

MASTER'S THESIS

Course code: BE307E

Candidate number: 2

**Growth Ambitions among Men and Women Entrepreneurs:
Investigating the Effect of Entrepreneurial Self-efficacy, Attitudes,
and Innovation Activities.**

Date: May 23rd, 2023,

Total number of pages: 62

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to highlight how entrepreneurial growth prospects are influenced by entrepreneurial self-efficacy, innovation activities and attitudes among male and female entrepreneurs. The hypotheses are tested using hierarchical regression analysis. The Theory of Planned Behaviour and Self-efficacy Theory will be employed since they suggest that self-motivation and intention affect engagement in a particular activity. I will also address the following research questions:

1. Is there a difference between male and female entrepreneurs regarding entrepreneurial self-efficacy, innovation activities, attitudes, and Growth ambitions?
2. What is the effect of entrepreneurial self-efficacy, innovation activities, and attitudes on Growth ambitions?
3. Is there a difference between men and women entrepreneurs regarding the effect of entrepreneurial self-efficacy, innovation activities, and attitudes on Growth ambitions?

The study employed quantitative methods research design. Data was collected from a sample of 142 male and female high-growth small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) incorporated businesses started in Norway. Data for women entrepreneurs were collected in the second half of 2013 and for men in late 2014 and early 2015. Data obtained from the study participants are analyzed through descriptive statistics using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences Version 23 (SPSS 23.0).

First, results indicate no significant difference between male and female entrepreneurs regarding entrepreneurial self-efficacy, innovation activities, attitudes, and growth ambitions. The findings from the study also show that self-efficacy, innovation activities, and attitudes tend to impact entrepreneurial growth ambitions. However, the impact of the variables varied distinctly on male and female entrepreneurs. Self-efficacy and attitudes impacted greatly female entrepreneurs' growth ambitions. Innovation activities were a key factor for the growth ambitions pursuit for male entrepreneurs. These findings contribute to the existing literature on women's entrepreneurship and highlight the need for tailored support for women to enhance their self-efficacy and entrepreneurial attitude.

Keywords used: gender, women entrepreneurship, self-efficacy, innovation activities, growth ambitions, entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial attitude.

Acknowledgement

This master's dissertation is the final bit of the program Master of Science in Business at Nord University. The thesis is in correspondence with the specialization of Innovation and Entrepreneurship. I appreciate the significant support and acumens I got from my supervisor Espen Isaksen, an associate professor at Nord University Business School. His vast knowledge and humble approach to research is an inspiration to emulate. His insights and constructive feedback following our discussions have been pivotal in completing my thesis. He guided me towards choosing a researchable topic in the initial stages of the master thesis and gave me access to secondary data that comprised a quantitative questionnaire with answers from respondents that was part of his research project. He effortlessly also helped me with data analysis whilst using the SPSS program and further ensured that I used proper literature.

1.0 Introduction

This study seeks to investigate the effect of entrepreneurial self-efficacy, attitudes, and innovation activities on growth ambitions among men and women entrepreneurs. The number of entrepreneurs continues to increase as dynamics change in the workplace and people identify gaps that they can fill through business opportunities coming up. The gender assessment of the business environment shows that men still dominate the entrepreneurship environment compared to women (Henry, Foss & Ahl, 2016). However, the number of women embarking on entrepreneurial careers is significantly less than men.

Entrepreneurial careers are dominated by men despite the significant role women entrepreneurs play in the economic growth and development of a nation (Henry, Foss & Ahl, 2016). Existing literature on the normative representations of entrepreneurship is dominated by masculinity, which inadvertently renders female entrepreneurs invisible (Zampetakis et al., 2017). Several factors continue to define the growth prospects for male and female entrepreneurs and understanding the different factors is critical to achieving any meaningful success (Henry, Foss & Ahl, 2016). The study seeks to understand how entrepreneurial growth prospects are influenced by innovation activities, attitudes, and self-efficacy of male and female entrepreneurs. Despite the increase in female entrepreneurship over the past few decades, there is a gap in the literature on the rate of entrepreneurial growth among male and female entrepreneurs and how the different variables affect the possibility of growth (Zampetakis et al., 2017). For any entrepreneur regardless of their gender, growth is critical hence understanding the role played by attitudes, innovation activities, and self-efficacy can transform the performance of the business. The research involved the application of Ajzen's theory of planned behaviour in understanding the behaviours of male and female entrepreneurs as they undertake growth. Ajzen proposes that "intentions to perform behaviours of different kinds can be predicted with high accuracy from attitudes toward the behaviour, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control" (Ajzen, 1991). At the centre of theory is the individual's intention to perform a given behaviour. The author defines the rule as "the stronger the intention to engage in a behaviour, the more likely should be its performance" (Ajzen, 1991).

1.1 Significance of the Study

Existing literature on entrepreneurship is dominated by male entrepreneurship even though female entrepreneurship is the fastest-growing category of entrepreneurship globally (Cardella, Hernandez-Sanchez & Sanchez-Garcia, 2020). Despite the changes in the figures on entrepreneurship, the number of male entrepreneurs highlights male dominance in the sector. Most of the previous studies focusing on entrepreneurship have focused on male entrepreneurs. Therefore, female entrepreneurs have been rendered invisible and exist at the periphery in most studies. In addition, the factors affecting the growth of entrepreneurship have covered the reasons why male entrepreneurs are successful in the field albeit the information is not sufficient on the underlying factors affecting the prospects of women entrepreneurs growing in the business environment. In this regard, the study will enhance an understanding of the factors affecting entrepreneurial growth prospects for male and female entrepreneurs. It will provide insights that can be used by entrepreneurship educators and practitioners in further research on similar fields.

The goal of this study, while using the theory of planned behaviour as discussed above deepens the understanding of the effect of entrepreneurial self-efficacy, attitudes, and innovation activities on growth ambitions among men and women entrepreneurs. Self-efficacy describes an individual's belief in their capacity to execute behaviours needed to produce specific performance attainments (Zampetakis et al., 2017). Innovation describes the practical implementation of ideas resulting in the introduction of new goods and services for the improvement of the quality of goods and services offered (Zeb & Ihsan, 2020).

On the other hand, attitude describes the psychological construct that is a mental and emotional factor characterizing an individual. It is a vital determinant of how individuals react to different situations (Zeb & Ihsan, 2020). Entrepreneurial attitude thus explains the psychological construct of the mental and emotional factors that determine the specific behavioural decisions undertaken by entrepreneurs (Zeb & Ihsan, 2020). Towards this end, one of the major objectives of the current study is to explore the link between entrepreneurs' growth ambitions and entrepreneurial self-efficacy. I also reasoned that growth ambitions are a key predictor of actual growth. A key predictor of actual business growth is the entrepreneurs' business growth aspiration (Davidsson, 1989, 1991; Delmar and Wiklund, 2008; Kolvereid and Bullvåg, 1996; Wiklund and Shepherd, 2003). Entrepreneurs can determine whether they desire their firms to grow or not. The entrepreneurs' expectations regarding the outcomes of growth influence their growth willingness (Wiklund et al., 2003).

The level of self-efficacy and extent of innovation activities will affect the growth levels of entrepreneurship. A third major objective of this study is to examine the impact of gender and entrepreneurial attitudes on growth ambitions. I reasoned that gender could be used to explain the differences in business growth. To the best of my knowledge, to date, there have been minimal studies conducted involving the testing of theory under this domain of entrepreneurship.

1.2 Summary of Knowledge Gaps

Existing literature provides significant findings on the issue of gender and entrepreneurial self-efficacy, attitudes, innovation activities, and growth ambitions. Most of the existing studies on this issue have focused on women entrepreneurs given the increased participation and composition of women in the workforce (Henry, Foss & Ahl, 2016). One of the main areas of great focus in the previous literature on entrepreneurship is the factors that influence growth ambitions. The investigation by the different scholars reveals that the goal is to grow the business and several factors often affect the growth ambitions of the entrepreneurs.

The self-efficacy of the entrepreneur and the business environment will ultimately affect the growth ambitions of entrepreneurs. In addition, innovation activities affects the growth ambitions of entrepreneurs since it determines whether they can improve their business processes and realize better outcomes (Zampetakis et al., 2017). Most of the existing studies have been carried out regarding the role of gender in entrepreneurship, which has become a major economic force in the recent past (Zampetakis et al., 2017). Several scholars have analyzed the underlying factors that influence the growth of businesses, especially in the case of entrepreneurs. However, still, the literature is not adequate to establish how entrepreneurial growth for male and female entrepreneurs is impacted by self-efficacy, attitudes, and innovation activities. The studies conducted focus on other factors in the business environment that influence growth other than self-efficacy, attitudes, and innovative nature of the entrepreneurs.

Most of the studies conducted regarding the role of attitude in entrepreneurship are inadequate. According to Zeb & Ihsan (2020) the investigation of entrepreneurial attitude has

mainly focused on the strategies and approaches useful in transforming attitudes to ensure better outcomes in the business environment. Most scholars analyzing the role of attitude among entrepreneurs tend to focus on the exceptionalism, creativity, and innovation activities of the entrepreneurs to change their situations.

The focus on the values that embody entrepreneurship contributing to the growth of businesses is minimal. Moreover, the distinction in the attitudes of male and female entrepreneurs and the impact on organizational success is inadequate. In addition, the focus of most studies is the general societal attitudes toward males and females without a greater focus on how attitudes play a role in the entrepreneurial journey. The investigation of the role of attitudes thus is an area of great significance.

1.3 Research Questions

To achieve the purpose of the study, I sought to answer the following research questions:

1. Is there a difference between male and female entrepreneurs regarding entrepreneurial self-efficacy, innovation activities, attitudes, and growth ambitions?
2. What is the effect of entrepreneurial self-efficacy, innovation activities, and attitudes on growth ambitions?
3. Is there a difference between Men and Women Entrepreneurs regarding the effect of entrepreneurial self-efficacy, innovation activities, and attitudes on growth ambitions?

The nature of the phenomenon under investigation implies that I had to conduct a positivist study. In this case, I assumed that entrepreneurial self-efficacy, attitudes, and innovation activities have an influential role in growth ambitions among men and women entrepreneurs. Growth ambitions refer to entrepreneurial aspirations or the pursuit of business growth (Klofsten et al., 2019). Entrepreneurial self-efficacy refers to individual beliefs and motivation regarding their capabilities to pursue entrepreneurship (Klofsten et al., 2019). Innovation activity refers to the development of new processes and products, creating novel knowledge or ideas, or a unique means of providing better quality or value (Zeb & Ihsan, 2020). Attitude describes the psychological construct that is a mental and emotional factor characterizing an individual, it is a vital determinant of how individuals react to different

situations (Zeb & Ihsan, 2020). I will conduct a quantitative analysis of a sample of 142 business owners and entrepreneurs in Norway using secondary data.

The remainder of the thesis is organized as follows: in chapter two I will delve more into the literature review. The literature review is divided into theoretical and empirical reviews. The theoretical review investigates the underlying theories explaining how entrepreneurial growth is affected by the behaviours of entrepreneurs. The empirical review provides a critical analysis of the previous studies addressing the research problem including the gaps that emerged from these studies. In chapter three, the research highlights the methodology used in the collection and analysis of the data on the research problem. In addition, the underlying philosophy explaining how self-efficacy, attitudes, and innovation activities affect entrepreneurial growth ambitions for male and female entrepreneurs are highlighted in chapter three. The subsequent section discusses the descriptive results analysis. Descriptive analysis including regression and correlation analysis are analyzed. The final section provides the conclusion of the study outcomes and the implication of the study in different fields.

2.0 Literature Review

Introduction

Entrepreneurial growth is a subject of research for numerous scholars, especially with the increase in the number of entrepreneurs. Nordbø (2022) explains that the changing dynamics in the entrepreneurial environment are often a source of great investigation to understand the underlying factors affecting male and female entrepreneurs. Nair (2020) further adds that it is imperative to investigate the phenomenon of growth ambitions to ensure that aspiring entrepreneurs understand what awaits them as they start the process. Existing literature provides different perspectives on the issue of growth and gender ambitions including self-efficacy, innovation activities, and attitudes. However, as previously mentioned, a significant portion of existing studies on this issue portray male dominance in entrepreneurship. To identify existing literature on this topic, a search was carried out on electronic databases. The search was conducted on three electronic databases: Business Source Premier, EBSCOhost, and Science Direct. These electronic databases were selected

because they contain a series of full-text, peer-reviewed sources on a range of subjects and issues in business and management among others. *Keywords used:* gender, women entrepreneurship, self-efficacy, innovation activities, growth ambitions, entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial attitude.

The literature review was divided into a theoretical review and a literature and hypothesis development. The theoretical review focused on the theories underpinning the entrepreneurial behaviour of male and female entrepreneurs. The theories selected included the theory of planned behaviour and self-efficacy theory. The literature review analyzed past studies on self-efficacy, attitudes, and innovation activities and their impact on growth ambitions. Here I also discussed the research hypotheses formulated in line with the research questions and ultimately a summary of the chapter was included.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) and the Self-efficacy Theory will be used to investigate the effect of entrepreneurial self-efficacy, attitudes, and innovation activities on growth ambitions among men and women entrepreneurs. TPB is built on the assumption that individuals are rational and hence will act according to their attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control (Sabah, 2016). The different factors form the backdrop of the decision-making process. The study will incorporate the elements of Ajzen's TPB model as shown in Figure 1 below, namely actual control referring to innovation activities and, one concept of self-efficacy for financing referring to perceived behavioural. In addition, the attitude measure is included also in establishing how they in turn impact growth ambitions among male and female entrepreneurs. The study does not include a measure of subjective norms. Key to note that intentions in figure 1 below also referred to growth ambitions for the purpose of this study.

When using the theory of planned behaviour, the study will examine whether gender is a factor that influences one's belief in their capabilities to pursue a specific goal. In essence, the study will examine the extent to which gender influences self-reflection and social persuasion toward entrepreneurial intentions and aspirations (Sabah, 2016). In this case, the study will examine whether a specific gender is pre-disposed to higher self-efficacy and whether this then contributes to growing their businesses further (Bandura, 1977).

TPB was developed by Icek Ajzen (1991) to predict various social behaviours in different careers or disciplines such as politics, business, and healthcare. Based on this theory, the intention to engage in action is one of the most important determinants of a person's behaviour. Ajzen proposes that "intentions to perform behaviours of different kinds can be

predicted with high accuracy from attitudes toward the behaviour, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control” (Ajzen, 1991). At the centre of theory is the individual’s intention to perform a given behaviour. The author defines the rule as “the stronger the intention to engage in a behaviour, the more likely should be its performance” (Ajzen, 1991). TPB is based on the concept of intention, which incorporates self-motivation and conscious decision (Sabah, 2016). Therefore, this theory suggests a strong link between intention/motivation and action. When applied to the field of entrepreneurship, TPB suggests that an individual’s engagement in entrepreneurship is influenced by intentions (Sabah, 2016). However, entrepreneurial intentions do not always result in entrepreneurial action because of other factors. The study contributes to the development of TPB. The tests between the independent and dependent variables in the study allow for the measurement of the different antecedents of entrepreneurial behaviour and the role of growth ambitions, attitudes, innovation activities, and self-efficacy come into play. The data collection and analysis with high levels of validity provide an opportunity for a comprehensive assessment of TPB.

Figure 1 below of Ajzen’s TPB model shows the different factors contributing to the intentions of an entrepreneur. The model by Ajzen (1991) also presupposes that a positive attitude toward growth and actual control referring to innovation activities are positively related to growth ambitions. The TPB model postulates that attitudes and self-efficacy are behavioural aspects that are adjustable as the situation demands hence the need for entrepreneurial growth will result in changes in these behavioural aspects. According to Ajzen (1991), self-belief and self-esteem are critical elements that if implemented expose a business individual to access financing for their business hence bringing out the relationship highlighted in Figure 1 below:

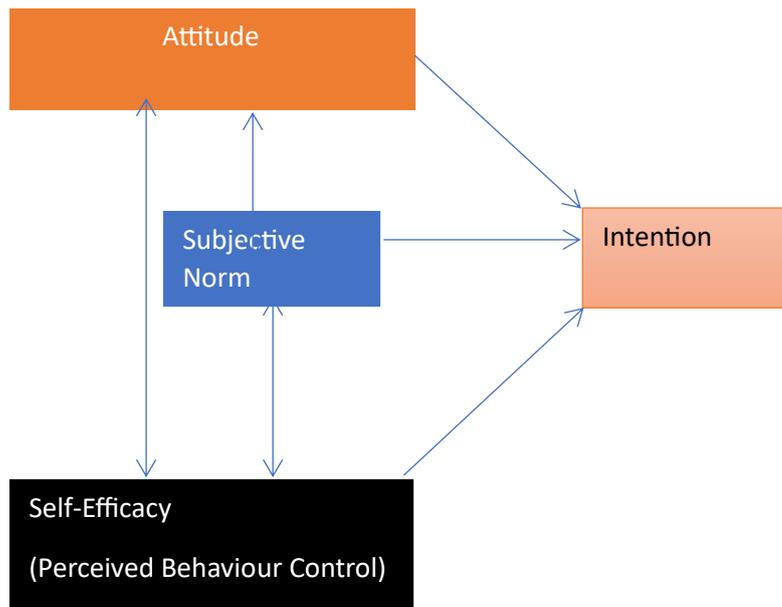


Figure 1: TPB model

Self-efficacy theory, which was developed by Albert Bandura, defines self-efficacy as a person's belief in his/her ability to carry out a given task (Bandura, 1977). The theory suggests that individual beliefs and motivations regarding one's capabilities to carry out a task are critical for his/her intentions and aspirations. If a person believes that he/she can accomplish a goal, he/she is increasingly likely to develop the intention and aspirations to realize that goal (Bandura, 1977). Self-efficacy theory highlights the significance of the individual and their perception of their abilities as critical determinants of successful outcomes. Self-efficacy provides the foundation for motivation, well-being, and individual accomplishment. The main sources of the self-efficacy theory include mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social persuasion, and emotional states (Bandura, 1977). The level of self-efficacy is likely to impact the success of the activities undertaken by individuals. According to the theory of self-efficacy, it can be described as high self-efficacy or low self-efficacy.

High self-efficacy is a great approach for entrepreneurs to realize greater success in the business environment (Bandura, 1977). High self-efficacy embodies a strong sense of self-confidence, and high levels of self-evaluation and self-awareness (Bandura, 1977). High self-efficacy levels are associated with the willingness to take risks to step outside of the comfort zone and include the ability to solve tough and challenging problems. Individuals who

embody a high level of self-efficacy tend to be highly motivated to reach their goals and showcase high levels of self-resilience (Bandura, 1977). The application of the theory requires entrepreneurs to implement self-efficacy characteristics. The different characteristics associated with self-efficacy will push entrepreneurs to grow their businesses. Adopting high self-efficacy characteristics will ensure that entrepreneurs have greater opportunities to grow their businesses and achieve great success.

Balawi & Ayoub (2022) explain that self-efficacy is critical for all categories of entrepreneurs seeking funding for their businesses. High self-belief will inform the financiers of the abilities of the entrepreneur since they are better at articulating the growth trajectory of their businesses. Holst & Teigen (2021) further adds that for most financiers of entrepreneurial ventures one of the most critical elements is ensuring that there is self-belief that will ensure expected outcomes are achieved. Thus, self-efficacy is a critical determinant of growth ambitions and success of businesses since it influences whether entrepreneurs access funding or not.

2.2 Literature and Hypotheses Development

The literature review and hypothesis development provide an opportunity to review the previous studies conducted regarding the research problem. Conducting the literature review allows the identification of the gaps emerging from the previous studies that inform hypothesis development in this study. The area of growth ambitions is not a new subject in the business environment and the review provides an opportunity for one to understand the different factors contributing to entrepreneurial growth ambitions. In addition, the empirical review provides an opportunity to understand the emerging gaps from the previous studies.

2.2.1 Entrepreneurship, Growth Ambitions and Business Growth

A key predictor of actual business growth is the entrepreneurs' business growth aspiration (Davidsson, 1989, 1991; Delmar and Wiklund, 2008; Kolvereid and Bullvåg, 1996; Wiklund and Shepherd, 2003). Entrepreneurs can determine whether they desire their firms to grow or not. The entrepreneurs' expectations regarding the outcomes of growth influence their growth willingness (Wiklund et al., 2003). Growth ambition is the gap between the current performance and opportunity in the marketplace (Burnette et al., 2020). Growth and development describe the process of improving entrepreneurial skills and knowledge among individuals with the help of the provision of well-organized training and developing

institutions (Burnette et al., 2020). Despite the excellent business performance, opportunities often exist for growth. Coleman et al. (2019) explain that the Norwegian entrepreneurial environment is one of the main contributors to the excellent performance of the economy. Several support initiatives for Norwegian women are in place as part of the strategy to ensure the best outcomes are achieved.

For entrepreneurs, growth can be achieved through the introduction of innovative technologies, products, and services. Increased competition in the entrepreneurial environment forces growth in the field as entrepreneurs seek strategies through which they can become competitive. Growth is a critical aspect of the long-term survival of the business (Burnette et al., 2020; Klofsten et al., 2019). Through growth, a business can acquire assets, attract, and retain new talent and fund additional investments. Entrepreneurial growth is also critical in driving business performance and profit (Klofsten et al., 2019). Even though entrepreneurial growth is critical, several factors are likely to affect the process including capital, labour availability, raw materials, market availability, education, the societal attitudes, and the cultural value of the business. Since male and female entrepreneurs often encounter different experiences affecting the growth of their businesses, the literature review helps in explaining how male and female entrepreneurs perform and the underlying factors affecting the growth and development of their businesses.

According to Ward, Hernandez-Sanchez & Sanchez-Garcia (2019), entrepreneurship is a concept that refers to the set of activities that result in the creation of new products and services. Therefore, this concept is not restricted to a fixed profile of individuals and interests since it can be evaluated at an individual or group level. Ward, Hernandez-Sanchez & Sanchez-Garcia (2019) contend that the significance of gender in entrepreneurship is evident in the differences in entrepreneurial activity and patterns between men and women. These differences are evident in various aspects including the number of males and females in entrepreneurial careers, concentration in different business ventures, and levels of growth orientation in businesses.

Concerning the number of male and female entrepreneurs, entrepreneurship has traditionally been viewed as a masculine career resulting in male dominance in this field (Henry, Foss & Ahl, 2016). Masculinity in the field of entrepreneurship is evident in normative representations, which in turn marginalizes female entrepreneurs while making them invisible (Zampetakis et al., 2017). The stereotyped representations of male entrepreneurship end up discouraging women from engaging in entrepreneurial/business activities. This implies that normative representations of entrepreneurship as a patriarchal

field have essentially created barriers to women's involvement in business activities.

However, the number of female entrepreneurs has increased rapidly in recent years to the extent that it has attracted the attention of many scholars (Cardella, Hernandez-Sanchez & Sanchez-Garcia, 2020). According to Sweida & Reichard (2016) the number of women selecting entrepreneurship as a career continues to rise. Li et al. (2020) contend that while the number of female entrepreneurs continues to increase, women embarking on entrepreneurial careers and initiatives are still significantly less than men. Existing studies have shown that women choose entrepreneurship as an occupation less than men do. According to Sweida & Reichard (2016), these differences are evident in traditional, non-feminine industries like technology and manufacturing. With regards to concentration in business ventures, Sweida & Reichard (2016) postulate that men dominate fields like technology and manufacturing. In concurrence, Ward, Hernandez-Sanchez & Sanchez-Garcia (2020) states that men are more focused and dominate science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields.

Nordbø (2022) explains that there has been a steady rise in the number of women entrepreneurs especially, in rural Norway. In recent years, most women have embraced entrepreneurship, and, in the process, they have managed to transform the economies. Nordbø (2022) explain that with more women taking on entrepreneurial activities, they can contribute to economic growth since they participate in activities that generate significant benefits for the economy. The role of women in engaging in productive activities and paying taxes has been instrumental in transforming the economies of where they are based which in this case is rural Norway (Nordbø, 2022). According to Nair (2020), women entrepreneurship is an emerging economic force across the globe because of the increase in the proportion of women in the workforce. As an emerging economic force, women's entrepreneurship plays an important role in economic growth and development.

2.2.2 Gender and Entrepreneurial Growth Ambitions

Bulanova et al. (2016) suggest that women entrepreneurs have significantly low growth ambitions compared to men. The low growth ambitions among women entrepreneurs are shown in the scarcity of women-owned businesses. Women entrepreneurs have a low level of perceived growth desirability or poor attitudes toward growth. The desirability and feasibility of growth ambitions among women entrepreneurs are affected by various factors that are classified into three categories i.e., individual, firm, and environmental factors (Susan & Alicia, 2012). Individual factors that contribute to low growth ambitions among women entrepreneurs include the fear that growth would compromise the quality of service and the

belief that the entrepreneur can be too old to wish to further undertake business growth.

In addition, some women entrepreneurs do not pursue growth for their businesses because business growth is not worth the extra effort. Others have also limited their growth ambitions because of the increased risk and work pressure associated with business growth (Bulanova et al., 2016). On the other hand, firm factors that limit the growth ambitions of women entrepreneurs include the size of the business and limited capabilities to build and expand. Issues in the environment that limit the growth ambitions of women entrepreneurs include the lack of necessary market demand to support growth and the lack of growth opportunities.

Khan et al. (2021) suggest that factors affecting the growth ambitions of women entrepreneurs can be classified into two categories i.e., internal, and external factors. Internal factors include self-confidence, risk-taking, and the need for achievement. On the contrary, external factors include socio-cultural and economic factors. These internal and external factors shape the extent to which women entrepreneurs pursue business growth and the success of their businesses. Welsh et al. (2016) explain that family support and personal problems are the major individual factors that influence the growth ambitions of women entrepreneurs.

Nordbø (2022) investigated the disparities affecting women entrepreneurs in Norway in rural and urban areas. The underlying difference is the fact that women in urban areas were more likely to succeed in their entrepreneurial environment due to the availability of several factors needed for success as an entrepreneur (Nordbø, 2022). On the contrary, women in rural Norway faced significant challenges due to the unavailability of critical resources needed for success. Neneh (2021) suggests that the individual factors affecting women entrepreneurs' growth ambitions relate to work and family, which are the salient roles of every person. These salient roles have significant impacts on one's behaviour as well as career decisions. The growth ambitions of women entrepreneurs are significantly impacted by how these salient roles influence their behavioural/career choices such as entrepreneurship.

Bullough et al. (2022) argue that the growth ambitions of women entrepreneurs are affected by gender issues and societal culture. In this case, there is a strong link between gender role expectations and social-cultural dimensions.

This link exists in nearly all facets of society including the entrepreneurial environment. Existing research demonstrates that cultural, educational, infrastructural, social, occupational, and role-related factors are either facilitators or obstacles to women's entrepreneurship and their growth ambitions (Solesvik et al., 2019; Ngoasong & Kimbu,

2019). As a multi-layer construct, culture influences the growth ambitions of women entrepreneurs by shaping societal beliefs, norms, and expectations. Therefore, cultural dimensions influence women's pursuit of entrepreneurship and their growth ambitions.

For female entrepreneurs, the challenges are numerous hence they are likely to fall behind their male counterparts and fail to experience similar levels of growth (Solesvik et al., 2019). Solesvik et al. (2019) explain that men are more predisposed to undertake risky ventures while women are calculative and take their time before undertaking any business. The impulsive and risk-taking nature of male entrepreneurs may come out as a dangerous characteristic though in many instances it can generate better results (Darnihamedani & Terjesen, 2022). The outcome of the approach by male entrepreneurs is that male-owned businesses often grow quickly compared to business run and owned by female entrepreneurs. By understanding the dynamics in the business environment and the significance of quick decision-making most male entrepreneurs have achieved great success responsible for the difference in the growth ambitions in the business environment.

According to the study by Darnihamedani & Terjesen (2022), male entrepreneurs have greater growth ambitions compared to female entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurs start and grow their businesses in varying institutional contexts. The regulation efficiency and freedom to start and run a business without excessive government interference tend to affect the growth of the business. The management of registering, hiring, and firing employees are some of the institutional issues that emerge. According to Darnihamedani & Terjesen (2022), male entrepreneurs understand and manage the dynamics of business freedom, labour freedom, and monetary freedom better. Male entrepreneurs often consider the dynamics in the business environment as an opportunity to grow rather than a challenge that prevents their businesses from growing.

2.2.3 Growth Ambitions and Entrepreneurial Attitudes

Male and female entrepreneurs tend to exhibit different attitudes that affect the overall performance of their businesses (Prabha et al., 2019). Attitudes of individuals tend to impact the behaviours they exhibit. The attitudes of entrepreneurs play a significant role in determining the growth and success of their businesses. Attitudes such as passion, bravery, flexibility, and strong work ethic contribute to the growth of a business (Prabha et al., 2019). When an entrepreneur develops an excellent attitude, the prospects of growing the business are higher. However, in a situation where the entrepreneur fails to adopt an excellent attitude or shows indecisiveness as their strongest attitude then chances of growth are limited (Prabha et al., 2019).

Male and female entrepreneurs are likely to engage in different behaviours during specific times and places. In addition, the attitudes of the two genders are likely to influence the attitudinal approach that they adopt at specific moments when they are operating in the business environment (Prabha et al., 2019). The common attitudes and traits among successful female entrepreneurs include assertiveness, action-mindedness, risk-taking, and problem-solving skills (Prabha et al., 2019). However, their attitudes must be adaptable to the continuously changing business environment. The dynamism of the business environment implies that most female entrepreneurs must adopt flexible attitudes that ensure that their interaction with other stakeholders in the business environment is successful.

Attitudes are often made up of three components cognitive, emotional, and behavioural (Amofah & Saladrigues, 2022). Over time attitudes tend to shape the behaviours of individuals and how they interact with other people (Amofah & Saladrigues, 2022). In most instances, attitude is explained as the feelings that an individual has about something. In some instances, attitude may be confused with behaviour though the latter explains how someone acts while responding to their feelings.

Attitude, if shaped in the right way, is likely to influence behaviour and help in the realization of the best outcomes (Amofah & Saladrigues, 2022). The idea that behaviour often follows attitude is embraced by different schools of thought including in advertising and marketing organizations. Attitudes towards risk are in most cases determined by culture and impact on the perceptions of entrepreneurs. In cultures where people are risk-averse, individuals may end up focusing on the possibility of failure in the business (Amofah & Saladrigues, 2022). Attitude in an entrepreneurial environment often implies that processes and products are subject to continuous improvement and development. Attitudes such as openness and flexibility are instrumental in ensuring any meaningful success is achieved in

the business environment.

Attitude is instrumental in the entrepreneurship journey. Attitude determines how an entrepreneur interacts with the other individuals in the business environment and hence can contribute to the success or failure of a business. The prevailing assumption and attitude regarding women are that they are responsible for providing and caring for children and family members (Vamvaka et al., 2020). Therefore, few women are expected to grow their businesses. In some societies, the masculine nature of men and the fact that they have a greater propensity to risk is responsible for most being considered great entrepreneurs. However, the attitudes toward women are changing and more are going into entrepreneurship (Vamvaka et al., 2020). Most women have started successful businesses and are competing with men highlighting the changing attitudes.

Fintland & Haugen (2021) explain that increased education and employment opportunities are instrumental in changing the attitudes and narratives of women in entrepreneurship. In addition, when more females are introduced to more female role models who have excelled in the entrepreneurial environment, changes in attitudes will be witnessed since it will become clear that there is a great possibility for success. Fintland & Haugen (2021) explain that attitudinal change needs to start at the learning institutions especially at the higher educational level to ensure that there is an ease of transition into the entrepreneurial environment and application of the ideas learned.

According to Ajzen (1991) behavioural patterns tend to influence outcomes in different environments. Attitude is a behavioural aspect that can be planned based on the probable outcomes that one seeks to achieve. Thus, when the attitude is adjusted favourably there is an increased likelihood of growth ambitions. The following hypothesis is thus suggested:

H1a: Entrepreneurs with a more favourable attitude toward firm growth will report growth ambitions.

There is also reason to believe that attitude will have a positive effect on growth ambitions for both male and female entrepreneurs, thus the suggestion of the following hypotheses:

H1b: Male entrepreneurs with a more favourable attitude toward firm growth will report growth ambitions.

H1c: Female entrepreneurs with a more favourable attitude toward firm growth will report growth ambitions.

2.2.4 Growth Ambitions and Entrepreneurial Innovation

Zeb & Ihsan (2020) define innovation as a process of creative destruction that contributes to technological changes and employment growth. Given rapid globalization and technological advancements in recent years, innovation is a major factor in organizational sustainability and regional advantage. On the other hand, Torchia et al. (2018) define innovation as an organization's commitment to developing and introducing new products, systems, and processes. However, Zeb & Ihsan (2020) contend that innovation is defined in many ways that focus on the development of new processes and products, creating novel knowledge or idea, or a unique means of providing better quality or value.

Innovation in the entrepreneurial environment includes the development of new products and services, and the improvement of the existing ones (Zeb & Ihsan, 2020).

Most entrepreneurs are highly innovative individuals since they must look at strategies through which they can improve the business environment. Most entrepreneurs are cost-conscious hence they must ensure that they adopt the best practices highlighting why they are more inclined to become innovative in the business environment (Zeb & Ihsan, 2020). Innovation ensures that entrepreneurs develop new approaches that can enhance how an organization performs. In most instances, male entrepreneurs tend to be more innovative compared to female entrepreneurs (Zeb & Ihsan, 2020).

Grünfeld (2020) explain that Nordic countries are considered the forerunners on matters relating to gender equality and women's labour force. The investigation of the cultural outlook of the performance of different genders in the workplace shows that the gap between men and women appears non-existent in the Nordic region. However, one striking aspect is that fewer women are starting businesses in Nordic countries compared to men (Grünfeld, 2020). Grünfeld (2020) explains that Nordic countries tend to have similar economic structures, social systems, labour markets, democratic concepts, universal public services, and the models of the welfare state. Despite the similarities across the Nordic countries, one consistent aspect is the fact that there are clear differences in the share of female entrepreneurs across the Nordic countries (Grünfeld, 2020; Susan & Alicia, 2012). In Norway, one of the Nordic countries, women consider the need for a steady income and the economic risks associated with starting a business as some of the fundamental factors why they are less likely to go into business.

Zeb & Ihsan (2020) explains that women and men are equally productive in innovation and creative activities. However, men tend to have more patents compared to women. In addition, the number of men who have higher creative performances than women is greater. Innovation primarily involves a certain degree of risk-taking by implementing unknown and untried ideas (Klofsten et al., 2019). Most men are willing to experiment with new ideas and are not reluctant of chartering into new territories with new ideas (Zeb & Ihsan, 2020). Most women are more conservative and less pragmatic in their decision-making hence they are often less open to embracing new ideas. Klofsten et al. (2019) explain the difference in innovation levels is critical since it determines the level of entrepreneurial growth by male and female entrepreneurs. Moreover, men are more prone to risk-taking while women are risk-averse and tend to study situations more before implementing new strategies explaining the difference in innovation levels (Klofsten et al., 2019).

According to Zeb & Ihsan, entrepreneurial innovation allows for the development of new strategies in the entrepreneurial environment that in turn encourage growth ambitions. Entrepreneurs have an opportunity to implement better approaches that will generate better growth prospects. This explanation that innovation activities will influence growth ambitions among entrepreneurs, leads to the following hypothesis:

H2a: Entrepreneurs who engage in more innovative activities will report growth ambitions.

There is also reason to believe that innovation activities will have a positive effect on growth ambitions for both male and female entrepreneurs, thus the suggestion of the following hypotheses:

H2b: Male entrepreneurs who engage in more innovation activities will report growth ambitions.

H2c: Female entrepreneurs who engage in more innovation activities will report growth ambitions.

2.2.5 Growth Ambitions and Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy

Entrepreneurial self-efficacy refers to individual beliefs and motivation regarding their capabilities to pursue entrepreneurship (Bulanova et al., 2016). Based on the self-efficacy theory, individual beliefs, and motivations regarding one's capabilities to carry out a task is critical for his/her intentions and aspirations (Bulanova et al., 2016). Therefore, individual entrepreneurial intentions and aspirations are influenced by beliefs and motivations regarding their entrepreneurial capabilities. Bulanova et al. (2016) contend that entrepreneurial self-efficacy is strongly linked to perceived feasibility. Individuals' beliefs and motivations regarding their capabilities play a critical role in the perceived feasibility of their initiatives. Therefore, there is a strong link between self-efficacy and entrepreneurial intentions. However, self-efficacy is influenced by various factors, especially mastery experience.

This implies that individuals with perceived mastery experience have higher levels of self-efficacy, which in turn improves their entrepreneurial intentions. As suggested by Susan & Alicia (2012), mastery experience is shaped by one's level of education and training. The level of self-efficacy shown by an entrepreneur will affect the growth levels of their business. Entrepreneurs with higher levels of self-efficacy are more likely to experience growth in their businesses. On the contrary, when entrepreneurs have lower levels of self-efficacy, the growth levels of the business might be affected. Entrepreneurs need to exhibit strong levels of self-efficacy since in such instances the prospects for growth are often significant.

Neill et al. (2015) suggest a strong link between gender and entrepreneurial self-efficacy. Studies on high-growth startups demonstrate that individuals with a strong discovery mindset tend to pursue and become successful in entrepreneurship. These individuals tend to act and think in ways that enable them to perceive and capitalize on emerging opportunities. For example, women entrepreneurs in high-growth startups have been found to have a strong discover mindset, which is an indicator of entrepreneurial self-efficacy. They discover and capitalize on entrepreneurial opportunities through a transformative process. High self-efficacy in women tends to affect business growth positively. A high level of self-efficacy often boosts the confidence of women pushing them to implement strategies that can allow the business to grow (Neill et al., 2015). The belief in self-efficacy often increases the perception of feasibility in women thereby influencing entrepreneurial intention. The younger women with more self-efficacy believe that skills, knowledge, and experience are needed in increasing their willingness to start new businesses (Neill et al., 2015). Thus, it emerges that women with high levels of self-efficacy have greater belief in their abilities to grow and develop businesses. They are more inclined to improve their performance in the business

environment, opening opportunities for growth and success.

Cardella et al. (2020) explain that men tend to have greater self-efficacy compared to female entrepreneurs. Therefore, men have greater chances of growing in the business environment. Most male entrepreneurs do not second guess their skills hence the chances of growing in the business environment are higher (Neill et al., 2015). On the contrary, women are more conservative and do not seek to try out new ideas in the business environment. The higher self-efficacy on the part of male entrepreneurs often encourages innovations that ultimately contribute to the growth of male business ventures (Neill et al., 2015).

Male entrepreneurs are more open to implementing new ideas that can encourage the growth of their businesses while this cannot be said to be the same in the case of female entrepreneurs (Cardella et al., 2020). According to Cardella et al. (2020), entrepreneurial self-efficacy is affected by culture, family, and institutional support. These factors continue to play a critical role in today's business field even as the composition of women in the workforce increases. Cardella et al. (2020) suggest that the gender gap in entrepreneurship is attributable to poor self-efficacy among women. Unlike men, women tend to have lower entrepreneurial self-efficacy because of cultural issues, family problems, and a lack of institutional support. The lower self-efficacy among women contributes to the need for entrepreneurial education targeting women as well as social entrepreneurship. Kuschel & Lepeley (2016) contend that the lower levels of entrepreneurial self-efficacy among women entrepreneurs are evident in the field of technology. Tech startups are dominated by men since men are likely to develop technological innovations and ventures for self-realization purposes.

Solesvik et al. (2019) explain that the number of males in the technology field is higher despite females making significant strides in reducing the gap. For instance, in the Norwegian setup, the representation of women in the tech space is similar to male representation showing that the gap is minimal. Therefore, women have managed to develop new and innovative strategies that can improve performance in the entrepreneurial environment (Solesvik et al., 2019). The competitiveness in the tech space and the increasing number of innovations will contribute to better performance by male and female entrepreneurs.

Bullough et al. (2022) contend that entrepreneurial self-efficacy is affected by gender role expectations and attitudes. Women are traditionally associated with nurturing, affectionate, cooperative, and collaborative roles. As a result, women tend to be more successful in fields or ventures that involve empathy and judging emotions. This view of women's role has contributed to lower levels of entrepreneurial self-efficacy. While some of

these skills would contribute to success in entrepreneurial initiatives, women are less likely to engage in entrepreneurship, unlike their male counterparts due to gender role expectations. Moreover, Bullough et al. (2022) state that women have lower levels of entrepreneurial self-efficacy because of a lack of role models and mentors. Entrepreneurial role models have powerful effects on entrepreneurial self-efficacy, which implies that such figures contribute to lower self-efficacy, especially among women (Bullough et al., 2022).

Bullough et al. (2022) explain that entrepreneurial self-efficacy affects the level of self-confidence entrepreneurs have in the decisions they make, hence affecting growth ambitions. High confidence levels are indicative of the belief in the entrepreneurial decisions selected and will impact growth positively. This reasoning here, fosters the likelihood that entrepreneurial self-efficacy will affect entrepreneurs' growth ambitions, hence the following hypothesis:

H3a: Entrepreneurs reporting high self-efficacy are more likely to report growth ambitions for their businesses.

There is also reason to believe that entrepreneurial self-efficacy will have a positive effect on growth ambitions for both male and female entrepreneurs, thus the suggestion of the following hypotheses:

H3b: Male entrepreneurs reporting high self-efficacy are more likely to report growth ambitions for their businesses.

H3c: Female entrepreneurs reporting high self-efficacy are more likely to report growth ambitions for their businesses.

2.3 Research Hypotheses

The study will test the following research hypotheses to investigate the effect of entrepreneurial self-efficacy, attitudes, and innovation activities on growth ambitions among men and women entrepreneurs. From Table 1 below I strived to link the research questions listed below with the resultant hypotheses derived to further understand the influence self-efficacy, entrepreneurial attitudes, and innovation activities have on growth ambitions among male and female entrepreneurs.

Table 1

Research Question 1: Is there a difference between men and women entrepreneurs regarding entrepreneurial self-efficacy, innovation activities, attitudes, and growth ambitions?	Research Question 2: What is the effect of entrepreneurial self-efficacy, innovation activities, and attitudes on growth ambitions?	Research Question 3 Is there a difference between men and women entrepreneurs regarding the effect of entrepreneurial self-efficacy, innovation activities, and attitudes on growth ambitions?
Not a hypothesis	H1A	H1B/ H1C
	H2A	H2B/ H2C
	H3A	H3B/ H3C

Figure 2, below shows a research model that is pivotal to the study, showing the relationship between the dependent variable namely: growth ambitions and independent variables, namely: self-efficacy, attitudes, innovation activities among male and female (gender factor) entrepreneurs, and the resultant control variables are further discussed in the method section.

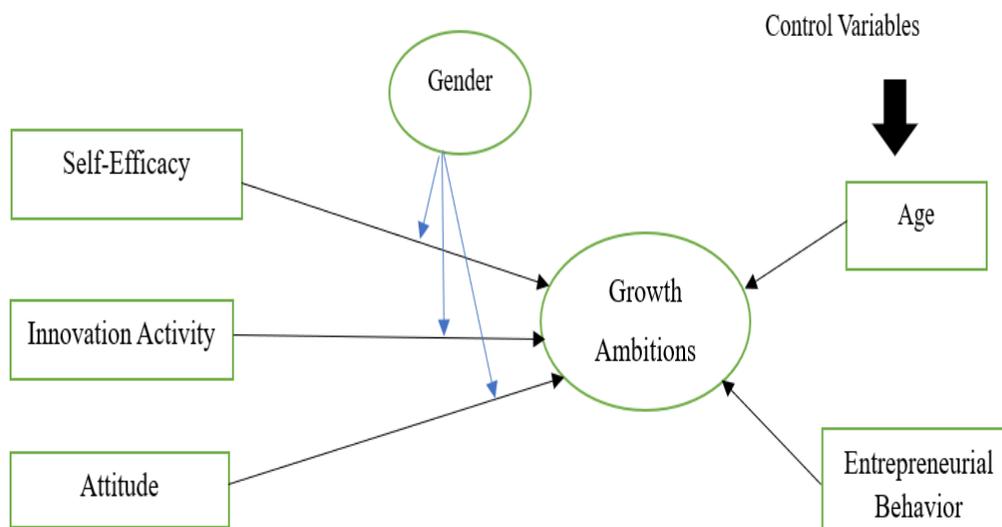


Figure 2: Research Model

2.4 Summary of the literature review

The literature review provides critical insights into past studies that have investigated growth and entrepreneurship. Several factors often affect the growth ambitions of male and female entrepreneurs. The literature review involves highlighting the theory of planned behaviour and how it helps in explaining the behaviour of entrepreneurs. Male and female entrepreneurs tend to exhibit different types of behaviour that often affect the growth levels of the businesses that they develop. The underlying objectives of any entrepreneur are to undertake activities that can inspire growth. The review of the relationship between the two variables highlights that there are specific factors that must be implemented by the entrepreneur for growth to succeed. The absence of the requirements will limit the possibility of an entrepreneur experiencing any meaningful growth.

Entrepreneurial self-efficacy is critical in ensuring that growth is achieved in the entrepreneurship journey. The literature review reveals that male and female entrepreneurs often approach the business environment from different perspectives.

Male entrepreneurs tend to believe in their skills hence the prospects of growth are higher compared to female entrepreneurs who experience self-doubt and a conservative

approach to business hence growth is affected. The literature involved the analysis of the relationship between growth and entrepreneurial attitudes. From the literature review, male and female entrepreneurs tend to have different attitudes towards life and the entrepreneurial journey, and their attitudes contributes to growth of the business. The behaviours and attitudes of male and female entrepreneurs have an impact on the extent of growth of businesses. The review of growth and innovation in entrepreneurship reveals that the latter directly impacts growth. Innovation is one of the most significant aspects that entrepreneurs must address since it allows the development of better strategies to succeed in the business environment. The literature review provides an opportunity to understand the conclusion from past studies and the implication of such studies on entrepreneurial growth.

3.0 Research Methodology

Introduction

Research methodology highlights the blueprint used in conducting a study. The methodology describes the specific procedures and techniques used in identifying, selecting, processing, and analyzing information regarding a topic (Creswell, 2014). The methodology allows for the critical evaluation of the research's validity and credibility. In addition, the research methodology, in this case, includes the data collection and analysis methods employed in understanding the influence of growth ambitions being the dependent variable and independent variables being self-efficacy, innovation activities, and attitudes among male and female entrepreneurs. Furthermore, the methodology includes a look into control variables namely age and previous entrepreneurial behaviour, and their measurement are discussed. According to Creswell (2014), the selection of a research design is critical because it has a significant impact on study findings. The selection of a research design is influenced by the nature of the research issue or phenomenon under investigation.

3.1 Research Design

The research design is the blueprint explaining the process of conducting the research study. It covers the approaches used in investigating research problems. Several research designs have been highlighted by other scholars in the past and they are all instrumental in addressing the research problems under investigation. Each design applies to a specific type of research hence a single approach does not apply to all types of study. The most popular research designs include descriptive design, exploratory design, explanatory design, and correlation research design (Siedlecki, 2020). One of the most popular research designs and often applied by most researchers is the descriptive research design.

According to Rashid et al. (2019), descriptive research design involves observing and describing the behaviour of the research subjects without influencing them. Thus, descriptive research design involves explaining the characteristics of the research participants accurately while relating their reactions to specific phenomena in society (Alpi & Evans, 2019). On the contrary, explanatory research involves highlighting the cause-effect relationship between the different research variables. For exploratory research, it is associated with identifying research variables in a research problem that might have not been investigated by other scholars previously (Alpi & Evans, 2019). A correlation research design involves the investigation of the relationships between the variables in a study without the researcher controlling or manipulating any of the research variables (Alpi & Evans, 2019). A correlation is a reflection

of the strength and direction of the relationship between two or more variables in a study. Depending on the variables included in a study, the direction of correlation can be positive or negative (Alpi & Evans, 2019). In a correlation research design, the research can use the naturalistic observation method, archival data method, and survey method.

For this study, I found the descriptive design and correlation design to be the most appropriate for dealing with the research problem. In this case, the use of descriptive design allowed the researcher to be in a position where there was a comprehensive description of the influence of self-efficacy, innovation activities, and attitudes on the growth ambitions of male and female entrepreneurs (Creswell, 2014). By embracing descriptive and correlation design, I was able to explain how entrepreneurial self-efficacy, innovation activities, and attitudes influence growth ambitions among male and female entrepreneurs (Alpi & Evans, 2019). The use of descriptive research design always ensures that the researcher can have a deeper understanding and investigate the research hypothesis against the outcome of the research. The impact of self-efficacy, attitudes, and innovation activities is analyzed on how they impact growth ambitions from the perspective of gender.

3.2 Philosophical position

Scientific philosophies involve studying the concept, boundaries, and methodology of different concepts. The philosophy describes the researcher's thought in investigating new, reliable knowledge regarding the research problem under investigation (Mason, Augustyn & Seakhoa-King, 2022). The philosophy describes the basis of research that involves the selection of a research strategy, formulation of the research problem, collection of data, processing, and analysis. The research problem plays a critical role in determining the research philosophy selected. The main types of research philosophies include pragmatism, positivism, realism, and interpretivism.

As part of the research design, the study sought to integrate the positivism philosophy in analyzing the research problem. Positivist philosophy focuses on understanding how a research phenomenon can be scientifically tested in the process of empirically identifying the relationship between the different variables (Mason, Augustyn & Seakhoa-King, 2022). By using the positivist philosophy, the researcher can test scientifically through data collection the influence of self-efficacy, innovation activities, and attitudes on the growth ambitions of male and female entrepreneurs. In addition, applying the theory of planned behaviour in the analysis of the research problem indicates the application of positivist philosophy.

Furthermore, the study involved a deductive approach. The deductive approach is concerned with the testing of existing theories as part of the process to determine their accuracy in explaining research problems (Bingham & Witkowsky, 2021). Therefore, the adoption of the deductive approach ensures that the study can verify the past literature on the influence of self-efficacy, innovation activities, and attitudes on growth ambitions among male and female entrepreneurs. Furthermore, the deductive approach is concerned with the testing of existing theories as part of the process to determine their accuracy in explaining research problems (Bingham & Witkowsky, 2021).

3.3 Quantitative Research Method

In the study, the research adopted a quantitative research method. Quantitative research involves the collection of information from potential respondents using sampling methods. The data can be collected by sending out online surveys, online polls, and questionnaires. The data in quantitative study is highlighted in numerical form (Creswell, 2014). The use of the quantitative method allows for the research to investigate growth ambitions by employing statistical data collection techniques and analysis. The objective of quantitative research is to attain greater knowledge and understanding of the social world (Creswell, 2014). The adoption of quantitative methods is critical to observing situations and events that affect humans.

Thus, quantitative research often produces objective data that can be communicated through statistics and numbers hence allowing for comprehensive decisions and understanding to be made (Creswell, 2014). By using quantitative data, there is an excellent opportunity to understand the different issues affecting humanity and develop solutions using numerical data. Furthermore, the nature of the research problem informed the decision to settle on quantitative approaches in this study. The impact of self-efficacy, attitudes, and innovation activities on growth ambitions among male and female entrepreneurs can be appropriately understood through statistical analysis. Moreover, using a quantitative approach allows for the research objectives and aims to be addressed conclusively.

3.4 Data Collection: Study Setting and Sample Size

In a simple definition, the study setting is the physical, social context within which the research is carried out. In research, the setting must be described accurately since the results and the interpretation of the results depend significantly on this aspect. On the other hand, the sample is the specific group that is to take part in the study.

The sample includes the specific group that is expected to have characteristics for them to take part in the study. The setting for this study was on high-growth small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Norway. SMEs are ideal for the study since more than 95% of the Norwegian industry comprises such types of businesses hence, they are likely to provide an excellent group to study and understand their characteristics in the business environment (Bulanova et al., 2016).

The research followed a sample of 185 incorporated businesses in Norway. Data was collected from the lead entrepreneurs in the firms using telephone interviews. Results from women entrepreneurs were obtained in the second half of 2013, whilst for their male counterparts between late 2014 and early 2015 respectively. The sample consisted of women and men founder managers that started limited liability firms in 2004,2005 or 2006 with a minimum of 10 million NOK in sales turnover and at least 10 employees in 2011(Bulanova et al., 2016).

The approach was effective in that during the telephone calls respondents could get clarity by asking questions regarding the questionnaire. However, out of the sample size of 185 participants selected a final sample involved in the study included 142 participants. The main reason for the exclusion of some of the participants was that the individuals who were managing the businesses currently were not the founders of the businesses. The study involved the collection and analysis of secondary data. The secondary data used in the study was obtained through a purposive sampling technique.

The sample that took part in the study was identified through the purposive sampling technique. Purposive sampling is a type of non-probability sampling where the researcher depends on their judgment when selecting members of the population who are to take part in the study. The purposive sampling strategy was effective in this case since it ensured that the researcher only used participants who were relevant to the research problem.

The participants were administered open-ended and close-ended questionnaires focusing on how growth ambitions are impacted by self-efficacy, innovation activities, and attitudes of female and male entrepreneurs.

Operationalization of Variables

3.6 Measures

3.6.1 Dependent Variable

The measure of growth ambition was based on a closed-ended questionnaire with one item. Here respondents answered either, (1= yes or 0= no): Five years from now, “Do you wish the company to be bigger than it is today?”. A high number of previous studies have used similar measures of growth expectations (Bulanova et al., 2016). From the frequency Table 2-3 below, among the 142 respondents (valid = 140, 2= missing respondents), **79.3** percent had the desire to grow their business further, whilst **20.7** percent did not wish to grow their business.

Frequencies

Statistics					
growthambition					
N	Valid	140			
	Missing	2			

growthambition					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	.00	29	20.4	20.7	20.7
	1.00	111	78.2	79.3	100.0
	Total	140	98.6	100.0	
Missing	System	2	1.4		
Total		142	100.0		

Table 2: Frequency table showing the growth ambitions

3.6.2 Independent Variables

Gender was measured using a dummy variable where “1” =men entrepreneurs and “0” =women entrepreneurs. A final sample as is seen in frequency Table below 4, showed that **48.6** percent of women and **51.4** percent of male entrepreneurs had the wish to grow their businesses.

Frequencies

Statistics		
0 kvinne 1 mann		
N	Valid	142
	Missing	0

0 kvinne 1 mann					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	kvinne	69	48.6	48.6	48.6
	mann	73	51.4	51.4	100.0
Total		142	100.0	100.0	

Table 3: Frequency table showing final sample for male and female entrepreneurs

For innovation activity, it was based on four statements where respondents had to answer, 'yes or no': During the past three years, 1) "Has the company introduced new or significantly improved products (goods or services) to the market?", 2) "Has the company introduced new or significantly improved methods for the production, storage, or distribution of goods or services, or new or significantly improved support functions? ", 3) "Has the company introduced new or significant changes in the design, packaging, marketing or pricing of goods or services?", 4) "Has the company introduced organizational changes such as new business practices, organization of work, or external relations?". The four questions were coded as dummy variables, (1=yes,0=no).

The responses were added together, where the scale ranged from 0-4;(0 = meant that they responded no to all four questions and 4= they responded yes to all four questions). Furthermore, a mean of 2.26 was also realized as is shown in the frequency Table 4 below:

INNOACTIVITY					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	.00	19	13.4	13.5	13.5
	1.00	18	12.7	12.8	26.2
	2.00	39	27.5	27.7	53.9
	3.00	37	26.1	26.2	80.1
	4.00	28	19.7	19.9	100.0
	Total		141	99.3	100.0
Missing	System	1	.7		
Total		142	100.0		

```

FREQUENCIES VARIABLES=entrepreneurial INNOACTIVITY
/STATISTICS=MEAN
/ORDER=ANALYSIS.

```

Frequencies

		Statistics	
		behavior	INNOACTIVT Y
N	Valid	141	141
	Missing	1	1
Mean		.3617	2.2624

Table 4: Frequency table of innovation activities for male and female entrepreneurs

The attitude and self-efficacy measures were calculated using summated scales by adding each of the four questions and then dividing them by four. See Table I below for the items. Based on the eight questions they were asked to state whether they agree or disagree on a five-point scale (from 1= ‘completely disagree’ to 5 = ‘completely agree’) as shown in Table 1 below. A PCA with varimax rotation was run to identify relationships among the statements. The results of the PCA are shown in Table 5 below. Using the latent root criteria (eigenvalues > 1) resulted in the two expected components. The PCA, therefore, indicated two distinct empirical results i.e., components of attitudes and self-efficacy. The Cronbach’s alpha value was **0.897** for the attitudes measure whilst it was **0.805** for self-efficacy. This indicated good internal consistency reliability.

Table 5: Result of principal component analysis for two dimensions of Attitudes and Self-efficacy

	Varimax Rotated Components		
	1	2	Communality
Attitude Measure			
1. A doubling of the number of employees over the next 5 years is good for the entire company	0.922	0.106	.861
2. A doubling of the number of workers over the next 5 years is good for the employees	0.937	0.086	.885
3. A doubling of the number of employees over the next 5 years is good for the owners	0.897	0.109	.816
4. A doubling of the number of employees over the next 5 years is good for the local community	0.712	-0.039	.508
Self-Efficacy Measure			
5. You are sure that you can obtain the capital needed for future growth in the company	-0.038	0.817	.670
6. You are sure that you can develop good connections with potential investors	0.099	0.653	.437
7. You are sure that you can find potential sources of financing to cover your company's capital needs	-0.159	0.876	.793
8. You are confident that you can develop good relationships with key people at funding providers	-0.172	0.829	.717
Eigenvalue	3.104	2.582	
Percent variance explained.	38.79	32.28	
Cumulative percent of the variance	38.79	71.07	
Cronbach's alpha	0.897	0.805	

Notes: The percent variance explained is after varimax rotation, n=142.

Control Variables

In this study, the control variables used include age and previous entrepreneurial behaviour. The control variables selected help in showcasing the correlation or underlying relationship between the dependent and independent variables thus avoiding research bias. The inclusion of the variables helps controlling for other additional influences on growth ambitions.

Age

The first control variable is age. The review of the data collected showed that the average age for male entrepreneurs was 48 years whilst for female entrepreneurs was 50 years.

Entrepreneurial Behaviour (previous experience)

To analyze entrepreneurial behaviour respondents were asked the question: 'Have you been involved in starting other companies since you became involved in this company?' where they responded either (yes or no). From the frequency Table below, dummy variables of 0 and 1 were used (0= no previous experience, 1= had previous experience) Among the 142 respondents, 36.2 percent reported that they had previous experience as an entrepreneur, whilst 63.8 percent had no previous experience.

Frequency Table

		behavior			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	.00	90	63.4	63.8	63.8
	1.00	51	35.9	36.2	100.0
	Total	141	99.3	100.0	
Missing	System	1	.7		
Total		142	100.0		

Table 6: Frequency table of previous entrepreneurial experience for male and female entrepreneurs

3.6 Analysis Methods

The measurement is determined by the theoretical framework and research model. In this study, several data analysis methods were applied. The analysis methods used in the study included univariate, bivariate, and multivariate approaches. The univariate analysis involves a focus on descriptive statistics, standard deviation, and means (Creswell, 2014). In addition, variables and frequency analysis is included in the univariate analysis. Cronbach's alpha is used in the estimation of the internal consistency reliability in the study.

3.6.1 Correlation Analysis

The correlation analysis involves the measure of correlation. Correlation analyses are conducted to understand the relationship among the different variables in the study (Creswell, 2014). In this regard, the correlation analysis involved the application of Pearson's correlation coefficient and Spearman's rank correlation coefficient. The Pearson test is an example of a parametric test used in measuring the degree of linear relationship between two variables.

3.6.2 Regression Analysis

Regression analysis involves the examination of the average value of the dependent variables changing with the independent variables. The variables involved in the analysis are dependent and independent. In a situation where there are several independent variables in a study, then it is considered a multivariate regression. The study employs logistics regression. Logistic regression is a type of statistical model used in classifying and predictive analytics. It is a method associated with the estimation of the probability of an event occurring (Creswell, 2014).

Logistic regression is an excellent example of supervised learning and the prediction of the likelihood of events occurring. Logistic regression is an appropriate technique for this study since the dependent variable of growth ambitions is categorical (1,0).

3.6.3 Data Internal Consistency Reliability

One of the most instrumental aspects of research is to analyze and confirm the reliability of the data. The reliability of data can be confirmed through internal consistency reliability and by applying Cronbach's alpha test (Bingham & Witkowsky, 2021). The application of the test helps in the analysis of the internal consistency in the study. Internal consistency explains how the selected set of indicators is linked. Conducting Cronbach's alpha test requires more than a single indicator (Bingham & Witkowsky, 2021). The goal of the test

is to confirm whether the indicators have a positive correlation. Cronbach's alpha has values for testing reliability that ranges from 0 to 1. The values of 0.60 to 0.70 are considered lower levels of acceptability. As mentioned earlier, after conducting the analysis, Cronbach's alpha value was **0.897** for the attitudes measure whilst it was **0.805** for self-efficacy. This indicated good internal consistency reliability.

3.6.4 Validity

Validity measures the extent to which a measure or set of measures is representative of the scope of the study. It focuses on the extent to which a study is free from systematic and non-random error. The integration of validity in the study is to assess how the concept is defined by the measures (Bingham & Witkowsky, 2021). The study involved conducting external and internal validity on the data related to the study. External validity involves generalizability.

It analyzes the extent to which the research can be affected when the different aspects are generalized. For instance, the impact of generalization of populations, settings, and variables and the influence they have on the study outcomes. External validity in this study may be threatened, because the sample is purposive and only involves high growth firms.

On the other hand, internal validity focuses on causality. The measurement of internal validity focuses on ensuring that the research undertaken follows the principle of cause and effect. Identifying causality in a study involves establishing the covariation between the cause and effect, the analysis of whether the cause comes before the effect, and the fact that the relationship between variables is not spurious (Bingham & Witkowsky, 2021).

Content validity is another type of validity that informed the basis of the analysis of the study. Content validity is focused on assessing whether a test is representative of all the aspects of the construct (Bingham & Witkowsky, 2021). In the production of valid results, the content of the test, survey, and measurement method must address all critical parts of the subject that it seeks to measure. The other area of focus is ensuring that the relationship between the variables involved in the study following the cause-effect sequence must be theoretically based (Bingham & Witkowsky, 2021). The analysis of the influence of self-efficacy, innovation activities, and attitudes on growth ambitions among male and female entrepreneurs reveals that the conditions highlighted in internal validity are applicable. In addition, the theory of planned behaviour helps in establishing the causal effects among the variables under investigation in the study.

Regarding the testing hypothesis and the selected significance levels, there is a clear approach adopted in the study. The significance level indicates the probability that the researcher is willing to accept the estimated coefficient is classified as different from zero even though this might not be the case. The common significance level used in studies is 0.05 and this is the value that the researcher adopted to understand the relationship between growth ambitions, self-efficacy, innovation activities, and attitudes among male and female entrepreneurs.

Summary of Method Section

The methodology highlights the approaches used in collecting and analyzing data on the factors affecting growth ambitions among male and female entrepreneurs. The main independent variables that informed the basis of the study included self-efficacy, innovation activities, and attitudes of male and female entrepreneurs. The methodology outlines the research method used in this study including the correlation and regression (logistic) analyses used in this study. The methodology section also highlights data used in this study as secondary data relating to the Norwegian entrepreneurial environment.

The statistical representation of the outcome of the study helps to enhance the understanding of the research problem. The methodology highlights the underlying basis for the selection of the data collection and analytical methods used in the study including the shortcomings and benefits of each approach. In this section, we also consider data internal consistency and reliability. This was confirmed through internal consistency reliability and applying Cronbach's alpha test, this helped in the analysis of the internal consistency of the study.

4.0 Results

As mentioned earlier I developed nine hypotheses and three research questions in trying to help the reader understand the effect self-efficacy, entrepreneurial attitudes, and innovation activities have on growth ambitions among men and women entrepreneurs. In this section, I will discuss how I carried out hypothesis testing in trying to answer the resultant research questions with the use of correlation and logistic regression analysis as follows:

Research question one: *Is there a difference between men and women entrepreneurs regarding entrepreneurial self-efficacy, innovation activities, and attitudes regarding growth ambitions?*

To arrive at the answer, I did a cross-tabulation test using a chi-square statistic and a t-test to show the difference male and female entrepreneurs for growth ambitions. From the chi square test, I arrived at a significant value of 0.102 as shown in Table 7 below. This value is above the significance level of 0.05. Hence, there is no significant difference between men and women regarding growth ambitions.

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	2.668 ^a	1	.102		
Continuity Correction ^b	2.030	1	.154		
Likelihood Ratio	2.684	1	.101		
Fisher's Exact Test				.144	.077
Linear-by-Linear Association	2.649	1	.104		
N of Valid Cases	140				

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 14.09.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

Table 7: Chi-square tests for male and female entrepreneurs

From the cross-tabulation Table 8 below, it was evident that men and women do not statistically defer regarding growth ambitions. Looking at the expected and actual counts for the entrepreneurs, gave the following results: for women entrepreneurs 53.9 was the expected count and actual count was 50, whilst that of male entrepreneurs was 57.1 as expected count and 61 as an actual count, we see that men are more likely compared to women to report growth ambitions. This difference is, however, not statistically significant.

Crosstabs for research question 1

Case Processing Summary

	Valid		Cases Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
0 kvinne 1 mann * growthambition	140	98.6%	2	1.4%	142	100.0%

0 kvinne 1 mann * growthambition Crosstabulation

		growthambition		Total	
		.00	1.00		
0 kvinne 1 mann	kvinne	Count	18	50	68
		Expected Count	14.1	53.9	68.0
mann	Count	11	61	72	
	Expected Count	14.9	57.1	72.0	
Total	Count	29	111	140	
	Expected Count	29.0	111.0	140.0	

Table 8: Cross tabulations for growth ambitions for male and female entrepreneurs

Looking at the t-test Table 9 below, we see the results of the conducted t-tests. Under the columns for men and women we see the average of what they have answered for all the variables under consideration in this study. On the far right, the t-value are presented, this connotes how big the difference is between women and men on these variables, and whether there is reason to say whether there is a significant difference or not.

From the self-efficacy variable, we see the mean for male is almost like that of women. The t-values are small and indicates no statistical significance difference. An equal trend is evident looking at the variables of attitudes and innovation activities.

Table 9. T- test

Differences between male and female entrepreneurs on the selected variables

(Mean and t-values)

	Female	Male	T- values
Self-Efficacy	4.01	4.09	-.590
Attitude	3.27	3.32	-.229
Innovation Activity	2.22	2.30	-.370

N	69	73	
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N=142. Level of statistical significance: *** indicates $p < 0.001$, ** indicates $p < 0.01$, * indicates $p < 0.05$.

Therefore, the chi square test in Table 7, the cross tabulations Table 8, and the t-test in Table 9, help to answer research question one: *Is there a difference between men and women entrepreneurs regarding entrepreneurial self-efficacy, innovation activities, and attitudes regarding growth ambitions? NO*

Hence the null hypotheses are supported, and the results indicate no significant difference among male and female entrepreneurs.

Hypothesis testing

For research questions 2 and 3, the results obtained are shown in Table 11-13 below: where descriptive statistics mean, and correlation coefficients were obtained. To begin with results for both male and female entrepreneurs are shown in Table 11, and thereafter in Tables 12 and 13 for male and female entrepreneurs respectively.

Research question two: *What is the effect of entrepreneurial self-efficacy, innovation activities, and attitudes on growth ambitions?* was in relation to the following hypotheses:

H1a: Entrepreneurs with a more favourable attitude towards firm growth will report growth ambitions:

From Table 11 below, a positive correlation between a favourable attitude toward firm growth and growth ambitions of 0.237** is shown, this correlation is significant at the 0.05 level. This implies that a favourable attitude was important for the respondents in their desire to further grow their businesses. Therefore, this hypothesis is preliminarily supported.

H2a: Entrepreneurs who engage in more innovation activities will report growth ambitions:

From Table 11 below we see a weak correlation between innovation activities and growth ambitions, and it is not statistically significant at the 0.05 level. This implies that innovation activity was not key for entrepreneurs concerning growth ambitions. The hypothesis is thus not preliminarily supported.

H3a: Entrepreneurs reporting high self-efficacy will report growth ambitions.

From Table 11 below, we can see a positive correlation between self-efficacy and growth ambitions of 0.300** , this correlation is significant at the 0.05 level. This implies that self-efficacy was important for the respondents in their desire to further grow their businesses. Therefore, this hypothesis is preliminarily supported.

Research question three: *Is there a difference between men and women entrepreneurs regarding the effect of entrepreneurial self-efficacy, innovation activities, and attitudes on growth ambitions?* was in relation to the following hypotheses:

H1b: Male entrepreneurs with a more favourable attitude toward growth will report growth ambitions:

From Table 12, below we can see that there is a weak correlation between the entrepreneurial attitudes of male respondents and their desire to further grow their business, and it is not statistically significant at the 0.05 level. Thus, this hypothesis is not preliminarily supported.

H1c: Female entrepreneurs with a more favourable attitude toward growth will report growth ambitions:

From Table 13, below we can see that there is a positive correlation of 0.307* between female entrepreneurs with a favourable attitude toward firm growth and growth ambitions. This correlation is significant at the 0.05 level. Thus, this hypothesis is preliminarily supported.

H2b: Male entrepreneurs who engage in more innovation activities will report growth ambitions:

From Table 12 below, we can see a positive correlation between male entrepreneurs who engage in more innovation activities and growth ambitions of 0.267*, this correlation is significant at the 0.05 level. This implies that innovation activities are a key variable explaining growth ambitions for men entrepreneurs. Therefore, this hypothesis is preliminarily supported.

H2c: Female entrepreneurs who engage in more innovation activities will report growth ambitions:

From Table 13 below, we saw a weak correlation between female entrepreneurs who engaged in more innovation activities and growth ambitions and the correlation was not statistically significant at the 0.05 level. This implies that innovation activity was not an important variable for them to further grow their businesses. Therefore, this hypothesis is preliminarily not supported.

H3b: Male entrepreneurs reporting high self-efficacy will report growth ambitions:

From Table 12, below we can see that there is a weak correlation between male entrepreneurs who report high self-efficacy and growth ambitions, and the correlation is not significant at the 0.05 level. This implies that for male respondents' self-efficacy was not a key variable for them to grow their business further. Thus, this hypothesis is not preliminarily supported.

H3c: Female entrepreneurs reporting high self-efficacy will report growth ambitions:

From Table 13, below we can see that there is a strongly positive correlation of 0.390** between female entrepreneurs who report high self-efficacy and growth ambitions. This correlation is significant at the 0.05 level. This implies that self-efficacy was an important

variable for the female respondents in their desire to further grow their businesses. Thus, this hypothesis is supported.

I further tested the hypotheses formerly by running a logistic regression analysis as shown in Table 14. Here I had three different models where model 1 represented both men and women entrepreneurs, whilst model 2 and 3 represented male and female entrepreneurs respectively. Two of the regression models are statistically significant, that is model 1 and 3. However, model 2 has no statistical significance.

From the Table 14 below, we saw that the variable of attitude for **model 1** had a Wald of 6.92**. This implied statistical significance at the level where, $p < 0.01$. It also implied that a favourable attitude was a key factor for entrepreneurs in their pursuit of growth ambitions, supporting **H1a**. However, the innovation activity in model 1 had a Wald of 0.70, this was not statistically significant, implying that innovation activities was not key for entrepreneurs in pursuit of growth ambitions, thus **H2a** was not supported. The variable of self-efficacy for model 1 had a Wald of 10.1**. This was statistically significant at the level where, $p < 0.01$. It also implied that a self-efficacy was a key factor for entrepreneurs in their pursuit of growth ambitions, thus supporting **H3a**.

From Table 14 below, in **model 2** the variables of attitude and self-efficacy had Wald values of 1.1 and 1.7 respectively. These values were not statistically significant, implying that attitude and self-efficacy were not key for male entrepreneurs in pursuit of growth ambitions, thus **H1b and H3b** were equally not supported. The variable of innovation activities in model 2 had a Wald of 4.4*. This denoted statistical significance at the level where, $p < 0.05$. This implied that innovation activities are key, explaining growth ambitions for male entrepreneurs. Further, supports **H2b**.

The attitude variable in **model 3** had a Wald of 7.4**. This implied statistical significance at the level where, $p < 0.01$. It also implied that for female entrepreneurs a favourable attitude was important for them to grow their business. This supported **H1c**. Conversely, the innovation activity in model 3 had a Wald of 0.45, this was not statistically significant, implying that innovation activities was not key for female entrepreneurs in pursuit of growth ambitions, thus **H2c** was not supported. The variable of self-efficacy for model 3 had a Wald of 8.6**, implying statistical significance at the level where, $p < 0.01$. It also meant that for female entrepreneurs' self-efficacy was important for them to grow their business. This supported **H3c**.

Therefore, it is key to note also that the **Nagelkerke R^2 of 0.48** explains the variance in the dependent variable. Finally, the regression analysis results coincide with correlation

results obtained prior in the study. A summary of hypotheses Table 10 below shows results for the research question for which no difference in the variables was reported as well as research questions for which the hypotheses were supported and those not supported.

Table 10: Summary of the hypotheses

Research questions	Hypotheses	Results
<p>Question 1: Is there a difference between men and women entrepreneurs regarding entrepreneurial self-efficacy, innovation activities, attitudes, and growth ambitions?</p>		No differences
<p>Question 2: What is the effect of entrepreneurial self-efficacy, innovation activities, and attitudes on growth ambitions?</p>	<p>H1a: Entrepreneurs with a more favourable attitude toward firm growth will report growth ambitions</p>	Supported
	<p>H2a: Entrepreneurs who engage in more innovation activities will report growth ambitions.</p>	Not Supported
	<p>H3a: Entrepreneurs reporting high self-efficacy are more likely to report growth ambitions for their businesses.</p>	Supported

<p>Question 3</p> <p>Is there a difference between men and women entrepreneurs regarding the effect of entrepreneurial self-efficacy, innovation activities, attitudes on growth ambitions?</p>	<p>H1b:</p> <p>Male entrepreneurs with a more favourable attitude toward firm growth will report growth ambitions</p>	<p>Not Supported</p>
	<p>H2b:</p> <p>Male entrepreneurs who engage in more innovation activities will report growth ambitions</p>	<p>Supported</p>
	<p>H3b:</p> <p>Male entrepreneurs reporting high self-efficacy are more likely to report growth ambitions for their businesses.</p>	<p>Not Supported</p>
	<p>H1c:</p> <p>Female entrepreneurs with a more favourable attitude toward firm growth will report growth ambitions</p>	<p>Supported</p>
	<p>H2c:</p> <p>Female entrepreneurs who engage in more innovation activities will report growth ambitions</p>	<p>Not Supported</p>
	<p>H3c:</p> <p>Female entrepreneurs reporting high self-efficacy are more likely to report growth ambitions for their businesses.</p>	<p>Supported</p>

Table 11: Descriptive statistics, Correlation Coefficients, for both Male and Female Entrepreneurs

	Standard		1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.
	Mean	Deviation							
1. Gender (1= men, 0 = women)	0.514	0.502	1.00						
2. Self-efficacy	4.05	0.82	0.045	1.00					
3. Innovation Activity	2.26	1.29	0.02	0.076	1.00				
4. Attitude	3.29	1.22	0.052	-.007	0.073	1.00			
5. Age	48.6	9.36	-.105	0.05	-.017	-.157	1.00		
6. Entrepreneurial behaviour	0.362	0.48	0.168*	0.094	0.197*	-.074	0.014	1.00	
7. Growth ambitions	0.793	0.41	0.144	0.300**	0.141	0.237**	-.201*	0.103	1.00

Notes: * indicates correlations are significant at 0.05 level (two-tailed tests); ** indicates correlation is significant at 0.01 (2-tailed), n=137

Table 12: Descriptive Statistics, Correlation Coefficients for Male Entrepreneurs

	Standard		1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.
	Mean	deviation							
1. Gender (1= men, 0 = women)	1.00	0.00	1.00						
2. Self-efficacy	4.09	0.77		1.00					
3. Innovation Activity	2.30	1.21		0.001	1.00				
4. Attitude	3.32	1.19		-0.004	0.131	1.00			
5. Age	47.7	8.95		0.12	-.117	-.31**	1.00		
6. Entrepreneurial behaviour	0.44	0.50		0.03	0.213	0.033	0.097	1.00	
7. Growth ambitions	0.85	0.36		0.138	0.267*	0.16	-.091	-.003	1.00

Notes: * indicates correlations are significant at 0.05 level (two-tailed tests); ** indicates correlations are significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed). n=73

Table 13: Descriptive statistics, Correlation Coefficients, for Female Entrepreneurs

	Standard		1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.
	Mean	deviation							
1. Gender (1= men, 0 = women)	1.00	0.00	1.00						
2. Self-efficacy	4.01	0.87		1.00					
3. Innovation Activity	2.22	1.38		0.315**	1.00				
4. Attitude	3.27	1.25		-0.008	-0.002	1.00			
5. Age	49.6	9.73		-0.002	0.120	-0.069	1.00		
6. Entrepreneurial behaviour	0.28	0.45		0.148	0.187	-0.237*	0.022	1.00	
7. Growth ambitions	0.74	0.45		0.390**	0.037	0.307*	-0.270*	0.151	1.00

Notes: * indicates correlations are significant at 0.05 level (two-tailed tests); ** indicates correlations are significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed). n=69

Table 14: Logistic Regression results on Growth Ambitions

	Male & Female		Male		Female	
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	<i>B</i>	Wald	<i>B</i>	Wald	<i>B</i>	Wald
Attitude towards growth	0.54	6.92**	0.33	1.1	0.94	7.4**
Self-Efficacy	0.89	10.1**	0.53	1.7	1.51	8.6**
Innovation Activity	0.16	0.70	0.69	4.4*	-.20	0.45
<i>Control Variables</i>						
Age	-.06	5.31*	-.02	0.4	-.08	4.6
Entrepreneurial Behaviour	0.47	0.78	-.54	0.5	1.1	1.6
-2 Log likelihood	114.703 ^a		52.98 ^a		50.49 ^a	
Model Chi Square	26.73***		8.24		26.85***	
Cox & Snell R ²	0.18		0.11		0.33	
Nagelkerke R ²	0.28		0.19		0.48	
N	142		73		69	

Notes: Level of statistical significance: *** indicates p<0.001, ** indicates p<0.01, * indicates p<0.05

5.0 Discussion and Conclusion

In this study, I focused on establishing the relationship involving self-efficacy, innovation activities and attitudes concerning growth ambitions among male and female entrepreneurs in Norway. This section provides insightful discussion based on the results collected and analyzed on the entrepreneurial self-efficacy, attitudes and innovation activities and the influences they have on growth ambitions. The section involves discussion on the research questions and hypotheses that were investigated. In addition, the theoretical and practical implications of the study in different fields form part of the conclusion as well as the assessment of the limitations encountered during the process of conducting this study.

5.1 Summary and Conclusion

In this study, the research focused on understanding the impact of self-efficacy, innovation activities, and attitudes on growth ambitions among men and women entrepreneurs. This informed the underlying focus of this study. Entrepreneurial growth is critical since the development of new businesses often encourages better-quality products and services (Cardella, Hernandez-Sanchez & Sanchez-Garcia, 2020).

I will now briefly discuss the findings from the three research questions with the resultant hypotheses:

RQ1: Is there a difference between male and female entrepreneurs regarding entrepreneurial self-efficacy, innovation activities, attitudes, and growth ambitions?

From this, it is evident that there are no significant differences between male and female entrepreneurs and their growth ambitions when the four measures are analyzed. Male and female entrepreneurs show small differences concerning to t-test values and cross tabulations tests as earlier discussed, on the aspects of entrepreneurial self-efficacy, innovation activities, attitudes, and growth ambitions. The study outcomes on this research question differed from the insights in the literature review. The results of attitudes and innovation activities showed that the two groups of entrepreneurs scored high on favourable attitudes, self-efficacy, and innovation activities. The result from the self-efficacy assessment in this study was not consistent with the results from the literature review which suggested that male entrepreneurs had more self-efficacy concerning growth aspirations (Kolvereid & Isaksen, 2107). The results show that women and men score highly on self-efficacy. This result could be a result of gender equity in Norway, and probably because our study focused on high-growth firms majorly. The findings are consistent with the outcome of the study by Bulanova et al. (2016) who found that entrepreneurial self-efficacy, attitudes, and innovativeness are critical to the

growth of businesses. The assessment of the control variables in the study showed similarities in the average age of women and men when going into entrepreneurship hence this can explain the similarities in performance of the different variables investigated in the study.

RQ2: What is the effect of entrepreneurial self-efficacy, innovation activities, and attitudes on growth ambitions?

This research question addressed three hypotheses. First, the study investigated whether entrepreneurs with a more favourable attitude towards firm growth will report growth ambitions. The study outcome indicated a positive correlation between a favourable attitude toward firm growth and growth ambitions. For entrepreneurs, this correlation is significant at the 0.05 level as shown in Table 14. This implies that a favourable attitude was important for the respondents in their desire to further grow their businesses. Therefore, this hypothesis is supported. The likelihood of entrepreneurial growth for male and female entrepreneurs is determined by the attitudes they adopt while conducting their businesses. The study also sought to investigate if entrepreneurs who engage in more innovation activities will report growth ambitions. The results from the study exhibit a weak correlation between innovation activities and growth ambitions, which is not statistically significant at the 0.05 level. This implies that innovation activity was not important for growth ambitions. The other area of measurement in the study focused on whether self-efficacy will result in growth ambitions for entrepreneurs. The study results indicated a positive correlation between self-efficacy and growth ambitions. This correlation is significant at the 0.05 level. This implies that self-efficacy was important for the respondents in their desire to further grow their businesses. Ajzen (1991) proposes that intentions to perform behaviours of different kinds can be predicted with high accuracy from attitudes toward the behaviour, and perceived behavioural control. Results obtained from this study support his model. The level of motivation will inspire determination that can encourage entrepreneurs to work to achieve the best outcomes. Self-efficacy, motivation and attitudes are all aspects of the theory of planned behaviour since male and female entrepreneurs can adjust these aspects of their behaviours to grow.

RQ3: Is there a difference between men and women entrepreneurs regarding the effect of entrepreneurial self-efficacy, innovation activities, and attitudes on growth ambitions?

This research question addressed six hypotheses. First, a measure of whether the male entrepreneurs with a more favourable attitude toward growth will report growth ambitions. The study outcomes indicated that there is a weak correlation between the entrepreneurial attitudes of male respondents and their desire to further grow their business, and it is not statistically significant at the 0.05 level. Thus, attitude played a minimal role in influencing the growth ambitions of male entrepreneurs. The other area of measurement was whether female entrepreneurs with a more favourable attitude toward growth will report growth ambitions. The results from the study indicated a positive correlation between female entrepreneurs with a favourable attitude toward firm growth and growth ambitions. This correlation is significant at the 0.05 level. Thus, for female entrepreneurs' positive attitudes towards growth were important for their growth ambitions.

Furthermore, the research sought to investigate whether male entrepreneurs who engage in more innovation activities will report growth ambitions. The results from the investigation of this aspect indicated a positive correlation between male entrepreneurs who engage in more innovation activities and growth ambitions, this correlation is significant at the 0.05 level. This implies that innovation activities are a key variable explaining growth ambitions for men entrepreneurs. Innovation is thus instrumental in determining the level of success achieved by male entrepreneurs as they seek to grow their enterprises. The growth ambitions of their enterprises are determined by the levels of innovation they implement to enhance the overall efficiency of their businesses. The other area of focus in this study involved assessing if female entrepreneurs who engage in more innovation activities will report growth ambitions. There is a weak correlation between female entrepreneurs who engaged in more innovation activities and growth ambitions and the correlation was not statistically significant at the 0.05 level. This implies that for female entrepreneurs' innovation seemed not to be critical for growth aspirations.

In addition, the study investigated if male entrepreneurs reporting high self-efficacy will report growth ambitions. The study results indicate that there is a weak correlation between male entrepreneurs who report self-efficacy and growth ambitions. This implies that for male respondents' self-efficacy was not a key variable for them to grow their business further. The other area of investigation was whether female entrepreneurs reporting high self-efficacy will report growth ambitions. The research results indicated that there is a strong positive correlation between female entrepreneurs who report high self-efficacy and growth

ambitions. This correlation is significant at the 0.05 level. This implies that self-efficacy was an important variable for the female respondents in their desire to further grow their businesses.

Moreover, based on the analysis of the logistic regression analysis of R-squared, the model fits better for women entrepreneurs compared to male entrepreneurs., as model 3, discussed in Table 14, best explains the variance in the dependent variable. The model highlighted the strong positive correlation between female entrepreneurs reporting self-efficacy and growth ambitions. The model helps in explaining that when female entrepreneurs have a higher level of self-efficacy, they will end up achieving better entrepreneurial growth compared to male entrepreneurs.

5.2 Theoretical Implications and Contributions

The study contributes to entrepreneurship literature by integrating the TPB framework and Self-efficacy theory in the analysis of the different variables. The theory of planned behaviour is a great tool for predicting an individual's intention to engage in a behaviour. The theory is useful in explaining the different behaviours for which people can exert control. The theory of planned behaviour integrates critical components including attitudes and perceived behavioural control that refer to self-efficacy. Intentions in this study refers to growth ambitions, whilst actual control referred to innovation activities. The study did not measure subjective norms.

The study helps in building the application of TPB in understanding the decision-making process of entrepreneurs. Applying TPB in analyzing the behaviour of male and female entrepreneurs highlights several similarities in their behaviours and decision-making within the entrepreneurial spectrum. Moreover, applying TPB can help in the development of approaches that can enhance the behaviours of entrepreneurs based on the existing situations and which they can improve on to achieve growth objectives.

The study outcome indicates that self-efficacy, attitudes, and innovation activities of entrepreneurs contribute to growth ambitions. Growth ambitions are an excellent area of focus since it also helps in highlighting the role of gender regarding growth ambitions in this study. The results presented here indicate that gender contrast impacted differently on both male and female entrepreneurs. Women entrepreneurs who have great belief in their skills and exhibit high levels of confidence are more likely to experience significant growth in their operations.

As entrepreneurs operate in the business environment, they experience diverse issues in the business environment forcing them to become innovative. As innovation increases most male entrepreneurs are likely to experience growth since they become effective in their business processes. Innovation activities for male entrepreneurs as well as self-efficacy and overall attitudes for female entrepreneurs play a critical role in determining the level of growth experienced by the firms.

Therefore, the lasting influence of the research is that increased analysis of male and female entrepreneurs can reveal the different subjective factors that might explain the difference in performance for the two groups. However, the current outcome of the study does indicate a significant difference in that self-efficacy and a favourable attitude toward firm growth were key factors for women entrepreneurs in their pursuit of growing their firms further. However, for their male counterparts innovation activities was as a vital factor in the pursuit of growth ambitions.

5.3 Practical implications

The study outcome has several practical implications. The findings of the study have practical implications for entrepreneurs, policymakers, and educators. Based on the prevailing circumstances in the operational environment, entrepreneurs can adjust their behaviours to ensure the best outcomes are achieved. Entrepreneurs have an opportunity to understand the areas they need to adjust to ensure they become innovative and grow in their businesses. Based on findings from this study we see that for male entrepreneurs, innovation activities can have transformative effects on them by driving their competitiveness, growth, adaptability, efficiency, funding opportunities, networking, and reputation building. By embracing innovation and leveraging its potential, male entrepreneurs can seize new opportunities, overcome challenges, and create a sustainable pathway for success in their respective industries.

Self-efficacy and a favourable attitude significantly impact female entrepreneurs' growth ambitions by fostering confidence through mastery experience, building resilience, risk-taking, proactive learning, resource acquisition, network building, overcoming biases, and inspiring others. These psychological aspects play a central role in forming the mentality and performances of female entrepreneurs, enabling them to overcome challenges and achieve their growth aspirations.

Policymakers like the Norwegian government in cooperation with partners like Innovation Norway, Enova, start-up accelerators and incubators in Norway can consider using variables and findings in this study to guide entrepreneurs regarding business growth. They can organize workshops, training sessions and mentoring programs that focus on enhancing innovation capabilities and skill development. By organizing training and mentoring programs, the self-efficacy of female entrepreneurs can improve. In addition, policymakers can look at fostering innovation for male and female entrepreneurs by developing rewards and recognition programs for the entrepreneurs who excel in the field. By rewarding innovative entrepreneurs, policymakers can spur significant developments in innovation that pushes entrepreneurial growth for both male and female entrepreneurs. Policy makers can also work closely with start-ups in forums that foster idea generation, product development, market research and business model innovation. They can also increase funding opportunities and connect entrepreneurs with investors, facilitating partnerships with industry experts or research institutions. Incubators and accelerators can track and evaluate the progress of male and female entrepreneurs in terms of self-efficacy, attitudes, and innovation activities. This data can provide insights into the effectiveness of support programs and help identify areas for improvement for prospective entrepreneurs. Regular monitoring and evaluation would allow incubators to refine their strategies, customize interventions, and continuously enhance their support services to maximize the impact on growth ambitions.

5.4 Limitations

The present study has several limitations, opening several avenues for future research. The sample size is not large enough for the population identified for the study. The sample size captures a smaller representation of the businesses started in Norway in the period from 2004 to 2006. Due to the smaller sample size, the study focused on four measures in analyzing growth ambitions. The sample size is representative though not adequate to understand the Norwegian entrepreneurial environment due to the diverse factors that come into effect. Therefore, future studies can adjust the sample size to have a better perspective of the underlying situation in the Norwegian industry. The research narrowed down on the factors affecting growth ambitions to self-efficacy, attitudes, and innovation activities among male and female entrepreneurs, yet several factors outside of the range of entrepreneur can influence the growth ambitions as well that were not investigated comprehensively in the research. Other factors such as capital, market, education levels, and cultural values are likely to impact growth ambitions apart from the factors analyzed in this study. In addition, the

study focused on a sample of SME high-growth firms. The study acknowledges that smaller firms and bigger firms tend to have different growth motives and trajectories. Increasing the number or including both small and large enterprises could present an opportunity to have a holistic view of the underlying factors responsible for entrepreneurial growth ambitions.

The study also did not measure the concept of subjective norms that is included in Ajzen's theory of planned behaviour hence this presents a limitation. By studying subjective norms concerning the growth ambitions of entrepreneurs, we gain an understanding of the social, cultural, and contextual factors that influence their entrepreneurial intentions, decision-making, resource access, risk awareness, and identity creation. This knowledge can inform the development of supportive ecosystems, guidelines, and interventions that foster an entrepreneurial ecosystem conducive to growth ambitions.

5.5 Future research

The present research provides an excellent opportunity for future studies to address the gaps existing in the study. One of the areas that future studies can investigate is expanding the sample size to integrate entrepreneurial assessment involving a significantly larger group. Increasing the sample size presents an opportunity to identify the different factors affecting growth ambitions besides the four measures analyzed in the study. Thus, future studies can analyze the underlying basis for which entrepreneurs select businesses relating to specific industries. In addition, investigations on why other entrepreneurs set out on the entrepreneurial journey without any growth ambitions can be investigated. Thus, future studies can integrate additional measures as well as subjective norms in assessing, for instance, in predicting entrepreneurial growth factors in small and big firms since several factors come into play when assessing organizations of differing sizes.

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