to measure turnover intentions. In addition, general background information was also collected.

Results The results revealed that more than half of Saudi Entrepreneurs do not report high (above average) levels of resilience, self-efficacy and burnout. The results also revealed that there is a positive relationship between resilience self-efficacy and burnout, which was unexpected. The study also found that work burnout positively influenced turnover intentions. This relationship was expected. The direct relationship between personal resources and turnover intentions were also tested and the results revealed that there was no significant relationship between self-efficacy and turnover intentions but there was a negative relationship between resilience and turnover intentions.



Conclusions Through using the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) theory to frame this research this study has emphasized the importance of personal resources in reducing turnover intentions, as well as the negative role of burnout in the turnover decisions of Saudi entrepreneurs. The study also indicated that while there was a positive relationship found between personal resources (self-efficacy and resilience and burnout), this may indicate that there are other factors which influence this relationship which need to be explored in future studies.

Keywords: Entrepreneurs' personal resources, Entrepreneurs' work burnout, Entrepreneurs' Turnover intentions.

Literature Review

The working environments of entrepreneurs are challenging, high risk, competitive and constantly evolving (Kariv, 2008). As a result, entrepreneurs often experience high stress, emotional exhaustion and fear (Wei, Cang, and Hisrich, 2015). Consequently, individual personal resources including resilience, self-efficacy and optimism can help entrepreneurs control stressful situations. It can also help in reducing the undesirable impact of job demands on strain and improve desirable impacts such as increased performance (Bakker, and Demerouti, 2017). Personal resources therefore play an important role in the motivational process leading to engagement and positive outcomes, however, they are also considered to reduce the undesirable effects of job demands on stress and enhances the desirable effects (Bakker, and Demerouti, 2017). The theoretical framework used to frame this research is the Job Demands – Resources (JD-R) theory which will help explain the effects of personal resources on burnout and turnover intentions. Consequently, this theory helps guide the links between the variables and provides the justification for the hypotheses tested.

Objective

This study seeks to explore the relationship between business resilience, self-efficacy, burnout and turnover intentions of Saudi entrepreneurs during Covid-19. In doing so, this study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. Do Saudi entrepreneurs' have high (above average) levels of resilience and self-efficacy?
2. Do higher resilience levels lead to lower work burnout amongst Saudi entrepreneurs?
3. Do higher self-efficacy levels lead to lower work burnout amongst Saudi entrepreneurs?
4. Does higher work burnout influence the turnover intentions of Saudi entrepreneurs?
5. Does work burnout mediate the relationship between personal resources (self-efficacy and resilience) and turnover intentions?

Based on these five research questions, the following research hypotheses were developed:

H1 Personal Resources of Saudi Entrepreneurs

H1a Saudi entrepreneurs have high (above average) resilience levels.

H1b Saudi entrepreneurs have high (above average) self-efficacy levels.

H2 Personal Resources and Work Burnout

H2a Saudi entrepreneurs with higher resilience levels experience lower work burnout.

H2b Saudi entrepreneurs with higher self-efficacy levels experience lower work burnout.

H3 Work Burnout and Turnover Intentions

H3a Work burnout has a positive impact on turnover intentions of Saudi entrepreneurs.

H4 Mediating Role of Work Burnout

H4a Work burnout mediates the relationship between resilience and turnover intentions of Saudi entrepreneurs.

H4b Work burnout mediates the relationship between self-efficacy and turnover intentions of Saudi entrepreneurs.

Methodology

This research adopts a quantitative methodology. It used a descriptive correlational design. The data was collected through the use of surveys. The survey incorporated a number of validated scales including: The Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale to measure resilience, the Entrepreneurial self-efficacy scale to measure self-efficacy, the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI-GS) scale to measure burnout and the Turnover Intentions scale to measure turnover intentions. In addition, general background information was also collected. The participants were Saudi entrepreneurs and the total sample size of useable responses was 212 participants. To ensure the participants information remained confidential, a plain language statement was added to the survey to inform participants that their information will not only be used for the purposes of this research and that all data collected will remain confidential. Moreover, the data was analyzed by through presenting the demographics of the participants, descriptive statistics, histograms, correlations and regressions. The research hypotheses tested are summarized below:



Analysis and Findings

The results indicate that more than half of Saudi Entrepreneurs do not report high (above average) levels of resilience, self-efficacy and burnout. Moreover, the results indicated that the higher the personal resources (resilience and self-efficacy) levels of Saudi entrepreneurs the more they feel burned-out. This could indicate that as a result of high confidence and resilience employees take on extra workload and while these personal resources are useful up to a certain point, when the workload is too much, their positive impact is weakened. As these findings are in contrast to the majority of literature in the field it may be useful in future studies to look at variables such as recovery time, job control or work overload. In addition, a key goal of this study was to determine if work burnout mediates the relationship between personal resources (resilience and self-efficacy) and turnover intentions. The results also outline that both resilience and work burnout influence the entrepreneurs' turnover intentions. This indicates that an increase in burnout will increase turnover intentions and the increase in resilience will decrease turnover intentions. While self-efficacy did not have a significant relationship with turnover intention the findings regarding the impact of burnout and resilience are important not only in the literature but also have practical value.

These results are also in line with the literature stating that work burnout mediates the relationship between personal resources (resilience) and turnover intentions.

Conclusions

The research findings indicate that personal resources (resilience) have an important role in reducing the turnover intentions of Saudi entrepreneurs. The study also highlighted the negative role of burnout in the turnover decisions of Saudi entrepreneurs. Furthermore, the study found that there is positive relationship between personal resources (self-efficacy and resilience) and work burnout, which was unexpected. Therefore, while some possible reasons for this are outlined above further research is needed to explore possible factors that may influence the above. Moreover, further studies could explore ways in which personal resources, such as resilience, could be enhanced which based on the results of this study would lead to a reduction in turnover intentions. Over the long term this will have important implications for the Saudi economy giving that entrepreneurs are considered an important factor in the achievement of Vision 2030. Future research would also be qualitative in nature to help better understand why some hypotheses were not supported and why some results were not in line with other studies.



References

- Bakker, A. B., Demerouti, E., De Boer, E., & Schaufeli, W. B. (2003). Job demands and job resources as predictors of absence duration and frequency. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 62, 341–356. [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0001-8791\(02\)00030-1](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0001-8791(02)00030-1)
- Bakker, A.B., Van Veldhoven, M. and Xanthopoulou, D., 2010. Beyond the demand-control model. *Journal of Personnel Psychology*.
- Bandura, A., 1982. Self-efficacy mechanism in human agency. *American psychologist*, 37(2), p.122.
- Demerouti, E., Bakker, A.B., Nachreiner, F. and Schaufeli, W.B., 2001. The job demands-resources model of burnout. *Journal of Applied psychology*, 86(3), p.499.
- Kariv, D., 2008. The relationship between stress and business performance among men and women entrepreneurs. *Journal of Small Business & Entrepreneurship*, 21(4), pp.449-476.
- Lee, R.T. and Ashforth, B.E., 1990. On the meaning of Maslach's three dimensions of burnout. *Journal of applied psychology*, 75(6), p.743.
- Leiter, M.P. and Maslach, C., 2009. Nurse turnover: the mediating role of burnout. *Journal of nursing management*, 17(3), pp.331-339.
- Litt, M.D., 1988. Cognitive mediators of stressful experience: Self-efficacy and perceived control. *Cognitive therapy and research*, 12(3), pp.241-260.

Research digest

The Association Between The Social Media Influencers And Consumer Behaviours Among Young Saudi Arabia Adults

Maram Alqasem | Dr. Sarah Fraser | 2021

Abstract

This study aims to understand and study The Association between Social Media Influencers and Consumer Behaviours among Young Saudi Arabia Adults. The study used interviews to collect the required information. It targeted the Riyadh region in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia of both sexes by testing a random sample that was interviewed through the application of Zoom in compliance with the prevention measures issued by the Ministry of Health and international organizations. The results of the interviews were analysed, the results indicated that the study data indicated that the respondents are heavily exposed to social media such as Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube, among others, showed the extent of Saudi young adults to follow influencer advertisements through social media. This confirms the intensity of their exposure to influencer advertisements through social media. It also confirms that the influencer's credibility plays a vital role in the respondents' motivation to be exposed to the advertisements of social media influencers. The study also confirms that the characteristics of celebrities (credibility, liking, and attractiveness) have a significant impact in generating positive consumer attitudes towards advertisements, which would enhance consumers' buying intentions, revealed the respondents' opinion of the methods used by social media influencers in marketing goods and services.

Keywords: Social media influencers. Influencers, Social media , Credibility, Advertisements, Consumer Behaviours.

Literature Review

In the first section of the literature review, the study focuses on youth at the center of this study. Through the various subsections, pulls out the characteristics and aspects that are relevant to the study and have a bearing on it, such as the youth bulge, outlook of today's youth, socio-economic challenges they face, the culture they live in daily and their social values and lastly, their use of technology.

The second section looks at social media and influencers. It starts with the relevant definitions of social media and their participatory culture. It also presents a brief overview of social media in Saudi Arabia in light of its existence side by side next to traditional media. Then it gives an overview of the highest used platforms by youth in Saudi Arabia, including Facebook, YouTube, and to a lesser extent, Instagram (Alexa, 2014).

The third section looks at consumer behavior. The section discusses the phases in the development of consumer behavior, followed by the approaches or perspectives available for researchers who study consumer behavior. A review of consumer behavior definitions is presented, and a new definition is proposed for the purposes of this study.

Objective

- The research aim of this thesis is to explore the use and impact of social media on consumer behavior with particular focus on Saudi Arabic youth. To achieve this aim, this study focuses on active users' interactions with social media and consumer behavior. Following the identification of the research aim, the following objectives of this study have been formulated:
- To analyze the effect of social media influencers on consumers' behavior.
- To discuss the relationship between the social media influencers and consumers and purchase intention.
- To explain the consumer view social media influencers as positive or negative to their customer experience.

Methodology

In this section, the methodology was used, where the interview tool was used as a means to collect data from the sample. The study also targeted the Riyadh region in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia by conducting interviews through the application of zoom, as a means of collecting data as well as adherence to the preventive measures issued by the Saudi Ministry of Health and international organizations in relation to Social distancing due to the spread of Covid 19, and the interviews were conducted to achieve the results intended for the study.

Analysis and Findings

- The study data indicated that the respondents are heavily exposed to social media such as Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube, among others. Showed the extent of Saudi university youth's keenness to follow influencer advertisements through social media, and this confirms the intensity of their exposure to influencer ads through social media.
- The study confirms that the credibility of the influencer plays a very important role in the respondents' motivation to be exposed to the advertisements of social media influencers.
- The study confirms that the characteristics of celebrities (credibility, liking, and attractiveness) have a great impact in generating positive consumer attitudes towards advertisements, which would enhance consumers' buying intentions.



Conclusions

Saudi youth consumers use many social media sites, which showed them eagerness to follow the advertisements produced by social media celebrities, which means that they are affected a lot, especially if the celebrities have good characteristics such as credibility, admiration and attractiveness. By controlling their decisions in the purchase of products, as the study indicates that many young people interact with video clips and influencers' posts on social networking sites, so that the liking can be first, then "sending the link to friends", then "saving", then "sharing." And finally This means that the popular pattern is still popular, as the study confirmed an increase in interest in purchases after seeing the specifications of the product or service that are offered by celebrities or influencers.

Research Digest

The Perceived Importance of Leadership Role on Saudi Female Entrepreneurs.

Maryam Aldawsary | Dr Sarah Fraser | 2021

Abstract

Good leadership requires attitudes and behaviors that have characteristics that are related to skills that develop people (Kattan, 2015). Female entrepreneurs in Saudi Arabia are a highly attractive subject that raises many interests, a role of a Saudi businesswoman can increase economic development. Plus, female entrepreneurs in Saudi Arabia share several challenges such as the conservative culture, stemming from the Saudi government and several complications to be a female in a male driven society. Female entrepreneurs face major obstacles that might delay or prevent the ability to successfully run their business in terms of basic access such as going to court or using the property. Opportunities in knowledge and experience in different fields of management are increasing nowadays. Also, in the Vision of 2030 it encourages entrepreneurship and the women involvement in the workforce and their share of Saudi economy supporting young women in Saudi Arabia (Welsh, Memili, Kaciak, and Al Sadoon, 2014). A necessity to develop leadership and management to develop a generation of leaders. Women in Saudi play an important role in changing minds in their culture to showcase female leaders and lead to success in changing old thoughts and patterns. Women leaders impose their respect on all and confirm the importance of women in contributing to men in the development process in the country (Kattan, 2015).

The literature does not deny that the female is a huge part of the society and can affect the economy (Al-Abdallah, 2019). Moreover, literature highlights the characteristics and traits of the entrepreneur, in having ambition, drive, project management, independence, confidence, knowledge, and passion (Antunes, de Abreu, and Rodrigues, 2020). For the methodology using the thematic analysis for a qualitative methodology to five representative models of Saudi female entrepreneurs to give an understanding of their point of view in their concept of leadership and management, what were their obstacles and how did they improve; to understand that concept from experience. understand the struggles and opportunities of being an entrepreneur, leader, and manager at once all together. Resulting in leadership is intertwined with entrepreneurship in traits and characteristics. Nevertheless, passion can be anticipated to be the most common aspect within all participants. Passion being a strong indicator to the entrepreneurs' motive and pursue goals when facing difficulties (Chen, Yao, and Kotha, 2009). The entrepreneurial leader is both an entrepreneur and a person with leadership qualities, prone to risk-taking, innovative, and capable of directing individuals. Since entrepreneurial leaders are individuals who can see and evaluate



opportunities and direct employees to obtain these opportunities, they assume an important role both in terms of business profitability and country development (PİR, 2019).

Keywords

Leadership, Management, Female entrepreneur.

Literature review

Plenty of research has been done on the Saudi female entrepreneur. Likewise, the work of Aliah Alsadoon, Eugene Kaciak, Esra memili, and Dianne H.B. Welsh on Saudi women entrepreneurs: a growing economic segment (Welsh, Memili, Kaciak, and Al Sadoon, 2014). Also, the work of Tawfik, Alkhateeb, Abdalla, Abdalla, Abdo, Elsayed, Mohammed, Ibrahim, Shihata, and Mawad, in their 2020 study of The Economic Empowerment of Saudi Women in the Light of Saudi Vision 2030 highlighting the role of women to the economy and how it is a huge part in the Vision 2030 to have women in leadership roles creating economic growth 2030 (Al-Abdallah, 2019). Moreover, a study by Akram, Murugiah and Afran mentioned the differences between the goals of masculine and the feminine. The values to a masculine would be assertiveness, competition, and success. On the other hand, the feminine values are linked to nurturance and solidarity (Akram, Murugiah, and Arfan, 2017). In addition, it differs among societies in terms of what is viewed as an appropriate behavior for each gender (Akram, Murugiah, and Arfan, 2017). Another study mention that the female entrepreneur in the middle eastern region must go through a factor of a push and pull. The push factor is the encouragement to start the business. The pull factor is the positive aspect that comes with owning ones' business (Al-Kwif, Tien Khoa, Ongsakul, and Ahmed, 2020). It is typical for a female to have the resource, support, and talent that leads to set up a certain type of business (Al-Kwif, Tien Khoa, Ongsakul, and Ahmed, 2020). Plus, motivation for the female entrepreneur is an important attribute. Also, female entrepreneurs believed the growth of their entrepreneurship is because they are seeking to work independently. In addition, to improving their status and pursue profit. Similarly, a reason to become an entrepreneur is to have more personal control over their lives and freedom in their endeavors (Al-Kwif, Tien Khoa, Ongsakul, and Ahmed, 2020). However, an entrepreneur is someone passionate and starve to develop their own business. A factor in understanding female management as managerial behavior of women entrepreneurs influenced through, culture, social and historical context. A startup is conducted through the influence of family and values creating entrepreneurial management (Antunes, de Abreu, and Rodrigues, 2020).

Objects

To assess the training needs of existing and potential women entrepreneurs. In addition, following interviews with five women with different enterprises. Showing women entrepreneurs can be studied for their innate characteristics and drive (Roomi, and Harrison, 2010). Assessing the

leadership qualities and motivations of the female entrepreneur in Saudi Arabia. To discover the process of a female entrepreneur in leadership.

Methodology

Research analysis can be easily influenced by the qualitative method, as there is the probability to become more subjective (Greener, 2008). Outlining thematic analysis to the qualitative analytic methods that search patterns or themes (Braun, and Clarke, 2006). The qualitative approach is an interpretive method, the research will transcribe the verbal data, the data will be collected then transcribed, and later on, the data was analyzed to clarify the concept to categories and themes to a particular phenomenon (Greener, 2008).

Analysis and findings

Writing the analysis through intertwined qualitative research through informal notes to a formal process of analysis and report writing. The purpose is to provide a compelling, convincing, clear, and complex story about the data based on the analysis embedded in a scholarly field (Braun, and Clarke, 2012). Thematic analysis is a flexible method that allows the researcher to focus on the data in multiple different ways. It focuses on the analyzed meaning through the entire data set, or it can be examining a particular aspect of a phenomenon in depth. It can state the obvious or semantic meanings in the data. It can be interrogated in the latent meaning as the assumptions and ideas can lie in what is clearly stated.

Having a pattern of meaning allows identifying what needs to be important concerning the particular topic and research question to be explored. Many patterns can be identified across any data set. The reason for the analysis is to identify those relevant to answer a particular research question (Braun, and Clarke, 2012). Covering the main theme in being a female entrepreneur. In which they all agree on having a drive and passion for their enterprise, which has a subtheme of ambition as it is without ambition there will not be the desire and passion. Also, they have been proving and improving their skills in project management in having risk management, emotional control, conflict resolution, and time management. Moreover, because of their high awareness of project management, they know every aspect of their enterprise verifying that knowledge is power. In which they have found their independence as it was proves through the literature review that the entrepreneurial leader has both qualities of entrepreneurship and leadership as mentioned by Al-Kwafi, Tien Khoa, Ongsakul, and Ahmed. Also, by Al-Kwafi, Tien Khoa, Ongsakul, and Ahmed mentioned that the female entrepreneurs require freedom and independent, creating their goal having communicative skills, risk takers, improve status, and peruse profit (Al-Kwafi, Tien Khoa, Ongsakul, and Ahmed, 2020) In addition, Vietor, Richard, and Sheldahl-Thomason mentioned to ensure entrepreneurial opportunities, independent, and becoming an effective member of the society that attracts economic growth (Vietor, Richard, and Sheldahl-Thomason, 2018).



Conclusion

All participants appear to be leaders; proving the theory of entrepreneurial leadership in setting a clear goal, innovative, visionary, taking risks, create opportunities, problem solving, decision making and empowering others (Leitch, and Volery, 2017). Participants vary from education, enterprise, experience, and personality. With having the differences in the perused motive, they all have ambition in common and self-confidence with extreme passion (Kirkpatrick, and Locke,1991). Also, having great communication skills help lead the enterprise (NAUSHAD, 2021). At this point, the concept of entrepreneurial leadership is mentioned in entrepreneurship studies, especially associated with leadership, contribute to traditional leadership approaches. Because it is understood that there is a certain level of interaction between leadership and entrepreneurship in ensuring competitiveness. In addition, to leadership qualities, having an entrepreneurial spirit shows that the leader can also be entrepreneurial. Entrepreneurial leadership has characteristics such as influencing others, vision, originality, and courage, entrepreneurship features such as taking risks, capturing opportunities, following innovations, being innovative, productive, and connected (PIR, 2019). The entrepreneurial leader has the potential to combine leadership with entrepreneurial skills (PIR, 2019).



References

- Al-Abdallah, G.M., 2019. A Systematic Review of Women Entrepreneurs Opportunities and Challenges in Saudi Arabia. *Journal of Entrepreneurship Education*, 22(6).
- Al-Kwafi, O.S., Tien Khoa, T., Ongsakul, V. and Ahmed, Z.U., 2020. Determinants of female entrepreneurship success across Saudi Arabia. *Journal of Transnational management*, 25(1), pp.3-29.
- Akram, F., Murugiah, L. and Arfan, A., 2017. Cultural Aspects and Leadership Effectiveness of Women Leaders: A Theoretical Prospective of Saudi Arabia. *Pakistan Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 5(1).
- Antunes, L., de Abreu, A. and Rodrigues, M., 2020. [online] Available at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/343463194_True_heroines_unveiling_the_fm_le_management_of_startups%27_entrepreneurs> [Accessed 31 January 2021].
- Braun, V. and Clarke, V., 2006. Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative research in psychology*, 3(2), pp.77-101.
- Braun, V. and Clarke, V., 2012. Thematic analysis.
- Chen, X.P., Yao, X. and Kotha, S., 2009. Entrepreneur passion and preparedness in business plan presentations: a persuasion analysis of venture capitalists' funding decisions. *Academy of Management journal*, 52(1), pp.199-214.
- Greener, S., 2008. *Business Research Methods*.
- Kattan, M., 2015. Factors of successful women leadership in Saudi Arabia.
- Kirkpatrick, S.A. and Locke, E.A., 1991. Leadership: do traits matter?. *Academy of management perspectives*, 5(2), pp.48-60.
- Leitch, C.M. and Volery, T., 2017. Entrepreneurial leadership: Insights and directions. *International Small Business Journal*, 35(2), pp.147-156.
- NAUSHAD, M., 2021. Investigating Determinants of Entrepreneurial Leadership Among SMEs and Their Role in Sustainable Economic Development of Saudi Arabia. *The Journal of Asian Finance, Economics and Business*, 8(4), pp.225-237.
- Roomi, M.A. and Harrison, P., 2010. Behind the veil: women-only entrepreneurship training in Pakistan. *International Journal of Gender and Entrepreneurship*.
- Tawfik, T., Alkhateeb, Y., Abdalla, M., Abdalla, Z., Abdo, S., Elsayed, M., Mohammed, E., Ibrahim, M., Shihata, G. and Mawad, E., 2020. The Economic Empowerment of Saudi Women in the Light of Saudi Vision 2030. *Asian Economic and Financial Review*, 10(11), pp.1269-1279.
- Welsh, D.H., Memili, E., Kaciak, E. and Al Sadoon, A., 2014. Saudi women entrepreneurs: A growing economic segment. *Journal of Business Research*, 67(5), pp.758-762.

Research Digest

Investigating The Relationship Between Employees' Perception Of TQM Effectiveness And Their Level Of Change Readiness: A Select Sample Of Healthcare Institutions In Saudi Arabia

Nada Abdulaziz Al-Hassoon | Dr. Rajáa Clouse | 2021

Abstract

Employees' readiness for change often promotes the successful implementation of Total Quality Management (TQM) in healthcare institutions. This study aims to contribute by investigating the relationship between the perception of employees in healthcare institutions towards implementing TQM and their readiness level towards its implementation. By sampling a select set of healthcare institutions in Riyadh city, the capital of Saudi Arabia, to investigate the role self-reported change readiness plays in the perception of TQM effectiveness, we aim to add insight to the literature on the nature of this relationship or lack of in Saudi Arabia. A quantitative approach was employed in this research using reliable and valid instruments compiled from the literature. A web-based survey was designed as a data collection method. The study found a statistically significant correlation between the self-reported readiness level to implementing TQM and the perception of employees of TQM effectiveness. In contrast, the study revealed that, on average, the sample had a variation in its reporting on the perception of the effectiveness of TQM and also in its reporting on the level of readiness to implement TQM. This reveals the healthcare organizations sampled need to pave the way for a change readiness framework so that the organization raises its reported readiness level. Similarly, an initiative targeting TQM effectiveness helps bring together different stakeholders to an acceptable awareness level. In addition, there is a statistical difference in perceptions of the effectiveness of the various stakeholders that play into TQM implementation, such as the top management and leadership, employees, and patients. The literature resources investigated in this research study and the findings reached from the collected responses agree that the implementation of TQM often has significant benefits for any healthcare institution.

Keywords: Total Quality Management, TQM, Change Readiness, Individual Change Readiness, Individual Readiness for Change, Perception, Employees, Healthcare Institutions, Saudi Arabia, Riyadh, Statistical Process Control.

Literature Review

According to Alolayyan *et al.* (2011) TQM has special applicability in the healthcare sector, as it improves patient satisfaction, reduces costs and medical errors, and also maximizes the overall

quality of service. However, Alofi and Younes (2019) argued that there is a lack of appreciation, a lack of awareness, and a lack of understanding of TQM in healthcare institutions in Saudi Arabia.

According to Haffar *et al.* (2016), if change readiness is prevalent in the organizational culture, TQM practices can be appropriately applied. The synthesis of the literature reveals a gap in studying the relationship between readiness level and TQM effectiveness in healthcare institutions in Saudi Arabia.

Objective

Motivated by the gap noticed in the literature, this research study is designed to achieve the following objectives:

- To measure the strength of the relationship between TQM effectiveness and change readiness.
- To assess employees' perception of TQM effectiveness.
- To measure the level of agreement of employees' change readiness towards TQM implementation.
- To identify the differences of the perception across the measured focus areas that play into TQM implementation.

Methodology

A quantitative methodology approach was adopted. A web-based survey was developed as a data collection method using the Qualtrics online survey to answer the research questions and to investigate the relationship between the two constructs. The survey was compiled by aggregating items that measure the desired constructs from previous studies. This rendered our survey reliable and valid even when used in the context of Saudi Arabia. A total of 165 employees from three public hospitals participated in the study. The Cronbach's alpha measurements were acceptable and added certainty into the consistency of responses to the survey items. Microsoft Excel was used in the analysis process to reach the resolution to the research questions.

Analysis and Findings

Our data analysis revealed a statistically significant positive correlation between the self-reported readiness level to implementing TQM and the perception of employees of TQM effectiveness. We further investigated any role of impact and found that change readiness impacted the perception of TQM effectiveness. The latter two findings resolve the main research question and confirm the objective of our study. Our exploratory analysis indicated that, on average, our sample had a variation in its reporting of the perception of TQM effectiveness and the readiness level for TQM implementation. The responses could not be bound to an agreement level based on the Likert scale used. The study also revealed a statistically significant difference in the perceptions across



multiple aspects of TQM effectiveness such as those addressing the top management and leadership and those addressing the employee and patient.

Conclusions and Recommendations

As the top management and leadership of healthcare management institutions in Saudi Arabia aim to achieve an effective level of TQM implementation in their healthcare institutions, the study recommends to firstly assess the perceptions of their employees towards TQM effectiveness, create a culture of readiness, and set a clear vision before implementing TQM initiatives. Assessing the readiness level to adopt TQM, pushes the TQM process forward (Weeks, Helms, and Etkin, 1995). According to Haffar *et al.* (2016), if change readiness prevails in the organizational culture, TQM can be fully implemented. A simple vision often guides individuals through a major change, which in turn reduces the error rate (Stadtländer, 2006). When assessing the resources, financial or otherwise, required to initiate and implement TQM, we advise organizations to first invest in a change readiness framework that will pave the way for effective implantation of TQM.



References:

- Alofi, K. and Younes, A. (2019) 'Total Quality Management (TQM) Implementation in the Manufacturing Sector in Saudi Arabia: A Systematic Review', *Business and Management Research*, 8(1), pp. 41-54. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Ahmed_Younes10/publication/340284741_Total_Quality_Management_TQM_Implementation_in_the_Manufacturing_Sector_in_Saudi_Arabia_A_Systematic_Review/links/5e93887a4585150839d95afb/Total-Quality-Management-TQM-Implementation-in-the-Manufacturing-Sector-in-Saudi-Arabia-A-Systematic-Review.pdf (Accessed: 15 January 2021).
- Alolayyan, M. *et al.* (2011) 'Advance mathematical model to study and analyse the effects of total quality management (TQM) and operational flexibility on hospital performance', *Total Quality Management & Business Excellence*, 22(12), pp.1371-1393. Doi: 10.1080/14783363.2011.625183 .
- Haffar, M. *et al.* (2016) 'The influence of individual readiness for change dimensions on quality management implementation in Algerian manufacturing organisations', *International Journal of Production Economics*, 207, pp. 247-260. Doi: 10.1016/j.ijpe.2016.08.024 .
- Stadtländer, C. (2006) 'Strategically Balanced Change: A Key Factor in Modern Management', *EJBO - Electronic Journal of Business Ethics and Organization Studies*, 1(1), pp. 17-25. Available at: https://jyx.jyu.fi/bitstream/handle/123456789/25373/1/ejbo_vol11_no1_pages_17-25.pdf (Accessed: 22 January 2021).
- Weeks, B., Helms, M. and Etkin, L. (1995) 'Is your organization ready for TQM? An assessment methodology', *The TQM Magazine*, 7(5), pp. 43-49. Doi:10.1108/09544789510098632 .

Research Digest

Exploring The Relationship Between Transformational Leadership, Personal Resilience And Employee Engagement: Insights From Saudi Arabia

Nora Aloraini | Dr. Caroline McGroary | 2021

Abstract

Objective: The main purpose of this research was to explore the resilience of employees in Saudi consulting firms and to determine whether this predicts work engagement. In addition, this study seeks to explore whether the leadership styles of key managers (transformational leaders) contributes towards greater resilience and employee engagement in times of uncertainty within consulting firms in Saudi Arabia. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, employees and businesses globally have faced challenges and thus the concepts of resilience, good leadership and employee engagement have got a lot of attention. While these concepts and the relationships between them have been explored in the literature, there is very little research related to the period of Covid-19, as well as there being limited research in Saudi Arabia. Therefore, this research seeks to address this gap.

Methodology: This study adopted a mixed methodology; with a dominant quantitative focus and a supplementary qualitative approach. It used a descriptive correlational design. Quantitative data was collected through surveys and was designed to include: demographic information, employment engagement using the 9-item Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES-9), the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC10) was used to measure resilience and transformational leadership was measured using the Authentic leadership Questionnaire (ALQ Version 1.0 Rater). This data was analysed using SPSS with a total sample size of 103. The qualitative data was collected using semi structured interviews.

Findings: The results revealed that during Covid-19, the levels of resilience and engagement were above the average. The results of regression analysis outlined that resilience had a positive impact on engagement. Transformational leadership also had a positive impact on personal resilience and on engagement at work. Finally, resilience mediated the relationship between leadership style and engagement.

Conclusions: The results of this study confirmed that there is a significant positive relationship between transformational leadership, personal resilience and engagement in consulting firms in Saudi Arabia. In addition, the results outline that leaders in Saudi Arabia have a key role to play in increasing resilience and engagement.

Keywords: Engagement at work, personal resilience, transformational leadership consulting firms and times of uncertainty.

Literature review

There is a large body of research in the psychology field which highlights the important relationship between resources, engagement and positive outcomes such as increased performance (e.g. Bakker and Schaufeli, 2017). Much of this research is framed using the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) theory which outline the positive role of resources (personal and job) in the motivational process leading to well-being and engagement (Bakker and Schaufeli, 2017). Studies in the psychology field have also found that personal resources and psychological capital including variables (e.g. resilience) may help in reducing stress and work burnout as well as increasing work engagement (Bakker and Schaufeli, 2017; Herbert, 2011). Research has shown that psychological capital (PsyCap) can be developed for people within organizations indicating that if we determine ways to increase these personal resources it will present a positive impact on the organization and the individuals working there (Herbert, 2011). This is particularly important especially in times of change when employee resilience and engagement plays a critical role in supporting the organization (de Sousa & Dierendonck 2014; Shin, Taylor, Seo, 2012). Furthermore, it has been highlighted that people who work in consulting firms are dealing with very heavy workloads and are working long hours which seems to be a common culture in these companies (Sweeney & Summers, 2002). Together, this literature has made a strong case demonstrating the usefulness of conducting this research in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Objective

The objective of this study is to explore the resilience of employees in Saudi organisations and to determine whether this predicts work engagement. In addition, this study seeks to explore whether the leadership styles of key managers contribute towards greater resilience and employee engagement in times of uncertainty. This led to the following research questions and hypotheses.

Research questions

1. During Covid-19 were the resilience and engagement levels of Saudi employees above average?
2. Does resilience have a positive impact on employee engagement?
3. Do certain leadership styles (e.g. transformational leaders) positively influence resilience?
4. Does resilience mediate the relationship between leadership style and employee engagement?
5. What is the impact of transformational leaders in employee engagement?

Hypothesis - Supported/Unsupported

1. During Covid-19 the levels of Saudi employees resilience and engagement were above average.
2. Resilience has a positive influence on employees engagement
3. Transformational leaders have a positive influence on employee resilience
4. Resilience mediates the relationship between leadership style and employee engagement

Methodology

This research adopted a mixed methodology, which integrates the use of quantitative and qualitative research strategies, with the quantitative phase being the dominant approach. This research followed the ethical considerations as per the DCU guidelines. The participants in this research were randomly targeted as it was sent to different professionals who are working in multiple consulting organizations in Saudi Arabia. Quantitative data was collected through surveys and was designed to include: demographic information, employment engagement using the 9-item Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES-9), the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC10) was used to measure resilience and transformational leadership was measured using the Authentic leadership Questionnaire (ALQ Version 1.0 Rater). This data was analysed using SPSS with a total sample size of 103. The qualitative data was collected using semi structured interviews and was used to develop additional insights into the study.

Analysis and findings

The results revealed that during Covid-19, the levels of resilience and engagement were above the average. The results of regression analysis outlined that resilience had a positive impact on engagement. Transformational leadership also had a positive impact on personal resilience and on engagement at work. Finally, resilience mediated the relationship between leadership style and engagement. These results are largely in line with the academic literature however provide a contribution to this literature as the study was carried out during Covid-19 and in Saudi Arabia.

Conclusions

Research findings confirm that there is a significant positive relationship between transformational leaders, personal resilience and employee engagement at work in consulting firms in Saudi Arabia. This research not only adds to the empirical literature in the field, but it also brings a new point of view from Saudi Arabia, there are also practical implications of this study which will be useful to consulting firms due to huge demand on this sector in order to achieve the goals of Saudi Vision 2030. Nevertheless, further research is needed to explore how to improve personal resilience in consulting firms within the Saudi Arabian context.



References

- Bakker, A.B. and Demerouti, E., 2017. Job demands–resources theory: taking stock and looking forward. *Journal of occupational health psychology*, 22(3), p.273.
- Breevaart, K., Bakker, A., Hetland, J., Demerouti, E., Olsen, O.K. and Espevik, R., 2014. Daily transactional and transformational leadership and daily employee engagement. *Journal of occupational and organizational psychology*, 87(1), pp.138-157.
- de Sousa, M.J.C. and Van Dierendonck, D., 2014. Servant leadership and engagement in a merge process under high uncertainty. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*.
- Herbert, M., 2011. An exploration of the relationships between psychological capital (hope, optimism, self-efficacy, resilience), occupational stress, burnout and employee engagement (Doctoral dissertation, Stellenbosch: Stellenbosch University).
- Mäkikangas, A., Bakker, A.B. and Schaufeli, W.B., 2017. Antecedents of daily team job crafting. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 26(3), pp.421-433.
- Shin, J., Taylor, M.S. and Seo, M.G., 2012. Resources for change: The relationships of organizational inducements and psychological resilience to employees' attitudes and behaviors toward organizational change. *Academy of Management journal*, 55(3), pp.727-748.
- Sweeney, J.T. and Summers, S.L., 2002. The effect of the busy season workload on public accountants' job burnout. *Behavioral Research in Accounting*, 14(1), pp.223-245.

Research Digest

The National Transformation Plan and Women Labor Force Participation: An Exploration of The Perceived Positive Role of The National Transformation Plan On The Opportunities For Women Entrepreneurs In Saudi Arabia.

Nouf Aljarallah | Dr Caroline McGroary | 2021

Abstract

Aim: The aim of this research is to investigate the perceived positive role of the National Transformation Plan (NTP) on the opportunities for women entrepreneurs in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA).

Background: KSA has a population of about 13.5 million women and more than 9.1 million of the population are considered to be of working-age. However, since 2015 only 20.2 percent of the total working population of women are participating in the workforce which is much lower than the employment rates for males which stands at 77.8. Additionally, the number of women graduating university in Saudi Arabia is more than 50 percent but those who are choosing careers as entrepreneurs is still considered to be significantly low. The country has also frequently been ranked by the World Bank survey as one of the top countries in terms of the ease of doing business in position 13 in the world, but the under participation of females in the economic development process is still worrying (Al-Kwifit et al., 2020).

Objectives: The objective of this study is to establish the reasons, challenges, and barriers to female participation in the labor force, to identify the specific market characteristics that limit the participation of female entrepreneurs in KSA, to identify the underlying factors that encourage female participation in the labor force and the growth of female entrepreneurship. This study also seeks to illustrate the role of the national transformation plan in encouraging women entrepreneurship.

Methods: This study adopted a qualitative methodology. For data collection, semi-structured individual interviews are utilized. Furthermore, a deductive approach is used with a probability sampling technique. The phenomenological research philosophy is used where it is the theoretical basis of the qualitative study.

Results: The results showed that the NTP as part of Saudi Vision 2030 raised women participation in the labor market and has increased opportunities for female entrepreneurs which has led to economic development. The study also revealed the efforts being made by the government in order to bridge the obstacles that challenges the NTP initiative regarding women participation in the



workforce, through training, policy amendments, and media campaigns. Also, in general, the results showed that religious and cultural factors are the main determinants of the existence of gender inequality in the Saudi labor force.

Conclusions: It is confirmed that there is a perceived significant role of the National Transformation Plan (NTP) in promoting opportunities for female entrepreneurs in KSA. Also, as a result of Vision 2030 women will have more opportunities to occupy leadership positions in the future in Saudi Arabia. The participation of females in the Kingdom's economy could help in achieving sustainable economic development by decreasing unemployment rate and increasing the power of the labor force; achieving social justice and societal welfare.

Literature review

The National Transformational Program is part of Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 that aims national development and economic growth through enhancing the standards of living for citizens in Saudi Arabia, improving economic enablers, and achieving governmental operational excellence (Moshashai et al, 2020). It was considered important to explore its impact on women entrepreneurs for a number of reasons. Firstly, women hold an increasingly important role in Saudi society however still have low labour participation rates. This may be due to many reasons, cultural stereotypes, limited opportunities and other factors (Mehtap et al., 2017). This study seeks to explore some of these factors to provide better insights into the role of the NTP is addressing any issues or barriers that might exist for women as they seek to take on more roles as entrepreneurs in Saudi Arabia.

Objective

The main aim of the study is to investigate whether the national transformation plan (NTP) has resulted in better opportunities for women entrepreneurs in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

The objectives of the study shall therefore be;

- To establish the reasons, challenges, and barriers to female participation in the labor force
- To identify the specific market characteristics that limit the participation of women as female entrepreneurs in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
- To identify the underlying factors that encourage female participation in the labor force and growth of female entrepreneurship.

To illustrate the role of the national transformation plan in encouraging women entrepreneurship the following are the research questions that shall guide the scope of this study;

1. Has the national transformation led to more opportunities for women entrepreneurs?

2. Do female entrepreneurs experience gender bias issues in the labor market? To what extent does this affect them?
3. Have changes in Saudi society in recent years had a positive impact on raising female economic participation?

These research questions lead to the development of the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: The national transformation plan has had a positive impact on women entrepreneurs

Hypothesis 2: Gender and cultural stereotypes has a negative impact on women entrepreneurs

Hypothesis 3: Changes in Saudi society in recent years have had a positive impact on reducing the gender inequality gap and will continue to do so in future years and therefore providing more opportunities for women entrepreneurs

Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative methodology. For data collection, semi-structured individual interviews are utilized. Furthermore, a deductive approach is used with a random sampling technique. The phenomenological research philosophy is used where it is the theoretical basis of the qualitative study.

Analysis and findings

The results showed that the NTP as part of Saudi Vision 2030 raised women participation in the labor market and has increased opportunities for female entrepreneurs which has led to economic development. The study also revealed the efforts being made by the government in order to bridge the obstacles that challenges the NTP initiative regarding women participation in the workforce, through training, policy amendments, and media campaigns. Also, in general, the results showed that religious and cultural factors are the main determinants of the existence of gender inequality in the Saudi labor force.

Conclusions

In general, the results of the study confirmed that there is a perceived significant role of the national transformation plan on the opportunities for female entrepreneurs in KSA. Also, as a result of Vision 2030 women will have more opportunities to occupy leadership positions in the future in Saudi Arabia. The participation of females in the Kingdom's economy could help in achieving sustainable economic development by decreasing unemployment rates and increasing the power of the labor force; achieving social justice and society welfare.

References

- Al-Bakr, F., Bruce, E.R., Davidson, P.M., Schlaffer, E. and Kropiunigg, U., 2017. Empowered but Not Equal: Challenging the Traditional Gender Roles as Seen by University Students in Saudi Arabia. In FIRE: Forum for International Research in Education (Vol. 4, No. 1, pp. 52-66). Lehigh University Library and Technology Services. 8A East Packer Avenue, Fairchild Martindale Library Room 514, Bethlehem, PA 18015.
- Al-Kwafi, O.S., Tien Khoa, T., Ongsakul, V. and Ahmed, Z.U., 2020. Determinants of female entrepreneurship success across Saudi Arabia. *Journal of Transnational management*, 25(1), pp.3-29.
- Arifin, S.R.M., 2018. Ethical considerations in qualitative study. *International Journal of Care Scholars*, 1(2), pp.30-33.
- Asongu, S.A., Efobi, U.R., Tanankem, B.V. and Osabuohien, E.S., 2020. Globalisation and female economic participation in sub-Saharan Africa. *Gender Issues*, 37(1), pp.61-89.
- Azmi, I.A.G., 2017. Muslim women entrepreneurs motivation in SMEs: a quantitative study in Asia pacific countries. *Asian Economic and Financial Review*, 7(1), p.27.
- Baerlocher, D., Parente, S.L. and Rios-Neto, E., 2021. Female Labor Force Participation and economic growth: Accounting for the gender bonus. *Economics Letters*, 200, p.109740.
- Moshashai, D., Leber, A.M. and Savage, J.D., 2020. Saudi Arabia plans for its economic future: Vision 2030, the National Transformation Plan and Saudi fiscal reform. *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 47(3), pp.381-401.
- Mehtap, S., Pellegrini, M.M., Caputo, A. and Welsh, D.H., 2017. Entrepreneurial intentions of young women in the Arab world. *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior & Research*.

Research Digest

The Impact Of COVID-19 On the Tourism Industry in Saudi Arabia

Noura Bin Jumah | Dr. Caroline McGroary | 2021

Abstract

Objective: The aim of this study is to determine the impact of COVID-19 on tourism in Saudi Arabia. In doing so this study aims to; a) To outline the impacts of COVID-19 in the tourism industry in Saudi Arabia; b) To scrutinize the business models that help deal with the negative consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic in Saudi Arabia; c) To determine the impact of the Saudi government's response to COVID-19 on tourism industry; d) To find out ways in which the tourism industry in Saudi Arabia will be a key growth area for the economy in the coming years; e) To identify the short-term actions that are taken by tour business entrepreneurs in KSA to achieve growth during the Covid-19 Pandemic.

Background: The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is a vibrant economy that mainly depends on oil for the development of its economy. Hence, in order to diversify the economy, there has been significant investment in many sectors including tourism with the aim of creating more opportunities for development. This is supported by Vision 2030 of the country which is the governments strategic plan to diversify its economy away from oil to other sectors. However, the economic effects of COVID 19 have been severely felt in all the sectors of the economy especially in the tourism sector. Among the effects that have been felt are reductions in air travel, loss of disposable income, and the reduced investment in this sector. Measures and strategies of health such as social distancing, community lockdowns, traveling bans, campaigns of staying at home, and self-quarantine, which are mandatory, have brought international travel, leisure, and tourism to a halt (El Keshky et al., 2020).

Methodology: This research used a qualitative research methodology in which an interview-based research approach and a deductive approach to data analysis was applied in the analysis.

Findings: The findings of this study indicated the following themes: COVID 19 has had a significant negative effect on businesses; there a new challenges now facing the tourism sector due to COVID 19 in Saudi Arabia: there had been governmental support to try to deal with the downturn in this sector but more needs to be done; there are potential growth areas in this area in the future, but the sector needs continued investment.

Conclusion: The research findings have concluded that due to COVID 19, the tourism industry in Saudi Arabia has been adversely affected, these adverse effects have resulted in a change in business models and a pressing need for more support and investment in this sector going forward.

Key Words: Tourism; Covid 19; Vision2030; Saudi Arabia; Investment; World Health Organization; Pandemic.

Literature review

Tourism and traveling have always been one of the important sectors in the economy of the world before COVID – 19. It accounted for 10% of the global economy and offered close to 320 million jobs (Grech, Grech & Fabri, 2020). During the period of the jet age in 1950, only 25 million individuals took international trips compared to 2019 when the number of foreign trips rose to 1.5 billion, and the travel and tourism industry grew too big and took the greater fraction of the economy of the world (Grech, Grech & Fabri, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic has caused a significant decrease in these numbers globally causing major concerns for the tourism industry. Therefore, this research is timely as it seeks to explore the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on tourism in Saudi Arabia. Given that Saudi Arabia has only opened its borders to tourism in recent years, the downturn in this sector due to Covid-19 must be explored. Hence, this research seeks to close this research gap.

Objective

The aim of this study is to determine the impact of COVID-19 on tourism in Saudi Arabia. This will be achieved through answering the below research questions.

1. What impact has the COVID-19 pandemic had on the tourism industry in Saudi Arabia?
2. Have companies in the tourism sector in Saudi Arabia changed their business models to deal with the negative consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic?
3. Has the Saudi government supported the tourism industry during Covid 19?
4. Is the tourism industry in Saudi Arabia a key growth area for the economy in the coming years?

The following research hypothesis are derived from these research questions.

H1: The tourism industry in KSA has been negatively impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic.

H2: Many businesses in the tourism industry in Saudi Arabia have changed their business models to deal with the negative consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic.

H3: The Saudi government's response to Covid-19 has had a positive impact on the tourism industry in Saudi Arabia.

H4: Over the coming years the tourism industry in Saudi Arabia will be a key growth area for the economy.

Methodology

In consideration of the research instrument used in this study, the researcher used a semi-structured interview approach. All ten research participants were interviewed, and their responses were analysed to meet the objective of this research work. The interview guide had a number of different



sections: demographic information, the impact of COVID 19 on the tourism industry, business models developed to deal with the consequences of COVID 19, the Saudi Arabian government response to the impact of the COVID 19 pandemic, and tourism industry as a key growth area in the future economy. The data was analysed manually in line with the guide from Creswell (1999).

Analysis and findings

The findings of this study indicated the following themes: COVID 19 has had a significant negative effect on businesses; there a new challenge now facing the tourism sector due to COVID 19 in Saudi Arabia: there had been governmental support to try to deal with the downturn in this sector but more needs to be done; there are potential growth areas in this area in the future, but the sector needs continued investment.

Conclusions

The study has presented the main literature in this field and had identified a number of gaps in the literature which have been answered through the research questions. The research findings have concluded that due to COVID 19, the tourism industry in Saudi Arabia has been adversely affected. Among the effects that COVID 19 has brought is a change in the business models of tourism companies. Additionally, factors such as less disposable income, less international tourists coming into Saudi Arabia has forced business owners in this sector to be more creative and innovative. However, for many the financial pressures are significant and there is more support needed from the government. The research findings have also shown that the government has made a significant contribution in combating COVID 19 and supporting this sector but more needs to be done.

References

- Abiad, A., Arao, R. M., & Dagli, S. (2020). The economic impact of the COVID-19 outbreak on developing Asia.
- Abuhjeeleh, M. (2019). Rethinking tourism in Saudi Arabia: Royal vision 2030 perspective. *African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure*, 8(5), 1-16.
- Al Shaker, M., Akram, M. W., Mahar, S., Majrashi, A. A., & HashemE, A. R. (2020). ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES OF COVID-19 ON THE CITY OF MAKKAH. *PalArch's Journal of Archaeology of Egypt/Egyptology*, 17(7), 8142-8147.
- Algaissi, A. A., Alharbi, N. K., Hassanain, M., & Hashem, A. M. (2020). Preparedness and response to COVID-19 in Saudi Arabia: Building on MERS experience. *Journal of infection and public health*.
- Al-Ghraibah, O. B. (2020). Online Consumer Retention In Saudi Arabia During COVID 19: The Moderating Role Of Online Trust. *J. Crit. Rev*, 7(9), 2464-2472. Ali, A. (2018). Travel and tourism: growth potentials and contribute to the GDP of Saudi Arabia. *Problems and Perspectives in Management*, 16(1), 417-427.
- Alzubair, K. (2019). Tourism Policy and Service Quality Management in Business Conference Tourism in Saudi Arabia.
- Creswell, J. W. (1999). Mixed-method research: Introduction and application. In *Handbook of educational policy* (pp. 455-472). Academic press.
- Grech, V., Grech, P., & Fabri, S. (2020). A risk balancing act–tourism competition using health leverage in the COVID-19 era. *International Journal of Risk & Safety in Medicine*, (Preprint), 1-5.

Research Digest

The impact of commercial advertisements from the influencers on user behaviour in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Reham Aldosari | Dr. Sarah Fraser | 2021

Abstract

Purpose: There is a significant amount of money spent on advertisements, and commercial advertisements on social media platforms are considered to have a significant role in impacting on consumer behaviour. Advertisements are a very old and very establishment marketing tool but using advertisements on social media platforms is relatively new.

This research specifically looks at the role of influencers in advertisements on social media, an influencer is considered to be a person who has a large number of followers and have a significant influence on them. These people are self-classified and know how to gain a lot of attention from their followers.

Companies often engage with influencers to increase the awareness and electronic word of mouth of the product, or service, or brand with the aim of leveraging the influencer's followers to increase sales or awareness. The study aims to understand and study the impact influencers have on the effectiveness of advertisements on social media platforms by analysing the factors that can affect consumer behaviour.

Methodology: The study used the questionnaire as a tool to collect the required information. The study targeted university students in Riyadh region, Saudi Arabia. It used the quantitative method to analyse data using SPSS software. The sample is random and anonymous.

Findings: The results of the study showed that there was a positive relationship between the use of influencers and consumers reactions towards advertisements, as the mutual trust between them leads to increase propensity to purchase.

Commercial advertisements by influencers positively influence customers to purchase the advertised product or service. Customer satisfaction is linked to influencer advertisements with visual advertising, and commercial advertisements increase the percentage of sales.

Recommendations: The result of the study indicates that money spending on advertisements, on social media platforms that utilise influencers does have a positive effect on purchases and consumer satisfaction. Therefore, it is recommended that for-profit institution utilise this means of



leveraging their investments to maximises sales. It also indicates that not for profit organisations could help build awareness by the use of influencers in advertisements on social media platforms.

Keywords: Commercial advertisements, Social media, Influencers, Marketing, Consumer behaviour, Saudi Arabia.

Literature review

- Consumer behaviour is positively affected by influencers, and the influencers play an essential role in the decisions of consumers (Chatzigeorgiou, 2017).
- Advertising on social media has made companies seek to maintain their social media presence to promote their products, find new ways to interact with customers, and build relationships with social media users (Schiffman, Kanuk and Hansen, 2008).
- Influencers have high rates of audience participation and interaction, which creates mutual trust between the influencer and the followers (Constantinides, 2004).
- The influencer has the ability and skill to influence the audience and followers with purchasing decisions (Aral and Walker, 2012).

Objective

- To clarify the value of the use of influencers in commercial advertisements.
- To measure whether influencer's involvement in advertisements positively impacts on consumer behaviour.
- Measuring the effectiveness of commercial advertisements, their significance when linked to influencers, and their impact on consumer behaviour.
- To analyse the impact of social media on the consumer's buying decision.

Methodology

- This research used a descriptive-analytical method to research the phenomenon, describing its nature and the relationship among its variables and the studied facts associated with the behaviour of a sample of people. This method is designed to describe and diagnose the problems that the researcher wishes to research.
- This research used an online questionnaire tool as a tool to collect data, and a sample was selected on a random basis.

- The questionnaire included questions that will be able to be analysed using a quantitative approach and a qualitative approach.

Analysis and findings

- Statistical differences are indicated that influencers and celebrities play an important role in the behaviour of followers.
- It can be observed through the data and statistical analysis that newspapers and magazines are among the means of advertising that has obtained the lowest percentage of engagement by consumers compared to other forms of advertisements.
- The results clearly indicate that influencers play an important role in determining the behaviour of individuals in choosing products, services, or brands offered by companies.
- The results would support the argument because customer satisfaction increases through very visually design adverts supported by influencers and celebrities.
- As the statistical analysis shows that customers prefer the short advertising period.
- The result shows that descriptive measurements indicate a high degree of positive approval of the commercial advertisement using influencers and that potentially increases sales.

Conclusions

- Influencers play an essential role in consumer behaviour to buy the products advertised by them, as the mutual trust between the influencer and their followers, leads to increase propensity to purchase.
- The research agrees with the key findings of previous research that indicated a strong correlation between influencers and followers. Consumer behaviour is positively affected by influencers.
- Within the design of the advertisements it appears that factors such as, the electronic display of the products, the duration of the display, the aesthetic image have an influence on consumer behaviour.
- In the social media world and with the use of influences the potential rate of change is much more effectiveness than it was in the traditional advertising environment and therefore there is a constant need to measure the effectiveness of the various advertisements, and therefore any weaknesses can be remedied.

Research Digest

Consumer's Attitudes Towards Personalized Social Media Advertisement in the Kingdom's Retail Sector

Sama Alhoshan | Dr. Sarah Fraser | 2021

Abstract

Aim: The aim of this research is to present a critical challenge in social media marketing, which is important for any company to understand: consumer attitudes towards personalized advertisement on social media in the Kingdom's retail sector. This study makes an effort to develop a better understanding of this marketing method, by attempting to describe how individuals react to this advertisement tool, and the affect it has on their behaviour and buying intentions.

Background: The Internet accelerated the technological advancement as well as the usage of digital media (Cheong & Morrison, 2008). As the internet is now more accessible, and people consider it a means to stay connected via various social media networks. In fact, the global number of social media users is predicted to grow to reach 3.29 billion users by 2022 (eMarketer, 2018). In Saudi Arabia alone, the total number of Saudi social media users is 18.3 million users, which counts for 58% of the total population (MCIT, 2020).

Companies recognized the power of social media tools and tailored their strategies to adapt accordingly. Therefore, social media has changed dramatically from being a basic tool for content sharing to becoming an important advertisement tool (Weinberg, 2009).

Through the involvement in online activities, consumers generate a large amount of personal data (Acquisti, Brandimarte & Loewenstein, 2015). To maximize the reach, companies utilize the data to tailor their messages. Previous research investigating consumers, relied on the role of attitudes to examine consumer behaviour (Zhou, Su and Bao, 2002). There is also a correlation between the personalized advertisement perception and buying behaviour (Zhu and Chang, 2016).

Methods: A mixed research method has been employed in this research. In this research, the data has been collected using an online survey, the survey enclosed comprises open qualitative questions as well.

Results: The results of the quantitative research were used to validate the research hypothesis with regards to the participants' awareness of the topic, attitudes and buying behaviour.

Conclusion: The results of the study confirms that there is a high level of awareness among Saudi consumers about the personalization of advertisement in social media. Also, this form of advertisement has a significant influence on the consumers intention to purchase.

Keywords: Consumer's Attitudes, Social Media, Personalized Advertisement, Retail Sector, Saudi Arabia.

Literature Review

In order to acquire a deeper understanding about the topic, potential broad and relevant topics were identified. These topics include: the social media advertainments, personalization, consumer perception, consumer buying decision process, and a focus on the main generational cohort: Generation Z. Finally, the chapter explores the attitudes towards personalized advertainment on social media in the MENA region, specifically in Saudi Arabia.

More than 53% of the world's population is connected, with more than 9 out of every 10 internet users now using social media platforms (DataReportal, 2021). Today, social media has changed from being a basic tool for peer to peer content generation, to becoming an important part of the media scene (Weinberg, 2009).

Many of the leading networking sites have become dependent on advertisements as a main source of revenue. "If you are not paying for it, you became the product", potentially implying that customers are the product with social media channels using intelligence to its advantage by utilizing customers data for targeted advertainment purposes (Hackl, 2020).

Previous research stated that online advertainment is linked to the consumers encouragement and intention to purchase online (Kimelfield & Watt, 2001). Therefore, personalized advertisement has reformed the definition of advertisement, as it now includes adding the personal aspects by customizing the promotional messages for each consumer (Yu, 2020). The perception of a personalized advertisement is divided among consumers, as some find it attractive and find that it answers their needs, while some might find it intrusive due to the use of personal data (Tucker, 2013). However, the way the consumer digests the advertisement determines whether they will perceive it as positive or negative (Hong & Thong, 2013). As the consumer encounters a personalized advertainment, they can ignore, react, or consider it as a threat, depending on their perception of that advertisement (Gellynck et al., 2009).

From a business perspective, social media is a critical aspect that influences the purchasing decision among Generation Z (Al-Zyoud, 2018). Therefore, brand-generated content in general is a great influential instrument on Instagram for example, and positively influences the consumer purchasing decision behaviour (Shah, 2017). This is mostly effective with digital native consumers, whom are prone to use social media frequently (Kumar et al., 2016).

Generation Z is the first generation raised using smartphones (Southgate, 2017) and are therefore considered ‘digital natives’ (Reinikainen et al., 2020) By the year 2030, Generation Z are expected to mark 1 billion of the world’s population (CBRE, 2020). Today, this generation is the largest generation, as they are equivalent to 32% or almost one-third of the total population (Miller and Lu, 2018). Furthermore, Generation Z is considered the largest segment among social media users, marking 26% back in 2017 (Nielsen, 2017). Generation Z or iGen is expected to be the future of retail as they boast huge spending power and are expected to grow further by the year 2026 (Hackl, 2020).

Objective

- To establish the volume of social media usage in Saudi Arabia - To establish the recognition of the personalized advertisement phenomenon in Saudi Arabia
- To establish the users’ attitudes towards social media advertisements in Saudi Arabia
- To establish the impact of personalized advertisements on the users’ buying behaviour

Methodology

Personalized social media advertisement is an emerging technology with limited research undertaken to investigate its effect on consumers’ buying behaviour. By the time this research was prepared, the challenges brought on by COVID-19 had changed the online behaviour of the users making this research different than any other research undertaken before March 2020. In the quantitative development phase, an online questionnaire was given to a randomly selected sample of 115 participants. This phase aimed to find out the subject’s perception when exposed to social media personalized advertising with exploratory factor analysis. The final stage is the validation phase, wherein we investigate the reliability of the sample and findings against previous literature.

Analysis and findings

The study examined the social media usage, 81.7% use social media platforms every day. 51.3% of the sample uses social media for socializing purposes. The age group is dominated by Millennials and Generation Z, an age group that is familiar with social media and the Internet. The female participants accounted for the majority of the sample (53.5%). the vast majority of the participants (89.6%) is familiar with the personalized social media advertisement concept. Almost 55.7% find personalized social media advertisements convincing and these advertisements will lead them eventually to make a purchase decision. However, (54.8%) reacts by scrolling passed the advertisement. In general Saudis hold a positive attitude towards this form of promotion.



Conclusions

Key findings

- 89.6% of Saudi participants are familiar and **aware** of the personalized social media advertisement concept.
- 55.7% of the total participants find personalized social media advertisements convincing and will lead them eventually to make **a purchase decision**. That is due to the personalization aspects of the advertisement, as it appears relevant to the consumer and they can relate to it.
- 50.4%, which represents more than half of the study sample, **hold positive attitudes** towards this form of promotion. This indicates that there is a relationship between the consumer attitudes and their intended behaviours.

Limitations:

- The research method selected.
- The sample size.
- Some of the survey questions.
- COVID 19.

Research Digest

Remote Working and Its Effect on Business in Saudi Arabia

Sara Ahmed Alsheaibi | Dr. Caroline McGroary | 2021

Abstract

Background: Remote working is increasingly becoming an organizational norm as employees adapt to the changing work environment. In the recent times, organizations around the globe have recorded notable disruptions such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Technologies such as Zoom are making it possible for employees to interact virtually and complete their office duties.

Objective: The study examines the concept of remote working and its effects on Saudi businesses. Specifically, it examines how remote working affects employee engagement in an organization. In the literature there is strong support for the view that the level of employee engagement impacts directly on the productivity levels and overall business performance (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). As a relatively new model in business operations, remote working presents mixed outcomes for organizations.

Methodology: The study utilizes questionnaires to explore the study hypotheses. The results were analysed through SPSS and there was a sample size of 99. The results were explained using the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) theory.

Findings: The results outlined a negative relationship between demands and engagement and a positive relationship between personal resources and engagement. There was also a comparison done from before and after the pandemic with there being more demands placed on employees as a result of the pandemic and this having a stronger negative effect on engagement. Resilience was also higher before the pandemic but in both cases had a positive impact on engagement.

Conclusion: These findings are important as the world continues to grapple with the effects of remote working. Therefore, in the case where demands such as work overload negatively impacts on engagement employers need to be aware of this and consider where employees can be supported. Also, as personal resources such as resilience can be developed through interventions this research has important practical implications as it suggests ways in which employers can indirectly increase engagement.

Keywords: Remote working, employee engagement, business performance, productivity, flexible work arrangement.

Literature review

Previous studies have emphasized remote working as an emerging practice in organizational practice, presenting mixed outcomes for organizations. Moss (2018) argued that remote working results in low engagement levels as employees get detached from their physical workplace. According to Weideman and Hofmeyr (2020), managers and supervisors record reduced engagement with the employees, making it difficult to identify and address the issues and challenges affecting the workers. However, in line with the psychology literature the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) theory outlines that resources (personal and job) have a positive impact on engagement and that demands has a negative impact on this motivational process leading to engagement (Bakker and Demerouti, 2017). Therefore, given that over the past year there has been so much focus on remote working and the advantages and challenges associated with it, this study was considered important as it could use the theoretical framework of the JD-R theory to help understand the relationship between these different factors.

Objective

The aim of this study is to explore the effects of remote working on employee engagement in Saudi Arabian businesses. In addressing the objective, the study will explore the effects of job demands (workload and emotional demands), and personal resources (resilience) on employee engagement, as well as gaining an insight into the individual preferences of employees as regards working from home.

This led to the development of the following research questions and hypotheses.

Research Questions

1. Do job demands have a negative impact on employee engagement when working from home? (Survey)
2. Do job resources have a positive impact on employee engagement when working from home? (Survey)
3. Does working from home increase employee engagement?
4. What are the general preferences of people as regards remote working and what does this mean for the future of work? (Interviews)

Research Hypotheses

1. Work overload has a negative impact on employee engagement. (answered through survey)
2. Emotional work demands have a negative impact on employee engagement. (answered through survey)
3. Resilience has a positive impact on employee engagement. (answered through survey)
4. Working from home has led to above average employee engagement (Survey and interviews)
5. Working from home has led to below average employee engagement (survey and interviews)
6. In general people have a preference for working from home and would like to have this option in the future (interviews)

Methodology

The study uses online surveys as the data collection method. The questionnaire was designed to collect data on each of the variables of interest. For example, the 9-item Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES-9) was used to measure work engagement. Using an online survey and a random sampling technique, the research was based on 120 participants out of a population of more than 1,000 employees from the selected companies. SPSS was used to analyze the study data.

Analysis and findings

The results outlined a negative relationship between demands and engagement and a positive relationship between personal resources and engagement. There was also a comparison done from before and after the pandemic with there being more demands placed on employees as a result of the pandemic and this having a stronger negative effect on engagement. Resilience was also higher before the pandemic but in both cases had a positive impact on engagement.

Conclusions

These findings are important as the world continues to deal with the effects of remote working. Therefore, in the case where demands such as work overload negatively impacts on engagement employers need to be aware of this and consider where employees can be supported. Also, as personal resources such as resilience can be developed through interventions this research has important practical implications as it suggests ways in which employers can indirectly increase engagement. Therefore, this research makes important academic and practical contributions.



References

- Bakker, A.B. and Demerouti, E., 2017. Job demands-resources theory: taking stock and looking forward. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 22(3), p.273.
- Lian, J.W., Yen, D.C. and Wang, Y.T., 2014. An exploratory study to understand the critical factors affecting the decision to adopt cloud computing in Taiwan hospital. *International Journal of Information Management*, 34(1), pp.28-36.
- Loomis, D.K. and Paterson, S., 2018. A comparison of data collection methods: Mail versus online surveys. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 49(2), pp.133-149.
- Mayer, I., 2015. Qualitative research with a focus on qualitative data analysis. *International Journal of Sales, Retailing & Marketing*, 4(9), pp.53-67.
- McCusker, K. and Gunaydin, S., 2015. Research using qualitative, quantitative or mixed methods and choice based on the research. *Perfusion*, 30(7), pp.537-542.
- McIntosh, M., and Morse, J. 2015. 'Situating and constructing diversity in semi-structured interviews.' *Global Qualitative Nursing Research*, pp. 1-10.
- Moss, J., 2018. "Helping remote workers avoid loneliness and burnout." *Harvard Business Review on Health*.
- Weideman, M. and Hofmeyr, K.B., 2020. The influence of flexible work arrangements on employee engagement: An exploratory study. *SA Journal of Human Resource Management*, 18(1), pp.1-18.

Research Digest

Impact of Covid-19 on Digital Transformation in Saudi Arabia

Shaikha ALDahash | Dr Sarah Fraser |2021

Abstract

This dissertation aims to understand the digital transformation in the context of Saudi Arabia based on the available literature that is highlighting the process of digitization in Saudi Arabia considering Covid-19 is limited.

Covid 19 has impacted all the major industries around the world and has caused this unprecedented global health crisis that has led the world into severe social economic consequences. This research seeks to understand the impact of Covid19 on accelerating the efforts of digitization and digital transformation in the business market of Saudi Arabia.

The literature review for this research is divided into three sections; The role of covid-19 in accelerating the digital transformation of organizations, the impact of Covid-19 on business models of small and medium sized enterprises in terms of digital transformation, and how organizations can cope with this transformation. The results of the literature review show that all around the world most companies resorted to digitally transforming their business model by introducing digital technologies into their operations, finance, and supply chain.

Our research aims to understand this transformation in the context of Saudi Arabia because the available literature that is highlighting the process of digitization in Saudi Arabia considering Covid19 is limited.

For this research, we conducted a survey of various working professionals who either owned a business or worked for their views on the impact of covid-19 on their company. We then divided our responses into 3 segments; small, medium, and large sized company employees and analyzed the data in light of our hypothesis.

The result of our data shows that many companies in Saudi Arabia chose to convert themselves digitally as they believed digital transformation leads to an increase in productivity and efficiency. Furthermore, the areas most impacted in the context of Saudi Arabia in terms of the business model information technology (IT) and operations.

Literature review

In this research paper the literature review is divided into three sections; The role of covid-19 in accelerating the digital transformation of organizations, the impact of Covid-19 on business models of small and medium sized enterprises in terms of digital transformation, how organizations can cope with this transformation. The results of the literature review show that all around the world most companies resorted to digitally transforming their business model by introducing digital technologies into their operations, finance, and supply chain.

Objective

The COVID-19 pandemic presents important opportunities and challenges for technology research from a methodological standpoint. The objectives of this research represent these new areas of research that have been opened up and are as follows;

1. This research aims to evaluate the role of Covid-19 in accelerating digital transformation as there is not enough research and literature available on this area that is specific to Saudi Arabia.
2. This research aims to study the impact of digitization on the mental wellbeing of employees to better understand how productivity will be impacted if a company decides to digitize.
3. This research aims to provide a body of literature that can be used by traditional and start up businesses to make decisions whether they should go for complete digitization or take up other means to digitize.
4. This research aims to identify how business models have changed in terms of marketing, finances and operations to cope with digitization in companies all around the world and then provide recommendations to businesses about how they can improve various parts of their business model by introducing strategies that take into account the impact of Covid-19.

Methodology

In order to understand the impact of Covid-19 and reach the full understanding about the hypothesis of the research an online survey has been conducted through a well-designed questionnaire with over 170 respondents who worked at a company or owned a business. In order to study the impact of Covid-19 on digital transformation the collected literature review was analyzed and a theoretical framework was created so that the empirical model of this research can coordinate with the theoretical model hence ensuring a strong and accurate data analysis method which yields authentic results.



According to the literature review it can be summarized that Covid-19 has played a major role in accelerating the digital transformation that was going slow due to various misconceptions such as people thinking that digital transformation would lead to unemployment and replacement of humans with robots, along with this many businesses were unsure about the cost of transforming themselves fully digital and also had unawareness about whether it is okay to adopt a hybrid system where some aspects of the business model are digitally adapted where as other aspects are left to be done in the traditional manner.

After collection of all the data accordingly a charts and figures has been worked on to represent the results as they are easier

to understand and visual representation for every response makes the process of coming to a

conclusion much easier. Based on those four hypotheses that were based on four research objectives and each question corresponded to a particular hypothesis, hence a group of questions whose results would either prove the hypothesis to be valid or invalidate it. In order to calculate the results and reach a conclusion for the research analysis should be conducted to analyze the statistical data for each group of questions and according to the results of the statistical inference a decision will be taken based on whether the research hypothesis is valid or not.

Analysis and findings

The result of our data shows that many companies in Saudi Arabia chose to convert themselves digitally as they believed digital transformation leads to an increase in productivity and efficiency. Furthermore, the areas most impacted in the context of Saudi Arabia in terms of the business model information technology (IT) and operations.

Conclusions

The research aimed to understand all of these points in the context of Saudi Arabia because the available literature that was highlighting the process of digitization in Saudi Arabia in light of Covid-19 is limited. The result of the data shows that due to the intervention of the government and also because of the utility of digital platforms many companies in Saudi Arabia chose to convert themselves digitally. Furthermore, most of the employees and companies believe that this digital transformation led to an increase in their productivity and efficiency. However, in case of Saudi Arabia the companies did not change their usual traditional way of operations in terms of how they marketed their product, dealt with their competitors or how they chose to conduct recruitments to hire new human resources. Furthermore, the areas most impacted in the context of Saudi Arabia in terms of the business model were not finance and supply chain rather they were more about information technology (IT) and operations.

References

- Seetharaman, P. (2020). Business models shifts: Impact of Covid-19. International journal of information management.
- SADAD. (2020). Vision, Mission & Objectives. Sadad.com
- Hassounah, M. (2020). Digital Response During the COVID-19 Pandemic in Saudi Arabia. Journal of Medical Internet Research.
- Jin Xu, Weixian Wei. (2021) The effects of tax and fee reduction policy on mitigating shock of the COVID-19 epidemic in China. Applied Economics 0:0, pages 1-16.
- Hind Alofaysan The impact of Covid-19 pandemic on the economic performance of Saudi Arabia, March 2021, Economics research forum.
- Fletcher, G.; Griffiths, M. Digital transformation during a lockdown. Int. J. Inf. Manag. 2020.
- Humphries, J.E.; Neilson, C.; Ulyseas, G. The Evolving Impacts of COVID-19 on Small Businesses Since the CARES Act; Social Science Research Network: Rochester, NY, USA, 2020.
- Rogers, D. (2016). The digital transformation playbook: Rethink your business for the digital age. Columbia University Press.
- Berman, S.J. Digital transformation: Opportunities to create new business models. Strat. Leadersh. 2012, 40, 16–24.
- Iansiti M. and Lakhani, KR. (2020). Competing in the Age of AI: Strategy and Leadership when Algorithms and Networks run the world. Boston: Harvard Business Review Press.
- Gregurec, I.; Tomičić Furjan, M.; Tomičić-Pupek, K. The Impact of COVID-19 on Sustainable Business Models in SMEs. Sustainability 2021, 13, 1098
- Dabic, Marina & Kraus, Sascha. (2021). CfP for the "DeGruyter Handbook of SME Entrepreneurship".

Research Digest

An Examination in The Cybersecurity in KSA

Afrah Alhakami, Elham Alkhaldi, Ruaa Almuhanha, Sara Medhish

Dr. Caroline McGroary | Industry: Deloitte | 2021

Abstract

The purpose of this practicum research was to explore the impact of Covid-19 on the cybersecurity landscape in Saudi Arabia. In doing so, this research sought to answer five main research questions as follows: 1) What impact has Covid-19 had on cybersecurity in Saudi Arabia?; 2) Are Saudi citizens/employees aware of the cyber risks they face daily?; 3) What safeguards can be put in place to help mitigate risks?; 4) What are the potential growth areas in cybersecurity in Saudi Arabia? and 5) How can cybersecurity education help achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals?

In order to answer these research questions, this study adopted a primarily quantitative approach through the use of surveys, with a supplementary qualitative approach through the use of interviews. In addition to carrying out primary research this study also carried out secondary data analysis through reviewing industry reports and the literature in depth.

The study findings were summarised into three categories; cybersecurity risks and safeguards at work; personal cybersecurity risks and safeguards; and cybersecurity risks for children. The results revealed that there is a pressing need for more cybersecurity education and awareness across all three categories, and that while there is an awareness of many of the risks faced, there is limited knowledge on how to safeguard against these risks. There is also a significant talent shortage in the area of cybersecurity which is exacerbating these issues. However, given this shortage there is also huge opportunities for growth in this sector. Finally, through our secondary research we revealed the importance of cybersecurity for achievement of all of the UN SDGs. In conclusion, we recommend that there is a need for greater cybersecurity education in the workplace, amongst individuals and at all levels of our education system, and through more investment in this area organizations and citizens globally will be better positioned to address the cyber risks they face on a daily basis.

Key terms/keywords: Cybersecurity / Ransomware / Safeguards / Talent Shortage / UN SDGs

Literature review

Cybersecurity is defined as the protection of networks, information technology systems, operational technology systems, their hardware and software components, the services they provide, and the data they contain, from any penetration, disruption, modification, entry, use, or exploitation. It includes information security, electronic security, and digital security (Saudi National Cybersecurity Authority, 2021). Over the last number of years this concept has been receiving increasing attention in both practitioner reports and the academic literature. The main themes emerging in these reports and the literature is the greater risks that organisations and individuals are facing daily, with some of the common global themes being centered around the surge in cyberattacks as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, technological advances, complex cybercrime and cyber talent shortage. In seeking to understand how these trends evolved we explored the history of cybersecurity and how it was once considered an IT-issue but is now considered something which impacts on all individuals and organizations, regardless of their size. This discussion then paved the way to explore how cybersecurity is relevant to the achievement of all 17 UN SDGs.

Objective

The objective of our practicum research project focuses on answering five main questions.

1. What impact has Covid-19 had on cybersecurity in Saudi Arabia?
2. Are Saudi citizens/ employees aware of the cyber risks they face daily?
3. What safeguards can be put in place to help mitigate risks?
4. What are the potential growth areas in cybersecurity in Saudi Arabia?
5. How can cybersecurity education help achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals?

Methodology

This research adopted a primarily quantitative approach through the use of surveys which was supplemented by interviews. We also carried out secondary data analysis through the review of industry publications, academic publications and other online materials.

We used a random sampling data collection technique for both quantitative and qualitative data collection. The survey was administered online to both males and females over the age of 15 old in Saudi Arabia. We collected usable responses from 371 respondents. The results were analysed through descriptive data analysis techniques. Semi-structured interviews were carried out with



three individuals to gain more in-depth insights into the quantitative findings. These responses were analysed manually using excel.

Analysis and findings

Our findings were divided into four sections; section one included general information about our participants; section two presented the cybersecurity risks and safeguards from an employees perspective; section three captured personal cybersecurity risks and safeguards; finally section four presented the cybersecurity risks faced by children. Overall, the results revealed that there is a pressing need for more cybersecurity education and awareness across all employees, individuals and parents/children, and that while there is an awareness of many of the risks faced, there is limited knowledge on how to safeguard against these risks. There is also a significant talent shortage in the area of cybersecurity which is exacerbating these issues. However, given this shortage there is also huge opportunities for growth in this sector. Finally, through our secondary research we revealed the importance of cybersecurity for achievement of all of the UN SDGs.

Conclusions

In conclusion, we recommend that there is a need for greater cybersecurity education in the workplace, amongst individuals and at all levels of our education system, and through more investment in this area organizations and citizens globally will be better positioned to address the cyber risks they face on a daily basis. There is also scope to build on this research from both a practitioner and academic perspective.



References

- Deloitte. (n.d.). Future of cyber | Deloitte | Global. [online] Available at: <https://www2.deloitte.com/global/en/pages/about-deloitte/articles/gx-future-of-cyber.html> [Accessed 12 Mar. 2021].
- Georgiadou, A., Mouzakitis, S. and Askounis, D., 2021. Working from home during COVID-19 crisis: a cyber security culture assessment survey. *Security Journal*, pp.1-20.
- Giannakas, F., Kambourakis, G. and Gritzalis, S., 2015, November. CyberAware: A mobile game-based app for cybersecurity education and awareness. In 2015 International Conference on Interactive Mobile Communication Technologies and Learning (IMCL) (pp. 54-58). IEEE.
- Safcsp.org.sa. 2021. The Saudi Federation for Cyber Security and Programming. [online] Available at: <https://safcsp.org.sa/ar/Event/KaizenArabia.html> [Accessed 4 March 2021].
- Salam, A., 2020. Internet of things for sustainability: perspectives in privacy, cybersecurity, and future trends. In *Internet of Things for Sustainable Community Development* (pp. 299-327). Springer, Cham.
- Saudi National Cybersecurity Authority. n.d. [online] Available at: <https://nca.gov.sa/en/pages/about.html> [Accessed 18 February 2021].

Research Digest

Investigating The Relationship Between Perceived Workforce Gender Diversity And Perceived Organizational Performance: A Case Of An Automation Solutions Company In Saudi Arabia

Salwa Al khathami, Reem Ali Aldosari, Nourah Almagid

Dr. Rajaa Clouse | Industry: Emerson | 2021

Abstract

In today's economy, organizations are encountering increasing changes in the makeup of their workforce. This ever-changing nature of the organizational demographics is characterized with the emergence of awareness of diversity in workgroups, and the challenges inherited in managing diversity. Of particular interest to this research, we focus our investigative lens on gender diversity. In collaboration with Emerson Solutions, Saudi Arabia, we embarked on this research study to investigate the relationship between the perceived gender diversity in their workplace and the perceived organizational performance. The perceptions in this study are all self-reported by active employees in the organization. The management of Emerson, Saudi Arabia, witnessed a positive shift in organizational performance and observed a correlation between the positive shift in performance at a time when they were actively narrowing their diversity gap in the place of employment. They tasked the team with the research question of investigating this observed relationship and reporting empirical evidence to substantiate or refute their observations. The research adopted a quantitative design where a Likert scale survey was developed while compiling question items from published reliable survey scales that measure constructs such as perceived gender diversity with the perceived operationalization of diversity in the workplace and perceived organizational performance. The research scale used for this study was assessed for its validity and its reliability in light of its use in the context of a workplace in Saudi Arabia. Our findings confirm that there is a positive correlation between perceived gender diversity and perceived organizational performance at Emerson, Saudi Arabia. In addition, we report evidence that perceived gender diversity in the workplace impacts perceived organizational performance.

The research findings align with the ongoing conversation in the literature on the impact of gender diversity of various elements of organizational performance. This led us to recommend to Emerson to share the findings of this study with their leadership levels so that the return on investment for promoting a gender aware workplace is clearly stated in tangible manners such as performance.

Keywords: Gender Diversity, Organizational Performance, Saudi Arabia, Emerson Automation Solutions.

Literature review

A number of the studies we engaged in covered the relationship between organizational performance and gender diversity and indicated that employees, irrespective of their diversity backgrounds, positively acknowledged diversity, and the need for diversity management. Studies indicated that employees' perception of the promotion of gender diversity was found to be positively related to perceived organizational performance (B. Hollowell, 2007). (K. Rowland, S. Simons, 2011) (Major, 2014).

On the other hand, studies also showed that significant differences were observed among employees when it comes to valuing the diversity practices. Perceiving and acknowledging gender diversity is not synonymous to valuing it.

It is often recognized that the vision of a company can be achieved by means of bringing creative minds. As such, embracing differing traits in the workforce is a proxy for the execution of visions and missions (L. Atiyah, 2016).

Objective

This study aimed to examine the relationship and impact of gender diversity in the workplace on the perceived organizational performance.

To achieve such purpose, this study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What is relationship between perceived diversity management and perceived organizational performance?
2. Is there a difference in perception of males and females towards diversity and diversity management?
3. Is there a difference in perception of males and females towards the equal developmental opportunities in Emerson?
4. Is there a difference in perception of males and females towards hiring and retaining diverse employees in Emerson?
5. Is there a difference in perception of males and females towards promotion of gender diversity?

Methodology

This research required a collection of primary self-reported data and adopted a quantitative research strategy. A survey was developed by adopting measurement scales deemed reliable from the literature.

The survey items set to measure a set of constructs that relate to diversity, diversity management and organizational performance. The survey was distributed using the Qualtrics software package and reached all employees of Emerson, Saudi Arabia. The reliability of the survey was assessed and was found to be satisfactory by computing the Cronbach Alpha (Alpha= .880).

Analysis and findings

The findings of the study showed that, perceived gender diversity and perceived organizational performance have a statistically significant linear relationship with a positive correlation factor $r = .880$. A linear regression analysis was also conducted and shows that perception of diversity impacts the perceived organizational performance. These results are in line with what has been discussed in previous studies.

Moreover, the correlation between diversity management and organizational performance is found to be positive with a correlation factor of .565. Furthermore, while conducting an ANOVA analysis, we found that there is no difference in perception of males and females towards diversity and diversity management, towards equal developmental opportunities, hiring and retaining diverse employees, and towards promotion of gender diversity at Emerson Automation Solutions.

Conclusions

The empirical findings of the study show evidence that both genders in Emerson perceive diversity and diversity management similarly. Although the findings are based on self-reported perceptions, the latter is an indication that Emerson is managing gender diversity to a level that it is positively impacting its organizational performance.

Research Digest

Understanding the Influencing Factors on Unicorn in the MENA Region: An Interpretive Structural Modelling Approach

Albandari Alotaibi, Amjaad Aljassas, Munirah Almulhim, Raghd Alsowayna

Dr. Rajaa Clouse, Dr Samantha Kozak (IES) | Industry: Innovation Ecosystem Society | 2021

Abstract

This research sought to present a conceptual framework depicting the mechanisms that interact and affect the makeup of unicorn companies in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. Available literature resources on the subject were used as data sources to extract the pertinent factors influencing startups to grow into unicorn companies. To draw on a systematic and replicable methodology to derive the factors and the relationship between these factors, the Interpretive Structural Modeling (ISM) methodology was used to guide our understanding of the factors contributing to the rise of unicorn and in particular to showcase how these factors relate to each other in terms of driving power and dependence power. The methodology also enables us to order the factors in tiers of influence power. Through analysis of the existing and relevant literature at the time the study, we found 10 major factors that interact and makeup unicorns in the MENA region and used an iterative process to categorize them into three different tiers with the top tier depicting the most influential factors: (i) Tier 1 factor(s): innovation, business model, funding and investment, ecosystem and community, high supply and demand, and team dynamics (ii), Tier 2 factor(s): government interest, network and relation, and media attention (iii) Tiers 3 factor(s): founder's persona. The conceptual model was further validated qualitatively with experts' evaluation who confirmed the relevance of the factors extracted in impacting the makeup of unicorns in the region. When interpreting the implications of the factors in the conceptual framework, we focus, at first hand, on recommending that incubators of startup ideas consider the most influential factors found in the model to leverage guiding new startups into the propensity of becoming unicorns. We further recommend that investors also consider the factors found and their driving power to assess the Return on Investment (ROI) and the propensity of the investment leading to a unicorn. In more general terms, accelerators and business incubators can benefit from such a depiction of the factors impacting unicorns that led to our conceptual framework to develop and strengthen ecosystems for the services provided.

Keywords: Unicorn, Startup, Investment, MENA

Literature review

In an attempt to identify the key factors and elements that constitute a unicorn in the MENA region, this study benefited from a content-centric review of the literature based on a multiple-stage approach. The literature review played a significant role because it entailed going through various articles related to the factors that constitute unicorns in the MENA region in a systematic way and through a number of iterations. We selected relevant keywords with the core theme of this approach to obtain a comprehensive set of related academic articles. We then used a cluster analysis approach to group, to list and to categorize similar research articles and documents into respective categories. The literature review phase of our research constituted our data collection phase.

A number of iterations of the literature review revealed several elements that are shown to be causally related to the makeup of unicorns. The final set of influencing factors we reached by analyzing the literature are Founder Persona, Business model, Government Interest, Innovation, Funding, Team dynamics, Relationship and Networking, Ecosystem and Community, Media Attention, and High Supply and Demand.

Objective

This research study seeks to understand the factors that lead to the makeup of unicorn startups in the MENA region. Upon extracting factors from the literature, this research aims to reveal the interrelations between the factors and aims to categorize them based on their influence power. The output of this research is a conceptual framework of factors that makeup unicorn startups. The conceptual framework would depict the factors, their interrelations and their rank based on their driver (influence) power.

Methodology

We applied the systematic approach employed in the Interpretive Structural Modelling (ISM) methodology. ISM is used in generating conceptual framework especially in areas that witness a shortage of empirical research. The methodology has a predetermined set of steps to follow so that a systematic and replicable approach is adopted. The first state is to generate a matrix that outlines the relationships between the factors that were extracted from the literature. This is then followed by further developing an Initial Reachability Matrix that considers the transitivity propriety across the interacting factors. Once the relationships between factors is agreed interpretatively, the driving power and the dependence power for each factor is computed. The latter impacts the final hierarchy of factors in the conceptual framework.



Analysis and findings

The conceptual framework that we derived following the ISM methodology, contains three tiers of factors based on their influence (driving) power. In the first tier, we find that innovation, business model, funding and investment, ecosystem and community, high supply and demand, and team dynamics are the most influencing factors that impact the makeup of a Unicorn. The second tier of factors encompass the government interest, network and relation, and media attention. Lastly, the least influential variable reached according to the ISM methodology in the last tier is the founder's persona. The latter is considered to have a less powerful impact among all other factors. The model is further validated by an expert in entrepreneurial investment management who worked closely with unicorn startups and who agreed to the factors included in the conceptual framework and also to the hierarchy derived.

Conclusions

The model represents a steppingstone to understanding the factors impacting the rise of unicorns in the MENA region. The framework that resulted from this study can be used to assist investors in assessing factors that can be readily visible to them such as team dynamics. Business accelerators and incubators can improve the portfolio of services they offer entrepreneurs by focusing on empowering the ecosystem and promoting practices that support innovation, which sits at the highest tier of the conceptual framework and helps attract media attention and government support which were also depicted to be influential factors in the makeup of unicorns in the region.

Research Digest

The Obstacles of Female Social Entrepreneur in Saudi Arabia

Abrar Khaled Alrayes, Haneen Tarig Aolagi, Reem Mohammed AlFurhud Sarah Abdulrahman Alhussain

Dr. Sarah Fraser | Industry: Women's Skills Bureau | 2021

Abstract

Our research question is (The obstacles that face female social entrepreneurs in Saudi Arabia). And this practicum research is sponsored by **Women Skills Bureau**. A group of expatriate women in 2000, created the Women's Skills Bureau (WSB), to assist expatriates in Saudi Arabia. Twenty years later, the Women's Skills Bureau (WSB) has expanded from exclusively concentrating on expatriate spouses to bringing professional women from the Saudi and expatriate communities together.

In our literature review, we shed the light on social entrepreneurship in Saudi Arabia and how it has slowly grown in the past few years. Researchers determined that female social entrepreneur faces significant obstacles, some of these obstacles are comparable in different cultures such as finance problems, gender equality, an individual problem similar to the fear of failure, and the absence of social support.

To collect our data, we tried to use different methods such as focus group and survey however, due to COVID-19 we weren't able to do focus group meetings and were left with only the survey.

Our findings determined that female social entrepreneurs face some obstacles such as finances and risk-taking problems, an individual problem similar to the fear of failure and how to support female social entrepreneur.

Literature Review

In the literature review, it focused in four main subjects which are Female Social entrepreneurship, Education, women empowerment and sustainable development and from a number of academic sources.

Objective

From the practicum findings it could help to reach these objectives

- Creating opportunities for women in the kingdom of Saudi Arabia
- Providing coaching, mentoring and skills development in a professional way that led to a professional path of social entrepreneur.
- Providing opportunities for professional development by providing an education that improve the society.
- To understand and to have useful findings in the area of female social entrepreneurs.
- Finding solutions to the obstacles facing social entrepreneur such as (Financial complication and Fear of taking risk)
- Helping economic growth in Saudi Arabia and making recommendations to improve sustainability in society by referring to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and Vision 2030.

Methodology

Questionnaire Design:

The questionnaire consisted of 34 questions, which were focused on various aspects of social entrepreneurship.

- The first group of questions focused on the obstacles, demographic and support
- The second group of questions focused on female social entrepreneurship skills.

Data Collection Method and Tools:

We relied on creating a survey form using Google form that specifically targeted female social entrepreneurs to find out their opinions

Research Design:

Qualitative research primarily focuses on the words in the data collection and analysis, and conducting academic references, quantitative research principally focuses on the quantification of data gathering and analysis.

Research Ethics:

- Credibility is the key element for evaluating the truth value of qualitative research
- That is why the questionnaire is mainly used in the field of studies that aim to explore facts about current practices, public opinion polls.

- The questionnaire provides sufficient time for the respondent or collaborator with the researcher to think about his answers.

Search Limitations:

- Research Limitations are the influences that the researcher cannot control.
- One of the research's established limitations may be that the results are inaccurate or cannot be generalized

Analysis and findings

Brief findings:

Demographic results:

The highest age brackets are female at age +50 years old they constitute 29.8 %, this was followed by the age between 40 – 50 years old which constitute 25.5 %.

What Support Female Social Entrepreneur:

The results show that:

- 61.7 per cent started their idea by themselves.
- 63.8 per cent answered that they motivated by themselves.
- 51 per cent did not have a mentor or someone to guide them in their journey.

The Major Obstacles:

- **Financial Complications:**

57.4 percent did face financial difficulties in their journey.

- **The Fear of Failure:**

72.3 percent of female social entrepreneurs agreed that the fear of failure is one of the major obstacles they faced when they started

Female Social Entrepreneur Skills:

- **Creativity**

51.1 % of the participants rate 4 out 5.

- **Communication**

The vast majority which is 42 % rated themselves as 5 out of 5.

- **Finance**

The majority 53.2 % rate themselves 3 out of 5.

- **Self-confidence**

The majority of 53.2 % rated themselves 5 out of 5, which indicates a greater level of self-confidence.

- **Marketing**

The scale indicates that 40.4 % rated themselves as 3 out of 5 which indicates that it is a skill that needs to develop for their business to survive.

- **Innovation**

The scale amazingly indicates that 48,9 % rated themselves with 5 out of 5 and that they have great innovation skills

- **Risk-taking**

- 31.9 % of the participants rated themselves as 3 out of 5, while getting so close
- 29.9 % rated themselves as 5 out of 5.

Conclusions

This practicum has conducted a survey to study the obstacles of female social entrepreneurs and a deep understanding on how to support social entrepreneurs in Saudi Arabia. From the findings, the recommendation has been written to minimize the obstacles that female social entrepreneurs face in light of The 2030 Vision. Therefore, implementing these recommendations it could help in achieving the 2030 Vision of Saudi Arabia and empowering female and create a new opportunity for female in Saudi Arabia. Besides, it supports sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations by achieving gender equality and empower all women and promoting sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all.