Transformational Management Review
(Transform. Manag. Rev.)

Vol.01, Issue No.01, Jan-June, 2026
pp.72-99

Article Type: Research Article

Thriving or Burning Out? AI and Smart Cities Shape Serial Entrepreneurs' Work-Life Balance

Received: 14/10/2025
Accepted: 12/12/2025
Published: 15/01/2026

Rizwan Tahir[1] & Ayman Ibrahim[2]

[1]Department of Business & Management, Rochester Institute of Technology (Dubai Campus), United Arab Emirates.
Email: *rxtcad@rit.edu*

[2]Department of Business & Management, Rochester Institute of Technology (Dubai Campus), United Arab Emirates.
Email: *axicad1@rit.edu*

Abstract

In Dubai's hyper-connected smart-city landscape where innovation moves at algorithmic speed serial entrepreneurs find themselves thriving and burning out at the same time. This study examines how these entrepreneurs navigate the paradoxical effects of artificial intelligence (AI) and smart-city infrastructures on their work-life balance (WLB). Drawing on semi-structured interviews with 20 multi-venture founders, the analysis applies template analysis and extends the Job Demands Resources (JD-R) Model to reveal how AI-enabled tools function simultaneously as job resources enhancing efficiency, decision accuracy, and opportunity recognition and as job demands that intensify constant connectivity, cognitive overload, and emotional strain. Findings show that smart-city infrastructures accelerate entrepreneurial tempo, blur personal professional boundaries, and heighten technological dependency, producing distinct patterns of overload not captured in traditional entrepreneurship research. Entrepreneurs respond through selective technology adoption, task delegation, boundary-setting, and continuous learning, yet these adaptive strategies cannot fully compensate for ecosystem-level gaps in psychosocial and policy support. The study advances theory by conceptualising AI as a resource demand hybrid within entrepreneurial labour and by positioning resilience as an emergent socio-technical

© 2026 Author(s). This article is published under the CC-BY license at https://iilmreview.com

practice. Practically, it calls for human-centred smart-city governance that integrates wellness, mentorship, and digital-boundary programmes. Overall, the findings demonstrate that sustaining entrepreneurship in AI-intensive urban environments requires aligning technological innovation with human well-being.

Keywords: Serial entrepreneurs, Artificial intelligence, Smart cities, WLB, Job Demands–Resources Model, Entrepreneurial resilience

Introduction

Serial entrepreneurship defined as the repeated creation and management of multiple ventures has emerged as an important empirical and theoretical phenomenon within contemporary innovation economies (Lafontaine & Shaw, 2016). Unlike novice founders, serial entrepreneurs accumulate experiential, cognitive, and relational capital across entrepreneurial cycles, enhancing pattern recognition, judgement, and strategic adaptability (Parker, 2014). However, this sustained engagement across ventures also intensifies uncertainty, role overload, and emotional strain, creating pressures that directly affect entrepreneurs' work-life balance (WLB) a dimension still underexplored within mainstream entrepreneurship research.

The rapid diffusion of artificial intelligence (AI) and smart-city infrastructures adds a new and largely unexplored layer to this complexity. Smart cities characterised by dense digital infrastructures, algorithmic decision systems, pervasive data flows, and hyper-connectivity (Caputo, Pizzi, Pellegrini, & Dabić, 2021) reshape the temporal, cognitive, and relational structure of entrepreneurial work. Dubai represents an amplified case, with strategic investments in AI-enabled governance, automated service delivery, and ubiquitous digital platforms positioning it as a global exemplar of state-led technological modernisation. In such environments, entrepreneurial activity becomes embedded in technologically mediated urban ecosystems that shape pace and expectations, often intensifying demands that influence entrepreneurs' WLB.

AI-driven infrastructures create a central paradox: while automation, predictive analytics, and digital platforms enhance entrepreneurial agility and market responsiveness, they also foster an 'always-on' culture, intensifying temporal fragmentation and blurring work life boundaries (Obschonka & Audretsch, 2020). The psychosocial toll manifested as stress, emotional exhaustion, and identity-based overcommitment becomes particularly acute for serial entrepreneurs managing multiple ventures (Spivack, McKelvie, & Haynie, 2014). Although prior research emphasises opportunity recognition and venture performance, limited attention has been given to how digital infrastructures reshape daily entrepreneurial experiences (Audretsch & Kariv, 2025; Cetindamar et al., 2020; Perng et al., 2018), underscoring a critical gap in understanding how AI-intensive environments influence entrepreneurs' WLB and long-term sustainability.

To address these questions, we draw on the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) Model, extending it from organisational employment contexts to the domain of independent serial entrepreneurship. The JD-R framework offers a robust lens for examining how technological infrastructures introduce new demands (e.g., digital overload, connectivity pressures, and emotional strain) and new resources (e.g., automation, strategic clarity, and efficiency). These dynamics directly shape entrepreneurs' WLB, especially as coping and resilience depend on ecosystem-level supports, policy environments, and social infrastructures that remain underdeveloped in many smart-city contexts. Taken together, this theoretical tension motivates the following research questions:

- **RQ1:** How do AI-enabled smart city infrastructures simultaneously function as job resources and job demands for serial entrepreneurs in Dubai?
- **RQ2:** In what ways do multi-venture responsibilities within Dubai's hyper-connected smart city amplify job demands that challenge entrepreneurs' WLB?
- **RQ3:** How do serial entrepreneurs employ adaptive strategies such as selective AI adoption, delegation, and personal boundary-setting to convert digital pressures into resilience within an AI-driven entrepreneurial ecosystem?
- **RQ4:** How do gaps in smart-city policy and entrepreneurial support ecosystems influence the sustainability of entrepreneurial careers and the well-being of serial entrepreneurs in AI-intensive environments?

By addressing these questions, this study makes three key contributions. First, it bridges entrepreneurship and smart-city research by theorising the entrepreneurial experience within digitally mediated urban environments a domain still conceptually underdeveloped. Second, it extends the JD-R Model to account for technologically induced demands and resources experienced by independent entrepreneurs rather than employees. Third, it foregrounds Dubai as a critical site for theorising the future of entrepreneurial work in AI-driven cities, highlighting implications for entrepreneurs' WLB. Collectively, these contributions deepen understanding of entrepreneurship as embodied, relational, and increasingly technologically entangled labour.

Literature Review

This literature review integrates four core bodies of scholarship serial entrepreneurship**,** WLB**,** AI and smart cities**,** and the JDR Model to construct a cohesive theoretical foundation for understanding how digital infrastructures reshape entrepreneurial labour and well-being. Figure 1 visually maps this literature and its intersections, showing how the study bridges individual-level psychological mechanisms with ecosystem-level technological forces. Collectively, these perspectives converge on a central puzzle: how do AI-driven smart-city infrastructures

simultaneously empower and endanger serial entrepreneurs' capacity to sustain WLB and long-term career sustainability?

Serial Entrepreneurship in the Age of AI

Serial entrepreneurship represents a distinctive mode of entrepreneurial practice involving repeated cycles of venture creation, growth, and exit (Eggers & Song, 2015; Parker, 2014). While prior research highlights serial entrepreneurs' ability to leverage experiential knowledge, social capital, and pattern recognition for successive innovations, it also reveals heightened exposure to role overload, uncertainty, and emotional strain (Spivack et al., 2014; Westhead et al., 2005). These competing dynamics reflect the 'double-edged' nature of habitual entrepreneurship, with direct implications for maintaining a sustainable WLB.

The diffusion of AI technologies intensifies this duality. Algorithmic decision support, predictive analytics, and digital dashboards enhance strategic precision but also increase the velocity and cognitive demands of entrepreneurial work (Obschonka & Audretsch, 2020). Operating within digital ecosystems requiring constant adaptation, data literacy, and multi-platform engagement further erodes temporal boundaries between ventures. As AI systems autonomously manage information flows, entrepreneurs must interpret algorithmic outputs and align them with strategic judgement a dynamic that increasingly shapes their WLB yet remains largely unexplored in entrepreneurship research.

WLB and the Paradox of Entrepreneurial Freedom

WLB traditionally refers to the individual's capacity to harmonise professional demands with personal life roles, thereby maintaining psychological well-being and performance (Greenhaus & Allen, 2011). Within entrepreneurship, however, autonomy often viewed as a key motivator paradoxically produces greater boundary permeability and temporal extensiveness**.** Entrepreneurs' sense of identity becomes intertwined with their ventures, erasing spatial and emotional demarcations between work and life (Westhead et al., 2005).

For serial entrepreneurs, this blurring is magnified: multiple venture commitments expand the scope of accountability, elongate workdays, and intensify emotional labour. In AI-enabled contexts, this tension is further complicated by technological acceleration. Automation and digital collaboration platforms ostensibly enhance flexibility yet embed entrepreneurs within systems that expect perpetual connectivity and instantaneous response. Thus, digitalisation converts flexibility into an illusion of control, producing an 'always-on' work mode that undermines rest, relationships, and reflection (Caputo et al., 2021). This paradox underscores that the determinants of WLB are no longer solely behavioural or psychological they are algorithmic and infrastructural.

AI, Smart Cities, and Technologically Mediation Entrepreneurial Work

Smart cities urban systems integrating AI, data analytics, and pervasive digital infrastructures redefine how entrepreneurship unfolds by embedding it within algorithmically managed ecosystems (Shaw & Sørensen, 2019). In these environments, entrepreneurial success depends not only on market insight but also on navigating the governance logics of digital infrastructures. Dubai exemplifies this phenomenon, with AI institutionalised across public services, logistics, and commerce (Caputo et al., 2021), shaping both entrepreneurial activity and its implications for WLB.

While these infrastructures enhance operational efficiency and access to global networks, they also create new dependencies and vulnerabilities. Entrepreneurs must adapt to fluctuating algorithmic conditions system outages, software updates, and automated decision biases that generate uncertainty beyond traditional market risk (Yun et al., 2019). The affective toll of constant digital engagement anxiety, exhaustion, and cognitive overload remains under-theorised, even though such pressures directly shape entrepreneurs' WLB. Current scholarship privileges technology as an efficiency enabler, overlooking its role as a social actor governing attention and pace.

Serial Entrepreneurship within Smart-city Contexts

The convergence of AI integration, urban digitalisation, and multi-venture engagement creates an entrepreneurial condition marked by acceleration, complexity, and digital immersion. Entrepreneurs operate in ecosystems where infrastructural intelligence rather than personal agency alone shapes work tempo and expectations (Corbo et al., 2020). These technologies compress decision cycles and amplify feedback loops, affecting agility while placing added pressures on WLB.

For serial entrepreneurs in smart cities like Dubai, the demands of managing concurrent ventures multiply the effects of this acceleration. Entrepreneurs describe being 'plugged in' across multiple ventures and digital layers simultaneously, leaving minimal psychological distance between roles. While these affordances can enhance innovation, they also embed entrepreneurs within a form of algorithmic surveillance that equates responsiveness with professionalism. This technologically mediated intensity produces entrepreneurial temporal fragility, where AI systems regulate work rhythms dynamics that directly shape the sustainability of entrepreneurs' WLB.

Despite these dynamics, research remains fragmented across domains, rarely integrating the lived experience of multi-venture entrepreneurs with the structural logics of smart-city ecosystems. This omission conceals how technological infrastructures mediate not just economic outcomes but also the affective and existential dimensions of entrepreneurial work.

The JD-R Model and Entrepreneurial Sustainability

The JD–R Model (Demerouti & Bakker, 2023) provides a powerful framework for analysing how work environments generate strain or motivation through the interplay of demands and resources. Job demands elements requiring sustained effort are linked to exhaustion, while resources elements facilitating goal attainment promote engagement. Yet in AI-mediated entrepreneurship, the boundary between these categories becomes porous. Digital tools such as automation, data analytics, and smart platforms may function simultaneously as resources and demands, shaping both performance and entrepreneurs' WLB by influencing cognitive and emotional load (Scholze & Hecker, 2024).

In this study's context, job demands encompass temporal fragmentation, cognitive overload, emotional strain, and technological dependency, while job resources include autonomy, AI-driven efficiency, and digital skill enhancement. However, as Figure 1 illustrates, these constructs interact dynamically within a recursive socio-technical system where AI simultaneously reduces and generates strain. This hybridisation challenges original JD-R assumptions and highlights how such shifting demands and resources shape entrepreneurs' WLB in technologically mediated environments.

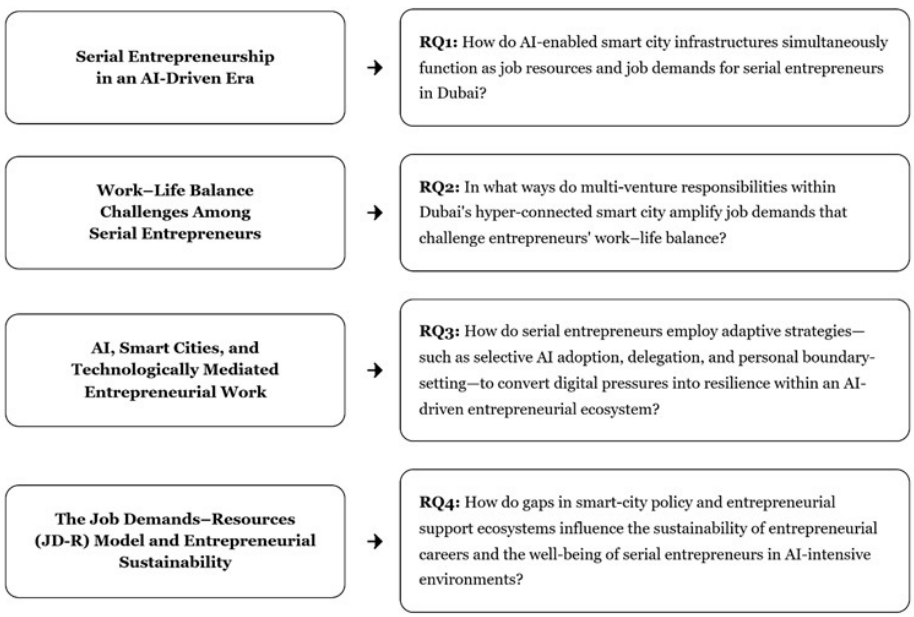


Figure 1: Linking Literature Review Themes to Research Questions.

Furthermore, the JD-R lens exposes gaps in ecosystem-level resources such as policy supports, mentorship networks, and wellness infrastructures that buffer entrepreneurial strain (Cetindamar et al., 2020; Perng et al., 2018). In Dubai, rapid digitalisation has outpaced the evolution of human-centred supports, creating asymmetries between technological sophistication and psychosocial sustainability. This imbalance repositions resilience not as an individual trait but as an emergent, ecosystem-dependent capability.

Theoretical Gaps and Integrative Framework

Across these intersecting literatures, a conceptual gap persists: how do AI-intensive smart-city ecosystems reshape the psychosocial architecture of entrepreneurial work? Scholarship on serial entrepreneurship emphasises learning and opportunity recognition, while digital work studies foreground automation and efficiency. Yet few frameworks integrate the emotional, temporal, and cognitive dimensions of entrepreneurial experience within AI-mediated infrastructures. Likewise, although the JD–R model advances understanding of occupational strain, it has yet to account for the hybrid resource demand dynamics that shape entrepreneurs' WLB in digital ecosystems.

An integrative framework that unifies these gaps across serial entrepreneurship, WLB, AI-enabled smart cities, and the JD–R model is provided in Figure 1. It theorises entrepreneurial life as situated within recursive socio-technical loops: AI-driven infrastructures amplify work demands even as they provide new resources, compelling entrepreneurs to engage in ongoing cycles of adaptation, boundary-setting, and resilience. The figure thus anchors the study's central argument: that sustaining entrepreneurial well-being in smart cities like Dubai depends on rebalancing technological ambition with human sustainability. By foregrounding these interdependencies, this research extends entrepreneurial theory toward a socio-technical paradigm that redefines the meaning of WLB and resilience in AI-enabled urban smart cities.

Methodology

Due to limited existing studies examining how smart city infrastructure affects the WLB of serial entrepreneurs in Dubai, a qualitative research methodology was chosen as the optimal framework. This exploratory investigation seeks to build foundational knowledge about a largely unexplored area where serial entrepreneurship intersects with WLB considerations. The comprehensive and adaptable nature of qualitative research makes it particularly well-suited for investigating how new technological environments transform both business practices and personal wellness among entrepreneurs—nuanced perspectives that rigid quantitative methods might fail to capture (Strauss & Corbin, 1997). Additionally, qualitative approaches facilitate the development of evidence-based insights and theoretical frameworks addressing themes of inclusion, innovation, and equity (Weick, 1989).

Sample and Data Collection

The study employed both snowball and purposive sampling methods to recruit participants, concentrating on settings where the research phenomena could be most clearly observed specifically, serial entrepreneurs operating in Dubai while managing business activities within the city's ongoing digital transformation (Larsson & van Wagtendonk, 2025). The recruitment process adhered to strict ethical guidelines that received approval from the University Ethics Board, guaranteeing that participant selection and involvement met established academic standards. The sample focused on serial entrepreneurs who had at least five years of business experience within Dubai, with intentional inclusion of participants from diverse national backgrounds.

Data collection, coding, and analysis were done simultaneously, enabling themes and theoretical frameworks to develop organically from the data (Gioia et al., 2013). Instead of starting with predetermined variables, the methodology was adapted in response to participant stories, maintaining strong connections to actual experiences (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). This cyclical process enhanced theoretical classifications and encompassed all pertinent variations, guaranteeing conceptual strength and validity (Strauss & Corbin, 1997).

A total of 20 entrepreneurs took part in the study, with recruitment conducted mainly through snowball sampling an approach especially appropriate for the Dubai setting. The participants came from various industries, encompassing technology, e-commerce, hospitality, education, and design sectors (*refer to Table 1*)**.** Semi-structured interviews were carried out in English, ranging from 50 to 100 minutes in duration. Participants were guaranteed confidentiality and anonymity, with informed consent secured prior to their involvement. The interview framework was developed based on a comprehensive literature analysis of serial entrepreneurship and WLB theories (Oliver, 2013; Pineda & Corburn, 2020). Audio recordings were made for all interviews with one exception where extensive written notes were maintained instead and all were later transcribed for analytical purposes.

The data collection approach maintained a cyclical nature, influenced by the ongoing interaction between developing findings and theoretical consideration (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). This reciprocal connection between empirical data and theoretical frameworks corresponds with inductive, theory-construction research principles and facilitates the creation of comprehensive, evidence-based results (Weick, 1989).

Coding and Template Generation

Template analysis was selected as the main approach for thematic structuring due to its flexibility in qualitative research contexts (Morse, 2015). A preliminary coding framework was constructed using established literature and initial interview data, providing a foundation for the coding process. Throughout the data collection phase, this framework underwent modifications to

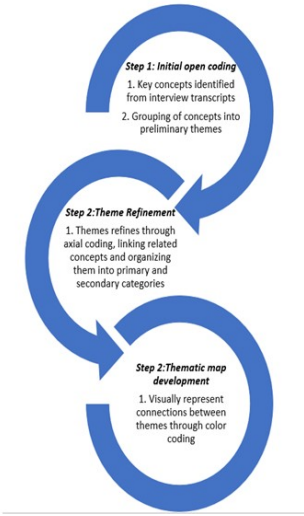


Figure 2: Thematic Analysis Framework.

incorporate more nuanced insights and emerging patterns discovered within the data. Broad-level codes were initially informed by the interview structure, while participant responses were utilised to refine, confirm, or adjust these thematic categories.

To maintain methodological rigour, all transcripts underwent systematic coding using approaches suggested by King (2004), incorporating quality assurance measures and researcher self-reflection. A comprehensive coding guide was developed, featuring thematic categories, their definitions, and representative quotations. The preliminary coding structure was examined and enhanced through expert consultations with specialists in urban innovation and WLB fields. These collaborative reviews enhanced the dependability of the coding scheme and confirmed the interpretive validity of the identified themes (Gioia et al., 2013).

Table 1: Profiles of 20 Serial Entrepreneurs.

PaNo.	Gender	Nati	Ind	Age	EduQ	IntD
1	Male	Emirati	Real Estate & Retail	52	MBA	75 min
2	Female	Emirati	Fashion & Tech Startups	41	MSc Innovation	82 min
3	Male	Emirati	Logistics & Hospitality	47	BBA	68 min

PaNo.	Gender	Nati	Ind	Age	EduQ	IntD
4	Female	American	E-commerce & Health Tech	38	MBA	85 min
5	Male	Indian	Fintech & Education	45	Chartered Accountant,	72 min
6	Male	Chinese	Manufacturing & AI	50	PhD Engineering	66 min
7	Male	German	Green Energy & Consulting	56	MBA	74 min
8	Female	Spanish	Tourism & Food Chains	43	MSc Tourism Management	79 min
9	Male	Pakistani	Construction & Trading	48	BSc Civil Engineering	87 min
10	Male	British	Venture Capital & Tech	39	MBA	69 min
11	Male	Iranian	Import-Export & Retail	54	BA Economics	83 min
12	Male	South Korean	Gaming & AI Solutions	36	BSc Computer Science	70 min
13	Male	Jordanian	IT Services & Consulting	44	MBA	76 min
14	Female	Italian	Fashion & Design Startups	37	MA Fashion Design	88 min
15	Male	Nigerian	Agri tech & Logistics	42	MSc Agribusiness	71 min
16	Male	French	Food Processing & Retail	53	MBA	67 min
17	Male	Brazilian	Sports Tech & Fitness	40	BBA	84 min
18	Male	Emirati	Smart Cities & AI	46	MSc Smart Technologies	90 min
19	Male	Russian	Mining & Renewable Energy	58	PhD Geology	73 min
20	Male	Egyptian	Transport & Tech Hubs	49	MBA	65 min

Participant No.: P.No.; Nationality: Nati; Industry: Ind; Educational Qualification: EduQ;

Interview Duration: IntD

The results of this analytical process are displayed in Table 2, which outlines the thematic structure that emerged from the data analysis. It demonstrates how *initial codes* based directly on participants' language were grouped into *intermediate thematic categories* and then consolidated into *four primary overarching themes*: *(1) the double-edged role of AI and smart city infrastructure, (2) WLB challenges in multi-venture contexts*, *(3)* adaptive strategies and entrepreneurial resilience, *and (4) the human dimension of smart city entrepreneurship.*

This layered framework illustrates the analytical progression from initial data to abstract conceptual understanding, guaranteeing transparency, trustworthiness, and a clear connection between empirical findings and theoretical analysis. Furthermore, Figure 2 displays the thematic analytical model, visually illustrating the connections among initial codes, intermediate themes, and the four central themes. Combined, Table 2 and Figure 1 offer comprehensive textual and graphical documentation of the coding methodology, improving transparency and research reproducibility.

Through direct exploration of entrepreneurs' actual experiences, the research approach produced comprehensive empirical data while also expanding the theoretical use of the JD-R model within a technology-intensive, high-pressure smart city environment. This coherence between methodological design and research objectives strengthens the validity, applicability, and real-world significance of the results.

Table 2: Key Themes, Second-order Themes, Codes, and Quotes from the Serial Entrepreneurs

Key Theme	**Second-order Theme**	**First-order Codes**	**Quotes from Serial Entrepreneurs**
The Double-Edged Role of AI and Smart City Infrastructure	Enhanced efficiency and automation	• AI saves time • Automation reduces staff needs	AI takes care of routine reports — what used to take me hours now takes minutes.
	24/7 connectivity pressures	• Always on call • Work never ends	Even at family dinners, I'm still answering messages — the work follows me everywhere
	Data-driven opportunity recognition	• Spot gaps faster • Quick pivots with data	The dashboard alerts me when sales dip, so I can change strategy immediately.

Key Theme	Second-order Theme	First-order Codes	Quotes from Serial Entrepreneurs
	Technological dependency and overload	• System crash halts work • Overwhelmed by updates	When the server went down, my whole business froze for hours.
WLB Challenges in Multi-Venture Contexts	Temporal fragmentation	• No real downtime • Vacations still work	On holiday I'm still checking in on three venturesdaily.
	Family and relationship strains	• Kids say I'm absent • Missed family events	I skipped my daughter's school play because of investor calls.
	Emotional exhaustion	• Completely drained • Failures hit hard	Running back-to-back ventures leaves me mentally empty.
	Blurred personal–professional boundaries	• Home feels like office • Present but distracted	My living room is now my office; there's no separation.
Adaptive Strategies and Entrepreneurial Resilience	Selective adoption of AI tools	• Use only value-adding AI • Filter out noisy tools	Most apps are distractions — I've learned to ignore them
	Delegation and outsourcing	• Outsource admin tasks • Depend on strong teams	I outsource bookkeeping so I can focus on growth
	Continuous skill upgrading	• Take AI courses • Stay updated or fade	If I don't learn fast, my ventures won't survive here

Key Theme	Second-order Theme	First-order Codes	Quotes from Serial Entrepreneurs
	Personal boundary-setting	• Phone-free evenings • Family-only weekends	Weekends are reserved for family, no exceptions.
The Human Dimension of Smart City Entrepreneurship	Neglect of well-being in policy design	• No mental health support • Policy ignores burnout	There's funding for startups, but nothing for entrepreneur stress.
	Need for supportive ecosystems	• More mentorship needed • Wellness in hubs	What we really need is guidance from experienced founders
	Entrepreneurial identity and meaning making	• I am my ventures • Passion with costs	Entrepreneurship isn't just my job — it's who I am.
	Sustainability of entrepreneurial careers	• Can't last without balance • Pace is survival	If I don't slow down, I'll burn out completely.

Findings

Serial entrepreneurs are more than business founders they are storytellers of survival, opportunity, and compromise in Dubai's smart city environment. Building on the qualitative methodology outlined earlier, where semi-structured interviews with 20 experienced serial entrepreneurs were coded through template analysis, this section now turns to the lived realities that emerged from their narratives. The analysis moves from first-order codes rooted in participants' words to broader thematic patterns, offering a window into how technological infrastructures and entrepreneurial practices intersect with personal well-being and WLB. What follows are the voices of serial entrepreneurs themselves, illustrating how Dubai's hyper-connected ecosystem both enables professional growth and simultaneously strains personal boundaries.

RQ1: How do AI-enabled smart city infrastructures simultaneously function as job resources and job demands for serial entrepreneurs in Dubai?

The Double-edged Role of AI and Smart City Infrastructure

The findings reveal that serial entrepreneurs in Dubai view AI and smart city infrastructures as both enablers and stressors in their professional lives. On one hand, AI is recognised as a powerful resource that enhances efficiency and frees up valuable time. As one entrepreneur (**13**) explained,

AI takes care of routine reports what used to take me hours now takes minutes.

This illustrates how automation reduces operational burdens and allows entrepreneurs to devote more energy to strategic decision-making and growth-oriented activities. However, the same digital affordances also impose new demands. The expectation of constant connectivity blurs the line between work and personal life. Another participant (**12**) captured this tension succinctly:

Even at family dinners, I'm still answering messages the work follows me everywhere.

The hyper-connected ecosystem of Dubai's smart city environment intensifies the 'always on' culture, leaving little room for detachment or recovery. In addition, reliance on AI-driven infrastructures creates vulnerabilities. Another entrepreneur (**3**) reflected,

When the server went down, my whole business froze for hours.

Serial entrepreneurs in Dubai view AI and smart city infrastructure as both beneficial and challenging. While AI enhances efficiency by automating tasks, freeing up time for strategic decisions, it also creates new pressures, such as constant connectivity that blurs work-life boundaries. Entrepreneurs report being always on call, even during personal moments. Furthermore, reliance on AI-driven systems introduces vulnerability, as technological failures can disrupt business operations. These complexities are illustrated in Table 3, which highlights themes of efficiency, connectivity pressures, and technological dependency, underscoring the dual nature of AI in shaping entrepreneurs' work-life dynamics.

RQ2: In what ways do multi-venture responsibilities within Dubai's hyper-connected smart city amplify job demands that challenge entrepreneurs' WLB?

WLB Challenges in Multi-venture Contexts

Serial entrepreneurs emphasised that managing multiple ventures in Dubai's high-paced environment creates acute challenges for their WLB. Many described fragmented schedules, where professional obligations consistently intrude on personal life. As one participant **(2)** explained,

Table 3: The Double-Edged Role of AI and Smart City Infrasturcture

Key Themes	Second-order themes	First-order Codes	Number*
The Double-Edged Role of AI and Smart City Infrasturcture	Enhanced efficiency and automation	AI saves time Automation reduces staff needs	15
	24 / 7 connectivity pressures	Always on call Work never ends	11
	Data-driven opportunity recognition	Spot gaps faster Quick pivots with data	7
	Technological dependency and overload	System crash halts work Overwhelmed by updates	4

**Number of interviewees who mentioned this theme*

On holiday I'm still checking in on three ventures daily.

Such accounts demonstrate how temporal fragmentation erodes opportunities for rest and recovery. Family relationships were also reported as being under significant strain. Entrepreneurs acknowledged how repeated commitments to their ventures reduced their availability for personal and social obligations. Another participant **(7)** candidly admitted,

I skipped my daughter's school play because of investor calls.

A comment that underscores how entrepreneurial demands frequently displace family priorities. These tensions highlight the hidden costs of serial entrepreneurship in hyper-connected urban environments. Emotional exhaustion further compounds these difficulties. The relentless cycle of starting, managing, and exiting ventures was described as draining and at times overwhelming. Another entrepreneur (**3**) reflected,

Running back-to-back ventures leaves me mentally empty.

Serial entrepreneurs in Dubai face significant challenges in maintaining WLB due to the constant demands of managing multiple ventures. While the excitement of recognising new opportunities drives them, the psychological toll of continuous effort leads to emotional exhaustion and strained personal relationships. Fragmented schedules and blurred boundaries between work and personal life contribute to these difficulties, with entrepreneurs often missing family events or feeling mentally drained. Table 4 highlights themes such as temporal fragmentation and emotional exhaustion, showing how these entrepreneurs struggle to sustain balance due to the overlapping

pressures of professional and personal commitments.

Table 4: WLB Challenges in Multi-Ventures Context

Key Themes	Second-order themes	First-order Codes	Number*
WLB Challenges in Multi-Ventures Context	Temporal fragmentation	No real downtime Vacations still work	13
	Family and relationship strains	Kids say I'm absent Missed family events	10
	Emotional exhaustion	Completely drained Failures hit hard	6
	Blurred personal–professional boundaries	Home feels like office Present but distracted	5

**Number of interviewees who mentioned this theme*

RQ3: How do serial entrepreneurs employ adaptive strategies such as selective AI adoption, delegation, and personal boundary-setting to convert digital pressures into resilience within an AI-driven entrepreneurial ecosystem?

Adaptive Strategies and Entrepreneurial Resilience

Despite the strains imposed by AI-driven smart city environments, serial entrepreneurs in Dubai demonstrate significant adaptability and resilience. Many reported being selective in their adoption of digital tools, recognising that not all technologies add value. As one participant (**10**) noted,

> *Most apps are distractions I've learned to ignore them.*

This pragmatic approach reflects a conscious effort to filter digital overload and focus only on technologies that enhance efficiency. Delegation and outsourcing were also highlighted as critical strategies. Several entrepreneurs explained how they deliberately shed administrative burdens to preserve their energy for higher-level decisions. Another participant (**8)** commented,

> *I outsource bookkeeping so I can focus on growth.*

This reflects how entrepreneurial resilience is tied to the ability to leverage external support and build reliable teams that enable founders to avoid burnout. Continuous skill upgrading was another common theme. Serial entrepreneurs recognised that to remain competitive in an AI-driven economy, they must invest in lifelong learning. As another participant (**5**) put it,

If I don't learn fast, my ventures won't survive here.

Serial entrepreneurs in Dubai cultivate resilience through strategies like selective technology adoption, delegation, and continuous skill upgrading. They use only value-adding digital tools, filter out distractions, and rely on external support for administrative tasks, which also helps protect their WLB. This enables them to focus on strategic growth. Additionally, they pursue lifelong learning to remain competitive in an AI-driven market. Table 5 highlights these adaptive strategies, showing that resilience is developed intentionally through filtering technology, delegating tasks, and investing in personal development to navigate a rapidly changing business landscape.

Table 5: Adaptive Strategies and Entrepreneurial Resilience

Key Themes	**Second-order themes**	**First-order Codes**	**Number***
Adaptive Strategies and Entrepreneurial Resilience	Selective adoption of AI tools	Use only value-adding AI Filter out noisy tools	16
	Delegation and outsourcing	Outsource admin tasks Depend on strong teams	12
	Continuous skill upgrading	Take AI courses Stay updated or fade	3
	Personal boundary-setting	Phone-free evenings Family-only weekends	1

**Number of interviewees who mentioned this theme*

RQ4: How do gaps in smart-city policy and entrepreneurial support ecosystems influence the sustainability of entrepreneurial careers and the well-being of serial entrepreneurs in AI-intensive environments?

The Human Dimension of Smart City Entrepreneurship

The findings reveal that entrepreneurs perceive a significant gap between Dubai's innovation-driven smart city policies and the human dimensions of entrepreneurship. While technology and infrastructure are prioritised, well-being often remains overlooked. One participant (**17**) observed,

There's funding for startups, but nothing for entrepreneur stress.

This lack of attention to mental health highlights the limitations of a policy framework focused

solely on economic growth. Entrepreneurs also emphasised the importance of supportive ecosystems that go beyond financial capital. Many desired networks and mentorship programs that could provide guidance and emotional support. As another (**1**) explained,

What we really need is guidance from experienced founders.

This underscores how ecosystems must cultivate not only financial but also social resources if they are to truly sustain entrepreneurial careers. At a personal level, many entrepreneurs tied their identity closely to their ventures, often at a high personal cost. Another participant (**9**) remarked,

Entrepreneurship isn't just my job it's who I am.

Entrepreneurial identity in Dubai's smart city ecosystem is both a source of passion and a potential cause of burnout. Entrepreneurs often tie their sense of self closely to their ventures, leading to over-identification, emotional exhaustion, and strained WLB. As seen in **Table 3.4**, the lack of attention to mental health and the need for supportive ecosystems are key challenges. Entrepreneurs desire not only financial resources but also mentorship, emotional support, and wellness programs. Policies should therefore advance technology while promoting human sustainability to ensure innovation without compromising entrepreneurs' well-being.

Taken together, these insights are illuminated by a broader theoretical model grounded in the JD-R framework, visually represented in Figure 3. This model explains how serial entrepreneurs navigate the intertwined job demands and resources within Dubai's AI-enabled smart city environment. AI tools and digital infrastructures operate as critical resources that enhance efficiency, expand market reach, and strengthen strategic decision-making, yet these same hyper-connected systems intensify job demands through constant digital engagement, temporal fragmentation, and emotional strain pressures that also disrupt entrepreneurs' WLB. This creates a paradox in which AI-driven affordances simultaneously enable growth and generate significant psychosocial burdens. In response, serial entrepreneurs adopt adaptive strategies such as selective technology use, delegating non-core tasks, and continuous learning, cultivating resilience through intentional practice rather than innate capacity. However, these individual efforts cannot fully compensate for systemic shortcomings, including limited psychosocial support and insufficient policy focus on entrepreneurial well-being. Strong identification with their ventures further fuels innovation but heightens risks of over-identification and burnout. Overall, the findings portray entrepreneurs walking a fine line between opportunity and overload, reinforcing that sustaining entrepreneurship in AI-enabled smart cities requires not only technological advancement but also an ecosystem that supports human well-being and healthier work-life boundaries.

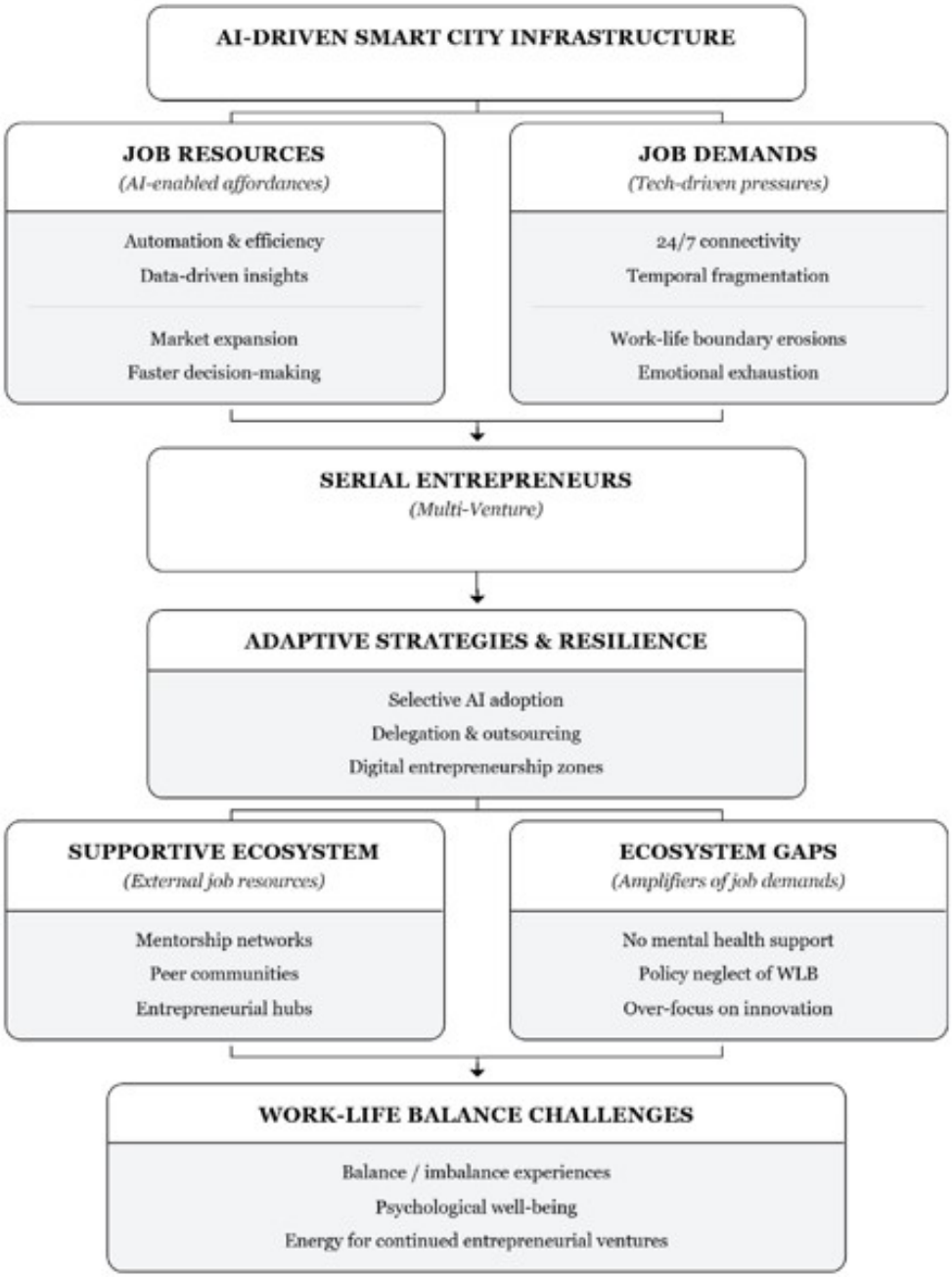


Figure 3: Linking Literature Review Themes to Research Questions.

Table 6: The Human Dimension of Smart City Entrepreneurship

Key Themes	Second-order themes	First-order Codes	Number*
The Human Dimension of Smart City Entrepreneurship	Neglect of well-being in policy design	No mental health support Policy ignores burnout	12
	Need for supportive ecosystems	More mentorship needed Wellness in hubs	8
	Entrepreneurial identity and meaning making	I am my ventures Passion with costs	5
	Sustainability of entrepreneurial careers	Can't last without balance Pace is survival	3

**Number of interviewees who mentioned this theme*

Discussion of Results

Serial entrepreneurship in AI-intensive smart cities is not simply evolving it is being structurally transformed by the socio-technical architectures that shape how ventures are created, managed, and sustained. The findings show that serial entrepreneurship in Dubai's AI-driven smart-city ecosystem is shaped by intensifying demands and shifting resources that fundamentally reconfigure entrepreneurial labour, including challenges to WLB. While prior studies emphasise the pressures of managing multiple ventures (Spivack et al., 2014; Westhead et al., 2005), the present study demonstrates that these pressures are recalibrated through algorithmic infrastructures and digital governance systems that introduce new temporal, cognitive, and affective contingencies into everyday entrepreneurial practice.

Applying a JD–R lens reveals that AI functions simultaneously as a job demand and a job resource. Participants described a pervasive condition of *algorithmic tethering*, in which AI-enabled platforms, government portals, and venture-specific tools accelerate expectations for precision, immediacy, and continuous availability. While earlier scholarship acknowledges technology-enabled flexibility, the findings show that such flexibility coexists with heightened temporal density and affective strain. This extends research on digital work intensification (Obschonka & Audretsch, 2020; Caputo et al., 2021) by demonstrating that smart-city systems institutionalise intensification at the ecosystem level, embedding it directly into the digital and regulatory infrastructures that govern entrepreneurial action.

Yet AI also introduces new resources automation, analytics, and digital coordination that

entrepreneurs mobilise to navigate escalating pressures. This duality creates a *demand resource spiral* in which the very resources intended to ease work (e.g., automation or digital visibility) generate secondary demands such as increased monitoring, tighter response cycles, and heightened cognitive vigilance. JD-R theory typically positions resources as buffers against job demands, but the findings reveal a structural instability wherein AI-driven resources can themselves become demand multipliers. This dynamic highlights a fragile equilibrium in which entrepreneurs must continuously recalibrate their engagement with AI to sustain well-being and performance.

The study further reconceptualises entrepreneurial resilience as an emergent socio-technical practice rather than a stable psychological trait. Entrepreneurs developed adaptive behaviours including selective automation, micro-boundaries, task delegation, and strategic disconnection to preserve cognitive bandwidth and emotional equilibrium. These practices illustrate how resilience operates as an ongoing resource-conservation strategy in response to accelerating algorithmic demands. However, they also reveal a deeper structural vulnerability: while AI capabilities advance rapidly within Dubai's smart-city infrastructure, human-centred supports in the entrepreneurial ecosystem have not kept pace (Cetindamar et al., 2020; Pineda & Corburn, 2020). As a result, responsibility for coping with AI-amplified work intensification shifts disproportionately onto individual entrepreneurs, creating ecosystem-level boundary conditions for JD–R dynamics that have not previously been theorised.

The complexity of this dynamic becomes evident when considering the recursive way AI functions simultaneously as a job demand and a job resource an interaction illustrated in Figure 3. Entrepreneurs become embedded in a cyclical demand resource process in which AI-accelerated pressures necessitate more sophisticated coping mechanisms, which in turn require increased digital proficiency and adaptive capability. This recursive pattern reflects a form of ecosystem-level strain that traditional entrepreneurship and JD-R literature have yet to fully recognise. Collectively, the findings suggest that entrepreneurial life in AI-intensive smart cities constitutes a distinct socio-technical condition shaped by digital infrastructures, psychological strain, multi-venture complexity, WLB tensions, and uneven ecosystem supports.

Taken together, these results position AI-enabled smart cities as a new frontier for theorising entrepreneurial action, well-being, and sustainability. Serial entrepreneurs in Dubai navigate environments where algorithmic infrastructures rather than organisational structures govern the tempo, visibility, and complexity of their work. The resulting demand–resource spirals reshape the distribution of strain, blur the boundaries between autonomy and overload, and shift resilience from a dispositional attribute to a dynamic, socio-technical adaptive practice. This study, therefore, advances entrepreneurship scholarship by revealing how digital infrastructures, WLB tensions, psychological strain, and uneven ecosystem supports interact to produce novel patterns of entrepreneurial vulnerability and endurance. These insights invite a fundamental

rethinking of how entrepreneurial work and well-being are conceptualised in technologically advanced urban environments and lay the groundwork for future inquiry into entrepreneurial sustainability in AI-saturated ecosystems.

Theoretical Implications

This study advances theory in several important ways. First, it extends research on serial entrepreneurship by showing that multi-venture engagement in AI-driven smart-city environments is not merely an intensified version of traditional entrepreneurial strain, but a fundamentally different mode of work shaped by socio-technical acceleration and blurred work-life boundaries. Entrepreneurs in such cities operate within real-time data flows, automated public services, and infrastructural AI systems that structure tempo, attention, and emotional rhythms. This expands prior understandings of habitual entrepreneurship (Spivack et al., 2014; Westhead et al., 2005) by identifying algorithmic forces not just personal or market factors as key determinants of entrepreneurial experience and well-being. Second, the findings refine and extend the JD-R Model (Demerouti & Bakker, 2023). As shown in Figure 3, AI-enabled tools act as resource demand hybrids: they enhance efficiency, decision quality, and clarity while simultaneously intensifying expectations for speed, constant availability, and cognitive vigilance. This duality challenges the JD-R assumption that resources inherently buffer demands, demonstrating instead that in AI-mediated entrepreneurial work, resources can rapidly 'flip' into demands, particularly when they heighten temporal pressures or constrain WLB. This represents a meaningful theoretical advancement, requiring the JD-R model to incorporate dynamic, context-dependent resource demand interconversion.

Third, the study significantly contributes to theories of entrepreneurial resilience by positioning it as a processual, socio-technically embedded practice rather than a stable dispositional trait. Entrepreneurs engaged in ongoing cycles of technological adaptation, digital boundary-setting, and emotional regulation practices shaped both by personal capabilities and by the design of smart-city infrastructures and support systems. This reconceptualisation locates resilience within an ecological framework, highlighting the interdependence of psychological processes, urban governance, and digital architectures. Finally, the study advances smart-city scholarship by revealing that entrepreneurs experience smart-city infrastructures not only as enablers of efficiency but also as algorithmic actors that influence autonomy, identity, WLB, and overall well-being. This broadens existing smart-city research (Shaw & Sørensen, 2019; Yun et al., 2019), which has largely emphasised technological or environmental outcomes, by foregrounding the lived experiences of entrepreneurial actors embedded within these evolving AI-enabled ecosystems.

Practical Implications

The findings offer important practical implications for policymakers, entrepreneurial-support organisations, and entrepreneurs operating in AI-intensive smart-city environments. At the policy

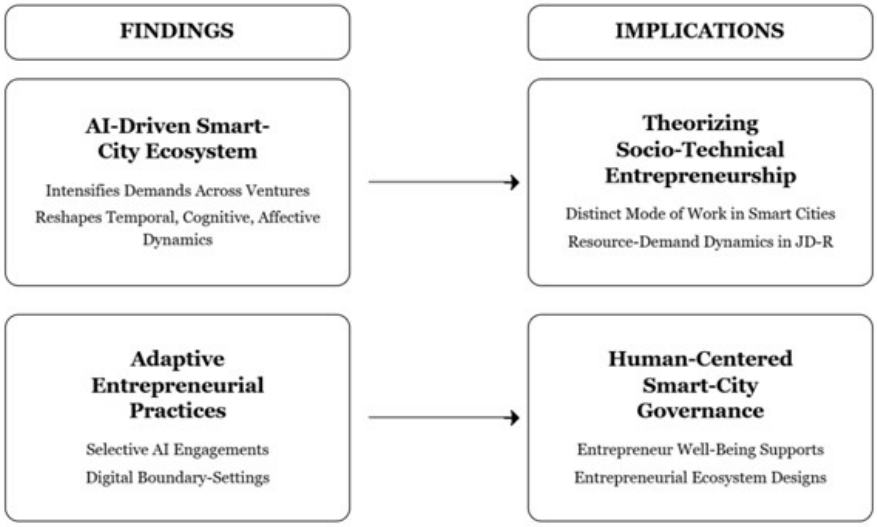


Figure 4: Summary of Key Findings and Implications.

level, the results underscore the urgent need for human-centred smart-city governance in which rapid technological expansion is matched with psychosocial, relational, and well-being-oriented support mechanisms. While Dubai's digital ecosystem provides world-class infrastructure, it lacks sufficient structures to buffer the psychological strain, emotional turbulence, and WLB pressures experienced by entrepreneurs. Policymakers can address these gaps by integrating mental health services, structured mentoring systems, digital-boundary guidelines, and periodic entrepreneur well-being audits into national innovation agendas and city-level strategies. Such initiatives would shift smart-city policy from a technology-first orientation to one that prioritises human sustainability alongside digital progress. Entrepreneurial-support institutions such as incubators, accelerators, coworking hubs, and innovation districts must also adopt more holistic approaches to ecosystem design. The study demonstrates that entrepreneurs require far more than technical support; they also benefit from resilience-building programs, guidance on selective AI adoption, training in digital hygiene, and peer-support networks that alleviate the burden of constant digital engagement.

For practising entrepreneurs, the findings highlight the importance of intentional and strategic engagement with AI systems. The most effective entrepreneurs in the study did not embrace every available technological option but instead curated their digital environments, using high-value automation, delegating routine tasks, and establishing micro-boundaries to prevent constant algorithmic pull. They also created predictable routines for partial or temporary disconnection,

which proved essential for sustaining cognitive capacity, emotional stability, and a healthier WLB in AI-saturated contexts. Collectively, the results suggest that sustaining entrepreneurship in AI-enabled smart cities requires a recalibration of ambitions one that balances technological innovation with human well-being. Without broader ecosystem-level interventions, the burden of managing algorithmic intensification will remain disproportionately on individual entrepreneurs, ultimately constraining long-term entrepreneurial resilience and innovation capacity.

CONCLUSION

This study explored how serial entrepreneurs in Dubai navigate the dual forces of opportunity and strain generated by AI and smart city infrastructures while striving to maintain WLB. Drawing on qualitative insights from 20 entrepreneurs, the findings revealed that AI-enabled tools and digital infrastructures operate as both essential resources and significant stressors. While these technologies enhance efficiency, data-driven decision-making, and opportunity recognition, they also intensify pressures related to constant connectivity, technological dependency, and blurred personal–professional boundaries (Obschonka & Audretsch, 2020; Scholze & Hecker, 2024). By applying and extending the JD-R Model, the study showed that AI functions as a resource–demand hybrid, reshaping entrepreneurial labour through mechanisms that simultaneously empower and exhaust. Figure 3 illustrates how AI-driven infrastructures elevate productivity and innovation potential while amplifying cognitive, emotional, and temporal pressures.

The study contributes to the expanding literature on entrepreneurial sustainability within AI-intensive urban ecosystems (Li et al., 2023) by demonstrating that sustainable entrepreneurship in smart cities requires more than technological advancement. It demands balanced ecosystems that align digital innovation with human well-being, psychological resilience, and healthier work-life integration. The findings, therefore, call for a paradigm shift in how policymakers, entrepreneurial hubs, and digital ecosystem designers conceptualise innovation. Success should be evaluated not only by speed, automation, and efficiency but also by the psychological and relational sustainability of the entrepreneurs driving progress, ensuring that AI-enabled smart cities remain both innovative and human-centred.

Limitations and Future Research

Despite its theoretical and empirical contributions, this study has several limitations that open promising avenues for future research. First, the use of a purposive sample of 20 Dubai-based serial entrepreneurs limits the generalizability of the findings. Comparative research across diverse cultural, institutional, and technological environments is needed to determine whether the paradoxes identified here are globally consistent or shaped uniquely by Dubai's smart-city context. Second, the study relied on self-reported, retrospective interviews, which may introduce recall bias. Future studies could adopt mixed-method or longitudinal designs integrating qualitative

interviews with digital-tracking techniques such as monitoring AI usage patterns, communication logs, or well-being indicators to generate more dynamic and objective insights into how AI shapes work and life boundaries over time.

Third, although this study extends the JD-R model to entrepreneurial contexts, further refinement is required to capture the temporal fluidity of resource demand interconversion in AI-intensive environments. Future research could investigate how specific AI tools such as predictive analytics, algorithmic management systems, or generative design technologies influence the evolving equilibrium between entrepreneurial demands and resources. Comparative studies between serial and novice entrepreneurs may also reveal distinct resilience mechanisms or coping trajectories in AI-driven settings. Building on the policy and ecosystem-level insights illustrated in Figure 4, future research should empirically test interventions such as digital wellness programs, boundary-setting initiatives, and structured mentorship platforms to evaluate their effectiveness in reducing entrepreneurial strain. Ultimately, this study advances the JD-R framework within AI-enabled smart cities by demonstrating how technology simultaneously empowers and pressures entrepreneurial life, calling for an integrated vision of innovation that strengthens both efficiency and well-being.

References

Ahmed, A. E., Ucbasaran, D., Cacciotti, G., & Williams, T. A. (2022). Integrating psychological resilience, stress, and coping in entrepreneurship: A critical review and research agenda. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 46(3), 497–538. https://doi.org/10.1177/10422587211046542

Audretsch, D. B., & Kariv, D. (2025). Emotional resources and knowledge management: A gender perspective on human-centric innovation amidst crises. *Journal of Knowledge Management*. https://doi.org/10.1108/jkm-02-2024-0235

Bakker, A. B., Demerouti, E., & Sanz-Vergel, A. (2023). Job Demands–Resources theory: Ten years later. *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior*, 10, 25–53. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-orgpsych-120920-053933

Caputo, A., Pizzi, S., Pellegrini, M. M., & Dabić, M. (2021). Digitalization and business models: Where are we going? A science map of the field. *Journal of Business Research*, 123,489–501. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2020.09.053

Cetindamar, D., Lammers, T., & Sick, N. (2020). *Understanding the relationship between smart cities and entrepreneurial ecosystems: The case of Sydney.* In N. Biloria (Ed.), Data-driven multivalence in the built environment. *S.M.A.R.T. Environments* (pp. 275–292). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-12180-8_15

Corbo, L., Mahassel, S., & Ferraris, A. (2020). Translational mechanisms in business model design: Introducing the continuous validation framework. *Management Decision*, 58 (9), 2011–2026. https:

//doi.org/10.1108/MD-10-2019-1488

Demerouti, E., & Bakker, A. B. (2023). Job Demands–Resources theory in times of crises: New propositions. *Organizational Psychology Review*, 13(3), 243–263. https://doi.org/10.1177/20413866221135022

Eggers, J. P., & Song, L. (2015). Dealing with failure: Serial entrepreneurs and the costs of changing industries between ventures. *Academy of Management Journal*, 58(6), 1785–1803. https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2014.0050

Gioia, D. A., Corley, K. G., & Hamilton, A. L. (2013). Seeking qualitative rigor in inductive research: Notes on the Gioia methodology. *Organizational Research Methods*, 16(1), 15–31. https://doi.org/10.1177/1094428112452151

Giuggioli, G., & Pellegrini, M. M. (2022). Artificial intelligence as an enabler for entrepreneurs: A systematic literature review and an agenda for future research. *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behaviour & Research*, 29(4), 816–837. https://doi.org/10.1108/ijebr-05-2021-0426

Greenhaus, J. H., & Allen, T. D. (2011). *Work–family balance.* In Handbook of occupational health psychology (pp. 165–184). American Psychological Association. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1chs29w.14

Guerrero, M., & Peña-Legazkue, I. (2019). Renascence after post-mortem: The choice of accelerated repeat entrepreneurship. *Small Business Economics*, 52(1), 47–65. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11187-018-0015-7

Heath, R. (2024, January 12). *Assistive technology is AI's next billion-person market*. Axios. https://www.axios.com/2024/01/12/ai-assistivetechnologyaccessibility

King, Z. (2004). Career self-management: Its nature, causes and consequences. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 65(1), 112–133. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0001-8791(03)00052-6

Lafontaine, F., & Shaw, K. L. (2016). Serial entrepreneurship: Learning by doing? *Journal of Labor Economics*, 34(S2), S217–S254. https://doi.org/10.1086/683820

Larsson, E., & van Wagtendonk, S. E. (2025). *The impact of ADHD traits on the pre-launch planning phase of the entrepreneurial process* (Master's thesis, Lund University). LUP LU Publication Archive. https://lup.lub.lu.se/luur/download?func=downloadFile&recordOId=9204601&fileOId=9204602

Obschonka, M., & Audretsch, D. B. (2020). Artificial intelligence and big data in entrepreneurship: A new era has begun. *Small Business Economics*, 55(3), 529–539. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11187-019-00202-4

Oliver, M. (2013). The social model of disability: Thirty years on. *Disability & Society*, 28(7), 1024–1026. https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2013.818773

Parker, S. C. (2014). Who becomes serial and portfolio entrepreneurs? *Small Business Economics*, 43, 887–898. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11187-014-9576-2

Perng, S.-Y., Kitchin, R., & Mac Donncha, D. (2018). Hackathons, entrepreneurial life and the making of smart cities. *Geoforum*, 97,189–197. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2018.08.024

Pineda, V. S., & Corburn, J. (2020). Disability, urban health equity, and the coronavirus pandemic: Promoting cities for all. *Journal of Urban Health*, 97(3), 336–351. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11524-020-00437-7

Rubin, H. J., & Rubin, I. S. (2012). *Qualitative interviewing: The art of hearing data* (3rd ed.). Sage Publications.

Scholze, A., & Hecker, A. (2024). The Job Demands–Resources model as a theoretical lens for the bright and dark side of digitization. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 155, 108177. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2024.108177

Shaw, K., & Sørensen, A. (2019). The productivity advantage of serial entrepreneurs. *ILR Review*, 72(5), 1225–1261. https://doi.org/10.1177/0019793919865501

Spivack, A. J., McKelvie, A., & Haynie, J. M. (2014). Habitual entrepreneurs: Possible cases of entrepreneurship addiction? *Journal of Business Venturing*, 29(5), 651–667. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusvent.2013.11.002

Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1997). *Basics of qualitative research*. Sage.

Weick, K. E. (1989). Theory construction as disciplined imagination. *Academy of Management Review*, 14(4), 516–531. https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.1989.4308376

Yun, J. J., Lee, M., Park, K., & Zhao, X. (2019). Open innovation and serial entrepreneurs. *Sustainability*, 11(18), 5055. https://doi.org/10.3390/su11185055

About Author(s):

Rizwan Tahir is currently a Professor of International Business at RIT Dubai. Prior to that, he has held the faculty positions at the University of Auckland and AUT University in New Zealand and University of Vaasa in Finland. He has obtained his Ph.D. degree in International Business at the University of Vassa, Finland. His research has been published in the Cross Cultural and Strategic Management Journal, Journal of International Consumer Marketing, European Business Review, Asian Business & Management, Journal of Global Business Advancement and Global Business Review.

Copyright and License

[© 2026 **Rizwan Tahir & Ayman Ibrahim**] This is an Open Access article published in **Transformational Management Review** *(Transform. Manag. Rev.)*, a Platinum Open Access Journal by IILM Lodhi Road, New Delhi. It is published with a Creative Commons Attribution

- CC-BY4.0 International License. This license permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.

How to Cite?

Rizwan, T. & Ayman, I. (2026). Thriving or Burning Out? AI and Smart Cities Shape Serial Entrepreneurs' Work-Life Balance. *Transformational Management Review*, 01(01), 72-100.