

Entrepreneurship and Business Performance: case of Algeria

المقاولاتية و اداء المؤسسات: حالة الجزائر

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Abstract:

The aim of this paper is to investigate the relationship between entrepreneurship and business performance. Data were collected from 101 Algerian SMEs by means of a questionnaire; statistical techniques such as descriptive statistics and correlation were employed. The current research shows that proactive and risk firm behavior positively contribute to SMEs performance. Additionally, Algerian SMEs are not sufficiently involved in research and innovation activities, which enable relatively low performance.

keyword: Entrepreneurial Orientation (EO); firm performance.; risk-taking; innovation; proactiveness ;Algerian SMEs.

JEL classification code : L26,L25,D24

ملخص: تفحص هذه الورقة البحثية تاثير التوجه المقالاتي على تحقيق الاداء في المؤسسات، من اجل هذا جمعنا اجابات 101 مقاول جزائري عن طريق الاستبيان . استخدمنا عدة ادوات احصائية لمعالجة البيانات من بينها التحليل الوصفي و تحليل الاتباط بين متغيرات البحث. خلصت نتائج الورقة البحثية الى ان: المقاولاتية في الجزائر محددة بعنصرين هما المخاطرة و المبادرة ، بالنسبة لعنصر الابداع فهو غائب عن الممارسات اليومية للمؤسسات الصغيرة و المتوسطة الامر الذي ادى الى تحقيق اداء منخفض نوعا ما.

الكلمات المفتاحية : التوجه المقاولاتي ؛ اداء المؤسسة ؛ المخاطرة؛ الابداع؛ المبادرة؛ المؤسسات الصغيرة و المتوسطة الجزائرية

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1. Introduction :

. Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs') have been the backbone of economic growth. SMEs have become an important source of employment in most countries, especially for new jobs and a major source of technological innovation and new products, essential for a competitive and efficient market, critical for poverty reduction.

SMEs also act as a supplier of goods and service to large organizations. Most SMEs have been characterized as dynamic, innovative, efficient and their small size allows for flexibility, immediate feedback, short decision-making chain, better understanding and quicker response to customer need (Al Mamun, Kumar, & Ibrahim, 2017).

It has become increasingly uncertain for firms to maintain continuous cash flow by relying upon existing lines of business, as business environment becomes more complex and dynamic. Where product and business model life cycles are shortened, and where the future profit streams from existing operations are uncertain and businesses need to constantly seek out new opportunities. Firms have to foster entrepreneurship to seize opportunities and to obtain sustainable competitive advantages (Al Mamun, Kumar, & Ibrahim, 2017). This business environment requires a firm to regularly innovate, take risk into account, to be proactive in order to maintain or find a new position in the market place. The characteristics and motivations of small firm owner-managers have considerable influences on the performance of their firms. Wang (2008) posits that EO is important for firm performance. Other research suggests that entrepreneurial firms may benefit more from imitation than from high levels of innovativeness (Yao, Wen, & Ren, 2009). In summary, the results of many studies indicate the positive relationship between EO and performance (Lumpkin & Dess, 1996).

The phenomenon of an entrepreneurial orientation (EO)- as a driving force behind the organizational pursuit of entrepreneurial activities- has become a central focus of the entrepreneurship literature and the subject of more than 30 years of research (Kosa, Mohammed, & Ajibie, 2018). Both from a theoretical and empirical point of view. Moreover, has recently been recognized as one of the most important factors for a firm's growth and profitability. Hence, growth can be

associated with innovativeness, pro-activeness and risk-taking behavior of the firm, which refers to an entrepreneurial orientation (EO) dimension.

Entrepreneurial orientation (EO) refers to “the processes, practices, and decision-making activities that lead to new entry” (Covin & Wales, 2012) . EO is revealed through firm-level characteristics as summarized by (Miller, 1983) as follows: “An entrepreneurial firm is one that engages in product-market innovation, undertakes somewhat risky ventures, and is first to come up with ‘proactive’ innovations, beating competitors to the punch.”

The significance of EO lies in its potential to help the firm’s top management to delineate the purpose of the organization, sustain firm’s vision and formulate a way to achieve competitive advantage over competitors (Al Mamun, Kumar, & Ibrahim, 2017). Some scholars agreed that entrepreneurial orientation is a significant contributor to a firm’s success and contributes to a healthier business performance (Mahmood.R & Hanafi.N, 2013) and provided evidences that firms with higher entrepreneurial orientation tend to have superior performance .

Main question: *What is the relationship linking entrepreneurial orientation and firm performance?*

Sub-questions: We have developed a set of sub-questions to support the larger area of focus on entrepreneurial orientation elements and their relationship with firm performance.

The first sub-question: What is the relationship linking innovativeness and firm performance?

The second sub-question: What is the relationship linking proactiveness and firm performance?

The third sub-question: What is the relationship linking risk-taking and firm performance?

2. Orientation Entrepreneuriale (OE)

Researchers agree that EO is a combination of three dimensions: innovativeness, proactiveness, and risk-taking behavior. “EO refers to the processes, practices, and decision-making activities that lead to a new entry. . . . It involves the intentions and actions of key players functioning in a dynamic generative process aimed at new-venture creation” (Wiklund, 1999).

Miller & Friesen (1982) posited that entrepreneurial firms “innovate boldly and regularly while taking considerable risks in their product-market strategies.” Adding the attribute of “proactivity” (Lumpkin & Dess, 1996). According to Miller theorists would not call a firm entrepreneurial if it changes its technology or product-line ... simply by direct imitating competitors while refusing to take any risks. Some proactiveness would be essential as well. By the same token, risk-taking firms that are highly leveraged financially are not necessarily considered entrepreneurial. They must also engage in product-market or technological innovation (Miller, 1983).

Innovativeness: Schumpeter (1934) was one of the first authors to show its significance. In a company, the propensity to innovate reflects a tendency to engage in and maintain the process of generating ideas, creativity, development opportunities that can lead to the emergence of new products, new services, and new technologies. (Bchini, 2015)

Innovativeness, an attribute of the entrepreneur, refers to the willingness to try new methods, which differs from the existing, enthusiasm to bring on board new methods in the way the business is being operated, and the willingness to implement the innovative strateg. Joseph Schumpeter has listed the innovation forms as follows (Brem, 2008):

- The introduction of a good or a significant improvement in the quality of an existing good.
- The introduction of a new method of production, i.e. an innovation in processes.
- The opening of a new market, in particular an export market in a new territory.
- The conquest of a new source of supply of raw materials or half-manufactured goods.
- The creation of a new type of industrial organization, i.e. an administrative innovation.

Proactiveness: Miller & Friesen (1978) view proactiveness as changing the environment by introducing new products and technologies. They Defined proactiveness as “seeking new opportunities which may or may not be related to the present line of operations, introduction of new products and brands ahead of competition, strategically eliminating operations which are in the mature or declining stages of life cycle” (Miller & Friesen,

1982) . Proactiveness is a perspective characteristic of a marketplace leader that has the foresight to act in anticipation of future demand and shape the environment. Moreover, proactiveness involves adopting initiatives in an effort to shape the environment to one's own advantage, while responsiveness involves being accommodative towards competitors' challenges (Al Mamun, Kumar, & Ibrahim, 2017).

In other words, firms are proactive when they shape their environments i.e. through the introduction of new products and services ahead of competitors, eliminating declining brands, entering new emerging markets ahead of competitors and identifying new opportunities. Ogunsiji & Kayode (2010) Translated to the level of the firm, proactive companies are leaders in the market, rather than followers (Ogunsiji & Kayode, 2010).

Risk-taking: is associated with a willingness to commit large amounts of resources to projects where the cost of failure may be high. It also involves a large amount of investment in a new technology and always sells new product or services in new market (Dess & Lumpkin, 2005). Also, firms have to take risk to obtain high financial returns by assuming high levels of debt, committing a large amount of firms' resources .Entrepreneurs generally take more risks than non-entrepreneurs do.

3. Firm performance : Definition and Meaning

This concept refers to the level of achievement of the business organization toward its goals: profit maximization. Hence, sustainable profit maximization is associated with some measure items, which are sales growth, employment growth, gross profit, return on asset, return on investment, and return on sales (Pratono & Mahmood, 2015).

Covin & Slevin, (1991) Defined "improved performance" defined in terms of a wide variety of organizational effectiveness criteria, a narrower financially based definition is proposed for the current model. A firm's economic performance is generally acknowledged to have two primary dimensions-growth and profitability. Therefore, efficiency, growth, and profit were the most commonly considered dimensions (Dess & Lumpkin, 2005).

4. Brief background of EO-performance relations

Previous studies have used different performance measures to find the link between EO and firm performance, including financial measures like profit growth, sales growth, and market share growth (Grunhagen, Wollan, Dada, & Waston, 2013). EO is related to performance among small firms in hostile environments. Lumpkin & Dess (1996) have argued that firms benefit from highlighting newness, responsiveness, and a degree of boldness.

Covin & Slevin, (1991) have argued that some managers may feel compelled to adopt a more entrepreneurial style if they perceive that bold, entrepreneurial actions are needed to improve their firm's performance. Other top managers in poorly-performing firms may feel that risky, entrepreneurial actions are exactly what their firms must avoid. Likewise, it is conceivable that some top managers in high-performing firms may feel that the inherent risk of an entrepreneurial style will jeopardize their firm's performance, and should therefore be avoided. Other top managers in high-performing firms may feel that an entrepreneurial style is a key to their success (Covin & Slevin, 1989). Wiklund, (1999) Suggested that seeking to increase EO may be worthwhile for small firms because a positive relationship has been identified between EO and firm performance. He examined the sustainability of the relationship between EO and firm performance. He analyzed the data from small Swedish firms and found a positive relationship between EO and firm performance. Where firms monitor market changes and respond quickly, thus capitalizing on emerging opportunities. Innovation keeps them ahead of their competitors, gaining a competitive advantage that leads to improved financial results. Proactiveness gives firms the ability to present new products/services to the market ahead of competitors, which also gives them a competitive advantage (Wiklund, 1999).

Many authors have argued that corporations' profit streams are under constant threat given the general tendency in today's business toward shorter product and business model life cycles. In these circumstances, EO can improve companies' competitiveness by meaning that they actually seek new opportunities, which allow firms to establish first-mover advantages, charge high prices, and scrape the top of the market ahead of their competitors (Rauch, Wiklund, & Lumpkin, 2009). In

fact, Companies with a strong EO actually create a significant advantage and differentiation over their competition, promoting both market share and profits (Wiklund, 1999).

A company needs to adopt an Entrepreneurial Orientation (EO) pro-actively in terms of continuous innovation to combat the adverse impact of reducing the product life cycle and innovative activities of the competitor at the far parts of the world. While lacking the advantages of perfect information about new prospects are absent, there is also a lack of knowledge about how markets will behave in the near future. Such innovativeness and pro-activity in dealing with an uncertain market behavior involves risk and risk-taking, although it can also create a powerful strategic position, enhance the competitiveness of the company and have a positive effect on performance (Eternad, 2015).

In addition to the studies of several previous results repeatedly and constantly demonstrate a positive relationship between EO and firm performance (Lee & Lim, 2009); (Yao, Wen, & Ren, 2009); (Fairoz, Hirobumi, & Tanaka, 2010); (Zainol & Ayadurai, 2011); (Mahmood & Hanafi, 2013); (Arief & Thoyib, 2013); (Pratono & Mahmood, 2015); (Khedhaouria, Gura'u, & Torre's, 2015); (Kosa, Mohammad, & Ajibie, 2018). Based upon these findings (Real, Roldan, & Leal, 2014), we hypothesize as follows:

Main Hypothesis: Entrepreneurial orientation is positively related to Firm Performance

- The first sub-hypothesis: Innovativeness is positively related to Firm Performance.
- The second sub-hypothesis: Proactivity is positively related to Firm Performance.
- The third sub-hypothesis: Risk-taking is positively related to Firm Performance.

5. Methodology

5.1 Data Collection and Sampling

Data collection in Algeria is very problematic. Researchers face a variety of obstacles, including the lack of confidence in mail surveys. To overcome this obstacle, we conducted face-to-face interviews to gather data using structured questionnaires.

We selected a sample of 180 Algerian small and medium-sized business owners /managers, the surveyed enterprises were selected from the list established by the Ministry of Industry and Mines. We focused on the manufacturing companies, the answers of 101 questionnaires have been checked and evaluated from these firms. With a response rate of 56.11%.

5.2 Questionnaire Development

The original questionnaire was first formed in English. It was translated into French afterwards. There were three sections in the questionnaire. The first part (A) comprises respondent's and firm's profiles. The second part (B) comprises the questions relative to EO, while the last part (C) includes the questions of measuring Firm performance.

The measures of this study were embraced and validated by many previous researchs that have examined the correlation between the Entrepreneurial Orientation and firm performance, but we had adjusted the questionnaire to the Algerian context.

Entrepreneurial Orientation (EO): EO has been measured with a frequently used and validated in prior research e.g., (Covin & Slevin, 1989); (Miller & Friesen, 1982) ; (Rauch, Wiklund, Lumpkin, & Frese, 2009) evaluating the company's emphasis on innovation, risk-taking and pro-activity. In our research, we used these three dimensions of EO by using five point Likert scale (5=strongly agree and 1= strongly disagree). The alpha reliability of the scale is 0.858.

Table 01. Measuring the components of Entrepreneurial Orientation

EO Component	Typical Assessment Items
Innovativeness (innov)	In general, the top managers in my firm favour a strong emphasis on R&D, technological leadership and innovation How many lines of products or services has your firm marketed in these last years ? Very many new lines of products or services.

	Changes in product or service lines have usually been quite dramatic
	My firm prefers to design its own unique new processes and methods of production
Risk-taking (RT)	My firm usually has a strong proclivity for high risk projects (with chances of very high returns) Owing to the nature of the environment, bold wide-ranging acts are necessary to achieve the firm’s objectives.
Proactiveness (Pro)	In dealing with competitors, my firm usually initiates actions which competitors then respond to. In dealing with competitors, my firm is very often the first business to introduce new products/services, administrative techniques, operating technologies, etc. In general, the top managers of my firm have a strong tendency to be ahead of others in introducing novel ideas or products

Source: *Covin, J. G., & Wales, W. J. (2012),p 677-702.*

Organizational Performance (OP): our paper was focused on Murphy, Trailer, & Hill (1996) study of measuring firm performance variable with three dimensions: efficiency, growth, and profit. Every dimension was determined by three objects. The alpha reliability of the scale is 0.741. It is important to emphasize that in our article in order to avoid misunderstanding of respondents, we used the same plan of the yearswer to avoid confusion of respondents. It is a Likert scale of 5 points.

Table2: Measuring the components of Organizational Performance

FP Component	Typical Assessment Items
Efficiency (Eff)	My firm is usually satisfied with return on investment My firm is usually satisfied with return on equity My firm is usually satisfied with return on assets
Growth (Grw)	My firm is usually satisfied with sale growth My firm is usually satisfied with employee growth My firm is usually satisfied with market share growth
Profit (Prf)	My firm is usually satisfied with return on sales My firm is usually satisfied with net profit margin My firm is usually satisfied with gross profit margin

Source: *Murphy, G. B., Trailer, J. W., & Hill, R. C. (1996),p 15-23.*

6. Data analysis and results

6.1 Respondents and Enterprises' Profile

One hundred one (101) surveys were analyzed. The characteristics of the respondents and the companies are found in Table 3. Around 80% of the members of the sample were male. The majority of participants (67%) are between the age 41-50 years. levels of education among participants showed that 33% hold university degrees and 58% have advanced level qualifications. According to the firm's characteristics, 48% are from the Food/ Agriculture sector, followed by Manufacturing (29%), Construction (17%), and 6% the least from services.

In terms of size, the majority of the entrepreneurial companies are Medium enterprises constituting 77%, followed by Small enterprises with less than 50 employees, constituting 16%. The age of the surveyed SMEs indicates that 15 % of them are more than 5 years old, 28% have existed for more than 10 years, and finally 26% have existed for more than 20 years.

Table 3. Sample Profile

	Demographic characteristics	SMEs Algerian	
		Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	81	80.19%
	Female	20	19.80%
Respondents 'age	30 - 40 years	20	19.80%
	41 - 50 years	67	66.33%
	> 50 years	14	13.86%
Level of Education	Bachelor's degree	11	10.89%
	Level qualifications	58	57,42%
	University degrees	32	31,68%
Firm age	1 - 5 years	4	3.96%
	6- 10 years	15	14.85%
	11 - 20 years	28	27.72%
	21 - 30 years	26	25.74%

	31 - 40 years	18	17.82%
	41 - 50 years	10	9.90%
Number of Employees	10 - 50	16	15.84%
	51- 100	35	34.65%
	101 – 200	41	40.59%
	201-300	09	8.91%
Field Business	Food/Beverages/Agri culture	48	47.52
	Manufacturing	29	28.71
	Building/Construction Services	18	17.82
		06	5.94

Source: Results of the questionnaire using SPSS.V 21

6.2 Testing of hypotheses: Pearson correlation

The bivariate Pearson Correlation provides a sample correlation coefficient, r , which calculates the intensity and direction of linear relationships between pairs of continuous variables. By definition, the Pearson Correlation assesses whether there is statistical evidence for a linear relationship among the same pairs of variables in the population, represented by a population correlation coefficient, ρ (“rho”). The Pearson Correlation is a parametric measure.

Table 4: hypothesis testing

Hypothesis	Results	Conclusion
Innov*FP	All Sig>0.05	<i>Hypothesis 1 refused</i>
RT1* Grw	Sig=0.006/coe=0.545	<i>Hypothesis 2 was supported</i>
Rt1*Prf	Sig=0.000/coe=0.678	
Rt2*Prf	Sig=0.001/coe=0.789	
Pro1*Eff	Sig= 0.000/coe=0.205	<i>Hypothesis 2 was supported</i>
Pro1*Grw	Sig=0.021/coe=0.452	
Pro1*Prf	Sig=0.012/coe= 0.333	
Pro2*Grw	Sig= 0.028/coe=0.122	
Pro2*Prf	Sig=0.041/coe=0.350	
Pro3*Eff	Sig0.002/coe= 0.422	
Pro*Grw	Sig= 0.030/coe=0.243	

Source: Results of the questionnaire using SPSS.V 21

Despite some statistically significant links between EO-innovativeness and firm performance, however, much of the relationships between these two variables are negligible and insignificant.

The Algerian economic environment is increasingly globalized and competitive, and in this context, it seems vital for Algerian small and medium sized enterprises to boost their efforts in research and development innovation. This effort enables them to improve their competitiveness, develop new markets, obtain social responsibility or simply survive. Sadly, there is not enough creativity from Algerian entrepreneurs. According to the direct contact with them, the main reasons are:

- Finance difficulties,
- Weak collaboration with university research laboratories,
- Weak orientation to internationalization,

The Algerian manager has a proactive attitude with the intention to play a pioneering role within the company that allows performance to be achieved.

For hypothesis 2, our findings showed support for the relationship between proactiveness and performance. Without a doubt, proactiveness contributes significantly to predict the performance of the Algerian companies.

We found that Algerian managers practice proactive behaviors to improve performance, respond to competition and environmental changes, overcome competitors, and acquire new market shares.

This research paper aims to investigate the impact of EO on Algerian SMEs firm performance when such firms face a quite market uncertainty and instability. This study has consolidated the results found by the other authors, on the existence of a positive relationship between, entrepreneurial orientation and business performance.

So, in the Algerian environmental , we observed the presence of a particular entrepreneurial environment, primarily related to socio-economic and socio-cultural aspects (informal economy and unemployment), daily administrative procedures, lack of funding, expertise, skills, and training...etc. Current changes such as: lower oil prices, political and economic changes are required by the Algerian Government.

The findings of this research suggest that in Algerian industrial context, entrepreneurs who posit a higher entrepreneurial orientation in terms of pro-activeness, and risk taking, will favor a higher entrepreneurial performance in the market. So the results of this study is very capital, because the industrial sector in Algeria recently faced many organizational changes that require further administrative and regulatory procedures for new ventures.

In Algeria the the Ministry of Industry and Mining's main objective is to encourage the creation and the development of SMEs, which are the backbone of the national industrial structure with programs and reforms to improve entrepreneurship. we can summarize three major conclusions:

First, there is a positive relationship between two dimensions of OE and firm performance of Algerian SMEs working in the industrial sector. This finding contributes to a better understanding of entrepreneurship and its impact on firm performance, but the experimental results are inconclusive; because the impact of the EO on performance is specific to context (Lumkin & Dess, 1996) and the liaison between EO and performance is linear.

Second, we observed that two dimensions proactiveness, and risk taking define EO in Algerian SMEs. There is few significant relationship between innovativeness and performance, so we conclude that innovation is absent in Algerian SMEs. Finally, we have applied a survey research in the three regions of Algeria (East, West, and North) to test our hypotheses. Even though the EO has been widely studied in developed economies, few studies have been conducted in the emerging economies (e.g. Zhou & Lie, 2007)

Overall, this work contributes to the studies on entrepreneurial orientation in emerging countries; it joins a number of recent studies in this area.

7. Conclusion

In the empirical phase, we faced some difficulties, during the distribution of the questionnaire:

- The distribution of the final version to entrepreneurs of Algerian SMEs took up almost 6 months. We allocated 255 days for data collection.
- The sample in the Algerian context relates to 03 regions, we were forced to visit some firms twice or three times often in order to meet the manager.
- Some entrepreneurs refused to meet us. And they have justified their refusal by the lack of time, they also refused to give us information about their enterprises. Even though this information will be used in a scientific research and in spite of questionnaire anonymity.
- The sample size was not large enough to test our hypotheses; this research should be replicated with a larger sample.

We suggest that future studies should investigate the relationship between the EO and firm performance with moderator variables (Ex: environment, manager characteristics, size of the firm). Additionally, we recommend taking cultural, situational and psychological factors into the relationship between the OE and performance firm. Finally, it might be interesting to test our hypotheses in a larger and more diversified sample affecting the Maghreb countries (Algeria-Tunisia-Morocco).

In the theoretical part, our research enriches the knowledge of SMEs entrepreneurial orientation and firm performance, in emerging countries. In the same way, the present research makes it possible to explain the relationship between the entrepreneurial orientation and firm performance in the Algerian SMEs.

The importance of this study is not checking the practices of Algerian small and medium-sized enterprises, but it is necessary for Algerian SMEs to perform well through a strong entrepreneurial orientation.

Finally, we close this research paper. As we have seen in the theoretical part, research on the relationship of entrepreneurial orientation and firm performance in SMEs offers several important perspectives for development. We want to continue to collaborate in this field.

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