

Fostering life satisfaction through family support among entrepreneurs: the mediating role of entrepreneurial self-efficacy and coping

Obey Dzomonda and Brownhilder Neneh

*Department of Business Management, Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences,
University of the Free State, Bloemfontein, South Africa*

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Abstract

Purpose – Despite the growing importance of researching life satisfaction and its determinants among entrepreneurs, the effect of family support on life satisfaction among entrepreneurs in the context of developing countries remains underexplored. Additionally, there is limited understanding of the mediating role of entrepreneurial self-efficacy and coping on the relationship between family support and life satisfaction. Thus, the authors analysed the effect of family support on life satisfaction among entrepreneurs in South Africa. The study further aimed to examine the mediating role of entrepreneurial self-efficacy and coping on the relationship between family support and life satisfaction.

Design/methodology/approach – The paper adopted a quantitative research method with a causal research design. Data were collected using questionnaires from 150 entrepreneurs in South Africa. The authors used the partial least square structural equation modelling (SMART PLS 4) to test the hypothesised relationships.

Findings – The study established that family support positively predicts life satisfaction. The results further showed that entrepreneurial self-efficacy and coping partially mediate the association between family support and life satisfaction.

Originality/value – This study contributes to the existing entrepreneurship literature by demonstrating that family support is a vital resource for entrepreneurs in developing countries who operate in volatile and resource-constrained environments. Additionally, our study demonstrated that entrepreneurial self-efficacy and coping are crucial psychological mechanisms necessary to understand how family support influences life satisfaction among entrepreneurs, an approach lacking in existing literature in a developing country context. This study culminates with practical implications for entrepreneurs and policymakers.

Keywords Coping, Entrepreneurs, Entrepreneurial self-efficacy, Family support, Life satisfaction

Paper type Research paper

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1. Introduction

Existing literature indicates that venturing into an entrepreneurship career is more fulfilling for individuals than being an employee (Bhuiyan and Ivlevs, 2019; Obschonka *et al.*, 2023; Markussen *et al.*, 2018). This is because an entrepreneurship career gives individuals autonomy and scope to achieve other personal goals, which may not be the case with paid employment (Alshibani and Volery, 2020; Marshall *et al.*, 2020; Obschonka *et al.*, 2023; Salamzadeh *et al.*, 2014; Wiklund *et al.*, 2019). Nevertheless, the entrepreneurial career is associated with uncertainty and stressful job demands, which causes anxiety and burnout among entrepreneurs (Hsu, Shinnar and Anderson, 2019; Obschonka *et al.*, 2023). Entrepreneurs work long hours, deal with employees from diverse backgrounds and ensure that the business continues as a going concern (Alshibani and Volery, 2020; Uy, Foo and Song, 2013; Zhu, Burmeister-Lamp and Hsu, 2017). The stress among entrepreneurs also emanates from emotional demands as entrepreneurs make decisions about their investments in a forever-changing business environment where success is not guaranteed (Fatoki, 2018; Marshall *et al.*, 2020). On this backdrop, contemporary literature has stressed the importance of studying life satisfaction among entrepreneurs because of its vital role in influencing their cognitive processes and productivity (De Clercq, Kaciak and Thongpapanl, 2022; Wiklund *et al.*, 2019). According to Shin and Johnson (1978, p. 478), life satisfaction is a “global assessment of a person’s quality of life according to his chosen criteria”. Life satisfaction is a crucial component of subjective well-being which measures an individual’s happiness, joy, positive emotions and being content with life (Stephan, Rauch and Hatak, 2023; Wiklund *et al.*, 2019). Existing literature (Newman *et al.*, 2018; Stephan *et al.*, 2023; Wiklund *et al.*, 2019) expresses that studies in entrepreneurship must adopt subjective measures of success, such as life satisfaction, instead of the overly used objective measure of success (financial performance). This is because life satisfaction predicts several outcomes, such as individuals’ productivity, entrepreneurial persistence, opportunity recognition and decisions about entrepreneurial venture exit and reentry (El Shoubaki and Stephan, 2018; Lauto, Pittino and Visintin, 2020; Wiklund *et al.*, 2019). Once an entrepreneur is satisfied with their life, they will likely persist in achieving their goals, resulting in enhanced performance in their ventures (Connolly, Sevä and Gärling, 2024; De Clercq *et al.*, 2022; Drnovšek *et al.*, 2024; Markussen, Fibæk, Tarp and Tuan, 2018). Essentially, life satisfaction has become one of the indicators of Sustainable development goals, particularly goal number 3 (i.e. attainment of well-being for all ages), emanating from its usefulness in predicting various outcomes in an individual’s life and the country’s level of development beyond gross domestic product (El Shoubaki and Stephan, 2018; Stephan *et al.*, 2023). Given the importance of life satisfaction in the entrepreneurial process, it becomes crucial to study its antecedents among entrepreneurs exposed to stressful job demands due to the nature of this career.

Contemporary literature identifies family support as a crucial resource that can help entrepreneurs attain life satisfaction (Neneh, 2017; Neneh and Welsh, 2022; Welsh and Kaciak, 2019). Even though entrepreneurs can derive support from other support systems such as business networks, friends and social networks (Alshibani and Volery, 2020; Newman *et al.*, 2018; Neneh, 2020), in this paper, we consider only support from family. Family support plays a crucial role in assisting entrepreneurs in dealing with stress and attaining life satisfaction (Welsh and Kaciak, 2019; Xu *et al.*, 2020). Aldrich and Cliff (2003) assert that family support is the immediate system where entrepreneurs can obtain different resources to grow their businesses. Such resources play a crucial role at each stage of the business venture. A study by Neneh and Welsh (2022) asserts that leveraging the family domain allows entrepreneurs to access different resources, enabling them to proactively

solve business problems based on the knowledge acquired from experienced family members. Essentially, resources from family reduce the negative effect of job stressors in the workplace resulting in positive emotions and happiness among entrepreneurs (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007; Bakker *et al.*, 2014).

This study addresses two novel gaps in the existing literature. Firstly, even though existing studies have enhanced our understanding of the association between life satisfaction and its determinants (Alshibani and Volery, 2020; Marshall *et al.*, 2020; Xu *et al.*, 2020), we observed that there is a lack of studies that have explored this phenomenon from a developing country context. Most existing studies have been conducted in other regions, such as Australia (Alshibani and Volery, 2020), the USA (Marshall *et al.*, 2020) and China (Xu *et al.*, 2020). In support, recent studies (Barbosa *et al.*, 2024; Karimi and Reisi, 2023) argue that research about life satisfaction and its determinants remains limited in the context of developing countries. This may be limiting in terms of generalising the findings to a different context, such as South Africa. On this background, existing literature (Stephan *et al.*, 2023; Wiklund *et al.*, 2019) argue that it is crucial to consider the socio-economic context and the broader institutional environment in which entrepreneurial activities are embedded when researching life satisfaction. Contextual factors such as competition, economic recession, corruption and business environment can impose unique stressors on entrepreneurs in different countries or regions (Stephan, 2018; Stephan *et al.*, 2023). Additionally, Welsh *et al.* (2021) found that family support elements, such as emotional support are affected by the context in which entrepreneurial activities are embedded. Barbosa *et al.* (2024, p. 12) argue that:

The problem is that the environment faced by entrepreneurs from developing countries is challenging, with less support from the government, and many entrepreneurs start their ventures out of necessity, with few resources.

Thus, necessitating more studies to understand the different strategies they adopt to enhance their life satisfaction. Specifically, entrepreneurs in developing countries like South Africa operate in a volatile business environment. Some of the challenges include a weak economic growth rate, which contracted from 2% in 2022 to approximately 0.4% in 2023, high inflation rate of approximately 7% in 2022 and 6% in 2023 and an increase in interest rates to approximately 12% in 2023, making the entrepreneurial environment to be challenging and stressful. The challenges entrepreneurs face in South Africa are worsened by weak entrepreneurial framework conditions (EFCs), which are lower than the other 14 participating economies (Global Entrepreneurship Monitor report, 2024). The EFCs are rated 0 being poor and 10 being very adequate sufficient status. South Africa performed poorly across all key indicators of the EFCs compared to the other 14 participating economies in the reporting period of the GEM (2024) survey. It scored 4.1, ranking 5th in entrepreneurial finance, 3.5 (7th) in ease of access to entrepreneurial finance, 3.3 (6th) in government policy: support and relevance and 3.7 (8th) in government policy: taxes and bureaucracy. Additionally, South Africa scored 3.0 (11th) in government entrepreneurial programs, 2.7 (11th) in research and development transfers, 4.4 (12th) in commercial and professional dynamics, 3.2 (11th) in ease of entry: burdens and regulation and 4.5 (12th) position out of the 14 participating economies in physical infrastructure (GEM report, 2024). These unfavourable conditions, together with the high failure rate of small businesses in the country estimated to be 70%–80% (Zulu *et al.*, 2023), provide unique challenges to the entrepreneurial environment in South Africa, resulting in stressful experiences among the entrepreneurs. Since entrepreneurship is expected to contribute critically to job creation and economic growth in developing countries (Rahman, Salamzadeh and Tabash, 2022), it

becomes crucial to understand wellbeing issues among entrepreneurs in this region since wellbeing results in enhanced productivity (Wiklund *et al.*, 2019). Thus, our study responds to the call from existing studies (Bahsri *et al.*, 2023; Barbosa *et al.*, 2024; Gashi *et al.*, 2024; Stephan, 2018; Stephan *et al.*, 2023; Wiklund *et al.*, 2019) for more empirical studies investigating the link between life satisfaction and its determinants in different countries since the nature of stressors and life satisfaction among entrepreneurs vary based on context.

Secondly, even though there has been growing interest in studies exploring the antecedents and outcomes of life satisfaction (Newman *et al.*, 2018; Wiklund *et al.*, 2019), mixed findings abound regarding the association between family support and life satisfaction (Bhuiyan and Ivlevs, 2019; Sieger and Minola, 2017; Xu *et al.*, 2020), which limits our understanding of this association. For instance, a strand of scholars (Alshibani and Volery, 2020; Marshall *et al.*, 2020) found that family support positively predicts life satisfaction among entrepreneurs. Contrarily, other scholars argue that different forms of family support, such as financial support, may come with certain obligations, which can result in depression and anxiety among entrepreneurs (Bhuiyan and Ivlevs, 2019; Sieger and Minola, 2017; Xu *et al.*, 2020). Sieger and Minola (2017) view family financial support as a poisoned gift in that the obligations from the family may impose certain conditions and control on the business, negatively influencing the venture's performance. Xu *et al.* (2020) also noted that family support may result in family interference which create conflicts and negatively influence the entrepreneurs' life satisfaction. A study by Alshibani and Volery (2020) also validated the association between family support and life satisfaction using only emotional support. This approach is limiting since entrepreneurs may require various support to deal with challenges, they experience at different business life cycle stages (Neneh and Welsh, 2022; Welsh and Kaciak, 2019). Thus, Alshibani and Volery (2020) further recommended that other future studies consider a comprehensive measure of family support that incorporates all the elements, such as emotional, financial and instrumental support. Thus, we adopt an integrated measure of family support incorporating emotional, financial and instrumental support to assess whether these findings hold in the context of entrepreneurs in a developing country context. Building upon the research gaps mentioned above, this study aims to answer the following research question:

RQ1. Whether family support directly influence life satisfaction among entrepreneurs in South Africa?

Given that family support may not always influence life satisfaction directly (Bhuiyan and Ivlevs, 2019; Xu *et al.*, 2020), we contend that exploring the mechanisms through which family support affects life satisfaction is essential. Thus, guided by existing literature, we introduce entrepreneurial self-efficacy and coping as mediating variables to this relationship since these two constructs are deemed crucial psychological resources for entrepreneurs at different stages of the venture process (Ahmed *et al.*, 2022; Marshall *et al.*, 2020). Existing literature asserts that these two factors enable entrepreneurs to persist and sustain their ventures even in uncertain environments by acting as additional psychological resources that diminish stress and burnout (Barbosa *et al.*, 2024; Tisu, Vîrgă and Tăris, 2023). We believe that self-efficacy and coping are particularly relevant within the context of a developing country such as South Africa characterised by weak institutional support for entrepreneurs, regulatory burdens, insufficient infrastructure and lack of funding because they can help entrepreneurs sustain their motivation, persistence and resilience, ultimately improving their life satisfaction despite operating in a challenging environment. In particular, coping mechanisms are relevant for entrepreneurs in this context as they enable entrepreneurs to manage stress, adapt to uncertainty and

sustain productivity in an environment of limited resources and economic instability. [Tisu, Virgă and Taris \(2023\)](#) assert that entrepreneurial self-efficacy equips individuals with a success-oriented mindset which enables them to overcome daily challenges in their ventures. [Bandura \(1991\)](#) described self-efficacy as an individual's confidence and belief in their skills regarding performing a task. According to [Newman et al. \(2018\)](#), entrepreneurial self-efficacy is a crucial psychological resource that makes entrepreneurs confident that their skills will enable them to successfully execute tasks associated with the entrepreneurship career, resulting in positive emotions and joy. Consequently, there is evidence that entrepreneurial self-efficacy makes entrepreneurs optimistic about the future of their businesses, which triggers positive emotions ([Bullough, Renko and Myatt, 2014](#); [Newman et al., 2018](#)). Essentially, since entrepreneurs operate in conditions of resource scarcity, having access to family support, such as mentorship and feedback from family members makes entrepreneurs confident in their ability to run the business successfully, enhancing their life satisfaction ([Ahmed et al., 2022](#); [Marshall et al., 2020](#); [Newman et al., 2018](#)). Nevertheless, there is a paucity of studies that have explored the mediating role of ESE on the association between family support and life satisfaction in a developing country context. Thus, this study aims to explore how family support impacts life satisfaction through entrepreneurial self-efficacy. In this case, the study intends to answer the following research question:

RQ2. Whether entrepreneurial self-efficacy mediates the relationship between family support and life satisfaction among entrepreneurs in South Africa?

Coping is also one of the crucial psychological resources linked to life satisfaction ([Drnovšek et al., 2010](#); [Uy, Foo and Song, 2013](#); [Zhu et al., 2017](#)). Coping is defined as “the thoughts and behaviors used to manage the internal and external demands of situations that are appraised as stressful” ([Folkman and Moskowitz, 2004](#), p. 745). [Lazarus and Folkman \(1984\)](#) postulated that entrepreneurs could adopt problem-solving or emotion-based coping to deal with stressful job demands. Problem-based coping entails developing active ways to deal with job stressors, such as taking bold actions to deal with problems as they arise, while emotion-based coping entails walking away from the stressful environment ([Ahmed et al., 2022](#); [Lazarus and Folkman, 1984](#); [Schonfeld and Mazzola, 2015](#)). Existing literature reports that having access to family support can enable entrepreneurs to actively solve problems as they arise in their businesses, which enhances their life satisfaction ([Bahsri et al., 2023](#); [Marshall et al., 2020](#); [Uy, Foo and Song, 2013](#)). This study aims to answer the following question based on the above research gap:

RQ3. Whether coping mediates the relationship between family support and life satisfaction among entrepreneurs in South Africa?

The contribution of this study is threefold. Firstly, it uses a sample of entrepreneurs to understand the determinants of life satisfaction closing a research gap of limited studies that have studied life satisfaction among entrepreneurs since most studies have mainly focused on the life satisfaction of employees ([Barbosa et al., 2024](#); [Bahsri et al., 2023](#)). Additionally, since psychological constructs such as entrepreneurial self-efficacy, coping and life satisfaction are context-specific ([Bhuiyan and Ivlevs, 2019](#); [Newman et al., 2018](#); [Stephan, 2018](#)), exploring such factors among entrepreneurs from a developing country adds value to the existing body of knowledge. Secondly, our study contributes theoretically by combining the tenets of the family embeddedness theory ([Aldrich and Cliff, 2003](#)) with the Social Cognitive theory ([Bandura, 1991](#)) and the Transactional Model of Stress and coping theory ([Lazarus and Folkman, 1984](#)), enhancing our

understanding of the determinants of life satisfaction. Thirdly, our study extends the existing literature by examining the mediating role of entrepreneurial self-efficacy and coping on the association between family support and life satisfaction. This approach has been lacking in the existing literature.

2. Theoretical framework

Our study adopted the family embeddedness theory (Aldrich and Cliff, 2003) to explain how family support influences entrepreneurs' life satisfaction, as depicted in Figure 1. The Family embeddedness theory postulates that the family system, which is a function of family transitions, resources and values, plays a crucial role in the entrepreneurial process by predicting several outcomes, such as entrepreneurial behaviour, objective and subjective performance (Aldrich and Cliff, 2003). In this case, Aldrich and Cliff (2003) argued that since the family and the business domains are intertwined, it is crucial to understand how entrepreneurs can benefit from the resources within the family system. The family embeddedness theory asserts that entrepreneurs can use financial, instrumental and emotional support from their immediate family members to establish and manage their businesses (Aldrich and Cliff, 2003; Neneh, 2017; Neneh and Welsh, 2022). Family members can provide financial support in the form of unpaid hours to the business, instant loans to the entrepreneur to start a business, offer emotional support when the entrepreneur experiences burnout and sometimes act as role models (Neneh, 2017; Neneh and Welsh, 2022; Welsh et al., 2018). Consistent with existing studies (Neneh, 2017; Welsh and Kaciak, 2019), we adopt all three types of family support (i.e. financial, instrumental and emotional support) because these are all crucial resources that predict life satisfaction among

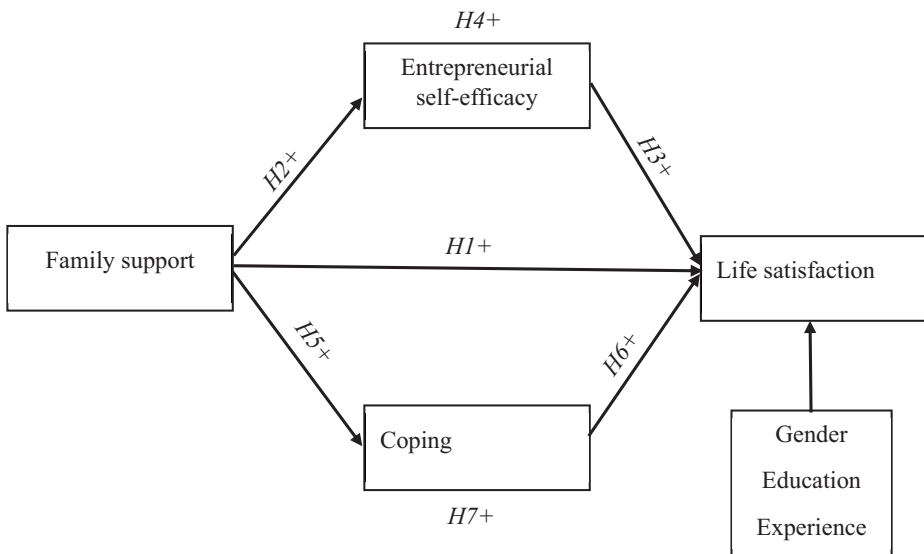


Figure 1. Depicts the hypothesised relationships among the key variables of the study. It clearly shows that family support directly influences life satisfaction, while entrepreneurial self-efficacy and coping mediate this relationship

Source(s): Authors' own work (2025)

entrepreneurs at every stage of the business cycle. The family embeddedness theory has also received wide support and application among studies that assess the effect of family support on life satisfaction among entrepreneurs (Xu *et al.*, 2020), making it a useful theoretical framework for our study.

We also built on two theories, the social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1991) and the Transactional Model of Stress and coping theory (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984), to provide a theoretical justification for incorporating two personal psychological resources, such as entrepreneurial self-efficacy and coping, into the conceptual framework as mediating variables. Self-efficacy is a crucial element of the social cognitive theory, and it is defined as an individual's assessment of their skills concerning the demands of executing a task (Bandura, 1991). Consistent with other existing scholars (Engel *et al.*, 2014; Miao, Qian and Ma, 2017; Newman *et al.*, 2019), we adopt entrepreneurial self-efficacy as a construct specific to the entrepreneurship domain. According to Newman *et al.* (2019), entrepreneurial self-efficacy describes an individual's confidence in their entrepreneurial skills. ESE is a psychological resource that enables individuals to appraise environmental stressors positively, resulting in life satisfaction (Newman *et al.*, 2018; Newman *et al.*, 2019; Marshall *et al.*, 2020).

Drawing from the Transactional Model of Stress and coping theory (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984), coping is one of the crucial psychological resources that can diminish the adverse effects of work stress on life satisfaction. According to the Transactional Model of Stress and coping theory, individuals can adopt problem-focused or emotion-focused coping to deal with negative stimuli in the environment (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984; Folkman and Moskowitz, 2004). According to Drnovšek *et al.* (2010, p. 193):

Problem-based coping refers to a cognitively based response behavior that includes efforts to alleviate stressful circumstances while emotion-based coping involves behavioral responses to regulate the affective consequences of stressful events.

Coping enables entrepreneurs to effectively deal with problems in the work domain which invokes positive emotions and life satisfaction (Drnovšek *et al.*, 2010; Uy *et al.*, 2013). In this study, we adopt both problem-focused and emotion-focused coping as we believe these can be used by entrepreneurs in varying proportions depending on the nature of the problem. The Transactional Model of Stress and coping theory (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984) has received widespread support in the entrepreneurship domain where it has been found that both problem-focused and emotion-focused coping are instrumental for helping entrepreneurs to effectively deal with stressors in their work environment (Huang and Chen, 2021; Krithiga and Velmurugan, 2024; Nikolaev *et al.*, 2024; Simmons and Dalton, 2023). Barbosa *et al.* (2024) also recommend adopting coping theories to provide a new perspective on how entrepreneurs can maintain their life satisfaction amid uncertainty and stressful entrepreneurial environments.

2.1 Hypothesis development

2.1.1 Family support and life satisfaction. Drawing from the family embeddedness theory, the family system and the business domain are intertwined (Aldrich and Cliff, 2003). Thus, the characteristics of the family system play a crucial role in predicting several entrepreneurial outcomes such as life satisfaction (Aldrich and Cliff, 2003; Huang *et al.*, 2024; Neneh and Welsh, 2022; Welsh *et al.*, 2018). In support, Alshibani and Volery (2020) express that family support helps entrepreneurs achieve their goals, leading to positive emotions, joy and happiness. We posit that a combination of financial, instrumental and emotional support provided by the family system predicts high levels of life satisfaction among entrepreneurs. According to Marshall *et al.* (2020), financial support is one of the

crucial resources required at each stage of the entrepreneurial venture. Thus, financial resources have a bearing on the success or failure of the entrepreneurial venture. Existing studies indicate that several entrepreneurs in developing countries operate under resource scarcity conditions, resulting in stress and emotional exhaustion (Arshi *et al.*, 2020; Fatoki, 2018; Welsh *et al.*, 2018). Evidence shows that many entrepreneurs in emerging markets do not have collateral security to secure credit from banks, which triggers adverse psychological outcomes such as stress among entrepreneurs (Fatoki, 2018; Rungani and Potgieter, 2018). Thus, financial support from family members enables entrepreneurs to meet the business's operational costs and set targets resulting in positive emotions, happiness and satisfaction with life (Marshall *et al.*, 2020; Welsh *et al.*, 2018). Family members usually provide non-interest-bearing loans, which help the entrepreneur overcome the stress of securing high-interest bank loans (Neneh, 2017; Welsh *et al.*, 2018). Additionally, Welsh and Kaciak (2019) assert that family members can also provide financial support through unpaid hours to the business, helping the entrepreneur attain a work-life balance which triggers positive emotions and satisfaction with their life. Generally, entrepreneurs are satisfied when they can easily access finance to grow their businesses (Welsh and Kaciak, 2019).

Existing literature indicates that instrumental support is another crucial resource available for entrepreneurs from their family members (Neneh, 2017; Powell and Eddleston, 2013; Welsh and Kaciak, 2019). Family instrumental support may predict high levels of satisfaction with life among entrepreneurs through family work enrichment (Neneh, 2017; Sirgy *et al.*, 2020; Welsh and Kaciak, 2019; Welsh *et al.*, 2021). On this account, the skills learned in the family domain such as multi-tasking may be transferred to the work domain, resulting in mastery of work and happiness (Powell and Eddleston, 2013; Sirgy *et al.*, 2020). Essentially, some family members are qualified in different fields; hence, their advice, mentorship and feedback help the entrepreneur to gain some critical skills required to manage their business, which reduces stress and burnout effectively (Neneh and Welsh, 2022; Welsh *et al.*, 2018; Welsh *et al.*, 2021). Family members may also assist the entrepreneur in mobilising tangible resources such as funding, securing business premises and working for free in the business to ease the pressure of securing qualified employees (Greenhaus and Powell, 2006; Powell and Eddleston, 2013; Neneh and Welsh, 2022).

Though rewarding, the entrepreneurship career is associated with uncertainty, risk and burnout (Obschonka *et al.*, 2023; Stephan *et al.*, 2023; Uy *et al.*, 2013; Zhu *et al.*, 2017). Ideally, working long hours and operating under resource scarcity expose entrepreneurs to emotional exhaustion and regret (Hsu *et al.*, 2019; Marshall *et al.*, 2020). Thus, since entrepreneurs are exposed to stressful job demands, emotional support provided by family members may provide a buffering mechanism (Neneh and Welsh, 2022; Welsh *et al.*, 2018) that results in positive emotions and life satisfaction (Alshibani and Volery, 2020; Zhu *et al.*, 2017). Emotional support from family may consist of motivation, reassurance and empathy which helps the entrepreneur to evaluate stressors in the workplace positively (Neneh and Welsh, 2022; Welsh *et al.*, 2018; Zhu *et al.*, 2017). Emotional support predicts high subjective well-being levels among entrepreneurs (Welsh and Kaciak, 2019; Zhu *et al.*, 2017). Thus, existing literature supports the view that family support positively predicts life satisfaction among entrepreneurs (Alshibani and Volery, 2020; Huang *et al.*, 2024; Marshall *et al.*, 2020; Powell and Eddleston, 2013). We posit that financial, instrumental and emotional resources from the family domain may help enrich the work domain resulting in joy, happiness and satisfaction with life among entrepreneurs as they can effectively deal with stressors in their businesses. Based on this evidence, we propose the following hypothesis:

H1. Family support positively predicts life satisfaction among entrepreneurs.

2.1.2 The mediating role of entrepreneurial self-efficacy. We examine how and when entrepreneurs develop self-efficacy when they receive support from the family domain which enhances their life satisfaction. We rely on the tenets of the family embeddedness framework (Aldrich and Cliff, 2003) and the social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1991) to validate our conceptual arguments on how family support positively influences life satisfaction through entrepreneurial self-efficacy. According to the family embeddedness framework (Aldrich and Cliff, 2003), the family domain provides useful resources that enrich the work domain of entrepreneurs. On this account, Marshall *et al.* (2020) argue that having access to instrumental support from family can facilitate learning and enhance one's cognitive abilities to actively deal with problems in the business domain leading to positive emotions and life satisfaction. Additionally, once entrepreneurs can access financial support from family, they can use such to acquire new skills and hire skilled labour necessary for the success of their business. Newman *et al.* (2018) suggest that having access to social support spirals the further development of more personal and psychological resources, such as entrepreneurial self-efficacy, which is crucial for predicting life satisfaction. ESE is a psychological resource that enables individuals to positively evaluate environmental stressors, leading to positive emotions and life satisfaction (Barbosa *et al.*, 2024; Newman *et al.*, 2018; Newman *et al.*, 2019). Since an entrepreneurship career demands entrepreneurial skills and competencies, ESE makes entrepreneurs confident that their entrepreneurial skills can enable them to operate a successful business, thus, leading to happiness and satisfaction with their work (Marshall *et al.*, 2020; Newman *et al.*, 2018). High ESE ignites positive emotions among entrepreneurs by making them feel they are in control of environmental stressors (Engel *et al.*, 2014). In support, Engel *et al.* (2014, p. 13) argue that "when individuals feel confident about their entrepreneurial ability, they are more likely to frame an uncertain environment as an opportunity and thus rely on effectual logic in their decisions." Thus, Engel *et al.* (2014) further argued that high ESE ignites positive emotions among entrepreneurs by making them feel they are in control of environmental stressors (Engel *et al.*, 2014). In support, Newman *et al.* (2018) expressed that individuals with high ESE tend to have high internal locus of control, which makes them believe in their capabilities to solve problems in the workplace, thus resulting in satisfaction with life.

Existing studies further indicate that ESE acts as a psychological resource that enables entrepreneurs to remain motivated and persistent until they attain their goals, even when confronted with uncertainty (Bakker *et al.*, 2014; Miao, Qian and Ma, 2017; Newman *et al.*, 2018). As such, there is evidence that entrepreneurial self-efficacy positively mediates the association between social support and life satisfaction (Marshall *et al.*, 2020; Newman *et al.*, 2018). According to Bandura (1977), individuals can develop their self-efficacy from (1) mastery experiences, which describes leveraging on one's previous successes to build confidence in performing a task, (2) vicarious experiences, wherein an individual develop confidence in their abilities after witnessing similar counterparts succeeding in a similar task, social persuasion, which describes (3) verbal persuasion and encouragement by significant others that the individual is capable of attaining a specific goal and (4) physiological states which help in regulating stress. We believe that having access to family support can help entrepreneurs to enhance these sources of self-efficacy which enhances their life satisfaction. Building from these studies, we posit that when an individual has access to resources from the family system, it bolsters confidence in their entrepreneurial skills, resulting in positive emotions, happiness and life satisfaction. On this account, we hypothesise that:

H2. Family support positively influences entrepreneurial self-efficacy among entrepreneurs.

H3. Entrepreneurial self-efficacy positively influences life satisfaction among entrepreneurs.

H4. Entrepreneurial self-efficacy mediates the association between family support and life satisfaction among entrepreneurs.

2.1.3 *The mediating role of coping.* We build on the Transactional Model of Stress and coping theory (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984) to argue that coping is a crucial mechanism that can connect family support to life satisfaction. Using this theory and consistent with a study by Barbosa *et al.* (2024), we argue that individuals with access to family support are likely to positively appraise stressors in the entrepreneurial environment which enhances their coping strategies. Coping is a crucial psychological construct linked to several outcomes, such as life satisfaction (Barbosa *et al.*, 2024; Krithiga and Velmurugan, 2024; Nikolaev *et al.*, 2024). An individual can use either problem or emotion-focused coping to deal with stressors triggered by the environment (Ahmed *et al.*, 2022; Folkman and Moskowitz, 2004). Emotion-focused coping entails walking away from stressors, while problem-focused coping entails actively confronting the stressor to find a solution (Ahmed *et al.*, 2022; Folkman and Moskowitz, 2004). Problem-focused coping includes taking bold actions to deal with defaulting clients and negotiating better terms with suppliers (Barbosa *et al.*, 2024; Schonfeld and Mazzola, 2015). Thus, being an entrepreneur means stress is inevitable since the individual is exposed to stressful job demands, such as resolving issues with employees and contractual disputes with suppliers of the business, which necessitates the need for developing effective coping strategies (Nikolaev *et al.*, 2024; Schonfeld and Mazzola, 2015). Thus, entrepreneurs who effectively devise some coping strategies to deal with job stressors report high levels of happiness and life satisfaction (Drnovšek *et al.*, 2010; Nikolaev *et al.*, 2022; Uy *et al.*, 2013). In this case, Uy *et al.* (2013) argued that using problem-focused and emotion-focused coping in different situations helps entrepreneurs effectively address problems as they arise, leading to satisfaction with life. Consequently, entrepreneurs who develop effective coping strategies can appraise stressors positively and tend to worry less about possible business failure (Ahmed *et al.*, 2022; Drnovšek *et al.*, 2010; Krithiga and Velmurugan, 2024; Uy *et al.*, 2013). Evidence suggests that problem-focused coping helps entrepreneurs learn how to deal with recurring challenges in the future after successfully addressing the current problem, which enhances their life satisfaction. Existing literature supports the view that coping positively influences life satisfaction (Barbosa *et al.*, 2024; Drnovšek *et al.*, 2010; Ahmed *et al.*, 2022; Huang and Chen, 2021; Nikolaev *et al.*, 2022; Uy *et al.*, 2013).

Nikolaev *et al.* (2024) assert that coping is an important mediating variable in the relationship between family support and life satisfaction because it helps individuals regulate emotional rollercoasters emanating from the entrepreneurial environment, resulting in enhanced life satisfaction. Furthermore, when entrepreneurs receive instrumental support from family, such as business knowledge, they are likely to develop proactive planning skills that help them manage situations that might potentially stress them, making them satisfied with their life (Ahmed *et al.*, 2022; Uy *et al.*, 2013). Additionally, learning how to solve problems as they arise from a family member who has business experience enables entrepreneurs to have mastery of the business environment, making them positively appraise stressors in the work domain, which ignites positive emotions and satisfaction with life (Bakker *et al.*, 2014; Nikolaev *et al.*, 2022). We argue that once entrepreneurs perceive that they have access to family support, they will likely cope well with work stress and challenges, resulting in satisfaction with life. This is particularly important in the context of South Africa, where entrepreneurs operate in a volatile business environment characterised

by lack of funding, high business failure rate and weak institutional support ([Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, 2025](#)). On this backdrop, we propose the following hypotheses:

- H5. Family support positively influences coping among entrepreneurs.
- H6. Coping positively influences life satisfaction among entrepreneurs.
- H7. Coping mediates the association between family support and life satisfaction among entrepreneurs.

3. Materials and methods

The current study used a quantitative research method with a causal research design as we intended to understand the interplay of family support, self-efficacy and coping with life satisfaction. We considered four provinces in South Africa, such as the Free State, Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal and the Northern Cape, as our study area. The Free State, KwaZulu-Natal and the Northern Cape provinces are categorised as rural, while Gauteng province is mostly urban. Thus, we considered these provinces appropriate units of analysis for this study because they provided us with a representative sample reflecting South African entrepreneurs. In addition, the South African Government is intensifying programmes to boost entrepreneurship in the region since the public entities cannot create more jobs to curb the growing unemployment ([Habiyaremye et al., 2022](#)). A self-administered questionnaire was distributed to the entrepreneurs in the study area in a survey. Entrepreneurs were considered for this study because they provide a reach context to study the issues of life satisfaction and its determinants since they operate under stressful conditions which result in burnout ([Marshall et al., 2020](#); [Newman et al., 2018](#)) and regret ([Hsu et al., 2019](#)). Since entrepreneurs play a vital role in revitalising an economy, exploring the determinants of life satisfaction among this group may be beneficial since life satisfaction results in enhanced productivity and venture performance ([Wiklund et al., 2019](#)). Consistent with other scholars who defined an entrepreneur as an individual who responds to a business opportunity and starts and operates a profitable business ([Davidsson and Wicklund, 2001](#); [Shane and Venkataraman, 2000](#)), full-time entrepreneurs who have been successfully running their business for the past 3 years were considered in the study. These entrepreneurs were owners or founders of the business. The criteria for selecting the entrepreneurs included the fact that they needed to be the owners of the business with at least 50% shares in the business. Another important criterion was that only businesses employing below 250 employees were included in the survey based on the definition of small businesses in South Africa ([Government Gazette, 2019](#)). We excluded SME managers as these are employees in these entrepreneurial businesses; hence, they do not experience the same stress compared to the founder of the business. Some questionnaires were distributed online to the participants using the QuestionPro software. Using online and physical drop-off and pick-up methods enhanced our chances of reaching out to sufficient participants. Due to the lack of a sampling frame for entrepreneurs in South Africa, a combination of the convenience and purposive sampling techniques was used to recruit the participants. In this case, the participants were recruited based on their availability and willingness to participate in the survey. The purposive sampling was used to recruit only participants who met certain criteria as explained in the inclusion criteria. From the 250 questionnaires distributed, 100 questionnaires were discarded because they were not completed properly and had some missing data. This could be because of over exposure to surveys (i.e. survey fatigue) since we are not the only researchers collecting data from entrepreneurs given the growing interest in entrepreneurship in South Africa. Additionally, it could be the issue of perceived data

sensitivity, where respondents avoid answering questions they perceive as too personal or intrusive. Finally, it could be because of the perceived lack of direct benefits from participating in the survey which reduces motivation to complete the survey. As such, 150 valid and complete questionnaires became the adequate sample for further processing. This resulted in a 60% response rate. This was achieved after removing questionnaires with missing values which were identified during the coding process. Since the study used self-reported questionnaires, it was crucial to assess the reliability and validity of the constructs. In this case, reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability. All the constructs were reliable as the values for Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability were all above the recommended threshold of 0.7 and above (Hair *et al.*, 2019). Validity was assessed using convergent and discriminant validity. Convergent validity was assessed using average variance extracted (AVE), while discriminant validity was assessed using Fornell and Larcker (1981). Using these assessments, validity was attained in all the constructs. All the AVEs of the constructs were above the recommended acceptable threshold 0.5 (Hair *et al.*, 2019).

3.1 Measures

This section describes how each construct was measured. The details of the items used to measure each construct are shown in Table 1.

3.2.1 Life satisfaction. Life satisfaction was the dependent variable in the study. This study measured life satisfaction using 5 items from the satisfaction with life scale developed by Diener *et al.* (1985). Nevertheless, 1 item "If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing" was dropped because it did not load properly. This was not surprising since this item's factor loading was 0.61 on Diener *et al.*'s (1985) original scale. According to Hair *et al.* (2019), factor loadings should be 0.7 and above to be retained in the model. Nevertheless, both convergent and discriminant validity of the life satisfaction construct was acceptable in this study, thus making us confident that dropping the item that loaded poorly would not affect our model and the rigour of our results. We anchored the statements on a seven-point Likert scale.

3.2.2 Family support. The origins of the family support scale can be linked to a study by Zimet *et al.* (1988), which conceptualised the multidimensional measure of social support. Henceforth, it has received support as witnessed by its wide adoption and application in different studies in different contexts (An *et al.*, 2024; Bird and Wennberg, 2016; Eddleston and Powell, 2012; Edelman *et al.*, 2016; Neneh, 2017; Osman *et al.*, 2014; Shakespeare-Finch and Obst, 2011; Xu *et al.*, 2020; Welsh and Kaciak, 2019). Following other existing studies, family support was measured using three types of support (i.e financial, instrumental and emotional support) (Neneh, 2017; Xu *et al.*, 2020; Welsh and Kaciak, 2019). Emotional support was measured using three items while financial and instrumental support were each measured with one item consistent with an existing study (Neneh, 2017). All the items were evaluated on a seven-point Likert scale. Consistent with Xu *et al.* (2020), since we were interested in general family support, we aggregated all the items into one construct of family support.

3.3.3 Entrepreneurial self-efficacy. Question items measuring entrepreneurial self-efficacy were adapted from existing studies (Zhao *et al.*, 2005). We measured this construct using four items. All the questions were anchored on a seven-point Likert scale.

3.3.4 Coping. This construct was measured using questions related to problem-focused and emotion-focused coping following other existing studies (Endler and Parker, 1990; Uy *et al.*, 2013). Both problem and emotion-focused questions were assessed using seven items each, where we tasked participants to express how they dealt with a job stressor in the past

Table 1. Key constructs and items

Indicator	Constructs	Source
LS	<i>Life satisfaction</i>	Diener <i>et al.</i> (1985)
LS1	I am satisfied with my life	
LS2	In most ways, my life is close to my ideal	
LS3	The conditions of my life are excellent	
LS4	So far, I have gotten the important things I want in life	Neneh (2017); Shakespeare-Finch and Obst (2011); Xu <i>et al.</i> (2020); Zimet <i>et al.</i> (1988)
FS	<i>Family support</i>	
FS1	There is someone I can talk to about the pressures in my life	
FS2	When I am feeling down there is someone in my family I can lean on	
FS3	There is someone from my family who can give me useful feedback about my ideas concerning my business	Zhao <i>et al.</i> (2005)
FS4	There is someone in my family who can offer me financial assistance to solve problems in my business	
FS5	There is someone in my family who can help	
	Me fulfil my responsibilities when I am unable	
ESE	<i>Entrepreneurial self-efficacy</i>	Folkman and Lazarus (1980); Endler and Parker (1990); Uy <i>et al.</i> (2013)
ESE1	I am confident in successfully identifying new business opportunities	
ESE2	I am confident in my skills related to creating new products	
ESE3	I am confident in my skills related to thinking creatively	
ESE4	I am confident in my skills related to commercializing an idea or new development in my business	
COP	<i>Coping</i>	
COP1	I thought about the event and learnt from my mistakes	
COP2	I focused on the problem to see how I could solve it	
COP3	I took some time off to get away from the stressor	
COP4	I visited a friend to have someone to talk to about my business problems	

Source(s): Authors' own work

two months, consistent with other existing studies (Folkman and Lazarus, 1980; Endler and Parker, 1990; Uy *et al.*, 2013).

3.3.5 Control variables. It was crucial to control other factors such as gender, business experience and level of education as control variables that can influence life satisfaction among entrepreneurs besides the constructs under investigation. These factors were treated as control variables consistent with other similar studies (Newman *et al.*, 2018). To measure gender, a binary code was used following other existing studies (Shirokova *et al.*, 2016). In this case, male was coded 1 and female 0. Business experience was measured using the number of years the entrepreneur spent operating an entrepreneurial venture. Consequently, no experience was coded 0 and experienced 1. The level of education was also scored on a binary code i.e 0 for matric and below and 1 for tertiary level.

3.4 Assessment of common method bias

Since the study used self-reported questionnaires, it was crucial to assess the possibility of Common Method Bias. As such, we assessed common method bias using Harman's one-factor test in SPSS. To achieve this, factor analysis was run using unrotated principal component analysis. The Harman's one-factor test results showed that the first factor accounted for 48.72%, which is less than 50%, indicating that the data was free from common method bias and, hence, ready for further statistical analyses.

We further tested the model for common method bias by conducting a full collinearity test as recommended by Kock (2015). We assessed the variance inflation factors (VIFs) for each construct. The VIFs for LS, FS, ESE and COP were 2.575, 1.466, 1.803 and 2.064, respectively. All the VIFs were within the recommended cut-off point of <3.3 (Kock, 2015). This suggested that common method bias was not a problem in our model.

3.5 Assessment of endogeneity

According to Sarstedt *et al.* (2020), endogeneity occurs when the independent variable is correlated with the error term of the dependent variable, leading to biased and unreliable estimates. This is an issue that needs to be diagnosed and fixed to enhance the rigour of the findings. To achieve this, we adopted a systematic approach recommended in existing literature to assess for endogeneity (Hult *et al.*, 2018; Sarstedt *et al.*, 2020). Firstly, we evaluated whether our predictor variables i.e family support, entrepreneurial self-efficacy and coping in our model, were nonnormally distributed. We evaluated this using the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test, as recommended by Sarstedt and Mooi (2019). It was found that none of the predictor variable scores were normally distributed. Henceforth, we assessed endogeneity in the model using Park and Gupta's (2012) Gaussian copula approach. The Gaussian copula approach has recently received support as a useful tool assessing endogeneity, especially in PLS-SEM models (Sarstedt *et al.*, 2020). As shown in Table 2, the Gaussian copula results showed that all the Gaussian copula combinations were insignificant (i.e. $p > 0.05$) as recommended by Sarstedt *et al.* (2020). The Gaussian copulas for all the predictor variables of life satisfaction were GC (ES) → LS (−0.083; $p = 0.500$), GC (FS) → LS (−0.279; 0.177) and GC (COP) → LS (0.057; 0.631), all insignificant. As shown in Table 2, we further tested all the possible relationships in the model, and all the Gaussian copula combinations were insignificant. This indicates that our model was free from endogeneity issues.

3.6 Data analysis

Data was analysed using descriptive statistics and structural equation modelling (SMART PLS version 4). In this case, PLS-SEM was used to assess the hypothesized relationships. The PLS-SEM enabled the researchers to test a sophisticated model where the association

Table 2. Assessment of endogeneity

Test	Construct	Coefficients	p-value
Gaussian copula of Model 1 (endogenous variables; ES)	ES → LS	0.347	0.000
	FS → LS	0.204	0.015
	COP → LS	0.162	0.000
Gaussian copula of Model 2 (endogenous variables; FS)	GC (ES) → LS	-0.083	0.500
	ES → LS	0.211	0.021
	FS → LS	0.531	0.030
Gaussian copula of Model 3 (endogenous variables; COP)	COP → LS	0.106	0.000
	GC (FS) → LS	-0.279	0.177
	ES → LS	0.281	0.019
Gaussian copula of Model 4 (endogenous variables; ES, FS)	FS → LS	0.241	0.015
	COP → LS	0.136	0.000
	GC (COP) → LS	0.057	0.631
Gaussian copula of Model 5 (endogenous variables; ES, COP)	ES → LS	0.303	0.000
	FS → LS	0.213	0.037
	COP → LS	0.159	0.000
Gaussian copula of Model 6 (endogenous variables; FS, COP)	GC (ES) → LS	-0.073	0.565
	GC (FS) → LS	-0.273	0.190
	ES → LS	0.345	0.000
Gaussian copula of Model 7 (endogenous variables; ES, FS, COP)	FS → LS	0.216	0.045
	COP → LS	0.137	0.000
	GC (ES) → LS	-0.069	0.616
Gaussian copula of Model 8 (endogenous variables; ES, FS, COP)	GC (COP) → LS	0.025	0.854
	ES → LS	0.181	0.000
	FS → LS	0.254	0.032
Gaussian copula of Model 9 (endogenous variables; ES, FS, COP)	COP → LS	0.149	0.000
	GC (FS) → LS	-0.314	0.190
	GC (COP) → LS	-0.040	0.781
Gaussian copula of Model 10 (endogenous variables; ES, FS, COP)	ES → LS	0.295	0.000
	FS → LS	0.367	0.026
	COP → LS	0.152	0.000
Gaussian copula of Model 11 (endogenous variables; ES, FS, COP)	GC (ES) → LS	-0.069	0.637
	GC (FS) → LS	-0.331	0.127
	GC (COP) → LS	0.039	0.806

Source(s): Authors' own work

between family support and life satisfaction was mediated by two variables i.e entrepreneurial self-efficacy and coping. Essentially, the SMART PLS version 4 made it possible to test a multi-mediation model.

3.7 Ethical considerations

The authors adhered to all ethical considerations stipulated by the Ethics committee the researchers are affiliated to. The authors applied for an ethical clearance before commencing the data collection process. Furthermore, informed consent was obtained from the participants who volunteered to participate in the study.

4. Results

4.1 Demographic characteristics

Table 3 presents the demographic characteristics of the participants. The findings showed that males (63%) were the majority and (37%) were females. Most of the entrepreneurs were

Table 3. Demographic characteristics of the participants

Variables	Category	Frequency	%
Gender	Female	56	37
	Male	94	63
Age	18–20	2	1
	21–30 years	40	27
	31–40 years	65	43
	41–50 years	27	18
	Above 50 years	16	11
Level of education	Matric and below	57	38
	Tertiary level	93	62
Business sector	Retail	36	24
	Services	101	67
	Manufacturing	9	6
	Others	4	3
Number of employees	1–5 employees	55	37
	6–10 employees	36	24
	11–20 employees	36	24
	21–50 years employees	23	15

Source(s): Authors' own work

between 31 and 40 years (43%) and 21–30 years (27%). Regarding educational level, 62% of the entrepreneurs possessed a tertiary qualification, while 38% had matric and below. The results also showed that most entrepreneurs (37%) employed 1–5 employees, followed by 6–10 employees (24%) and 11–20 employees (24%). Only 15% of the entrepreneurial businesses employed 21–50 years employees. This indicates that entrepreneurial businesses in South Africa are not growing as expected. Also, the findings showed that most entrepreneurs surveyed mainly operated in the services sector (67%).

4.2 Descriptive statistics

Table 4 captures the descriptive statistics of the key constructs of the study. The findings show that the participants exhibited moderate levels of life satisfaction (mean, 5.27; SD, 1.289), family support (mean, 4.85; SD, 1.836), entrepreneurial-self efficacy (mean, 5.56; SD, 1.506) and coping (mean, 5.74; SD, 1.383). In terms of correlations, the findings show that life satisfaction was positively correlated with family support ($r = 0.425$; $p = 0.001$), entrepreneurial self-efficacy ($r = 0.463$; $p = 0.000$) and coping (0.477 ; $p = 0.000$). The correlations among all the constructs are all significant and moderate.

4.3 Assessment of the measurement model

According to Hair *et al.* (2019), it is crucial to assess the measurement model to enhance the rigour of the data collection instrument. The findings on the instrument's quality, as ascertained by reliability and validity, are presented in Table 5. As indicated in Table 5, the CA and CR values were considered to measure reliability. The CA values between 0.845–0.880 and the CR values between 0.854–0.895 show acceptable levels of reliability (Hair *et al.*, 2019; Hair *et al.*, 2019; Sarstedt *et al.*, 2022). We further assessed the measurement model for convergent and discriminant validity to ascertain validity. Based on the findings in Table 4, convergent validity was achieved since the AVE values ranged from

Table 4. Mean, standard deviation, correlations

Constructs	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4
1. Life satisfaction	5.27	1.289	1			
2. Family support	4.85	1.836	0.425**	1		
3. Entrepreneurial self-efficacy	5.56	1.506	0.463**	0.443**	1	
4. Coping	5.74	1.383	0.477**	0.541**	0.660**	1

Note(s): **, correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed) *, correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed); c. Likewise $n = 150$

Source(s): Authors' own work

Table 5. Reliability and validity criteria

Constructs	Items	Factor loadings	CA	CR	AVE
Life satisfaction (LS)	LS1	0.886	0.845	0.895	0.679
	LS2	0.878			
	LS3	0.727			
	LS4	0.795			
Family support (FS)	FS1	0.835	0.856	0.863	0.698
	FS2	0.811			
	FS3	0.850			
	FS4	0.845			
	FS5	0.762			
Entrepreneurial self-efficacy (ESE)	ESE1	0.870	0.880	0.883	0.735
	ESE2	0.859			
	ESE3	0.867			
	ESE4	0.834			
Coping (COP)	COP1	0.820	0.855	0.854	0.697
	COP2	0.874			
	COP3	0.851			
	COP4	0.794			

Source(s): Authors' own work

0.679–0.698. Consistent with [Hair et al. \(2019\)](#), the AVE values meet the prescribed threshold of 0.5 and above.

4.3.1 Discriminant validity. As shown in [Table 6](#), we assessed discriminant validity following recommendations by [Fornell and Larcker \(1981\)](#). According to [Fornell and Larcker \(1981, p. 45\)](#), for a scale to attain discriminant validity, “the square root of each construct’s AVE should have a greater value than the correlations with other latent constructs”. As indicated in [Table 6](#), the findings show an acceptable discriminant validity since the squared AVEs indicated by the diagonal values in bold exceeded the correlations of each construct.

4.4 Structural model

We took a series of steps to assess the structural model to enhance the rigour of the results. We first evaluated the model for collinearity issues using existing recommended cut-off points ([Hair et al., 2019](#)). The assessment indicated that the model did not have collinearity issues as presented in the methodology section. We also assessed the structural model based

Table 6. Discriminant validity

Constructs	COP	LS	ESE	FS
COP	0.835			
LS	0.497	0.824		
ESE	0.659	0.485	0.858	
FS	0.552	0.446	0.451	0.835

Note(s): Diagonal values show the square root of AVEs for the constructs
Source(s): Authors' own work

on the R^2 values. The R^2 value for the FS–ESE relationship was 30%, and 0.304 for the FS–COP relationship. The R^2 value for the mediation model was 0.323. This suggests that the combined effect of the predictor variable and mediating variables predicted 32% of the variance in life satisfaction. The predictive relevance of the model was assessed using Q^2 as recommended by Hair *et al.* (2019). The Q^2 values for the endogenous variables i.e COP, ESE and LS were 0.290, 0.187 and 0.182 respectively. All the Q^2 values were above zero indicating the model has predictive relevance (Hair *et al.*, 2019). We assessed model fit using the standardised root mean square residual (SRMR) recommended by Henseler *et al.* (2016). According to Henseler *et al.* (2016), the model with SRMR below the cut-off <0.08 demonstrates an acceptable model fit. In this study, the SRMR value was 0.06 showing an adequate model fit. We used the bootstrapping method with 5,000 sub-samples, a function in SMART PLS 4, to test for the significance of the hypothesised relationships. Table 7 presents the findings of the direct relationships. The results show that family support positively predicts life satisfaction ($\beta = 0.173$; $t = 2.101$; $p = 0.000$). A significant positive association was also established between family support and entrepreneurial self-efficacy ($\beta = 0.450$; $t = 5.958$; $p = 0.000$). The association between entrepreneurial self-efficacy and life satisfaction was also positive and significant ($\beta = 0.257$; $t = 2.898$; $p = 0.004$). The findings also show that family support positively influences coping ($\beta = 0.311$; $t = 5.793$; $p = 0.000$). It was also established that the association between coping and life satisfaction was positive and significant ($\beta = 0.204$; $t = 2.243$; $p = 0.025$). Interestingly, the results also showed that entrepreneurial self-efficacy positively predicts coping ($\beta = 0.525$; $t = 7.885$; $p = 0.000$).

Table 7. Direct effects

Hypothesis	Path	Beta	<i>t</i> statistics	<i>p</i> -values	Decision
H1	FS → LS	0.173	2.101	0.000	Supported
H2	FS → ESE	0.450	5.958	0.000	Supported
H3	ESE → LS	0.257	2.898	0.004	Supported
H5	FS → COP	0.311	5.793	0.000	Supported
H6	COP → LS	0.204	2.243	0.025	Supported
	ESE → COP	0.525	7.885	0.000	
<i>Control variables</i>					
1	Gender → LS	0.025	0.328	0.743	
2	EXP → LS	-0.178	2.369	0.018	
3	Edu → LS	0.247	3.352	0.001	

Source(s): Authors' own work

4.4.1 Mediation analysis. Table 8 presents results on the hypothesised indirect relationships. The significance level was tested using the bootstrapping method with 5,000 subsamples. After controlling for gender, level of education and previous business experience, the findings show that entrepreneurial self-efficacy mediates the association between family support and life satisfaction ($\beta = 0.116$; $t = 2.339$; $p = 0.000$) as shown in Table 8. The total effects of FS on LS was 0.403. As shown in Table 8, a VAF of 29% further confirms that ESE partially mediates the association between family support and life satisfaction. When considering the confidence intervals of the indirect effects, the LL and UL values exclude zero confirming mediation. The results point to a complementary partial mediation since the indirect and direct effects are significant and point in the same direction. It was also established that coping partially mediates the association between family support and life satisfaction ($\beta = 0.236$; $t = 4.304$; $p = 0.000$). As shown in Table 8, a VAF of 58% further confirms that coping partially mediates the association between family support and life satisfaction. Also, when considering the confidence intervals of the indirect effects, the LL and UL values exclude zero confirming mediation. The results point to a complementary partial mediation since the indirect and direct effects are significant and point in the same direction. Our findings imply that family support is crucial for further developing more personal and psychological resources such as entrepreneurial self-efficacy and coping, which are essential for enhancing life satisfaction.

5. Discussion

This study aimed to evaluate the effect of family support on life satisfaction among entrepreneurs in South Africa. The study further examined the mediating role of psychological resources such as entrepreneurial self-efficacy and coping on the association between family support and life satisfaction. The findings showed that family support is a crucial determinant of life satisfaction. The strong positive and significant relationship established between family support and life satisfaction implies that resources provided by the family domain enrich the business domain resulting in positive emotions, joy, happiness and life satisfaction among entrepreneurs. The strong positive relationship between family support and life satisfaction could be explained by the South African Ubuntu-driven family support. Ubuntu is the South African idea embedded in the values of communalism, solidarity, interconnectedness and humanness, where one's well-being is deeply intertwined with the welfare of one's family and community (Kupangwa, 2025; Mangaliso, 2001; Zondo, 2022). Within the Ubuntu philosophy, family members feel morally obligated to support one another, embodying the collective ethos of overcoming challenges (Kupangwa, 2025). Family support is vital for entrepreneurs in South Africa because they operate in a challenging entrepreneurial environment with limited access to resources. The Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (2025) reports that South Africa exhibits poor EFCs, particularly access to finance, government policy and entrepreneurial support programmes, compared to other participating economies. Thus, considering the limited institutional and state support available to many entrepreneurs in South Africa (Global

Table 8. Mediation analysis

Mediation path	β	t statistic	p-values	Confidence interval	Decision	VAF(%)
–	–	–	–	LL UL		
H4: FS \rightarrow ESE \rightarrow LS	0.116	2.339	0.000	0.028 0.224	Partial mediation	29
H7: FS \rightarrow COP \rightarrow LS	0.236	4.304	0.000	0.012 0.134	Partial mediation	58

Source(s): Authors' own work

[Entrepreneurship Monitor, 2025](#)), the family domain often serves as a primary source of emotional stability and practical support. Family support acts as a protective factor against mental health challenges for entrepreneurs with limited access to resources, contributing to higher life satisfaction ([Neneh and Welsh, 2022](#)). Ideally, in South Africa, family ties are highly valued, and entrepreneurship is often seen as a family endeavour, where successful family members often support individuals in the family interested in starting a business ([Neneh and Welsh, 2022](#); [Urban and Nonkwelo, 2022](#)). Interestingly, the Ubuntu philosophy has become a stable indigenous knowledge system that is leveraged for business success by informing how successful entrepreneurs in the family often mentor and extend resources to other entrepreneurs in the family to grow their businesses ([Kupangwa, 2025](#); [Urban and Nonkwelo, 2022](#)). This culture of shared responsibility creates a safety net that reduces stress and fosters a sense of security, leading to greater life satisfaction ([Neneh and Welsh, 2022](#)). In the case of entrepreneurs in developing countries such as South Africa who operate under resource constraints ([GEM, 2025](#)), family members' financial, instrumental and emotional support play a crucial role in helping entrepreneurs deal with the stress from excessive work pressure, resulting in life satisfaction. Our findings are consistent with other studies conducted in different contexts. According to [Bahsri et al. \(2023\)](#), since the family system and the business domain are intertwined, the characteristics of the family system play a crucial role in predicting several entrepreneurial outcomes, such as life satisfaction. Essentially, resources from family diminish the negative effect of job stressors in the workplace resulting in positive emotions and happiness among entrepreneurs ([Bakker and Demerouti, 2007](#); [Bakker et al., 2014](#)). Since most entrepreneurs operate under stressful environments, lack resources and suffer from loneliness, leveraging family members for support bolsters their wellbeing. In support, existing studies express that some family members are qualified in different fields; hence, their advice, mentorship and feedback help entrepreneurs gain some critical skills required to manage their business which reduces stress and burnout effectively ([Neneh and Welsh, 2022](#); [Welsh et al., 2018](#); [Welsh et al., 2021](#)). Our findings are also consistent with other studies conducted in different contexts; for example, a study conducted by [Alshibani and Volery \(2020\)](#) in Australia found that entrepreneurs with access to family support reported high levels of life satisfaction. Also, the availability of emotional support, such as reassurance, empathy and motivation, may help entrepreneurs appraise stressors in the environment positively, resulting in positive life satisfaction ([Neneh and Welsh, 2022](#); [Welsh et al., 2018](#); [Zhu et al., 2017](#)). This view is also supported by other studies conducted in developing countries ([Neneh, 2017](#); [Neneh and Welsh, 2022](#)). Our findings contrast the view by [Sieger and Minola \(2017\)](#) that family support is a poisoned gift by demonstrating that family support is crucial in predicting life satisfaction among entrepreneurs from a developing country such as South Africa by diminishing the stress emanating from lack of resources, low economic growth, high inflation, high unemployment and negative reviews such as greylisting which negatively impact their businesses.

After controlling for gender, level of education and previous business experience, the findings also showed that entrepreneurial self-efficacy partially mediates the association between family support and life satisfaction. A VAF of 29% further confirmed that ESE partially mediates the association between family support and life satisfaction. A complementary partial mediation was established since the indirect and direct effects were significant and pointing in the same direction ([Hair et al., 2019](#)). This implies that having access to resources from the family system enhances one's confidence in their entrepreneurial skills resulting in feelings of joy, happiness and life satisfaction. The findings justified our application of the Social Cognitive Theory ([Bandura, 1991](#)) to theorise the inclusion of entrepreneurial self-efficacy as a mediating variable on the link between family support and life satisfaction. The current findings corroborate the work of other existing

scholars who found that individuals with high ESE tend to have high internal *locus* of control which makes them believe in their capabilities to solve problems in the workplace, thus, resulting in satisfaction with life (Barbosa *et al.*, 2024; Newman *et al.*, 2018; Newman *et al.*, 2019). Existing studies also express that ESE acts as a psychological resource that enables entrepreneurs to remain motivated and persistent until they attain their goals even when confronted with uncertainty and challenging circumstances (Bakker *et al.*, 2014; Miao, Qian and Ma, 2017; Newman *et al.*, 2018). Consequently, having access to family support is believed to spiral the further development of more personal and psychological resources such as ESE, which are crucial for enhancing life satisfaction (Bahsri *et al.*, 2023; Newman *et al.*, 2018). This implies that when entrepreneurs perceive that they can access essential resources from the family system (Welsh and Kaciak, 2019), they are likely to become confident in their entrepreneurial skills, which invokes positive emotions and life satisfaction (Marshall *et al.*, 2020; Newman *et al.*, 2018).

It was also established that coping partially mediates the association between family support and life satisfaction. A VAF of 58% further confirmed the partial mediation of coping on the association between family support and life satisfaction. When considering the confidence intervals of the indirect effects, the LL and UL excluded zero confirming mediation. The results pointed to a complementary partial mediation since the indirect and direct effects were significant and pointed in the same direction (Hair *et al.*, 2019). This implies that coping is a crucial psychological mechanism that explains how family support influences life satisfaction. A study by Krithiga and Velmurugan (2024) conducted in the context of a developing country (India) agrees that coping is an essential psychological resource that can assist entrepreneurs in dealing with stressors in the work domain. Since the entrepreneurial career is associated with uncertainty and risk, entrepreneurs who effectively devise coping strategies to deal with job stressors report high levels of happiness and life satisfaction (Drnovšek *et al.*, 2010; Nikolaev *et al.*, 2022; Uy *et al.*, 2013). We posit that the availability of family support bolsters personal resources such as coping, which results in personal utility such as life satisfaction. In support, existing studies allude that when individuals can access support from the family system, they are likely to develop effective coping strategies which make them positively appraise stressors in the work domain resulting in life satisfaction (Ahmed *et al.*, 2022; Aldrich and Cliff, 2003; Drnovšek *et al.*, 2010; Uy *et al.*, 2013; Welsh and Kaciak, 2019). These findings become important, particularly within the South African context, where entrepreneurs operate in a volatile landscape with limited resources resulting in stress and burnout. Consistent with the family embeddedness theory (Aldrich and Cliff, 2003), resources such as family support are crucial in building more psychological resources such as entrepreneurial self-efficacy and coping which helps entrepreneurs in developing countries thrive in stressful entrepreneurial environments and be satisfied with their lives.

5.1 Theoretical implications

Our findings extend the existing literature on the intersection of entrepreneurship and life satisfaction in two ways. Firstly, our study contributes to the existing body of knowledge by responding to the call for more empirical studies to consider the socio-economic context when investigating the link between life satisfaction and its determinants since the nature of stressors and life satisfaction among entrepreneurs vary based on context (Barbosa *et al.*, 2024; Gashi *et al.*, 2024; Stephan, 2018; Wiklund *et al.*, 2019; Welsh *et al.*, 2021). We thus applied the family embeddedness theory (Aldrich and Cliff, 2003), Social Cognitive theory (Bandura, 1991) and the Transactional Model of Stress and coping theory (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984) to explain how resources from the family domain result in the further

development of psychological resources such as entrepreneurial self-efficacy and coping, which are crucial for diminishing stress emanating from entrepreneurial environments from a developing country context. Our findings demonstrated that different resources, such as family support and psychological resources, such as entrepreneurial self-efficacy and coping, are crucial in predicting life satisfaction among entrepreneurs in a developing country such as South Africa who operate in a volatile and resource-constrained environment. Thus, it became apparent that the mixed findings on the link between family support and life satisfaction can be attributed to contextual differences. Secondly, our study contributes to the existing literature by proposing and testing a mediation model that includes two vital mediating variables, entrepreneurial self-efficacy and coping, which enhanced our understanding of how family support can predict life satisfaction among entrepreneurs in a developing country context. Thus, our findings provided new theoretical insights that enhanced our understanding of the interplay between family support, entrepreneurial self-efficacy and coping with life satisfaction among entrepreneurs in South Africa, an approach that is lacking in existing studies.

5.2 Practical implications

Having established that family support positively influences life satisfaction among entrepreneurs, entrepreneurs are encouraged to leverage the family system to benefit from crucial resources which can enrich their business domains, leading to life satisfaction. Also, since the entrepreneurship career can be emotionally demanding and stressful, entrepreneurs are encouraged to use the emotional support provided by family members. Additionally, we encouraged entrepreneurs to take advantage of mentorship, feedback, and other instrumental support from experienced family members. This can enhance their entrepreneurial self-efficacy, which is crucial for attaining life satisfaction. Entrepreneurs are also encouraged to develop effective coping strategies, such as problem-focused and emotion-focused by actively resolving problems as they come and sometimes walking away from stressors, to deal with stressors in the business environment. Even though other studies express that entrepreneurs should mainly use problem-focused coping because of the myriad of daily challenges they face (Drmovšek *et al.*, 2010; Nikolaev *et al.*, 2022), another existing study (Uy *et al.*, 2013) found that both coping strategies are crucial and can enhance life satisfaction. Our findings can also assist entrepreneurship training practitioners in developing training manuals and materials that challenge entrepreneurs to solve real-world business problems through role-playing. This can help entrepreneurs sharpen their entrepreneurial self-efficacy and coping skills which are crucial psychological resources linked to life satisfaction. The findings also culminate with policy implications. Policymakers in South Africa are encouraged to design policies that are context-specific, as interventions that have been adopted in developed countries to support entrepreneurs may be ineffective in a developing country such as South Africa due to contextual differences. Policymakers should also aim to develop an entrepreneurial ecosystem that links all key stakeholders that support the development of SMEs since the results showed that access to resources is key as it has a buffering effect on the stress associated with running an entrepreneurial venture.

6. Limitations and future directions for research

Even though our research generated new insights into the phenomenon explored, the study has some limitations that warrant further investigation. One of the limitations is that our study used non-probability sampling techniques such as convenience and purposive sampling, which might weaken the representativeness of the sample and possibly limit the generalisability of the findings. Also, the study was cross-sectional, where we collected data

at a single point in time which might limit our understanding of the development of coping mechanisms and entrepreneurial self-efficacy. We thus suggest that future studies should conduct a longitudinal study since a reasonable time is required to fully understand the interplay between family support, entrepreneurial self-efficacy and coping with life satisfaction among entrepreneurs. Additionally, our study only used life satisfaction to measure the well-being of entrepreneurs, which might limit the understanding of this phenomenon among this group since well-being is a multi-dimensional construct that consists of hedonic and eudaimonic well-being (Nikolaev *et al.*, 2022; Wiklund *et al.*, 2019). Thus, future studies can replicate this study and include eudaimonic wellbeing to enhance the understanding of wellbeing issues among entrepreneurs. Finally, our study only tested the mediating role of entrepreneurial self-efficacy and coping on the association between family support and life satisfaction without incorporating other boundary conditions, which can also influence this mediation model. This creates an opportunity for future studies to explore a moderated mediation model by incorporating variables such as gender and experience of the entrepreneur as possible moderators. This is because experienced vs less experienced entrepreneurs may cope differently with stressors in the business environment even though they have access to family support. In addition, future studies can also investigate other mediators such as resilience and moderators such as cultural differences in family support, to further enhance the understanding of the relationship between family support and life satisfaction among entrepreneurs. It was also crucial to note a strong and direct relationship between ESE and coping even though we did not hypothesise this relationship. Hence, this paves the way for future studies to explore the relationship between ESE and coping to understand how personal resources such as ESE can enhance further gains in psychological resources such as coping.

7. Conclusions

Our study generated new insights by establishing that family support is a crucial resource that minimises the negative effect of entrepreneurial environmental stressors resulting in positive emotions, happiness and life satisfaction among entrepreneurs. Additionally, our findings demonstrated that entrepreneurial self-efficacy and coping are crucial psychological mechanisms that can explain how family support influences life satisfaction among entrepreneurs. Interestingly, the results justified our application of the family embeddedness theory (Aldrich and Cliff, 2003), Social Cognitive theory (Bandura, 1991) and the Transactional Model of Stress and coping theory (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984) to understand how different resources can interact to predict life satisfaction among entrepreneurs, thus generating new insights from a developing country context.

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Further reading

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Corresponding author

Obey Dzomonda can be contacted at: dzomonda@gmail.com