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MODERATING EFFECT OF SOCIAL NETWORK TIES ON EMPLOYEE INTRAPRENEURIAL ORIENTATION AND SMALL ENTERPRISE PERFORMANCE

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This research examines the influence of employee intrapreneurial orientation on the performance of small businesses in Ghana, explicitly emphasising the moderating effect of social networks.

Design/Methodology/Approach: This research employed a quantitative approach, employing a cross-sectional survey to gather data from 571 key informants in small enterprises in the regions of Greater Accra, Ashanti, and Bono in Ghana. SmartPLS structural equation modelling and Hayes' PROCESS techniques were utilised to examine the relationships among the variables.

Findings: The analysis indicated that employee proactiveness and competitive aggressiveness significantly enhance small enterprise performance, while employee innovativeness and risk-taking propensity showed no direct effect. On the other hand, employee autonomy demonstrated a negative correlation. Furthermore, social network ties positively moderated the association between employee intrapreneurial orientation and small enterprise performance.

Research Limitation: The cross-sectional design used in the study restricts the capacity to determine definitive causal relations, and findings may not be generalisable beyond the Ghanaian context.

Practical Implications: Managers should foster a culture that promotes proactivity and competitive behaviour among employees while encouraging strong social networks to optimise firm performance.

Social Implications: Enhancing social networks within small enterprises can improve economic outcomes, supporting broader economic growth and job creation in developing regions.

Originality: This research advances the body of research by indicating how different aspects of intrapreneurial orientation have different effects and emphasising how important social networks are for improving small businesses' performance in underdeveloped economies.

***Keywords*:** *Autonomy. enterprise performance. innovativeness. intrapreneurial. risk-taking*

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INTRODUCTION

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are major contributors to economic growth, innovation, and job creation, especially in developing economies (Abdul-Azeez et al., 2024; Amoah et al., 2022; Heenkenda et al., 2022). In sub-Saharan Africa, SMEs are vital to poverty alleviation, local development, and economic transformation. The sector's contribution to gross domestic product (GDP) is invaluable as it generates numerous employment opportunities and offers income stability for millions of households (Otman, 2021). However, despite their critical importance, the survival and sustainability of SMEs in emerging economies remain a significant challenge.

Research reveals that, especially in Africa, five of every seven freshly launched enterprises collapse within the first year of operation (Nkwinika & Mashau, 2020). The fragile state of this industry is highlighted by research done in Ghana by Peprah et al. (2016), which reveals that the survival rate of SMEs after five years of operation is less than 60%.

Similarly, recent data published by Statista reveals that Africa has an average startup failure rate of 54%, with Ghana ranked third globally in 2020, with a staggering 74% startup failure rate (Galal, 2023). The failure of SMEs is often attributed to various factors, including poor access to finance, inadequate infrastructure, and an unstable policy environment (Abbey & Adu-Danso, 2023; Haider & Abdulcadir, 2022; Saleh et al., 2022). However, beyond these external constraints, the performance and survival of SMEs are closely linked to internal organisational factors, particularly the competencies and behaviours of employees.

Employee intrapreneurial orientation, characterised by innovation, proactive, risk-taking, autonomy, and competitive aggressiveness, has been recognised as a significant determinant of organisational output and survival (Okręglicka et al., 2023). These intrapreneurial competencies equip employees to identify new opportunities, challenge the status quo, and take strategic risks, all essential for driving innovation and business growth in dynamic and competitive markets. Intrapreneurial employees can act as change agents within their organisations, fostering creativity, enhancing operational efficiencies, and improving overall firm performance.

Despite the increasing acknowledgement of the importance of employee intrapreneurial orientation, there is still a substantial void in the literature on its influence on small business performances, particularly in developing economies like Ghana. Many existing studies have drawn attention to large enterprises in developed economies, where organisational structures, resources, and external environments differ significantly from SMEs in emerging markets (Afriyie, 2019; Chandra et al., 2020). This creates an urgent need to examine how intrapreneurial behaviours influence the performance of small enterprises in resource-constrained environments, where firms encounter exclusive challenges, including limited ability to obtain funding, volatile markets, and high competition.

Moreover, while intrapreneurial orientation is essential in establishing firm performance, social network ties as a moderator in this association have received little attention in the literature.

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Social network ties focus on the connections and relationships that individuals or organisations maintain with others in their professional or social spheres that can profoundly influence organisational outcomes. For SMEs, social network ties offer access to invaluable resources like information, partnerships, and outside support systems that enhance their ability to innovate, grow, and survive in challenging environments. The strength and diversity of social networks, whether among employees, managers, or owner-managers, can facilitate knowledge exchange, foster collaboration, and create opportunities for learning and development that ultimately boost firm performance (Anand et al., 2021; McCartan, 2023; Muna et al., 2023). However, despite the potential impact of these networks, studies have not investigated whether social network ties can buffer the association between employee intrapreneurial orientation and the performances of businesses in the SME context.

To bridge this gap, the study investigates how employees' intrapreneurial orientation, which encompasses innovativeness, proactiveness, risk-taking, autonomy, and competitive aggressiveness, affects small business performance in Ghana. Additionally, this study aims to determine what role social network ties play in this relationship and how they might strengthen or weaken the influence of entrepreneurial behaviours on enterprises' performances. This research will contribute to a deeper awareness of how SMEs in underdeveloped economies can use employee competencies and social networks to improve performance, enhance innovation, and guarantee lasting sustainability.

The outcomes of this research are projected to offer insightful knowledge into the dynamics of SME performance in Ghana and other similar emerging markets. By examining the dual influence of employee intrapreneurial orientation and social networks, this research offers practical implications for policymakers, business owners, and managers seeking to foster a more entrepreneurial and resilient workforce within the SME sector.

Additionally, this research will advance the existing body of literature on SME performance, intrapreneurial competencies, and the role of social networks, offering an intricate awareness of the unique challenges and opportunities encountered by small businesses in developing economies. As such, the study represents a significant addition to both the theoretical understanding and practical application of intrapreneurship and the performance of small businesses in emerging economies.

EMPIRICAL REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

Employee Innovation and Small Business Performance

Prior studies have established that employee innovativeness has a substantial effect on business performance (Bylok, 2022; Çağlıyan et al., 2022; Dogbe et al., 2020; Gao et al., 2020; Poduška et al., 2020; and Zaato et al., 2020). The reason is that, as asserted by Gui et al. (2024) and Nasifoglu Elidemir et al. (2020), innovative behaviours support the creation and implementation of innovative ideas, products, and processes, which in a way enhance competitiveness and advocate for long-term sustainability. According to the Resource-Based

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View (RBV) theory, a business's internal competencies, especially its intangible assets like employee innovation, are critical for achieving sustained competitive advantage (Lubis, 2022). Employee innovativeness is one such capability that enables small enterprises to leverage unique knowledge and creativity to distinguish their activities from competitors.

With innovation, employees can introduce novel solutions, products, or processes that significantly enhance firm performance. This allows small enterprises to adjust to rapid market transitions and obtain advantages over competitors despite their resource constraints. The ability of employees to innovate is crucial in today's fast-evolving market conditions, particularly for small enterprises that often operate in niche markets where differentiation is key to survival.

Employee innovation drives the firm's ability to capture new opportunities, reduce operational inefficiencies, and meet customer needs promptly and effectively, ultimately leading to better financial and non-financial performance. However, prior studies have not focused on small enterprises per se. Therefore, we hypothesise that by using small enterprises from Ghana:
H1: Employee innovativeness has a significant positive effect on small enterprise performance.

Employee Proactiveness and Small Business Performance
Proactiveness describes an employee's anticipatory mindset, marked by the capacity to identify and address market opportunities and challenges promptly (Akani et al., 2022; Khan et al., 2024; Kiss et al., 2022). Employees proactively contribute to firm performance by anticipating market shifts, identifying potential opportunities, and initiating timely actions to capitalise on these opportunities. In small enterprises, which typically lack the large-scale resources of more prominent firms, employees' capacity to actively adapt to changes in their environment is essential for staying competitive and achieving long-term growth.

The Entrepreneurial Orientation theory emphasises the importance of proactiveness as a key dimension of entrepreneurial behaviour, which involves actively seeking out and exploiting emerging opportunities before competitors (Ferreira et al., 2020; Kreiser & Davis, 2010; Lumpkin & Dess, 2001). This is particularly important for small enterprises, which often operate in dynamic and competitive markets where early movers gain significant advantages. Hence, we hypothesise that:
H2: Employee proactiveness has a significant positive effect on small enterprise performance.

Employees' Risk-Taking Propensity and Performance of Small Enterprises
Risk-taking propensity is a key component of entrepreneurial behaviour that involves a willingness to engage in activities with uncertain outcomes in pursuit of potential rewards (Scafarto et al., 2019). Risk-taking is crucial for small enterprises, enabling them to seize opportunities that more risk-averse competitors might overlook. Employees with a greater propensity for risk are highly inclined to support and drive initiatives that challenge conventional thinking, enabling the firm to innovate and potentially disrupt the market. While risk-taking entails the possibility of failure, it is also integral to achieving breakthrough

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innovations and significant performance improvements, especially in fast-evolving industries (Graciano et al., 2023).

In small enterprises, where resources are limited, risk-takers can provide the entrepreneurial spark needed to propel the business forward, facilitating growth and competitive positioning. The Prospect Theory explains how decision-making under uncertainty often involves weighing potential losses against gains (Kahneman & Tversky, 2013). Concerning small businesses, employees with a high risk-taking propensity are more willing to pursue uncertain but high-reward opportunities, which can lead to breakthrough innovations or competitive advantages. Risk-taking is paramount in rapidly changing environments, and sticking to the status quo could result in missed opportunities. Thus, we hypothesise that:
H3: The risk-taking propensity of employees has a significant positive effect on small enterprise performance.

Employee Autonomy and Small Business Performance
Autonomy allows employees the freedom to make decisions and implement them without excessive oversight, which can bring greater job satisfaction and motivation (De Clercq & Brieger, 2022; Demirkol, 2021; Rasmussen, 2024; Tran et al., 2021). Self-Determination Theory (SDT) emphasises the significance of autonomy in enhancing intrinsic motivation. Allowing employees to make decisions and exercise control over their duties enhances their motivation, engagement, and creativity (Demirkol, 2021). Autonomy also fosters a culture of accountability and responsibility, where employees experience a greater sense of ownership over their tasks and are motivated to contribute to the firm's success (Alshemmari, 2023).

In small enterprises, where decision-making structures are often less hierarchical, granting autonomy to employees empowers them to innovate and take initiative (Ndidi et al., 2022; Otto et al., 2020). According to Porter and van den Hooff (2020), autonomous workers can swiftly adjust to evolving environments and customer demands, improving operational efficiency and incredible overall firm performance. Moreover, autonomy encourages experimentation and risk-taking, which is critical for small enterprises to adapt to rapidly changing market conditions. Thus, small firms can respond more quickly to customer needs and market opportunities by delegating decision-making authority to employees, improving overall performance. Consequently, we hypothesise that.
H4: Autonomy of employees has a significant positive effect on small enterprise performance.

Employee Competitive Aggressiveness and Small Enterprise Performance
Competitive aggressiveness reflects the firm’s willingness to take bold, assertive actions to outperform competitors and dominate the market (Lumpkin & Pidduck, 2021; Okręglicka et al., 2023). According to Mutiria (2024), employees who exhibit competitive aggressiveness are proactive in identifying and exploiting weaknesses in competitors’ strategies, aggressively pursuing market opportunities, and continuously striving to outperform rivals. In small enterprises, where resources may be limited and competition fierce, such behaviours are crucial for gaining and maintaining market share. Competitive aggressiveness can manifest in various

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ways, including creating innovative products, aggressive marketing strategies, or enhanced customer service offerings.

By fostering a culture of competitive aggressiveness, small enterprises can leverage their agility and responsiveness to secure a competitive edge in crowded markets, leading to enhanced firm success (Clauss et al., 2021; Reed, 2021). Theoretically, the Dynamic Capabilities Theory posits that firms attain a competitive edge by building capabilities that allow them to respond to changing environments (Buzzao & Rizzi, 2021; Ferreira et al., 2020; McDougall et al., 2022). Competitive aggressiveness is a dynamic capability that empowers employees to take bold actions to outperform competitors. Consequently, we hypothesise that:
H5: Competitive aggressiveness among employees has a significant positive effect on small enterprise performance.

The Moderating Influence of Social Network Ties on the Relationship Between Employee Intrapreneurial Orientation and Small Enterprise Performance
Among the objectives of this study is to find out if social network ties substantially impact the connection between the intrapreneurial orientation of employees and the performances of small businesses. If they do, the positive influence of intrapreneurial behaviours on performance could become strong when employees have access to social networks. Social Capital Theory underpins this relationship, asserting that social networks offer valuable resources like information, knowledge, and social support, thereby enhancing organisational outcomes (Singh et al., 2021). Employees with strong social network ties can leverage external resources that complement their intrapreneurial characteristics like innovation, proactive, and risk-taking by gaining access to new ideas, market insights, and collaborative opportunities (Chen et al., 2022; Glaser et al., 2021; Soltanifar et al., 2023; Tzabbar et al., 2022).

These networks serve as conduits for information flow, resource sharing, and external validation, all of which can bolster the effectiveness of intrapreneurial activities within small enterprises. In small firms where internal resources are often limited, social network ties can bridge the gap by providing access to external expertise, financial resources, and market opportunities, thereby amplifying the influence of intrapreneurial behaviours on enterprise performance. Therefore, by acting as a moderator, social networks enhance the connection between employee intrapreneurial behaviour and organisational performance by providing critical external support systems that elevate the enterprise's capability to innovate, compete, and grow. However, as of this study, no known study has assessed social network ties as a moderator in the association between employee intrapreneurial orientation and small enterprise performances. Hence, we hypothesise that:
H6: Social network ties moderate the connection between employee intrapreneurial orientation and the performance of small businesses.

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METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study utilised quantitative methods to systematically investigate the association between the antecedent variables of intrapreneurial orientation and small enterprise performance, considering social network ties as a moderator. The researchers chose a quantitative approach because it allows them to systematically measure variables, test hypotheses, and generalise results based on statistical analysis (Pregoner, 2024). The study was conducted using a cross-sectional survey design, allowing the researchers to obtain data from several small enterprises at one given time to examine the pattern, correlation, and cause-and-effect relationship among the constructs under consideration (Maier et al., 2023). For this purpose, a structured questionnaire was developed as a convenient instrument to collect the necessary data.

Sampling Technique, Sample Size and Data Collection

The respondents for the study cover small businesses operating in Ghana. In alignment with the definition provided by the Ghana Statistical Service (GSS), small-scale enterprises for this research are defined as businesses employing fewer than 10 employees (Bentum, 2020). We gathered data from small enterprises located in three key industrialised regions of Ghana: Accra, Kumasi, and Sunyani, which represent the Greater Accra, Ashanti, and Bono regions, respectively. Additionally, the ample exclusively comprised enterprises operating for a minimum of two years prior to data collection, which took place in March 2024. Based on these inclusion criteria, a purposive sampling strategy was employed.

This method involved identifying and selecting firms from online local business directories, including ghanaweb.com, focusing on enterprises that were easily accessible geographically. The researchers then visited these businesses in person, presented the survey instruments, and secured informed consent from the participants. At each firm, we collected data from at least two key informants, typically a senior manager (such as the owner-manager or operations manager) and another employee. After a three-month data collection period, the study yielded 585 individual responses, out of which 571 were deemed usable following data cleaning procedures, including identifying incomplete or missing values. On average, the surveyed enterprises employed five employees and had been in business for approximately eight years.

Measures

To guarantee the reliability and validity of the data, the research drew from established literature to identify appropriate indicators for measuring the core constructs. An initial pool of items was carefully reviewed and refined as necessary to conform to the specific context of this study. The research employed short, multiple-item scales for each construct to ensure the constructs were accurately and completely captured while minimising the risk of measurement error and respondent fatigue. A 7-point Likert scale ranging from *1* = least form of agreement to *7* = highest form of agreement was employed to measure the constructs under study. The participants had to tick a box next to the option that best matched the supplied mark.

Independent variables

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Five dimensions of intrapreneurial orientation made up the predictor variables. Reflective indicators from Dess and Lumpkin (2005), Aarakit and Kimbugwe (2015), and Nielsen et al. (2019) were adopted. We used five items to measure employee innovativeness. Examples include the statement, "I assist my enterprise in introducing new products or services." The study used five items to measure employee proactiveness. Examples include the statement, "I focus on developing new ways even if the existing ones are effective." Employees' risk-taking propensity was measured with four items. Example: “I take bold decisions necessary to achieve the enterprise’s objective.” Three items were used to measure employee autonomy. This is exemplified by the item "I am allowed to deal with problems and opportunities." Lastly, four indicators were employed to measure employee competitive aggression. Example: “I find ways to differentiate work from co-workers and competitors.

Dependent variable
To measure small enterprise performance, the subjective measure of sales growth and growth in net profit performance was adapted from Watson (2012), Dobbs and Hamilton (2007), and Singh et al. (2016). Each of the performance dimensions was measured using five items. An example of an item for sales growth performance is “my enterprise has been experiencing an increase in sales in general,” while an example of net profit growth is “operating expenses for my enterprise have been prudently managed for the past years.”

Moderating variable
An eight-item reflective scale adapted from Zhao (2005) was employed to assess social network ties. The items include “I spend much time building up broad social networks for future use.”

Analytical Approach
Prior to testing the study’s hypotheses, the partial least square structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) method was used to conduct confirmatory analyses of our reflective composite structures. This is called confirmatory composite analysis (CCA). The approach examines how well the proposed measurement model aligns with the empirical data while accounting for potential measurement errors (Hair Jr. et al., 2020). The variance-based SEM (PLS-SEM)-CCA, used in this study to confirm our factors, has an advantage over the covariance-based SEM (CB-SEM); as submitted by Hair Jr. et al. (2020), it retains a higher number of items for measuring constructs, thereby enhancing construct validity. Additionally, CCA consistently provides determinant construct scores. The analysis was performed using Smart PLS 3.2.8.

Following the validation of the measurement model, the study proceeded with hypothesis testing, drawing on methodologies from previous research in business strategy and environmental management (e.g., Appiah & Essuman, 2024; Qiao et al., 2022). To examine the hypotheses, we utilised SmartPLS SEM and Hayes' SPSS PROCESS Macro Version 4.2, which is well-suited for investigating conditional process models due to its robust bootstrapping capabilities and data visualisation features (Hayes & Rockwood, 2020). For the PROCESS analysis, PROCESS Model 1 was employed to assess the moderated effect hypothesis (H6),

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while SEM through Smart PLS 3.2.8 was used for the direct effect hypotheses (H1 to H5). The analysis employed 5,000 bootstrap samples and a 95% confidence interval to rigorously assess the hypothesised relationships (Hayes & Rockwood, 2020).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic Profile of Respondents

The demographic characteristics of the respondents provide a comprehensive understanding of the individuals who participated in this study, offering insights into their gender, age, educational background, enterprise activities, and work experience. The demographic information of the respondents is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Demographic Information

Variables	Options	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	191	33.4%
	Female	380	66.6%
Age	Less than 30	348	60.9%
	30 – 40	82	14.4%
	41 – 50	107	18.7%
	51 – 60	23	4.0%
	Above 60	11	1.9%
Educational Level	Post Graduate Degree	66	11.6%
	First Degree	223	39.1%
	Senior High School	78	13.6%
	Junior High School	170	29.7%
	None	34	6.0%
Enterprise Activity	Agro-processing	84	14.7%
	Agro-industrial	57	10.0%
	Handicraft	52	9.1%
	Service providers/hospitality	287	50.3%
	Others	91	15.9%
Working experience	Less than a year	82	14.4%
	1 – 5 years	74	12.9%
	6 – 10 years	208	36.5%
	11 – 15 years	121	21.2%
	16 -20 years	61	10.7%
	Above 20 years	25	4.3%

Source: Survey Data (2024)

From Table 1, the gender distribution of the respondents was predominantly female, with 380 participants representing 66.6% of the sample, while 191 participants (33.4%) were male. This indicates a significant female representation among the key informants in small enterprises, highlighting the role of women in entrepreneurial activities in Ghana. The age distribution

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revealed that most respondents were younger than 30 years, accounting for 348 participants (60.9%). Respondents aged 51 to 60 years and above 60 years accounted for 4.0% and 1.9%, respectively. This indicates that the workforce in small enterprises is predominantly youthful. Regarding educational attainment, 11.6% had postgraduate degrees, while 39.1% held first degrees. Additionally, 13.6% had completed senior high school, and 29.7% had junior high school education. A small proportion (6.0%) reported having no formal education. This diversity in educational levels reflects varying degrees of formal training among the respondents.

Most respondents were engaged in service-oriented or hospitality enterprises, representing 50.3% (287 participants). Agro-processing and agro-industrial activities accounted for 14.7% (84 respondents) and 10.0% (57 respondents), respectively, while 9.1% were involved in handicrafts. Other types of enterprises comprised 15.9%. This distribution underscores the dominance of service-related activities within the small business sector in Ghana. Regarding work experience, 14.4% had less than one year of experience, while 12.9% reported 1 to 5 years of experience. A significant proportion, 36.5%, had 6 to 10 years of experience. Respondents with 11 to 15 years and 16 to 20 years of experience constituted 21.2% and 10.7%, respectively. Only 4.3% had over 20 years of work experience, reflecting a substantial presence of relatively seasoned professionals in the sector.

This research has some higher-order constructs (HOC). Small enterprise performance, in particular, is grounded on two lower-order constructs (LOC): a subjective measure of sales growth (SalPerf) and growth in net profit performance (NPPerf). Again, in examining social network ties as a moderator in the association between employee intrapreneurial orientation and enterprise performances, employee intrapreneurial orientation is used as a HOC. That is, employee intrapreneurial orientation is based on five LOCs covering employee innovativeness (INNOV), proactiveness (PROA), risk-taking propensity (RTP), autonomy (AUT), and competitive aggressiveness (CAG). The two-stage approach, as proposed by Hair et al. (2019), was used to compute the HOC score from the LOCs.

Stage One: Analysis of LOCs

Since all the LOCs have reflective indicators, the CCA assessment involves estimating factor loadings and their significance, assessing composite reliability, extracting the average variance (AVE), and assessing discriminant validity. In line with Benitez et al. (2020), we considered factor loadings below 0.60 inadequate and excluded them from further analysis. Therefore, we excluded three factors of social network ties (SNT2 = 0.590, SNT3 = 0.569, SNT8 = 0.486), one factor of employee proactiveness (PROA1 = 0.565), one factor of employee autonomy (AUT1 = 0.565), and two factors of sales performance (SalPerf2 = 0.417, SalPerf3 = 0.540) from further analysis. Thus, we re-estimated the model without them. Table 2 illustrates the findings of the factor loadings (FL), including their p-values, Cronbach alpha (CA), composite reliability (CR), and AVE of the re-estimated model.

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Table 2: Measurement Items, Validity and Reliability Results – LOCs

Constructs (CR; CA; AVE)	**FLs**	**T-Values**
Employee Innovation (CR = 0.906; CA = 0.869; AVE = 0.659)		
INNOV1	0.863	60.079
INNOV2	0.778	27.220
INNOV3	0.891	69.919
INNOV4	0.777	31.861
INNOV5	0.741	31.768
Employee Proactiveness (CR = 0.912; CA = 0.872; AVE = 0.722)		
PROA2	0.809	49.172
PROA3	0.892	69.143
PROA4	0.880	87.565
PROA5	0.815	39.586
Risk-Taking Propensity (CR = .919; CA = .882; AVE = .739)		
RTP1	0.805	31.35
RTP2	0.904	62.187
RTP3	0.909	130.492
RTP 4	0.816	28.669
Employee Autonomy (CR = .884; CA = .742; AVE = .792)		
AUT2	0.919	69.897
AUT3	0.860	38.309
Competitive Aggressiveness (CR = .898; CA = .848; AVE = .687)		
CAG1	0.812	39.731
CAG2	0.874	68.427
CAG3	0.826	49.024
CAG4	0.803	29.877
Sales Growth Performance (CR = .903; CA = .837; AVE = .756)		
SalPerf1	0.874	61.434
SalPerf4	0.917	120.059
SalPerf5	0.814	30.382
Net Profit Performance (CR = .915; CA = .885; AVE = .684)		
NPPerf1	0.845	66.651
NPPerf2	0.813	48.155
NPPerf3	0.760	29.464
NPPerf4	0.856	49.328
NPPerf5	0.859	58.561
Social Network Ties (SNT) (CR = .903; CA = .867; AVE = .653)		
SNT1	0.686	22.804
SNT4	0.808	37.577
SNT5	0.880	77.258

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SNT6	0.844	58.853
SNT7	0.809	52.130

Source: Survey Data (2024)

Table 2 reveals that all the FLs are beyond 0.60 and significant at 1%, signifying unidimensionality and convergence validity. Table 1 again shows that the CR and the CA are above 0.70, the recommended benchmark for construct reliability (Benitez et al., 2020). Additionally, the results show that the AVE ranged between 0.653 and 0.792, which satisfies Hair Jr. et al.'s (2023) convergent validity criterion.

We assessed discriminant validity utilising the Fornell-Larcker criterion, which stipulates that "the square root of a construct's AVE must be greater than its correlations with other constructs in the model" (Hair Jr. et al., 2023). As indicated in Table 3, the square roots of the AVEs, as bolded for all constructs, exceed their respective inter-construct correlations, confirming that each construct is different and exhibits strong discriminant validity.

Table 3: Fornell-Lacker Criterion of Discriminant Validity – LOCs

Construct	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**
Autonomy of Employees	**0.890**							
Competitive Aggressiveness	0.518	**0.829**						
Employee Innovativeness	0.580	0.574	**0.812**					
Employee Proactivity	0.566	0.685	0.665	**0.850**				
Growth Performance	0.256	0.510	0.361	0.523	**0.827**			
Risk-taking Propensity	0.439	0.593	0.609	0.777	0.404	**0.859**		
Sales Performance	0.375	0.511	0.414	0.595	0.784	0.490	**0.869**	
Social Network Ties	0.478	0.462	0.478	0.510	0.432	0.466	0.466	**0.808**

Source: Survey Data (2024)

Stage Two: Analysis of HOC

During the second analysis phase, we stored the LOCs scores for each construct and used them to calculate the HOC (Benitez et al., 2022). The HOC constructs comprise employee intrapreneurial orientation (EIO) and small enterprise performance. Hair et al. (2019) stated that it is vital to report the reliability and validity of constructs across both stages of analysis to ensure the robustness and consistency of the study's outcomes. Given the reflective nature of the constructs in this stage, we replicated all the validity and reliability measures from stage one. The results of the FLs, including their p-values, CA, CR, and AVE of the HOC model, are indicated in Table 4.

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Table 4: Measurement Items, Validity and Reliability Results – HOCs

Construct/Measures (CR; CA; AVE)	**Loadings**	**T-Values**
EIO (CR = 0.914; CA = 0.883; AVE = 0.681)		
INNOV	0.814	38.73
PROA	0.913	142.349
RTP	0.842	63.869
AUT	0.712	24.836
CAG	0.833	56.441
Small Enterprise Performance (CR = .943; CA = .879; AVE = .891)		
SalPerf1	0.951	193.914
NPPerf2	0.937	139.327
Social Network Ties (SNT) (CR = .867; CA = .903; AVE = .653)		
SNT1	0.687	22.978
SNT4	0.808	37.946
SNT5	0.880	77.788
SNT6	0.844	58.455
SNT7	0.808	52.814

Source: Survey Data (2024)

Note: INNOV = Innovation, PROA = Proactiveness, RTP = Risk-taking Propensity, AUT = Autonomy, CAG = Competitive Aggressiveness, SalPerf = Sales Growth Performance, NPPerf2 = Net Profit Growth, SNT = Social Network Ties

Table 4 indicates that all of the FLs for the HOCs are higher than 0.70 and substantial at 1%. Furthermore, the findings reveal that CR and the AVE are higher than 0.80 and 0.50, respectively. This means there is no issue with construct reliability and convergent validity (Benitez et al., 2020). The result for the discriminant validity for the HOCs is presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Fornell-Lacker Criterion of Discriminant Validity – HOCs

Construct	**1**	**2**	**3**
Employee Intrapreneurial Orientation	**0.825**		
Small Enterprise Performance	0.587	**0.944**	
Social Network Ties	0.575	0.476	**0.808**

Source: Survey Data (2024)

Table 5 indicates that each construct's square root of the AVEs is more than its respective correlation values with the other constructs, demonstrating discriminant validity (Hair Jr. et al., 2023).

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Hypothesis Testing

As already indicated, we used SmartPLS SEM to evaluate the direct hypotheses. Additionally, Hayes' PROCESS macro and the Johnson-Neyman technique were utilised to assess and illustrate the extent and direction of the moderating effects. The hypotheses labelled H1 to H5 correspond to the direct effect paths in the conceptual framework. The SEM findings for these direct relationships are presented in Table 6.

Table 6: Results of Direct Effects

Direct Path Hypotheses		*B*	Mean	Std. Dev.	*T*-Stats	*P*-Values
H1:	INNOV -> Enterprise Performance	-0.036	-0.035	0.040	0.902	0.367
H2:	PROA -> Enterprise Performance	0.417	0.417	0.075	5.557	0.000
H3:	RTP -> Enterprise Performance	-0.035	-0.035	0.061	0.573	0.567
H4:	AUT -> Enterprise Performance	-0.101	-0.098	0.051	2.005	0.045
H5:	CAG -> Enterprise Performance	0.240	0.242	0.064	3.772	0.000

Source: Survey Data (2024)

Contrary to the forecast made in H1, findings in Table 6 indicate that employee innovation is not significantly associated with small enterprise performance ($\beta = -0.036$, $t = 0.902$, $p = 0.367$). Conformity to the prediction in H2, the findings in Table 6 reveal that employee proactiveness positively affects small enterprise performance ($\beta = 0.417$, $t = 5.557$, $p = 0.000$). In contrast to the prediction in H3, employee risk-taking propensity did not relate significantly with the performances of small enterprises ($\beta = -0.035$, $t = 0.573$, $p = 0.567$). Although the result for H4 is significant, it contrastingly indicates a significant negative association between employee autonomy and small enterprise performance ($\beta = -0.101$, $t = 0.902$, $p = 0.367$). Finally, in conformity to H5, the findings show that employee competitive aggressiveness relates positively to the performances of small enterprises ($\beta = -0.101$, $t = 0.902$, $p = 0.367$). The PROCESS results for the moderated effect are shown in Table 7.

Table 7: Results of Moderated Effect

	Dependent Variable: Small Enterprise Performance			
Predictor Variables	***B***	**SE**	**LLCI**	**ULCI**
Constant	3.8108	0.0547	3.7033	3.9182
Intrapreneurial Orientation (EIO)	0.5323	0.0477	0.4386	0.6259
Social Network Ties (SNT)	0.1979	0.0414	0.1166	0.2792
Interaction Term (EIO*SNT)	0.1022	0.0208	0.0614	0.143
R-sq. = 0.3535				
F= 103.3616				
P = 0.00				

Source: Survey Data (2024)

Results in Table 7 show that social network ties positively moderate the link between employee intrapreneurial behaviours and small enterprise performance, given β = 0.1022, 95% bootstrap CI: 0.0614 – 0.143l. Besides, as evidenced in Table 8, the findings from the Johnson-Neyman analysis show that the higher social network ties, the higher the associations between employee intrapreneurial orientation and small enterprise performance, lending support for H6.

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Table 8: Analysis of Moderated Effects via Slope Analysis

Path	Level of Social Network Ties	*β*	LLCI	ULCI
EIO ---> Enterprise Performance	Low (-1SD)	.3816	.2807	.4825
	High (+1SD)	.6829	.5621	.8037

Source: Survey Data (2024)

In addition, a simple slope conducted with the PROCESS tool reveals that the association is more robust and positive at one standard deviation above the mean of social network ties (β = 0.6829, 95% bootstrap CI: .5621 – .8037) compared to one standard deviation below the mean (β = .3816, 95% CI: .2807 – .4825). These findings are indicated in Figure 1.

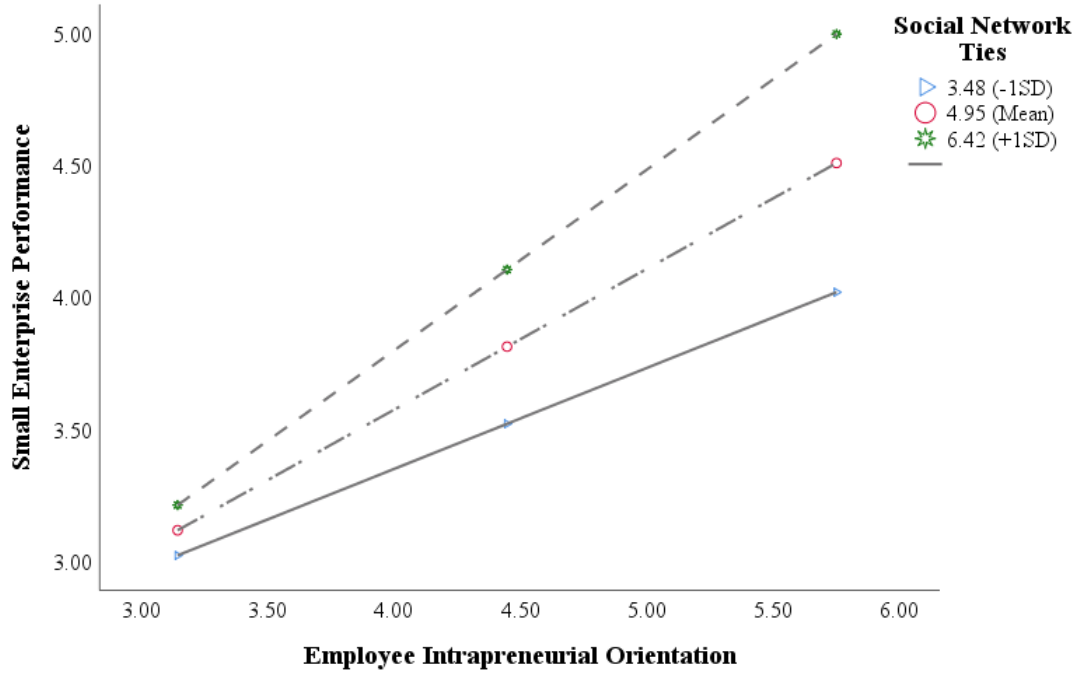

Figure 1: Moderating effect of social network ties

Discussion

The outcomes from this research offer deeper insights into the link between employee intrapreneurial orientation and small enterprises' performances, along with the moderating influence of social network ties. The results show that while employee proactiveness and competitive aggressiveness significantly enhance small enterprise performance, innovativeness and risk-taking propensity do not exhibit a direct impact. This suggests that in the Ghanaian setting, small enterprises being proactive and competitively aggressive is more crucial for performance than simply being innovative or willing to take risks.

Precisely, the substantial positive influence of proactiveness on small enterprises' performances aligns with prior studies that highlight the importance of proactive behaviours in leveraging emerging opportunities and pre-empting market changes (Ferreira et al., 2020; Kiss et al.,

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2022). Proactive employees in small enterprises anticipate and act on new opportunities, enabling their firms to stay ahead of the competition and sustain growth. Similarly, the favourable influence of competitive aggressiveness on small firms' performances agrees with the Dynamic Capabilities Theory, which posits that businesses achieve a competitive edge by responding swiftly and assertively to changing environments (Lumpkin & Pidduck, 2021).

Contrary to expectations, the research revealed no positive association between employee innovativeness and small enterprise performance. This result diverges from RBV theory, which stresses the role of innovation as a very vital resource for a competitive edge (Lubis, 2022). One possible explanation is that, in resource-constrained environments such as Ghana, the effectiveness of innovation may be hampered by limited access to capital and market resources, making it difficult for small enterprises to translate innovative ideas into tangible performance outcomes.

Furthermore, the absence of substantial influence of risk-taking propensity on small enterprise performances may be due to the increasing uncertainty and risk aversion prevalent in developing economies. The Prospect Theory asserts that making decisions under uncertainty often skews towards minimising potential losses, which could explain why small enterprises may not fully capitalise on the risk-taking behaviours of their employees (Kahneman & Tversky, 2013).

Interestingly, the negative relationship between employee autonomy and performance suggests that granting too much independence to employees without sufficient guidance may lead to inefficiencies or misalignment with the firm's strategic goals. Previous research supports this finding, arguing that autonomy's benefits are context-dependent and might not regularly result in positive outcomes (De Clercq & Brieger, 2022; Tran et al., 2021).

The influence of social network ties in moderating the connection between employee intrapreneurial orientation and small enterprise performances underscores the importance of external social capital in enhancing organisational outcomes. Employees with robust social networks can leverage external resources, knowledge, and support to amplify the impact of their intrapreneurial behaviours, leading to improved performance. This finding supports Social Capital Theory, which highlights the role of networks in smoothing resource access and innovation (Singh et al., 2021; Chen et al., 2022).

CONCLUSION

This research aimed to investigate how employee intrapreneurial orientation influences the performances of small enterprises in Ghana, emphasising the moderating role of social network ties. The results indicate that the various intrapreneurial orientation dimensions do not uniformly influence firm performance. Notably, employee proactiveness and competitive aggressiveness showed a substantial favourable effect on small enterprise performances, whereas innovativeness and risk-taking propensity did not exhibit a direct impact. These results suggest that in resource-constrained environments, such as those faced by small enterprises in

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Ghana, strategic behaviours that emphasise proactive market engagement and competitive assertiveness are more crucial for enhancing performance than innovation alone.

Moreover, the study draws attention to the vital role of social network ties in moderating the connection between intrapreneurial behaviours and firm performance. Strong social networks enhance employees' access to external resources, expertise, and support, amplifying the favourable effects of intrapreneurial orientation on firm performance. This underscores the importance of cultivating robust social capital within small enterprises to bolster their competitive positioning and sustainability in dynamic markets.

Overall, deeper insight is gained from how small enterprises in developing economies can leverage employee competencies and external networks to navigate challenges and achieve superior performance. By delineating the differential impact of various intrapreneurial behaviours and emphasising the significance of social networks, this study provides insightful knowledge for scholars and practitioners interested in fostering entrepreneurship and growth in small businesses.

Theoretical Contribution and Implication

This research advances the literature by extending the understanding of employee intrapreneurial orientation and its effect on the performances of small enterprises in developing economies, specifically in Ghana. Investigating employee innovation, proactiveness, risk-taking propensity, autonomy, and competitive aggressiveness provides a nuanced view of which intrapreneurial behaviours are most effective in driving performance.

The study challenges the traditional notion posited by the RBV that all forms of intrapreneurial orientation contribute equally to firm performance. The findings indicate that proactiveness and competitive aggressiveness are more critical than innovativeness and risk-taking. This suggests that small enterprises in developing economies may benefit more from strategic agility and assertiveness than purely innovative pursuits.

Furthermore, the research highlights how social network ties as a moderator enrich the understanding of how external resources can influence the effectiveness of internal competencies. This aligns with Social Capital Theory and suggests that enhancing employee networks can be a strategic approach for small enterprises to overcome internal resource constraints.

The research also adds to the discourse on autonomy in small enterprises, revealing that autonomy's impact on performance is not universally positive and can vary depending on contextual factors. This finding provides an avenue for further research to explore the conditions under which autonomy can be beneficial or detrimental to firm performance.

Managerial Implication

For managers of small enterprises, this study offers practical insights into optimising employee behaviours to improve performance. First, fostering a proactive and competitively aggressive

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workforce should be a strategic priority. Managers should encourage employees to anticipate market trends, identify new opportunities, and take bold actions to outperform competitors. This can be attained by targeted training initiatives, performance incentives, and promoting a culture that rewards proactive and competitive behaviours.

The findings also suggest that managers must carefully balance the autonomy granted to employees. While autonomy can drive creativity and innovation, excessive independence without adequate direction may lead to inefficiencies or misaligned efforts. Managers should provide clear goals and sufficient oversight to ensure that autonomous activities align with the firm's strategic objectives.

Additionally, managers should actively facilitate the development of social network ties among employees. This can be done by encouraging participation in industry events, fostering partnerships with other businesses, and supporting professional development opportunities. By strengthening these networks, employees can access valuable external resources that promote their potential to create and make a meaningful impact on firm performance.

Policy Implication

The research's outcome is significant for policymakers aiming to facilitate the development and sustainability of small businesses in emerging economies. Given the significant role of proactiveness and competitive aggressiveness in enhancing performance, policies should promote an enabling atmosphere that inspires entrepreneurial behaviours. This could include providing grants and subsidies for innovative projects, reducing bureaucratic barriers to business operations, and offering tax incentives for small enterprises demonstrating growth potential.

Moreover, to address the challenges associated with limited innovation resources, policymakers should prioritise initiatives facilitating access to financing and market opportunities. Establishing innovation hubs, providing funding for research and development, and enhancing access to technology can help small enterprises overcome resource constraints and leverage employee innovativeness more effectively.

Finally, recognising the importance of social network ties, policymakers should promote networking platforms and industry associations that connect small enterprises with more extensive networks of suppliers, customers, and partners. Such initiatives can facilitate knowledge exchange and collaboration, strengthening the overall ecosystem in which small enterprises operate.

Limitations

While this research provides invaluable insights into the existing literature, it does have certain limitations. First, the cross-sectional design limits the capacity to create causal relations between intrapreneurial orientation, social network ties, and firm performance. Future studies might utilise longitudinal designs to capture the dynamic evolution of these relationships over time. Secondly, the study predominantly relied on subjective performance measures, such as

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sales and net profit growth. While these are valuable indicators, incorporating objective metrics like market share, customer retention, or innovation output would provide a more holistic view of enterprise performance.

Furthermore, the research examined five dimensions of employee intrapreneurial orientation: innovation, proactiveness, risk-taking propensity, autonomy, and competitive aggressiveness.

Future Research

Future research could explore other potentially relevant dimensions, such as resilience and adaptability, which may also influence the performance of small enterprises, particularly in volatile and uncertain environments. Finally, the moderating role of social network ties was analysed as a unidimensional construct. Future studies could investigate the differential effects of various types of social networks, such as professional, familial, and community networks, to understand better how different dimensions of social network ties contribute to the effectiveness of intrapreneurial behaviours in small enterprises.

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