

Entrepreneurial Creativity: The Raw Path to Career Success

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Abstract:

Entrepreneurial creativity acts as a crucial catalyst that connects creative thinking to observable business accomplishments and directly translates into long-term career success. Global economic progress is fuelled by the creative entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurs with this creative ability are able to recognize niche market possibilities, create original solutions to challenging issues, and create unique company strategies that set them apart in highly competitive markets. More variance in career success may be explained by creativity than by intellect alone, emphasizing how the capacity to think creatively, link seemingly unrelated ideas, and produce original thoughts serves as the cornerstone for creating successful businesses. Entrepreneurs that are successful use their creative thinking to quickly adjust to changes in the market, shift course as needed, and consistently develop new goods and services. Structural equation modeling is used to examine the hypotheses on a sample of 420 creative entrepreneurs in northern India. Mediation analysis is used in this study. Results indicate that creative entrepreneurs' cognitive style influences entrepreneurial success through affecting creativity toward more potential prospects, innovation, and firm performance. Improved problem-solving skills, the creation of distinctive value propositions, and the capacity to turn obstacles into opportunities for growth are all examples of this creative-to-success road.

Introduction:

In India, people view entrepreneurs as the artisans of both the present and the future. It is well known that one of the key determinants of the development of our nation's numerous sectors is the presence of entrepreneurs. The economic progress of our nation, whether developing or developed, demonstrates that entrepreneurs contribute to every area of business, with the nature of this contribution varying between different societies and countries. Businesses with the proper talent and capital will have an extra edge over their competitors to implement derived strategies and create new ones that are challenging for rivals to imitate. In the light of this, the following research study seeks to understand and explore the factors that influence the success of SMEs in India. The definition of success is still up for dispute in the literature on entrepreneurship (Gorgieveski et al., 2011). Despite extensive research on the "success" of small businesses, this remains the case. The definition of a firm's success, however, is not widely accepted in the literature. There are many different viewpoints on this idea in the literature on entrepreneurship, ranging from merely surviving to reaching particular performance levels. The concepts "success," "survival," and "growth" are sometimes used interchangeably and are closely related. In addition to the diversity that defines success, scholars do not all agree on the factors that lead to SMEs' success. In any kind of business, but particularly in the case of SMEs, defining a firm's success is a very challenging issue. The definition of success used in this study is that proposed by Ahmad and Seet (2006), who proposed that success is a personal design that includes both financial and non-financial variables. Indian entrepreneurs' professional success is a result of a thriving market, supportive laws, and shifting views. Entrepreneurship is now a well-respected and profitable career path that greatly boosts economic development, innovation, and job creation. Business people will

be crucial in determining India's destiny as it moves closer to being a major economic force in the world. The aim of this study is to explain about financial and non-financial variables that how an entrepreneur uses all his financial and non-financial factors and how he builds his career with the help of these factors.

Literature Review:

Fatima et al. (2024) investigated whether Individual Entrepreneurial Orientation (IEO) training enhances the professional achievement of small business owners in Pakistan. Additionally, it looks at career resilience and IEO behaviour as mediating factors in this association. A sample of 527 Pakistani small business operators was taken from Lahore. 256 people made up the training group. 271 individuals made up the Control group. Four slabs was taken to measure the IEO, prior to training (T0), six months after training (T1), a year after training (T2), and two years after training (T3). Methodology used in this study, PROCESS Model 6 for serial (double) mediation, ANCOVAs for group comparison, and controls for sector, age, gender, self-efficacy, and cognitive ability. Study concluded that Small business owners that receive IEO training based on action-based psychological principles (ART) see long-lasting gains in their resilience, entrepreneurial behavior, and professional achievement.

Gumel et al. (2023) provided a comprehensive literature review of the critical success factors (CSFs) influencing the success of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) globally. Recognizing the pivotal role SMEs play in economic development and job creation, the study seeks to fill the information gap regarding why many SMEs fail—often within the first five years—by identifying and synthesizing the most influential factors for success. The consolidation of 25 CSFs offers a valuable checklist for practitioners designing interventions or diagnostics for SME growth. Researchers can use these factors as variables for further empirical study and model development. The paper is a foundational resource for those seeking to understand or improve SME performance. By categorizing 25 critical success factors into entrepreneurial, enterprise, and environmental domains, it emphasizes the need for nuanced, context-sensitive approaches in policy and practice to enhance SME resilience and growth.

Zhao et al. (2021) investigated the connection between the age of entrepreneurs and their professional achievements. It reviews twelve theoretical stances on the positive and negative effects of age on entrepreneurial performance. The authors then empirically investigate this link with an exploratory meta-analysis utilizing data from 102 samples. According to the findings, age has a weakly positive linear association with total entrepreneurial performance. However, the relationship is U-shaped, showing a negative correlation for younger samples and a positive correlation for older samples. When there are more female entrepreneurs in the sample, the favourable impact of age becomes more noticeable. The authors highlight the distinctive features of entrepreneurial careers by contrasting their findings with earlier meta-analyses on employee age and performance.

Cho et al. (2020) examined the motivations, obstacles, and critical elements influencing the professional performance of women entrepreneurs in South Korea. To learn about the experiences of female entrepreneurs, the writers surveyed and interviewed them. They discovered that both opportunity-based pull factors (such a strong sense of self) and necessity-driven push factors (like the need for money for a family) inspired female entrepreneurs. In addition to overcoming obstacles like gender stereotypes and work-life balance, the women also generated possibilities by fostering an environment within the company that felt like a family. Personality traits and devoted staff were important success factors. The study

emphasizes how crucial cultural context is to comprehending women's entrepreneurship, a topic that has received little attention in previous studies that have mostly been carried out in Western settings.

Sherif et al. (2020) investigated how academic faculty members succeed in their careers, particularly in the field of management information systems (MIS). It uses the "intelligent career framework" and looks at how academic career paths are impacted by social interactions, motivation, and competencies—the so-called "three ways of knowing": know-why, know-how, and know-who. 36 MIS professors from 22 universities in the US, Canada, and Australia participated in in-depth interviews with the authors. For analysis, participants were divided into four strata. Combining a strong "know-why," "know-how," and "know-who" allows faculty to progress their careers and access important resources. These people rise in society, exercise power, and use their connections to enhance their own achievements.

Salisu et al. (2019) investigated the impact of resilience on entrepreneurial career success (professional satisfaction, perceived career progress, and perceived financial attainment). According to the study, constancy of interest was positively correlated with only perceived financial attainment and predicted resilience, but persistence of effort was associated with all facets of career success as well as resilience. Additionally, resilience was linked to every aspect of professional success. The study sheds light on the structures of grit and raises the possibility that a collectivist culture, where consistency is not as highly prized, may not be a good fit for the Western definition of grit. The significance of grit and resilience as catalysts for entrepreneurial activity and crucial sources of energy that can reenergize entrepreneurs on the difficult path to success is emphasized in the study.

Chen et al. (2018) investigated the typology of creative entrepreneurs and its relationship to their success as entrepreneurs. Based on their entrepreneurial inventiveness and ability to see opportunities, the study distinguishes four categories of creative entrepreneurs: "creative constructionist," "creative opportunist," "creative designer," and "creative producer." The results indicate that entrepreneurs who are classified as "creative constructionists" are less likely to give up their entrepreneurial career and have more career success in terms of the firm's creative performance, individual career accomplishment, social reputation, and entrepreneurial contentment and happiness. The study emphasizes how entrepreneurial success in creative sectors is fueled by the complimentary roles of entrepreneurial innovation and opportunity recognition.

Chen et al. (2015) investigated the connection between job success and the cognitive and conflict-handling styles of creative entrepreneurs. According to the study, the cognitive style of creative entrepreneurs—more especially, their divergent and convergent thinking— influences how they handle conflicts within the company, which in turn impacts their professional success in terms of accomplishment and social standing. The hypotheses are investigated using structural equation modeling on a sample of 251 Taiwanese innovative entrepreneurs. The findings show that the cognitive style of creative entrepreneurs affects their conflict-handling style, which in turn affects their business success. The findings also imply that creative entrepreneurs who exhibit a greater degree of divergent thinking are more proactive and constructive when they respond to interpersonal problems by using obliging, dominating, and integrating strategies.

Karavardar (2014) examined the mediating function of career satisfaction in the hazelnut processing sector in Giresun, Turkey, in order to better understand the relationship between

professional commitment and subjective career success. 400 workers at Giresun's hazelnut processing industry were given surveys as part of the study's quantitative methodology. An 87.75% response rate was obtained from the 351 completed questionnaires that were gathered. To evaluate the correlations and the mediating effect, Sobel's test and multiple regression analysis were used. The results highlight how crucial it is for businesses to comprehend these elements in order to inspire and retain employees, particularly in a time when traditional career models are giving way to more flexible ones.

Supaad (2013) explored a field of career development among Islamic educators, specifically in primary schools, that has not received much attention. The study clarifies how personality traits, career planning, and career strategy affect the subjective career success of Islamic education instructors by analyzing these aspects using well-known frameworks such as the Gould Planning Model and the Five Factor Model. The results offer useful insights for improving career trajectories in the field of Islamic education and are applicable to Malaysian educators, school administration, educational authorities, and teacher training institutes. 185 manufacturing workers participated in the study, which discovered a strong correlation between career performance and career plans. The conclusion highlights that proactive measures like diligence, tenacity, and self-control can lead to professional success. It emphasizes how crucial it is to take personal responsibility and actively pursue professional goals in order to reap significant rewards.

Human et al. (2010) examined how undergraduate business students in South Korea, Ukraine, and the US see career and entrepreneurial pathways, filled a major vacuum in comparative cross-cultural entrepreneurship research. The nations were picked because of their differing degrees of capitalist experience, providing a rare chance to study how national context and entrepreneurial mindsets interact. 371 undergraduate business students (169 from Ukraine, 133 from South Korea, and 69 from the US) make up the sample. Using Likert scales, the 28-item survey addresses seven fundamental constructs (such as risk perception, team orientation, and career preparation). The tool was meticulously translated and cross-lingually verified. Significant differences were highlighted using comparative statistics, such as F-tests and mean comparisons. The study provides insightful empirical support for the idea that entrepreneurial inclinations are influenced by both distinct country contexts and universal principles.

Alstete (2008) investigated how small business owners and successful entrepreneurs perceived the benefits and drawbacks of starting their own company. This qualitative study compiles and examines interviews with 149 small business owners and seasoned entrepreneurs about their opinions on the benefits and drawbacks of their ventures as well as how they would advise aspiring new venture creators. The main conclusions show that although entrepreneurs encounter difficulties including long hours, stress, responsibility, danger, and a lack of company perks, they also relish the independence, freedom, job satisfaction, and financial rewards that come with being their own boss. The study offers first hand comments and views from seasoned business owners, and it generally confirms earlier studies in the sector.

Methodology:

Table 1. Demographic profile of respondents (n = 420).

Variables	Frequency	%
Age of the Respondents		
Upto 31 Years	59	14.05%
From 31 to 40 Years	170	40.48%

From 41 to 50 years	133	31.67%
Above 50 Years	58	13.81%
Gender		
Male	230	54.76%
Female	190	45.24%
Marital Status		
Married	227	54.05%
Single	186	44.29%
Other	7	1.67%
Age When Started Business		
Upto 31 Years	184	43.81%
From 31 to 40 Years	141	33.57%
From 41 to 50 years	22	5.24%
Above 50 Years	73	17.38%
Kind of Industry		
Manufacturing	277	65.95%
Service	143	34.05%
History of Enterprise		
Inherited	146	34.76%
Acquired	217	51.67%
Start-Up	57	13.57%
Generation of Enterprise		
First	44	10.48%
Second	226	53.81%
Third	150	35.71%
Type of Entity		
Sole Proprietary	273	65.00%
Partnership Ltd.	67	15.95%
Other	80	19.05%
Educational Qualification		
No Formal Education	38	9.05%
Up to 12th	92	21.90%
Graduation	186	44.29%
Post-Graduation	75	17.86%
Others	29	6.90%
Work Experience		
Yes	354	84.29%
No	66	15.71%
Formal Training		
Yes	89	21.19%
No	331	78.81%
Residential Status		
Haryana	105	25.00%
Punjab	105	25.00%
Himachal Pradesh	105	25.00%
Delhi-NCR	105	25.00%

Table 1 presents the demographic profile of the respondents, which includes details of various socio-economic and occupational characteristics of a total of 420 participants. In terms of age

group, the highest number of respondents (40.48%) fall in the age group of 31 to 40 years, followed by 31.67% of respondents in the age group of 41 to 50 years. Respondents below 31 years of age are 14.05%, while those above 50 years of age are 13.81%. In terms of gender breakdown, males are more in number (54.76%), while females are 45.24%. In terms of marital status, 54.05% of the respondents are married, while 44.29% are unmarried; only 1.67% of the respondents fall in the 'others' category. The age of starting a business also shows that respondents upto 31 years have the highest proportion (43.81%), followed by those starting a business between 31 and 40 years at 33.57%. By type of industry, 65.95% of the respondents belong to the manufacturing sector, while 34.05% come from the service sector.

In Addition, enterprise history shows that most of the respondents (51.67%) have acquired their enterprise through acquisition, 34.76% have inherited it, and only 13.57% have started a start-up. By generation analysis of enterprise, 53.81% of the respondents are second generation entrepreneurs, while 35.71% belong to the third generation, and only 10.48% are first generation entrepreneurs. In the type of entity, sole proprietorship is dominant (65.00%), followed by partnership limited (15.95%) and respondents in 'others' category (19.05%). In terms of educational qualification, majority of the respondents are graduates (44.29%), followed by those with education upto 12th standard at 21.90%. Post graduate degree holders are 17.86%, while respondents with no formal education are 9.05%. In terms of work experience, 84.29% of the respondents have prior work experience, while 15.71% do not. However, the number of respondents with formal training is relatively less (21.19%), while 78.81% of the respondents have not received any formal training. Regional distribution shows even distribution of respondents, where Haryana, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh and Delhi-NCR account for 25% of the respondents from each region. Thus, this demographic analysis makes it clear that the respondents come from diverse social, educational, occupational and geographical backgrounds, thereby providing a broad and balanced perspective to the study.

Measurement Model

This study used a measurement model to evaluate the reliability and validity of the data set. The measurement model provides a statistical framework through which the relationships between observable indicators and latent structural factors are analyzed (Hair *et al.*, 2010). Specifically, indicators such as Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability were used to test reliability, while convergent validity and discriminant validity were examined to evaluate validity.

Table 2. Summary of reliability and validity of measurement model

Instrument/Items and constructs	Loadings	(α)	CR	AVE
Firm Performance				
FP1: Enterprise success of our company over the past three years on profitability.	0.752		0.919	0.559
FP2: Enterprise success of our company over the past three years on sales growth.	0.811			
FP3: Enterprise success of our company over the past three years on return on investment.	0.745			
FP4: Enterprise success of our company over the past three years on cash flow.	0.730			
FP5: Enterprise success of our company over the past three years on market share.	0.792			
FP6: This business creates more jobs for local Community.	0.664			
FP7: This business obtains customer trust and	0.715			

confidence.			
FP8: This business is contributing to the community development.	0.744		
FP9: This business has satisfied customers.	0.765		
Career Success			
CS1: I am satisfied with the success I have achieved in my career.	0.794	0.895	0.631
CS2: I am satisfied with my progress towards meeting my overall career goals.	0.750		
CS3: I am satisfied with my progress towards meeting my goal for income.	0.847		
CS4: I am satisfied with my progress towards meeting my goals for advancement.	0.775		
CS5: I am satisfied with my progress towards meeting my goals for the development on new skills.	0.805		
Entrepreneurial Creativity			
E_CRE1: I usually search out new creative elements and inspiration, and then utilize those ideas in my creative business.	0.786	0.874	0.581
E_CRE2: I am not afraid to take risks.	0.753		
E_CRE3: I usually suggest new ways to achieve goals and objectives.	0.735		
E_CRE4: I often have fresh ideas.	0.810		
E_CRE5: In general, I am a good source of creative ideas.	0.722		

Table 2 above summarizes the reliability and validity of the measurement model, showing the loadings of the indicators, Cronbach alpha (α), Composite Reliability (CR), and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for the three major constructs—firm performance, career success, and entrepreneurial creativity. The factor loadings of all indicators for the firm performance construct are within the acceptable range (0.664 to 0.811), confirming that each indicator adequately reflects the respective construct. The Cronbach alpha value for this construct is 0.919, indicating excellent internal consistency, while the value of CR 0.919 and AVE 0.559 are also above the standard thresholds (0.70 and 0.50, respectively) (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

Similarly, factor loadings for career success range from 0.750 to 0.847 and Cronbach alpha is 0.895, which indicates high reliability. Its CR (0.895) and AVE (0.631) are also at acceptable levels. Loadings of all indicators of entrepreneurial creativity construct range from 0.722 to 0.810, and its $\alpha = 0.874$, CR = 0.874 and AVE = 0.581, which indicates that this construct is also sufficiently reliable and valid. Thus, the outcomes of the measurement model conclude that the indicators used are relatively strong and all the measurement constructs used in the research are not only internally consistent but also have sufficient convergent validity. This ensures that each construct is effectively measuring its intended factors, thereby strengthening the foundation for further structural model analysis.

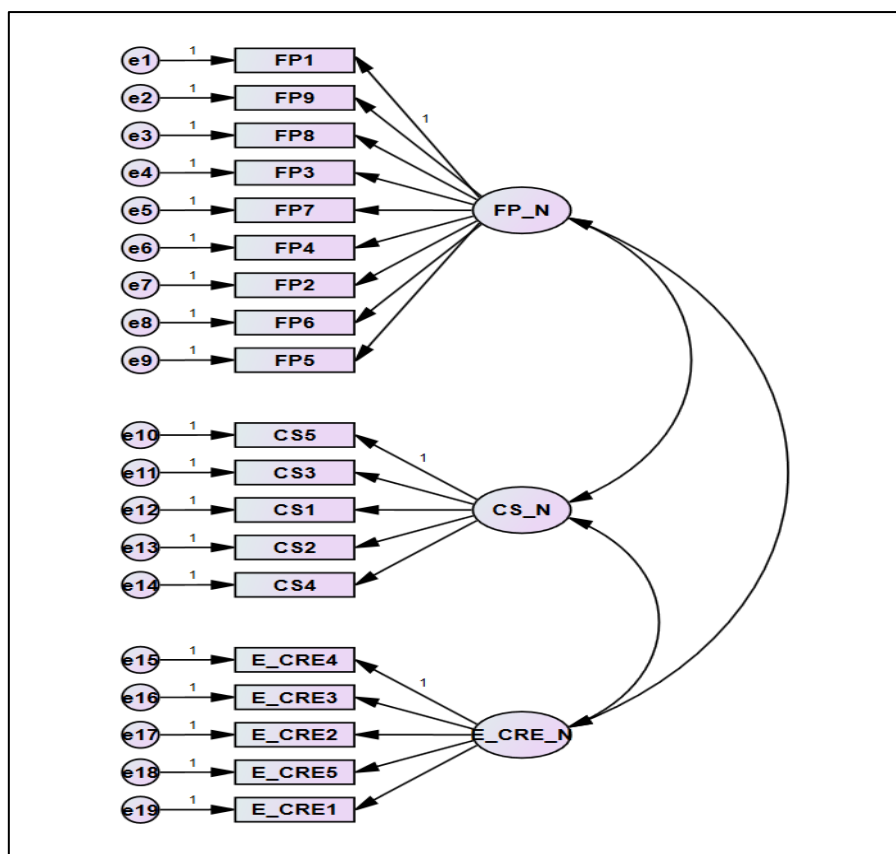


Figure 1: CFA Model

Table 3. Discriminant Validity

<i>Variables</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
1. Firm Performance	0.748			4.523	0.735
2. Career Success	0.520	0.795		4.147	1.017
3. Entrepreneurial Creativity	0.505	0.726	0.762	4.453	1.139

Notes: n = 420; Values in the parentheses represent the square root of the AVE value. p<0.05; p<0.01; p<0.001

Table 3 presents the results of discriminant validity of the measurement model. The values shown in the diagonal of the table are the square root of AVE (Average Variance Extracted), which reflects the highest correlation of the respective construct with itself. According to Fornell & Larcker, 1981, if the square root of the AVE of a construct is greater than the correlation of that construct with any other construct, it establishes discriminant validity. In this table, the AVE square root (0.748, 0.795, 0.762) of all constructs is higher than their respective inter-construct correlations (e.g. $r = 0.520$ between firm performance and career success; $r = 0.505$ between firm performance and entrepreneurial creativity), which confirms that all measurement constructs are clearly distinct among themselves. Additionally, all correlations are statistically significant ($p < 0.001$), indicating that although the constructs have mutual relationships, they are sufficiently distinctive. Thus, the results in Table 3 clearly indicate that the discriminant validity of the measurement model is adequate and satisfactory, thereby reinforcing the accuracy and reliability of the structural model analysis.

Table 4. Model Fit Measurement

Measure	CMIN	DF	CMIN/DF	CFI	SRMR	RMSEA	P-Close
Estimate	249.527	149	1.675	0.978	0.038	0.04	0.972

Threshold	--	--	Between 1 and 3	>0.95	<0.08	<0.06	>0.05
Interpretation	--	--	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent

The outcomes of model fit indicators presented in Table 4 shows that the measurement model fits the data extremely well. The value of CMIN/DF is 1.675, which falls within the recommended range of 1 to 3, and is an indicator of good model fit. The value of CFI (Comparative Fit Index) is 0.978, which indicates excellent fit as it is greater than 0.95. The value of SRMR (Standardized Root Mean Square Residual) is 0.038, which indicates minimal difference between the model and the actual data as it is less than 0.08. The value of RMSEA (Root Mean Square Error of Approximation) is 0.04, which is less than the accepted limit of 0.06 and indicates excellent approximate fit. Additionally, the *p*-close value is 0.972, which is greater than 0.05, and indicates that the error level of the model cannot be statistically rejected. The combined values of all these indicators make it clear that the overall fit of the model is of high quality, making it a robust and reliable framework for structural equation modeling.

Table 5. SEM – Structural Relationships – Conceptual Model

Hypothesis	Hypothesized Path	Regression Weights	S.E.	<i>p</i> -value	Standardized Regression Weights	Results
H _{1a}	E_CRE →FP	0.317	0.044	0.012	0.505	Hypothesis Supported
H _{1b}	FP→CS	0.284	0.076	0.014	0.206	Hypothesis Supported
H _{1c}	E_CRE →CS	0.627	0.051	0.011	0.726	Hypothesis Supported

The results of the path analysis of the structural equation model presented in Table 5. Above table indicates that entrepreneurial creativity had a significant impact on firm performance, thereby confirming hypothesis H_{1a} ($\beta = 0.317$, *t*-value 7.227, significance $p < 0.05$). Also, hypothesis H_{1b} was confirmed, wherein firm performance had a positive impact on career success ($\beta = 0.284$, *t*-value 3.736, significance $p < 0.05$). Similarly, under hypothesis H_{1c}, entrepreneurial creativity was found to have the strongest and significant impact on career success ($\beta = 0.627$, *t*-value 12.294, significance $p < 0.001$). It is evident from these results that entrepreneurial creativity not only impacts firm performance, but it also contributes significantly to career success. These findings reveal that entrepreneurial creativity is an important determinant that affects both business and personal success, and underscore the need to implement programs that promote creativity.

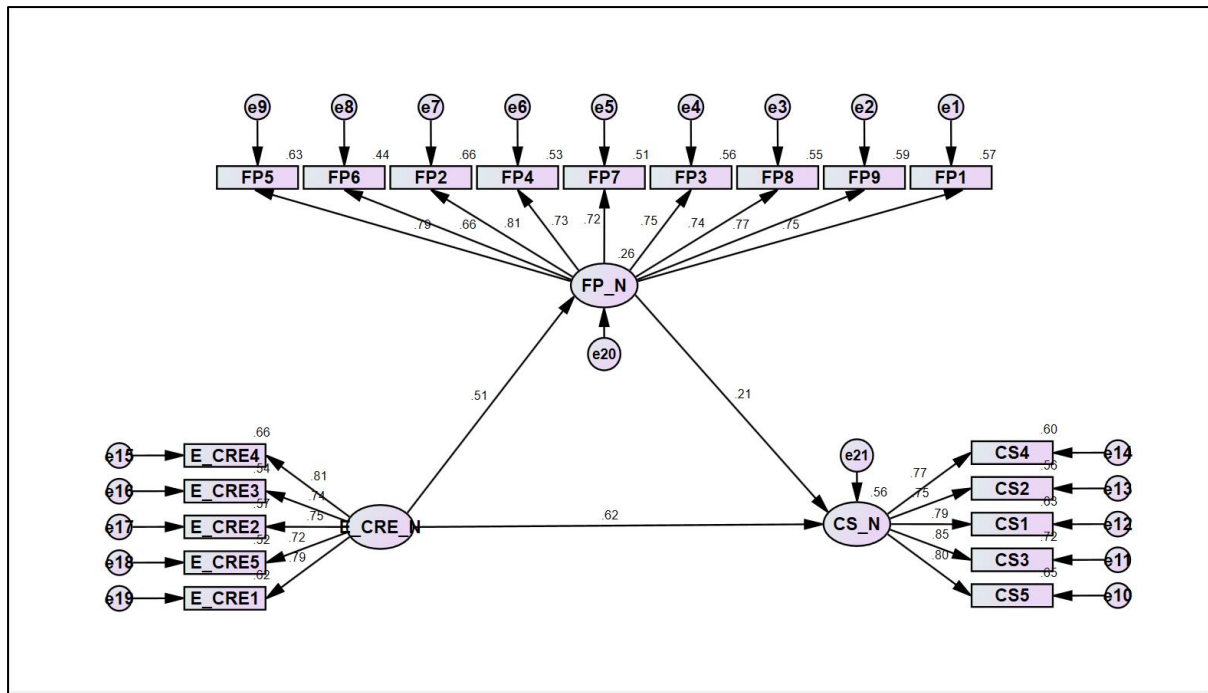


Figure 2: Structural Model

Mediation analysis

Mediation analysis is an important statistical technique aimed at understanding how a third variable, called the mediating variable, affects the relationship between an independent variable and a dependent variable. This analysis helps researchers to know whether the effect of the independent variable is directly on the dependent variable, or it is transmitted through an intermediate process. In this study, entrepreneurial creativity acts as the independent variable, while career success is the dependent variable. As per the hypothesis, firm performance plays the role of mediating variable in this relationship. According to the results presented in Table 6, the total effect of entrepreneurial creativity on career success is found to be significant ($\beta = 0.726$; $p < 0.01$), indicating that entrepreneurial creativity has a significant role in career success. Similarly, the direct effect ($\beta = 0.622$; $p < 0.01$) is also significant, indicating that the effect of creativity on career success exists directly as well.

Table 6. Total, Direct and Indirect Effect for Mediation Analysis

Hypothesized Path	Estimate	SE	p-value	Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Remarks
Total Effect						
E_CRE → CS	0.726	0.036	0.006	0.648	0.793	Significant
Direct Effect						
E_CRE → CS	0.622	0.051	0.005	0.534	0.742	Significant
Indirect Effect						
E_CRE → CS	0.104	0.028	0.009	0.046	0.154	Significant

Additionally, the indirect effect ($\beta = 0.104$; $p < 0.01$) was also found to be significant, confirming that the effect of entrepreneurial creativity is partially mediated through firm performance. This mediation shows that firm performance is part of the process through which creativity affects career success. The overall R-Square of the model is 0.559 and Adjusted R-

Square is 0.558, indicating that the independent and mediator variables together are able to explain 55.9% of the variation in career success. This reflects a strong model fit and indicates that the proposed structural model is statistically adequate and reliable in predicting career success.

Conclusion:

In the end, entrepreneurial creativity is a vital tool for anybody hoping to succeed in the entrepreneurial field as it serves as both the initial spark that launches commercial endeavors and the steady fuel that propels long-term professional accomplishments. This mediation shows that firm performance is part of the process through which creativity affects career success. This analysis helps researchers to know whether the effect of the independent variable is directly on the dependent variable, or it is transmitted through an intermediate process. In this study, entrepreneurial creativity acts as the independent variable, while career success is the dependent variable. This suggests that business owners who possess strong networking, relationship-building, and creative thinking skills may develop firm capabilities in the areas of management, marketing, and market connecting. In conclusion, this study makes a substantial contribution to the performance of small businesses.

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