# Towards Sustainable University Management: A proposed model to Improve the Quality of Job Performance Evaluation During the Privatization of Universities in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabi

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**Abstract:** Privatization enables the universities to better choose the modern educational systems, deepen the interconnection of educational institutions with the sectors of production and services, develop cooperation and research exchange. This study aimed to contribute to the privatization of Saudi universities and sustainable management therein through developing a framework to improve the quality of job performance during the privatization of universities in the Kingdom with reference to Umm Al-Qura University in Mecca. This in turn contributes to the competitiveness of universities and accelerates their dependence after privatization. The study used the descriptive approach for its suitability to the nature of its subject, objectives, and the analysis of the dimensions of the problem and the reality study. The study utilized two methods: field research based on a questionnaire to investigate the opinions of the study sample – the faculty members at Umm Al-Qura University, to explore the reality of the job performance evaluation system, as well as identify the requirements to develop job performance and improve the current evaluation system within the requirements of privatizing Saudi universities. The proposed model identifies emerging trends in the field of employee performance appraisal during privatization by taking into account the strategic integration of human resource management, the influence of organizational context factors on the employee performance appraisal system, and performance criteria and standards that are customized for the organizational context.

*Keywords:* Sustainable University Management, Quality, Job Performance Evaluation, Privatization, Saudi Arabia.

## Introduction

Since the twentieth century, the world has undergone multiple and accelerating changes in all spheres of life, particularly in science and knowledge, where knowledge has become the main catalyst for global economic growth and competitiveness, and real capital under new global realities dominated by various variables such as globalization (Tong and Baslom, 2019). Transition to a knowledge society is not possible without reaching a knowledge-based economy, and this has led to a change in some countries' policies, structural reforms, and a qualitative shift in the level of competitiveness (Nurunnabi, 2017). These transformations have imposed great challenges on higher education, as the impact of higher education in building knowledge economies has increased, and it has become a pivotal role in creating the intellectual capacity on which it depends in the production and employment of knowledge (Ashour, 2020).

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is one of the fastest-growing economies that realize that the transition to a knowledge society has become a necessity dictated by international conditions and developments, in which the concept of global competition has changed, so that knowledge becomes the basis of competitive advantages between countries. This transformation requires focusing on developing human capacities and directing them to be creative and more productive, especially with the increasing intensity of competition globally and its dependence on knowledge (Quamar, 2016).

Accordingly, the Kingdom's transformation towards a knowledge society has become imperative to build a more diversified economy capable of global competition. This culminated in the launch of the Saudi Vision 2030, which focused on the importance of investing in human resources through higher education institutions in preparing individuals scientifically and professionally. However, preparing individuals at a high scientific and skill level requires the existence of efficient and quality institutions. Therefore, one of the most important goals of the Kingdom's Vision 2030 is to have at least five Saudi universities among the top 200 universities in international rankings (Saudi Vision 2030, 2021).

Universities are the mainstay for social development in all fields, and they are society's means towards achieving progress and prosperity. Therefore, many countries of the world have tended to establish high-level universities to enhance their global competitiveness. Building a competitive university requires working according to a clear strategy and a future vision to play a leading role in the process of building a broad base of scientifically and professionally prepared cadres in a way that contributes effectively to improving its competitiveness (Iesrah and Al-Kasbe, 2018).

This puts Saudi universities before the challenge of competing with various regional and global universities to achieve a high rating in light of international indicators. Universities obtaining advanced international rankings require achieving the highest rates of quality and job performance so that universities competition is associated with adherence to comprehensive quality standards, including effective job performance evaluation frameworks. The degree to which these standards are achieved depends on the extent to which universities are given independence and academic freedom so that this independence includes the university's ability to allocate its resources in a way that organizes its returns in various fields (Al-Abbad, 2017).

The independence of universities is achieved through privatization where the universities set their plans towards the gradual qualitative improvement of their programs for modern and future sciences. Besides, privatization enables the universities to better choose the modern educational systems, deepen the interconnection of educational

institutions with the sectors of production and services, develop cooperation and research exchange. Additionally, private universities have more opportunities to achieve excellence through developing strong performance evaluation programs that are driven by information and communication technology to raise the efficiency of the university's service to the community and continue paying attention to educational functions according to the data of the knowledge society (Nadarajah et al., 2012).

About a year ago, the Saudi Ministry of Education announced a royal order about the privatization of three Saudi universities: King Saud University, King Abdulaziz University, and Imam Abdul Rahman bin Faisal University according to the new university system. It aims to achieve the disciplined independence of the universities with the organizational hierarchy of having a board of trustees in each university, which contributes to achieving governance, activating resources, establishing endowments and companies, approving specializations, and programs, and selecting leaders based on competence and excellence.

Few previous studies have shown a weakness in the management of some Saudi universities, as they face challenges related to university management as well as job performance and performance evaluation (Adeinat and Abdulfatah, 2019), (Shafique, 2015). This, in turn, affects the ability of universities to proceed with privatization and provide the necessary interventions to improve the job performance of their administrative and academic cadres, and this affects the sustainability of university management and reduces the impact of the development activities that it implements.

Following the previous introduction, the current study aims to contribute to the privatization of Saudi universities and sustainable management therein through developing a framework to improve the quality of job performance during the privatization of universities in the Kingdom with reference to Umm Al-Qura University in Mecca. This in turn contributes to the competitiveness of universities and accelerate their dependence after privatization.

**Study Aim and Objectives**

This study aims to develop a framework to improve the job performance evaluation in Saudi universities according to the requirements of privatizing higher education. Besides, the study aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. Explore the requirements for the privatization of universities in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

2. Identifying the reality of job performance in Saudi universities preparing for privatization from the point of view of faculty members.

3. Identifying the most important requirements that should be met to improve job performance from the point of view of faculty members.

**Research Questions**

The study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What are the requirements for the privatization of universities in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia?

2. What is the reality of job performance in Saudi universities preparing for privatization from the point of view of faculty members?

3. What are the most important requirements that should be met to improve job performance from the point of view of faculty members?

## Literature Review

Privatization is defined as the transfer of some government institutions from public ownership in the state to private ownership, and privatization refers to the transfer of firm shares from public circulation to private ownership as well. government in addition to increasing the levels of efficiency enjoyed by the various institutions in the country (Bortolotti, Fantini and Siniscalco, 2004).

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has tended to privatize education in the past few years, and this means active and effective participation of the private sector in educational activities and responsibilities that were the prerogative of the state without other parties, and it is worth noting that privatizing education does not necessarily mean the transfer of ownership of the services of the sector the entire private sector, as is the case in many enterprises that are being privatized (Akoum, 2009).

There are many types of privatizations of education, and the following are some of them (Verger, Fontdevila and Zancajo, 2016):

1. The full privatization of education: This form of privatization means the transfer of all educational responsibilities and institutions to the full ownership of the private sector.

2. Partial privatization of education: Partial privatization of education means that many responsibilities of education are transferred to the private sector and shared with the government sector of the state.

3. Conditional privatization of education: This type of privatization expresses the transfer of some education responsibilities to the private sector according to the conditions agreed upon with the government sector.

Many countries of the world are working to privatize the education sector to achieve the following goals (Verger, Fontdevila and Zancajo, 2016):

1. Improving the efficiency of educational outputs by stimulating the elements of competition between the various educational institutions of the private sector instead of the government sector taking overall education responsibilities.

2. Reducing the expenses covered by the state's general budget and investing money in establishing many projects that would develop public services.

3. Attracting foreign capital to invest in the education sector, which leads to an increase in the state's input and higher revenues, in addition to lowering its expenditures, as mentioned above.

There are several benefits to privatizing education, including the following (Verger, Fontdevila and Zancajo, 2016):

1. Competition: The privatization of education leads to high levels of competition between the private sector, which leads to the innovation of many modern educational mechanisms, in addition to significantly increasing the efficiency of the educational process.

2. Providing job opportunities: The privatization of the education sector leads to more job opportunities for teachers and more qualified employees, and it also contributes to providing many job opportunities for the residents of the educational institution's area.

3. Reducing taxes: privatizing education leads to a decrease in state expenditures, which leads to a decrease in the value of taxes imposed by the state on citizens to cover the budget.

Back to literature, few studies have tackled the issue of universities' privatization and very limited studies tackled the issue of performance during privatization. Adamson and Galloway (2019) analyzed the different forms and mechanisms for privatizing schools in the United States, especially independent schools, where the study focused on identifying the data that contribute to the development of performance in schools after privatization. The researchers used the comparative analytical method, and the study tool included documents collected from six American states where they were analyzed for comparison. The study sample consisted of several schools in some states. The results showed that the privatization of education led to a preoccupation with privatization distracts from the general goal of education, which is the achievement of high-quality learning, to matters of less importance, and that the multiplicity of tracks in one country led to a disparity in education and a difference in the level of success. The study also showed that the difficulty of developing programs for improving the teachers' performance affects the quality of education during privatization.

Elzoughbi (2017) sought to evaluate the feasibility of privatizing pre-university education in Egypt, ascertain the benefits and drawbacks of privatization, and propose a road map to assist the Ministry of Education in improving Egypt's education system. The researcher took a qualitative approach, and in order to acquire data for the study's aims, the researcher employed an interview and secondary data. There were 18 people in the sample. The findings indicated that privatization is an effective strategy for improving educational quality, expanding educational services, and reducing the government's financial burden, that public education schools face significant challenges in terms of educational service quality, and that privatization fosters non-profit competition among competitors and results in non-discrimination. Among government students, an educational voucher system is in place for low-income pupils.

In the same context, the study of Termes et al. (2018) analyzed privatization trends in educational institutions in the Philippines and to identify the implications of this on the administrative process and job performance. The researcher used the qualitative descriptive approach, where the study tool was the interview to collect data. The sample consisted of 11 schools, including 87 school principals, teachers and parents. The results indicated the need to work on achieving a balance between private and public schools, achieving competitiveness to attract students, by demonstrating competitive quality and achieving efficiency in the educational process.

The study of Hearn (2018) focused on teacher management and performance in privatized schools, where the researchers used the descriptive approach. The study tools included a questionnaire, interview, documents, reports, and statistics collection and analysis. The study sample consisted of officials in the Ministry of Education and school principals, and teachers. The results showed that the job performance of teachers is directly reflected in the quality of the educational process after privatization, like the schools that were privatized noticed superior performance of teachers as a result of the support provided by the schools and the pursuit of continuous development of their capabilities.

## Research Method

The study used the descriptive approach for its suitability to the nature of its subject, objectives, and the analysis of the dimensions of the problem and the reality study. The study utilized two methods: field research based on a questionnaire to investigate the opinions of the study sample – the faculty members at Umm Al-Qura University, to explore the reality of the job performance evaluation system, as well as identify the requirements to develop job performance and improve the current evaluation system within the requirements of privatizing Saudi universities.

The questionnaire included the following dimensions:

1. The reality of the job performance evaluation system.

2. The requirements to develop job performance and improve the current evaluation system within the requirements of privatizing Saudi universities.

The study also included a literary review of previous relevant studies to achieve the study's objectives in identifying the requirements for privatizing higher education in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

The Delphi method was also used to further evaluate the developed framework through the opinions of academic leaders in Saudi universities towards improving job performance in universities that are moving towards privatization.

The study sample will include Umm Al-Qura University, where the questionnaire will be distributed to its employees. Concerning the Delphi method, a sample of the academic leaders in the three Saudi universities that have been subject to privatization will be selected (King Saud University, King Abdulaziz University, and Imam Abdul Rahman bin Faisal University) so that the framework will be evaluated from their point of view.

**Sampling Process**

The study sample consisted of the faculty members at Umm Al-Qura University, the number of individuals who collaborated with the study, and filled the survey form ٧٨ people. and table (1) shows the participants distribution according to personal data.

**Table 1**

*The participants are distributed according to personal data.*

|  |  | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|---|
| Gender | Male | 47 | 60.3 |
|  | Female | 31 | 39.7 |
| Age | 23- 35 | 3 | 3.8 |
|  | 36-45 | 12 | 15.4 |
|  | 46- 55 | 34 | 43.6 |
|  | 56- 65 | 29 | 37.2 |
| Education | Secondary certificate | 1 | 1.3 |
|  | Bachelor degree | 5 | 6.4 |
|  | Master degree | 10 | 12.8 |
|  | PhD. | 62 | 79.5 |
| Has your university developed a clear plan for privatization? | Yes | 11 | 14.1 |
|  | No | 67 | 85.9 |
| Total |  | 78 | 100.0 |

It is clear from the previous table that 60.3% of the participants are males, and 39.7% are females, their ages ranged from 23-65 years, and their distribution by age groups was: 43.6% aged from 46-55 years, 37.2% aged from 56-65 years, 15.4 % are aged 36-45 years, and 3.8% are between 23-35 years old.

As for their distribution by educational level, 79.5% have a doctorate, 12.8% a master's degree, 6.4% a bachelor's degree, and 1.3% a secondary education. and we can note that 85.9% of the respondents stated that the university did not develop a clear plan for privatization.

**Reliability and Validity**

To confirm the questionnaire's validity and applicability for the research objectives, it was examined by a panel of experts, academics, and specialists, who were requested to comment on each paragraph and suggest additions, deletions, or reformulations. The researcher adhered to the guidelines and updated the questionnaire.

Consistent internally Consistency of each paragraph of the questionnaire with the axis to which it belongs, so correlation coefficients between the degree of each paragraph and the total score of the axis to which it belongs were calculated in order to verify the questionnaire's validity. The results indicate the questionnaire's validity consistency with the internal data in the study, where values of correlate.

**Table2**

*Internal consistency for questionnaire items.*

| The first Domain | | | The second Domain | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| No. | R | P-value | No. | r | P-value |
| 1 | .778** | .000 | 1 | .664** | .000 |
| 2 | .811** | .000 | 2 | .595** | .000 |
| 3 | .822** | .000 | 3 | .646** | .000 |
| 4 | .871** | .000 | 4 | .603** | .000 |
| 5 | .808** | .000 | 5 | .711** | .000 |
| 6 | .703** | .000 | 6 | .685** | .000 |
| 7 | .668** | .000 | 7 | .585** | .000 |
| 8 | .687** | .000 | 8 | .665** | .000 |
| 9 | .751** | .000 | 9 | .580** | .000 |
| 10 | .694** | .000 | | | |
| 11 | .653** | .000 | | | |
| 12 | .718** | .000 | | | |

**Hint**: r= Pearson Correlation Coefficient, **Significant at the 0.01 level.

**Reliability**

There are numerous approaches for determining the extent of the Reliability to measure what it was meant for. Cronbach's Alpha was employed in this study to determine the reliability of data acquired via the study tool (questionnaire), and the results are displayed in Table 4 below:

Table 3

*The value of Cronbach's Alpha for every domain*

| Domains | No. of Questions | Cronbach's Alpha |
|---|---|---|
| The reality of the job performance evaluation system. | 12 | 0.929 |
| The requirements to develop job performance and improve the current evaluation system. | 9 | 0.817 |
| All domains | 21 | 0.909 |

Table (3) shows that the reliability variables ranged from 0.929 to the first domain, and 0.817 to the second, these results indicate the presence of high reliability in the data of study domains, in addition the total reliability coefficient reached to 0.909, which considered very high value of the Cronbach's Alpha.

Through the above tests of the validity and reliability of data in the study, results indicated high presence of validity and reliability of data in the study and, accordingly,

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the data collected from the study sample is good and suitable for analysis. The results of the analysis are dependable to be disseminated in the study population.

**The Delphi method**

The proposed framework was presented to experts from academic leaders in Saudi universities, to assess its suitability and the extent to which it achieves its purposes and objectives, and to get their suggestions and views to develop and improve the proposed framework.

This was done through the following steps:

1. Contacting the experts and providing a briefing on the study, its objectives and results; (11) experts were contacted. After that, the Delphi tool was sent to the experts to take their opinions on the main themes of the framework and to get their opinions and suggestions.

2. Determining the unanimously accepted percentage of experts' answers, which was 80% in the Delphi tool (first round), 85% in the Delphi tool (the second round), and 90% in the Delphi tool (the third round). Whereas, the Delphi tool (the framework) was modified, based on the opinions and suggestions of experts in the first round, by keeping the statements that were agreed upon by the experts at 80%, and the Delphi tool was modified according to the experts' observations (addition, deletion and modification). After that, the tool was sent to the same experts in the first round where the experts' observations were taken into account in the second round, keeping the statements that got agreement among the experts by 85%. Aimillarly, the Delphi tool was modified according to the experts' observations from (addition, deletion and modification). After that, the tool was sent to the same experts in the second round where the comments of the experts were taken into account in the third round, keeping the statements that got 90% agreement among the experts. The framework was adopted in this round, as there were no observations in this round that would require the presentation of a fourth round. It should be noted that the experts who lasted until the end of the third round were 6 experts.

3. Writing the proposed framework for the current study based on what was agreed upon – with a high percentage of experts from academic leaders in Saudi universities participating in the answer to the Delphi tool.

## Results of Study

### The reality of the job performance evaluation system

Table 4 shows the descriptive measurements of items of "The reality of the job performance evaluation system" whereas the table has (12) items, the item which comes first based on a level of approval is "The current evaluation system is efficient" with (M = 3.87 out of 5, RII = 74.2%, SD = 0.65), This result indicates a high degree of approval, the item which comes last based on approval level is "The current evaluation system is based on comparing results between employees as well as over certain periods" with (M = 3.65 out of 5, RII = 73%, SD = 0.68) This result indicates a high degree of approval.

The total degree of "The reality of the job performance evaluation system." was with (M = 3.75 out of 5, RII = 75%, SD = 0.54) This result indicates a high degree of approval.

**Table 4**

*Descriptive measurements of items of "The reality of the job performance evaluation system".*

| | Items | M | SD | RII | L A | R |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | The performance appraisal system is one of the main components of the university. | 3.78 | 0.80 | 75.6% | High | 3 |
| 2 | The current performance evaluation system is effective and gives accurate results. | 3.76 | 0.81 | 75.2% | High | 7 |
| 3 | The current evaluation system focuses on the results of achievement. | 3.78 | 0.75 | 75.6% | High | 3 |
| 4 | The current assessment focuses on behavior at work. | 3.72 | 0.79 | 74.4% | High | 8 |
| 5 | The current evaluation system focuses on the results achieved as well as the expectations of performance in a specific period. | 3.69 | 0.78 | 73.8% | High | 11 |
| 6 | The current evaluation system is based on comparing results between employees as well as over certain periods. | 3.65 | 0.68 | 73.0% | High | 12 |
| 7 | The university pays attention to the employee evaluation system. | 3.71 | 0.63 | 74.2% | High | 9 |
| 8 | Employees are involved in defining the objectives of the current evaluation system. | 3.81 | 0.68 | 76.2% | High | 2 |
| 9 | Performance appraisal mainly aims to calculate evaluation and rewards. | 3.77 | 0.72 | 75.4% | High | 5 |
| 10 | Performance evaluation mainly aims to improve the performance level of employees. | 3.77 | 0.66 | 75.4% | High | 5 |
| 11 | The current evaluation system contributes to identifying training and development needs. | 3.71 | 0.65 | 74.2% | High | 9 |
| 12 | The current evaluation system is efficient. | 3.87 | 0.69 | 77.4% | High | 1 |
| | **The reality of the job performance evaluation system** | **3.75** | **0.54** | **75.0%** | **High** | |

**Hint**: M=Mean of answers, RII=Relative Importance Index ((Mean/5) *100%), SD=Standard Deviation, LA= Level of agreement, R=Rank.

The requirements to develop job performance and improve the current evaluation system"

Table 5 shows the descriptive measurements of items of "The requirements to develop job performance and improve the current evaluation system" whereas the table has (9) items, the item which comes first based on a level of approval is "The evaluation system must contain a description card for each job" with (M = 4.24 out of 5, RII = 84.8%, SD = 0.61), This result indicates a v. high degree of approval, the item which comes last based on approval level is "There must be specific rates or levels of performance in the evaluation process" with (M = 4.12 out of 5, RII = 82.4%, SD = 0.64) This result indicates

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a high degree of approval. The total degree of "The requirements to develop job performance and improve the current evaluation system" was with (M = 4.18 out of 5, RII = 83.6%, SD = 0.41) This result indicates a high degree of approval.

**Table 5**

*Descriptive measurements of items of "The requirements to develop job performance and improve the current evaluation system".*

| | Items | M | SD | RII | L A | R |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | The current assessment system needs comprehensive development. | 4.14 | 0.62 | 82.8% | High | 7 |
| 2 | The current assessment system needs partial development. | 4.19 | 0.60 | 83.8% | High | 4 |
| 3 | I think that the transition to privatization requires the development of the evaluation criteria used. | 4.22 | 0.62 | 84.4% | V. High | 2 |
| 4 | Privatization directly affects the objective of developing the appraisal system. | 4.21 | 0.61 | 84.2% | V. High | 3 |
| 5 | Privatization affects the job performance of employees. | 4.19 | 0.67 | 83.8% | High | 4 |
| 6 | The criteria to be applied to develop and evaluate job performance differ when moving to privatization. | 4.12 | 0.68 | 82.4% | High | 8 |
| 7 | The evaluation system must contain a description card for each job. | 4.24 | 0.61 | 84.8% | V. High | 1 |
| 8 | There must be specific rates or levels of performance in the evaluation process. | 4.12 | 0.64 | 82.4% | High | 9 |
| 9 | A minimum permissible level must be determined. If the worker's performance does not reach that level, the evaluator must state the justifications and reasons that led to the failure to reach that required level. | 4.15 | 0.69 | 83.0% | High | 6 |
| | **The requirements to develop job performance and improve the current evaluation system** | **4.18** | **0.41** | **83.6%** | **High** | |

**Hint:** M=Mean of answers, RII=Relative Importance Index (Mean/5) *100%), SD=Standard Deviation, LA= Level of agreement, R=Rank.

The data indicates that faculty members expressed satisfaction with the characteristics included in the current performance evaluation system. With a limited standard deviation, the mean result addressing the statement concerning the suitability of the current performance evaluation system was weak. This demonstrates a lack of considerable variation in respondents' perspectives. This is further supported by the confidence intervals for the population sample's overall mean, which indicate that the overall mean for this statement is between 3.65 and 3.87. Given that performance evaluation system is assumed to be objective, effective, and capable of achieving the objectives for which they are designed, the results indicate that participants believe the system is suitable for purpose.

It is worth noting that, while the specified qualities of the PAS are determined to be satisfactory to a degree, the data in the preceding two chapters suggest a lack of contentment among faculty members. The contradictory findings in this section may be explained by the critical character of the questions used to evaluate the hypothesis. According to the researcher, respondents were hesitant to make candid responses, citing discontent with either university management or performance evaluation systems. In other words, dishonest responses may be to blame for unanticipated outcomes. The majority of respondents were non-Saudis, and because they were employed on annual contracts, their fear of not being renewed may have influenced their responses.

Additionally, it is worth noting that the majority of responders are assistant professors who rely on positive relationships with management to advance. They may have been apprehensive that by criticizing the system, they would enrage their line supervisors and thereby jeopardize their future careers.

This issue is not unique to the respondents' desired features, but also exists in practice. To illustrate this, Alqahtani (2010) evaluated executive managers' perceptions toward the performance evaluation method used by governmental agencies in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The study demonstrates the value of experience in evaluating worker performance by examining the extent to which the existing performance evaluation system accomplishes the objectives for which it was developed and the extent to which the present evaluation system's items are acceptable. Although the performance evaluation elements are highly adequate, the study discovered that managers pay little attention to factors that reflect employees' actual performance, which has the detrimental effect of lowering performance levels.

In Saudi colleges, the performance evaluation procedure is recognized as one of the most challenging policies for administrators. It is self-evident that the academic job requires output that is difficult to quantify. It is natural for academic employees to exert a great degree of autonomy in their job and for their performance to be intellectually dependent. As a result, the rating process becomes subjective and vulnerable to the judgment of line managers. It is well known that authorities struggle to develop statistically and qualitatively appropriate criteria for evaluating academic members.

In articulating potential solutions, respondents believe the system falls short of establishing standards or criteria that may be used to assess faculty members' real performance. Thus, Khoury (2017) proposes a solution, arguing that workers should be involved in developing their job descriptions and objectives. By including employees in creating their own goals, these goals become more acceptable. Additionally, Tziner and Rabenu (2018) believe that management can engage people in a process he refers to as "system refining." The term "system refining" refers to the process of developing job descriptions, goal settings, and performance criteria or assessments in which employees can participate actively. As a result, Saudi university faculty members should take an active role in developing their own standards and objectives. Naeem, Jamal and Riaz (2017) believes that academic freedom allows faculty to determine which concerns are worth exploring and which disciplines should be taught.

This study corroborates the findings of Idowu (2017), who discovered similar results, with faculty members sharing similar concerns and working in a similar academic environment. The survey was done at Palestinian public sector universities in the West Bank. Faculty members' perceptions of the effectiveness of managing their PA process, according to the survey, lean toward dissatisfaction. This is due to a number of factors, the most significant of which are a lack of awareness of performance standards and supervisory expectations. According to the study, it is critical to involve faculty members in creating the ground norms and standards in order to improve their performance and happiness. This includes developing and communicating performance criteria to faculty members, as well as soliciting input on the standards.

**Framework Development**

Following the results of study, the study framework has been developed based on the following three principles:

1. **Competitiveness:** The framework presents a vision of the emerging Saudi universities possessing competitive advantages and capabilities that qualify them to compete and achieve excellence at the local and global level.

2. **Participation:** The proposed framework focused on the principle of partnership to support relations of cooperation and partnerships between employees at Saudi universities with each other on the one hand, and between emerging Saudi universities and international universities on the other to further improve their performance.

3. **Normative:** The application of the proposed framework is based on the foundations and programs of the Kingdom's Vision 2030, and the strategic plans for the development of higher education.

## Key Elements of Framework

The process of performance appraisal is a means of exchanging information, and the quality of the relationship between the rater and the assessed employee is critical to the procedure's efficacy. Additionally, the performance appraisal systems enable businesses to design a variety of activities that promote employee competency development in the pursuit of performance improvement (Pichler, 2012).

The suggested conceptual framework for performance appraisal is informed by current developments in the specialized literature, emphasizing the critical role of organizational environment in shaping performance appraisal systems and processes. Additionally, the emphasis on strategic human resource management provides a new perspective (Rusu, Vasiliki and Hutu, 2016), with an emphasis on performance management and improvement of employees. Thus, in accordance with Murphy and DeNisi (2008), the researcher incorporated the university strategy and the goal of the employee performance review process into the model. Additionally, the researcher considered the business's kind and strategic objectives, two contextual elements that have a significant impact on the adoption of tailored performance criteria and standards, as well as the appraisal instruments and procedures used.

Additionally, the current research framework incorporates key components of the CIPD's (2011) performance appraisal process, including feedback, positive reinforcement, the exchange of perspectives on performance, and agreement on ways to enhance and foster employee performance, as described earlier in the paper. Additionally, the researcher stressed the importance of measuring progress toward agreed-upon objectives through the use of specific appraisal instruments and procedures, as outlined in the conceptual framework shown below.

Other significant new elements include performance feedback (Tracey, 2014) and learning, which, according to Armstrong's (2009) model, constitute critical features of the employee performance appraisal process. Regarding feedback, it should be incorporated into a performance appraisal model since managers may provide feedback formally, as part of the performance appraisal process (Devi, Nagesh and Shirisha, 2018).

The researcher believes that it is critical to design an employee performance appraisal model that takes into account tailored performance criteria and standards based on strategic objectives. Additionally, the model represents the idea that performance criteria stressing quality are particularly critical in educational firms for individual performance appraisal relevance during the privatization process.

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## Conceptual Framework

DeNisi and Smith (2014) stress that while theoretical studies of performance assessment systems initially concentrated on accuracy, the current trend in performance management research is to focus on increasing employee performance and inspiring employees to improve performance.

Additionally, performance appraisal systems aimed at enhancing performance emphasize the necessity of focusing research on employee performance rather than on performance accuracy.

The focus on performance management and strategic human resource management adds a new dimension to this field, with researchers emphasizing the importance of context in employee performance appraisal and trying to identify contextual factors have a significant impact on the performance appraisal process.

Thus, the proposed model emphasizes emerging trends in the field by incorporating strategic human resource management, the impact of contextual factors on the performance appraisal process, and the use of customized performance standards and criteria tailored to the institutional strategy in which performance appraisal is implemented.

## Components of Conceptual Framework

The proposed framework for evaluating employee performance emphasizes the critical role of the organizational environment in defining the strategic integration of human resource management, namely the university's strategy and kind of business. Human resource management strategic integration requires performance management and appraisal systems that comply to core performance criteria and standards (Haines and St-Onge, 2012).

Additionally, in light of the university's strategic objectives, we assessed the importance of contextual factors in developing customized performance criteria and standards, which are influenced by job/position characteristics.

Another contextual component incorporated into the proposed framework is the purpose of employee performance appraisal, which has been demonstrated to be significant in recent research on the influence of organizational setting variables on performance appraisal procedures (Tziner and Rabenu, 2018). As a result, our conceptual framework reveals that the purpose of employee performance appraisal has a significant impact on the instrument and technique selection.

Additionally, positive reinforcement of positive activities and results should follow post-performance appraisal comments. This subject involves a discussion between management and employees about employee performance, followed by an agreement to improve employee performance. Additionally, these contribute to long-term learning by emphasizing the behaviors that should be reinforced in order to achieve higher levels of work performance.

## Conclusion

To summarize, the suggested framework identifies emerging trends in the field of employee performance appraisal during privatization by considering human resource management's strategic integration, the impact of organizational setting aspects on the performance appraisal system, and performance standards that are customized for the organizational context.

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As a result, the proposed conceptual framework emphasizes the crucial need of an performance appraisal process that is customized to the organization's environment and the individual's job characteristics. Rabenu and Tziner (2018) argue that performance appraisal should be tailored for each employee to account for both their specialized activities and their distinctive characteristics and be "adaptable to the organization's constant structural changes.

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# The Impact of Psychological Empowerment on the Possession of Entrepreneurial Characteristics among Academic Leaders at Princess Nourah Bint Abdulrahman University

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**Abstract:** The current study aimed to reveal the impact of psychological empowerment on the possession of entrepreneurial characteristics among academic leaders at Princess Nourah Bint AbdulRahman University. The study utilized a descriptive correlational approach. A questionnaire was distributed to a sample of 121 academic leaders at PNU, following a random sampling technique. The findings indicated that psychological empowerment has a statistically significant positive impact on the possession of entrepreneurial characteristics among academic leaders at PNU, explaining 71.50% of the total variation. The study also revealed that psychological empowerment (including the four dimensions: meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact) impacted all four of the entrepreneurial characteristics (i.e. the need for achievement, initiative, innovation, risk-taking), explaining 65.5%, 60.6%, 43.5%, and 42.6% of the variation in these dimensions, respectively. It also concluded that self-determination was the most significant variable, influencing the four entrepreneurial characteristics. The study also found that the psychological empowerment and entrepreneurial characteristics of PNU academic leaders reached moderate levels: 3.63 and 3.57.

*Keywords*: psychological empowerment, entrepreneurial characteristics, academic leaders.

## Introduction

Higher education institutions have become increasingly motivated and challenged in recent years to use creative and innovative methods to improve their performance and rankings. Entrepreneurship has emerged as one avenue by which significant improvements in education can be made. To maintain their distinction and high rankings, higher education institutions can consistently focus on transforming into entrepreneurial institutions and providing excellence in services and programs (Al Ghamdi, 2020; Bux & Honglin, 2015; Fayolle, 2018; Kuratko, 2016; Salamzadeh et al., 2022; Sancho et al., 2022). Entrepreneurship in higher education has also received considerable attention from economists and educators. Since entrepreneurship has emerged as a path to extraordinary success in higher education (Greene et al., 2015), academic institutions are among the organizations that have embraced creativity and innovation to develop new products and establish effective knowledge-sharing initiatives (Farahani & Falahati, 2007).

Moreover, academic leaders have taken responsibility for increasing the entrepreneurial level of their universities; if they were psychologically empowered, they would respond to complicated problems, institutional needs, and various changes even faster (Zare et al., 2007). Psychologically empowered leaders not only have higher morale and satisfaction but take responsibility for their own performance. They also have the ability to deal with and adapt to turbulent circumstances and strengthen competition to ensure that their organizations remain sustainable. Psychologically empowered leaders derive meaning from their work, possess the required competence to achieve it, have a high level of self-determination, and have a noticeable impact on the environment (Bux & Honglin, 2015; Henao-Zapata & Peiró, 2018). According to Spreitzer (1995), psychological empowerment comprises the feelings an individual has about his/her work and can be outlined in terms of four dimensions; meaning, competency, self–determination, and impact. Thus, academic leaders in higher education institutions must be psychologically empowered and should have entrepreneurial mindsets that enable them to take responsibility for their performance.

Entrepreneurial leaders are needed in all kinds of institutions, as they would allow universities to achieve higher rankings and leadership positions. A leader with entrepreneurial traits has a renewed sense of accomplishment, creates value, and takes calculated risks to seize opportunities. Entrepreneurship has always been associated with proactive, innovative, and risk-taking leaders (Kraus et al., 2012), and numerous studies have confirmed the critical need for leaders with entrepreneurial characteristics (Bagheri & Akbari, 2018; Bilal et al., 2022; Cai et al., 2019). For instance, entrepreneurial leaders have long-term visions, do not fear risks (Al Ghamdi, 2020; Hu et al., 2018), take advantage of the opportunities available (Fontana & Musa, 2017; Koryak et al., 2015), and enhance their subordinates' confidence in their leadership. More specifically, entrepreneurial leaders are highly capable of innovating and adding value to the organizations at which they work (Decker et al., 2014; Fernald et al., 2005; Fontana & Musa, 2017; Isenberg, 2011). They also inspire their employees to innovate, explore further opportunities, and proactively provide phenomenal initiatives (Bagheri, 2017; Bagheri & Akbari, 2018; Bilal et al., 2022). For this reason, entrepreneurial leaders differ from traditional leaders (He et al., 2017).

Researchers and practitioners have indicated a relationship between psychological empowerment and entrepreneurial characteristics (Haji et al., 2020; Safari et al., 2010; Soltani & Khanamani, 2019). Similarly, Bux and Honglin (2015) discovered a significant correlation between psychological empowerment and entrepreneurial intentions.

Entrepreneurship is a catalyst for new products and services and an incubator for revolutionary technological progress (Farrukh et al., 2017). Soltani and Khanamani (2019) identified a significant positive relationship between psychological empowerment and organizational entrepreneurship, which was mediated by knowledge sharing. The development of entrepreneurship activities is associated with technological progress and innovation, and innovative products are competitive and increase long-term university survival (Lumpkin & Dess, 1996; Mohar et al., 2007). Entrepreneurial leaders possess exceptional characteristics such as creativity, resilience, flexibility, and determination (Okyireh et al., 2021). However, it is the aspect of psychological empowerment that propels entrepreneurs to achieve higher levels of trust, self-determination, and competence.

Academic leaders in higher education have embraced innovation and creativity as strategies to improve institutional performance, and most are involved in the incubation of entrepreneurial skills. As universities embrace technology and expand their revenue streams, their role as knowledge-creating entities becomes significant (Xiong, 2022). For instance, some of the leading innovations in technology and healthcare started within universities. This shows that empowering academic leaders and students can go a long way in fostering entrepreneurial spirit and creativity. Therefore, the current study examined the impact of psychological empowerment on the possession of entrepreneurial characteristics among academic leaders at PNU.

**Research Problem**

Entrepreneurship and the necessity of leaders who possess entrepreneurial characteristics have gained significant attention from academics and researchers in higher education institutions because of their role in developing performance, increasing productivity, and becoming globally competitive (Al Ghamdi, 2020; Salamzadeh et al., 2022; Sancho et al., 2022; Okyireh et al., 2021). Accordingly, Saudi Vision 2030 focuses on increasing the spirit of entrepreneurship. One of the most critical goals of Saudi Vision 2030 is to make the nation a leading country in all aspects, including political, educational, and economic. As for higher education, it seeks to ensure that at least five Saudi universities are included among the leading 200 universities in the world by 2030 (Vision 2030, 2016).

PNU is a remarkable example of women's empowerment as it is the largest women's university in the world. Its establishment aimed to empower women for a better future as leaders in various fields. PNU has numerous programs, activities, and centers to support and empower women, which have proven successful. For instance, the university established the "Women's Leadership Center," a unique center to empower local and regional women by training them and providing them with advisory and professional support. PNU also established the "Leading Executive Leadership Program" to empower executive leaders throughout the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The university's efforts to empower women leaders are evident at the university level, locally, and regionally (Princess Nourah bint Abdulrahman University, 2023). However, psychological empowerment differs from administrative empowerment in that it originates within the individual and is mainly controlled by the individual him/herself based on what is provided by the external environment (Spreitzer, 1995; Thomas and Velthouse, 1990). Numerous previous studies have discussed the empowerment of academic leaders at Saudi universities (AlAtwai & Merhi, 2018; Aldighrir, 2018; Al Jalawi, 2020; Al-Rasheed, 2020).

However, despite the significance of psychological empowerment and entrepreneurial characteristics for academic leaders, only a few studies in Saudi Arabia have addressed these variables individually or in conjunction with others. For instance, Al-Enezi (2021) conducted a study on psychological empowerment and its correlation to academic life quality with a sample of students at Imam Muhammad ibn Saud Islamic University. Al-Faraj (2022) also examined psychological empowerment and its relationship to female students' attitudes toward professional life in the Al Qassim region. A study by Al-Qarni (2021) discussed psychological empowerment as a mediating variable in the relationship between empowering leadership and some individual work performance variables. The treatment was applied to all educational supervisors in the education departments in Jeddah. Al-Dhdan (2020) conducted a study on psychological empowerment and its relationship to creative behavior among a sample of faculty members at Saudi universities. Al Ghamdi (2016) examined the psychological empowerment of female academic leaders at Saudi universities and its relationship to their administrative creativity.

Regarding entrepreneurial characteristics, previous studies have addressed this topic in various environments with different populations. For example, Ghawanmeh's (2022) study discussed the ability of preparatory year students at Hail University to create entrepreneurial projects and encounter challenges. Likewise, Al Zahrani's (2021) study examined the entrepreneurial characteristics of Umm Al-Qura University students and the mechanisms by which they can be achieved. Al-Ramathi's (2019) study investigated the entrepreneurial characteristics of school leaders in Bisha Governorate and their relationship to strengthening teachers' commitment to the organization. However, previous research has not directly investigated the impact of psychological empowerment on the possession of entrepreneurial characteristics among academic leaders at Saudi universities. Thus, the present study aimed to identify this among academic leaders at PNU to narrow this research gap.

## Research Questions

Considering the significance of psychological empowerment and entrepreneurial characteristics for academic leaders at higher education institutions, this study aims to investigate the impact of psychological empowerment on the possession of entrepreneurial characteristics among academic leaders at PNU. The research questions can be summarized as follows:

**The main question is:**

What is the impact of psychological empowerment on the possession of entrepreneurial characteristics among academic leaders at PNU?

**The sub-questions:**

*RQ1:* What is the level of psychological empowerment among academic leaders at PNU?

*RQ2:* What is the level of entrepreneurial characteristics among academic leaders at PNU?

*RQ3*: Does psychological empowerment have a statistically significant impact on the possession of entrepreneurial characteristics among academic leaders at PNU?

## Research Hypotheses

**The main hypothesis** *(H0):* Psychological empowerment (including its four dimensions: meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact) does not have a statistically significant impact on the possession of entrepreneurial characteristics (i.e., need for achievement, initiative, innovation, risk-taking) among academic leaders at PNU.

**The sub-hypotheses:**

**The first sub-hypothesis** *(H0a):* Psychological empowerment (including its four dimensions: meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact) does not have a statistically significant impact on need for achievement (one of the entrepreneurial characteristics) among academic leaders at PNU.

**The second sub-hypothesis** *(H0b):* Psychological empowerment (including its four dimensions: meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact) does not have a statistically significant impact on initiative (one of the entrepreneurial characteristics) among academic leaders at PNU.

**The third sub-hypothesis** *(H0c):* Psychological empowerment (including its four dimensions: meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact) does not have a statistically significant impact on innovation (one of the entrepreneurial characteristics) among academic leaders at PNU.

**The fourth sub-hypothesis** *(H0d):* Psychological empowerment (including its four dimensions: meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact) does not have a statistically significant impact on risk-taking (one of the entrepreneurial characteristics) among academic leaders at PNU.

## Purpose of the Study

The current study aims to identify the impact of psychological empowerment on the possession of entrepreneurial characteristics among academic leaders at PNU.

## Significance of the Study

Regarding the theoretical significance of the study, psychological empowerment and entrepreneurial characteristics considerably impact the dynamism of contemporary organizations. Thus, the significance of the current study lies in the academic enrichment it will provide by outlining the theoretical literature and previous studies of the variables (psychological empowerment and entrepreneurial characteristics) in a way that constitutes an integrated conceptual framework of their relationship. The lack of previous studies conducted at Saudi universities confirms the importance of the current study: it will pave the way for similar studies to be conducted at other Saudi universities. Its topic is also in line with the direction of Vision 2030 and its focus on entrepreneurship in various sectors, including higher education.

As for the implications, it is anticipated that the results of this study will help leaders at Saudi universities, in general, and at PNU, in particular, understand the current levels of psychological empowerment and entrepreneurial characteristics among academic leaders. Additionally, this study is expected to provide new knowledge related to the reality of the psychological empowerment of leaders and its impact on the possession of entrepreneurial characteristics, which may benefit officials when they are planning their universities' future.

## Study Delimitations

The study was delimited to reveal the impact of psychological empowerment (including four dimensions: meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact) on four entrepreneurial characteristics (the need for achievement, initiative, innovation, and risk-taking). The study focused on academic leaders at PNU, including the dean, vice dean, chair, and vice chair. The study data were collected during the academic year 2021/2022.

## Study Terminology

### Psychological Empowerment

Psychological empowerment represents internal motivation and can be divided into four cognitive dimensions: meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact (Spreitzer, 1995). psychological empowerment can be defined as intrinsic job motivation that generates a sense of an individual's self-control of work and effective participation in the work function (Seibert et al., 2011). According to the current study, psychological empowerment for academic leaders is the ability to comprehend the meaning of work while possessing the necessary competence with more autonomy and self-determination, and influence in the workplace.

### Entrepreneurial Characteristics

Gibb (2008) stated that an entrepreneur is a person who searches for opportunities and innovatively creates products by exploiting opportunities and gaps in the market. Obschonka and Stuetzer (2017) highlight a leader's four essential entrepreneurial characteristics: the need for achievement, initiative, innovation, and risk-taking. In the current study, entrepreneurial characteristics encourage academic leaders to take calculated risks, constantly seek accomplishments, and introduce new and innovative initiatives into the workplace.

## Literature Review

### Psychological Empowerment (PE)

The concept of empowerment has attracted tremendous scientific interest in the past few decades in many sub-fields, including management, psychology, and leadership. The main focus has been psychological empowerment, which is connected to individual, group, and institutional attitudes and actions (Khan et al., 2020). Given this growing interest in empowerment as a topic in the field of leadership, conceptions of the idea have multiplied. However, most focus on giving greater freedom to individuals in participation and decision-making. One essential definition of empowerment was provided by Conger and Kanungo (1988): it focuses on increasing self-efficacy among an organization's members by eliminating conditions that promote powerlessness.

The concept of psychological empowerment is a contemporary one that has been given considerable research and attention, primarily in the workplace. Conger and Kanungo (1988) connected psychological empowerment with situational attributes and incumbent job cognitions, while Thomas and Velthouse (1990) defined psychological empowerment as the increased intrinsic motivation of an individual to complete a task, which produces motivation and satisfaction. The specific dimensions of empowerment highlighted by researchers differ due to their diverse aspects. Conger and Kanungo (1988) identified four dimensions of empowerment as a motivational concept. Thomas and Velthouse (1990) utilized the same dimensions but added a cognitive aspect, considering the research of

Conger and Kanungo (1988) and Thomas and Velthouse (1990). Spreitzer (1995) defined four dimensions of psychological empowerment (meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact), which were employed in this study. The following sections provide explanations of these terms one by one:

*Meaning* is the first dimension of psychological empowerment. It describes how an individual's beliefs, values, and standards correspond to their work (Rani et al., 2021). Individuals find meaning in their work if they can align their values and beliefs with their work and the organization for which they work (Gong et al., 2020). An empowered employee is more confident, more likely to share work-related knowledge with colleagues, and more motivated to achieve shared goals and show initiative because they believe their work is meaningful and positively impacts society (Gong et al., 2020; Khan et al., 2020).

*Competence* is the second dimension of psychological empowerment, defined as an individual's belief and confidence in their ability to carry out their tasks at work skillfully (Seibert et al., 2011). A psychologically empowered person also tends to be more competent. Competence is acquired through experience, training, and knowledge of one's responsibilities (Rani et al., 20121). Rani et al. (2021) confirm that employee competence relates to capabilities and motivation, both of which significantly influence performance. Similarly, Lan and Chong (2015) state that employees who demonstrate competence are more motivated to complete tasks and are more satisfied with their jobs. Competent employees show self-confidence and believe they can perform their jobs skillfully and successfully (Malik et al., 2021). As such, employee confidence, knowledge levels, and motivation can predict the quality of job performance (Rani et al., 2021).

*Self-determination* is the third dimension of psychological empowerment, which refers to a sense of independence. Autonomy is a critical aspect of how an individual perceives their role in an organization. Hence, employees who believe they have control over their work are more motivated, which increases their sense of self-determination (Deci et al., 2017). According to Javed et al. (2016), self-determination increases task-related motivation. As a result, employees with high self-determination engage in work-related behavior due to intrinsic motivators such as curiosity, taking on new challenges, and meeting and/or exceeding goals (Deci et al., 2017; Javed et al., 2016).

Lastly, *impact* is the fourth dimension of psychological empowerment, defined as employees' perception of the influence they have over what happens in their organizations and departments (Kong et al., 2015). Specifically, Ölçer and Florescu (2015) define impact- as a part of the psychological empowerment paradigm- as "the degree to which a person can influence strategic, administrative, or operational outcomes at work" (pp. 117–118). Employees who are confident they can have an impact on their work also believe they can influence operational processes and outcomes (Kong et al., 2015).

Meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact are the four dimensions of psychological empowerment that motivate university leaders to perform well and achieve shared university goals. Therefore, employee empowerment is critical and considered one of the most effective strategies for organizational success.

**Entrepreneurial Characteristics (ECs)**

The term entrepreneurship has become widely known, particularly through public debates. It is utilized by policymakers to forecast future prosperity and encourage international comparisons (Saygin, 2022). Entrepreneurship is an economic growth

engine, positively correlated with job creation, institutional survival, and technological change (Etzkowitz, 2003). Greene et al. (2015) and Wach (2014) emphasize that entrepreneurship education is a powerful tool for engaging individuals in entrepreneurial activities and facilitating economic movement, describing it as a required step in societal growth and development. Wilson (2008) states that the earlier individuals acquire their entrepreneurial training, the more straightforward it will be for them to participate in such activities in the future. For this reason, entrepreneurship in education and the entrepreneurial qualities of leaders are essential. Numerous researchers have suggested a set of characteristics that an entrepreneurial leader must have. The Trait Theory of Entrepreneurship defines four essential characteristics: need for achievement, initiative, innovation, and risk-taking (Al Ghamdi, 2020; Obschonka & Stuetzer, 2017). Research into these characteristics has revealed that they have a significant relationship with entrepreneurial success. The four entrepreneurial characteristics can be summarized as follows:

The ***need for achievement*** is considered to be an entrepreneurial characteristic (Gupta & Fernandez, 2009; Gupta et al., 2004), which can be defined as the extent to which an individual aspires to achieve goals and works hard to be satisfied with their outcomes (Gerba, 2012). Salamzadeh et al. (2014) state that numerous empirical studies indicated a relationship between the need for achievement (n-Ach) and entrepreneurship. A high level of n-Ach is a critical entrepreneurial characteristic leadership characteristic. A study conducted at the university level discovered that colleges focusing on practical approaches to entrepreneurship had a more significant positive impact on intention (initiative, need for achievement) than those with a more theoretical approach (Moraes et al., 2018).

***Initiative*** is one of the distinguishing characteristics of entrepreneurial leaders (Al Ghamdi, 2020). There is always room to seize unanticipated opportunities and utilize new methods to achieve excellence; thus, being proactive and enterprising is one of the most significant characteristics of an entrepreneurial leader. According to Osaze (2003), initiative determines one's future goals and whether they are achieved. Crant (2000) describes proactivity as taking the initiative to enhance the present situation; it entails challenging the status quo rather than quietly adapting to current conditions. Li (2020) mentions that proactive individuals act in advance by thinking, planning, and performing based on future results, thus selecting, modifying, and even creating the desired results. In other words, a proactive person decides to change the environment on purpose. Osaze (2003) argues that a proactive leader is equally passionate about the past, present, and future, aiming to comprehend the present and build a proactive future. More specifically, being proactive is essential for university leaders; in a rapidly changing environment, opportunities must be seized before they are wasted.

***Innovation*** is a point of difference between entrepreneurs and non-entrepreneurs (Chye Koh, 1996). Lumpkin and Dess (2001) define innovation as generating new ideas, conducting experiments, and creating novel products or services. It also includes technological improvement procedures that allow an organization to enter a new market. Innovation is considered one of the fundamental characteristics of an entrepreneurial leader. Universities face intense competition; thus, they must integrate innovation into their activities to be entrepreneurial. Aas et al. (2020) found that diversity, new perspectives, and training increased academic leaders' innovation and openness to strategies that enhanced university innovation. Supapawawisit et al. (2018) also mention that innovation reaches high rates when universities encourage employees to take risks.

Empowering employees and giving them the confidence to take calculated risks makes them more innovative, which improves the university's progress and rankings.

*Risk-taking* is another vital characteristic of an entrepreneurial leader, defined by Teece et al. (2016) as utilizing the resources available to perform in uncertain conditions. Knight (2012) distinguished between risk-taking and uncertainty, stating that uncertainty is uncontrollable, whereas risk-taking is calculable. According to Kuratko (2007), numerous risks are worth taking, and can eventually lead to outstanding success. Accordingly, taking risks in ambiguous situations has positive and negative sides. However, the difference is that entrepreneurial leaders take calculated risks based on the information available, aiming to reduce losses. Hanaysha and Al-Shaikh (2022) argue that entrepreneurship is associated with considerable risk-taking, which suggests that leaders must detect, alleviate, and manage risk factors.

These four characteristics can serve as a framework for encouraging teamwork, as entrepreneurs rarely work alone. According to Lazar et al. (2020), forming an entrepreneurial team is often perceived as a critical first step to successfully balancing the traits. A team lacking initiative, for example, may be too passive to face competitors, whereas one comprised primarily of risk-takers may be too aggressive to survive long enough to cement success (Lazar et al., 2020). Ultimately, teams that possess the four characteristics of entrepreneurship are more successful than others. Nevertheless, the most effective teams have high levels of need for achievement, which tends to make them more focused on their objectives and goals (Jin et al., 2017).

## Psychological Empowerment (PE) and Entrepreneurial Characteristics (ECs)

Research has sought to establish the impact of psychological empowerment on the possession of entrepreneurial characteristics among academic leaders. Previous studies have demonstrated that the psychological empowerment of leaders can positively impact work outcomes. Employee empowerment is critical and one of the most effective strategies for organizational success. There are many methods to empower leaders. According to Xiong (2022), psychological empowerment can help employees remain productive and involved. An employee needs to be psychologically empowered to be ready to face challenges in the workplace. The idea of work engagement as a business strategy has been widely researched. It is based on the belief that empowering employees improves their productivity, supplementing their entrepreneurial characteristics (Xiong, 2022).

Despite several studies highlighting the significance of psychological empowerment in work environments, studies on its impact on the possession of entrepreneurial characteristics among leaders in the university context are still lacking compared to other studies in the field of leadership. However, in the past years, some studies have appeared. For instance, Safari et al. (2010) investigated the relationship between psychological empowerment (including four dimensions: meaningfulness, competence, influence, self-determination, and trust) and entrepreneurship in higher education. The results revealed that psychological empowerment can predict entrepreneurship. In another study, Nguyen et al. (2021) examined its impact on innovative work behavior, as well as the mediating role of psychological empowerment. The finding indicated that psychological empowerment fully mediated the relationship between entrepreneurial culture and innovative work behavior. Moreover, Mahmoud et al. (2021) examined the relationship between psychological empowerment and individual performance mediated by

entrepreneurial behavior. According to the outcomes, psychological empowerment is directly correlated with entrepreneurial behavior and individual performance.

In the context of Saudi universities, no study has investigated the impact of psychological empowerment on the possession of entrepreneurial characteristics among academic leaders. Current research examines this relationship, as previous studies have confirmed that higher education has a critical need for leaders who are psychologically empowered.

## Previous Studies

This section reviews some previous studies related to psychological empowerment and entrepreneurial characteristics. It also identifies some similarities and differences between these studies and the current study.

### Previous Studies Related to Psychological Empowerment

Al-Faraj (2022) performed a study to determine the association between psychological empowerment and attitudes toward professional life. The psychological empowerment scale (Spreitzer, 1995) was applied to a group of female consultants in KSA. The study revealed an association between psychological empowerment and positive attitudes regarding work life. Another finding was that student counselors had a high level of psychological empowerment. Haji et al. (2022) explored the effect of psychological capital on entrepreneurial spirit, as well as the significance of psychological empowerment as a moderator. According to the study's findings, psychological empowerment had a considerable positive impact on entrepreneurial spirit.

Similarly, Okyireh et al. (2021) evaluated the effect of three business directions on entrepreneurial behavior, one of which was psychological empowerment. The study discovered that psychological empowerment was positively associated with entrepreneurial action. Rani et al. (2021) researched the association between four characteristics of psychological empowerment and employee performance in Malaysia. According to the study's findings, meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact are all significantly associated and predict employee performance.

Al-Qarni (2021) conducted another study that considered the impact of psychological empowerment as a moderating variable. The findings revealed that psychological empowerment has a direct impact on contextual performance. The study also discovered that psychological empowerment completely moderated the effect of empowering leadership on task and contextual performance. Additionally, Al-Dhdan (2020) explored the extent of psychological empowerment and its connections to creative activity among Saudi university faculty members. One of the key findings was a significant positive relationship between psychological empowerment and creative behavior. Moreover, Meng and Sun's (2019) study aimed to evaluate the connection between psychological empowerment and work engagement among Chinese university faculty members. The findings revealed that psychological empowerment influenced work engagement, with total psychological empowerment and work engagement scores being somewhat high. According to the study results, psychological empowerment mainly influenced work engagement through two dimensions: meaning and competence.

### Previous Studies Related to Entrepreneurial Characteristics

Saygin (2022) conducted a study to determine the entrepreneurial traits of the Young Entrepreneurs. According to the findings, participants emphasized courage and self-

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confidence as essential aspects of entrepreneurship. Participants also agreed that the most fundamental entrepreneurial attributes are courage, innovation, and self-confidence. Likewise, Al Zahrani's (2021) research amid to determine the entrepreneurial qualities existing among Umm Al-Qura University students. According to the findings, students at Umm Al-Qura University showed significant levels of entrepreneurial qualities.

Wahab and Tyasari's (2020) study examined the function of entrepreneurial leadership as a moderator in the link between management competency and job performance. The study found that entrepreneurial leadership mediated both associations between managerial competency and job performance and the connection between learning orientation and job performance among university leaders.

The main objective of Al-Ramathi's (2019) research was to determine the level of entrepreneurial qualities among school leaders and their relationship to increasing organizational engagement among teachers. The study findings revealed that school leaders had high levels of entrepreneurial qualities. As a result, the study recommended that school leaders should improve their entrepreneurial skills through workshops and seminars. Another suggestion was encouraging a sense of adventure and calculated risk-taking by empowering school leaders to make decisions. Similarly, Salamzadeh et al. (2014) investigated the association between entrepreneurial traits and the students' fields of study. The findings show a substantial link between entrepreneurial traits and the fields of study of the participants.

Gupta and Fernandez (2009) conducted an international study examining entrepreneurial traits in three nations and observed parallels and variations. Students from India, Turkey, and the United States rated the importance of several attributes of an entrepreneur. The study found that while entrepreneurs from different cultures had similar features, there were considerable variances. The study advocated identifying country-specific entrepreneurship ideas to aid scholars and practitioners interested in studying and educating entrepreneurs worldwide.

Overall, the review of the previous literature clearly shows similarities and differences between the current study and prior studies. One of the parallels is that the current study focuses on psychological empowerment and entrepreneurial characteristics. The present study also conforms with previous studies in terms of research methodology, as it uses a quantitative research design (Al-Faraj, 2022; Al-Qarni, 2021; Al-Ramathi, 2019; Al Zahrani, 2021; Meng & Sun, 2019; Rani et al., 2021; Salamzadeh et al., 2014; Wahab & Tyasari, 2020). However, it also differs from previous studies in aspects such as the study environment. For instance, most previous studies were in the public education context (Al-Faraj's, 2022; Al-Qarni, 2021; Al-Ramathi, 2019), while Okyireh et al.'s (2021) study was conducted in various municipalities in Ghana.

The current study is comparable to previous research in the university context (Al-Dhdan, 2020; Al Zahrani, 2021; Gupta & Fernandez, 2009; Meng & Sun, 2019; Salamzadeh et al., 2014; Wahab & Tyasari, 2020). Another difference concerns the current study's sample: academic leaders at PNU. In contrast, Al-Dhdan's (2020) sample was faculty members at various Saudi universities, while Al Zahrani (2021), Gupta and Fernandez (2009), and Salamzadeh et al. (2014) all sampled students. This study differs from earlier research because it is one of the first to examine the impact of psychological empowerment on the entrepreneurial characteristics of academic leaders at Saudi universities. The current study also benefitted from the previous studies, which provided

a broader theoretical background related to the research topic and indicated the appropriate study method.

## Methodology

The study utilized the descriptive correlational approach based on a situation statement to test hypotheses and clarify the study's results. The current study adopted a survey designed by Spreitzer (1995) to measure psychological empowerment. The questionnaire had 12 items with four dimensions: Meaning (3 items), Competence (3 items), Self-Determination (3 items), and Impact (3 items). Additionally, a questionnaire was adopted by Al Ghamdi (2020) to measure entrepreneurial characteristics. The questionnaire had 12 items with four dimensions: the need for achievement (3 items), initiative (3 items), innovation (3 items), and risk-taking (3 items). A six-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 6 = strongly agree, with no neutral point) was utilized to measure study variables. A pilot study containing 30 respondents was conducted to measure the survey's validity and reliability. An online survey was also sent to participants at PNU.

### Study Population and Sample

The study population consisted of all of academic leaders at PNU such as, dean, vice dean, chair, and vice chair. Respondents were determined through a stratified random sampling approach. The appropriate sample size for the target population was 121 individuals, based on Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) table for determining sample size. Demographic variables were leadership position, experience as an academic leader, disciplines, and number of leadership courses.

### Study Instrument

The questionnaire was used to collect study data to achieve the study objectives based on its methodology. The present study contained two questionnaires. The first questionnaire was Spreitzer's (1995) psychological empowerment survey, and the second was Al Ghamdi's (2020) entrepreneurial characteristics items. The study instrument consists of two sections: demographic variables such as leadership position, experience as an academic leader, disciplines, and leadership courses. The second section consists of psychological empowerment with 12 items of four dimensions: Meaning (3 items), Competence (3 items), Self- Determination (3 items), and Impact (3 items), and entrepreneurial characteristics with 12 items of four dimensions: the need for achievement (3 items), initiative (3 items), innovation (3 items), risk-taking (3 items)

The participants were recruited randomly from PNU and invited to complete an online questionnaire. The purpose of the questionnaire was mentioned, and the participants were confirmed that their responses would remain confidential.

A six-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 6 = strongly agree, with no neutral point) was utilized to measure study variables, and it was divided into three levels by the statistical method as 1.00 – < 2.68 low level, 2.68– <4.36 Moderate level, and 4.36 – 6.00 High level.

### Validity and Reliability

After being translated into Arabic with its original in English, the instrument was presented to a group of experts in educational leadership, management, and entrepreneurship among faculty members at Saudi universities who work as (full professor, associate professor, and assistant professor) to ensure face validity, and their observations were taken. Regarding internal consistency and reliability, a pilot study of

(30) respondents was conducted to examine the instruments utilized in this study to measure the level of psychological empowerment and entrepreneurial characteristics of academic leaders at PNU. The collected data within the pilot study were excluded from the sample.

To measure the items' validities, the Pearson Correlation Coefficient was determined for each item in the pilot study within its dimension and the total questionnaire scores within each dimension. As shown in Table 2, the psychological empowerment items correlation scores ranged from .570* to .870**, and most correlations were significant at $p \leq 0.01$. The correlation coefficients for the total score in each dimension ranged from .679** to .854**, and most were significant at $p \leq 0.01$.

**Table 2**

*Pearson Correlation Coefficients for each Items of psychological empowerment with the total Score of its Dimension*

| Dimension 1 | | Dimension 2 | | Dimension 3 | | Dimension 4 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N | R | N | R | N | R | N | R |
| 1 | .608** | 4 | .870** | 6 | .743** | 10 | .830** |
| 2 | .747** | 5 | .695** | 8 | .692** | 11 | .732** |
| 3 | .856** | 6 | .753** | 9 | .570* | 12 | .684** |

*Pearson Correlation Coefficients for each Dimension of psychological empowerment with the total score of the questionnaire*

| Dimension 1 | | Dimension 2 | | Dimension 3 | | Dimension 4 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| R | .854** | R | .764** | R | .679** | R | .837** |

*\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*

*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).*

Similarly, Table 3 illustrated the entrepreneurial characteristics items correlation scores ranged from .540* to .837**, and most correlations were significant at $p \leq 0.01$. The correlation coefficients for the total scores in each dimension ranged from .632** to .893**, and most were significant at $p \leq 0.01$.

**Table 3**

*Pearson Correlation Coefficients for each Items of entrepreneurial characteristics with the total Score of its Dimension*

| Dimension 1 | | Dimension 2 | | Dimension 3 | | Dimension 4 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N | R | N | R | N | R | N | R |
| 1 | .673** | 7 | .782** | 13 | .540* | 19 | .653** |
| 2 | .615** | 8 | .687** | 14 | .837** | 20 | .835** |
| 3 | .767** | 9 | .704** | 15 | .651** | 21 | .771** |

*Pearson Correlation Coefficients for each Dimension of entrepreneurial characteristics with the total score of the questionnaire*

| Dimension 1 | | Dimension 2 | | Dimension 3 | | Dimension 4 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| R | .632** | R | .893** | R | .679** | R | .726** |

*\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*

*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).*

The instrument for psychological empowerment had a large Cronbach's alpha of 0.862, and the four main dimensions had acceptable reliabilities of 0.857, 0.836, 0.731, and 0.769, respectively. Likewise, the instrument for the entrepreneurial characteristics had a large Cronbach's alpha of 0.812, and the four main dimensions had acceptable reliability of 0.922, 0.757, 0.892, and 0.741, respectively. This indicates that the study instrument has a high degree of reliability and can be relied upon to achieve the purpose of the study.

## Results

The current study focused on examining the impact of psychological empowerment on the possession of the entrepreneurial characteristics for academic leaders at PNU by measuring the level of psychological empowerment with its four dimensions (meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact) and the level of entrepreneurial characteristics with its four dimensions (the need for achievement, initiative, innovation, risk-taking). The study received responses from 121 participants. The respondents held leadership positions at PNU, including dean (4.1%), vice dean (35.5%), departmental chair (37.2%), and vice-departmental chair (23.1%). Only a tiny proportion (4.1%) had less than five years of experience in these positions, with the rest (95.9%) having worked for at least five years. Most respondents worked in human science (62.8%) and natural science (27.3%). Therefore, the sample was sufficiently representative to make inferences about the larger population.

### Results Related to the Level of Psychological Empowerment (PE) and Entrepreneurial Characteristics (ECs):

To answer the *RQ1* "What is the level of psychological empowerment among academic leaders at PNU"? and *RQ2* "What is the level of entrepreneurial characteristics among academic leaders at PNU"? Means (M) and Standard Deviations (SD) were calculated for the PE and ECs and their dimensions, as shown in Table 4.

**Table 4**

*Means (M) and standard deviations (SD) for PE & ECs (N=121)*

| Variables/ Dimensions | M | SD |
|---|---|---|
| **Psychological Empowerment (PE)** | **3.63** | **0.77** |
| D1: Meaning | 3.70 | 0.79 |
| D2: Competence | 3.61 | 0.80 |
| D3: Self-Determination | 3.93 | 0.76 |
| D4: Impact | 3.28 | 1.14 |
| **Entrepreneurial Characteristics (ECs)** | **3.57** | **0.73** |
| D1: The need for achievement | 3.17 | 1.07 |
| D2: Initiative | 3.65 | 0.86 |
| D3: Innovation | 3.68 | 0.68 |
| D4: Risk-Taking | 3.77 | 0.75 |

Table 4 demonstrates the Means and Standard Deviations of PE with its dimensions and ECs with its dimensions. Accordingly, the level of PE and ECs reached a moderate level (3.63 and 3.57), respectively. For the PE dimensions the self-determination dimension was the highest with (M= 3.93, and SD= 0.76), while the impact dimension was the lowest with (M= 3.28, and SD= 1.14). For the ECs dimensions the risk-taking

dimension was the highest with (M= 3.77, and SD= 0.75), while the need for achievement dimension was the lowest with (M= 3.17, and SD= 1.07).

## Results Related to the Impact of Psychological Empowerment (PE) on Entrepreneurial Characteristics (ECs):

To answer the *RQ3* "Does psychological empowerment have a statistically significant impact on the possession of entrepreneurial characteristics among academic leaders at PNU"? The study hypotheses related to the assumed impact of PE on the possession of ECs were tested using the multiple linear regression analysis.

### The first sub-hypothesis (H0a):

Psychological empowerment (including its four dimensions: meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact) does not have a statistically significant impact on need for achievement (one of the entrepreneurial characteristics) among academic leaders at PNU. A regression analysis was performed to determine whether the four PE factors significantly impacted the need for achievement. Table 5 shows the regression results for this analysis.

**Table 5**

*Impact of PE dimensions on the need for Achievement (N=121)*

| Dependent Variable | Independent Variable | B | Std. Error | Beta | t | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | (Constant) | -.174 | .127 | | -1.375 | .172 |
| | Meaning | .473 | .149 | .315 | 3.174 | .002 |
| | Competence | .245 | .155 | .169 | 1.584 | .116 |
| The need for Achievement | Self-determination | -.043 | .116 | -.027 | -.366 | .715 |
| | Impact | .368 | .065 | .440 | 5.678 | <.001 |
| | F | | | 58.037 | | |
| | R Square | | | .667 | | |

The resulting model is *the need for Achievement= 0.368 Impact -0.043 Self-determination +0.245 Competence + 0.473 Meaning -0.174*. The four variables explained 65.5% of the variation in *the need for Achievement* variable. However, only the *Meaning* and *Impact* variables significantly impacted *the need for Achievement*, with $p<0.05$. Nevertheless, the model exhibits statistical significance, $F (4,116) = 58.037$, $p<.05$. Consequently, this F statistic provides sufficient evidence to reject the null hypothesis, as four dimensions significantly impact the need for *the need for Achievement*.

### The second sub-hypothesis (H0b):

Psychological empowerment (including its four dimensions: meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact) does not have a statistically significant impact on initiative (one of the entrepreneurial characteristics) among academic leaders at PNU. Regression analysis used *Initiative* as the dependent variable and PE factors as the explanatory variables. Table 6 shows the results of this analysis.

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**Table 6**

*Impact of PE dimensions on Initiative (N=121)*

| Dependent Variable | Independent Variable | B | Std. Error | Beta | t | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | (Constant) | .291 | .096 | | 3.029 | .003 |
| | Meaning | .095 | .113 | .089 | .843 | .401 |
| | Competence | .187 | .118 | .181 | 1.592 | .114 |
| Initiative | Self-determination | .256 | .088 | .229 | 2.896 | .005 |
| | Impact | .246 | .049 | .414 | 4.995 | <.001 |
| | F | | | 47.118 | | |
| | R Square | | | .619 | | |

The resulting model is *Initiative= 0.246 Impact +0.256 Self-determination +0.187 Competence + 0.095 Meaning +0.291*. These variables accounted for 60.6% of the variation in *Initiative*. However, only *Self-determination* and *Impact* variables had a significant impact on *the need for Achievement*, with p<.05. Even so, the combined impact of these variables was significant, $F (4,116) = 47.118$, *p*<.05. Consequently, there is sufficient justification to reject the null hypothesis, as the four dimensions have a statistically significant impact on *Initiative* variable.

## The third sub-hypothesis (H0c):

Psychological empowerment (including its four dimensions: meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact) does not have a statistically significant impact on innovation (one of the entrepreneurial characteristics) among academic leaders at PNU. A third regression analysis was performed using *Innovation* as the dependent variable and PE factors as the independent variables, as presented in Table 7.

**Table 7**

*Impact of PE dimensions on Innovation (N=121)*

| Dependent Variable | Independent Variable | B | Std. Error | Beta | t | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | (Constant) | .440 | .099 | | 4.441 | <.001 |
| | Meaning | .126 | .117 | .137 | 1.081 | .282 |
| | Competence | .153 | .121 | .172 | 1.261 | .210 |
| Innovation | Self-determination | .290 | .091 | .301 | 3.179 | .002 |
| | Impact | .089 | .051 | .174 | 1.749 | .083 |
| | F | | | 24.090 | | |
| | R Square | | | .454 | | |

The predictive model is *Innovation = 0.089 Impact +0.290 Self-determination +0.153 Competence + 0.126 Meaning +0.440*. The adjusted r-square indicates that these variables explain up to 43.50% of the variation in *Innovation*. However, only *the Self-determination* variable had a significant impact on *Innovation*, with p<.05. Nevertheless, these variables taken collectively had a significant impact on *Innovation*, $F (4,116) = 47.118$, *p* <.05. For this reason, the null hypothesis is rejected, as the four PE dimensions have a statistically significant impact on *Innovation*.

## The fourth sub-hypothesis (H0d):

Psychological empowerment (including its four dimensions: meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact) does not have a statistically significant impact on risk-taking (one of the entrepreneurial characteristics) among academic leaders at PNU. A fourth regression analysis was performed using *Risk-Taking* as the dependent variable and the PE factors as the explanatory variables. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 8.

**Table 8**

*Impact of PE dimensions on Risk- Taking (N=121)*

| Dependent Variable | Independent Variable | B | Std. Error | Beta | t | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | (Constant) | .344 | .104 | | 3.325 | .001 |
| | Meaning | .276 | .122 | .290 | 2.266 | .025 |
| | Competence | .189 | .127 | .205 | 1.491 | .139 |
| Risk - Taking | Self-determination | .315 | .095 | .316 | 3.310 | .001 |
| | Impact | -.050 | .053 | -.094 | -.941 | .349 |
| | F | | | 23.304 | | |
| | R Square | | | .446 | | |

The explanatory model is *Risk-Taking = -0.05 Impact +0.315 Self-determination +0.189 Competence + 0.276 Meaning +0.344*. The adjusted coefficient of determination indicates that PE variables explain up to 42.60% of the variation in *Risk-Taking*. However, only *Self-determination* and *Meaning* variables significantly impacted the dependent variable. Further, the four variables taken collectively significantly impacted *Risk-taking*, $F\ (4,116) = 23.304$, $p<.05$. Consequently, we reject the null hypothesis, as the four PE dimensions have a statistically significant impact on *Risk-Taking*.

## The main hypothesis (H0):

Psychological empowerment (including its four dimensions: meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact) does not have a statistically significant impact on the possession of entrepreneurial characteristics (i.e., need for achievement, initiative, innovation, risk-taking) among academic leaders at PNU. A last regression model analyzed the relationship between ECs and PE. The average and log-transformed scores for all ECs were the dependent variable, while the log-transformed PE factors were the explanatory variables as presented in Table 9.

**Table 9**

*Impact of PE dimensions on ECs (N=121)*

| Dependent Variable | Independent Variable | B | Std. Error | Beta | t | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | (Constant) | .262 | .068 | | 3.843 | <.001 |
| | Meaning | .214 | .080 | .239 | 2.654 | .009 |
| Entrepreneurial Characteristics (ECs) | Competence | .212 | .084 | .246 | 2.538 | .012 |
| | Self-determination | .230 | .063 | .247 | 3.670 | <.001 |
| | Impact | .126 | .035 | .253 | 3.590 | <.001 |
| | F | | | 76.170 | | |
| | R Square | | | .724 | | |

The impact of PE dimensions on ECs is explained by the model *Entrepreneurial Characteristics (ECs) = 0.126 Impact +0.230 Self-determination +0.212 Competence + 0.214 Meaning +0.262*. The PE factors explain 71.50% of the change in ECs. All the coefficients for the explanatory variables were statistically significant at 5% level, with $p<.05$. In addition, the four variables taken collectively significantly impacted ECs, $F(4,116) = 76.170$, $p<.05$. Consequently, the main hypothesis is rejected, as PE dimensions are significant determinants of the variation in ECs.

**Discussion**

The current study investigated the levels of psychological empowerment and entrepreneurial characteristics among academic leaders at PNU and determined the impact of psychological empowerment on the possession of entrepreneurial characteristics. According to the findings, PE levels were moderate, as were the levels of all its dimensions. Self-determination was the highest and impact was the lowest. These results show that the leaders experience a degree of autonomy and freedom in performing their jobs; however, their influence might be limited. The findings correspond with the conclusions reached by other studies (Al-Dhdan, 2020; Almadei & Albasal et al., 2022; Al-Qarni, 2021; Alshenaifi, 2021). They differ from the results of Ambad and Bahron (2012), who found above-average PE levels, and Meng and Sun (2019), who found that PE scores among faculty members and university leaders were moderately high.

ECs levels were also moderate, as were the levels of the individual characteristics. Risk-taking was the highest, while the need for achievement was the lowest. These results can be explained by the fact that the university was established for women, and its leaders are also female. They dare to face difficulties, pursue challenges, and enter high-risk situations because they believe that the highest levels of leadership lie behind the most dramatic risks. However, the fact that the need for achievement was at a lower level may be attributed to the fact that the leaders have sufficient achievements in the field of their specializations. These outcomes are consistent with those of Hussein (2013) and disagree with those of Saygin (2022), Al Zahrani (2021), and Al-Ramathi (2019), who found high EC levels among the respondents in their studies.

A multiple regression analysis indicated that psychological empowerment had a positive impact on the possession of entrepreneurial characteristics among academic leaders at PNU, explaining 71.50% of the total variation. The findings also revealed that psychological empowerment factors predict entrepreneurial characteristics. The findings support the results of existing studies on the role of psychological empowerment in influencing entrepreneurial characteristics. In this regard, Haji et al. (2022) indicated the significant positive impact of psychological empowerment on entrepreneurial spirit. Additionally, Okyireh et al. (2021) found that psychological empowerment had a positive impact on entrepreneurial behavior. The findings of Meng and Sun (2019) demonstrated that psychological empowerment was positively related to all aspects of work engagement for faculty members and university leaders.

More specifically, the need for achievement, initiative, innovation, and risk-taking are the principal entrepreneurial characteristics. Therefore, the four PE factors drive people to develop these entrepreneurial characteristics and motivate them to work. It was also noticed that self-determination was the most significant variable in influencing the four entrepreneurial characteristics, ahead of the remaining dimensions (meaning, competence, and impact). This reinforces the importance of focusing on self-determination, especially because its level was average but it had a more significant

impact on the four entrepreneurial characteristics than the other dimensions. Similarly, Meng and Sun's (2019) findings confirmed that the positive effect of psychological empowerment was primarily realized through two dimensions: meaning and competence. Aceituno-Aceituno et al. (2018) confirmed the statistical significance of self-determination in their regression models, showing that a lack of job opportunities enhances the psychological motivation to get involved in entrepreneurship. Therefore, self-determination is more vital for a leader than competence, influence, and understanding of the meaning of work because it affects the other aspects directly. In contrast, if a leader does not have autonomy and self-determination, efficiency and influence decrease accordingly. According to Romero-Galisteo et al. (2022), the differences in entrepreneurial intentions can be explained by differences in the psychological willingness to begin work.

The results also indicate that the need for achievement directly influences a person's psychological predisposition to entrepreneurship. These findings validate Sun et al. (2020)'s findings that a sense of personal achievement and influence impact entrepreneurial intentions and actions. Karimi and Makreet (2020) also supported these findings, stating that power and achievement are closely associated with social status and personal success. Consequently, leaders with a strong drive for achievement are more likely to enter entrepreneurial work.

The study finds that psychological dimensions drive personal initiative. Entrepreneurs possess an enhanced capacity to turn ideas into action through creativity, risk-taking, and innovation (Kerr et al., 2019). Ogba et al. (2022) reported that taking initiative is vital in transforming entrepreneurial intention into action, particularly among young graduates. Consequently, a psychological predisposition to action and risk-taking significantly impacts the entrepreneurial drive of academic leaders

Entrepreneurial innovation enables universities to surmount challenges and develop a unique competitive advantage. Yu and Du (2021) observed that innovation encourages entrepreneurs to use natural resources and integrate themselves into the natural environment more easily, resulting in a competitive advantage. It also allows entrepreneurs to overcome constraints and achieve sustainable development (Li et al., 2022; Zhou et al., 2022). Bawn et al. (2022) mention that innovation permits entrepreneurs to take advantage of change, adding that entrepreneurs are defined by this trait. PE factors enhance academic leaders' capacity to innovate and enable them to develop solutions to existing and emerging problems.

Lastly, risk-taking refers to utilizing the resources available under uncertain conditions (Teece et al., 2016). Kuratko (2007) added that despite uncertainties, numerous risks are worthwhile as they may lead to exceptional success. Numerous studies have emphasized the significance of risk-taking attitudes among entrepreneurs (Al-Mamary & Alshallaqi, 2022; Razak et al., 2021; Salameh et al., 2022; Zeng et al., 2022). These studies state that risk-taking creates learning opportunities, builds resilience, and generates a feeling of accomplishment after success. Consequently, PE factors that drive leaders to greater risk-taking enhance their entrepreneurial prowess.

## Conclusion

The current study investigated the level of psychological empowerment and entrepreneurial characteristics among academic leaders at PNU and determined the impact of psychological empowerment on the possession of entrepreneurial characteristics. The levels of psychological empowerment and entrepreneurial

characteristics of academic leaders at PNU were moderate. Psychological empowerment was found to have a statistically significant positive impact on entrepreneurial characteristics, explaining 71.50% of the total variation. Specifically, the principal drivers of entrepreneurial activities are the need for achievement, initiative, innovation, and risk-taking. These ECs are driven by the four PE factors, of which self-determination had the greatest influence on the four aspects of entrepreneurship.

## Recommendations

Based on the findings from the study on the impact of psychological empowerment on the possession of entrepreneurial characteristics among academic leaders at PNU, it is possible to offer the following recommendations for universities:

1. Consider other factors that affect leaders' entrepreneurial characteristics. Although psychological empowerment promotes ECs among academic leaders, it is not the only critical factor to do so.

2. Focus on raising levels of psychological empowerment and entrepreneurial characteristics among academic leaders.

3. Provide academic leaders with more autonomy and self-determination because these factors have a significant impact on their possession of entrepreneurial characteristics.

4. Give special consideration to providing development programs that enhance the entrepreneurial characteristics of academic leaders at various administrative levels of the university based on their needs.

5. Create special programs to identify academic leaders who possess entrepreneurial characteristics, develop their skills, and empower them to develop entrepreneurial universities that can compete locally and globally.

6. Promote an entrepreneurial culture within Saudi universities, especially among university leaders.

7. Encourage the concept of the entrepreneurial leader by creating an award for the best entrepreneurial leader at a Saudi university according to specific criteria.

8. Finally, as the current research examined the impact of PE on ECs by studying only one university, it is recommended that a similar analysis be carried out at other universities so the outcomes can be compared with the findings of the current study.

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