

Intrapreneurial drivers as a strategic imperative: Assessing organizational support within the food processing industry in Albania

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Abstract: In rapidly evolving global markets, the ability of a company to innovate internally—or engage in intrapreneurship—is crucial for sustaining competitive advantage. **Objective:** The primary objective of this research is to assess whether the Albanian food processing companies provide a conducive environment for intrapreneurship, focusing on five key intrapreneurial drivers: management support, work discretion, rewards, time availability, and organizational boundaries. **Method:** The researchers employed mainly a quantitative approach, using the Corporate Entrepreneurship Assessment Instrument (CEAI) developed by Kuratko, Hornsby, and Covin (2014), augmented with in-person observations of the researchers on-site. The instrument was shared with employees from ten leading companies in the industry to measure perceptions of intrapreneurial support within their organizational environments. **Results:** Analysis of survey data and observations revealed moderate managerial support for innovative ideas but lacking support in terms of resources and implementation. Employees reported limited autonomy, hindering innovation. There was a disconnect between innovation and reward systems, indicating that intrapreneurial efforts are not adequately incentivized. Time constraints and rigid job roles also limited intrapreneurial ventures. Overall, the environment within these companies is not optimal for intrapreneurship, raising questions about a possible supportive intrapreneurial environment. **Originality:** This study fills a significant gap to the field by exploring the intrapreneurial domain in the Albanian food processing industry as an emerging market, a context largely ignored in previous studies. This study highlights the need for strategic changes in management practices within the Albanian food processing industry to better support and leverage intrapreneurial capabilities. **Recommendations** include enhancing managerial support for innovation, liberalizing work procedures, aligning rewards with innovative outputs, managing workloads to allow creative freedom, and reducing organizational rigidity to enhance agility.

Keywords: intrapreneurship, organizational support, food processing industry, Albania, strategic management.

JEL classification: M12.

1. Introduction

Entrepreneurship, as defined by Ferreira (2020), is the courageous act of initiating a new business venture with the aim of making a profit, while fully acknowledging the potential risks involved. A significant concept that emerged from this is intrapreneurship, also known as corporate entrepreneurship, which involves the diffusion of entrepreneurial behavior and mindset within an organization. In today's dynamic business environment, organizations are constantly faced with changes stemming from political events, market fluctuations, technological advancements, and shifts in consumer preferences. To survive and thrive amidst these changes, organizations must be adaptable.

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Numerous studies have endorsed intrapreneurship as the most effective tool for keeping pace with these incessant changes.

Intrapreneurship, as described by Antoncic and Hisrich (2001), is a process that unfolds within an existing organization, irrespective of its size, and leads to innovations in the form of new products, technologies, strategies, and services. Over the years, researchers have strived to identify the factors that foster intrapreneurship within an organization. For the purpose of this study, a sample of 10 Albanian companies from the food processing industry were purposively selected. These ten companies represent the majority of the market share in the food processing industry in Albania as well as they are among the most preferred brands by local consumers, widely present in supermarket shelves. The driving factors of intrapreneurship considered in this study include management support, work discretion, rewards, time availability, and organizational boundaries. These factors, as defined by Kuratko et al. (2014), are the primary determinants of an environment conducive to intrapreneurial behavior. The Corporate Entrepreneurship Assessment Instrument (CEAI), developed by Kuratko et al. (2014), was employed as a survey tool and distributed among the selected companies to analyze the degree to which intrapreneurship is supported within the industry.

Despite research studies conducted on intrapreneurship as a concept or case studies from different countries, there is a deficiency of studies pertaining to Albania. This scarcity of literature on the Albanian market's system for intrapreneurship is the rationale behind choosing this topic. The objective of this research is to assess whether the Albanian food processing companies provide a conducive environment for intrapreneurship, focusing on five key intrapreneurial drivers: management support, work discretion, rewards, time availability, and organizational boundaries. To facilitate this research objective, the following research question has been formulated: "Are the drivers of intrapreneurship development supported in the Albanian food processing industry?" To answer the research question, the extent to which each of the drivers is supported will be analyzed.

2. Literature review

This chapter presents the literature review on intrapreneurship and its relationship with entrepreneurship.

2.1. The concept of entrepreneurship

The concept of entrepreneurship is fundamental in the business world, involving the creation of new businesses and the bearing of risks to generate profit. Entrepreneurship is the act of starting a new business with the intent of generating profit while considering potential risks (Ferreira, 2020). Aspiring entrepreneurs are often driven by a desire to be their own boss and control their future. Although the core concept of entrepreneurship has remained consistent over the decades, opportunities for entrepreneurs have significantly increased. Entrepreneurs were first recognized as a distinct class in 18th-century France when economist Richard Cantillon associated them with risk-bearing economic activities (Frederick et al., 2010). The term "entrepreneur" derives from the French word 'entreprendre,' meaning to undertake. An entrepreneur plans, manages, and bears all the risks of starting and operating a business. Although definitions of entrepreneurship vary, they essentially share the same meaning. Entrepreneurs can be described as self-governing individuals motivated to work hard, resolve issues, and learn from failure (Frederick et al., 2010). They enjoy solving business problems, building success, and reaping the rewards (Gaspar et al., 2005).

Entrepreneurs are believed to share specific traits, such as determination to create a profitable business despite challenges, self-confidence in their abilities and resources, and a desire for independence. They thrive on the fulfillment and rewards of working for themselves and are willing to take risks to create and maintain a successful business (Bazerman & Moore, 1986). However, personal traits alone are insufficient for success; academic education and training in areas like accounting, finance, sales, branding, taxation, marketing, business management, and law are crucial (Hesselbein, 1996).

2.2. The concept of intrapreneurship

Intrapreneurship is a special form of entrepreneurship. It involves fostering an entrepreneurial mindset within an existing organization to drive innovation and adaptability. Thus, to understand intrapreneurship, it is helpful to understand first the concept of entrepreneurship. In recent decades, academics and researchers have shown great interest in intrapreneurship, recognizing its benefits for enterprises of all types and sizes.

Antoncic and Hisrich (2001;2003) define intrapreneurship as the act of entrepreneurship within an organization. The term "intrapreneurship" was introduced by Pinchot in 1985 to describe the process of innovation within firms that leads to growth. Pinchot explained that "intrapreneur" is a combination of 'intracorporate' and 'entrepreneur' (as cited in Antoncic & Hisrich, 2001). Therefore, intrapreneurship is also known as corporate entrepreneurship. Churchill (1992) highlights intrapreneurship as the process of identifying and developing opportunities to create value through innovation, regardless of resources or location (as cited in Antoncic & Hisrich, 2001). Zahra (1996) links intrapreneurship to firms' survival, growth, and profitability (as cited in Hoque, Proches & Rambakus, 2020). In simple terms, intrapreneurship allows employees to act as entrepreneurs within a business, organization, or firm.

2.3. Similarities and differences between intrapreneurship and entrepreneurship

Intrapreneurship derives from the concept of entrepreneurship, and both are driven by the mission to innovate. Key similarities include leadership, innovation, intelligence, vision, and adaptability. Successful intrapreneurs and entrepreneurs exhibit strong leadership skills to turn ideas into successful ventures. Innovation is crucial for both, as they aim to keep their companies ahead by quickly adapting to challenges. Both need the right skill set and tools to execute projects and achieve goals.

The major differences between intrapreneurship and entrepreneurship involve risk-bearing, ownership of intellectual rights, and reward potential (Morris et al., 2011). Intrapreneurs face limited risk, as their company bears the risk of new projects, while entrepreneurs bear full responsibility and risk. Intrapreneurs' rewards are limited to job titles and firm policies, whereas entrepreneurs directly receive the full rewards of their success. Entrepreneurs have more flexibility and freedom, making decisions independently, while intrapreneurs operate within organizational boundaries and require higher-level approvals. Entrepreneurs are recognized for their business planning, profit growth skills, leadership, and motivational qualities. In a work environment, proper motivation and leadership enhance employee creativity and performance, leading to job satisfaction, positive customer feedback, and financial development. Creating intrapreneurs within an organization involves several steps, including providing the right environment and support structures. Entrepreneurs and managers drive the creation of intrapreneurs by empowering and motivating employees, who are the greatest source of competitive advantage for companies (Gaspar et al., 2005).

Key studies, such as those by Ferreira (2020), Hoque, Proches & Rambakus, (2020), Antoncic & Hisrich (2011), Ribeiro-Soriano (2017), Urban & Wood (2017), Blanka (2019) offer valuable insights into the mechanisms and benefits of intrapreneurship in fostering innovation and growth within organizations. By leveraging employees' entrepreneurial skills, companies can enhance their competitive edge and adaptability in rapidly changing markets. Effective intrapreneurship requires a supportive organizational culture, clear communication of goals, and the provision of resources and autonomy to employees (Hisrich & Ramadani, 2017).

3. Data and methodology

This study aims to evaluate the support for intrapreneurial drivers within Albanian companies, specifically focusing on the food processing industry. Given that intrapreneurship is a relatively unstudied concept in Albania, this research seeks to understand the readiness of these companies and their management to embrace and encourage intrapreneurial activities.

To achieve this objective, the research utilizes a quantitative analysis approach targeting the food processing sector in Albania. A sample composed of 10 most prominent Albanian companies of the sector is purposely selected to gather both insights and first-hand observations from the researchers into the intrapreneurial environment within these organizations. These ten companies represent the

majority of the market share in the food processing industry in Albania as well as they are among the most preferred brands by local consumers, widely present in supermarket shelves. This ensures the generalisability of the results of this study for the food processing industry in Albania. Primary data collection involved utilizing a survey based on the Corporate Entrepreneurship Assessment Instrument (CEAI) adapted from Kuratko, Hornsby, and Covin (2014) and distributing it to different level employees and low-level managers aged 18 and over, among the selected companies. This approach was taken to measure the extent to which employees are allowed to act as intrapreneurs and how well managers motivate their employees to engage in intrapreneurial activities.

The survey comprised various statements assessed using a 5-point Likert scale to measure responses. Both the survey and observations facilitated the collection of informative data on how these companies foster or inhibit entrepreneurial behaviours among their staff. 85 valid surveys were filtered, this augmented with the first-hand observations of the researchers created the data used for the analysis. Before distributing the survey, each company was contacted and provided with detailed information about the research and the purpose of the survey. Some companies requested to review the survey beforehand, while others agreed to participate immediately. The survey included a summary at the beginning, assuring respondents of anonymity and security of their personal information. The survey was developed based on the literature review and specifically adapted from the Corporate Entrepreneurship Assessment Instrument (CEAI) by Kuratko, Hornsby, and Covin (2014). The original CEAI survey comprises five sections and 48 statements, focusing on key aspects of corporate intrapreneurship development. For this research, 45 statements were retained, and the survey was translated into Albanian too to ensure clarity for the respondents. The survey responses and observations were collected over a 2-month period and analyzed via descriptive tools.

The five sections of the survey are as follows: Top Management Support, which includes 17 statements to measure the degree to which employees believe that top management encourages and promotes entrepreneurial behavior, supports innovative ideas, and provides necessary resources. Work Discretion, comprising 10 statements, that assess the degree to which employees believe the company tolerates failure, provides decision-making freedom, and delegates authority to lower-level workers. Rewards/Reinforcements, which contains six statements to evaluate the degree to which employees feel that their company rewards entrepreneurial activities and successes. Time Availability, with six statements measuring the extent to which employees are given extra time to pursue innovations and achieve organizational goals, while maintaining reasonable workload schedules. Organizational Boundaries, that consists of six statements to gauge the flexibility of organizational boundaries in promoting entrepreneurial activity and improving information flow between departments.

The research focused on the food processing industry in Albania, selecting a sample of 10 prominent companies purposely based on their market presence and consumer preference. The selected companies for this study are Kazazi Meat, Aiba, Partner Ballkanik, Klegen, Teuta Durres, Beata, Zepa Natyral, Gjiofarm, Qumeshit Mireli, Sejega. The selected companies are locally known for their above-average-and-high quality products and standards, making them ideal subjects for this research study. They range from meat and dairy producers to companies specializing in natural products, juices, and condiments. The diversity and market share of these companies provides a good opportunity for a comprehensive overview of the readiness for intrapreneurship in the Albanian food processing industry.

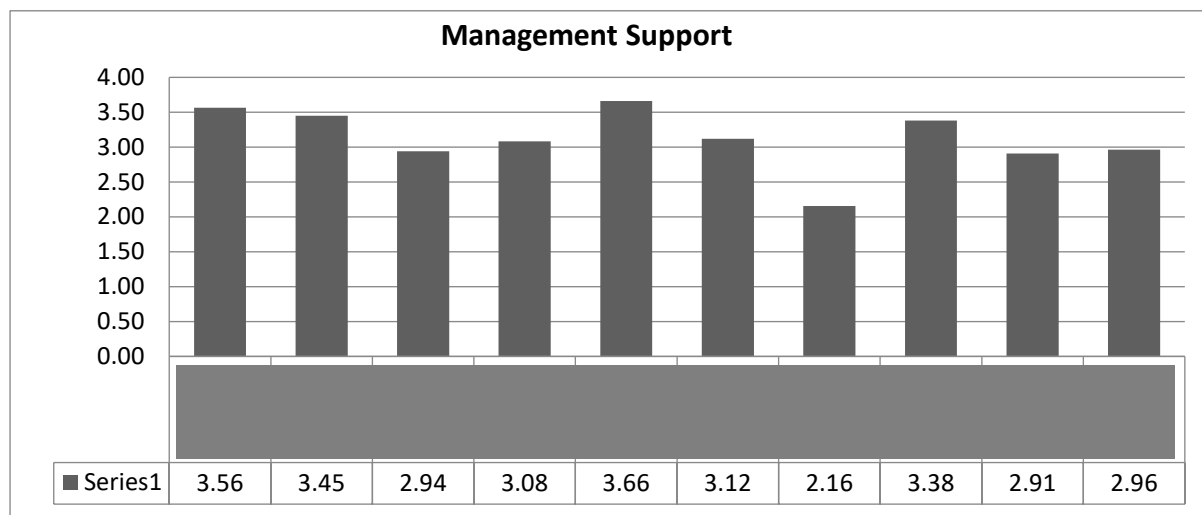
4. Research results and comments

After collecting the surveys, in total, 85 surveys were considered, each containing 45 statements, resulting in 3,375 individual responses, this combined with the observation notes of the researchers made up a significant amount of information to be processed. Mean values for each section were calculated using Kuratko et al.'s (2014) scoring scales. The data were visualized through column graphs for each section, enabling a comprehensive analysis of each dimension.

Figure 1 illustrates the results regarding Management Support dimension across the entire sample. The mean values range from 2.16 to 3.6 out of 5.0, a variation that indicates an average tendency among managers to support new ideas and small experimental projects, despite the highest score being 3.66 out of 5. Analysis of researcher observations and individual responses reveals that employees generally feel their ideas and opinions are considered and that they are encouraged to discuss

suggestions or project ideas with their managers. However, the implementation of these ideas is often hindered by a lack of financial support, limited free time, or fear of failure, as reflected in the moderate mean values. In some of the companies, many employees feel unsupported in expressing their innovative project ideas.

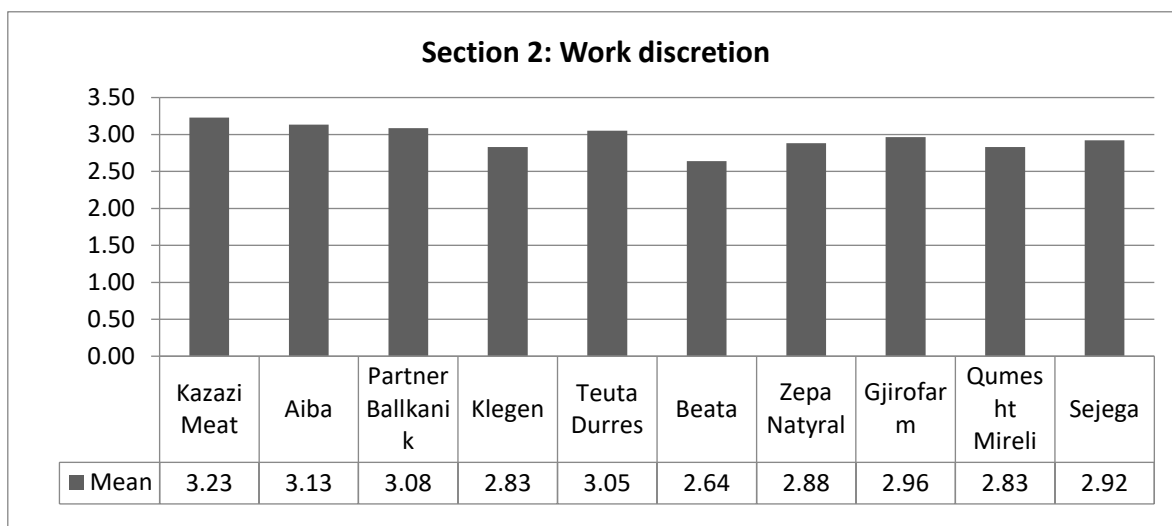
Figure 1. Extent to which employees perceive managers support and promote entrepreneurial behavior



Source: author's calculations.

Overall, while these companies are not fully ready to implement intrapreneurship, they are on the right path due to the support most managers provide. To advance, these companies need to start executing employees' ideas, which will foster motivation and satisfaction, ultimately leveraging employee expertise for successful projects and gaining competitive advantages.

Figure 2. Extent to which employees perceive failure tolerated and decision-making freedom provided



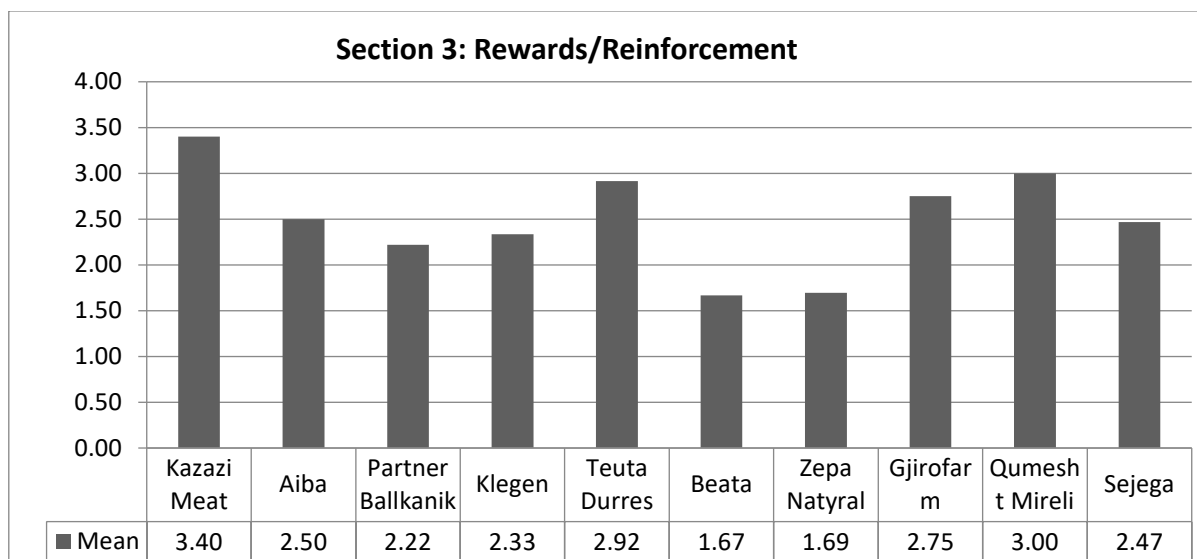
Source: author's calculations.

Figure 2 displays the results regarding the Work Discretion dimension. The mean values are moderate, varying from 2.64 to 3.23 out of 5.0, and relatively consistent across the sample, indicating a uniform perception of this aspect. However, observation notes and a more detailed survey analysis show that employees do not feel autonomous and lack the freedom to decide how to perform their tasks. Creativity and the opportunity to try different methods are generally lacking, with many employees adhering to standard procedures. Mistakes often

lead to criticism or punishment, although some employees feel that the company provides opportunities to utilize their abilities. Improvement is needed in granting employees more decision-making freedom and reducing criticism for failures. Managers should focus on delegating authority and responsibility to lower levels to enhance work discretion.

Figure 3 shows the results for rewards and reinforcements. Unlike previously, in this section noticeable extremes can be seen, with means varying from 1.67 to 3.40 out of 5.0. The results indicate that in few companies, employees feel that entrepreneurial initiatives and performance are rewarded, nevertheless often with increased job responsibilities. However, they also report challenges and obstacles in their jobs. In most other companies, employees perceive that their efforts and performance are not adequately rewarded or recognized by managers. Employees stated that their job is challenging, and managers don't remove obstacles, or even don't inform higher managers when their performance is outstanding. The lack of a performance-based reward system is concerning, as it can demotivate employees and prevent the company from fully utilizing its labor resources. Implementing such a system is crucial for encouraging challenging work and fostering intrapreneurship.

Figure 3. The extent to which employees perceive that entrepreneurial activity is rewarded

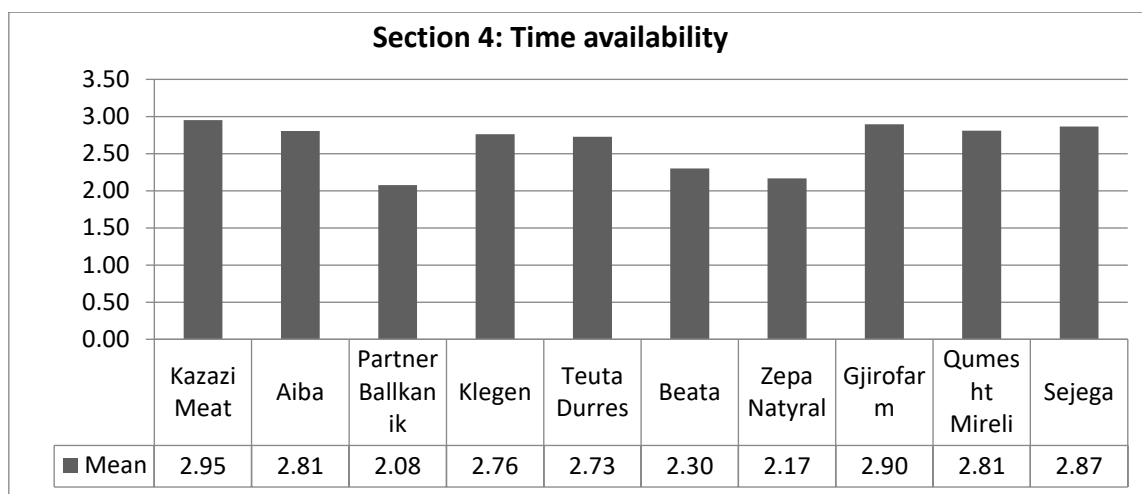


Source: author's calculations.

Figure 4 presents the results for the Time Availability dimension, with mean values consistently below three varying from 2.17 to 2.95 out of 5.0, indicating a significant issue across all the sample of companies. While also analyzing the individual responses and observatory notes, most employees reported that they do not have sufficient free time, and when they have the right amount of workload to complete their tasks, they feel constrained by time limitations. This lack of free time hampers their ability to develop new ideas or address broader organizational issues.

Employees feel rushed and burdened with too many tasks, leading to inefficiency. Time availability is critical for generating intrapreneurial activity, and these companies need to manage time better to encourage innovation, as Kuratko et al. (2009) pose that employees should be given free time during working hours to foster new and innovative ideas.

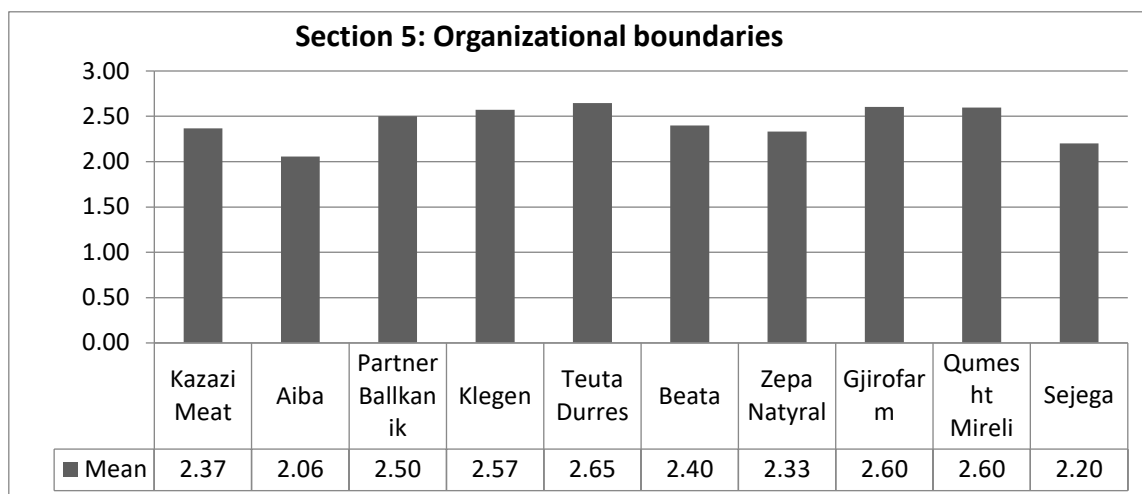
Figure 4. The extent to which employees are ensured extra time to pursue job innovations and organizational goals



Source: author's calculations.

Figure 5 illustrates the results for the Organizational Boundaries dimension, which are similarly low, with mean values varying from 2.2 to below 2.65 out of 5.00. From observation notes and individual responses, it results that employees follow standard operating procedures that have remained unchanged for at least the last six months and are restricted by numerous rules on task performance. This rigidity stifles creativity and innovation, preventing employees from taking on responsibilities beyond their job descriptions.

Figure 5. The extent to which employees perceive that internal and external boundaries of the organization are flexible



Source: author's calculations.

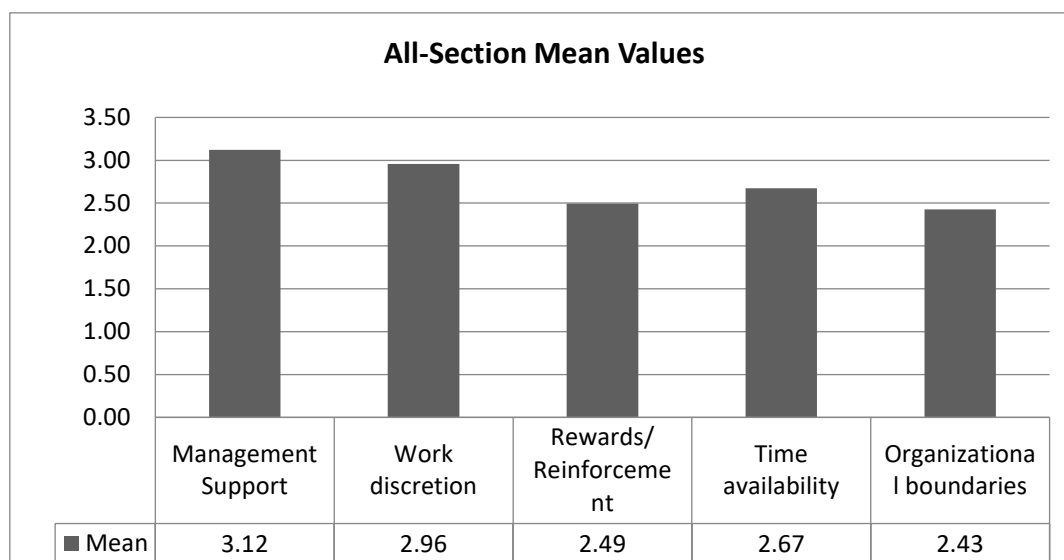
While employees are aware of the expected performance levels, performance evaluations are infrequent. Frank (2013) emphasizes that regular performance evaluations are essential for boosting employee morale and commitment. To promote intrapreneurship, these companies must create a boundary-less organization that removes barriers to change and innovation.

Figure 6 provides a summary of the average mean values for each dimension across the sample. Only one section, management support, has a mean value exceeding 3, while the others range between 2.43 to 2.96 out of 5.00. These results show that employees are uncertain about their companies' support for intrapreneurship in areas like work discretion, rewards, time availability, and organizational boundaries.

Analysis of survey data and observations revealed a moderate level of managerial support for innovative ideas but lacking support in terms of resources and implementation. Employees reported limited autonomy,

hindering innovation. It resulted in a disconnect between innovation and reward systems, indicating that intrapreneurial efforts are not adequately incentivized. Time constraints and rigid job roles also limited intrapreneurial ventures. Overall, the environment within these companies is not optimal for intrapreneurship, raising questions about a possible supportive intrapreneurial environment.

Figure 6. Summary of section mean value



Source: author's calculations.

The overall mean of 2.73 indicates significant room for improvement. These low scores are likely due to time constraints, poor time and workload management, creativity limitations, and a lack of performance-based rewards.

To address the research question, findings indicate that the drivers of intrapreneurship are not adequately supported in the Albanian food processing industry, and these companies need to rethink about their management practices and organizational contexts to support intrapreneurship better, thus, leveraging employee potential for competitive advantage.

5. Conclusions

The aim of this research was to examine the internal environment for the development of intrapreneurship in the Albanian food processing industry, assessing the extent to which drivers of intrapreneurship are encouraged and supported. Using the Corporate Entrepreneurship Assessment Instrument (CEAI) developed by Kuratko et al. (2014), the internal environment of a sample of ten selected companies was evaluated.

The study concluded that the internal environment for supporting intrapreneurship in this industry is poorly developed, evidenced by the low mean values across various aspects of the survey. The highest mean value was recorded for 'Management Support' (3.12), followed by 'Work Discretion.' The lowest mean values were for 'Organizational Boundaries' and 'Rewards and Reinforcements.' Despite its relatively low score, 'Management Support' emerged as the primary driver of intrapreneurship, indicating that while overall support is lacking, management's willingness to support new ideas and projects is more promising because intrapreneurship development is impossible without the support of top management.

These findings emphasize the significant role of managers in fostering intrapreneurship. In this context, CEAI serves as a valuable tool for identifying areas in need of improvement and guiding managers on where to focus their efforts to enhance corporate entrepreneurship. It can be concluded that as evidenced by all dimensions' overall mean value of 2.73 internal environment of companies is not adequately supportive of corporate intrapreneurship.

To stimulate the development of intrapreneurship in the Albanian food processing industry, some key practical implications that result from this study can be summarized in the form of actionable recommendations as below:

- Enhance Management Support: Given that management support is the leading driver, it is crucial for managers to actively support their employees and listen to their ideas. This will empower employees to perform better and contribute more innovatively.
- Increase Work Discretion: Liberalized work procedures and the provision to employees with greater freedom to make decisions about their work processes. Encouraging creativity of employees in choosing their methods for performing tasks can lead to more innovative solutions, which can be later turned into rewards.
- Balance Workload and Time: Ensure that employees have a balanced workload and sufficient time to complete tasks without feeling overwhelmed. Time is essential for creative thinking, and reducing stress can enhance engagement and performance.
- Foster a Supportive Organizational Culture: Managers should implement incentives that encourage intrapreneurship. This includes supporting innovative ideas with resources, creating performance-based reward systems, encouraging risk-taking, and tolerating failure. Reducing bureaucratic obstacles can also help employees become intrapreneurs.

By continuously improving these internal factors, managers and companies can create an environment that nurtures intrapreneurial activities, ultimately leading to greater innovation and competitiveness.

While the findings of this study provided a good basis for assessing the organizational context among Albanian food processing companies to support intrapreneurship, it also faced some limitations, including the small sample size, however representative enough in terms of market share, which may seem to limit the generalizability of findings for some researchers. This limitation was tackled with personal observations of the researchers to cross-check survey findings. Additionally, fixed Likert-scale questions may have led to response bias, with respondents potentially using extreme rankings. Some managers hesitated to distribute the survey due to fears of negative impacts on their company's reputation or job security, reducing the number of participating companies. Furthermore, the limited existing research on intrapreneurship in Albanian companies posed challenges in contextualizing the findings. Nevertheless, these limitations highlight the need for further research covering more companies and industries to gain a comprehensive understanding of intrapreneurship in Albania. Future studies should aim to address these limitations and build on the findings of this research.

Authors' contribution: Introduction, E.D, A.K; Literature review, E.D, A.K.; Methodology and data, E.D, A.K; Research results and comments, E.D, A.K; Conclusion, E.D, A.K.

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