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Unveiling International New Ventures' Success: Employee's Entrepreneurial Behavior

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Abstract: New international ventures have become an important and growing role in the economics of a country. However, it seems that the literature on international entrepreneurship has paid little attention to their employees and their contribution to the success of these firms in international markets. The employee may be a key point in explaining their rapid and fruitful international development, i.e., increasing the international entrepreneurial orientation of the company. Using case study methodology, this investigation aims to unveil the human resource management in international new ventures, complete previous models explaining these organizations, and contribute to a better understanding of their international success. The findings show that the entrepreneurs aim to foster employee entrepreneurial behavior by implementing certain human resource practices.

Keywords: international new venture; born global; employee entrepreneurial behavior; entrepreneurial orientation; intrapreneurship; human resource management; human resource practices

1. Introduction

The last three decades have witnessed a rapid growth of small and medium firms that internationalize soon after foundation (Glaister et al. 2014). Although these organizations have been labeled with different names, two of them have become the most influential in the literature (Reuber et al. 2017; Romanello and Chiarvesio 2019): international new venture (INV) and born global (BG). Initially, the term INV appeared in the early 1990s, when McDougall (1989) noted that new organizations differentiate according to their domestic or international orientation. Oviatt and McDougall (1994) defined an INV “as a business organization that, from inception, seeks to derive significant competitive advantages from the use of resources and the sale of outputs in multiple countries” (p. 49). Almost at the same time, Rennie (1993) also noted that some organizations differed from traditional incremental exporters, as they started selling abroad very early after the foundation reaching a considerable export rate over the total sales. Later, Knight and Cavusgil (1996) defined BG firms as “small, (usually) technology-oriented companies, which started operating in international markets from the earliest days of their establishment” (p. 1). Since then, a rich body of literature has developed studying this phenomenon, appearing other close terms like instant exporters (McAuley 1999), international ventures (Kuemmerle 2002), or born internationals (Kundu and Katz 2003).

Recent reviews (Cesinger et al. 2012; Garcia-Lillo et al. 2017; Reuber et al. 2017; Martin and Javalgi 2018; Romanello and Chiarvesio 2019) have concluded that there is no consensus on the operational definition of these organizations. Common to the investigations is the idea that these firms are young and internationalize quickly, skipping some stages of the traditional Uppsala model proposed by Johanson and Vahlne (1977), which explains the internationalization as an incremental process. The literature seems to converge that these firms initiate internationalization activities around

three years since their creation. Maybe because of the unclear operational definition of this type of company, some authors have used the terms INV and BG interchangeably in the investigations (Romanello and Chiarvesio 2019). However, the label “global” refers to a truly global spread of business activities, even though some of these companies may sell only in a few countries or, even, in one country (Cesinger et al. 2012; Garcia-Lillo et al. 2017; Reuber et al. 2017; Martin and Javalgi 2018). Therefore, the label “international” seems to be more appropriate to define the scope of their internationalization. For this reason, this paper will use the term INV, which is also the most cited one in the literature (Reuber et al. 2017).

Earlier, these firms were the exceptions to the rule as it seemed that internationalization concerned only to enterprises already consolidated in their local market (Oviatt and McDougall 1994). However, soon after, their numbers and weight in the economy of a country were increasing (Eurofound 2012). Concurrently, the academic interest in this type of company grew, as well (Coviello et al. 2011), and over these three last decades the international entrepreneurship (IE) research has provided a well-delineated theoretical framework documenting the INV's unique business model (Jones et al. 2011; Knight and Liesch 2016; Schwens et al. 2018). INVs cope with scarce tangible resources as financial and human ones (Freeman et al. 2006). However, they have got valuable intangible resources and capabilities (Knight and Cavusgil 2004; Rialp et al. 2005). INVs are assumed to operate predominantly in technology-intensive industries (Gabrielsson et al. 2008), in which competitive advantage is often based on the possession of a unique know-how (Burgel and Murray 2000; Gabrielsson et al. 2008), leveraged through a niche-focused and proactive international strategy (Rialp et al. 2005) with low requirements of marketing mix adaptations (Verbeke et al. 2014).

Since the seminal works, the literature has flourished trying to explain the antecedents and performance of these companies, that can explain their success (Glaister et al. 2014; Romanello and Chiarvesio 2019). For example, the investigations have studied the characteristics of the organizations and their entrepreneurs (Evangelista 2005; Spence et al. 2011; Kalinic and Forza 2012; Rasmussen et al. 2012; Odorici and Presutti 2013), the reasons explaining the rapid and early internationalization (Rialp et al. 2005; Zou and Ghauri 2010; Taylor and Jack 2013), the exploitation of the international opportunity (Reuber et al. 2017), the relationship among the entry strategy into foreign markets, the competitive advantage and the resource commitment (Gassmann and Keupp 2007; Ripollés et al. 2012; Zhang and Dai 2013), the role of the knowledge in the internationalization process (Gassmann and Keupp 2007; Presutti et al. 2007; Nordman and Melén 2008) and the capability learning (Prashantham and Floyd 2012), their distribution channels (Gabrielsson and Kirpalani 2004; Gabrielsson and Gabrielsson 2011), their financial management (Gabrielsson et al. 2004) and the importance of the trust, the contracts (Blomqvist et al. 2008), the relationships, the international alliances (Acs and Terjesen 2013), the marketing, the information technologies (Evers et al. 2012; Zhang et al. 2013), the networks (Kiss and Danis 2010), and the social capital (Rialp et al. 2005), as well as environmental variables as the industry structure (Fernhaber et al. 2007) and the INV's innovativeness (Efrat et al. 2017). Surprisingly, the investigations have neglected the contribution of the employee in the success of the INV. Only recent research focusing on human-related issues has started to emerge, with papers looking into subjects such as investment in HR practices in INVs that are located in emergent economies (Khavul et al. 2009), talent management applied by mature new ventures operating in international contexts (Festing et al. 2013), or recruitment and training practices in mature INVs (Glaister et al. 2014). That matches the suggestions from some authors, as it seems that not all-important factors explaining the performance and survival of INVs have been yet explored (Knight and Liesch 2016; Dzikowski 2018).

Research has firmly established that INVs' performance is associated with their capacity to update their business model to meet different market settings (Achtenhagen et al. 2013; Laurell et al. 2017) and developing an entrepreneurial orientation (EO) may help (McDougall and Oviatt 2000). When competing in complex and hostile environments, small to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) tend to become entrepreneurial, i.e., a strategic orientation based on innovation, proactivity, and risk-taking

(Miller 1983; Bouchard and Basso 2011). The EO allows that the firms can identify new opportunities and achieve superior performance, assuring business survival and competitiveness (Ribeiro-Soriano and Urbano 2010). Knight and Cavusgil (2004) have argued that promoting an entrepreneurial behavior should be instrumental for the development and enactment of key organizational routines in the INV to succeed in the international markets. The strong relationship between EO and superior performance has been well established in the INV literature (Knight and Liesch 2016). Acknowledging that the EO is crucial for reaching a superior performance and consolidating the survival of the firm, it's necessary to reveal the mechanisms by which the entrepreneurs maintain a solid EO over time (Bouchard and Basso 2011) and further investigate how the entrepreneurs translate the EO into a superior performance (Knight and Liesch 2016).

Lately, the literature has witnessed an interest in promoting entrepreneurial behaviors in the organization, as it is considered that innovative employee behavior relates to firm growth and strategic renewal, implying a competitive advantage for the company (Veenker et al. 2008; Guerrero and Peña-Legazkue 2013; Blanka 2018). At the same time, the employee contribution to the organization has become more valued, and the organization has granted the employee more power and responsibility (Foss et al. 2015). The development of organizational entrepreneurial behaviors is likely to result in dependency on how the firms mobilize their employees to meet the requirements of the entrepreneurial behavior (Hayton 2005; Peris-Ortiz 2009; Messersmith and Wales 2011; Hayton et al. 2013; Tang et al. 2015).

From the human resource management (HRM) literature, we know that human resource (HR) practices are specific actions that a company carries out to direct the employee's behavior towards desired outcomes (Schuler 1992; Becker and Gerhart 1996). Many investigations have found support for a linkage between HR practices and the employee's entrepreneurial behavior (EEB; e.g., Kirby 2006; Menzel et al. 2007; Rigtering and Weitzel 2013; Liu et al. 2019). With the implementation of adequate HR practices, the organization signals to the employee that it values and supports his entrepreneurial behavior (Shipton et al. 2006; Liu et al. 2019). However, we know very little about HR practices adopted by INVs, especially those that contribute to the EEB.

Also, it has been established that HR practices can be grouped into three main categories using the ability, motivation, and opportunity (AMO) schemata. That is, HR practices intend to enhance the employees' abilities, foster their motivation and provide them with the opportunity to perform in their works (Lepak et al. 2006; Boxall and Purcell 2008; Subramony 2009). Moreover, three types of relationships among HR practices can be identified: additive, substitutive or synergic; being the synergic approach the most recommended (Delery 1998; Gerhart 2007; Chadwick 2010; Jiang et al. 2012; Boon et al. 2019). Finally, no consensus seems to emerge on what practices are the best, neither arguments on what configurations of HR practices can be more effective, as it matters the context in which they are applied (Warech and Tracey 2004; Bryson et al. 2005; Boon et al. 2019). That suggests that HR practices must be studied in different contexts.

Based on the above reflections, this paper aims to address the following research questions: What HR practices encourage EEB in the context of new ventures' early internationalization? Can a common denominator be identified among HR practices increasing EEB? By concentrating on these questions, this paper looks for adding to the existing literature mainly in three directions. First, it focuses on the role of EEB as a neglected factor that might contribute to complete previous models explaining INVs' early internationalization and success. In this sort of company, the weight of the employee may be heavier than until now supposed, even becoming a key factor in explaining their success. This investigation seems to be one of the first studying the EEB in the context of INVs. Therefore, this paper can be a starting point questioning the importance of the employees in these organizations. Understanding how entrepreneurs maintain a strong EO over time and translate it into superior performance can advance the theory of INVs. Also, by studying entrepreneurial behaviors at the employee level, this work goes beyond past research, which has mainly focused on studying antecedents and consequences of an entrepreneurial behavior at the firm level (Miller 2011).

Second, this work studies INVs' early internationalization from a different perspective, and it aims to develop informational propositions integrating IE literature with insights from the resource management literature, as HR practices fostering EEB are uncovered. Basing on related literature has been an advisable and usual way to advance in IE research (Jones et al. 2011; Coviello 2015). Thus, research in HRM is also advanced, as the scant literature focused on new ventures has overlooked the particular case of INVs, except for the works of Khavul et al. (2009) and Glaister et al. (2014). Besides, the authors studying HR practices in international organizations mainly deal with multinational firms (De Cieri et al. 2007; Brewster 2017; Cooke et al. 2019).

Third, only a few investigations in HR practices have focused on employee experiences (employee level), as usually, the literature has adopted a more firm-level perspective (Lepak et al. 2006; Alfes et al. 2013). However, HRM literature could benefit considering an employee level perspective (Gerhart 2005; Conway and Monks 2008; Kuvaas 2008; Alfes et al. 2013), as the information collected from the HR managers is not enough to uncover how HR practices really work (Khilji and Wang 2006; Nishii et al. 2008). Gathering information from the employee can be more reliable (Paauwe 2009) and it may help to unveil the mechanisms working in that relationship HRM-performance (Lepak et al. 2006). This multi-level analysis is recommended by Knight and Liesch (2016) in their review of the evolution of research on early internationalization and BG firms, as it can help to better understand the nuances in INVs. Therefore, this paper combines both entrepreneur and employee's visions about the implementation of HR practices, which is not usual to find in the literature (Boon et al. 2019).

Thus, this work follows suggestions made by several authors claiming for investigations, that will provide the literature with further explanatory models and theoretical perspectives on INVs and complete existing theories and models, which can explain how INVs quickly internationalize and achieve a superior international performance (Jones et al. 2011; Knight and Liesch 2016; Dzikowski 2018). For example, Knight and Liesch (2016) recommend in their review investigating the human resources in this type of organization that, among other factors, may lead to their superior performance.

Qualitative methodology is useful when we know little about a phenomenon (Eisenhardt 1989). The case study bases on existing theory for guiding the data collection and analysis, and it responds to "how" and "why" questions (Yin 2014) allowing to create new theories through the combination of ideas that emanate from the cases. Also, the case studies may contain less bias than analytical processes (Eisenhardt 1989) and the resulting theory may be empirically valid, as it has built from real cases. Because of the very few works found on HRM and EEB in INVs, it seems appropriate using a case study methodology for the current investigation, setting up the basis for future works. This is in line with the literature, as investigations on HRM in internationalized companies mainly use qualitative methods, specifically, case study and interviews (Cooke et al. 2019). Besides, the case study methodology is especially recommended for developing models and theory on INVs (Knight and Liesch 2016).

The paper follows with the literature review on EEB and its relationship with HRM. Afterward, the features of the investigation are described. Then, the findings are related and discussed with the presentation of the inferred propositions on the characteristics of INVs' HR practices and finally, the paper closes with the conclusions.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Employee Entrepreneurial Behaviour

Entrepreneurial behavior refers to a set of actions that promotes innovativeness, proactiveness, and risk-taking at the firm level (Miller 1983; Covin and Slevin 1991; Lumpkin and Dess 1996). As the meaning of being entrepreneurial has been widely studied, just a brief review follows. For an innovative behavior to be considered entrepreneurial, it needs to involve the search for new relations between existing resources and products, expanding the firm's resources and capabilities (Eckhardt and Shane 2003). The innovative behavior, that results from the firm's desire to optimize existing resources, is not considered entrepreneurial (Kirzner 1973; Shane and Venkataraman 2000;

Eckhardt and Shane 2003). A decidedly proactive behavior implies taking the initiative in an attempt to shape the environment and gain competitive advantages. The opposite of proactive behavior is passive and reactive behavior, i.e., simply responding to changes in the environment (Covin and Slevin 1989; Lumpkin and Dess 1997). Finally, the entrepreneurial behavior implies taking moderate to high risks (Covin and Slevin 1989; Lumpkin and Dess 1997).

The importance of being entrepreneurial has been widely recognized in the IE literature since the ground-breaking Oviatt and McDougall (1994) paper. For example, Zahra and George (2002) wrote: “the innovativeness and risk taking that firms undertake as they expand (or contract) their international operations are what makes international entrepreneurship an interesting research area” (p. 154).

Past IE research has concluded that the entrepreneur and his characteristics have a determining role in promoting international entrepreneurial orientated behaviors (Oviatt and McDougall 2005; Weerawardena et al. 2007; Cannone and Ughetto 2014). For example, Bouchard and Basso (2011) suggest that in SMEs the entrepreneur can foster or inhibit EEB, depending on the level of convergence with his employees’ initiatives and his attitude towards them. Surprisingly, there are only a few works relating the EO with the EEB (Wakkee et al. 2010; Bouchard and Basso 2011; Johnson and Wu 2012; Lages et al. 2017). Acknowledging the entrepreneur’s important role, this research points out the need to extend this perspective studying the influence of the HR practices, that the entrepreneur promotes to inculcate entrepreneurial behaviors in their workers.

The EEB is under-researched in the literature (De Jong et al. 2015; Blanka 2018; Mustafa et al. 2018), which has led to confusion on its conceptualization, appearing terms such as individual entrepreneurial orientation, intrapreneurship, or corporate entrepreneurship. Those terms have even been used interchangeably in the investigations, although some effort has been made to clarify the concepts (Blanka 2018; Mustafa et al. 2018; Neessen et al. 2019). For example, corporate entrepreneurship seems to refer to entrepreneurial actions at the firm level.

EEB can be defined as “the extent to which individual workers proactively engage in the creation, introduction, and application of opportunities at work, marked by taking business-related risks” (De Jong et al. 2015, p. 982). EEB is an individual bottom-up construct that can affect the performance of INVs (Maritz 2010; Fellnhofer et al. 2017; Kollmann et al. 2017; Neessen et al. 2019). By developing EEB employees contribute to the organization creating new products, processes, services, and they can initiate self-renewal in the INV increasing its competitiveness and performance (Neessen et al. 2019). Accordingly, three dimensions can be identified in the EEB construct: innovativeness, proactiveness, and risk-taking (Gawke et al. 2017; Blanka 2018; Mustafa et al. 2018; Neessen et al. 2019). Shortly, the dimension related to innovative behavior at the employee level refers to the initiation and intentional introduction of new and useful ideas, processes, products or procedures, which can take place within a work role, group or organization (De Jong and Hartog 2010). Entrepreneurial employees can recognize problems, generate ideas for solving them, and deliver them to the superiors and co-workers, forming models for further assessment and adoption (De Jong et al. 2015). The employee proactive behavior can be defined as a self-initiated and future-oriented action, which aims to change and improve the situation or oneself (Parker and Collins 2010). These actions can intend to improve the internal organizational environment or fit the firm with its context, for example, identifying threats or communicating strategic issues to the management (De Jong et al. 2015). Finally, employees may risk suffering from psychological, social and/or personal matters (Gasse 1982), risking even their status quo in the organization (Heinonen and Toivonen 2008; Parker and Collins 2010). Employee’s risk refers to matters related to business, with potential losses, which they may experience with new working ways because of changes in processes and systems (Afsar et al. 2017), reputation damage, resistance from co-workers, or even losing the post (De Jong et al. 2015). Also, entrepreneurial employees may involve in internal fights with superiors, as they usually act under their own initiative in pursuit of their objective (Janssen 2003). Hence, employee risk can be defined as the potential losses in a broader sense that the employee may face, with an inclination to move forward without having a permission or consensus (De Jong et al. 2015).

Mostly, the literature has studied the EEB under four research streams (Blanka 2018; Mustafa et al. 2018; Neessen et al. 2019): individual characteristics (e.g., demographics, behavior, attitudes), organizational factors (e.g., management support, culture, HR practices), contextual factors (e.g., firm type, market conditions), and the employee's outcomes (e.g., performance, intrapreneurial activity). Starting with the first stream, personality traits and work values such as optimism, persistence, initiative, ambition, extraversion, altruism, creativity, management and achievement seem to be positively associated with EEB (Camelo-Ordaz et al. 2011; Sinha and Srivastava 2013; Blanka 2018). Other authors have found that attitudes to income, independence, ownership, or recognition are related to entrepreneurial behaviors (Kirby 2006; Tietz and Parker 2012). Employee's human capital as knowledge, skills, and experience are pointed out by several researchers as promoters of EEB (Parker 2011; Blanka 2018). Social capital can help to achieve entrepreneurial activities in the employee, as well. Thus, the employee's networks within or outside the company are useful to develop an entrepreneurial behavior (Bicknell et al. 2010; Urbano and Turro 2013). Organizational factors concentrate on structures and processes within the firm. It has been found that management support and leadership in the form of positive attitudes towards entrepreneurial activities can lead to EEB (Kirby 2006; Park et al. 2014). Also, an appropriate organizational culture supporting entrepreneurial behaviors and creating an appropriate environment of nearness and cooperation can stimulate entrepreneurial activities in the employee (Park et al. 2014; Mustafa et al. 2018). Organizational factors seem to be the most frequently studied (Neessen et al. 2019) and HRM practices have been proved to have a determining role in promoting EEB (Kirby 2006; Menzel et al. 2007; Rigtering and Weitzel 2013; Liu et al. 2019). Contextual factors such as market competition can increase the willingness to enroll in entrepreneurial activities to overcome the environmental adversity (Sebora and Theerapatvong 2010). Compared to smaller firms, larger firms seem to favor entrepreneurship, as they may better reward such employee behaviors, additionally to the availability of resources they have got (Sebora and Theerapatvong 2010). Nonetheless, Bouchard and Basso (2011) suggest that traditional entrepreneurial SMEs, characterized by a central role of the owner, limited planning activities and informality, low associate to diffuse intrapreneurial practices. However, entrepreneurial SMEs with reduced centrality of the owner, more planning and formalization of processes better relate to diffuse intrapreneurial activities. Finally, the fourth stream investigated the outcomes of the entrepreneurial employee. Thus, EEB can lead to several outcomes, such as innovation, venture creation, business renewal, opportunity recognition, individual success, and higher individual productivity and organizational performance (Maritz 2010; Sieger et al. 2013; Urbano and Turro 2013; Urban and Wood 2017; Neessen et al. 2019).

2.2. Human Resource Practices and Employee Entrepreneurial Behavior

The key importance of the employee in the success of a firm has been attested by researches. The employees can drive to success or failure in all companies, especially in entrepreneurial firms with limited resources (Katz et al. 2000), as the employees are those, who carry out all the strategies and procedures (Baron 2007). Adopting a strategy-as-practice perspective with its focus on micro activities (Achtenhagen et al. 2013), HR practices have been pointed out for influencing on performance, as HR practices are the specific HR activities used to achieve the employee's compromise with the organizational strategy (Lepak et al. 2006).

Several authors suggest that multiple HR practices can be grouped using the AMO approach (Boxall et al. 2016). It has been proved that the employee's contribution to firms' competitive advantage is a function of his ability (Vroom 1964; Gerhart 2007; Schmitt 2014), such as knowledge, capabilities, and skills (Kaufman 2015). Different recruitment, selection, and training practices can be used to enhance the employee's ability to perform a particular task (Lepak et al. 2006; Jiang et al. 2012). However, it is also necessary that employees will be motivated to apply this knowledge and make an extra effort (Wright and Snell 1998). In other words, with practices related to performance management, compensation and incentives it is intended that the employees will be motivated to properly perform

(Jiang et al. 2012). Moreover, if the employees are motivated, but do not have the appropriate knowledge, they cannot properly perform. Additionally, the AMO approach considers the labor environment where the employees use their abilities and motivation (Kroon et al. 2013). The opportunity dimension refers to the facilities that the organization provides its employees to develop their potential (Kaufman 2015). Employee involvement and job design practices are related to this dimension (Jiang et al. 2012).

Although the literature on HRM and EEB is not abundant, researchers have identified several HR practices that positively relate to EEB (for reviews see (Blanka 2018; Mustafa et al. 2018; Neessen et al. 2019)). Thus, the investigated practices can be ordered by each AMO dimension, too.

The majority of the investigated practices belong to the bundle opportunity and mostly refer to the autonomy that is granted to the employee so that he can make decisions about his work and processes which he carries out. Thus, autonomy has been suggested by almost all investigations as important for developing an entrepreneurial action in the employee (Feyzbakhsh et al. 2008; Castrogiovanni et al. 2011; Globocnik and Salomo 2015; De Jong et al. 2015). According to the findings, when the employee feels independent and free to manage his job, he can behave entrepreneurially. Communication and feedback seem to be important in predicting the EEB (Heinonen and Toivonen 2008; Castrogiovanni et al. 2011). Communication and feedback allow the employee to easily transmit information and ideas through the organization and to his superiors, detecting problems and opportunities, as well as implementing more effective and efficient working ways (Bos-Nehles et al. 2017). Communication also concerns getting information from the management, which the employees can use for their jobs, generating a constant flow of ideas and facilitating their creativity (Castrogiovanni et al. 2011; Hayton et al. 2013). The communication processes permit openness in the relationships between the top management and employees, and among employees themselves, which can stimulate entrepreneurial behaviors in the employee (Castrogiovanni et al. 2011). Involvement practices related to the participation of the employee in decision-making processes or broadly defined jobs relate positively to EEB, as the employee can contribute and develop in his job (Amo 2010; Rigtering and Weitzel 2013; Liu et al. 2019). Participation allows employees to pour own initiatives, make decisions, and contribute to problem-solving (Huselid 1995). Narrow defined jobs associate to mechanistic structures and routine that may inhibit creativity, while broadly defined jobs relate to a more organic and flexible organization, variety, and significance (Alexander and Randolph 1985; De Jong et al. 2015), which can be more appropriate for developing an entrepreneurial behavior, as the employee has got a bigger opportunity to participate with his ideas (Rigtering and Weitzel 2013). Authors suggest that the top management must permit the employee to participate and pay attention to the ideas coming from them, allowing a discussion and deliberation based on the staff's feedback (Menzel et al. 2007). Other organizational factors can influence the entrepreneurial activities of the employee. Thus, an appropriate physical environment fostering nearness and cooperation, as well as a flat hierarchy structure facilitates personal relations, knowledge sharing and joint idea creation (Menzel et al. 2007; Castrogiovanni et al. 2011). The idea is to reduce organizational barriers. Entrepreneurial behaviors take place in a mutually interrelated social environment (Menzel et al. 2007). Socialization facilitates mutual interaction processes and understanding on the individual level (Nonaka 1994; Hayton 2005; Menzel et al. 2007). Besides, innovative behaviors are also spontaneous and can happen by chance interaction, for example, in an informal meeting (Sherwood 2002; Menzel et al. 2007). Team work can lump knowledge from every member together, (otherwise, it could remain dispersed in the organization), sharing it with the team members, and facilitates the interaction among the individuals, that can result in innovations (Hisrich 1990; Laursen and Foss 2003; Shipton et al. 2006). Besides, team work provides the employee with an environment, where he can find support for the challenges related to change and innovation (Shipton et al. 2006). Job rotation can facilitate the introduction of new ideas from different approaches and increase knowledge diffusion (Pinchot 1985; Laursen and Foss 2003; Zampetakis and Moustakis 2010).

In the AMO motivational dimension the most frequently investigated practices concern rewards. Rewards can include financial and non-financial benefits (Ramamoorthy et al. 2005). The investigations

have found a positive relationship between rewards and EEB, as they motivate the employee to contribute with his entrepreneurial effort, showing that the organization prices it (Kirby 2006; Menzel et al. 2007; Globocnik and Salomo 2015; Liu et al. 2019). Besides, the employee feels compensated for the assumption of risk (Castrogiovanni et al. 2011). Rewards are usually aligned with organizational objectives and results (Sebora et al. 2010). Appraisal practices can impact the employee’s motivation, learning orientation and help to understand the organizational objectives, which can produce innovative suggestions in the employee (Shipton et al. 2006). Twomey and Harris (2000) found that appraisal systems can be positively related to EEB. However, the evidence may be weak, as the authors used a single source of data, which was highly correlated. Also, the same authors suggest that career development increases EEB; as employees can create networks from which they become knowledgeable, that promotes new ideas (Liu et al. 2019). Finally, job security can be positively related to EEB as it motivates the employee to take risks, for example, accepting responsibility for possible failure (Zampetakis and Moustakis 2010; Zhou et al. 2013).

Concerning the ability dimension, training has been appointed by other authors for promoting an entrepreneurial behavior in the employee (Twomey and Harris 2000; Menzel et al. 2007; Zampetakis and Moustakis 2010; Liu et al. 2019). The investigations have considered training as a construct for developing competences and knowledge in the organization (Pratoom and Savatsomboon 2012) and competences and career development in the employee (Bysted and Jespersen 2014), which can be used as a base to behave entrepreneurially. Authors suggest that greater formation and training levels in the employee better relate to EEB (Castrogiovanni et al. 2011). The sense is to provide potential entrepreneurial employees with capabilities such as creativity, innovativeness, proactiveness, team spirit and skills to become entrepreneurial (Menzel et al. 2007). That is, a specific training associated with entrepreneurial activities is recommended, instead of a generic one (Diaz-Fernandez et al. 2015). Also, staffing can influence the EEB (Twomey and Harris 2000; Castrogiovanni et al. 2011; Hayton et al. 2013; Liu et al. 2019). The aim is to provide the organization with employees, who are predisposed to be creative and entrepreneurial (Hayton et al. 2013).

A summary of the studied practices can be found in Table 1.

Table 1. Composition of an HR system fostering EEB.

| | HR Practices | Dimension | Outcome |
|-----------|--|-------------|---------|
| HR system | Staffing Training | Ability | EEB |
| | Rewards Appraisal systems Career development Job security | Motivation | |
| | Autonomy Communication Participation Broadly defined jobs Flat hierarchy structure Socialization Team work Job rotation | Opportunity | |

Source: author.

The effect of HR practices on EEB has been explained through a wide variety of theoretical approaches. For example, the social exchange theory (Blau 1964) predicts that HR practices are perceived by the employees as an investment in them. Therefore, the employee will reciprocate with entrepreneurial behavior. This relationship, that develops between employee and organization, is based on trust, loyalty, and a mutual commitment (Cropanzano and Mitchell 2005). Rigtering and

Weitzel (2013) used this theory to explain that employees participating in decision-making processes reciprocated with entrepreneurial behaviors at work. Generally, papers using this theory consider that the EEB shows up when employees feel that the organization values their contribution and it takes care of their well-being (Mustafa et al. 2018). Also, motivation-based theories try to explain motivational factors, such as financial and autonomous, which foster entrepreneurial behaviors in the employee (Bicknell et al. 2010). Thus, Marvel et al. (2007) suggest that work design and rewards motivate employees to contribute within the organization with their entrepreneurial behaviors.

According to Jiang et al. (2012), the relationships among the practices in an HR system can be considered additive, substitutive or synergic. In an additive sense, the quantity of practices that a system has got is the main influencing factor (Arthur 1992, 1994; Huselid 1995; Youndt et al. 1996; Takeuchi et al. 2007; Toh et al. 2008). In this case, the practices are independent of each other and do not overlap (Delery 1998; Boxall and Purcell 2008). Further, the practices can be substitutive when one of them can be replaced by another. Therefore, using more substitutive practices can only increase the cost for the company (Ichniowski et al. 1996; Harp et al. 1998). Finally, the practices show a synergic effect when they are used together. In this case, the impact of a practice will be bigger when implemented together with another, as they are interrelated (Becker et al. 1997; Delery 1998). Following the synergic approach, an AMO dimension can be reached using different practices, and missing a certain practice cannot stop the effect of another practice. Moreover, the pursued employee behavior can be reached with only two AMO dimensions (Bello-Pintado 2015) and certain practices can be related to more than one AMO dimension (Lepak et al. 2006). Finally, the work of Jiang et al. (2012) showed that there might be a hierarchy in the AMO dimensions. For example, practices referring to the motivation and opportunity dimensions were more positively related to the employee's behavior, than the ability dimension. Therefore, an important message that seems to emerge from past research is that no consensus exists on which are the best HR practices composing a working AMO system (Lepak and Snell 2002; Warech and Tracey 2004; Bryson et al. 2005), neither their relationships. This brings to the fore the need to study HR practices in specific contexts.

3. Methodology

Since the objective was analyzing what and how HR practices foster EEB in a certain type of organization, which is rather unexplored in the literature, this investigation employed a purposive sampling technique (Welch et al. 2011). Independent organizations were selected, excluding branches to avoid any possible managerial influence (Zahra 2005; Crick 2009). The selected firms were operating in high technology sectors, in line with the majority of papers on INVs (Coviello and Jones 2004), as this organizations use to flourish in high technology sectors (Bell 1995; Boter and Holmquist 1996; Bell et al. 2003; Autio et al. 2011). The organizations were working in the international markets within the first three years after the foundation (Coviello and Jones 2004; Knight and Cavusgil 2004; Cannone and Ughetto 2014). As companies operating in high technology industries may spend some time after the foundation developing the product, it was considered the three-year limitation on internationalization once they had a product ready for sale. Besides, HR practices need some period to be implemented and get an outcome in the employee (Pfeffer 1998). Therefore, this research focused on INVs aging from three to seven years old, which is usual in qualitative investigations (e.g., Freeman and Cavusgil 2007; Crick 2009; Evers et al. 2012; Hagen and Zucchella 2014; Gerschewski et al. 2015). In summary, for this investigation the population was defined as own entity high technology organizations, which start receiving foreign revenues within the first three years since they have started the productive activity, aging from three to seven years.

The Iberian Balance Sheet Analysis System database from Bureau Van Dijk was consulted to select possible cases. This database contains generic and financial information of Spanish and Portuguese organizations. Additional information was collected from the Spanish Scientific and Technological Park Association and three technological parks associated with their respective universities in three Spanish cities. Concretely, Parc Científic Tecnològic i Empresarial from Jaume I Universitat in Castellon,

Parque Científico y Empresarial from Miguel Hernández Universitas in Elche, and Parc Científic de la Universitat de València in Valencia. The above-mentioned entities provided a list of possible organizations to be investigated. After filtering the list, 23 firms remained, which were located in the previously mentioned technological parks. Those firms were contacted to be sure that they met the required parameters and, if they did, they were asked for their collaboration in this research. Finally, seven companies kindly agreed. That is in line with the literature, as it recommends to study from four to a maximum of ten cases (Eisenhardt 1989). Data collection took place from July 2016 until January 2017.

In Table 2 the reader can find schematic information for each company. Names have been replaced by capital letters to guarantee anonymity.

The interview is the most frequently used tool in a case study investigation (Yin 2014). The interview can report further information to the interviewer (Freeman and Cavusgil 2007) and explore subjects from the interviewee's point of view (Marshall and Rossman 1999). As already anticipated, data was gathered from in-depth face to face interviews with the founder (3 cases), the general manager (3 cases) or HR manager (1 case), and a total of 23 employees. For this investigation, the roles of founder, entrepreneur and general manager are considered similar, because they are concerned with the same functions in the studied companies. In the INV G, the HR manager is also considered to be in the top management board because of his post and the functions he carries out. All interviewed workers were employed from 7 months to 7 years, so that they could be aware of the HRM practices implemented in the company, disregarding recently incorporated employees. Also, it was set a restriction that employees should work on different departments, and there should be a minimum of two interviewed per company. The interviewed employees were all white-collar and responsible for core activities in their firm (e.g., operations manager, business developer, marketing manager, brand manager, product developer, responsible for internal administration, technical manager, production coordinator, consultant, project manager), as these organizations were outsourcing other activities, which were not considered core for their value chain. However, as it is usual in small organizations, they were executing multiple tasks apart from the main one.

The interviews were held by the author of this article in the same company or a nearby room, where the privacy of the conversation could be assured. Interviewing management and employees is difficult, as they use to be very busy with their tasks. Therefore, it was necessary to repeatedly visit the companies to fulfill all interviews. The interviews were semi-structured, which is usual in INV (Freeman and Cavusgil 2007; Crick 2009; Evers et al. 2012; Sepulveda and Gabrielsson 2013; Gabrielsson et al. 2014) and HR investigations (Davies and Crane 2010; Glover and Butler 2012; Currie et al. 2015; Langwell and Heaton 2016; Krzywdzinski 2017). Each interview was worked under a guideline to assure that all subjects were covered. Every interview was tape-recorded to keep accuracy. Later, the audio file was transcribed and sent to each interviewee for edition, addition or removal of content to ensure the validity and authenticity of the information (Sepulveda and Gabrielsson 2013; Hagen and Zucchella 2014). The interviews generated 16 h and 21 min of audio recording, and the transcription 369 pages. In Table 3 the reader can see the collected data per organization.

Additionally, the investigator took notes from the impressions and other visual information which he could capture, as the literature suggests (Eisenhardt 1989; Johnstone 2007; Yin 2014). Further information was collected through phone conversations and email (Wakkee et al. 2007; Hagen and Zucchella 2014), firms' web pages and available printed information, account statements, and information provided by the technological parks. Afterward, the information was compared and analyzed to empirically validate it (Yin 2014).

For data interpretation and procedure, tables were used to organize and analyze the information, helping to compress and understand it (Mäkelä and Turcan 2007). Additionally, data was indexed by keywords to make it easier to operate. Finally, the findings were compared with those from the literature, thus increasing the internal validity, generalization and theoretical level of the present investigation (Eisenhardt 1989).

Table 2. INVs at the moment of the interview.

| INV | Sector | Foundation Date | International Sale Start Year | Age, in Years | Average Growth in Sales ⁽¹⁾ | International Sale Rate; Sale Formula ⁽²⁾ | International Purchase Rate | No. of Countries | Staff | Quantity of Interviewees, and Position |
|-----|-----------------------|-----------------|-------------------------------|---------------|--|--|-----------------------------|------------------|-------|--|
| A | Foot ware | December 2011 | 1st | 5 | 81% | 100%; B2C | 30% | 13 | 8 | 1, general manager 2, employee |
| B | Software, consultancy | November 2011 | 3rd | 5 | 58% | 35%; B2B, B2C | - | 5 | 55 | 1, entrepreneur 5, employee |
| C | Sport security | March 2013 | 2nd | 3 | 300% | 70%; B2B, B2C | 100% | 72 | 9 | 1, general manager 3, employee |
| D | Measuring equipment | November 2009 | 2nd | 7 | 123% | 100%; B2B | 47% | 10 | 11 | 1, general manager 2, employee |
| E | Preventive security | October 2009 | 2nd ⁽³⁾ | 7 | 88% | 50%; B2B | - | 2 | 3 | 1, entrepreneur 2, employee |
| F | Medical software | June 2010 | 2nd | 6 | 1% | 8%; B2B, B2C | - | 4 | 8 | 1, entrepreneur 2, employee |
| G | Pharmacology | June 2009 | 3 rd | 7 | 41% | 6%; B2B | - | 4 | 20 | 1, HR manager 7, employee |

Notes: (1) The last three years. (2) B2B: Business to Business; B2C: Business to Consumer. (3) Since the company started production. Source: author.

Table 3. Information collected from each INV, in detail.

| INV | Length of Recorded Interview, in Time | Transcription of Interview, in Pages | Financial Statement ⁽¹⁾ (a) | Report on Sales ⁽¹⁾ | Report on Quantity of Employees ⁽¹⁾ | Additional Information Collected by Email and/or Phone | Information Collected by Firm's Web Page | Additional Information Provided by the Firm |
|-----|--|--|--|--------------------------------|--|--|--|---|
| A | M: 0:18; E1: 0:30; E2: 0:19; T: 1:07 | M: 8; E1: 10; E2: 7; T: 25 | • | • | • | • | • | Brochure |
| B | M: 0:54; E1: 0:33; E2: 0:20; E3: 0:20; E4: 0:21; E5: 0:26; T: 2:54 | M: 20; E1: 12; E2: 9; E3: 7; E4: 9; E5: 12; T: 69 | • | • | • | • | • | |
| C | M: 0:36; E1: 0:34; E2: 0:24; E3: 0:19; T: 1:53 | M: 13; E1: 13; E2: 9; E3: 8; T: 43 | • | • | • | • | • | Brochure |
| D | M: 0:38; E1: 0:27; E2: 0:25; T: 1:30 | M: 13; E1: 10; E2: 10; T: 33 | • | • | • | • | • | |
| E | M: 0:26; E1: 0:28; E2: 0:15; T: 1:09 | M: 10; E1: 9; E2: 6; T: 25 | • | • | • | • | • | |
| F | M: 2:16; E1: 0:33; E2: 0:52; T: 3:41 | M: 43; T1: 20; T2: 19; T: 82 | • | • | • | • | • | |
| G | M: 0:32; E1: 0:31; E2: 0:24; E3: 0:31; E4: 0:28; E5: 0:34; E6: 0:23; E7: 0:44; T: 4:07 | M: 11; E1: 11; E2: 11; E3: 13; E4: 11; E5: 12; E6: 10; E7: 13; T: 92 | • | • | • | • | • | |

Notes: M: top manager. E: employee. T: total. (1) Since the foundation, per year. (a) Collected from the Iberian Balance Sheet Analysis System database. Source: author.

According to Yin (2014), there are four tests to evaluate the quality of an investigation: construct validity, internal validity, generalizability (or external validity) and reliability. Construct validity refers to identifying precise operative measures for the concepts, which will be investigated. For the present study, multiple sources of evidence have been used such as interviews, textual and numeric information, visual observation, web pages, financial balances, printed information from the firms and information from the management institutions in charge of the technological parks, where the studied companies were located. Besides, the transcriptions of the interviews were revised by the interviewees. Internal validity relates to seeking casual relationships, where it is assumed that certain conditions lead to other conditions, distinguishing from false relationships. In our investigation, the findings are confronted with existing literature on HRM, comparing similarities and differences. External validity consists of defining the scope to which the findings can be analytically generalized, replicating in different cases. In our particular case, it has been replicated in seven organizations. Reliability tries to assure that the investigative processes, for example, data collection in a case, can be carried out once again and get similar results in that case. In this work, it was followed the investigative protocol recommended by the literature (Eisenhardt 1989; Yin 2014), developing a database with the collected information (audio files and transcriptions), and in detail documenting the processes.

4. Results and Discussion

The purpose of this paper was to study the HRM practices, which are implemented in INVs to inculcate entrepreneurial behaviors to the employees. To achieve that objective, a case study methodology was used, which mostly based on interviews with top managers and employees. The findings of this study will be exposed in this section. Concretely, the observed EEB will be next related and, later, the implemented HR practices will be commented on. After the description and discussion of each finding, a proposition will be suggested as a result of the research. Original citations from the interviewees will be included to support the arguments. Further illustrative citations are available to the reader in Table 4.

Table 4. Illustrative citations.

| EEB |
|--|
| <i>"I consider that I'm vigorous at work not only when I'm able to fulfill my duties with the sufficient quality and expected required level, but also when I'm able to propose new actions and contribute with more than simply it is required." (Employee INV E).</i> |
| <i>"To be able to have new ideas, to easily introduce them into the firm's functioning is a positive factor." (Employee INV E).</i> |
| <i>"I'm very used to making task lists per day, so I know what I have to do every day and truly see what I've done. [...] Something we've got in our job is focusing on the bad things. [...] It's about always considering what you can change, what you can do for something to be better. [...] I think that the critiques are not bad, but about what we are going to improve, what we can improve now." (Employee INV G).</i> |
| <i>"As I cannot change the work every day, I change the way of working, my planning, [...] the working time or whatever. [...] I practice the Pomodoro technique, which consists of working 25 min and rest five. [...] Those are techniques that you are investigating to find out how you can be more productive, and they work in me very well. I, at least when I speak with people, transmit them in case they can help them." (Employee INV B).</i> |
| <i>"I go out from work and read an article, something related to a project, which I can get identified with or it can provide me with something. I read it. I think it over. Or, I'm walking on the mountain doing sport and, from time to time, an idea comes to me, something that you feel it can contribute. [...] You always are curious to investigate. [...] Also, I like having relationships with other types of persons because, sometimes, you do not reach the click you're looking for, and you listen to a person, and he says a concrete word, and he's telling it to you, even if he didn't tell you straight. But without noticing, he inspires you." (Employee INV B).</i> |
| <i>"If I consider that something would be interesting to do, I try to see what you'll get, and I propose [to the management] and they don't reject it." (Employee INV F).</i> |
| <i>"When I realize that a working technique does not perform as it should, getting down the productivity, then I look for a new technique." (Employee INV B).</i> |
| <i>"The budgets are very small and everything which fails can make that budget to change. Earlier I told you that every task I solve is a small stone, it's something you build. If for each task you make here you have to take the small brick off, build it in again, putting the small brick, taking it off and putting it in creates a lot of nervousness within the company." (Employee INV C).</i> |
| <i>"In this kind of company, when you come into it, in a technological organization and so, you have to have an adaptive character or it'll be very difficult for you to adapt because it changes very much from one day to the next one. This is not a traditional company, where everything is already settled. Here the uncertainty shows up every day." (Employee INV B).</i> |
| <i>"We're living with short lifetimes. We don't have a financial situation which allows being relaxed. Therefore, any big mistake I think everybody understands that the probability the company will suffer serious problems is real. [...] here, people are betting in a job, which is absolutely no stable. You have got a very-very-very high risk that it goes wrong." [Entrepreneur INV E].</i> |
| <i>"Here there were or will be hard periods because it's a small company with a difficult market." (Employee INV F).</i> |

Table 4. Cont.

| Involvement in the whole organizational project |
|---|
| <i>"The hours you dedicate to . . . , or the mental cost you dedicate to a firm like this one, I think it's rather higher than in other jobs. You're making a professional bet of many personal hours, you sacrifice a lot, you live in a very uncertain constant personal situation. There are many other more stable jobs. So, this needs not only that the short-term economical bet will be of your interest, but that you'll feel like it, that you'll believe in the project, that you'll be able to develop it with your team. [. . .] You are the one who must get them [the employees] involved or making them feel that the effort is worth it." (Entrepreneur INV E).</i> |
| Importance of employee, and entrepreneur's experience managing employees |
| <i>"Human resources are, as I told you, a very important part of the company. [. . .] We consider that human resources must be working very well. If not 100%, it's 80% of the company. It's like the engine of the company. In a type of company like ours, that must work very well." (Entrepreneur INV F).</i> |
| <i>"I think that, for the top managers, we're the most important." (Employee INV G).</i> |
| <i>"Do things to improve, to win the staff's heart. That is the key point." (Entrepreneur INV B).</i> |
| <i>"For me, this is new. This is the first responsible post I've got in charge of people. Therefore, I'm learning." (General manager INV A).</i> |
| <i>"I don't have experience in HR [. . .], but it's true that [INV C] is growing up and every day there are more workers and managing them means a challenge for me". (General manager INV C).</i> |
| <i>"I don't have specific formation [in managing human resources], but with a bit of common sense, it's enough to start with. Later, when we'll need external help, we'll ask for it." (HR manager INV G).</i> |
| Encouraging the employee to behave entrepreneurially |
| <i>"You do decide, contribute, make your decision, whatever you think more appropriate." (Employee INV B, relating what the entrepreneur says to him).</i> |
| EEB reinforcing entrepreneur's EO |
| <i>"When you go to a factory and see that they take care of the staff, that's visible. [. . .] A screwing factory with people, who passionate with work, they'll come to you and say: we have to turn this machine another round and you'll see that we'll produce five screws more. [. . .] In my life I've got the conclusion, that even in very mechanical works it's good to be creative. You can improve the process. You can improve many things, which, finally are the key point. When you learn of a company which made something special, that's because there were special people within giving their best. And that's a screwing factory but, suddenly, a thought came to a dude about, instead of a cross, better a pentagon and so with a special tool, and that's it! We get rich. Because there was a dude who had his ideas and transmitted them. [. . .] ¿Do you want to establish a new company? Then, just tell us about! [. . .] If it's a business that is related to what we do here, take advantage. We all are interested in doing a good business." (Entrepreneur INV B).</i> |
| <i>"When the employees participate in the decisions or proposals, many of those proposals are put into practice. They're then not only developing a product, [. . .] they logically co-design what we make. [. . .] To have a team, who is visualizing the strategy, participating in the strategy, is what a start-up needs." (Entrepreneur INV E).</i> |

Source: author.

As a general finding and except in the INV G, the interviewed companies didn't have any HR manager, for which that task was assumed by the founder or general manager, as expected by the literature on small or new firms (Keating and Olivares 2007; Greenidge et al. 2012). Only in G, an employee was internally recruited for that new post when the firm was six years old and 17 workers were employed.

Out of the 23 interviewed employees, 19 of them showed clear entrepreneurial attitudes and behaviors. Thus, the employees contribute with innovations in form of new ideas and proposals about the product, improvements in the organizational processes, new ways or advances in his work to be more effective and efficient, solving the deficiencies that they may have detected somewhere in the company, and even proposing the creation of new ventures.

"We hold conversations with the workmates, in which we contribute with creativity. [. . .] A conversation can lead you to creativity. Neither must it be anything new, as you can be creative changing something that it is already done or facing it from another point of view." (Employee INV B).

"We have got a case of intra-entrepreneurship. A boy, who started here, had got a project with other two classmates, which was an app. He told us about it, and we've helped them to build their firm up. [. . .] If that company will succeed, as we're expecting, he'll jump out and will be working exclusively for that firm, which we have helped to establish. We, in exchange, have got a percentage. [. . .] INV B) is an entity, which grows up, which so much evolves, that it's got a great deal of margin to take advantage of those people's ideas." (Entrepreneur INV B).

Also, employees materialize their proactive behaviors continuously thinking about what they have to change or improve in their work within the organization. Employees are proactive when proposing

formative activities, training their workmates and self-training, seeking and proposing new ways to make their job and be more productive, participating in socializing processes through the organization of informal meetings, looking for information to solve a problem which may appear on their tasks or in the organization, trying to mingle with their co-workers to get creative ideas, and even contributing with an extra effort outside the working hours to move their work forward. For example, an employee from company B, who oversees the maintenance of relationships in the firm's networks, indicates that she proactively implements innovations in her post, and proactively proposes those innovations to other co-workers, not waiting until the company will teach them. This is not new, as Sieger et al. (2013) already anticipated that entrepreneurial employees help others to behave entrepreneurially, as in this case.

Apart from the innovative and proactive behaviors that the employees showed, along the interviews six of them indicated that they assume a certain risk when working in an INV. Apart from the risk of getting fired or that the company may drown, they face risks while taking decisions in doing their tasks, where they may fail, reduce the productivity level or the company's resources, failing to the team and getting rejected by their workmates. For example, employees from company C manifested that the own work development they make implies a risk, as the company has got very scarce resources. In other words, employees seem to be aware that the mistakes they can make in developing their tasks can have irreversible consequences. The failure is tolerated in the companies (Dal Zotto and Gustafsson 2008), which assumes that the employee may take wrong decisions.

"The company's resources are not the ones a multinational has got. Therefore, each thing counts a great deal. [. . .] A mistake in a bigger company wouldn't be important. Here, it does. This is the mistake that you can have on failing the team. [. . .] This is the fear of not being able to do all right because no one is perfect and that's the bad point being in a start-up." (Employee INV C).

The findings from this investigation show that innovative and proactive behaviors take place in the employees in INVs, who also assume risks while performing in their jobs. These findings may lead to propose that:

Proposition 1. *In INVs, employees act entrepreneurially in their labor environment, showing innovative and proactive behaviors, as well as assuming risks.*

The entrepreneur takes advantage of the entrepreneurial actions, which emanates from the employees. So, this EEB reinforces the entrepreneurial behavior of the firm and aims to guarantee the success of the INV, as entrepreneurs from the companies B, E, F, and G commented in their interviews. These entrepreneurs are constantly getting the employee's feedback with the purpose of applying their innovations to the business. The accumulation of innovative behaviors from the employee reinforces the corporative entrepreneurial actions (Mustafa et al. 2018). Actually, entrepreneurial activities happen at both the organizational and individual employee's level (Mair 2005).

"We don't try to limit people. For me, it's interesting that people see in B an infinite way in their career. That is, if someone comes and says I want to open a foreign branch, let's study it and, if you have got the competences and so, why not? Then the company is interested in internationalization. [. . .] It's a mix: organizational necessities with more ideas, with their competences. You try to get the best from each one." (Entrepreneur INV B).

The fact that the entrepreneur takes advantage of the EEB, may suggest the following proposition.

Proposition 2. *EEB can be considered as an important factor reinforcing INVs' entrepreneurial activities.*

Every interviewed top manager showed a clear orientation towards the employees, taking a great deal of care for them and considering them one of his most valuable resources. Also, the top

manager showed inexperience in managing HR, which is usual to happen in small and new companies (Cardon and Stevens 2004; Mayson and Barrett 2006). This inexperience and lack of knowledge on HRM imply that HR practices are brought about *ad hoc*, in which the entrepreneur intends to involve the employees in the whole organizational project and to encourage entrepreneurial behavior in them. Such behavior was manifested by the entrepreneurs and general managers from INVs A, B, C, E, F, and HR manager from G.

“We’re looking for people, who engage in the company, and make it as his own.” (Entrepreneur INV B).

“Our boss [the entrepreneur] insists that we have to be genuine, that we have to do innovative things.” (Employee INV G).

Next, HR practices, which have been found relevant for getting an entrepreneurial behavior in the employee, are commented. Practices are grouped in each AMO dimension. Firstly, the opportunity dimension will be presented, as it is the most important, and later the ability and motivation dimensions. In Table 5 the reader can have a glance to the HR practices that are implemented in the studied INVs.

Table 5. Practices implemented by INVs to foster EEB.

| | Dimension | HR Practice | Outcome | |
|-----|-------------|--|---------|-------------------------|
| AMO | Opportunity | Participation Communication Flat organizational structure Socialization Autonomy Labor and familiar flexibility Person-job fit | EEB | |
| | | Ability | | Recruitment Training |
| | | Motivation | | Incentives |

Source: author.

The findings of the investigation show that the entrepreneur mostly emphasizes practices that intend to grant the employees with the opportunity to contribute with their entrepreneurial behavior, which is in line with the predictions from the literature (Mustafa et al. 2018; Neessen et al. 2019). Thus, entrepreneurs facilitate the participation of the employees in decision-making processes (INVs A, B, E, F, and G), in which they can propose organizational improvements at all levels, and new ideas for solving problems. For example, the entrepreneur from INV A promotes innovation from the employee as he questions him in their meetings how the same employee and the top managers can improve in their work, and how the company can improve in every process. Also, employees from the firm F proactively propose to the entrepreneurs training programs to enable them to carry out their tasks, or even they correct the entrepreneurs by own initiative when they take wrong decisions.

The innovative and proactive behaviors from the employees take place because of the good and open communication existing between both groups. For example, the HR manager from company G holds personal interviews with the employees as a communication channel to get views from the employees. In these personal interviews, the employees propose improvements about the organization, internal processes and every other matter. Or, the entrepreneur from INV B, who favors the suggestions from employees through the good communication tools he’s got, as the online weekly report. Actually, an employee from INV B tells that she proposes matters on whatever subject, following the entrepreneur’s request. Also, employees in the company F provide the entrepreneur with new ideas improving whatever matter in the weekly session they’ve got. This entrepreneur also promotes

the feedback from his employees in every communicative action, insisting on getting information from them on how to cope with or improve the procedures, or even the employees tell him what they need for being more productive. The communication and participation processes are favored by the organizational information that the management shares among his employees. The employees feel more integrated into the company with this information, which they also use for bringing about more ideas, as an employee in INV E says. Also, the flat organizational structure helps the employees to easily access to the top management and pour them with ideas, suggestions and other important information, as two workers from INV B state. Socialization can also contribute to proactiveness and creativity in the employee. For example, in company C employees proactively help colleagues when the latter are overworked, because of the good social relationship they have. Also, a worker from INV B considers that her good relationships with his colleagues help her to be more creative. The environment must be appropriate to offer physical nearness, stimulating cooperation among the staff (Menzel et al. 2007). Good relationships are suggested by the literature to facilitate entrepreneurial behaviors in the employee, and the employee can interact with other members of the organization's interchanging information and knowledge (Menzel et al. 2007).

Entrepreneurs also accentuate practices related to job design to get entrepreneurial behaviors from the employee. Thus, employees in company B can autonomously decide about the way they work and execute tasks, keeping in mind the organizational objectives. For example, an employee from INV B self decides how she wants to work and which working techniques she can apply for carrying out her tasks. That makes possible that she proactively innovates with new techniques, which may improve her productivity. Employees in the firm F proactively self-train in which they need for solving their tasks, and do not wait for the company to train them. Also, the general manager from INV D mentions that his employees proactive and autonomously execute tasks, which are considered additional to their expected duties. In contrast, very cleared described jobs can inhibit proactivity, as an employee from INV A relates. This employee tells that only sometimes he behaves proactively because the jobs are very concrete and fixed described so that employees barely have got autonomy:

"Here, [the top managers] know very well what they want and how they want it. So, the guidelines are very clear. Above all, when facing a small doubt, you ask. Sometimes I've let me drive and I've got more initiative." (Employee INV A).

In the literature, autonomy is the most traditionally suggested practice related to EEB. Autonomy enables the employee to have a framework of freedom, where he can develop creative ideas and behave proactively within the organization (De Jong et al. 2015; Neessen et al. 2019). Also, employees can increase their self-efficacy (Globocnik and Salomo 2015).

Regarding labor and familiar flexibility, the entrepreneur from company B allows working time flexibility. According to him, it's more profitable that the employee works when this one gets inspired, whenever it may happen, as on Sunday night. Also, the entrepreneur from INV E affirms that he implements time flexibility because he needs people to be creative and not being absorbed in a mechanical work, which is fixed by a working timetable.

"Time, freedom is important. To have flexibility in your work. I can have an incredibly good day, which allows me to work 10 h and at 100%, and another day I get up in the morning and say I feel like doing sport or going to the beach after lunch, and tomorrow I'll be more creative." (Employee INV B).

The adjustment between person and job has been stated by the entrepreneur from INV B as positively related to the development of entrepreneurial behavior in the employee. Thus, the entrepreneur adjusted the post to an employee who hired with the purpose that this employee could develop his project. This project consisted of setting up a new company, in which INV B participated. The final aim is to get the best contribution from each employee, as the entrepreneur told.

According to the information collected from the interviews, the second most relevant dimension of AMO for developing an EEB was ability. Three companies stated that they're looking for employees,

who may show entrepreneurial features. Thus, INV B recruits most of their new employees in the university, and it staffs them into the company to develop the newcomer's innovative ideas.

"We're very much looking for talent in the university. My partner, who is very involved in the university, has created a program [at the university, ...] for developing an entrepreneurial spirit. [...] We use it for capturing talented ones." (Entrepreneur INV B).

Also, INV C recruits most of their employees in the university through another entrepreneurial program, and the entrepreneur from INV E says he looks for a type of employee who is ambitious, who understands and has got an entrepreneurial vision or purpose. Getting into the organization employees who may have entrepreneurial competences is advisable in the literature if the company aims for innovative and proactive behaviors from the staff (Mustafa et al. 2016; Liu et al. 2019). Training is only referred by two workers as important for getting entrepreneurial behaviors, as predicted by the literature (Twomey and Harris 2000; Menzel et al. 2007). Thus, an employee from INV B says it's important to have training because he can be aware of tools that he can adapt and use in his work. Also, a worker from the INV F in his spare time proactively self-trains on matters, which can be useful for his job.

Finally, in the motivation dimension AMO, rewards are not so important in studied INVs for getting entrepreneurial behavior in the employee. Only the entrepreneur from the INV E means it is important to incentivize the entrepreneurial feeling that the worker may experience in the organization, for which he grants company shares to his employees.

"You're working on launching a company. You're working on creating something, which should be bigger, it should be something ... a project mostly for the future, in which you're investing time and more. So, that the people who initiate the project can feel participants, as they are. This bet must be rentable for them. Not only economically, but also feeling participants of the company. Thus, in a small company where people, who are important for the team, can become a partner or participate in that, it seems to be the most reasonable, if you want to have an engaged dude." (Entrepreneur INV E).

This finding is interesting because the literature suggests that rewards are an important antecedent for EEB, as entrepreneurial efforts should be properly acknowledged (Menzel et al. 2007; Castrogiovanni et al. 2011; Globocnik and Salomo 2015). However, in this investigation, both the management and employees do not pay big attention to them. It may be because the investigated INVs are relatively young companies, which must cope with shortness on financial resources. Therefore, they must look for other practices that may replace rewards. Offering a modest salary but granting additional bonuses can be motivating for the employee. For example, giving stock options as incentives can highly motivate employees to behave entrepreneurially (Dal Zotto and Gustafsson 2008). Moreover, Balkin et al. (2000) advise that it may be a good strategy for the entrepreneurs to concentrate HR practices on innovative inputs and not on rewarding the outcomes.

Taking into account the above findings of the practices which are implemented by the entrepreneur to get the EEB, it could be reasonable to propose the following:

Proposition 3. *In INVs, entrepreneurs use HR practices to foster EEB, above all practices belonging to the AMO opportunity dimension. All HR practices have a common denominator, as the entrepreneur engages the employee in the whole organizational project, allowing the employee to assume the entrepreneur's roles in their work environment.*

As expected from the literature (Jiang et al. 2012), several HR practices related to EEB showed synergic effects among them. For example, practices referred to socialization and flat organizational structure facilitate that in the communication and participation processes innovations easily flow between entrepreneur and employees, and among the latter. Also, good communication channels provide the employee with a comfortable way to participate with his ideas passing them further to

the top management. In the same way, autonomy and labor and familiar flexibility complement each other, as the employee has got certain freedom to decide about when and how to carry out his proactive actions.

Proposition 4. *In INVs, EEB can be enhanced by using the synergic relationships among the HR practices.*

Finally, the HRM policies applied in smaller organizations can differ from the ones implemented in bigger companies (Carrier 1994). In smaller organizations, applied HR practices use to be less formal and more limited in resources (Cardon and Stevens 2004), and some firms may implement only a few specific practices (Castrogiovanni et al. 2011). In these organizations, the entrepreneur or top manager plays a key role in promoting or inhibiting EEB (Carrier 1994; Bouchard and Basso 2011), as it happens in the studied INVs. The interviews have shown that personal relationships between an entrepreneur or top manager and an employee are very important and they are based on mutual trust (Castrogiovanni et al. 2011; Hughes and Mustafa 2017). Also, the work environment is very open and familiar, as expected if we consider the small number of employees working in each company.

5. Conclusions

The objective of this investigation was to study the HR practices which foster EEB. Existing literature provided a framework as a starting point for studying the practices and defined the unit of analysis, which was the INV. Using a case study methodology, several firms were contacted and seven of them agreed to participate in the research, which findings have been related in the section dedicated to the results. These findings permit to answer the questions, which were formulated in the introduction of this work. The main conclusions of this paper are that almost all interviewed employees show entrepreneurial behaviors and that practices based on the AMO opportunity dimension seem to be the most relevant ones for achieving that behavior in the employees. The common denominator of the implemented practices is that the entrepreneur intends to engage the employees in the whole organizational project. Also, employees assume entrepreneurial roles, which help to increase the founder's entrepreneurial actions. The EEBs contribute to maintain and develop a high level of innovativeness in the INV, which keeps a strong competitive advantage assuring the survival and success of the firm.

Usually, in small and new enterprises scarce resources are destined to HRM activities, the top manager has no experience managing employees, and there are not bureaucratic norms, but these firms are more innovation-oriented compared to established organizations (Dal Zotto and Gustafsson 2008). This can be a competitive advantage for INVs, as the entrepreneur can implement in his firm the most appropriate HR practices for reaching the desired outcome in the employees, following his strategic orientation. Moreover, the design of the right HRM system is considered a critical activity in a newly established firm (Dal Zotto and Gustafsson 2008). The importance granted by the entrepreneurs to the practices belonging to the opportunity dimension reports the weight of this dimension in the INVs. These practices intend that the employees can develop their work and contribute to the organizational performance, as it is expected from them (Lepak et al. 2006; Gerhart 2007; Jiang et al. 2012), and even further with an extra effort. Analyzing the practices which compose the opportunity dimension in the INV and comparing them with the literature, it can be deduced that these practices show a clear entrepreneurial behavior. Moreover, Parker (2011) relates in his investigation that the employee does not show any interest in intrapreneurial activities until the manager presents a suitable opportunity for it. Concretely, the literature shows that HR practices can influence the EEB (Schuler 1986; Hayton 2005; Schmelter et al. 2010; Tang et al. 2015), that is, well managed employees may develop entrepreneurial activities (Baden-Fuller 1995; Wright et al. 2001; De Saa-Pérez and García-Falcón 2002; Bornay-Barrachina et al. 2012; Tang et al. 2015). The findings of the investigation show that the entrepreneur aims to get that contribution in the form of entrepreneurial behavior from the employee through the implementation of HR practices. Through these practices,

the entrepreneur intends to engage the employee in the whole organizational project, and he creates an environment that favors the EEB. Even, it could be said, that the entrepreneur creates a sort of association with their employees. Besides, the entrepreneur stimulates the employee in a way, that the latter assumes the entrepreneur's roles. That matches the predictions from the literature, which suggests that engaged entrepreneurial employees can behave similarly to entrepreneurs (Martíarena 2013). In SMEs, as INVs use to be, the entrepreneur can be early aware of the employee's initiatives and can foster or inhibit his entrepreneurial behaviors (Carrier 1994; Bouchard and Basso 2011). The entrepreneur (or top manager) encourages the innovative behaviors in the employee, as the present investigation has demonstrated. That is, the entrepreneur further communicates his entrepreneurial orientation to the employee. Additionally, the entrepreneur creates in the firm the appropriate environment that can facilitate the entrepreneurial activities in the employee (Lages et al. 2017), and the employee feels a natural affinity to environments that offer innovation, proactiveness and risk-taking possibilities, which matches the employee's aspirations of entrepreneurship (Johnson and Wu 2012; Lages et al. 2017). The entrepreneur takes advantage of those employee innovative outcomes adding them to the organizational innovativeness. For example, when an employee innovates a product, that leads to an innovation outcome at the organizational level (Neessen et al. 2019), following an innovative strategic orientation. That helps the entrepreneur to maintain a strong EO over time.

In INVs, the HRM function can be more important than in other organizations. Some of the top-ten characteristics explaining the success of INVs (Martin and Javalgi 2018) are their flexibility to adapt to rapidly changing environmental conditions (Oviatt and McDougall 2005), their market commitment and proactive international strategy (Autio 2005; Weerawardena et al. 2007), their technological innovativeness (Knight and Cavusgil 2004), and their unique intangible resources and capabilities, which are based on knowledge management (Martin and Javalgi 2016). These characteristics along with the resource constraint oblige the entrepreneur to provide himself with a key competitive team of workers, who can manage these challenges.

The INV is a young firm, which is usually oriented to a specific niche in the market, operating in highly competitive environments with other bigger organizations that have got more resources. The INV intends to exploit the international opportunity and keep its competitive advantage, strengthening its position before other companies will arrive. Hostile environments, such as international ones, demand higher levels of EO to cope with them. The literature indicates that the organizational entrepreneurial actions are initiated and carried out by the accumulation of activities, which are fulfilled by the individuals that work in the company, or in other words, the companies are innovative, proactive and assume risk through their staff (Montoro-Sánchez and Ribeiro-Soriano 2011). The EEB is a type of extra-role behavior that impacts the course of the organization (Neessen et al. 2019). Actually, employees are the ones who make the entrepreneurial activities succeed (Tang et al. 2015). The EEB from the studied INVs operationalizes producing innovations and improvements on products and processes, being more effective and efficient at work and bringing about new business ventures. Those outcomes contribute to the success of the INV improving the competitive position of the company. The entrepreneur knows that investing in the employees can result in getting the advantage of the innovative and proactive behaviors that will emanate from them. That is, the entrepreneur uses the EEB to strengthen the firm's EO to guarantee the success of his INV (Lee et al. 2011; Lau et al. 2012; Blanka 2018; Mustafa et al. 2018). For example, the entrepreneur from INV B took advantage of an intra-entrepreneurial case, where an employee proposed him a new venture.

These findings are not unexpected in a type of company as INVs are, which precisely stand out because of a remarkable EO. It seems, that this may be one of the key factors, which better could explain the success of INVs. Actually, the literature already suggests that there are practices, which are core in the HR systems for achieving the desired strategic objectives of the companies operating in a certain sector (De Grip and Sieben 2009; Boon et al. 2019), and the decisions about HRM seem to be the most important ones for getting an organizational EO (Morris and Jones 1993; Hayton 2005; Ribeiro-Soriano and Urbano 2010).

Additionally, the findings have shown that synergic effects appear among the practices, which the entrepreneur implements for getting the EEB. This is consistent with the literature, which recommends synergic relationships, as the impact of HR practices seem to be bigger when they are interrelated (Jiang et al. 2012; Boon et al. 2019). The studied INVs are newly created organizations, where the top manager has no previous experience in HRM. Therefore, the entrepreneur can implement the needed practices, which are adapted to the nuances of his organization. Undoubtedly, the personality of the entrepreneur is projected on the design of the system of practices, which he must implement to achieve the wished outcomes in the employee. Therefore, the entrepreneur aims to implement practices, which complement each other in the pursuit of entrepreneurial behaviors and are in line with the strategic orientation of the firm.

From a managerial point of view, it is interesting that the entrepreneurs from INVs strongly accentuate those practices, which are intended to grant the employee the opportunity to perform in his work. Thus, the entrepreneurs promote the involvement of the employee in the whole organizational project, with the aim that the employee feels the company like the own one. However, it is also necessary that the employee can have the opportunity to develop and contribute with his effort to the success of the company. The entrepreneur's investment in practices related to the AMO opportunity dimension seems to pay off generating in the employee an extra-role behavior, which provides the company with innovations and proactive actions. This EEB reinforces the entrepreneur's EO contributing to the success of the company. Hence, managers are advised to invest in practices, which will provide the employees with the opportunity to contribute their expected and extra-role performance to guarantee the success of the INV. Recommended HR practices are communication, autonomy, and participation in decision-making, among others. Of course, many other practices related to providing the company with appropriate employees, who show an entrepreneurial vision, and developing them with appropriate training will help to get the EEB. A bundle of HR interrelated practices, rather than practices in isolation, seem to be more effective in getting entrepreneurial outcomes from the employee. The reason is that certain practices present synergic effects when they are implemented together. Besides, the same outcome may be achieved through different practices. For example, managers can motivate employees offering them the opportunity to participate in decision-making processes. It seems that there is no specific combination of practices, which can be ideal for all companies, as the context where they are applied matters. Thus, managers should study the best combination of HR practices, which better adapts to their organization and produces the desired outcome in the employees. If the managers have got a clear orientation towards the employee, they can get information about the needed practices to be implemented and the best way to do it. In this process, it is very important to receive continuous feedback from the staff, which can orientate the manager about the quality of the decisions he is taking regarding the HRM.

6. Limitations and Future Research

The planned objective studying the HR practices in the INVs suggested that the most suitable research methodology to follow was the case study which, as other techniques do, implies certain limitations. This research limited to companies situated in three Spanish provinces situated on the East coast. The physical concentration of the selected cases may suppose certain bias, as in that region particular norms or legislation may be applied, which can conditionate entrepreneurs to implement specific practices. Thus, one of the investigated firms took advantage of financial local government funds granted for employee training. The seven participating companies were located in technological parks and operating in the high technology sector, which may have specific peculiarities, although this sector is where more INVs can be generally found. That is, in the geographical and sectoral concentration may take place in a certain manner to manage human resources, which may not exist in other environments. For example, in high technology industries, small companies competing in foreign markets tend to invest more in employee training (Morley et al. 2016). Considering that all interviewed companies, except D, were located in technological parks related to nearby universities,

with which they had relationships, it may conditionate the way entrepreneurs manage their employees, too. For example, those companies exchanged information with the universities about the recruitment of new employees.

Further, the collection of information was mainly made through personal interviews, assisted by a guideline. It may be possible that the guideline was too structured and couldn't allow the managers or employees to freely speak their thoughts out. For example, using academic terminology in the questions may induce an employee to use that same terminology in his answers. Or, the employee may disguise that he didn't properly understand the question and doesn't want to reveal certain ignorance on that matter.

As earlier related, every interview was audio-recorded and later transcribed to accurately fix the interviewee's thoughts. However, there were certain cases where it was difficult to decoder some words, because of the environmental noise or uncomplete employee pronunciation. Fortunately, there were only a few such cases. Furthermore, the temporary limitation of each interview may not permit the researcher to collect the full wished information.

Although the collaboration was high, some of the participants were reluctant to be further contacted. Moreover, it was difficult to get a second interview. Therefore, the missing data had to be collected by phone or electronic mail. Also, for some subjects, it was difficult to access the information, as the relationship between investigator and participant needed time to build up and get confidence. For example, getting specific details about an HRM process implemented in the company. Firstly, the subjects addressed in the interviews were delicate, as it referred to the way an entrepreneur manages human resources in his company, and secondly, employees were to speak about factors, which may influence their performance, attitude, and behavior. This may cause informational bias. For example, an entrepreneur may want to speak very well about the way he manages his employees. Or, an employee may praise his superior's management. Actually, it was observed that in a few cases the worker did not seem to be honestly speaking how he feels in his work, instead of about how the company expects to hear he feels. In the interviews, there may appear indices that reveal such situations, as the interviewee alters his nervous estate in some parts of the conversation, not knowing what to say or criticize. Also, the interviewee showed opposite meanings, even, assuring something and later playing that assertion down. Fortunately, there were only a few of those cases. In these cases, the followed strategy by the interviewer was to come back to those matters, once he had gained confidence with the interviewee, and the latter showed evidence of relaxation and accommodation to the interview.

In this sense, the small quantity of workers in each company means that everybody knows his co-workers very well and suggested to anonymize the obtained data to avoid later possible reprisals by the managers. Therefore, some interviewees looked unquiet, which could lead to informational bias. However, it was important to gain confidence with the interviewee guarantying anonymity and providing him with a relaxed, cordial, transparent and collaborative ambient.

Also, the interviews were carried out by only one investigator, which may limit the in-situ interpretation of data and miss other points of view from additional researchers, which could enrich the dialogue.

Finally, the impossibility of interviewing the whole staff in the organization may limit the information, as not all opinions are collected. In the same way, the study cannot be aware of all the details which happen in a company.

Although the investigation has got limitations, it can provide us with details about the HRM in INVs, on which future research can base. Thus, the findings can be tested by quantitative means within the INV population to contrast and extend theory on this sort of organization. In this case, future researches can address other sectors and regions, with different locations of companies and organizational features. The quantitative methodology may enable the investigator to find out the importance of each practice on employee performance and his contribution to the organizational EO.

Also, it can be interesting testing the synergic impact of the practices applied in these firms, and their contribution to employee performance.

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