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The Role of Government Policies in Developing E-Commerce in Emerging Markets: A Managerial Perspective

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Abstract
This study aims to investigate the impact of government policies on the development of e-commerce in emerging markets focusing on the managerial perspective within the context of Iraqi small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs). A quantitative research approach was adopted and data were collected using a structured questionnaire administered to 292 managers from SMEs in Iraq. The data were analyzed using Smart-PLS software based on Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The model examined the effect of three independent variables, including infrastructure and support, policy awareness and implementation, and regulatory environment on E-commerce. The results revealed that both infrastructure and support, and the regulatory environment have significant and positive impacts on e-commerce. However, Policy Awareness and Implementation did not show a statistically significant effect. This study is relevant to researchers and practitioners in fields such as e-commerce, public administration, digital policy, and business management. It provides valuable insights for governments, digital policymakers, and entrepreneurs. The originality of this study lies in its managerial level analysis and its use of an integrated model that empirically examines policy impact using validated constructs within the context of an emerging economy.

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Keywords: E-Commerce, Government Policies, Infrastructure, Regulatory Environment, Policy Awareness, Emerging Markets, Iraq

Introduction

In the current era, the world is witnessing a rapid digital transformation in light of technological development and the spread of many artificial intelligence tools which has made a significant difference in many fields especially in the business and trading sectors (Amarna *et al*., 2025; Omol, 2024) [1, 18]. Likewise, e-commerce has come to the forefront as a grower of economic growth and development, job creation, and a supporter of small and medium enterprises especially with regard to rising smartphone penetration, wider internet availability and changing consumer tastes (Mustafa *et al*., 2022; Jula *et al*., 2024; Otarinia, 2024) [14, 17, 19].

Although e-commerce played an efficient role in developing and growing the economy, there are numerous challenges that impact e-commerce development in particular emerging markets which are the low-quality of the digital infrastructure particularly in the countryside, the limited electronic trust for consumers, absence of high proficient digital skill in human resources, and extreme comparison within countries itself (El-Ebiary *et al*., 2021; Santoso, 2022) [7, 24]. Hence, governments play a critical role in adoption and implementation of which provides an integrated policies that helps carve an enabling trading ecosystem to foster e commerce long term growth. Such policies range from massive investments in digital infrastructure, creation of supporting legislative and regulatory framework, establishment of mature and secure online payment, provision of attractive tax and investment features for local or foreign firms, as well as massive investments in human capital of professional

workers (Kwilinski, 2023; Mustafa *et al*., 2022; Wang *et al*., 2024) [15, 17, 25] Employment of Electronic Commerce by Government Policies. Although many studies have investigated the impact of Government policies upon e-business, most of the existing literature examines either macroeconomic consequences, or legal regulation, leaving a noticeable gap in the literature regarding the administrative perspective and how practitioners interact with policies in practice. Therefore, this study seeks to find the research gap through in-depth analysis of the role of government policies in the development of e-commerce in both developing market and specifically Iraqi, with a focus on managerial perspective. The paper contributes to the academic literature by offering an integrated view bridging the managerial approach and the impact of policies on e-commerce in emerging contexts. It also offers practical insights for practitioners, including executives, entrepreneurs and investors, to help them make better, more rational choices.

This paper is divided into six sections as follows: Section 1, presents the research background, objectives, and research problem. Section 2, reviews the relevant literature on the relationship between government policies and e-commerce. Section 3, outlines the research methodology used to analyze the sample data. Section 4, presents the empirical results and statistical analysis. Section 5, discusses the main findings of the study. Finally, section 6 concludes the paper with recommendations for policymakers and practitioners.

Literature Review

Given the paradigm shift in technology that the world has witnessed in the last two decades, e-commerce has emerged as a strategic tool for enabling the businesses, especially, in the developing economies. This expansion means that the uptake of e-commerce is now influenced not only by technological advances, but by the participation of the governmental sphere, in establishing the necessary institutional and regulatory context (Rosário & Raimundo, 2021; Sanbella *et al*., 2024) [22, 23]. We have realised that the government needs to do more than just legislate; the government has to create the strategic vision in which public investments go to facilitating technology, the deployment of digital governance enabling economic actors and small businesses to operate in the digital space. Institutional theory argues that regulations and public policies create pressures and opportunities for institutions, which could constrain or enable them in deciding whether or not to adopt innovation (Yang *et al*., 2025) [27]. According to public governance theories, government policies are more successful if they are prepared in a participatory process and are targeted for implementation in a transparent and market-oriented context (Hartanto *et al*., 2024) [11].

However, E-commerce can be merely defined as the process of buying and selling multiple products and services. It comprises a number of stages ranging from product display and marketing to payment and delivery on to improved customer service and all-in technical support. E-commerce depends on digital aids for the entire process of buying and selling (Asbari, 2023; Jain *et al*., 2021) [3, 13]. E-commerce can be sorted out in line with the one who are the two parties of the commercial transaction into five main forms including business to business (B2B), business to consumer (B2C), consumer to consumer (C2C), consumer to business (C2B), business to governments (B2G) and consumer to government (C2G) (Asipi & Durakovic, 2021; Anderson *et al*., 2022) [4, 2]. There are many studies that have examined the impact of government policies on e-commerce (Crasta & Janefer, 2024; Dańska *et al*., 2024; Lee *et al*., 2023; Pokrovskaya, 2024; Qazi, 2025; Xie *et al*., 2021; Yindi *et al*., 2021; Zhou & Jiang, 2025) [6, 16, 20, 21, 28, 29]. According to Dańska *et al*. (2024), the development of the e-commerce sector is more evident in countries with strong infrastructure. Similarly, Yindi *et al*. (2021) [28] pointed out that the innovation of infrastructure plays a significant role in the adoption of e-commerce. Moreover, the empirical evidence provided by Zhou and Jiang (2025) [29]. It serves to confirm that e-commerce infrastructure can prompt economic growth and, at the same time, it is also an investment in fighting against income disparity between developing countries versus China soutfar What is the Answer. For both knowledge and practical application of policy, Crasta and Janefer (2024) [6] point out that there are significant gaps in what managers currently know particularly about new types of attacks on computers--cyber warfare. It reminds that executives should be informed about policies related to e-commerce in a timely and comprehensive way, so that they have thorough knowledge and understanding of the policies being implemented digitally. Moreover, Xie and his colleagues found (2021) that when managers understand digital doctrine, it has a remarkably beneficial influence on consumer preferences. By so improving e-commerce. The paper also suggested for governments to act effectively in promoting environmental consciousness, both among those running businesses and in general public opinion. Finally, several studies have also argued that the regulatory environment has a significant impact on the development of e-commerce. For example, this is suggested by work done in recent years by Lee *et al* (2023) [16]; Pokrovskaya (2024) [20]; and Qazi (2025) [21]. E-commerce laws play a direct or indirect role in improving e-commerce quality and the results of Qazi (2025) [21] can contribute to this and help toward economic development, societal well-being, and sustainable practices. According to the demonstration of Lee *et al*. (2023) [16], what every investor should notice is that for both home and foreign markets, the less you know about laws relating to digital business; Why there is all risk on platforms where people are promoting their investment projects. Well, a wider impact can be seen abroad than at home: Assuming (2024) and In the context of an interconnected, dynamic international e-commerce market, the results of Pokrovskaya's (2024) [20], study highlight the importance for both companies as well as consumers to realize that regulation governing data privacy and competition laws will continue to change on a monthly or even weekly basis. In this light, it was also labelled key sources of strain and potential points at conflict. Certainly, the examples offered below are those from previous literature:

H1: There is a significant effect of infrastructure and support on e-commerce in Iraq.

H2: There is a significant impact of policy awareness and implementation on e-commerce in Iraq.

H3: There is a significant influence of the regulatory environment on e-commerce in Iraq.

The study proposes a research model based on the above theoretical arguments and hypotheses, as shown in Figure 1. This model summarizes the proposed relationships between government policies and e-commerce.

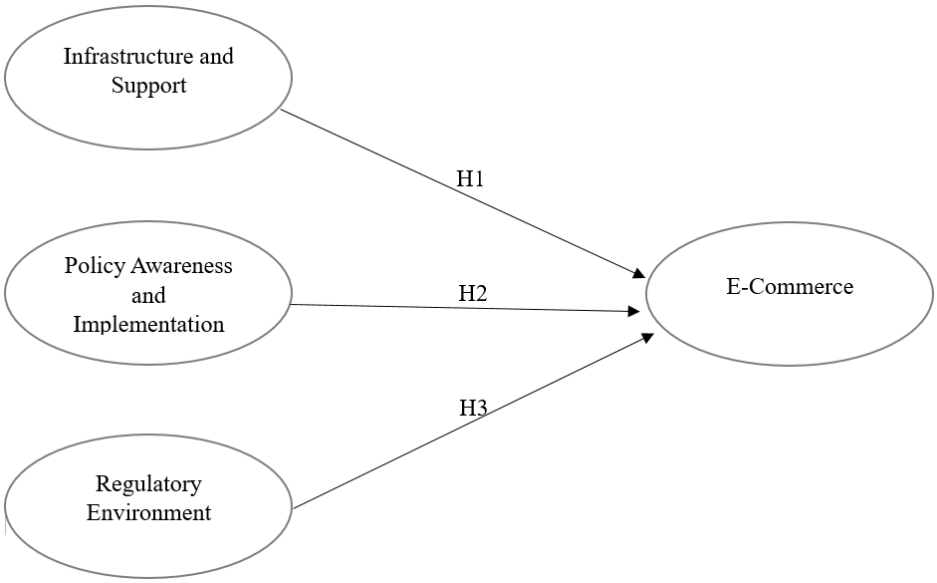

Fig 1: Research model

Methodology

For the sake of the primary purpose of this study to determine the government policies that influences e-commerce in the Iraqi context, data were collected through a questionnaire that was distributed to 326 respondents holding managerial level positions in Iraqi small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs). Table 1: Sample characteristics Following the study protocol and standard procedures for survey design, 34 incomplete questionnaires were excluded from the sample, which was 292 respondents, obtaining a response rate of 89·5. According to Hair et al. (2020), the sample size was adequate to get a stabilization of the model. Based on previous literature, the questionnaire that consists of 21 question items is designed according to five-point Likert scale with 1 to 5 response choice scale, as presented in Table 1. Here, government policies are used as independent variables of infrastructure and support, policy awareness and implementation, and regulatory environment, while e-commerce is chosen to be the dependent variable.

The Smart-PLS software that employs structural equation modeling based on least squares was used for the analysis of the collected data. However, this method is more appropriate when sample sizes and data do not have a normal distribution (Hair etal., 2020). Statistical analysis was performed in two stages. Stage one included checking the reliability and validity of the model where external loadings, Cronbach's Alpha, composite reliability and average variance extracted (AVE). Path coefficient analysis was then used to test the study hypotheses.

Table 1: Study variables

Variable	Number of items	Source
Infrastructure and Support	6	Hossain *et al*. (2023) [12]
Policy Awareness and Implementation	4	Yindi *et al*. (2020) [28]
Regulatory Environment	6	Lee *et al*. (2023) [16]
E-Commerce	5	Gajewska *et al*. (2020) [8]

Results and Discussion

Measurement model

To examine the relationship between the study variables, a measurement model was built as shown in Figure 2. The model's independent variables include infrastructure and support, policy awareness and implementation, and regulatory environment, which were represented by 6, 4, and 6 items respectively. However, e-commerce is considered an independent variable which was measured by 5 items. The small arrows in the figure indicate the relationship between the elements and their variables, which were IS1-IS6, RE1-RE6, PAI1-PAI4, EC1-EC5. On the other hand, the numbers associated with these variables indicate the external loadings, which means their strength. However, the large arrows show the relationship between the study variables.

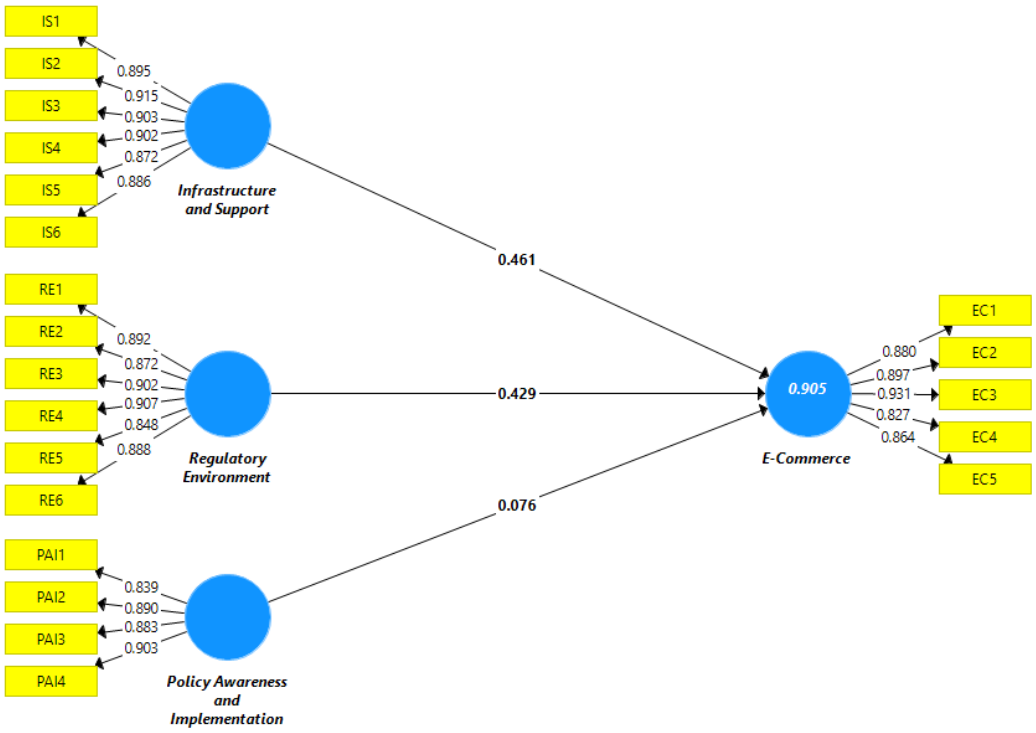

Fig 2: Measurement model Outer loadings

External loadings appeared in the measurement model as evidence of the relationship between latent constructs in Table 2 with their respective indicators. All out loadings of items used to operationalize study variables (i.e., e-commerce, infrastructure and support, awareness and policy implementation, and regulatory environment) were higher than the lowest acceptable level of 0.70. With the range of 0.827–0.931(Hair *et al*. 2020). These values indicate that each item has a good correlation with the latent variable it is purported to measure. Such findings suggest that each measurement item contributes meaningfully and unambiguously to capture the theoretical construct it is supposed to reflect, thus demonstrating a high degree of convergent validity. For example, item EC3 received a loading of 0.931 from the outer model, meaning that it explains over 93% of the variance of the latent variable (e-commerce).

Table 2: Outer loadings

Items	E-Commerce	Infrastructure and Support	Policy Awareness and Implementation	Regulatory Environment
EC1	0.880			
EC2	0.897			
EC3	0.931			
EC4	0.827			
EC5	0.864			
IS1		0.895		
IS2		0.915		
IS3		0.903		
IS4		0.902		
IS5		0.872		
IS6		0.886		
PAI1			0.839	
PAI2			0.890	
PAI3			0.883	
PAI4			0.903	
RE1				0.892
RE2				0.872
RE3				0.902
RE4				0.907
RE5				0.848
RE6				0.888

Construct reliability and validity

The results of the reliability and validity analysis of the latent variables in the measurement model (e-commerce infrastructure and e-commerce support, awareness and policy implementation, and regulatory environment) can be found in Table 3. We assessed internal consistency by Cronbachs α and composite reliability and the calculated values of both indicators were over the threshold of 0.7 seedlings by Hair *et al*. (2020). For example, Cronbach's alpha for 'infrastructure and support' variable equals 0.951, and it shows a very high degree of internal consistency among the items measuring the construction of this variable. The CR for all variables varies from 0.931 to 0.961, and it exceeds the minimal accepted level of 0.7. These results show that the degrees of reliability are extremely high: the data do not have a large dispersion or unexplained variance, which is advantageous for the quality of the measurement model.

AVE measure which is one of the major in SEM (i.e., structural equation modeling) supports the convergent validity of the measurement model. Table 9 shows the results indicating that all variables have AVE where the value are above 0.77, well above the acceptable minimum standard of 0.50 (Hair *et al*., 2020). This indicates that over 77 per cent of the variance in the items making up each variable can compare to that variable and this demonstrates a high convergent validity. That is, the specific chosen indicators are appropriate to represent the construct on, for example the regulatory environment variable reached a AVE=0.783, therefore the indicators chosen were significative in measuring this construct.

Table 3: Reliability and validity analysis

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
E-Commerce	0.927	0.945	0.776
Infrastructure and Support	0.951	0.961	0.802
Policy Awareness and Implementation	0.902	0.931	0.773
Regulatory Environment	0.944	0.956	0.783

Structure model

The structural model is the second phase of SEM, which comes after the measurement model is satisfied. The final or third step involves testing the hypothesized relationships of the research conceptual model by analyzing the relationships in the structural model between the latent variables. While the structural model is tested to find out the relationship and influence of independent variables on dependent variable and significant, insignificant, positive or negative and direct and indirect effect of independent variables (Hair *et al*., 2021).

The structural model of this study to examine the relationship between the dependent variable (e-commerce) and the independent variables (infrastructure and support, policy awareness and implementation, regulatory environment) is shown below in Figure 3. The arrows indicate the direct relationship of each independent variable to e-commerce and the numbers on the arrows show the direction and intensity of the effect.

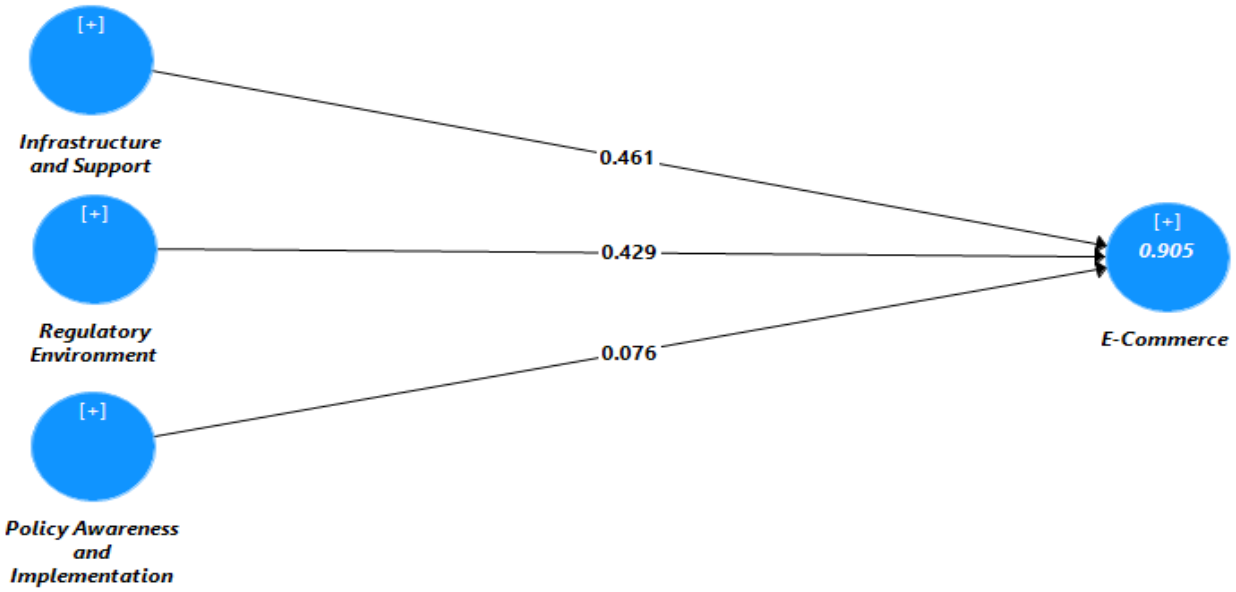

Fig 3: Structure model R Square

Table 4 contains the results of the analysis of the structural model to examine the quality of the structural model, and the R-squared value was analyzed to show how effective the model is in explaining the study problem. The R-square Value represents the percentage of variance in the dependent variable that can be explained or predicted with some independent variables included in the model (Hair, *et al* 2014).

The results are presented in Table below where e-commerce variable has R-squared of 0.905; that is, 90.5 percent

variance in e-commerce due to the following three variables infrastructure and support, awareness and policy implementation, and regulatory environment. This means that the model implemented in the analysis has a high explanatory ability, confirming that the independent variables have been properly selected and that it accurately reflects the e-commerce influencing factors.

Table 4: R-squared

Variable	R Square	R Square Adjusted
E-Commerce	0.905	0.904

Path coefficients

The analysis of the structural model gave significant positive path coefficients between the independent and dependent variable (e-commerce) as indicated in Table 5 which enable to test the hypotheses formulated in the study. As for the above hypothesis, according to the path coefficients results, we find that the coefficient between infrastructure and support and e-commerce showed a value of ($\beta = 0.461$, $T = 6.138$, $P = 0.000$), which means that there is a significant positive effect between them at the significance level ($\alpha < 0.01$), and thus we accept the first hypothesis. That result is in line with findings from Dańska *et al*. (2024) proves that the presence of up-to-date digital infrastructure simonoh fast internet services and technical support is among the key prerequisites of e-commerce adoption, particularly in developing markets.

In comparison, variable awareness and implementing policy has no significant effect on e commerce ($\beta=0.076$, $T=1.332$, $P=0.183$), we therefore, reject 2nd hypothesis. This finding is different from that of several studies (e.g., Xie *et al*. (2021) paper that highlighted the role of awareness campaigns in boosting e-commerce. The absence of importance in this context, however, might point to a more practical divide between policy making and policy implementation or the low penetration of government messages into the hands of their intended users. This document needs deeper issue analysis conducted to understand the existing gap between the policy and practice.

On the other hand, despite the indirect and considerable influence of regulatory environment on e-commerce ($\beta = 0.429$, $T = 5.561$, $P = 0.000$), we accept the third hypothesis. This result also aligns with the study of Qazi (2025) [21], which indicated that the existence of specific legislation and enforcing organizations constitutes a major factor in creating a safe environment and encourages individuals and certain organizations to use electronic platforms securely and effectively.

Overall, the outcomes signify that technical and regulatory determinants dictate e-commerce development in the studied environment, with the impact of awareness raising and policy aspects minimal due to the challenges of actual implementation and institutional communication.

Table 5: Coefficients analysis

Variable	coefficients	Mean	S. D	T Statistics	P Values
Infrastructure and support → e-commerce	0.461	0.465	0.075	6.138	0
Policy awareness and implementation → e-commerce	0.076	0.076	0.057	1.332	0.183
Regulatory environment → e-commerce	0.429	0.426	0.077	5.561	0

Limitations of The Study

Despite the importance of the findings of this study, there are some limitations that should be taken into account when generalizing or interpreting the results. One of the most important limitations of this study is that it was conducted within a specific geographical or administrative context which is Iraqi small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs). This, however limits the possibility of generalizing the results to other environments that differ in their economic, technological, or legal characteristics. Additionally, the study relied on a quantitative approach using a questionnaire and structural equation modeling (SEM) analysis. Despite the strength of this approach, it does not provide a deep understanding of behavioral drivers or contextual factors that may be influential and cannot be quantified. Moreover, the study focused only on direct relationships, and did not address the potential role of mediating or moderating variables, which may influence the strength or direction of relationships between variables.

Conclusion

This study aimed to analyze the impact of government policies on e-commerce in emerging markets specifically Iraq from a managerial perspective and this was accomplished using structural equation modeling.

The results of the measurement model showed that the instruments used had high degrees of reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity hence enhancing the explanatory power of the structural model.

Regarding the results of the structural model, they showed that infrastructure and regulatory environment had positive and significant effects on e-commerce, while awareness and policy implementation did not demonstrate a significant impact. These results indicate that a strong technical environment and a clear regulatory framework are the cornerstones of supporting digital transformation and e-commerce adoption, while political and executive awareness still require greater implementation.

This study recommends strengthening digital infrastructure by improving internet networks and technical support in Iraq and providing a conducive technical environment for e-commerce. It also recommends reviewing and updating legislation related to digital transactions to enhance trust and simplify regulatory procedures. Furthermore, the study suggests that future researchers incorporate mediating and moderating variables to gain a deeper understanding of the relationships between influencing factors. Finally, it's also recommended to conduct comparative studies across different countries or sectors to broaden the scope of generalization.

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