



Full Paper

Public policy implications of entrepreneurship research

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Abstract

After examining 4247 articles in 10 journals between 2010 and 2020, we found only 11.7% ($n=497$) included explicit policy recommendations, and just 1.4% ($n=60$) had explicit policy implications subsections. We analysed these 60 articles using behaviourally anchored rating scales (BARS) to assess four key aspects of the policy implications for quality and practicality. Policy implications were generally based on methodologically transparent research, but often lacked rigour in detailing policy and regulatory requirements, and typically demanded significant resources for implementation. Our results contribute to theory by improving our understanding of the why, when and how of policy implications of entrepreneurship research. Also, our BARS framework allows for a differentiation between quality and practical applicability, thereby reframing assumptions by showing that impactful policy implications require both methodological quality and implementation feasibility. Overall, the research–policy gap in entrepreneurship results not merely from disengagement but also research–policy misalignment in content and form.

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There is global interest in public policies supporting entrepreneurship as it drives economic growth (Goedhuys and Sleuwaegen, 2010; Nugent and Yhee, 2002), creates jobs and reduces poverty (Robson et al., 2009). This interest has gained urgency in light of increased demands for research impact, societal relevance and evidence-based policymaking, especially in the context of the post-pandemic economic recovery (AACSB, 2023). If designed and implemented effectively, policies have the potential to foster the foundation of new ventures and strengthen entrepreneurial ecosystems (Chaves-Maza and Fedriani Martel, 2020; Grimm and Audretsch, 2005) through both ‘hard’ measures, such as financial aid and ‘soft’ assistance such as specialised training (Ramsden and Bennett, 2005; Robson et al., 2009). Public policies, though not always welcomed by entrepreneurs (Gibb, 2000) and not always providing value with regard to public fund investment (Curran, 2000), can benefit entrepreneurship. For example, they can address market failures caused by imperfect information (Storey, 1994) and promote values related to risk tolerance, creativity and innovation (Román et al., 2013). Despite 30 years of research on public policy and entrepreneurship, we still do not fully understand the research–policy connection (Hart et al., 2021; Mallett and Wapshott, 2020). Accordingly, there are numerous calls for research to improve our understanding of public policy derived from entrepreneurship research (Acs et al., 2016; Autio and Rannikko, 2016; Bennett, 2008; Bradley and Klein, 2016; Lucas et al., 2018; Obeng and Blundel, 2015; Stevenson et al., 2021).

The research–policy gap in entrepreneurship

In a recent contribution to the discourse on the impact of entrepreneurship research, Waldron et al. (2025) argued that it should strive for relevance in the sense of having the potential to influence the thoughts, decisions and actions of those who practice entrepreneurship. Whereas Waldron et al. (2025) addressed the issue broadly, directing much of their attention to entrepreneurs and their teams, our study joins this conversation by focusing upon a particular group of stakeholders whose actions hold great importance for entrepreneurs: policymakers. The much-lamented knowledge gaps regarding entrepreneurship policies may be due to various factors. First, businesses may be reluctant to take advantage of governmental support given that the cultural gap between government officials and entrepreneurs has been widely debated in the literature (Gibb, 2000). This reluctance may stem from the characteristics of both businesses and entrepreneurs (Bennett and Robson, 2000; Schwartz and Bar-El, 2004). For example, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are often hesitant to use support services (Bennett and Robson, 2000; Berry et al., 2006; Curran and Storey, 2002; Gibb, 2000; Mole, 2002; Mole et al., 2017; Storey, 2004).

Second, consider the context in which entrepreneurial activities take place. For example, geographical location must be taken into account (Audretsch, 2007; Smallbone and Welter, 2012) as it may prevent more isolated ventures from accessing support programmes (Schwartz and Bar-El, 2004) or reflect broader societal influences (gender inequity; Schwartz and Bar-El, 2004). In such cases, policies alone may prove insufficient to address deeply ingrained structural issues.

Third, more research is needed on the design and implementation of entrepreneurship policies (Curran and Blackburn, 2000). As interventions must be tailored to the needs of their intended beneficiaries (Obeng and Blundel, 2015), challenges often arise from difficulties in accurately identifying the proper targeted groups and potential beneficiaries (Jacob and Lefgren, 2011). There

are also challenges due to the opportunistic behaviour of some entrepreneurs (such as rent-seeking) who are more interested in securing grants than in creating genuine value (Gustafsson et al., 2016). Moreover, Bennett (2014) made the case that SME policies sometimes attempt to support all small firms indiscriminately, rather than targeting those with the most growth potential; this can lead to overextension of public resources and propping up weak or inefficient firms, distorting market dynamics.

Fourth, and related to the previous point, academics need to demonstrate a willingness to engage in discussions with entrepreneurs and, if possible, do so in multidisciplinary settings that extend beyond traditional academic conferences and workshops (Gibb, 2000). Roundy and Ginting-Szczesny (2025) showed that doing so has an actual impact on policymaking. Immersing ourselves in the realities of entrepreneurs and SMEs could provide us, entrepreneurship researchers, with a more nuanced, experience-based understanding of the field and, in relation to theories, perhaps even insights into an entrepreneur's conceptual framework (Gibb, 2000). While engaging with policymakers is essential for understanding their agenda, this can be challenging, as decisions are often shaped by political priorities, including electoral ones, even when available evidence suggests alternative courses of action.

Our previous discussion suggests that, overall, the research–policy gap in entrepreneurship can be attributed to both demand- and supply-side factors (Bird and Aguinis, 2025). Rather than favouring one particular stance, Bird and Aguinis (2025) argued that, to some extent, we have cultivated a system emphasising publications in specific journals, rankings and citations as central career-building elements. Given the limited number of journals explicitly requesting policy implications in submitted manuscripts (the demand side) and researchers being unsure of how to formulate such policy implications (the supply side; Aguinis et al., 2022b), many may be in doubt as to how to add value through formulating policy implications in their work. Furthermore, the strict focus on metrics unrelated to impact on policymaking for career purposes drives a tendency to publish work within domains where researchers are already established (Harley and Fleming, 2021). However, policy implications could be more central to entrepreneurship research, and they do at times move from peer-reviewed articles into policy documents, government reports and white papers (Roundy and Ginting-Szczesny, 2025).

In sum, there is much to be learned about entrepreneurship-based policymaking (Bradley et al., 2021; Obeng and Blundel, 2015). Entrepreneurship journals typically seek high-impact research (Ahl and Nelson, 2015; Wiklund et al., 2019); however, it remains unclear to what extent entrepreneurship scholars consider the policy implications of their research. Shedding light on this issue would help us understand whether there is latitude to enhance entrepreneurship's social and economic impact as an academic field and how to do so. We also issue the caveat however, that every policy aimed at fostering entrepreneurship involves trade-offs; no single policy can effortlessly enhance entrepreneurial activity or create the perfect framework (Bradley et al., 2021).

The present study

We conducted a critical and in-depth investigation of the policy implications of entrepreneurship research in peer-reviewed journals because they are the most credible and trustworthy source of theory and research. We examined 4247 articles published in 10 highly influential entrepreneurship journals between 2010 and 2020. Our results revealed that only 11.7% ($n=497$) included explicit policy recommendations, and only 1.4% ($n=60$) dedicated at least a subsection discussing policy implications (even if it did not have a heading or subheading labelled as such). To gain a deeper understanding of the content of these policies, we analysed the 60 articles based on four key issues relative to the quality and practicality features of policy implications. We captured the *quality* of

policy implications through the assessment of (1) methodological transparency and (2) requirements for policy and regulatory intervention. In addition, we assessed *practicality* through (3) institutional change required for policy implementation and (4) resource intensity required for policy implementation. To critically assess these four issues in depth, we developed and applied behaviourally anchored rating scales (BARS), which we make available in the online supplement for future research (see Appendices 1–4). Our results showed that policy implications tend to be derived from highly transparent research. However, these implications are often vague and lack detail regarding the key elements that policymakers must consider for high-quality policy design. Regarding practicality, we found that implementing policy recommendations would generally not require significant institutional change, but it would demand a moderate to substantial amount of resources.

Our study helps explain the *why*, *when* and *how* of policy implications in entrepreneurship research, and what this means for future research and theory advancements. First – *why*: We found that most articles include policy implications in a symbolic and performative way; not because the research was deeply connected to policymaking. This result uncovered a mismatch between what researchers are offering and what policymakers actually need. We also found that European journals are more likely to include explicit policy suggestions compared to those in the United States. Also, ironically, special issues that have focused on entrepreneurship policy often lack clear policy guidance. Second – *when*: Policy implications only become truly useful when they are both scientifically sound and practically attainable. That means spelling out who the recommendation is for, what resources are needed and whether the idea can realistically be put into practice. Just doing rigorous research is not enough – it also has to work in the real world. Third – *how*: Using our BARS framework, we showed that even highly transparent studies often offer policy takeaways that are too vague or impractical. The introduction of BARS to entrepreneurship research demonstrates the value of measuring relevant policy-related variables systematically. Thus, we argue that the gap between research and policy is not just a matter of researchers not engaging – it is also the result of structural barriers, such as academic incentive systems, and differences in how researchers and policymakers think. To bridge this gap, future research should not only engage more with policy but also rethink how it communicates policy relevance, drawing on principles from policy design and evidence use. We discuss these and several additional implications in detail in the discussion section.

Theoretical background

Entrepreneurship and public policy

The significance of entrepreneurship in driving economic growth is widely acknowledged, with particular emphasis on its role in regional development (Audretsch, 2007; Audretsch and Keilbach, 2004). This has been reflected in SME policies (Smallbone and Welter, 2012), which provide incentives to facilitate business establishment, survival and growth (Baumol, 1996; Bradley et al., 2021). Furthermore, a growing argument suggests that such public policies should encourage businesses to actively address societal challenges (Pastran et al., 2021). Public policies are an important part of the rules and systems that influence how people and businesses behave; they affect decisions by offering incentives that shape economic activity (North, 1990). These institutional structures have a strong influence on entrepreneurship, but their effects are often complex and not always direct (Mallett and Wapshott, 2020). Policies help define the ‘rules of the game’ that support entrepreneurship at different levels – local, national and international (Baumol, 1996; Scott, 1995). However, how these policies are created, applied and enforced varies widely depending on

the country and legal system (Smallbone and Welter, 2012). They can influence how easy it is to start or grow a business, gain access to funding and enforce contracts (Djankov et al., 2002; Williamson, 2000). Because of this, some policy actions can encourage entrepreneurship while others may unintentionally constrain it. This shows the importance of designing policies that are tailored to the specific context and problem they aim to address (Acs and Szerb, 2007). Building on the idea that successful entrepreneurship depends on turning structural possibilities into real outcomes (Ramoglou and McMullen, 2024), we argue that well-designed public policies play a key role in creating those opportunities.

The relationship between entrepreneurship and public policy is constantly evolving, meaning it is important to study how specific policies fit the local entrepreneurial environment. Research shows that regions with supportive policy settings tend to have more startup activity and innovation (Audretsch and Keilbach, 2004). To be effective, policies need to match the particular needs of the region they serve. When they do, they can help build a strong entrepreneurial ecosystem by providing the right infrastructure, funding options and regulatory support (Fritsch and Storey, 2014). But these policies also need to show that they are worth the investment – that is, they must offer clear value for money (Curran, 2000). When well designed, public policies can reduce key risks for entrepreneurs, such as limited access to capital or difficulties entering the market (Kritikos, 2024).

Understanding policy implications of entrepreneurship research: Four key issues

The existing literature maintains that sound policy implications should derive from robust theory and empirical evidence, should address the fundamental elements of policy design, and their implementation should require a limited amount of resources and be easily inserted in the broader institutional setting (Audretsch, 2007; Feldman and Zoller, 2012; Mason and Brown, 2014; Oliver et al., 2014). In other words, good policy implications should be of high quality (i.e. deriving from transparent research and addressing the key elements of policy design) and practical (i.e. they need to require reasonable resources and be implementable within the existing institutional context). Accordingly, our analysis of the policy advice offered by entrepreneurship research aims to capture measurable features of the quality and practicality of policy implications. *Quality* refers to the formulation of advice that aligns with the policy-making design process and the methodological transparency of the research from which it derives. Anderson et al. (2019) drew attention to the importance of rigorous attention to methodology when conducting empirical research. Hitt (2005) argued for the importance of and the lack of well-designed policy implications in empirical research.

The policy design orientation stream of research argues that while policy implications should derive from research findings, they should also be crafted in a way that aligns with the procedural and substantive reality of policy formulation (Howlett, 2014). *Practicality* focuses on the operational aspects of policy recommendation (the degree of institutional change and resource intensity that its implementation would provoke or require). From a policy standpoint, these are key practical considerations, and institutional theory and resource theory, as applied to public policy, are both relevant to our discussion. Bradley et al. (2021) pointed to the importance of carefully considering all feasible options when producing policy for entrepreneurship, including measures that ‘do less’ rather than ‘do more’. Although we examined the quality and practicality of policy implications, there is, of course, the separate topic of effectiveness, which refers to how well the policy has achieved its desired outcomes or how well it is likely to achieve its outcomes. These are naturally the most often-asked questions by governments (Howlett, 2014). However, such aspects remain challenging to measure because knowledge about policy effectiveness is often ex-post concerning the policy recommendations of researchers.

In sum, our analysis focused on measurable aspects of quality and practicality of policy advice by tackling four key issues that researchers in their academic articles can have control over: (1) the methodological transparency of the research from which it derives, (2) details on the requirements for policy and regulatory interventions, (3) the extent of the institutional change that would be required for implementing the policy advice and (4) the resources that would be required for implementing the policy advice. Next, we offer a more detailed description of each.

Methodological transparency. Methodological transparency is ‘the degree of detail and disclosure about the specific steps, decisions, and judgment calls made during a scientific study’ (Aguinis et al., 2018: 84). Published research that is more methodologically transparent is of higher quality for at least two reasons. First, it facilitates the replication of empirical findings, which fosters the accumulation of knowledge (Bettis et al., 2016) and thus, the development of science. As the number of retracted articles has been mounting over the last two decades (Karabag and Berggren, 2016), the scepticism about the veracity and conclusions of published research (Schwab and Starbuck, 2017) makes methodological transparency especially salient in the field of entrepreneurship (Crawford et al., 2022). Second, methodological transparency allows a better understanding of the trustworthiness, meaning and implications of empirical results for theory and practice (Aguinis and Solarino, 2019). Thus, transparency is valuable for researchers interested in the theoretical underpinnings of published research and practitioners and policymakers who are interested in applying the knowledge produced by that research. As such, methodological transparency improves the ability of policymakers to understand the mechanisms underlying the effects identified by scientific studies and the soundness of the logic behind their conclusions and suggestions.

Requirements for policy and regulatory intervention. To improve the quality of the policy implications, researchers must consider all the activities, actors and strategies of the various stages of the policy-making cycle (policy writing, policy implementation and policy evaluation; Howlette and Ramesh, 2003). A higher quality policy recommendation encompasses several key elements: the identification of the intended objectives and of the actors who have a pivotal role in policy implementation, the actions for stimulating the involvement of relevant stakeholders, the strategies for service delivery and dissemination as well as the processes and mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating policy effectiveness (Hardee et al., 2004; Klein and Knight, 2005; Mthethwa, 2012). The extant literature highlights that researchers should learn to speak the language of policymaking (Mead, 2015) so that the key elements of policy design are reflected in the structure and formulation of the proposed policy advice (Cairney and Oliver, 2020; Weiss, 1977). In other words, the quality of policy advice depends on how much it provides suggestions and reflections on the aspects that policymakers consider when working with policy design. Therefore, to address the quality issue, we examined the level of detail with which the policy recommendations of entrepreneurship researchers cover aspects related to policy formulation, dissemination, leadership for policy implementation, stakeholder engagement, service delivery and feedback on progress and results.

Institutional change required for policy implementation. The institutional environment is the set of humanly devised constraints that establish the structure of incentives in society and help shape human interactions (North, 1990). This comprises informal arrangements, such as social norms, cultural values and practised conventions (informal institutions), as well as formalised codes such as rules, laws and constitutions (formal institutions; Pinelli et al., 2024a; Poček, 2022; Poček et al., 2024). Public policies are examples of formal institutions. Bylund and McCaffrey (2017), drawing on North (1990), argued that social, political or economic institutions profoundly affect entrepreneurship. Furthermore, for entrepreneurship to contribute to economic growth, the institutional

framework must be supportive (Mallett and Wappshot, 2020). Estrin et al. (2013) argued that entrepreneurs must act to overcome deficiencies in institutions, emphasising their role in furthering entrepreneurial growth. This speaks to institutions playing an important role in the practicality of policy interventions. The effectiveness of individual institutional provisions depends on the other institutions that collectively form the institutional environment. The introduction or modification of regulation produces an institutional change that may alter the effectiveness of other institutions. At the same time, the effectiveness of newly introduced regulations may require some other part of the institutional environment to change. Yet, not all regulatory changes require the same degree of institutional change: some interventions focus on narrow-scope issues and may not require any fundamental change at the system level, demonstrating higher practicality in implementation (Elola et al., 2017; Poček et al., 2024), whereas others may require more dramatic change, such as amending higher-order pieces of regulation (a country's constitution) or a cultural change for the general population (the willingness to dispose of waste conscientiously). In this regard, Bradley et al. (2021) remarked that the literature on policy and entrepreneurship unfolds over a spectrum that ranges from the macro-level, which focuses on broader institutional effects, to the micro-level, which focuses on the effects of narrow-scope interventions that mainly affect selected target recipients. Thus, the third key issue we examined is whether implementing the policy advice offered by entrepreneurship researchers requires significant institutional change.

Resource intensity required for policy implementation. Policy recommendations differ based on the amount, kind and complexity of the resources necessary for implementation. The actors and organisations in charge of executing the policy may or may not possess the necessary endowments of resources and capabilities. Bennett (2008) argued for policies on infrastructure to support entrepreneurship and consider the marginal utility of the new infrastructure investments. Thus, the resources needed for implementation are an important aspect of the practicality of policy interventions. Policy advice that can be implemented without significant investments and with existing processes, capabilities and knowledge will be more practical and easier to implement, as it will encounter less resistance in the political system (Bradley et al., 2021). Conversely, policy recommendations that require developing new capabilities, changing organisational arrangements or organising more complex systems of resources would be more challenging to follow. Certain resources may be readily available in certain regions, sectors or communities but not in other contexts (unique natural resources or advanced knowledge in a particular technology set; Barbieri et al., 2023). In the latter case, procuring the required resources will be complex, time-consuming, or altogether unfeasible. Finally, implementing policy recommendations may also require particular organisational (or inter-organisational) arrangements or the involvement or cooperation of various stakeholders (individuals, organisations, governmental bodies), which would absorb resources and create complexity. As such, the fourth key issue we examined is the amount and breadth of resources required for implementing policy and the effort necessary for organising these resources.

Methodology

Review scope and selection of journals and articles

We selected 10 leading journals in entrepreneurship, following the methodology adopted by studies examining research-based implications for policymaking in other fields (Aguinis et al., 2022b). We started with the 32 journals in the *Entrepreneurship and Small Business Management* category of the 2021 Chartered Association of Business Schools (CABS) Academic Journal Guide (AJG). We matched this list with the JCR Impact Factors from that year to identify the

highest-ranked journals. This procedure led us to include the three journals with the highest AJG ranking scores of '4' (*Journal of Business Venturing*, *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice* and *Strategic Entrepreneurship Journal*), the six with scores of '3' (*Family Business Review*, *Small Business Economics*, *Entrepreneurship and Regional Development*, *International Small Business Journal*, *Journal of Small Business Management* and *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior and Research*), and one journal with an AJG score of '2' (*Journal of Family Business Strategy*). It could be argued that this narrow scope of journals using the AJG ranking is problematic. However, given that we aim to provide an overview of the scale and scope of explicit policy implications in the mainstream entrepreneurship literature, the selected peer-reviewed journals serve this purpose well because they are arguably the source of the most credible and trustworthy theory and research in the field.

Step 1: Identification of articles with policy implications. We examined the abstracts and introduction sections of the articles to ensure that only empirical articles were included in the sample, thus excluding reviews, conceptual articles, editorials or commentaries. Through this process, we identified 688 empirical articles (accounting for 16.2% of the total population of 4247).

Step 2: Assessing consistency in the article identification process. Next, we extracted the policy recommendations from these 688 articles. We split this subsample into three parts, each assigned to one of three co-authors. To assess and ensure reliability, we first checked that the three co-authors adopted a homogeneous methodology to extract the policy recommendations. Thus, we randomly selected 30 articles, and each co-author examined them individually to extract the explicit policy recommendations. The three co-authors then compared and discussed the results they obtained individually. Only two discrepancies emerged, which were resolved through consensus after discussion.

Step 3: Extraction of explicit policy implications. Next, the three co-authors individually examined the articles assigned to identify and extract the explicit policy recommendations. This step excluded 191 of the 688 articles, resulting in 497 articles with explicit policy recommendations. The policy implications were mentioned in the discussion, the conclusion or the implications paragraphs. We did not search for policy implications to be mentioned in any particular section of the paper; we searched for them throughout the articles to ensure that we did not miss any relevant policy implications regardless of where they were located.

Step 4: Validity and reliability checks. The three co-authors double-checked each other's work (i.e. #1 double-checked the work of #2, #2 double-checked the work of #3 and #3 double-checked the work of #2). This check did not lead to any changes, thus confirming that the extraction process described in the previous steps worked as intended.

Step 5: Selection of the subsample. We focused our substantive analysis of the content of policy implications on the subset of articles that devoted at least a subsection to policy implications (even if it did not have a heading or subheading labelled as such). This subset included 60 articles, and these articles addressed research conducted across different contexts. For example, some papers studied entrepreneurship at the individual level, some at the regional level and others at the country level. Also, the papers span different themes and aspects (the entrepreneurial process, finance, individual characteristics and the organisational context). However, what makes them a distinct grouping, in addition to focusing on entrepreneurship, is that they all have an explicit focus on producing and communicating policy implications.

Step 6: Scale development, validation and scoring. We critically evaluated the policy advice offered by these 60 articles based on the four key issues described in section ‘Theoretical background’. To capture these four key issues, we developed four measures. Each measure consists of a 5-point Likert-type BARS, a measurement approach that has been used extensively in psychology, human resource management, organisational behaviour and strategic management research (Aguinis and Solarino, 2019; Cascio and Aguinis, 2025). We found no instances of BARS being used in research on policies regarding SMEs or entrepreneurship.

Information on each of the BARS is included in Appendices 1–4 in the online supplement. Four co-authors independently examined the 60 policy recommendations and assigned scores for one BARS. *Methodological Transparency* captures the level of detail with which researchers disclose the specific steps and decisions they made in the study, particularly those related to the research design, the measurement methodology, the analytical techniques and the reporting of results. *Requirements for Policy and Regulatory Interventions* capture the extent to which the policy recommendations cover the key aspects of policy design related to policy formulation and dissemination, leadership for policy implementation, stakeholder involvement in policy implementation, operations and service delivery and feedback mechanisms for policy evaluation. *Institutional Change Required for Policy Implementation* captures the extent to which the implementation of policy advice necessitates modifications of the existing institutional environment. Finally, *Resource Intensity Required for Policy Implementation* captures the extent to which the implementation of policy advice requires resources that are rare and hardly accessible, the extent of the need for new organisational processes for using the resources, and the extent of the effort that is necessary for coordinating the stakeholders that are involved in the implementation of the proposed policy. For all BARS, higher values reflect more positive features: (a) higher methodological transparency, (b) more details and clearer conceptualisations of requirements for policy and regulatory interventions, (c) fewer institutional changes required for policy implementation and (d) fewer resources needed for policy implementation. Appendix 5 in the online supplement includes detailed information on the scoring and validation procedures.

Results

Overall findings

As shown in Table 1, the 60 articles were unevenly distributed across the 10 journals. For one journal, *Family Business Review*, we only found one article with an explicit policy implication; this also had a subsection dedicated to policy implication, making it 100% of the sample. For two journals, *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice* and *Family Business Strategy*, none of the articles with explicit policy implications ($N=16$ and 3, respectively) contained such a subsection, resulting in 0% for both journals. The remaining seven journals range between 8% for *Entrepreneurship and Regional Development* and 22.22% for *Journal of Business Venturing*.

Table 2 includes descriptive statistics for each of the four variables, Figure 1 includes the score distributions. As shown in Figure 1, 28 articles received high scores (4 or higher) for *Methodological Transparency*, while none received a 2 or lower (i.e. low methodological transparency). However, 39 articles received low scores (i.e. few requirements) for *Requirements for Policy and Regulatory Intervention*, but none received high scores. Regarding *Institutional Change Required for Policy Implementation*, 32 articles received high (i.e. less change required) and 12 low scores (i.e. more change required). Finally, 36 articles received low scores on the BARS, which measures *Resource Intensity Required for Policy Implementation* (i.e. high resource intensity), and only one received a high score (i.e. low resource intensity). A one-way ANOVA based on the mean scores for the four

Table 1. Number of articles with policy implications of entrepreneurship research across journals.

Journal	Number of articles addressing policy implications	Number of articles including at least a subsection addressing policy implications (numbers in parentheses show the percentage relative to the overall number of articles found)
<i>Small Business Economics</i>	202	20 (9.90%)
<i>Entrepreneurship and Regional Development</i>	75	6 (8%)
<i>International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior and Research</i>	66	11 (16.67%)
<i>International Small Business Journal</i>	45	6 (13.33%)
<i>Journal of Small Business Management</i>	41	6 (14.63%)
<i>Journal of Business Venturing</i>	36	8 (22.22%)
<i>Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice</i>	16	0 (0%)
<i>Strategic Entrepreneurship Journal</i>	12	2 (16.67%)
<i>Journal of Family Business Strategy</i>	3	0 (0%)
<i>Family Business Review</i>	1	1 (100%)
Total	497	60

Table 2. Descriptive statistics for the four BARS used to assess the content of policy implications ($n = 60$).

BARS	Methodological Transparency	Requirements for Policy and Regulatory Intervention	Institutional Change Required for Policy Implementation	Resource Intensity Required for Policy Implementation
Mean (SD)	3.47 (0.50)	2.23 (0.65)	3.43 (1.03)	2.38 (0.58)
Min–Max	3–4	1–3	1–5	1–4

The four mean scores differ: $F(3, 246) = 52.76$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.40$. For all variables, higher scores are more desirable (i.e., more transparency, fewer requirements, less institutional change and fewer resources; see the Supplemental Material for details).

BARS: behaviourally anchored rating scale.

variables across the 60 articles showed that they are statistically different: $F(3, 246) = 52.76$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.40$. Given this overall difference, we conducted follow-up pairwise comparisons between the four variables.

Table 3 reports results, including Cohen's d statistics, showing standardised differences between mean scores. All pairwise comparisons are statistically different except for two (*Methodological Transparency* vs. *Institutional Change Required for Policy Implementation*; and *Requirements for Policy and Regulatory Intervention* vs. *Resource Intensity Required for Policy Implementation*). A highly informative result based on the BARS scores is the identification of implications based on transparent research, whose implementation may require little institutional change and few resources. Yet, given the relatively low scores that the articles in our sample received in *Requirements for Policy and Regulatory Intervention* (i.e. a high degree of requirements; see Figure 1), we did not find instances of detailed policy recommendations that thoroughly cover all four variables. However, among the 28 articles that scored high in *Methodological Transparency*, 12 received a mid-score (i.e. 3) in *Requirements for Policy and Regulatory Interventions* (see Table 4). Among these, seven studies scored high on *Institutional Change Required for Policy Implementation* (i.e., not too much change required). Still, none received a high score in *Resource Intensity Required for*

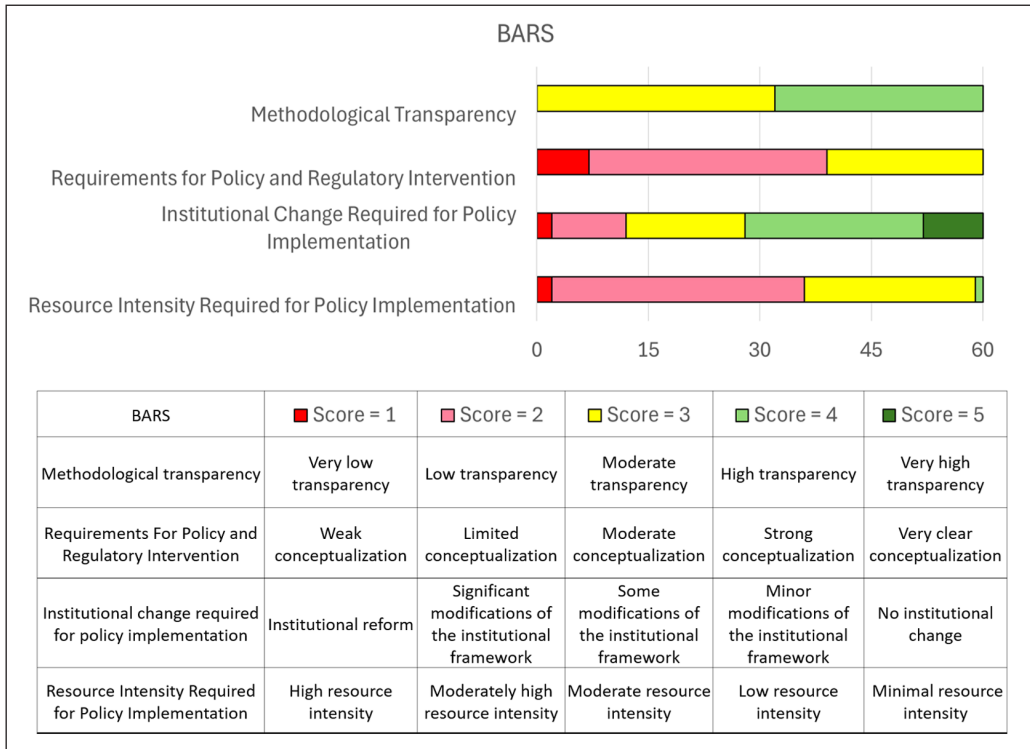


Figure 1. Distribution of the sample along the four BARS used to analyse the content of policy implications. Dark and light red indicate more undesirable features, whereas dark and light green indicate more desirable features. BARS: behaviourally anchored rating scale.

Policy Implementation (recall that higher scores indicate fewer resources for implementation). Three articles, however, received respectively high (four or higher) and moderate (three) scores in the latter two variables. In other words, these three instances represent moderately detailed policy recommendations based on highly transparent research and are relatively practical to implement due to low institutional change and moderate resource intensity.

An example of such policy advice is Agyapong (2021), who examined the relationship between owner–manager perceptions of financial risk and venture performance. Financial risk in the food processing industry was the most influential factor. The study advocated tax breaks, interest rate ceilings, subsidies and business development services to help identify, assess and manage financial risks. It scored high on *Methodological Transparency*, due to the clarity of the research design, the detailed description of the analytical methodology, the appropriateness of the statistical techniques and the comprehensiveness of reporting empirical results. The moderate score on *Requirements for Policy and Regulatory Interventions* and *Resource Intensity* reflects limited attention to policy design elements (dissemination and execution strategies, leadership roles and processes for monitoring and evaluating the impact of the proposed policy interventions). *Resource Intensity Required for Policy Implementation* is also moderate, and it is unlikely to require significant resources, as per the description in the article. Finally, *Institutional Change Required* scored high based on little need for high-level institutional change.

Table 3. Pairwise comparisons of differences among the four features of policy implications.

A	B	Pairwise comparisons of mean scores between the four features of policy implications				Effect size	
		Mean diff. (A-B)	SE	SD	95% CI upper-lower limits	Cohen's <i>d</i>	95% CI upper-lower limits
Methodological Transparency compared to . . .	Requirements for Policy and Regulatory Intervention	1.23*	0.10	0.77	1.04 to 1.43	2.13*	1.68 to 2.57
	Institutional Change Required for Policy Implementation	0.03	0.14	1.10	-0.25 to 0.32	0.04	-0.32 to 0.4
	Resource Intensity Required for Policy Implementation	1.08*	0.11	0.85	0.86 to 1.3	1.99*	1.54 to 2.42
Requirements for Policy and Regulatory Intervention compared to . . .	Methodological Transparency	-1.23*	0.10	0.77	-1.43 to -1.04	-2.13*	-2.57 to -1.68
	Institutional Change Required for Policy Implementation	-1.20*	0.14	1.10	-1.48 to -0.92	-1.39*	-1.79 to -0.99
	Resource Intensity Required for Policy Implementation	-0.15	0.11	0.84	-0.37 to 0.07	-0.24	-0.6 to 0.12
Institutional Change Required for Policy Implementation compared to . . .	Methodological Transparency	-0.03	0.14	1.10	-0.32 to 0.25	-0.04	-0.4 to 0.32
	Requirements for Policy and Regulatory Intervention	1.20*	0.14	1.10	0.92 to 1.48	1.39*	0.99 to 1.79
	Resource Intensity Required for Policy Implementation	1.05*	0.15	1.20	0.74 to 1.36	1.25*	0.86 to 1.64
Resource Intensity Required for Policy Implementation Compared to . . .	Methodological Transparency	-1.08*	0.11	0.85	-1.3 to -0.86	-1.99*	-2.42 to -1.54
	Requirements for Policy and Regulatory Intervention	0.15	0.11	0.84	-0.07 to 0.37	0.24	-0.12 to 0.6
	Institutional Change Required for Policy Implementation	-1.05*	0.15	1.20	-1.36 to -0.74	-1.25*	-1.64 to -0.86

n = 60.

SE: standard error; SD: standard deviation.

**p* < .05.

Table 4. Articles with high scores in *Methodological Transparency*.

				Institutional Change Required for Policy Implementation			Total
				Low (score ≤ 2)	Moderate (score = 3)	High (score ≥ 4)	
Requirements for Policy and Regulatory Intervention	Low (score ≤ 2)	Resource Intensity Required for Policy Implementation	Low (score ≤ 2)	4	1	7	11
			Moderate (score = 3)	0	2	3	5
			High (score ≥ 4)	0	0	0	11
Total				4	3	9	16
Requirements for Policy and Regulatory Intervention	Moderate (score = 3)	Resource Intensity Required for Policy Implementation	Low (score ≤ 2)	1	2	5	8
			Moderate (score = 3)	1	1	2	4
			High (score ≥ 4)	0	0	0	0
Total				2	3	7	12

Source: Anchors.

Methodological Transparency: 1 = very low transparency; 2 = low transparency; 3 = Moderate transparency; 4 = high transparency; 5 = very high transparency. *Requirements for Policy and Regulatory Intervention*: 1 = weak conceptualisation; 2 = limited conceptualisation; 3 = moderate conceptualisation; 4 = strong conceptualisation; 5 = very clear conceptualisation. *Institutional Change Required for Policy Implementation*: 1 = institutional reform; 2 = significant modifications of the institutional framework; 3 = some modifications of the institutional framework; 4 = minor modifications of the institutional framework; 5 = no institutional change. *Resource Intensity Required for Policy Implementation*: 1 = high resource intensity; 2 = moderately high resource intensity; 3 = moderate resource intensity; 4 = low resource intensity; 5 = minimal resource intensity.

We also found a pattern of moderately detailed policy recommendations based on highly transparent research, but difficult to implement due to high institutional change and resource intensity. Among 12 articles with a high score in *Methodological Transparency* and a moderate score in *Requirements for Policy and Regulatory Interventions*, two received a low score in *Institutional Change* and eight in *Resource Intensity*. Only one article (Lafuente et al., 2020) received a low score for both. This study showed that higher business formation rates relate to low value-adding businesses, while total factor productivity is driven by innovative firms focused on new technologies. The authors suggested focusing policies on such ventures, as innovation and technology drive productivity and growth, while others only increase employment. Certain aspects of this recommendation could have benefited from greater detail (implementation leadership, stakeholder involvement, monitoring, evaluation). However, the authors offered policymakers detailed suggestions on policy goals (e.g. supporting Schumpeterian entrepreneurship, strengthening entrepreneurial ecosystems, investing in technologies) and interventions (mechanisms to finance innovations; incentives to develop new technologies) that consider country-level specificities (i.e. technological capability) and possible drawbacks (discouragement of entrepreneurship). Implementing these recommendations will require significant resources for analysis, research, customised programmes and risk management. Prioritising Schumpeterian entrepreneurship may require rethinking national development strategies, possibly involving changes in high-order legislation, including societal attitudes and culture.

Finally, BARS scores enabled us to identify policy recommendations that, owing to their high level of transparency, hold strong potential to provide useful policy recommendations, but offered

advice lacking detailed requirements. Among the 28 articles with high scores in *Methodological Transparency*, 16 received low scores in *Requirements for Policy and Regulatory Interventions*. An example is Chen and Hu (2019), who found that external enablers (natural disasters, pandemics, climate change, new disruptive technologies) boosted venture creation unevenly in China's high-speed rail rollout, with richer regions experiencing the highest increase. The authors suggested that policymakers evaluate local conditions during route planning to maximise positive effects and implement policies that lower transaction costs, facilitate knowledge exchange and stimulate demand. While the recommendation invited policymakers to examine local economic conditions, the formulation was highly generic and did not consider any of the key elements of policy design: it did not identify stakeholders or leading actors; it did not examine operational challenges or delivery issues; and it did not discuss dissemination strategies or monitoring mechanisms. As such, the invitation to adopt a region-specific approach to route planning lacked the detail to guide policymakers through the policy cycle from formulation to evaluation.

Regional differences in the inclusion of policy implications

Only seven out of the 60 policy implications (11.67%) are from U.S.-based journals. The remaining 53 policy implications, accounting for 88.33% of the sample, are from European-based journals. This suggests different approaches to and views on the role and status of policy implications. We went back to the sample of 497 explicit policy implications and examined the distribution of United States versus European-based journals. Results were consistent with those based on articles including a subsection devoted to policy implications. Specifically, we found that 74 of the 497 policy implications (14.89%) stem from the four U.S.-based journals versus 423 (85.11%) from the six European-based journals. Had the overall production of policy implications been identical across the two continents, we would have seen a distribution much closer to the 60/40 distribution of journals. In sum, U.S.-based entrepreneurship journals are generally less likely to generate policy implications from empirical research and even less likely to dedicate a subsection to discuss them than European-based journals.

Policy-focused special issues and policy implications

During the 10 years covered by our study, we found three special issues directly related to policy. Two issues were from *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development*: (1) 'Entrepreneurship Education and Context' and 'Government Policies to Support Entrepreneurship' (Vol. 24, Issue 9–10, 2012), and (2) 'Clustering and Innovation: Firm-level Strategizing and Policy' (Vol. 31, Issue 1–2, 2019). The third was from *Journal of Small Business Management*, 'Global Research and Policy Implications for Today's SMEs', Vol. 49, Issue 1, 2011. We examined all the articles in these special issues and, ironically, none included explicit policy implications, even though several papers do address policymakers. Especially interesting is Dennis (2011), the first part of an ambitious project to develop four typologies to help understand, explain and analyse how public policies influence new and small entrepreneurial businesses. While not containing any policy implications, the work sought to explain how policies can affect a specific area of entrepreneurship through different typologies. One other special issue reflected this approach: *Strategic Entrepreneurship Journal* had a special issue on 'Entrepreneurship in the Public Interest', Vol. 7, Issue 1, 2013. In the editorial (McGahan et al., 2013), the authors called for increased collaboration between management and entrepreneurship researchers and policymakers. Also, they highlighted that management scholars and entrepreneurship scholars have not been sufficiently present in the discourse on significant societal challenges compared to political science, history and international business.

Discussion

Implications for theory

Our results provide empirical evidence to justify the call for greater involvement of entrepreneurship scholars in the policy discussion (Bradley et al., 2021; Stevenson et al., 2021) and more conversation on evidence-based policy and entrepreneurship (Smallbone, 2016). Also, our findings support the recent call by Waldron et al. (2025) for increased relevance of related research for those practising entrepreneurship. Such greater involvement could be desirable because, among other outcomes, it would increase entrepreneurship research's social and economic impact. Entrepreneurial activities are characterised by uncertainty, causal ambiguity, novelty and complexity (Du and Kim, 2021; Ott and Eisenhardt, 2020), which reduces the ability of policy makers to accurately identify appropriate levers required to achieve certain objectives, and those to be avoided with regard to negative consequences. As a result, entrepreneurship policies risk being ineffective creating a social cost given the opportunity cost of the resources invested in policy design and implementation, or producing unintended negative consequences, creating actual social and monetary costs. The scientific knowledge produced by entrepreneurship research could be conducive to crafting better policies and increasing the social and economic impact of the entrepreneurship field (Foss et al., 2019; Steyaert, 2011). A necessary condition for the materialisation of this scenario, however, is that policy advice be appropriately designed for policymaker use (Cairney and Oliver, 2020; Weiss, 1977). This is why we examined not only *how much* entrepreneurship scholars discuss policy implications but also *in what manner*. This approach allowed us to advance our theoretical understanding of entrepreneurship research and public policy dimensions regarding quality and practicality.

First, we found that methodological transparency is quite high; this is comforting as policy advice offered by transparent research is trustworthy and can improve policymaker understanding of theoretical mechanisms and the soundness of the logic behind researcher suggestions (Aguinis and Solarino, 2019). As such, despite the much-lamented retraction (Karabag and Berggren, 2016; Schwab and Starbuck, 2017) and replication crises (Crawford et al., 2022; Pinelli et al., 2024b), the high level of methodological transparency of the entrepreneurship articles that we examined indicates that this research does have *the potential* to produce meaningful and useful policy recommendations.

Second, we also found that the policy advice from entrepreneurship scholars frequently failed to consider some key elements of policy design – this led to recommendations that, at best, lack important details. This limits the potential meaningful contribution of research to policymaking (Acs et al., 2016; Foss et al., 2019). While researchers may not ‘speak the language’ of policymakers (Mead, 2015), previous research has also found that policymakers often look for opinions based on political convictions; thus, being research-informed does not necessarily imply being research-driven (Daviter, 2015). Similarly, Weible (2008: 620), examining current studies on the topic, stated that the primary use of knowledge in a political setting is to ‘legitimize previously made policy decisions’. This is important to note when assessing the role of policy implications and not being so naïve as to think that research-based policy implications are, or even should be, the main source of input into the policymaking process.

Third, we examined the level of institutional change and the resource intensity required to implement the policy recommendations of entrepreneurship studies. Based on these results, we now understand that most research does not consider the practicality of proposed solutions in that practical applications are constrained by available investment.

Fourth, we offer a set of criteria for evaluating entrepreneurship research to make it relevant for practitioners. By focusing on *quality* (methodological transparency and requirements for

policy and regulatory intervention) and *practicality* (degree of institutional change required and resource intensity required to implement the policy recommendation), we address the relevance and meaningfulness of policy implications in a measurable way. As such, we have demonstrated the usefulness of applying the BARS methodology; this constitutes an additional contribution of this study, and we hope future work will similarly take advantage of this novel methodological approach in SME and entrepreneurship research (see the Supplemental Material for detailed information on the BARS).

Overall, our results suggest that entrepreneurship scholars occasionally engage with policy in their published research, and when they do, this engagement tends to exhibit misalignments. Accordingly, our findings improve understanding of why, when and how entrepreneurship research engages with policy implications. *Why* do researchers include policy implications in journal articles? Our findings suggest that these sections often seem written not because the authors might aim to influence real-world policy, but as symbolic and performative gestures. This means that policy relevance is frequently more about ticking a box than offering genuine, practical insights. Also, we found that European journals include policy implications more often than U.S.-based journals. Possibly, European journals see policy implications more as an integral part of empirical research than their U.S.-based counterparts. Also, possibly, U.S.-based journals see policy implications as just that, a derived implication no different than other possible types of implications. However, it could also mean that empirical research in European-based journals produces more (of various quality) policy implications than do U.S.-based journals. In addition, surprisingly, special issues focused on entrepreneurship policy often lack explicit policy implications altogether. While it is positive to see special issues directly related to policy and policy implications, three issues across 10 journals covering a decade are not a signal that this is an issue that attracts much attention. Also, it was discouraging that while several articles directly explored a discourse on policy and did offer some advice to policymakers, none included explicit policy implications. This points to editorial standards and institutional cultures – not just author preferences – as important factors shaping how (and whether) policy issues are addressed. These trends echo broader concerns about how academic work is evaluated (Aguinis et al., 2020) and the dual supply and demand challenges of research-based policy implications as identified by Bird and Aguinis (2025). Scholars focus on publishing in top-tier journals and might not feel that including policy implications in their work will be valued by reviewers and editors. Eby and Facticeu (2023) pointed to the fact that there is a strong focus on a formulaic approach to research, which leads to incremental knowledge gains. This is not conducive to the inclusion of policy implications in research.

When do policy implications actually matter? Our results show that it is not enough to include them – they only become meaningful when they are of high quality and are practical to implement. That means clearly identifying who the advice is for, what resources are needed and how they could realistically work in practice. As Prewitt et al. (2012: 42) noted, ‘the primary goal of policymakers is a practical response to a particular public policy issue’. *How* should researchers write policy implications? Even methodologically transparent studies often fall short because they fail to explain them in a way that decision-makers can use. So, addressing the gap between research and policy requires more than just increasing engagement – it requires rethinking how we define and reward policy relevance within the academic system (Aguinis et al., 2020). These insights are especially important for researchers working at the intersection of entrepreneurship and public policy (Acs et al., 2016; Audretsch et al., 2007; Autio and Rannikko, 2016; Bradley and Klein, 2016; Bradley et al., 2021; Stevenson et al., 2021). Our results suggest that simply adding more voices or generating more policy ideas will not necessarily close the gap. What is needed is a stronger focus on the quality and practicality of policy implications so they are clear, focused and

actionable. This also means that the gap between research and policy may stem not only from a lack of effort by researchers but from mismatches in incentives and thinking styles between scholars and policymakers.

Moving forward: Implications for practice and strengthening the policy–research relationship in entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship policies, like any other type of public policy, exist for many different reasons, including political ones. So, we do not argue that policy implications should be exclusively research-based or indeed, that only academic research can produce valuable input to the policy process. Rather than assigning blame, we believe that making the entrepreneurship–policy nexus more permeable may require that entrepreneurship researchers improve their understanding of policy and thus their ability to craft more useful policy advice (the *supply* side). In addition, it is also necessary that entrepreneurship journals, specifically positioned to stimulate the production of higher-quality policy advice, become more demanding about the quality and specific details of the advice offered in the research they publish (the *demand* side). In a context that puts increasing pressure on scholars to demonstrate the influence of their research (Foss et al., 2019; Steyaert, 2011), entrepreneurship journals thus have an important role to play in increasing the contribution and impact of entrepreneurship as an academic field on the economy and society.

Our analysis, hence, uncovers an opportunity, and perhaps a need, to strengthen the link between the research published in the most influential entrepreneurship journals and policymaking. The low number of policy implications offered by entrepreneurship scholars and the vagueness of the policy advice point to an instance of the research–practice gap (Pittz, 2022). Our study showed that policymakers lie at the periphery of scholarly attention, just like managers, as documented by Aguinis et al. (2022a). Our results, combined with related research conducted to date, allow us to offer four recommendations that may help policy increase its centrality in entrepreneurship scholarship. We argue that the emergence of policy implications with a high and consistent quality is likely to pave the way for a higher overall output of policy implications in empirical entrepreneurship research. While this should not be a goal in itself, given that policy implications are well established as an important outcome of academic research (Hitt, 2005), an increased and more evenly distributed production of policy implications is likely to benefit the field of entrepreneurship more broadly.

Do not forget policy implications. Entrepreneurship scholars should remember that policy is part of the entrepreneurship domain (Carlsson et al., 2013; Roundy and Ginting-Szczesny, 2025) and that, as such, it is worthy of both coverage and expertise. The same entrepreneurship journals should also remember that policymakers are often mentioned as stakeholders in their aims and scope, which makes requesting researchers for good policy advice entirely within their vision and mission. In addition, scholars and journals should realise that properly engaging with the policy discussion is conducive to increasing the impact of the field (Foss et al., 2019; Steyaert, 2011) through positive effects on the effectiveness of entrepreneurship-supporting policies and thus, on social and economic development. Roundy and Ginting-Szczesny (2025) demonstrated that having an editorial focus on societal impact can lead to research influencing public policies through policy implications, as is the case for the *Journal of Business Venturing Insights*. Bird and Aguinis (2025) introduced the SPARC framework to help researchers design their research for increased impact and to derive policy implications based on their work. Having this framework in mind

when planning, executing and disseminating research could help researchers include policy implications in their work.

Focus on research with impact. To strengthen the research–policy relationship, policymakers need to develop an interest in entrepreneurship scholarship, requiring published research to be relevant to policymakers. In turn, relevance derives from the usefulness of research questions and findings for policymakers. More specifically, Bird and Aguinis (2025) emphasised selecting a societal problem that can be influenced when planning research and describing the actors along with the societal problem. Also, to increase impact, they emphasised selecting areas where progress is likely and offering practical knowledge that can inform policymakers in their work. We believe that virtually all streams of research that fall within the broad domain of the entrepreneurship field may produce valuable insights, from macro-level outcomes to micro-foundational approaches (Aguinis et al., 2022b; De Massis and Foss, 2018), which further reinforces the notion that entrepreneurship research has the potential to be influential upon policymaking.

Think about consequences beyond the academy. Producing valuable insights for policymakers requires scholars to go beyond academic circles and reflect on the implications of their research findings on the real world. To produce good policy implications, researchers must first, familiarise themselves with extant policies and understand how they affect the dependent variables they examine. In this sense, existing policies are equivalent to academic literature, and new research findings might confirm, or call into question, ‘received wisdom’ from extant policies. However, entrepreneurship scholars cannot contribute to their development without a deep knowledge of existing policies. So, there is a need to connect with practitioners and policymakers during research planning. This can also help insights into existing policies as well as pressing issues for practitioners and policymakers.

In addition, without sufficient incentives, it is unlikely that these changes will occur. However, we see these issues evolving, given that several journals now welcome policy implications – and even emphasise those in their mission statements (see *California Management Review*, *Harvard Business Review*, *Journal of Business Ethics* and *Journal of Business Venturing Insights*). Also, the emphasis on impact similarly signals that business schools, and eventually staff, will be rewarded for increased involvement in the policy space. For example, accrediting bodies such as the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB, 2023) and the European Foundation for Management Development (Aguinis, 2024) highlight the critical role of the societal impact of business schools (AACSB, 2023).

Learn about policy design. Finally, no policy advice – however insightful – will be helpful to policymakers if it is not properly designed and communicated. As thinking is primarily shaped by the intellectual influences to which individuals are exposed (Pinelli et al., 2022), scholars need to understand how to design research and then translate their thoughts from complex terminology to language that non-academic audiences can better understand. In the case of policy implications, scholars must convey their advice clearly reflective of the audience, facilitating the application of the advice. As highlighted in our discussion, this exercise cannot be purely cosmetic and limited to words and semantics.

Limitations and additional directions for future research

We focused our study on research published in 10 leading peer-reviewed entrepreneurship journals. However, researchers may prefer to dispense their policy advice in outlets different from

those we selected, such as other journals and non-academic publications. Clearly, there are several additional types of outlets (books, book chapters, magazines and white papers) in which policy recommendations are also likely to be more nuanced than those we found in the articles in our sample. It would thus be informative if future research examined policy recommendations from research published in non-academic outlets. In addition, the accuracy of our assessment of *Institutional Change Required for Policy Implementation* and *Resource Intensity Required for Policy Implementation*, was inevitably affected by the level of detail with which scholars formulated their policy recommendations. As those in our sample are, at best, moderately detailed, our inferences on how practical their implementation is likely to be limited by our ability to correctly anticipate how vaguely formulated policy recommendations would affect the embedding institutional system and the required resource investment. Future research may overcome this limitation by assessing the degree of practicality of the most detailed policy recommendations, perhaps those published in non-academic outlets.

It is also important to realise that, related to the variable *Methodological Transparency*, there is the issue of data availability. Those reading research rarely have access to the utilised data; so, as we did in our online supplement, future research would benefit from including scores for each study based on the BARS. Making the data available helps with transparency and replicability, and can also be a valuable repository for future meta-analyses. Finally, we acknowledge that theoretical, conceptual papers can also provide policy implications based on in-depth discussions of contemporary topics such as leadership or organisational behaviour. In our study, we chose to focus solely on explicit policy implications based on empirical research to better understand how studies of practice inform the policymaking process.

Conclusions

In this article, we examined the content of policy advice offered in articles published between 2010 and 2020 across 10 leading entrepreneurship journals. We advanced the theoretical understanding of the relationship between entrepreneurship research and public policy by examining not only the presence of policy implications in academic articles but also why, when and how they are constructed. We documented that the academic treatment of policy relevance remains underdeveloped and is often symbolic rather than substantive. Theoretically, our results challenge the assumption that including policy implications necessarily signal policy relevance as the former are frequently performative and often, do not address policymaker needs directly and explicitly regarding practicality. Also, the concentration of policy implications in European journals – contrasted with their near absence in U.S.-based journals and special issues focused on policy – points to editorial and institutional norms as key factors to consider. This finding illustrates the role of academic cultures in shaping not just research content but its orientation toward external stakeholders. Also, a transparent methodology alone is not enough; instead, implications with potential impact require attention to practical feasibility, including clarity about the policy audience, required resources and implementability. This insight refines existing assumptions in the field, showing that rigour must be coupled with relevance to create policy value. As such, our study contributes to a growing body of work that views evidence-based policymaking as a co-produced and context-sensitive process, rather than a one-way transfer of findings.

In closing, we believe our study sheds light on a major opportunity to elevate the societal relevance and impact of entrepreneurship research by strengthening its connection to public policy. While acknowledging that policy decisions are influenced by many factors – including politics – entrepreneurship scholars can play a meaningful role by becoming more knowledgeable about policy design and more deliberate in how we craft and communicate policy

implications. We encourage a constructive path forward: scholars should deepen their understanding of existing policies, reflect on how findings can inform them, and express recommendations in clear, actionable ways that policymakers can use. At the same time, we urge entrepreneurship journals to raise their expectations for the quality and specificity of policy advice. By so doing, they can help increase the field's visibility, utility and broader impact. Our recommendations – ranging from recognising the importance of policy in entrepreneurship, to prioritising research with real-world consequences, to learning how to frame policy advice effectively – provide an actionable roadmap for change. Following these recommendations can help entrepreneurship research move beyond symbolic gestures and deliver meaningful insights that contribute to better policies, stronger entrepreneurial ecosystems and tangible social and economic progress. In short, embracing this agenda has the potential to position entrepreneurship scholars not only as observers of entrepreneurial activity but as influential contributors to the design of the environments in which it occurs.

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Supplemental material

Supplemental material for this article is available online.

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