

ENTREPRENEURIAL LEADERSHIP AND BUSINESS PERFORMANCE AMONG SMALL AND MICRO ENTERPRISES IN SOSHANGUVE SOUTH AFRICA

Livhuwani Ramovha*, Patrick Ebong Ebewo, Elona Ndlovu

Master of Management Sciences Organisational Leadership, Tshwane University of Technology
Staatsartillerie Road Pretoria West Pretoria 0183, South Africa

Article history:

Received
18 February 2026

Revised
7 April 2026

Accepted
11 September 2026

Available online
30 September 2026

This is an open access
article under the CC
BY license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)



Abstract

Background: Entrepreneurial leadership (EL) has become an important perspective for explaining how owner-managers mobilize resources, respond to uncertainty, and translate entrepreneurial intentions into organizational action. However, evidence remains limited on whether the individual behavioral dimensions of EL are equally associated with the performance of small and micro-enterprises (SMEs), particularly in South African township contexts.

Purpose: This study examined the relationships between five entrepreneurial leadership dimensions—framing challenges, absorbing uncertainty, path clearing, building commitment, and specifying limits—and business performance among SMEs in Soshanguve, Gauteng, South Africa. The study specifically sought to determine whether the dimensions differed in the strength of their relationships with performance.

Design/methodology/approach: A quantitative, cross-sectional survey was conducted with 400 SME owners. Because a complete and reliable sampling frame was unavailable, convenience and snowball sampling were used. Data was collected through a structured self-administered questionnaire and analysed using descriptive statistics, reliability analysis and partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM)

Findings/Results: The PLS-SEM results indicated positive and statistically significant relationships between all five entrepreneurial leadership dimensions and business performance: framing challenges, absorbing uncertainty, path clearing, building commitment, and specifying limits. The structural model explained 65.0% of the variance in business performance ($R^2 = 0.650$). Specifying limits had the largest estimated relationship, followed by building commitment, path-clearing, framing challenges, and absorbing uncertainty.

Conclusion: The findings support a differentiated view of entrepreneurial leadership, in which relational mobilization and organizational clarity may be particularly important in the Soshanguve SME context. Because the study is cross-sectional and uses non-probability sampling, the findings indicate associations rather than causal effects and should not be generalized beyond comparable contexts without further evidence. Importantly, the final interpretation depends on the revalidation of the measurement and structural models, including construct distinctiveness, collinearity, and common-method diagnostics.

Originality/value (State of the art): This study provides the first empirical evaluation of the five dimensions of entrepreneurial leadership in relation to SME performance in Soshanguve, Gauteng. By examining the relative strength of individual dimensions rather than treating entrepreneurial leadership as a single, undifferentiated construct, this study extends existing research. This study provides a more targeted empirical basis for SME leadership development and performance improvement.

Keywords: entrepreneurial leadership, SME performance, small and micro enterprises, township entrepreneurship, Soshanguve, South Africa

How to Cite:

Ramovha, L., Ebewo, P. E., & Ndlovu, E. (2026). Entrepreneurial leadership and business performance among small and micro enterprises in Soshanguve South Africa. *Indonesian Journal of Business and Entrepreneurship*, 12(3), 552. <https://doi.org/10.17358/IJBE.12.3.552>

*Corresponding author:
Email: livhuwanilr@gmail.com

INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurial leadership (EL) is an emergent leadership paradigm that has evolved from both leadership and entrepreneurship scholarship to address the multifaceted challenges confronting contemporary enterprises (Bagheri & Harrison, 2020). It strategically integrates entrepreneurial and leadership principles (Renko et al. 2015; Mamun et al. 2018). Despite its growing prominence in academic discourse, entrepreneurial leadership remains underexplored, particularly regarding its performance indicators and practical value for both established and emerging enterprises (Mehmood & Jian, 2020). To build a comprehensive understanding of entrepreneurial leadership, it is necessary first to delineate the foundational concepts of entrepreneurship and leadership. Entrepreneurship is the process of identifying, assessing, and exploiting opportunities in the business environment to generate profit while managing inherent risks (Shumba et al. 2024). In contrast, leadership entails influencing, guiding, and mobilizing individuals to achieve collective business objectives (Wibowo & Narmaditya, 2020). Accordingly, entrepreneurial leadership can be defined as a behavioral orientation characterized by the ability to acquire and deploy resources strategically, respond decisively in high-stakes environments, and formulate adaptive strategies that foster sustained competitive advantage in dynamic markets (Araujo, 2020; Rusliati, Mulyaningrum, Wibomo, & Narmaditya, 2020).

Because of the dynamic business environment and the challenges it poses to business owners, an entrepreneurial leader is essential to ensure business success, growth, performance, and long-term survival (Armanu, Dwi Ilham & Ratih, 2021; Siwela et al. 2022; and Mbangiswano et al. 2025). Leadership practices within a business can either serve as a catalyst guiding the enterprise toward success or act as a barrier contributing to its failure (Mhembere, 2020). The leadership style adopted by entrepreneurs plays a critical role in driving economic growth by fostering innovation, creativity, effective management, job creation, productivity, and business competitiveness, all of which contribute to enhanced performance (Zaccaro, 2017; Ndlovu-Hlatshwayo & Nesamvuni, 2022). Vecchio (2003) and Lekutle et al. (2023) contend that entrepreneurial leadership is particularly well-suited to small and growing enterprises. Expanding on this perspective, Bagheri and

Harrison (2020) reaffirmed Vecchio's claim, arguing that entrepreneurial leadership is applicable across diverse business contexts as a method, approach, or mindset that fosters improved performance, enhanced competitiveness, and sustainable growth. Small and micro-enterprises require entrepreneurial leaders who can identify opportunities, define strategic objectives, generate innovative solutions, empower and influence others, and adopt an entrepreneurial orientation to maintain agility in an increasingly volatile business environment (Leitch & Volery, 2017). Therefore, entrepreneurial leadership is relevant at all levels of business, as it centers on the capacity to recognize and act on emerging opportunities (Kavithaselvaraja & Zaidatol-Akmalia, 2017).

Small and micro enterprises (SMEs) play an important role in employment creation, income generation, and local economic development in South Africa (Cannot & Rabie, 2018; Ebewo, 2014). However, their ability to survive and achieve sustainable business performance is constrained by their vulnerability to changing market conditions, limited resources, competitive pressures, and uncertainty (Bushe, 2019; Schultz et al. 2024; Msimango-Galawe & Hlatshwayo, 2021). These challenges are particularly relevant in Soshanguve, where SMEs contribute to local economic activity but continue to face difficulties that may lead to poor performance and business closures. Although previous studies have established that entrepreneurial leadership is relevant to SME survival, growth, and performance, an important empirical problem remains (Molema et al. 2026). Existing research frequently treats entrepreneurial leadership as a broad or aggregated construct, making it difficult to determine which specific leadership behaviors are most strongly associated with SME business performance (Lekutle et al. 2023; Armanu, Dwi Ilham & Ratih, 2021). This creates practical and theoretical limitations because entrepreneurial leaders do not respond to business challenges through a single behavior; rather, they must interpret challenges, manage uncertainty, remove obstacles, establish boundaries, and mobilize stakeholders towards business objectives. The specific research problem addressed in this study is the limited empirical understanding of how the individual dimensions of entrepreneurial leadership relate to the business performance of SMEs in Soshanguve, Gauteng. Insufficient attention has been given to the combined explanatory relevance of five dimensions framing challenges, absorbing uncertainty, path clearing/underwriting, specifying limits, and

building commitment within this specific SME context. Consequently, this study addresses the gap by empirically examining the relationships between these five dimensions of entrepreneurial leadership and SME business performance. Rather than assuming that entrepreneurial leadership is a uniform construct, the study disaggregates it into constituent dimensions to determine whether, and to what extent, each dimension is associated with business performance. This approach provides a more precise understanding of the leadership behaviors that may be particularly relevant to SMEs operating in resource-constrained and uncertain environments.

Entrepreneurial leadership (EL) has increasingly emerged as an important perspective for understanding how owner-managers mobilize resources, respond to uncertainty, identify opportunities, and coordinate organizational action in entrepreneurial settings. While foundational research conceptualized EL as a combination of entrepreneurial and leadership behaviors, contemporary scholarship increasingly treats EL as a multidimensional construct through which leaders influence opportunity development, innovation, adaptation, and organizational performance (Renko et al. 2015; Bagheri & Harrison, 2020). This development is particularly relevant to SMEs, which frequently operate under resource constraints, environmental uncertainty, competitive pressures, and limited business capacity.

Entrepreneurial leadership is theoretically grounded in the broader literature on strategic entrepreneurship, which emphasizes the integration of entrepreneurial opportunity-seeking with strategic processes to create and sustain organizational value (Ireland et al. 2003). This perspective is complemented by the entrepreneurial mindset approach of McGrath and MacMillan (2000), which highlights the importance of proactive action, opportunity pursuit, and decision-making under conditions of uncertainty and incomplete information in entrepreneurship. Building on these foundations, Gupta et al. (2004) conceptualized entrepreneurial leadership through five interrelated roles: framing challenges, absorbing uncertainty, path clearing, building commitment, and specifying limits. Subsequent scholarship has further established entrepreneurial leadership as a distinct and multidimensional construct (Renko et al. 2015; Bagheri & Harrison, 2020), providing a contemporary basis for examining the specific behavioral mechanisms through

which entrepreneurial leadership may influence business performance.

Recent empirical research continues to demonstrate the relevance of entrepreneurial leadership to SME and micro-enterprise performance. Nguyen et al. (2021) found that entrepreneurial leadership significantly influences SME performance through mechanisms such as team creativity, dynamic capabilities, and competitive advantage. Their findings suggest that the performance implications of EL extend beyond the leader's individual behavior to the business capabilities through which entrepreneurial intentions are translated into performance outcomes. Similarly, Srimulyani et al. (2023) examined 575 SME owners in East Java and found that entrepreneurial leadership was an important internal entrepreneurial factor associated with improved business performance. These findings reinforce the relevance of EL, while indicating that its performance effects are embedded within broader business processes.

More recent empirical evidence further demonstrates that the relationship between entrepreneurial leadership and performance is context-dependent. Kebede et al. (2024) found a significant relationship between entrepreneurial leadership and quality performance among micro and small enterprises, with service innovation mediating the relationship. This finding suggests that entrepreneurial leadership can influence enterprise performance by facilitating business responses and innovation rather than solely through direct leadership effects. Similarly, recent research has linked entrepreneurial leadership to entrepreneurial success, innovation capability, and competitive advantage, further demonstrating its importance in enabling SMEs to respond to changing competitive environments (Taleb et al. 2023; Ercantan et al. 2024). Evidence from South Africa is also increasingly demonstrating the relevance of entrepreneurial leadership to SMME development and performance. South African SMMEs operate within a challenging environment characterized by resource constraints, infrastructure limitations, access-to-finance challenges, market competition, and institutional pressures. These conditions increase the importance of leadership capabilities that enable entrepreneurs to identify opportunities, manage uncertainty, and coordinate available resources. Recent South African evidence has found a positive relationship between entrepreneurial leadership and entrepreneurial development among

SMMEs in Gauteng (Aluko, 2025), strengthening the contextual relevance of EL to the present study.

Despite this growing body of evidence, an important limitation remains in the contemporary literature. Much empirical research continues to examine entrepreneurial leadership as a broad or aggregate construct or to focus on mediating organizational factors such as innovation, dynamic capabilities, competitive advantage, and organizational resources (Nguyen et al. 2021; Kebede et al. 2024). While these studies establish that EL matters for organizational outcomes, they offer less insight into which specific entrepreneurial leadership behaviors drive performance differences. Treating EL as a single, undifferentiated construct may obscure meaningful variation in the behavioral roles that entrepreneurial leaders perform. This issue is particularly important given evidence that individual EL dimensions may not contribute equally to business performance. Recent empirical research has begun to show that certain entrepreneurial leadership behaviors are more strongly associated with performance than others. Bangguiyac and Castañeda (2025) found that specific entrepreneurial leadership dimensions had different relationships with MSME business performance. Such findings challenge the assumption that entrepreneurial leadership dimensions operate uniformly and support the need for more disaggregated empirical investigation.

The contemporary literature establishes that entrepreneurial leadership is positively associated with SME and micro-enterprise outcomes across different emerging-market contexts (Nguyen et al. 2021; Srimulyani et al. 2023; Kebede et al. 2024; Ercantan et al. 2024). Nevertheless, three important gaps remain. First, a behavioral gap remains. Existing studies frequently examine EL as an aggregate construct or focus on mediating organizational variables. Consequently, less is known about the specific behavioral mechanisms through which individual EL dimensions influence SME business performance. Second, a comparative gap remains. Emerging evidence indicates that individual EL dimensions may have different performance implications. However, limited research has systematically examined the relationships among all five dimensions identified by Gupta et al. (2004) and SME business performance within a single empirical model. Third, a contextual gap remains. Although recent EL research has expanded across emerging economies, comparatively limited

evidence examines the differentiated performance implications of the five entrepreneurial leadership dimensions among South African township SMEs. This matters because township enterprises operate within distinctive institutional, economic, and resource environments that may alter the relative importance of leadership behaviors. The present study addresses these gaps by empirically examining the relationships between framing challenges, absorbing uncertainty, path clearing, specifying limits, building commitment, and SME business performance among small and micro enterprises in Soshanguve, Gauteng. The study therefore advances the literature from an aggregate EL-performance perspective towards a dimension-specific and context-sensitive explanation of entrepreneurial leadership and SME performance.

This study makes four related contributions to the entrepreneurial leadership literature. First, it contributes to the multidimensional conceptualization of entrepreneurial leadership by examining the five behavioral dimensions separately rather than treating EL as an undifferentiated construct. This provides a more fine-grained understanding of the behaviors through which entrepreneurial leaders may influence business performance. Second, the study contributes to the theoretical integration of entrepreneurial leadership and strategic entrepreneurship by connecting strategic opportunity seeking and entrepreneurial action (Ireland et al. 2003; McGrath & MacMillan, 2000) with the specific entrepreneurial leadership roles identified by Gupta et al. (2004) and the contemporary multidimensional conceptualization of EL (Renko et al. 2015; Bagheri & Harrison, 2020). Third, the study provides a comparative contribution by examining whether the five EL dimensions have different relationships with SME business performance. This is particularly important because existing research often establishes that EL matters without sufficiently explaining which specific leadership behaviors may be more consequential than others. Fourth, the study provides a contextual contribution by extending research on multidimensional entrepreneurial leadership to SMEs operating in a South African township environment. The study, therefore, responds to the need for greater geographical and contextual diversity in EL research. The central novelty of the study, consequently, does not rest solely on its examination of entrepreneurial leadership in Soshanguve. Rather, its novelty lies in the combination of multidimensional analysis, comparative examination of EL behaviors,

theoretical integration, and application to an under-researched township SME context. By identifying which entrepreneurial leadership behaviors are more strongly associated with business performance, the study provides a more differentiated explanation of how entrepreneurial leadership may contribute to enterprise outcomes under resource constraints and uncertainty.

Accordingly, the present study moves beyond the broad question of whether entrepreneurial leadership contributes to SME performance and examines how five theoretically distinct entrepreneurial leadership dimensions relate individually to business performance. The study focuses on framing challenges, absorbing uncertainty, path clearing, specifying limits, and building commitment, drawing directly from the framework developed by Gupta et al. (2004). The integration of these dimensions is theoretically justified because they represent complementary yet distinct behavioral mechanisms by which entrepreneurial leaders can influence business actions and outcomes.

METHODS

The study adopted a positivist research philosophy, which emphasizes the development and empirical testing of hypotheses, as well as the identification and analysis of causal relationships (Leavy, 2023). This philosophical stance was selected because it aligned with the study's objectives and methodological approach. First, the positivist paradigm enabled a systematic investigation of the relationship between entrepreneurial leadership and business performance by testing specific hypotheses concerning the effects of various leadership dimensions. Second, it facilitated the validation or rejection of assertions about the influence of entrepreneurial leadership on business outcomes. In line with positivist traditions, the study utilized structured questionnaires and official statistical tools recognized as validated, reliable, and appropriate for producing objective insights into the research problem. Crucially, the data collection process was non-intrusive; the researcher maintained an objective and detached stance, ensuring no influence on the phenomenon under investigation. The positivist philosophy also guided the development of hypotheses by grounding them in established theoretical frameworks (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2019). Accordingly, the hypotheses in this study were based on recognized entrepreneurial leadership theories, focusing on five core dimensions:

framing challenges, absorbing uncertainty, clearing the path, specifying limits, and building commitment, as identified by Dahlin & Gratell (2018), Paudel (2019), Bagheri & Harrison (2020), and 2021).

This study utilised a descriptive research design to examine the events, experiences, and behaviours that shape the business performance of small and micro enterprises (SMEs). Descriptive research is particularly suitable for exploring complex phenomena in real-world contexts, as it seeks to answer fundamental questions such as what, why, how, and when (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2019). This approach was deemed appropriate given the exploratory nature of the study and its emphasis on capturing the lived realities of entrepreneurs operating in resource-constrained environments. Within this framework, the design was specifically selected to assess the role of entrepreneurial leadership as a key determinant of business performance, acknowledging that leadership practices often influence strategic direction, adaptability, and long-term viability in SMEs. By generating comprehensive and nuanced data, descriptive studies allow the identification of recurring patterns, relationships, and contextual variables that may not be evident in more rigid quantitative approaches. The rich detail obtained from this method contributes to a deeper understanding of how entrepreneurial leadership is enacted in practice and how it correlates with measurable business outcomes such as growth, profitability, and sustainability. As such, the insights and practical implications derived from this research not only offer value for practitioners and policymakers but also serve as a foundation for future empirical investigation and theory development in the field of entrepreneurship (Leavy, 2023).

The survey strategy provides researchers with a systematic means to collect data that can be quantitatively analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques (Easterby-Smith, Jaspersen, Thorpe, & Valizade, 2021). This approach is particularly valuable for capturing information from a large number of respondents, thereby enhancing the generalizability of the findings. In this study, the survey method was implemented using structured, self-administered questionnaires adapted from previously validated instruments to ensure both reliability and alignment with the research objectives. Respondents completed the questionnaires independently, without direct interaction with the researcher, which minimized potential bias and enabled them to provide honest

and considered responses at their own pace. The self-administered format also facilitated efficient data collection from geographically dispersed samples. By employing the survey strategy, the study was able to explore the research area on a broader scale, reaching more respondents than would have been possible through interviews alone, especially given the time and resource constraints associated with conducting and analyzing in-depth qualitative interviews by one researcher. This broader scope strengthens the robustness of the study's conclusions and provides a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomena being investigated.

A non-probability sampling approach, specifically utilizing both convenience and snowball sampling techniques to recruit participants, was employed. Convenience sampling was initially used to identify SME owners in Soshanguve who were readily accessible, available, and willing to participate in the research. This method allowed the researcher to begin data collection quickly, without the need for a sampling frame or detailed population data. However, the researcher encountered difficulties obtaining a comprehensive, up-to-date list of SME owners in the area, which posed a significant limitation to identifying a broad sample through convenience sampling. To address this challenge, snowball sampling was subsequently employed as a complementary strategy to broaden the sample base. Through this approach, initial participants who met the inclusion criteria were asked to refer the researcher to other SME owners within their networks who also operated in Soshanguve. This peer-referral process proved effective in reaching a wider and more diverse range of participants, including individuals who may not have been easily identifiable through direct outreach. It also enhanced trust and willingness to participate, as referrals were based on existing relationships within the SME community. The selection of respondents characterizes convenience sampling based on ease of access and willingness to engage in the study (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2019:308), making it especially suitable for research contexts constrained by limited time, funding, or logistical support. The use of snowball sampling further enabled the study to overcome barriers related to the absence of a defined sampling frame, which is common in informal or under-documented business sectors. The combined use of these two non-probability sampling techniques was considered appropriate for two key reasons. First, both methods are time-efficient,

cost-effective, and relatively simple to administer compared to probability-based approaches, particularly in field settings where logistical obstacles such as transportation, safety, or a lack of centralized records may impede systematic sampling.

Second, the actual size and distribution of SMEs operating in Soshanguve were unknown and difficult to determine with precision. In such instances, where the researcher lacks complete information about the target population, non-probability sampling techniques such as convenience and snowball sampling are not only practical but also methodologically justified (Mweshi & Sakyi, 2020). A total of 400 questionnaires were distributed. Conversely, 400 questionnaires were completed and received. A pilot study involving 50 participants was conducted to evaluate the feasibility of the research design and identify potential issues with the data-collection instrument prior to the main survey. This initial phase served several key functions, including providing insights into the average time required to complete the questionnaire. It evaluated the clarity, relevance, and cognitive demands of individual survey items. The pilot study was critical in detecting questions that were ambiguous, repetitive, or overly complex. The results indicated that the questionnaire was well understood by all respondents, with no concerns reported regarding item clarity or comprehension. As a result, no modifications were necessary. Furthermore, the average completion time was less than one hour, confirming that the questionnaire length was appropriate and did not require reduction. The survey instrument was developed by adapting items from previously validated scales used in empirical studies (Paudel, 2019; Anwar & Syed, 2020; Mhembere, 2020; Bagheri & Harrison, 2020; Naushad, 2021). Each construct was evaluated using multiple items rated on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). Internal consistency reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, with all constructs meeting or exceeding the acceptable threshold of 0.70, indicating satisfactory reliability.

The theoretical integration of the five dimensions follows Gupta et al.'s (2004) distinction between scenario enactment and cast enactment. Scenario enactment concerns constructing and pursuing a possible future state and includes framing challenges, absorbing uncertainty, and clearing paths. Cast enactment concerns assembling and coordinating the people required to enact that future state and includes building commitment and specifying

limits. The five roles are therefore conceptually distinct but functionally connected: leaders must identify what requires action, accept responsibility for uncertainty, remove barriers to execution, mobilize people, and establish sufficient boundaries for coordinated action.

Framing challenges represents the leader's ability to interpret complex situations, define problems, and identify the strategic challenge confronting the enterprise. This behavior matters because effective problem framing can direct scarce business resources toward the issues that matter most for business survival and growth. Evidence that EL is associated with SME performance further suggests that leadership processes that orient business attention can contribute to outcomes (Al Mamun et al. 2018; Nguyen et al. 2021). Contemporary research linking entrepreneurial leadership with strategic agility, innovation, and organizational adaptation supports the importance of leadership behaviors that facilitate strategic interpretation and responsiveness (Sari & Ahmad, 2022; Taleb et al. 2023). Accordingly, this study hypothesized that effective framing of challenges would be positively associated with business performance.

H1: Framing challenges have a positive and significant relationship with the business performance of small and micro-enterprises in Soshanguve.

Absorbing uncertainty concerns a leader's ability to tolerate, manage, and act under conditions of uncertainty. This dimension is particularly relevant to SMEs because entrepreneurs frequently make decisions with incomplete information and limited resources. McGrath and MacMillan's (2000) entrepreneurial mindset perspective provides an important theoretical foundation for this behavior, while recent empirical evidence indicates that uncertainty-management capabilities can influence entrepreneurial and business outcomes (Banguiyac & Castañeda, 2025).

H2: Absorbing uncertainty is positively and significantly related to business performance among SMEs in Soshanguve.

Path clearing refers to a leader's capacity to remove obstacles, facilitate access to resources, and create conditions that enable business owners to implement strategic intentions. This dimension connects entrepreneurial vision with implementation. Recent studies have shown that entrepreneurial leadership influences performance through innovation, dynamic capabilities, and organizational processes, supporting

the importance of implementation-oriented leadership behavior (Nguyen et al. 2021; Kebede et al. 2024). For small enterprises with limited slack resources, removing obstacles may have a disproportionately large effect because a single administrative, resource, or operational constraint can delay execution. Thus, path clearing is expected to be positively related to business performance.

H3: Path clearing has a positive and significant relationship with business performance among SMEs in Soshanguve.

Building commitment refers to the leader's capacity to mobilize employees and other stakeholders around organizational objectives and secure sustained support for implementation. This dimension highlights the social and relational components of entrepreneurial leadership. Contemporary evidence emphasizing organizational capabilities, stakeholder relationships, and collective action supports the importance of commitment in translating entrepreneurial intentions into sustained organizational outcomes (Nguyen et al. 2021; Santos & Almeida, 2023). In SMEs, where each employee may perform multiple roles, effective mobilization and persistence are particularly likely to influence the quality of implementation. Building commitment is therefore expected to be positively related to business performance.

H4: Building commitment is positively and significantly related to business performance among small and micro-enterprises in Soshanguve.

Specifying limits concerns establishing boundaries, responsibilities, expectations, and areas of authority. Although entrepreneurship is frequently associated with flexibility and opportunity seeking, SMEs also require sufficient structure to coordinate activities and reduce ambiguity. Specifying limits may therefore enable entrepreneurial organizations to maintain strategic direction while allowing sufficient flexibility to respond to opportunities and threats. In resource-constrained SMEs, where informal structures are common and the owner-manager may be closely involved in daily operations, explicit expectations and accountability may be particularly important for consistent execution. The expected relationship is therefore positive, with clearer organizational boundaries supporting business performance.

H5: Specifying limits has a positive and significant relationship with business performance among small and micro-enterprises in Soshanguve.

Therefore, the five dimensions can be understood through the lens of the entrepreneurial leadership model (Figure 1). This model integrates dimensions while preserving conceptual distinctiveness. Framing challenges establishes what needs to be addressed; absorbing uncertainty enables action despite incomplete information; path clearing facilitates implementation; specifying limits provides structure and coordination; and building commitment mobilizes the people and stakeholders required to sustain action. Therefore, the framework provides a stronger theoretical explanation of why entrepreneurial leadership may influence SME performance than an aggregate EL construct alone. The model does not collapse the five dimensions into a single aggregate predictor because the purpose of this study is to identify their distinct and relative relationships with business performance. Hypotheses development in Table 1.

RESULTS

Measurement-model assessment

The measurement model was evaluated for indicator reliability, internal consistency reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. Indicator reliability was assessed using standardized outer loadings, which ranged from 0.660 to 0.979. Most indicators surpassed the commonly accepted threshold of 0.70, with the lowest loading observed for F3 (0.660), followed by G5 (0.719) and C4 (0.767). The remaining indicators demonstrated loadings above the threshold. Internal consistency was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, and rho_A metrics. The results indicate high internal consistency across all six constructs, with Cronbach's alpha values ranging from 0.910 to 0.981, composite reliability values from 0.935 to 0.985, and rho_A values from 0.928 to 0.981. Convergent validity was assessed via the Average Variance Extracted (AVE), with values between 0.744 and 0.929, all surpassing the conventional minimum criterion of 0.50 for each construct. These findings suggest that the constructs account for a substantial proportion of the variance in their respective indicators. Reliability, Indicator loadings and convergent validity in Table 2.

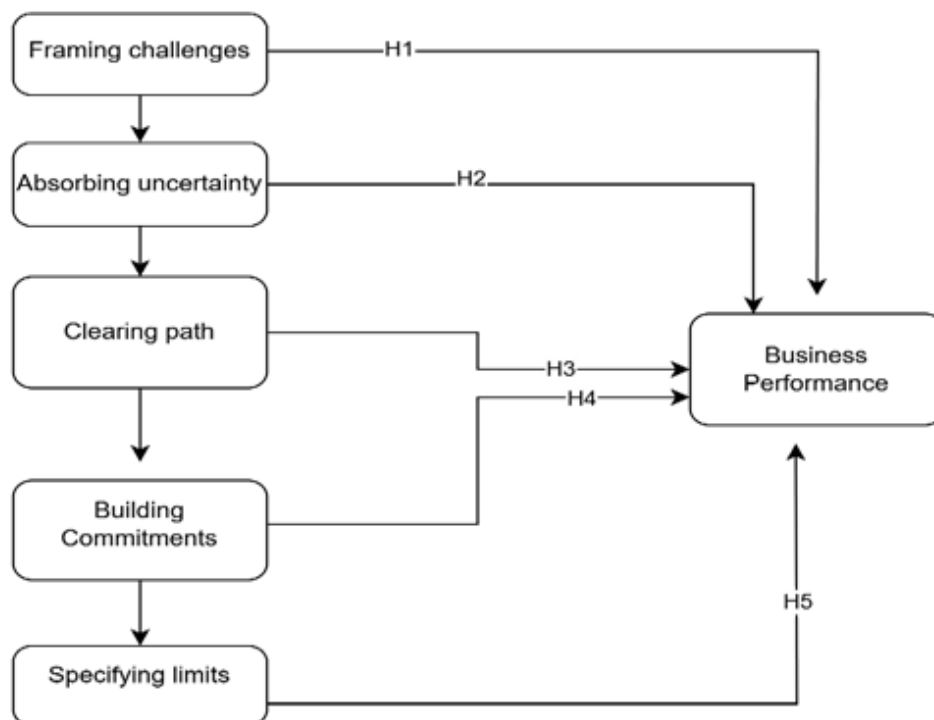


Figure 1. Entrepreneurial leadership model

Table 1. Hypotheses development

Predictor	Hypothesised relationship	Outcome
Framing Challenges	H1: Positive	Business Performance
Absorbing Uncertainty	H2: Positive	Business Performance
Path Clearing	H3: Positive	Business Performance
Building Commitment	H4: Positive	Business Performance
Specifying Limits	H5: Positive	Business Performance

Table 2. Reliability, Indicator Loadings and Convergent Validity

Construct	Indicator	Loading	Cronbach's α	Composite Reliability	rho_A	AVE
Framing Challenges	B1	0.958	0.981	0.985	0.981	0.929
	B2	0.944				
	B3	0.961				
	B4	0.979				
	B5	0.977				
Absorbing Uncertainty	C1	0.941	0.930	0.947	0.946	0.784
	C2	0.969				
	C3	0.859				
	C4	0.767				
	C5	0.876				
Path Clearing	D1	0.942	0.946	0.959	0.952	0.825
	D2	0.948				
	D3	0.941				
	D4	0.786				
	D5	0.912				
Building Commitment	E1	0.930	0.957	0.967	0.958	0.854
	E2	0.946				
	E3	0.917				
	E4	0.946				
	E5	0.882				
Specifying Limitations	F1	0.934	0.910	0.935	0.928	0.744
	F2	0.895				
	F3	0.660				
	F4	0.885				
	F5	0.908				
Business Performance	G1	0.878	0.929	0.948	0.932	0.786
	G2	0.943				
	G3	0.956				
	G4	0.917				
	G5	0.719				

The results provide evidence of strong internal consistency and convergent validity. All six constructs exceeded the accepted reliability criteria, and all AVE values exceeded 0.50. Although F3 recorded a comparatively low loading of 0.660, the item was retained because the construct-level reliability and convergent validity measures remained satisfactory, and the indicator contributed to the construct's theoretical coverage.

Discriminant validity

Discriminant validity was assessed by comparing the squared correlations between the latent variables and the AVE of the respective constructs. The AVE values exceeded the corresponding squared inter-construct correlations, providing evidence that the constructs were empirically distinguishable (Table 3).

Table 3. Discriminant validity – squared interfactor correlations and AVE

Construct	Framing Challenges	Absorbing Uncertainty	Path Clearing	Building Commitment	Specifying Limitations	Business Performance
Framing Challenges	0.929	0.706	0.534	0.482	0.468	0.415
Absorbing Uncertainty	0.706	0.784	0.443	0.438	0.350	0.323
Path Clearing	0.534	0.443	0.825	0.691	0.433	0.483
Building Commitment	0.482	0.438	0.691	0.854	0.640	0.605
Specifying Limitations	0.468	0.350	0.433	0.640	0.744	0.650
Business Performance	0.415	0.323	0.483	0.605	0.65	0.786

Statistical Significance and Magnitude of Relationships

The structural model results provide evidence of positive and statistically significant structural relationships between all five dimensions of entrepreneurial leadership and business performance, with standardized path coefficients indicating differences in the magnitude of these relationships. As shown in Table 1, Framing Challenges had a positive and statistically significant relationship with Business Performance ($\beta = 0.640$, $p < 0.001$). Absorbing Uncertainty demonstrated the weakest, although still statistically significant, relationship with Business Performance ($\beta = 0.564$, $p < 0.001$). Path Clearing exhibited a strong positive relationship ($\beta = 0.706$, $p < 0.001$), whereas commitment building demonstrated a very strong positive relationship ($\beta = 0.790$, $p < 0.001$). Specifying Limits recorded the strongest structural relationship with Business Performance ($\beta = 0.813$, $p < 0.001$).

The corresponding bivariate correlations were also positive and substantial, ranging from $r = 0.564$ for Absorbing Uncertainty to $r = 0.813$ for Specifying Limits. The associated squared correlations (r^2) indicate the proportion of variance shared between each entrepreneurial leadership dimension and Business Performance at the bivariate level, ranging from 31.8% to 66.1%. These r^2 values are presented to contextualize the magnitude of the observed bivariate associations and should not be interpreted as PLS-SEM f^2 effect sizes. The results indicate that the five dimensions are not equally associated with business performance. Specifying Limits demonstrated the strongest relationship ($\beta = 0.813$), followed by Building Commitment ($\beta = 0.790$), Path Clearing ($\beta = 0.706$), Framing Challenges ($\beta = 0.640$), and Absorbing Uncertainty ($\beta = 0.564$). Thus, while all five dimensions were positively related to Business Performance, Specifying Limits and

Building Commitment showed the strongest structural relationships, whereas Absorbing Uncertainty showed the weakest.

All five hypothesized relationships were statistically significant ($p < 0.001$) and therefore supported. However, the standardized path coefficients (β) reported above describe the direction and magnitude of the structural relationships. In contrast, the formal PLS-SEM f^2 statistic assesses the change in explained variance when a specific predictor is omitted from the structural model. The calculation of f^2 therefore requires the R^2 value of the complete model and the R^2 value obtained after excluding each predictor. Because the predictor-exclusion R^2 values were not available in the reported analysis output, formal f^2 effect sizes could not be calculated reliably and are therefore not reported. This distinction ensures that the magnitude of the relationships is presented accurately, without misinterpreting bivariate r^2 values as unique PLS-SEM effect sizes.

The largest squared inter-construct correlation was 0.706 between Framing Challenges and Absorbing Uncertainty, whereas the corresponding AVE values were 0.929 and 0.784, respectively. Similarly, the highest relationship involving Business Performance was with Specifying Limitations (squared correlation = 0.650), while the AVE for Business Performance was 0.786. Overall, the results support discriminant validity according to the reported criteria.

Structural-model specification and results

Following confirmation of the adequacy of the measurement model, the structural model was assessed. Business performance was specified as the endogenous construct, with framing challenges, absorbing uncertainty, path clearing, building commitment, and specifying limitations specified as predictors.

The structural model results indicate that all five hypothesized relationships were positive and statistically significant. The standardized path coefficients ranged from 0.569 to 0.807, with all reported p-values below 0.001. Building Commitment demonstrated a strong positive association with Business Performance ($\beta = 0.778$, $p < 0.001$), while Specifying Limitations produced the largest estimated path coefficient ($\beta = 0.807$, $p < 0.001$). Path Clearing was also positively associated with Business Performance ($\beta = 0.695$, $p < 0.001$), followed by Framing Challenges ($\beta = 0.644$, $p < 0.001$) and Absorbing Uncertainty ($\beta = 0.569$, $p < 0.001$). Accordingly, all five hypothesized direct relationships were supported by the reported PLS-SEM results (Table 4).

Theoretical Implications

This study contributes to entrepreneurial leadership theory by providing empirical evidence on the applicability of the five-dimensional framework developed by Gupta et al. (2004) within the context of SMEs in Soshanguve. The positive relationships identified across all five dimensions support the conceptualization of entrepreneurial leadership as a multidimensional construct comprising distinguishable but complementary leadership behaviors. This finding is also consistent with the multidimensional conceptualization advanced by Renko et al. (2015) and Bagheri and Harrison (2020). A more important theoretical contribution arises from the finding that the five dimensions did not demonstrate equal estimated relationships with business performance. This provides support for moving beyond an aggregate conceptualization of entrepreneurial leadership towards a more differentiated understanding of the behavioral mechanisms through which entrepreneurial leaders may influence organizational outcomes. The findings suggest that entrepreneurial leadership should not necessarily be regarded as a uniformly weighted set of behaviors; instead, the performance relevance of individual dimensions may depend on the organizational and environmental context in which they are enacted.

The stronger relationships associated with building commitment and specifying limits provide further theoretical insight. Building commitment highlights the relational and social dimensions of entrepreneurial leadership by emphasizing employee mobilization and shared commitment to organizational objectives.

Specifying limits, by contrast, highlights the structural dimension of entrepreneurial leadership by clarifying responsibilities, expectations, authority, and accountability. Taken together, these findings suggest that entrepreneurial leadership may contribute to SME performance by mobilizing people and structuring organizational action. This complements the strategic entrepreneurship perspective, which emphasizes the integration of entrepreneurial opportunity seeking and strategic action (Ireland et al. 2003), and the entrepreneurial mindset perspective, which emphasizes action under uncertainty (McGrath & MacMillan, 2000). This study, therefore, extends the theoretical application of Gupta et al. (2004) framework in two ways. First, it provides empirical evidence concerning the individual performance relationships of all five dimensions within a single SME model. Second, it demonstrates the framework's relevance in an under-researched South African township context. The findings consequently support a context-sensitive interpretation of entrepreneurial leadership, in which the relative importance of specific leadership behaviors may vary according to resource availability, organizational structure, and environmental conditions.

Practical and Implementation Implications

Practical implications for SME owners, managers, support organizations, and policymakers include developing a broad range of entrepreneurial leadership capabilities, especially in building commitment and specifying limits. Building commitment involves clear communication of vision, employee involvement, recognition, teamwork, and shared goals. Specifying limits requires defining responsibilities, expectations, authority, procedures, and accountability. These practices foster motivation and clarity, helping employees understand their roles and contributions. Support programmes should integrate leadership development with financial and technical aid, offering training in skills such as communication, delegation, decision-making, and adaptability. Mentorship and peer learning can further embed these capabilities into daily practice. Policymakers should view leadership skills as crucial to SME development, with support focused on enhancing these capabilities to better mobilize staff, utilize resources, and adapt to market changes. However, these recommendations are based on cross-sectional data and should be seen as guidance rather than guarantees of success.

Table 4. Structural model and hypothesis testing

Hypothesis	Structural relationship	β	p-value	Decision
H1	Framing Challenges → Business Performance	0.644	<0.001	Supported
H2	Absorbing Uncertainty → Business Performance	0.569	<0.001	Supported
H3	Path Clearing → Business Performance	0.695	<0.001	Supported
H4	Building Commitment → Business Performance	0.778	<0.001	Supported
H5	Specifying Limitations → Business Performance	0.807	<0.001	Supported

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

This study examined the link between entrepreneurial leadership and SME performance in Soshanguve, finding positive and significant relationships across five leadership dimensions: framing challenges, absorbing uncertainty, path clearing, building commitment, and specifying limits. Building commitment and specifying limits showed the strongest links. The results suggest that entrepreneurial leadership, especially mobilizing employees and setting clear expectations and boundaries, is vital for SME success. These findings align with prior research showing the positive impacts of entrepreneurial leadership on SMEs, micro-enterprises, and organizational performance. Studies by Al Mamun et al. (2018), Mgeni (2015), Nguyen et al. (2021), Srimulyani et al. (2023), Kebede et al. (2024), Taleb et al. (2023), and Ercantan et al. (2024) support the importance of entrepreneurial leadership for business performance, innovation, and organizational outcomes. Overall, this study reinforces that entrepreneurial leadership is a key capability for SMEs in uncertain and resource-limited environments.

The findings offer a nuanced view beyond studies that view entrepreneurial leadership as a single construct. While previous research has shown its importance for organizational outcomes, it also highlights different mechanisms, such as innovation and capabilities, through which it operates (Nguyen et al. 2021; Kebede et al. 2024). This study deepens this understanding by analyzing five behavioral dimensions separately and finding that they relate differently to performance. Building commitment and setting limits show stronger links, suggesting that entrepreneurial leadership's impact depends on mobilizing people and structuring organizations, not just opportunity seeking. These dimensions may also explain differences from studies emphasizing innovation or adaptability. Such differences likely reflect varied organizational and environmental

contexts. In Soshanguve's resource-constrained, competitive environment, leaders rely on employees and stakeholders, establishing clear responsibilities to coordinate limited resources. Building commitment helps mobilize human resources, and setting limits reduces ambiguity, easing coordination. This context explains why these behavioral dimensions are more strongly associated with performance in this setting. The findings are relevant for South Africa, where SMMEs face resource constraints, financing issues, infrastructure limits, and competition (Cant & Rabie, 2018; Bushe, 2019; Ngcobo & Sukdeo, 2015). They suggest that leadership capacity helps SME owners manage resources and respond to challenges. These results support emerging evidence on entrepreneurial leadership's role in SMME development and detail how leadership dimensions relate to business performance. However, the cross-sectional, non-probability sampling limits generalization and causality. The results are context-specific for Soshanguve and should not be seen as proof that leadership behaviors universally cause better SME performance.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made.

1. Strengthening entrepreneurial leadership development among SME owners and managers. Existing entrepreneurship development initiatives should incorporate structured leadership development components that address all five dimensions of entrepreneurial leadership.
2. Prioritize building commitment and specifying limits. Leadership-development programmes should give particular attention to employee engagement, communication, shared vision, role clarification, delegation, accountability, and performance expectations because these dimensions demonstrated the strongest estimated relationships with business performance.
3. Integrate leadership development into broader SME

support interventions. Government departments and business-support organizations should complement financial, technical, and market-access assistance with mentorship, coaching, and practical leadership development.

4. Adopt context-sensitive interventions. SME support programmes should recognize that the relative importance of entrepreneurial leadership behaviors may vary with enterprise size, industry, organizational maturity, resource availability, and environmental conditions.
5. Encourage continuous leadership development. SME owners and managers should treat entrepreneurial leadership as an ongoing organizational capability and use employee feedback, mentoring, reflection, and professional development to refine their leadership practices as their businesses evolve.

The study findings should be interpreted in light of several methodological limitations. First, the cross-sectional design limits the ability to establish temporal relationships between entrepreneurial leadership and business performance. Longitudinal research is therefore recommended to determine whether changes in entrepreneurial leadership practices precede and contribute to subsequent changes in SME performance. Second, the non-probability sampling approach limits the statistical generalizability of the findings. Future research should, where feasible, employ probability-based sampling and examine SMEs across different geographical areas, industries, and stages of enterprise development. Comparative studies could determine whether the relative importance of the five entrepreneurial leadership dimensions identified in Soshanguve is replicated in other South African and emerging-market SME contexts. Third, future research should investigate the mechanisms through which specific entrepreneurial leadership dimensions influence performance. For example, building commitment could be examined in relation to employee engagement and organizational commitment, while specifying limits could be examined in relation to role clarity, accountability, and operational efficiency. Other potential mediating or moderating factors, including organizational innovation, dynamic capabilities, resource availability, firm age, and environmental uncertainty, could also be investigated. Finally, comparative research examining entrepreneurial leadership alongside transformational, transactional, and servant leadership could establish whether entrepreneurial leadership provides distinctive

explanatory value for SME performance. Such research would contribute to a deeper understanding of how different leadership approaches operate under the resource constraints and uncertainty characteristic of many SMEs. Overall, the study provides context-specific empirical evidence of positive and statistically significant associations between all five dimensions of entrepreneurial leadership and SME business performance in Soshanguve. Building commitment and specifying limits demonstrated the strongest estimated relationships with performance, suggesting that employee mobilization and clarity regarding responsibilities, expectations, and organizational boundaries may be particularly important within this context.

The findings are broadly consistent with previous research linking entrepreneurial leadership with SME and organizational performance, while extending that literature by demonstrating that individual entrepreneurial leadership dimensions may differ in their relative relationships with business performance. This study contributes a more differentiated and context-sensitive explanation of entrepreneurial leadership by showing that its potential performance relevance extends beyond entrepreneurial opportunity seeking and adaptation to include the mobilization of employees and the structuring of organizational action. The central conclusion is that entrepreneurial leadership is an important capability for SMEs. However, its relationship with business performance may be particularly strengthened when leaders can build employee commitment while establishing clear organizational expectations, responsibilities, and boundaries. This conclusion is appropriately limited to the evidence generated by the study: the cross-sectional design does not establish causality, and the non-probability sampling approach limits statistical generalization beyond the study population. The findings therefore provide evidence of meaningful relationships within the Soshanguve SME context and a foundation for further longitudinal, comparative, and context-sensitive research.

FUNDING STATEMENT: This research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST: The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

REFERENCES

- Al Mamun, A., Ibrahim, M. D., Yusoff, M. N. H. B., & Fazal, S. A. (2018). Entrepreneurial leadership, performance, and sustainability of micro-enterprises in Malaysia. *Sustainability*, 10(5), 1591. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su10051591>
- Aluko, T. O. (2025). Contribution of entrepreneurial leadership on entrepreneurial development: A South African case. *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Knowledge*, 13(1), 57–71.
- Anwar, M., & Syed Shah, Z. A. (2020). Entrepreneurial orientation and generic competitive strategies for emerging SMEs. *Journal of Public Affairs*, 21(1), 2125.
- Araujo, C. C., Giri, E. E., & Soares, A. D. (2020). The effect of leadership and employee motivation on business success and organisational performance. *International Journal of Multicultural and Multi-Religious Understanding*, 7(7), 509–551.
- Armanu, A. S., Dwi Ilham, S., & D Ratih, A. (2021). The influence of entrepreneurial leadership on business performance with innovative human resource practices mediation on creative economy entrepreneurs in Malang Raya. *International Journal of Innovation, Creativity and Change*, 15(5), 1021–1030.
- Bagheri, A. (2017). The impact of entrepreneurial leadership on innovation work behaviours and opportunity recognition in high-technology SMEs. *Journal of High Technology Management Research*, 8(20), 159–166.
- Bagheri, A., & Harrison, C. (2020). Entrepreneurial leadership measurement: A multi-dimensional construct. *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*, 27(4), 659–679.
- Banguiyac, G. D., & Castañeda, M. O. (2025). Entrepreneurial leadership and business performance of MSMEs: The mediating role of government support. *International Journal of Applied Business & International Management*, 10(2), 313–329. <https://doi.org/10.32535/ijabim.v10i2.4079>
- Benmira, S., & Agboola, M. (2020). Evolution of leadership theory. *Business Management Journal*, 5, 3–5.
- Bushe, B. (2019). The causes and impact of business failure among small to micro and medium enterprises in South Africa. *Journal of Africa's Public Services Delivery & Performance Review*, 1(7), 1–26.
- Cant, M. C., & Rabie, C. (2018). Township SMME sustainability: A South African perspective. *Acta Universitatis Danubius*, 14(7), 227–247.
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. (2018). Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches *Sage Publications Inc.*
- Dahlin, C. J., & Gratell, P. (2018). How does social media affect entrepreneurial leadership: A qualitative study on entrepreneurs' perceptions regarding social media as a tool for entrepreneurial leadership [Master's thesis, Uppsala University].
- Dwi Widayani, A. A., Landra, N., Sarmawa, W., Sudja, N., Ximenes, M., & Samawar, M. G. (2020). The role of ethical behavior and entrepreneurial leadership to improve organisational performance. *Cogent Business & Management*, 6(1), 1–10.
- Ebewo, P. (2014). Establishing community-based enterprises for sustainable development of impoverished communities: a theoretical perspective.
- Ercantan, K., Eyupoglu, Z., & Ercantan, Ö. (2024). The entrepreneurial leadership, innovative behaviour, and competitive advantage relationship in manufacturing companies: A key to manufacturing development and sustainable business. *Sustainability*, 16(6), 2407.
- Gupta, V., MacMillan, I. C., & Surie, G. (2004). Entrepreneurial leadership: Developing and measuring a cross-cultural construct. *Journal of Business Venturing*, 19(2), 241–260.
- Ireland, R. D., Hitt, M. A., & Sirmon, D. G. (2003). A model of strategic entrepreneurship: The construct and its dimensions. *Journal of Management*, 29(6), 963–989.
- Kavithaselvaraja, A., & Zaidatol-Akmalia, L. P. (2017). Conceptualisation of entrepreneurial leadership models and its suitability towards educational settings. *International Journal of Humanities Social Sciences and Education*, 4(11), 153–158.
- Kebede, A. G., Terefe, S. D., & Ijigu, A. W. (2024). Linking entrepreneurial leadership to quality performance of micro and small-scale enterprises in service sector: The mediating role of service innovation. *Cogent Social Sciences*, 10(1), 2339526.
- Leitch, C. M., & Volery, T. (2017). Entrepreneurial leadership: Insights and directions. *International Small Business Journal*, 35(2), 147–156. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02643758.2017.1311111>

doi.org/10.1177/0266242616681397

- Lekutle, N. T., Ebewo, P. E., & Shambare, R. (2023). The effects of entrepreneurship leadership on youth entrepreneurial intentions post-COVID-19: The case of Gauteng. *Businesses*, 3(4), 569-584. <https://doi.org/10.3390/businesses3040035>
- Mbangiswano, S. Z., Ndlovu, E., & Vuthela, Z. S. (2025). Empowering rural women agripreneurs through financial inclusion: Lessons from South Africa for the G20 development agenda. *Administrative Sciences*, 15(9), 340. <https://doi.org/10.3390/admsci15090340>
- McGrath, R. G., & MacMillan, I. C. (2000). The entrepreneurial mindset: Strategies for continuously creating opportunity in an age of uncertainty *Harvard Business Press*.
- Megawaty, M., Hendriadi, T., & Salama, K. N. (2022). The impact of entrepreneurial leadership on the performance of small and medium enterprises. *Point of View Research Management*, 3(4), 388–397.
- Mehmood, M. S., & Jia, Z. (2020). Entrepreneurial leadership: The key to develop creativity in organisations. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, 42(3), 434–452.
- Mgeni, T. O. (2015). Impact of entrepreneurial leadership style on business performance of SME in Tanzania. *Journal of Entrepreneurship & Organization Management*, 4(1), 1000142.
- Mhembere, M. (2020). The relationship between financial literacy, entrepreneurial leadership, and entrepreneurial performance of small, medium, and microenterprises [Master's thesis, Gordon Institute of Business Science, University of Pretoria].
- Molema, M. L., Ebewo, P. E., & Ndlovu, E. N. (2026). Entrepreneurial Coaching and Self-Efficacy as Catalysts for Business Growth Among Women Entrepreneurs in Gauteng, South Africa. *Administrative Sciences*, 16(2), 60. <https://doi.org/10.3390/admsci16020060>
- Msimango-Galawe, J., & Hlatshwayo, E. N. (2021). South African business incubators and reducing the SME failure rate—A literature review. *Problems and Perspectives in Management*, 19(2), 194-205.
- Naushad, M. (2021). Investigating determinants of entrepreneurial leadership among SMEs and their role in sustainable economic development of Saudi Arabia. *Journal of Asian Finance, Economics, and Business*, 8(4), 225–237.
- Ndlovu-Hlatshwayo, E. N., & Nesamvuni, A. E. (2022). 10 Informal Entrepreneurship in Africa. *The Future of Entrepreneurship in Africa: Challenges and Opportunities Post-pandemic*, 165.
- Ngcobo, S., & Sukdeo, R. (2015). Challenges facing SMMEs during their first two years of operation in South Africa. *Journal of Corporate Ownership & Control*, 12(3), 505–512.
- Nguyen, P. V., Huynh, H. T. N., Lam, L. N. H., Le, T. B., & Nguyen, N. H. X. (2021). The impact of entrepreneurial leadership on SMEs' performance: The mediating effects of organizational factors. *Heliyon*, 7(6), e07326. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2021.e07326>
- Paudel, S. (2019). Entrepreneurial leadership and business performance: Effect of organisational innovation and environmental dynamism. *South Asian Journal of Business Studies*, 8(3), 348–369.
- Pauceanu, A. M., Rabie, N., Moustafa, A., & Jiroveanu, D. C. (2021). Entrepreneurial leadership and sustainable development—A systematic literature review. *Sustainability*, 13(21), 11695.
- Ranjan, S. (2018). Entrepreneurial leadership: A review of measures, antecedents, outcomes, and moderators. *Asian Social Science*, 14(12), 104–114.
- Rehman, K., Lim, K. B., Yeo, S. F., Saif, N., & Ameer, M. (2025). The nexus of entrepreneurial leadership and entrepreneurial success with a mediation of technology management processes: From the perspective of the small- and medium-sized enterprises of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. *Sustainability*, 17(3), 882.
- Renko, M., El Tarabishy, A., Carsrud, A. L., & Brännback, M. (2015). Understanding and measuring entrepreneurial leadership style. *Journal of Small Business Management*, 53(1), 54–74. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jsbm.12086>
- Rusliati, E., Mulyaningrum, M., Wibowo, A., & Narmaditya, B. S. (2020). Does entrepreneurial leadership matter for micro-enterprise development? Lesson from West Java in Indonesia. *The Journal of Asian Finance, Economics and Business*, 7(8), 445–450.
- Sandybayev, A. (2019). Impact of effective entrepreneurial leadership style on organizational performance. *International Journal of Economics and Management*, 1(1), 47–55.
- Sari, A. L. (2024). Strategic management practices and their impact on organisational performance: A

- study of SMEs in emerging markets. *Komitmen: Jurnal Ilmiah Manajemen*, 5(20), 48–55.
- Sari, S. A., & Ahmad, N. H. (2022). Connecting the dots: Linking entrepreneurial leadership and strategic agility towards SME competitiveness. *Vision*, 30(2), 172–184. <https://doi.org/10.1177/09722629221091658>
- Santos, M., & Almeida, P. (2023). Leadership, commitment, and firm performance: A systematic review. *European Management Journal*, 41(1), 78–91.
- Sarwoko, E. (2020). Entrepreneurial leadership and innovative work behavior: The role of creative self-efficacy. *Journal of Economics, Business, and Accountancy, Ventura*, 23(2), 183–193.
- Saunders, M., Lewis, P., & Thornhill, A. (2019). Research methods for business students *Pearson Education*.
- Sawaeen, F., & Mohd Ali, K. (2020). The impact of entrepreneurial leadership and learning orientation on organizational performance of SMEs: The mediating role of innovation capacity. *Management Science Letters*, 10(2), 369–380.
- Scheepers, M. J., Gronum, S., Cranney, S., & Tracey, N. (2025). Business model redesign through effectual action in times of crisis. *Journal of Small Business Management*, 63(3), 1106–1142.
- Schultz, C., Ebewo, P., & Mmako, M. M. (2024). The perceived future of female entrepreneurs in South Africa. *International Journal of Research in Business and Social Science* (2147-4478), 13(4), 410-422.
- Schumpeter, J. A. (1934). The theory of economic development: An inquiry into profits, capital, credit, interest, and the business cycle *Harvard Business Press*.
- Senthilkumar, K. (2020). The influence of entrepreneurial leadership in the performance of micro and small enterprises: The case for Eastern Tigray, Ethiopia. *SAMVAD: SIBM Pune Research Journal*, 21, 1–15.
- Siwela, B., E Ebewo, P., & M Faku, E. (2022). Customer acceptance of self-service technology at fast service restaurants in Tshwane.
- Srimulyani, V. A., et al. (2023). Internal factors of entrepreneurial and business performance of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in East Java, Indonesia. *Heliyon*, 9(11), e21637.
- Taleb, T. S. T., Hashim, N., & Zakaria, N. (2023). Entrepreneurial leadership and entrepreneurial success: The mediating role of entrepreneurial opportunity recognition and innovation capability. *Sustainability*, 15(7), 5776.
- Thornberry, N. (2006). Lead like an Entrepreneur *McGraw-Hill*.
- Urban, B., & Kanguwe, F. (2024). Organisational configurations explaining the entrepreneurial-orientation performance-environment relationship: A focus on bricolage capability, organisational identity and absorptive capacity. *Journal of Innovation and Entrepreneurship*, 13(51), 1–29.
- Vecchio, R. P. (2003). Entrepreneurship and leadership: Common trends and common threads. *Human Resource Management Review*, 13(2), 303–327.
- Yusuf, E., & Faruk, D. (2017). Entrepreneurial leadership: A theoretical framework. *Sustainability Journal*, 4(2), 12–124.