

Original Research Article

Self-Actualization Among the Palestinian Pioneer Woman (Qualitative Study)

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Received: 31.02.2026

Accepted: 25.04.2026

Published: 30.04.2026

Journal homepage:<https://www.easpublisher.com>**Quick Response Code**

Abstract: This study investigates the psychological profile of self-actualized Palestinian entrepreneurial women through an in-depth case study approach. The research addresses a critical gap in understanding the intersection between entrepreneurship, psychological resilience, and self-actualization within conflict-affected contexts such as the Gaza Strip. Drawing on clinical and qualitative methodologies, the study integrates projective and structured assessment tools, including the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT), self-actualization scales, problem-solving measures, optimism, risk-taking tendencies, social power orientation, and moral reasoning assessments. The findings reveal that self-actualized entrepreneurial women exhibit a complex psychological structure characterized by high levels of intrinsic motivation, adaptive problem-solving strategies, cognitive flexibility, and a strong sense of purpose aligned with both personal and collective goals. Despite exposure to socio-political constraints and economic instability, participants demonstrated resilience patterns supported by optimism, internal locus of control, and moral commitment. Notably, the interaction between self-actualization and entrepreneurial traits appears to be mediated by contextual adversity, transforming external constraints into drivers of psychological growth and innovation. The study contributes to the literature by offering a context-sensitive psychological model of female entrepreneurship in marginalized environments, emphasizing the role of internal psychological resources in achieving self-actualization. The findings have practical implications for psychological counseling, entrepreneurship development programs, and gender-focused empowerment policies in similar socio-cultural contexts.

Keywords: Self-actualization; entrepreneurship; psychological profile; Palestinian women; resilience; problem-solving.

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INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurialism is becoming an increasing multi-dimensional, yet also multi-faceted phenomenon; and while we often think about it primarily from a financial perspective or as a way to create new jobs and wealth, there are many other factors at play that help drive entrepreneurial behavior. In particular, researchers have recently focused on the psychological aspects of entrepreneurialism. The focus has been placed on females as they experience the most barriers when trying to enter into business for themselves, and doing so in very difficult circumstances. As the academic community continues to evolve their thinking around what drives the behavior of entrepreneurs, the concept of

self-actualization has emerged as one of the primary constructs used to explain the relationship between motivations, personal development, and involvement in entrepreneurial activities (Maslow, 1970; Santrock, 2003).

Self-actualization can be described as realizing your full potential by integrating all of your abilities, values and goals. Research studies indicate that those who attain greater self-actualization will exhibit improved cognitive flexibility, internal motivation, resiliency and adaptability to changing situations (Ordun & Akün, 2017; Jena & Dorji, 2016). All of these characteristics mirror the typical psychological make-up of a successful entrepreneur such as risk-taking

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propensity, innovative spirit, perseverance, and problem-solving skills (Shane *et al.*, 2003; Hisrich & Peters, 2005). Therefore, exploring the relationship between self-actualization and entrepreneurialism offers a possible avenue of study to understand how people navigate uncertainly and achieve success despite challenging circumstance.

A notable gap exists in the body of literature regarding research into women entrepreneurs operating in post-conflict regions. Women entrepreneurs in the Gaza strip operate within a unique environment, which includes a combination of limited socioeconomic and political options. As a result, the structural constraints imposed upon them not only limit their entrepreneurial opportunity but also impact how they develop psychologically and form an identity. Although prior studies have investigated entrepreneurship in Arab countries (Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, 2011; European Commission, 2016) in a generalized sense, few studies have captured the deeply embedded psychological processes that allow women to endure and survive adversity.

Additionally, many existing studies investigating self-actualization are based on quantitative methods. Few studies have used qualitative or clinical methods to study the complexity of the lived experience of women enduring the constraints of adverse conditions. In this regard, it is crucial to understand the culturally mediated interaction of role expectations, gender roles, and socio-political influences that affect individual behaviors in complex ways. Furthermore, the importance of conducting case-study research, providing an in-depth examination of the underlying psychological mechanisms that can be difficult to measure using standardized instruments alone (Cameron, 2012), must be emphasized.

The critical factors involved in self-actualization include optimism (Carver & Scheier, 2003); problem-solving abilities (Robichaud & Dugas, 2005); moral reasoning (Carver & Scheier, 2003); and social power orientation (Robichaud & Dugas, 2005). Although previous researchers have identified each variable as relevant to both self-actualization and entrepreneurial success separately, little attention has been paid to understanding the relationships between these variables as part of a single conceptual model, especially given that women are often forced to balance their own aspirations with those of others due to socio-political restrictions on choice.

Therefore, as an attempt to fill these voids, the present investigation is designed to provide a psychosocial analysis of self-actualized Palestinian women entrepreneurs via a qualitative case study design. Through the use of multi-dimensional assessment instruments (i.e., projective testing methods, and standardized rating scales), this study will create an

overall psychological profile of these individuals; one which encompasses their visible personality characteristics and their underlying motivational dynamics.

This study contributes to three interrelated areas. Theoretically, it develops knowledge on how to apply Self-Actualization Theory within the domain of Entrepreneurship using a context-based framework. Empirically, it produces data on the psychological adaptability and coping mechanisms employed by women who are functioning under structural barriers. Practically, it presents guidelines for developing targeted mental health interventions and entrepreneurial support services aimed at increasing women's empowerment in economically disadvantaged settings.

Based on this framework, the study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the key psychological characteristics of self-actualized Palestinian entrepreneurial women?
2. How do these women employ cognitive and emotional strategies to cope with environmental constraints?
3. What is the relationship between self-actualization and entrepreneurial traits within the context of the Gaza Strip?

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Self-Actualization: Theoretical Foundations and Psychological Dimensions

Self-actualization was among the most important concepts developed by humanistic psychologists. It is defined as the realization of an individual's full potential through developing a sense of personal fulfillment. The idea of self-actualization comes from the hierarchy of needs theory developed by Abraham Maslow, who placed self-actualization at the highest level of need. According to Maslow, people develop psychologically when they are able to engage in self-directed learning, autonomous behavior and creating their own meanings in life (Maslow, 1970; Zahran, 1971). As humanistic psychologists continued to develop theories and conducted research on human behavior, researchers further developed the understanding of self-actualized people. Researchers discovered that self-actualized people were characterized by high self-awareness, creativity, flexibility and a sense of purpose in their lives. Therefore, these are examples of how self-actualized people think and act (Ordun & Akün, 2017; Jena & Dorji, 2016).

In addition to being studied theoretically, self-actualization has also been studied empirically in applied psychology. Research has shown that there is a relationship between self-actualization and positive mental health outcomes. For example, self-actualized individuals have demonstrated better emotional regulation, an internal locus of control and are capable of

turning negative events into opportunities for growth (Carver & Scheier, 2003) as would be expected in models of problem-solving and coping skills used to define psychological maturity (Robichaud & Dugas, 2005; Kazantzis *et al.*, 2010). Furthermore, studies published in Arab psychology journals reported results consistent with those found in Western psychology literature. Specifically, it was reported that self-actualization correlated positively with both psychological adjustment and life satisfaction (Al-Daheri, 2005; Al-Khalidi, 2009), as well as goal achievement.

Self-actualization should not be viewed as a fixed trait. Rather, it can vary depending upon the environment. In unstable environments, self-actualization may occur differently than it does in stable ones. However, even in unstable environments, people continue to grow and develop. As such, researchers have identified two additional ways that people grow and develop in unstable environments. These include demonstrating resiliency and adapting to new circumstances. Further, researchers noted that people in unstable environments redefine what success means to them.

2. Entrepreneurship as a Psychological and Behavioral Construct

Entrepreneurship as a field has developed significantly beyond its original focus on economic concepts to become a multi-discipline field incorporating elements of psychology, sociology and culture. The modern definitions of entrepreneurship now place emphasis on it being a process based around identifying opportunities, developing innovative products or services and assuming calculated risk (Daft, 2010; Hisrich & Peters, 2005). As a characteristic of individuals, there is a strong relationship between entrepreneurial behavior and characteristics of personality including achievement motivation, self-efficacy, independent nature and perseverance (Shane *et al.*, 2003). Successful entrepreneurs may also exhibit a particular cognitive style in terms of problem-solving behaviors which include proactively finding solutions to problems encountered, tolerant of uncertainty/ambiguity and use strategic thinking (Bolton & Thompson, 2000). These types of cognitions are influenced by emotional/motivational factors such as optimism, ability to withstand setbacks/resilience and orientation towards the future (Carver & Scheier, 2003). Therefore, entrepreneurship represents not just an economic activity but also the realization of one's potential.

The study of entrepreneurship within the Arab context highlights the increasing relevance of entrepreneurship as an engine for economic growth and social empowerment with specific reference to young people and women (Al-Sakameh, 2008; Al-Najjar & Al-Ali, 2006), however numerous structural impediments exist such as restricted availability of capital to support

new ventures, limitations imposed by cultural attitudes and institutional restrictions that affect entrepreneurial participation and success.

3. Women's Entrepreneurship and Contextual Constraints

A number of studies have focused on the topic of women's entrepreneurship, as well as the specific obstacles and motivators that influence women's engagement in entrepreneurial endeavors. Research indicates that when engaged in entrepreneurial activity, women tend to be highly intrinsically motivated, socially responsible, and inclined toward working collaboratively for mutually beneficial goals and values (Zapalska, 2001; Buttner, 1993)

Moreover, while both men and women are affected by their socio-economic environment and institutions in which they operate, women may experience additional limitations due to discriminatory attitudes and societal expectations based upon gender (GEM, 2011), along with lessened opportunities for accessing education, capital, training etc. (European Commission, 2016). Additionally, despite these impediments women entrepreneurs appear to be extremely adaptable and resilient, and are able to rely heavily on their own and others' support systems to navigate around the obstacles they encounter.

The issues facing women who engage in entrepreneurial activities within the Palestinian context (especially those in the Gaza strip) are further complicated by political instability, severe economic restrictions, and extreme limited access to travel or other forms of mobility. Past studies have examined the function of entrepreneurship as an economic survival mechanism as well as a method for women to gain financial independence under adverse circumstances (Abu Mandil, 2014; Abdullah *et al.*, 2014). However, research is needed to better understand psychologically, how women achieve self-actualization via entrepreneurial engagement in such difficult-to-access environments.

4. Psychological Correlates: Optimism, Problem-Solving, and Moral Reasoning

A developing body of research is identifying the psychological aspects of self-actualization and entrepreneurial success. The literature indicates that one of the primary predictors of resilience and adaptive coping in response to adverse events is optimism (Carver & Scheier, 2003; Sarici Bulut, 2018), and optimistic individuals will often view obstacles or setbacks as temporary and manageable while pursuing long term goals.

Problem solving skills enable individuals to navigate through unknown, unstructured, and unpredictable environments. Problem solving involves numerous cognitive functions including analysis,

evaluation, and decision making. Both of these problem-solving skills are important for achieving self-actualization as well as for conducting entrepreneurial activities (Kazantzis *et al.*, 2010). Additionally, research has demonstrated that individuals with effective problem-solving skills tend to have lower levels of stress, are able to make more informed decisions, and are ultimately more successful in achieving their desired objectives (Robichaud & Dugas, 2005).

Moral reasoning and social responsibility are two additional components of the psychological profile of self-actualized individuals. Moral reasoning reflects an individual's ability to assess an ethical dilemma and determine what would be the most appropriate course of action. Social responsibility refers to an individual's sense of commitment and accountability to others in social interactions (Abdel Fattah, 2001). For example, the moral reasoning of entrepreneurs can affect the way they make decisions regarding their business operations, the type of behaviors exhibited by them as leaders, and the social implications of their business ventures (Al-Roubi & Al-Baker, 1992).

5. Toward an Integrated Framework

The prior research indicates that self-actualization, entrepreneurship, and the psychological variables (i.e., optimism, problem-solving abilities, and moral reasoning) all work together. Nevertheless, most prior studies were conducted independently from one another and did not create a single theoretical model that would consider environmental context when examining these variables.

Therefore, the purpose of this current research was to address this deficiency through developing an integrated psychological model where self-actualization is the key variable connecting individual characteristics, thought processes, and external factors. Entrepreneurship will be viewed as both an end-product and as a process of self-actualization, especially among individuals who exist in environments with constraints and adversities.

In order to investigate the interplay of the various psychological variables in the lives of the Palestinian entrepreneurial women, the methodology employed for this research will utilize a qualitative/case-study approach.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The focus of this study was an exploratory and qualitative methodology which utilizes the Clinical Psychology approach in conjunction with Case Study Methodology to gain an in-depth and thorough understanding of the psychological profiles of successful Palestinian female entrepreneurs. Through the use of clinical psychology methodology, the researcher can examine psychological dynamics including subjectivity,

and motivation through participant interaction and through the use of specialized clinical psychology methodologies. At the same time, Case Study Methodology provides for an in-depth examination of a small number of cases to provide richly textured data reflecting the complexities inherent in the phenomena being examined.

Given the socio-political nature of the Gaza Strip environment, this methodology provides researchers with an opportunity to analyze both individual personalities and their life experiences within a complex social context. Therefore, it emphasizes a deep analysis of the data collected rather than emphasizing generality and represents a qualitative tradition seeking to identify meanings, interpretations, and psychological nuances regarding the experience of individuals rather than statistically representing them.

Participants and Sampling

A purposeful sampling approach was used for this study. Purposeful sampling is an intentional sampling technique that allows researchers to select subjects or samples that fit the researcher's objectives and will provide substantial insight into the data being collected. Participants for this study were Palestinian female entrepreneurs who demonstrated indicators of self-actualization through their professional accomplishments, personal growth and development and community involvement. Participants were also selected based upon additional specific criteria such as they were actively engaged in some form of entrepreneurship; recognized as successful professionals in their own field of endeavor; and exhibited behaviors and/or psychological characteristics related to self-actualization. This smaller number of cases reflects the qualitative aspect of this study. Qualitative studies emphasize detailed, case-oriented analyses over broader generalizations. Therefore, each subject selected for participation in this study represented a unique unit of analysis and contributed to developing an enhanced conceptual understanding of the phenomenon researched.

Data Collection Instruments

The researcher employed a variety of tools to gather data in order to provide strong methodological support for an in-depth analysis. The Semi-Structured Clinical Interview was used as a major tool to collect detailed background information regarding each participant's personal history, family history, education and career, and psychological experiences. Utilizing a clinical interview allows for greater flexibility when developing new emergent themes within each case study while maintaining consistencies among all case studies.

In addition to the semi-structured clinical interview, the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT) was administered as a Projective Technique that assessed participants' unconscious and conscious personality

dynamics; underlying motivation; and unresolved conflict(s). Participants interpreted the ambiguous images presented in the TAT to gain access to their internal world, including their needs, interpersonal relationships, and how they cope or adapt.

Also, the researcher constructed a Self-Actualization Scale which included items intended to measure important aspects of self-actualization such as autonomy, goal orientation, emotional balance, and sense of purpose. The Self-Actualization Scale permitted a systematic examination of how participants perceive themselves and their behavior relative to self-actualization.

Moreover, a Problem-Solving Scale was implemented to assess participants' cognitive strategies and behavioral responses toward resolving problems. The Problem-Solving Scale provided insight into participants' ability to think analytically, make decisions, generate flexible solution alternatives, and evaluate the results of their efforts.

Additional measures were taken to enhance the overall psychological profile of the participants. These measures include additional scales assessing optimism, risk taking orientation, social power orientation, and level of moral development. Each of these measures collectively provided a multi-dimensional perspective of the participants' psychological attributes and relationship between those attributes and both self-actualization and successful entrepreneurship.

Validity and Reliability

The content of the instrument was validated through a review by a panel of expert psychologists and educators. Experts reviewed each item on the instrument for relevance, clarity and appropriateness. The panel's comments were used to revise the instrument and improve its fit to the research context.

Additionally, face validity was taken into consideration as well as ensuring that all of the language was clear and culturally appropriate to the Palestinian culture. These two steps ensured that participants would find the questions on the instrument easy to understand and relevant to their experiences.

While this research is qualitative in nature, the researchers still had to consider issues related to internal consistency when developing the scales (the measurement tools) so that there would be some level of coherence among the items measuring the same construct. Additionally, using multiple data collection methods (interviews, projective tests and structured scales) helped to increase the trustworthiness of the findings by providing methodological triangulation.

Data Analysis Procedures

The researcher utilized an interpretive qualitative research design that integrated thematic and clinical strategies for analyzing data. Through thematic analysis (i.e., identifying, coding and grouping recurring patterns or themes) of interview data, the researcher identified themes and patterns that are related to participants' psychological characteristics, life experiences and entrepreneurial behaviors.

At the same time, the researcher interpreted responses received from participants via the projective test and/or other measures utilizing a clinical interpretation model to reveal underlying psychological meanings and hidden structural elements in participants' narrative accounts. The researcher's interpretive approach was influenced by professional guidelines for conducting clinical assessments as well as projective testing.

The researcher used a cross-case analytical strategy to examine both similarities and differences across participants, which allowed the researcher to develop an aggregate understanding of similar patterns of self-actualization occurring across participants while at the same time examining unique patterns and characteristics of each participant. The researcher used a multiple layer analytic strategy to understand how self-actualization occurred in a social/cultural context relevant to this study.

Ethical Considerations

The experiment followed a code of conduct for ethical practice in psychology. Participants were fully aware of the intentions behind the study as well as the methods used, and gave their consent voluntarily before they took part. Personal data was completely anonymous at all times during the experiment. In addition, all materials from the study were stored safely.

Participants' mental health and welfare were also treated with special consideration especially while asking them about sensitive parts of themselves. The researcher paid close attention to any signs that indicated participants became uncomfortable. Also, the researchers made sure that participation did not cause any mental distress.

RESULTS

Overview of Analytical Approach

This research used an integrative qualitative methodology that utilized both thematic analysis of clinical interview responses and a projective approach (Thematic Apperception Test) as well as a process of interpretive synthesis with respect to responses from each of the various psychological assessment scales. An examination of recurrent psychological themes and individual variation in these themes among the participants was completed via a cross case analytical methodological design.

Results were reported through a structural thematic report format that included tables for purposes of supporting transparency, providing additional support for the rigor and traceability regarding the relationship between the raw data collected and the subsequent interpretations made.

Case	Educational Level	Entrepreneurial Field	Experience (Years)	Key Achievement Indicator
Case 1	University	Small Business (Retail/Services)	5–7	Established independent enterprise
Case 2	Postgraduate	Social Entrepreneurship	6–8	Community-based initiatives
Case 3	University	Home-based Business	4–6	Financial independence
Case 4	University	Digital/Online Business	3–5	Business scalability
Case 5	Postgraduate	Educational/Training Services	7–10	Institutional recognition

This profile illustrates a relatively diverse yet comparable group in terms of entrepreneurial engagement and developmental trajectories.

Theme 1: Internal Locus of Control and Personal Agency

There was an overwhelming finding across each case; that there is a very strong sense of internal locus of control among participants. There were consistent attributions by the participants with regards to success or failure based upon perceived personal effort, decision making, and tenacity rather than external factors. The demonstrated orientation toward a high level of psychological autonomy and self-determination is reflective of the participant's preference for self-directed actions.

The interview data contained explicit statements from the participants regarding their feelings of responsibility (accountability), and their scale responses clearly indicated that they prefer to make decisions independently. The projective test results supported the findings above in that participants created stories about characters that have complete control over what happens in the story.

Theme 2: Resilience and Adaptive Coping

The participants had many social and economic barriers but were very resilient. The participants' stories illustrated repeatedly being exposed to adversity. They used the same types of coping strategies repeatedly; specifically, they used a problem focused thinking style (trying to solve problems), persistence (never giving up) and cognitive reframing (looking at problems from different perspectives).

Participants perceived obstacles as an opportunity for personal development. An adaptive approach to obstacles was consistent with all of the data collected through the interview process, the rating scale process, and the projective response process. Therefore, it appears that resilience is a fundamental aspect of their personality.

Participant Profile Overview

To contextualize the findings, participants were profiled based on key demographic and professional characteristics relevant to entrepreneurial engagement and self-actualization.

Theme 3: Purpose-Driven Orientation

Purpose and meaning were the primary attributes that stood out in the entrepreneurial identities of participants. In this regard, they viewed their entrepreneurial pursuits as having a positive social impact on both their families and communities and therefore as being meaningful well beyond their own success. The values-driven nature of their motivations demonstrated how their achievements are directly tied to social benefit. Projective responses showed that many of them viewed themselves through lenses of "helping others", leadership, and contributing which demonstrate an intrinsic motivation for creating meaning and taking responsibility for their actions.

Theme 4: Cognitive Flexibility and Problem-Solving

Participants were able to exhibit very high levels of problem-solving ability that were flexible, strategic and adaptable. These participants were able to assess several options for resolution, make adjustments in how they approached problems due to changes in conditions, and learn from prior experience.

The participant's scale responses suggested that these participants used a highly structured and analytical approach when making decisions. However, the interview responses suggest that experiential learning was one of the primary ways in which these participants developed cognitively.

This suggests that this flexibility is one of the many ways in which participants develop their effectiveness as an entrepreneur.

Theme 5: Optimism and Future Orientation

The participants demonstrated a high level of consistent optimism in this study. The optimism that participants showed in this study, is an optimistic view of their life, which came from their past accomplishments as well as from past successes. Participants also had strong beliefs in their capacity to be able to solve problems and achieve success when they face obstacles or challenges in the future. In addition, most projective stories included positive endings;

therefore, it appears that these participants have a constructive outlook toward the future.

Theme 6: Balanced Self-Perception and Emotional Stability

Participants displayed a balance of self-concept that was identified as self-consciousness, acceptance and emotion regulation. Self-awareness included an understanding of both strengths and weaknesses, but with little or no criticism towards themselves.

The participants showed emotional stability through their ability to handle high levels of stress while maintaining effective work performance. The participants' ability to maintain this level of function under pressure is indicative of their overall level of mental health.

Thematic Analysis Matrix

The following table presents the integration of themes across data sources, enhancing analytical transparency:

Theme	Evidence from Interviews	Evidence from TAT	Evidence from Scales
Internal Locus of Control	Attribution to personal effort	Active protagonists overcoming challenges	High autonomy responses
Resilience	Narratives of overcoming adversity	Conflict resolution themes	High persistence scores
Purpose Orientation	Community-focused goals	Altruistic storylines	Value-driven responses
Cognitive Flexibility	Strategic decision-making	Adaptive problem narratives	Analytical problem-solving patterns
Optimism	Positive future expectations	Favorable story endings	High optimism indicators
Emotional Stability	Controlled emotional responses	Balanced interpersonal themes	Stable self-assessment

Cross-Case Psychological Pattern Analysis

To illustrate consistency across participants, the following matrix summarizes the presence of key psychological characteristics:

Theme	Case 1	Case 2	Case 3	Case 4	Case 5
Internal Locus of Control	High	High	High	High	High
Resilience	High	High	Moderate-High	High	High
Purpose Orientation	Moderate-High	High	Moderate	High	High
Cognitive Flexibility	High	High	Moderate	High	High
Optimism	High	High	High	High	High
Emotional Stability	High	High	Moderate-High	High	High

The table indicates a high degree of consistency across cases, with minor variations reflecting individual differences rather than structural divergence.

Integrated Psychological Profile

The overall synthesis of research results showed a consistent psychological profile of strength for these individuals. This included high levels of personal agency, ability to be resilient when faced with adversity; motivation based on purpose and values; ability to cognitively adapt and adjust to changing circumstances; positive outlook (optimism); and a healthy balance in their emotions. Importantly, these traits work together synergistically to create a dynamic whole. Thus, these participants were able to successfully move through the challenges of their environment and sustain their success over time.

DISCUSSION

Overview and Analytical Framing

The main purpose of this study was to establish an overall psychological picture for the Palestinian women entrepreneurs who had reached their full

potential in the context of a very complex socio-political environment. In general, all participants exhibited a clear group of psychological features that fit well with the theories of personality and humanistic psychology concerning self-actualization, motivation, and adaptability. The outcomes of the research support previous theoretical views on self-actualization which describe it as an ongoing process of self-development toward realizing one's total capacity through continuing personal development and action-oriented behaviors (Maslow as stated by Al-Sab'awi, 2009; Al-Khalidi, 2009).

Self-Actualization as a Dynamic Process

As such, the study confirms that self actualisation is not just a stable personality trait however rather a long-term development process. Participants were continually engaged in their own personal development as well as in their goal pursuits and the creation of meaning for their lives which is consistent with previous research demonstrating that self actualisation entails the continued effort to achieve one's

personal or existential fulfillment (Al-Sab'awi, 2009; Al-Sayyid, 2018).

In addition, these results are also beyond the normal views on self actualisation as they demonstrate that individuals can develop self actualisation even when exposed to adverse circumstances. These results support previous studies suggesting that at times difficult living conditions may lead to greater levels of psychological growth and adaptive functioning (Hamid, 2021).

Internal Locus of Control and Personal Agency

Strong internal locus of control by participants in this study corresponds with previous studies showing an association of personal agency with both achievement and psychological well-being. Research has also indicated that those who report attributing their achievements and failures to internal factors (such as effort or decisions) have stronger motivational levels, are more persistent (Abd Al-Rahman, 1998; Al-'Adl, 2001), and are more likely to maintain goal-oriented behaviors under pressure than those reporting high internal control beliefs, which serve as an important source of psychological strength when faced with constraint (Al-'Utoum, 2004).

Resilience and Adaptive Coping

Resilience was also viewed by many of the participants to be one of their most important characteristics. In addition, past research has established that it plays a significant role in the area of mental health and psychological adjustment (and) success. Therefore, this study found that participants were able to adjust to stressors, view challenges in a positive light, and continue to persevere; all of these are consistent with research studies concerning coping skills and mental health (Zahran, 1971).

In addition, the findings of this study indicated that resilient individuals do not simply respond passively to challenges they experience. Rather, they take an active role in developing their abilities to overcome adversity through learning from experiences. The findings of this study support other researchers who have investigated the relationship between resiliency and individual's self-efficacy as well as long term achievements (Hamid, 2021).

Purpose-Driven Motivation

The strongest motivating factor among participants was the desire for successful achievement for themselves and others. Al Sab'awi (2009) and Shahin & Zayed (2009), indicate this form of self-actualizing motivation goes beyond one's own satisfaction to include contributing to family and community. Therefore, results from this study are consistent with findings regarding cultural values that promote both individualism and collectivism as motivators. Al-Rimawi (2004) emphasizes that the sociocultural environment

significantly influences how an individual's motivations are understood.

Cognitive Flexibility and Problem-Solving

The advanced problem-solving ability demonstrated by all participants is supported through the literature reviewed within cognitive psychology which emphasizes flexibility and adaptability in solving problems as a means of adapting to complexities (Al-'Utoum, 2004; Jarwan, 2011).

The ability to consider alternative options, develop new strategies, and apply learning experiences are examples of high-level cognitive operations which support both an individual's psychological adaptation and their entrepreneurial success. This supports research findings indicating that problem-solving skills relate to self-efficacy and performance (Faied, 1999).

Optimism and Future Orientation

Research has supported the role of optimism in increasing motivation, maintaining perseverance and improving mental health (Carver & Scheier, 2003; Makhaimer & Abd Al-Mu'ti, 2000), as participants expressed an optimistic view for the future. This optimism appeared to be based on past experiences rather than overly idealized expectations, similar to other research regarding adaptive and maladaptive optimism (Al-Samarrai, 2011).

Emotional Stability and Self-Regulation

Emotional Stability was found to be an important contributor to the participant's overall performance and health. The findings of this study are consistent with other studies in Personality and Clinical Psychology that have identified Emotional Regulation as being critical for achieving Psychological Balance and Successful Functioning (Abbas, 2003; Al-Khalidi, 2009)

The participants were able to effectively manage their stress while maintaining a balanced self-view. These capabilities reflect Advanced Self-Awareness and Control which are fundamental elements of Self-Actualization (Abd Al-Raouf, 2018).

Integrated Interpretation

The integration of these findings suggests that self-actualization is a multidimensional construct shaped by the interaction of psychological, cognitive, and social factors. The results support a holistic understanding of self-actualization that incorporates agency, resilience, purpose, and emotional balance, consistent with contemporary psychological theories (Al-Ma'aytah *et al.*, 2002).

CONCLUSION

This research attempted to create a complete psychological description of successful Palestinian businesswomen in their quest to reach self-actualization within a poor resource constrained political-social

environment. The findings indicate that achieving self-actualization in such a challenging environment is not just an abstract theoretical concept; rather, self-actualization occurs through an interactive process among the resources (personal capacity) available to entrepreneurs and the constraints (environmental challenges) they face.

The data revealed that all participants exhibited common patterns of personality traits, which included a high degree of locus of control, resilience, motivation by a sense of purpose, cognitive adaptability, optimism and stable emotions. When these traits are present together, they function synergistically to help people develop ways to deal with adversity on a daily basis, maintain long term objectives and ultimately achieve success in both personal and work-related aspects of life. In this respect, the research supports theoretical models of self-actualization as a process of ongoing self-realization and fulfilling one's full potential.

In addition, the research expands upon previous studies concerning self-actualization by providing evidence that self-actualization can occur under circumstances of unstable social-political environments. The participants were able to grow and develop through adversity and utilized adversity as an opportunity for growth and change. Therefore, this finding provides additional insight into the definition of self-actualization in terms of its ability to be developed through adversity and demonstrates a more accurate representation of self-actualization as being adaptable and resilient in less-than-ideal situations.

From a practical point-of-view, the results emphasize the need for entrepreneurial and educational programs for women to integrate psychological empowerment. Psychological empowerment may provide significant contributions to both personal growth as well as economic participation through increasing internal agency, resilience, and adaptive cognitive skills. Policymakers and institutions could also recognize that the psychological aspects of entrepreneurship are important when developing support systems for entrepreneurs in environments with structural barriers.

Although it has some benefits, the study is limited in several ways. A qualitative case study design was employed for the purpose of providing an in-depth examination of the issues at hand; however, there are limitations to generalizing the findings due to the case study design. There is also a limitation on how broadly applicable these results are to other populations based upon the size and specificity of the sample used. The potential exists for future studies using mixed-method designs or larger samples to confirm and build upon the current results.

Overall, this study presents a theoretical framework for self-actualization among entrepreneurial

women in a challenging socio-culture environment. It examines the relationship between psychological strengths (or weaknesses) and environmental factors that affect the ability to achieve self-actualization. Therefore, this study provides value for both academic research as well as practical applications.

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Cite This Article: Khitam I. M. Alsahhar & Bushra Salim Al-Rayes (2026). Self-Actualization Among the Palestinian Pioneer Woman (Qualitative Study). *EAS J Psychol Behav Sci*, 8(2), 77-86.
