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Life Stories of Social and Environmental Entrepreneurs

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Abstract

This research aimed to analyze the influence of the antecedents of the behavior of social entrepreneurs (SE) through their life stories. For this, the dimensions of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) were used, which cover personal attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control, in addition to behavioral intention. For this proposition, a basic qualitative, descriptive-exploratory research was carried out, classified as a field study. For data collection, semi-structured interviews were conducted with thirty Brazilian social entrepreneurs, in the form of autobiographical narratives. To analyze the data, the strategies of content analysis and the abductive method were used. In both stages, the New NVivo software was adopted. Among the results obtained, a theoretical model is presented, through dimensions, which emerged from the TPB and from the field research, characterizing these dimensions as predecessors, explaining how the life story, which acts in a transversal way, influences the antecedents of the behavior of social entrepreneurs. This study enables the advancement of discussions and the display of new perspectives on socio-environmental entrepreneurship. It is noted that this investigation contributes to filling a theoretical gap, pointed out in the literature, on the identification of characteristics and trajectories of social entrepreneurs, starting from the life story narratives, from the point of view of the entrepreneur, as a person, and not at an organizational level of institutions.

Keywords: social and environmental entrepreneur; motivation to undertake; opportunity recognition; theory of planned behavior.

Introduction

The dimension of entrepreneurship that examines the social field is known as social entrepreneurship and is considered a subfield of the area (Dacin, Dacin, & Tracey, 2011). This area emerged in the 1990s in Brazil, given the increase in social demands, the decrease in public investment in social causes by the government, the progress in private investments in these causes, in addition to the expansion of organizations in the third sector and investments by companies in social actions (Castelo, Santos, Silva, & Aquino, 2022; Limeira, 2015).

The relationship between this field of entrepreneurship and the generation of social value has as a central figure the actor or subject, whose individual actions are responsible for rebuilding, in the community, the socialization process, creating quality and strengthened relationships between people (Itelvino, Costa, Gohn, Ramacciotti, & Porto, 2018). By being able to convert issues related to society into opportunities, to create and transform entrepreneurial experience into knowledge, the social entrepreneur, therefore, becomes a reality transformation generator (Muñoz & Kibler, 2016).

The entrepreneurial trajectory begins with a promising idea. The ideas usually come from the entrepreneur's personal experience. However, it is noted that this personal experience is not the only factor that can encourage social entrepreneurs to promote effective ideas to be developed. The recognition of needs, opportunities, and social assets, in addition to changes, can also provide the creation of promising ideas (Guclu, Dees, & Anderson, 2002).

Asarkaya and Taysir (2019) consider that social entrepreneurs are influenced by past exposure to certain experiences and people. These factors are called antecedents and/or main dimensions. Therefore, the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) should be adopted as the main theoretical reference, especially emphasizing how personal attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and behavioral intention influence, together with antecedents, the process of becoming a social entrepreneur (Ajzen, 1991).

Understanding the antecedents of social entrepreneurial behavior, while also taking into account those who work in the environmental area, based on the evaluation of their purpose, motivation and perception, aspects, training, trajectory, career and experiences, engagement, skills, challenges, and how they recognize opportunities, based on the narratives of their life stories, is revealed as being relevant, since in the literature Carneiro and Bernardino (2019) state that there is a flaw in how the descriptions and characteristics of this entrepreneur are.

In view of the above, the following problem stands out: how do the antecedents of the behavior of social entrepreneurs influence their life story?

Based on the aforementioned research problem that guides this work, the following general objective is sought: to analyze the influence of the antecedents of the behavior of social entrepreneurs through their life story.

This research is justified by its intention to enrich knowledge, both nationally and internationally, in the area of social and environmental entrepreneurship and the antecedents of such behavior, since this is a relatively new and promising environment. In fact, the concept and practice (Monteiro, Sánchez-García, Hernández-Sánchez, & Cardella, 2022; Romani-Dias, Lizuka, Walchhuter, & Barbosa, 2017) is still relatively incipient and, in many ways, is not very clear (Oliveira,

2019). Above all, the aim is to contribute to promoting reflections that generate new ways of thinking, new models, and new theories and concepts.

Finally, it is also important to mention that the fact of studying social entrepreneurship from the point of view of the entrepreneur (as a person) and not at the organizational level (institutions), becomes relevant because there are few studies that focus on the social entrepreneur (Lambrechts, Caniëls, Molderez, Venn, & Oorbeek, 2020).

In addition, although there are several studies on the personality of the entrepreneur, most of the existing research in the area has focused essentially on the institutional level (Nascimento & Salazar, 2020), so some authors suggest a focus on the individual (Fridhi, 2021; Saebi, Foss, & Linder, 2018). This seems particularly important when talking about motivations for entrepreneurship, more specifically with understanding the role of action (Sadílek, Kročil, & Müller, 2022; Wanyoike & Maseno, 2021; Yamini, Soloveva, & Xiaobao, 2022).

Theoretical foundations

Social entrepreneurship

Several initiatives can be seen, in the practical field, with the purpose of mitigating social problems and solving the challenges of the 21st century (Cunha & Benneworth, 2014), among these, socio-environmental entrepreneurship has been recognised as a subfield of entrepreneurship, which has been researched for three decades. It is observed that, after years of research, so far no conceptual consensus has been reached on this phenomenon (Lubberink, Blok, van Ophem, & Omta, 2019).

This is because social enterprises are complex organizations and take different forms in different contexts (Bignotti & Myres, 2022). The type of tensions and challenges faced by the organization will differ between different environments. This complexity can be seen in studies such as those by Zahra, Gedajlovic, Neubaum and Schulman (2009); Dacin, Dacin and Matear, (2010); Kerlin (2012); Bacq and Janssen (2011); and Mair (2020), who all reported disparate definitions of social entrepreneurship.

In this sense, there have been calls to extend existing theories or even generate new ones which investigate context-specific phenomena, including socio-environmental entrepreneurship (Chandra & Kerlin, 2020; George, Corbishley, Khayesi, Haas, & Tihanyi, 2016), in developing countries, as is the case in Brazil.

Socio-environmental entrepreneurship provides a clear illustration of a hybrid organization that encompasses a social mission alongside skills and solutions traditionally based on market logic. It should be noted that the concept of socio-environmental entrepreneurship is based on the assumption that the combination of social and economic value is widely accepted as a central characteristic, since it is from this type of entrepreneurship that it is possible to develop innovative models to solve the difficulties of society often associated with social innovation (Manjon, Merino, & Cairns, 2022; Mirvis & Googins, 2018).

From this perspective, socio-environmental entrepreneurship is not only considered the replication of something that already exists, but, as it is a social problem, the creation of something new, with an organized structure and a focus on mobilizing indispensable resources to solve such a problem. Thus, what causes this activity is not wealth, but the problem to be solved. Therefore, wealth is just the means to achieve the goal (Austin, Stevenson, & Wei-Skilern, 2006).

Based on concepts already observed, the social entrepreneur is the one who has a clear and central social mission to improve society, based on the assumption of combining social and economic value, developing innovative models that have the main focus on solving or minimizing problems, generating transformations and contributing to the well-being of the communities in which they operate.

Characteristics of the social entrepreneur

The profile of the social entrepreneur refers to the set of characteristics or qualities that allow us to distinguish someone or something from others. In this way, the set of values and attitudes that social entrepreneurs reflect consists of attributes that identify them, but also differentiate them from traditional entrepreneurs (Caldera, Ortega, & Sánchez, 2016).

Personal characteristics such as communication and innovation skills, the ability to detect opportunities, and having social commitment fuel marketing skills, which lead to competitive advantage (Palacios-Marqués, Martí-Sánchez, & Auguacil, 2019). Entrepreneurs are passionate, enthusiastic, ambitious, and resilient, but they often face risks and can fail in business (Cacciotti, Hayton, Mitchell, & Gialitzoglu, 2016). Social entrepreneurs strive to create value with limited resources, exploiting their abilities to find and use opportunities, innovate, take on risks, and deliver social change (Farinha, Sebastião, Sampaio, & Lopes, 2020; Lubberink et al., 2019).

These actors directly generate benefits for society, since the main goal of their enterprise is to achieve social objectives, to the detriment of commercial and financial ends. It is necessary to clarify that these purposes, obviously, are not intended to incur enterprise losses, because for this to be viable and survive it must remain in the market, compared to other types of entrepreneurs who, although also achieving social purposes, do not prioritize them as the main objective (Navarro, Climent, & Palacio, 2011).

Cruz (2013) states that, among the predominant attributes of this entrepreneur what stands out are: the search for opportunities and the creation of innovation; propensity to take risks (Nakamura, 2022) and tolerance for uncertainty; the high degree of credibility and transparency in management; and motivation for a mission, based on a long-term goal, driven by the pursuit of social well-being (Bessant & Tidd, 2009), revealing a sociomoral motivation behind their activities (Nicholls, 2006).

It is worth adding that another characteristic of social entrepreneurs is their ability to create value from social innovation (Tracey, Phillips, & Jarvis, 2011). It turns out, therefore, that their ability to imagine and create is essential.

Validating the arguments of Gigauri, Ponait, Apostu and Raimi (2022), the authors highlight certain traits inherent to social entrepreneurs: they point to them as being happy, passionate,

enthusiastic, extroverted, ambitious, resilient, and interested in politics, in addition to collaborating with activities of volunteering and being more liberal than other people.

Similarly, Shaw (2004) compares the entrepreneurial context of for-profit companies with that of social enterprises. For the author, both contexts share the existence of leadership and a vision aimed at achieving the organization's objectives in the face of scarce resources. However, while the for-profit enterprise seeks to meet an unmet market need, the social enterprise seeks to satisfy social needs.

Theory of Planned Behavior

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) defined by Ajzen (1991), seeks to understand, in general, the continuous changes that guide the actions undertaken through human behavior, considering that beliefs influence attitudes that, in turn, influence intentions and these define behavior (Romero-Colmenares & Reyes-Rodríguez, 2022).

Using TPB (Ajzen, 1991) as a theoretical basis, special emphasis was placed on how social entrepreneurial intentions and attitudes are influenced. Notably, it is suggested that these are driven by the concern of entrepreneurs in relation to social problems, sustainability, and interest in financial return (Ahuja, Akhtar, & Wali, 2019).

Analytically, TPB proposes to explain, in general, human behavior in a given situation. This theory holds that the behavior and the intention to perform an action result from the combination of three distinct and independent attitudes, which precede this intention and which, in turn, precedes the behavior. Such attitudes predict the intention to act, namely: (a) the individual's personal attitude towards the behavior; (b) the subjective norm that is implicit in it; and (c) the perception of the perceived behavioral control in question (Ajzen, 1991; Kumar, 2020).

Personal attitude towards behavior is influenced by an individual's behavioral beliefs. If these indicate that positive results can be achieved through participating in a specific behavior, the individual would probably have a positive attitude towards it. Subjective norms deal with the perceived support or lack of support offered by other relevant actors when engaging in the specific behavior of interest. Finally, perceived behavioral control deals with how much control or confidence individuals have in their abilities to perform the behavior of interest (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Liñán & Chen, 2009; Zaremohzzabieh et al., 2019).

Entrepreneurial intention is at the core of TPB (Ajzen, 1991), which, according to this theory, indicates the effort that the person will make to carry out entrepreneurial behavior and, thus, captures the three motivational factors (attitude, norm, and behavior) or antecedents influencing the behavior (Ajzen, 1991; Bae, Qian, Miao, & Fiet, 2014). One of the benefits of the structure of this theory, according to Liñán, Nabi and Krueger (2013) is that, by focusing on intentions rather than simply on attitudes, the ability to identify long-term trends is increased.

Examining an individual's attitudes can be useful in predicting behavior through its influence on entrepreneurial intentions (Segal, Borgia, & Schoenfeld, 2005). Some studies, such as by Hayton and Cacciotti (2013); Wach, Kruse, Costa and Moriano (2021); and Zapkau, Schwens, Steinmetz and Kabst (2015), show that beliefs, values, and attitudes can affect the decision to become an

entrepreneur. Likewise, these studies have demonstrated a significant relationship between attitude and entrepreneurial intention.

For Liñán, Rodríguez-Cohard and Rueda-Cantuche (2011), the perceived desire is related to the individual's attraction to a certain behavior (in the case of this research, becoming a social entrepreneur), while the perceived viability refers to the degree to which people consider themselves capable of carrying out a certain behavior (the presence of models, mentors, or partners would be a decisive element in establishing the level of entrepreneurial viability of the individual). For Shapero and Sokol (1982), these perceptions are determined by cultural and social factors through their influence on the individual's value system.

The Life Story

The premise of the life story strategy is a narrative, based on written records of individual stories arising from a lifetime, originating from the collection of the stories through the mediation of interviews (Vogt & Bulgacov, 2019).

The life story has been shown in the last decades to be an important tool for the analysis of the lives of individuals. Furthermore, its results have revealed considerable potential for the theoretical development of the field of administration, especially in studies on gender, culture, power, and change (Mageste & Lopes, 2007).

In the work in question, the life story is presented as a guiding strategy and as a method to conduct data collection (Hatch & Wisniewski, 2006; Yitshaki, Kropp, & Honig, 2021), integrating the sense of self and the meaning of life through the narratives of social entrepreneurs, expanding their entrepreneurial identities beyond the constraints of their individual life stories (Cunningham, Xiong, Hashim, & Yunis, 2022).

However, through the theoretical deepening with the method of the life story, in its diversified mode, and using comprehensive resources from the look and behavior of the subjects themselves, advantages arising from the search for the verification and understanding of their reflections on the social environment can be noticed (Colling & Oltramari, 2019).

In this sense, this study is based on a discovery process, which, in turn, is based on a theoretical conceptualization, which reveals patterns of actions and interactions between the various types of social units (Strauss & Corbin, 1994, p. 278).

Therefore, it demonstrates vast potential, in that it can enable understanding and study in partnership with the TPB (Ajzen, 1991) in order to better understand specific human behavior originating from the life stories of social entrepreneurs.

Research method

The research was designed using a basic qualitative, descriptive, and exploratory approach (Cooper & Schindler, 2003). In regard to the scope, which matches the breadth and depth, the research can be classified as a field study (Bailey, 2007). The research method chosen was the life

story (Rae & Carswell, 2000). Data collection procedures occurred through the use of research instruments, which in this article were represented by primary and secondary data, publications, national and international studies, semi-structured interviews (Mann, 1992), and direct observation (Patton, 2002). The data were analyzed using content and narrative analysis techniques (Freitas & Janissek, 2000) to extract the views of the interviewees on the topics addressed.

The semi-structured interview script was applied to social entrepreneurs about the influence of their life story on social enterprises. This script was prepared by the authors and addressed the assumptions of the TPB. At first, a pre-test was carried out through the application of the script with a social entrepreneur, who presented characteristics of the population included in the research, thus making it possible to identify the need for some adjustments. This practice aims to review and guide aspects of the investigation that are not completely delimited (Richardson, 1989).

In order to identify social entrepreneurs in the Brazilian context it became necessary to delimit the research universe (Asiamah, Mensah, & Oteng-Abayie, 2017). Thus, the selection of social entrepreneurs was based on the following criteria: (a) a creator/founder or member of a socio-environmental enterprise; (b) currently performing, or has already performed, managerial activities in the socio-environmental enterprise; (c) that the location of the socio-environmental enterprise was limited to Brazil, regardless of the branch of activity, size, or profitability of the enterprise; and (d) undertook socio-environmental initiatives, with at least one year of operation, that generate an impact on society.

Social entrepreneurs were also selected by intentional and non-probabilistic criteria, principally, because they belong to different sectors, but also including the recognition of the socio-environmental enterprise in its local reality, through the snowball sampling technique, also known as the chain of informants or snowball method (Cohen & Arieli, 2011).

Once data collection was complete, the data were analyzed using the triangulation method, which is a procedure used to maximize reliability. For this purpose, when more than one way of obtaining data is used, such as interviews, secondary data collection, and observation, among others, comparisons between the data collected by each method are made possible, thus performing a triangulation of sources (Alves-Mazzotti & Gewandsznajder, 1999).

It is worth explaining that triangulation in data collection and analysis was used in qualitative research, minimizing fragmentation, and adding to the coherence of the expressions of different subjects (Minayo, 2014).

This process required that the methods, techniques, and strategies were triangulated with scientific precision, considering the specificities and adequacy of each one to the analysis processes, viewing them in a different way and, at the same time, combined (Minayo, Souza, Constantino, & Santos, 2005).

Initially, in August 2020, 68 potential social entrepreneurs were contacted to be interviewed through direct connections, via email, Instagram, and WhatsApp, among which 26 refused or did not respond to the interview request, and twelve did not have enough time to reconcile this commitment with their work schedules.

Data collection took place in September 2020, using semi-structured, in-depth interviews via videoconference as the main method, with an average duration of 45 minutes, with a total of thirty Brazilian social and environmental entrepreneurs, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Social entrepreneurs interviewed

Social Entrepreneur	Age	Education	State	Position in Social Enterprise	Year founded	Social Activity of the Organization
SE1	56	Music	Ceará	Founder of Social Enterprise	1992	Education
SE2	31	Management processes	São Paulo	Vice-President	2017	Private transport around the periphery
SE3	52	Computer Science	Federal District	Founder and President	2017	Solar Energy
SE4	22	Biotechnology	Bahia	Founder and CEO	2013	Water
SE5	32	Physical education	Ceará	Founder and President	2014	Sport education and
SE6	35	Nursing and Business Administration	Ceará	Founder and General Coordinator	2018	Local development
SE7	32	Letters (language and literature)	Ceará	Founder and CEO	2015	Education
SE8	35	Psychology	Bahia	Founder and President	2013	Health
SE9	60	Physics	Ceará	Founder and General Coordinator	1993	Science and technology
SE10	43	Business Administration	Pernambuco	Founder and President	2016	Incubator of impact projects and businesses

SE11	29	Business Administration	Santa Catarina	Co-founder and CEO	2016	Education for the deaf
SE12	30	Economy	Ceará	President	2006	Education
SE13	24	Business Administration	Ceará	President	2016	Local development
SE14	58	Religious Sciences	Ceará	Founder	1998	Social finance
SE15	34	International relations	Rio de Janeiro	Founder	2013	Agency specialized in voluntary vacations
SE16	27	International relations	Paraíba	Co-founder	2019	Entrepreneurial education
SE17	27	Business Administration	Maranhão	Founder director and	2017	Social impact entrepreneurship
SE18	23	Social communication	Pará	President	2018	Local development
SE19	40	Social Sciences and Business Administration	Ceará	Founder and President	2007	Connect supporters with transformative social causes
SE20	38	Pedagogy	Ceará	Founder and CEO	2016	Agriculture
SE21	28	Chemical engineering	Ceará	Founder and CEO	2019	Education
SE22	28	Advocacy, Business Administration and Economy	Rio de Janeiro	Founder and President	2013	Health
SE23	51	Biology	Ceará	General coordinator	2001	Environment

SE24	34	Advertising and marketing	Alagoas	Co-founder and CEO	2012	Education for the deaf
SE25	23	Electrical Engineering	Ceará	Founder and CEO	2017	Mobility for the blind
SE26	28	Social Communication	Bahia	Co-founder and Partner	2016	Organic waste treatment
SE27	27	Advertising and marketing	Pernambuco	Founder and CEO	2016	Safe mobility for women
SE28	33	Tourism	Pernambuco	Founder and General Coordinator	2015	Education in rural areas
SE29	35	Civil Engineering	Pernambuco	Founder	2019	Renovations for the general public
SE30	24	Architecture and urbanism	Ceará	Co-founder	2018	Renovations for the general public

Source: Prepared by the authors (2022).

After completing the data collection and transcription of the recorded audios, using the Express Scribe tool, the analytical exploration of these data was carried out using the source triangulation method (Alves-Mazzotti & Gewandsznajder, 1999), with the help of the New NVivo software.

The process of analysis of the qualitative methods is presented as narratives in life stories through an abductive methodological route, used to analyze the remarkable events of social entrepreneurs, as well as to present the expressions and attitudes that determine their social performance (Adam, 2008).

Analysis and discussion of results

Profile of interviewed entrepreneurs

This research also made it possible to clarify the socio-demographic profile of the thirty social entrepreneurs interviewed, the sample consisted of fifteen women and fifteen men, mostly composed of young people under 35 years of age. With regard to marital status, the majority were single professionals, corresponding to twenty respondents; eight married respondents; and two

widowers. With regard to children, 22 of the interviewees did not have any, while only eight had children. It was found that these were new research findings which emerged from this study.

With regard to academic training, there was no standard that stood out in the choice of higher education. It was observed that the most frequent course was business administration, studied by four respondents. Regarding the position held in the enterprise at the time of the interview, seven held positions of presidents, and the others were founders or co-founders, CEOs, coordinators, directors, vice-presidents and creators.

Thus, the diversity of the academic background of the social entrepreneurs interviewed was evident, most respondents had finished higher education and only a small proportion had only secondary education, demonstrating the heterogeneity in the areas of higher education. However, the most evident area was human sciences, with the most common course being administration, followed by social communication, international relations, and advertising and marketing.

Personal attitude

To analyze the influence of the antecedents of the social entrepreneurs' behavior, through the life story, the dimensions of TPB were used. These cover personal attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control, in addition to behavioral intention.

As for personal attitude, an analyzed dimension which emerged from the field of studies, there were influences and skills in childhood, with an emphasis on the school phase. With regard to the reporting of inherent descriptions, part of the interviewees had few memories of this milestone in life. When asked if they were good students, they said yes, having a good school performance. Among the most identified subjects, geography and history stood out. Such reports were evidenced in the transcriptions below:

When I was at school, I was always very creative. I remember that I really liked creating stories, the sharing part, and history took me to a lot of places. (SE2, 2020)

I think the subject that, at many times, aroused a lot of social reflection in me was history. (SE19, 2020)

I was much better at humanities. I was always very good at geography, history, Portuguese, writing, and I didn't like physics very much. (SE26, 2020)

Therefore, what was observed from these statements were patterns that emerged in relation to studies from a behaviorist perspective, being based on ideas coming from the human sciences, such as history, geography, sociology, and philosophy.

When asked about what they wanted to be when they grew up, and also about their childhood dreams of what they wanted to be as adults, professions such as diplomacy and law, among others, emerged. In this context, references to the independent process and intellectual development of self-teaching deserves to be highlighted, as can be seen from the following excerpts:

I'm a self-taught musician because I didn't study music in school, I learned it by myself at the age of twelve. (SE1, 2020)

I always studied a lot by myself, I was completely self-taught, and I chased after my goals. I have a terrible memory, so I had to use my head a lot to compensate for the lack of memory. (SE3, 2020)

Look, in the school phase, formal education hardly influenced anything, whether before or after, it had little influence, I like being self-taught more because there are many things that were not taught in school. (SE9, 2020)

It is noteworthy that some obtained this learning through school and university, and others acquired it through alternative paths. Furthermore, some completed the formal stage, in principle, others implemented it as a complementary stage, and others followed a successful self-taught route, as corroborated by Hilsdorf (2015, p.18).

Ajzen's model (1991) comprises three independent variables, which precede the formation of intention and which, in turn, predict behavior. Thus, it was evident that the first variable represents the attitude towards the behavior and is determined by the period that enables its occurrence. However, this moment, as seen in several reports from the social entrepreneurs interviewed, did not occur during the childhood/school phase.

In this verified dimension, linked to personal attitude, which emerged from the field of studies on the influences and skills in youth aimed at graduation, the interviewees were asked whether the academic environment influenced in any way their desire to undertake social and environmental actions and turn them into reality. It was also considered that learning in higher education did not prove to be a predominant source of influence for socio-environmental entrepreneurship, with actions aimed at improving the well-being of a specific group or of society in general as their motivation, demonstrating the prevalence in adopting socio-environmental activity as a life option. In response, only nine, among the thirty respondents, stated that there was this influence:

I never had any inspiration in academic life, academic life was never a stimulus. . . In fact, I was never an "A" student, I was always a B, . . . because as I am very practical, I started working, earning money and being an entrepreneur early on, the academic part fit in with what I did and not the other way around, so I think I learned it in practice, you know? (SE10, 2020)

I was very frustrated with college because I saw how far it was from the market and practice. I still think college is very far from what we see in everyday life. (SE25, 2020)

It was attested that 60.9% of respondents were not influenced by the academic environment to act in socio-environmental entrepreneurship, and 39.1% of these confirmed this influence.

Another finding of this research is that with emphasis on this stage of life, a significant part of social entrepreneurs, namely 25 interviewees, sought to participate in mentoring, incubation, and acceleration programs. It is emphasized that there was a difference in the age of entrepreneurs, which were generation Y, including people who were born in the late 1970s until the early 1990s.

The adoption of such professional development tools proved to be relevant for this studied

group, in accordance with the report that such a procedure helped and impelled them to undertake socio-environmental actions, even without other professional experience. When questioned about how this initiative took place, it was found that it was not the higher education course chosen that benefited them, but an attitude typical of entrepreneurial individuals, who sought this type of process according to the following arguments:

I went to Canada to do an exchange program. I saw everything about incubators, as well as the differences in innovative action and existing incubators in Brazil and Canada. From then on, I realized what social entrepreneurship actually was. (SE8, 2020)

I was mentored by Jorge Paulo Lemann, Carlos Alberto Sicupira, Marcel Herrmann Telles, Luiza Helena Trajano, in short, I kept in touch with all the great business people in Brazil. (SE22, 2020)

Today, I mentor social impact businesses at both Artemisia and Quintessa. (SE24, 2020)

So, we were incubated and accelerated by the Recife Center for Advanced Studies and Systems (Cesar) as well, where I had to further develop the idea, build it and then fix the weaknesses. (SE29, 2020)

It is highlighted that, of the interviewed entrepreneurs, 83.3% participated in mentoring, incubation, and acceleration programs, and 16.7% did not participate. It is recognized that these manifestations, cited by Silva, Cruz, Gomes and Paixão (2017), corroborate that mentoring, incubation and acceleration helped the interviewed social entrepreneurs to create their ventures.

Another point that should be focused on is that with the social entrepreneurs questioned there was the high participation in extracurricular activities, which can be divided into several segments, such as junior company, academic directory, student union, exchange program, extra courses, and social work, among others, all performed voluntarily. Activities that were not associated with the chosen course were also included, and, in this situation, many interviewees opted for activities other than those that were connected to their academic area, justified by the need to leave their comfort zone, as can be inferred from the following excerpts:

I see volunteering as a way to apply yourself, you give a little of your life, your time. . . there is also cooperation so that this new professional of the future has a collaborative mind to work in partnerships, with resilience, emotional health, a sensitivity and empathy to lead. That's why I started to get involved in volunteering, based on a solidarity action, because fifty thousand people lost everything. (SE10, 2020)

I stayed for a year in the junior company and then I decided to find some other activity that involved volunteering. So, I went to volunteer at Aiesec, in Venezuela, and I chose the project not because of the country, because I didn't have much information about it, but because of the project, which aimed to teach social entrepreneurship to young people. From there, I started researching what this social entrepreneurship was. (SE17, 2020)

Volunteer work is amazing, and it's interesting because when I was in college in Zurich, I did it in the student union office, then I went to Ireland for my master's, I joined a social organization known as the Dublin Simon Community, which works with homeless people, and during the two years of my master's degree, I was at the Simon Community shelter at

night, at the service of something bigger. (SE23, 2020)

My volunteer work in the hinterlands started in 2012, and this whole work started with my family, and after approximately two years of work, the group became a social business, which operates in the hinterlands. (SE28, 2020)

It was evidenced that 83.3% of respondents performed voluntary work, and 16.7% did not perform such activity. In this context, volunteering undoubtedly constituted a valuable resource, being an important dimension in relation to the antecedents that would also explain the formation of the socio-environmental entrepreneurial intention.

The last dimension investigated, in terms of personal attitude, which emerged from the field of studies, was whether the social entrepreneur had already considered the possibility of opening a socio-environmental enterprise as a life option. Of those questioned, 28 respondents emphatically stated that this could be perceived, according to the following narratives:

I didn't get into this for business, I got into it from the heart, so I had the feeling that, firstly, I would be much happier than I was, even knowing that I could go bankrupt. (SE10, 2020)

Today, you can give me a billion reais, I wouldn't sell the platform, and do you know why? It is a life mission, since I became an entrepreneur, because entrepreneurs have their idea, their project, as a life mission, and without that, nothing for me makes sense. (SE14, 2020)

I think it's my life. . . this is for life. (ES20, 2020)

It was stated that, of the social entrepreneurs interviewed, 96.6% saw their socio-environmental enterprise as a life option, while only 3.4% did not state this desire.

When asked whether being a social entrepreneur in Brazil entailed more advantages than social and economic disadvantages, most respondents replied that there are more advantages, even with the various existing difficulties, as stated in the following narratives:

There are many advantages, I learned a lot more from my social business than in college or a bank. (SE2, 2020)

For me, there are only advantages, I wouldn't be able to be happy if I wasn't a social entrepreneur. I think we can make money and help, it's more than perfect. (SE20, 2020)

More advantages, overall, and that's indisputable, do you know why? Because the process makes us stronger, so, having resources or not, forces us to reinvent and also reinvent ourselves. We need to have innovative, creative, impactful projects and, in the absence of resources, you have to be your best self. This is the same thing as a non-social business. (SE23, 2020)

Being a social entrepreneur in Brazil implies more advantages than disadvantages, but the

situation can cover both aspects, in percentage terms, according to information from the interview participants. However, it is concluded that, of the interviewees, 93.1% ratify that this attribute is advantageous.

Another dimension was identified in the interviews, and which became significant in the formation of the socio-environmental entrepreneurial attitude, validating Pangriya's arguments (2019), and this was contentment, a feeling of satisfaction and happiness with work. It is evident that doing something good for the community brings happiness to social entrepreneurs. Furthermore, their intention to make a real and lasting impact on people's lives gave them maximum satisfaction with their work. It should be noted that this was a unique feature of social entrepreneurs, which made them different from commercial entrepreneurs, in the real sense.

Subjective norms

Another analyzed dimension was the subjective norm, which covered the dimensions of family influence, personal environment, and motivational factors.

This investigated dimension, which comes from the studied field of family influence, showed among the respondents that although they have family figures as their closest personal inspirations, for socio-environmental entrepreneurship this influence was not predominant but was more prevalent than that of friends or acquaintances. This influence did not originate in the family nucleus, but it was in that nucleus that the necessary support was obtained.

When asked if any person in the family served as an inspiration, most respondents mentioned someone close, such as parents, mother or father, in addition to the presence of grandparents, uncles, siblings, and cousins. Of the respondents, only five did not cite any family member as an inspiration for socio-environmental entrepreneurship, according to the reports:

It was my father who inspired me 100%. (SE2, 2020)

I was very inspired by my mother, with her perseverance. (SE3, 2020)

One thing is interesting, that my father always influenced and encouraged me, in his own way, many times he believed that it would not work out, so, I think that, although he often bet that it would not work out, he always allowed me to proceed and supported me. (SE5, 2020)

I know that many times my mother was worried about what I was doing, but she was always by my side, supporting me, encouraging me. My mother was always frank. . . she didn't receive much education, she didn't know how to pass something on to her children, but she was there, and whenever I needed to talk, she listened to me. (SE27, 2020)

Regarding whether or not there was family support for the research participants, this reality was verified in which 83.3% of respondents confirmed having had this support for their socio-environmental enterprise, and 16.7% indicated negativity, on the part of the family, in relation to this work.

What could be understood in the course of the findings that emerged from this research

connected to the interviewees' narratives, was that, regardless of any perspective, in relation to family support, their socio-environmental plans would be put into practice, dependent on the objectives, without depending on the opinion of those closest, such as parents, siblings, and spouses.

Another analyzed dimension which emerged from the field of studies was the personal environment. When asked if there was any influence from friends/acquaintances or society in the decision to become a social entrepreneur, most entrepreneurs did not receive this support from friends or acquaintances. Few of the interviewees claimed to have had this support, often as a result of others not fully understanding the personal surroundings about the activity carried out, reflecting the reality of the cases corresponding to the research participants.

As mentioned, in several quotes, some of the interviewees mentioned how much people thought they were crazy for abandoning a traditional career for another in the socio-environmental area, as stated:

My family didn't support me right away, but after they visited my social business and really saw what I was doing, they changed their minds. Some people even ask me why and what I do this for, if I live well. (SE3, 2020)

All my friends found my attitude insane because I was going to leave a stable professional situation for a business with no perspective of how much I would earn and then they couldn't believe how it would be something that would depend only on me. At that point, I replied that this was the main reason for my decision, to have something that depended only on me. (SE12, 2020)

As I said before, people don't believe in social business. . . they think it's all a myth, a pat on the back, and they think it's philanthropy. (SE30, 2020)

As mentioned, the attempt at interference, arising from personal surroundings and the social circle in which the social entrepreneurs lived, became evident, with the intention to discourage activities aimed at the socio-environmental field. However, along with family support, their socio-environmental purposes were implemented due to the objectives, regardless of the opinions of those closest to them, such as parents, siblings, spouses, friends, and co-workers.

It can be seen in the ideas of Liñán and Chen (2009) and Ajzen (2011) that the subjective norms of social pressure exerted on the individual to become or not a social entrepreneur, come not only from the family circle in which they live, but also the individual's perception of the social judgment of their partners, friends, and co-workers, among others, with the intention of proceeding with such behavior or not.

Motivational factors were an observed dimension which emerged from the field of studies. This was the main motivator in socio-environmental entrepreneurship, whether for humanity or philanthropy (Boluk & Mottiar, 2014). It was found that, for the social entrepreneur to create value for society, this is the main motivator (Santos, 2012). Another determining factor is that these social entrepreneurs created value without concern for profits, and this was due to their motivation to provide something for humanity (Ghalwash, Tolba, & Ismail, 2017).

It was observed that the reason for becoming a social entrepreneur was the individuals' intentions, followed by triggering events, which led to the identification of opportunities. Such triggering events strengthened the connection between intentions and behavior and created the consistent frame of these intentions. In this way, the respondents expressed their motivations for becoming social entrepreneurs:

I went through a near-death situation. I nearly drowned in a river, in a whirlpool, in the year 2012, I barely managed to escape. After that, I started to think a little, and rethink my values. Before, I was a person who thought a lot about money, and I saw that it was no use thinking only about that. So, I started to focus a little on this social area, and to participate in voluntary action groups. That was the big milestone in my life. I saw, for the first time, how difficult it is to live in the dark. Until then, I didn't have any idea, I had never tried using a diesel lamp, which is what these rural communities use nowadays. (SE3, 2020)

We have an intrinsic motivation, it's inside you, it's what keeps you on your feet all the time, your life project, the social impact you generate, so that's where the motivation comes from. Of course, the market is important, and so is revenue, but it comes from a motivation that comes from within you. (SE7, 2020)

The motivation was precisely realizing that I could make a difference in someone's life. (SE24, 2020)

As explained in the excerpts from the interviews, and based on Ghalwash, Tolba and Ismail (2017), current social difficulties, as well as individual encounters and individual inspiration, among others, were the main reasons for these social entrepreneurs. In addition, previous undertakings in social and environmental areas, present social and environmental challenges and desires which were considered the main motivational factors for socio-environmental undertakings.

It is corroborated with Sharir and Lerner (2006) that sometimes the support of the community, in terms of resources, recognition, information, and networks, also motivate an individual to migrate to a socio-environmental enterprise. Experiences and life stories motivated individuals to establish socio-environmental projects.

It is worth adding that another inspirational factor for social entrepreneurs was the belief in divine power, which encouraged social entrepreneurs to improve their community (MacDonald & Howorth, 2018). In addition to these, there are also environmental, demographic, personal, and psychological factors that motivated individuals to become social entrepreneurs.

Other aspects identified in the interviews, which became dimensions in relation to antecedents and, also, formed subjective norms and motivations of social entrepreneurs, validated by Pangriya's arguments (2019), were self-transcendence, unique ideas, and innovation to resolve points of suffering, inspiration and personal experience.

The desire to give back to society, without expecting anything in return, reflected the self-transcendent motive of social entrepreneurs, as stated in the following narratives:

I left formal work, with a formal contract. I had a drastic reduction in income, but I returned to the social business from which I was helped and, at that moment, I saw that I had to reciprocate. That was my biggest motivation. I had access to technical courses, through the social business, my college education was enabled by a 100% scholarship, and this was achieved through the social business, of which, today, I am president. (SE12, 2020)

As a way of giving back to society for everything I received, in my social business, we started designing a project, and we explained that this had to be a scalable project, with a high social impact. We must identify a national problem, and try to solve it. So, the process consisted of trying to give back a little for the opportunities I had received. (SE22, 2020)

A new antecedent that, similarly, explained the formation of subjective norms and motivations of social entrepreneurs was empathy, being an important capability that preceded socio-environmental entrepreneurial intention. Bockorny and Youssef-Morgan (2019) discussed the role of courage, confidence, hope, optimism, and resilience in entrepreneurship, and collectively referred to them as psychological capital.

The relationship between the courage of entrepreneurs, which encompasses psychological capital, life and satisfaction, and that of social entrepreneurs, which corresponded to satisfaction with life, was explored. Furthermore, it was observed that psychological capital moderates the relationship. The survey respondents, in this conjecture, reported as follows:

When I identify a problem, I try to solve it, as I have always done in my entire life. . . this made me come across some social problems in the region, showing me that I always had to solve something, and that there was something to do to make change. (SE13, 2020)

I think that the indignation with the world, the way it presents itself today, the desire to make a difference and leave a legacy, the empathy I have with other people, who are experiencing other situations, and that we can help, somehow uniting all the knowledge I have to do good. (SE22, 2020)

I think, mainly, that maybe empathy is fundamental, because it bothers me a lot to see what other people are going through, including the environment, and to have that feeling of impotence. So, it moves me a lot to cause these transformations. (SE24, 2020)

Following this line of reasoning, it was attested that the recognition for the execution of the socio-environmental enterprise, through national and international awards, was a considerable motivational force in social entrepreneurs, playing an essential role along with their resilience, courage, strength, and perseverance, offering prestige and motivating social entrepreneurs to give their best, as can be seen in the following excerpts:

In 2017, I was elected to the Gasc of UN Women, and that was a moment when I was thrilled to know I was on the right path. In 2020, I was one of the elected members of the United States government's Young Leaders of the Americas program, Ylai. . . so, although it was difficult, it was a challenging selection process, but having managed to achieve it

was an important recognition. (SE5, 2020)

Microsoft had a program called Student to Business, S2B, aimed only at university students. Microsoft is very supportive of social business, so in 2011 this company said, like this: "You are the best social business that we support, do you want to be a guinea pig to test this?" (SE9, 2020)

With the UN award, we became nationally recognized, so, those who didn't believe or trust us, thought that, for those who had won the award, there was something behind it all. It turns out that in April 2017 we received an invitation to present the solution to Pope Francis at the Vatican, so there is greater help there, you know? (SE10, 2020)

Perceived Behavioral Control

The dimension next analyzed was perceived behavioral control, which covers the dimensions of career transition, opportunity recognition, and main challenges.

This evaluated dimension helps make the decision for career transition which, according to the interviewee's reports, came from the identification and recognition of opportunity, as the respondents said:

At first, there was a lot of curiosity, but I liked it a lot, so I ended up persisting, but at the same time, I didn't think twice about giving up my job and investing 100% into this social business, even knowing that many people are very afraid. We have to take chances because we have to try and, if it doesn't work out, we go to the next step, because otherwise we regret not taking the risk. Nowadays, I can think like this. (SE2, 2020)

I started to participate in various entrepreneurship events, accelerations, incubations, I founded my social business and I had to develop my managerial side, in parallel with the scientific side, and one thing that helped me a lot was not being under pressure, so, I did all of this as a hobby. I wasn't doing anything out of obligation, or because I had to find something that would make me money to support myself. (SE4, 2020)

I decided to leave my business life to submit myself to this social world, without knowing how it would be monetized, or if there was a possibility of doing business in that, what I was going to live on, how my family was going to survive, but I had a enormous clarity that I had found something bigger than a business, that it was a purpose, a personal accomplishment and could help a lot of people. (SE10, 2020)

As evidenced in the research reports and legitimized by the authors Shane, Locke and Collins (2003), the career transition to a socio-environmental enterprise took place, initially, through the identification of opportunities, deliberately or not, followed by the chance of starting an enterprise, linked to a decision process.

This procedure happened due to an external trigger, such as social and environmental factors, being the catalyst to the decision for career transition, the desire to undertake socio-environmental work led to the execution of the idea and the consideration of the feasibility and necessary knowledge. It was analyzed in several reports from the interviewees that these individuals

had never prepared themselves to be social entrepreneurs and that they felt a little scared when opting for this professional route. However, the risks were faced and attitudes were taken, with dedication and commitment, so that the enterprise progressed.

The next dimension investigated was opportunity recognition, which represents the main point of the entrepreneurship process (Gregoire & Shepherd, 2012). This dimension is based on the perspective of Shane and Venkataraman (2000), which corroborates the thesis that tries to understand how opportunities to develop new goods and services are identified, created, and exploited, and also by whom and with what social, economic, and environmental consequences. It was evident that these individuals had knowledge experience, in a particular way, as they allude to in the following:

The entrepreneur develops perception, so it is the moment that they talk to themselves, about the moment, and on that occasion, an insight comes. That scenario was inside me, and it was something I had to do. I think that if you don't do what's inside you, and what moves you, you're liable to die frustrated. So, I had to know myself inside. It was a dream, and I was finding myself, in my dream. One day, everything that's meant to be yours will find a way to get to you. (SE1, 2020)

Then you see that there are a million families in Brazil that are still in this situation, without energy, so that made me start my social business. (SE3, 2020)

It happened, like a shock, to be honest, because I was already dissatisfied professionally, because, as I said, for me, there was always a lack of purpose. (SE16, 2020)

Based on concepts by Baron and Shane (2007), Gregoire and Shepherd (2012), Shane and Venkataraman (2000), Thompson (2018), and Venkataraman (1997), and from observing the statements, it was understood that social entrepreneurs are people who identify a flaw in society and change it into an opportunity, inserting imagination and vision into its solution. These were individuals who were recruiting and motivating others to their cause and establishing networks of key people while securing necessary resources. Moreover, the aforementioned entrepreneurs overcame obstacles and challenges, introducing their own management systems, arising from their socio-environmental enterprise.

When respondents were asked what was the greatest difficulty in becoming a social entrepreneur, the main challenges were expressed in the following narratives:

I see how difficult it is to endeavor, especially socially, in Brazil and in the periphery, because there is a lack of resources, investment, incentives. So, it's rare to see companies gambling on projects that are starting, so, to make a difference, we participate in different events, lectures, the project is applauded by everyone, who say that it has everything to work out, but, when it comes to investing, no one has the courage or speaks out. (SE2, 2020)

In Brazil, people did not have this view of the importance of social entrepreneurship, at least in the past. But, I see that this is changing a lot, people are having this perception now. Of course, we are still far from the ideal scenario, but it has improved a lot since I

started. (SE4, 2020)

There was a skepticism that, in fact, made us question ourselves, not knowing exactly how to do it, in addition to my lack of experience, and I didn't know anyone who was a social entrepreneur, I didn't even know how to conceptualize it. (SE8, 2020)

It is worth adding that perceived behavioral control was one of the fundamental prerequisites for potential entrepreneurs (Krueger & Brazeal, 1994), since, in many contexts, most beginners did not have enough commercial experience (Luthans & Ibrayeva, 2006). The report provided below, given by an interviewee, is evidence of what the aforementioned authors deduced:

The first difficulty I had was in management knowledge; the second was that I didn't have any money to create a business, any kind of capital, nothing, it was basically a jump from a twenty-story building, like you have to create something until you hit the ground. So, the story revolved around building a project, through partners, since I had no resources, and, meanwhile, I deepened my knowledge, I was doing and learning, in practice, what the process was to endeavor. (SE7, 2020)

It was found, based on several reports from the social entrepreneurs, and which emerged from the research, that participation in public notices that officially selected public socio-environmental projects was carried out by 28 entrepreneurs. Generally, these entrepreneurs participated in such public notices so as to start the socio-environmental enterprise, it enabled them access to investment destined to the expansion, among other reasons, according to the following explanations:

I saw the opportunity to present the idea to a public notice at the time of Social Good Brasil in Florianópolis. They were looking for ideas, it wasn't even a business, and until then, I didn't think this idea of mine could become a business. . . . (SE7, 2020)

It happened, in the second year that I applied, to the public notice. In the first year, I was a finalist, but as I was a consumer, the competition was very tough. So, the company called me, giving me feedback because I didn't win, but we improved it when I was filling out the protocols, and it ended up working out. (SE8, 2020)

We built a community kitchen, very industrial, but it started with a small contribution because we didn't have financial resources, which were very limited. For you to have an idea, when we won a public notice, we received five thousand reais, so it was not possible to perform miracles. So, we started to participate in a Walmart notice, in that period, which was the WWE. . . . (SE13, 2020)

The project passed a RedBull social entrepreneurship notice. Afterwards, the project was chosen by the Toyota Mobility Foundation, to receive financial and institutional support, and also, one from WRI Brasil. I won an In3Citi public notice, in 2018, from thirteen participants, and my social business was selected. (SE27, 2020)

It was evident that, of the social entrepreneurs interviewed, 93.3% participated in public notices for the selection of socio-environmental projects, and 6.7% did not participate. Therefore, as evidenced in several reports from the social entrepreneurs interviewed, and reinforcing Limeira's arguments (2015), one of the biggest challenges for socio-environmental entrepreneurs is to obtain access to financing and attract investors, especially in the initial phase of the enterprise cycle.

Behavioral Intention

The next dimension examined was behavioral intention, which encompassed the dimensions of self-concept and professional experience.

In this analyzed dimension, which dealt with the concept of self, the interviewees were asked what their personal characteristics were that influenced their actions in the socio-environmental field. Some of the responses received were as follows:

I think that, in my case, this is how I deal with people and their needs, see the problems and try to solve them. (SE6, 2020)

It has to do with the fact that I have always had a very strong conviction about helping others. (SE11, 2020)

I have social indignation, I can't see the other suffering and then let that pain pass, I think it's really empathy, the need to put myself in the other's place. (SE13, 2020)

The most present and relevant characteristics among social entrepreneurs were: empathy, creativity, curiosity, communication, indignation, nonconformity, restlessness, resilience, courage, responsibility, solidarity, concern for the interests of others, unconditional acceptance of others, and dedicating oneself to a goal, as well as the need to be compassionate towards social and environmental problems, in addition to being persistent, aware, and being motivated by a mission based on a goal in the long term. It was found, therefore, that the ability to imagine and create was essential, given that the generation of innovative ideas proposed by the entrepreneur constituted a basis for socio-environmental organization.

Referring to the dimension of professional experience, which emerged from the field of studies, van Ryzin, Grossman, Dipadova-Stocks and Bergrud (2009) outlined that variables, such as personality traits, and elements of a sociodemographic nature, namely age, sex, origin, and previous professional experience, among others, formed the entrepreneurial intention that influenced the creation of socio-environmental enterprises.

Likewise, the referred authors proposed that an individual's experience could change their conception of values, enabling the analysis and development of the entrepreneurial profile, since people with a higher level of education and employment, in addition to having experiences and endeavors, were more likely to be social entrepreneurs.

This became evident in several quotes from the interviewees, when asked if their professional training influenced their desire to act as a social entrepreneur:

Yes, since college, many things that I learned in my professional field I applied in my course. Since the beginning of graduation, I was already participating in something that was developed in parallel, so I could easily see the other side. So, I always applied, in my professional training as a graduate, things I learned from my professional side. And, my friends, many of whom have a story similar to mine. I have a friend, for example, a computer engineer, and the certainty he always had is that he wouldn't work with that, so I have the example of other cases close to me, as well as others who applied for a selection process, which had absolutely nothing to do with the course they were taking. (SE18, 2020)

Yes, what influenced me in a decisive way in my trajectory was that always, from the beginning, I kept myself active, busy, whether doing an internship or working, as a consultant in social institutions. It was as if social organizations were the main motivating environment of my career, so I learned much more by interacting with my colleagues from internships, jobs and consultancies. (SE19, 2020)

Regarding professional experiences prior to the socio-environmental enterprise initiative, and based on the interviewees' statements, which indicate this reason, professional training influenced the desire to act as a social entrepreneur, since, before such an initiative, the entrepreneurs created an organization and had already been involved in other socio-environmental projects. During this period of time, significant changes occurred in their personal lives, leaving them dissatisfied with their professional situation, among other reasons.

Behavior of social entrepreneurs

The behavior, according to Lopes Jr. and Souza (2005), was defined not only through intention or attitude, but also through beliefs, subjective norms, and perceptions of control. In short, it was found that, according to the three dimensions analyzed, in light of the TPB, the interviewees had an attitude and intention focused on aptitude for the socio-environmental enterprise. As demonstrated in the quotes from the social entrepreneurs interviewed:

My social business is my professional side one hundred percent. And that's what I want for my life. I don't intend to stay only in this social business for my whole life, I'm proud to have it, but I want to have other social businesses, and other challenges, too. (SE11, 2020)

My business at the moment is my life option, however, I don't think I'll stay in it forever, I want my social business to be a big company to the point that I won't be able to manage it, I believe I still have about three more years at the most being part of it, but this undertaking is now a matter of life for me. I see myself outside of my business, I see myself already starting several other businesses, I'm already creating others, but I don't see myself in this venture forever. (SE20, 2020)

In this way, like traditional entrepreneurs, social entrepreneurs were recognized for the skills and abilities that set them apart. Some characteristics and behaviors were inherent to the routine

and activities that they perform. Morgado (2013) listed certain characteristics of social entrepreneurs, namely motivation, innovation, leadership, and ethics/morals, while also explaining the importance of each one of these.

Motivation was related to the willingness to undertake socio-environmental work, without being limited by the scarcity of resources. Innovation, therefore, was directed towards the ability to detach from the norms in force, seeking new solutions or existing adaptations, to serve the socio-environmental mission, as observed in the following excerpts:

I'm not going to spend time on anything other than the mission. Social business is a very tough agenda, but I refuse to be distracted because, while we are distracted, someone is starving; someone doesn't have access to education, health, or a project is likely to close. So, this is a value that I have: not having peace, in a country with so many people without peace. (SE10, 2020)

I thought it was a life mission, as soon as I became an entrepreneur, because entrepreneurs have their idea, their project as a life mission. Without that, for me, nothing makes sense. Being a social entrepreneur was a life decision, I decided that my life was this: to fight for equality, for communities, to endeavor, to seek solutions. I think you make a decision, and you have to be a social entrepreneur by choice, not to make money. I'm not going to be a social entrepreneur because it makes money, I think that most social entrepreneurs really start with nothing, just the idea, willpower, at first, unless you're one of the wealthy ones, otherwise, I think it is based on a lot of effort. (SE14, 2020)

For Morgado (2013), leadership was also seen as a fundamental factor, since, in general, social entrepreneurs occupy leadership positions and need to involve employees in order to carry out, in the best possible way, the activities of the organization. Finally, ethics and morals indicate concern for others; the importance of planning activities as a team; creating dialogue between interested parties; and the high sense of transparency towards the partners and the public, as evidenced in the following excerpts:

I've always been a bit restless, and it was already in my nature to try to solve problems that I couldn't solve alone, so I think that when the concept of social business was presented to me, it gave a lot of meaning to my life, because I already did this, I was already involved in some social activities. (SE7, 2020)

But I think that, in addition to nonconformity, I have skills, such as the issue of leadership. I know that leadership is a very important thing in my life, as well as communication and collaboration. (SE16, 2020)

Irengun and Arikboga (2015) identified that there is a positive relationship between personality traits and intentions to undertake socio-environmental work. For the authors, emotionally stable and empathetic individuals tend to develop successful human relationships and have a positive relationship with the socio-environmental dimension.

Life Stories

The last motivating factor found was the life stories of the social entrepreneurs questioned, which acts transversally. The details of their life stories were investigated to discover what contributed to the decision to found a relevant socio-environmental enterprise, looking at their experiences, suffering, problems, among others, and what motivated them to find the solution to socio-environmental difficulties. In such experiences, the training of social entrepreneurs played a relevant role (Pangriya, 2019).

Prabhu (1999) stated that the founding of a socio-environmental enterprise could be triggered by the founder's background, through the way in which they were influenced by past exposure to certain experiences and people. In the research, these factors are called antecedents and/or main dimensions, linked to the TPB, which explains the process of becoming an entrepreneur (Ajzen, 1991), in this case, a social entrepreneur.

In this way the exploration of behaviors, focusing on the stories of social entrepreneurs, can provide a deeper view of their motivations (Gartner, 2010). Indeed, the life stories method analyzed the way respondents expressed their self-identity, through references to past, present and future actions (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998).

As explained in the excerpts from the interviews, and based on Yitshaki, Kropp and Honig (2021) and Cunningham et al. (2022), this proposition exposed countless surprising stories of courageous people, as well as attitudes that changed, in a satisfactory way, the lives of many individuals, who chose to dedicate themselves to others in order to contribute to an egalitarian and just society, making a difference in the life of the other through various actions. It is noticed that what prevailed in the memories of social entrepreneurs, in relation to life stories, was the perception of a milestone in one's life and its affective impact, according to the following explanations:

I have several stories that families tell me, mainly the first ones, that go back some time. If I start to tell you this, I'm going to cry, because it was really remarkable. . . (SE4, 2020)

Ah, yes, we have a lot of stories, I usually say that the bank account of the social business is these stories. . . (SE10, 2020)

There are several outstanding stories, we have already served one hundred and fifty thousand people, in twenty-one states of Brazil, in addition to Mozambique, Haiti and India, just imagine the number of stories to tell . . . (SE22, 2020)

Theoretical model

This research contributes to filling a theoretical gap pointed out in the literature on socio-environmental entrepreneurship. The diversity of dimensions, which emerged from the scientific literature and field research, are characterized as predecessors, explaining how the life story, which acts transversally, influenced the antecedents of the behavior of social entrepreneurs, in the light of the TPB, characterized as a dominant model, while seeking to explain the socio-environmental entrepreneurial behavioral intention of individuals with this profile.

In such a way, a part of the proposed theoretical model emerged from the field, and for this reason it is described here, after the results, with an emphasis on the influence of antecedents on the social entrepreneurs' behavior and their life story, as can be shown in Figure 1.

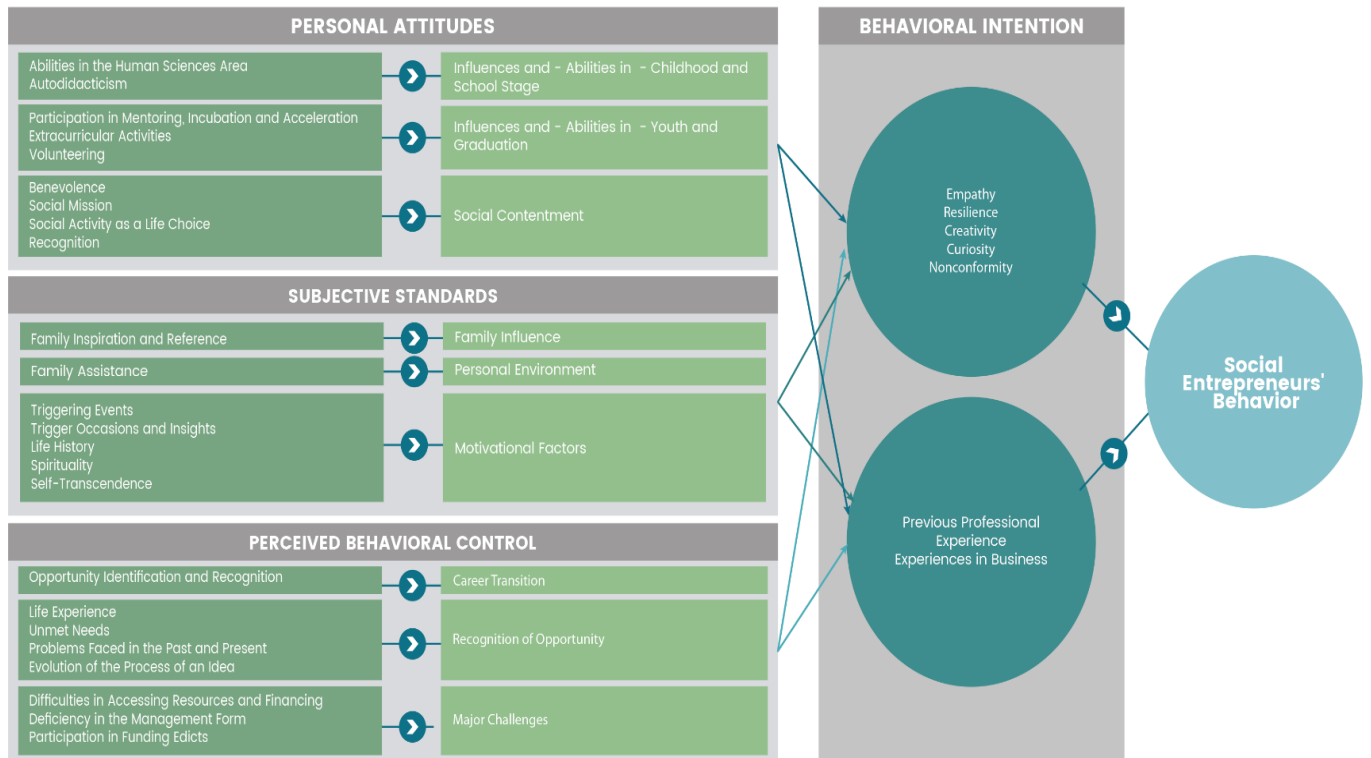


Figure 1. Theoretical model of the influence of antecedents on the behavior of social entrepreneurs and their life story.

Source: Prepared by the authors (2022).

Final considerations

This research sought to know through the life stories of social entrepreneurs the antecedents of their behavior to carry out socio-environmental changes, being at the core of this research. This is in response to the question initially proposed and which guided the study: how does the antecedents of social entrepreneurs' behavior influence their life story?

With regard to understanding how the personal attitude of social entrepreneurs influences their life story, favorable attitudes enabled perceptions of behaviors related to the goal of becoming a social entrepreneur. It was concluded, therefore, that positive attitudes, with regard to social entrepreneurship could positively affect the personal attraction to starting one's own enterprise, highlighting that these attitudes played the most important role in explaining intentions.

With regard to understanding how the subjective norms of social entrepreneurs influence their life story, the analyzed dimension of motivational factors validated the aforementioned dimension, noting also that the experiences and the life story itself motivated the interviewees to

start socio-environmental endeavors, the central motivational factor being learning in life and experiencing situations and sharing them with others.

With regard to understanding how perceived behavioral control of social entrepreneurs influenced their life story, it was observed that professional experiences created stimuli for these individuals to learn to better observe and experience their own lives, influencing them to act as social entrepreneurs, creating a predominant sense of responsibility for achieving goals, developing initiative, having freedom of choice and a way of relating to people.

The dimension known as behavioral intention validates that the purpose of social entrepreneurs influences their life story, as the TPB deals with what the individual wants to do, and the actions they intend to perform, in order to turn this desire into reality. In contrast, behavior is seen as the result of the interaction between attitudes, as well as the motivation and intention to perform these actions.

It can be concluded that the analysis of the life story of the thirty social entrepreneurs interviewed acted in a transversal way, revealing the process by which these individuals gave meaning to their experiences, through the explanation of stages or milestones in life. Appropriately, the narratives demonstrated the relationship between the understanding of the socio-environmental mission and the way in which these respondents adapted to this understanding.

Based on the TPB, such results indicated different antecedents, which led to conscious and intentional actions of socio-environmental entrepreneurship. The life stories of the social entrepreneurs analyzed ratify the awareness-raising processes that lead to intentional actions in order to achieve socio-environmental objectives.

It is evident, in this context, that the desire to undertake socio-environmental endeavors is understood as an intrinsic motivational factor, arising from personal values, such as vocation, purpose, calling, mission, life choice, and personal fulfillment, among others. Such particularities are identified through predominant characteristics in such social entrepreneurs, highlighting their restlessness, an essential attribute, which awakens a tirelessly curious view, which focuses on life.

These are, therefore, altruistic individuals, who resist difficulties and are not intimidated by mishaps. Furthermore, they are sensitive, spiritual, and maintain the certainty that they will achieve their goals. Certainly, the spirituality that surrounds them is intangible, but surrounds these references, maintaining a consecrated connection, because these individuals are not moved by money, they are at the service of something greater or inexplicable.

The life stories analyzed suggest that the social entrepreneur is an outsider, who does not fit into conventions, which is an unequivocal trait of these individuals, since working with something on the margins of society gave them a unique perspective, which allowed them to see further, with a critical view, without restraints.

It is, therefore, a prophetic and moral commitment to share their skills, inferring happiness, providing work with an affective and pleasurable meaning, which is enshrined in an immeasurable and immaterial legacy through experiences and stories full of knowledge.

Indeed, when it comes to the theoretical contribution, this research, in addition to referring to a current topic, has enabled the advance of discussions and the display of new perspectives on social entrepreneurship. It is perceived that this investigation certainly contributes to filling a

theoretical gap, pointed out in the literature, on the identification of characteristics and trajectories of social entrepreneurs from the life story narratives from the point of view of the entrepreneur as a person and not at the organizational level of institutions.

The research in question also contributed to the existing literature on the influence of life stories on the antecedents of the behavior of social entrepreneurs, in addition to reinforcing the TPB as an adequate theoretical model to measure the intention that manifests from beliefs, motivations, values, personal attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control, influencing the behavioral intention and constituting the behavior of the social entrepreneur.

The research results contribute to the practice in several aspects. Initially, educational institutions and public policy decision makers should invest efforts in providing volunteer activities and social experiences for their public, if they want to train a new generation of social entrepreneurs. In addition, they can work on behavioral and awareness issues, seeking to develop an altruistic attitude in their public, since this aspect influences the creation of future social entrepreneurs.

This work has limitations, such as in the initial phase of the field research, certain entrepreneurs raised some questions, such as: “What is the objective of the research?” and “In Brazil, only successful traditional entrepreneurs are studied; the focus of research in Brazil is not on socio-environmental entrepreneurship”, demonstrating a certain distrust and hostility towards the research.

It is suggested that for future studies larger samples be used with different types of enterprises and socio-environmental organizations, as well as social entrepreneurs not included in the known lists. This would be essential to confirm the result of the research and add knowledge to the discoveries.

Future research may consider the impact of different backgrounds on becoming a social entrepreneur, on levels of development, and vice versa. Analyzing socio-environmental organizations from other countries can provide an opportunity to compare the characteristics in different cultures and the impact of the context on these cases.

Future research can explore the topic using quantitative research with different profiles of social entrepreneurs, while also testing the theoretical model proposed in this article. In addition, accompanying entrepreneurs over time can reveal a series of new findings within the scope of the influence of their life stories; therefore, it is worth suggesting that future research should adopt a longitudinal approach for researching social entrepreneurs.

Another suggestion for future research is the investigation of practices from the perspective of employees and beneficiaries of socio-environmental projects as this can enrich the analyzes through the cross checking of data to support the performance of comparative studies.

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Conflict of interests

The authors inform that there is no conflict of interest.

Inclusive language

The authors have used inclusive language that recognizes diversity, demonstrates respect for all people, is sensitive to differences, and promotes equal opportunity.

Authors' contribution

First author: conception (leader), data curation (leader), formal analysis (leader), funding acquisition (support), research (leader), methodology (peer), project administration (leader), supervision (support), writing – original draft (leader), writing – proofreading and editing (equal).

Second author: conception (support), data curation (support), formal analysis (support), funding acquisition (leader), investigation (support), methodology (equal), project administration (support), supervision (leader), writing – original draft (support), writing – proofreading and editing (equal).

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