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The Impact of Women's Empowerment on Their Entrepreneurship Intention in the Saudi Food Industry

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Abstract: This study takes a novel attempt to examine the impact of women's empowerment in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which has been prioritized recently by the country's leadership as a part of the Saudi Vision 2030, on women's intention towards entrepreneurship. A pre-examined survey was directed to the Saudi women working in KSA's food and beverage businesses. The structural equation modeling results showed a significant positive impact of psychosocial, economic, and political empowerment on Saudi women's intention to engage in entrepreneurship activities. However, the results confirmed a significant negative influence of social empowerment on entrepreneurship intentions. This is because Saudi women did not perceive the proper social empowerment by their community, which negatively influenced their entrepreneurship intention. Hence, interventions by decision-makers are crucial to adopt a media campaign regarding gender equality and the vital contribution of women in the labor market and entrepreneurship. Other implications were discussed for scholars and decision-makers.

Keywords: women's empowerment; entrepreneurial intention; psychological empowerment; economic empowerment; social empowerment; political empowerment; Kingdom of Saudi Arabia



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1. Introduction

Entrepreneurship is the process of using one's entrepreneurial skills to generate wealth through new ventures, which contributes to society and the nation's economy by taking advantage of possibilities in a rapidly changing social, political, legal, and economic environment (Kumar and Singh 2021). Notwithstanding, there is a variation between men and women in their contribution to entrepreneurship. This variation can be explained by the fact that women still have fewer opportunities to make a long-life career (Rossi et al. 2011; Costa et al. 2016). In order to educate women about the value of their contributions to society and to foster women's entrepreneurship, female empowerment and contribution to the labor markets should be addressed (Dautović et al. 2019). Studies (Onu 2021; Karwati et al. 2018) indicate that the level of a better family economy can be enhanced through the introduction of entrepreneurial activities as a means of female empowerment. Additionally, the model of entrepreneurial women is very effective in enhancing their self-reliance. Tanti et al. (2021) commented on the value of global networking among female businesses and entrepreneurs, where mentoring might take place to support women startups and entrepreneurs. Female entrepreneurs implement many strategies, which can include reliance on social relationships for managing home-business expectations and challenges (Ayatakshi-Endow and Steele 2021).

Bhardwaj (2018) introduced the role of education in enhancing the status of women entrepreneurs through empowerment and self-employment and found that there was a significant relationship between the size of the business expansion and the sector of business and profit generated for enhancing community services. Women's informal entrepreneurship has a significant role in family, economic, and societal well-being. It plays an important role in empowering women (Muhammad et al. 2021). Bhukuth et al. (2019) examined how to enhance women's well-being and give them more influence in their homes, communities, and companies. They presented two cases for empowering women through entrepreneurship. They concluded that women entrepreneurs could not grow their businesses independently and needed help from their family members. Additionally, they found that the main motivation for starting a business was the opportunity for financial independence and autonomy. Banihani (2020) found a strong correlation between women's status in society and economic development across several nations, indicating a link between women's emancipation and national economic growth.

In Nigeria, Ali and Salisu (2019), the women's entrepreneurship and empowerment strategy, were investigated for the purposes of national development. It was discovered that cultural stereotypes, unequal access to education, and a lack of funding had an impact on women's entrepreneurship and empowerment. In the Gulf Cooperation Council, Alexandre and Kharabsheh (2019) studied the evolution of women entrepreneurship and indicated a new kind of female entrepreneurship in the Arab region based on the support of the sociocultural environment and female empowerment. Ennis (2019) presented three intersecting political economy logics—the logic of the economy's structure, the logic of development narratives, and the logic of socioeconomic organization—which presented competing tensions for female entrepreneurs in the Gulf and indicated activities of women entrepreneurs that strengthened particular gender norms while generating new types of reliance. Chaudhry and Paquibut (2021) described the characteristics of women entrepreneurs in Oman, their contribution to the economy and plans, and the challenges they faced, such as limited market access, domestic obligations that limited their online time, and a lack of social media marketing expertise.

Nurbatra and Hartono (2020) indicated that the life skill program for women's empowerment positively affected creativity and women's entrepreneurship, which improved economics. Thapa Karki and Xheneti (2018) said that in order to achieve sustainable development goals (SDGs), it was widely acknowledged that women's economic empowerment through entrepreneurship is important. Jakkula (2017) entrepreneurs have developed strategies to increase market share and suggested empowering such entrepreneurs. The same author indicated that they should be included in the various entrepreneurship associations for the overall development of rural entrepreneurship. Chatterjee et al. (2019) showed that increasing female entrepreneurs' participation might boost national growth and empower women. Hence, the influence of important elements on the success of women entrepreneurs (psychological, sociocultural, skill, and resource-related) was explored. Su et al. (2020) adopted the five dimensions to examine women's empowerment in a qualitative study to understand the integration of heritage and tourism into the empowerment of rural women. These dimensions are economic, social, psychological, educational, and political. They found that the most important dimension was economic empowerment. Other dimensions included education, the recognition of their own value and their contribution to the family, self-confidence and positive self-evaluation, and the recognition of personal ability and value.

The above-discussed studies and growth in the literature on the relationship between female empowerment and entrepreneurship often focus on entrepreneurship as a means to empower women. This means that when women engage in entrepreneurship, they feel empowered. The current research has a different assumption that if the decision-makers empower women who used to be segregated and marginalized, they are more likely to engage in entrepreneurship activities to achieve themselves and contribute to their societies. This empowerment can be conducted economically, socially, politically, and

psychologically. The current research examines the impact of women's empowerment, i.e., psychological, social, political, and economic, on women's entrepreneurship intentions in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), where the government recently empowered women as part of the country's vision. The major research question is: to what extent does women's empowerment recently undertaken by the Saudi government impact women's entrepreneurship intentions? What dimensions of female empowerment have the most impact on women's entrepreneurship intention? The current research paper aims to investigate the direct impact of four dimensions of female empowerment (psychological, social, political, and economic) on entrepreneurship intention in the Saudi Arabia context using structural equation modeling as the primary data analysis method. The following sections of the research explore the Saudi context and review the literature to build the research hypothesis. The research then presents the research methods and the results of the collected data. It then discusses these results and provides implications of the study for decision-makers and scholars.

2. The Saudi Context

According to the [GDP World Bank \(2020\)](#) statistics, The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) has the largest economy in the Middle East and is the eighteenth largest in the world. However, the economy was dependent mainly on oil since KSA is the second-largest producer of oil after the United States and has the second-largest oil reserve. Hence, it has become part of the G20 major economies. Notwithstanding this, the leadership of the country wants to diversify the economy and empower women; hence, the Crown Prince, Mohammed bin Salman introduced the Saudi Vision 2030 in April 2016. Since the inauguration of the Vision, the non-oil government revenues have increased from USD 44 bn in 2015 to USD 107 bn in 2021 ([The Saudi Vision 2030 2022a](#)). The Global Competitive Index showed that the Kingdom is ranked 12th in the index of Venture Capital Availability because of entrepreneurship activities and small businesses, which are expected to reach 35% of the contribution to GDP by 2030 ([The Saudi Vision 2030 2022b](#)).

KSA used to be a gender-segregated country, where decision-making used to be dominated by men ([Baki 2004](#)). Women in Saudi Arabia used to have limited access to the labor market, especially leading positions ([Baki 2004](#)). They also used to have limited contributions to entrepreneurship. However, the Vision has had a significant impact on women's empowerment. In relation to the contribution of the Vision to Saudi women, the number of Saudi women who own a home has increased from 47% to 60% between 2016 and 2021 ([The Saudi Vision 2030 2022a](#)). Additionally, women's participation in the labor market has increased from 19.4% to 35.6% between 2016 and 2021 ([The Saudi Vision 2030 2022a](#)). Furthermore, the number of women-owned SMEs has jumped from 22% to 38% between 2015 and 2020. The major increase in Saudi SMEs at this time was dedicated to female entrepreneurship ([The Saudi Vision 2030 2022b](#)).

In relation to female entrepreneurship in KSA, [Alkhaled \(2021\)](#) explored women's entrepreneurship as a political reform of feminism for social change in Saudi Arabia. The results demonstrated the entrepreneurs wanted to empower women within their firm to cultivate a feminist consciousness within their entrepreneurial network. [Alshmary et al. \(2021\)](#) studied the attitudes of Saudi women toward empowering them in the online labor market and the impact of the social and economic characteristics on it. [Al-Qahtani et al. \(2021\)](#) designed and validated a tool for women's emancipation among Saudi women employed as academic and administrative employees. [Parveen \(2022\)](#) indicated that the Saudi government had developed various laws and reforms to empower women in the workplace, including gender equality, which resulted in a new paradigm shift for Saudi women entering the labor sector. In an effort to realize Saudi Arabia's "Vision 2030", it has examined the effectiveness of government initiatives to empower women ([Rizvi and Hussain 2022](#)). [Alessa et al. \(2022\)](#) evaluated the Saudi context, the difficulties, and the suggested course of action in light of the Saudi Vision 2030, and the economic empowerment of women in Saudi Arabia was found to contribute to the achievement

of the Vision. [Elshaer et al. \(2021\)](#) found that women in the Saudi tourism industry are economically, politically, and psychologically empowered but not socially empowered. A recent study on female entrepreneurs in the Saudi food industry ([Gharbi et al. 2022](#)) showed that their innovative capacities fully mediate the relationship between their human resources practices and the competitive advantages of their business. Similarly, [Sobaih and Elshaer \(2022\)](#) found that female graduates in the food and agricultural programs were more likely to engage in entrepreneurship due to their entrepreneurship orientation, especially innovativeness, which was enhanced by the current Saudi education and support system ([Aliedan et al. 2022](#)).

3. Theoretical Framework and Hypothesis Building

3.1. Psychological Empowerment for Women Entrepreneurship

In rural entrepreneurial women, [Okyireh and Nkansah Simpeh \(2016\)](#) investigated the four dimensions of psychological empowerment—meaning, competence, choice, and impact—and found and offered insightful information about how entrepreneurship might be strategically used to empower women in rural communities. For women entrepreneurs, [Barani and Dheepa \(2001\)](#) have top-ranking goals of obtaining power and wealth through entrepreneurship, which are supported by a positive attitude and self-confidence to co-operate with others and achieve. [Onyishi and Agbo \(2010\)](#) indicated that women could create the required employment and wealth on their own, but it may be necessary to psychologically empower them in order for them to succeed as business owners. [Ron and Yanai \(2021\)](#) demonstrated the role of psychodrama in promoting the reduction of anxiety, stress, guilt, and self-blame while reinforcing perceptions of self-worth and confidence, which enrich women's empowerment. [Hibbs \(2022\)](#) examined Zimmerman's psychological empowerment framework to provide fresh perspectives on how to empower women and encourage civic engagement in a feminist group setting. [Zaki Dajani and Mostafa \(2021\)](#) examined the impact of psychologically empowered working with female dimensions on a perceived work–life balance. It was found that while meaning, impact, and trust dimensions had insignificant influence, competence and self-determination dimensions had positive effects. [Ertac and Tanova \(2020\)](#) implemented their study on rural areas of Northern Cyprus and found that when psychological empowerment was low, women entrepreneurs' level of flourishing declined as their growth mindset level was raised.

Following the above arguments, we can advance the hypothesis for the relation between psychological empowerment and women's entrepreneurship:

Hypothesis 1 (H1). *Women's psychological empowerment has a positive impact on their entrepreneurship intention.*

3.2. Social Empowerment for Women Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship is a socio-spatially embedded activity, and the masculinities that are given a normative role in entrepreneurship development policies are a manifestation of the social construction of gender, time, geography, economy, and culture ([Harrison et al. 2020](#)). [Ojediran and Anderson \(2020\)](#) indicated that empowering women should take into account the social context in which entrepreneurship occurs since it is socially integrated and could be seen as a social activity with economic effects. [Haugh and Talwar \(2016\)](#) investigated how social entrepreneurship, women's empowerment, and social transformation are related. The social order itself has changed thanks to creative business practices that have supported women's economic activities. [Osei and Zhuang \(2020\)](#) studied empowering women through female entrepreneurship, which has implications for performance and social innovation, and relational social capital. [Sharma and Kumar \(2021\)](#) attributed women's empowerment to social entrepreneurship, which fared better than non-governmental organizations despite having the same ability to promote women's empowerment. [Khanna \(2019\)](#) argued that women should be empowered and supported through social entrepreneurship in their development, according to research on the method in which women in the business sector

have taken the initiative to challenge women in rural regions to prove themselves. This is consistent with [Venugopalan et al. \(2021\)](#), who asserted that women in India could be empowered through capacity-building and social inclusion programs. [Argyrou and Charitakis \(2018\)](#) introduced female involvement in social entrepreneurship initiatives, which may result in job opportunities that help remove current barriers and successfully ensure that women's right to work is realized. [Kumari \(2020\)](#) and [Zhou and Johnston \(2020\)](#) used social media to empower women and encourage women entrepreneurs since it has become a powerful platform for the discussion of women's rights and to encourage the government and policymakers to step up commitments and formulate policies for gender equality. Social media has empowered women manifold both socially, psychologically, and financially. We can test the hypothesis for the relation between social empowerment and women entrepreneurship as:

Hypothesis 2 (H2). *Women's social empowerment has a positive impact on their entrepreneurship intention.*

3.3. Political Empowerment for Women Entrepreneurship

[Al-Qahtani et al. \(2020\)](#) indicated that rules and legislation have an impact on the empowerment of women in all spheres of the economy and society, which are also crucial for the advancement of women in politics. The state government created several programs for the benefit of women after analyzing the need for women's empowerment ([Gupta 2020](#)). [Ibarra and Stengel \(2021\)](#) studied the socio-political environment and argued that different obstacles must be overcome in order to empower women. [Patel and Patel \(2021\)](#) found that significant economic and social empowerment for women has occurred, but not political empowerment. However, in the Saudi context, women's empowerment and social, economic, and political positions are improved at the national level through laws that support women ([The Saudi Vision 2030 2022a](#)). The study of [Elshaer et al. \(2021\)](#) showed that Saudi women are sufficiently empowered by the new tourism industry; hence, they successfully contributed to sustainable tourism development. [Shabir and Mahmood \(2020\)](#) studied the influence of political positions on the empowerment of women in Pakistani society and concluded that enlightened modernization and non-discriminant gender increase the empowerment of women. [Sen \(2019\)](#) examined the sustainable development goals' objective to achieve gender equality and female empowerment with regard to the role of feminist mobilization. They concluded the ability of feminist organizations to stand their ground, defend human rights, and advance economic, ecological, and gender justice. We can examine the hypothesis for the relationship between political empowerment and women's entrepreneurship as:

Hypothesis 3 (H3). *Women's political empowerment has a positive impact on their entrepreneurship intention.*

3.4. Economic Empowerment for Women Entrepreneurship

[Dahlum et al. \(2022\)](#) found that the relationship between women's political empowerment and economic growth was strongly correlated, and women's political empowerment improves technological change. According to several studies, gender equality and female empowerment have an impact on economic outcomes, including growth ([Cuberes and Teignier 2014](#); [Bertay et al. 2020](#); [Altuzarra et al. 2021](#); [Santos Silva and Klasen 2021](#)). Opportunities to empower women business actors to grow their businesses and maintain a sustainable entrepreneurial position are made possible by the possibility of establishing a business through social capital and shared responsibility. Through sustainable entrepreneurship, female entrepreneurs can develop professionally and have some flexibility to manage their job and family responsibilities ([Yudiastuti et al. 2021](#)). In Vietnam, the performance difference among micro, small and medium enterprises was examined, and it was found that the average value added was lower for female-led firms in the informal sector, but

women tended to lead medium-size firms with higher value-added and labor productivity for the formal sector (Bui and Long 2021). Harrison et al. (2020) indicated that the creation of women-only entrepreneurial networks could offer support, role models, and access to resources; regional economic development policies have placed a strong emphasis on encouraging and promoting women's entrepreneurship. Manzoor et al. (2020) commented on the importance of truly empowering women and including them in society. Women entrepreneurs participate in the informal economy for a variety of reasons, including poverty, rising inflation, the need to support their families and to increase family income. We can advance the hypothesis for the relationship between economic empowerment and female entrepreneurship as:

Hypothesis 4 (H4). *Women's economic empowerment has a positive impact on their entrepreneurship intention.*

A summary of these research hypotheses is presented in the research theoretical model (Figure 1).

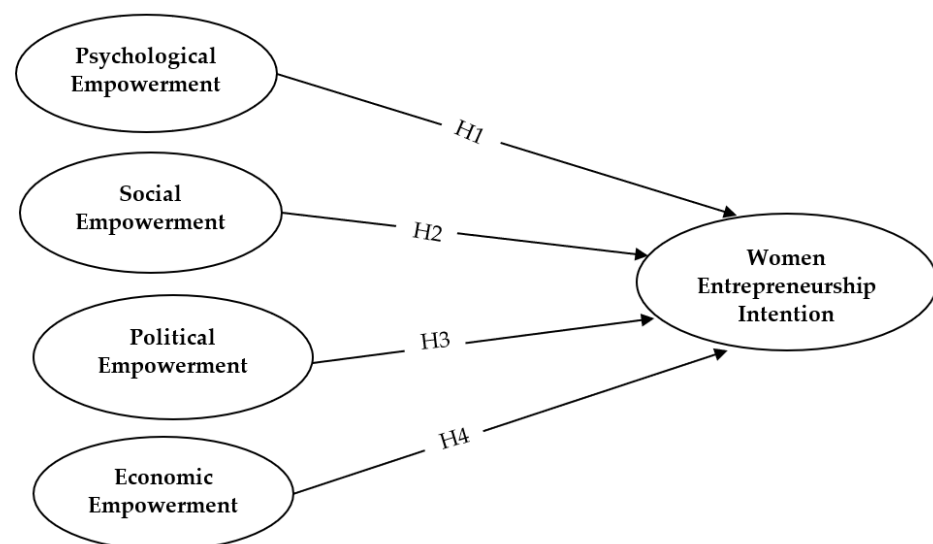


Figure 1. The research theoretical model.

4. Methods

4.1. Measures

This study's variables were derived from well-established empowerment and entrepreneurship in the literature review scales. The women's empowerment scale was derived from Boley and McGehee (2014) and Scheyvens (1999). The scale was modified to fit the study context and has four dimensions known: political empowerment (4 variables), psychological empowerment (5 variables), economic empowerment (3 variables), and social empowerment (3 variables). Three items adopted and modified from Lee et al. (2004) measure women's entrepreneurship intention. Participants were questioned to evaluate the degree of agreement on each variable employing a five-point Likert scale "1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree".

4.2. Data Collection and Sampling

A self-administered questionnaire was designed to collect the study's empirical data. This paper surveyed 500 women in micro food and beverage businesses in KSA. Drop-and-collect was used to obtain a high response rate (Ibeh et al. 2004). From them, 475 valid questionnaires were collected. An independent sample *t*-test was used to compare early and late scores. No differences were found between responses (early and late) ($p > 0.05$), suggesting that non-response bias was not an issue (Armstrong and Overton 1977). All

women were assured their answers would be confidential and anonymous (Salancik and Pfeffer 1977). The questionnaire was pilot tested with 25 food business practitioners and 25 academics to clarify it. Harman's single-factor procedure was analyzed using SPSS v21 to test common method variance (CMV). All study variables were revealed to exploratory factor analysis (EFA), and the factor's extracted decision was fixed to 1 with no rotation procedure. So, one dimension explains 33.8% of the variance. All these techniques agree that CMV is not a problem in this study.

4.3. Data Analysis

SPSS vs. 24 was employed to describe the respondents, conduct the independent sample *t*-test, and test the study dimensions' reliability using Cronbach's alpha values. Given the complexity of the developed framework, its structural properties were examined using CFA and SEM in AMOS vs. 24.

5. Results

5.1. The Profile of Respondents

The majority of respondents, 56%, fell within the age range of 21 to 30, while 35% fell within the age range of 36 to 45, and only 9% were above 45 years old. A total of 45 percent of the women were married, while 55 percent were single and never married. The majority of the responses came from women who worked in hotels (25 percent) and coffee shops (30 percent), while the remainder of the responses came from women who worked in restaurants (45 percent). All respondents had some level of education, with 55 percent holding a bachelor's degree or higher and 45 percent holding a high school diploma or equivalent. The majority of women's monthly incomes (60 percent) fell between 7001 and 10,000 Saudi riyals (1886–2666 \$), while forty percent of women's monthly incomes were less than 7000 Saudi riyals (1886 \$). The data are more dispersed and less concentrated around its mean, as evidenced by the fact that the mean scores range from 3.19 to 3.92 and the standard deviation values range from 0.840 to 1.16 (Bryman and Cramer 2012).

5.2. Measurement Model

The validity and reliability of the study's measurement model were analyzed using first-order CFA with Amos vs. 24. As can be seen in Table 1, the model provides a satisfactory explanation of the data. χ^2 (125, $N = 475$) = 434.750, $p < 0.001$, normed $\chi^2 = 3.478$, RMSEA = 0.049, SRMR = 0.035, CFI = 0.980, TLI = 0.953, NFI = 0.973, PCFI = 0.719 and PNFI = 0.873 (Table 1). All of the items have Cronbach's alphas and composite reliability (CR) scores that are higher than the recommended level of 0.80 (Fornell and Larcker 1981), which approve adequate internal reliability. All factor loadings for all the items were between 0.875 and 0.978, which exceeds 0.7 with *t*-values above 61.166 (Anderson and Gerbing 1988) (Table 1). This shows a positive relationship between the study dimension items. Convergent validity is guaranteed as a result. All average variance extracted (AVE) scores exceeded 0.50 (Fornell and Larcker 1981) and, thus, prove convergent validity.

Two methods were employed to measure discriminant validity. The AVE square root for each dimension should exceed the row and column shared correlations (Fornell and Larcker 1981) (Table 2). According to Hair et al. (2014), in order to have discriminant validity, the AVE for each dimension needs to be higher than the MSV. The results presented in Tables 1 and 2 demonstrate that AVE scores are higher than MSV and that every item loads higher on its respective factor than any other, thereby validating the item-level discriminant validity. The findings provided evidence of the reliability and validity of the measurement model.

Table 1. Results of CFA for discriminant and convergent validity.

Dimensions and Variables	Standardized Loading	t-Value	M	S. D
Psychological empowerment (Boley and McGehee 2014) ($\alpha = 0.940$) (CR = 0.980, AVE = 0.909, MSV = 0.182)				
"Food businesses in KSA makes me proud to be a KSA resident".	0.877	b *	3.92	0.896
"Food businesses in KSA makes me feel special because people travel to see my county's unique features".	0.893	34.804	3.92	0.856
"Food businesses in KSA makes me want to tell others about what we have to offer in KSA".	0.971	42.126	3.90	0.892
"Food businesses in KSA reminds me that I have a unique culture to share with visitors".	0.931	41.549	3.92	0.865
"Food businesses in KSA makes me want to work to keep KSA County special".	0.962	42.155	3.90	0.897
Social empowerment (Boley and McGehee 2014) ($\alpha = 0.917$) (CR = 0.946, AVE = 0.853, MSV = 0.239)				
"Food businesses in KSA makes me feel more connected to my community".	0.956	B	3.57	0.919
"Food businesses in KSA fosters a sense of 'community spirit within me'".	0.912	31.216	3.71	0.898
"Food businesses in KSA provides ways for me to get involved in my community".	0.954	37.929	3.60	0.867
Political empowerment (Boley and McGehee 2014) ($\alpha = 0.922$) (CR = 0.983, AVE = 0.935, MSV = 0.423)				
"I feel like I have a voice in KSA food businesses decisions".	0.937	B	3.62	0.895
"I feel like I have access to the decision-making process when it comes to food businesses in KSA".	0.973	61.166	3.61	0.913
"I feel like my vote makes a difference in how food businesses are developed in KSA".	0.973	54.551	3.59	0.924
"I feel like I have an outlet to share my concerns about food business development in KSA".	0.932	55.398	3.62	0.919
Economic empowerment (Scheyvens 1999) ($\alpha = 0.903$) (CR = 0.964, AVE = 0.901, MSV = 0.423)				
"My food business brings lasting economic gains to a local community".	0.978	B	3.45	1.15
"The cash earned from my food business is shared between many households in the community".	0.978	38.058	3.44	1.16
"There are visible signs of improvement from the cash that is earned from my food business".	0.888	38.140	3.44	1.14
Women entrepreneurship intention (Lee et al. 2004) ($\alpha = 0.920$) (CR = 0.947, AVE = 0.855, MSV = 0.141)				
"I will recommend others to invest in food business projects".	0.875	B	3.25	0.840
"I will continue to invest in food business-related projects".	0.949	32.963	3.39	0.977
"I can stand the inconvenience caused by food business-related projects".	0.882	41.779	3.19	0.862

Model fit: (χ^2 (125, N = 475) = 434.750, $p < 0.001$, normed $\chi^2 = 3.478$, RMSEA = 0.049, SRMR = 0.035, CFI = 0.980, TLI = 0.953, NFI = 0.973, PCFI = 0.719 and PNFI = 0.873). * b: the value is set constant (equal 1) to run the model.

Table 2. Fornell–Larcker criterion analysis.

	1	2	3	4	5
1-Psychological empowerment	0.954				
2-Social empowerment	0.427	0.924			
3-Political empowerment	0.357	0.489	0.967		
4-Economic empowerment	0.244	0.488	0.650	0.949	
5-Women’s entrepreneurship	0.238	0.154	0.375	0.350	0.925

Note: Bold diagonal values: average variance extracted (AVEs).

5.3. The Structural Model

The research latent and observed variables were analyzed using structural equation modeling (SEM), and the maximum likelihood estimation was used to verify whether or not there was a connection between the variables and their potential causes. The structural equation model (SEM) is an appropriate method for data analysis because it enables the simultaneous and thorough examination of relations to be carried out in one model (Tabachnick and Fidell 2007). In general, the structural model has fit indexes that are satisfactory (χ^2 (131, $N = 475$) = 586.618, $p < 0.001$, normed $\chi^2 = 4.478$, RMSEA = 0.048, SRMR = 0.037, CFI = 0.945, TLI = 0.919, NFI = 0.938, PCFI = 0.717 and PNFI = 0.724) and shows a high degree of data conformity to the model (see Table 3). In addition, the structural model indicates that the prediction power is satisfactory; the squared multiple correlations (SMC) for women entrepreneurs are 0.41.

Table 3. Hypothesis testing.

Hypotheses		Results of a Research Model			
		Beta (β)	C-R (t -Value)	SMC	Hypotheses Results
H1	Psychological empowerment → Women’s entrepreneurship	0.36 ***	9.142	—	Supported
H2	Social empowerment → Women’s entrepreneurship	−0.23 ***	−3.020	—	Not Supported
H3	Political empowerment → Women’s entrepreneurship	0.35 ***	7.937	—	Supported
H4	Economic empowerment → Women’s entrepreneurship	0.32 ***	6.930	—	Supported
Women entrepreneurship				0.41	

Model fit: (χ^2 (131, $N = 475$) = 586.618, $p < 0.001$, normed $\chi^2 = 4.478$, RMSEA = 0.048, SRMR = 0.037, CFI = 0.945, TLI = 0.919, NFI = 0.938, PCFI = 0.717 and PNFI = 0.724); ***: significant level less than 0.001.

5.4. Hypothesis Testing

The interrelationships between the research latent factors (hypotheses) are displayed in Table 3 and Figure 2, respectively. The findings indicate that if women have psychological empowerment, their entrepreneurship intention will be high ($\beta = 0.36$, t -value = 9.142, $p < 0.001$), thus, hypothesis H1 was confirmed. Likewise, when women have political empowerment, their entrepreneurship intention will increase ($\beta = 0.35$, t -value = 7.937, $p < 0.001$); hypothesis H3 was therefore agreed. Similarly, the impact of economic empowerment on women’s entrepreneurship intention was positive and significant ($\beta = 0.32$, t -value = 6.930, $p < 0.001$), confirming H4. However, social empowerment effects on women’s entrepreneurship intention were significant but negative ($\beta = 0.016$, t -value = 0.689, $p > 0.05$), which demonstrates that the H2 hypothesis was not supported.

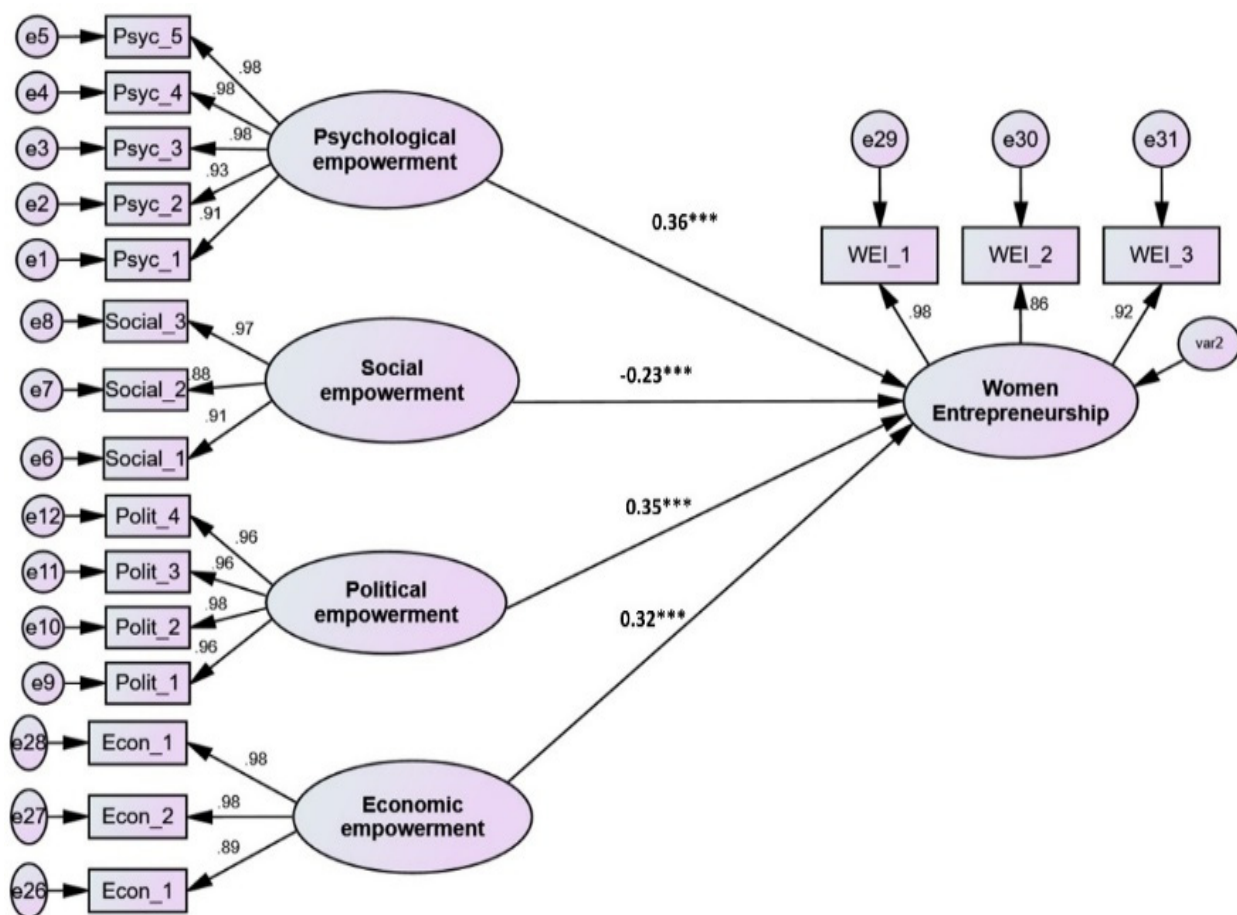


Figure 2. The study structural model. ***: significant level less than 0.001.

6. Discussion

The current research takes a novel approach to try to examine the impact of Saudi women's empowerment, which was recently announced by the Saudi government as a major aspect of the Saudi Vision 2030, and on their intention to run their new ventures, especially in the food industry, which is more convenient to the Saudi women (Gharbi et al. 2022). The research examined the perception of Saudi women working in the food industry regarding their empowerment and its impact on their entrepreneurship. The findings showed that since Saudi women are psychologically empowered, their entrepreneurship intention was positive and high. This stresses the value of psychological empowerment among women, which has also been acknowledged by many researchers (Hibbs 2022; Zaki Dajani and Mostafa 2021) due to its positive outcomes. In this research, the most positive psychological empowerment was entrepreneurship intention. Likewise, the results confirmed when women have political empowerment, their entrepreneurship intention is enhanced. This confirms that women's entrepreneurship has emerged as political reform in Saudi Arabia with support from the leadership of the country (Alkhaled 2021). This confirms that the influence of political position on women's empowerment is crucial (Shabir and Mahmood 2020). In KSA, the leadership of the country was leading this approach, which allowed women to perceive this clearly, and hence, affected their intention to run their own businesses. Similarly, the impact of economic empowerment on women's entrepreneurship intention was positive and significant. This is supported by Dahlum et al. (2022), who found that the relationship between women's political empowerment and economic growth was strongly correlated. Women found that the food industry has several economic benefits with support from the political leadership, which was found to impact their intention of entrepreneurship.

However, the results showed that Saudi women feel less socially empowered, and hence, their limited social empowerment has a negative significant impact on their entrepreneurship intention. The findings support the work of [Elshaer et al. \(2021\)](#) who found that women in the Saudi tourism industry are economically, politically, and psychologically empowered but not socially empowered. However, the previous research ([Ojediran and Anderson 2020](#)) confirmed that women should take into account the social context in which entrepreneurship occurs since it is socially integrated and could be seen as a social activity with economic effects. However, women perceive that their community does not give them the proper support and empowerment; thus, they believe that they are less socially empowered.

These results have implications for scholars in that women's empowerment has an impact on the entrepreneurship intention of women. When women perceive empowerment (i.e., psychologically, economically, and politically), they are more likely to engage in entrepreneurship intentions. This research confirms that entrepreneurship can be promoted if women are empowered. Most previous research (see, for example, [Alexandre and Kharabsheh 2019](#); [Bhardwaj 2018](#); [Bhukuth et al. 2019](#); [Banihani 2020](#)) argued that women's empowerment could be achieved through entrepreneurship. This research supported the assumption made by [Karwati et al. \(2018\)](#) that women's empowerment enhances entrepreneurship independence. The current research hypothesizes that women's empowerment by the government, society, and organizations influences their entrepreneurship intention. The results of SEM analysis supported these hypotheses and confirmed that empowerment could be a means of entrepreneurship.

The results also send some important messages to decision-makers to pay better attention to the four dimensions of women's empowerment since they are leading entrepreneurship. The current research confirmed that Saudi women perceived political, economic, and psychological empowerment but did not perceive social empowerment due to limited support by the community, which negatively affected their intention toward entrepreneurship. Hence, decision-makers should pay more attention to empowering Saudi women socially in the food industry, where women find it more suitable for their career, albeit the limited support given by their local community, who discourage them from engaging in entrepreneurship activities. Therefore, media campaigns are important, especially social media usage, to empower women socially. This argument is supported by [Kumari \(2020\)](#) and [Zhou and Johnston \(2020\)](#), who argued that social media is a powerful platform for encouraging the government and community to promote gender equality, especially in a country such as KSA, where men used to be dominant in the decision-making process.

7. Conclusions

The current research examined the impact of Saudi women's empowerment, which has been prioritized lately by the government as a part of the Saudi Vision 2030, on their intention towards entrepreneurship. The results confirmed a positive significant impact of psychosocial, economic, and political impact on Saudi women's intention to engage in entrepreneurship activities in the food industry. However, the results confirmed that Saudi women still have a challenge in relation to their social empowerment, which is dedicated to the Saudi culture in that women are responsible for the house, and men are responsible for work and running the business. The Saudi women did not perceive the proper social empowerment by their community, which negatively affected their entrepreneurship intention. Hence, interventions by decision-makers are crucial to adopt a media campaign regarding gender equality and the vital contribution of women in the labor market and entrepreneurship. The current study model might be replicated in other sectors, such as health and education, and results can be compared to verify or falsify the current study findings.

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