CORPORATE GLOBAL MINDSET AND INTERNATIONALIZATION OF SMES

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Introduction/background: Although internationalization is crucial for SMEs' development little research exists on the relationship between the attributes that create corporate global mindset, and their effects on companies' internationalization. While existing research focuses on the isolated analysis of single factors, this paper introduces a set-theoretic approach, investigating interdependencies of complementarity, efficiency, and novelty among the various factors making up corporate global mindset.

Aim of the paper: The study's objectives are to: (1) identify attributes (business postures) relating to corporate global mindset; and (2) identify and evaluate the combinations of corporate global mindset attributes that lead to internationalization behavior.

Materials and methods: This study performs a fuzzy-set qualitative comparative analysis (fs/QCA) to analyze how corporate global mindset relates to SMEs internationalization. The sample consists of 73 Polish SMEs.

Results and conclusions: This study confirms that four different combinations of corporate global mindset attributes can lead to the same outcome – the high degree of internationalization. This research lies in providing an understanding of how different solutions can lead to the same result. This insight is helpful in gaining a deeper understanding of firms' internationalization.

Keywords: Corporate global mindset, internationalization, Fuzzy-set QCA, SME.

1. Introduction

In the literature, there are numerous studies on the role of corporate global mindset in the organization's performance (Felício, Caldeirinha, Rodrigues, Kyvik, 2013, Ananthram, Pearson, Chatterjee, 2010, Talke, 2007). However, still not much is known about the attributes that create corporate global mindset, and their effects on companies' internationalization. It is very important understand the corporate global mindset attributes because a company has routines, produces products and services, and develops many activities that interact with very different cultural realities that require adaptation and appropriate decisions to be successful (Felício, Caldeirinha, Rodrigues, 2012). In addition the knowledge about the operationalization of global mindset construct is still limited. Overall, the literature discusses global mindset from

the perspective of large companies, and scarcely explores how small companies behave or take advantage of international opportunities.

This research builds on the resource-based view (Barney, 1991; Teece, Pisano, Shuen, 1997), the mindset theory (Gollwitzer, 1990), and the internalization theory (Rugman, Verbeke, 2004) which form the theoretical basis of this study. This research contributes significantly to literature by providing insight into two key areas: attributes relating to corporate global mindset, and relationship between corporate global mindset and degree of SMEs internationalization. It is worth emphasizing that traditional statistical methodologies are not fully suited to analyzing what different configurations of corporate global mindset attributes lead to internationalization performance. This is directly related to the challenges of the configuration approach, where the focus shifts from the net effect of a single attribute on outcome to the analysis of multiple configurations related to comparable outcome. Furthermore, the methodological challenge is to modeling many complex relationships between configuration attributes (Fiss, 2011). Traditional multivariate analytical methods are often less effective at capturing complex systems of interdependencies between configuration attributes and outcome variables. Given these challenges, the development of configuration theory and empirical testing of configuration approaches are rarely present in corporate global mindset research. Therefore, fuzzy-set qualitative comparative analysis (fs/QCA) was proposed, which is a useful tool to study these issues. Set-theoretic methods (Ragin, 2000, 2008; Ragin, Fiss, 2008; Rihoux, Ragin, 2009) provide tools to study combinations of factors, emphasizing that these combinations form solutions that explain individual cases. Importantly, set-theoretic approaches differ from conventional, variable-based approaches.

Using fs/QCA, this research evaluates combinations of corporate global mindset factors to understand the recipes that lead to SMEs internationalization behavior. The study's objectives are to: (1) identify attributes (business postures) relating to corporate global mindset; and (2) identify and evaluate the combinations of corporate global mindset attributes that lead to internationalization behavior. Another important aim of this research is to present the contribution and value of fs/QCA application to the study of corporate global mindset, providing a better understanding of which equifinal combinations of attributes lead to the SMEs internationalization.

The structure of the paper is as follows: after the introduction, the theoretical foundations were presented by analyzing the existing literature in the research field, and on this basis the propositions were formulated. Section 3 explains the research method, and Section 4 focuses on empirical results and their analysis. Section 5 discusses the results and conclusions.

2. Theoretical background

Corporate global mindset is essentially based on the resource-based view, mindset theory, and internalization theory. The resource-based view is a managerial framework used to determine the strategic resources and refers to all assets, capabilities, processes, information, and knowledge attributes that allow the company can exploit to achieve sustainable competitive advantage (Barney, 1991; Teece, Pisano, Shuen, 1997). From this point of view, companies are heterogeneous in relation to their resources and capabilities (Wernerfelt, 1984). A large body of research has shown that differences in the resources of companies competing in the same industry largely explain the differences in their performance. These results suggest the importance of company-specific factors.

The mindset theory consists of the distinction between the motivation to choose a target and the willingness to make the decision to achieve such objective (Gollwitzer, 1999). Global mindset is defined by Govindarajan and Gupta (2001, p. 111) as a mindset "that combines an openness to and awareness diversity across cultures and markets with a propensity and ability to synthesize across the diversity". Kedia and Mukherji (1999) define it as openness and the ability to recognize complex connections. In this way, a global mindset facilitates the effective management of multinational corporations, allowing them to operate with greater strategic intent in the international arena (Nummela, Saarenketo, Puumalainen, 2004).

The internalization theory aims to understand the type of organization, company boundaries and the company's relations with the external environment, as well as to explain the existence, functioning and behavior of companies operating on the international market (Rugman, Verbeke, 2004). This theory aims to assess the conditions of functioning on international markets. Internationalization stems, among other reasons, from the need to diversify risks and broaden horizons to other markets. As indicated in the literature, this driver of internationalization, apart from requiring resources, depends on global mindset. Some studies confirm the relationship of global mindset with the successful internationalization of companies (e.g. Felício, Caldeirinha, Rodrigues, Kyvik, 2013).

Global mindset has most often been studied at the individual level, but at the organizational/corporate level it has been considered a requirement for the organization to be globally competitive. Thus, in order for an organization to gain and maintain a global market leadership position in its industry, it has to regard the development of a global mindset as a goal that embraces every individual and every employee (Govindarajan, Gupta, 2001). Corporate global mindset has its roots in routine, operational practices, processes and behaviors, including experience, social relationships, and conventions. Corporate global mindset refers to the degree to which firms learn to think and operate both globally and as integrated entities, to reflect their structure and organization (Begley, Boyd, 2003). Corporate global mindset is an integrative, multidimensional aptitude whose roots lies in organization's heritage, dominant culture and

mobilized resources (Paul, 2000). These factors shape the behavior of the organization and its overall strategic orientation in the global market (Yin, Johnson, Bao, 2008).

Three general approaches to define or interpret global thinking from a cultural, strategic or multidimensional perspective have been identified in the literature (Levy et al., 2007). The multidimensional perspective includes both cultural and strategic perspectives in their attempts to define global mindset. The multidimensional perspective provides a more encompassing definition of what global mindset is. In the multidimensional perspective of the organization, the global mindset consists of global aptitude (integrates cognition), global knowledge, and global orientation (integrates behavior) (Felício, Caldeirinha, Rodrigues, Kyvik, 2013; Yin, Johnson, Bao, 2008).

As suggested by previous research (e.g. Felício, Caldeirinha, Rodrigues, Kyvik, 2013), and based on a multidimensional approach, the corporate global mindset is strongly related to the five business posture, constituting a multi-dimensional construct consisting of the following attributes: analytical posture (Talke, 2007; Venkatraman, 1989), aggressive posture (Morgan, Strong, 2003; Paul, 2000; Talke, 2007; Venkatraman, 1989), risk-taking posture (Talke, 2007; Venkatraman, 1989), situational posture and strategic posture (Begley, Boyd, 2003). The analytical posture reflects the company's ability to generate information and build knowledge in order to provide a competitive advantage (Morgan, Strong, 2003), relates to customer behavior, market planning, and attention to new products and technological innovation. The aggressive posture describes a company's behavioral attitude along a continuum from offensiveness to defensiveness, e.g. in response to external threats (Covin, Slevin, 1991). While some studies have found that aggressive posture negatively impacts outcomes (Venkatraman, 1989), others advocate positive relationships with outcomes (Covin, Slevin, 1991; Lumpkin, Dess, 2001). A risk-taking posture refers to how decisions are made and acted upon in relation to some knowledge of likely outcomes. It also refers to embarking on the unknown areas or engaging significant resources in uncertain projects (Dess, Lumpkin, 2005). The situational posture refers to ensuring transparency in a hierarchical structure, decentralization of responsibilities, the adoption of technologically advanced products and services, and the provision of resources for development, while the strategic posture involves planning the future to ensure global resources and market conditions for achieving economies of scale.

On the basis of the theoretical background, the following propositions can be made:

Proposition 1: The analytical posture, the aggressive posture, the risk-taking posture, the situational posture and the strategic posture combine to form alternative internationalization behavior solutions.

Proposition 2: Various combinations of analytical, aggressive, risk-taking, situational and strategic postures relates positively to the high degree of internationalization.

3. Measures, data collection, and analysis method

On this basis, a research model is presented that analyzes the presence or absence of corporate attitudes, five business posture of global thinking when the results of internationalization behavior emerge. The model also explains how these attributes combine to create different configurations for internationalization behavior outcome – the high degree of internationalization (Figure 1).
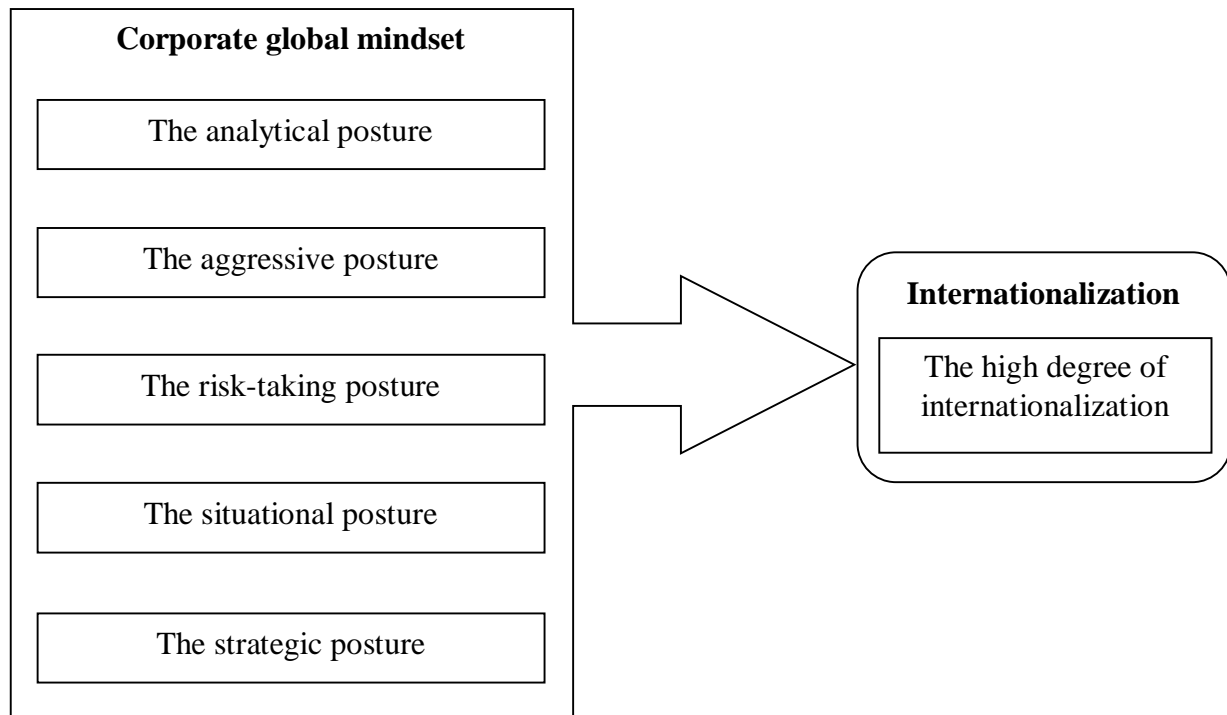

Figure 1. Research model. Source: own study.

The research model has five attributes (analytical posture, aggressive posture, risk-taking posture, situational posture, and strategic posture) resulting from 18 observed variables and one outcome resulting from one variable. The internationalization behavior outcome is the high degree of internationalization. Seven-point Likert-type scales (from 1 – totally disagree or inexistent to 7 – totally agree or excellent) were used to develop constructs for the study. Measurement scales had with reliable psychometric properties, validated in previous empirical studies. Reliability for each scale was determined using Cronbach's alpha. The reliability score is a measure of the internal consistency of the construct (Nunnally, 1978), and alpha values over 0.70 indicates sound reliable measures.

To measure analytical posture (Cronbach's alpha 0.78), the study uses five-item scale developed by Venkatraman (1989) and Talke, (2007). Aggressive posture (Cronbach's alpha 0.81), is measured based on four-item scale developed on the basis of research conducted by Morgan, Strong (2003), Paul (2000), Talke, (2007) and Venkatraman (1989). The measurement of risk-taking posture (Cronbach's alpha 0.94), was based on the scale developed by Talke,

(2007) and Venkatraman (1989) which consisted of three items. A two-item scale and a three-item scale developed by Begley, Boyd, (2003) were used to measure situational posture (Cronbach's alpha 0.72) and strategic posture (Cronbach's alpha 0.75) respectively.

International sales as a percentage of total sales is the most commonly used measure to capture the effectiveness of international performance (Yeoh, 2004). It is also a viable proxy for the degree of internationalization (Kumar, Singh, 2008). In this paper, an SME's high degree of internationalization is considered when foreign sales represent more than 25% of total sales (Zahra, Garvis, 2000; Lu, Beamish, 2001, 2004). Therefore, the variable takes a value of one if an SMS's foreign sales are greater than 25%; otherwise, it is zero (e.g., Ripolles-Melia, Menguzzato-Boulard, Sanchez-Peinado, 2007). Table 1 details information on these constructs and variables.

Table 1.
Attributes, variables, source, and reliability of the constructs

Attributes		Variables	Sources
Outcome	The degree of internationlization	Percentage of foreign sales to total sales	Zahra, Garvis, (2000); Lu, Beamish, (2001, 2004)
Attributes	Analytical posture (Cronbach Alpha = 0.78)	1. Market-planning activities explicitly consider long-term future developments; 2. R&D is the firm's main way of guaranteeing sustainable competitive advantage; 3. The firm performs continuous analysis of the potential of new technologies; 4. The firm makes systematic predictions of trends in innovation; 5. The innovation and development strategy has a long-term focus.	Talke, (2007); Venkatraman, (1989)
	Aggressive posture (Cronbach Alpha = 0.81)	1. Sacrifice profitability to increase leadership in innovative products or services; 2. Generally engage in aggressive market activities; 3. Prioritize launching new products before competitors do; 4. Focus the product development strategy on aggressive innovation.	Morgan, Strong, (2003); Paul, (2000); Talke, (2007); Venkatraman, (1989)
	Risk-taking posture (Cronbach Alpha = 0.94)	1. A progressive, bold attitude to making important decisions; 2. A tendency to support promising projects even if their likelihood of success is uncertain; 3. A tendency to take risks when making important market-related decisions.	Talke, (2007); Venkatraman, (1989)

Cont. table 1.

	Situational posture (Cronbach Alpha = 0.72)	1. The products/services are technologically advanced; 2. The firm performs its own R&D; 3. The firm has access to resources that enable the firm to grow.	Begley, Boyd, (2003)
	Strategic posture (Cronbach Alpha = 0.75)	1. The firm focuses on obtaining global resources; 2. The firm has entered new markets under the influence of global competition; 3. The perception of the firm's policies and organizational practices is relevant to resolving the challenges arising from globalization.	Begley, Boyd, (2003)

Source: own study.

Data collection took place through an online survey during the first quarter of 2020. The data used in this study was designed from previous high-accuracy studies. The online survey consisted of an introductory page, three pages of questions, and an ending page. Data was used from a sample of 73 small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) located in the Silesian Province in Poland. Prior to the survey, 10 interviews with managers were conducted to ensure that the concepts were relevant and that the phrasing of the variables and the meaning of the concepts were equally understandable. After three rounds of reminder emails, 293 responses were received, representing 20.39 percent of responses. In summary, 293 questionnaires completed by managers from 73 SMEs were received. Table 2 summarizes the main characteristics of the sample.

Table 2.
Characteristics of the research sample

Category		Statistic
Firm level	Age	<5 years (33,3%)
		6-10 years (42,7%)
		>11 years (24,0%)
	Size (employees)	<10 (33.4%)
		<50 (46.6%)
		<250 (20.0%)
Respondent level	Gender	Female (31,5%)
		Male (68,5%)
	Education	Higher (72%)
		Secondary (17%)
		Other education backgrounds (11%)
	Age	< 30 (36%)
		31-45 (43%)
		>46 (21%)
	Working experience of respondents	3-5 years (33%)
		6-10 (45%)
		More than 10 years (22%)

Source: own study.

In order to explore how the attributes contribute to the outcome in question, the current study employs a set-theoretic approach based on the fuzzy-set qualitative comparative analysis (fsQCA). Contrary to correlational methods, such as structural equation modeling, which

estimate the net effect of an independent variable on a dependent variable, fs/QCA identifies the causal conditions that lead to internationalization behavior outcome (Cheng, Chang, Li, 2013; Schneider, Schulze-Bentrop, Paunescu, 2010). The aim of fs/QCA is not to prove the existence of causal relationships but rather to reveal patterns that support the existence of causal relationships (Schneider, Wagemann, 2010). In this way, fs/QCA supplements conventional correlational analyses thanks to its three main advantages: (1) asymmetry (i.e., the relationships between independent and dependent variables are treated as asymmetric), (2) equifinality (i.e., multiple pathways lead to the same outcome), and (3) causal complexity (i.e., combinations of causal antecedent conditions lead to the outcome, and hence, the focus is not on net effects, but on combinatorial effects) (Fiss, 2011; Ganter, Hecker, 2014). This study first uses fs/QCA to evaluate the group of attributes comprising the subsets of corporate global mindset attributes and then identifies the combinations of attributes that relate to internationalization behavior. Fs/QCA uses Boolean algebra and algorithms to reduce a large number of complex causal conditions to a small set of configurations that lead to a certain outcome. The fs/QCA 2.5 software was used in the analysis, which provided results consisting of a complex solution, a parsimonious solution and an intermediate solution. Based on the feed by Rihoux and Ragin (2009), for further analyzes an intermediate solution was used as better and with significant advantages over the other two solutions, and the results of the parsimonious solution was also taken into account.

4. Empirical results and analysis

Prior to performing fs/QCA, the original scales need to be calibrated into set membership values (indicating the degree of membership in a set) ranging from 0 to 1. To arrive at continuous set membership values (in the range between 0 and 1), the log odds method described by Ragin (2008) is applied. Consistent with recommendations in the literature (Ragin, 2008), three anchor points were used to perform this calibration: the 5%-percentile, the median, and the 95%-percentile of a variable. The extreme points define full non-membership/full membership in a set, whereas the median is the crossover point indicating that a case is neither in nor out of a set.

For each outcome, five conditions appear in the truth table. Hence, the number of possible combinations is 32. The next steps are to remove the logical remainders and analyze the raw consistency (Kwiotkowska, 2017; Fiss, 2011; Ragin, 2008), and to analyze the solutions (Fiss, 2011). The presentation of results uses the same notation as Ragin and Fiss (2008). To differentiate the cases belonging to the solution from those not belonging to the solution, the consistency cutoff point is 0.95 for the degree of internationalization. Table 3 presents results. Utilizing the notation system from Ragin and Fiss (2008), each column in the Table 3

represents a configuration of conditions linked to the respective outcome. Full circles (●) indicate the presence of a condition while blank spaces indicate "don't care". Each panel represents the alternative causal combinations or recipes for the outcome (Ragin, 2008). These are consecutively numbered S1a, S1b, S2a and S2b.

Table 3.
Configurations for high degree of internationalization

Configuration	Solution			
	S1a	S1b	S2a	S2b
Analytical posture	●			●
Aggressive posture		●	●	
Risk-taking posture			⬤	⬤
Situational posture	⬤	⬤		
Strategic posture		●		
Consistency	0,88	0,92	0,94	0,93
Raw coverage	0,65	0,47	0,47	0,62
Unique coverage	0,18	0,06	0,01	0,01
Solution consistency	0,91			
Solution coverage	0,83			

Note: ⬤ = core causal condition present; ● = peripheral causal condition present.
Source: own study.

The results with different solutions for high degree of internationalization have good consistency and solution coverage (C = 0.91; SC = 0.83), solution 1 and solution 2, both with neutral permutations. The overall solution for high degree of internationalization implies first-order (or across-type) equifinality of solutions. The neutral permutations within solution 1 (1a and 1b) and solution 2 (2a and 2b) imply second-order (or within-type) equifinality.

Four solutions lead to the high degree of internationalization. Solution 1a indicates that combining two corporate global mindset attributes: situational posture as the core condition and analyitical posture – as a peripheral condition, leads to the high degree of internationalization. Solution 1b implies that three corporate global mindset attributes (situational as the core condition and aggressive and strategic as peripheral conditions) combine to yield the same high degree of internationalization as in solution 1a. Solution 2a implies that two attributes of corporate global mindset attributes (aggressive posture as a peripheral condition and risk-taking posture as the core condition) lead to the high degree of internationalization. Finally, Solution 2b indicates that combining analytical posture and risk-taking posture (core condition) leads to the high degree of internationalization.

Table 3 lists two measures of fit: consistency and coverage. The measure of consistency assesses the degree to which cases sharing a given combination of conditions agree in displaying the outcome. It can range between 0 and 1, where 1 implies perfect consistency.

The score is calculated for each configuration separately and for the solution as a whole. The scores for the solution (0.91) and for each configuration separately (0.88-0.94) suggest the presence of clear set-theoretic relationships. Solution coverage (0.83), by contrast, assesses the empirical importance of the solution. The raw coverage measures the degree to which an outcome is covered by each configuration. It is also interesting how much of the result is only covered by a specific configuration, i.e. a unique coverage. Different configurations can overlap, meaning that the same case can follow multiple paths toward the outcome. Therefore, a measure of the unique contribution of each configuration to the result is also provided. An analysis of the coverage suggests S1a is relatively distinct because of its high unique coverage. S2a and S2b have fairly raw coverage but lack unique coverage, indicating that these configurations overlap with other configurations (Schneider, Wagemann, 2012).

5. Discussion and conclusions

This study confirms that different combinations of corporate global mindset attributes can lead to the same outcome – the high degree of internationalization. For SMEs five attributes of the firms' global mindset: strategy (strategic posture); resources, products' technological advancement, and R&D capacity (situational posture); type of organizational environment and resource enhancement structure (aggressive posture); boldness when making important decisions and support for promising yet uncertain projects (risk-taking posture); and commitment to long-term conditions and sustainable competitive advantage (analytical posture) combine to form alternative internationalization behavior solutions. Results confirm Proposition 1. Begley and Boyd (2003) and Gupta and Govindarajan (2002) were the first to recognize that it was important to combine organizational features and extended this idea to the perspective of global thinking. These authors present global thinking as an organizational ability.

As the results of the conducted analyzes show SMEs that combine situational posture as a core condition with analytical posture, aggressive posture, and strategic posture as peripheral conditions achieve the high degree of internationalization. Alternatively, SMEs that combine the core condition of risk-taking posture with the peripheral conditions of analytical posture, and aggressive posture also achieve high degree of internationalization. Hence, results support Proposition 2. Yin, Johnson and Bao (2008) find that corporate global mindset positively influence the international strategy and operations in the international market.

It is also worth emphasizing that, in general, research uses conventional statistical methods based on variables for which the causal process of calculating the results is relevant. Whereas fs/QCA offers a viable methodological alternative. Using fs/QCA to study the impact of a corporate global mindset on SME internationalization provides a broader interpretation of the

results than conventional methods. Rather than offering one solution, fs/QCA yields different terms of a solution. In this way, this approach improves scholars' interpretation using traditional methods. There are several alternatives for each proposal. These solutions combine attributes and distinguish different terms in the solution for the same configuration. In this way, a comprehensive interpretation of these results is possible. This research shows that the attributes of global corporate thinking are inherent in companies and that these attributes come together to provide multiple solutions. The use of fs/QCA to analyze configurations leading to internationalization behavior is an important contribution to the literature. An important theoretical and practical contribution of this research lies in understanding how different solutions can lead to the same result – high degree of internationalization. This knowledge helps to gain a deeper understanding of SME internationalization behavior. This paper demonstrates that the choice of theoretical perspectives used to identify configurations matters, and it is important for scholars to capture as many theoretical perspectives as required to holistically capture the phenomenon and underlying causal logics.

The current study has two significant limitations. First, fs/QCA uses interactive models. Hence, the need to consider all possible configurations means that the data matrices increase in size exponentially as a function of the number of causal conditions. Second, it is possible that the configurations may not be generalized to other property spaces constructed with the same conditions in different samples. Therefore, the results are bound by the conditions included in the study. Trying to analyze an intermediate and large number of cases in the future would improve the study.

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