

Intrapreneurial competencies and firms' growth: The mediating effect of perceived organizational support

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ABSTRACT

Objective: The objective of this article is to determine the relationship between intrapreneurial competencies (IC) (i.e. opportunity promoter, proactivity, flexibility, business drive, and risk assumption) and organizational growth (OG) and to test the mediating role of perceived organizational support (POS).

Research Design & Methods: A simple random sampling technique was used to draw a sample of 408 employees from 34 small manufacturing firms. We analyzed the influence of IC on OG through a parallel mediation involving POS.

Findings: The results show that POS mediates the path through which opportunity promoter, proactivity, flexibility, drive, and risk assumption impact OG.

Implications & Recommendations: IC fosters OG, particularly with high POS by employees. Thus, employers must identify and strengthen factors that support employees to improve their abilities and enhance OG.

Contribution & Value Added: The findings of this study highlight the importance of IC in fostering OG, particularly when employees perceive that they are valued by the organization and that their well-being is of importance to the organization.

Article type: research article

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INTRODUCTION

Employees of a firm usually approach their duties with the intentions of growing their firms' assets and reducing their liabilities to enable them to compete favourably, or dominate their industries (Koch *et al.*, 2019; Ms Ginu & Binoy, 2014). Growth is the process of a steady increase in size. It is a stage in a firm's lifecycle when it expands and seeks other options to create more profit (Weinzimmer *et al.*, 1998). It can assist in reducing external risks of a firm, creating an economy of scale, diversifying, increasing protection, and increasing a firm's market influence (Rexhepi *et al.*, 2013). Shane (1996) explained that organizational growth (OG) relates to the employees' activities within the organization. Prior research studies have recounted that organizations with high employees involvement in the decision-making processes, experience growth (Alavi & Karami, 2009; Mendes, 2012), and are more prone to dominate their markets (Yaemjamuang, 2017). Farrukh, *et al.*, (2017) found that intrapreneurial behaviours were positive predictors of organizational performance, which is related to OG.

According to Dobre (2013) managers can achieve OG by identifying and incorporating the abilities, and competencies of employees to craft, detect and pursue new opportunities, and create economic values. OG refers to the increase in assets and capital of a firm as a result of employees'

activities. Also, competent employees can equip a firm with the opportunities to endure market fluctuations, increase their power and develop efficiencies from economies of scale (Alvarez & Barney, 2001; Kasser *et al.*, 1992; Kuratko *et al.*, 1990). Such abilities are usually associated with entrepreneurs (Oslo, 1985). Some employees have similar competencies to entrepreneurs and are referred to as intrapreneurs (Antoncic & Hisrich, 2001; Parker, 2009). Thus, these competencies are referred to as intrapreneurial competencies (IC), and we, argue that they might foster OG. Employees with IC may be able to promote ideas that will cause OC.

The concept of intrapreneurship focuses on creating chances for entrepreneurial employees to display their capabilities under the control of managers. It offers employees chances to innovate, promote ideas, and participate in the creation and execution of valued organizational processes. Literature has shown that intrapreneurship allows organizations to grow effectively, and manage change, it also fosters employees' growth (Hiwarkar & Vidiyapeeth, 2019). Dublin and Onuoha (2020) found that jobs that allow intrapreneurial behaviours changed employees' reactions to organizational tasks. Prior research also acknowledged that firms across the globe are placing a higher emphasis on employability because only employees with the abilities to promote and drive businesses, that are flexible and can assume risks, can guarantee their success (Hostager *et al.*, 1998; Klofsten *et al.*, 2020; Kuratko *et al.*, 1990; Rathna & Vijaya, 2009). However, while there is the notion that IC is steadily becoming fecund, there is sparse empirical evidence to show how they may influence OG in developing countries like Nigeria, plus, the little knowledge so far is atheoretical. Moreover, the roles that these firms play in giving support have not been captured. Thus, there is a need for an empirical understanding of the mediating role of organizational support in the relationship between IC and OG.

In Nigeria, for example, the quest for outstanding, knowledgeable, and skilful employees who can contribute to OG has been on the increase in recent times. Firms tend to be interested in employing people who have certain skills aside from their educational qualifications. They believe that this can help them succeed in their operations (Nkechinyere, 2019). But there appears to be a scarcity of these types of employees in Nigeria. Nkechinyere (2019) reported that the unemployment rate in Nigeria is increasing because the majority of employees do not meet the expectations of the labour market. Isa and Sharma (2016) also highlighted poor employees' performance as one of the major causes of employee retrenchment in Nigeria. In 2018, a University don and top employer of labour in the financial sector declared that 95% of Nigerian graduates are not employable (Iyabo, 2018). His statement was probably borne out of notions that business stagnation and failures that are plaguing the businesses in Nigeria were caused by a lack of employees' competencies. More is that employees have been observed in some cases, that they hardly promote opportunities, neither are they proactive nor flexible, they barely take a risk for the firm, nor do they take actions to drive the business. Possibly, it may be as a result of outright lack of these IC, or as a result of their perceived lack of organizational support. Perceived organizational support (POS) represents the awareness of employees about the way they feel that the firm values their input and cares about their well-being (Eisenberger *et al.*, 1990). POS has been found to have significant impacts on employees' performance and well-being (Islam *et al.*, 2015; Maan *et al.*, 2020). Thus, the lack of organizational support might dampen the IC of employees when they sense that their contributions are not valued, or that their well-being is not considered.

This study sets out to determine the relationships the various dimensions of IC (opportunity promoter, proactivity, flexibility, drive & risk-taking) have with OG, and how POS might moderate these relationships. This study contributes to the literature in many ways. First, prior research on IC has focused on performance and not growth per se (Parada *et al.*, 2019). Moreover, constructs on the dimensions of IC are mostly lumped up in one latent construct, thus ignoring the individual impact that the respective dimensions have on organizational outcomes (e.g. Farrukh *et al.*, 2017). Thus, this research contributes to entrepreneurship literature by providing an understanding of how IC might foster OG in a developing economy. Second, this study incorporates the impact of organizational support on the IC-OG relationship. No study to the best of our knowledge has combined these variables in a single model to explain the import of IC. This is a significant contribution because it advances the tenets of two different theories: Resource Base View (RBV) and Social Exchange Theory (SET) in explaining how IC can foster OG in the existing body of literature.

In the remaining sections of this study, we proceed to review the literature on IC of employees. We then discuss the potential influence of IC on OG, both directly and indirectly through POS. We test our hypotheses with a sample of employees and discuss the implications of our results.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

Intrapreneurial Competencies (IC)

In the context of this study, IC represents the combination of skills and abilities of employees, which permits them to act like entrepreneurs (i.e. promote opportunities, act proactively, be flexible, drive businesses and assume risk) while being engaged as employees. IC specifically focuses on how entrepreneurial employees can utilize their skills and knowledge to improve the outcomes of the firms. It comprises the five different dimensions: opportunity promoter: employees' ability to identify, utilize, demonstrate, and reflect diligence about opportunities for new initiatives in a company (Lombriser, 1994). Proactivity: employees' willingness to assess and support new ideas that could transform or expand their firms (Galvez, 2011). Flexibility: the ability of the employees to detach from rigid procedures and schemas (Vargas-Halabí *et al.*, 2017). Drive: the capacity of the employees to be involved in various processes to support new initiatives (Vargas-Halabi *et al.*, 2016). Risk-taking: the capacity of the employees to take risks on new ideas on behalf of the firm (Vargas-Halabi *et al.*, 2017). Prior researchers have found that IC can lead to positive outcomes such as firm performance, innovation, survival, and projects (Antoncic & Hisrich, 2003; Parada *et al.*, 2019). Albeit these positive outcomes were identified by prior researchers, the links between IC and OG appear to have received scant attention in the literature from developing economies. Little appears to be known about how IC might influence OG or the core mechanism of such effects. We consider this a theoretical and empirical gap and thus argue that there is a need for systematic study. This study intends to cover this gap by considering the mechanisms through which IC might influence OG. Thus, we conducted a systematic study on the nature of the mechanisms focusing on a parallel mediation process linking IC to growth via POS. The research applies an in-depth empirical analysis of a set of complementary hypotheses (Figure 1).

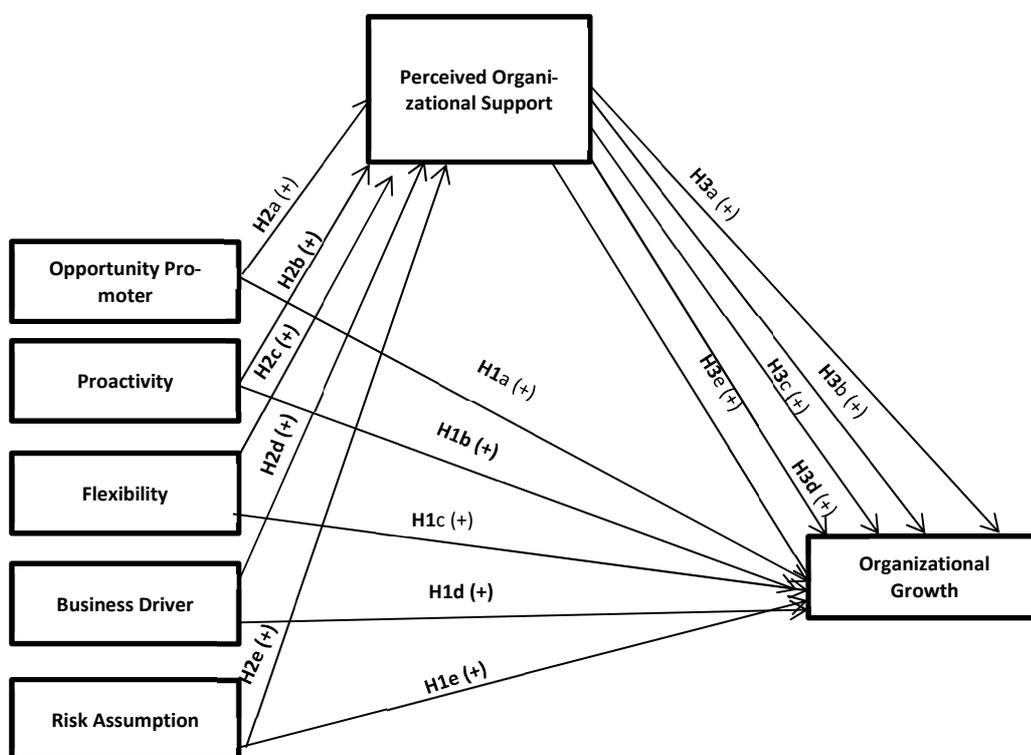


Figure 1. Hypotheses Development Model

Source: own elaboration.

Theoretical framework

This study combines resource-based view (RBV) and social exchange theory (SET) to investigate how IC via POS might foster OG. RBV explains that resources and capabilities are two factors required for a firm to be successful (Davis & Cobb, 2010). Agbenyegah and Mahohoma (2020) explained that the RBV variables such as knowledge, managerial skills, and technological and marketing skills are essential to the sustainability of firms. The RBV is essential in explaining the impact of employees' behaviour on the firms' outcome because it is premised on the tenets that the right combinations of resources, including competencies i.e. the pool of the human resources: skills, abilities behaviours, and motivation will place a firm in a strategic position to take advantages of opportunities in the marketplace for profitable earnings (Geoffrey & Christos, 2015).

SET, on the other hand, assumes that firms' support for employees can foster favourable workplace attitudes and behaviours (Kurtessis *et al.*, 2017). The variables of SET include POS, commitment, engagement, etc. which are very essential to the performance of employees (Colquitt *et al.*, 2013). SET is generally based on the tenets of reciprocity, which assumes that employees will react positively via performance if the organization furnishes them with the necessary support required to do their jobs (Gould-Williams, 2007). The linkage between these theories to this study is that firms with adequate human resources (skills, abilities, behaviours, and motivation) could enjoy various advantages in the marketplace that position them to earn profits to grow and that the support from the organization for these skills and competencies would most definitely foster growth.

IC and OG

Prior research showed that intrapreneurial behaviours are positively and significantly related to firms' performance (Dung, 2021; Farrukh *et al.*, 2017; Hashemi *et al.*, 2012). Albeit, only a few studies have examined the influence of IC on OG, since IC positively predicted firms' performance (Carter & Tamayo, 2017; Mahmoud *et al.*, 2020; Rathna & Vijaya, 2009), IC might foster organizational growth and expansion. This could be interpreted to mean that firms with employees, who can promote opportunities within the firm, act proactively, are flexible, can take a risk, and drive businesses, will most likely witness expansion and growth than firms without such types of employees. Drawing on RBV, we argue that firms with scarce and valuable resources like intrapreneurs can gain an advantage that fosters growth easily in the marketplace (Barney, 1991). Firms with the right pool of employees would most likely grow. Such firms may be able to gain a competitive advantage that would enable them to get more profit that will enable them to expand and grow (Barney, 1991). IC can help organizations innovate, rebrand, renew, reengineer and revive their operation that fosters their growth (Antoncic & Hisrich, 2003; Trujillo & Guzman, 2008; Varela & Irizer, 2009). Thus, our research model considers opportunity promoter, proactivity, flexibility, business driver, and risk assumption, as significant predictors of OG. Based on these arguments, we might expect positive relationships between opportunity promoter, proactivity, flexibility, business driver and risk assumption, and OG. Thus, we propose:

- H1a:** Opportunity promoter is directly and positively related to OG.
- H1b:** Proactivity is directly and positively related to OG
- H1c:** Flexibility is directly and positively related to OG.
- H1d:** Business Driver is directly and positively related to OG.
- H1e:** Risk Assumption is directly and positively related to OG.

IC and POS

Evidence is rife from prior research where POS impacts positively on employees' entrepreneurial behaviours (Meyer & Allen, 1997); this implies that opportunity promoter, proactivity, flexibility, business driver, and risk assumption will thrive in only firms that encourage them. Firms can provide adequate supervisory, emotional and material support that could encourage employees who have these competencies. It is vital to note that the nature of the relationship between intrapreneurs and their firms is

dependent on the levels of support from the firms. The more intrapreneurs perceive that their firms support them, the more likely they feel committed to engaging in the expansion and growth of the firms.

POS can contribute to explaining a variety of employees' attitudes, behaviours, engagement, satisfaction, motivations, and emotions (Islam *et al.*, 2015; Kraimer *et al.*, 2011; Maan *et al.*, 2020). Employees, who perceive that they have the support of their firms, would display positive attitudes or behaviours that would foster OG. Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002) asserted that supports are the catalyst for employees' positive attitudes, behaviours, and performance. The relationships between IC as a multidimensional construct and POS appear not to have received full study. Meyer *et al.* (1990) explained that POS is the positive and negative attitudes and behaviours that employees display as a result of the care, respect, and values they receive for their contributions to the firms. Prior research has reported positive links between employees' behaviours and organizational support in terms of entrepreneurial activities. POS is crucial in the SET (Eisenberger *et al.*, 1986) because it promotes the reciprocity of favourable or unfavourable behaviours. It facilitates employees' engagement, commitment, and performance (Eisenberger *et al.*, 1990; Rahman & Karan, 2016; Rhoades *et al.*, 2001). POS can assist employees to promote opportunities within the firm, embrace proactivity, act flexibly, drive businesses and take risks for the firm (Chouchane *et al.*, 2021; Lukes, 2012; Mirkamandar & Malikehbeheshstifar, 2015). We argue that the various dimensions of IC would have direct and positive effects on POS. Thus, we propose that:

H2a: Opportunity promoter is directly and positively related to POS.

H2b: Proactivity is directly and positively related to POS.

H2c: Flexibility is directly and positively related to POS.

H2d: Business Driver is directly and positively related to POS.

H2e: Risk Assumption is directly and positively related to POS.

The influence of IC on OG via POS

Organizational support among other things improves job satisfaction and positive moods of employees, commitment, performance, and fewer withdrawal behaviours for the firms (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). We argue that favourable employee behaviours can encourage the firm to improve or increase their levels of support to the employees. This argument is based on the tenets of the SET, which avers that favourable actions will be replied to with favourable behaviours. Thus, if the firm perceives that employees have IC and encourage others to adopt initiatives that improve the OG, they will most likely provide support by providing rewards, a conducive workplace, and fairness. Previous studies have presented evidence that showed that entrepreneurial behaviours foster POS (Chouchane *et al.*, 2021; Jong *et al.*, 2015), and OG as well (Kellermanns *et al.*, 2008). But there appears to be a dearth of studies that have considered how various dimensions of IC might influence growth through POS. Farrukh *et al.*, (2017) indicated that intrapreneurs who perceive support might display greater commitment. Similarly, Hecker (2017) highlighted that POS enhances entrepreneurial employees to innovate, and initiate OG. Based on the RBV and the SET, we deduce that the set of resources (human capital) within the firm, whose behaviours favour the outcomes of the firm might gain more support from the organization in exchange for their effort, which might, in turn, initiate more OG. Thus, we might expect that POS will improve the effect of IC on OG. Therefore, we propose that:

H3a: POS mediates the relationship between opportunity promoter and OG.

H3b: POS mediates the relationship between proactivity and OG.

H3c: POS mediates the relationship between flexibility and OG.

H3d: POS mediates the relationship between business drivers and OG.

H3e: POS mediates the relationship between risk assumption and OG.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Employees of manufacturing firms in Nigeria made up the population of this study. This choice was based on the notion that such employees are sometimes placed in situations where they have to utilize their initiatives, which place them in positions that may involve taking a risk, being proactive, remaining flexible, and driving businesses with their ideas. Thus, we believe that a population of this kind will present the necessary responses to the variables of this study. Based on data from the National Survey of Micro Small & Medium Enterprises (2017), a total of 2277 employees of small manufacturing firms in South-East Nigeria were selected as the population of this study. A simple random sampling technique was used to draw a sample of 340 employees. We worked with the definition that small firms have between 10-49 employees, thus assuming that we randomly pick 10 employees from each firm, we would study a total of 34 firms. Albeit, we envisaged that there may be non-responses, thus we accounted for this by adopting a 20% (i.e. 68) attrition rate (Wayne, 1975). The total sample size for this study was 408 employees of small manufacturing firms in South-East Nigeria.

An authorization letter was sent to a total of 34 firms to inform them about the intended survey of their employees. A copy of the structured questionnaire that was designed for the study, and a consent note indicating that participation was voluntary and that personal data and responses would be confidential as such responses were for research purposes only were sent also. After two weeks, we received authorization from only 27 firms out of the 34 requests made. Thus, we conducted our study on the employees of the 27 firms that agreed since we were certain we would get the required number of responses from these firms. With the aid of research assistants, we administered copies of the questionnaires face-to-face to the employees. The survey was done during break periods to avoid supervisors' influence on the employees' responses.

The questionnaire was divided into two: part A for the employees' demographic information and part B contained the main questionnaire. A total of 311 completed questionnaires (excluding all respondents with missing information) from 27 small manufacturing firms in South-East Nigeria were returned. 76% (236) of respondents were male employees, while 84% (261) indicated that there were below 40 years of age.

Measurements and scale development

The scales of the study were adopted from prior research. Few adjustments were made in the wording to suit the purpose and context of the current study. The scales in part B of the instrument were placed on five-point Likert scales ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The demographic information were gathered via categorical data: Gender was placed on either male = 1; female = 2; Age was placed thus; 23-27 = 1, 28-32 = 2, 33-37 = 4, 38-42 = 5. The reliability of these scales was accessed through the composite reliability (CR), and only scales with alphas above .70 were utilized.

Intrapreneurial Competencies

To access the IC scale, the scale developed and validated by Vargas-Halabi, *et al.*, titled COIN_CR1 ©2017, comprising five dimensions: opportunity promoter, proactivity, flexibility, business driver, and risk assumption was adopted.

Opportunity promoter

A total of 6-item made up this scale. The scale aimed at determining the extent: to which employees agree that they never/always act diligently to avail opportunities to change or generate new initiatives for the firm, have the ability to convince others of the benefits of carrying out new initiatives for the company; encourage others to remain enthusiastic during the implementation of the new initiative of the company. Unfortunately, the items of this scale all cross-loaded under other scales, thus, they were eliminated from further analysis in the current study.

Proactivity

This scale assessed behaviours that are aimed at supporting actions and making efforts for new initiatives. The scale is comprised of 4-items that: ascertain the extent: to which employees agree that they are never/always willing to assess with others any new opportunity for the firm; to which they agree that they never/always support new ideas regardless of who puts them forward in the firm. These items all loaded together with a CR of 0.945.

Flexibility

This scale assessed those behaviours that are aimed at lack of adherence to rigid schemes and procedures. The scale comprised of 4-items that aimed to ascertain the extent: to which employees agree that they never/always have a well-defined scheme to identify opportunities to generate new initiatives in the firm; they recognize how to get the resources to fund new initiatives in the firm; they have methods to evaluate the costs and benefits of new initiatives in the firm. These items all loaded together with a CR of 0.943.

Business Drive

This scale measures employees' behaviours that reflect their ability to take interest in the progress and support new initiatives and also take actions to convince other people. 4-items made up this scale. It measures the extent to which: employees agree that they never/always monitor the progress of new initiatives in the firms; they try to clarify the importance of the new initiative for the firm to their superiors. All the items here are loaded together with a CR of 0.903.

Risk Assumption

This scale measures employees' behaviours regarding their capacities to take risks on new initiatives for the firm. The scale is made up of 3-items that sought to measure the extents to which: they agree that they never/always enjoy betting and gambling on new initiatives in the firm; are willing to take chances on new initiatives with uncertain results. All the items were loaded together with a CR of 0.915.

POS

This scale reflects the general belief that employees of a firm hold concerning the levels of values that the firm has about their membership in the firm. This scale was adopted from the scale developed by Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002). This is a one-dimensional scale that consists of 4-items that assessed the extent to which: employees perceived that their firms are fair, they perceive supervisors' support, and they perceive organizational rewards and favourable job conditions. These items are loaded together with a CR of 0.937.

Organizational Growth

This scale reflects the extent to which a firm has improved or expanded over the years based on the activities of the employees. We decided to utilize subjective measures as against objective measures because the survey was on the employees who could not be able to provide us with objective data. Thus, we assessed their perception of how they felt their firms may have increased since the last 3 years when they joined the firm. The scale was built from a scale by Alves and Gama (2019). It comprised of 6-items that sought to identify the extent to which: the employees believe that their actions have made the firm worse/better with regards to their competitors; they estimate that their sales growth was worse/better; they have gained more market share; they receive more customers' compliments. 2-items from this scale loaded below the 0.50 cut-off and were removed from the final items utilized in further analyses of the current study. The CR of the scale was 0.939.

Gender

Gender in this study reflects the sexual orientation of the employees (male or female). This was to determine whether the gender of the employees affects their IC or the growth of the firm. This was categorized thus, Male =1 and Female = 2.

Employees Age

This scale assessed the extent to which the age brackets of employees might affect their IC or ability to contribute to OG. It was categorized thus; 23-27 years =1; 28-32 years = 2; 33-37 years = 3; 38-42 years = 4.

Table 1. The Measurement Scale

Variables	Indicators (items)	Loadings	Convergent and discriminant validity check			Reliability test
			AVE	MSV	MAXR(H)	CR
Flexibility	Flx1	0.90				
	Flx2	0.90				
	Flx3	0.91				
	Flx4	0.89	0.806	0.202	0.944	0.943
Proactivity	Pro1	0.90				
	Pro2	0.93				
	Pro3	0.88				
	Pro4	0.90	0.812	0.172	0.947	0.945
Risk-Taking	Rsk1	0.89				
	Rsk2	0.90				
	Rsk3	0.86	0.781	0.276	0.916	0.915
Business Drive	Drv1	0.84				
	Drv2	0.90				
	Drv3	0.88	0.757	0.210	0.907	0.903
OG	Gwt1	0.87				
	Gwt2	0.88				
	Gwt3	0.91				
	Gwt4	0.90	0.793	0.181	0.940	0.939
POS	Pos1	0.88				
	Pos2	0.89				
	Pos3	0.88				
	Pos4	0.90	0.788	0.276	0.937	0.937

Note: AVE = Average variance extracted, MVS = Minimum Shared Variance, CR = Composite Reliability.

Source: own Calculations in AMOS V. 24.

Overall measurement model fit

To ensure a fit in the overall model of this study, we performed a Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA). The measurement model consisted of seven latent variables: IC (opportunity promoter, proactivity, flexibility, business driver, and risk assumption), POS, and OG. The CFA indicated that the items measuring opportunity promoter cross-loaded with other items in the model and caused the model not to be fit. However, when they were removed from the model, every other item loaded fine under their latent variable, and the overall goodness-of-fit became adequate: $\chi^2 = 231.8$; $df = 194$; $\chi^2/df = 1.19$; $CFI = 0.994$; $TLI = 0.993$; $RMSEA = 0.025$, reflecting an acceptable model fit (Hair et al., 2010).

Convergent validity and discriminant validity

Convergent validity was attained as the indicator factor loadings were significant and exceeded the acceptable value of ≥ 0.6 on their corresponding constructs. The average variance extracted (AVE) is ≥ 0.50 .

Composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha reliability

Scales with alphas and composite reliability that are ≥ 0.70 and ≥ 0.60 are considered reliable, while the factor loadings should be ≥ 0.50 (Hair *et al.*, 2010). Based on the outputs of the overall CFA analysis, all these criteria were met in this study (Table 1).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive

The means, SDs, and bivariate correlations among the variables of the study are presented in Table 2. The table showed that proactivity; flexibility; business driver and risk assumptions were positively related to OG and POS as well.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics and Bivariate Correlations among Variables

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
Flexibility	12.61	5.448						
Proactivity	11.53	5.154	0.093					
Risk Taking	9.33	3.961	0.365**	0.233**				
Business Drive	9.52	3.730	0.285**	0.383**	0.217**			
POS	12.56	5.068	0.423**	0.241**	0.487**	0.422**		
OG	12.87	5.168	0.362**	0.231**	0.300**	0.398**	0.26**	

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Own calculations in SPSS V. 25.

Hypotheses testing

The Hayes PROCESS Macro 3.5 (Model 4 – Hayes, 2018) was utilized to test the study hypotheses. These were conducted by applying bias-corrected 5,000 resample bootstraps to determine the direct, indirect, and total effects (Hayes, 2018). The results of the analysis of direct and total effects have been presented in Figure 2, whereas Table 3 was used to display the analysis of the indirect effect.

Influences of IC on OG

Every one of the proposed hypotheses under hypothesis 1 was supported as displayed on the regression model (Fig. 2). The respective direct relationships between Proactivity; flexibility; business drive; risk assumption and OG are statistically significant ($\beta = 0.162$, $p < 0.001$; $\beta = 0.259$, $p < 0.001$; $\beta = 0.439$, $p < 0.001$; $\beta = 0.241$, $p < 0.001$). These coefficients reflect the direct effects (c') of IC on OG within the path model. Similarly, the total effects (path c) of IC on OG showed significant positive relationships: proactivity, POS and OG ($\beta = 0.233$, $r^2 = 0.0533$, $p < 0.001$); flexibility POS and OG ($\beta = 0.344$, $r^2 = 0.1311$, $p < 0.001$); business driver, POS and OG ($\beta = 0.552$, $r^2 = 0.1587$, $p < 0.001$); and risk assumption, POS and OG ($\beta = 0.391$, $r^2 = 0.2371$, $p < 0.001$).

Impact of IC on POS

In the second set of hypotheses, i.e. Hypotheses 2b, c, d, and e, the direct relationships between the various IC dimensions and the mediating variable were tested. The results as indicated in Figure 2 shows that proactivity; flexibility; business drive and risk assumption respectively, are significantly related with POS ($\beta = 0.241$, $p < 0.001$; $\beta = 0.393$, $p < 0.001$; $\beta = 0.573$, $p < 0.001$; $\beta = 0.623$, $p < 0.001$). These imply that all the second sets of hypotheses developed for this study were supported.

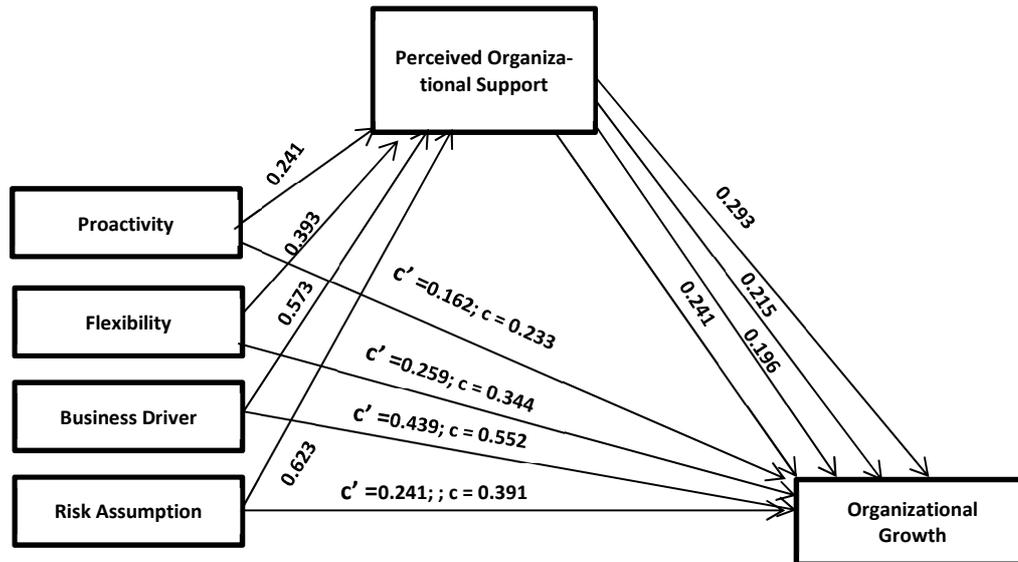


Figure 2. Results of the structural model

Source: own elaborations, from AMOS V. 24.

Table 3. Mediation Analysis

Path			Indirect effect	Bias-correlated 95% CI	
				Lower	Upper
Proactivity →	POS →	OG	0.0695	0.325	0.1139
Flexibility →	POS →	OG	0.0846	0.0325	0.1414
Business Driver →	POS →	OG	0.1125	0.408	0.1990
Risk Assumption →	POS →	OG	0.1502	0.0653	0.2468

Note: POS = Perceived Organizational Support, OG = Organizational Growth.

Source: own calculations from PROCESS 3.

The influence of IC on OG via POS (indirect effect)

In the third set of hypotheses of this study, i.e. Hypotheses 3b, c, d, and e, the influence of the various dimensions of IC on OG through a parallel mediation involving POS was tested. With the aid of a bootstrapping method, the indirect effects were examined. Table 3 indicated positive and significant relationships between: proactivity on OG via POS; flexibility's on OG via POS; business drive on OG via POS; risk assumption on OG via POS ($\beta = 0.0695$, $p < 0.001$; $\beta = 0.085$, $p < 0.001$; $\beta = 0.113$, $p < 0.001$; $\beta = 0.150$, $p < 0.001$). The bootstrapping mediation test demonstrated that POS mediates the path through which various dimensions of IC influence OG. Thus, the third sets of hypotheses 3b, c, d, and e were supported.

Discussion

Studies examining the impact of IC on performance are rife but are scanty in the area of expansion and growth. An understanding of this impact will improve our knowledge of the growth of small firms and add to the entrepreneurship literature as well. No prior research to the best of our knowledge has combined RBV and SET in one comprehensive model to test the relationships among IC, OG, and POS. We proposed that (IC) proactivity, flexibility, business driver, and risk assumption, influence OG individually, and that POS mediated these relationships. We found that they all have positive associations with POS. These indicate that employees with IC and perceptions that they have a supportive organization would be highly motivated to continue in their entrepreneurial behaviours in other to grow the organization. This could also be interpreted to mean that intrapreneurs can display their competencies of promoting opportunities, proactivity, flexibility, business driving, and risk assumptions only because they perceived that the organization encourages them (Chouchane *et al.*, 2021). These findings suggest that IC festers in a supportive environment.

We also found that POS is associated positively with OG. This finding corroborates Hariani and Masdupi, (2019) view that firms that provide adequate encouragement, supervision, and motivation for their employees usually experience growth and expansion because their employees would be engaged in innovative activities. We also made similar findings to Butali and Njoroge (2018), that a supportive workplace that encourages employees to participate decision making usually enjoys some measures of expansion and growth. This implies that the levels of support that employees get from their firms would enable them to engage in activities that would foster growth in the organization.

Also, the results showed that the relationships between the different dimensions of IC and OG were mediated by POS. Proactivity showed a positive relationship with growth via a link with POS. Similarly, flexibility, business driver, and risk assumption also indicated positive relationships with growth through POS. These results meet expectations; given that evidence from previous studies showed that entrepreneurial behaviours and supports are good predictors of organizational success (Maan *et al.*, 2020). These findings also support the impact of support in fostering OG. Since IC fosters OG, then organizational support would encourage employees to explore behaviours that would enable the organization to exploit more profitable options. Drawing on RBV which posits that rare, valuable and hard to imitate resources can assist a firm to grow for instance (Barney, 1991), and SET, which supports the tenets of reciprocity (Kurtessis *et al.*, 2017), we can suggest that firms with intrapreneurs, who provide the necessary support to such intrapreneurs, would enjoy favourable returns like innovations and commitments from them to foster their expansions and growth.

CONCLUSIONS

This study adopts RBV and SET to examine the relationship between the dimensions of IC and OG. The results of the study stressed the importance of IC as a tool of OG. The findings of this study have implications for managers, employees, and policymakers in Nigeria and other countries. The study highlights the importance of organizational support by managers on the development of IC in the firm. For employees, the study highlights how they can benefit from developing IC, while policymakers can benefit from this study by encouraging policies that will foster IC in firms because their growth will translate into economic growth. There are practical and theoretical insights from this study. This study advances theories and contributes to how IC can foster OG in the existing body of literature. This study empirically confirms that IC has both direct and indirect influences on growth through POS. The results indicated that IC can foster employees' engagements, which would ultimately lead to OG. Also, IC can boost the reputation of a firm because it affords them rare, valuable and hard to imitate resources that would also place them in vantage positions (Barney, 1991).

The findings of the current study are not bereft of some limitations, thus, we advise that they should be taken into consideration when interpreting the result of this study. Firstly, only employees from small manufacturing firms were studied. Intrapreneurship exists in virtually all levels of firms in different sectors, thus, this limits the generalization of our findings to other firms in different levels and sectors. We call for further studies to investigate with employees of firms from different sectors and levels as well. Also, some country constraints may exist in the generalization of our findings since the current study was conducted in Nigeria. These relationships may not subsist in developed climes where the concept of intrapreneurship is at its advanced stage. We however suggest the replication of the studies in other cultures. Finally, the scale we adopted for this study may have limited our findings. We gathered responses on an OG scale from employees which are mainly perceptual. We, therefore, recommend that future studies should develop objective scales for employees.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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