

Entrepreneurial support for startups: A systematic literature review using the PRISMA method

Accompagnement entrepreneurial des start-ups : revue de littérature systématique via la méthode PRISMA

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Abstract:

Despite their potential for economic redefinition, many start-ups face challenges and failures. Thus, tailored entrepreneurial support is indispensable. This article aims to present a systematic review on the evolution of entrepreneurial support for start-ups, using the PRISMA method to identify and synthesize scientific articles. The objective is to explore the role of entrepreneurial support in the success of innovative enterprises. The research method involved selecting databases such as Science Direct, Web Of Science, Springer, Scopus, Jstor, Cairn.info, Google Scholar, with keywords in both French and English such as "AE," "Start-ups," "entrepreneurial support." Selection criteria included language (English and French), publication date (2000-2024), covering both foundational and recent works. The results of 69 articles studied highlight that support for start-ups contributes to their success and sustainability. Different theoretical approaches to entrepreneurial support and its impact on start-up continuity were examined. This analysis demonstrated the importance of support structures tailored to the varied profiles of entrepreneurs. In conclusion, the article highlights the essential link between entrepreneurial support and start-up success, thus offering valuable insights for practitioners and researchers in this field.

Keywords : entrepreneurial support ; start-ups ; systematic review ; entrepreneurial success ; PRISMA.

Résumé :

Malgré leur potentiel de redéfinition économique, de nombreuses start-ups rencontrent des défis et des échecs. Ainsi, un accompagnement entrepreneurial adapté est indispensable. Cet article présente une revue systématique sur l'évolution de l'accompagnement entrepreneurial des start-ups, utilisant la méthode PRISMA pour recenser et synthétiser les articles scientifiques. L'objectif est d'explorer le rôle de l'accompagnement entrepreneurial dans le succès des entreprises innovantes. La méthode de recherche a impliqué la sélection des bases de données comme Science Direct, Web Of Science, Springer, Scopus, Jstor, Cairn.info, Google Scholar, avec des mots-clés en français et en anglais comme "AE", "Start-ups", "entrepreneurial support". Les critères de sélection incluent la langue (anglais et français), la date de publication (2000-2024), couvrant à la fois les travaux fondateurs et récents. Les résultats des 69 articles étudiés soulignent que l'accompagnement des start-ups contribue à leur succès et à leur pérennité. Les différentes approches théoriques de l'AE et son impact sur la continuité des start-ups ont été examinés. Cette analyse démontre l'importance de structures d'accompagnement adaptées aux profils variés des entrepreneurs. En conclusion, l'article met en avant le lien essentiel entre l'accompagnement entrepreneurial et le succès des start-ups, offrant ainsi des perspectives précieuses pour les praticiens et chercheurs.

Mots clés : accompagnement entrepreneurial ; start-ups ; revue systématique ; réussite entrepreneuriale ; PRISMA.

Introduction:

Considered a new economic model for raising funds and driving significant growth, the startup remains a dynamic player in its field and continues to expand at a steady pace. Its bold vision and commitment to technological innovation are the cornerstones of its promising future. However, one out of every two innovative startups disappears within its first five years (Löfsten, 2016). Indeed, creating a startup remains challenging (Philippart, 2016), given the ever-evolving market reactions to innovative products, which remain unpredictable. Consequently, the government, in partnership with the private sector, is making crucial efforts to encourage and promote this field, urging young entrepreneurs to invest increasingly in it through the implementation of various entrepreneurial support policies. Recognizing the importance of startup creation, support and assistance systems have gradually taken root and evolved (Cuzin and Fayolle, 2004). Beyond assistance and financial support services, numerous entrepreneurship support programs and structures continue to emerge across the country, attracting young businesses seeking advice and networks.

Furthermore, numerous studies have focused on the concept of promoting innovative entrepreneurship. This approach helps reduce the rate of entrepreneurial failure, supports growth, and thus ensures the success and sustainability of these young innovative companies. The relevance of this concept is particularly significant for startups, as they are generally exposed to higher risks than other types of businesses.

This contribution aims to explore the role of entrepreneurial support in startups. Our focus is to clearly analyze the connections between these two concepts and elucidate the mechanisms underlying these relationships to better understand and clarify them. This leads us to the following research question: **Is there a relationship between entrepreneurial support and the sustainability of startups?**

Based on an analysis of a sample of 69 articles from various databases, the results reveal that startup growth is linked to the contribution of entrepreneurial support and its undeniable effects. This support provides tailored assistance, enabling startups not only to overcome the challenges they face but also to maximize opportunities for growth and development.

This work is structured around four sections. In the first section, we discuss the conceptual framework of entrepreneurial support and that of startups. In the second section, we present the methodological aspects of our study, specifically the literature review conducted using the PRISMA method (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses). This method allowed us to clearly define inclusion and exclusion criteria, perform a thorough and

systematic search of relevant studies, select articles objectively, and analyze and synthesize data systematically. In the third section, we present our results from the systematic analysis. Finally, we discuss the results obtained to deepen our understanding of the effects of entrepreneurial support on the development of startups.

1. Towards a holistic vision of entrepreneurial support for start-ups:

Over the past few decades, the field of entrepreneurship has experienced remarkable exponential growth, fueled by the emergence of new approaches and technologies, as well as the birth of controversial new concepts. Given this undeniable fact, and before embarking on our research, it is essential to show the connection between entrepreneurial support and the sustainability of start-ups, and to set out these two key concepts first.

1.1. Entrepreneurial support :

The concept of incubation first emerged in the USA in the late 1950s with the Batavia Industrial Center structure, while these structures did not see real development until the 1980s when the National Business Incubation Association (NBIA) was created in 1985 (Messegheem et al., 2013).

Research on this concept has proliferated, enabling us to refine its overall vision, the diversity of its forms, its operating methods, as well as its success factors (Messegheem et al., 2013). According to Pluchart (2013) entrepreneurial support encompasses a set of relationships and/or mediations that aim to provide the material and immaterial resources required by the entrepreneur, inscribed in time and space. Whereas Schmitt (2016) sees it as a simple reproduction of the actions to be carried out. He explains that this support is the willingness to provide entrepreneurs with the various elements of a project in a mechanical way just like a player piano. Moreover, it must focus on the entrepreneur's profile as much as on his environment. In fact, it appears that support is a plural notion and not a singular one (Chabaud et al., 2010; Hackett & Dilts, 2004; Messegheem et al., 2013), since the accompaniers contribute through their experience, training, networks, managerial and cultural practices, time, etc. (Hackett & Dilts, 2004; Messegheem et al., 2013).

Several theories have been mobilized to understand entrepreneurial support. In the article by Ghazouani & Sail (2023), they cited the theory of self-efficacy, developed by Bandura, which states that the entrepreneur's beliefs about his or her abilities enable the pursuit and achievement of set goals. Entrepreneurial self-efficacy can be developed or reinforced with the help of entrepreneurial support systems. Moreover, Sarasvathy's (2001) theory of effectuation indicates

that entrepreneurs exploit the means at their disposal to generate newness and create value. Entrepreneurial support, in turn, acts on these resources to develop business opportunities. We should also mention network theory (Ghazouani & Sail, 2023; Hackett & Dilts, 2004), which shows the importance of interactions and relationships between individuals and their influence on behavior and opportunities. One of the key factors in the success of incubators is the network (Hackett & Dilts, 2004). This gives entrepreneurs greater access to resources, knowledge and/or skills that positively influence their strategic opportunities.

Paul (2004) (cited in (Deschamps et al., 2010; Pluchart, 2019a)), for his part, notes that accompaniment can be subdivided into three postures, namely leading “from the accompanier to the accompanied”, guiding “the accompanied oriented by the accompanier” and escorting “a relationship of assistance and protection of the accompanied by the accompanier”. Although research has attempted to define entrepreneurial support, its exact conceptualization remains ambiguous and difficult to delimit.

1.2. Start-up :

Technological advancements and communication tools profoundly shaped the twentieth century, significantly redefining and molding various aspects of daily life. The economy, in particular, was heavily influenced by a drive for innovation and research, closely linked to the rise of companies leveraging new information and communication technologies. This, in turn, led to the emergence of a new business structure characterized by a distinct drive for innovation and commercialization, transforming the traditional process of value creation. These are, of course, startups, which now have a substantial impact on global economic expansion and are seen as a catalyst for growth, economic prosperity, and social progress. Their agility and inclination for experimentation also foster a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship that reverberates throughout the entire economy.

The use of this term emerged after World War II with the rise of the first venture capital firms. A startup is a young, innovative company, typically in the field of new technologies, according to the Larousse dictionary. This concept highlights the importance of its two critical phases: the 'start,' which refers to the beginning—the startup phase where the idea is initiated—and the 'up,' representing the rapid growth and scaling that follow the creation of the innovative young company. In other words, a startup embodies the spirit of initiative and dynamic growth, symbolizing innovation, agility, and the potential for exponential development.

In *The Lean Startup: How Today's Entrepreneurs Use Continuous Innovation to Create Radically Successful Businesses*, Eric Ries defines a startup as 'a human institution designed to create a new product or service under conditions of extreme uncertainty.' According to the author, the human component plays a crucial role in startup innovation, particularly in the value creation process (Ries, 2011).

Low and MacMillan (1988) define a startup as an emerging business initiated by entrepreneurs, combining business ideas with resources. Blank and Dorf (2012), on the other hand, define a startup as a temporary organization designed to search for a scalable and repeatable business model. Patrick Fridenson has outlined four conditions that differentiate startups from conventional businesses: high growth potential, new technology, a significant need for funding, and operating in a new market where risk is difficult to assess.

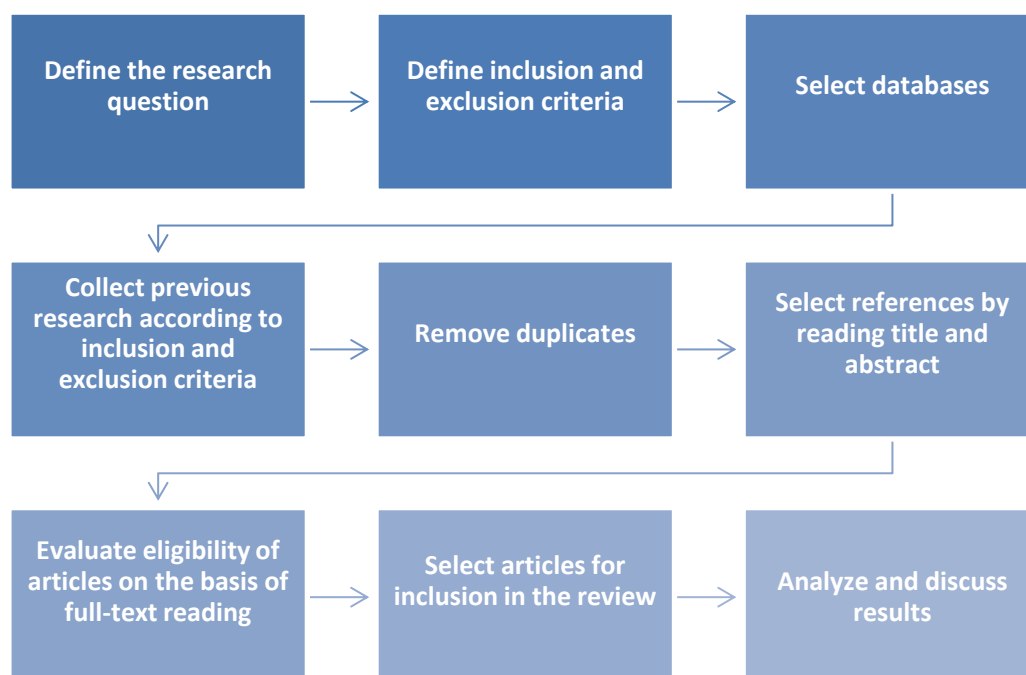
2. Design research and Methodology :

The systematic literature review is predominant in the healthcare field and is gradually gaining importance in the field of management sciences. Its aim is to improve the quality of the research process by synthesizing existing research in a comprehensive and rigorous way. This approach adopts a reproducible, scientific and transparent process, as defined by Tranfield, Denyer and Smart (2003).

With this in mind, we have chosen to adopt the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Item for Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis) method. This research method acts as a guide to conducting a systematic literature review in a rigorous, methodical, complete and exhaustive way. By following several steps, and structuring the results correctly, it ensures that research work is given greater importance and credibility.

The steps of a PRISMA systematic literature review can be summarized as follows (Gedda, 2015; Mateo, 2020; Page et al., 2021; Tranfield et al., 2003):

Figure N°1: Steps of a systematic review using the PRISMA method



Source: Realized by authors

First, we determined our research question, which will guide our study. We then proceeded to collect references by executing an online search, defining two search lines dealing with the following key concepts, limiting ourselves to two languages 'French and English' and using the Boolean operators 'AND' and 'OR':

- SL 1 : « Accompagnement entrepreneurial » AND « start-ups » OR « startups »
- SL 2 : « Entrepreneurial support » AND « start-ups » OR « startups »

This search was carried out on seven databases: Scopus, Web of science, Science Direct, Springer, Jstor, Google scholar and Cairn info (consulted in March 2024).

We managed to process all publications using ZOTERO software, which enabled us to collect them and eliminate duplicates. In addition, we used Microsoft Excel to process and analyze the data included in the review.

Finally, a temporal limit was set for the search covering articles published from the year 2000 to the year 2024 (March 2024). Therefore, only articles dating from this period and beyond were considered in the data collection and analysis.

3. Results analysis :

In this section, we will present the results of our research into start-up support, while analyzing and interpreting the various stages of the PRISMA method.

Firstly, we identified a total of 1061 publications, as illustrated and broken down by database in Table 1 below. In particular, the Scopus database is the main source of our collection, with 24 articles representing 35% of the 69 articles selected, followed by google scholar with 18 articles, or 26% of the selection. Web of science, Cairn info and Science direct account for 16%, 13% and 7% respectively. In last place, Jstor and Springer are the sources with the least contribution. In fact, the references were collected using ZOTERO software, which provides optimal management of bibliographic references.

Table N°1: Number of articles and their weights by database

Database	Number of articles found	Percentages	Number of articles selected	Percentages
Scopus	847	80%	24	35%
JSTOR	30	3%	1	1%
Springer	26	2%	1	1%
Google scholar	41	4%	18	26%
Web of Science	42	4%	11	16%
Science direct	11	1%	5	7%
Cairn.info	64	6%	9	13%
Total	1061	100%	69	100%

Source: Authors

We then identified 980 articles, after eliminating 81 duplicates using the same software. Moreover, we were supposed to integrate the inclusion and exclusion criteria, listed below in Table 2, into the selection phase based on title and abstract. This last selection resulted in 220 documents, of which 06 articles were not found, and 214 articles were carefully studied based on a full reading of the article.

Table N°2 : Inclusion and exclusion criteria

	Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
<i>Language</i>	English and French	Other languages
<i>Type of article</i>	Articles, conference papers	Memoir, book chapter
<i>Purpose of the article</i>	Articles dealing with the subject of entrepreneurial support for startups or/and any type of support for startups, be it 'incubation', 'acceleration', 'mentoring', 'coaching', etc.	Other subjects
<i>Date</i>	Between 2000 and 2024	Articles published before 2000
		Duplicate items

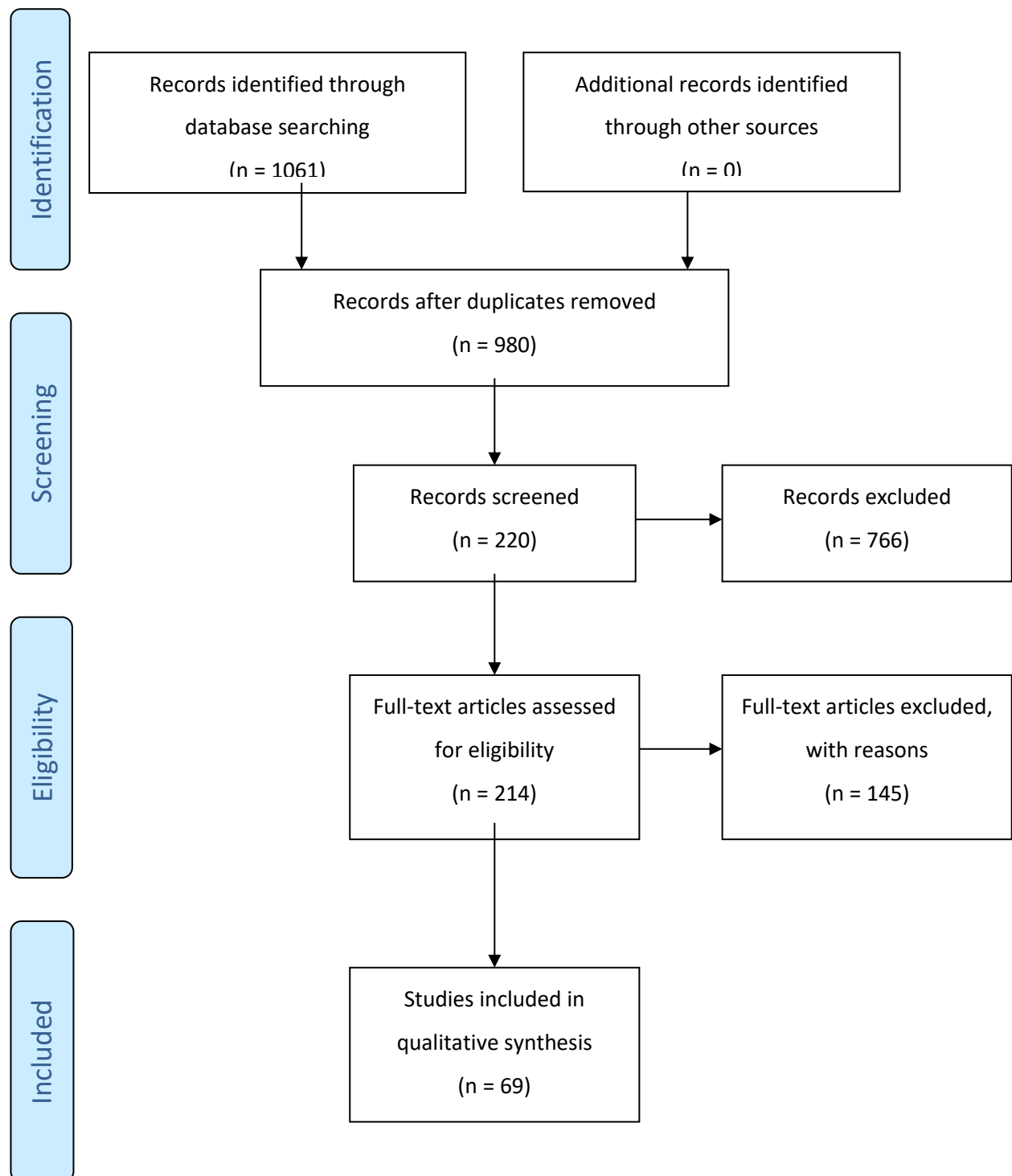
Source: Authors

In reading all the selected articles, we also excluded 145 of them for two reasons:

- Some articles do not answer our research question: they deal with the subject of entrepreneurial support for companies in general, without focusing on startups, which are the subject of our research.
- Some articles present summaries that are not clear and comprehensible enough: this led us to read the full article to determine its relevance.

As a result, we finally identified 69 articles that precisely met our needs. In summary, the PRISMA Flowchart is presented as follows:

Figure N°2: PRISMA Flowchart

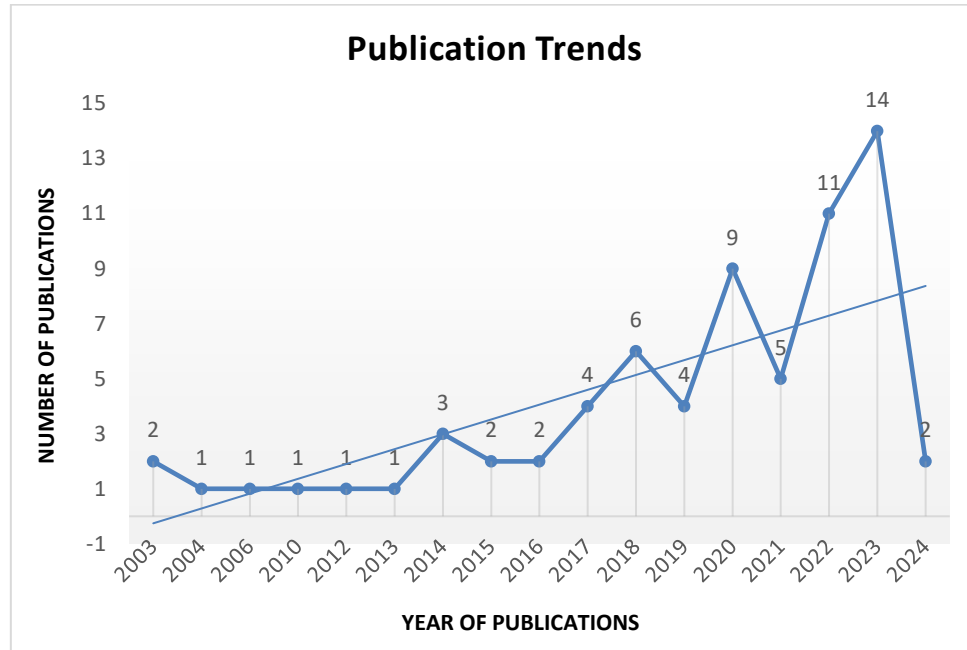


Source: Authors

We have ranked the number of articles published in our research by year of publication to show how the subject has evolved over time. Looking at the graph in Figure 3, we can see that start-up support is a subject that has only recently aroused the interest of researchers. Moreover, the

figure shows an increasing curve, meaning that publications are increasing over this period, with 2023 standing out as the year with the highest number of publications.

Figure N°3: The evolution of publications on entrepreneurial support for startups



4. Discussion :

The objective of this article is to examine the effects of entrepreneurial support provided to startups by relevant organizations and to highlight their role in the development and long-term success of these young, innovative companies. The results of this study illustrate that the support and services offered to startups have a positive impact on their development and growth, while also strengthening their resilience and enhancing their competitiveness in the market.

Indeed, startups represent significant potential for our economy, both in terms of job creation and support for economic growth (Aaboen, Lindelöf, von Koch, & Löfsten, 2006; Chanut-Guieu & Tannery, 2009; Julien et al., 2002). They have become one of the main drivers of national growth, contributing to national development by encouraging innovation, improving productivity, and introducing new products and services to the market. However, they risk not fully realizing their potential due to a lack of relevant skills, limited local networks, and management issues. For these reasons, promoting and encouraging startup entrepreneurship has taken on increased importance in light of the recent economic crisis. Support during the creation

phase can significantly influence a startup's survival and growth potential (Hentic-Gilberto, Berger-Douce, 2017).

Furthermore, the results show that entrepreneurial support at early stages, combined with activities such as market evaluation, business planning, and financial planning, contributes to positive outcomes for novice entrepreneurs. This influence remains significant even when considering individual characteristics, activities during the startup phase, organizational characteristics, and external factors. The findings suggest that effective support programs are those that combine external advice with concrete actions taken by entrepreneurs to better prepare for challenges and seize growth opportunities (Yusuf, J. E., 2014). In this context, having access to a support program should facilitate the process for aspiring founders by helping them overcome certain obstacles, develop new skills, or access specific resources (Cuzin and Fayolle, 2004).

According to the authors, entrepreneurial support enables startups to access a range of services, most notably access to financial, material, and technological resources; professional and personal development for startup founders; networking and connections with partners, suppliers, and customers; and access to mentoring and investment acceleration programs at both national and international levels. The authors also note that startups require broader support beyond mere financing, particularly in terms of advice, networks, and high-quality personalized guidance.

The results of our research highlighted the diversity of entrepreneurial support structures, reflecting the wide range of needs and contexts encountered by startups at different stages of development. By their very nature, these structures vary in terms of the services offered, methodologies used, and target audiences. Business incubators, for example, often provide intensive support to startups, helping them develop their business ideas, access financing, and establish networks. They may also offer shared workspace and material resources. Accelerators, on the other hand, generally focus on the rapid growth of already established businesses, providing them with access to mentors, investors, and additional resources to accelerate their expansion. Furthermore, there are specific training and mentoring programs aimed at underrepresented groups in entrepreneurship, particularly young entrepreneurs. These programs aim to overcome the specific barriers these groups face and promote diversity within the entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Certainly, entrepreneurial support plays an increasingly crucial role in the development of startups, both during the creation stage and in their post-creation phase. However, it is important

to recognize that each startup is unique, with its own challenges, needs, and aspirations. Thus, despite the importance of these support services, it is essential to ensure that they are tailored and personalized to meet the specificities of each startup.

Conclusion:

In this contribution, our goal was to catalog and comprehensively present research works on the support of startups. To achieve this, we chose to adopt the PRISMA method and apply a straightforward and effective approach from the collection of references from databases to their evaluation and analysis. By utilizing the features of Zotero and Microsoft Excel software, we conducted a systematic analysis that allowed us to highlight several relevant publications addressing the impact of entrepreneurial support on startups.

This systematic literature review allowed us to analyze a sample of 69 articles published in various databases, including Scopus, JSTOR, Springer, Google Scholar, Web of Science, Science Direct, and Cairn.info, which addressed the relationship between the concepts explored in our research and provided insights to enhance the understanding of this topic. Thus, the support for startups is a subject that has only recently attracted the attention of researchers, reflecting the rapid evolution of the entrepreneurial landscape and the growing recognition of the importance of supporting emerging businesses in the contemporary economy.

Overall, scientific research on startup support has so far demonstrated the crucial importance of supporting young, innovative businesses throughout their lifecycle to foster their growth, stimulate innovation, and strengthen their sustainability in an increasingly competitive market. Indeed, support programs offer a range of resources, from strategic expertise to access to funding, which can significantly improve the chances of success for startups. Mentors, incubators, accelerators, and professional networks play a key role in this process by providing personalized support and advice tailored to the specific needs of each company. As a result, they contribute to creating an environment conducive to the emergence of new ideas and the expansion of the entrepreneurial ecosystem. Moreover, by investing in entrepreneurial support, governments, academic institutions, and industry players can foster innovation, job creation, and long-term economic growth.

The managerial implications of this research indicate that decision-makers and managers of support programs should place greater emphasis on service customization, enhancing networking opportunities, and integrating digital technologies into their offerings. Furthermore,

strengthening collaboration between public and private stakeholders is crucial to maximize the effectiveness and reach of these programs.

Our study faces certain theoretical and methodological limitations. Firstly, we have predefined the search keywords and the databases used. However, it would be preferable to broaden the scope of our research by including other databases and exploring additional keywords beyond those mentioned in this article, such as 'incubat*' and/or 'young innovative business.' Secondly, our research does not claim to be exhaustive, as it did not include other types of references, particularly theses, dissertations, and book chapters. Finally, a systematic literature review allows for tracking the evolution of a given topic over time.

However, it is worth noting that this research may pave the way for a qualitative study that would provide a better understanding of the influence of entrepreneurial support on the sustainability of startups.

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