

The Reality of Economic Intelligence in Small and Medium Enterprises in Muscat Governorate in the Sultanate of Oman

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Abstract

This research aimed to identify the reality of economic intelligence in small and medium enterprises in Muscat, Oman. The researcher adopted the descriptive, analytical, and survey approach to achieve the research objectives. The study sample consisted of (150) individuals. The results showed that economic intelligence in small and medium enterprises in the Muscat, Oman, in general was average, with an arithmetic mean of (3.61). The first field (strategic vigilance) obtained an average degree of approval with an arithmetic mean of (3.64); also, (information technology) obtained an average degree of approval with an arithmetic mean of (3.57). In light of the results, the researcher suggested a number of recommendations, the most important of which are conducting educational and awareness seminars in small and medium enterprises in Oman to raise awareness of the importance of practicing and applying economic intelligence and training courses and programs in economic intelligence for workers in those institutions.

Keywords: *Economic Intelligence, enterprises.*

Introduction

Small and medium enterprises are considered the appropriate means to achieve development in developed and developing societies alike. Therefore, these institutions receive great attention from governments, decision-makers, and politicians, in general, and researchers in particular. The importance of small and medium enterprises for economic development has been testified by the entire world, as they have large and inexpensive investment incentives capable of expanding the economic activity of countries, especially countries that adopted them to achieve their development leap (Jawad, 2007). Therefore, the small and medium enterprises are given priority within various development programs and strategies, especially in developed countries, as they have become a significant source of employment, contributing to creating jobs and increasing national production. (Khaled, 2012).

Small and medium enterprises are considered one of the areas of attracting savings and converting them into investments in various sectors, as these enterprises depend mainly on limited capital, making them an element of attracting small savers because their savings are sufficient to establish these institutions. Besides, they are compatible with small savers' preference, who are not inclined to shares system, which does not enable them to directly supervise their investments (Soltani, 2014).

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In the present era, institutions are witnessing many transformations in light of the information technology revolution, globalization, and the multiple goals of institutions, which have forced them to face challenges that hinder their path towards achieving their strategic goals (Mohammed, 2012).

This age is characterized by rapid environmental changes and serious challenges, which cast a shadow on the performance of institutions and governments and their ability to compete for growth and development in a constantly changing environment. This requires the adoption of creative and distinct strategies and efficient and effective administrative, financial, and economic systems that enhance competitiveness in extremely complex environmental and international conditions (Maghmouli, 2016). Economic intelligence is among the most prominent strategies and methods, which many countries and economies have come to rely on as an effective tool in enhancing their local, regional, and international competitiveness (Abu Bakr and Khairuddin, 2017).

Therefore, institutions find themselves forced to make a qualitative leap from the quantitative economy to the qualitative economy, especially the knowledge-based economy, which has become an inevitable necessity for developing institutions' performance and effectiveness, as information is considered a strategic resource. All of these imperatives led to the emergence of economic intelligence, which contemporary institutions adopt as a work method, keeping the institution in a state of complete and constant vigilance about what is happening around it. Thus, economic intelligence is considered one of the most important and most modern systems that guarantee its position in the competitive market (Sumaya, 2020).

Small and medium enterprises differ from other enterprises in that their capital is often concentrated with the owner, which enables owners to pool energies and benefit from individual intelligence factors, to achieve creativity and new ideas. The process of establishing a new institution is a translation of the manager's ability to persuade others and attract their interest about the goals he/she seeks to achieve. However, small and medium enterprises, due to their weak capabilities, appear less able to benefit from the application of economic intelligence.

It is worth noting that this sector has great opportunities in creating direct and indirect jobs, stimulating the economy, attracting foreign currencies, localizing and attracting investment, and creating a positive reputation for the country. But all of this can only be achieved through information and data enhanced by technology, as it is one of the most important components of economic intelligence based on medium and long-term strategies. It helps those concerned with small and medium enterprises make sound decisions, which in turn leads to the success of the sector, increases confidence in it, and increases its financial returns.

Several studies dealt with economic intelligence. For example, (Sumaya, 2020) aimed to determine the reality of economic intelligence in Algerian economic institutions and reached several results. The study found that strategic information is considered the basic resource in the intelligence process and a strategic resource in supporting the institution's general strategy. Moreover, economic intelligence gives the institution the ability to make appropriate decisions in turbulent circumstances and makes it capable of attack and defense at the same time. The application of strategic vigilance and economic intelligence at the level of Algerian institutions is not clearly visible, as it is either impulsive and unorganized or falls under one of the other functions such as marketing.

(Shahra and Naima, 2019) highlighted the level of application of economic intelligence as a competitive information system. The results showed a high level of application of economic intelligence in the Hajar al-Soud Industrial Corporation in Skikda, as it is a modern concept that the corporation seeks to keep pace with to face changes in the external environment.

(Ezzedine, 2019) diagnosed the reality of applying economic intelligence to a sample of small and medium enterprises from the state of Blida in Algeria. The findings indicated that there is no effective database for economic intelligence in small and medium enterprises in Algeria due to its recent appearance. (Nasri, Hajjaj, 2019) aimed to identify the reality of applying the elements of economic intelligence (strategic vigilance, security and protection of information, and influence in the environment) in Algerian institutions. The results implied that the level of applying the elements of economic intelligence in those institutions was high.

(Maloud, 2018) attempted to identify the reality of economic intelligence in Algerian economic institutions, especially Anno Foundation, the commercial branch in the state of Mostaganem. The results showed that a significant percentage of the leaders of that institution did not know economic intelligence and strategic vigilance and cannot differentiate between them. This means that there is a weak culture of economic intelligence in institutions, as they do not seek information and only practice routine tasks of buying and selling.

The present study attempts to reveal the reality of economic intelligence in small and medium enterprises in Muscat, Sultanate of Oman, and propose appropriate recommendations and suggestions.

Significance of the research

The importance of this study lies in the following:

- Economic intelligence occupies today a high position in modern management and in the interests of various countries and small and medium modern institutions.
- Small and medium enterprises have become extremely important in economic and social development as they are the engine of the state's economies.
- It is considered a new addition to the economic literature in the field of business administration. The small and medium enterprises sector in the Sultanate of Oman is the first to be relied upon within Oman Vision 2040 in providing job opportunities and innovation sought by the His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq.
- The scarcity of Arab studies in general and Omani studies in particular in the field of economic intelligence.
- The results of the study may benefit officials and decision-makers in small and medium enterprises in the Sultanate of Oman in identifying the actual reality of economic intelligence in those institutions to enhance strengths, address weaknesses, and provide appropriate solutions.

The research problem and objectives

Small and medium enterprises in the Sultanate of Oman face very profound difficulties and challenges. It is not exaggerating to suggest that these challenges are greater than those of large enterprises, especially when it comes to the technical, marketing, administrative, and financial aspects, not to mention the lack of familiarity of many of the owners with the principles and foundations upon which the establishment of small and medium enterprises is based.

The success of this sector depends greatly on the extent to which the founders, decision makers, and stakeholders are aware of the necessity of possessing economic intelligence to help them achieve goals through the data they obtain, whether scientific, the product of cumulative experiences, or issued by government agencies such as the National Center for Statistics and Information.

This study sets off from an intellectual dilemma resulting from the growing interest in applying economic intelligence in light of the tremendous developments in the field of information technology and giving information a distinct role in small and medium

enterprises and considering it the most important strategic resource. Therefore, the present research comes to reveal the actual reality of applying economic intelligence in small and medium enterprises. The problem of the research can be crystallized in the following question:

What is the reality of economic intelligence in small and medium enterprises in Muscat, Oman?

The research aims to:

- Introduce the concept of economic intelligence, its importance, characteristics, and stages.
- identifying the reality of economic intelligence in small and medium enterprises in Muscat, Oman.

Theoretical literature of the research

The concept of economic intelligence:

Economic intelligence is defined as the art of monitoring, observing, and practicing attacking and defensive information. It aims to link several fields in order to use information for the organization's strategic tactical goals and is considered a means of linking the organization's actions and knowledge (Philippe, 2000).

It is also defined as a set of coordinated activities for the research, processing, distribution, and exploitation of useful information by economic agents (Jakobiak, 2001).

(Levet, 2002) argues that economic intelligence is an organized activity that helps the organization know what it is necessary to know about its environment and competitors, while providing the necessary protection for its knowledge heritage by preventing its competitors from knowing what should not be known about it. Thus, this concept aims to anticipate and get ahead of changes and unravel the ambiguity of the future.

(Lesca, 2004) defines it as a process that advances the relationship between an organization and its environment, which responds to the organization's functions and its use of information and communications technology that provides it with useful strategic information.

(Pesqueux et Ferrary, 2006) remarks that economic intelligence is an activity that allows seizing opportunities, monitoring threats, and meeting the needs of economic agents related to information and knowledge of high value, in order to help institutions make the right decisions and improve their competitiveness.

The concept is also defined as a control method that works to control strategic information in order to achieve competition, economic security, and institutional security (Legender, 2006). According to (Besson et Possin, 2006), it is the ability to find answers to various questions posed by the institution through its stored information.

(Goria, 2006) argues that it is the process of collecting and interpreting information about the activities of current or potential competitors to discover their weaknesses or strengths. It is also known as a tool to help make decisions based on strategic information to reduce uncertainty and making sure that the decision taken by the organization is not based on chances (Afolabi, 2007).

Economic intelligence is the activity of producing knowledge in accordance with what serves the institution's economic and strategic objectives; the process of collecting and producing information is carried out in a legitimate manner and from open sources (Dufau, 2010).

(Diyat, 2013)'s view, it is the process of researching, analyzing, disseminating, and enriching information resources based on the organization's information system. The latter plays a link between the institution and the environment in which it exists. Institutions respond to the slightest changes in the environment while preserving information; accordingly, strategies can be developed to maintain their competitiveness and ensure their continuity.

It is a set of processes and procedures, starting with collecting, analyzing, processing, and disseminating information useful in making strategic decisions for institutional managers to achieve the objectives of developing the institution and increasing its efficiency while ensuring and protecting information as it is a strategic resource of the institution's resources (Al-Baroudi, 2014, 60).

It is also a system or working method that is one of the basic requirements in modern business management. It is based on the principle of monitoring the environment, collecting, processing, and analyzing information and using it in a way that supports the process of making correct decisions, contributing to achieving the desired goals to reach the required performance in light of the intense competitive environment (Qashi, Wadia, 2015).

EI is the system that monitors the environment of institutions and countries and enables them to discover opportunities, threats, strengths, and weaknesses through a set of activities related to researching, processing, distributing, and disseminating information in a useful way that helps institutions and countries make the right decisions and enhance their competitive capabilities. These activities take place within a legal framework and carry within them protective and influential dimensions (Abu Bakr and Khairuddin, 2017).

It is a group of coordinated activities to collect, process, and disseminate useful information and present it to economic agents to review it. These activities are carried out in a legitimate manner and in light of the availability of all necessary protection guarantees to preserve the intangible legacy of the institution and the availability of the best quality, duration, and cost. This useful information is appropriate for all decision levels in the organization and helps in preparing and implementing the necessary strategies to achieve the various goals of the organization, most notably improving competitive capabilities (Khawalid, 2018).

It refers to a tool for producing the knowledge necessary for organizations to achieve their strategic goals, protect their position in the market, and monitor the competitive environment in order to control the factors of success (Zarqout, 2020, 68).

In light of the above, it can be said that economic intelligence is a set of data, information, and procedures that start from collecting and analyzing data and then processing or employing it to achieve the goals of small and medium enterprises, as well as disseminating this information because it helps those concerned in adopting decisions that contribute to increasing the success of the enterprises, which is the ultimate goal of their existence. We should also point out the necessity of the immunity and protection of private data since it is the joint of the institution. Without it, the institution will collapse, especially if it falls into the hands of competitors. Economic intelligence is based on the data owned by the individual or institution.

The importance of economic intelligence in small and medium enterprises:

The application of the economic intelligence system achieves creativity, and innovation in collecting data, and managing information and its flow within the project. It also allows, in a modern and dynamic way, identifying the driving forces of the environment surrounding the project. Hence, the effective role of information in stimulating creativity and its contribution to the formation of economic intelligence in the project and exploiting it for strategic planning purposes is highlighted (Mohammed, 2012).

Economic intelligence gains its importance from the rapid change in the new economic environment, the data stored by projects, and the information they produce, and in decision-making mechanisms and increasing competition, both at the economic level and improving product delivery. Here, the importance of economic intelligence emerges, as it provides protection for the project from external threats, seizing opportunities before competitors, and adapting more to the new rules of the market, by employing the use of data and information technology effectively and turning it into knowledge that supports decision makers in the project. The importance of applying economic intelligence to various economic sectors is also demonstrated by moving from building information systems in the project to analyzing, developing, and achieving future strategies and facing challenges in the new economic world (Ezzedine, 2019).

Adopting economic intelligence enables organizations to know the information they need about their environment (activities, sources, customers, markets, products, services, and prices). This enables them to develop a clear vision of their current operations and anticipate and manage changes in preparing for the future in order to design appropriate strategies to create value for the customer and improve profitability in current and future markets (Tham and Kim, 2002).

Economic intelligence applications are often used in developing a new product, improving performance, making decisions, and obtaining a competitive advantage, as well as creating cooperation between economic dealers, creating connections between economic projects, and exploiting information to protect technological property.

The economic intelligence strategy also helps the state obtain information about the economies of other countries and draw up the necessary plans to confront challenges so that it can protect its economy from competitor attacks.

Further, economic intelligence contributes to the development of new products and services, increasing the efficiency of institutions, improving sales, acquiring and sustaining competitive advantages, and helping in making high-quality decisions in light of the availability of information and the low level of uncertainty (Martinet et Marti, 2001).

The economic intelligence system has exceptional importance for small and medium enterprises that operate with a professional methodology, which enables them to achieve the following (Al-Baroudi, 2014):

1. Automating transactions and digitizing services in a way that helps them increase production and reduce effort by harnessing data and information into products that help them adopt short, medium, and long-term projects, plans, and strategies.
2. Activating the concept of economic blocs between institutions whose products intersect in a way that enhances their technical, marketing, administrative, and financial strength.
3. Creating products that are difficult for competitors to create, so that these products become additional sources of income through identifying the problems that the markets suffer from and devising solutions to them.
4. Helping to face challenges and solve emerging problems by employing smart applications based on the Internet, data, and information.
5. Helping small and medium enterprises keep pace with any geopolitical, commercial, or social variables depending on the science of economic intelligence based on analyzing data after collecting it.

The importance of the economic intelligence system is not limited only to what was mentioned above. It is of great importance in the mechanism of activating and implementing processes and measuring the extent to which the objectives of the system

are achieved, especially since the economic intelligence system needs renewed dynamic foundations and organizational and operational procedures before implementing the system in order to make it more susceptible to all changes. This and more are in the interest of developing small and medium enterprises, including (Hussein, 2012):

1. Collecting data and information, storing, distributing, analyzing, and implementing them in a planned, organized, and sound manner.
2. Accurately and professionally setting goals that are applicable, measurable, and reasonable.
3. Harmonizing internal and external public relations and on all administrative levels.
4. Updating the nature of work in line with the needs of economic intelligence.
5. Understanding the method and methodology through which information and data are used and how they are distributed within the scope of the project in order to maximize its successes.
6. Providing the owners of small and medium enterprises, including the lower, middle, and upper managements, with ways to implement the economic intelligence system in order to achieve its desired goals.

From the above, we can say that economic intelligence has become an essential pillar of the harmonization between the sustainability of economic project development and the modern transformations resulting from economic globalization and intense competition between various economic projects.

Characteristics of economic intelligence:

The most important characteristics of economic intelligence are (Muhammad, 2015):

- Strategic and tactical use of information with competitive advantages in making decisions.
- The presence of a strong administration to coordinate the efforts of economic agents.
- Forming pressure and influence groups.
- Integrating scientific, technical, economic, legal, and geopolitical knowledge.
- Confidentiality in obtaining and disseminating information in a legitimate manner.
- Protecting the national heritage in its technological and industrial dimensions.
- Adopting globalism as a ladder for decision-making (Bournois et Romani, 2000).

Stages of economic intelligence:

Economic intelligence processes go through four main stages: identifying the need for information, acquiring the information, processing it, and finally distributing and using the information, as shown in the following figure:

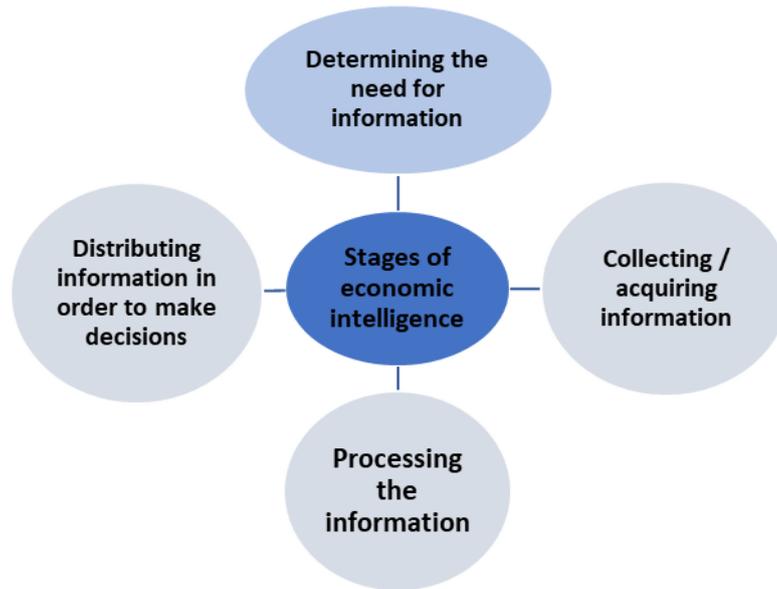


Figure 1 Stages of economic intelligence

Therefore, the stages of economic intelligence are as follows: (Al-Baroudi 2014)

The stage of determining the need for information: This is the first stage of obtaining information and requires those responsible for economic intelligence operations to have high skills and knowledge of the project, its organization and management, and to search for the information that the project wants to obtain without the need for advanced technological means.

The stage of collecting information: After determining the need for information comes the stage of collecting information, by choosing one of several forms to search for this information. The most important sources of obtaining information are official sources through the press, books, social media, previous studies, statistics and information centers, banks, annual reports, and digital communication platforms.

Information can be also obtained from informal sources, including industry competitors, suppliers, academic research and studies, markets, and internal sources for the project and its previous data. The most important characteristic of these sources is that they require self-effort from those who collect information and continuity of movement and communication with others.

Information processing stage: Information processing is the basis of the stages of economic intelligence, as what always challenges the project is not the lack of information, but rather its abundance, which requires processing the information obtained to continue implementing these operations (evaluation, sorting, analysis) and transforming it into an appropriate form (Marcon and Moinet, 2006).

This stage represents the means to stimulate creativity within the project, through collecting all the information obtained, analyzing it in a homogeneous way, and then processing and translating it as an essential step for the processing procedure to give a rich analytical picture of all the information that is always hidden in the documents.

- The stage of distributing information in order to make a decision: It is the last stage of economic intelligence. It depends mainly on what is called 'the value of the information', i.e., giving value to this information through its use and distribution within the project. This is especially if the parameters are used by the appropriate person who is able to convince others of the process and to introduce the techniques applied in the organization and help transform this information into actions that contribute to creating and achieving added value that increases the project's profits. Therefore, the stage of distributing information is an essential step for economic intelligence procedures. After completing

the distribution and announcement of the information and benefiting from it in making strategic decisions for the project, it is necessary to return to the stage of needing new information, especially since the information loses its value after its announcement and distribution.

From the above, it can be argued that it is necessary to have interrelation between the aforementioned stages of economic intelligence. If we do not determine the needs of the information seeker, we will have neglected the most important element of economic intelligence. We must also rely on a reliable source to obtain information and make it usable. Finally, the information that is not distributed and announced becomes useless and does not contribute to creating any added value for the project.

Research methodology and procedures

Research Approach

The research relied on the descriptive analytical and survey methodology due to its suitability to achieve the objectives of the research.

Research population and sample:

The research population consists of entrepreneurs, employees of operating small and medium-sized enterprises, and officials concerned with the economic sectors in their various activities in the Muscat Governorate - the Sultanate of Oman; the number reached (1,500) employees. The study was conducted on a simple random sample of (10%). The sample consisted of (150) employees in small and medium enterprises in the Sultanate of Oman.

Research tool

The researcher prepared the questionnaire based on review of theoretical literature and studies related to the topic. The theoretical aspect has a share in the contents of the research, in addition to personal experience and the intellectual framework. Data, definitions, and a number of articles and research were obtained from the internet, in addition to using the electronic questionnaire as a source for obtaining information and data prepared by the researcher using Arabic sources and some previous studies. A five-point Likert scale (strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree) was relied upon to measure the responses of the research sample members.

Validity of the research tool:

The questionnaire was distributed by e-mail and in-person to owners of small and medium enterprises, in addition to colleagues studying at the Modern College of Commerce and Science and officials at Reyadah, Al-Raffd Fund, the Development Bank, the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and the Ministry of Commerce and Industry to seek their opinions and comments about the congruence and consistency of the statements included in the questionnaire and the extent of their conformity with the objectives of the study. This had a good impact in developing, revising, and setting up the statements of the questionnaire. In light of this, the tool was modified to the final form for field application, which consisted of two areas:

- The first area: strategic vigilance, which includes (11) statements.
- The second field: Information technology, which includes (7) statements.

Reliability of the study tool:

The reliability of the tool used to measure the variables included in the research was tested using the Cronbach Alpha test and the measurement result was statistically

acceptable as the Cronbach Alpha value was greater than (0.60). The following table shows this.

Table 1 Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient for the tool

Fields	Number of statements	Consistency
Strategic vigilance	11	0.74
Information technology	7	0.71
Total	18	0.73

It is clear from Table (1) that the field of (Information Technology) obtained the lowest coefficient (0.71), and the total score for the reliability coefficient for the scale as a whole was (0.73), which are acceptable percentages. Therefore, all values are greater than (0.60), which is an indication of consistency between the items of research tool.

Research design and statistical processing

In order to process the data and estimate the degree of agreement and responses upon analysis, the researcher adopted three levels to estimate the degree of reality of economic intelligence and interpreted the results of the questionnaire as follows:

- Low level: If the arithmetic mean is from 1.00 to less than 2.33.
- Average level: If the arithmetic mean is from 2.33 to less than 3.66.
- High level: if the arithmetic mean is 3.66-5.

The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) program was used through the following statistical methods:

- Arithmetic means and standard deviations to estimate the responses of sample members.
- Cronbach Alpha correlation coefficient to ensure the reliability of the research tool.

Research results and discussion

The main question of the research states: "What is the reality of economic intelligence in small and medium enterprises in Muscat, Oman?"

To answer this question, all arithmetic means and standard deviations for the domains and the tool as a whole were calculated, and the following table shows the responses of the research sample.

Table 2 Arithmetic means and standard deviations for the tool domains

Field number	Field	Arithmetic means	standard deviation	Rank	Impact level
First Field	Strategic vigilance	3.6455	.48240	Second	Average
Second Field	information technology	3.5781	.61045	Third	Average
The totality of the tool		3.6118	.50206	-	Average

It is clear from Table (2) that the overall score for the reality of economic intelligence for the tool as a whole was average with an arithmetic mean of (3.61); the first domain (strategic vigilance) was at the average level with its arithmetic mean reaching (3.64), and

the domain (Information Technology) was at the average level, and its arithmetic mean was (3.57).

The researcher attributes the reason that the reality of economic intelligence was average in general to the weakness of the culture of economic intelligence among entrepreneurs and workers in small and medium enterprises in the Sultanate of Oman. This result differs from the result of (Shahra and Naima, 2019), and (Nasri and Hajjaj, 2019), which concluded that the reality of economic intelligence was high.

At the statement level, all arithmetic means and standard deviations were extracted for each domain separately, and the following tables show the responses of the research sample.

1- Results related to strategic vigilance

Table 3 Arithmetic means and standard deviations for the items related to strategic vigilance, arranged in descending order according to the arithmetic means.

Rank	No	Statements	standard deviations	arithmetic means	Degree
1	7	Economic intelligence helps develop the organization, improves employee performance, and increases revenues	4.39	.601	High
2	8	Economic intelligence contributes to the quality of financial, administrative, and marketing decisions.	4.39	.578	High
3	1	Your organization has a clear strategic plan for enterprise development.	3.82	.977	High
4	2	The work team is aware of the opportunities and threats to the organization.	3.81	.781	High
5	3	The work team is aware of the organization's strengths and weaknesses.	3.79	.838	High
6	11	Do you think your organization contributes to the national product?	3.77	1.006	High
7	5	Based on the definition of economic intelligence, do you practice it in reality?	3.49	.925	average
8	10	Your organization resorts to private entities to obtain statistical information or consultations related to your activity	3.40	1.030	average
9	9	Your organization resorts to government agencies to obtain statistical information or consultations related to your activity	3.37	1.089	average
10	6	Your organization applies economic intelligence	3.25	1.055	average
11	4	The term economic intelligence is popular among owners of small and medium enterprises	2.62	.981	average
Total for the first field			3.46	0.948	average

It is clear from Table (5) that the arithmetic means for the field of strategic vigilance ranged between (2.62 - 4.39), where statement No. (7), which states, "Economic intelligence helps develop the organization, improves employee performance, and raises revenues," came in the first place with a arithmetic mean of (4.39) with high degree. Statement (8), which states: "Economic intelligence contributes to the quality of financial,

administrative and marketing decisions,” ranked second with an arithmetic mean of (4.39) and a high degree. Statement (1), which states: “Your organization has a clear strategic plan for the development of the organization,” ranked third with an arithmetic mean of (3.82), whereas statement No. (4), which reads, “The term economic intelligence is common among owners of small and medium enterprises,” ranked third with an arithmetic mean of (2.62) and average degree.

The overall result indicates that the arithmetic means and standard deviations for the statements related to strategic vigilance came at an average level, as the arithmetic mean reached (3.46), meaning that the reality of strategic vigilance in small and medium enterprises in the Sultanate of Oman was generally at average degree. This indicates weak awareness of the concept of strategic vigilance since it is a novel concept in small and medium enterprises in the Sultanate of Oman.

2- Results related to information technology

Table 4 Arithmetic means and standard deviations for statements related to information technology, arranged in descending order according to the arithmetic means.

rank	No	Statements	arithme tic means	standard deviatio n	degree
1	1	Institutions must employ information technology programs.	4.52	.588	High
2	2	The institution owns a database of economic information related to its activity.	3.69	.984	High
3	6	Management shares information and data about the market and competitors with the work team.	3.67	.808	High
4	7	Your organization has high measures to protect (security) information from leakage or loss.	3.51	1.157	average
5	3	The Corporation has a system for continuously updating economic data and information related to its activities.	3.37	1.156	average
6	4	The organization invests in the latest technical systems related to dealing with information and big data.	3.28	1.130	average
7	5	The organization relies on searching for information from the Internet only.	3.01	1.052	average
Total for the second field			3.57	1.164	average

Table (6) shows that the arithmetic means for the statements in the second field (information technology) ranged between (3.01-4.52). Statement No. (1), which states, “Institutions must employ information technology programs,” ranked first with arithmetic mean of (4.52) and a high degree. Statement (2), which states: “The institution has a database of economic information related to its activity,” came second with an arithmetic mean of (3.69) and a high degree. Statement (6), which states: “Management shares information and data about the market and competitors with the work team,” received an arithmetic mean of (3.67) and a high degree. Statement No. (5), which reads, “Your organization depends on searching for information from the Internet only,” ranked last, with arithmetic mean of (3.01) and average degree.

The overall result suggests that the arithmetic means and standard deviations for the statements related to information technology came at average level, as the arithmetic mean reached (3.57), meaning that the reality of information technology in small and medium enterprises in the Sultanate of Oman was generally at an average degree. This

implies the weak interest of small and medium enterprises in the Sultanate Oman Information systems and technologies.

Conclusion:

The increasing intensity of competition and the globalization of the economy require the owners of small and medium enterprises to establish a system of economic intelligence, spread its culture, and pay more attention to human resources and develop their knowledge in order to optimally exploit information and stimulate creativity and innovation.

The objective of this research was to introduce the concept of economic intelligence, its importance, characteristics, and stages, and to reveal the reality of economic intelligence in small and medium enterprises in the Sultanate of Oman. The spatial limitations of the research were small and medium enterprises in the Muscat Governorate in the Sultanate of Oman. Field application took place during the year 2021/2022 on a sample of entrepreneurs and workers in small and medium enterprises in the Sultanate of Oman.

The results of the research showed that the level of economic intelligence in small and medium enterprises in the Sultanate of Oman was average; the reality of strategic vigilance in small and medium enterprises was at average degree, too; the reality of the field of information technology was also at average degree.

In light of these results, the researcher recommends implementing educational and awareness seminars in small and medium enterprises to raise awareness of the importance of practicing and applying economic intelligence. The study also suggests preparing and implementing training courses and programs in the field of economic intelligence and using the most advanced strategic vigilance software in order to integrate it with information security and influence the surrounding environment. This allows it to create opportunities instead of waiting for them. Small and medium enterprises should also invest in the latest technical systems related to dealing with information and big data and give economic intelligence greater research interest as it is one of the important and modern topics in the administrative field, which helps the success of business organizations. The researcher also recommends establishing units for economic intelligence and scientific research cells in every institution, organizing scientific seminars and conferences, and encouraging studies and research aimed at enhancing the applied aspect of economic intelligence while trying to translate its results and recommendations into a practical reality in order to benefit from them. Finally, the study highlights focusing on taking procedures and laws to integrate information and communications technology into all functions and operations within small and medium enterprises in the Sultanate of Oman.

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