

## Startup Entrepreneurship and Ecosystem Entrepreneurship in Algeria: An Academic Perspective

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### **Abstract:**

This article critically examines the state of startup entrepreneurship and the development of the entrepreneurial ecosystem in Algeria, drawing on recent academic research and empirical studies. It analyzes the characteristics of Algerian startups, the evolving role of universities, the impact of government policies, and the structural challenges facing the ecosystem. A survey was conducted with 25 representative actors of entrepreneurship university centers in Algeria. The discussion highlights the importance of integrated strategies, legal frameworks, and educational reforms for fostering sustainable entrepreneurial growth.

**Keywords:** Startup; Entrepreneurship ecosystem; education; institutions; Algeria.

**Jel Classification Codes :** L26, I23, O43, O53

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Algeria is undergoing a strategic transition from a hydrocarbon-dependent economy toward a model that increasingly prioritizes innovation and entrepreneurship. Startups and the broader entrepreneurial ecosystem are increasingly recognized as central drivers of this transition, contributing to economic diversification, job creation, and technological advancement (Bouchour, 2018). Nevertheless, to ensure the long-term efficiency of this transition, it is imperative that the entrepreneurial ecosystem pivots toward innovation-led development and sustainable startup scaling.

The Algerian startup ecosystem represents an emerging sector with significant potential to contribute to the national economic diversification and reduce reliance on hydrocarbon revenues (Khellil, 2024); (Soumeia, 2024); (Kheira, 2024). Recognizing this potential, the Algerian government has implemented various measures, such as dedicated ministries, funding mechanisms, and legislative frameworks, to foster entrepreneurial growth (Boulefa, 2025); (Fetni, 2022). However, this evolving landscape continues to face significant institutional challenges. Entrepreneurial ecosystems, which refer to the interconnected network of actors, institutions, policies, cultural norms, and resources, foster innovation, job creation, and economic diversification within the Arab region. (Isenberg, 2011) ; (Allali, 2025).

The Algerian Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research reports a significant development within the national higher education system during the 2023/2024 academic year. Approximately 1,501,941 students are enrolled across various fields of study. Science and technology disciplines attract 57% of the student body, while 43% are registered in humanities and social sciences, and 16% in economics, management, and business studies. The majority of students (61%) are pursuing undergraduate (License) degrees, followed by 25% in master's programs and 4% in doctoral studies. The national university network comprises 115 institutions, including 54 universities and 39 national higher schools. These figures reflect Algeria's sustained efforts to strengthen its higher education system and address the growing demand for advanced training among its youth.

University-level support, combined with collaboration with agencies such as NESDA, plays a crucial role to fostering young entrepreneurs through tailored training, evaluation, and mentoring. Continuous program updates, capacity building of trainers, and the allocation of adequate resources are essential to ensure the sustainability and effectiveness of these initiatives.

Algeria has made significant strides in developing its entrepreneurial ecosystem, particularly since 2019, with the establishment of the Ministry for the Knowledge Economy, Startups, and Micro-Enterprises, the Algerian Startup Fund, and a national startup labelling framework (Boulefa, 2025). Legislative reforms, such as the 2020 Financial Law and Executive Decree No. 20-254, have aimed to streamline administrative processes and incentivize innovation (Boulefa, 2025).

Despite these advances, Algerian startups face persistent challenges, including limited access to finance, bureaucratic bottlenecks, underdeveloped digital infrastructure, and a concentration of resources in major cities (Sciendo, 2022); (Launch base Africa, 2025). Incubators and accelerators, including Ooredoo's tStart and iStart, along with innovation hubs such as Sylabs defined as collaborative spaces that bring together startups, researchers,

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investors, and support organizations to facilitate knowledge exchange and innovation-driven entrepreneurship—play an essential role in nurturing early-stage startups.(Sciendo, 2022).

This article aims to provide an analytical overview of the Algerian Startup ecosystem by reviewing relevant literature, examining the current institutional and economic context, identifying key challenges, and discussing future development prospects. However, despite the growing body of literature on entrepreneurship and the startup ecosystem in Algeria, existing studies remain largely descriptive and fragmented. Most scholarly work primarily focuses on entrepreneurial intentions and the Algerian institutional framework, without providing an in-depth analysis of the role played by university-based entrepreneurship support centers within the startup ecosystem, particularly with regard to training mechanisms, support and follow-up processes, and regional disparities.

This study seeks to address this gap by conducting a survey among managers of entrepreneurship support centers operating within Algerian universities, schools, and university hubs. This approach aims to provide a clearer understanding of the current dynamics and key challenges facing the Algerian startup ecosystem.

Accordingly, following this introduction, the article presents a comprehensive literature review on startup development in Algeria. The next section explains the Algerian context, followed by an analysis of a survey conducted among managers of entrepreneurship centers at universities. A conclusion ends the article.

### **2. Literature Review**

Research highlights the "accelerated growth" of Algerian startups, largely driven by targeted government support programs and regulatory frameworks designed to promote entrepreneurship. (Regis, 2019); (Saba, 2025). Several studies emphasize the government's awareness of previous limitations in entrepreneurial support mechanisms, highlighting the subsequent need for tailored instruments, including incubation, acceleration, and adapted financing schemes(Badreddine, 2023). The establishment of the Ministry of the Knowledge Economy, Startups, and Micro-Enterprises in 2020 is frequently cited as a pivotal institutional step in structuring Algeria's entrepreneurial ecosystem(Launch base Africa, 2025).

Beyond public policies, entrepreneurial behavior and business growth strategies in Algeria are also significantly influenced by socio-cultural norms. Empirical research indicates that entrepreneurs often perceive their firms as personal property, which affects growth decisions. Moreover, fear of failure and low levels of trust in formal institutions act as significant barriers to entrepreneurial expansion(Setti, 2025). These Institutional barriers, also referred to as institutional voids, denote the absence, weakness, or inefficiency of formal and informal institutions that support market functioning and entrepreneurial activity.

The role of academic institutions is increasingly acknowledged, with the Ministry of Higher Education actively involving universities in startup creation through initiatives such as Ministerial Decision No. 1275, which promotes student-led projects emerging from graduation theses. Support structures, including business accelerators, are recognized for providing essential services such as mentoring, access to financing, and marketing support(Fetni, 2022). However, recent empirical findings suggest that while accelerators and

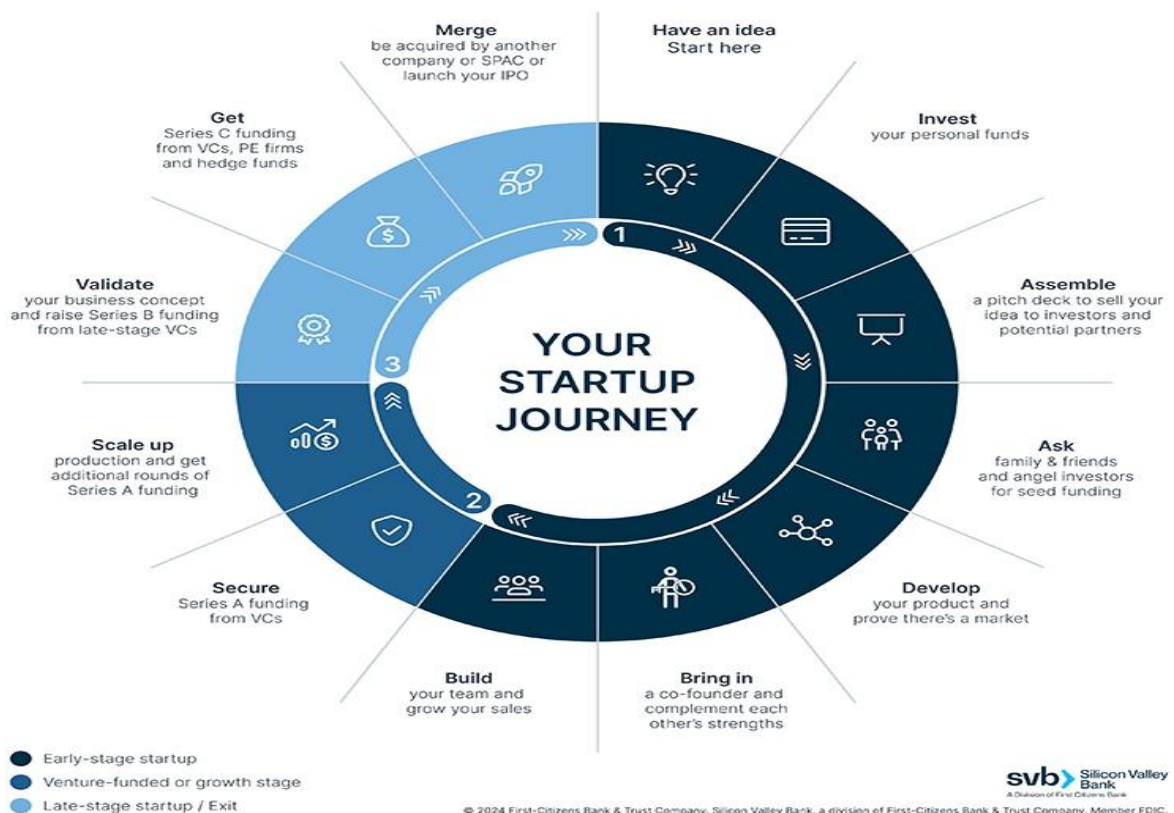
incubators provide substantial support, their direct impact on improving access to formal funding remains limited (Meslem, 2024). Empirical research on financial practices highlights a strong reliance on personal funds, alongside persistent difficulties in accessing formal financing channels. Furthermore, several studies identify digital transformation challenges, particularly the need for more supportive institutional frameworks and governance systems.

Universities in Algeria have become increasingly involved in promoting entrepreneurship, notably through institutional reforms and dedicated initiatives integrated into academic programs (Khoualed, 2024). Empirical studies indicate that while Algerian students exhibit moderate level of entrepreneurial readiness, the motivation and support provided by universities significantly enhance the likelihood of successful startup initiation (MI-DNU, 2024).

However, the transition towards entrepreneurial universities is still in its early stages. Many startup projects continue to lack comprehensive business planning, adequate legal considerations, and substantive innovation, reflecting the nascent state of the ecosystem and the need for more robust educational frameworks. The effectiveness of these initiatives ultimately depends on the alignment of university strategies with local economic contexts, as well as the active participation of all relevant stakeholders (MI-DNU, 2024)

A startup is an entity operating within an entrepreneurial ecosystem, which is represented as follows:

**Fig.1. Your Startup Journey**



Source: Adapted from Silicon Valley Bank (2024).

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Figure 1 titled "Your Startup Journey" from Silicon Valley Bank (2024) presents a structured overview of the key stages a startup typically experienced by startups, from initial ideation to potential exit through mergers or initial public offering. It reflects the entrepreneurial life cycle theory, integrating core elements related to financial strategy, human capital development, and scaling dynamics. It is structured around three sequential phases, representing different startup maturity: early-stage, venture-funded or growth stage, and late-stage or exit.

### **2.1 Early-Stage Startup Phase (Steps 1–6)**

This phase is consistent to the initial and seed stages commonly identified in entrepreneurial ventures development. (Byers, 2011). The focus here is on idea generation, initial resource mobilization, and market validation:

- Have an idea: reflects the creative inception of entrepreneurial process.
- Invest Personal Funds: referred as bootstrapping, emphasizes founder commitment and early risk-bearing (Aldrich, 2001).
- Assemble a Pitch Deck and Ask for Seed Funding: Highlights the role of social capital in early fundraising (Shane, 2002).
- Develop Your Product: Echoes lean startup principles of testing minimum viable products (MVPs) (Ries, 2011).
- Bring in a Co-Founder: Reinforces the resource-based view which emphasizes the importance of complementary human capital strengthens the new ventures (Barney, 1991).

### **2.2 Venture-Funded / Growth Stage (Steps 7–10)**

This segment captures early growth and scaling process, often supported by external venture capital (VC) investment and organizational development mechanisms:

- Build the Team and Grow Sales: Aligns with Greiner's growth model focusing on leadership and delegation challenges during early expansion. (Greiner, 1972)
- Secure Series A Funding: venture capital firms often step in at this point to support proof of market traction (Gompers, 2001).
- Scale Up Production: Operational scaling involves complex challenges related to supply chains, human resource management, and customer acquisition (Kazanjian, 1990).
- Raise Series B Funding: indicative a transition from product-market fit to market dominance (Bhide, 2000).

### **2.3 Late-Stage / Exit Phase (Steps 11–13)**

This final stage corresponds with maturity and potential exit, where the startup seeks liquidity events:

- confirm the business model's viability to secure Series B/C Funding: signaling preparedness for mezzanine financing or large-scale strategic investments (Davila, 2003).
- Obtain Series C Funding from private equity or Hedge Funds: Typically used to support internationalization or strategic acquisitions (Cumming, 2010).
- Merge / IPO / SPAC Exit: Final step reflects harvesting strategies in entrepreneurial finance literature (Mason, 2006).

Building upon the established literature on entrepreneurial ecosystems and startup growth, this empirical analysis elucidates the specific dynamics of startups within the Algerian ecosystem.

### **3. The Algerian Current Context**

The Algerian entrepreneurial ecosystem comprises government agencies, incubators, accelerators, universities, and private sector actors. Recent studies emphasize the need for a comprehensive, integrated framework that promotes effective interaction among these actors, fostering a supportive entrepreneurial culture, a conducive institutional environment, and access to diverse funding sources. The effectiveness of this ecosystem depends less on the number of actors than on the quality of coordination and knowledge spillovers among them.

Despite increased governmental interest and the development of support mechanisms, the ecosystem continues to be constrained by the absence of a fully conducive environment. Key barriers include insufficient access to funding, fragmented stakeholder collaboration, and persistent cultural resistance to entrepreneurship (Boulefa, 2025). To address these challenges, scholars advocate for unified strategies that simultaneously account for political, economic, cultural, legislative, and social factors, while emphasizing the importance of multi-stakeholder engagement and policy coherence (Allali, 2025).

Algeria's startup ecosystem has demonstrated measurable growth, positioning it as a potential intermediary between North Africa and the rest of the continent (Khellil, 2024). As of 2024, Algeria ranked 115th globally in the StartupBlink ecosystem index, marking a slight decline compared to the previous year but still reflecting an active environment. The government's commitment is reflected in several major institutional initiatives:

- **Dedicated Ministry:** The Ministry responsible for the Knowledge Economy, Startups, and Micro-Enterprises manages the country's support programs and entrepreneurial policies (Launch base Africa, 2025).
- **Funding Mechanisms:** The Algerian Startup Fund (ASF) provides venture capital financing, complemented by newer specialized funds targeting sectors, such as energy (conventional and renewable), artificial intelligence, ICT, cybersecurity, and robotics, including an \$11 million fund from Algérie Télécom (Khellil, 2024) (Launch base Africa, 2025). By 2029, the government has set a target to assist the creation and development of 20,000 startups, as outlined in the national entrepreneurship and innovation strategy.
- **Labeling System:** according to official data published by the Ministry of Knowledge Economy and Startups, Over 2,300 startups have received the official "startup label" This refers to an official institutional certification granted by public authorities to

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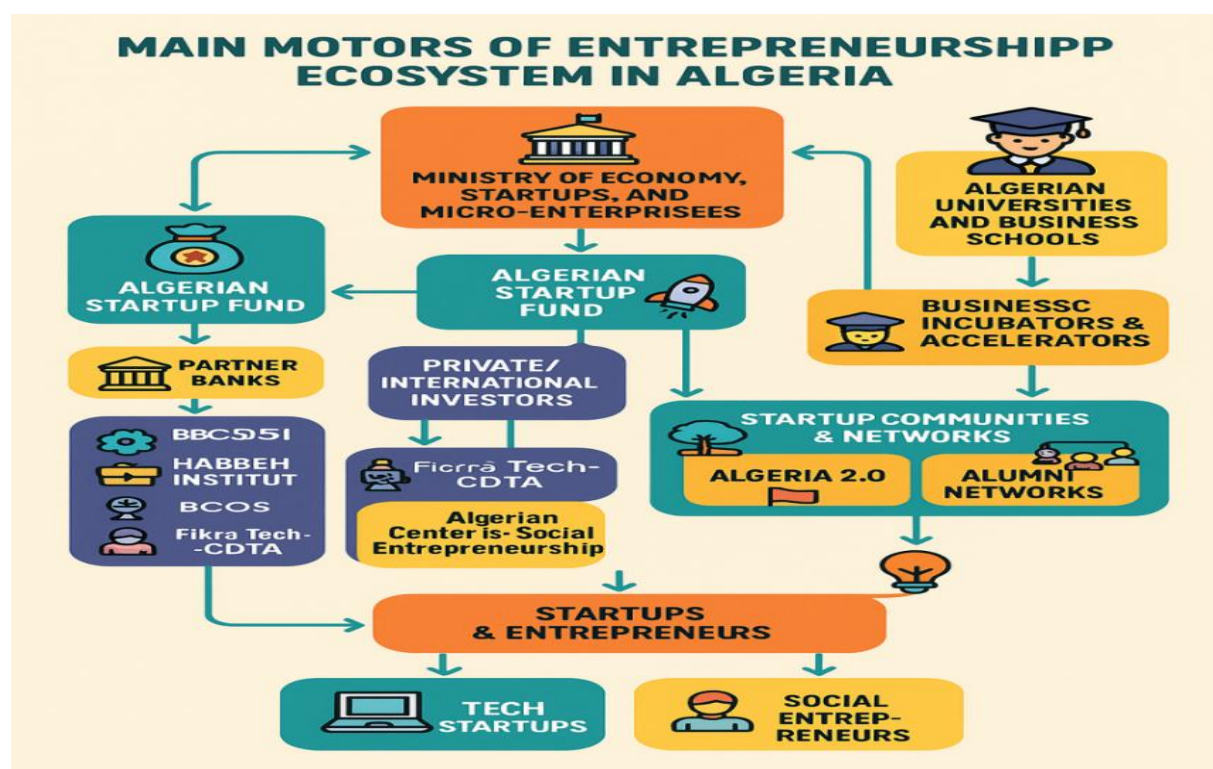
firms that meet predefined criteria related to innovation, growth potential, and legal status (Launch base Africa, 2025).

- **Infrastructure:** A total of 104 entrepreneurial support centers, including incubators, have been established across the country (Launch Base Africa, 2024). Universities dedicated to artificial intelligence, robotics, and mathematics have also been created.

The Algerian entrepreneurial ecosystem exhibits significant potential alongside structural limitations when compared to neighboring countries. Algeria is characterized by a relatively immature ecosystem, attributable to limited private sector engagement and constrained access to venture capital. Nevertheless, Algeria possesses several strategic advantages: a substantial domestic market and a qualified human capital base. Its geographic position enables growth potential in several promising sectors, including renewable energy, agriculture, and artificial intelligence development.

The ecosystem benefits from several structural strengths, including one of Africa's largest economies, a young population, high mobile penetration rates, significant purchasing power, and a large pool of engineering graduates (Launch base Africa, 2025). Key sectors exhibiting activity include Software and Data, Transportation, E-commerce and Retail, Fintech, E-health, and Edtech (Brazilian Journal of Business, 2024; Launch Base Africa, 2025). Startups are estimated to contribute nearly 5% to the non-hydrocarbon GDP, with ambitions to reach 10% in the medium term (Khellil, 2024). Success stories such as Yassir, Lablabe, Garini, SuperMom, and Eylia Development Company, illustrate the growth potential of Algerian startups (Khellil, 2024).








**Fig. 2. Main Motors of Entrepreneurship Ecosystem in Algeria**





Source: Author's proposal

Indeed, the component of the Algerian startup ecosystem described in figure 2 can be seen as a dynamic and evolving structure organized around the state, financial institutions, academia, and support agencies, each playing a specific role in fostering entrepreneurship. The Ministry of Economy, Startups, and Micro-enterprises is at its heart, leading action and funding through the Algerian Startup Fund and partner banks. In this framework, Algerian universities and business schools are increasingly framed as key actors in innovation and entrepreneurship, with considerable untapped potential for human resource development and research commercialization. The ecosystem also benefits from the presence of incubators, accelerators, and entrepreneurial networks that provide mentoring, technical support, and platforms for collaboration. However, despite these institutions and structures, the remains by challenges, such as regional imbalances, limited access to capital, and fragmented institutional coordination. In fact,grappling with these questions through concerted policy measures and improved linkages between stakeholders is critical for Algeria to harness its demographic potential and economic ambitions and translate them into a dynamic and inclusive entrepreneurial ecosystem.

**Table 1. Top 10 of Algerian Startup**

Rank	Startup	SR Score	Description
1	 Yassir	55,480	Enhancing the delivery of services in Africa. - Yassir is the leading super App for on demand.
2	 Legal Doctrine	41,516	The largest legal fund in francophone Africa - Legal Doctrine is a legaltech start-up, publisher
3	 Siamois QCM	38,521	The first medical MCQ platform in Algeria - Siamois QCM is an e-training platform
4	 OkStore	34,391	Push to the future - Okstore is a commerce platform that allows anyone
5	 Zawwali	25,936	Connect Users to Retailers with the Best Price.
6	 TalabaStore	23,629	N°1 of Algerian Students
7	 MdinJdida	21,953	Business of the future

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Rank	Startup	SR Score	Description
8	 LAFIRIST Lafirst	20,994	Your Financial Freedom Starts Here. - Online platform aims to enrich the Arabian online ...
9	 TKAWEN	20,467	Your Partner in Training and Digital Transformation - Tkawen: Pioneering Innovation in Education and
10	 AlgeriaCertify	19,354	Algeria's Certificate and Verification Portal (Alger...) is a platform integrating blockchain and AI to ensure authenticity of certificates

**Source:** Startup Ranking (2025), visited 27 May 2025

This ranking hierarchy necessitates a nuanced interpretation, taking into consideration the full range of contributing factors and contextual variables.

The SR Web score, ranging from 0 to 100, measures a startup's online visibility based on factors such as the quality and quantity of inbound, internal, and outbound links, on-page SEO elements (such as content relevance, title tags, and URLs), and estimated website audience metrics (visits, page views, and visit duration). Similarly, the SR Social captures a startup's social influence based on engagement of certain metrics from their social media. For example, Facebook usage (or engagement) via followers, likes, comments, shares also contributes to the SR score alongside Twitter (or engagement) via followers, retweets, favorites, and engagement. Therefore, both scores together contribute to the overall SR Score, which reflects in the startups' profiles as well, and gets much more difficult to improve upon because it is based on a logarithmic scale. The SR Score reflects startups' levels of online visibility and social media engagement, based on measurable indicators such as website traffic and social media interactions.

As shown in Table 1, the ranking reflects both the sustained expansion and the wide-ranging sectoral and technological composition of Algeria's entrepreneurial ecosystem. Furthermore, Yassir emerges as the highest ranked startup, followed by several innovative companies that work across a more specialized niche. The SR Score illustrates varying levels of online and social influence secured by the startups since 2025. This indicator demonstrates the digital visibility and online reputation of startups operating across different sectors.

Algerian startup rankings reveal a diverse entrepreneurial environment, displaying a market-like hierarchical structure, notably led by startups such as, Legal Doctrine and Siamois QCM, making themselves notable in legaltech and e-learning, respectively. The presence of startups in fields like on-demand services, e-commerce, fintech, and blockchain certification illustrates a widening definition of innovation that is no longer limited to the way for traditional sectors. However, the consistent drop in SR Score from first to tenth position displayed an equally stratified startup ecosystem found in the influence and reach of these startups, showing that the digital landscape is dominated and owned by a few, at least in Algeria.

Finally, all institutional statistics reported in this study are derived from official governmental sources and policy documents to ensure data reliability and verifiability.

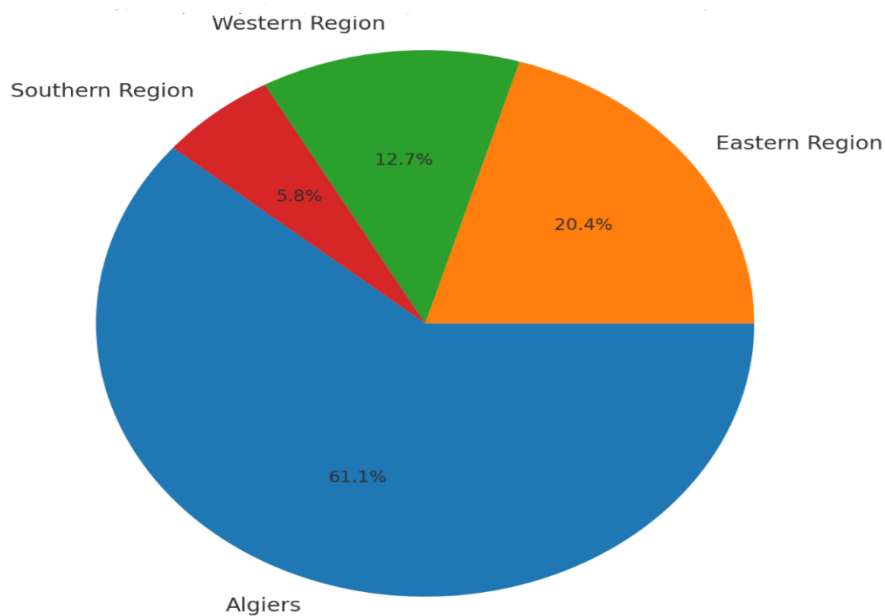
#### **4.PERSPECTIVE ANALYSIS AND SURVEY**

In this section, we aim to explore the dynamics of startup development in Algeria through the analysis of responses of key players in the field. To do this, our questionnaire was specifically targeted at directors of entrepreneurship support centers, representing a well-defined population category. A purposive sampling strategy was employed for this study. This research adopted an exploratory analytical approach, relying predominantly on descriptive statistics. The objective was to highlight general trends rather than to establish causal relationships. To consolidate knowledge in this thematic area, future researchers are encouraged to employ inferential statistical methodologies.

we decided to question the directors of entrepreneurship centers in Algerian universities, given the ambitious program launched by the Ministry of Higher Education and Research. We launched the survey using Google Forms between January and March 2025. After data validation, a total of 25 complete and usable responses were retained for analysis.

Despite the sample size is limited, it is composed of key stakeholders directly involved in the management of university entrepreneurship centers. Consequently, our survey provides an exploratory yet significant analysis of the operational dynamics, challenges, and geographical distribution of these centers across the national territory. Nevertheless, these findings do not necessarily allow for a broad generalization at the national scale.

**Fig.3. Geographic distribution of Start-up in Algeria (2024)**



**Source:** Authors compilation using data from Algeria Invest<sup>1</sup>, consulted on 29 April 2025

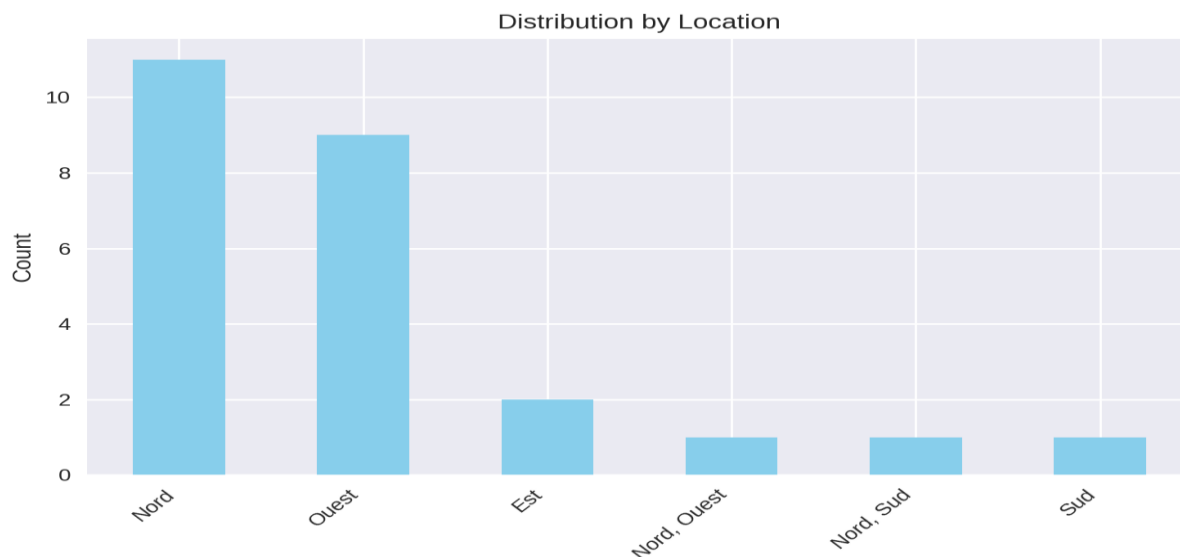
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<sup>1</sup><https://algeriainvest.com/fr/premium-news/lessor-des-startups-en-algerie-une-hausse-spectaculaire-de-228-en-deux-ans?utm>

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The Figure 3 shows a regional imbalance, with strong centralization in Algiers, to the detriment of other regions, particularly the South. This could raise questions regarding regional development, territorial equity, and the public policies required to rebalance the distribution.

### F.4. Distribution by location



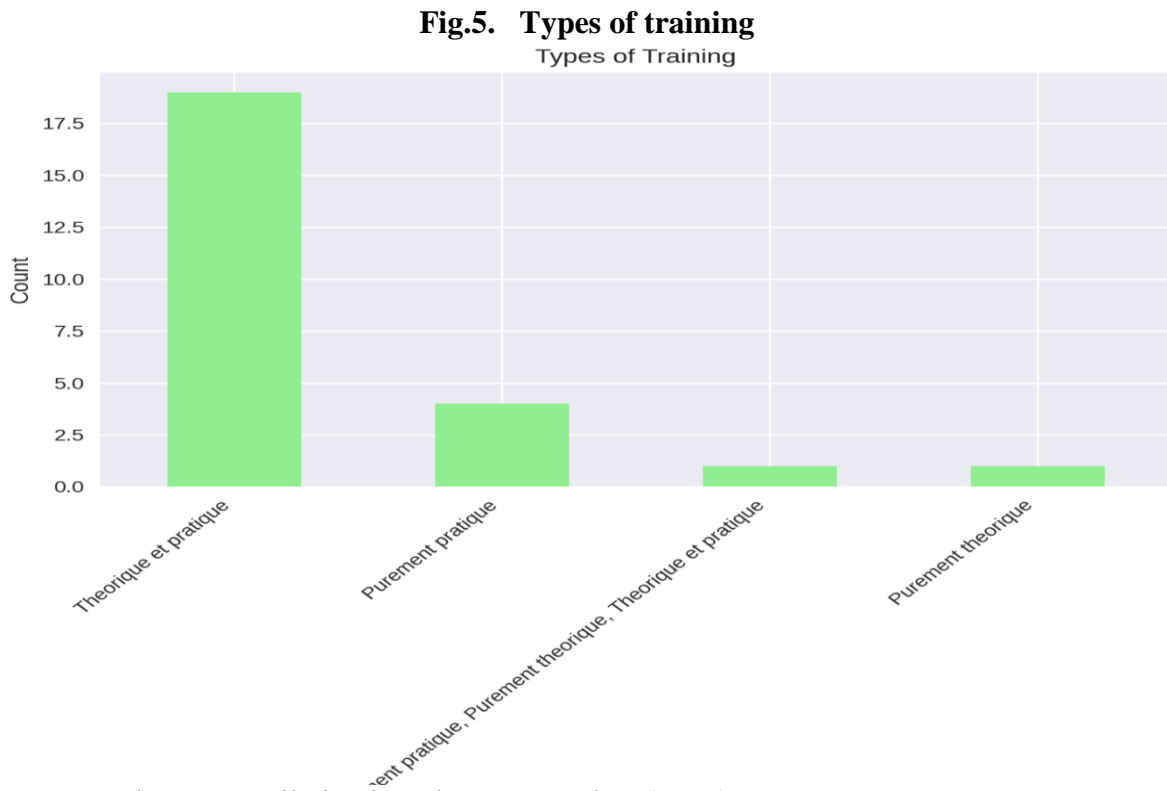
**Source:** Authors' compilation based on survey data (2025).

To provide a clear comparison of entrepreneurship centers across the different Algerian regions, we opted for this bar chart.

Figure 4 illustrates the geographical distribution of entrepreneurial activities, presenting the frequency of these entities across various designated locations within Algeria. The data reveal a pronounced concentration in the "Nord" (North) region, which exhibits the highest frequency of observed activities. Following this, the "Ouest" (West) region demonstrates the second-highest incidence.

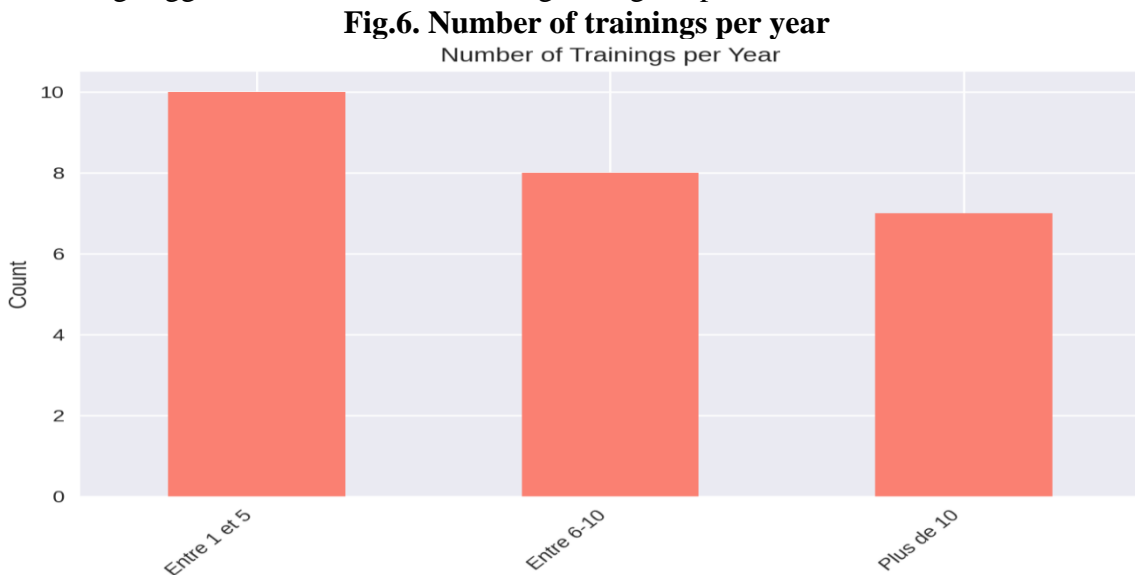
Conversely, the locations designated as "Nord, Ouest" (North, West), "Nord, Sud" (North, South), and "Sud" (South) display markedly lower frequencies, each registering minimal counts. Collectively, these observations indicate a significant concentration of entrepreneurial endeavors, predominantly in the northern part of the country.

The limited presence in the southern regions shows that these areas face significant obstacles in accessing support structures. The concentration of 60% of activities in northern regions perpetuates a center-periphery dynamic that limits entrepreneurial opportunities for youth in southern and western Algeria, where unemployment rates are often higher. Finally, this geographic concentration corroborates Isenberg's theory, which stipulates that entrepreneurship reaches its optimum within a well-functioning entrepreneurial ecosystem.



**Source:**Authors’ compilation based on survey data (2025).

In Figure 5, the respondents argue a strong preference for training that combines both theoretical and practical elements. Purely practical training is the next most common, though significantly less so. The majority of respondents stressed the importance of combining theoretical and practical knowledge to provide better support for project managers. Therefore, this finding suggests a shift towards learning through experience.



**Source:**Authors’ compilation based on survey data (2025).

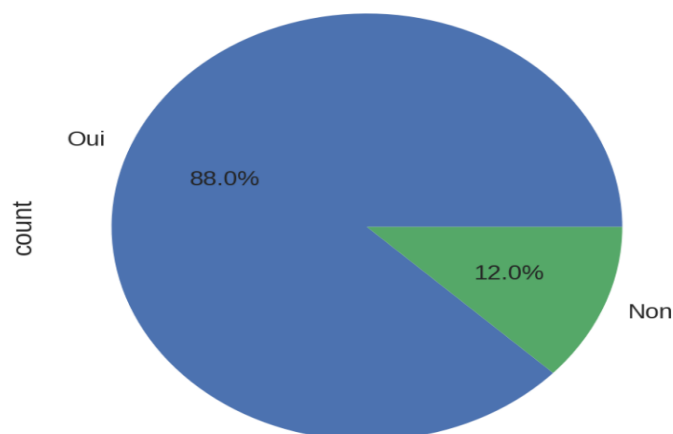
As training and coaching workshops are basic elements for supporting future entrepreneurs in general and startup founders in particular, the survey shows that 40% of the respondents in our sample state that they have organized between 1 and 5 training courses at

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their respective institutions. The remaining 60% are divided between 6 and 10 training courses and more than 10 training courses, as shown in Figure 6.

Consequently, these inequalities in training between centers suggest significant disparities in resource allocation, staff capabilities, and institutional commitment.

**Fig.7. Presence of incubators**  
Presence of Incubators



**Source:** Authors' compilation based on survey data (2025).

In this case, we opted to use a pie chart because it facilitates the conceptualization of data in percentages. Figure 7 shows that 88.00% of respondents confirm the presence of incubators in their institution. This dynamic of incubator creation is seen in Algerian universities as well as in the private sector.

**Table 2. The source of Entrepreneurial intent**

Where the trainees' entrepreneurial intent comes from:	
Economic Factors	10
Personnel Factors	7
Social Factors	8
Total	25

**Source:** Authors' compilation based on survey data (2025).

Among the 25 respondents responsible for entrepreneurship centers in Algeria, 10 identified economic factors as the primary source of entrepreneurial intent, followed by social factors (8 out of 25). Only 7 out of 25 mentioned personal factors.

This observation reflects the prevailing Algerian socioeconomic context, characterized by an unemployment rate exceeding 10% (ONS, 2024) and a significant deficit in traditional employment sectors. In contrast, developed economies are typically associated with opportunity-based entrepreneurship. This innovation-driven model is characterized by project sustainability and substantial growth potential for startups.

This study empirically illustrates how theoretical frameworks of entrepreneurial ecosystems and university-based entrepreneurship manifest in an emerging economy context. It highlights the structural gaps between theoretical models and their institutional implementation. Algerian universities align with the entrepreneurial model through growing incubation and awareness activities. However, linkages with external actors and post-incubation support remain insufficient, revealing an incomplete implementation of the model.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

The article aims to analyse the Startup dynamics in Algeria by following a survey with a representative sample of 25 Managers of Entrepreneurship centers at Algerian universities. Algeria's startup ecosystem is in a state of dynamic motion yet remains centered on a few key players. Regulatory barriers are holding back other initiatives that could boost a sector in need of greater autonomy. Policies to initiate R&D and export are urgently needed to ensure the dynamism and continuity of initiatives in this direction. The most significant factors influencing the success or failure of Algerian startups are strong founder skills (primarily technical and relational/leadership abilities), technological innovation, and chronic difficulties in accessing appropriate financing, all compounded by persistent regulatory and ecosystem weaknesses.

This study has several limitations. First, the sample size is relatively small (25 respondents), which limits the statistical power of the analysis and precludes generalization at the national level. Also, the reliability tests and validity assessments were not addressed in this article due to several factors. These include the sample size, the nature of the questions posed, and the exploratory scope of the study. The geographical distribution of respondents is uneven, reflecting an imbalance. Finally, Future researchers could improve this through the integration of quantitative performance indicators and the mobilization of inferential methods.

To foster the development of the entrepreneurial ecosystem, several strategic guidelines must be established:

- Equitable resource allocation across entrepreneurship support centers
- Creation of tax incentives for startups and the development of hybrid financing mechanisms
- Implementation of mobile infrastructure to extend territorial coverage
- Design of a standardized framework dedicated to entrepreneurship support centers

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