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The role of entrepreneurial skills as a vehicle for business growth: a study in Spanish start-ups

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Abstract

Business growth (BG) is one of the most studied areas over the years. However, with the current uncertainty and entrepreneurial dynamism it becomes relevant to consider new variables such as entrepreneurial skills (ES) and competencies that influence its development. Accordingly, this research refers to the impact that the individual's skills have on the entrepreneurial environment. For this purpose, a survey has been developed to employees of different organizations considering the variables of high degree of proactivity in the employees' attitude, entrepreneurial training, innovation, previous experience or risk aversion. The research has been conducted through fuzzy set qualitative comparative analysis (fsQCA) and the result shows the differences between the combination of variables for BG through the consideration of sales growth and profit. Thus, the results of this research provide new insights that allows the development and boosting of BG.

1. Introduction

Interest in the entrepreneurial ecosystem has grown over the years (Hayton and Kelley, 2006), which has led to changes in the environment and the emergence of new trends harnessed by entrepreneurial individuals to develop new ideas or business practices in the marketplace. In view of the changing reality, entrepreneurial growth has been linked to a myriad of factors. Entrepreneurship has gained relevance as it stimulates economic growth (Méndez-Picazo et al., 2021). BG has been linked to the area of entrepreneurship and management; however, the growth of organizations is a topic that has generated considerable controversy among authors due to the difficulty of predicting it (McKelvie and Wiklund, 2010; Nason and Wiklund, 2018). Considering the performance of SMEs, authors such as Kusa et al., (2021) point out factors such as risk-taking, innovativeness, proactivity, openness to opportunities and heterogeneity of motivation. Due to the multitude of factors that can influence the growth of SMEs, it is necessary for SMEs to establish clear growth strategies and plans to follow (Blázquez et al., 2006). In view of the growing position of start-ups, and the heterogeneity of scientific approaches linked to entrepreneurial growth, this research aims to analyze the variables linked to entrepreneurial activity through which entrepreneurial growth is possible.

Over the years, many authors have addressed the concept of ES and competencies (Hayton and McEvoy, 2006). However, recent literature examines, in addition to the traditional elements already analyzed, such as education or access to venture capital, psychological characteristics of the individual and their impact on entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurial individuals have been studied through different variables with the aim of understanding the beliefs and stimulating

decisions that drive them to start a business, thus, an innovative and creative person who has the ability to detect and take advantage of opportunities has been considered an entrepreneur (Metallo et al., 2021). These characteristics have given rise to detailed analyses of ES, understood as determining and influential elements in entrepreneurship. In this way, it has been demonstrated that risk aversion, entrepreneurial capacity, preferences for autonomy or locus of control are decisive elements in the entrepreneurial environment (Zhao and Seibert, 2006).

Entrepreneurship skills influence the competitiveness of organizations and this, in turn, has an impact on the dynamism of a country (Cuervo et al., 2007). Hence, in the context of entrepreneurship, competencies are particularly related to the birth, survival or growth of a firm (Baum et al., 2001). Consequently, entrepreneurial competencies have been representative for the growth and success of organizations (Mitchelmore and Rowley 2010). Research related to competencies has been associated with aspirations that lead to achieving economic benefits or entrepreneurial success (Spencer and Spencer, 1993). In this way, entrepreneurial competencies will be key determinants of sustainability and successful entrepreneurship. Following the research of Smith and Morse, (2005) the terms skills and competencies will be used interchangeably in this research work.

There is no universal trend on the drivers of entrepreneurial success and performance (Chandler and Hanks, 1994), but the traits of the individual are particularly relevant (Rauch and Frese, 2007). Consequently, various aspects of the organizational environment influence the ecosystem in which firms and individuals cooperate and interact and have a significant impact on entrepreneurial sustainability and success. Therefore, to analyze how entrepreneurial variables influence organizational growth, research is conducted on the entrepreneurial capabilities and skills of employees, which can explain organizational performance measured through increased sales or profits. In this way, the present study explores entrepreneurial competencies as influential elements in business performance. Thus, it is proposed that, in order to achieve increased sales, the organization can display entrepreneurial capabilities among its employees. In this sense, the question of whether proactivity, entrepreneurial training, innovation, business experience or risk-taking contribute significantly to BG has been addressed. To this end, a survey was conducted with the aim of collecting primary data from the environment, considering the arguments of Baum and Locke (2004) who propose that the individual's perceived capacity of the entrepreneurial situation allows to take action even in environments of high uncertainty and risk. To address the gap in the literature concerning the variables that influence BG, we proceeded to the elaboration of different propositions that have been analyzed through the methodology of Qualitative Comparative Analysis (FsQCA), a configurational comparative method (Ragin, 1987), which allows researchers to overcome the need for large samples required in traditional probability-based statistical techniques (Mas-Verdú et al., 2015). In this sense, these variables for BG are approached in different ways, making it possible to contribute to the scientific development of business studies.

This research considers the role of new variables and shows the relevance of these variables in the entrepreneurial impulse. Consequently, the examined variables have been proven through the results that they are not necessary conditions that will directly influence the organization's growth. Thus, the analysis of the combination of conditions becomes relevant.

For BG, measured through profit, organizations rely on employees who have technical studies about their company or product. In addition, proactivity and risk-taking ability are highlighted in all configurations of outcome presence.

Also, it should be considered that entrepreneurial programs are relevant in the case of being directly linked to the organization. Consequently, our findings show that entrepreneurship programmes have the capacity to influence in BG.

Finally, innovation through the third configuration is evident in the results. Indeed, Abbing (2010) confirms that innovation is a relevant factor for business survival and success.

This paper is organized as follows. Section 2 presents the literature review and research propositions. Section 3 makes reference to the description of the sample, the data set used and the research method. Section 4 gives the results obtained. Moreover, section 5 provides the discussion and section 6 addresses the conclusions of the study, highlights the implications. Finally, section 7 presents the limitations and section 8 outlines new research lines.

2. Literature review

Entrepreneurs have been widely recognized as drivers of economic growth (Ribeiro-Soriano, 2017), bearing in mind that both concepts have been previously linked in research, such as proposed by Carree and Thurik (2003) or Baumol (2004). Additionally, the entrepreneurial activity has been seen as a solution to social and environmental challenges (Vedula et al., 2021). Kuratko and Hodgetts, (2004) emphasize the relevance of the entrepreneur since they face risks and challenges existing in the market. So, the entrepreneur has the ability to identify market opportunities and take advantage of them (Makhbul and Hasun 2011). Achieving a competitive advantage at the current time is an arduous challenge for companies, which requires the consideration of the different skills and efforts of the members of the company (Barney, 1991).

Throughout the years, different theories have been considered that refer to the relative research of the factors that enable the performance of organizations (Vroom, 1964). Traditional analyses highlight the economic perspective, thus emphasizing profit as a key element for this (Acs and Audretsch, 2006).

Regional conditions influence entrepreneurship (Feldman, 2001). Accordingly, authors such as Dana et al. (2022) highlight the urban entrepreneurship empowered by digitisation, which generates sustainability in enterprises in smart cities. Due to this reason, the complex environment requires a higher level of innovation and proactivity for business survival and competitiveness; consequently, the change in the organizational context suggests, a change in the behavior of enterprises, as well as in the relationships between employees (Ribeiro-Soriano and Urbano, 2010). In doing so, profit loses relevance as an isolated factor and the combination of items capable of impacting on sustainability and business success becomes relevant.

Analyzing the different aspects that influence entrepreneurial performance, the person capable of managing, planning, and assuming the risks of a business must be considered. According to Kuratko et al. (2014), the entrepreneur will have the capacity to innovate and recognize opportunities, thus turning ideas into viable opportunities that add value through the time, effort and skills available to the entrepreneur. Therefore, they will have the ability to take risks. Reynolds (2012) showed that the existence of opportunities for entrepreneurship significantly

influences the decision to be an entrepreneur, so, just as fear of failure acts as a personal barrier, confidence in individual knowledge and skills can act as a driving factor. From the psychological perspective, there are authors who link personality traits to entrepreneurship. Coon (2004) underlines the qualities of creativity, innovation or management skills that allow driving and recognition of entrepreneurial opportunities. Covin and Slevin (1991) include the dimension of proactivity, risk-taking and innovation as key elements in the entrepreneurial decision, and in turn, scholars such as Lumpkin and Dess (1996) add the elements of autonomy and competitiveness. Basu and Goswami (1999) also consider the influence of socioeconomic factors such as educational level and previous entrepreneurial experience.

Competencies have been defined as knowledge, skills and attitudes. Mulder et al. (2007) pointed out the holistic notion of competencies. However, many authors identify them as separate entities with the capacity to influence individual BG. Hence, it has been shown that competencies are modifiable, attainable and can be learned through experience, education or training (Wagener et al., 2010). Therefore, education becomes relevant in the entrepreneurial environment (Edelman et al., 2008). In research on entrepreneurship and SMEs, different attributes such as demographics, psychological variables, competencies and technical knowledge become relevant, as they have the ability to influence outcomes (Mitchelmore y Rowley, 2010).

Therefore, there is a need to encourage SMEs to maintain proper records for the survival and growth of small businesses (Olajide M. and Obialo F-K., 2020).

2.1 Competencies in the Entrepreneurial Environment

A company's core competencies and their development over time play a crucial role in innovation activities, thus making it possible to ensure survival and sustained growth over time (Seddighi and Mathew, 2020). Studies researching entrepreneurship distinguish between managerial competencies and entrepreneurial competencies (Lerner and Almor, 2002). Management competencies are those needed prior to the start-up of the idea and entrepreneurial competencies are those that enable growth, so a combination of both becomes necessary (Man et al., 2002).

Competencies are analyzed because they are linked to the growth and development of organizations as proposed by various authors (Bird, 1995). Different researchers have shown that there is a link between the entrepreneur's competencies and the success and growth of the organization (Lerner and Almor, 2002). In addition, it is worth considering that the development of ES among entrepreneurs contributes to profitability and growth (Chandler and Jansen, 1992). **Moreover, as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, entrepreneurship education is necessary for the proper management of change (Ratten and Jones, 2021).** Thus, when dealing with skills, we are talking about the individual and the relationship that he or she acquires with entrepreneurial characteristics, so that human capital must be valued as a core element (Davidsson and Honig, 2003).

Furthermore, the particular competencies that entrepreneurs must possess in order to be successful (Man et al., 2002) must be considered. Accordingly, successful entrepreneurs have the ability to identify and take advantage of market opportunities and assume risks (Markman and Baron, 2003). **In that line, the entrepreneur must use their critical judgement to take**

decisions in uncertain environments (Zayadin et al., 2022). Moreover, authors such as Murray (1996) analyzed entrepreneurial success through the analysis of factors such as personal experience, business experience, innovation history, production and marketing experience, status, entrepreneurial experience and previous contact with venture capitalists.

Venture capital is one of the recurrent variables most analyzed, and currently it acquires particular significance due to the pandemic situation and uncertainty in which we are involved. The entrepreneur is linked to factors such as the perception of opportunity or risk aversion (Nabi and Liñán, 2013), elements that usually represent the main drawbacks when the business idea is developed (Arrighetti et al., 2016). Therefore, the individual who is going to pursue a business idea in the market must have a higher tolerance to risk since they are exposed to different situations of uncertainty and stress (Chen et al., 1998). Traditionally, risk propensity has been considered a constant trait linked to decision making (Sitkin and Pablo, 1992). Moreover, authors such as Wagener et al., (2010) and Makhbul, (2011) have considered risk as a key factor in entrepreneurial decisions. In this way, knowledge and awareness of this variable leads the individual to generate confidence in the development of entrepreneurial tasks (Zhao et al., 2005).

2.1.1 Proactivity

Proactivity allows the orientation of the individual towards entrepreneurial development. The role of proactivity in the entrepreneurial process has been recognized (Crant, 1996). Proactivity should be seen as the link between personal initiative and the need for achievement (Claes et al., 2005). The first contributions to this concept were made by Bateman and Crant (1993), who identified the proactive personality as the one capable of circumventing social and environmental limits, allowing the entrepreneur to demonstrate initiative and perseverance. Years later, Crant (2000) outline that proactive individuals were more successful. In turn, Uy et al. (2015) also related entrepreneurship to this ability.

Proactivity should consider the individual's decisions and planning of business tasks. Decision-making ability, which is another influential variable in entrepreneurial activity, allowing the individual to advance in entrepreneurial development (Rezaei-Zadeh et al., 2014, Wagener et al., 2010). Planning allows the visualization of the goals to be achieved (Brinckmann et al., 2010). Elements such as leadership, self-esteem, creativity and motivation for proactivity should thus be borne in mind when considering entrepreneurial performances as elements capable of identifying the entrepreneurial tendency and being precursors to it (Obschonka et al., 2017; Schmitt-Rodermund 2004). Proactivity allows the employee to make creative decisions and take an active role in the organization (Sengupta et al., 2021). Thus, a proactive individual will have the capacity to generate changes in the environment (Zampetakis, 2008).

Proposition 1: Proactivity contributes to the BG

2.1.2 Entrepreneurial Training

Entrepreneurship ought to be seen as a dynamic element since it allows the acquisition of concepts and knowledge as it progresses and discovers the stages of the process of launching a business idea in the market (Miller and Friesen, 1982). Scholars such as Passaro et al., (2018)

have discussed the link between entrepreneurship education, entrepreneurial intention and human capital.

The role of entrepreneurial education and training programs enables the development of entrepreneurial competencies and skills (Galvão et al., 2020). Innovation companies require an investment in both external and internal knowledge in order to develop their activity (Audretsch et al., 2020). Thus, the market is continuously evolving, and training becomes important to consider as a key element in business progress and sustainability. The context influences training in the entrepreneurial field, this is why Löbler (2006) reveals that, in diverse, changing and uncertain environments, individuals must continue training, since this will give them a real advantage to make good decisions. Therefore, the learning focus allows the consideration of knowledge and skills that allow BG and success.

The value of training in the organization has been widely considered. Entrepreneurship training programs are designed to prepare people with the knowledge and skills necessary to identify opportunities, understand customer perceptions, generate new ideas, develop business plans and create their own companies, thus contributing to entrepreneurship in different sectors of the economy (Efe, 2014). Furthermore, it should be considered that competencies are not fixed traits, rather they can be developed and learned through experience and training (Man et al., 2002, Mulder et al., 2007). Corporate sustainability is another of today's challenges, so companies should also consider the development of green training programs (Bouncken et al., 2022). Giovannetti and Piga (2017) posits innovative training as a crucial element, thus, this training, supported by R&D produces positive returns for innovation performance in the organization. Accordingly, education plays an important role in the impact and success of entrepreneurship, since it provides the individual with tools that help to make decisions in the business environment.

As a general rule, entrepreneurial training courses refer to structured training that allows trainees to learn the skills required to identify and take advantage of the opportunities identified in the market (Katz, 2007). Entrepreneurial education is one of the main elements in personal and professional development, since it allows developing the competitive skills of individuals (Kuvaas, 2008), providing them with the tools to manage and be successful in different challenges. In this way, training can prove to be an effective growth strategy to achieve a competitive advantage (Khalid et al., 2019). It should be considered that business training enables the development and growth of the main organizational sectors or organizational performances (Úbeda-García et al., 2013), so it is worth considering this element as a relevant variable in organizational success. In this way, education is seen as a variable that plays a fundamental role in the results and future prospects of the organization (McKenzie, and Woodruff, 2013). Consequently, entrepreneurial development in organizations requires investment in training and skills (Audretsch et al., 2020). Thus, it becomes necessary to consider the type of investment that entrepreneurial firms should allocate to skills development and training in order to increase the innovation performance of the organization (Belitski et al., 2020).

Regarding the entrepreneur's knowledge, it is important to highlight, in addition to education, previous business experience, which provides knowledge about the different elements of a company (Delmar and Shane, 2006). Thus, authors such as Saridakis et al. (2008) have deemed previous professional experience as a determinant of entrepreneurial growth. Consequently,

the level of education and previous work experience influence entrepreneurial success (Rose et al., 2006).

Proposition 2: Entrepreneurial training contributes to the BG

2.1.3 Innovation

Innovation is a key capability that can promote sustainable competitive advantage (Ortigueira-Sánchez et al., 2022) In this sense, innovation is essential for a country's competitiveness and sustainability (Okunevičiūtė Neverauskienė et al., 2020). Furthermore, it is one of the key elements for their success and survival of organizations (Abbing, 2010). Considering the competitive and complex environment, organizational innovation has the ability to generate differential value in the organization. Thus, innovation capability is considered a valuable asset for companies.

Innovation has been highly evaluated over the years, but it should be noted, as Adler and Shenbar (1990) propose, that this phenomenon does not have a single definition or affect a specific element of the organization; thus, it is linked to the development of new products that fulfill the needs of the market, to the organization's ability to expand technologies during the production process, to the adoption of new products and technologies that allow satisfying future needs, or to the company's capacity to respond to unexpected technological activities and unforeseen opportunities created by competitors. Accordingly, innovation refers to the set of organizational activities that make possible the development, design, creation and introduction of new products, services, processes or business models (Freeman, 1976). Hence, innovation requires a set of resources, assets and capabilities (Sen and Egelhoff, 2000). A good combination of these will enable success in a highly changing environment, allowing for business sustainability. In this line it is necessary to highlight the skills and capabilities of the employees. Thus, knowledge is a key element that links innovation and entrepreneurial activity (Kraus et al., 2021). For this reason, it will be required analyze the effect of innovation in the BG.

Proposition 3: Innovation contributes to the BG

2.1.4 Entrepreneurial Experience

Entrepreneurial experience has been widely considered in organizational development (Shane and Khurana, 2003). Experience is a relevant element for entrepreneurs as it considers the learning capacity for the management of organizations in uncertain environments (Vaillant and LaFuente, 2021).

Entrepreneur's prior experience is a driver of entrepreneurial self-efficacy (Hallak et al., 2011). Entrepreneurs with previous experience have developed a higher tolerance for risk and ambiguity, thus being able to reduce uncertainty and consider new opportunities (Delmar and Shane 2006; Dimov, 2007) and they apply efficient reasoning more often (Politis, 2008). However, authors such as Stuart and Abetti (1990) define entrepreneurial experience in various dimensions, including age, dimensions of technical experience, team management, etc.,

highlighting as relevant to the link with business results only that linked to the employee's participation in new organizations and the managerial role played by the employee in those organizations.

Experience has been identified as a knowledge based (Liu and Almor, 2016). Thus, entrepreneurs learn transforming experiences into knowledge (Corbett, 2005). Entrepreneurial behavior has allowed considering that it is the result of past experiences, observed behaviors or conformity to a social group (Sluss and Ashforth, 2007). Moreover, entrepreneurs often use their judgments to evaluate situations (McVea, 2009). Thus, it will be necessary to consider parameters such as personal experiences, emotions and subjective values (Westhead et al., 2005) in organizational development. Accordingly, entrepreneurial experience is linked to both entrepreneurial actions and learning capabilities (Hilmersson, 2014).

Proposition 4: Entrepreneurial experience contributes to the BG

2.1.5 Risk Taking

Uncertainty carries with it a certain risk associated with a lack of information. Consequently, in most situations people make decisions without sufficient information (Rottenstreich and Kivetz, 2006). Zhao and Seibert, (2006) point out that risk aversion, entrepreneurial capacity, preferences for autonomy and locus of control are representative components of the individual who manages the organization.

Risk propensity in organizational decision making, as Xu (2004) points out, affects the individual's perceptions and behaviors. The personality trait of risk-taking is also related to entrepreneurial intention (Zhao et al., 2010). Therefore, it becomes relevant to consider the individual as a key element in the analysis of risk aversion. As indicated by Macko and Tyszka, (2009) the risk associated with the organization is linked to the competencies of the decision maker. In this line, experienced entrepreneurs have a more accurate view of potential risks (Baron and Ensley, 2006). Consequently, successful entrepreneurs are able to manage risk (Botha and Robertson, 2014). Therefore, if the employee manages the risk in the decisions and values the available information, he/she will achieve a more adequate management of the organization, which may have an impact on its growth. Within this approach, risk assumption should be analyzed to identify whether it is an influential element in the growth of the organization.

Proposition 5: Risk taking contributes to the BG

2.2 Business Growth (BG)

The growth of companies, especially small companies, has been widely studied (Wiklund et al., 2009) and it has been recognized in the literature as a crucial indicator of firm success (Covin and Slevin, 1997). Growth increases the overall performance of the company, including elements such as sales, asset base, employee retention, among others (Dugguh et al., 2018). Entrepreneurial success depends on the moment in which the organization is internally and the external conditions it faces, so, the entrepreneurial motivation of the individual or the goals set can be significant variables (Rodríguez-Gutiérrez, et al., 2015). In addition, due to the continuous evolution faced by the market, organizations must deal with uncertainty, thus, the success perspective evolves (Camisón and Cruz, 2008), which means that the market in which the

organization is located, its competitors and the future outlook must be considered as elements that influence the organization's goals.

Business success does not depend exclusively on the profitability or economic success of the organization. The concern for BG has led to the consideration of different internal growth strategies in an SME. The business model is another key element for BG; however, some studies have shown that not all companies can acquire new growth points through this concept (Wang et al., 2022). Pasanen, (2007), refers to the age of the company, product and customer structures, among others. Georgelli et al. (2000) refers to this growth through the development of new products, processes or services to the market. However, other aspects such as environmental sustainability (Méndez-Picazo et al., 2021) must be considered as an added variable to organizational success and reputation. Companies should thereby consider and implement innovative solutions and policies in order to ensure success in the markets (Saunila, 2020).

Economic variables are the first to be addressed when trying to analyze business success, profitability and productivity are the key elements (Wiklund and Shepherd, 2005), whereas variables related to income, personal wealth and turnover (Perren, 2000) are the elements considered. Regarding this aspect, financial decisions also affect the profits or losses of the organization (Man et al., 2002), thus, attainable and appropriate goals must be set according to the specific circumstances and environment. BG usually means an increase in the size or scale of a company's operations, generally associated with an increase in its resources and output (Dugguh et al., 2018). Foster and Browne (2006) provide a broader definition of BG, which includes an increase in total sales volume per year, increase in production capacity, increase in employment, increase in production volume, increase in raw material use, increase in energy and power.

Regarding sales, the end customer and the persuasiveness of the organization with respect to them should be borne in mind (Davidsson and Honig, 2003). At this point, it is the customer who will create value for the business (Baron and Markman, 2003). From the entrepreneurial perspective, Lumpkin and Dess, (1996) examine sales growth as the growth-oriented performance variable. Authors such as Brixiová et al., (2020) reported that there is a positive relationship between training and sales for male entrepreneurs, thus highlighting two of the variables considered in this research. In short, sales over time provide valuable information for the organization, making it possible to generate an effective technique for evaluating the organization's performance (Kariv, 2008).

Table I. Propositions

PROPOSITION NUMBER	PROPOSITION
1	Proposition 1: Proactivity contributes to the BG
2	Proposition 2: Entrepreneurial training contributes to the BG
3	Proposition 3: Innovation contributes to the BG
4	Proposition 4: Entrepreneurial experience contributes to the BG
5	Proposition 5: Risk taking contributes to the BG

3 Methodology

3.1 Sample and Data Collection

The empirical study was carried out in 70 Spanish start-ups and the data collection took place in January 2020.

The companies participating in the study belong to different sectors of activity. They have in common their technological base, their small size and that they are all part of the same incubator.

Limesurvey Version 2.05 + was used to distribute the questionnaire and collect the data. The reasons why this tool seems appropriate to us are: it enabled us to use different question formats within the questionnaire; it allowed us to vary the order of the items and it is compatible with the data formats required by SPSS.

The contact with the start-ups was made through their accelerator who put us directly in contact with the CEO of the start-ups. We organize a meeting with them to explain them the objectives of the research and inviting them to participate. Afterwards, the link with access to the questionnaire was sent. An open and anonymous survey was chosen to enhance access and increase sincerity and confidence among respondents.

The questionnaire had 15 items using a 5-point Likert scale. Items 1 to 8 corresponded to the measurement of ES. Items 9 to 11 were used to measure the outcome BG. Finally, items 12 to 15 were used to identify certain sociodemographic characteristics of the respondents.

Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) has been the methodology used. This has allowed the development of a combination of conditions shown in the propositions that give rise to the result (De Crescenzo et al., 2021; Ribeiro-Navarrete et al., 2021b). It is necessary to consider that the variables are related through configurations that have the capacity to explain the outcome (Lassala et al., 2021; Ribeiro-Navarrete et al., 2021a). The fsQCA approach has been used widely used in prior studies about entrepreneurship and innovation, as it allows to capture the complex and equifinal causality that characterises this study area (Benyon et al., 2018, Kraus et al., 2018; Wang et al., 2021)

In order to develop the empirical analysis we used fsQCA 3.0 software, which allows us to analyse the necessary and sufficient conditions of the causal conditions, regarding to presence and absence of the expected outcomes.

3.2 Calibration

In fsQCA studies all the causal conditions has to be calibrated, except the crisp ones (dichotomous conditions that can only adopt 0 or 1 values). In the calibration process all the conditions are transformed into values ranged between 0 and 1 (Wagemann et al., 2016). The calibration, and the restant QCA analysis were conducted through the fsQCA 3.0 software (Ragin & Davey, 2016).

Following Ragin (2008) prior studies, we set thresholds in order to determine the full-membership, crossover point and full non-membership of the cases. In this sense, we set percentile 90 for full membership, percentile 50 for the maximum ambiguity level and percentile 10 for the full non-membership score. In order to avoid problems we rested 0.1 to the membership values for all the calibrated conditions below the full membership (Ragin, 2008; Fiss, 2011).

Table II. Definition of conditions

EXP	prior experience of workers in building new businesses	Fuzzy value	Causal condition
EST	ownership of companies of technical studies about their businesses or products	Fuzzy value	Causal condition
FORM	prior training in entrepreneurship of employees	Fuzzy value	Causal condition
INN	innovation capability of the firm	Fuzzy value	Causal condition
PROA	proactivity of the organization	Fuzzy value	Causal condition
RISK	prone to take risk of the employees	Fuzzy value	Causal condition
SAL	the increasement in sales of the company	Fuzzy value	Outcome
PRF	increasement in profits of the company	Fuzzy value	Outcome

The causal condition EXP represents the prior experience of workers in building new businesses, it has been calibrated with thresholds 4, 2, 5 and 1. Condition EST, which stands for the ownership of companies of technical studies about their businesses or products has been calibrated setting 5, 3.9 and 3 as thresholds. Causal condition FORM, which represent the prior training in entrepreneurship of employees was calibrated with thresholds 5, 3.9 and 3. The same thresholds has been set for the calibration of the condition INN that represents the innovation capability of the firm. Causal condition PROA which stands for proactivity of the organization was calibrated with thresholds 5, 3.9 and 2 and condition RISK which represents the prone to take risk of the employees has been calibrated setting as thresholds 4, 1.9 and 1 scores. On the other hand, the first expected outcome of this research, SAL that represents the increasement in sales of the company was calibrated with thresholds 5, 3.9 and 2, and the second expected outcome, PRF that represents the increasement in profits of the company was calibrated setting as thresholds 5, 3.9 and 1 values.

Table III. Calibration

	Full membership (90 th percentile)	Crossover point (50 th percentile)	Full non-membership (10 th percentile)
EXP	4	2.5	1
EST	5	3.9	3
FORM	5	3.9	3
INN	5	3.9	3
PROA	5	3.9	2
RISK	4	1.9	1

SAL	5	3.9	2
PRF	5	3.9	1

3.3 Analysis of Necessary Conditions

In the present research, we conducted the analysis of necessary conditions in the fsQCA analysis. According to Dul (2016) necessary conditions are those with in his absence it is impossible that the outcome happen. In the necessity analysis we study the levels of consistency and coverage that each causal conditions has in the expected outcome. Coverage levels indicate the ratio of cases in which the outcome and the condition appear, meanwhile consistency measures the proportion of cases in which the condition and the outcome are present among the expected outcome. Following Schneider & Wagemann (2012) prior studies, we consider as necessary every condition with consistency levels above 0.9.

Table IV. Analysis of necessary conditions - Sales

	PRESENCE OF SALES INCREASEMENT		ABSENCE OF SALES INCREASEMENT	
	Consistency	Coverage	Consistency	Coverage
EXP	0.539226	0.538691	0.668802	0.725199
~EXP	0.724926	0.668498	0.574566	0.574566
EST	0.633069	0.660280	0.616194	0.697566
~EST	0.710030	0.630234	0.699909	0.674306
FORM	0.722443	0.599012	0.726898	0.654179
~FORM	0.582920	0.662902	0.554437	0.684359
INN	0.814300	0.612855	0.733760	0.599402
~INN	0.467726	0.618110	0.526075	0.754593
PROA	0.636544	0.629048	0.600183	0.643769
~PROA	0.639524	0.595745	0.654163	0.661425
RISK	0.691658	0.605126	0.684812	0.650304
~RISK	0.600298	0.636986	0.584172	0.672814

Table V. Analysis of necessary conditions - Profit

	PRESENCE OF PROFIT INCREASEMENT		ABSENCE OF PROFIT INCREASEMENT	
	Consistency	Coverage	Consistency	Coverage
EXP	0.644267	0.599206	0.603011	0.695437
~EXP	0.672533	0.577381	0.652473	0.694597
EST	0.683733	0.663905	0.591398	0.712067
~EST	0.703467	0.581313	0.720860	0.738651
FORM	0.700800	0.540963	0.726882	0.695760
~FORM	0.605867	0.641445	0.520430	0.683230
INN	0.746667	0.523169	0.782366	0.679746
~INN	0.542933	0.667979	0.451183	0.688320
PROA	0.643733	0.592247	0.610753	0.696762
~PROA	0.670400	0.581406	0.642581	0.691027
RISK	0.721600	0.587750	0.669678	0.676368
~RISK	0.602667	0.595364	0.591828	0.724974

As can be extracted from the table above, we cannot consider any condition as necessary, as no one exceed the 0.9 score in its consistency.

3.4 Analysis of Sufficient Conditions

The sufficiency analysis were conducted using fsQCA 3.0 software. In the analysis of sufficient conditions we analyze the causal conditions which lead to the absence or presence of the outcome (Greckhamer et al., 2018). According to prior studies of Rihoux & Ragin (2009), we set a minimum consistency level of 0.75 in order to consider an outcome relevant.

4 Results

4.1 Presence of the outcome – level of sales

Configuration 1 suggests that in order to achieve sales increases, companies show entrepreneurial characteristics in their workers, or within their organization, and have a strong component of proactivity in the attitude of their employees. On the other hand, the organization's workers have no experience in the creation of new companies, lack entrepreneurial training and do not take excessive risks. This solution has a consistency level of 0.92, while it has a raw coverage of 0.314, i.e. this solution explains 31.4% of the cases in which the analyzed result is met.

On the other hand, Configuration 2 suggests that for companies to increase their sales, the majority of employees should not have much experience in the creation of new companies, while on the contrary, they should have innovative skills, be proactive, take risks, and have technical studies about their company or product. This configuration has a consistency of 0.845, and a raw coverage of 0.243.

Configuration 4 shows that in order to achieve sales increases, companies have to take risks, have training in entrepreneurship, and innovate. Also, their employees do not have much experience in creating entrepreneurial projects, they do not have technical studies of their company, and they are not proactive. This solution has a consistency level of 0.895, and a raw coverage of 0.196.

4.2 Absence of the outcome

Configuration 5 is the solution with the highest raw coverage level of 0.405, thus it explains 40,5% of cases in which the outcome is absent. This configuration implies that in order for the company not to have increased sales, the teams of workers must have experience in business creation, be innovative and take risks. This configuration has a consistency score of 0.81.

Configuration 10 suggests that companies in which the employees workforce have trained in the entrepreneurial discipline, do not have prior experience building businesses, do not own studies about their businesses or products, do not have innovative and proactive skills and especially do not take risks, do not increase their level of sales. Configuration 10 has a raw coverage score of 0.179 and a consistency level of 0.970.

Configuration 6 shows that companies with an employee workforce with prior experience in entrepreneurial projects, training in the entrepreneurship discipline, which own studies about their products or businesses, are not innovative and without proactive skills do not reach increases in their sales volume. This configuration explains 23,8% of cases and has a consistency level of 0.912.

Table VI. Analysis of sufficient conditions - Sales

	PRESENCE OF THE PPUTCOME (SALES)				ABSENCE OF THE OUTCOME							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
EXP	○	○	○	○	●	●	○			○	○	○
EST		●	●	○		●	●	○	●	○	●	●
FORM	○		●	●		●	●	●	●	●	○	●
INN	●	●	○	●	●	○	●	●	○	○	○	●
PROA	●	●	○	○		○	○	●	●	○	○	
RISK	○	●	●	●	●			○	●	○	●	○
Raw coverage	0.314	0.243	0.179	0.196	0.405	0.238	0.200	0.238	0.189	0.179	0.187	0.194
Unique coverage	0.144	0.054	0.056	0.067	0.197	0.046	0.160	0.048	0.013	0.041	0.025	0.006
Consistency	0.921	0.845	0.837	0.895	0.810	0.912	0.846	0.867	0.914	0.970	0.911	0.855
Solution coverage	0.537				0.779							
Solution consistency	0.851				0.798							

Note: The table has been prepared based on the previous study by Fiss (2011). They have been grouped according to their core structures. Black circles indicate the presence of the condition, while white circles indicate the absence of the condition. A large circle size indicates a core condition, and a small circle indicates that the condition only appears in the intermediate condition. Blank spaces means indifference of the condition in a given configuration.

4.3 Presence of the outcome – profit

Configuration 3 shows that companies that reach increasement in profits think that entrepreneurs have technical studies about their company or product, are proactive and are favorable to assume risks in order to obtain profitability. This configuration also shows that companies that increase their profits do not have a huge experience in creating new businesses, the owners do not received specific training in the entrepreneurship discipline and do not innovate. This configuration registered a consistency level of 1 and a raw coverage of 0.272, thus it explains 27.2% of cases in which companies increase profit.

Configuration 4 suggests that in order to achieve increasement in profits, companies have technical studies about their firms or products, they have proactive skills in an organizational level and are prone to take risks. On the other hand, other characteristics that in this study lead companies to increase profits are to have employees without prior experience building

businesses, without previous training in entrepreneurship and they do not consider herself as innovative. This configuration has a consistency level of 1, and a raw coverage score of 0.197.

Configuration 5 shows that in 24,5% of cases of companies that reach increases in profits, they have technical studies about their businesses and products, they are innovative and have a proactive entrepreneurial attitude. Configuration 5 also shows that companies which reach increasement in profits have employees without previous experience in entrepreneurial projects, and without entrepreneurial training. This configuration has a consistency level of 0.973.

4.4 Absence of the outcome - profit

Configuration 6 suggest that companies that did not increase their profits have lack of experience in prior entrepreneurial projects, have technical studies about their businesses and projects, have training about the entrepreneurial discipline and are innovative. This configuration has a consistency level of 0.985 and explains 29,9% of the cases in which companies did not reach increases in their profit.

Configuration 10 shows that companies without technical studies about their products and services, with an employee workforce with prior experience in entrepreneurial projects and trained in entrepreneurship, which are innovative and proactive do not register increasement in profit. Configuration 10 register a consistency score of 0.977 and a raw coverage of 0.249.

Configuration 7, which has the highest raw coverage level, thus it explains most of the cases in which companies do not reach increasement in profit, shows that in order to register the absence of the outcome, companies have to have a workforce with prior experience in entrepreneurial projects, with academic background in entrepreneurship, prone to take risks and with absence of proactivity. This configuration has a consistency level of 0.949.

Table VII Analysis of sufficient conditions- profit

	PRESENCE OF OUTCOME (PROFIT)					ABSENCE OF OUTCOME				
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
EXP		●	○	●	○	○	●	○	○	●
EST	●	●	●	●	●	●		○	○	○
FORM	●	●	○	●	○	●	●	○		●
INN	○		○	○	●	●			●	●
PROA	●	●	●	○	●		○	○	●	●
RISK	●	●	●	○			●	○	○	
Raw coverage	0.248	0.321	0.272	0.197	0.245	0.299	0.331	0.237	0.288	0.249
Unique coverage	0.008	0.097	0.049	0.029	0.071	0.068	0.115	0.079	0.086	0.065
Consistency	0.952	0.899	1	1	0.973	0.985	0.949	0.955	0.902	0.977
Solution coverage	0.557					0.741				
Solution consistency	0.928					0.919				

Note: As per Fiss's (2011) notation, the solutions are grouped by their "core" structures, where black circles indicate the presence of the condition, white circles indicate the absence of the condition, large circles indicate a core condition (i.e. the condition appears in both the parsimonious solution and the intermediate solution), small circles indicate that the condition only appears in the intermediate solution, and blank spaces indicate that the condition may be present or absent (i.e. it is irrelevant).

5 Discussion

An increasing number of scientific studies on how to approach BG are being carried out due to the high impact that companies have on society. However, few studies address variables related to the state of the organization considering the employees and the set of programs, policies and attitudes that can drive business development. This research considers the role of new variables and shows the relevance of these variables in the entrepreneurial impulse. Consequently, the examined variables have been proven through the results that they are not necessary conditions that will directly influence the organization's growth, since none of the variables exceeds the consistency of 0.9. Thus, the analysis of the combination of conditions becomes relevant.

For BG, measured through profit, organizations rely on employees who have technical studies about their company or product. In addition, proactivity and risk-taking ability are highlighted in all configurations of outcome presence. Thus, the first configuration, related to the proactivity of the individual, is confirmed through the results. **In this way, the obtained results are linked to the approximations that authors such as Obschonka et al. (2017) or Uy et al. (2015) point out, so proactivity should be considered in entrepreneurial actions.** Accordingly, small businesses should find the proactive way to manage themselves, specifically, as proposed by Yeniaras and Unver, (2016) proactive business relationships in a target market for further growth and development.

In relation to the second configuration, it should be considered that entrepreneurial programs are relevant in the case of being directly linked to the organization. **Hence, these programs, as Galvão et al. (2020) suggested, have the capacity to develop entrepreneurial competences and skills. Consequently, our findings show that entrepreneurship programmes have the capacity to influence in BG.**

Innovation through the third configuration is evident in the results. **As mentioned in the literature, entrepreneurship is a key activity for sustainability (Ribeiro-Soriano, 2017) and in turn, innovation is essential for the development and competitiveness of the country (Okunevičiūtė Neverauskienė et al., 2020) which means that both concepts are key in the economic development. Indeed, Abbing (2010) confirms that innovation is a relevant factor for business survival and success.** Additionally, the ownership of the companies of technical studies on their business or products is one of the decisive factors, as it appears in most of the configurations. Experience of workers in building new businesses appear in the second and fourth configuration, in this sense, entrepreneurial experience positively influences the relationship between entrepreneurial orientation, market orientation and performance growth when it is industry specific (Presutti and Odorici, 2019).

Moreover, when considering the level of sales, it is necessary to highlight the relevance of configuration two, which points out that proactivity, risk-taking and the company's capacity for innovation can produce BG. Configuration three shows that prior entrepreneurship training of employees linked to the firms' ownership of technical studies on their business or products

enables organizational growth. In this line, results show that there exists a relationship between the entrepreneurial features of the employees and of the organization with the increase in the company's sales or profit.

Moreover, it should be taken into account, in view of the results, that sales and growth are not always linked to the same variables, and these affect each outcome differently. Thus, variables such as the prior experience of workers in building new businesses may be proxy for profit and not be particularly relevant for sales following configuration two. Thus, although many of the studies cited in this research indicate a link between variables, these factors must be considered with caution in order to be generalised.

5.1 Theoretical and Practical Implications

This research allows new insights in the literature on entrepreneurship and the role of the individual's ES that favour entrepreneurial growth. Therefore, it becomes relevant for policy development and entrepreneurial strategies. The research provides different conceptual configurations that allow managers and entrepreneurs to consider new dimensions and the combination of them to ensure BG. Consequently, it is essential to consider that ES support the development of new business strategies, which can influence business growth through proper management. In this line, Coon (2004) underlines certain qualities such as creativity and innovation that allow business opportunities to be recognised and promoted. Additionally, it is worth highlighting the contribution of González-Tejero and Molina, (2022) who indicate that training programmes in certain entrepreneurial skills allow the development of new initiatives in organisations such as intra-entrepreneurship. Moreover, considering the digitalisation and evolution of markets, skills will also enable continuous and ongoing development of the companies. This implication is in line with Jardim (2021), who considers that ES are required to be successful in the global and digital world. Accordingly, the results generate a useful orientation for decision making by business leaders, allowing them to promote economic and social development. Specifically, through the consideration of this research, business leaders will be able to consider the influence of training programs on the performance of the organization. In this way, companies or governmental organizations will consider the development of new training plans, courses and methodologies that have the ability to influence in the development and growth of the organization.

Regarding the practical implications of the research, it is necessary to note that through the examination of the variables: risk aversion, high degree of proactivity in the attitude of employees, previous experience and entrepreneurial training, different opportunities and challenges arise in the organizations. In this way, they provide a deep understanding of how the individual impacts the success of the organization through profit or sales. Specifically, this research, at a practical level, tests the conceptual framework of BG, understanding the need and relevance of the factors that influence it. In turn, it allows to explore how to support organizational growth through the use of new variables, such as training or proactivity, thus fostering the development of new relationships between entrepreneurs and their teams. Consequently, concrete strategies focused on improving and achieving business success can be developed, providing organizations with new insights as part of their business plans. In this sense, human resources policies can be designed to include these variables and focus on the employee as the core of any strategy. By improving the employee's experience within the

organization, the employee's motivation for training and proactivity can be enhanced, thereby impacting the development and growth of the organization.

In addition, these results may have implications in the labour market, especially in the recruitment and retention of talent. Professionals who have the skills that guarantee business growth will be the most demanded and best valued by the market, this also having an impact on salary policies.

6 Conclusion

The research shows the combinations of variables that allow the organization to grow. Based on the configurations, new predictive models of BG can be developed. Thus, as indicated by Mitchelmore and Rowley (2010), entrepreneurial competencies influence the growth and success of the organization. Thus, special attention should be paid to the proactive and risk-averse characteristics of employees. As well as training programs if they are directly linked to the organization's knowledge. Thus, it contributes to the understanding of the importance of ES in organizational development, which is an advance in research.

Considering the methodology used for the analysis, it should be noted that fsQCA allows to examine how ES influence BG. The five proposed conditions have been analyzed in relation to two perspectives, i.e. considering the impact on the growth of the company through the level of sales or increase in profit. This approach fills an existing gap in the literature, since there have been many studies on organizational growth, however, such method has not been used to address this issue. Although further research remains still to be done on these variables, it is expected that the results will show the relevance of the organization's consideration of them. Thus, the implication of our study is that more concrete evaluations, along the lines of our study, should be conducted to ensure the treatment and control of ES since business perspective.

The following research limitations should be considered as a starting point for future work. Entrepreneurial growth will be influenced by previous experience, entrepreneurial training and individual proactivity variables, but may have other variables, which have a combined influence. Economic variables such as profit and sales are still important to consider when analyzing entrepreneurial impact and growth, but the link with factors such as environmental sustainability or corporate social responsibility should not be overlooked, therefore considering these factors can broaden the analysis. In addition, a further comparison of the results through the study of particular sectors or different countries will allow for a higher impact on the research.

7 Limitations

This research is not without limits. The sample was based on 70 Spanish start-ups, the geographical area being limited, and new territories may be considered in order to broaden the research. In addition, it has focused on a certain category of companies (start-ups), and it could be extended to multinationals. Consequently, the limitations can be the starting point for new research.

8 Future research lines

Strategic business actions must consider current and future sustainability, so the introduction of new variables, brings new lines that allow to increase the balance of business management.

This research can be considered as a starting point for further scientific work. Thus, the configurations indicate how a combination of variables can have an impact on BG. However, there are numerous variables that can influence this both directly and indirectly. Therefore, it is proposed that new variables be introduced to the configurations. In particular, due to the current digitization of business processes, it is recommended that the degree of business digitization be analysed in future works, responding to current market trends.

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