

# Fit-intrapreneurship in the emerging economy of health and fitness industry

Emerging  
economy of  
health and  
fitness

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – This study aims to analyze the precursors of high and low intrapreneurial intentions among fitness center employees, considering various variables (gender, age, organization size and job satisfaction).

**Design/methodology/approach** – The study involved 166 fitness center employees of the Portuguese fitness center. The study used a two-part questionnaire to gather sociodemographic data and assess variables related to intrapreneurial intentions and job satisfaction among fitness employees. The first part collected basic demographic information, while the second used validated scales to measure intrapreneurial intentions (innovation and risk-taking) and job satisfaction (intrinsic and extrinsic).

**Findings** – This study underscores intrapreneurship as key for the evolving global fitness sector, highlighting job satisfaction as critical for fostering intrapreneurial intentions. Age, organizational size and gender diversity are also significant, suggesting that fostering a diverse and satisfied workforce under transformational leadership can enhance fitness organizations' adaptability and growth.

**Social implications** – This research supports the growth of the fitness sector by demonstrating how intrapreneurship, propelled by job satisfaction, can resolve challenges, benefiting fitness centers regardless of size, age or gender diversity.

**Originality/value** – The study highlights the vital role of intrapreneurs in the fitness industry, advocating a nongender-biased approach to intrapreneurship and identifying job satisfaction as key to fostering intrapreneurial intentions, beneficial for all fitness centers.

**Keywords** Intrapreneurship, Sport management, Employees, Fitness centers, QCA

**Paper type** Research paper

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## 1. Introduction

Organizations are in a continuous process of change, survival and market sustainability, with innovation being a vital tool for their growth (Hernández-Perlines *et al.*, 2022), especially concerning countries or regions with emerging economies (see, for example, Khattak *et al.*, 2022; or Mehrotra and Jaladi, 2022). In this context, intrapreneurship assumes special relevance in business development, as it enables the creation of competitive positions and facilitates growth and progress (Galván-Vela *et al.*, 2021; Hernández-Perlines *et al.*, 2022).

Originally, intrapreneurship aimed to explain the innovation process within an organization, but today it has become the primary strategic consideration for any organization (Wan and Liu, 2021). Some authors have defined it as the entrepreneurial spirit that develops within existing organizations (Antoncic and Hisrich, 2001, 2003; Parker, 2011). However, scientific literature also uses terms such as corporate entrepreneurship, internal entrepreneurship, organizational entrepreneurship or intrapreneurship (Blanka, 2019; Kraus *et al.*, 2019; Lara-Bocanegra *et al.*, 2021, 2022b; Neessen *et al.*, 2019; Urbano *et al.*, 2013). Intrapreneurship refers to the actions of an employee who undertakes entrepreneurial activities within the established boundaries of the company (Pinchot, 1985). These individuals are motivated, proactive and action-oriented, taking responsibility for turning an idea into a profitable business reality for their company (Pinchot and Soltanifar, 2021). Importantly, these individuals are considered pioneers who drive transformative processes within established organizations (Braunerhjelm *et al.*, 2018; Rigtering *et al.*, 2019). All of this merely indicates that intrapreneurs are capable of enhancing organizational adaptability, enabling the identification of new lucrative perspectives and creating a competitive advantage over rivals (Ireland *et al.*, 2009; Kuratko, 2017; Neessen *et al.*, 2019). The actions of intrapreneurial individuals improve business performance and generate lasting competitive advantages (Alpkan *et al.*, 2010; Bierwerth *et al.*, 2015; Felicio *et al.*, 2012; Moriano *et al.*, 2009). As Amo (2010) highlights, intrapreneurial behavior emerges from lower echelons of the corporate hierarchy, with employees themselves responsible for conveying and championing their concerns and ideas to senior executives, who act as facilitators in their realization. Additionally, intrapreneurs require a cultural context within the organization and a conducive environment that nurtures their behaviors (Marques *et al.*, 2022).

As Gawke *et al.* (2019) present, intrapreneurship can be approached from three distinct perspectives. The first, linked to employees' business orientation, views it as an organizational component considering propensity for innovation, risk-taking and personal initiative (Moriano *et al.*, 2014; Rigtering and Weitzel, 2013; Valsania *et al.*, 2016; Wakkee *et al.*, 2010). The second focuses on intrapreneurial outcomes, related to employees' involvement in intrapreneurial activities and/or the number of implemented intrapreneurial initiatives (Guerrero and Peña-Legazkue, 2013; Hornsby *et al.*, 2009; Urbano *et al.*, 2013). Finally, the employee behavior-based approach considers the actions taken by workers to expand the organization's activities/projects and enhance its responsiveness to both internal and external events (strategic renewal) (Gawke *et al.*, 2017, 2018, 2019; Mustafa *et al.*, 2016; Park *et al.*, 2014; Woo, 2018). This third approach positions the employee as the central element of intrapreneurship and the outcomes achieved by them, while the first two focus on the organizational perspective (Gawke *et al.*, 2019; Marques *et al.*, 2022). However, there are key elements that intertwine across different approaches, as the concept of innovation is present in all of them (Ratten, 2021). Therefore, one can start with an employee-centered approach to intrapreneurship, while acknowledging that there are inherent elements transcending the organizational level (Gawke *et al.*, 2019; Marques *et al.*, 2022).

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In an attempt to consolidate the aforementioned points, [Lara-Bocanegra \(2023\)](#) indicated that intrapreneurship is a way of acting and performing as an employee. The intrapreneur is defined as an employee with extensive experience and/or knowledge in a specific sector, enabling them to identify new business opportunities and/or market niches for creating and/or redesigning ideas/products/services/businesses within the boundaries and security provided by an existing organization. Consequently, this study aims to analyze the precursors of high and low intrapreneurial intentions among fitness center employees, considering various variables (gender, age, organization size and job satisfaction).

Therefore, this work is organized into five sections. Section 1 is the introduction, addressing the theoretical framework and current situation from which this research emanates. Section 2 is the theoretical framework. Section 3 presents the methodology used, describing the sample of participants and the data analysis and collection procedure. Section 4 shows the research results. Section 5 hosts the discussion, while Section 6 outlines the conclusions reached through the development of this research.

## 2. Theoretical framework

### 2.1 *Intrapreneurship intention*

Various authors indicate that research on intrapreneurship is scattered and requires greater analysis and investigation by the scientific community ([Blanka, 2019](#); [Lara-Bocanegra et al., 2021](#)). Starting from the premise that intrapreneurship is an individual and personal decision ([Ratten, 2021](#); [Rigtering and Weitzel, 2013](#)), it is necessary to address the individual factors of the subject to understand how and why these types of behaviors are triggered in them. In the sports field, [Lara-Bocanegra et al. \(2021\)](#) highlighted the need to delve into the generation of intentions and intrapreneurial behaviors starting from the analysis of their precursors or driving agents. Furthermore, better knowledge about the generation of intrapreneurial intentions will facilitate understanding the generation of behavior ([Fitzsimmons and Douglas, 2011](#)).

In this line, there are multiple factors in the literature that directly or indirectly influence intrapreneurship, such as educational level, experience, age, contact network, superiors' leadership style, self-efficacy, identification with the organization, the type of work developed, job satisfaction and the organization's entrepreneurial orientation ([Covin and Slevin, 1991](#); [Douglas and Fitzsimmons, 2013](#); [Ireland et al., 2009](#); [Lara-Bocanegra et al., 2022b, 2022a](#); [Martarena, 2013](#); [Moriani et al., 2009, 2014](#); [Jong et al., 2015](#); [Turro et al., 2016](#); [Valsania et al., 2016](#)). However, research on intrapreneurship in the sports field is scattered and/or with a diverse focus ([Lara-Bocanegra et al., 2021](#); [Ratten, 2021](#)). In recent years, several studies linked to the generation of intrapreneurial intentions in the sports field ([Jones et al., 2017](#); [Lara-Bocanegra et al., 2022b, 2022a](#); [Zvosec et al., 2023](#)) and others linked to the generation of the intention to undertake intrapreneurially in university students ([González-Serrano, 2019](#); [González-Serrano et al., 2018, 2019, 2023](#); [Zainuddin and Mukhtar, 2023](#)) have been published.

Regarding the sociodemographic variables previously mentioned, some of them have caused controversy in the literature due to their connection as precursors of the intention to undertake intrapreneurially. Among them, gender stands out as one of the most controversial in the scientific literature linked to the sports field. Such is the case that, there are some studies linked to sports science students that indicate that women have a greater tendency toward intrapreneurship ([González-Serrano, 2019](#); [González-Serrano et al., 2018, 2023](#)), while in studies on employees of sports organizations, it has been indicated that gender is not presented as a precursor variable of intrapreneurship ([Lara-Bocanegra, 2023](#); [Lara-Bocanegra et al., 2022a](#)), and sometimes it does not reflect gender differences but rather other sociodemographic factors such as age or career development ([Jones et al., 2017](#); [Jones et al., 2020](#)). These discrepancies and/or controversies in the literature necessitate analyzing

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this variable in different contexts and/or realities of sports organizations to determine its influence or not. Therefore, the following proposition is presented:

*P1.* Gender is a causal condition for high levels of intrapreneurial intentions.

As for age, it is another variable that generates controversy in the academic literature, with studies in the sports sector emphasizing its importance in generating intrapreneurial intentions (González-Serrano *et al.*, 2018; Lara-Bocanegra *et al.*, 2022b), while it is unimportant in other sectors (Douglas and Fitzsimmons, 2013). Parker (2011) indicates that younger employees (lack of resources) and older ones (lack of motivation to undertake) have a higher probability of intrapreneuring, while Bosma *et al.* (2012) indicate that employees under 35 years of age have a higher intrapreneurial intention. On the other hand, Guerrero and Peña-Legazkue (2013) stress the importance of the experience gained over the years and knowledge of a particular market/sector. Lara-Bocanegra *et al.* (2022b) linked age with educational level, indicating that young subjects with a high level of education or older subjects with low education had high levels of intrapreneurial intention. Therefore, the following proposition is presented:

*P2.* Being older is a causal condition for high levels of intrapreneurial intentions.

The size of an organization is a variable that influences the processes, performance and innovation capacity of an organization (Covin *et al.*, 2006; Herrera and Sánchez-González, 2013). Moreover, it is a variable extensively analyzed at the sports level in relation to the organization's entrepreneurial orientation (Núñez-Pomar *et al.*, 2016; Escamilla-Fajardo *et al.*, 2021). The larger size of an organization is linked with high levels of economic and sports performance (Escamilla-Fajardo *et al.*, 2021), while higher values of entrepreneurial orientation are observed in smaller organizations (Rauch *et al.*, 2009; Wiklund and Shepherd, 2005), possibly linked to the positive proximity of the leader, providing flexibility and a quick adaptation to changes (Núñez-Pomar *et al.*, 2016). However, the size of the organization to which the employee belongs is not a variable extensively analyzed in relation to the generation of intrapreneurial intentions, with some authors indicating that this variable does not influence the intention to undertake intrapreneurially (Moriano *et al.*, 2014). According to Carrier (1994), intrapreneurship can be important for small, medium and large companies, although research has been very focused on large companies. Consequently, the following proposition is presented:

*P3.* Belonging to a smaller organization is a causal condition for high levels of intrapreneurial intentions.

Job satisfaction is a bifactorial variable composed of motivators or intrinsic factors and hygiene or extrinsic factors (Herzberg *et al.*, 1959). Warr *et al.* (1979) linked the intrinsic factors with aspects related to the recognition obtained for well-done work, responsibility, promotion and aspects related to the content of the task, while the extrinsic factors are related to the organization of work: schedule, remuneration and physical conditions of work. In relation to intrapreneurship, it is a variable that the scientific literature has shown to influence the intention and intrapreneurial behavior of employees (Howard-Grenville, 2007; Kraus *et al.*, 2019; Lara-Bocanegra, 2023). It is important to note that, traditionally, it has been believed that intrapreneurs leave their organizations with low levels of job satisfaction, however, Johnson and Wu (2012) indicated that intrapreneurs leave them with high levels of job satisfaction. Various authors indicate that focusing on promoting autonomy, delegating

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responsibility and employee well-being positively infers commitment and increases their job satisfaction, which directly and positively impacts better performance for the organization (Ağca *et al.*, 2012; Gawke *et al.*, 2018). In the sports sector, several authors have analyzed the influence of job satisfaction on intrapreneurial intention in employees of sports organizations (Lara-Bocanegra *et al.*, 2022b, 2022a), obtaining positive results in organizations dedicated to tennis and in a generic context. Therefore, the following proposition is presented:

- P4.* Having high levels of satisfaction is a causal condition for high levels of intrapreneurial intentions.

The Portuguese Institute of Sport and Youth (PISY), 2021 indicated the existence of about 14,000 fitness professionals with professionally validated titles, who were responsible for developing tasks of technical directors and physical exercise instructors. Several authors have indicated that the growth of the fitness sector is based on the importance of fitness professionals in customer satisfaction and retention (Campos *et al.*, 2016; Ramos *et al.*, 2021; Theodorakis *et al.*, 2004). Additionally, high levels of job satisfaction will contribute to the mental and emotional health of people, resulting in a benefit for the organization itself (Ramos *et al.*, 2021). However, there are various factors related to fitness professionals that influence their job satisfaction: excess physical exercise hours leading to pain, job stability, schedule, job security, absenteeism, productivity, turnover, employee autonomy, etc., among others (Ramos *et al.*, 2021).

The four hypotheses presented respond to the study's objective, also, attending to everything previously exposed and combining research on intrapreneurship and the fitness sector, this study aims to analyze the precursors of high and low intrapreneurial intentions among fitness center employees, taking into account various variables (gender, age, organization size and job satisfaction).

### 3. Methods

#### 3.1 Research context in Portugal

The fitness world is experiencing continuous and exponential growth worldwide, after the pandemic moment lived, with a 4% growth over the past two years, including 184 million members, 205,000 gyms and €82bn of annual global revenue (IHRS, 2022). The European fitness industry in 2022 reported €28bn in revenues, a total of 63,000 FC and 68 million members (Deloitte and EuropeActive, 2023). The current pandemic moment has influenced all aspects of life, and the fitness world has also been affected. In this sense, in the research context in Portugal, the impact of the global COVID-19 pandemic has broken the line of exponential growth reached in 2019 (i.e. €289,371 revenues; 688.210 number of members; 1.100 clubs; 6.7% market penetration rate). In 2020, there was a recession in the main indicators (i.e. a decrease of 49% of revenues; 29% number of members, 27% number of clubs and 1.9 % points market penetration rate), a stabilization in 2021 compared with 2020, and growth in 2022, equaling the year 2020 (Pedragosa and Ferreira-Barbosa, 2022; Pedragosa *et al.*, 2023). In 2022, Portugal saw a certain recovery in the sector. The number of clubs increased by 10%, from 800 to 880 clubs. The number of members increased by 49%, reaching the highest number since 2019, to 691.656 members. Revenues increased by 39%, from 165.364 thousand euros to 229.218 thousand euros. The market penetration rate increased by 2.2 % points, from 4.5% to 6.7%.

Regarding the number of workers in the fitness industry, its increase and decrease depend on the increase in the number of members and the number of FCs (Ramos *et al.*, 2021). In Portugal, despite the growing number of professional licenses for technical

directors and exercise trainers (i.e. 33,359 have been issued in 10 years) (PISY, 2021), after 2019 the number of workers decreased by 15% until 2022, with an estimated 16,532 workers in Portugal in 2022 (Pedragosa *et al.*, 2023).

### 3.2 Sample

The sample consisted of a total of 166 fitness center employees in Portugal. Of these, 57.8% ( $n = 96$ ) were men and 42.2% ( $n = 70$ ) women, with ages ranging from 19 to 65 years ( $M = 37.92$ ;  $SD = 10.21$ ). Regarding the level of education, 14.5% ( $n = 24$ ) had a basic educational level (2nd cycle, 3rd cycle and basic education), 10.2% ( $n = 17$ ) high school/vocational training, while 75.3% ( $n = 125$ ) have university degrees (teaching degree, bachelor's degree and doctorate). In terms of the position held, 11.4% ( $n = 19$ ) are technical directors, 1.2% ( $n = 2$ ) are general directors (e.g. marketing, finance, human resources, etc.), 5.4% ( $n = 9$ ) are technical coordinators (e.g. group classes, exercise room, swimming pools), 17.5% ( $n = 29$ ) general coordinators (e.g. marketing, finance, human resources, etc.), 46.4% ( $n = 77$ ) are sports technicians/instructors, 3% ( $n = 5$ ) are salespeople, 7.2% ( $n = 12$ ) are administrative staff (reception/secretary), while the remaining 7.8% ( $n = 13$ ) are dedicated to other tasks. Finally, regarding the size of the sports organization to which the employees belonged, they were classified according to the criteria indicated by the [European Union Commission \(2003\)](#), 17.5% ( $n = 29$ ) belong to microenterprises (less than 10 employees), 48.2% ( $n = 80$ ) to small enterprises (10–49 employees), 19.3% ( $n = 32$ ) to medium-sized enterprises (50–249 employees) and finally, 15.1% ( $n = 25$ ) are employees of large sports organizations (more than 250 employees).

### 3.3 Instruments

The instrument was divided into two parts. The first part, to obtain the sociodemographic data of the participants in this study, an *ad hoc* questionnaire was designed that included questions related to gender, age, level of education, position held and the size of the sports organization. And the second part, the variables of this study was a structured questionnaire composed of different scales previously validated. Specifically, the following were used:

- (1) Intrapreneurial intentions scale: this scale was developed by [Stull and Singh \(2005\)](#), has been adapted and validated in Spanish in sports science students by [González-Serrano \*et al.\* \(2019\)](#), and used in employees of sports organizations ([Lara-Bocanegra \*et al.\*, 2022b](#)). The instrument consists of seven items that determine the intention to undertake intrapreneurially. It is divided into two dimensions, innovation with four items (e.g. I would try to develop new processes, services or products) and risk-taking with three items (e.g. I would take calculated risks despite the possibility of failing). A seven-point Likert-type response scale was used, where 1 means (strongly disagree) and 7 (strongly agree). The Cronbach's alpha of the tool with the sample of this work was 0.95, being for the dimension of innovation 0.97 and for risk-taking 0.92.
- (2) Job satisfaction scale: this is the overall Job satisfaction scale ([Warr \*et al.\*, 1979](#)), validated in Spanish by [Boluarte \(2014\)](#) and used in the sports field by different authors ([Gálvez-Ruiz \*et al.\*, 2017](#); [Grimaldi-Puyana \*et al.\*, 2018](#); [Lara-Bocanegra \*et al.\*, 2022b](#)). The scale consists of 15 items and measures the satisfaction that employees have with different aspects and behaviors of the entity where they work. The 15 items are specified in two second-order dimensions: intrinsic satisfaction (seven items, e.g. Recognition you get for well-done work) and

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extrinsic satisfaction (eight items, e.g. The possibility of using your skills). A seven-point Likert scale was used, where 1 (very dissatisfied) and 7 (very satisfied). The Cronbach's alpha of the tool with the sample of this work was 0.96, being for intrinsic satisfaction 0.93 and for extrinsic satisfaction 0.91.

### 3.4 Procedure

The sample collection was carried out after contacting Portugal Activo – Association of Fitness and Health Clubs. Thus, after several meetings with this entity and the presentation of the study's impact on this sector, the study was approved and the developed instrument was sent. The translation of the instrument was done by two specialists in Sport Management with published works in the Fitness area (one native Portuguese and one native Spanish). For the adaptation and translation of the different constructs of the instrument, all items were first translated into Portuguese and then adapted to modify to avoid the use of negatively worded items (Hinkin *et al.*, 1997). The next step was to translate all the items back into Spanish to check the similarity between the original versions and the resulting versions, and finally to use them in the final version of the instrument. Portugal Activo proceeded to make three massive mailings of the link (self-administered online questionnaire through GoogleForms) to its entire network of fitness center employees in Portugal. In this way, it was possible to reach employees from all over the Portuguese geography and from different fitness organizations with their own characteristics.

### 3.5 Data analysis

Data analysis was performed using fuzzy-set qualitative comparative analysis (hereinafter fsQCA) (version 3.0, USA), being a methodology in vogue in the field of entrepreneurship (Kraus *et al.*, 2018). fsQCA is based on configurational theory, suggesting that starting from an antecedent condition within a configuration acts interdependently with each other, rather than individually (Douglas *et al.*, 2020). Likewise, conditions are combined indiscriminately, and sometimes contradictorily, to achieve the same result (equifinality) through different paths (Ragin, 2008).

Before addressing the data analysis, all missing cases/values were eliminated, as well as the calibration of the database. In this sense, Likert-type scales were calibrated to a conventional fuzzy set calibration approach (values between 0 and 1) so that the software could treat them (Ragin, 2008). For this, each of the variables that have a response scale of 1 to 7 (intention to undertake intrapreneurially) or from 1 to 10 (job satisfaction) multiplied all the items that make it up to obtain greater variability. From there, three thresholds previously proposed in the literature (Escamilla-Fajardo *et al.*, 2019; Woodside, 2013) are considered: the lower threshold corresponding to the 10th percentile, the medium threshold corresponding to the 50th percentile and the upper threshold corresponding to the 90th percentile. On the other hand, the sociodemographic variables analyzed were also manually recalibrated with values between 0 and 1.

After this calibration and treatment of the data, a necessity analysis was carried out to determine if any condition is necessary for high or low levels of intention to undertake intrapreneurially. For this, the consistency value must be equal to or greater than 0.90 (Ragin, 2008). Finally, a sufficiency analysis was performed to determine if any condition or the interaction of several of them is sufficient for high or low levels of intention to undertake intrapreneurially. The threshold consistency value considered is 0.75 (Ragin, 2008).

Next, fsQCA establishes three solutions: complex, parsimonious and intermediate. Douglas *et al.* (2020) indicate that the gross coverage of each solution is the proportion of

cases in the sample that share a certain configuration. The thorough analysis of the parsimonious and intermediate solutions determines the conclusions on the causal essentiality of the specific combinations of causal conditions (Fiss, 2011). Likewise, central conditions may appear in both parsimonious and intermediate solutions, while peripheral conditions only appear in the intermediate solutions (Fiss, 2011). For this reason, this study will focus on the peripheral conditions of the intermediate solution.

Finally, for the representation of the results, what was proposed by various authors (Fiss, 2011; Ragin and Fiss, 2008) was used. In this sense, black circles are linked with the presence of a condition, while white circles indicate the absence of a condition. All analyses were carried out using the statistical program SPSS 25.0 (IBM, 2017) and the fsQCA program (version 3.0, USA).

#### 4. Results

First, the calibration of the variables is presented for use with fsQCA. As the previous literature indicates, the three thresholds corresponding to the 10th, 50th and 90th percentiles must be considered (Escamilla-Fajardo *et al.*, 2019; Eng and Woodside, 2012; Woodside, 2013) (Table 1).

After the calibration of the variables, a necessity check was conducted to identify any causal condition necessary for high or low levels (~) of intrapreneurial intention. Subsequently, sufficiency analyses were performed, verifying sufficient conditions and starting from the creation of a truth table, where a minimum consistency threshold of 0.75 was established (Ragin, 2008).

##### 4.1 Necessity analysis

The necessity analyses determine if any of the conditions are necessary for high or low levels of intrapreneurial intention. Considering the results obtained, no condition is necessary since the consistency level in all cases is below the 0.90 recommended by previous literature (Eng and Woodside, 2012; Ragin, 2008). However, it is noteworthy that being an employee of a smaller fitness center is the condition with the highest consistency value for both high and low levels of intrapreneurial intention (Table 2).

##### 4.2 Sufficiency analysis

The sufficiency analyses indicate whether any condition or the interaction of different conditions is sufficient to explain high or low levels of intrapreneurial intention. First, a truth table was generated, providing the possible combinations or paths of the causal

		AGE	SIZE	EJS	IJS	II
Mean		37.92	2.32	5.07	5.17	5.21
Standard deviation		10.21	0.93	1.45	1.53	1.37
Minimum		19.00	1.00	1.00	1.14	1.43
Maximum		65.00	4.00	7.00	7.00	7.00
Percentiles	10	25.00	1.00	2.84	3.00	3.00
	50	37.00	2.00	5.38	5.57	5.57
	90	52.30	4.00	6.75	7.00	7.00

**Table 1.**

Calibration of analyzed conditions

**Notes:** II = intrapreneurial intent; EJS = extrinsic job satisfaction; IJS = intrinsic job satisfaction  
**Source:** Own elaboration

	Intrapreneurial intentions		~ Intrapreneurial intentions	
	Consistency	Coverage	Consistency	Coverage
Gender	0.61	0.52	0.55	0.48
~ Gender	0.39	0.46	0.45	0.54
Age	0.65	0.65	0.57	0.59
~ Age	0.60	0.58	0.66	0.66
Size	0.43	0.63	0.47	0.71
~ Size	0.81	0.60	0.76	0.58
EJS	0.77	0.73	0.54	0.52
~EJS	0.50	0.51	0.72	0.77
IJS	0.75	0.72	0.56	0.55
~ IJS	0.52	0.53	0.71	0.75

**Table 2.** Necessity analysis for high and low levels of intrapreneurial intention

**Notes:** EJS = extrinsic job satisfaction; IJS = intrinsic job satisfaction; ~ = low levels  
**Source:** Own elaboration

Cutoff frequency: 3	Intrapreneurial intentions cutoff consistency: 0.81			~ Intrapreneurial intentions cutoff consistency: 0.81		
	1	2	3	1	2	3
Gender	●	●	○			●
Age	●	○	○		○	
Size		●	○	○		
EJS	●		●	○	○	○
IJS	●		●	○	○	○
Consistency	0.84	0.76	0.83	0.81	0.83	0.79
Raw coverage	0.32	0.18	0.16	0.51	0.48	0.36
Unique Coverage	0.21	0.07	0.16	0.07	0.06	0.03
Total solution consistency	0.79			0.79		
Total solution coverage	0.55			0.64		

**Table 3.** Sufficiency analysis (intermediate solution) for high and low levels of intrapreneurial intentions

**Notes:** ● = presence of condition; ○ = absence of condition; Expected vector for intrapreneurial intentions: 1.1.1-0.1-0.1-0. (0: absent; 1: present); Expected vector for ~ intrapreneurial intentions: 0.0.1-0.1-0.1-0; using the format of [Fiss \(2011\)](#)

**Source:** Own elaboration

conditions for a given result. Second, the software generates three solutions: parsimonious, intermediate and complex. Following the previous literature, and as mentioned earlier, the intermediate solution is considered ([Ragin, 2008](#)), as it alone presents the peripheral conditions ([Fiss, 2011](#)).

To simplify the presentation of the results, only the three most significant combinations or paths for each result, high and low levels of intrapreneurial intention, are shown ([Table 3](#)). The frequency cutoff in the truth table was set at 3, and the consistency cutoff was set at 0.81. The intermediate solution presented three causal configurations (combinations of conditions) for both high and low levels of intrapreneurial intention. For high levels of intention, the three solutions had a consistency of 0.79 and a gross coverage of 0.55, meaning they explained 55% of the cases of high intrapreneurial intentions. For low levels of intrapreneurial intention, the three solutions provided a consistency of 0.79 and a gross

coverage of 0.64, indicating that these solutions explained 64% of the cases of low levels of intrapreneurial intention.

The most significant solution for high levels of intrapreneurial intention is being male, older age and high levels of both intrinsic and extrinsic job satisfaction (raw coverage = 0.32; raw consistency = 0.84). The second most explanatory solution consisted of younger males and larger companies (raw coverage = 0.18; raw consistency = 0.76). Finally, the third, least explanatory solution for high levels of intrapreneurial intention was the combination of being a young female, belonging to smaller organizations and having high levels of both intrinsic and extrinsic job satisfaction (raw coverage = 0.16; raw consistency = 0.83). These three solutions for high levels of intrapreneurial intention can explain 32%, 18% and 16%, respectively.

Regarding low levels of intrapreneurial intention, the most explanatory solution was composed of individuals belonging to smaller organizations and with low levels of both intrinsic and extrinsic job satisfaction (raw coverage = 0.51; raw consistency = 0.81). The second most explanatory solution was formed by younger individuals presenting low levels of both intrinsic and extrinsic job satisfaction (raw coverage = 0.48; raw consistency = 0.83). The third and final solution for low levels of intrapreneurial intention consisted of males with low levels of both intrinsic and extrinsic job satisfaction (raw coverage = 0.36; raw consistency = 0.79). These three solutions for low levels of intrapreneurial intention can explain 51%, 48% and 36%, respectively.

## 5. Discussion

The aim of this study is to analyze the precursors of high and low intrapreneurial intentions among fitness center employees, considering variables such as gender, age, organizational size and job satisfaction. It is important to note that intrapreneurship in sports is less developed than its counterpart, entrepreneurship in sports, despite a recent upward trend in research on intrapreneurship aimed at addressing this disparity and deepening its understanding and transfer to the social and business fabric (Abdelwahed *et al.*, 2022; Blanka, 2019; Bogatyreva *et al.*, 2022; González-Serrano *et al.*, 2018; Kraus *et al.*, 2019; Lara-Bocanegra, 2023).

Furthermore, the explicit need for organizations to generate changes, survive and sustain in the market, combined with a global moment of uncertainty and economic crisis, underscores the critical role of innovation and, consequently, intrapreneurs in the growth and development of organizations themselves (Blanka, 2019; Galván-Vela *et al.*, 2021; Hernández-Perlines *et al.*, 2022). Intrapreneurship is both a personal and individual decision, as well as a way of acting and performing as an employee, establishing itself as the foundation for the growth of the sports sector (Lara-Bocanegra, 2023; Rigtering and Weitzel, 2013).

In this context, referring to the conclusions of various studies related to intrapreneurship in sports, there is a need for further analysis on the precursors of intrapreneurial intentions, taking into account different business realities and models of sports organizations (Lara-Bocanegra *et al.*, 2021; Lara-Bocanegra *et al.*, 2022a).

Regarding the results of this study, job satisfaction among fitness center employees emerges as a critical variable, as it appears in five out of the six solutions obtained for generating both high and low levels of intrapreneurial intention. These findings highlight the significance of employee job satisfaction in relation to fostering intrapreneurial intentions, as demonstrated in the academic literature (Howard-Grenville, 2007; Kraus *et al.*, 2019; Lara-Bocanegra, 2023; Lara-Bocanegra *et al.*, 2021, 2022b). High levels of job satisfaction correlate with high intrapreneurial intentions in fitness center employees, while

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low levels of satisfaction are associated with low intentions to intrapreneur. This aligns with the perspectives of several authors (Kraus *et al.*, 2019; Lara-Bocanegra, 2023; Lara-Bocanegra *et al.*, 2022a), emphasizing the importance of employee satisfaction as a precursor to intrapreneurial intention, thereby enhancing employee commitment and overall organizational outcomes (Ağca *et al.*, 2012; Gawke *et al.*, 2018; Lara-Bocanegra *et al.*, 2022a). Both the literature and the results obtained underscore the link between job satisfaction and intrapreneurship, suggesting that a strong focus on job satisfaction within fitness centers would positively impact both the employees and the organization's benefit.

Another variable analyzed in this work, which has generated considerable controversy within the scientific community, is gender. In this case, gender was present in four out of the six solutions obtained, showing a mix of men and women for high levels of intrapreneurial intention, while for low levels of intrapreneurship, men appear in one of the solutions. These results align and contrast with those of various authors (González-Serrano, 2019; González-Serrano *et al.*, 2018, 2019), who suggested that women have a greater tendency toward intrapreneurship. Thus, by obtaining favorable results for both women and men for high levels of intrapreneurial intention, it can be asserted that the intention to intrapreneur is not a precursor to intrapreneurship by itself, as several authors have indicated (Lara-Bocanegra, 2023; Lara-Bocanegra *et al.*, 2022a), though it may be conditioned by its relationship with other variables.

Regarding the most significant conditions for generating high levels of intrapreneurial intentions, they are being male, of older age and possessing high levels of job satisfaction (both intrinsic and extrinsic). Being male contrasts with the findings of González-Serrano *et al.* (2018), who stated that women had a greater intention to intrapreneur than men. Baena-Luna and García-Río (2021) mentioned that female managers showed better organizational conditions for the emergence of intrapreneurial behavior, but the results did not allow for definitive conclusions regarding gender. However, Lara-Bocanegra *et al.* (2022a) noted that gender did not influence the intention to intrapreneur, thus generating some controversy. As for age, older age relates to greater knowledge of a particular sector (González-Serrano *et al.*, 2018; Guerrero and Peña-Legazkue, 2013; Parker, 2011) and to more or less experience in it (Lara-Bocanegra *et al.*, 2022b). This relationship of age with respect to experience/knowledge of a sector is crucial for the emergence of intrapreneurs. Moreover, high levels of job satisfaction correlate with the emergence of intrapreneurial intention and behaviors (Howard-Grenville, 2007; Kraus *et al.*, 2019; Lara-Bocanegra, 2023), possibly linked to organizational identification, which, in turn, affects greater intrapreneurial intention and behavior (Moriano *et al.*, 2009).

The second most explanatory solution for high levels of intrapreneurial intentions comprised young men belonging to larger organizations. Regarding gender, as previously mentioned, it seems not to be decisive on its own, as Lara-Bocanegra (2023) indicated, contrary to the view that women are more inclined toward intrapreneurship than men (González-Serrano, 2019; González-Serrano *et al.*, 2018). Being young could entail the necessary ambition for job stability and, due to a lack of resources (Bosma *et al.*, 2012; Parker, 2011), present a higher intrapreneurial intention. In addition, intrapreneurship often arises from the bottom up in organizations (Amo, 2010), so being in less significant positions when younger may influence this higher intention to intrapreneur. On the other hand, belonging to a larger fitness center facilitates high levels of intrapreneurial intention, as larger size is associated with higher economic and sports performance (Escamilla-Fajardo *et al.*, 2021), which could be due, to some extent, to intrapreneurs improving the organizational performance (Alpkan *et al.*, 2010; Moriano *et al.*, 2009).

On the other hand, being a young woman, belonging to smaller organizations, and possessing high levels of job satisfaction are found to be the third most explanatory solution for high levels of intrapreneurial intention. The finding of a solution where the female gender plays a primary role in generating the intention to intrapreneur underscores the relevance of what various authors have proposed in this line of inquiry (Baena-Luna and García-Río, 2021; González-Serrano *et al.*, 2018). However, this time other solutions were obtained where the male gender was also present, suggesting that gender itself is not a precursor variable to the intention to intrapreneur (Lara-Bocanegra, 2023). As for youth, similar to the previous solution, youth may be associated with a lack of resources and a need for stability, leading to a greater intention to intrapreneur (Bosma *et al.*, 2012; Parker, 2011). The smaller size of an organization is linked to higher entrepreneurial orientation values, possibly related to the proximity of the organization's leader and the flexibility and rapid adaptation to changes that this allows (Núñez-Pomar *et al.*, 2016; Rauch *et al.*, 2009; Wiklund and Shepherd, 2005). Regarding job satisfaction, the literature has specifically shown the relationship between high levels of job satisfaction and the generation of intrapreneurial intentions and behaviors (Ağca *et al.*, 2012; Gawke *et al.*, 2018; Howard-Grenville, 2007; Kraus *et al.*, 2019; Lara-Bocanegra, 2023; Lara-Bocanegra *et al.*, 2022b, 2022a).

Regarding the most explanatory solutions for low levels of intention to intrapreneur, they include, first, belonging to smaller organizations and having low levels of job satisfaction (both intrinsic and extrinsic); second, being young and having low levels of job satisfaction; and, finally, being women with low levels of job satisfaction. These combinations highlight again the importance of job satisfaction and the need for its promotion by sports organizations to foster the generation of intrapreneurial intentions among their internal clients (Ağca *et al.*, 2012; Gawke *et al.*, 2018; Howard-Grenville, 2007; Kraus *et al.*, 2019; Lara-Bocanegra, 2023; Lara-Bocanegra *et al.*, 2022b, 2022a). As for the smaller size of the organization, the leader's proximity influences higher levels of entrepreneurial orientation (Núñez-Pomar *et al.*, 2016; Rauch *et al.*, 2009; Wiklund and Shepherd, 2005), but a transactional leadership style negatively influences intrapreneurship (Moriano *et al.*, 2014). For this reason, the leadership style exercised can be crucial for the emergence of the intention to intrapreneur (Lara-Bocanegra, 2023; Moriano *et al.*, 2014). Regarding age, lesser experience and/or knowledge in the sports sector due to younger age negatively affects the intention to intrapreneur. Lara-Bocanegra *et al.* (2022b) indicated that older age/experience in the sector in relation to educational level, provided the individual with an ability to anticipate and greater knowledge of the sector's reality, positively influencing the intention to intrapreneur. Moreover, the gender variable, as previously mentioned, is not in itself a precursor variable to low/high levels of intrapreneurial intention (Lara-Bocanegra, 2023), as solutions involving both genders have been obtained.

## 6. Conclusions

In conclusion, this work highlights several conclusions that will be of great help to the fitness sector, a sector that is continually growing both in Portugal and globally (Deloitte and EuropeActive, 2023; Foroughi *et al.*, 2019; Pedragosa *et al.*, 2023). The fact that intrapreneurship emerges as a solution to the current problems faced by fitness organizations is of great interest to both large chains in the sector and to medium and small fitness centers.

In this sense, the four precursor variables of intrapreneurial intention stand out as important for the emergence of intrapreneurs, particularly job satisfaction (both intrinsic and extrinsic), which proves to be the most significant variable. Therefore, fitness centers should promote job satisfaction among their employees, facilitating the creation of

intrapreneurial ecosystems under the umbrella of transformational leadership and fluid communication.

Regarding age and organizational size, both are precursor variables for intrapreneurial intention, acting differently depending on their combination with other variables. Specifically, young individuals, due to their greater curiosity and lower purchasing power, are potential intrapreneurs. On the other hand, older employees, with their extensive experience and sector knowledge, become reliable intrapreneurs who can anticipate changes and meet organizational needs. The same applies to fitness centers' size: in larger fitness centers, men exhibit higher intention, while in smaller centers, women do. This suggests that all employees can act as intrapreneurs within the fitness center, provided they possess the necessary characteristics, including appropriate leadership styles. Creating diverse teams with individuals of different ages will positively impact the organization's benefit.

Thus, this paper has attempted to shed light on the gender controversy in relation to the generation of intrapreneurial intentions. In this sense, this study has corroborated the findings of previous studies (Lara-Bocanegra, 2023; Lara-Bocanegra *et al.*, 2022a), which highlighted the idea that gender does not act as a precursor variable, since this intention appears in both women and men. Therefore, the importance of analyzing intraentrepreneurship through the prism of the subject is emphasized, and never focusing on one sex or the other, as this has not been a determining factor.

### 6.1 Practical implications

The practical implications section emphasizes the significant role intrapreneurs play within sports organizations, particularly fitness centers. Theoretically, it underscores the necessity to view intrapreneurship through a generic lens, not considering gender as a determining variable. It also highlights the crucial inclusion of job satisfaction as a variable linked to the generation of intrapreneurial intentions across various sports organizations, including fitness centers. Practically, this study aids managers and/or CEOs of fitness centers in recognizing that basing their growth on the potential intrapreneurs present within their

- Ensure that this organization has a strong entrepreneurial orientation.
- Lead by example in intrapreneurship for the employees.
- Remember that all employees have the potential to be intrapreneurs.
- Promote personal and professional growth among employees.
- Value academic education and make it accessible.
- Appreciate employees' experience and give them recognition.
- Prioritize employee job satisfaction.
- Facilitate communication channels between employees and management.
- Encourage and reward the generation of new ideas and projects..
- Value all ideas, even if they don't all come to fruition.

**Source:** Own elaboration

**Figure 1.**  
Decalogue of ideas/  
tips to generate  
intrapreneurship

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organizations is a secure strategy. It reveals that anyone can become an intrapreneur, regardless of age or gender, offering solutions for both small and large fitness centers (FCs) in generating intrapreneurial intentions. Whether it is a small fitness studio or a large chain, the intrapreneurial potential lies in human capital and personal development. Therefore, a series of ideas or tips for fostering intrapreneurial intentions is suggested (Figure 1).

Likewise, this paper transfers to society its own knowledge about intrapreneurship in the fitness sector, which provides substantial value since it is one of the most important sectors worldwide and that, thanks to its intrapreneurs, could continue to grow exponentially. In this way, the importance of intrapreneurship at the organizational level is latent, providing fitness center managers with the opportunity to generate intrapreneurs that are beneficial to their own organizations.

The applicability of this study lies in the importance and need to obtain relevant information that can be used by sports management, both for the growth of the different business models and to give the importance that the employees themselves have. In this sense, these data can provide great information for the sports sector and serve as a model for those moments when action is required.

### *6.2 Limitations and future research*

This work is not without limitations, one of which is related to the sample collected, 166 employees of fitness centers, where 57.8% ( $n = 96$ ) were men and 42.2% ( $n = 70$ ) were women. There is an unequal participation in terms of gender, which could infer some risk of bias in the results obtained and conclusions of this work. Additionally, this study analyzes the combination of variables for high and low levels of intention to intrapreneur, but does not address the entrepreneurial orientation of the different fitness centers, which would allow for a closer and deeper analysis of the realities of the centers, through the analysis of their managers/CEOs. Moreover, this study does not take into account the analysis of the intention to intrapreneurship based on the job position held, which could provide very valuable information to the scientific community and, therefore, have a transfer to the fitness sector. Another limiting factor is the generation of intentions to intrapreneur, which has been analyzed in this work from the perspective of Ajzen's (1991) planned behavior theory. However, a complete analysis of the model is required, since only information about the intention has been obtained, but not about the definitive generation of intrapreneurial behaviors, which prevents having a general view of intrapreneurship in sports. On the other hand, being able to conduct methodological triangulation, combining QCA analysis with, for example, statistical cluster analysis, would have provided greater validity and consistency to the findings noted. In this sense, future research should consider the possibility of combining both statistical analyses.

These limitations should not be taken as weaknesses of the research itself but should be transformed into opportunities for growth and future lines of research. In this sense, it is necessary to continue with the analysis of the intention to intrapreneur in employees of sports organizations, but including in this equation the analysis of the entrepreneurial orientation of the organization itself. This will allow crossing the individual data of the employee with the entrepreneurial orientation of the organization, obtaining an exact radiography of the situation of intrapreneurship in the sports sector. Additionally, future research should incorporate among the precursor variables the job position held, which will provide information about the labor situation of the intrapreneurial subject and the specific motivation for the generation of new ideas/projects. Finally, the adaptation and development of the theoretical model of Ajzen's (1991) planned behavior theory in relation to intrapreneurship in sports is necessary, as in this sector there are only partial analyses of the generation of intentions or behaviors, but not of the complete model.

For all the reasons mentioned above, intrapreneurship is a safe value for growth for fitness centers, but the centers themselves must bet on its development and promotion, making their own employees act as intrapreneurs for the benefit of their organization.

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