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ENTREPRENEURIAL LEADERSHIP CHARACTERISTICS DURING TIMES OF CRISIS IN DEVELOPING ECONOMIES: A STUDY IN SAUDI ARABIA

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ABSTRACT: *Crisis management is a critical challenge that entrepreneurs face. The research aims to understand the various characteristics of entrepreneurs during a crisis. The study used a qualitative approach with in-depth interviews conducted with three participants and a literature review on the key entrepreneurial characteristics necessary for crisis management. The study revealed several key characteristics that enable entrepreneurs to become better crisis managers, including risk-taking, innovativeness, proactiveness, competitive aggressiveness, and Autonomy. Participants stated the importance of utilising technology and setting up risk management strategies. This study provides specific insight into how these aspects fit into crisis management. Crises within the business are everyday occurrences that each entrepreneur must manage effectively to ensure the success of their ventures. Limitations include lack of literature regarding this specific topic in Saudi Arabia and the small sample size of three entrepreneurs used for the in-depth interviews. This research can provide insight into how the specific incentives and policies generated to empower entrepreneurs can be targeted and specific to entrepreneurs in Saudi Arabia. This study can also guide educational institutions on how they could better equip the entrepreneurs of tomorrow. One of the leading social implications could be improving the economic performance of SMEs within the KSA through entrepreneurs being better equipped for crisis management. Proper crisis management could enable more enterprises to become more efficient in the long term, ensuring their success.*

KEYWORDS: Entrepreneurship, Coronavirus, Crisis, Characteristics, Saudi Arabia, Leadership.

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INTRODUCTION

This article conducts a literature review regarding the characteristics of entrepreneurs. It determines the behaviours, competencies, and qualities that entrepreneurs must demonstrate, particularly in times of crisis. Three entrepreneurs from Makkah were included in the study: two males and one female. Entrepreneurs face various challenges in establishing the mode of crisis management that is most suitable for their business. Crisis management is an essential factor in determining the success of entrepreneurial investment. The analysis of these three entrepreneurs seeks to answer the following question: What are the characteristics of entrepreneurs undergoing crises?

This study was conducted during the global COVID-19 pandemic crisis. The most relevant results demonstrated the importance of considering the qualities of an entrepreneur's modern entrepreneurship in a literature study. Prior research on the characteristics of entrepreneurs highlights some key characteristics that increase their effectiveness. These characteristics include Innovativeness, risk-taking, Proactiveness, Autonomy, and competitive aggressiveness. As such, this study will analyse these specific characteristics and how they fit into crisis management.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Risk-Taking and Entrepreneurship

Risk-taking has beeEconomies:as an entrepreneur's motivation and willingness to undertake projects with uncertain outcomes (Antoncic et al., 2018). Risk-taking propensity refers to an individual's orientation to engaging in risks (Antoncic et al., 2018). It may also entail a company's inclination to pursue ventures with unknown or inherent aspects of risk (Linton, 2019). Linton (2019) argued that risk-taking is a significant component of entrepreneurship. Different forms of risk exist, such as borrowing heavily, venturing into an unknown business, or committing a large portion of personal assets. Linton (2019) observed that risk-taking decisions should consider tolerance, risk vs reward, and the probability of loss or failure. Risks that involve heavy investments and a high probability of incurring losses are considered high risk (Linton, 2019). A business often depends on the entrepreneur's ability to undertake risks that promote business growth by exploring new opportunities. Risk-taking is determined by two factors: the nature of the business or firm and the entrepreneur's personality.

According to Syed et al. (2020), curious individuals establish multiple capabilities, making them open to risk-taking and pliable to respond to challenging tasks. One example is a firm launching a new product that may depend on the innovativeness of leaders or market orientation. Risk-taking habits may also vary based on business performance in SMEs. Antoncic et al. (2018) proposed that personal characteristics can influence entrepreneurs' intentions or behaviours when starting a business. Risk-taking propensity can allow an individual the confidence to launch a new business (Johnson et al., 2018). Antoncic et al. (2018) proposed categories of risk-taking abilities, including differences between individuals willing to take risks and those with risk aversion. In entrepreneurship, business owners tend to be proactive when dealing with risks. The ability to control risk depends on the capacity to identify and seize potential threats. Enterprises with moderate levels of risk have a better chance of succeeding in a dynamic market than those with very low or very high levels of risk.

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Proactiveness and Entrepreneurship

Proactiveness encompasses the ability to identify opportunities by engaging in initiatives that make a meaningful impact. It also involves controlling external environmental pressures that can cause uncertainties. Brzozowski et al. (2019) suggested that proactiveness involves anticipating and acting to meet future needs by pursuing opportunities and incorporating new products to prepare for competition. Proactiveness is a primary factor in promoting entrepreneurial orientation. Proactive entrepreneurs engage in opportunity-seeking and are more forward-looking than competitors. Huang (2014) argued that proactiveness is a significant driver for sustaining a competitive advantage. SWOT analysis can facilitate market trends and a firm's capabilities (Huang, 2014). Entrepreneurs should plan for crucial resources to ensure smooth business operations. SMEs may face challenges such as a lack of adequate networks (Huang, 2014). Etriya et al. (2019) proposed that networking helps entrepreneurial farmers identify and pursue opportunities. According to Llanos-Contreras et al. (2019), proactiveness involves initiating projects that anticipate future events, making systematic changes, and identifying challenges and opportunities. Eze (2018) observed that proactiveness offers entrepreneurs new avenues to establish competitive dominance. Furthermore, it allows them to explore and implement innovation in service delivery. According to Kozubíková et al. (2017), being proactive is a significant determinant of overall business performance. The entrepreneur should evaluate past, present, and future challenges to prepare for opportunities.

Innovativeness and Entrepreneurship

Innovation is one of the core tools for attaining competitive dominance. Menold et al. (2014) point out that innovation is centered on creativity. An innovative entrepreneur possesses the ability to incorporate a firm that varies from existing markets in competencies or offers. Factors influencing business innovativeness include alertness to market trends and taking necessary risks. Kusumawardhani et al. (2012) assert that an innovative entrepreneur needs to research the market before investing. Technology used to meet market demands is considered innovative. Chang et al. (2020) proposed that cyber entrepreneurship is an emerging approach, especially for younger generations. Productivity and competitiveness are improved by innovation. According to Kusumawardhani et al. (2012), a company's capacity for innovation aids in the resolution of business issues and fosters success. According to Obunike and Udu (2018), innovation boosts profitability and competitive advantage. According to Nasierowski and Arcelus (2012), metrics include revenue, productivity, and competitive position; however, these are contingent on the business environment, competition, economic or political factors, and reputation. Innovation ensures continuous improvement (Huang, 2014). Forms of innovativeness include improvements to products, technology, market strategies, or knowledge. Obunike and Udu (2018) proposed two groups: technological and non-technological. The former includes strategy- or marketing-oriented processes, while organizational innovativeness involves introducing improved products or new markets. Technological innovativeness entails mastering new production or design processes (Obunike & Udu, 2018).

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Competitive Aggressiveness and Entrepreneurship

Competitive aggressiveness relates to how companies engage with competitors (Schillo, 2011). Market aggressiveness can assist firms in adopting initiatives such as increased product capabilities or competitive marketing. For example, lowering product prices can enhance market penetration (Rahman et al., 2016). Competitively aggressive enterprises act based on competitors' engagements. Kozubíková et al. (2017) suggested that competitive aggressiveness involves how businesses relate to competitors. According to Rahman et al. (2016), business owners must act on time to outdo competitors. Competitive aggressiveness is more suitable for organizations with large resources (Rahman et al., 2016). Lerner et al. (2018) suggested that in highly competitive markets, the window of opportunity is minimal, making small firms more vulnerable. Competitively aggressive firms may create a monopoly through patents, copyrights, innovative marketing, or superior services. Llanos-Contreras et al. (2019) suggested that competitive aggressiveness consists of directly facing competitors, following strategies despite their impact on rivals, and seeking to displace them. Entrepreneurs can enhance their competitive aggressiveness by evaluating internal practices and incorporating creative decision-making. Nasierowski and Arcelus (2012) proposed that innovativeness must exist for a firm to be competitive.

Autonomy and Entrepreneurship

Autonomy refers to the freedom to develop a business idea without hindrances (Kusumawardhani et al., 2012). It involves the capacity to make decisions and act independently. One example is a manager in an SME carrying out operations by determining policies and plans. According to Rahman et al. (2016), autonomy is significant in promoting value creation. Browder et al. (2019) suggested that corporate entrepreneurs encourage autonomous behaviors to harness ideas and boost productivity. Autonomous decision-making promotes microenterprise success. Independence motivates entrepreneurs to improve operations and attain profitability. Lumpkin et al. (2009) argued that autonomy is significant in leveraging opportunities and strengths to expand ventures. It also encourages innovation in formulating new ideas or launching products.

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to understand the importance of leadership and entrepreneurial skills during a pandemic so that entrepreneurs may develop their risk-taking practices, innovativeness, proactiveness, competitive aggressiveness, and autonomy during times of crisis. A qualitative approach was deemed suitable to collect and analyze data (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The best way to investigate this matter is from the participant's perspective, and a qualitative method is required to obtain this. The lack of literature on this topic and the theoretical stance to understand the phenomenon of this study further justify the qualitative method (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The data sources were divided into two sets. The first identifies valuable skills that entrepreneurs should have in times of crisis, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, and examines how they apply these skills to ensure business survival. This data was collected from open online resources. The second set was obtained from in-depth interviews with entrepreneurial leaders. These interviews gathered their perspectives on the practicality and importance of these skills. Three entrepreneurial leaders were chosen to answer questions over the phone and in online meetings due to pandemic restrictions (Upadhyay &

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Lipkovich, 2020). The interviews were transcribed and analyzed to develop themes that could determine the validity of the study's hypothesis.

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

SMART entrepreneurs are continually undertaking significant changes to stay in the market. This paper interviewed three entrepreneurs in Makkah. The interviews were based on a questionnaire in which participants were prompted to answer questions about their respective businesses to understand how they dealt with the pandemic situation in their businesses. The questions provide an understanding of the characteristics of entrepreneurs in the pandemic (Block et al., 2021; Nummela et al., 2020). The following are the results obtained from the three entrepreneurs.

Interview 1

The first entrepreneur interviewed was a 40-year-old male with a higher diploma in human resources. Most of his business activities focused on an application called Diverapp (Est & Sawwaf, 2019). His company was based in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia and was established in 2018, specializing in serving marine tourism, with one owner and five employees.

Risk Taking Behavior

This company struggled during the recent crisis, as requests slowed from the beginning of the virus's spread and stopped entirely with the introduction of a partial and then complete lockdown in the town of Jeddah. During the outbreak crisis, the respondent emphasized that entrepreneurs had to prepare an alternate work plan and find new strategies and ideas to continue immediately. To the respondent, taking risks during a crisis was essential, and he felt that an entrepreneur had to be brave enough to take calculated risks. The higher the risk, the higher the anticipated return, and the more creative an entrepreneur is in their concept, work style, and management, the more clients will want to work with them. They must have a competitive advantage, and all this is a form of risk. They must have the spirit of challenge, distinction, and the ability to take risks; otherwise, they can neither compete nor be present. If an inexperienced entrepreneur does not want to take risks and enter the field of trade confidently, he advises them not to enter the world of entrepreneurship; hesitancy is unacceptable.

Innovativeness

The respondent expressed his view that Innovativeness was essential as a skill leading to success. He agreed that creativity had to drive any project he assigned, remarking that:

Our project is mainly focused on creativity in work since it seeks to tackle a vacuum in the field of practicing diving as a hobby and in the market in the area of booking diving trips. Marine activities with mobile applications are also limited in this market. Its market share is currently small and specific in Saudi Arabia. We aim to make the application global. Obtaining tourist visas to visit the Kingdom has also been permitted for Saudis if they wish to dive during their vacations outside Saudi Arabia and non-Saudis. Whether they want to take cruises anywhere in the world, this idea itself is innovative entrepreneurial thinking unique to my

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knowledge. This is the risk in the project again. The project's idea is universal in its presentation, and our vision is to reach the world.

Proactiveness

Initiative in every situation running a company is a must, according to the first respondent. From the experience of developing his application, he stated:

There can be people around us everywhere who want to dive. The application works to bring people together on one platform, introduce them to each other and introduce them to the services we provide and the chances to dive around them. We say that it is difficult to set up, but easy to use. We strive to create an app that is easy to use and relaxed so that the registration and booking phases do not exceed three steps in fulfilling most of the requirements. In my field, we emphasize that launching an application is a new way to get work done in one way or another. I focus on my relationship with everyone interested in this field, and we have a good relationship with everyone and are characterized by honesty, clarity, and continuity, avoiding conflicts and disputes. We always strive to be neutral, not favoring any party, by being a mediator in the relationship between divers and dive service centers. After the trial phase of the application, we found great moral support at the level of local and international organizations and the individual level.

Competitive Aggressiveness

In terms of competitiveness, the respondent stated:

What distinguishes us is that we compete and serve competitors simultaneously, and this is the secret of the success of the work we are doing. Furthermore, the mystery of our help to competitors is that not all of them have applications to offer their services. In this sense, I serve them, and they all welcome me.

He expressed that waiting for a client to reach out to their company was not an option.

We do not wait for him whenever he wants to communicate with us, but we initiate and encourage him to take diving trips, and this is entirely new. We are sailing into social apps, looking for clients, reaching out to them, and encouraging them to try our services. We encourage everyone to go diving. We do not seek to compete with large corporations and organisations but rather work with them side by side.

Autonomy

Employees are not allowed to act without interference in the company. However, the respondent welcomes any new ideas to share and evaluate, after which he can decide whether to approve them.

Autonomy or independence could also be a human trait, and I naturally like to know all the details, know everything, and in my project, I would like to interfere in small and finite matters, and I think it is a secret of success at least for now. There are simple things sometimes I can ask them to do, and I only wait for the results. As for sensitive or decisive things, I do it on my own, even if it is small. I sometimes offer freedom and independence, and I run the issue differently depending on the sensitivity and nature of the subject. I do not like to turn over all the keys to one person; there is a risk.

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Finally, he emphasized that the distribution of powers is essential, but for each in his specialization'.

Interview 2

The second entrepreneur interviewed was a 38-year-old female with a bachelor's degree in Mathematics. Most of her business activities were geared towards making flower bouquets and gifts with antiques. The sole proprietorship she managed was based in Makkah, Saudi Arabia, and was established in 2019. The shop had one owner and three employees working in it. Their performance during the COVID-19 crisis had floundered due to the suspension request, slowly from the beginning of the outbreak until business stopped entirely with the introduction of a partial and then absolute restriction in Makkah City.

This respondent emphasized that an entrepreneur had to have essential skills during the current crisis to prepare an alternate work plan and to find new strategies and ideas to continue immediately. Risk-taking during a time of crisis was also essential for this respondent. After winning a competition through the Chamber of Industry and Commerce in Makkah Al-Makaria, she started her business, the 'Passion, SHAGHAF' (Chamber of Industry and Commerce in Makkah Al-Mukarramah, 2018). She saw her shop stop working during the pandemic in two respects: on the other hand, raw materials were difficult to obtain, and there were fewer clients due to both the fear of the coronavirus and the difficulty of going out due to the restrictions. In her words, 'I returned to work through the house, as I did in the beginning before winning the 'Passion, SHAGHAF' competition and obtaining financial support.' She expressed that entrepreneurs had to have the ability to face difficult situations and the passion and desire to continue and not give up quickly. They had to try to keep going.

Risk Taking

The respondent agreed that taking risks was very important as a woman because there was a sense of uncertainty. For instance, she used artificial flowers instead of natural flowers, which was considered at risk of not succeeding. However, it is necessary to take risks to avoid losing customers and the market. It is essential to continue providing the service and being patient to stabilize the shop's workflow. Even during the crisis, there would always be new opportunities, such as the month of Ramadan and Eid, and the respondent sought to take advantage of these opportunities.

Innovativeness

The respondent stated:

Innovation is essential for competition and continuity and necessary to satisfy all different opinions and moods, and if I had not been innovative, I would not have succeeded, nor would some have tried to imitate me in my work. Now, I am working on marketing with more innovative methods, including e-marketing, and I will work to create my website soon.

She distinguished her business from others as follows:

The different approach to offering and the willingness to communicate with the customers. Whether the client is a man or a woman, I offer them the product in a way that differs from what is on the market. In terms of content, idea, and the final result, I strive to satisfy the customer, whether they are a man or a woman. Being a woman dealing with flowers and

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customers gave me a significant advantage that was not on the market before, and this is the first innovation I sought.

Being more resilient is one factor that the respondent emphasized when she switched to using artificial flowers. She felt that this change had many advantages, especially under current conditions, and she was working on secure packaging and trying to deliver orders with licensed companies such as Mrsool Co (Mrsool).

Proactiveness

The respondent expressed her Proactiveness by looking at the international versions of the packaging brochures, flowers, and roses and following new trends quickly. During the pandemic situation, she began to work from home again and work on using artificial flowers instead of natural ones. All of these were proactive things that she believed had begun to solve the problem.

Excellence in defining opportunities somewhat, but opportunities are always available. I search for them, but unfortunately, I often work individually. I only have trainees, and I also get help from my children. I am a beginner entrepreneur with a small team.

She reported some difficulties in terms of delivery.

Initiating actions will make other organizations respond to us; this is what I did when participating in 'SHAGHAF, Passion.' Through the Social Development Bank initiative to find solutions for us, I will deliver my products to entities and individuals everywhere. I am working to produce a safe product that can reach customers in a guaranteed manner and under current difficult circumstances.

Competitive Aggressiveness

She stated:

Our field of work is very competitive, and I agree with this assertion in two respects. The first is who was on the market before and had clients and employees. He is more financially capable; he tried to imitate my ideas and products, repeat all the decorations that I have done, and open a store next to me, among many other things. Our project takes a bold and aggressive approach when we compete. I may agree in one way or another with this phrase whenever I see my work being copied and imitated, and I try to invent the new because I have the talent, which is essential for entrepreneurs. I try to man oeuvre and beat the competitors as closely as I can, within the limits of sources that I consider limited.

Autonomy

The respondent trained many women to work with her according to their abilities and possibilities. After training, employees could act creatively and flexibly. She expressed her feelings that employees should not be free to act until they understood their roles very well, which takes time. She found it challenging to leave employees to deal with customers because she was afraid of losing business. She wanted to be sure that her employees' methods were appropriate.

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She went on to explain that it was possible that if her employees were trained and became sufficiently skilled, they could be given the freedom to communicate without interference. She would not give all employees access to information due to previous experiences with missing data. She preferred that her business be stable; then, she would consider giving access to assigned employees.

Interview 3

The third entrepreneur interviewed was a 43-year-old male with a Bachelor's Degree in Architecture; most of his business activities involved providing consultations. The company he managed was based in Makkah, Saudi Arabia, and was established in mid-2018. It had one owner and seven employees. During the pandemic crisis, this firm followed official instructions and converted to teleworking. The respondent tried to adjust his firm's work, which government agencies supported. However, work was affected and significantly reduced. He nonetheless reported feeling that there were still opportunities that his firm could seek.

The crisis has imposed on everyone the skills to benefit significantly from technologies, and therefore, the essential skill is the ability to deal with new programs and techniques to work remotely and smoothly to accomplish the most significant amount of work and try to stay on the market map. Working with teams in faraway locations is also an important skill, and remote team management, through the ability to monitor and follow up in a way that contributes to accomplishing the required work for clients.

Risk Taking

The respondent highlighted that the need for innovative types and methods as part of the risk could be sustained initially because they had costs and losses.

It may be calculated, it may not be calculated, and I mean here that I do it through boldness and trust in Allah first, guidance second, and consulting third; then we do it. I say: this matter succeeded together; praise be to God. He thinks that in a pioneering start-up project, he needs to be present in the first stage and get a share of the market; then, stability will come. Therefore, risk-taking is a determined way to obtain a new customer. It provides better opportunities for new entities; we always try to open doors to work in new areas through which we compete and sometimes increase our chances.

Innovativeness

The market at the present stage is dominated by intense and heavy competition; if you do not provide Innovativeness or improvements in your work style, you will not be able to compete, continue, and succeed. Whatever the project, creativity must be present in the methodologies. Using innovative programs that allow teams to work remotely is one creative method of operation. The use of organizations working part-time and providing a new means of income for employees can reduce the financial burden on the facility, especially considering the absence of business continuity and steady income. This method reduces costs, and the respondent can reduce prices and increase quality, leading to competition.

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Proactiveness

The respondent pointed out that:

By searching out the competition as soon as it is presented, we are among the first participants to buy time, and we are well prepared to enter them; we compete with others by going to the parties we aspire to work with and presenting the services that we provide and the new creative ideas that we have that distinguish us from others. We race to win any excellent opportunity.

He also emphasized:

We are not waiting for the work to come to us, and the work will not come to us if we do not move to it. We are a pioneering facility; we need to race to get to work. I assigned an employee to search for opportunities. He searches by himself for hours and shows me the available opportunities.

He thinks that 'being proactive is necessary to have a foothold in the market and follow new regulations, new ideas around the world, and new trends'.

Competitive Aggressiveness

The respondent said that a competitive approach was being taken due to a shortage in the market. He was surprised by the number of competitors ahead of us, which reached 35 competitors in one of the government competitions, and this is a considerable number. Competition in our field is high, especially in the Corona crisis, and we are a new ground-breaking agency.' Lowering prices was one aggressive tactic this firm used to maintain good quality and give customers more than they expected from engineering results to help them and their organizations accomplish their tasks. This firm used remote work extensively while searching for experiences that increased quality.

Autonomy

The respondent allowed his employees to act without interference to create and bring out all of their bright ideas, which helped accomplish tasks proficiently. However, he advised those who needed it. He stated that there had to be limited independence. When asking whether employees were given freedom and independence to decide how to go about doing their work, he stated:

I practice brainstorming initially; then, I let the employees create; our work needs much independence to get intellectual creativity. New ideas are welcome, and they help the employee whenever he/she has the freedom and space to act…I think that the compliance of the employee with stringent constraints is detrimental in one way or another.

Moreover, he agreed that the freedom of communicating with others is limited; I am mostly concerned with external communication to preserve the facility, especially as it is an entrepreneur and start-up institution, and at the beginning'. He did not see free access to all information as appropriate.

Each employee is aware of their affairs only, and I do not allow them to see private information because of the high sensitivity of the matter due to competition.

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DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Business is an ever-changing environment that requires varying levels of risk. From the inception of a business idea to its actualization and eventual success, entrepreneurs are faced with a range of choices that they must make to determine the success of the business. Most people in business choose to take calculated risks meant to optimize the chances of success in their business venture (Antoncic et al., 2018). A business is usually only as successful as the initiatives taken by entrepreneurs in managing the business during times of crisis, and crisis management is often a tipping point in the success of a business. Failure at this point may mean the overall failure of the business.

This paper interviewed three entrepreneurs in Makkah regarding their opinions on the risks to their businesses. The three entrepreneurs faced challenges in managing and achieving their duties due to the recent developments of the global pandemic. Therefore, the interview questions aimed to understand what choices the entrepreneurs were making regarding the current situation. Similarly, the questions investigated the characteristics of entrepreneurs facing crises in their businesses. With the pandemic, businesses have faced difficult choices to stay in business and maintain some level of profitability.

The three entrepreneurs highlighted the importance of risk from a variety of perspectives. All three entrepreneurs interviewed agreed that they would not have achieved any success in their businesses without taking risks. In making decisions, entrepreneurs choose to make substantial investments to start and maintain their businesses (Antoncic et al., 2018).

The pandemic has resulted in most businesses closing due to the quarantine measures enforced in the region. To remain afloat, entrepreneurs need to devise methods and strategies to maintain their status (Johnson et al., 2018). The entrepreneurs interviewed in this paper highlighted various methods that had helped them deal with the crisis and their characteristics regarding taking control of the situation and managing it effectively.

Technology has become a core part of the modern world. It helps to solve the daily needs of modern entrepreneurship, as demonstrated by other researchers (Belik et al., 2019). If used correctly, it has the potential to optimize business performance with minimal impact on costs. The interviews revealed that some entrepreneurs chose to use technology to make the process easier (Eze, 2018). In these challenging times, entrepreneurs are using technology to communicate with clients and employees to try to get work done from home amid the health crisis.

Systems of risk management have been used for a long time in businesses to help weather times of crisis. Entrepreneurs must have the foresight to anticipate potential crises (Eze, 2018). In doing so, they can anticipate any eventualities that may lead to undesired outcomes and preemptively try to mitigate such risks. For instance, the entrepreneurs interviewed in this paper highlighted that they created jobs that were not permanent. In such cases, the workers were paid for the work they did day-to-day. In times of crisis in which workers are not needed, permanent workers are costly in requiring the business to pay them, even when they are not working. In the pandemic, many workers under quarantine cannot get to work, and businesses are forced to close.

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Hiring non-permanent staff can minimise costs, maximise profitability and assure business continuity despite crises (Eze, 2018). In this case, less business means lower bills to pay, and therefore, the business does not have to strain itself to stay on its feet. Entrepreneurs enforce systems of crisis management that contribute to the adaptability of the business in crises. The interviews found that one entrepreneur chose to undertake her business from home in light of the current situation. She could easily make her products from the comfort of her home and was therefore not impacted as much as others by the quarantine. However, her business was challenged by the low supply of materials and low rates of purchases from clients.

A good entrepreneur is a good investor in their workers. The interviews revealed that entrepreneurs chose to impart their knowledge to their employees. Passing on knowledge equips employees with enough expertise to handle crises autonomously. The entrepreneur, in this case, needs to be patient and find time to educate their employees on what to do during crises (Johnson et al., 2018), allowing employees to develop their business skills and help in business automation. The development of such skills presents a valuable tool that can be used to manage crises and stay ahead of the competition. Entrepreneurs often face challenges related to capital, experience, and even premises, but investing in suitable approaches can be the perfect tool for fighting to stay in the market.

The identification of opportunities is a significant factor in the establishment of business continuity. While crises may be highly taxing to a business, they also offer unique opportunities in the business environment. The entrepreneurs interviewed in this paper related that crises create opportunities that can be identified if people take enough time to analyse the market (Johnson et al., 2018). Recognition of market trends helps entrepreneurs to know where the market is headed and how they can take advantage of the situation. To best handle a crisis, an entrepreneur needs to observe the market and note the opportunities created. The interviews revealed that some entrepreneurs choose to research the market personally, while others opt to employ people to do it for them. Identification of business opportunities may make a difference in achieving business continuity.

A crisis is always a serious factor when considering business situations. Entrepreneurs are expected to be rational and handle crises without compromising their business. Therefore, they are expected to have certain qualities that assist them in carrying out their duties to the business and survive crises without any significant challenges.

Since the declaration of COVID-19 as a global pandemic, many places globally, including Saudi Arabia, are now enforcing quarantine measures that aim to keep people at home to prevent the spread of the illness. While this move has been aimed at protecting people's health, it has had a significant detrimental effect on businesses globally delivering services. As a result, workers are not allowed to get to their workplaces, and businesses have been forced to close.

The three entrepreneurs in this study showed a range of essential factors in managing or dealing with the crisis. The entrepreneurs highlighted the use of technology, setting up risk management strategies, and identifying business opportunities. These factors are used to control the challenges that may arise in crises and create an area for growth for the future. As such, the three individuals interviewed showed high resilience in dealing with the current crisis, even though it presented an intellectual challenge to managing their respective businesses.

For a business to stay afloat, it needs to be able to handle whatever comes. A crisis is usually an unplanned situation that may cause severe damage to the process of doing business. This

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paper highlights a range of characteristics that can help businesses manage crises and any eventualities that come with them more effectively. If responded to adequately, crises can improve business resilience and benefit the company in the long run.

The study clarified the features of Saudi entrepreneurs and modern entrepreneurship and their creativity and ability to cope with the COVID-19 pandemic. This reveals the role of Vision 2030 in supporting entrepreneurs through the spirit and determination given to them, the incentives provided and the Kingdom's desire to support the entrepreneur in general (Vision 2030, 2016). It also suggests the need to further examine the topic through a more significant segment and other regions in the Kingdom to prove entrepreneurs' fundamental qualities and characteristics. These findings also confirm those mentioned in previous qualitative studies on a global scale.

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