

Impact of international entrepreneurial orientation on internationalisation outcome: A mediating role of culture

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Abstract: In Emerging economies, MNCs (Multinational corporations) encounter several issues while devising Strategies to penetrate foreign markets, examining these SMEs' performance in present times and assessing their internationalisation process is crucial. The purpose of this research is to investigate how international entrepreneurial orientation affects SMEs' international performance during internationalization, as well as how organizational culture in the Kingdom influences the international performance of these MNCs. To attain this objective ($n = 206$) MNCs in the Kingdom have adopted internationalisation strategies. Questionnaires were administered as part of a survey approach for this study. To forecast and estimate relationships, partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) was employed. This study indicates that improving internationalization performance, mainly through active participation in foreign markets, is one of the SMEs' strategies during the internationalization process. The empirical findings demonstrate that international entrepreneurial orientation influences the internationalisation performance of SMEs largely influenced by organisational culture. Previous research shows that the success of SMEs' internationalization, however, is not directly impacted by their international entrepreneurial orientation. This study supports the significance of organisational culture during internationalisation. This study offers insightful information that motivates policymakers and owner-managers in developing nations, especially in KSA, to build organizational cultures and dynamic capacities that meet the demands of globalization in today's business scenario.

Keywords: internationalisation process; MNCs; developing nations; international orientation; SEM; organisational culture; research methodology; kingdom of saudi arabia

1. Introduction

Companies now confront a significantly different set of possibilities and difficulties as a result of globalisation. Even now, small firms are reaching consumers, suppliers, and partners globally due to the removal of regulatory hurdles and the development of ICT (Aldianto et al., 2021; Wright and Dana, 2003). Restrictions have incredibly severely impacted the SME sector, yet these businesses have consistently formulated new business models and strategies (Afrizon, 2020; Buccieri et al., 2021). As prior research indicated, SMEs with an entrepreneurial orientation can utilise this orientation to navigate and seek out new possibilities in new markets, including foreign markets (Thukral and Jain, 2021). Prior research has yielded significant insights by demonstrating the significance of entrepreneurial orientation (AlShehhi et al., 2022; Paul and Rosado-Serrano, 2019). This orientation reflects firms' attitudes

toward business activities and is often shown to influence a variety of measures of internationalization (Wiklund and Shepherd, 2005).

Over the last ten years, there has been a trend of SMEs being more internationalized and research on SMEs' internationalization performance has been crucial (Ruzzier et al., 2006). International business ventures are one of the SMEs' strategies for expanding further since they are increasingly recognized as the engine of economic development in developing nations. There are notable distinctions between emerging and mature countries in terms of technical, social, cultural, and economic aspects. It creates a need to assess the international performance in terms of cultural dimensions. These distinctions should be taken into account when considering internationalization for businesses, particularly those in the service industry (Alon et al., 2013; Rammal and Rose, 2014). However, other researchers point out that SMEs' internationalisation is still a relatively new trend, especially in developing nations (Rahman et al., 2021). It has yet to get much attention so far (Bianchi and Wickramasekera, 2016). According to Gupta and Batra (2016), studying how SMEs from developing nations have internationalized enables scholars to investigate the boundary conditions of current theories in novel settings.

Superior performance is significantly influenced by organisational culture (Schein, 2010). It is also asserted that SMEs from developing economies perform differently when it comes to internationalisation when culture is taken into consideration. Even though foreign SMEs have attracted much attention in the last 10 years, more research is needed to understand how their cultural orientations affect their ability to grow internationally (Ahmad, 2019; Chebbi et al., 2023). International entrepreneurial culture, on the other hand, is an ingrained practice that fosters exceptional internationalisation performance to discover and seize global possibilities to establish a niche market (Buccieri et al., 2021). By incorporating these cultural factors, the study could advance existing theories by proposing that EO behaviours in Saudi Arabia are shaped not just by the global, market-driven need for innovation but also by deeply ingrained cultural elements like family influence, network-based decision-making, and centralized authority. These elements either facilitate or hinder the flexibility and rapid decision-making required for internationalization.

Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 has positioned the country as an ambitious, forward-thinking economy focused on diversification, innovation, and global integration. Vision 2030 aims to reduce the country's dependency on oil and foster new industries such as technology, tourism, and renewable energy. These changes have significant implications for entrepreneurial orientation and internationalization. By contextualizing Vision 2030 within the entrepreneurial orientation and internationalization frameworks, the study could suggest that Saudi firms' internationalization behavior is not only influenced by global competitive forces but also shaped by national policies and government incentives for entrepreneurship. This may differ from firms in other regions where government support for international expansion is less prominent. Therefore, organisational culture may act as a mediator between an SME's internationalisation performance and its entrepreneurial orientation (Ma and Cheok, 2022). The dynamic character of Middle Eastern SMEs while joining the global market during internationalization is examined. This research looks at the things SMEs need to think about when they join the more volatile global market.

The paper is outlined with the study's background, problem statement, objectives, and contributions in Section 1. The evolution of theory and hypothesis is covered in Section 2. The research methodology, which comprises sample, data collecting, measurement, and data analysis methodologies, is presented in Section 3. Our results and conclusions are presented in Section 4. The paper concludes with recommendations, ramifications, constraints, and prospects for further study in section 5.

2. Literature analysis and formation of hypotheses

Dynamic capabilities theory (DCT) explains how firms can achieve a competitive advantage by integrating, reconfiguring, and renewing their resources in response to changing environments. In the context of emerging economies or Global South countries, The DCT can contribute to developed economies, as firms have relatively stable market conditions and robust institutional frameworks. However, in emerging economies, firms often operate in environments characterized by institutional instability, resource scarcity, and rapid market shifts. The study could advance DCT by illustrating how firms in these contexts develop unique dynamic capabilities, such as adaptation to volatility or resource reconfiguration in resource-constrained environments, which may be overlooked in mainstream DCT literature.

Entrepreneurial orientation (EO) refers to the strategic posture of a firm toward risk-taking, proactiveness, and innovation. The study highlights how firms in emerging economies might develop a modified version of EO tailored to local conditions. For example, the risk tolerance in emerging markets could be higher due to external pressures such as market instability or limited access to capital. Similarly, firms in these markets may exhibit high levels of proactiveness or innovation in seeking to overcome infrastructural challenges or capitalize on unexploited opportunities. EO research in the Global South might need to account for factors like informal institutions, socio-political environments, or resource-based constraints, which could shape entrepreneurial behaviours differently from firms in developed economies. The study could contribute by proposing contextual dimensions (e.g., the importance of social networks or government policies) that moderate the relationship between EO and firm performance in emerging economies.

The combination of dynamic capabilities and entrepreneurial orientation can provide a more comprehensive understanding of how firms can navigate complex and uncertain environments in emerging economies while internationalizing. By integrating DCT with EO, the study could propose how firms in the Global South combine dynamic capabilities with entrepreneurial orientations to achieve sustainable competitive advantages. This might involve dynamic capabilities for managing change combined with an entrepreneurial mindset that encourages proactive exploration and innovation in uncertain environments. This could lead to new models of strategic management that are distinct from models applied in developed markets. The study could develop a new framework or model that merges dynamic capabilities and entrepreneurial orientation, contextualized within the specific challenges of emerging economies.

The study could support existing literature by reinforcing the idea that dynamic capabilities and entrepreneurial orientation are crucial for firm success across different regions. These theories still hold value even in contexts as diverse as emerging economies, with minor modifications in their application. It could challenge existing literature by suggesting that the assumptions regarding resource availability, market stability, and institutional support in dynamic capabilities and EO models only sometimes hold in the context of emerging economies. This might lead to a reassessment of the contextual limits of these theories and open the door for new theoretical developments tailored to these unique environments.

By articulating how dynamic capabilities and entrepreneurial orientation theory evolve or are applied differently in emerging markets, the study could significantly enhance our understanding of internationalisation strategy in emerging markets and the Global South and contribute to more nuanced theoretical developments in the field.

2.1. Research foundational premise

The dynamic capacity theory (DCT) was utilized in the analysis of the organization's internationalization process and had implications for this process. This theory offers a framework for figuring out if unique, challenging-to-replicate advantages are produced, preserved, and enhanced. Dynamic capabilities are a company's ability to quickly adapt its skills to changes in the internal and external environment (Teece et al., 1997). A DCT was created by Teece et al. (1997) and Schumpeter and Hausman (1994). It offered insightful information on how dynamic organizations operate and how they may innovate, adapt, and take advantage of possibilities in a dynamic market setting. This theory finds value in this research as organizations during the internationalization process have to undergo many changes and transformations.

The DCT originally stemmed from the resource-based theory (RBT) (Priem and Butler, 2001), which emphasizes the use of productive resources in a generally stable environment. In contrast, Teece et al. (2017) advocated that the DCT prompts businesses to integrate, reorganize, or change their assets, processes, and structures to fit the rapidly changing contexts better. As a result, in a dynamic context, RBT is unable to describe the behaviour and performance of a business over time. Therefore, the input from DC theory was utilized in this research.

2.2. International entrepreneurial orientation (IEO)

SMEs operating in developing nations must contend with institutional complexity and resource restrictions (Buccieri et al., 2021; Van Tulder et al., 2020). According to Huang et al. (2014), entrepreneurship fosters the capacity to recognise and take advantage of possibilities in volatile marketplaces, which includes the global success of SMEs in developing nations doing business in unreliable environments (Javalgi and Todd, 2011). The process of internationalisation necessitates a drastic shift in business culture and strategy due to the open market mechanism's much greater level of competitiveness. Companies need to reassess not only the competition but also worldwide consumer behavior, which has undergone significant changes. A proactive and risk-taking mindset is necessary to explore market opportunities in an

international setting (Zhou et al., 2010). For this reason, an entrepreneurial orientation is essential (McDougall and Oviatt, 2000). International entrepreneurial orientation (IEO) is defined as a reflection of businesses pursuing international markets innovatively and proactively.

2.3. Organisational culture (OC)

It is essential to the growth and success of a business. Organizational culture is described by Deshpande and Farley (1999) as shared values and ideas that provide people with an understanding of how organizations work and organisational behavior standards. According to Khan and Ahmed (2019), an organization is a complex system where people interact with the system and with one another to create an organizational culture that is dynamically generated. There are several ways to analyze organisational culture: apparent artifacts, endorsed ideals, principles, guidelines, conduct standards, and fundamental presumptions that underlie (Schein, 2010).

Hofstede (1980) claimed that masculinity, individualism, power distance, and uncertainty avoidance are characteristics of culture. The degree of management and staff conduct predicated on an ideal correlation between official and informal planning acts is known as “power distance”. The integration of people inside an organisation is known as individualism.

The line that separates personal and organisational interests has been precisely matched. Members of an organization’s tolerance for ambiguity and uncertainty is reflected in their avoidance of uncertainty. Cultural ideals associated with masculinity include power, consumerism, aggressiveness, competition, and ambition. It is well documented that any organisational transformation, including a successful entry into foreign markets, is influenced by culture (Nguyen and Waring, 2013). Hofstede’s (1980) dimensions are used in this research to quantify organisational culture.

2.4. Development of hypotheses

2.4.1. SMEs’ internationalisation performance and inclination towards international entrepreneurship

According to Teece (2012), the DCT directs businesses to respond to external environmental changes. In changing these kinds of circumstances, an entrepreneurial mindset is necessary for survival and growth, especially when entering a new worldwide market (Covin and Miller, 2014). In particular, taking risks, being creative, and taking initiative are linked to international entrepreneurial orientation to accomplish objectives (Knight, 2001). Entrepreneurial orientation was shown to improve organisational performance in earlier empirical investigations (Alshehhi et al., 2022; Covin and Slevin, 1991). The international orientation of SMEs in the Middle East is the primary concern of this research. SMEs in developing nations continue to need assistance in exploring global market prospects, particularly in light of internationalization with their limited financial resources in a more erratic commercial climate (Kuckertz et al., 2020). Zahra (2021) asserts that to sustain entrepreneurship using fundamental resources of skills and competencies, an international entrepreneurial mindset is required. A company’s ability to prosper in a highly competitive business climate and support SMEs in achieving

internationalisation success in a global setting depends on their entrepreneurial mindset (Naldi et al., 2007). SMEs must adopt an international entrepreneurial mindset (Teece, 2007). Therefore, the following hypothesis is put out by this study:

H1. The success of SMEs in internationalization is significantly and favorably impacted by entrepreneurial orientation during internationalization.

2.4.2. Mediating role of organisational culture

Some researchers are still investigating the mechanisms behind the relationship between work behavior and performance (Kollmann and töckmann, 2014; Nofiani et al., 2021). Although the internationalization process is a business behavior,

internationalization is considered a personal concept that describes the idea of enterprises to enter international markets (Kollmann and Stöckmann, 2014). Nofiani et al. (2021) state that globally oriented entrepreneurs cultivate and maintain a dynamic set of competencies that allow their businesses to produce knowledge-intensive goods and expedite their entrance into new markets.

Furthermore, as a feature of international entrepreneurial culture, Lim and Kim (2020) show how international entrepreneurial orientation may foster dynamic qualities that promote better international performance in tumultuous marketplaces. As a result, to close this gap, it is required to investigate specific actions that, in this case, relate to organisational dynamic capacity and the link between international entrepreneurial orientation and internationalisation performance (Buccieri et al. (2021).

By establishing dynamic organizational skills, SMEs with a proactive, creative mentality and a risk-taking attitude are better prepared to handle the dynamics of the global environment (AlShehhi et al., 2022). In order to take advantage of global business prospects in the creation and launch of new goods and services, SMEs may also benefit from improved coordination and communication skills in international markets (Chebbi et al., 2023). Better internationalisation performance, such as an increase in the quantity and diversity of items approved by the global market, is the result achieved by SMEs. As previously mentioned, mediating factors like organisational culture may help in understanding the association between entrepreneurial orientation and performance (Lim and Kim, 2020). An organization's set of values and beliefs that are tailored to achieving its goals and objectives is known as its organisational culture (Schein, 2010). According to Teece (2012), organisational culture is the primary means of competitive advantage due to its distinct and unmistakable qualities, as seen from the dynamic capacities viewpoint. By creating strong morale, behaviour, and dedication to firm growth during the worldwide market penetration (Arabeche et al., 2022). One of the best strategies for crisis management is to develop a robust and contemporary organisational culture, which enables businesses to continue expanding during periods of extreme unpredictability.

Saudi Arabia's organizational culture is deeply influenced by traditional values, societal norms, and the dominant role of religion and family in shaping business practices. Understanding how this cultural backdrop affects entrepreneurial behaviour and international business strategy is crucial. Saudi Arabian firms often have a hierarchical and family-driven organizational structure. This can impact decision-making processes and the approach to risk-taking, which is a critical element of

entrepreneurial orientation. The strong family networks could either act as a supportive mechanism for entrepreneurial activities or create constraints by reinforcing conservative decision-making. In Saudi Arabia, risk-taking and proactiveness might be more cautious in family-owned businesses compared to firms in individualistic, entrepreneurial cultures. However, Vision 2030's emphasis on diversification and innovation could create a shift toward more entrepreneurial behaviors, especially in the context of non-oil sectors. Saudi firms often exhibit a centralized and top-down approach to decision-making. This could affect the firm's ability to act proactively in the international market. If authority and decisions are concentrated at the top, entrepreneurial leaders may be limited in taking rapid action to exploit opportunities abroad, which could affect internationalization strategies. Understanding how Saudi Arabia's cultural dimensions, precisely power distance and uncertainty avoidance, influence entrepreneurial orientation and internationalization is crucial for a deeper exploration of the topic.

According to Cuevas-Vargas et al. (2019), an entrepreneurial mindset that is in line with organisational culture may provide strategic guidance for opportunity identification during the internationalisation process. It is also observed that not only the entrepreneur but the people working under him should have these competencies. It will help internalize different company relics and emblems (such as the slogan and logo), signifying a fresh approach to growing into other markets. According to Covin and Miller (2014), organisational culture can transform international entrepreneurial orientation into internationalisation performance via these actions. An essential component of the SME culture is an international entrepreneurial orientation, according to Mudalige et al. (2021). The importance of organisational culture was emphasized by Peng and Lin (2017), who claimed that culture impacts employee attitudes and performance inside the organization. Similarly, organisational culture plays a crucial role in international entrepreneurial orientation in directing entrepreneurial behaviour and improving organisational performance (Engelen, 2014). So, the following is how the suggested theory is put forth:

H2. The link between international entrepreneurial orientation and SMEs' success in internationalisation is mediated by organisational culture.

3. Techniques

3.1. Methodology

The present research aims to investigate the impact of international entrepreneurial orientation on the internationalisation performance of Saudi firms. In this research, the variable—organizational culture is looked at as a potential mediating factor in this relationship. The approach used was cross-sectional; the data was collected from CEOs/Managers to implement a quantitative technique (Saunders et al., 2007).

As documented in the literature, international entrepreneurial orientation is an activity that encompasses enterprise-level procedures, methods, and decision-making approaches (Lumpkin and Dess, 1996; Zhou et al., 2010). The innovativeness, proactivity, and risk-taking of SMEs are judged using seven measures, which are taken from Zhou et al. (2010) and Knight and Cavusgil (2004). According to Hofstede

(1980) and Hayton et al. (2002), organisational culture is a collection of shared values, attitudes, and behaviors that form the basis of an organization's personnel management practices (Schein, 2010). In this research, organisational culture served as an intervening or mediating factor. Eight questions from the questionnaire were modified to reflect the organisational level based on Hofstede's (1980) dimensions (Hofstede et al., 1990; Wallace et al., 1999). The internationalization performance of SMEs encompasses both financial and non-financial measures that measure an organization's overall success throughout the internationalization process (Falahat et al., 2020; Jantunen et al., 2005). To assess SMEs' success in internationalisation during the previous three years, Jantunen et al. (2005) proposed five items: market access, profitability, increase in sales, involvement in international markets, and the creation of worldwide knowledge. Likert scale, strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5) is used to assess each variable in this research. To aid respondents in understanding the survey's content, the English version was translated into Arabic.

3.2. Sampling technique and data collection

SMEs with headquarters located in the cities of Riyadh and Jeddah were chosen as the study's population. The cities were chosen as they both are business centres, Riyadh being the capital city and a hub for business organisations, and Jeddah being a port city having many exporting firms doing business; purposive sampling was used to choose a sample from this group. The leader of the Middle Eastern export community was contacted to disseminate the questionnaire to its members since there was little information available on official statistics on the number of SMEs in KSA that had engaged in foreign activities. This was done using the critical informant strategy (Kumar et al., 1993). Representatives of SMEs that have engaged in export operations to overseas markets, such as export managers or firm owners/managers, completed the questionnaire. Since one person often does small business administration in this part of the world, the owner-manager is seen as representing the opinions of the company (Indarti and Langenberg, 2004).

Furthermore, as noted by Lukito-Budi et al. (2023), owners play a critical role, particularly in the context of SMEs, since they gradually assume the position of a company's leader. The survey was carried out in 2024 between April and June. A total of 302 respondents took part, and 206 of their questionnaires were deemed eligible for further examination. Hair et al. (2014) provide insightful information on the process of establishing sample size in research projects utilised in this research. By using this method, the computation results indicate that 75 respondents are the minimal number of samples needed for this kind of research; as a consequence, more respondents than needed were acquired for this investigation.

3.3. Profiling of responding organisations

Respondents from SMEs filled out our poll with 10.9% of them identified as owners, and the remaining respondents as directors or export managers. The majority of SMEs choose to export consumer goods (50.9%). The research also estimates the elapsed time between the company's founding year and the export of its first product. We discovered that, in less than three years after starting their businesses, the majority

of SMEs (65%) had effectively exported their goods. One reason for this might be that SMEs now have unrestricted access to promote and sell their goods globally thanks to technology advancements, and several Saudi market platforms provide services for the international market as well as a range of social media platforms that facilitate online marketing. Less than 2% of SMEs have entered the African market, although the majority of SMEs (47%) cover Asia (see **Table 1**).

Table 1. Profile of respondents and responding firms.

Demographic variables	Frequency (n)	Percent (%)
Designation		
Export Manager	158	77.8
Senior Manager	26	12.8
CEOs	22	10.98
Total	206	100.0
Experience (Present Position)		
0–5 years	118	58.0
5–10 years	18	13.0
10–15 years	40	19.0
More than 15 yrs	30	14.0
Total	206	100.0
Products		
Industrial products	97	47.9
Consumer products	103	50.9
Services	6	1.5
Others		
Total	206	100.0
No of employees		
250–500	119	59.0
500–1000	71	34.0
More than 1000	16	6.4
Total	206	100
International Market Coverage		
Asia	97	47.9
Europe	51	25.4
America	25	12.5
Australia	25	12.5
Africa	7	1.5
Total	206	100.0

Source: Table Created by Author.

4. Results

4.1. Examining unidimensionality

Examining unidimensionality is critical, and CFA was used in the assessment process to ensure that no element should load on any other research variable. Out of all the methods available, CFA is considered to be the most effective in guaranteeing unidimensionality (Medsker et al.,1994).

4.2. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)

CFA was performed to assess unidimensionality; model fit was also assessed, which has to be within an acceptable range before proceeding with a structural model. Fit indices are essential for assessing the study’s measuring approach. Garver and Mentzer (1999) state that it is difficult to establish exact fit indices for all indices since the values fluctuate depending on the sample size. Fit indices, however, could be more helpful in differentiating between good and poor models. It has been challenging to settle on a single measure up to this point since multiple measurements convey distinct parts of the model (Crowley and Fan, 1997; Ping, 2004). All research scales were used to perform the CFA, and a measurement model was developed. The measurement model was rerun until all of the standard loadings were appropriate when it was found that some of them were outside of allowable boundaries. All the fit indices are shown in **Table 2**.

Table 2. Fit indices for the measurement model.

GFI	NFI	CFI	NNFI	RMSEA	DF	SRMR	Chi-Square	p-value
0.92	0.90	0.91	0.888	332.99	.50	0.786	765.88	0.000

Source: Prepared by the author.

Assessment of reliability

Prior to evaluating the validity, a reliability study of each research measure was carried out to ascertain unidimensionality (Anderson and Gerbing, 1991). It has been proposed that validity evaluation can only occur after dependability and reliability are established. The internal consistency and stability of the scales were assessed to assess scale reliability.

4.3. Scale reliability

The ability of a scale to evaluate scale consistency is known as scale reliability (Tavakol et al., 2008). It is not only dependent upon validity but also closely related to it (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994). The following standards may be used to assess it: When assessing reliability, the most recommended and often-used method is Cronbach’s alpha. Werts et al. (1974) recommended that the range of values for this metric be between 0.6 and 1.0. **Table 1** displays the Cronbach alpha independently for each study scale. As all the values were acceptable, scales may be trusted. Dependability is shown by the fact that all of the study’s outcomes, including construct reliability and Cronbach’s alpha, fall within an acceptable range. Also, the VE values are within allowable bounds.

4.4. Assessment of validity

Accurate measures for a research scale establish the scale’s validity. A variety of validity checks were performed on each study scale. The capacity of the practical tests and items drawn from the literature to assess theoretical claims is known as construct validity. It comprises presenting the theory together with an empirical and theoretical rationale for the studied issues. It also involves a statistical examination of the relationships between the responses to different test components and the internal architecture of the test. They also provide links between measurements of other components and test outcomes. Three kinds of concept validity were assessed: nomological, convergent, and discriminant. It illustrates the intimate relationship between things on a single scale (Campbell and Fiske, 1959). A scale is said to be convergent when there is a substantial degree of variance shared by the constituents of a particular notion, as stated by Hair et al. (2006). There are several approaches for determining the convergent validity. Firstly, It may be determined using high-standard loadings (Hair et al., 2008; Malhotra and Dash, 2011).

Further measurements are also made in order to demonstrate convergent validity. For example, scales with true convergence are indicated by NFI, and NNFI values are more significant than 0.9 (Bentler and Bonett, 1980; Hu and Bentler, 1999). Anderson and Gerbing (1988) also suggested using t-value results to demonstrate convergent validity. The t values for the study scale have to be more than 2. The current study’s research scales all had t values of more than 2, indicating good convergent validity. **Table 2** shows the convergent validity values for each scale.

4.5. Testing for measurement and structural models

A measurement model and a structural model were assessed to verify the quality of the instruments and to evaluate the suggested hypotheses. Initially, the measuring model’s reliability, discriminant validity, and convergence were assessed. (AVE) Moreover, loading values were used to assess convergent validity. According to data processing findings, all loading values exceeded the predicted standard score of 0.70, and all AVE values were above the threshold of 0.5 (Hair et al., 2014). The data for loading, AVE, Cronbach’s alpha, and composite reliability (CR) are shown in **Table 3**. For the assessment of convergent validity, t values were also assessed and shown below.

Table 3. Showing path values, AVE, Cronbach’s alpha, and composite reliability.

Construct	CR	Cronbach Alpha	t values	AVE	Loadings	VIF
IEO	0.745	0.823	3.44	0.532	0.641	1.908
OC	0.845	0.832	4.55	0.667	0.752	2.322
IO	0.632	0.743	10.56	0.612	0.651	1.987

Source: Table Created by Author.

Additionally, as shown by the Fornell-Larcker criteria, Discriminant validity was assessed through the variance inflation factor (VIF), which is used in this investigation and has a threshold score of five (Hair et al., 2014). According to the study’s findings, multicollinearity is not an issue since the VIF requirements have been satisfied (see **Table 3**).

4.6. Evaluation of structural model and mediation analysis

Constructs were projected into one structural model. The direct effect model was used to evaluate the direct link between the constructs. It is suggested that distinct models be evaluated in the event that the comprehensive model fails to converge. All scales in this research were rendered unidimensional, and fit indices were used to build a comprehensive model that included both independent and dependent variables.

In **Figure 1**, the model is shown. In the structural model, the independent variable (X) and dependent variable (Y) need to be related. The direct impact model's route coefficients were used to assess the research hypotheses. **Figure 1** displays the direct and indirect impact structural model. The results of the direct effect model hypothesis test are as follows. For H2, the path value ($B = 0.82$) was significant. Similarly, the path value from OC to IO ($B = 1.16$) was also significant at $p = 0.000$. Therefore, both hypotheses were accepted. However, H1 was not Accepted as the path value ($B = -0.80$) was not significant. Therefore, it is safely concluded that mediation was found; culture mediates the relationship between IEO and IO.

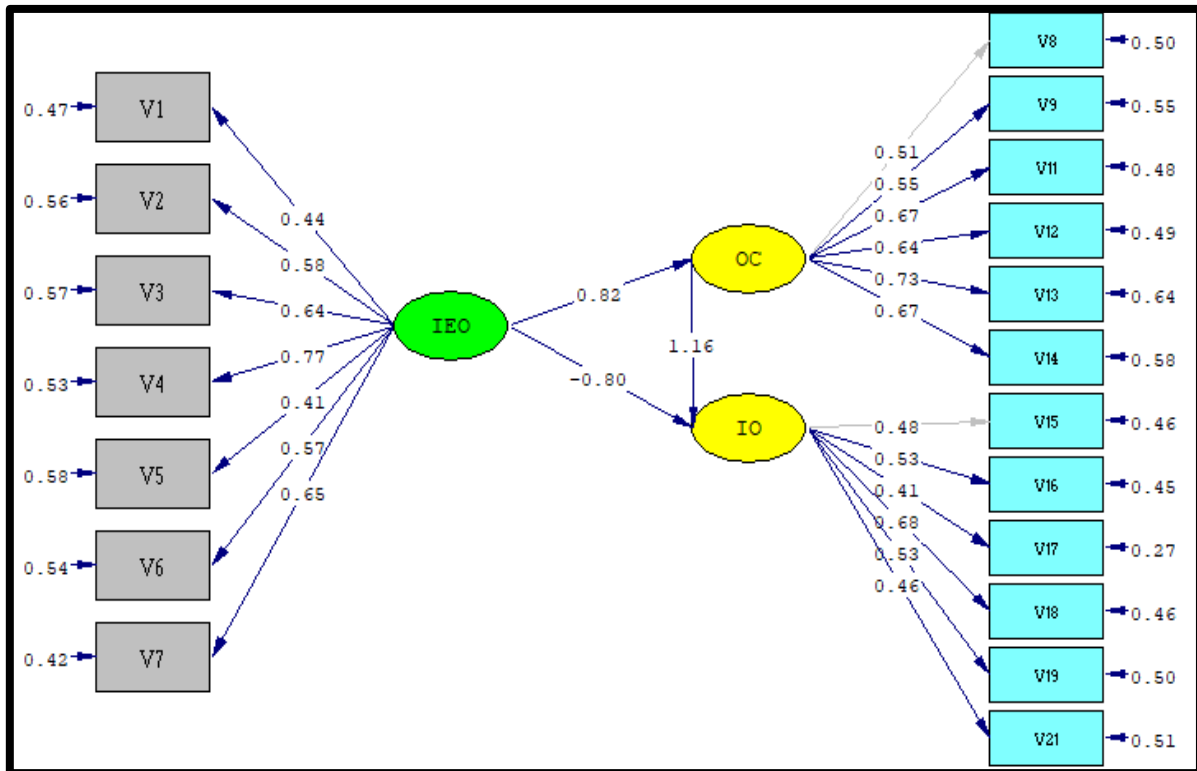


Figure 1. Showing structural model.

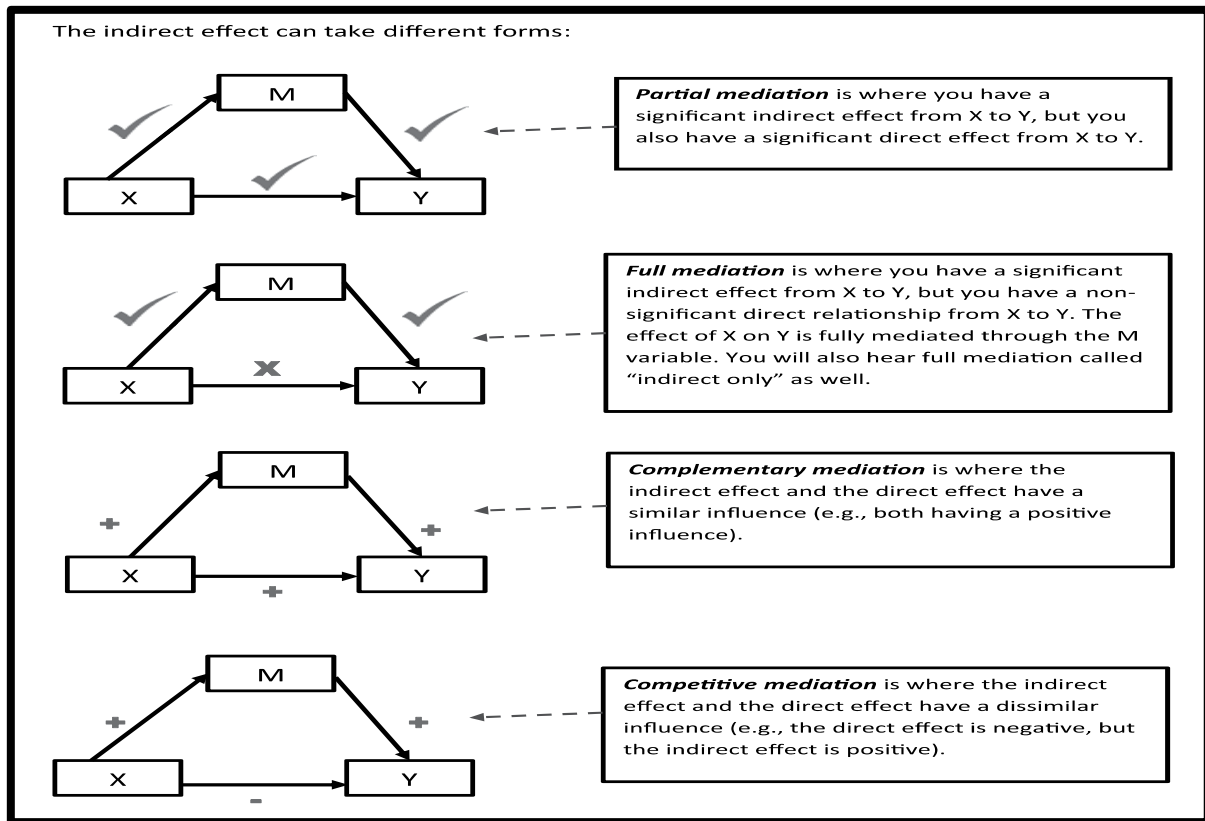


Figure 2. Showing types of mediation.

Source: Collier (2020).

In the current research, competitive mediation was found. The model does not support complete mediation as the direct relationship was negative, and both indirect effects were positive (refer Figure 2).

5. Discussion

With specific reference to SMEs in Saudi Arabia, this research examined a conceptual model that suggested the impact of global entrepreneurial orientation on internationalisation performance and the mediating role of organisational culture. Numerous research works have examined the connection between internationalisation performance, culture, and entrepreneurial attitude (Jantunen et al., 2005; Knight and Cavusgil, 2004). Internationalisation of SMEs in developing nations—particularly in the Middle East—this link has not, however, received much attention.

After examining every pathway link, our work puts explicitly forward three possibilities. Firstly, the influence of IEO on IO is found to be mediated by organisational culture, according to this study’s intriguing findings. The empirical results support this finding. The study’s findings show that, when it comes to SMEs in developing nations, organizational preparedness is necessary for the development of creative workflows, risk assessment, proactive market research, and an adaptable organizational culture that promotes global performance.

The study’s findings negate the direct relationship between Entrepreneurial orientation and success in internationalisation; as a consequence, H1 needs to be supported. This intriguing discovery runs counter to several other research papers

(Covin and Slevin, 1991; Kollmann and Stöckmann, 2014; Lumpkin and Dess, 1996; Monteiro et al., 2019) that claim entrepreneurial orientation directly and favorably enhance internationalization success. Additionally, Isichei et al. (2020) found that performance is not significantly impacted by risk-taking, which is a component of an entrepreneurial mindset. We validate that cultural dimensions have a mediating role in the association between international orientation and internationalization success, hence providing support for hypothesis H2. Due to technological advancements in the field, corporate actors must adopt an entrepreneurial mindset that emphasizes innovation, risk-taking, and proactivity (Covin and Slevin, 1991; Lumpkin and Dess, 1996). Businesses will be encouraged to enhance their dynamic skills in addressing environmental changes resulting from the new policies stemming from Vision 2030 by fostering innovation and adopting a proactive entrepreneurial mindset. Thus, environmental sensing skills, rejuvenation, and adaptability are greatly enhanced by SMEs' dedication to implementing business transformation via global company development. This conduct would significantly improve SMEs' performance when it comes to internationalisation.

According to the study's findings, internationalisation performance may be enhanced by taking the road from international entrepreneurial orientation to performance (Martin and Javalgi, 2016). One of the keys to SMEs' success, according to Indarti and Langenberg (2004), is their access to technology advancements. It follows that the fact that over 64 percent of SMEs in our research have sold their products abroad in the three years after they opened for business is not shocking. In response to innovations, SMEs in Saudi have made use of their sensing and integration skills. Through a variety of online venues, technology media has provided SMEs with extensive access to expand their businesses beyond national boundaries.

H2 is empirically confirmed by the study's results, which demonstrate that organisational culture significantly mediates the link between international entrepreneurial orientation and internationalisation performance. The link between international entrepreneurial orientation and SMEs' success in internationalisation is mediated, in large part, by organisational culture. According to Schein (2010), organisational culture is a set of fundamental beliefs that have been established, found, or produced by certain groups as a means of resolving issues with official and effective internal integration and outward adaption. The organisational culture of SMEs in Saudi demonstrates that they actively update staff members about corporate advancements and have a hierarchy or authority in running their businesses. In an effort to increase social mobility, the work culture has grown more flexible under the internationalization process, placing a strong emphasis on equality, solidarity, and the quality of the working environment. Creating an organizational culture helps SMEs adapt to changing conditions in the outside world even though it is a complex and time-consuming process (Jantunen et al., 2005). Global business tends to change and become more complicated every day; this might be especially difficult under circumstances when businesses operate in many overseas markets. Internationalization performance increases when businesses attempt to enhance organisational culture via a foreign market emphasis (Zhang et al., 2014).

Therefore, incorporating these cultural dimensions, the study challenged traditional Western models of EO and internationalization, which often assume that

firms are quick to embrace risk and innovation. Likely, firms in high power distance and high uncertainty avoidance cultures like Saudi Aramight engage in more calculated internationalization strategies that take into account gradual market entry, relationship-building, and government support. Moreover, the best approach to help organizations enhance their internationalization performance is via an entrepreneurial attitude. The study's findings confirm those of Shehu and Mahmood (2014), who found that organisational culture plays a substantial mediating role in the association between performance and entrepreneurial inclination. Organizational cultures vary differently from one another; management needs levers, such as international entrepreneurial orientation, to make a lasting impact in international markets (Zhang et al., 2014).

6. Final thoughts and recommendations for future studies

Theoretically, this research utilizes the scholarly contributions of many researchers in preparing a robust model of research. This research focuses on the link between international entrepreneurial orientation and the internationalisation performance of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), with the mediating role of organisational culture. Third, the backdrop of this empirical research was Saudi's growing economy and firms operating in Middle Eastern contexts. This study closes a vacuum in the literature on the internationalisation of SMEs in developing nations, especially in Saudi Arabia (Zhang et al., 2014), which has yet to receive enough attention in the recent past. Therefore, the research provides an essential context for the internationalisation performance of SMEs operating in KSA; this is in response to the calls for a study on the internationalisation of SMEs in the past made by Jantunen et al. (2005) and recently by (Chebbi et al., 2023; Falahat et al., 2020; Thukral and Jain, 2021).

Saudi SMEs should expand their operations into international markets in order to take advantage of the prospects presented by Vision 2030. The primary factor supporting internationalisation success should be the effective management of the organization's organisational culture. The expansion of international markets necessitates that SMEs have the appropriate organisational culture to adjust to environmental and sustainability challenges expertly. Furthermore, it is shown that there is no direct link suggesting that SMEs in Saudi need to support this orientation with cultural dimensions as a crucial component for successful internationalization. By incorporating a deeper exploration of Saudi Arabia's organizational culture, Vision 2030, and cultural dimensions such as power distance and uncertainty avoidance, the study would provide a more nuanced understanding of how the entrepreneurial local context shapes orientation and internationalization. This approach could significantly advance the current literature by offering insights into how Saudi firms, driven by a unique blend of tradition and reform, are navigating the challenges and opportunities of international business in a transforming economy. More than ever, SMEs in developing nations are contributing significantly to global commercial activities. As a result, SMEs in developing economies with worldwide markets possess the qualities outlined in this research to successfully internationalise. This requirement has the practical consequence of requiring institutional policies from the public and private

sectors as well as from all parties involved in the growth of SMEs' internationalization to promote an entrepreneurial mindset. The emphasis on creating a supportive environment and building organizational capacity is another practical aspect because the study's findings suggest that organizational preparedness is a critical success element in enhancing SMEs' performance when they expand internationally.

There are a number of limitations to this study that might guide future investigations. First, one may argue that this study's use of cross-sectional data needs to be improved. Nevertheless, when the explanatory factors can be taken to be significantly stable across time, it is feasible to justify drawing causal conclusions even with cross-sectional data. Longitudinal data may be used in future studies to investigate the factors that influence the sustainability of SMEs' internationalisation performance. Second, just the organisational level is measured in this study in order to evaluate multilevel units of analysis and provide prospects for future research. Third, although various developing economy sectors may have varying degrees of internationalisation, the present analysis does not concentrate on any one industry. Therefore, further research may be done by looking at how well certain industries have internationalised. In concordance with Zhang et al. (2014), this study also recommends that future research be undertaken to broaden the scope by taking into account elements unique to SMEs in developing nations. Further studies should take into account supplementary perspectives, such as institutional theory, to enhance the explanation of SMEs' internationalization success in developing economies. Also, future studies may consider deploying unconventional research methods to uncover interesting insights into the domain, such as MICMAC analysis (Ishrat et al., 2023) and several types of systematic review methods such as bibliometric reviews (Khan, Uddin, et al., 2024; Khan and Azam, 2023; Rashid et al., 2024), hybrid reviews (Khan, Anas, et al., 2024) and framework-based systematic reviews (Grover and Garima, 2024).

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