

Effect of mind-power ability among achieving entrepreneurs in South Africa

Identifying accustomed internal drivers

Identifying accustomed internal drivers

475

Nico van Rensburg

School of Business and Finance, University of the Western Cape, Cape Town, South Africa, and

Kanayo Ogujiuba

School of Development Studies, University of Mpumalanga, Mbombela, South Africa

Received 23 August 2019
Revised 11 December 2019
Accepted 12 December 2019

Abstract

Purpose – This paper aims to identify how mind-power ability and its underlying elements, acting as drivers, impact managerial, and individual performance levels among achieving entrepreneurs in South Africa.

Design/methodology/approach – The study adopted a qualitative approach and included 15 male entrepreneurs who were purposively selected based on the study's requirements. The primary data was collected through semi-structured one-on-one interviews, and interpretative phenomenological analysis served as the primary method of data analysis.

Findings – Findings from this study suggest that mind-power ability as an accustomed performance factor does indeed exist – and consists of a unique group of accustomed underlying elements – that significantly affects and contributes to both the managerial and individual performance levels of achieving entrepreneurs in South Africa.

Research limitations/implications – The strategic implementation of mind-power ability as a performance enhancer serves as a valuable aspect in the arsenal of achieving entrepreneurs. However, this study was limited to the opinion of a small sample of participants in a specific field. Also, the phenomenological nature of this study requires the researcher's interpretation of results to be viewed as the truth.

Practical implications – The study provides a new perspective and validates how the strategic implementation of mind-power techniques can boost entrepreneurial performance all-round. The study also proves new insights into the relationship between mind-power ability and cognitive and motivational processes, and further contributes beyond existing theory.

Originality/value – The study is novel and provides new insight into the strategic implementation and powerful effects of mind-power ability in entrepreneurship.

Keywords Entrepreneurship, Internal drivers, Mind power, Performance, South Africa, Success

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

The classification of mind-power ability as the ultimate performance-enhancing factor in entrepreneurship remains an area of great interest and debate (Ayala and Manzano, 2014; Davidsson, 2004). Therefore, the accustomed elements concluding mind-power ability and its significant effects continue to be closely investigated (Ayala and Manzano, 2014; Davidsson, 2004). Although it is evident that the majority of entrepreneurs seek to attain immediate success, this will not always be the case, as a large number of old and newly established businesses continue to fail across sectors each year (Lussier and Halabi, 2010).



Statistics indicate that in South Africa alone, the entrepreneurial failure rate among all businesses amounts to 75 per cent, which is currently the highest among all developing countries in the world (Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, 2016). Also, although indicating a slight incline of 4.1 per cent in 2017, entrepreneurial activity in South Africa has dropped by a staggering 30 per cent since 2013 (Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, 2017). Thus, it highlights the fact that South Africa's current entrepreneurial sector finds itself in a vast imbalance in terms of psychological approach and general performance. The positive effects of mind-power ability are therefore encouraged for entrepreneurs to learn, develop and apply continuously, to surpass these barriers of challenge consistently. The mere fact of just relying on physical performance, such as hard work, commitment and reasonable expectation, will only continue to create a glass-ceiling effect, as entrepreneurs will continue to fall short of reaching their full potential and business success. Thus, the importance of adapting and executing the right entrepreneurial thought and attitude pattern in highly pressurized situations remains a gap that needs to be further addressed and explored, as entrepreneurs require a much more driven and advanced pattern of thinking, to eventually create and maintain lasting success (Rasca and Deaconu, 2018).

Baron (2004) elaborates on this fact and explains the importance of remaining intact with one's personal surroundings, whether physical or mental, as to prevent any type of negative circumstances unwittingly occupy and control the mind. Therefore, psychologically, it stipulates the fact that an entrepreneur remains the master and creator of his or her own fate, of which selective thought processes are the blueprint towards progressing consistently (Bandura, 1997). This study, therefore, delineates and strictly focuses on mind-power ability as the overreaching determining factor, serving as a powering element contributing to entrepreneurial performance as a whole. Although singular in concept, mind-power ability appears to consist of a unique group of underlying internal drivers that significantly affects and gives rise to quality performance through effective entrepreneurial engagement. Thus, when looking at aspects such as mindfulness, visualization, affirmation and a strong sense of self-belief, this study set out to explore and strategically align the role of each of these drivers, as to conclude the direct effect and impact thereof, as unique elements giving rise to maximum performance and advanced management styles of entrepreneurs. In context of South Africa, it, therefore, remains of critical importance to not only further explore and refine the internal drivers among the overreaching success factor under investigation, but also find, authenticate and connect each individual element with actual evidence within the specific entrepreneurial field, as to give rise to unlocking the true mental processes present in achieving entrepreneurs experiencing immense pressure. This study presents a combination of real live examples of how mind-power ability is effectively applied, and the powerful effect it has on entrepreneurial performance levels all-round. This understanding will, therefore, be tremendously useful to positively transform the current lack of mental shortcomings in South Africa's entrepreneurial sector.

Brief review of related literature

Mind-power ability

Mind-power is one of the most powerful elements any human being can possess (Fiol and O'Connor, 2004). A majority of prior studies have proved that any person, team or business can achieve a basic desired level of physical accomplishment through hard work; however, there comes a stage where after a strong level of mental ability is required to go the extra mile (Jenerou *et al.*, 2018; Kier and McMullen, 2018). Although it might be a natural desire for a motivated entrepreneur to perform well at a specific level, it constantly requires a high level of effort, trust and commitment, depending on the goal that is being looked at to

achieve (Fiol and O'Connor, 2004). However, Fiol and O'Connor (2004) state that this fact often gets measured to only a physical degree where task execution can only manage to bring an entrepreneur so far. Thus, it stipulates the fact that although a physical goal might be a principal motivator for many, it certainly also requires a disciplined mental approach for the physical goal to effectively manifest. As a result, the ability of an entrepreneur to develop a desired vision in mind, and strategically align, nurture and transform that particular vision into an accustomed reality, is what the high achievers consistently look to conquer. It is, therefore, indeed not only an art but also a unique skill, and a competitive advantage, every entrepreneur longs to include in their arsenal as a weapon to overcome any type of challenge. Thus, the importance of adapting and executing the right entrepreneurial attitude towards effectively applying the proper implementation of mind-power ability throughout pressurized situations is unquestionable (Rasca and Deaconu, 2018).

Moreover, Rasca and Deaconu (2018) believe that, in general, entrepreneurial demeanour should be driven by a more advanced pattern of thinking to grow entrepreneurial opportunity, focus, innovation and positive reinforcement more consistently. Likewise, Bandura (1997) and Baron (2004) elaborate and explain the importance of developing a sense of power and control over certain entrepreneurial situations and outcomes, as an entrepreneur's ability to feel and take control over these type of circumstances, sparks the inner personal and mental ability of an entrepreneur to gain a tremendous psychological advantage (Cachan *et al.*, 2013). Consequently, it solidifies the fact that a psychologically sound entrepreneur is more driven by the entrepreneurial process itself, gaining satisfaction from the process through total discipline and commitment, rather than focusing too much on undesired external controllers or critiques (Cachan *et al.*, 2013). Therefore, it is evident that the personal mind-sets and behaviours of achieving entrepreneurs should remain a matter of high importance (Carsrud and Brannback, 2011; Collins *et al.*, 2004; Densberger, 2014; Frese, 2009), as it brings forth a whole new dimension of what can be accomplished if an entrepreneur strategically puts his or her mind to it. Over the years, contributing elements such as staying in the present moment (Cogan, 2019), effective visualization (Tenenbaum *et al.*, 2008), positive affirmation (Weinberg *et al.*, 1990) and a strong self-belief system (Comeig *et al.*, 2016) are believed to have contributed to successfully rounding out mind-power ability as a dominant performance-enhancing factor.

Contributing factors

The ability of an entrepreneur to fully believe in his or her own entrepreneurial ability requires careful planning, consistent evaluations and a great sense of confidence to eventually propel to success (Burch *et al.*, 2017). Therefore, critical aspects such as mindfulness, visualization and affirmation can severely strengthen mind-power ability if implemented correctly; however, a strong level of humanistic self-belief needs to be established and maintained throughout the process (Burch *et al.*, 2017; Zangwill, 2017). In their study, Jenerou *et al.* (2018) determined if a pre-season training program would improve the visual skills and season success of a specific sports team. To their gratification, results came back positively, demonstrating that pre-season training in collaboration with the positive visualization of foreseen results significantly increased performance percentages in both training and playing abilities among the participants (Jenerou *et al.*, 2018). In a similar study, researchers Kier and McMullen (2018) found a strong connection between visualization and imagination, strengthening the fact that active imagination can be strategically applied to create new ideas consistently. However, for an idea or specific circumstance to actively establish itself in the human mind, it still requires an individual to physically act out on these mental images (Velez and Hanus, 2016). Thus, the positive

manipulation of thoughts can lead to strategically develop appealing patterns in the mind that makes desired circumstances appear real as if they are already established or accomplished, whether positive or negative (Velez and Hanus, 2016). Thus, the trained ability of an entrepreneur to visualize a goal or a specific task, and positively affirming a positive result of the circumstance will lead to much better and relaxed task execution (Neck and Manz, 1992; Velez and Hanus, 2016).

However, for visualization and affirmation techniques to properly serve their cause it requires a particular individual or entrepreneur in this instance to be present and mindful of all processes at all times (Lindsay *et al.*, 2018). Lindsay *et al.* (2018) elaborates on this aspect and states that there are several ways to implement mindfulness effectively, of which the most common is believed to be for a person to purposefully focus on bodily motions – as to remain engaged in the present moment (Lindsay *et al.*, 2018). Watson and Clark (2007) state that it is therefore evident that entrepreneurs can intentionally manipulate both the conscious and subconscious mind, and so forth, transform any type of thought and connect it to a potential or desired outcome, positive or negative. As a result, remaining conscious in the present allows an individual to selectively choose what thoughts he or she feels to water, grow, master and eventually act out in reality (Kroon *et al.*, 2017; Lindsay *et al.*, 2018). Crocker *et al.* (2008) and Tesser (2000) further adds and states that it is therefore critical for an individual, whether an ordinary person or an accomplished entrepreneur, to only reflect on important values, as this is believed to reduce defensiveness and in return boosts self-image and self-worth in the process. Therefore, the strategic and successful implementation of a solidified mental approach, driven by techniques such as mindfulness, visualization, affirmation and self-belief, strategically adds value to and allows entrepreneurs to make continuous progress (Burch *et al.*, 2017; Zangwill, 2017). Thus, being mentally disciplined continues to prove that an individual's power of mind highly determines how he or she will go through life and approach both challenges and successes.

Entrepreneurial performance and mentality in South Africa

Although considered a leader in sub-Saharan Africa, South Africa currently holds one of the highest, if not the highest, entrepreneurial failure rates among all developing countries around the world (Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, 2017). In addition, Statistics South Africa (2018) proclaims that the country currently finds itself in one of the worst possible economic downturns in the country's history. Aspects such as corrupt government practices, high unemployment percentages, and a rising crime rate, predicts a variety of ongoing challenges in the years to come (SEDA, 2016). Other associated aspects in the form of difficulty to attain start-out capital, a faltering education system, political instability and racial discrimination, all creates further doubts for those who are already actively participating, as well as those still looking to enter the country's entrepreneurial sector (Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, 2017). On top of that, bankruptcy percentages among local businesses are also on the rise, as about 146 companies were forced to close their doors in 2018 (Statistics South Africa, 2018). Thus, with all things considered, it highlights the fact that somewhere, somehow, there is something fundamentally wrong with the overall mental approach towards entrepreneurship in South Africa. Sitting with about 6.65 million citizens without having any form of income, one would think that more people will be drawn to entrepreneurship as a mode of survival (Trading Economics, 2018). However, this exact reason has been one of the major concerns for the country, as it is believed to hurt the economy rather than boost it at this stage, as 90 per cent of businesses continue to struggle, with most of them closing down soon after the initial start-up phase (Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, 2017).

With all things considered, this undoubtedly adds to the country's severe and detrimental entrepreneurial fear of failure rate of 31.3 per cent (Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, 2017). Evidently, this has caused the country's pool of intentional entrepreneurs to slip further down to a 14 per cent all-time low, 13 per cent lower than the average 27 per cent among other similar efficiency-driven economies (Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, 2016). As a result, this highly suggest that more and more entrepreneurs are becoming hesitant about fully committing to enter the current entrepreneurial sector, as the current barriers unconsciously blindfold those who might hold some of the brightest of ideas that can potentially transform the country's economy into becoming one of the most effective and strongest in the world. In their study focused on the powers of entrepreneurial thought and attitude patters, Baron and Ensly (2006) found aspects such as critical and lateral thinking to play a significant role in how an entrepreneur chooses to react in certain situations or conditions. Researchers Rasca and Deaconu (2018) further elaborates and states that the idea of success in entrepreneurship, along with the associated factors to it, is truly a driven purpose and a unique existence in its own regard. Therefore, it is critical to identify and develop a unique set of diverse qualities that will not only educate but also equip entrepreneurs on developing the right mental approach towards conducting business more effectively (Huang and Pearce, 2015). Considering that the majority of the country's problems appear to be externally related, solidifies the idea that an internal shift among the mental disciplines existing within native entrepreneurs is required, as a renewed mind will lead to a different approach and so forth improve all-round performance moving forward.

Theoretical overview

In this study, the researchers adopted the view that entrepreneurs who firstly consist of, and secondly strategically develop and apply mind-power ability to purposefully boost performance, achieve greater heights in their careers than those who do not. Therefore, the ultimate goal of effective mind-power ability is for an entrepreneur to equip himself or herself with a solidified group of accustomed performance-enhancing factors that adds to their mental strength to stay motivated, optimistic, and fearless, in overcoming the daily challenges that are often associated with entrepreneurship. In terms of creating an academic context for the study, the researchers chose to identify the theory of self-efficacy as a foundation. Sekaran (2000), states that a theory allows a researcher to make meaning among the various factors identified as being significant to the area of investigation. Although only applied as a foundation, the theory of self-efficacy seemed most relevant for the purpose of this study, as it covers various areas related to human experience, behaviour, motivation, and cognitive patterns focused on accustomed abilities that forge high levels of individual performance (Bandura, 1993). According to Bandura (1993), there are four categories involving people's beliefs about their efficiency:

Motivational processes

Bandura (1993) states that the action of an individual to believe in his or her efforts and abilities brings into existence a compelling force of motivation. Therefore, the majority of entrepreneurial motivation comes across as being cognitively generated (Bandura, 1993). Thus, for the entrepreneur to express a strong belief in his or her accustomed capabilities, leads to the development of much higher effort and perseverance in general (Bandura, 1993).

Cognitive processes

The ability of an entrepreneur to believe in his or her efficacy develops a unique mental pattern, shaping the different types of anticipatory scenarios they create and rehearse (Bandura, 1993). Thus, performing a high sense of efficacy will lead to attracting more favourable situations; while expressing a weak sense of self-efficacy will create negativity and so forth attract scenarios of self-proclaimed failure, which in turn causes immense self-doubt and lack of self-confidence over time (Bandura, 1993).

Affective processes

According to Bandura (1993), the amount of faith someone has in their coping abilities will determine how much anxiety the person will experience during challenging situations, including the level of motivation expressed. Therefore, it is evident to say that the stronger an entrepreneur's beliefs in his or her accustomed abilities, the stronger he or she will act and become during times of challenge (Bandura, 1993).

Selection processes

Bandura (1993) believes that it is a mere fact that people predominantly get shaped by the particular environment in which they choose to operate. Therefore, the strength of the personal beliefs towards powering and accustomed abilities can develop and determine the direction entrepreneurs decide to take, ultimately affecting their overall environment and activity involvement in both the short and long term (Bandura, 1993).

Theoretical guideline

As derived from the four efficacy driven factors mentioned above, the idea that the real efficacy of an entrepreneur interconnects with his or her level of self-belief, and how they choose to mentally approach and take control over certain events and circumstances as to positively impact their entrepreneurial fate, is clarified. Therefore, the act of examining how an entrepreneur's mental ability affects performance can eventually describe how it is strategically executed (Pollard and Wilson, 2014). As derived from the brief review of related literature, the study identified mind-power ability as the over-reaching success factor that is believed to positively impact the performance and managerial levels of achieving entrepreneurs in South Africa (Table I).

Below is a step-by-step guide that indicates the strategy the study followed to fully explore, identify, and develop the key aspects of the over-reaching success factor under investigation:

Mind power

- Evaluate how visualization, affirmation, mindfulness, and self-belief influence the management style of the entrepreneur.
- Determine how the above-mentioned techniques contribute to the formation of mind power as a deriving success factor.

Table I.
Success factor and definition

Mind power	Mind power is one of the strongest and most effective powers any human being possess; it is a mere power of creative thought, developed through visualization, affirmation, mindfulness and self-belief techniques (Kehoe, 2007)
------------	--

Conceptual model

Figure 1 presents a graphic image addressing the over-reaching success factor, along with presenting each of the underlying factors/internal drivers thereto, explaining how each of the factors is strategically inter-related with one another.

As derived from the graphic image above, it is clear that to achieve ultimate entrepreneurial success through refining and strengthening the over-reaching success factor under investigation, the whole cycle, along with each variable, needs to be inter-linked with one another. Therefore, the over-reaching success factor requires a specific set of internal drivers/motivators, to be able to develop and perform at surface level. Thus, the study identified the following underlying factors as internal drivers/motivators believed to strongly influence and encourage the development of mind-power ability as a whole.

Underlying factors/drivers

- visualization – the process of creating a mental image or intention of what an individual wants to happen or feel in reality (Kizildag and Tiryaki, 2012);
- affirmation – the ability to strengthen an individual by helping him/her believe in the potential of an action they desire to manifest (Sherman and Cohen, 2006);
- mindfulness – is a state of active, purposeful, and open attention on the present moment (Kabat-Zinn, 2003); and
- self-belief – similar to self-confidence: the belief in one’s own ability and capability to perform (Greenacre et al., 2014).

Following the detailed explanation of the various drivers/motivators that are believed to strengthen the over-reaching success factor under investigation, it is also important to understand how these drivers/motivators impact and contribute to the management and business skills/factors presented. Below, follows a brief definition of the management and business skills/factors under investigation, supported by a brief description of how this skill/factor is believed to be interconnected with one another:

- Management style – the extent to which entrepreneurs are involved in effectively managing and dealing with people-related or work-related issues on a day-to-day basis (Billig, 2015).
- For mind power to derive as a success factor, it requires a certain level of visualization, affirmation, mindfulness and self-belief to manifest, to ultimately affect and impact the management style of an entrepreneur or business.

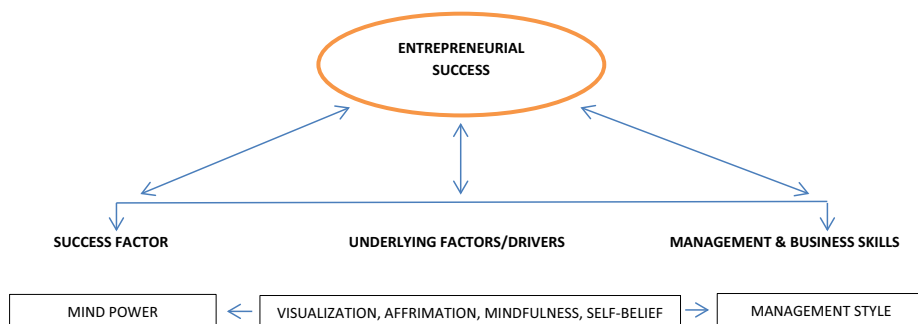


Figure 1.
Performance
characteristics and
sequence of mind-
power ability

Methods

For the purpose of this study, interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) was applied as the main methodological foundation. Researchers [Pietkiewicz and Smith \(2012\)](#) state that, the goal of phenomenological research is to try and classify the critical mechanisms of certain practices or occurrences, which separate or make certain individuals different or unique from others. [Smith et al. \(2009\)](#) add and state that the main goal of IPA research, however, is to get as close as possible to the research participant, as to make a valid attempt in trying to make meaning of the particular participant's exact life experiences. Additionally, [Pringle et al. \(2011\)](#) state that IPA as method occupies a dual approach in terms of hermeneutics, which in turn establishes greater significance in clarifying relevant experiences while maintaining a natural approach towards the participant in collaboration with the related or specific phenomena under investigation. Therefore, the implementation of IPA as method, allows for greater flexibility and responsiveness, which encourages a continuous flow of questioning, interpretation, and making critical sense of the meaning of the phenomena as the process unfolds, for both the participant and the researcher ([Smith et al., 2009](#); [Willig, 2001](#)). Thus, considering the fact that this study attempted to make meaning of how selected participants view mind-power ability, or apply accustomed mind-power techniques in this instance, makes choosing IPA as the primary method of data analysis most relevant.

Characteristics of participants

[Smith et al. \(2009\)](#) states that IPA remains relatively unfixed when it comes to sampling sizes, but strongly suggests that the ideal sample size should remain small, ranging anything from six to ten participants in number, as it allows the researcher to engage with each participant closely enough, collecting rich, effective and meaningful data only. In this study, the key participants included were 15 achieving male entrepreneurs who currently operate within the Western Cape's agricultural sector in South Africa. Each of the 15 participants were purposively selected, according to how each of them actively practices or strategically implement a combination of mind-power techniques which are believed to boost daily performances, within and outside the workplace. In terms of separating achieving from less-achieving participants in the selection process, participants were classified achieving if they were conducting uninterrupted business for more than 12 years straight, and generating a company turnover of more than ZAR 8,000,000 annually, and vice versa.

At the time of the study, each of the 15 participants were in the prime of their careers, which made them the ideal candidates and much more comfortable to openly share their lived experiences with regard to the positive impact and effects of applied mind-power ability within their day-to-day routines. Each of the participants certainly played a significant role in effectively answering each of the research questions. To the researcher's advantage, all participants were very welcoming and fully cooperative throughout the investigation. In addition, each of the participants expressed a great level of maturity as all of them were at a respective age, ranging from 38 to 65 years. From the 15 participants, 7 were soft fruit farmers, whereas 4 operated businesses in the stone fruit sector, with the remaining 4 operating businesses in the vegetable sector. Also, in terms of ethnicity and the total amount of years conducting business, 12 participants were white males, whereas the remainder 3 were black males. A more detailed account of the characteristics of the participants appears in [Table II](#).

Table II.
Characteristics of
participants

Participant	Age (yrs)	Gender	Ethnicity	In business (yrs)	Annual turnover	Industry sector
01	56	Male	White	21	ZAR 8,000,000+	Soft fruit
02	60	Male	White	30	ZAR 8,000,000+	Soft fruit
03	55	Male	White	23	ZAR 8,000,000+	Soft fruit
04	54	Male	White	20	ZAR 8,000,000+	Vegetable
05	57	Male	White	16	ZAR 8,000,000+	Stone fruit
06	42	Male	White	12	ZAR 8,000,000+	Soft fruit
07	53	Male	Black	14	ZAR 8,000,000+	Stone fruit
08	59	Male	White	20	ZAR 8,000,000+	Stone fruit
09	52	Male	White	16	ZAR 8,000,000+	Vegetable
10	47	Male	White	12	ZAR 8,000,000+	Soft fruit
11	56	Male	Black	15	ZAR 8,000,000+	Vegetable
12	38	Male	White	12	ZAR 8,000,000+	Stone fruit
13	65	Male	White	30	ZAR 8,000,000+	Vegetable
14	39	Male	White	12	ZAR 8,000,000+	Soft fruit
15	54	Male	Black	17	ZAR 8,000,000+	Soft fruit

Instruments

Apart from the two over-reaching research questions guiding the research output: “*How does mind-power ability affect the performance levels of achieving entrepreneurs in South Africa?*” and “*What are the internal drivers contributing to mind-power ability?*” this study followed a professionally constructed one-on-one interview guideline, focused on the lived experiences, feelings and beliefs of entrepreneurs with regard to how they view the overall effect, impact and strategic implementation of mind-power ability and its associated techniques, as a day-to-day performance enhancer. A semi-structured questionnaire, therefore, served as the basis for the data collection procedure, which contained a variety of semi-structured and open-ended questions concerning the phenomena under investigation. A sample of the questions that were included in the questionnaire are presented in the procedure section below. To ensure content validity and proper structure, the researchers insisted that the guideline be cross-checked by three experts in the field.

Procedure

After receiving the approval of the Research Ethics Committee, the researchers contacted the first five participants operating in the Western Cape’s agricultural sector in South Africa. Each of these first five participants was recognized in the industry as individuals having strong mental ability and who were actively practising or experimenting with mind-power techniques. Each of the first five participants advised the researchers on at least two other further possible interested parties whom to their knowledge also met the above-mentioned criteria. To the researchers’ advantage, this was no problem, as this allowed them to comfortably round out the chosen sample size to 15 desired participants in total. Each of the interviews and follow-up sessions held spanned two months, i.e., April-May 2019. Before the first meeting with each of the first five selected participants, a consent form and information sheet were verbally communicated and emailed to each participant individually, as to inform them on what the study is about, the reason for their selection/inclusion in the study, explaining their personal rights and modes of protection, and informing them that they were free to withdraw their consent at any stage from the study if they wished to do so. After written and verbal consent was received, confirming their willingness to fully participate in the study, a convenient time and interview location was arranged.

Before each of the interviews commenced, the researchers went over the consent form and information sheet one last time to ensure clarity, and asked each participant to personally sign each document to show their commitment and willingness to fully cooperate with the study procedure – the same procedure was followed with the latter ten additional participants. In the interview, the researchers asked each participant to respond to the following sample questions: “How would you describe a mentally tough person?” “Do you see yourself as being mentally tough?” “Why or Why not?” “If you could list five (5) factors believed to contribute the strongest towards mental strength, what would it be?” “Do you agree with the fact that visualization, affirmation, mindfulness, and self-belief are beneficial towards creating a positive mind?” “Why or Why not?” “Are you currently making use of any mental training or strengthening techniques?” “If so, what are they, how often do you practice them, and how do these affect and impact your daily life as a business professional?” Each question invited the participants to expand on and provide in-depth descriptions and perceptions of their personal lived experiences with regard to these unique abilities. At the end of each interview, the researchers allowed for extra time in case any possible or additional input from each of the participants came to the forefront. The researchers also had one additional follow-up session with each of the participants to ensure that the correct recording and interpretation of the collected information was achieved. Each interview lasted for 30-45 min, and apart from written notes that have been taken during this time, all interviews were tape-recorded with the sole permission of each of the participants.

Data analysis

The data were analysed using IPA. Thus, the researchers carefully constructed and applied a systematic process as follow: apart from the written notes taken throughout each interview, the researchers carefully listened to and transcribed the audio-recordings in great detail, rereading each of the transcripts multiple times to try and make perfect sense of each participant’s account. Furthermore, the most significant statements were then strategically extracted by labelling short phrases of certain statements, where after formulated meanings were then carefully categorized into clusters of themes. Upon the generation of themes, findings were professionally integrated into thorough narrative descriptions of the investigated phenomena. Given that actual personal experiences, perspectives and beliefs were thoroughly shared, the researchers applied great admiration and respect throughout, and strategically applied both bracketing and bridling techniques as a way of making sure that the accounts and results retrieved remained exactly as they were told, totally free from any of the researcher’s pre-determined perceptions or possible influence (Dahlberg *et al.*, 2008; Husserl, 1970). Apart from sending each of the participants a breakdown of the researcher’s descriptions as to personally compare their actual experiences and accounts shared to that of the researcher, the researchers chose to apply four broad IPA principles, namely, sensitivity to context, commitment and rigor, transparency and coherence, as well as impact and importance (Smith *et al.*, 2009; Yardley, 2008). Additionally, Smith *et al.* (2009) also point out that when IPA data is analysed, it is of utmost importance that both data and the interpretation of data abides to complete trustworthiness. Thus, in collaboration with the four above mentioned principles, and the qualitative nature of the study, additional aspects such as credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability also played a pivotal role. In terms of increasing overall credibility, participants were humbly asked to review and verify the transcribed data recordings. Also, depending on their availability, the researchers also made a point to meet with several of the participants in a casual post-group format to talk about experiences, to ensure transferability. Lastly, to attain dependability and

conformability, the researchers strongly relied on the professional input from various academically assigned reviewers and university supervisors as needed.

Results

All participants thoroughly expressed and agreed to the fact that the power of thought carried immense authority, so influential that it appears to be the absolute blueprint that turns positive and repetitive images into desired reality. Professionally conducted interviews were carried out with each of these participants. As a result and upon completion of the data analysis phase, seven major themes emerged, detailing the lived experiences, perspectives and beliefs on the area of investigation of each of the participants. These themes are categorized under two sub-sections of which are presented below with excerpts from the interviews to illustrate the themes: mental toughness, mental training, and power of thought, mindfulness, visualization, affirmation and self-belief.

Mind power and performance

Mental toughness. In entrepreneurship, the daily pressures can overshadow or completely evaporate an individual's desired goals or dreams, if not approached or processed correctly. Therefore, mental toughness appears to be the ultimate tool for entrepreneurs to outthink, outplan and outlast many of the challenges they often encounter. Thus, mental toughness is a unique skill owned and constantly developed by accomplished entrepreneurs:

I have always considered myself as a mentally tough person. I also make a point to keep grinding; I know breakthroughs will eventually come. A positive mind-set is crucial if you want to achieve something big ahead in life. Therefore, if you can program your mind to view challenges as opportunities to grow, I feel one can excel in all facets of life and business (Participant 14, 39 years old).

Mental toughness, to me, is the ability to thrive under pressure. I always go the extra mile in giving my best and setting the pace for others on what hard work entails. So, to say the least, it is evident that as an entrepreneur, you should make pressure your friend and not a mode of destruction; approach it and use it as a mode to grow outside your comfort zone (Participant 4, 54 years old).

Mental training. Throughout their lives and careers, each participant quickly came to realize that mind-power ability requires detailed focus and specific training. It is one thing to read about positive mental effects, but to become accustomed to it, is what matters. Thus, the consistent application of mental training techniques allowed each of these participants to create a "psychological weapon" that in fact, makes them capable of constantly withstanding any type of obstacle or scenario:

As an entrepreneur, one can quickly get caught up in the negative advice or opinions of others. What I have found works best for me is to create and feed off positive mental images I value about myself. The next step is to connect a feeling to these images, and feed off of those positives and so forth direct and apply those images and feelings to your ongoing daily activities, trust me it does wonders (Participant 12, 38 years of age).

As I grew older, I started to think more intuitively, and this has helped me to view my shortcomings as a source of motivation, rather than a threat. Therefore, as a rule, I feel you have to discipline your mind with tested techniques; I can truly confess that aspects such as having a positive vision and attaching a strong belief and feeling thereto, created miracles in both my life and business (Participant 9, 52 years of age).

Power of thought. The constant realization of the remarkable power of thought was certainly acknowledged by each of the participants as a determining factor. The constant awareness that their thoughts hold the power that can eventually make or break them makes them constantly aware of their efforts. Thus, by strategically controlling and disciplining individual thought processes, contributed to entrepreneurial tremendous focus and performance all round:

From a young age, I have come to realize the tremendous effects of having and maintaining positive thoughts. The late Mr. Arnold Palmer once said: if you think you are outclassed, you are, and if you think you'll lose, you've lost. This surely relates to many things and scenarios in life, and it just once again confirms the importance of paying critical attention to what flows through your mind, and how you choose to process those thoughts (Participant 10, 47 years of age).

Throughout my career, I was often guilty of being too stressed out and worrying too much about tomorrow that often paralysed me mentally, so to say. By reading numerous books on the art and positive effects of mental training, and applying what I have learned, contributed to making a substantial difference in both my attitude and behaviour. I now approach and view things much more optimistically (Participant 11, 56 years of age).

Mind power and contributing techniques

Mindfulness. The drive to remain active and focused on the present moment, served as a valuable mechanism, allowing each of the participants to get things done timely and properly at all times. Thus, through constantly remaining alert of their purpose and surroundings, resulted in these participants taking on an enlightened approach to adhere to the “here” and “now” principles daily:

I try to constantly remind myself that I don't have any more power over past events, but I can still control future ones by making proper decisions today. As a result, I am much more focused and don't dwell as much on past events, and I am not afraid of future ones either; I know today is all that really matters, and the rest will take care of itself. I feel I am much more present and attached to my thoughts than before (Participant 2, 60 years of age).

I have always been a great believer about staying in the present to focus only on what is in front of me at a specific moment. The mental ability of staying aware of your surroundings, such as hearing the wind blow, listening to yourself breathe, and paying attention to sounds around you, keeps your mind engaged at all times – you need to constantly remain aware of the fact that you can only control what is in front of you now (Participant 5, 57 years of age).

Visualization. The ability of an entrepreneur to mentally picture, believe, and rehearse a specific need or desired accomplishment, and eventually turning it into reality, is certainly a significant aspect that takes time to master. It is important to interconnect in terms of what the mind sees and expects the body to do. Thus, it is evident why more and more driven entrepreneurs are drawn to the art and power of directed visualization:

I have always been a fanatic when it comes to the powerful effects of visualization. I try to create and constantly re-create desired events and outcomes in my mind and rehearse them repetitively. I have found that this really disciplines my overall thoughts and selection processes, as I can let images with feelings attached to them freely enter and exit my mind and focusing only on the best (Participant 3, 53 years of age).

The positive impact visualization has had on my career has been truly significant. I am gaining significant benefits in a variety of ways, and I now purposefully try and introduce the same

benefits to my workforce as well. I try to keep my mind full of positives and constantly remind myself that if you can see it, believe it, and apply it, you can truly accomplish the impossible (Participant 15, 54 years of age).

Affirmation. Entrepreneurship, in general, can be a very challenging and often uncertain circumstance in a variety of ways. Therefore, affirming positive beliefs and encouraging behaviour regularly, plays a massive role in achieving ultimate entrepreneurial performance. Thus, the mere fact of drifting through life and business situations expecting others to encourage you is just not good enough:

Throughout my life, I have encountered various scenarios where I have unknowingly talked myself out of an event or situation, negatively. I have quickly come to realize that I needed to change and view things more positively. I started reading about the power of positive affirmation and almost instantly started to notice a positive change in my mind-set and actions all-round (Participant 13, 65 years of age).

To me, positive affirmation has truly impacted my behaviour, thinking patterns, and overall approach to life. I consciously choose that negative events do not discourage me; by affirming to myself that I can, I will, and so forth, use negativity as a motivator rather than a discouragement. It allows me to focus on making the best of any circumstance I face or the outcome I receive (Participant 12, 38 years of age).

Self-belief. The drive to fully act out on positive inner-belief systems with the goal of reaching maximum performance consistently is certainly an aspect that reaps tremendous benefits. The mere fact of choosing to become an entrepreneur in the first place shows significant courage and commitment in a variety of ways. Thus, the ability to take risks and following their own desires with the belief that they will succeed, says everything:

Over the years, I have come to know that self-confidence is indeed a skill that requires great time and effort to master. When you are left in the dark, and only have your own instinct to trust and resources to draw on, that's where true guts get born. Thus, personal fulfilment strengthens the inner spirit; it contributes to nurturing a strong sense of self-belief (Participant 6, 42 years of age).

Entrepreneurship without self-belief is a certain recipe for failure. The moment where you fully come to trust yourself, that's when challenges get transformed into opportunities. Thus, to eliminate the fear of failure, and applying what you know works best no matter the critics, is the ultimate source that builds character and keeps daily dreams alive (Participant 10, 47 years of age).

Discussion

The findings made clear an understanding of how achieving entrepreneurs make use of and strategically implement effective mind-power ability and supportive techniques. In addition, the findings further indicated that mind-power ability could indeed be categorized as a unique skill, both internal and external, as it establishes itself within an entrepreneur's mind based on a particular mental approach and belief system built on experiences from the past, the present moment, or the desired future. Thus, a strong sense of internal dominance surfaced among each of the participants, which basically allowed them, in their own way, to overcome the various impossibilities they often had to face on their journeys to success. The findings also gave clear examples of how the majority of these participants really took their successes and failures into their own hands, fully accounting for their own entrepreneurial efforts and decision-making processes at all times. Thus, the ability of these participants to have experienced numerous uncertainties and adversities along the way, whilst managing

to cope and rise above these challenges, certainly gave birth to a tremendous entrepreneurial spirit, which allowed them to psychologically overpower any imaginable situation there is to think of, good or bad. Researchers [Hedner and Abouzeedan \(2011\)](#) supports this fact and states that most entrepreneurs see their failures and successes as rather self-made, which strengthens the fact that entrepreneurial thought and attitude patterns play a defining role on route to achieving ultimate success.

The findings also produced a lot of examples indicating that each participant expressed a significant level of mental strength, which in their own right, allowed them to outthink, outplan and outlast a variety of challenges faced. Thus, the ability of these participants to have managed to keep grinding no matter how much uncertainty there was along their journeys, established an accustomed mental approach that managed to turn pressure into opportunity, rather than denial. Hence, as far as mental training is concerned, each participant understood not only the importance thereof but also the consistency, as it needed to be practiced and tailored to such an extent that it matched their own individual personalities and outlook on life and business. For most of the participants, focused reading, applied research, and undergoing expert sessions with qualified psychologists, certainly added and delivered astonishing results. In their study, [Frese et al. \(2002\)](#) also addressed certain psychological attributes, in which they found that aspects such as independence, innovation, and attitude towards risk and a competitive nature also have a unique linkage with entrepreneurial performance. As a result, these findings directly relate to the positive effects of mind-power ability found in this study. The findings proved that the ability to purposefully re-adjust an old way of thinking, acting in the present moment, and focusing on what can be controlled rather than what could not be through imagery definitely attracted more favour and positivity. Therefore, it is evident that the individual role of the identified drivers in this study: mindfulness, visualization, affirmation, and self-belief might have appeared to be generally the same, but will continue to differ among entrepreneurs depending on the level of maturity, practice and attention each element receives.

Thus, it makes the mental drivers presented and implemented by each participant in this study considerably unique to their environment and personalities, adding to their motivation, expertise, and leadership ability tremendously. In terms of motivation specifically, [Ryan and Deci \(2000\)](#) found that whether business or personal related, it can be classified as either an internal or external quest towards achieving a self-fulfilling goal in life. Hence, it became evident that the choice and opportunity for self-direction certainly boosted, rather than limited motivational elements ([Ryan and Deci, 2000](#)), which further strengthened the fact that each of the internal drivers currently existing within mind-power ability, certainly allowed each of the participants in this study to maintain a high level of control over their circumstances. Consequently, this established a unique platform that allowed these participants to remain focused on each day's tasks, no matter how complex the situation or process might have been. Hence, apart from impacting general leadership ability, this also broadly impacted participant managerial ability as well, as they took more responsibility for their actions, setting an encouraging example for their employees and families to follow. Thus, mind-power ability certainly represents the rising belief that entrepreneurs' psychological ability not only expresses but also gives rise to immaculate performance ability all-round. The uncertainty that often surrounds entrepreneurship, in general, required each of the participants to take frequent risks with no guarantee that any type of effort will, in fact, be rewarded. As a result, findings from this study indicate the importance of consistently transforming average beliefs into above-average ones, which in turn makes once average performers turn into tomorrow's fierce competitors.

Conclusion

Summary

In this study, the researchers critically explored mind-power ability as an over-reaching success factor that positively contributes to the performance levels of South African entrepreneurs. Apart from the fact that the results obtained from this study highlight the importance of the lived experiences of the selected participants, it also explained the true thought processes, feelings, and beliefs behind how mind-power ability and its underlying elements have impacted and contributed to their overall performance levels. To further delineate, it was important to understand how these findings relate or differ from existing literature, emphasizing the importance of understanding these elements, as well as listening to each participant's perspective, as to offer insights into what has contributed the most or possibly hindered their entrepreneurial performances throughout their careers. It is therefore encouraged that entrepreneurs get better equipped, educated and trained on the critical elements required to outlast the expected and unexpected challenges often associated with entrepreneurship. This will not only allow entrepreneurs to develop an accustomed internal antidote to encounter these challenges consistently but also set a professional example to others of what can be done if you put your mind to it. Consequently, this study successfully set out and identified a unique pathway thereto, addressing and presenting mind power as the ideal and over-reaching performance-enhancing factor. Also, the underlying elements driving mind-power ability – visualization, affirmation, mindfulness and self-belief – clearly explained the actual relationship these factors has with gaining and maintaining control over critical events and thought processes. Therefore, it highlights the fact that a sound, proficient and disciplined mind gives way to transforming what might have once seemed to be impossible, into possible. Thus, the results obtained strengthens the fact that if a focused and more strategized entrepreneurial approach is applied, in which hardship and failure are seen as an opportunity to grow rather than denial, entrepreneurs will eventually propel and so forth build better endurance throughout their endeavours in both a mental and physical capacity.

Limitations

This study, like various other research studies, had some limitations. Considering the small sample size in addition to being a qualitative study, it makes the generalization of results difficult. However results could be generalized to our very specific industry. The article focused on capturing the true lived experiences, perceptions, feelings and beliefs of the participants; therefore, apart from the researcher's interpretation thereof, the results obtained had to be taken and viewed as the truth. Also, although semi-structured in nature, each of the interview questions strictly focused on getting behind the meaning and effectiveness of the over-reaching success factor under investigation. As a result, this slightly narrowed the scope thereto, as to remain intact and within the boundaries of the particular research study.

Implications

This study not only purposefully addressed but also strategically exposed mind-power ability as a strategic performance-enhancing factor in entrepreneurship. Although the specific area of research can be considered as still being in its developing stages, especially in the context of South Africa, the findings from this study are expected to contribute to a wide array of other professional sectors as well. This study provides a new perspective and practically validates how the purposeful and correct implementation of mind-power techniques can boost both personal and entrepreneurial performance all-round. This study

is also believed to add tremendous value to the existing theory of self-efficacy, as it contains valuable evidence on the powerful effects of mind-power ability that can potentially transform psychological performance research in the years to come. It is therefore encouraged that critical steps be taken by not only entrepreneurs, but also businesses, policymakers, government, and educators in general, to train and mould individuals during the beginning phases of their careers about the importance of developing and applying effective mind-power techniques.

Recommendations

This study certainly highlighted a number of researchable aspects that could be further pursued by those involved in entrepreneurship itself, or within psychology, business or educational fields. For example, further expand on the effects of mind-power ability, and test the effect and impact thereof consisting of entrepreneurs operating in other entrepreneurial segments or disciplines. Also, the underlying elements such as mindfulness, visualization, affirmation and self-belief can also be further expanded upon, by using different qualitative methods or potential quantitative measures. Furthermore, in terms of the extreme challenges entrepreneurship can often deliver, the strategic implementation of mind-power techniques can be investigated in even greater depth, as to see how it potentially impacts general resilience levels among entrepreneurs from other cultures, or a specific sector. This will not only enhance better self-discovery among practising entrepreneurs but also strengthen and improve overall entrepreneurial purpose, whilst discovering and integrating better regulators, that encourages adequate entrepreneurial training and education all-round.

References

- Ayala, J.C. and Manzano, G. (2014), "The resilience of the entrepreneur. Influence on the success of the business. A longitudinal analysis", *Journal of Economic Psychology*, Vol. 42, pp. 126-135.
- Bandura, A. (1993), "Perceived self-efficacy in cognitive development and function", *Educational Psychologist*, Vol. 28 No. 2, pp. 117-148.
- Bandura, A. (1997), *Self-Efficacy: The Exercise of Control*, Freeman Publishers, New York, NY.
- Baron, R.A. (2004), "The cognitive perspective: a valuable tool for answering entrepreneurship's basic why questions", *Journal of Business Venturing*, Vol. 19 No. 2, pp. 221-239.
- Baron, R.A. and Ensly, M.D. (2006), "Opportunity recognition as the detection of meaningful patterns: evidence from companies with novice and experienced entrepreneurs", *Management Science*, Vol. 52 No. 9, pp. 1331-1344.
- Billig, M. (2015), "Kurt Lewin's leadership studies and his legacy to social psychology: is there nothing as practical as a good theory?", *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, Vol. 45 No. 4, pp. 440-460.
- Burch, B., Cangemi, J.P. and Allen, G. (2017), "Can success become a curse? A view of its darker side", *Education*, Vol. 138 No. 2, pp. 210-214.
- Cachan, J.C., Codina, J.B., Eccius-Wellmann, C., McGraw, E. and Myers, D.A. (2013), "Entrepreneurial motives and performance: evidence from North America", *Journal of Management Policy and Practice*, Vol. 14 No. 3, pp. 55-77.
- Carsrud, A. and Brannback, M. (2011), "Entrepreneurial motivations: what do we still need to know?", *Journal of Small Business Management*, Vol. 49 No. 1, pp. 9-26.
- Cogan, K.D. (2019), "Coaching Olympic athletes with sport psychology", *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research*, Vol. 71 No. 2, pp. 86-96.

- Collins, C.J., Hanges, P.J. and Locke, E.A. (2004), "The relationship of achievement motivation to entrepreneurial behaviour: a meta-analysis", *Human Performance*, Vol. 17 No. 1, pp. 95-117.
- Comeig, I., Grau-Grau, A., Jaramillo-Gutiérrez, A. and Ramirez, F. (2016), "Gender, self-confidence, sports, and preferences for competition", *Journal of Business Research*, Vol. 69 No. 4, pp. 1418-1422.
- Crocker, J., Niiya, Y. and Mischkowski, D. (2008), "Why does writing about important values reduce defensiveness? Self-affirmation and the role of positive other-directed feelings", *Psychological Science*, Vol. 19 No. 7, p. 740.
- Dahlberg, K., Dahlberg, H. and Nystrom, M. (2008), *Reflective Lifeworld Research*, Professional Publishing House, Lund.
- Davidsson, P. (2004), *Researching Entrepreneurship*, Springer Science and Business Media, New York, NY.
- Densberger, K. (2014), "The self-efficacy and risk-propensity of entrepreneurs", *Journal of Enterprising Culture*, Vol. 22 No. 4, pp. 437-462.
- Fiol, C.M. and O'Connor, E.J. (2004), "Waking up! Mindfulness in the face of bandwagons", *Academy of Management Review*, Vol. 28 No. 1, pp. 54-70.
- Frese, M. (2009), "Towards a psychology of entrepreneurship: an action theory perspective", *Foundations and Trends in Entrepreneurship*, Vol. 5 No. 6, pp. 437-496.
- Frese, M., Brantjes, A. and Hoorn, R. (2002), "Psychological success factors of small scale businesses in Namibia: the roles of strategy process, entrepreneurial orientation and the environment", *Journal of Developmental Entrepreneurship*, Vol. 7 No. 3, pp. 259-282.
- Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (2016), "Entrepreneurial behaviour and attitudes", available at: www.gemconsortium.org/country-profile/130 (accessed 6 August 2019).
- Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (2017), "An alarmingly low level of entrepreneurial activity in spite of high unemployment", available at: www.gemconsortium.org/country-profile/108 (accessed 6 August 2019).
- Greenacre, L., Tung, N.M. and Chapman, T. (2014), "Self-confidence, and the ability to influence", *Academy of Marketing Studies Journal*, Vol. 18 No. 2, pp. 169-178.
- Hedner, T. and Abouzeedan, A. (2011), "Entrepreneurial resilience", *Annals of Innovation and Entrepreneurship*, Vol. 2 No. 1, p. 7986.
- Huang, L. and Pearce, J.L. (2015), "Managing the unknowable", *Administrative Science Quarterly*, Vol. 60 No. 4, pp. 634-670.
- Husserl, E. (1970), *Logical Investigations II*, Humanity Books, New York, NY.
- Jenerou, A., Morgan, B. and Buckingham, R.S. (2018), "A vision training program's impact on ice hockey performance", *The Journal of the American Society of Ophthalmic Registered Nurses*, Vol. 43 No. 1, pp. 15-21.
- Kabat-Zinn, J. (2003), "Mindfulness-based interventions in context: past, present, and future", *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice*, Vol. 10 No. 2, pp. 144-154.
- Kehoe, J. (2007), *Mind Power into the 21st Century*, Zoetic, Vancouver.
- Kier, A.S. and McMullen, J.S. (2018), "Entrepreneurial imaginativeness in new venture ideation", *Academy of Management Journal*, Vol. 61 No. 6, pp. 2265-2295.
- Kizildag, E. and Tiryaki, M.S. (2012), "Imagery use of athletes in individual and team sports that require open and closed skill", *Perceptual and Motor Skills*, Vol. 114 No. 3, pp. 748-756.
- Kroon, B., van Woerkom, M. and Menting, C. (2017), "Mindfulness as substitute for transformational leadership", *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, Vol. 32 No. 4, pp. 284-297.
- Lindsay, E.K., Chin, B., Greco, C.M., Young, S., Brown, K.W., Wright, A.G.C. and Creswell, J.D. (2018), "How mindfulness training promotes positive emotions: dismantling acceptance skills training

- in two randomized controlled trials”, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol. 115 No. 6, pp. 944-973.
- Lussier, R.N. and Halabi, C.E. (2010), “A three-country comparison of the business success versus failure prediction model”, *Journal of Small Business Management*, Vol. 48 No. 3, pp. 360-377.
- Neck, C.P. and Manz, C.C. (1992), “Thought self-leadership: the influence of self-talk and mental imagery on performance”, *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, Vol. 13 No. 7, pp. 681.
- Pietkiewicz, I. and Smith, J.A. (2012), “A practical guide to using interpretative phenomenological analysis in qualitative research psychology”, *International Journal of Psychology*, Vol. 18 No. 2, pp. 361-369.
- Pollard, V. and Wilson, E. (2014), “The entrepreneurial mind-set in creative and performing arts higher education in Australia”, *Artivate: A Journal of Entrepreneurship in the Arts*, Vol. 3 No. 1, pp. 3-22.
- Pringle, J., Drummond, J., McLafferty, E. and Hendry, C. (2011), “Interpretative phenomenological analysis: a discussion and critique”, *Nurse Researcher*, Vol. 18 No. 3, pp. 20-24.
- Rasca, L. and Deaconu, A. (2018), “Entrepreneurial motivators and competencies – main drivers of entrepreneurial success”, *Proceedings of the International Conference on Business Excellence*, Vol. 12 No. 1, pp. 864-874.
- Ryan, R.M. and Deci, E.L. (2000), “Intrinsic and extrinsic motivations: classic definitions and new directions”, *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, Vol. 25 No. 1, pp. 54-67.
- SEDA (2016), *The Small, Medium, and Micro Enterprise Sector of South Africa*, Bureau for Economic Research, Stellenbosch University, Stellenbosch, pp. 1-32.
- Sekaran, U. (2000), *Research Methods for Business: A Skill Building Approach*, John Wiley and Sons, Singapore.
- Sherman, D.K. and Cohen, G.L. (2006), “The psychology of self-defence: self-affirmation theory”, *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, Vol. 32, pp. 183-242.
- Smith, J.A., Flowers, P. and Larkin, M. (2009), *Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis: Theory, Method and Research*, Sage Publications, London.
- Statistics South Africa (2018), “Economy stumbles in first quarter”, available at: www.statssa.gov.za/?p=12200 (accessed 6 August 2019).
- Tenenbaum, G., Edmonds, W.A. and Eccles, D.W. (2008), “Emotions, coping strategies, and performance: a conceptual framework for defining affect-related performance zones”, *Military Psychology*, Vol. 20, pp. 11-37.
- Tesser, A. (2000), “On the confluence of self-esteem maintenance mechanisms”, *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, Vol. 4 No. 4, pp. 290-299.
- Trading Economics (2018), “South Africa unemployment rate”, available at: <https://tradingeconomics.com/south-africa/unemployment-rate> (accessed 6 August 2019).
- Velez, J.A. and Hanus, M.D. (2016), “Self-Affirmation theory and performance feedback: when scoring high makes you feel low”, *Cyber Psychology, Behaviour and Social Networking*, Vol. 19 No. 12, pp. 721-726.
- Watson, D. and Clark, L.A. (2007), “Measurement and mismeasurement of mood: recurrent and emergent issues”, *Journal of Personality Assessment*, Vol. 68 No. 2, pp. 267-296.
- Weinberg, R., Garland, H., Bruya, L. and Jackson, A. (1990), “Effect of goal difficulty and positive reinforcement on endurance performance”, *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, Vol. 12 No. 2, p. 144.
- Willig, C. (2001), *Introducing Qualitative Research in Psychology: Adventures in Theory and Method*, Open University Press, Buckingham.
- Yardley, L. (2008), “Demonstrating validity in qualitative psychology”, in Smith, J.A. (Ed.), *Qualitative Psychology: A Practical Guide to Methods*, Sage Publications, London, pp. 295-296.
- Zangwill, N. (2017), “Self-belief and agency”, *Journal of Mind and Behaviour*, Vol. 38 No. 1, pp. 35-52.

Further reading

- Baum, J.R. and Locke, E.A. (2004), "The relationship of entrepreneurial traits, skill, and motivation to subsequent venture growth", *Journal of Applied Psychology*, Vol. 89 No. 4, pp. 587-598.
- Baum, J.R., Locke, E.A. and Smith, K.G. (2001), "A multidimensional model of venture growth", *Academy of Management Journal*, Vol. 44 No. 2, pp. 292-303.
- Bong, M., Cho, C., Ahn, H.S. and Kim, H.J. (2012), "Comparison of self-beliefs for predicting student motivation and achievement", *The Journal of Educational Research*, Vol. 105 No. 5, pp. 336-352.
- World Economic Forum (2017), "Future of economic progress: these are the world's fastest growing economies in 2017", available at: www.weforum.org/agenda/2017/06/these-are-the-world-s-fastest-growing-economies-in-2017-2/ (accessed 6 August 2019).

Corresponding author

Kanayo Ogujiuba can be contacted at: kanayo.ogujiuba@ump.ac.za