

The mediating effect of greed on the relationship between strategic entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial success: does gender of the entrepreneur matter?

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Abstract

Purpose – Understanding the factors that drive entrepreneurial success is crucial, and the role of greed in this context remains controversial. This study investigates how strategic entrepreneurship (SE) influences success, with greed as a mediating factor.

Design/methodology/approach – Using survey data from 127 respondents, we applied exploratory factor analysis (EFA), confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and structural equation modeling (SEM).

Findings – The findings indicate that while SE enhances success, greed hinders it. Notably, greed does not significantly mediate the relationship between SE and success, and its impact is not gender-sensitive.

Research limitations/implications – These insights contribute to the broader understanding of entrepreneurial dynamics and suggest that future research should explore additional moderating factors such as cultural background, industry type and organizational size.

Originality/value – This research broadens the understanding of the impact of greed on entrepreneurial success, an area that has not been extensively studied. It also uniquely explores the moderating role of gender in the relationship between SE and greed, offering fresh theoretical and practical perspectives on the factors influencing entrepreneurial success.

Keywords Strategic entrepreneurship, Greed, Entrepreneur success, Mediated effect

Paper type Research paper

1. Introduction

In the dynamic and competitive landscape of contemporary business, entrepreneurship plays a pivotal role in driving innovation, economic growth and wealth creation. While entrepreneurial success has often been attributed to a combination of factors, the influence of strategic entrepreneurship (SE) and the complex interplay of human motivations, particularly greed, have garnered increasing attention within the academic and business communities (Hughes *et al.*, 2021; Kantur, 2016; Terri *et al.*, 2015; Tacke *et al.*, 2023; Porfirio *et al.*, 2020). Due to their ambition to make more money, businessmen would be greedy

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(Sinafiksh, 2020). However, this is not helping them as they are less self-controlled and they even do not know the repercussions of their behavior on the long-term effect of their businesses (Knuniantc, 2022). Businesses naturally aim to make profits, but excessive greed can harm entrepreneurs, their partners and the public. Moreover, entrepreneurs should address social issues and not add to them.

In recent years researchers have explored the relationship between the “dark-side” personality characteristics of entrepreneurs and success (Akhtar *et al.*, 2013). These dark side personalities are considered psychopathy, a personality disorder characterized by a lack of empathy, manipulation and callousness (Robert and Craig, 2006; Akhtar *et al.*, 2013; Wei *et al.*, 2023). Taking greed as a behavioral aspect of entrepreneurs, some claim that greed has both positive and negative roles in success. Some argue that a certain degree of greed or ambition is necessary for entrepreneurs to drive innovation, take risks and propel their ventures to success. On the other hand, critics maintain that greed can lead to unethical behavior, exploitation of workers and resources, and a focus on short-term gains at the expense of long-term sustainability. For example, Terri *et al.* (2015) noted that greed has constructive and detrimental roles in success. However, Tacke *et al.* (2023) argued that greed is more likely to be connected to unethical behavior. According to Tacke *et al.* (2023), greed is an extreme kind of self-interest that drives people to pursue material wealth and non-material wants with little or no regard for the welfare of others that expecting positive influence is unlikely. Although greed is mentioned as a positive and negative factor for organizational success in a few researches, an empirical study is still rare and a lot is yet to be done (Wang and Murnighan, 2011). The study conducted by Piispanen *et al.* (2022) also indicated that the business development of small and medium enterprises would be affected by managers’ SE activities and their trusting and distrusting beliefs. Therefore, the nature of this topic underscores the need for a nuanced understanding of the role of greed in entrepreneurial success. Thus, the current study aims at exploring the effect of greed on the entrepreneurs’ success taking it as a mediating variable.

Strategic entrepreneurship is defined as the pursuit of opportunity; an entrepreneur’s capacity to identify an opportunity, utilize underutilized resources and produce value regardless of whether the resources are currently owned or not (Stockley, 2021). According to the definition, entrepreneurship is dependent on an entrepreneur’s capacity to pursue both opportunity and competitive advantage at the same time while entirely *tapping into new resources* which is contrary to effectual entrepreneurship which relies on resources *already available*. For young technological firms facing resource challenges, SE is presumed to be the solution as long as a firm possesses considerable scope for entrepreneurship (Hughes *et al.*, 2021). The study claimed that SE explained as a synthesis of opportunity-seeking and advantage-seeking behaviors, can affect innovation activities.

Though both SE and effectual entrepreneurship behaviors are essential at different times, launching a startup compared to managing a fully-fledged business requires vastly different behaviors and skills so researching separately is essential (Stockley, 2021). Thus, the current study is confined to the analysis of SE on entrepreneurs’ success where success is measured as the self-reported performance of the firm (Dominika *et al.*, 2020).

Kantur (2016) conducted a study and found that SE has a significant mediating role in the relationship between entrepreneurial orientation and performance. The positive association between performance and SE is reported that either variables increase or decrease in the same direction (Mohutsiwa, 2012). Unlike the effect of greed, the role of SE on success is positive (Kantur, 2016; Stockley, 2021; Hughes *et al.*, 2021).

Despite the recognition of SE as a crucial factor for success in the entrepreneurial landscape, there is a significant gap in understanding how greed interacts with SE and influences entrepreneurial outcomes. While the existing literature acknowledges both the positive and negative implications of greed, empirical studies examining greed as a

mediating variable in the relationship between SE and entrepreneurial success are notably limited. Additionally, there is a lack of exploration regarding how the entrepreneur's gender may moderate this relationship, which is critical for achieving a nuanced understanding of entrepreneurial behavior. The literature also presents conflicting views on the role of greed, with some studies suggesting that it fosters innovation and risk-taking, while others link it to unethical behavior and a short-term focus. This inconsistency highlights the urgent need for further research to clarify the contexts in which greed can either be beneficial or detrimental.

To address these gaps, this study aims to investigate the combined effects of SE and greed, while also considering the moderating effects of gender. By examining these relationships, the research seeks to contribute to a comprehensive theoretical framework that reconciles inconsistent findings in the literature and deepens our understanding of the behavioral drivers of entrepreneurial success. The implications of this study extend beyond academic theory; they can provide practical guidance for entrepreneurs seeking to balance ambition with ethical considerations for sustainable business practices. Furthermore, the findings are anticipated to inform policymakers and educators about the importance of promoting ethical entrepreneurship and gender equity within the entrepreneurial ecosystem, ultimately bridging the gap between theoretical concepts and real-world practices. Therefore, the major objective of the study is to investigate the influence of SE on entrepreneurial success when greed takes the mediation position. In line with the major objective, the specific objectives are as follows:

- (1) To examine the effect of SE on greed.
- (2) To investigate the effect of greed on entrepreneurs' success.
- (3) To find out the effect of SE on entrepreneurs' success.
- (4) To study the mediating effect of greed on the relationship between SE and entrepreneurs' success.
- (4) To examine the moderating effect of gender on the relationship between SE and greed.

The rest of this study is structured as follows: [Section 2](#) reviews the relevant literature, [Section 3](#) outlines the research methods and contexts, [Section 4](#) discusses the results and interpretations and [Section 5](#) concludes with practical implications and suggestions for future research directions.

2. Review of related literature

This section establishes the framework for a complete analysis by defining the important areas of attention and emphasizing the need for more research on the role of SE and greed in entrepreneurial success. Thus, we reviewed the literature by critically assessing and synthesizing existing research and set our research hypothesis based on the review. Accordingly, the review encompasses variables of interest mentioned in the objective section and it also determines the measurement of each latent variable.

2.1 Strategic entrepreneurship and success

The term "strategic entrepreneurship" is frequently associated with the contributions of scholars such as Michael A. Hitt, R. Duane Ireland and Robert E. Hoskisson ([Mazzei et al., 2017](#); [Mazzei, 2018](#)). Their research weaves together aspects of strategic management and entrepreneurship, illustrating how firms can attain superior performance by concurrently engaging in opportunity-seeking and advantage-seeking behaviors. The SE concept is usually

discussed by two opinion groups as using and creating opportunity with available skills and resources (Stockley, 2021; Timmons, 2004) and the second group of SEs is the identification, evaluation and use of opportunities in a way that has not occurred so far (Shane and Venkataraman, 2000; Shane, 2003). Moreover, SE is conceptualized as a unidimensional construct with nine items under four dimensions of “sustained regeneration,” “organizational rejuvenation,” “strategic renewal” and “domain redefinition” (Kantur, 2016).

In addition to defining exogenous and mediating variables, it is essential to define and measure the endogenous variable, entrepreneurs’ success. Thus, Fisher *et al.* (2014) defined entrepreneurs’ success as a multifaceted construct that best captures more than financial and economic metrics. In many types of research studies, success is equally defined as performance that constitutes financial and non-financial dimensions. In the study conducted in Malaysia and Bangladesh, for example, business growth and financial results are the most important aspects of success (Tehseen *et al.*, 2023). Moreover, Wach *et al.* (2020) used the psychological approach to assess entrepreneurial success and identified 14 items categorized under five main factors “firm performance,” “workplace relationships,” “personal fulfilment,” “community impact” and “personal financial rewards”. In this study however, success is measured in terms of self-reported firm performance to make the measurement easy (Wach *et al.*, 2020; Dominika *et al.*, 2020).

The effect of SE on success is relatively well-researched and a positive association is reported (Kantur, 2016; Stockley, 2021; Hughes *et al.*, 2021). However, the effect could be influenced by culture. The study by Bhasin and Keng Ng (2019) reveals that cultural values foster the entrepreneurial spirit, encourage risk-taking and subsequently drive economic development. Researchers adopted the SE measure proposed by Kantur (2016) and given these insights the following hypothesis is developed:

H1. Strategic entrepreneurship has a significant positive effect on entrepreneurs’ success.

This hypothesis is grounded in the robust theoretical and empirical foundations provided by previous research, offering a clear direction for further investigation into the dynamics of SE and its impact on success.

2.2 Strategic entrepreneurship and greed

Tacke *et al.* (2023) defined greed as “an extreme kind of self-interest that drives people to pursue material wealth and immaterial wants with little or no regard for the welfare of others.” Based on this definition, some scholars contend that greed should not be cultivated as a behavioral trait (Tacke *et al.*, 2023; Wang and Murnighan, 2011). However, some still claim that greed has both positive and negative roles in success that should be nurtured (Terri *et al.*, 2015). Regarding how to measure greed, we adapt the greed scale developed by Lambie and Haugen (2019).

Due to unsettled claims regarding the effect of greed on success, we tried to make further analyses on the effect of greed on success. Moreover, we wanted to examine the effect of SE on greed. In this context, we examine SE as the ability of an entrepreneur to recognize an opportunity, leverage underutilized resources to seize it and create enduring value (Stockley, 2021). Moreover, we presumed that SE exerts a significant negative influence on greed, thereby ensuring the sustained long-term success of entrepreneurs who operate with consideration for others. Therefore, we formulated the second hypothesis:

H2. Strategic entrepreneurship has a significant negative effect on greed.

To establish a theoretical foundation for the hypothesis that “strategic entrepreneurship has a significant negative effect on greed,” we considered the upper echelons theory, which posits

that the traits and values of top executives shape organizational outcomes; and leaders who embrace SE are likely to foster a culture of ethical behavior and long-term thinking within their organizations (Hambrick and Mason, 1984).

2.3 Greed and success

Different researches provide an extensive understanding of greed, exploring it through diverse angles like psychology, economics and literature. These sources emphasize the intricate intricacies of greed and its profound influence on both individuals and the broader community. In a study conducted by Hoyer *et al.* (2022), using a Dutch sample, it was found that individuals characterized by greed tend to have higher personal and household incomes. However, these individuals also reported lower life satisfaction, indicating negative psychological outcomes. The study concluded that while greed is a widespread phenomenon and may have certain advantages, it is frequently criticized. According to Jinyun *et al.* (2022), greed serves as a dual-faceted instrument. On one hand, it can foster competitiveness and contribute to organizational growth. However, it may also lead to detrimental outcomes, including imprudent risk-taking and unscrupulous conduct.

Although some researchers like Terri *et al.* (2015) and Jinyun *et al.* (2022) documented the positive and negative effects of greed on success, we are in accord with the argument of Tacke *et al.* (2023) and Wang and Murnighan (2011) that greed is a trait that has detrimental effect. Assuming the negative effects of greed on success, we formulated the third hypothesis as follows:

H3. Greed has a significant negative effect on entrepreneur's success.

In order to establish a theoretical foundation for the hypothesis "Greed has a significant negative effect on entrepreneurial success," we took prosocial behavior theory as the theoretical foundation. The prosocial behavior theory suggests that greed correlates negatively with prosocial behaviors like empathy and cooperation (Mares and Woodard, 2012). Entrepreneurs who display high levels of greed may be less inclined to participate in activities that foster strong, supportive networks essential for achieving entrepreneurial success. Consequently, the absence of prosocial behavior can impede the formation of valuable relationships and resource acquisition.

In addition to the direct effect, we reviewed the literature on the mediating effect of greed on the association between SE and success. Scholars disagree about greed, which Tacke *et al.* (2023) define as a selfish drive that makes people pursue wealth and needs without caring about others. Thus, some researchers argue against nurturing greed due to its potential harm (Tacke *et al.*, 2023; Wang and Murnighan, 2011), while others see it as having a dual impact on success (Terri *et al.*, 2015). Despite the existence of some literature that recognizes the mixed effect of greed on success, we keep the idea that advocates the detrimental nature of greed. Thus, we formulated the fourth hypothesis:

H4. Greed has a competing mediation effect on the relationship between SE and entrepreneurs' success.

2.4 Gender variation in greed

Although making broad generalizations about the greed of an entire gender is not appropriate at least theoretically, different writers tried to relate the material inclinations of genders. A study conducted by Aidin *et al.* (2023) revealed that strategic foresight plays a crucial role in women's entrepreneurship by contributing to business sustainability, highlighting the correlation between gender and SE. However, greed is a complex human behavior that may not be determined by gender and recognizing such traits may not be

inherently linked to gender as there is a difference between greed and materialism (Lambie and Haugen, 2019). Currie *et al.* (2000) conducted a study in Australian higher education institutions to investigate the sacrifices individuals had to make to pursue their careers and found unvarying responses across genders. Although the study conducted by Workman and Lee (2011) in the USA and Korea revealed that females are more materialist than males, being materialist is different from being greedy (Lambie and Haugen, 2019) and greed would be gender neutral. However, Simpson (2003) claimed that females are more likely than males to cooperate in greed. Thus, we presumed that gender is a factor in determining the relationship between SE and greed and formulated hypothesis five as follows.

H5. The relationship between SE and greed is significantly moderated by gender.

While the literature on SE and its outcomes is extensive, a notable gap exists in the exploration of its effect on greed and, in turn, how greed may mediate the relationship between SE and success.

To date, no empirical studies have specifically investigated these dynamics. This lapse is significant as understanding the influence of SE on greed could provide valuable insights into the ethical dimensions of entrepreneurial behavior. Moreover, examining greed as a potential mediator could reveal how entrepreneurial behavior affects success. Addressing this gap is essential for a comprehensive understanding of the interplay between SE, greed and success and the conceptual framework is presented in Figure 1.

3. Methods and contexts

Contexts of entrepreneurial success greed in Ethiopia.

Greed plays a complex role in entrepreneurship. While ambition and the quest for profit can inspire innovation and growth, an excess of greed may result in unethical behavior and a focus on short-term gains, ultimately detrimental to the business and its stakeholders. In Ethiopia, where community and social responsibility are highly esteemed, it is vital to balance profit-driven motives with ethical considerations for achieving sustainable entrepreneurial success. However, businesses are often viewed as greedy, prompting the government to impose strict regulations to safeguard consumers. Despite its dual nature observed in various countries, exploring the relationship between SE and greed can yield valuable insights into creating a more ethical and sustainable entrepreneurial landscape in Ethiopia.

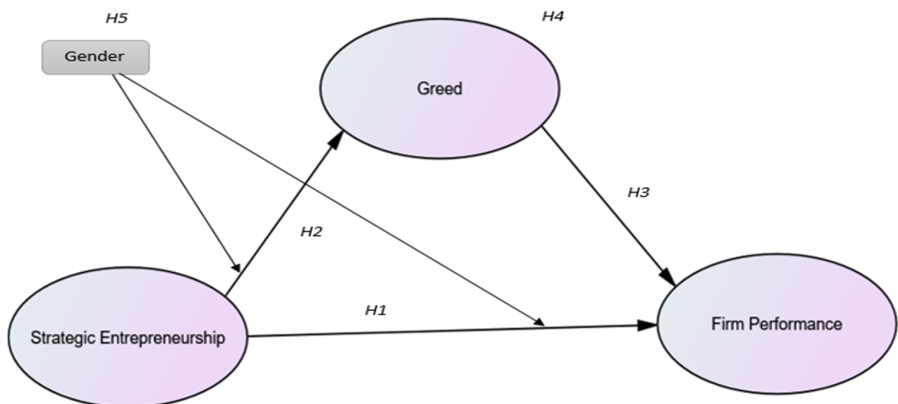


Figure 1.
Conceptual framework

Source(s): Figure by authors

To examine the interplay between SE, greed and entrepreneurs' success, we collected data from postgraduate students of Addis Ababa University, College of Business and Economics who at the same time either own or manage businesses. We preferred postgraduate students in the College of Business and Economics due to their practical and theoretical exposure to the subject matter. To reach the potential respondents, we obtained the total population and their addresses of active postgraduate students from Addis Ababa University, College of Business and Economics registrar and we sent them a questionnaire customized into Google form. From the total list of 1,604 students enrolled in four departments (Department of Accounting and Finance, Department of Economics, Department of Management and Department of Public Administration and Development Management), 104 emails bounced back due to different reasons including wrong address and we were able to reach 1,500 students through their email. Researchers also checked their experiences in either owning or managing businesses.

Questions for the survey related to SE, greed and entrepreneurs' success were adapted from previous studies. Therefore, the questions related to SE are adapted from [Kantur \(2016\)](#) and questions related to greed are adapted from [Lambie and Haugen \(2019\)](#). From the six sub-latent variables of greed: (1) excessive desire for more, material things; (2) excessive desire for more, non-material things; (3) disregard for the potential cost of obtaining one's desire; (4) insatiability; (5) acquisition motivation; and (6) retention motivation, we adapted 20 items initially and reduced later based on the validity. Moreover, questions for entrepreneurs' success were adopted from [Wach et al. \(2020\)](#) and the attributes related to firm performance are considered. We assigned codes to items under each of the three main latent variables (SE, greed and entrepreneurial success) that the questionnaire implicitly measured. We did not reveal the names of these variables to the respondents to prevent deliberate bias. From the total of 1,500 appropriate emails sent, we were able to get responses from 127 in the first round and the data are found to be sufficient as per the result of the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value.

3.1 Robustness check

To check the data sufficiency for factor analysis, researchers used the Barlett Test of Sphericity (BTS) and KMO and obtained the KMO value of 0.761. To resolve the convergent and discriminant validity concerns, the researchers removed some items from Greed (G16, G14, G18, G2, G11, G5, G8, G15, G20, G19 and G4) and ran the exploratory factor analysis (EFA) again and able to increase the KMO value to 0.796 and the cumulative rotation sums of squared loadings to 52%. The rotated component matrix along with components loading and Cronbach's alpha is presented in [Table 1](#).

[Table 1](#) shows reliability (Cronbach's alpha), convergent validity (loadings on a single factor) and discriminant validity (no cross-loadings). Having the clean pattern matrix for the EFA, researchers proceeded to the CFA and checked the model fit and model validity. Thus, we used the AMOS plugin for the pattern matrix model builder as shown in [Figure 2](#) and made some modifications for the model to fit.

Therefore, we co-vary e5 and e7, e13 and e14 and e20 and e22 to improve the model. Moreover, we deleted SE1 and G7 as they carry similar meanings to SE2 and G10, respectively, and the model fit is presented on [Table 2](#).

The model fit is generated by the Amos plugin and it is acceptable based on the recommendation of [Hu and Bentler \(1999\)](#) and [Gaskin and Lim \(2018\)](#).

For the master validity, we again used the Amos plugin and the validity is accepted according to [Malhotra \(2011\)](#). Malhotra argued that validity can be established through CR alone if it is greater than 0.70 and the model validity is presented on [Table 3](#).

As we hypothesized the moderation effect of gender on the relationship between SE and greed; and SE and firm performance, we ran the configural invariance test, metric invariance test and scalar invariance test as part of the robustness check.

Table 1.
Rotated component
matrix

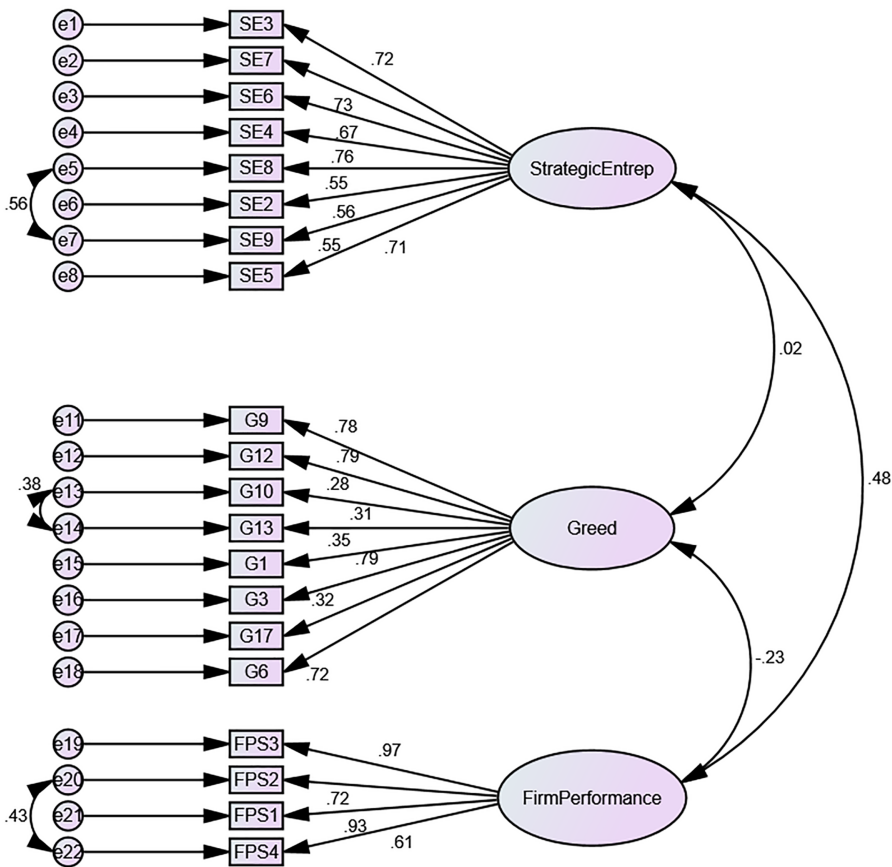
Cronbach's alpha		Component	
0.870		0.812	0.894
SE3	0.767		
SE7	0.720		
SE6	0.718		
SE4	0.709		
SE8	0.674		
SE2	0.659		
SE9	0.642		
SE5	0.613		
SE1	0.608		
G7		0.670	
G9		0.670	
G12		0.669	
G10		0.661	
G13		0.618	
G1		0.617	
G3		0.603	
G17		0.541	
G6		0.538	
FPS3			0.804
FPS2			0.779
FPS1			0.769
FPS4			0.687
Note(s): Extraction method: principal component analysis			
Rotation method: Varimax with Kaiser normalization			
a. rotation converged in six iterations			
Source(s): Created by authors			

The configural invariance is met as evidenced by a good model fit measure when estimating two groups (male and female) freely (without constraints). In addition, metric invariance was good as evidenced by the non-significant chi-square difference test between unconstrained and fully constrained models where the regression weights were constrained. Furthermore, scalar invariance was met as evidenced by the insignificant *p* value that the two groups are structurally not different (they are invariant). As part of the robustness check, researchers also tested the *multicollinearity*, common method bias and other required tests and the results are robust.

4. Results and discussion

In the robustness checking, all the assumptions are satisfied and the data can be used for the analysis to test the formulated hypotheses. Therefore, researchers presented the descriptive analysis, path analysis and structural equation modeling (SEM) analysis results using SPSS and AMOS. The analysis is conducted in terms of direct effect, indirect (mediated) effect and moderating effect.

Table 4 shows the descriptive analysis of variables that are retained and used in the research. The group means for SE, greed and performance are 3.53, 2.24 and 3.77, respectively. Relatively, the mean score of greed is low and respondents replied “Disagree” for respective items. According to the Likert scale mean score interpretation where 1.0–2.4 is considered low, 2.5–3.4 is neutral and 3.5–5.0 is high (Boone and Boone, 2012; Wanjohi and Syokau, 2021), the findings show that the average score for two dimensions (SE and performance) exceeds the neutral midpoint. However, the greed score is relatively low, suggesting that respondents are not prone to the behavior.



Source(s): Created by authors

Figure 2.
Confirmatory factor
analysis (CFA)

Measure	Estimate	Threshold	Interpretation
CMIN	264.795	—	—
DF	164	—	—
CMIN/DF	1.615	Between 1 and 3	Excellent
CFI	0.913	>0.95	Acceptable
SRMR	0.083	<0.08	Acceptable
RMSEA	0.070	<0.06	Acceptable
PClose	0.022	>0.05	Acceptable

Source(s): Created by authors

Table 2.
Model fit measure

4.1 Direct effect analysis

To do the direct, indirect and moderated effect analysis, researchers employed structural equation modeling. Therefore, the direct and indirect effect analysis is conducted based on the path diagram presented in Figure 3.

The effect of SE on firm performance ([Hypothesis 1](#)), the effect of SE on greed ([Hypothesis 2](#)) and the effect of greed on firm performance ([Hypothesis 3](#)) is determined based on the direct effect analysis as results are presented in [Figure 3](#) and [Table 5](#). [Table 5](#) shows the standardized and unstandardized coefficients of the variables SE, greed and performance.

The partial effect of SE on greed, holding other variables constant is 0.019 as indicated by the unstandardized coefficient. The effect is not significant and SE does not affect greed. Although we expect a negative effect of SE on greed, the result indicated that SE does not affect greed. We hypothesized that SE, which involves spotting and seizing opportunities with underutilized resources and creating lasting value, reduces greed and leads to long-

Table 3.
Model master validity

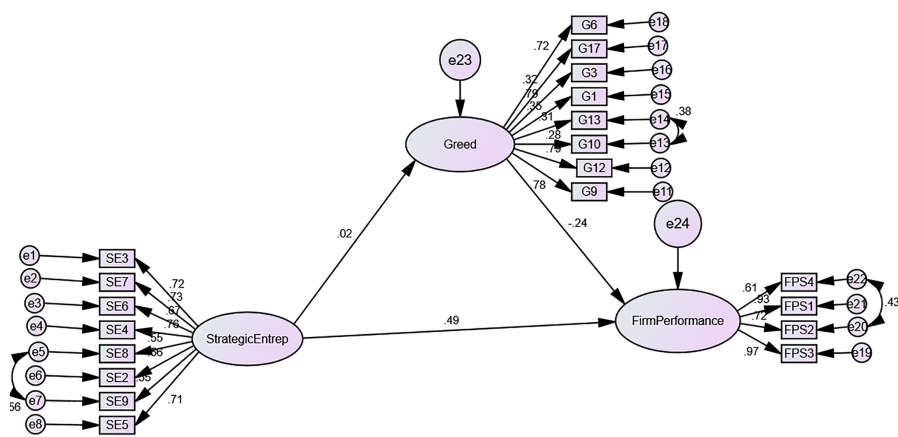
	CR	AVE	MSV	MaxR(H)	Strategic entrep	Greed	Firm performance
Strategic ENTREP	0.859	0.436	0.232	0.870	0.660		
Greed	0.784	0.349	0.055	0.866	0.015	0.590	
Firm performance	0.888	0.672	0.232	0.957	0.482***	-0.233*	0.820

Source(s): Created by authors

Table 4.
Descriptive statistics

Code	Items	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
SE1	You/your firm introduced new product/service lines	127	3.72	0.989
SE2	You/your firm introduced new product/service lines in new/different industries	127	3.36	1.110
SE3	You/your firm reorganized to foster innovation	127	3.59	0.995
SE4	You/your firm adopted flexible organizational structures to foster innovation	127	3.43	1.080
SE5	You/your firm introduced teamwork to foster innovation	127	3.68	0.950
SE6	You/your firm increased spending on new product development	127	3.47	1.022
SE7	You/your firm adopted new strategies to exploit new opportunities	127	3.83	0.969
SE8	You/your firm changed the rules of competition	127	3.39	1.039
SE9	You/your firm moved the competition to a new platform	127	3.27	1.080
	<i>Strategic entrepreneurship mean</i>		3.53	
G1	It is ok to harm others to get what you want	127	1.65	1.049
G3	You are fearful that you might lose everything you have	127	2.63	1.187
G6	You are concerned that you will lose what you have	127	2.65	1.102
G7	You will get what you want at all costs, even if you have to lie	127	1.99	1.020
G9	You afraid that everything you have might be gone one day	127	2.71	1.155
G10	You would cheat to get what you desire	127	1.64	0.833
G12	You worry about losing what you have	127	2.74	1.100
G13	You are so focused on getting what you want, that you do not think about the consequences	127	2.18	0.946
G17	You do not think about consequences when pursuing what you desire	127	1.94	0.871
	<i>Greed means</i>		2.24	
FPS1	The profitability of your firm has increased from time to time for the last three years	127	3.84	0.840
FPS2	The turnover/sales of your firm increases from time to time	127	3.76	0.906
FPS3	The profit of your firm is increasing from time to time	127	3.80	0.920
FPS4	The market share of your firm increases from time to time	127	3.69	0.861
	<i>Performance means</i>	127	3.77	

Source(s): Created by authors



Source(s): Created by authors

Figure 3.
Causal model

			Estimate		S.E.	C.R.	p
			Unstandardized	Standardized			
Greed	←	Strategic Entrep	0.019	0.015	0.131	0.148	0.882
Firm performance	←	Greed	−0.236	−0.241	0.086	−2.749	0.006
Firm performance	←	Strategic Entrep	0.605	0.485	0.120	5.030	0.001

Source(s): Created by authors

Table 5.
Regression weights

term success for entrepreneurs who care about others. However, we found no evidence for this and we rejected [Hypothesis 2](#). According to [Goldberg \(2023\)](#), keeping the mission and values of businesses at the forefront would help to sidestep greed. However, our results show that SE has no significant influence on greed that factors other than SE would affect greed.

The unstandardized coefficient of greed on entrepreneur success expressed as firm performance is -0.236 which represents the partial effect of greed on performance, holding other variables constant. The negative sign implies that such an effect is negative and performance would decrease by 0.236 for every unit increase of greed. Assuming the negative effects of greed on success could stem from its potential to distort decision-making, compromise ethical standards and increase risk, we claimed the negative effect on firm performance and the result indicates that the negative effect of greed on performance is significant. Therefore, we accepted [Hypothesis 3](#) and the result concurs with the finding reported by [Tacke et al. \(2023\)](#) and [Wang and Murnighan \(2011\)](#). However, it still refutes the finding reported by [Terri et al. \(2015\)](#) as they reported the constructive aspect of greed as well.

Similarly, the unstandardized coefficient of SE on performance is 0.605 which reflects the partial impact of SE on performance, holding other factors constant. The positive sign implies that performance would increase by 0.605 units for every unit increase in SE. Accordingly, [Hypothesis 1](#) is accepted and this result concurs with the study reported by [Kantur \(2016\)](#), [Stockley \(2021\)](#) and [Hughes et al. \(2021\)](#).

4.2 Indirect effect analysis

To examine the indirect effect of SE on firm performance through the mediating variable greed, we formulated the hypothesis that reads “*Greed has a competing mediation effect on the relationship between strategic entrepreneurship and entrepreneurs’ success*”. We argued that the total effect of SE on performance is significantly *less* than its direct effect due to the competing mediation effect of greed. Therefore, Hypothesis 4 was tested based on the result presented in Figure 3 and Table 6.

Using the bootstrap confidence interval technique, the analysis result shows a standardized estimate of -0.004 , a lower confidence interval of -0.086 , an upper confidence interval of 0.044 and a p -value of 0.770 . The mediated effect analysis shows that zero is within the lower and upper confidence intervals and that the mediation effect is not significantly different from zero (Reuben and David, 1986). Thus, Hypothesis 4 is rejected. Moreover, the total (indirect plus direct) effect of SE on performance ($(0.02*-0.24) + (0.49) = 0.485$) is slightly lower than its direct effect (0.49) due to the competing mediation effect of greed. However, the effect is not statistically significant and greed has no mediation effect. In addition to the direct effect, prior research reported the indirect effect of SE on the performance of organizations. For example, Amani and Bavil (2018) conducted a study using a human resource information system as a mediating variable and reported a significant indirect effect of SE on performance. However, our result, using greed as a mediating variable, shows no indirect effect that the type of mediating variable is vital for SE to have a significant indirect effect.

4.3 Moderating effect analysis

To test the moderating effect (gender as a moderator), we ran a chi-square difference test between the unconstrained and fully constrained model and the result shows that the unconstrained model is not different from the fully constrained model. That is, males and females are not different when it comes to the model. To see the coefficient and significance of each path for males and females further, we tested each path at a time and the result is presented in Table 7.

Based on the chi-square difference test for individual paths at a time, the standardized coefficients for males and females along with the p -values show that those coefficients are not statistically significant though differences in coefficients for males and females are observed. Therefore, Hypothesis 5 is rejected that gender is not a moderator on the relationship between any variables in the causal model. The result concurs with the findings reported by

Table 6.
Mediated effect

Parameters	Standardized estimate	Lower CI	Upper CI	p
Strategic Entrep – Greed – Firm Performance	-0.004	-0.086	0.044	0.770
Source(s): Created by authors				

Table 7.
Individual path
comparison – gender

Model paths	Standardized beta		DF	CMIN	p
	Male	Female			
Unconstrained (strategic entrep to greed)	0.04	-0.03	1	0.10	0.75
Unconstrained (greed to firm performance)	-0.30	-0.24	1	0.00	0.96
Unconstrained (strategic entrep to firm performance)	0.59	0.28	1	1.11	0.29
Source(s): Created by authors					

Currie *et al.* (2000). However, the result refutes the research that argues females are more likely than males to cooperate in greed (Simpson, 2003).

4.4 Summary of hypotheses test

Researchers tested all five hypotheses based on the result from the direct, indirect and moderating effect analysis. The summary of these hypotheses along with the test statistics is presented in Table 8.

5. Conclusion, practical implications and future research directions

The study reveals that SE positively impacts entrepreneurial success, whereas greed has a detrimental effect. The hypothesis that greed mediates the relationship between SE and success is not supported, and gender does not significantly moderate this relationship.

The results indicate that the personal qualities of owner-managers have a direct effect on the strategic direction and success of their businesses. Additionally, the findings show that entrepreneurs who have a strong focus on prosocial behavior are more likely to establish policies that support social responsibility and ethical practices, thus minimizing the risk of engaging in greedy behaviors. By merging upper echelons theory with the notion of prosocial behavior, this research emphasizes the significant influence of entrepreneurs' traits and prosocial motivations in shaping business strategies and outcomes. This insight could assist the government in creating training programs and policies aimed at fostering sustainable and ethical business practices.

While the study examines gender as a moderator, it did not explore other potential moderating or mediating variables that could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the relationships studied. These limitations highlight areas where future research can improve upon the current study, providing a more robust and nuanced

S. No.	Research hypothesis	Tests employed	Decision
H1	<i>Strategic entrepreneurship has a significant positive effect on entrepreneurs' success</i>	<i>t</i> -test	C.R = 5.030 $p < 0.001$ <i>Accepted</i>
H2	<i>Strategic entrepreneurship has a significant negative effect on greed</i>	<i>t</i> -test	C.R = 0.148 $p = 0.882$ <i>Reject</i>
H3	<i>Greed has a significant negative effect on entrepreneurs' success</i>	<i>t</i> -test	C.R = -2.749 $p = 0.006$ <i>Accepted</i>
H4	<i>Greed has a significant competing mediation effect on the relationship between strategic entrepreneurship and entrepreneurs' success</i>	Percentile bootstrap confidence interval	Lower value = -0.086 Upper value = 0.044 p -value = 0.770 <i>Reject</i> – zero is between
H5	<i>The Relationship between strategic entrepreneurship and greed is significantly moderated by gender</i>	Chi-square difference test	CMIN = 0.10 $p = 0.75$ <i>Reject</i>

Source(s): Created by authors

Table 8.
Hypotheses test summary

understanding of the impact of SE and greed on entrepreneurial success. Thus, future research should explore additional moderating factors such as cultural background, industry type and organizational size to gain a deeper understanding of the relationship between SE, greed and success. Investigating the long-term effects of SE and the role of greed at different stages of an enterprise life cycle could provide valuable insights. Additionally, examining other dimensions of success, such as workplace relationships, personal fulfillment, community impact and personal financial rewards, can offer a more comprehensive understanding of entrepreneurs' experiences and motivations regarding greed and SE.

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