

What are the cosmological beliefs of successful entrepreneurs, and how do external influences inform their mindset?

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**Master’s Degrees by Examination and Dissertation**

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## Page of contents

4.....	<b>Abstract</b>
5.....	<b>Introduction</b>
8.....	<b>Literature Review</b>
9.....	<i>Cosmological beliefs</i>
10.....	Psychological Capital
11.....	External influences
11.....	Spirituality and business
12.....	Meditation
14.....	New Age
15.....	Gaps in the research
17.....	<b>Methodology</b>
18.....	Qualitative research
19.....	Interview process
20.....	Things to consider
24.....	<b>Research and Findings</b>
24.....	Resilience
27.....	Cosmology, and fate
31.....	Gender effect
36.....	The Law of Attraction
39.....	External influences
40.....	Prayer, visualisation, and meditation
42.....	The ego and soul purpose
44.....	Motivation
47.....	Culture, religion, and spirituality
49.....	<b>Conclusion</b>
49.....	Cosmological beliefs and Psychological Capital
50.....	Motivation and the ego
51.....	Positive and negative effects of external influences
52.....	Gender
53.....	Potential flaws in my research
55.....	Final Notes
57.....	<b>Bibliography</b>

## Abstract

It is impossible to determine whether success is the product of a supernatural event, karma, fate, or magic, but it is feasible to examine the thinking of successful businesspeople to learn whether their cosmological beliefs have an influence on their outcomes and how. Spirituality is seen to be a catalyst and motivator for a positive mentality amid a crisis, and this mindset is claimed to make or break businesses.<sup>1</sup> A significant crisis that will forever be discussed as a devastating part of history is the COVID19 pandemic that led to an economic disruption.<sup>2</sup> However, while COVID19 decreased consumer consumption and production for many companies, it was a time where faith, spirituality and mindset determined how entrepreneurs redirected their daily practise,<sup>3</sup> as business's were forced to adapt their ways of working towards a New Age led online world.<sup>4</sup> This dissertation seeks to ascertain the cosmological beliefs of successful entrepreneurs' and how external influences impact their behavior adding to the expanding body of research in this field by emphasising the role of cosmological beliefs in business success, mindset, and well-being.

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<sup>1</sup>Clara Margaça, Jose C. Sánchez-García, Giuseppina Maria Cardella, and Brizeida R. Hernández-Sánchez, 'The Role of Spiritual Mindset and Gender in Small Business Entrepreneurial Success.' *Frontiers in psychology*, 13 (2022), 3-13 (p.7).

<sup>2</sup> Nuno Fernandes, 'Economic Effects Of Coronavirus Outbreak (COVID-19) On the World Economy', *Social Science Research Network Journal, IESE Business School Working Paper*. WP-1240-E (2020), 1-28.

<sup>3</sup> Margaça and others, 'The Role of Spiritual Mindset and Gender', p.2.

<sup>4</sup> Khalid Rahman, 'Evolving World Scenario.' *Policy Perspectives, JSTOR*, 17. 1 (2020), 143–148 (p.147).

## Introduction

It is impossible to determine whether success is the product of a supernatural event, karma, fate, or magic, but it is feasible to examine the thinking of successful businesspeople to learn whether and how their cosmological beliefs have an influence on their outcomes. According to Matthew Brophy, the study of how spirituality can be incorporated into business appears to be ever expanding, despite the odd notion that ‘businesses frequently view spiritual values as impositions that belong in business as much as a priest belongs at a bachelor party’.<sup>5</sup> Clara Margaça, Jose García, Giuseppina Cardella, and Brizeida Sánchez state that spirituality is seen to be a catalyst and motivator for a positive mentality amid a crisis, and this mindset is claimed to make or break businesses.<sup>6</sup> A significant crisis that will forever be discussed as a devastating part of history is the COVID19 pandemic that led to economic disruption as noted by the research undertaken by Nuno Fernandes.<sup>7</sup> However, while COVID19 decreased consumer consumption and production for many companies, it was a time where faith, spirituality and mindset determined how entrepreneurs redirected their daily practice.<sup>8</sup> Khalid Rahman explains that businesses were forced to adapt their ways of working towards an online world.<sup>9</sup>

My research seeks to ascertain the impact of successful entrepreneurs' cosmological views and how they influence their thinking, adding to the expanding body of research in this field by emphasising the role of cosmological beliefs in business success, mindset, and well-being.

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<sup>5</sup> Matthew Brophy, ‘Spirituality Incorporated: Including Convergent Spiritual Values in Business,’ *Journal of Business Ethics*, Springer, 132.4 (2015), 779-794 (p.779).

<sup>6</sup> Margaça and others, ‘The Role of Spiritual Mindset and Gender’, p.7.

<sup>7</sup> Nuno Fernandes, ‘Economic Effects of Coronavirus Outbreak (COVID-19) On the World Economy’, *Social Science Research Network Journal, IESE Business School Working Paper*. WP-1240-E (2020), 1-28.

<sup>8</sup> Margaça and others, ‘The Role of Spiritual Mindset’, p.2.

<sup>9</sup> Khalid Rahman, ‘Evolving World Scenario.’ *Policy Perspectives*, 17. 1 (2020), 143–148 (p.147).

Research by Ayatakshee Sarkar discovered that spirituality has been directly linked to reducing stress and depression in the workplace, helping build mental strength.<sup>10</sup> Mental development is commonly referred to within the literature in this subject as Psychological Capital, a concept developed by Fred Luthans, Carolyn Youssef, and Bruce Avolio.<sup>11</sup> This research will be discussed further in the literature review. According to Angela Balog and LaKami Baker, entrepreneurship can be extremely precarious, and often stressful,<sup>12</sup> yet the entrepreneur is frequently described as someone who observes and behaves upon the world differently from others.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, to determine whether this is due to their general mindset or cosmological perspective, it is important to understand how their beliefs and external influences impact their actions.

Throughout my study, the term ‘cosmological beliefs’ refers to any beliefs connected to spirituality, faith, religion, or a universal influence. According to Nicholas Campion, cosmology is a term that generally refers to the ‘ways in which human beings locate themselves in relation to the cosmos, seen as the totality of everything,’ as opposed to the narrowly

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<sup>10</sup> Ayatakshee Sarkar, and Garg Naval. “Peaceful Workplace Only A Myth?”: Examining The Mediating Role Of Psychological Capital On Spirituality and Nonviolence Behaviour At The Workplace’. *International Journal of Conflict Management*. 31.5 (2020), 709-728 (p.714). <<https://doi.org/10.1108/IJCMA-11-2019-0217>> on research undertaken by Kamlesh Singh, Mohita Junnarkar and Jasleen Kaur. ‘Spirituality And Its Assessment’, in *Measures of Positive Psychology, Development and Validation*. (Springer, New Delhi, 2016 pp.127–154).

<sup>11</sup> Fred Luthans, Carolyn M. Youssef, and Bruce J. Avolio, 'Introduction To Psychological Capital', in *Psychological Capital: Developing the Human Competitive Edge* (New York, online edn, Oxford Academic, 2007), p.3.

<sup>13</sup> Angela M Balog, and LaKami T. Baker, ‘Religiosity And Spirituality In The Life Of The Entrepreneur: A Review And Synthesis’, *Journal of Management, Spirituality & Religion, Academy Of Management Annual Meeting Proceedings*. 11.2 (2014), 159-186. (p.160). <DOI:10.1080/14766086.2013.836127>.

understood ‘scientific study of outer space’.<sup>14</sup> Max Ganzin, Gazi Islam and Roy Suddaby state how ‘cosmology involves adherence to a transcendent belief system involving often fatalistic assumptions of order and rationality in the universe and existing beyond individual interests.’<sup>15</sup> While little description is offered in literature as to the meaning of cosmological beliefs, Nicholas Campion describes a ‘cosmological world view’ as a set of cosmic theories that support, illuminate, explain, or motivate cultural views and people.<sup>16</sup> Cosmological beliefs in my research paper are the belief systems of the participants that could be said to be a direct impact or response to this concept of their ‘cosmological world view’ including any religious or spiritual beliefs. The interviews for my dissertation focus on discovering the participants’ cosmological beliefs, including their views on astrology and fate. Susan Meyer describes fate as a chain or a string of causes according to stoic beliefs,<sup>17</sup> and Bernadette Brady adds in conjunction to astrology, how ‘the life of an astrologer is a life engaged with a dance or a wrestle with fate.’<sup>18</sup> This idea that people's prosperity can be pre-determined, or influenced by their faith in fate will be investigated in my research.

Religion will not be a major topic of discussion in my paper, although the participants are likely to share religious personal or cultural values as parts of their responses. Religion and spirituality will be handled as two separate and different concepts. Brophy and fellow

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<sup>14</sup> Nicholas Campion, ‘Cosmology and Religion: Measurement And Meaning’ in *Astrology and Cosmology In The Worlds Religions*, (New York University Press, 2012), 1-10 (p.10).

<sup>15</sup> Max Ganzin, Gazi Islam, and Roy Suddaby, ‘Spirituality and Entrepreneurship: The Role of Magical Thinking in Future-Oriented Sensemaking’ *Organization Studie,s Sage Journals, EGOS*, 41.4 (2019), 77-102 (p.81).

<sup>16</sup> Campion, *Astrology and Cosmology*, p.10.

<sup>17</sup> Susan Sauvé Meyer, 'Chain of Causes: What Is Stoic Fate?', in Ricardo Salles (ed.), *God And Cosmos In Stoicism* (Oxford University Press, 2009), 71-90 (P.71)  
<<https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199556144.003.0004>>.

<sup>18</sup> Bernadette Brady, PHD, ‘Living with Fate: The Lifestyle Of Contemporary Astrologers’. *Journal for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture*. 13. (2019), 31-43. (p.32).

researchers state how spirituality can often be seen as a form of atheism,<sup>19</sup> and so it may be treated this way where the participants suggest. Campion describes how religion is difficult to define,<sup>20</sup> and offers definition attempts by other scholars including James George Frazer, who describes religion as a worship of higher beings more powerful than man, who are thought to direct and rule nature and human existence;<sup>21</sup> and Emile Durkheim describes how particular groups of that religion, practise ‘corresponding rites’ that are accepted by all members who belong and unify the group.<sup>22</sup> All of these theories are relevant and can be taken into consideration in studying my research. A higher power may also be referred to as God, Goddess, The Universe, or Deity; the differentiation of the terms’ meaning will be described whenever necessary for the reader in case of any direct impact that this may have on the research and the participants used in my study.

## Literature Review

My research is based on literature sources written by researchers who have already conducted studies on spirituality and business, emphasising the importance of future magical thinking for successful business owners.<sup>23</sup> The advancement of research in this field is offering evidence that the introduction of meditation, mindfulness, and spiritual acceptance in the workplace adds

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<sup>19</sup> Brophy, ‘Spirituality Incorporated’, p.787.

<sup>20</sup> Campion, *Astrology and Cosmology*, p.8.

<sup>21</sup> James George Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion*, (abridged ed.London: Mac-millan, 1971) [1922].

<sup>22</sup> Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms Of Religious Life*, trans. Karen E. Fields. New York: Free Press, 1995 [1<sup>st</sup> edn., *Les Formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse*, Paris; F. Alcan 1912].Ch.1, VI, (p.39).

<sup>23</sup> Ganzin and others, ‘Spirituality and Entrepreneurship’, p.78.



value to corporate teams, helping people to feel calmer, produce higher-quality work, and value their employment.<sup>24</sup> Corey Fox, Brian Webster and Camron Casper's research on spirituality and Psychological Capital has discovered that 'meditation helps to develop concentration, which reduces stress, and assists individuals in achieving insight and wisdom, which are all beneficial for problem solving.'<sup>25</sup> In contrast to my dissertation study, which employs a more anthropological and ethnological approach to the topic, the study by Fox and his associates takes a more scientific, and quantitative approach. My paper focuses on how cosmological beliefs including the concept of fate, astrology and spirituality, may be essential in developing successful businesses.

### ***Cosmological beliefs***

Matthew Brophy, Ganzin and his associates discuss two similar concepts, *Spiritual Imagination*,<sup>26</sup> and *Magical Thinking*.<sup>27</sup> Ganzin and his colleagues' concept is similar to my research, as they describe *Magical Thinking* as a set of beliefs that keep entrepreneurs motivated and focused, shifting away from 'rational-scientific context' to where an entrepreneur 'trusts in a larger cosmological belief system.'<sup>28</sup> *Spiritual Imagination* is a concept described more as a cosmological connection to a higher power. Having cosmological views or beliefs does not always entail adhering to a particular religion,<sup>29</sup> but both are said to possess a strong

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<sup>24</sup> Corey Fox, Brian D. Webster and Camron Casper, 'Spirituality, Psychological Capital and Employee Performance: An Empirical Examination.' *Journal of Managerial Issues*, 30. 2 (2018), 194-213 (p.195).

<sup>25</sup> Fox and others, 'Spirituality, Psychological Capital', p.196.

<sup>26</sup> Brophy, 'Spirituality Incorporated', p.792.

<sup>27</sup> Ganzin and others, 'Spirituality and Entrepreneurship', p. 98.

<sup>28</sup> Ganzin and others, 'Spirituality and Entrepreneurship', p.77.

<sup>29</sup> Nicholas, Campion, *Astrology and Popular Religion in the Modern West: Prophecy, Cosmology, and the New Age Movement*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. (United Kingdom. Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2012), 1-218 (p.116).

spiritual value system through connection to a higher power.<sup>30</sup> Numerous academics contend that cosmology and astrology might be considered a form of religion, with more individuals in the UK adhering to astrological beliefs than going to church, according to Nicholas Campion.<sup>31</sup> This prompts the question of whether the participants in my research identify as spiritual or religious, and how it compares to their perspective and level of belief on concepts and choices related to business.

Bernadette Brady discusses fate in conjunction to astrology, stating how previous studies define the astrologer as a person of dubious mental aptitude who refuses to accept responsibility for their own life. Her work argues against this notion, instead identifying astrology as a tool used 'like a life companion rather than a life dictator'.<sup>32</sup> Brady concludes that people are driven to astrology because they desire 'a sky-filled and sky-ordered' life, allowing them to understand life events and feel part of a collective or 'larger whole'.<sup>33</sup> This concept will be researched further, filling in gaps in the research to discover how the concept of fate can inspire individuals to build their Psychological Capital.

### ***Psychological Capital***

Psychological Capital, abbreviated to PsyCap, is a concept developed by Luthans, Youssef, and Avolio as previously mentioned. It appears to be a popular topic, as it is discussed in related works on spirituality and business. PsyCap is 'an individual's positive psychological state of development,' composed of four components: self-efficiency, optimism, hope, and resiliency.

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<sup>30</sup> Margaça and others, 'The Role of Spiritual Mindset and Gender', p.3.

<sup>31</sup> Campion, *Astrology and Popular Religion*, p. 1.

<sup>32</sup> Brady, 'Living with Fate', p.31.

<sup>33</sup> Brady, *Living with Fate*, p.42.

Luthans and his colleagues' study indicates that an individual's success and goal achievement are the direct outcome of their level of PsyCap,<sup>34</sup> which links to my research. They describe five important characteristics that self-efficacious people share:

They set high goals for themselves and self-select into difficult tasks.  
 They welcome and thrive on challenge.  
 They are highly self-motivated.  
 They invest the necessary effort to accomplish their goals.  
 When faced with obstacles, they persevere.<sup>35</sup>

People with high PsyCap are believed to establish their own objectives and challenges rather than relying on others; this is known as 'discrepancy reduction.'<sup>36</sup>

### ***External influences***

The participants' interaction with other humans, the natural world, or a higher power are examples of external influences in my research. According to previous literature by Fox and his colleagues, a key component to spirituality is relationships, including those between humans and other living things, and humans with a higher power.<sup>37</sup> Based on prior studies cited by Balog and her colleagues, an entrepreneur's external influences, religion, spirituality, values, and belief systems have an impact on their business decisions, results, and 'mission', 'or life purpose.'<sup>38</sup> According to Ganzin's research, business owners have been motivated by their 'life paths,' which include 'a practice-oriented tendency to engage in action or to see oneself as a vehicle for larger forces'.<sup>39</sup> Another argument is that a person is more motivated to achieve

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<sup>34</sup> Luthans, and others, 'Introduction to Psychological Capital' in *Psychological Capital*, ch.1, p.3.

<sup>35</sup> Luthans, and others, 'PsyCap Eacy: Confidence to Succeed' in *Psychological Capital*, ch.2, p.38.

<sup>36</sup> Luthans, and others, 'PsyCap Eacy: Confidence to Succeed' in *Psychological Capital*, ch.2, p.39.

<sup>37</sup> Fox and others 'Spirituality, Psychological Capital', p.196.

<sup>38</sup> Balog, and others, 'Religiosity and Spirituality', p. 2.

<sup>39</sup> Ganzin et al. 'Spirituality and Entrepreneurship' (2020), p. 91.

success and work harder when they believe they are achieving their full potential and are fulfilling their life purpose, thus their work allows them to develop their true 'self'.<sup>40</sup>

### ***Spirituality and business***

Margaça and her colleagues understand spirituality as 'a capital based on individual capabilities created by the application of intrinsic spiritual values, in order to use and develop human potential.' They add that spiritual capital can be credited for influencing and motivating entrepreneurs.<sup>41</sup> When reviewing the existing research on this subject, it is critical to note how spirituality and cosmological perspectives may have a big influence, not only on an entrepreneurial attitude but also on how to deal with any prospective future challenges. Previous studies have explored how psychological resources and spirituality are utilised to cope with any crisis, encouraging company owners to maintain their resilience, even in adversity. Margaça and her colleagues' research also found that spirituality often has more of a positive effect on women than on men.<sup>42</sup> Their research examines a gender effect, discovering that women are more likely to turn to spirituality while establishing a business and facing difficulties, using the business to create meaning in their lives and building their confidence and self-esteem.<sup>43</sup> This evidence will serve as a topic where similar findings are discovered in my research.

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<sup>40</sup> Sandra King, Kevin D. Thomas, Arthur Rubens, and Cynthia L. Sherman, 'Entrepreneurship and Spirituality: A Comparative Analysis of Entrepreneurs' Motivation', *Journal of Small Business and Entrepreneurship*, 23.4 (2010), 621-635 (pp. 624-625).

<sup>41</sup> Margaça and others, 'The Role of Spiritual Mindset', p.1.

<sup>42</sup> Margaça and others, 'The Role of Spiritual Mindset', p.8.

<sup>43</sup> Margaça and others, 'The Role of Spiritual Mindset', p.4.

Ganzin and his colleagues discuss the relationship between spirituality and business motivation, particularly in situations of difficulty or crisis. Their research examines how entrepreneurial mindsets differ from those of non-entrepreneurs, emphasising a particular interest in learning whether spirituality or faith contributes to their positive outlook.<sup>44</sup> They describe how '[c]osmology episodes relate to spirituality in that unusual or seemingly supernatural events can challenge fundamental understandings of the universe and one's place in it.'<sup>45</sup> Margaça and her co-workers assert that having a positive outlook may help business owners get through a crisis,<sup>46</sup> Ganzin investigates how faith in a higher power, God and fate might be a more potent tool in guiding entrepreneurs through difficult times.<sup>47</sup>

### ***Meditation***

Spiritual connections to higher external powers are frequently believed to be obtained through meditation, which allows a connection comparable to that of twentieth-century digital technology. Brophy describes how, 'invisible networks interconnect these mobile devices – to each other as well as to the overall web.'<sup>48</sup> To enable a spiritual connection, you must actively join up with a provider, and to strengthen the signal to source or a 'higher power', it is essential to remove any harmful barriers that obstruct interconnections. Brophy uses the example of how a mobile phone signal would be weaker if the walls are thick or the speaker is in a remote area.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Ganzin and others, 'Spirituality and Entrepreneurship', p. 79.

<sup>45</sup> Ganzin and others, 'Spirituality and Entrepreneurship', p.81.

<sup>46</sup> Margaça and others, 'The Role of Spiritual Mindset' p. 3 .

<sup>47</sup> Ganzin et al. 'Spirituality and Entrepreneurship', p. 81.

<sup>48</sup> Brophy, 'Spirituality Incorporated,' p.789.

<sup>49</sup> Brophy, 'Spirituality Incorporated,' p.780.

When examining the favourable ties between spirituality and religion in entrepreneurship, Angela Balog, LaKami Baker, and Alan Walker show the benefits of meditation.<sup>50</sup> Eva Herriott, Jane Schmidt-Wilk, and Dennis Heaton's research revealed that twenty one mid-Western entrepreneurs confirmed that transcendental meditation enhanced their wellbeing and their ability to deal with difficult situations.<sup>51</sup> According to Ganzin and his colleagues, those who believe in their ability to reach a higher power frequently utilise meditation as a cosmological instrument. While meditating, these 'magical thinkers' assert that they obtain wisdom through 'supernatural help.'<sup>52</sup> In contrast, Fox and his colleagues' research suggests that meditation is primarily a useful tool during times of stress or for problem solving with no reference to a higher power;<sup>53</sup> also including the concept of Psychological Capital, and they use this as their tool to study the difference between spirituality and an optimistic mindset within the workplace.<sup>54</sup>

### *New Age*

Campion refers to cosmology as a human study,<sup>55</sup> and also raises the point that cosmological beliefs may be considered a 'New Age' fad re-popularised by millennials.<sup>56</sup> A Millennial is a

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<sup>50</sup> Balog, and others, 'Religiosity and Spirituality', p.10.

<sup>51</sup> Eva N, Herriott, Jane, Schmidt-Wilk, and Dennis P, Heaton, 'Spiritual Dimensions of Entrepreneurship in Transcendental Meditation and TM-Sidhi Program Practitioners', *Journal of Management, Spirituality & Religion*, 6.3 (2009), 195–208.

<sup>52</sup> Ganzin and others, 'Spirituality and Entrepreneurship', p.90.

<sup>53</sup> Fox and others 'Spirituality, Psychological Capital', p.196.

<sup>54</sup> Fox and others 'Spirituality, Psychological Capital', p.197.

<sup>55</sup> *Campion Cosmology and Religion*, p.1.

<sup>56</sup> *Campion, Astrology and Popular Religion*, p. 34.

noun to describe ‘a person born between the early 1980s and the late 1990s, a member of Generation Y.’<sup>57</sup> As an alternative, it is possible that modern civilisation promotes an open mind without condemning or outlawing occult and cosmological practices, meaning more people feel it is acceptable to share their cosmological beliefs in the workspace.

When discussing the concept of New Age trends, social media and ‘online influencers’ are entrepreneurial phenomena that would previously not have been considered viable businesses. The surge in spiritual interest may be the consequence of a current generational tendency promoting the concept that financial riches may be ‘manifested’ through cosmological ideas and practices. There appears to have been a trend in self-belief and positive thinking on social media, dating back to before 1991 when Ruth Grainger observed the impact of positive thinking over negative thinking on the psyche and success.<sup>58</sup>

### ***Gaps in the research***

In researching the previous literature about the connection between cosmology and successful business mindset, gaps in the research are evident. Cosmological beliefs (including faith, spirituality, and religion) are a missing component in the study of Psychological Capital, as they may influence whether someone aspires to become successful and succeeds. Previous researchers have linked the concept of Psychological Capital to spirituality in business,<sup>59</sup> and

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<sup>57</sup> *Oxford languages and google definition of Millennial -English (2023) Oxford Languages*. Available at: <https://languages.oup.com/google-dictionary-en/> (Accessed: 21 June 2023).

<sup>58</sup> Ruth Dailey Grainger, ‘Dealing With Feelings: The Use: And Abuse: Of Negative Thinking’, *The American Journal of Nursing*, Lippincott Williams & Wilkins Stable, 91.8 (1991), 13-14 (p.13) <<http://www.jstor.com/stable/3426420>>.

<sup>59</sup> Clara Margaça, Jose Carlos Sánchez-García, Lisete M. Mónico, and Helena Knörr. ‘Editorial: Entrepreneurial Psychological Capital and Spirituality: A Core Distinction Among Entrepreneurs.’ *Frontiers in Positive Psychology*, 14.1 (2023) 1-4 (p.1) <<https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1125826>> .

the positive effects that both have in the workplace. Ganzin and his colleagues agree that 'spirituality plays a critical but largely unrecognized role in entrepreneurial cognition.'<sup>60</sup> Their research revealed a relationship between entrepreneurs and a higher power.<sup>61</sup> A study by Margaça and her colleagues found a correlation between spirituality and a positive psyche, which leads to success.<sup>62</sup> Further studies examine examples of mindful practices in the workplace, highlighting the benefits for both corporate growth and overall well-being.<sup>63</sup> However, within previous studies, spirituality is characterised as more of a tool,<sup>64</sup> rather than as a collection of motivating thoughts or events that may have contributed to their achievement.

My research will investigate how successful entrepreneurs' behaviour, ego and resilience are impacted as a direct result of their cosmological beliefs. I will do this by examining how external influences, including any New Age tendencies, may influence their business attitude and decisions. My dissertation aims to expand on previous research, exploring if meditation is simply a tool for mindfulness, allowing entrepreneurs to manage stress, generate new ideas, and make better business decisions.<sup>65</sup> Additionally I will be exploring whether entrepreneurs believe that it is possible to seek supernatural help,<sup>66</sup> and receive creative ideas through means

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<sup>60</sup> Ganzin and others, 'Spirituality and Entrepreneurship', p.78.

<sup>61</sup> Ganzin and others, 'Spirituality and Entrepreneurship', p.80.

<sup>62</sup> Margaça and others. 'Editorial: Entrepreneurial Psychological Capital', p.2.

<sup>63</sup> Fox and others, 'Spirituality, Psychological Capital and Employee Performance.', p.196.

<sup>64</sup> Bruce Borquist, Anne De Bruin, 'Values and Women-Led Social Entrepreneurship'. *International Journal of Gender And Entrepreneurship*, 11.2 (2019), 146-165 (p.149).

<sup>65</sup> Fox and others 'Spirituality, Psychological Capital', p.196.

<sup>66</sup> Ganzin and others, 'Spirituality and Entrepreneurship', p.89.



of a cosmological connection during meditation.<sup>67</sup> Could it be that Psychological Capital<sup>68</sup> enables confidence building without the assistance of cosmological beliefs,<sup>69</sup> or perhaps through prayer and belief in external higher influences, PsyCap may be strengthened?

My research aims to discover whether entrepreneurs' cosmological views are useful to their success and how these ideas influence what they feel is feasible for them to achieve.

## **Methodology**

All participants provided their consent to be included in the study. They agreed to have their interviews recorded, and they remain anonymous throughout my research report. The initial sample consisted of eight self-made successful business owners (further enquiry into the exact amounts their businesses earn was seen as unnecessary and intrusive). Out of the initial eight participants, one was no longer available to complete the interviews due to other work commitments. There was no personal relationship between the participants and me, the respondents were chosen through professional business acquaintances and social media connections. They were specifically selected with a variety of enterprises in mind; online business owners (including influencers, content creators) and an offline business who was not an active user of social media. Five of the seven interviews were conducted one-on-one, two of the participants who worked in the same office preferred to be interviewed collectively.

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<sup>67</sup> Brophy, 'Spirituality Incorporated,' p.780.

<sup>68</sup> Fox and others 'Spirituality, Psychological Capital', p.196

<sup>69</sup> Ganzin and others, 'Spirituality and Entrepreneurship', p.78.

## ***Qualitative Research***

According to Ryan Frances, Michael Coughlan, and Patricia Cronin 'qualitative research is concerned with the nature, explanation, and understanding of phenomena', thus it was the ideal approach for my research.<sup>70</sup> A qualitative research method used were semi-structured interviews.<sup>71</sup> This allowed the interview questions to be structured enough to ensure that all participants were asked the same key questions in the same order. According to Frances and others it is not always necessary for the questions to follow the same structure,<sup>72</sup> however it is possible that the order in which the questions are asked can affect the study, according to Norman Bradburn and William Manson's theory.<sup>73</sup> Semi-structured interviews encouraged elaboration through conversation to include any additional beliefs 'permitting the interviewee to tell his/her own story rather than answer a series of structured questions'.<sup>74</sup> Open-ended questions were also used, which according to John Geer, are beneficial for semi-structured interviews because they allow participants to express themselves in their own words.<sup>75</sup> Nevertheless, an issue with open-ended queries is that the answer aim is not always met as the participants may not feel comfortable enough with the interview process to respond in the

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<sup>70</sup> Frances and others, 'Interviewing in Qualitative Research' p.309.

<sup>71</sup> Frances and others, 'Interviewing in Qualitative Research' p.29.

<sup>72</sup> Frances and others, 'Interviewing in Qualitative Research' p.54.

<sup>73</sup> Norman M. Bradburn and William M. Mason 'The Effect of Question Order on Responses': *Journal of Marketing Research*. Sage Publications, Inc. on behalf of American Marketing Association Stable. 1.4 (1964), P57.

<sup>74</sup> Frances and others, 'Interviewing in Qualitative Research', p.310.

<sup>75</sup> John Geer, 'What Do Open-Ended Questions Measure?' *The Public Opinion Quarterly*. 52.3, (1988), 265-368 (p.365). <JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2749078>>.

manner expected.<sup>76</sup> This was the case with one of my participants, leading me to prompt, which may itself also have caused implications. The use of prompted questions, may have interfered with the specific questions posed, which aimed to receive a fair comprehension of the participants' opinions and beliefs. According to Beth Leech '[p]rompts are as important as the questions themselves in semistructured interviews. Prompts do two things: they keep people talking and they rescue you when responses turn to mush.'<sup>77</sup> Prompts were useful as they discovered additional answers where participants were more prone to provide a less cosmological response to a question, or where the participants did not grasp the purpose of the question. They also were useful in trying to discover the extent of their beliefs.

### *Interview process*

It was critical to allow the participants to have an open mind during the interviews to differentiate between two hypotheses; whether it is an entrepreneurs' cosmological beliefs *or* their positive mindset that have greater substantial impact on the manifestation on their accomplishments. According to Rosalind Edwards and Janet Holland interviews are important in discovering key information when employing an anthropological approach, as used in my research.<sup>78</sup> Ryan Frances, Michael Coughlan, and Patricia Cronin argue that an important approach to interviews 'is that of active listening'. This involves effective communication such as eye contact, open body language and enabling the participant to openly communicate. Participants should be given a brief introduction into the study, which they were in my research,

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<sup>76</sup> Geer, 'What do Open-Ended Questions Measure?', p.371.

<sup>77</sup> Beth. L. Leech. 'Asking Questions: Techniques for Semi Structured Interviews.' *PS - Political Science and Politics*, 35.4 (2002), 665-668 (p.667). <<https://doi.org/10.1017/S1049096502001129>>.

<sup>78</sup> Rosalind Edwards, *What is Qualitative Interviewing?*, ed. by Janet Holland (London: Bloomsbury, 2013) p.31.

allowing initial ‘non-threatening, factual questions’ that were asked before the essential study questions.<sup>79</sup>

When reporting on the benefits of focus groups in interviews, Joanna Tai and Rola Ajjawi discuss how ‘multiple people in a room may en-gender more discussion on the topic of interest than solo interviews.’ Other strengths discussed in their research include the comfort participants may have in sharing with others and that this method allows for the study of participant interaction. Tai and Ajjawi note possible disadvantage to multiple interviews conducted in the same room, which may also be considered a weakness in my research. The relevant challenges include the difficulty to keep up with making transcriptions, and how they may not wish to discuss sensitive topics around others.<sup>80</sup> In my research I found that having digitally recorded the interviews it was not difficult to transcribe, the participants also appeared more relaxed and confident to share personal information by having each other there. However, an obstruction arose when trying to fully understand their answers when listening back to the recordings. There were instances where one participant interrupted the other participant’s answer; this seemed to change the thought process or redirect a concept that the first participant was about to explain.

### ***Things to consider***

In addition to the above there were further weaknesses in my methodology. Sarah Baker and Rosalind Edwards explain how it can be difficult to know how many participants the right

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<sup>79</sup>Ryan Frances, Coughlan Michael, Coughlan, and Patricia Cronin, ‘Interviewing in Qualitative Research’ *International Journal of Therapy and Rehabilitation*, 16.6 (2009), 309-314 (p.311). <DOI:[10.12968/ijtr.2009.16.6.42433](https://doi.org/10.12968/ijtr.2009.16.6.42433)>.

<sup>80</sup> Joanna Tai. and Rola Ajjawi, ‘Undertaking and Reporting Qualitative Research’. *The Clinical Teacher's Toolbox ASME Publications*, 13. (2016), 175-182. (p.178). <<https://doi.org/10.1111/tct.12552>>.

amount is, as 'it depends' on the goals of the research with everything qualitative.<sup>81</sup> Fewer interviews may be sufficient for some dissertations, but in my research, it is probable that several interviews would have provided more data for comparison and discussion, as well as ensure a wide range of perspectives and responses. Baker and Edwards also state how 'key informants can mislead the researcher or withhold knowledge in interviews.'<sup>82</sup> Sarah Elwood and Deborah Martin explain how interview sites create 'micro-geographies' that might impact the participant-interviewer relationship and answers.<sup>83</sup> Three of the participants requested in-person interviews, which were performed at their respective offices and workplaces. It is possible, therefore, that interviewing the three participants at their workplace influenced their mindset at the time, as opposed to the Zoom interviews conducted with the participants in their homes. When interviewed in their homes, the participants in Elwood and Martin's research were more likely to talk freely about their opinions separate from work goals than those interviewed at their workplace.<sup>84</sup>

Another potential flaw in my research is that I currently own a spiritual, online wellness company. Therefore, it was critical for me to stay objective, due to my insider influence. According to Marilyn Asselin, it is best for any insider to observe with the mindset that they know nothing about the subject before conducting the research because the researcher's expectations, past experiences, beliefs, and emotions can prevent them from achieving the

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<sup>81</sup> Sarah Elsie Baker and Rosalind Edwards. 'How Many Qualitative Interviews is Enough?' *National Centre for Research Methods Review Paper*. University Rosalind Edwards, NCRM, University of Southampton. (2012) 3-42 (p.42).

<sup>82</sup> Baker and Edwards. 'How Many Qualitative Interviews is Enough?', p.31.

<sup>83</sup> Sarah Elwood and Deborah Martin. 'Placing Interviews: Location and Scales of Power In Qualitative Research'. *Professional Geographer*. 52.1 p.649-650. (2000), p.45.

<sup>84</sup> Elwood and Martin, "Placing Interviews: Location and Scales", p.44-45.

detachment required to analyse data objectively.<sup>85</sup> My research attempted to retain as much neutrality as possible by excluding my personal perspectives and experiences. Joanne Pearson explains complications of insidership, referring to Jacob Needleman's view that scholars, particularly those with esoteric understanding, must enable the explorer inside themselves to remain while still accepting the legitimacy of the 'outward, analytical, or critical mind'.<sup>86</sup> I was originally unaware of the participants' cosmological views, therefore there was no way for me to predict what the participants' cosmological beliefs would be. As a result, any relationship between belief and achievement was uncovered rather than predicted.

Sonya Dwyer and Jennifer Buckle allude to Patricia and Peter Adler's study, which discusses three 'membership roles' that should be addressed while doing observational research. These are:

- (a) peripheral member researchers, who do not participate in the core activities of group members;
- (b) active member researchers, who become involved with the central activities of the group without fully committing themselves to the members' values and goals; and
- (c) complete member researchers, who are already members of the group or who become fully affiliated during the course of the research.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Marilyn E Asselin. PhD, RN,C 'Insider Research: Issues to consider when doing Qualitative Research in your own setting', *Journal For Nurses In Staff Development*, 19.2 (2003), 99-103, (p.100).

<sup>86</sup> Joanne Pearson, "Going Native in Reverse": The Insider as Researcher in British Wicca', *Nova Religio*, 5.1 (2001), 52–63, (p.61).

<sup>87</sup> Patricia Adler , Peter Adler. *Membership roles in field research* (1987). Cited in Sonya Corbin Dwyer, PhD and Jennifer L. Buckle, PhD 'The Space Between: On Being an Insider-Outsider in Qualitative Research'. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*. 8.1 (2009), 54–63 (p.55). <<https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406909000800>>.

While I am not an affiliate of any of the participant groups or enterprises, it could be argued that I would fall into category (c) as a complete member researcher due to having insider knowledge regarding the subject of cosmology and business.

To adequately monitor the risks of being an insider from my perspective during my research, I had made sure to have an open mind and observe as if I were an outsider.<sup>88</sup> I did not, however, consider whether the answers provided by the participants would have been impacted by their knowledge of my insider status. Asselin also suggests a hypothesis of ‘role confusion’,<sup>89</sup> which proposes that the interviewer may over participate by over involvement, resulting in bias. She also states that participants in the study may have preconceived notions or expectations of the researcher, which may influence how they interact with the researcher as well as the ‘quantity and quality’ of information they offer.<sup>90</sup>

It has been frequently demonstrated that people may make conclusions or create opinions about others based on their appearance, notably their clothing. According to a study conducted by Kim K. P. Johnson, Nancy A. Schofield and Jennifer Yurchisin, ‘people often link concepts to physically perceptible features, like height, weight, and clothing.’<sup>91</sup> As the interviewer, I considered how my attire may influence the sort of reaction and connections I established with the participants. Casual wear was worn when interviewing the online content creators and influencers to reflect their outfit style, while more formal attire was chosen when meeting the

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<sup>88</sup> Asselin 'Insider Research', p.100.

<sup>89</sup> Asselin 'Insider Research', p.102.

<sup>90</sup> Asselin 'Insider Research', p.101

<sup>91</sup> Kim K. P. Johnson, Nancy A. Schofield, and Jennifer Yurchisin, ‘Appearance and Dress as a Source of Information: A Qualitative Approach to Data Collection’ *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal*, 20.3, (2002), 125-137 (p.126). <<https://doi.org/10.1177/0887302X0202000301>>.

offline business owner to meet the professional setting and to minimise any barriers encouraging open dialogue.

## **Research and Findings**

### ***Resilience***

A key characteristic of successful entrepreneurs is their ability to remain resilient in the face of difficulties.<sup>92</sup> When asked how they overcame problems in their enterprises, all participants recognised external forces and higher powers, as well as having a resilient attitude. Participant D initially provided a non-cosmological response to the majority of questions, indicating how he credited his success to himself, ‘never giving up’, finding solutions to challenges, and constantly looking at things from a new perspective. This is consistent with Luthans and his researchers’ notion of Psychological Capital, whereby an individual strengthens their PsyCap through resilience. Interestingly, this association is also closely related to the literature by Ganzin and his colleagues,<sup>93</sup> directly linking to the concept of an individual understanding who they are<sup>93</sup> and believing that working hard serves the laws of karma.<sup>94</sup>

All participants reported how diligently they worked, supporting the evidence of Psychological Capital’s influence on self-efficiency,<sup>95</sup> which alongside spiritual beliefs, pushes entrepreneurs to use their talents and abilities to work through difficult times to achieve their

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<sup>92</sup> Luthans, and others, *Psychological Capital*, Ch.1, p.1-3.

<sup>93</sup> Ganzin and others, ‘Spirituality and Entrepreneurship’, p.93.

<sup>94</sup> Ganzin and others, ‘Spirituality and Entrepreneurship’, p.94.

<sup>95</sup> Luthans, and others, *Psychological Capital*, Ch.2, p.34.



goals, according to Margaça and her colleagues.<sup>96</sup> Ganzin and associates' study indicated that *magical thinking* and spiritual beliefs may help entrepreneurs feel like they are serving a greater purpose, preventing them from giving up.<sup>97</sup> Their study also questions the notion of whether magical views of the world build a resilient mindset, or if entrepreneurs may change their views on spirituality when faced with challenges.<sup>98</sup>

Cosmological beliefs in an external higher power positively impact the resilience of my participants. Participant B stated how he regularly speaks to God, asking for encouragement and signs and believes that God would not 'plant this seed in my heart if I'm destined to fail'. Therefore, he searches for evidence that he is able to achieve in all that he does. It was the desire to become great that encouraged most of my participants to pursue their dreams. Collectively, three stated that their industry regularly tests their resilience. Participant B stated 'now we have built up this resilience' when referring to disappointments that regularly occur in their businesses. Another participant who had previously featured in a major British television soap also discussed the resilience needed by actresses and people in the creative, public industry.

Luthans states how low performers and those who have never had experience with certain tasks may be more likely to have lower PsyCap, but this does not mean that they are more destined to fail as a result. Through small successes a person is able to build to higher levels for similar future tasks.<sup>99</sup> All participants saw their achievements as a realisation of their ability, magic, or power that they were certain they could repeat again. These individuals also

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<sup>96</sup> Margaça and others. 'Editorial: Entrepreneurial Psychological Capital', p.1.

<sup>97</sup> Ganzin and others, 'Spirituality and Entrepreneurship', p.92.

<sup>98</sup> Ganzin and others, 'Spirituality and Entrepreneurship', p.97.

<sup>99</sup> Luthans, and others, *Psychological Capital*, Ch.2, p.44.

described a younger, less confident version of themselves who was less successful. They stated that if their younger selves had the knowledge, attitude, and belief systems that they now have, they would have accomplished more sooner. This lends credence to the research on PsyCap, in which a person may improve their resilience and self-efficacy.<sup>100</sup> The results of my research have also found that all the participants experienced difficult challenges during their businesses, and their belief in an external higher power discouraged them from quitting, as with the Ganzin study.<sup>101</sup> One participant who has built a successful YouTube network described how there often are times where she felt like quitting, stating ‘there have been several times where I don’t know if I can do this, it’s been so hard. That’s where spirituality came in... quitting is not an option; this is what I’m meant to do’.

Hope is one of the newer and lesser researched components of Psychological Capital within workplace studies, as there is more established literature and research on the link between PsyCap itself and work performance.<sup>102</sup> Charles R. Snyder and his colleagues describe hope as a goal directed energy. In their research they define hope as being composed of two elements, one being ‘goal-directed determination’ and ‘pathways (planning of ways to meet goals)’ as a cognitive set. These two hypotheses lend themselves to resilience, therefore making optimism, resilience and hope very similar concepts of Psychological Capital.<sup>103</sup> According to Charles Snyder and his colleagues, self-efficacy is said to be the result of resilience and hope.<sup>104</sup> The

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<sup>100</sup> Luthans, and others, *Psychological Capital*, Ch.2, pp.44-45.

<sup>101</sup> Ganzin and others, ‘Spirituality and Entrepreneurship’, p.92.

<sup>102</sup> Luthans and others, *Psychological Capital*, Ch.2, p.42.

<sup>103</sup> Luthans and others, *Psychological Capital*, Ch.2, p.43.

<sup>104</sup> Charles R. Snyder, Cheri Harris, John R. Anderson, Sharon A. Holleran, Lori M. Irving, Sandra T. Sigmon, Lauren Yoshinobu, June Gibb, Charyle Langelle, Pat Harney, ‘The Will And The Ways: Development And Validation Of An Individual-Differences Measure Of Hope’. *J Pers Social Psychology*. 60.4 (1991), 570-85 (p.570). <<https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.60.4.570>>.

participants were asked what they believe is a healthy business mindset, to which they all credited resilience, optimism, self-efficiency and interestingly having an abundant financial mindset rather than focusing on scarcity. One participant specifically explained how ‘hope doesn’t resonate’, clarifying that to her faith is more important, adding how her soul knows when she is doing the right thing.

The self-proclaimed spiritual and non-spiritual participants in my research shared the five key characteristics of persons with high PsyCap, as indicated in the literature review.<sup>105</sup> The spiritual participants demonstrated a strong will to succeed, and a resilient mindset, although this appeared to be a direct result of their cosmological views. For example, Participant F stated ‘I enjoy working really hard, it is coming from a place of loving what I do. I believe that we are all superheroes. I don’t believe witches were burnt because they were dangerous but because they were powerful. Our power has been suppressed; we are so much more powerful than we are led to believe.’ This concept empowers her to maintain resilience in her business as she feels that she can inspire women to find their ‘inner power’. It is important to note that this participant does not identify as a Witch, and instead views magic as a power that all people have.

### ***Cosmology, and Fate***

All the respondents described a belief in karma and fate without being directly asked. This included those who identified as spiritual as well as Participant D who did not. Interestingly, this correlation is related to Ganzin and his colleagues' research, where the entrepreneurs describe being directed or aided by a supernatural help; this belief was occasionally blended

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<sup>105</sup> Luthans, and others, *Psychological Capital*, ch.2, p.39.

with the concept of fate. Participants in the above authors' study discuss how they are likely to make a business decision, knowing that they will get their desired outcome with the aid of supernatural help. They also believe they have been chosen for success and that certain events and results are the result of 'star alignment' in answer to their prayers.<sup>106</sup> My research similarly found very strong evidence of entrepreneurial belief in supernatural help and 'star alignment.'

I assert that the notion of 'star alignment' may also be recognized in the practice of astrology, in which a person's destiny is predetermined based on the alignment of the stars and planets in the sky. All the participants understood or had been exposed in some way or another to astrology, except for participant D, who initially rejected the idea, having mistaken astrology solely as horoscopes. The growing popularity of the horoscope columns in print and, in the last decade, on the web demonstrates that astrology has a large place in modern Western popular culture, according to Nicholas Campion.<sup>107</sup> This explains why participant D may have presumed that astrology was solely the pop culture notion of horoscopes, to which he could not relate. One participant stated how she visualises the outcome of what she wants and believes that if she surrenders her will to a higher power then everything works for her in 'divine timing'. This is not dissimilar to earlier beliefs in that the universe may be 'divinely designed', as described by Ovanes Akopyan.<sup>108</sup>

Bernadette Brady states how 'as a praxis, astrology is an attempt to view the workings of fate, a desire to bring into awareness the activity of a believed agency which directs human

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<sup>106</sup> Ganzin and others, 'Spirituality and Entrepreneurship', p.89.

<sup>107</sup> Campion, *Astrology and Popular Religion*, p.3.

<sup>108</sup> Akopyan Ovanes, *Fate and Fortune in European Thought, ca. 1400-1650* (Leiden, The Netherlands, Brill's studies, 2021) p.1.

life.’<sup>109</sup>After I explained this concept, Participant D agreed to fate being linked to his new understanding of astrology. He stated how he believes it is possible that some people are ‘destined’ to find success and financial wealth more easily (or with more difficulty) than others, believing himself to be ‘blessed’. Therefore, all participants agreed that there is a possibility of astrological occurrences (including a pre-determined natal birth chart) being an unavoidable influence on our future and fate. Theodor Adorno states how a reliance on fate can relieve someone of their responsibility.<sup>110</sup> My research is more aligned to Ganzin and associates’ study, suggesting that fate allows a person to act less irrationally when making business decisions, as they put their faith in a higher power believing that everything will work out in their favor.<sup>111</sup>

Nicholas Campion refers to British television policies prohibiting the use of horoscopes unless they are presented purely as ‘entertainment’ or ‘legitimate inquiry’ and forbids them in periods when children are likely to be watching television. Consequently, astrology is obscurely linked to more forbidden subjects like sex and violence.<sup>112</sup> The spiritual participants agreed that subjects often referred to by them as ‘woo woo’ were difficult to share with others as they were frequently frowned upon. Participant A stated ‘so many [supernatural] things happen to me... I don’t tell [other people] anymore’ as he often felt that the coincidences he experiences could be overlooked or mocked. Without being questioned, more than half the

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<sup>109</sup> Brady, ‘Living with Fate’, p.32.

<sup>110</sup> Theodor, W. Adorno, ‘The Stars Down to Earth: The Los Angeles Times Astrology Column’, In *the Stars Down to Earth and Other Essays on the Irrational in Culture* (ed. with an introduction by Stephen Crook; London: Routledge, 1994, pp.34-127), p.54.

<sup>111</sup> Ganzin and others, ‘Spirituality and Entrepreneurship’, p.92.

<sup>112</sup> Campion, *Astrology and Popular Religion*, p.4 Discussion on Richard Dawkins, *Unweaving the Rainbow* (London, 1998), p.121; Independent Television Commission (ITC), *Paranormal Programming, Consultation Paper*, Programme Code Consultation, 2003, section 1.10.

participants stated that they believed those in authority purposefully shame and discredit occult beliefs and practices. They shared a similar idea that while authoritative leaders may be doing ancient practices personally, they do not want the public to learn or practise these, since it would make them more powerful and impossible to manage. When asked about the concept of New Age trends, one of the participants believes that there is an increase in successful young entrepreneurs, because their mindset is different and not as easy to control. This participant argued that people are now more comfortable in using magic and astrology, and more believe in concepts such as the 'Law of Attraction', a topic yet to be discussed.

Three of the participants discussed their fears of cosmology and their superstitious beliefs. Participant D stated how his brother, who is his business partner, previously sought guidance from an external influence, (a psychic reader) regarding business decisions. While his brother believed the results of the reading, participant D did not. He declared that he 'could tell you ten wrong things and one right thing,' inferring that a person receiving a reading would latch on to the right thing. He suggested that this could falsely make people pay for readings or direct their future based on what they have been told. This participant's presumed charlatanism is not unlike many others, as Campion points out. For centuries occult practices such as astrology were deemed as being a fraudulent way of making money.<sup>113</sup> This was corroborated by two additional participants, who indicated how they felt untrusting of readings by mediums or tarot in case any unpleasant prophecies were fulfilled. This in turn links to Addey's writings on Iamblichus, where Porphyry had questioned whether 'divination is caused by deceptive *daimones*'.<sup>114</sup> This concept that the fate of the participants could be negatively interfered with

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<sup>113</sup> Campion, *Astrology and Popular Religion*, p.4.

<sup>114</sup> Crystal Addey, *Divination and Theurgy in Neoplatonism : Oracles of the Gods* (Farnham, Surrey, England, Ashgate Publishing Group, 2014) p.140. on Iamblichus DM, 3.31 (176.1; 179.9, 180.3).

was expressed by all the participants. However, it was not clear whether they were afraid of negative occurrences happening due to a change in their behavior and aligned actions, or whether it was because they believed these were set in stone due to fate. Three participants stated how they are where they always wanted to be but not in the way that they thought, and considered whether this was down to now having a stronger more optimistic mindset, or if fate has led them on their current path away from the original desire for greater purpose and reason.

Despite having been raised as a Christian, Participant B described how he struggled to grasp the rules and doctrines of the Bible and, as a result, started to question everything he had been taught from a young age. Due to his Christian upbringing, this participant discussed a belief in a God that he now fears. Participant C expressed that watching Sinnead O Connor's documentary about defying the church fuelled her desire to expand her company and fight against discrimination and patriarchy, in the hopes of inspiring others to practise witchcraft. She does not submit to religion as she does not agree with the concept of a male God who inspires fear in all of us.

### ***Gender effect***

Almost all the participants had encountered or sought cosmological guidance, with one stating how his mother was able to connect to him through means of dream or 'inspired divination' as Iamblichus declared this communication in *Theurgy*.<sup>115</sup> The participant told the story of how his mother, using women's intuition, had called him in a panic, knowing that he had struggled

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<sup>115</sup>Addey, *Divination and Theurgy*, Ch7. P.239. on Thomas Taylor, *Iamblichus On The Mysteries Of The Egyptians, Chaldeans, And Assyrians*.

whilst climbing Kilimanjaro the previous day. He continued explaining the strong spiritual connection that he has to her.

In his writings on cosmology and astrology, Campion explores the hypothesis that women may be more susceptible to being persuaded or more 'gullible' than men. Whether this is the case or whether it is because 'they find a mode of expression, a kind of knowing,' is another possibility raised by Campion.<sup>116</sup> Participant E stated in her interview how energy is a 'feminine, masculine thing' adding how as a woman, 'we can't explain what we know, we just know' when describing a 'woman's cosmic intuition'. Campion also discusses how women are considerably more likely than males to be interested in astrology and the paranormal.<sup>117</sup> In other works he refers to other research that indicates that almost 100% of people in the United Kingdom know their astrological birth sign.<sup>118</sup>

All of the women in my research believe in astrology and three out of the four female participants (without any mention or questions) attributed personality traits to their zodiac signs. Participant E speculated that her reputation as a 'hard worker' stemmed from the fact that she had many planets in Capricorn in her astrological birth chart. Another participant stated how her eagerness to acquire and share information was due to 'being a Gemini', and Participant G credits her Virgo status to the fact that she had to establish clear goals and fulfil them with precision. The female participants in my research also credited yoga practice as being the start of their spiritual learning, leading to what they call their 'spiritual awakening'. They all heavily rely on spirituality to help them feel inner fulfillment and peace, creativity,

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<sup>116</sup> Campion, *Astrology and Popular Religion*, p.2.

<sup>117</sup> Campion, *Astrology and Popular Religion*, p.2.

<sup>118</sup> Nicholas Campion PHD, 'Prophecy, Cosmology and The New Age Movement: The Extent and Nature Of Contemporary Belief In Astrology.', *Study of Religions Department, Bath Spa University College*, (2004), 1-323 (abstract iii).



and to guide them through challenges in life, citing the Covid pandemic as a catalyst for greater spiritual discovery, all of which is supported by Margaça's research.<sup>119</sup> Zamor and Claude note a rise in 'spiritual awakenings' in the workplace from the growing amount of research and books published between the 1990's and 2003. Their research noticed now corporations were encouraging spirituality, believing that if their employees were happy then they are more likely to have more enthusiasm in their jobs due to feeling more productive and fulfilled.<sup>120</sup>

Participant C firmly identified that she relies on a female deity, saying that 'we all come from a womb and a feminine goddess.' Despite viewing the deity as feminine, she believes in a balance of feminine and masculine energy, as do the other female participants. According to Ganzin and his colleagues', both men and women may hold cosmological ideas that have an influence on their company's development and success, also providing support through trying times. One of their participants, Claire, described how the universe was able to help her in meeting 'the right people at the right time'. She believes that without these acts of fate or coincidence sent by a higher power, she would not have met these people and therefore would never have set up her company.<sup>121</sup>

Both male and female participants in my research shared similar views to the study on ...*Magical Thinking*,<sup>122</sup> stating how they believe they are blessed. Participant A said that he sees strangers as positive omens, like Claire in Ganzin and his associate's study.<sup>123</sup> This

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<sup>119</sup> Margaça and others 'The Role of Spiritual Mindset', p.2.

<sup>120</sup> Garcia-Zamor, Jean-Claude, 'Workplace Spirituality and Organizational Performance'. *American Body for Public Administration, Public Administration Review*, 63 (2003), 355-363 (p.355)  
<<https://doi.org/10.1111/1540-6210.00295>>.

<sup>121</sup> Ganzin and others, 'Spirituality and Entrepreneurship', p.90.

<sup>122</sup> Ganzin and others, 'Spirituality and Entrepreneurship', p.89.

<sup>123</sup> Ganzin and others, 'Spirituality and Entrepreneurship', p.90.

participant, however, did mention that he naturally attracts spiritual individuals into his life, noting that ‘other people seem more invested in my spiritual growth than I am.’ In this he is alluding to his female friends who often check in on him during astrological events that allegedly influence his chart. Ganzin and his colleagues’ participants refer to ‘the universe’ as an external higher power,<sup>124</sup> as do both male and female participants of my study. In my research paper, participant E stated how ‘the universe put all of these opportunities in front of me’, reflecting Claire’s beliefs.

It is significant to highlight that every participant in my research acknowledged their faith in the cosmos and their reliance on spiritual assistance in some form or other, regardless of their gender or declared beliefs. Participants A and B, who both identified as male, shared Claire’s views, indicating that their achievements were a direct result of their confidence in a higher power, and as a consequence of patiently waiting for what they had prayed for. Participant A explained how he often looks for good omens, spirit animals or signs, especially favouring a dolphin and a butterfly. During his interview he gave an example of how a butterfly tattoo on a woman may act to him as a positive indication that he should speak to her.

Participants A and B expressed their faith in a male God and the presence of a supportive network of individuals as instrumental to achieving their goals. Participant C, who as previously mentioned, believes in a female deity emphasized the importance of a Platonic concept that the Earth is a God. To her, mother nature acts as a primary mentor. She states that ‘mother nature is my greatest teacher’ and she actively seeks wisdom and guidance from this source. Her expressed concept is similar to the teachings of Plato, who stated that Earth (whom he also refers to as a female deity) is, ‘the first and eldest of all the gods which have come into

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<sup>124</sup> Ganzin and others, ‘Spirituality and Entrepreneurship’ p.89.

existence within the Heaven.’<sup>125</sup> For the first question the participants were asked to define their respective businesses. Participant C was immediately comfortable describing her company as ‘a total anomaly, built on an elemental online experience – an online Hogwarts Witch School, teaching magic and ritual on how to craft a magical life.’ It was immediately evident that this participant would be more inclined to credit her success to a cosmological set of ideas rather than a positive mindset.

Margaça and her colleagues’ research reveals how spirituality positively impacts the relationship between female psychological resilience, success, and optimism.<sup>126</sup> Research undertaken by Borquist, Bruin and Margaça suggests that women are more likely to rely on spirituality,<sup>127</sup> influencing their business values.<sup>128</sup> Both male and female participants in my research described how men seem to be encouraged, supported, and taken more seriously in business than women. This may offer an explanation for why the females in my research project (reflecting women’s opinions in other studies) may rely on spirituality more to maintain their resilience to achieve their success and goals. Participant G, who operates a spiritual business, indicated that she feels she had more to prove to her family and friends when she first started her brand, partly because she is a woman and partly because her business is considered a taboo niche. Research by Jan Zavodny Popsil and Lucis Sara

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<sup>125</sup> Plato. *Plato's Cosmology; the Timaeus of Plato*, (London: New York, Harcourt, Brace, K. Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co. Ltd.; 1937), 40c, p.85.

<sup>126</sup> Margaça and others. ‘The Role of Spiritual Mindset’, p.2.

<sup>127</sup> Margaça and others. ‘The Role of Spiritual Mindset’, p.8.

<sup>128</sup> Borquist and De Bruin, ‘Values and Women-Led Social Entrepreneurship’ p,149.

Zavodna supports this, demonstrating how women are likely to experience more challenges than men in business, including discrimination.<sup>129</sup> During the interview with participant A, he stated that ‘as a male there is less pressure’.

Pospisil and colleagues discuss the possibility of how women may be more likely to prioritise their home life and families over entrepreneurial endeavours in comparison to men, and this encourages women to set up business from home.<sup>130</sup> Kate Lewis, on the other hand, discovered that women gain a sense of self via their enterprises, allowing them financial freedom and the capacity to have an identity apart from being a mother.<sup>131</sup> Because none of the female participants in my research have children, I was unable to thoroughly investigate this issue further. Nonetheless, two of the women indicated that they had hired cleaners so they may focus on establishing their companies despite working from home.

### ***The Law of Attraction***

In 1991, Ruth Dailey Grainger claimed that ‘pop’ psychology was encouraging positive self-talk and thinking, convincing people at the time that they were able to ‘think and grow rich’.<sup>132</sup> Interestingly the 1937 book *Think And Grow Rich*, which encourages people to change their thought patterns to attract wealth,<sup>133</sup> was a book commonly read by the participants. A resurge

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<sup>129</sup> Jan Zavodny Pospisil, and Lucie Sara Zavodna, ‘An Insight to the World of Female Entrepreneurship: Systematic Literature Review Of The Phenomenon Using The Mckinsey 7S Model’ *Sciendo, Foundations of Management*, 14.1, (2022), 51-66 (p.52). <<https://doi.org/10.2478/fman-2022-0004>>.

<sup>130</sup> Pospisil and Zavodna, ‘An Insight to the World of Female Entrepreneurship’, p.52.

<sup>131</sup> Kate V Lewis, ‘Making Meaning as Well as Money: The Experience Of Young Female Entrepreneurs’. *International Journal of Gender and Entrepreneurship*, 9.4 (2017), 377-391 (p.384).

<sup>132</sup> Grainger, ‘Dealing with Feelings’, p.13.

<sup>133</sup> Napoleon Hill. *Think and Grow Rich: The Original*, (An Official Publication of The Napoleon Hill Foundation. United States, Sound Wisdom, 1937) 1-320.

in positive self-development books such as *The Secret*,<sup>134</sup> which encourages the notion of like attracting like, is another example given by participants when asked what they meant by the concept of The Law of Attraction. All the participants, other than participant D believe in the concept of The Law of Attraction, with participant E explaining 'I have very much created my life without knowing it through The Law of Attraction'. When asked what she meant by this she explained 'it comes back to that simple idea that like attracts like, every thought, belief, behaviour that we hold has a frequency. You put it out there and you get it back.' In Ganzin's study, participants describe a similar concept of asking and receiving from the universe.<sup>135</sup>

The participants in my research suggested that The Law of Attraction is an energetic exchange of good things attracting good things and the opposite attracting negative experiences and outcomes. In their study, Ganzin and colleagues describe a similar concept of The Law of Attraction as being 'relevant to the theme of helping people, and engaging in symbolic actions that have real consequences. Gestures with special meanings, that invoke spirits, are common fare in this kind of storytelling.'<sup>136</sup> Participant C stated that she feels anything she desires (as long as it is in alignment for her) comes to her as a result of her respect for the Earth. She explained how she builds altars out of respect for deities and used to focus more on asking and wanting things. By now she feels that she has everything she wants and so spends more time practising gratitude and offering gifts, foods, and other of the deities' favourite things, stating that 'they are to honour what I have and have done.'

According to Balog and her colleagues, entrepreneurs attach a profound and personal significance to their company aims, which are typically determined by their spiritual or

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<sup>134</sup> Rhonda Byrne, *The Secret*. (United Kingdom, Simon & Schuster UK, 2006). 1-198.

<sup>135</sup> Ganzin and others, 'Spirituality and Entrepreneurship', p.89-90.

<sup>136</sup> Ganzin and others, 'Spirituality and Entrepreneurship', p.89.

religious beliefs and values.<sup>137</sup> The findings of my research suggest how superstitions or negative connections held by an entrepreneur, may negatively impact their success and future business decisions. One participant stated that ‘sometimes I get a negative thought and then it will play out’. While the majority of the participants believe in The Law of Attraction, they also appeared to be afraid that if they did not continually focus on 'good vibrations' and positive energy, they would attract negative outcomes. Grainger states how ‘thoughts that trigger behavior are often based on beliefs – and beliefs can exist with or without evidence that they are accurate,’ further describing negative thoughts and talk as being harmful.<sup>138</sup> All the participants made a direct comment regarding how they do not allow ‘negativity’ to impact them or their progress. Four of the participants described how fear of money, a negative association with money or a scarcity mindset would not bring success. In a supportive research article, Hussein-Elhakim Issa argues that an entrepreneur uses optimism as a form of faith to prove and believe in their ability to succeed.<sup>139</sup>

It is crucial to notice that, except for participant D, all the participants have one thing in common: their businesses rely on online social media impact, and hence they are more prone to follow trends. Participant D was unfamiliar with the notion of The Law of Attraction, but he does believe in the underlying concept of it, which is that like attracts like. He also stated that focusing on the negative attracts more negative things, thus he exclusively concentrates on what is working well and finding solutions. Cosmology may therefore be able to positively impact people in believing that they are able to pursue their goals or are destined to find success.

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<sup>137</sup> Balog, and others, ‘Religiosity and Spirituality’, p.1.

<sup>138</sup> Grainger, ‘Dealing with Feelings’, p.13.

<sup>139</sup> Hussein-Elhakim Al Issa, ‘Psychological Capital for Success: The Mediating Role Of Entrepreneurial Persistence And Risk-Taking’, *Journal of Entrepreneurship in Emerging Economies*, 14.4, (2022), 525-548 (p.529).

### *External influences*

The individuals involved in my research recognised the significant influence that external factors, such as human beings, nature, or a higher force, have on their lives. They attribute their success not only to their cosmological beliefs and positive mindset but also to the importance of their relationships with others. All participants acknowledged the crucial role played by surrounding themselves with positive people in shaping both their business ventures and maintaining a positive mindset. The participants exemplified how external influences from people could either have a positive or negative impact on them. One participant expressed that ‘it is easier when people don’t believe in you, versus when they expect something from you’, implying that the initial stages of starting a business might be less challenging because the expectations have not built up yet. Luthans, Youssef, and Avlio observed in their research that people are more prone to believe what others believe about them.<sup>140</sup> As a result, any unfavourable influence from outside sources, whether from their social circles or strangers on social media, is likely to have a detrimental impact on their opinions. The positive or negative influence of the individuals surrounding the participants is critical in maintaining their achievement and positive mentality.

While the other participants avoided any negative outside influences, participant B acknowledged how his belief in the possibility of divine punishment was a motivator, describing how he had to stick to his end of the deal if God was to grant him any wishes that he had prayed for. This participant stated that he operates better when subjected to rigorous routines and discipline. In contrast to these ideas, participant A indicated that he does not have

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<sup>140</sup> Luthans and others, *Psychological Capital*, Ch.2, p.38

the same perspective, claiming that he dislikes routines because they make him feel 'trapped'. The female participants also do not conform to strict, constant routines, describing them as 'masculine' in energy and claiming that it drives them to work too hard, resulting in 'burnout'. Furthermore, these individuals hold the superstitious concept that when they are too deeply immersed in this 'masculine' energy, they are not in their receptive 'divine feminine' energy, thus unable to accept abundance and receive blessings.

### ***Prayer, visualisation, and meditation***

According to the research undertaken by Ganzin, prayer and meditation actively assisted entrepreneurs in obtaining answers and inspiration for their businesses.<sup>141</sup> This was also supported by Fox and colleagues, who stated that '[m]editation helps to develop concentration, which reduces stress, and assists individuals in achieving insight and wisdom, which are all beneficial for problem solving'.<sup>142</sup> All of the participants in my research practise prayer and meditation, including participant D who noted how he only meditates to help with sleep. Participants A and B claimed they had noticed that they were mainly using prayer to ask for things and wanted to start practicing more meditation.

Along with prayer and meditation another cosmological belief common within the participants was that they were able to create their future through visualisation and aligned action. All the participants believed they were able to achieve anything they could visualise first. According to Luthans, Psychological Capital can be enhanced by visualisation allowing

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<sup>141</sup> Ganzin and others, 'Spirituality and Entrepreneurship', p.89.

<sup>142</sup> Fox and others 'Spirituality, Psychological Capital', p.196.



‘information to be selected, cognitively processed, and acted upon through symbolizing, forethought, observation, self-regulation, and self-reflection’. This is also a tool used by the military to discover what could be improved in the future enhancing self-efficiency and future resilience to succeed.<sup>143</sup> Participant E stated how visualisation has been a crucial tool used to attract success, especially during difficult times. Another participant used visualisation techniques alongside journaling. She stated ‘if you just shake your body and breathe and then get out your journal – it’s insane what messages come to people, it can give them direct insight and clarity for what they need’. This participant also discussed how through meditation she has been able to connect to a higher power for wisdom, answers and even writing poetry. Matthew Brophy uses a metaphor for describing a spiritual connection made through means of meditation practice. Brophy characterises what he calls the ‘spiritual imagination’ as being similar to modern day technology. An invisible web of networks that can interconnect through mobile phones, tablets, and other technical devices. These devices can connect to each other as well as to an overall invisible frequency, which is the web.<sup>144</sup>

Two participants referred to journaling as ‘automatic writing’, praying to higher powers to ‘write through’ them. Three of the participants believe that they are able to ‘channel’ divine higher powers through them for business guidance. Two of the female participants hold an almost Gnostic belief in their ability to channel wisdom from and ‘through’ the Goddess, thus becoming ‘God like’ themselves, allowing them to achieve greatness.<sup>145</sup> During journal sessions, these participants request a higher spiritual force to channel through them, asking Deities to ‘speak to me and through me.’ Participants C and F believe that the Goddess is able

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<sup>143</sup> Luthans and others, *Psychological Capital*, Ch.2, p.53.

<sup>144</sup> Brophy, ‘Spirituality Incorporated’, p.789.

<sup>145</sup> John D. Turner ‘The Gnostic Sethians and Middle Platonism: Interpretations of the ‘Timaeus’ and ‘Parmenides.’ *Vigiliae Christianae*, 60.1 (2006), 9–64 (p.10), *JSTOR*, <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/20474740>>.

to channel through them, especially during meditation practices, which could be argued is almost a form of modern day theurgic practice, enticing possession to gain wisdom and clarity from Gods.<sup>146</sup> Practising prayer, meditation and visualisation techniques is therefore not only able to offer spiritual support to entrepreneurs, but it may also enhance Psychological Capital.

### ***The ego and soul purpose***

*The ego* was a topic repeatedly discussed by all the spiritual participants, and often had a negative connotation. Serving the participants' ego did not seem to be a desirable motivator for building their success to the online creators. Participant D, who was not influenced by online trends made no mention of the ego. Liliana Pérez-Nordtvedt and Mahmoud Ibrahim Fallatah discuss the idea of ego resilience, which they describe as 'a personality trait enabling entrepreneurs to navigate resistance under munificent conditions'. During their research they discovered how when faced with challenges, spiritual entrepreneurs who want to address large problems within their companies are able to act effectively when they have ego resilience, since this dynamic and adaptive attribute enables them to see such acts as feasible.<sup>147</sup> All the participants with spiritual beliefs claimed that they want to become the highest version of themselves. One participant stated that she asks herself 'is that the ego or is that your higher self?' whenever making business decisions.

The ego was often used by the participants to describe a lower version of the self, reflecting the beliefs of Iamblichus in Theurgy who discusses a higher and lower form of the soul.<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> Crystal Addey, *Divination & Theurgy In Neoplatonism*. Ch.6, p.215.

<sup>147</sup> Liliana Pérez-Nordtvedt and Mahmoud Ibrahim Fallatah 'Social Innovation In Saudi Arabia: The Role Of Entrepreneurs' Spirituality, Ego Resilience And Alertness', *Journal of Small Business Management*, 60.5 (2022), 1080-1121 (p.1082) < <https://doi.org/10.1080/00472778.2022.2041199>>.

<sup>148</sup> Addey. *Divination And Theurgy*, p.39 on Iamblichus, Translation by Thomas Taylor. *Iamblichus on the Mysteries of the Egyptians, Chaldeans, and Assyrians*. (1821).

Porphyry discusses purifying the lower soul through means of rituals and rites,<sup>149</sup> allowing ‘communion with the aethereal gods and for the lower soul to escape its ontological locus’.<sup>150</sup> This could be the intent of some of the participants of my research, achieved through practices such as journaling or meditation channelling. Plato would support this, given that the soul does not need the body and therefore meditation may act as a tool for removing the distractions of the physical body. He states ‘when [the soul] gets to be alone by itself it can dismiss the body and as far as possible without associating with it, or being affected by it, it can reach out to reality.’<sup>151</sup>

At the time of the interview, participant A explained that he was currently neglecting his appearance until he reached a milestone in his business, motivating him to take the next step in reaching his financial goal. He said that he was more likely to push himself this way, as it was a daily reminder to look forwards to being able to reward himself for reaching his target. He also discovered that grooming himself often fed into him following his ego rather than his soul purpose, which would support the Platonian belief that the physical body can interfere with the soul, as the body may act as a hindrance.<sup>152</sup> According to research undertaken by Nordtvedt and Fallatah, ego resilience is essential when building a positive mindset in business. This may also be strengthened during meditation.<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> Gregory Shaw. ‘Theurgy: Rituals Of Unification In The Neoplatonism Of Iamblichus’ *Cambridge University Press, JSTOR, Tradition* , 41, (1985), 1-28 (p.2) on Porphyry. *De Regressu Animae*, (1913), 27.21-28.15.

<sup>150</sup> Robert M. Berchman, *Porphyry Against the Christians* (Leiden ; Brill, 2005) p.50, on Porphyry. *De Regressu Animae*.(1913), fr. 2.

<sup>151</sup> Plato. *Phaedo*, (London; Oxford :Clarendon press, 1911). C, p.323.

<sup>152</sup> Plato, *Phaedo*, B-D, p.327.

<sup>153</sup> Nordtvedt and Fallatah ‘Social Innovation in Saudi Arabia’, p.1110.

Although the participants seemed to resent or avoid serving the ego, my research has discovered that the ego is able to motivate and encourage the participants to maintain resilience, act with confidence and pursue their desires of being successful, especially in terms of being publicly recognised. This could support the idea of there being a higher and lower version of the soul,<sup>154</sup> with the ‘lower self’ or lower soul serving for a less great purpose and the ‘higher self’ being a higher version of the ego that can aid in propelling people towards their goals. This could also be supported by Aristotle’s concept that the soul is mortal and that we are able to become the best versions of ourselves not only by serving the soul but also the physical body.<sup>155</sup>

### ***Motivation***

The individuals highlighted cosmology as a crucial motivator, demonstrating that they employed a combination of mentality and spiritual theoretical methods. To the spiritually-minded participants, their desire to set high goals, thrive on challenge, and be self-motivated was often due to a belief in serving a higher purpose. This was often referred to as a ‘soul mission’ in this lifetime. Meditation and prayer act as an additional element to feeling connected and to feeling of service to something greater than ourselves. The entrepreneurs’ work can also offer a purpose, giving their life meaning, as noted by Sandra Kauanui, Kevin Thomas, Arthur Rubens and Cynthia Sherman.<sup>156</sup> Spiritual entrepreneurs often express a love

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<sup>154</sup> Iamblichus, Translation by Thomas Taylor. *Iamblichus On The Mysteries Of The Egyptians, Chaldeans, And Assyrians*. [1821] (Bertram Dobell and Reeves and Turner, London, England, 1895), p.84.

<sup>155</sup> Jason W, Carter, ‘Aristotle on Earlier Definitions of Soul and their Explanatory Power: DA I.2–5.’ In C. Cohoe (Ed.), *Aristotle's On the Soul: A Critical Guide* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, Cambridge Critical Guides, 2022, pp.32-49) p.40, <<https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108641517.003>>.

<sup>156</sup> Kauanui and others, ‘Entrepreneurship and Spirituality’, p.622.

for what they do<sup>157</sup> and this was evident in my research. While most previous research and literature on the topic of entrepreneurship focuses on wealth and success as a key motivator, Balog and colleagues' research revealed that this is not always the case. They suggest that people like to have external motivators to drive them.<sup>158</sup>

Supporting research has discovered that most entrepreneurs are motivated by being able to give back to their communities and customers or to reach goals which may relate to why hope (goal-directed determination)<sup>159</sup> is one of the PsyCap components.<sup>160</sup> When asked what motivated participant F, she stated that 'it starts with your why and your service'. She displays a huge amount of passion for providing service to her viewers, offering wages to her team, being able to support her family and her positive service to humanity. The majority of participants stated they have a desire to provide for their families. Participant C runs her business as economically and as sustainably as possible in her attempt to serve the planet and give back to mother nature, stating how 'we are reflections of nature and emanations of the divine and understanding that we have an impact'. This is supported by Ganzin and his colleagues' research, whose participants also discussed being of service in the workplace.<sup>161</sup>

All the participants other than one, seemed originally highly motivated by being seen, admired, recognised or famous, which led to their resilience in pushing their online presence. Participants A, B and E expressed how their inspiration stemmed from believing they were

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<sup>157</sup> Kauanui and others, 'Entrepreneurship and Spirituality', pp.624-625.

<sup>158</sup> Balog, and others, 'Religiosity and Spirituality', p.2.

<sup>159</sup> Snyder and others, 'The will and the ways', p.570.

<sup>160</sup> Fred Luthans and Carolyn M. Youssef-Morgan, 'Psychological Capital: An Evidence-Based Positive Approach', *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior*, 4.1, (2017), 339-366 (p.340), < <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-orgpsych-032516-113324>>.

<sup>161</sup> Ganzin and others, 'Spirituality and Entrepreneurship', p.92.

destined for ‘something great’, with participant A stating, ‘I can’t be normal’ and ‘I just knew that I was meant for more’. Participant A explained his dreams of becoming a famous basketball player as a child, that how his mother had been foretold about his fame and future recognition by fortune tellers, thereby setting out his destiny. His path resulted in him building an online presence, eventually modelling around the world, and even appearing on a billboard, which he stated was a huge ‘manifested’ goal and achievement.

The cumulative evidence from my research and that others supports that combining cosmology and spiritual beliefs with components of Psychological Capital motivates entrepreneurs to continue past hurdles,<sup>162</sup> and even reduce symptoms of depression.<sup>163</sup> One participant shared that she would not be anywhere without her spiritual beliefs, declaring how, ‘I used to be an atheist and it made me depressed,’ later adding ‘I don’t think I would still be doing this if it wasn’t for my spiritual practice’. Participant A indicated that all the ‘self-made millionaires’ and successful businesspeople he had met have prayed and believed in a higher force, which motivated him to do the same.

Each participant responded uniquely with a personal perspective when asked what inspired them to start their business. A non-cosmological explanation was given by all participants, except for participant C who reached down and pulled out a woolen-textured pointed hat that she placed on her head after being asked this question. She resumed the interview with a detailed story of how she started out as a coach, guiding people, mostly women, through challenging situations. The desire to serve her community is supported by Balog’s research, which discusses entrepreneurs being motivated by being of service and giving back to a

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<sup>162</sup> Sarka and Naval, “Peaceful Workplace only a myth?”, p.716.

<sup>163</sup> Kamlesh Singh, Mohita Junnarkar and Jasleen Kaur, ‘Spirituality and it’s assessment’. In: *Measures of Positive Psychology*. (Springer, New Delhi, 2016, pp.1-215) p.162. <[https://doi.org/10.1007/978-81-322-3631-3\\_6](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-81-322-3631-3_6)>.

community.<sup>164</sup> Similarly, all the female participants shared this desire as a key motivation to serve their audience, community or other women who had struggled with a past version of themselves. Participant C credits her very first ‘candle magic spell’ to attracting \$12000 overnight and building her business significantly.

### ***Culture, religion, and spirituality***

Campion states ‘there is no human society that does not somehow, in some way, relate its fears, concerns, hopes, and wishes to the sky, and to the organizing principle behind it, the cosmos’.

<sup>165</sup> The participants in my research all share the commonality that they pray and speak to higher external forces as previously mentioned. One participant described how he had been ‘pushed towards God’, stating ‘you need a higher power to take it off your shoulders’ despite not conforming to any particular religion. According to Matthew Brophy, many atheists may in fact have a secular interpretation of spirituality or share spiritual notions.<sup>166</sup> This proved to be the case with the participants in my research. All except for participant D, identify themselves as secular, spiritual individuals who believe in higher forces and actively seek guidance from them. This is in keeping with the literature review, which posits that being spiritual does not imply identifying as religious.<sup>167</sup> Participant D identified as an ‘atheist,’ later stating in a confusing manner how he felt guided, protected, and blessed by an external larger force but was unsure how to define this higher power.

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<sup>164</sup> Balog, and others, ‘Religiosity and Spirituality’, p.2.

<sup>165</sup> Campion, *Astrology and Cosmology*, p.1.

<sup>166</sup> Brophy, ‘Spirituality Incorporated’, p.787.

<sup>167</sup> Campion, *Astrology and Popular Religion*, p.116.

When asked if they were comfortable discussing their cultural background, each participant openly explained their families' cultural origins, religious upbringings, and values. Participant D seemed to consider both religion and spirituality as the same or similar concept, which according to Fox's and his colleagues is often used synonymously. Their research discusses how religion and spirituality are different, noting that a more holistic, comprehensive, and individualised understanding of oneself and one's relationship to the environment may be found in the idea of spirituality. Religion, on the other hand, is a term for institutionalised ideas that are constrained by structure and collective worship.<sup>168</sup> When discussing his cultural background and religious upbringing, participant A explained that he was not raised with traditional religious beliefs, but rather with family members who held values like those of Buddhism. Although this participant is of Filipino descent, he holds a western viewpoint, such as the idea that Buddhism is not a religion but rather a 'philosophy' or 'way of life', which is supported by Nicholas Campion.<sup>169</sup> This participant also stated how he identified strongly with and practiced feng shui (not directly linked to Buddhism) because of a semi-superstitious upbringing. Two other participants also identified as following certain feng shui practices to attract love, peace, and wealth into their lives in the way that they designed their homes. Participant C stated that she was able to attract business growth and her partner through rituals involving witchcraft, sex magic and feng shui.

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<sup>168</sup> Fox and others 'Spirituality, Psychological Capital', p.196.

<sup>169</sup> Campion, *Astrology and Cosmology*, p.8.



## Conclusion

### *Cosmological beliefs and Psychological Capital*

Cosmology within entrepreneurship has been said to mediate an effect on success and resilience.<sup>170</sup> My participants expressed their confidence in an external higher power, stating that they feel 'blessed.' This has motivated them to resiliently achieve success, giving them the confidence to try again when things go wrong, indicating a high level of Psychological Capital.<sup>171</sup> Despite the fact that the fundamental research on Psychological Capital makes no mention of cosmological beliefs, I observed that my participants' belief in an external higher force has been crucial in enhancing their optimism, self-efficiency, resilience, and hope. Fox and his associates' research discovered that 'spirituality was positively and significantly related to PsyCap' but did not benefit task performance.<sup>172</sup> Unlike Fox and others' findings, cosmological beliefs strongly influenced all the individuals in my study except participant D. This might be related to the earlier debate on New Age tendencies, since the participants who were more technology focused were more likely to strive to imitate the cosmological practices of their mentors or persons they found inspirational.

Psychological Capital is said to affect who a person is, what they believe they can accomplish, what they do, and who they can become. People with a 'high PsyCap' are more adaptive and capable of keeping up with job changes and demands, allowing them to feel more content and competent.<sup>173</sup> All the participants of my research claim to have a hard work ethic. Nonetheless, it was evident that certain participants' cosmological ideas influenced their behaviour and

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<sup>170</sup> Margaça and others 'The Role of Spiritual Mindset', p.7.

<sup>171</sup> Luthans and others, *Psychological Capital*, Ch.2, p.44.

<sup>172</sup> Fox and others, 'Spirituality, Psychological Capital', p.203.

<sup>173</sup> Luthans and others, *Psychological Capital*, Ch.2, pp.33-34.

belief in themselves. Participants, for example, who attributed their conduct to their astrological birth charts may have found themselves driven by characteristics that the planets allegedly possess. It is not feasible, however, to prove whether or not the participants' beliefs, opinions and actions *are* a direct outcome of their astrological birth charts.

As noted in the literature review, there are gaps in the studies on Psychological Capital concerning entrepreneurs' cosmological views. Entrepreneurs who believe in predestined success, according to the findings of this study, are more likely to confidently pursue their goals and remain resilient because they rely on a higher power to guide them to what they believe is already theirs. All the participants believed that they are blessed by an external higher power, as did Ganzin and his associates' participants.<sup>174</sup> Entrepreneurs who believe they are 'divinely' led or destined to succeed are more prone to seek evidence of this whenever they feel the need. As a result, they may seek (or recognise) omens in spirit animals, angel numbers or other cosmological correspondences that may be interpreted to them as being good or bad. By doing this they achieve a kind of forward inertia, whereby they continue to pursue their goals and remain resilient.

### ***Motivation and the ego***

The participants of my research described how they are motivated to being of service and serving a life purpose and this is also evident in other previous research and literature.<sup>175</sup> My research revealed an intriguing finding, that the participants who sought external validation and guidance from a higher power did not appear to be comfortable solely crediting themselves for

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<sup>174</sup> Ganzin and others, 'Spirituality and Entrepreneurship', p.89.

<sup>175</sup> Margaça and others 'The Role of Spiritual Mindset', pp.3-4. And Fox and others, 'Spirituality, Psychological Capital', p.196.

their accomplishments. They frequently referred to the 'ego' as something that could impede their cosmological growth or be a source of spiritual punishment. It was additionally implied that the ego may have a negative impact on their decisions when pursuing their life goals, which is counterintuitive given that their goals appear to be in fact in service to the ego (to become famous, well-known, and successful). As a result, I contend that individuals may attribute their achievement to a higher force to feel less guilty about servicing their ego when pursuing goals. Serving their soul's purpose, their community, or anything outside of themselves may also be viewed as feeding their ego, since they desire to receive external validation for accomplishing something great. As a result, my research reveals that the ego is in conjunction with or in service to their cosmological beliefs, influencing their thinking and actions. As a result, while the ego, physical body and mind may be seen as being a hindrance,<sup>176</sup> the ego actually serves as a favourable motivator in achieving goals and success.<sup>177</sup>

### ***Positive and negative effects of external influences***

My research discovered that cosmological beliefs are advantageous when it comes to building a positive mental attitude in my participants' businesses. A positive mindset clearly has a significant impact on a person's belief in themselves and the success that they strive for, therefore it also has a direct impact on a person's behavior, supporting Champion's argument when defining cosmology.<sup>178</sup> Positive thinking seems to be amplified and stronger in those who practise optimism regularly. A key insight made was how cosmological beliefs can impact the mind both favorably and negatively. My results show that beliefs in negative forces, superstition, or a predestined failure can have a detrimental impact on a person's objectives and

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<sup>176</sup> Plato, *Phaedo*, B-D, p.327.

<sup>177</sup> Nordtvedt and others 'Social Innovation in Saudi Arabia', p.1110.

<sup>178</sup> Champion, *Astrology and Cosmology*, p.10.

behavior. This might explain the fear of cosmological practices such as astrology and tarot, which was demonstrated by some of the participants. A person who believes they have a good chance of success and is surrounded by individuals who believe in them appears to be more likely to work hard to achieve their goals, which corresponds to earlier research.<sup>179</sup>

In contrast, being exposed to negative external influences might harm an entrepreneur's beliefs, success, and self-esteem. This also pertains to my previous discussion of the ego; if another person feeds a person's ego positively, they build greater resilience and self-efficiency; but, if another person criticises or adversely impacts the ego, they may be less inclined to believe in themselves. The participants expressed apprehension of negative individuals because they may impact not just their own conviction in their abilities, but also their own cosmological views. It is also possible for someone to have such a strong ego and a positive mindset that they choose to ignore any negative external influences because they believe in God or a higher power who has blessed their journey and will not let them fail.

### ***Gender***

Cosmological beliefs, more specifically spirituality, are said to positively impact business owners, especially females.<sup>180</sup> Business is often 'considered as a male field'.<sup>181</sup> While my research is not specifically a study of gender, it is important to notice that the key literature on this subject, through prior research, has observed the influence of the gender and spirituality relationship. My research supports previous studies, concluding that women may seek spiritual aid more during a crisis than males because they feel they have had fewer

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<sup>179</sup> Luthans and others, *Psychological Capital*, Ch.2, p.38.

<sup>180</sup> Margaçã and others 'The Role of Spiritual Mindset', p.7.

<sup>181</sup> Pospisil and others, 'An Insight to the World', p.52.

opportunities, reduced support, or encouragement and therefore feel supported by external higher powers.<sup>182</sup> It is also worth noting that historically, religion has often been led by male leaders, which may lead to modern businesswomen favoring spirituality as a faith over patriarchal religion. Women, therefore, are more inclined than males to believe in astrology and other spiritual practices,<sup>183</sup> as they can relate to female deities, and balance of energy away from strict religions. Future research may reveal how the rise of female independence in business impacts their spiritual dependency as society advances and offers greater encouragement and assistance. Both male and female participants in my study directly linked their beliefs (and reliance on their beliefs) as a motivator to their success, building their resilience and confidence.

### ***Potential flaws in my research***

One flaw in my research is that the participants' comprehension of my insider knowledge may have influenced their responses, as compared to a situation where they were oblivious of my business and background.<sup>184</sup> Another issue may be the location in which the interviews took place. Not only could this have affected the responses and opinions shared, as explained by Elwood and her colleagues' research,<sup>185</sup> but may also have had an impact on any discussions on gender bias. All male participants were interviewed at their place of work while all the female participants were interviewed at home over Zoom. The female participants were interviewed over Zoom for no other reason than their physical distance from me. It may be

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<sup>182</sup> Borquist and De Bruin, 'Values and Women-Led Social Entrepreneurship', p.158.

<sup>183</sup> Campion, *Astrology and Popular Religion*, p.2.

<sup>184</sup> Asselin, 'Insider Research: Issues to Consider', p.101.

<sup>185</sup> Elwood and Martin, 'Placing Interviews: Location And Scales', pp.44-45.

possible that the male participants (especially Participant D) would have been inclined to share more cosmological beliefs had they have been interviewed at home over Zoom under the same natural conditions.

There were certain questions to which participant D did not respond until prompts or explanations were given. Questions asked regarding cosmological beliefs such as spirituality, astrology, fate, and religion had to be rephrased or clarified for him to provide relevant replies. This had a significant impact on his responses and was crucial to the discovery of my research. Participant D was the only participant who was not considered a millennial or younger, which could explain his lesser interest and involvement in online businesses and social media. I will also suggest the possibility that this makes him less susceptible to modern day trends (usually spread over social media) and therefore explains why he did not express similar cosmological beliefs such as The Law of Attraction and the universe, as did the other participants. He did still however express a belief in a higher power but was not able to explain what this was. It is probable that the internet is an external influence, driving people to follow trends and emulate the tactics of those who have achieved success. Not only may online external influence increase a person's Psychological Capital, but it can also alter their cosmological understanding and beliefs.

Two of the participants who worked in the same office requested to be interviewed collectively. Initially, I was hesitant to interview them together in case the complications often found in multiple interviews interfered.<sup>186</sup> However, it quickly became apparent that this method ensured the best responses here. An initial informal conversation between myself, participant

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<sup>186</sup> Tai and Ajjawi, 'Undertaking and Reporting Qualitative Research', p.178.

A and participant B allowed me to thoroughly comprehend their personal beliefs, which could be prompted and referred to afterwards. This was extremely beneficial since Participant A became uneasy and brief in his replies once the official recorded interview questions were presented (possibly due to nerves or anxiety). Participant B was able to prompt Participant A with what he had stated before the 'official' interview began when he became inhibited. Using a collective method for participant A elicited far more information and removed the 'interview block'.

### ***Final Notes***

Previous research contends that spirituality and religion serve as mere *tools* for resilient thinking,<sup>187</sup> enabling entrepreneurs to adhere to core principles and values. Mindful practices such as meditation are also beneficial in reducing stress in the workspace, therefore encouraging more efficient work.<sup>188</sup> It is not currently possible to prove any paranormal or higher power, but it is possible to look at the evidence and see that both spiritual and non-spiritual participants shared a belief in themselves and an external higher power, therefore positively impacting their will to succeed. This is supported by literature that suggests how faith is necessary for self-confidence and belief,<sup>189</sup> and the resilience to work past any challenges.<sup>190</sup> My research discovered that cosmological beliefs or *Magical Thinking*<sup>191</sup> are inherently good, positively impacting decisions and behaviour, encouraging people to pursue their goals and strive for success. Regardless of religious or spiritual views, a person appears

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<sup>187</sup> Fox and others, 'Spirituality, Psychological Capital', p. 198.

<sup>188</sup> Brophy, 'Spirituality Incorporated', pp.786, 791.

<sup>189</sup> Issa, 'Psychological Capital For Success', pp.525-548.

<sup>190</sup> Fox and others, 'Spirituality, Psychological Capital', p. 198.

<sup>191</sup> Ganzin and others, 'Spirituality and Entrepreneurship', p.78.

to be more likely to succeed if they have some type of confidence in a higher power. To maintain resilience, cosmological beliefs in external higher forces play a key role in helping entrepreneurs stay confident, and focused.



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