

**Does Environment Influence
Entrepreneurship? - Empirical
Evidence from Aspiring Emirati Women
Entrepreneurs in United Arab Emirates**

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Abstract

In recent times, women in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) have been taking a keen interest in entrepreneurship, with a greater number of women showing intentions to become entrepreneurs. Therefore, this study aimed to identify the variables that would influence women to become entrepreneurs. The participants were 100 aspiring Emirati women entrepreneurs, and Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) was the approach used to analyze the data. The results suggested that all identified variables, namely cultural, social, demographic, and environmental, were found to have an impact on women's entrepreneurship. However, the environmental variable was found to have the most significant impact on women becoming entrepreneurs in the UAE. It is imperative to state that the UAE environment has a profound impact on women's entrepreneurship. The results showed a significant impact and implications for the UAE's business and social environment, as more women are willing to contribute to UAE economic growth by embracing entrepreneurship and becoming entrepreneurs. and social environment, as more women are willing to contribute to UAE economic growth by embracing entrepreneurship and becoming entrepreneurs.

Keywords:

Environmental Variables, Cultural Variables, Demographic Variables, Social Variables, Entrepreneurship, Emirati Women, United Arab Emirates

Introduction

Entrepreneurship plays a critical role in both the growth and development of a society. However, women's entrepreneurship (WE) is still an untapped source of economic and social development, despite its growth potential (Alanzi et al., 2022; Dana et al., 2021; Hechevarria et al., 2019; Itani et al., 2011; Yadav and Unni, 2016). Compared to men, fewer women opt for entrepreneurship (Cardella et al., 2020; Elam et al., 2019), especially under the "religious" ambit. Traditionally, the religion of Islam upholds a very powerful role model in the form of Khadija, the first wife of the Prophet Mohammed, a wealthy trader and powerful businesswoman of her time. The UAE is predominantly an Islamic nation, and the religion places some restrictions on women. As a result of these restrictions, entrepreneurial activities among women in the Middle East represent only 4% of its population (Salama, 2016). Matroushi et al. (2020) studied WE using "push-pull factors," which is a theory that they propounded. They found that WE encounters several challenges related to education, a low level of entrepreneurial and managerial skills, and a lack of appropriate training. In effect, these have been found to be the most significant factors that influence both the growth and success of Emirati women entrepreneurs. Goby and Erogul (2011) were possibly among the first to study women's entrepreneurial initiatives in the UAE. They found that the socio-cultural context and adequate employment opportunities are among the major constraints influencing entrepreneurial intention among women. Over a period, other studies have also focused on multiple aspects of WE in the Middle East in general and in the UAE in particular (Ahmed et al., 2019; Amponsah and Ahmed, 2017a,b; Bouzari et al., 2021; Jabeen et al., 2015; Mehtap et al., 2017; Shetty et al., 2022; Sicard, 2017; Tahir and Baradie, 2019; Tlaiss, 2014). Some of the salient challenges of WE in the UAE include issues in the acquisition of initial capital, an inability to recruit and retain employees, competition, gender disparity, a lack of training, and fewer opportunities for networking (Mathew, 2019; Miller et al., 2017; Tahir and Baradie, 2019; Yavuz, 2022; Zhu et al., 2019). To strengthen, encourage, and promote WE, the UAE government has undertaken several initiatives in recent times. For instance, it has begun providing monetary assistance and knowledge support to help nurture the new ideas of aspiring entrepreneurs into reality (Anas and Ahmed, 2017; Tahir and Baradie, 2019). It also established organizations, such as Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum Global Initiatives (MBRGI, 2003) and Khalifa Fund for Women Entrepreneurs (KFED, 2007), to empower communities and spread knowledge for developing entrepreneurs in the UAE. Apart from these significant government initiatives, even the global community at large has begun contributing to these endeavors.

In terms of the educational backdrop in the UAE, it should be noted that among the total number of university graduates, 70% are women. Moreover, 40% are an integral part of the UAE's labor force (IBG Consulting, 2018). As per the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) (2019) report, there has been an increase in the number of women entrepreneurs from a mere 0.2% in 2006 to 1.4% in 2017. Despite this significant growth journey that women entrepreneurs have witnessed thus far, several authors have contended that statistics relating to WE have not yet been thoroughly and adequately studied, especially in the context of the Middle Eastern nations and the growing economies of the world. Some of the lacunae that other authors have pointed to include a combination of variables from cultural, social, and demographic aspects (Gbadamosi, 2019; Mathew, 2019; Al Matroushi et al., 2020; Suja, 2019; Tahir and Baradie, 2019; Yadav and Unni, 2016). Some authors have also found that there is a long way to go in achieving growth in WE (Bouguerra, 2015; Yadav and Unni, 2016). Notably, to date, most studies on entrepreneurship have primarily focused only on comparisons between men and women entrepreneurs (Henry et al., 2016). Moreover, there have been very few studies that have considered a new variable (i.e., the environmental variable) as a contributing factor in discussing WE. Given this gap that exists in the extant literature, the present study looks to identify the influence of cultural, social, demographic, and environmental variables on aspiring women entrepreneurs in the UAE.

Our rationale to include the environmental variable was based on the UAE's unique position as host to the most diversified population in the world, as 90% of the population are expatriates (The United Arab Emirates Government Portal, 2020). Thus, we chose the new environmental variable to identify and test its impact on women who aspire to become successful entrepreneurs. The primary data were collected through a survey method from aspiring women entrepreneurs (representing different ethnic groups, including UAE nationals). The outcomes of the study have the potential to guide and provide direction for policymakers, government agencies, etc. when working on specific strategies to further strengthen WE in the UAE. Furthermore, the outcomes could open new avenues for research related to the newly included environmental variable.

Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

Literature Review

Most of the existing literature identifying the factors and determinants influencing WE focused on developing their entrepreneurial intentions. This led us to explore the same, along with the factors that are responsible for its development. Additionally, we conducted this systematic literature review to identify different variables that influence women to opt for entrepreneurship and identify gaps, based upon which the hypotheses of the study were developed.

Entrepreneurial intention (EI) has been defined as an individual's interest and readiness to opt for an entrepreneurial venture (Tkachev and Kolvereid, 1999). Understanding more about the process of entrepreneurial activities is an essential requirement as it forms the basis for new organizations (van Gelderen et al., 2008). Existing literature has discussed EI through two prominent models. The first is known as the "entrepreneurial event model" (Shapiro, 1975), while the second is the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) (Ajzen, 1991; van Gelderen et al., 2008). In the first model, propensity to act, along with perceived desirability and feasibility, represent the three dimensions that are established by cultural and social factors. In the second model, EI is associated with behavioral intentions and perceived behavioral control. TPB identifies that attitude, social behavior, and social pressure from relatives, parents, and colleagues have a significant influence on one's intention to take up entrepreneurship. Later, a few studies added two additional components to the existing models: desirability and perceived self-efficacy (Krueger et al., 2000).

Palalic et al. (2017) empirically studied EI among university students using variables like previous experience related to entrepreneurship, gender, year and discipline of study, and their perception towards studying entrepreneurship courses. They found that positive business environments do influence students' motivation to become entrepreneurs. Moreover, entrepreneurial education increases an individual's inclination towards entrepreneurship. Additionally, entrepreneurial self-efficacy and gender (Nowiński et al., 2017), fear of failure, and self-efficacy (Verheul and Mil, 2011; Wieland et al., 2019) seemed to have a greater impact on EI and a career in entrepreneurship. Further, a study conducted in Nigeria by Sajuyigbe and Fadeyibi (2017) portrayed the role of WE in sustainable economic development.

While the importance of EI has been established, several studies, even in discussing WE, have actually failed to focus on EI. For instance, Ramadani et al. (2013) investigated opportunities for growth and development in entrepreneurship along with the problems that women entrepreneurs face. They even benchmarked them against the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) reports. However, they failed to encompass the importance of entrepreneurial intention among women. Other studies looked to understand some of the influencing factors for women entrepreneurs, such as personal characteristics, motives for starting a business, nature of the business, size,

revenues, family status, family business background, and issues in managing the business, coupled with competencies required to manage those businesses in transition economies and finance options available to women entrepreneurs (Anggadwita and Dhewanto, 2016; Hadjimanolis and Poutziouris, 2011; Kargwell, 2021; Ramadani et al., 2015; Yousfani et al., 2019). However, even they failed to address EI. Several scholars have also developed various frameworks and empirically tested the influence of socio-cultural environments on women entrepreneurs. Studies related to the decision-making process in family businesses owned by women are found to be very scarce, and group decision-making is found to be an important one in deciding the influence of gender in succession planning in family businesses (Ramadani et al., 2018).

Entrepreneurial triggers in women were classified as individual motivations for entrepreneurship, socio-cultural factors, the option to access finance at an initial stage (Jones and Mosteanu, 2019), education and incubation (Al Matroushi et al., 2020), and an encouraging business environment for entrepreneurship. In an empirical study of first-generation entrepreneurs in the UAE, Kargwell and Inguva (2012) found that university students considered education, networking, recognition, and reward to be the most important factors for becoming entrepreneurs. Yet, in another study, Mohammed (2019) stated that support for entrepreneurial education, including relational and structural support, along with career plans after university programs, do tend to influence entrepreneurial interest, specifically among women. A recent study conducted by Sadeghi et al. (2021) in 25 emerging countries related to what drives women to opt for domestic vs. international business found that when women are tempted towards financial rewards, they opt for international entrepreneurship, and as job alternatives lead to starting businesses in their home countries (Sadeghi et al., 2021).

Furthermore, perceived behavior control, attitudes towards entrepreneurship, and subjective norms are also key determinants of entrepreneurial intention (Ajzen, 1991). Hadjimanolis and Poutziouris (2011) and Nguyen (2018) both noted that when the family itself has a business background, it greatly influences entrepreneurial intention. Interestingly, our study reveals that men exhibit higher entrepreneurial intentions than women, regardless of "family background."

Hypotheses Development

Impact of Cultural Variables

As discussed in the introduction, several socio-cultural factors, such as religion and traditions, have a significant influence on WE (Gamage et al., 2003; Kreiser et al., 2010; Mueller and Thomas, 2001; Saffu, 2003; Johnson et al., 2013). This influence can be either negative or positive. For instance, religious and socio-cultural norms (i.e., religious values, ethnicity, marital status), support from family members, access to capital (Jones and Mosteanu, 2019), government support, entrepreneurial skills, and education positively and significantly influence WE in the UAE (Sneha and Olivia, 2018; Al Matroushi et al., 2020). In fact, the socio-cultural environment of any given society is comprised of habits, behaviors, lifestyles, value systems, and norms that lead to various other conditions within the society (Dana et al., 2021; Dana et al., 2022; Johnson et al., 2013; Kargwell and Inguva, 2012). Therefore, the influence of cultural variables needs to be thoroughly understood in order to develop strategies that promote WE (Mehtap et al., 2017; Ramadani et al., 2018; Tahir and Baradie, 2019). Based upon the same, we posit:

Hypothesis-1: There is a positive impact of cultural variables on developing women entrepreneurship in the UAE.

Impact of Social variables

Furthermore, both entrepreneurial interest and intention among women are intrinsically linked to social as well as socio-demographic variables that include the age and gender of the entrepreneur, qualifications, previous experience in terms of employment, and the presence and impact of any role models, among others (Bhaskar and Bimal, 2021; Light et al., 2013; Nguyen, 2018). The social environment includes the role of reference groups, the influence of family members, peers, family background, school environment and media, groups, and leaders in entrepreneurship as role models in society (Anas and Ahmed, 2017; Hadjimanolis and Poutziouris, 2011; Ramadani et al., 2013). Dana (1995) compared the empirical findings with established theories on entrepreneurship in a remote sub-Arctic Alaskan town. The study revealed that Eskimos and non-native respondents relate to opportunity quite differently, meaning that "entrepreneurship should not be viewed as a function of opportunity, but rather as a function of cultural perception of opportunity" (Dana, 1995, p. XX). Further, Dana (1996) suggested that cultural constraints do affect an individual's response to opportunity, leading us to posit:

Hypothesis-2: There is a positive impact of social, as well as socio-cultural variables on developing women entrepreneurship in the UAE.

Impact of Demographic Variables

Several scholars have chosen to focus on demographic variables that have a significant influence on WE. For instance, Hisrich and Brush (1986) were possibly among the first to state that demographic variables greatly influence women entrepreneurs. Later, other researchers went on to expand upon the influence of demographic variables by including personal desirability (Kolvereid, 1996), the age of the entrepreneur (Anas and Ahmed,

2017; Nguyen, 2018; Saiqal and Yousif, 2017), and financial security (van Gelderen et al., 2008). Based on the discussion above, we posit:

Hypothesis-3: There is a positive impact of demographic variables on developing women entrepreneurship in the UAE.

Impact of Environmental Variables

One of the earliest studies conducted on the entrepreneurial intentions of the respondents in a remote sub-arctic community revealed the impact of the environment on becoming entrepreneurs (Dana, 1995). As noted earlier, the UAE is a highly diverse country, with its population comprising almost 90% expats from various countries (The United Arab Emirates Government Portal, 2020). This cultural diversity has a significant influence on WE (Anggadwita and Dhewanto, 2016). In a comprehensive study on entrepreneurship development in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), Dana et al. (2021) examined the government's role in enhancing entrepreneurship. They noted that along with state support systems, government initiatives play a role in developing an entrepreneurial-friendly eco-system that motivates women to choose entrepreneurship as their career (GEM, 2019; Israr and Salem, 2018; Mathew, 2019). The factors within this eco-system have been classified by the authors under a new variable named "environmental variables." Legal rules, state support, and policies of the government are part of this new variable, and they play a vital role in affecting WE (Stephen et al., 2009). Based upon the discussion above, we posit:

Hypothesis-4: There is a positive impact of environmental variables on developing women entrepreneurship in the UAE.

In yet another study, Dana (1990a) looked at two different cultures in terms of their economic development. It was noted that entrepreneurs are often hindered in their initiatives because of excessive paperwork, and the government is not proactive in making quick decisions. However, with supportive government policies and procedures, entrepreneurship does get a boost, albeit it is dependent on socio-cultural aspects. Based on our critical literature review, we develop a conceptual framework by considering the four variables, i.e. cultural, social, demographic, and environmental.

Conceptual Model

Researchers developed a conceptual model intended to test the same to find its influence on aspiring women for entrepreneurship in the UAE (see Figure 1). The selected cultural, social, demographic, and environmental variables represent different facets and influences in developing women entrepreneurs in the UAE. The novelty of the study is to identify the influence of environmental variables, which are unique to the UAE environment. The outcomes would provide a much-needed cue to the educators, policymakers, venture capitalists, and other stakeholders involved in developing women entrepreneurs in the UAE.

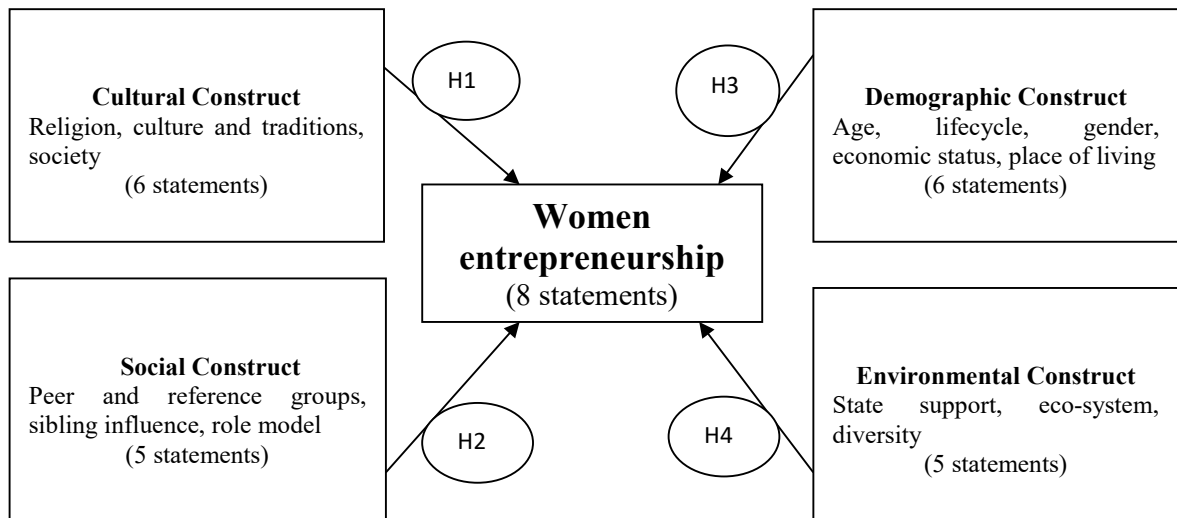


Figure 1: Conceptual Model and Hypotheses

In Figure 1, a description of the formulation of the proposed conceptual model and hypotheses to be tested empirically can be observed

Research Methodology

We followed a quantitative and cross-sectional research design and intended to identify the influence of socio-cultural, demographic, and environmental variables on aspiring women entrepreneurs (both UAE nationals and expatriates).

The 150 respondents targeted for this study included women from diverse backgrounds who were determined based on their age groups, marital status, academic qualifications, profession and employment, financial status, and residence. We briefed the respondents about the purpose of the study and subsequently sought their participation. Upon acceptance, they were provided with a structured questionnaire. Notably, as there were restrictions on male investigators interacting with the female respondents at the place of this study, we sought the assistance of female investigators who were specially trained on the data collection process.

Further, our questionnaire had four constructs that included cultural, social, demographic, and environmental factors. These factors were considered influential on the subject of WE. Notably, the cultural and demographic constructs were based on six statements, while the socio-environmental constructs had five statements each. The WE construct had eight statements (refer to Figure 1). In all, there were 30 statements and five constructs; moreover, there were six demographic questions. All statements were based on a five-point Likert scale (ranging from 1 strongly disagree to 5 strongly agree) framed to measure the influence of the selected constructs on developing WE in the UAE.

Analysis and Discussion

The demographic profiles of the 150 respondents (aspiring women entrepreneurs) are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic profiles of the respondents

Demographic variables	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age	Less than 30 years	72	48
	31-40 years	63	42
	More than 40 years	15	10
Income	Less than AED 10000	42	28
	10,001-15,000	9	6
	15,001-20,000	57	38
	More than AED 20,000	42	28
Marital Status	Married	87	58
	Single	63	42
Family	Joint	105	70
	Separated	45	30
Experience	Have work experience	123	82
	No work experience	27	18
Place of Residence	City	138	92
	Town	9	6
	Village	3	2

Table 1 shows that 90% of the respondents were below 40 years of age, 58% were married, 70% lived in joint families, 82% had prior work experience (including 92% in cities), while 66% earned more than AED 15,000 per month.

We conducted the Kaiser Meyer Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's tests to check the suitability of data. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Results of KMO and Bartlett's Tests

Kaiser Meyer Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy		0.677
Bartlett's test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	6807.144
	Df	861
	Sig.	.000

A 0.677 value of Kaiser Meyer Olkin (KMO) measure, which is >0.60 and therefore significant, and the Bartlett's test of sphericity value suggests that the data are suitable for further analysis.

Measurement of conceptual model

Further, we used the PLS-SEM methodology, using Smart-PLS 3.0 software to analyze our model. As suggested by previous researchers (Abudaqa et al., 2022; Ahmad et al., 2019a; Ahmad et al., 2019b; Bhatti et al., 2019; Riaz et al., 2020; Shaikh et al., 2020; Zakaria et al., 2020), the PLS-SEM method requires a two-stage measurement model along with a structural model estimation. The measurement model assessed internal consistency reliability, Cronbach's alpha (CA), composite reliability (CR), and average variance extracted (AVE). It also provided insights into the discriminating validity of the constructs and the proposed hypothesized relationships, including theories and the predictive relevance of the proposed model of this study.

As seen in Table 3, all outer loads of individual items were greater than the value of 0.70. Notably, this minimum threshold was achieved through CR and CA values, which indicate that all the tests were stable in terms of their individual item reliability and CR (Wong 2013). Moreover, the AVE values above the threshold value of 0.50 for each construct indicated the statistical correctness of all objects in the measurement model.

In addition, we used another method to determine discriminant validity, namely the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) Ratio of Correlations. Herein, the values of HTMT were calculated using the PLS algorithm. Notably, the findings were significantly lower than 1, meaning that all latent structures achieved discriminant validity (Henseler et al., 2015). Additionally, the findings indicated that discriminant validity was defined at HTMT 0.90, which implies that the values for the inter-construction ratio were below 0.90 and that the confidence intervals did not include a value of 1.0 (Henseler et al., 2015).

In the next step, we analyzed the hypothesized relationships in the structural model between the constructs. In fact, by analyzing how well the observed information matches the hypothesised relationship between the constructs, we used the model's explanatory power, as suggested by Chin (1998). Subsequently, we used the bootstrap resampling technique to test each significant coefficient. We had 5,000 duplications, as suggested by Hair et al. (2014), to test all of the hypothesized relationships using randomly selected subsamples.

Table 3: Measurement Model Estimation

Construct Name	Items	Factor Loading	Cronbach Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE of latent constructs
	CV1	0.784			
Cultural Variable (CV)	CV2	0.772	0.847	0.895	0.682
	CV3	0.848			
	CV4	0.872			
	CV6	0.808			
Social Variable (SV)	SV1	0.784	0.888	0.922	0.748
	SV2	0.823			
	SV3	0.878			
	SV4	0.883			
	SV5	0.873			
Demographic Variable (DV)	DV1	0.894	0.808	0.872	0.631
	DV2	0.814			
	DV4	0.863			
	DV5	0.710			
	DV6	0.783			
Environmental Variable (EV)	EV1	0.891	0.826	0.884	0.657
	EV2	0.766			
	EV3	0.822			
	EV4	0.86			
	EV5	0.792			
Women Entrepreneurial (WE)	WE1	0.783	0.9	0.921	0.625
	WE2	0.826			
	WE3	0.826			
	WE4	0.775			
	WE5	0.786			
	WE6	0.821			
	WE7	0.757			
	WE8	0.742			

Additionally, for evaluating the measurement model, we also assessed the discriminant validity of the latent constructs by applying the Fornell and Larcker (1981) criteria, which specifies that all latent constructs differ from the other constructs by suggesting that the square root of the AVE of all constructs is greater than their correlations (Roldán and Sánchez-Franco, 2012). The latent constructs are therefore discriminantly true. Table 4 presents the square roots of AVE of all the constructs, showing that the discriminant validity of all the constructs was achieved.

Table 4: Discriminant Validity

Construct Name	Items	Factor Loading	Cronbach Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE of latent constructs
Cultural Variable (CV)	CV1	0.784	0.847	0.895	0.682
	CV2	0.772			
	CV3	0.848			
	CV4	0.872			
	CV6	0.808			
Social Variable (SV)	SV1	0.784	0.888	0.922	0.748
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	EV3	0.822			
	EV4	0.86			
	EV5	0.792			
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	WE2	0.826			
	WE3	0.826			
	WE4	0.775			
	WE5	0.786			
	WE6	0.821			
	WE7	0.757			
	WE8	0.742			

Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio of Correlations

The results of the analysis showed that cultural variables (CV) have a positive and meaningful correlation with WE ($\beta=0.755$, $t=21.944$, $p=0.000$), validating the proposed hypotheses. Furthermore, the findings also indicate that the social variable (SV) does have a positive and important relation with WE ($\beta=0.048$, $t=11.902$, $p=0.000$). In addition, the demographic variable (DV) also has a strong and important correlation with WE ($\beta=0.090$, $t= 2.183$, $p=0.029$) and supports the proposed hypotheses. Importantly, the environmental variable also has a positive and significant correlation with WE ($\beta=0.121$, $t=5.114$, $p=0.00$), thereby again supporting the proposed hypotheses.

Furthermore, our results show that all of these predictors are important factors in developing WE (see Table 5). The findings concur with previous studies (e.g., Carter and Allen, 1997; Meyer, 2009; Moses and Amalu, 2010). Previous studies suggested that when social, demographic, environmental, and cultural factors are significantly influenced, WE is highly influenced. Therefore, all these determinants are considered important and thereby need to be adopted by the stakeholders

Table 5: Hypothesis Testing

	Original Sample	Standard Deviation	T Statistics	P Values	Decision
CV -> WE	0.755	0.034	21.944	0.000	Supported
DV -> WE	0.090	0.041	2.183	0.029	Supported
EV -> WE	0.121	0.024	5.114	0.000	Supported
SV -> WE	0.408	0.034	11.902	0.000	Supported

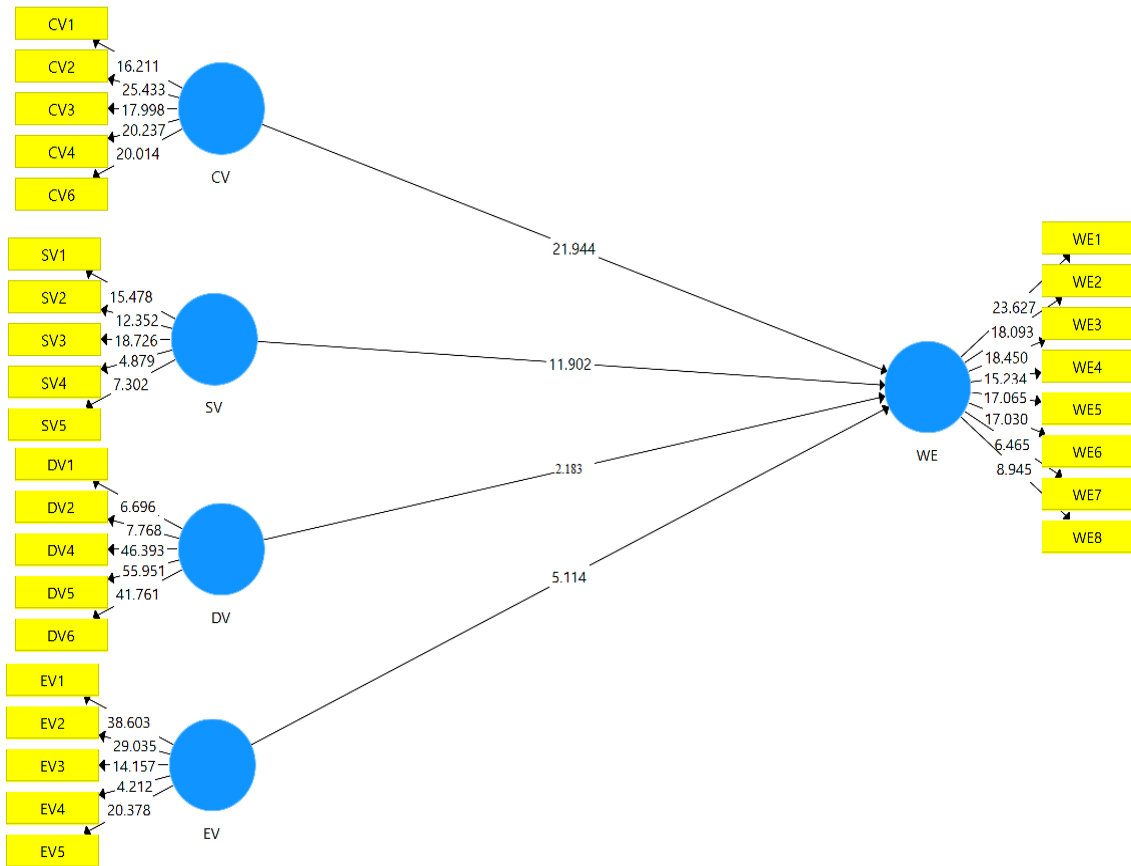


Figure 2 : Structural Model

Conclusions

This empirical study was conducted to identify the determinants of the entrepreneurial intention of aspiring women entrepreneurs in the UAE. The influence of cultural, social, demographic, and environmental variables on WE was studied by administering a structured questionnaire as a survey instrument to obtain responses from the sample. To analyze the collected data, we used a Partial Least Square (PLS)-Structural Equation Model (SEM) approach.

The results from SEM on different constructs revealed that all the variables under study have a positive influence over the development of WE in the UAE. Notably, several existing studies considered cultural, social, and demographic variables. However, studies considering the environmental variable have been limited, and it is in this regard that this study differs from others based on its identification of the influence of an environmental variable on the entrepreneurial intention of women aspiring to become entrepreneurs. We had asked the participants to respond to five statements related to this environmental variable, i.e., state support, ecosystem, and diversity. In addition to the influence of the environmental variable, we also noted that the place of living, influence of the elder sister, friends, uncomplicated procedures to commence business, and being young are some of the most crucial variables that have a major impact on the development of WE in the UAE. These findings corroborate those of Stephen et al. (2009), Anggadwita and Dhewanto (2016), Israr and Salem (2018), GEM (2019), Mathew (2019), and Hassan (2022) in the UAE and other parts of the world.

Hence, the salience of our study lies in the findings of the aspect of the environmental variable. Nevertheless, it is imperative to note that the demographic variable also significantly influences Emirati women's interest in becoming entrepreneurs. We believe that such a contribution would pave the way for a new trend of research on the influence of environmental variables among aspiring women entrepreneurs.

Study Implications

The results of this study have provided interesting insights. The findings of this study provide two major implications, one from a theoretical perspective for researchers and the other from a practical perspective for stakeholders such as the government, policymakers, and entrepreneurial education providers. The study attempted to fill the gaps in the existing works by proposing the influence of a new variable, namely the environmental variable, on WE and expanding the theoretical knowledge. On the other hand, from a practical perspective, educational institutions providing entrepreneurial education can motivate female students towards entrepreneurship by focusing on the variables considered in this study. Similarly, policymakers and the government can encourage women to aspire for entrepreneurship as a career instead of seeking a more typical job by designing policies that are shaped by the variables in this study.

The outcomes of the study have the potential to open new avenues of research in the areas of environmental variables and their impact on the development of WE, with specific reference to state support, the eco-system, and diversity. The study provides a significant contribution to the existing literature in terms of gender and entrepreneurship through highlighting the impact of environmental variables on WE. The study also provides empirical evidence of the influence of environmental variables on developing female entrepreneurs in the UAE, thus portraying the removal of gender barriers in entrepreneurship.

Limitations and Further Research.

Several challenges were encountered in terms of data collection, especially due to socio-cultural restrictions, as our target respondents were women. Thus, we enlisted the help of female investigators and trained them to collect relevant data. Moreover, identifying aspiring women entrepreneurs also posed a challenge, leading to a relatively small sample of data. However, the collected data does yield the requisite outcomes in order to test the impact of the selected variables on developing WE in the UAE. Thirdly, the study did not explore the reasons behind women's choice to become entrepreneurs. Thus, further research may choose to focus on such aspects to identify those specific reasons. Future research could also focus on selecting one or two variables and conducting an in-depth study in order to find their detailed impact.

Fourth, we unveiled the impact of environmental variables on WE in the UAE; such variables could also be used in the future in the context of different countries in order to test their influence and determine the universal impact and any potential patterns (if any). Possibly the most important limitation of this study is the restriction of its scope to only the UAE. Therefore, the results may not be generalized to a similar topic in other countries. In fact, future research may be conducted in other developing countries in order to highlight the variation in results. Lastly, the study has been limited to the direct effect, whereas there may be other variables that could moderate or mediate their relationship. Future research, therefore, could be carried out with both the moderating and mediating variables.

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