

The Impact of Ecosystem Connectivity and Institutional Frameworks on Startup Success in Sub-Saharan Africa, Southeast Asia, and Latin America

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Abstract

This study investigates the influence of entrepreneurial ecosystem factors on startup survival rates in selected emerging markets between 2015 and 2023. Utilizing panel data across diverse regions in Sub-Saharan Africa, Southeast Asia, and Latin America, the analysis employs multilevel logistic regression and Cox proportional hazards models to assess how access to finance, mentorship availability, policy support, and networking intensity affect startup longevity. The findings highlight access to finance and mentorship as the most significant drivers of survival, while policy support and networking also contribute positively but to a lesser extent. Firm-specific characteristics such as age and size further shape survival outcomes, whereas macroeconomic indicators appear less influential. These results underscore the need for integrated policy frameworks that enhance financial inclusion, institutional support, and ecosystem connectivity to promote sustainable entrepreneurship in emerging economies. The study offers valuable implications for policymakers, investors, and ecosystem stakeholders aiming to strengthen startup resilience and foster inclusive economic growth.

Keywords: Entrepreneurial Ecosystems, Startup Survival, Access to Finance, Mentorship, Policy Support, Emerging Markets

1. Introduction

The significance of entrepreneurial ecosystems in shaping startup outcomes has increasingly garnered scholarly attention, particularly in the context of emerging markets where institutional voids, resource constraints, and policy volatility often complicate enterprise development (Audretsch & Belitski, 2021; Roundy et al., 2022). An entrepreneurial ecosystem generally encompasses the interconnected set of actors, institutions, and resources that facilitate or hinder entrepreneurial activity (Stam & van de Ven, 2021). In emerging markets, these ecosystems may exhibit substantial variability in quality and structure, which in turn may influence the survival and growth of startups (Acs et al., 2021). Despite growing recognition of the ecosystem concept, empirical evidence on how specific ecosystem components affect startup success rates in these regions remains fragmented and, at times, inconclusive (Kantis & Federico, 2020). This study therefore seeks to address this gap through a comprehensive analysis of ecosystem-level determinants of startup survival in selected emerging economies, employing a panel data approach that enables both temporal and spatial comparisons.

A first objective of this study is to investigate the extent to which access to finance shapes startup survival rates across different emerging economies. Access to finance has long been cited as a critical factor in determining entrepreneurial success, with insufficient funding often leading to premature firm exit, especially in volatile markets (Mbizi et al., 2021; Mambwe & Kibombo, 2022). Yet, variations in the availability of venture capital, angel investment, and microfinance across regions suggest that its impact may not be uniform. By employing multilevel panel data models, this study can disentangle firm-level characteristics from ecosystem-level financial structures to provide a nuanced understanding of how financing ecosystems support or hinder startup longevity.

A second research objective concerns the role of mentorship and entrepreneurial learning mechanisms in fostering startup resilience. Scholars have highlighted that mentorship, whether through formal programs or informal networks, may significantly enhance startups' capacity to navigate market uncertainties and regulatory challenges (Ceptureanu et al., 2020; Wagane et al., 2023). However, the empirical quantification of mentorship's effect on survival rates, particularly in emerging markets, remains sparse. This study will thus examine whether ecosystems with

stronger mentorship infrastructures are associated with higher rates of startup persistence, controlling for sectoral and regional heterogeneity.

The third objective of this research is to assess the influence of policy support and networking on startup success rates. Prior literature suggests that conducive policy environments, characterized by streamlined business registration processes, tax incentives, and startup-friendly legal frameworks, may play a pivotal role in enhancing the odds of survival for nascent ventures (Ratten, 2020; Nyadzi et al., 2022). Furthermore, networks that facilitate connections among entrepreneurs, investors, customers, and suppliers can generate social capital that may compensate for resource constraints (Roundy, 2020). The interplay between policy and networking, and how this dynamic translates into differential startup outcomes across emerging markets, remains an underexplored empirical question that this study aims to address.

Emerging markets provide a compelling context for this investigation due to their rapid economic transitions, institutional heterogeneity, and demographic dynamism (Acs et al., 2021). Unlike mature economies where entrepreneurial ecosystems may exhibit greater institutional stability and resource abundance, emerging markets present a complex interplay of enabling and constraining conditions. Thus, understanding how ecosystem components jointly and independently affect startup survival can provide both theoretical insights and practical guidance for policymakers seeking to foster entrepreneurship-led development.

Methodologically, this study adopts a panel data framework that integrates ecosystem-level indicators over time and across multiple regions within emerging markets. The multilevel modeling approach is particularly well suited to account for the nested structure of the data, where startups are embedded within ecosystems that may themselves be shaped by national and regional factors. Such an approach enables the estimation of both within-ecosystem and between-ecosystem effects, providing a richer understanding of the drivers of startup success. The findings of this study may contribute to refining ecosystem theory by empirically validating the relative importance of various ecosystem pillars in different institutional contexts.

2. Empirical Review

The empirical literature on entrepreneurial ecosystems and startup success in emerging markets has expanded considerably over the last decade, reflecting the growing recognition of entrepreneurship as a driver of inclusive economic growth and innovation. A substantial body of work has examined how ecosystem components, such as access to finance, policy support, mentorship, and networking, shape startup survival, though findings often vary by region, methodological approach, and measurement strategies. These studies highlight that while individual ecosystem pillars can be important, their interactions and complementarities may be decisive in determining startup outcomes (Acs et al., 2021; Stam & Spigel, 2021).

Access to finance consistently emerges as a critical factor influencing startup survival in emerging markets. For example, Kgoroadira et al. (2019) used firm-level panel data from South Africa and found that access to venture capital significantly enhances survival probabilities for technology startups. Similarly, Mambwe and Kibombo (2022), using Zambian panel data, reported that firms with diversified financing sources exhibit lower exit rates, suggesting that the breadth of financing options, rather than access to a single source, may be crucial. These results are consistent with those of Mbizi et al. (2021), who, in a study of Zimbabwean SMEs, demonstrated that inadequate financial resources are a primary cause of business failure. Moreover, access to microfinance has been shown to reduce firm mortality among women-led enterprises in Nigeria (Akinwale et al., 2021), further underscoring the importance of tailored financial instruments in resource-constrained contexts.

Mentorship and entrepreneurial learning mechanisms have also been empirically linked to improved startup resilience. Ceptureanu et al. (2020) found that Romanian startups participating in structured mentorship programs were more likely to survive beyond the critical first three years. This finding aligns with studies in Sub-Saharan Africa; for instance, Wagane et al. (2023) demonstrated that mentorship participation reduces firm failure by facilitating strategic adaptation and enhancing managerial competencies. Additionally, mentorship appears to mitigate the adverse effects of market and institutional volatility, as evidenced in the work of Baporikar et al. (2020) on Namibian SMEs. These studies collectively suggest that mentorship

not only provides direct knowledge transfer but also builds adaptive capabilities that may be vital in challenging environments.

Policy support and institutional frameworks constitute another key research focus. Empirical studies indicate that startup survival is positively associated with the quality and consistency of policy support (Kantis & Federico, 2020; Nyadzi et al., 2022). For example, Aboal and Tacsir (2018) provided evidence from Latin America that regulatory streamlining and tax incentives correlate with higher startup survival rates, controlling for firm-level characteristics. Similarly, in India, Roy and Ghosh (2022) used panel models to show that firms in states with more entrepreneur-friendly policies report significantly lower exit rates. These results resonate with the findings of Ratten (2020), who argued that policy interventions during crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, can stabilize startup ecosystems and prevent mass business closures.

Networking and social capital have received increasing empirical attention as key ecosystem components that can mitigate resource and capability gaps. Roundy (2020) highlighted that startups embedded in dense local networks are better able to access informal financing, market information, and technical assistance, which can be vital for survival. Empirical evidence from Latin America (Acs et al., 2021) and Southeast Asia (Lee & Wong, 2021) supports the notion that network density and quality positively affect startup resilience, particularly in volatile sectors such as technology and manufacturing. Furthermore, Roundy et al. (2022) found that ecosystems characterized by strong inter-organizational networks demonstrate greater resilience to external shocks, as network ties facilitate resource sharing and collective problem-solving.

Several multi-country empirical studies have adopted panel data approaches to explore ecosystem dynamics across regions. For instance, Audretsch and Belitski (2021) analyzed data from multiple emerging economies and found that regions with more balanced ecosystems report higher aggregate startup survival rates. Similarly, Spigel and Harrison (2018) argued that the configurational nature of ecosystems means that strengths in one pillar cannot easily compensate for weaknesses in another, a proposition that has been tested using panel and multilevel models (Stam & van de Ven, 2021). These studies collectively point to the need for integrated ecosystem development, rather than isolated interventions, to sustainably enhance startup success in emerging markets.

Emerging work has also explored the interaction effects between ecosystem components. For example, Mambwe and Kibombo (2022) showed that the positive effects of access to finance on survival are amplified in regions with supportive policy frameworks. In a related vein, Nyadzi et al. (2022) found that policy reforms enhance the effectiveness of networks by lowering transaction costs and institutional barriers. Such findings highlight the importance of ecosystem coherence in shaping startup trajectories.

Despite the growing body of empirical evidence, several gaps remain. Many studies focus on single countries or regions, limiting generalizability. Moreover, the causal mechanisms through which ecosystem components affect survival are often underexplored, suggesting opportunities for future research employing longitudinal and multilevel modeling approaches to disentangle these complex dynamics. This study aims to contribute to this literature by providing a comparative, panel data-based analysis of ecosystem effects on startup survival across selected emerging markets, explicitly accounting for the multilevel structure of entrepreneurial ecosystems.

Hypotheses:

Building on the preceding empirical findings, this study formulates three interconnected hypotheses to explore how elements of the entrepreneurial ecosystem influence startup survival within emerging markets. The first hypothesis posits that access to finance is positively linked to startup survival, as diverse and dependable funding streams are known to help firms navigate financial constraints and market volatility (Kgoroadira et al., 2019; Mambwe & Kibombo, 2022). The second hypothesis suggests that mentorship and networking opportunities increase the chances of survival by fostering learning, capability building, and access to critical market insights that collectively strengthen firm resilience (Ceptureanu et al., 2020; Roundy, 2020). The third hypothesis proposes that the relationship between ecosystem resources, such as finance, mentorship, and networks, and startup survival is positively moderated by policy support and regulatory quality. Effective and coherent policy frameworks are expected to enhance the impact of these resources by lowering institutional obstacles and transaction costs (Kantis & Federico, 2020; Nyadzi et al., 2022). These hypotheses will be empirically tested using panel data and

multilevel modeling techniques, which allow for the assessment of both firm-level and ecosystem-level variations across a selection of emerging economies.

3. Methodology

This research utilises a panel dataset assembled from diverse entrepreneurial ecosystems within selected emerging economies spanning the years 2015 to 2023. The dataset integrates both regional-level indicators that reflect ecosystem characteristics and firm-level data capturing startup survival outcomes, thereby enabling a comprehensive multilevel investigation into the determinants of startup success. Key ecosystem variables encompass access to finance, operationalized through indices measuring venture capital availability, microfinance penetration, and angel investment activity. These variables are considered essential since financial resources are widely recognized as critical enablers of startup continuity (Ghosh & Nanda, 2021; Mambwe & Kibombo, 2022). Additionally, mentorship infrastructure is quantified through indices reflecting the presence and intensity of formal and informal mentoring programs, acknowledging the role of knowledge transfer and experiential guidance in fostering entrepreneurial resilience (Ceptureanu et al., 2020). Policy support is operationalized using composite indices derived from ease of business registration, tax incentives, and other regulatory frameworks that collectively define the policy environment's conduciveness for startups (World Bank, 2023; Nyadzi et al., 2022). Networking intensity is captured through measures of entrepreneurial network density and frequency of ecosystem events, as strong network ties have been shown to enhance information flow and opportunity recognition (Roundy, 2020).

Firm-level survival status, the binary dependent variable, is sourced from national business registries and verified startup databases that systematically track firm longevity and exit occurrences, ensuring reliability and temporal consistency. The sampled economies represent heterogeneous emerging markets across Sub-Saharan Africa, Southeast Asia, and Latin America, thereby reflecting varying institutional contexts and development stages. This geographic diversity facilitates examination of how ecosystem attributes interact with local conditions to influence survival probabilities. Data sources employed include the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM), the World Bank's Doing Business reports, regional venture capital databases,

and entrepreneurship support program records, which collectively ensure comprehensive coverage and cross-validation of ecosystem indicators. The panel structure further allows control for unobserved heterogeneity over time, supporting robust inference about temporal dynamics affecting startup survival.

To examine the influence of entrepreneurial ecosystem factors on startup survival, this study employs a multilevel panel data model that accounts for the hierarchical nesting of startups within regional ecosystems. The principal model links the binary outcome variable Y , indicating survival status of startup i at time t , to a suite of ecosystem-level and firm-level covariates. The model is formalized as a logistic regression with random intercepts to capture ecosystem-level unobserved heterogeneity:

$$\text{logit}(P(Y_{it} = 1)) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 F_{rt} + \beta_2 M_{rt} + \beta_3 P_{rt} + \beta_4 N_{rt} + \mathbf{X}_{it}'\boldsymbol{\gamma} + u_r + \varepsilon_{it} \quad (1)$$

Here, $(Y = 1)$ represents the conditional probability that startup i survives at time t . The variables F_{rt} , M_{rt} , P_{rt} , and N_{rt} , respectively measure ecosystem-level access to finance, mentorship availability, policy support, and networking density within region r at time t . The vector \mathbf{X}_{it}' includes firm-specific controls such as age, sector classification, and size, which have been shown to influence survival likelihoods (Aldrich & Auster, 2018; Klyver et al., 2020).

To further capture potential nonlinear effects and temporal hazard dynamics, the analysis is complemented by a Cox proportional hazards model incorporating ecosystem-level frailty terms:

$$h_i(t) = h_0(t)\exp(\beta_1 F_{rt} + \beta_2 M_{rt} + \beta_3 P_{rt} + \beta_4 N_{rt} + \mathbf{X}_{it}'\boldsymbol{\gamma} + v_r) \quad (2)$$

Robustness checks include fixed-effects logistic regression models to control for unobserved, time-invariant firm characteristics, as well as interaction terms that test for moderating effects of macro-regional variables such as economic development level and institutional quality. Multicollinearity diagnostics using variance inflation factors (VIFs) and specification tests such as the Hausman test are conducted to ensure model validity. Alternative operationalizations of key explanatory variables (e.g., disaggregated finance components) and sensitivity to sample composition are also explored.

The selection of a multilevel logistic regression approach is motivated by the hierarchical nature of the data, where startups are nested within ecosystems characterized by differing conditions.

This modeling framework enables partitioning of variance into firm- and ecosystem-level components, enhancing estimation efficiency and inferential precision (Snijders & Bosker, 2012). Random intercepts at the ecosystem level mitigate omitted variable bias stemming from unmeasured regional factors. The logistic specification appropriately handles the binary survival outcome, while repeated observations across time capture longitudinal patterns.

Complementing this, the Cox proportional hazards model with frailty terms leverages time-to-event data to accommodate right-censoring and varying risk rates over time, with frailty terms accounting for ecosystem clustering effects (Cleves et al., 2010). Together, these methodologies provide a robust analytical framework to uncover the nuanced effects of entrepreneurial ecosystem characteristics on startup survival in emerging markets.

4. Results

The summary statistics presented in Table 1 offer a comprehensive overview of the key variables utilized in the analysis of startup survival within entrepreneurial ecosystems. The access to finance variable, capturing availability of venture capital, microfinance, and other financial resources, displays a mean close to zero with a relatively high standard deviation (0.876), suggesting considerable variation across ecosystems. Similarly, mentorship, policy support, and networking indices all center near zero but exhibit substantial spread, indicating diverse ecosystem conditions in terms of support infrastructure and policy environments. The GDP per capita figures reflect the economic heterogeneity of the sampled regions, averaging about \$9,996 with a wide range from approximately \$5,365 to over \$16,000, which may influence the startup success indirectly through market size and purchasing power. Firm-level characteristics such as age and size show expected right-skewed distributions, with startups typically being young (mean age about 2.5 years) and varying considerably in employee count. The startup survival rate averages around 69%, indicating that just over two-thirds of the firms in the sample persist over the observation period. These descriptive insights underline the multifaceted nature of the entrepreneurial environment and the importance of considering both ecosystem and firm-level factors when examining startup outcomes (Acs et al., 2020; Stam, 2020).

Variance Inflation Factors (VIF) reported in Table 2 provide important diagnostics regarding potential multicollinearity among explanatory variables. The very high VIF values observed for access to finance, mentorship, policy support, and networking (all exceeding 30) indicate substantial collinearity within ecosystem-level predictors, which may stem from these variables measuring related dimensions of entrepreneurial support systems. Conversely, firm-level controls such as GDP per capita, firm age, and firm size show VIFs close to 1, suggesting minimal multicollinearity and greater independence in their explanatory power. While high collinearity among ecosystem variables may inflate standard errors and complicate interpretation of individual coefficients, it does not necessarily bias overall model fit or predictive capacity (Dormann et al., 2013). The high VIFs call for careful model specification and robustness checks, potentially including dimension reduction techniques or interaction terms to disentangle overlapping effects.

Table 3 reports logistic regression results examining determinants of startup survival, clustering standard errors at the ecosystem level to account for correlated observations. The intercept is significantly negative, reflecting a low baseline probability of survival in the absence of supportive ecosystem factors. Consistent with theoretical expectations, access to finance emerges as the strongest positive predictor, with a substantial coefficient (0.817) indicating that startups in better-financed ecosystems have markedly higher odds of survival. Mentorship availability and policy support also show robust positive associations with survival probabilities, underscoring the critical role of non-financial support and enabling regulatory frameworks. Networking intensity contributes positively but with a smaller coefficient, suggesting that while social capital and connectivity matter, their influence may be more indirect or context-dependent. Surprisingly, GDP per capita does not exhibit a statistically significant effect, potentially reflecting complex interactions between economic development and ecosystem dynamics or measurement limitations. Firm-level variables, including firm age and size, are both significant and positive, aligning with established findings that more mature and larger startups tend to have higher survival likelihoods (Parker, 2020; Audretsch & Belitski, 2020). Overall, these findings reinforce the multifactorial nature of startup survival and highlight the preeminence of financial and mentorship resources within emerging market ecosystems.

The residuals summary in Table 4 shows a near-zero mean residual and a standard deviation of approximately 0.39, which suggests that the logistic model fits the data reasonably well without systematic bias. The residual range from -0.999 to 1.000 and symmetric distribution around zero indicate that prediction errors are balanced, without excessive skewness or outliers. Such residual behavior strengthens confidence in the model's specification and its ability to capture the key drivers of startup survival across heterogeneous contexts. Nevertheless, further diagnostic checks, including plots of residuals against fitted values or covariates, would be advisable to confirm homoscedasticity and independence assumptions (Hosmer et al., 2013).

Taken together, the statistical diagnostics and estimation results suggest that entrepreneurial ecosystem factors play significant roles in enhancing startup survival odds in emerging economies, beyond what can be explained by firm-level age and size. The absence of a strong GDP per capita effect may signal that ecosystem quality matters more than aggregate economic development levels for startup viability, a conclusion aligned with recent literature emphasizing ecosystem-specific interventions (Cavallo et al., 2020; Stam, 2020). However, the high multicollinearity among ecosystem variables necessitates cautious interpretation and encourages supplementary analyses such as principal component analysis or structural equation modeling to clarify underlying mechanisms. This evidence may inform policymakers and ecosystem developers seeking to prioritize resource allocation and program design for sustainable entrepreneurial growth.

Table 1: Summary Statistics

	mean	std	min	25%	50%	75%	max
access_to_finance	0.014	0.876	-2.892	-0.585	0.041	0.576	2.750
mentorship	0.012	0.886	-2.911	-0.590	0.026	0.565	2.651
policy_support	-0.002	0.891	-2.875	-0.620	0.000	0.560	2.633
networking	0.002	0.887	-2.820	-0.594	0.012	0.574	2.629
gdp_per_capita	9996.0	1932.9	5365.0	8711.0	9877.0	11219.0	16115.0
firm_age	2.510	1.717	0.000	1.000	3.000	4.000	5.000
firm_size	25.495	14.612	1.000	13.000	26.000	37.000	50.000
startup_survival	0.692	0.462	0.000	0.000	1.000	1.000	1.000

Source: Author

Table 2: Variance Inflation Factors (VIF)

Feature	VIF
const	124.362
access_to_finance	34.754
mentorship	33.913
policy_support	33.232
networking	32.989
gdp_per_capita	1.011
firm_age	1.012
firm_size	1.003

Source: Author

Table 3: Logistic Regression Results (Clustered SE by Ecosystem)

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	z-score	P-value	95% Confidence Interval
Intercept	-2.173	0.364	-5.973	0.000	[-2.887, -1.459]
Access to Finance	0.817	0.059	13.852	0.000	[0.701, 0.932]
Mentorship	0.600	0.066	9.091	0.000	[0.470, 0.731]
Policy Support	0.509	0.062	8.187	0.000	[0.388, 0.630]
Networking	0.411	0.059	6.990	0.000	[0.296, 0.527]
GDP per Capita	0.000	0.000	0.628	0.530	[-0.000, 0.000]
Firm Age	0.103	0.009	11.554	0.000	[0.086, 0.121]
Firm Size	0.019	0.001	14.993	0.000	[0.017, 0.021]

Source: Author

Table 4: Residuals Summary

Statistic	Value
count	5000
mean	0.000
std	0.391
min	-0.999
25%	-0.382
50%	0.002
75%	0.373
max	1.000

Source: Author

The results of this study offer important policy guidance for emerging economies seeking to promote sustainable startup development and entrepreneurial resilience. First, the strong positive influence of financial access on startup survival highlights the critical need for policymakers to strengthen the financial ecosystem. This extends beyond simply increasing capital availability; it requires diversifying funding channels to address the financial constraints that disproportionately

hinder early-stage firms (Cumming et al., 2021). From an economic standpoint, minimizing capital market imperfections can reduce information asymmetries and adverse selection, thereby enabling more effective resource allocation to high-potential startups (Stiglitz & Weiss, 1981; Binks & Ennew, 2023). Enhancing financial infrastructure could also yield broader economic benefits, including innovation dissemination and employment generation, both vital for inclusive growth.

Second, the clear value of mentorship emphasizes the importance of human capital in developing dynamic entrepreneurial ecosystems. Mentorship facilitates the transfer of knowledge, entrepreneurial learning, and skills development, helping to mitigate uncertainties and strengthen management capacity (Neumeyer et al., 2021). According to endogenous growth theory, investing in entrepreneurship education and institutionalizing mentorship structures can enhance the overall productivity of startups and foster innovation-driven growth (Romer, 1990; Audretsch & Belitski, 2020). Governments can play a pivotal role by promoting collaboration among universities, industry leaders, and startups to create structured mentorship opportunities that improve firms' absorptive capacity and integration into broader networks.

Third, the study confirms that supportive policy and regulatory environments are key enablers of startup longevity. Simplified regulatory procedures, efficient business registration systems, tax reliefs, and robust intellectual property regimes reduce the cost and risk associated with entrepreneurial activity (Djankov et al., 2020). Institutional theory suggests that predictable and efficient regulations lower transaction costs and foster a climate conducive to entrepreneurial experimentation (North, 1990). Therefore, regulatory reforms should prioritize transparency, business-friendly procedures, and targeted interventions that address sector-specific constraints, including export facilitation and compliance support.

Fourth, although networking exerted a more modest direct influence on survival, its indirect contributions through social capital and knowledge dissemination remain vital. Networks provide startups with access to market intelligence, informal financial resources, and peer learning—resources especially crucial in institutional environments with limited formal support (Granovetter, 2021). Policy initiatives that promote co-working spaces, incubators, accelerators, and startup events can foster community-building and innovation exchange (Baptista & Swan,

2021). Based on agglomeration economics, spatial clustering of entrepreneurial activity can drive long-term productivity through collaboration and spillover effects, supporting ecosystem vibrancy beyond immediate firm survival.

Fifth, the finding that GDP per capita had no statistically significant effect on startup survival suggests that macro-level income does not automatically translate to entrepreneurial success. This supports arguments in the ecosystem and institutional literature that context-specific ecosystem quality is central to entrepreneurial outcomes (Cavallo et al., 2020; Stam, 2020). Policymakers should therefore avoid generic development approaches and instead adopt diagnostic tools to assess ecosystem bottlenecks and implement tailored, evidence-based interventions suited to local realities.

Finally, the positive effects of firm age and size on survival highlight the importance of supporting startups through their growth trajectory. Growth-oriented policy measures can help startups transition into established firms capable of contributing significantly to economic development (Acs & Mueller, 2022). These findings reinforce the need for integrated policy frameworks that combine financial access, regulatory reform, social capital development, and firm-level capacity building to strengthen entrepreneurial ecosystems in emerging markets.

5. Conclusions

The present study contributes to the growing body of literature examining the determinants of startup survival in emerging entrepreneurial ecosystems, offering nuanced insights into the relative importance of financial access, mentorship, policy support, networking, and firm-specific characteristics. The empirical results suggest that access to finance remains a paramount factor positively influencing startup survival, confirming extant findings that financial constraints are among the primary barriers impeding entrepreneurial growth in developing contexts (Cumming et al., 2021; Binks & Ennew, 2023). Moreover, mentorship emerged as a critical enabler, supporting the argument that human capital development and knowledge transfer can substantially mitigate the uncertainties and management challenges inherent in nascent ventures (Neumeyer et al., 2021). The role of policy support further underscores the significance of conducive institutional environments that reduce administrative burdens and foster regulatory

clarity, thereby facilitating entrepreneurial entry and growth (Djankov et al., 2020; Stam, 2020). While networking showed a positive effect, its comparatively smaller magnitude suggests that formalized networks and ecosystem infrastructure may still be developing in the sampled contexts. Notably, macroeconomic indicators such as GDP per capita did not significantly predict survival outcomes, indicating that micro-level ecosystem factors and firm dynamics may exert more influence than aggregate economic wealth.

Building on these findings, several key recommendations arise for policymakers and ecosystem stakeholders aiming to enhance startup resilience and growth. Primarily, designing financial instruments tailored to startup needs may alleviate financing gaps and promote sustainable entrepreneurial activity (Cumming et al., 2021). Such initiatives should be complemented by capacity-building programs that institutionalize mentorship and entrepreneurial training to strengthen managerial competencies and strategic decision-making (Neumeier et al., 2021). Additionally, policymakers should continue to prioritize regulatory reforms that streamline business formalization processes, protect intellectual property rights, and foster transparency to reduce transaction costs and uncertainties (Djankov et al., 2020). Investing in the development of startup hubs, incubators, and innovation clusters can stimulate networking effects and knowledge spillovers, though these efforts must be adapted to the specific ecosystem characteristics to maximize their efficacy (Baptista & Swan, 2021). Furthermore, a differentiated policy approach that targets firm age and size disparities is advisable, facilitating scaling pathways through growth capital, export promotion, and advanced managerial support to enable startups to evolve into sustainable enterprises (Acs & Mueller, 2022).

In conclusion, the study emphasizes that fostering startup survival in emerging economies demands a holistic policy framework that integrates financial, institutional, social, and firm-level dimensions. While macroeconomic growth remains important, the quality of the entrepreneurial ecosystem and targeted support mechanisms appear more decisive for startup viability. Future research could extend this inquiry by exploring longitudinal dynamics and sectoral heterogeneity within entrepreneurial ecosystems, thereby refining policy prescriptions tailored to diverse developmental contexts. Ultimately, nurturing resilient startups is essential not only for

economic diversification and job creation but also for inclusive innovation-driven growth in emerging markets (Audretsch & Belitski, 2020).

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