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THE EFFECTS OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION ON ENTREPRENEURIAL INTENTIONS AND THE MODERATING EFFECT OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP POLICY IN THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES (UAE)

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Abstract:

The research study examined the association between Entrepreneurship Education and Entrepreneurial intentions of young people in Education with its moderating variable of Government Entrepreneurship policy in Abu Dhabi in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The research study adopted a quantitative study approach based on a survey research design and survey data of 320 respondents who were mostly of the age group of young adult students pursuing business and related courses. The research study utilised simple random sampling strategy to garner data from the field in Abu Dhabi in order to avoid bias and to give each participant equal chances of being selected to belong to the study. Data was analysed using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) and Correlation Matrix (Pearson) in order to establish the relationship between the study variables. The findings indicated that Entrepreneurship Education has a significant positive effect on Entrepreneurial Intentions, and the positive direct effect was also observed in government's supportive entrepreneurship policies of funding students' business projects. Besides, the moderation analysis indicated the fact that the relationship between Entrepreneurship Education and Intentions is intensified with the assistance of government's policy support. The research study concluded that Entrepreneurship Education plays a vital role in the process of developing Entrepreneurial Intentions. Long-term exposure to Entrepreneurship Education, especially when presented in a well-designed and relevant curriculum has been found to make significant

impacts in changing the intentions of students towards taking part in entrepreneurial behaviour and also developed the long-term entrepreneurial attitudes. This is because the learners are able to acquire knowledge, skills, confidence, and a positive attitude to undertake Entrepreneurship activities for development. Since the study is based on empirical evidence obtained from the field in Abu Dhabi, the findings are generalisable to all other regions in the UAE. The study recommends that government should augment on the funds allocated to entrepreneurship groups for improving their businesses and fostering entrepreneurial mindsets of the young people in Education in the UAE.

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Keyword:

Entrepreneurship Education, Entrepreneurial Intentions, Policy Support, SEM, UAE



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Introduction

Entrepreneurship is known as a source of economic growth, innovations, and employment generation all over the world. In the context of the world, countries such as the United States of America have been more and more concerned to develop entrepreneurial ecosystems to facilitate competitiveness and attain enduring development (Shwedeh, 2023).

Entrepreneurship is a rising feature of globalization due to its positive contribution to the transitional economy worldwide. According to Omar (2021), Britain encourages their teaching and training departments to set up entrepreneurship programs to develop their people. The British government is considering entrepreneurship as a new valuable resource to replace the decaying natural one (Omar, 2021). Thus, Britain has considered Entrepreneurship as the engine for their economy to complement their natural resources and create employment through businesses ventures

The government in Germany maintains a good reputation for supporting Entrepreneurship Education in small and large businesses. The support results from favourable policies, including regulatory and financial, to help entrepreneurs overcome changes that entrepreneurs must handle in the current century, such as technology. Entrepreneurs in the Germany enjoy an environment worth risk-taking, including a business-friendly market and economy, excellent infrastructure, sound regulations, and safety (Omar, 2021).

Entrepreneurship in the UAE plays a major role in economic growth, innovation, and employment. The UAE has been making milestones in developing it with such initiatives as Vision 2031 and the National Agenda of Entrepreneurship. Education on entrepreneurship is vital in setting up the individuals who mostly include the youth and the general population in

the UAE with the skills, knowledge and the attitude to venture in the world of entrepreneurship (Becorace, 2020) Nevertheless, the overall policy environment pertinent to entrepreneurship, such as funding opportunities, the regulatory environment, and support systems, has an impact on the success of such education. In the case of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), the field of Entrepreneurship has become a major force with regard to the vision of the country to pursue future economic diversification and lessen its oil-based economy. The Education in Entrepreneurship is a key factor in the formation of the entrepreneurial attitude of individuals, their competencies and ability to consider and utilize opportunities. Through empirical evidence, this kind of education has been shown to be of real benefit to the entrepreneurial intentions through creation of a self-efficacy concept, opportunity identification abilities, and problem-solving skills (Shwedeh, 2023).

Literature Review

Kong et al. (2020) asserted that entrepreneurship intention describes an entrepreneur's behavioural tendency, preference, and intrinsic cognition to venture into a business. In this case, Qin & Chen et al (2023) argued that entrepreneurship intention helps to inform the expectation and the subjective attitude of potential Entrepreneurs about their intended decision to engage in entrepreneurship activities. Therefore, it guides entrepreneurs' attention toward accomplishing specific business goals towards achieving entrepreneurial results. Entrepreneurship education plays a critical role in informing the intention of an entrepreneur on whether to enter a particular business (Kong et al., 2020). Though the conceptualization of entrepreneurship intention is based on various diverse standpoints, it is agreeable that the concept remains the predictor of behaviours the entrepreneur displays to set up a business venture. As such, it remains an essential element that triggers one to adopt entrepreneurial behaviour leading to business venturing. Through entrepreneurship education, students develop the desire to choose by entering into self-employment that involves entrepreneurship. While literature focuses on entrepreneurship intentions, the curriculum course content has been identified as a critical aspect that influences the behaviours, preferences, and the tendency of the entrepreneur.

Omar (2021) indicated that curriculum content influences students to develop ideas for business, leading them to express their entrepreneurship intentions. The authors further noted that curriculum content would effectively inform entrepreneurship intentions, especially if students remain open-minded when pursuing entrepreneurship courses. Iwu et al. (2021), who agreed with the findings, argued that idea generation, as provided by curriculum content, impacts how students develop their mindset and skills for entrepreneurship. Earlier, had made related findings asserting that the curriculum program for business teams appropriately motivated the generation of entrepreneurial ideas leading to similar learning outcomes of entrepreneurship. According to the study by Iwu et al. (2021), University students who tend to develop as entrepreneurs are engaged in collaborative and practical entrepreneurial curricula activities. The authors argued that these students undergo the mentoring experience through entrepreneurial-minded academics equipping them to become competent in critical thinking to venture into entrepreneurship activities after graduation. However, Becorace et al (2020) argued that young graduates would negate the drive and commitment towards venturing into business activities if the curriculum course content fails to motivate real-life simulations in the entrepreneurship processes and entrepreneurial action.

Zelin et al (2021) argued that the graduates' career choices are significantly influenced by how appropriate the curriculum is because it tends to support them venturing into creating businesses. According to Zelin et al. (2021), entrepreneurial intention deliberately controls entrepreneurship, which represents the predictors of entrepreneurial behaviour. The vital role of conducting a critical assessment of the viability and quality of the curriculum and teaching contents implemented in the University marks the initial step in creating any business venture.

Omar (2021) argued that entrepreneurship actions provide the ground for curriculum content which includes entrepreneurship intentions. The curriculum content efficacy is said to have a strong influence over the attitudinal development of the graduates towards the creation of venture and innovation. Sigh et al. (2020) also indicated that graduates become provoked towards adopting entrepreneurial intention needed to create ventures if they receive a high level of innovativeness and suitable knowledge for entrepreneurship. Even in examining the link between curriculum content and entrepreneurship intention, the reliability of the value of output on graduates remains the central focus. This means that once the students undertake curriculum course content, they can develop entrepreneurial skills influencing their decision to commence any business venture. They also can adopt a strong passion for entrepreneurship which influences their intention.

Zhu and Zhang (2022) argued that if teaching methods are not scientifically designed or not appropriate, their impact may negatively influence the outcome of teaching entrepreneurship. The authors call for continuously developing suitable teaching methods to train competent entrepreneurs. Based on the argument by Dragin et al (2022), achieving entrepreneurship expertise by implementing the proper teaching methods influences students' intentions in the future, including the effect on their behaviours towards establishing the business. Another group of researchers, including Zelin et al. (2021), who recently conducted a study on entrepreneurship education and related variables such as the locus of control, identified variables, including "self-efficacy," as essential. Through this focus, the authors established that entrepreneurship education facilitates the improvement in characteristics that supports the chances of taking future action in the area, including opening new ventures. Dragin et al. (2022) observed that when students get subjected to teaching methods aiming at finding the solution to problems, it becomes the basis for enhancing logic and giving way to thinking in any problematic situation, such as real-world situations after graduation. With this skill imparted by appropriate teaching methods for entrepreneurship, students develop more urge to join the challenging world to explore and run ventures while applying what they learned in classrooms about entrepreneurship and overcoming challenges.

Zelin et al. (2021) argued that since entrepreneurship policy serves as the incentives and supporting measures that encourage individuals intending to attain self-employment, it requires that teaching methods observe the needs of the students. Considering that institutions of higher learning education have the mandate to teach entrepreneurship education, the role of entrepreneurship policy becomes essential in providing guidance or universities to adopt teaching approaches that pay attention to imparting more skills and knowledge for learners to understand the entire concept of entrepreneurship. This aligns with Sigh et al. (2020), who described entrepreneurship policy as preferential, relevant guidance and measures the government implements to encourage entrepreneurship activities.

While acknowledging the university as a place for knowledge promotion through teaching, research, and disseminating knowledge, Dragin et al (2022) argued that its environment influences entrepreneurial behaviours and attitudes. The fact that the context of the university environment influences the behaviours and attitudes of entrepreneurship has made it accepted as one of the predictors and significant factors contributing to entrepreneurial intention. In this context, Sigh et al (2020) argued that the environment presented is favourable to allowing students' imagination and thinking, helping them to become more creative hence intending to venture into the business world after graduation. Therefore, the argument by various scholars identifies the university as an educational institution that promotes actions and entrepreneurship that shape the efforts and intentions of students toward pursuing entrepreneurship.

Maheshwari et al (2022) asserted that universities give the platform for the students to demonstrate what they have received through learning hence shaping their future behaviours to intent venturing into entrepreneurship as they embrace what teachers have taught them. Besides, Zelin et al. (2021) observed that universities offer resources in interpersonal connections and networks which provide students with specific knowledge about entrepreneurship matters. Through this educational support provided by the university, graduates increase their willingness to expand their connections and networks, strengthening their confidence and intention to venture into business. This means that the entrepreneurship education and support provided by universities to grasp the required concepts in entrepreneurship provide the basis for graduates to believe in themselves to enter the business world.

Research into the role of universities has focused much on the educational role as the essential step in influencing students' intention toward entrepreneurship. Becorace et al. (2020) noted that higher learning institutions provide multiple entrepreneurial activities for students to undertake and proceed with the same spirit into their future ventures. The authors acknowledged the efforts by universities to offer various compulsory major courses in entrepreneurship to foster students' willingness and attitude, hence their entrepreneurship intention. According to Sigh et al. (2020), a recent study conducted by the Global University Entrepreneurial Spirit on students established that multiple courses offered by universities under degree program help enhance the ability of the students to understand values and motivations. This has the impact of influencing their actions and sharpening their skills to become entrepreneurs. As students develop skills for management and the practical running of the business, they create the intention to utilize the entrepreneurial opportunities that come along their way (Sigh, 2020). Even with significant studies that have examined what universities do to enhance the entrepreneurial intention of students, a lot of information seems left out to expressly point out the success of such roles in leading to graduates giving out successful entrepreneurs.

Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 is the conceptual framework demonstrating the relationship between variables. The suggested relationship results from literature review and theory exploring the interaction between the variables. Figure 1 reveals that each of the Entrepreneurship Education dimensions curriculum and course content, teaching method and teaching staff, and university role leads to Entrepreneurship Intentions by its dimensions.

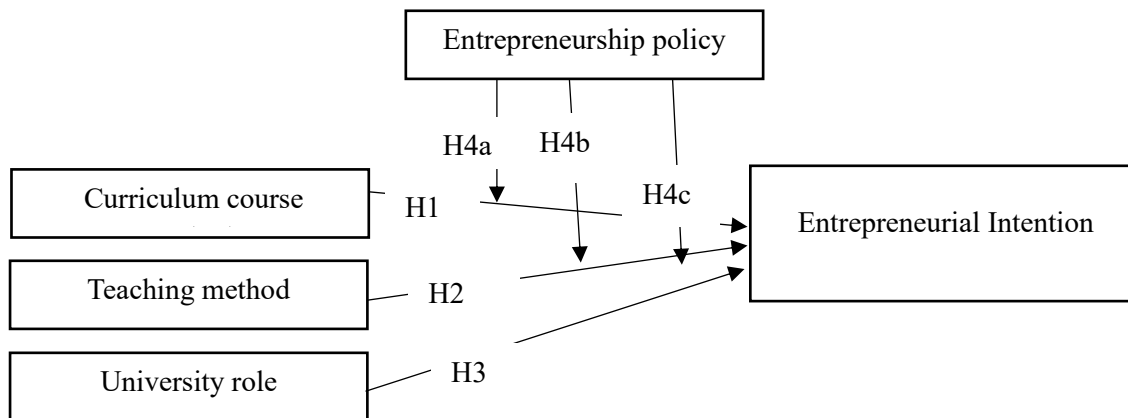


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Listyaningsih et al. (2023) identified curriculum content, teaching methods, and university roles as the significant constructs that influence the intention of entrepreneurial students. The three constructs form part of the elements that facilitate the acquisition of education for students. Listyaningsih et al. (2023) provide the relevant knowledge that students need while teaching methods ensure the proper approach to impart knowledge. The universities play the role of transferring knowledge and transitioning into the entrepreneurial world. The focus of the study was how entrepreneurship education impacts the entrepreneurship intention of the students. The study by Becorace et al. (2020) revealed that, though there were 73.5% of Emiratis who utilized opportunities to start businesses in 2021, there is low proportion of students involved in early-stage entrepreneurial activities. According to Becorace et al. (2020), only 2% of students graduating from higher learning institutions show the intention to start new businesses in the UAE.

This study is defined by independent (entrepreneurship education) and dependent (entrepreneurship intentions) variables interacting with each other at different levels. Literature has placed entrepreneurship education at the focus for universities aiming to make a global impact. It forms the basis for review within the literature to examine ways that would help achieve the target. As a significant independent variable in this study, various elements are required to succeed in universities for students who pursue entrepreneurship. Aja-Okorie and Adali (2018) identified curriculum course content as a significant aspect that informs institutions to develop and implement appropriate concepts of entrepreneurship. Universities offering entrepreneurship education focus on developing suitable teaching methods to impart knowledge and skills to students successfully. The university's role is an equally important aspect that influences the attitude and behaviour of students towards entrepreneurship. The researcher in this study regarded curriculum course contents, teaching methods, and the university's role as elements of entrepreneurship education.

Therefore, curriculum course contents, teaching methods, and role of the university are the independent variables in the current study aiming to influence the entrepreneurship intentions of students. According to Maheshwari et al. (2022), the TPB reflects on how best institutions can use norms and control to influence students' attitudes towards entrepreneurship hence its role in informing this study. While entrepreneurship education impacts the entrepreneurship intentions of the students, authorities, including the government and other regulatory institutions, have established entrepreneurship policies to encourage and support

entrepreneurship activities. This explains why entrepreneurship policy is considered to have mediating or moderating role between the three elements of entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurship intentions. Therefore, all antecedents of entrepreneurship, including curriculum course contents, teaching methods, and the university's role, are regarded as independent variables. In contrast, entrepreneurship intention is the dependent variable for the current research.

Research Methodology

Data Capturing

Facts used for the research project were obtained using both primary and secondary basics of data. Primary data was reached at by usage of Survey Structured questionnaires supplied to vivacious persons related to the study. Secondary data was picked up by the use of documentary valuations. The study employed a cross-sectional Survey and Descriptive research design (to make sure all sections of people are represented in the study and to narrate data characteristics respectively) using a quantitative approach. The researchers picked a total of 320 respondents (sample size) out of 320 people as target population; using a table developed by Morgan & Kreijcie (1970) to participate in the research scientific study.

Sampling Methods

The social experts engaged simple random sampling technique to select participants to belong to the study. The study population used the target population including categories like individuals that are potential or aspiring entrepreneurs including: final-year university students pursuing a degree in business, management, or entrepreneurship-related course, since they were at a transition stage of making career decisions. The research study used simple random sampling in order to give participants equal chances of being selected and to avoid bias.

Survey Structured Questionnaire

The questionnaire is a research instrument comprising of inter-related questions organized by the researcher about the research quandary under study based on the targets of the research study. Items were set and written for the contributors to answer with choices as reflected on the likert scale type interrogations. This method was adored because it covers a wide physical space in data assembly; it amasses a lot of information within a short epoch of time and offers superior reassurance regarding privacy. On the other hand, the questionnaire involved some challenges of attrition. There were few replicas that were not returned, though this was handled by distributing a lot of photocopies than the required number of the sample size for the research study.

Validity And Reliability of Research Instruments

Validity of the well-planned questionnaire was guaranteed by using content validity Index. Arising from the testing of the validity of the tools, the researchers obtained a content validity index (CVI) of 0.78 which was well directly above 0.75 indicating that the instrument was valid to elicit together data for the research scientific study.

Reliability of the Prescribed Questionnaire was calculated using Cronbach's alpha coefficient formula while observing the variables that had an alpha coefficient of digit greater than 0.70. Since the reliability calculation got by the academic produced 0.78 alpha value, it inferred that the research instrument was reliable to produce data required for the logical study.

Data Analysis

Investigation Statistical tools which were engaged to analyze data for this research study comprised of descriptive statistics (such as tables, frequencies and percentages) and inferential statistics like Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) and Correlation Matrix (Pearson & Latent composites) for appraising quantitative data.

Results

Demographic Profile of Respondents

Table 1 shows the demographic characteristic of respondents, and it could be seen that there is a relatively equal gender balance wherein males constitute 52.5 percent (n = 168) of the sample population whereas females make up 47.5 percent (n = 152) of the sample population. This implied that more or less balanced information from both genders supplied for the scientific study. Regarding the age factor, the highest percentage of the respondents fit into the age range of 21-25 (55.0%), 26-30 (22.5%), 20 years (14.4%), and above 30 years (8.1%). This meant that information supplied for the logical study was mainly from the youth and the UAE government needs to pay particular attention to the youth in the development process.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percent (%)
Gender	Male	168	52.5
	Female	152	47.5
Age	≤ 20	46	14.4
	21–25	176	55.0
	26–30	72	22.5
	> 30	26	8.1
Study Discipline	Business/Management	206	64.4
	Engineering/Tech	64	20.0
	Other	50	15.6
Prior Entrepreneurship Exposure	Yes	118	36.9
	No	202	63.1

In terms of academic background, the majorities (64.4%) pursued business or management related studies with 20.0 percent pursuing other studies engineering or technology related and 15.6 percent of other disciplines. Moreover, over one third of participants (36.9%) claimed that they had previous exposure to entrepreneurship whereas the other 63.1 percent did not have any prior exposure to the world of being an entrepreneur. Such demographic trends indicated that the sample was be dominated by the young adult population with significant contribution of people in business-related fields and thus the household population on which the researchers

can determine the impact of Entrepreneurship education and policy on entrepreneurial intentions.

Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive statistics in Table 2 show that there is a moderate high level of agreement based on all the three constructs that respondents gave. Entrepreneurial Intentions (EI) obtained the highest mean results that being the inclination towards starting a business or making an entrepreneurial engagement is quite strong in the overall participants that is 3.82 (SD = 0.71).

Table 2: Mean Scores and Standard Deviations for Study Constructs

Construct	Mean	SD
Entrepreneurship Education (EE)	3.74	0.62
Entrepreneurship Policy (EP)	3.48	0.66
Entrepreneurial Intentions (EI)	3.82	0.71

Entrepreneurship Education (EE) came with an average score of 3.74 (SD = 0.62), which indicated a more positive attitude towards the quality, relevance and effectiveness of the learning experience they have had in terms of entrepreneurship related issues. Smaller, albeit comparable, mean score of 3.48 (SD = 0.66) was achieved by Entrepreneurship Policy (EP) which revealed a demean signal of average consensus about the sufficiency of policies offering support, government incentives, and regulatory frameworks that enable the undertaking of business. This is indicated by fairly similar standard deviations assessing the constructs, which indicated that there was consistency in the responses of the participants. All in all, these results suggest that although entrepreneurial intentions are high in the sample, there is the possibility of additional improvement in the ratification of policies to go in line with the Education of Entrepreneurship.

Correlation Matrix (Pearson)

Table 3 illustrates the correlation matrix that indicates that all constructs positively and moderately correlate with one another and the results are statistically significant ($p < .01$). Entrepreneurship Education (EE) thus shows a correlation of 0.57 to Entrepreneurial Intentions (EI) implying a positive relationship between Entrepreneurship Education and Entrepreneurial Intentions of the participants.

Table 3: Correlation Matrix of Study Constructs

	EE	EP	EI
EE	1	0.49	0.57
EP	0.49	1	0.44
EI	0.57	0.44	1

EE is also fairly associated with Entrepreneurship Policy (EP) ($r = 0.49$), which is an indication that, more people viewing positively Entrepreneurship Education are more inclined to perceive policy support in a positive way. Also, EP correlates with 0.44 with EI which means that favourable policy environments are connected to a higher level of Entrepreneurial intentions. Although such correlations give initial hopes to confirming the hypothesized effects, they do not indicate, or support causality and hence additional testing needs to be conducted using structural equation modelling (SEM) to prove any given effect.

Model Fit (Sem)

Model fit indices listed in Table 4 revealed that a good model fit with the data is observed in the structural model. Ratio of chi square (12)/ degrees of freedom (2) = 2.11, far less than the recommended maximum of 3. Finding- An acceptable degree of model parsimony.

Table 4: Model Fit Indices for The Structural Equation Model (Sem)

Index	Value	Threshold
χ^2/df	2.11	< 3.00
CFI	0.962	≥ 0.95
TLI	0.952	≥ 0.95 (good)
RMSEA	0.059	≤ 0.06 (good)
SRMR	0.041	≤ 0.08

Compared to the suggested threshold of 0.95, both of these fitness checks Comparative Fit Index (CFI) and Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) are above 0.95, representing a good fit between the stated model and the available data. Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) is 0.059 which is less than 0.06 which is the appropriate level to determine a good fit and the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) is 0.041, which is very low and lies well within the acceptable limit of 0.08. All these indices together prove that the suggested model can appropriately indicate the existing relationships. Hence, there is a significant correlation between Entrepreneurship Education and Entrepreneurial Intentions in the UAE.

Discussion

From the findings, the study established that Entrepreneurship education greatly influences Entrepreneurship intentions and the moderating effects of Entrepreneurship policy in the UAE. This implied that the more governments in the world increased the Budget for Entrepreneurship Education in their education systems, the more tangible development ventures can be realized in their countries. The findings are in agreement with the study conducted by Qin & Chen (2023) on Supportive Entrepreneurship Policies and Cultural Environments who found out that Entrepreneurship Education motivates learners to take up Business ventures for development in their countries. However, Otache et al (2021) conducted a study on Mindset Change in China and found out that lack of sensitisation of parents on entrepreneurship education has a direct

bearing on their children's morale to start up Business ventures in the cosmos. This can always go a long way in encouraging the state of underdevelopment and backwardness in the UAE.

Conclusion

Entrepreneurship education plays a vital role in the process of developing entrepreneurial intentions. Long-term exposure to entrepreneurship education, especially when presented in a well-designed and relevant curriculum has been found to make significant impacts in changing the intentions of students towards taking part in entrepreneurial behaviour and also developed the long-term entrepreneurial attitudes. Entrepreneurs who undergo education have high chances of being successful in their businesses because they develop knowledge, skills, confidence, and a positive attitude to undertake entrepreneurship activities for development.

Recommendations

The study recommends that government should augment on the funds allocated to entrepreneurship groups for improving their businesses and fostering entrepreneurial mindsets of the young people in Education in the UAE. Ministry of Education in the UAE should create a learning environment in universities where students are allowed to set up Business ventures, have access to business incubators, startup financial models and having mentorship programmes in university curricula. Ministry of education in the UAE should encourage Universities to carry out longitudinal research studies to identify the long-term impact of combined Education research studies and Policy support Frame works on real entrepreneurial performance, extending this to other sectors as well involving diverse demographic groups in the Gulf and the Asian Economies.

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Ethics Statement: Throughout the research process, the researcher observed a number of ethical considerations including confidentiality, anonymity, respect of human participants and getting informed consent from the participants before data were garnered from them. The data collected were used solely for academic purposes

Author Contribution Statement: The author contributed significantly to the development of this manuscript. Abdullah Al-Ameri was responsible for the conceptualization, methodology, and overall supervision of the study. He also handled data collection, analysis, and interpretation of results. He as well contributed to the literature review, drafting, and critical revision of the manuscript. The author read and approved the final version of the manuscript prior to submission

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