

--- EARLY VIEW ---

## ‘WHAT TO DO WHEN THE GRILLS OPEN?’ ENTREPRENEURIAL MOTIVATIONS AND INDIVIDUAL BELIEFS OF FORMER CONVICTS

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### ABSTRACT

**Study Objective:** To investigate the entrepreneurial motivations and individual beliefs of former convicts from prison in Ceará regarding opening their own business, according to the theory of planned behavior (TPB). **Methodology/Approach:** A qualitative research was carried out with eleven former convicts from the Ceará prison system. The data collected through semi-structured interviews were analyzed by Atlas-ti software, using the content analysis pattern matching technique. **Results:** The former convicts expressed their intention to open their own business based on three motivations: by necessity, by opportunity, and by personal achievement. The interviewees' entrepreneurial intention was influenced by three types of salient belief: behavioral, normative, and perceived control. **Theoretical/Methodological contributions:** This research promotes and expands the discussion on entrepreneurship after a period of deprivation of liberty, using the TPB to identify the beliefs that precede the entrepreneurial intention. **Relevance/Originality:** Findings oppose the dichotomous classification of entrepreneurial motivation described by the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor. The study endorses the important influence of social referents in the construction of normative beliefs, which were perceived as facilitators of behavioral intention, being confused with beliefs of perceived control. **Social contributions:** Recognizing the low employability of former convicts as a management problem can be the beginning of a debate on strategies that seek to minimize the negative impacts of their low employability. This study is an invitation to discuss joint efforts between public authorities, the population, and academia, to mitigate prejudices that imprison former offenders and society.

**Keywords:** Entrepreneurial Motivation. Salient Beliefs. Penitentiary.



## “O QUE FAZER QUANDO AS GRADES SE ABREM?” MOTIVAÇÕES EMPREENDEDORAS E CRENÇAS INDIVIDUAIS DE EGRESSOS DE PENITENCIÁRIAS

### RESUMO

**Objetivo:** Investigar as motivações empreendedoras e as crenças individuais de egressos de penitenciárias cearenses quanto a abrir o próprio negócio, segundo a Teoria do Comportamento Planejado. **Metodologia/Abordagem:** Realizou-se uma investigação de abordagem qualitativa, com onze egressos do sistema prisional cearense. Os dados coletados, por meio de entrevista semiestruturada, foram analisados com auxílio do software Atlas Ti, utilizando as técnicas de análise de conteúdo e *pattern matching*. **Resultados:** Os egressos manifestaram intenção em abrir seu próprio negócio, a partir de três motivações: por necessidade, por oportunidades e por realização pessoal. A intenção empreendedora dos entrevistados é influenciada pelos três tipos de crenças salientes: comportamentais, normativas e de controle percebido. **Contribuições teóricas/Metodológicas:** Promover e ampliar a discussão sobre o empreendedorismo após o período de privação de liberdade, utilizando a Teoria do Comportamento Planejado para identificar as crenças que antecedem à intenção empreendedora. **Relevância/Originalidade:** Apresentar achados que contrapõem à classificação dicotômica de motivação empreendedora descrita pelo *Global Entrepreneurship Monitor*. Ratificar a importância da influência dos referentes sociais na construção das crenças normativas, que foram percebidas como facilitadores à intenção comportamental, confundindo-se com as crenças de controle percebido. **Contribuições sociais:** Reconhecer a baixa empregabilidade de ex-detentos como um problema de gestão, pode ser o início do debate de estratégias que busquem minimizar seus impactos negativos. Este estudo é um convite à discussão de estratégias de esforço conjunto entre poder público, população e academia, com o objetivo de mitigar paradigmas e preconceitos que aprisionam os ex-infratores e a sociedade.

**Palavras-chave:** Motivação Empreendedora. Crenças Salientes. Penitenciária.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The crisis affecting the Brazilian prison system regarding the high rate of recidivism of recluses after release points to the ineffectiveness of educational programs in prison organizations in promoting the resocialization and reintegration of individuals deprived of liberty (Silva & Saraiva, 2013), considering that access to educational assistance should contribute to the reintegration of the individual into social life (Cordeiro, 2019).

In the case of professional education, some prison organizations adopt educational programs aimed at entrepreneurship, which aim to provide professional qualifications (Costelloe & Langelid, 2011), since insertion in the formal labor market for former convicts is a challenging task as these subjects carry with them an identity that marks them as eternal delinquents (Souza, Costa, & Lopes, 2019).

Thus, the former convicts of the prison system would tend to direct efforts by the need to undertake, by adopting autonomous work as a career option (Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, 2017; Ireland, 2012; Patzelt, Williams, & Shepherd, 2014). This bypasses the potential discriminatory practices of employers who in some cases demonstrate negative attitudes toward hiring ex-convicts due to their criminal records, stigma, and fear of violent acts at work (Patzelt et al., 2014).

The promotion of entrepreneurship during the period of deprivation of liberty is one strategy to reduce the recidivism of former convicts, which has been the object of scientific investigations (e.g., Grosholz, Kabongo, Morris, & Wichern, 2020; Keena & Simmons, 2015; Moraes, Simões, & Gonçalves, 2017;



Patzelt et al., 2014). Patzelt et al. (2014) highlight that most entrepreneurship research investigates the impact of educational programs on the entrepreneurial intent of individuals and the performance of the businesses created by students after participation in these programs. In the prison context, such programs enable individuals deprived of liberty to engage in a process of positive change of their identity, expanding entrepreneurial intention through entrepreneurial education (Grosholz et al., 2020).

Assuming that opening one's own business is a rationalized action, and to understand the factors that interfere with entrepreneurial behavior, it is necessary to investigate the factors that individuals perceive about themselves and about the environment in which they live, which are the individual beliefs that determine intention and behavior (Hoppe, Barcellos, Vieira, & Matos, 2012).

Thus, it is possible to identify the beliefs that are predictive of entrepreneurial behavior through the operationalization of theories that analyze human behavior, such as the theory of planned behavior (TPB; Ajzen, 1991), a conceptual structure used as a reference to predict intentions and behavior in multidisciplinary contexts (Martins, Santos, & Silveira, 2018; Schlaegel & Koenig, 2014).

Given the above, the following research question was outlined: how do former convicts of Ceará's penitentiary perceive the possibility of opening their own business? Thus, the objective was to investigate the entrepreneurial motivations and individual beliefs of former Ceará inmates regarding opening their own business from the perspective of the TPB.

The research aims to expand the discussion on entrepreneurship from the perspective of inclusive entrepreneurial education. Entrepreneurship can be considered an instrument that can prevent criminal recidivism and promote social reintegration, the use of business opportunities, and the generation of legal income when professional training activities are offered aimed at the cognitive and behavioral transformation of former convicts. Then, the entrepreneurial activity should stimulate business creation and developing an entrepreneurial mentality and identity after the period of incarceration.

## **2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

The theories underpinning this research are entrepreneurial motivation under the classification of the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM, 2017), and individual beliefs related to entrepreneurial intention from the perspective of the TPB (Ajzen, 1991).

### **2.1 Entrepreneurial Motivation**

Entrepreneurial motivation is related to the degree to which the individual values entrepreneurial behavior, considering his perspective on becoming a successful entrepreneur based on his personal beliefs as fundamental motivation for entrepreneurial action (Minola, Criaco, & Obschonka, 2016). Beliefs are the information that the individual holds about a given behavior, although these may be imprecise and may not correspond to reality (Ajzen, 1991). The motivation to develop entrepreneurial behavior is based on personal beliefs, such as autonomy, competitiveness, material gain, and work ethic, which express human needs (Minola et al., 2016).

The relationship between economic freedom and entrepreneurial motivation is addressed, considering the classification that categorizes types of entrepreneurship, and entrepreneurship by opportunity and necessity. This is in line with the structure of the GEM (Angulo-Guerrero, Pérez-Moreno, & Abad-Guerrero, 2017), the largest report on the dynamic structure of entrepreneurship worldwide, operationalized in Brazil by the Getúlio Vargas Foundation (Vale, Corrêa, & Reis, 2014).

Empirical studies that investigate the factors that induce the individual to entrepreneurship take approach the perspective of necessity versus opportunity (Vale et al., 2014), considering that



entrepreneurs have motivation to meet their needs and desires and can create an enterprise based on the need for survival or the exploitation of opportunities, even when there are other attractive job options (Carsrud & Brännback, 2011), or by the combination of entrepreneurial motivations (Van der Zwan, Thurik, Verheul, & Hessels, 2016).

According to the GEM (2017), the entrepreneur by necessity is one who starts a business due to the lack of options for generating an occupation and an income. The individual is motivated by the need to develop an autonomous activity due to dissatisfaction with the available employment options, on impulse, or by family pressure (Van der Zwan et al., 2016).

In entrepreneurship by opportunity, the individual is driven by attraction or by a voluntary search for opportunities in the environment (GEM, 2017; Van der Zwan et al., 2016), including the exploration of new niche markets, considering innovation (Angulo-Guerrero et al., 2017), previous experience, and knowledge that create the ability to recognize opportunities wasted by others (Yitshaki & Kropp, 2017), and aiming for some gain (Block & Wagner, 2010).

It is emphasized that given the changes in production systems and the labor market marked by structural unemployment, the entrepreneur, attentive to business opportunities, can be moved by personal autonomy and the need for survival, perceiving in the entrepreneurial activity an alternative mode of work and income generation (Vale et al., 2014).

Empirical research indicates that entrepreneurs by necessity are characterized by lower levels of satisfaction (Block & Wagner, 2010; Kautonen & Palmroos, 2010) and lower educational level (Fossen & Büttner, 2013), and remain in the market for a shorter period (Block & Wagner, 2010). In the Brazilian context, the percentage of entrepreneurs by necessity is lower than that of entrepreneurs by opportunity (GEM, 2017).

## **2.2 Entrepreneurial Intention and the Theory of Planned Behavior**

Entrepreneurial intention is a conscious state that precedes action and directs attention to entrepreneurship (Agolla, Monametsi, & Phera, 2019). It refers to an effort made by the individual to carry out the entrepreneurial activity (Paul, Hermel, & Srivastava, 2017).

The most used theoretical model of entrepreneurial intention (Martins et al., 2018) is the TPB, which seeks to explain behavior in each situation (Ajzen, 1991). Applying it in the field of entrepreneurship, it is assumed that entrepreneurial intention denotes the commitment that the individual makes to affect the entrepreneurial behavior. It is based on belief, the initial factor that induces a person to perform (or not) a certain behavior.

According to TPB, human behavior is guided by behavioral, normative, and perceived control beliefs (Ajzen, 1991). Behavioral beliefs involve the individual's evaluation of the possible results that a given behavior can cause, causing a favorable or unfavorable attitude toward its realization. Normative beliefs are related to the pressure of social referents (family, friends, and other groups) so that the individual develops entrepreneurial behavior. Perceived control refers to those factors that can enable or prevent the performance of the behavior, considering the individual's abilities (Ajzen, 1991).

The entrepreneurship programs in prison promote discussion on the development of an effective way of achieving one's objectives and the projection of independence made possible by entrepreneurship, resulting in a change in the entrepreneurial attitude of detainees. Support networks inside and outside prison create social pressures on an inmate, particularly when family and friends perceive entrepreneurship as the best option among those available. Professional qualifications through these



programs imply the development of skills and social and economic training in detainees, influencing their entrepreneurial behavior (Grosholz et al., 2020).

The results of the research by Cavazos-Arroyo, Puente-Díaz, and Agarwal (2017) indicate that behavioral beliefs influence entrepreneurial attitude, and a favorable attitude implies a greater entrepreneurial intention (Agolla et al., 2019; Carsrud & Brännback, 2011; Ferri, Ginesti, Spano, & Zampela, 2019). Findings from the researches by Agolla et al. (2019), Cavazos-Arroyo et al. (2017), and Ferri et al. (2019) evidence the positive influence of normative beliefs and perceived control on entrepreneurial intention.

The integration of detainees into the labor market can be accomplished through projects focused on employability (Wilson, Gallagher, & Mackenzie, 2000). This is because many have low education and few professional skills, and gaining a job opportunity and staying employed should be encouraged to avoid recidivism and build new emotional ties after leaving prison (Alós, Esteban, Jódar, & Miguélez, 2015; Grosholz et al., 2020).

In this sense, former convicts can be motivated by an impulse for self-employment (Van der Zwan et al., 2016), becoming an entrepreneur out of necessity, because they are considered stigmatized individuals, given their criminal background (Sarasvathy, 2004), or by the recognition of opportunities, due to participation in programs aimed at entrepreneurship that can provoke cognitive and behavioral changes in former convicts (Grosholz et al., 2020).

Given the theoretical contribution of this paper, two research proposals are defined:

P1: The entrepreneurial motivation of former convicts is dichotomous and is based on necessity or business opportunity.

P2: Behavioral, normative, and perceived control beliefs influence the entrepreneurial intention of former convicts who participate in programs aimed at entrepreneurship, since the intention precedes entrepreneurial behavior.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

This research is based on a qualitative descriptive and exploratory typology (Gray, 2012) in which semi-structured interviews were conducted with former convicts from Ceará, aiming to answer the research question.

The dynamics of the place where the research subjects serve their sentences impose limitations on researchers, such as security procedures predefined by the institutions involved, limitations on the time available for the interview, access to a limited number of subjects to be researched, and accessibility difficulties that compromise the safety of researchers. Given these limitations, the criterion used to conduct the interviews was accessibility (Vergara, 2003). The interviews were carried out in the premises of the Coordination of Social Inclusion of the Prisoner and the Graduate (CISPE) and the Deusmar Queirós Foundation, and mediated by representatives of these institutions. The interviews were in person and recorded, with the permission of the interviewees. They were conducted in April and May of 2018.

The saturation point followed the Thiry-Cherques (2009) criterion and was perceived in the ninth interview. Two additional interviews were conducted to confirm saturation, one of which was conducted with a female graduate. It was not possible to conduct interviews with an equal number of men and women due to the difficulty of access to interviewees; for this reason, the interviews conducted with the three interviewees were not discarded, because only with the eleven interviews it was possible to achieve theoretical saturation.



Individual interviews were conducted with eleven former convicts, identified in this investigation from the codification EG1 to EG11; their profile is presented in Figure 1. Among the interviewees, eight were men and three were women, aged between 22 and 51 years. Nine interviewees were convicted by the Justice: they have the closed regime and are completing the remainder of their sentence in open or semi-open regime, some using electronic monitoring equipment. Two of the interviewees were women who, after a period of incarceration, received the benefit of relaxing imprisonment, being able to wait for their trial in freedom.

Interviewee	Gender	Age	Education	Sentence
EG1	Female	43 years old	Higher Education in Philosophy	10 years
EG2	Male	34 years old	Higher Education in Informatics Incomplete Higher Education in Mathematics	11 years
EG3	Male	25 years old	Incomplete Higher Education in Business Administration	10 years
EG4	Female	27 years old	Incomplete Higher Education in Finance	AT
EG5	Male	51 years old	High School	N/M
EG6	Male	22 years old	High School	N/M
EG7	Male	33 years old	High School	9 years
EG8	Female	30 years old	Incomplete High School	AT
EG9	Male	24 years old	Incomplete High School	3.5 years
EG10	Male	43 years old	Incomplete Elementary School	Recidivist + 10 years
EG11	Male	30 years old	Incomplete Elementary School	N/M

**Figure 1.**

Profile of the interviewees

Source: Elaborated by the authors (2020)

Note: AT: Awaiting trial; N/M: Not mentioned.

The interview script was elaborated based on the dichotomous classification of entrepreneurial motivations (GEM, 2017), and the TPB (Ajzen, 1991) was used to investigate the individual beliefs of the interviewees.

The collected data were analyzed through content analysis (Bardin, 2011) and the pattern matching technique (Trochim, 1989), wherein a comparison is made between the theory adopted in this study and the empirical reality investigated. The constituent elements of analysis presented arranged in Figure 2 were listed.



Constituent elements of analysis	Constituent definitions	Operational settings	Interview roadmap questions
Entrepreneurial motivation by necessity	Due to the lack of available employment options, the individual is motivated by the need for survival (Angulo-Guerrero et al., 2017; GEM, 2017; Van der Zwan et al., 2016; Yitshaki & Kropp, 2017)	To identify whether the graduate intends to open his own business and, if so, to investigate what factors motivate him (necessity, opportunity, and others that emerge from the field)	What are your goals for the future after you leave the penitentiary?
Entrepreneurial motivation by opportunity	The individual is motivated by the recognition of opportunities and is attracted to explore such business opportunities (Angulo-Guerrero et al., 2017; GEM, 2017; Van der Zwan et al., 2016; Yitshaki & Kropp, 2017)		
Individual behavioral beliefs	This refers to the individual assessment about the entrepreneurial behavior, promoting a favorable or unfavorable attitude toward entrepreneurship (Agolla et al., 2019; Ajzen, 1991; Ferri et al., 2019; Grosholz et al., 2020; Liñán & Chen, 2009)	To identify the beliefs related to former convicts' favorable and unfavorable evaluation of becoming entrepreneurs	In your opinion, what would be the advantages of having your own business? What would be the disadvantages?
Individual normative beliefs	This comes from the influence of social groups and reflects the individual's concern about the consequences of entrepreneurial behavior for their social referents (Agolla et al., 2019; Ajzen, 1991; Ferri et al., 2019; Grosholz et al., 2020; Liñán & Chen, 2009)	To investigate which social referents exert social pressure on former convicts to enter the entrepreneurial activity	What would people think if you decided to set up your own business? What person would approve if you decided to put your own business? Who do you think would disapprove? Why is that?
Individual perceived control	This is related to the recognition of skills and abilities for the development of entrepreneurial functions (Agolla et al., 2019; Ajzen, 1991; Ferri et al., 2019; Grosholz et al., 2020; Liñán & Chen, 2009)	To highlight former convicts' beliefs about their individual capacity that facilitate and hinder entrepreneurial activity	What would make your attempt to start a business easier? Why is that? What would make it difficult for you to try to start a business? Why?

**Figure 2.**  
Constituent elements of analysis  
Source: Elaborated by the authors (2020)

The content of the interviews was transcribed and analyzed with the aid of the Atlas.ti software, used to encode the transcription fragments in units of registration and represent the results of each category through semantic networks generated by Network View. Each context unit is illustrated by arrows that demonstrate associations between units of registration. Each code is indicated by an ordered pair of two numbers {a - b}, where 'a' represents the frequency of use of the registration unit during transcription and 'b' denotes the interconnection with other codes.



The units of context and registration resulting from content analysis were grouped into four dimensions of analysis: a) entrepreneurial motivations, b) behavioral beliefs, c) normative beliefs, and d) beliefs of perceived control, as shown in Figure 3.

Analytical category	Context unit	Registration unit
Entrepreneurial motivations	Future objectives	Entrepreneurship by necessity
		Entrepreneurship by opportunity
		Personal achievement
Behavioral beliefs	Advantages	Financial return
		To help other former convicts
		To manage own time
		Autonomy
		Lower pressure level
	Disadvantages	Loss of labor rights
		Need for discipline and organization
		Tax costs
		Risk
		There are no disadvantages to owning your own business
Normative beliefs	Perception of social referents	Society
		Family
		Friends
		Customers and suppliers
Perceived control	Facilitators	Previous experience of entrepreneurship
		Previous professional experience
		Personal skills
		Perception of social referents
		Family entrepreneurs
		My Entrepreneur Cart project
		Bureaucracy of starting a company
	Difficulties	Lack of support
		Lack of capital
		Passage through the prison system
		Suspension of rights
		Stigma and prejudice
		Electronic anklet

**Figure 3.**  
Analytical research categories  
Source: Elaborated by the authors (2020)

#### 4. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the mapping of initiatives for the reintegration of former convicts to encourage entrepreneurship, three initiatives administered by the State Department of Justice and Citizenship (SEJUS-CE) were identified—the Querer Project, the Living and Entrepreneurship Project, and Kiteiras Grants—and a private initiative (the School Factory Project).

The Querer Project enables professional training, encouraging cooperation and association among detainees. The Living and Entrepreneurship Project offers training through courses and workshops, in

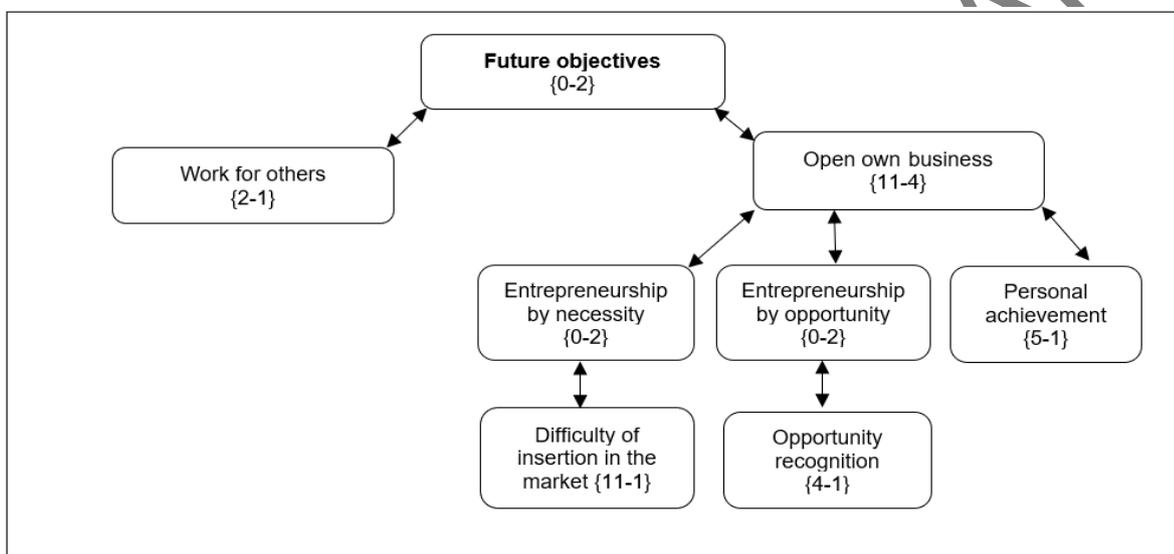


addition to providing snack carts to former convicts, the license issued by the City of Fortaleza at no cost to former convicts (Ceará, 2017).

The Kiteiras Grants Project stems from a partnership between SEJUS-CE, the Inter-American Development Bank, and the Danone company, its objective being to provide training for former convicts and offer structural support to open a business. The Factory School Project comes from a partnership between the Deusmar Queirós Foundation and the State University of Ceará, offering professional training, teaching, and production workshops in various areas for convicts and their families.

#### 4.1 Entrepreneurial Motivations

When asked about their objectives after leaving the penitentiary, the interviewees pointed out two responses, to work for others or to open own their business, consolidating the ‘Future objectives’ context unit and generating the semantic network shown in Figure 4.



**Figure 4.**  
**Entrepreneurial motivations**

Source: Elaborated by the authors with Atlas.ti (2020)

The interviewees who expressed their desire to work for others would like to resume activities that they performed before their period in prison, they show the desire to reconcile working for others with an entrepreneurial career.

All interviewees expressed an interest in opening their own business, expressing entrepreneurial intention by presenting a predisposition to entrepreneurial activity (Agolla et al., 2019; Paul et al., 2017), as shown by the following: “I would like to have my business” (EG1), “I am already thinking about my own business” (EG4).

The reports corroborate the GEM (2017) data that demonstrate that having a business of their own is the desire of 31 percent of adult Brazilians, and that 36 percent already own a business or have taken some action to have their own company.

The motivations that would lead interviewees to open a business were grouped into three registration units: ‘Entrepreneurship by necessity’, ‘Entrepreneurship by opportunity’, and ‘Personal achievement’. The latter category emerged from the field contrasts with the dichotomous GEM (2017) categorization, and corroborates the perspective of Vale et al. (2014).



Entrepreneurship by necessity is common among interviewees. This is because of the obstacles to relocation in the labor market: the barriers that restrict their employability conditions (Holzer, Raphael, & Stoll, 2003) include unemployment, family pressure, and dissatisfaction with the current situation, pushing them toward entrepreneurship (Van der Zwan et al., 2016). The interviews reveal the difficulty of insertion in informal work that directs them toward entrepreneurship by necessity:

Everyone inside thinks about starting a business because they already know how difficult it is to get a job after you leave prison (EG3).

They do not give an opportunity. When a vacancy appeared, I went, it was the first. But when they pulled my card and saw that I had gone through the system, they said: "Give me your number and I'll call you later". When I left, I spent almost ten years in this fight looking for a formal job, but the doors were always closed (EG11).

One of the interviewees mentioned that planning for his small enterprise started while he was still serving time in a closed regime. At the time of the interview, he was wearing an electronic anklet and had been under house arrest for three months, but he had opened a small shop in his home in a neighborhood on the outskirts of Fortaleza.

The motivation 'entrepreneurship by opportunity' emerged when respondents acknowledged the existence of certain business opportunities which have not yet been explored. Thus, there are entrepreneurial motivations related to the exploration of new opportunities based on human capital (Vale et al., 2014; Yitshaki & Kropp, 2017), as shown by these reports:

Some opportunities appeared in front of me, such as drop shipping, which is online sales without you having stock at home; another possibility is to open a sewing workshop system with my aunt (EG4).

To start a business is my idea now. I had this vision because one day I got home and my wife was gone., I had nothing to eat, I wanted to eat something fast and there was nothing close to home. And then I had this vision that something could work here, with the sale of snacks at night (EG12).

In contrast to the dichotomous GEM classification, it emerged from the interviewees' account of entrepreneurial motivation as a personal achievement. This was predicted in the research by Vale et al. (2014), in which the authors argued that entrepreneurial motivations are complex and multidimensional and should not be exclusively necessity versus opportunity.

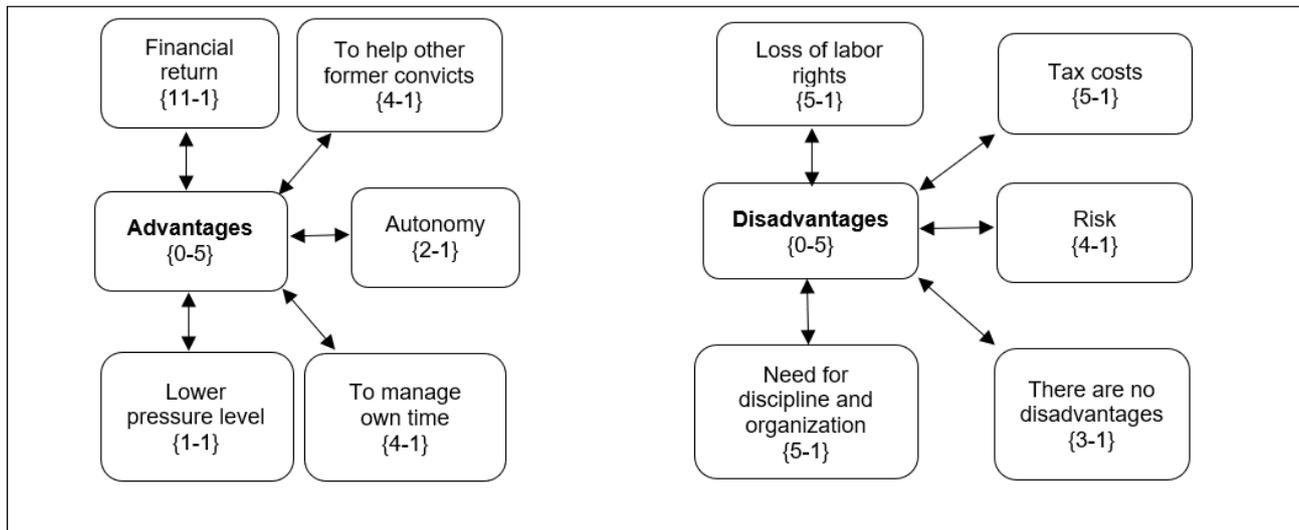
One factor driving the individual to entrepreneurship is the desire for achievement (Vale et al., 2014), leading to the creation of the personal achievement registration unit. This category is corroborated by McClelland (1972) when considering that a main motivation driving the individual to entrepreneurship is related to the need for personal achievement.

In view of the above, the motivations that induce respondents to become entrepreneurs go beyond the dichotomous classification of the GEM, as the interviewees are motivated by necessity, opportunity, and personal achievement, corroborating the research perspective of Vale et al. (2014). Entrepreneurial motivation results from the interactions between several complex factors that transcend the need for survival and the perception of business opportunities. This is a relevant finding of this research.



## 4.2 Behavioral Beliefs

Behavioral beliefs in relation to the assessment of individuals' entrepreneurship were categorized from two registration units, 'advantages of having their own business' and 'disadvantages of having their own business', providing the semantic network shown in Figure 5.



**Figure 5.**  
**Behavioral beliefs**

Source: Elaborated by the authors with Atlas.ti (2020)

When choosing entrepreneurship, entrepreneurs consider the desire for autonomy and independence, application of their knowledge and experience, the enjoyment of self-employment, and self-realization (Carter, Gartner, Shaver, & Gatewood, 2003; Vale et al., 2014). From the interviews, the following behavioral beliefs favorable to entrepreneurship were identified: financial return, time management, autonomy, lower pressure/stress level, and helping other former convicts.

Financial need is a strong motivator for the individual to become autonomous and to choose entrepreneurship as a career option (Alstete, 2008). This is especially true in the post-incarceration period, when former convicts face financial restrictions and develop activities that require little initial capital to open a business (Grosholz et al., 2020).

Former convicts see entrepreneurship as a viable way of earning income, as reported by EG6: "An advantage is an income, which I believe would be greater than a minimum wage, right?" The former convicts who already had a business before entering the prison system also agree that the financial return is one of the positive points of being an entrepreneur.

The results corroborate Kautonen and Palmroos' (2010) affirmation that increased income, the freedom to manage their own time, and independence are factors that attract individuals to entrepreneurship.

Self-discipline in managing one's time provokes a positive attitude toward entrepreneurship among prisoners who participate in entrepreneurial education programs (Grosholz et al., 2020). Thus, opening a business is associated with the idea of managing your own time, as the reports confirm: "One of the advantages is that you work your hours, right?" (EG5) and "There are many advantages—having more time to solve my problems, for example" (EG3). These statements suggest the belief that entrepreneurship will bring more flexibility and free time, generating the belief 'management of own time'.

Another belief was autonomy, which allows freedom of decision for the entrepreneur, offering the opportunity to work according to their values and objectives in addition to commanding and leading their business (Grosholz et al., 2020; Van Gelderen, 2010), as reported: “There are many advantages, only you are working for yourself, it is not for anyone. It is already good. You do it your way” (EG3).

One of the interviewees believed that the level of pressure and stress in his career as an entrepreneur was lower compared to the pressure of working as a third-party employee, this being one of the advantages of having his own business. Such a report differs from the results indicated in the literature, since entrepreneurial activity generates stress for entrepreneurs at all levels (Alstete, 2008).

One belief that stood out was called ‘helping other former convicts’. Four interviewees emphasized that, as entrepreneurs, they could generate job opportunities for other former convicts. Such externalizations reveal meeting the needs of third parties linked to the entrepreneur through bonds of an affective and family nature as an inducement to entrepreneurship (Vale et al., 2014), offering post-incarceration social support (Grosholz et al., 2020).

Regarding the disadvantages of having your own business, four beliefs were listed as being unfavorable to entrepreneurship: labor rights, tax costs, the need for discipline and organization, and risk. It was also stated that there are no disadvantages to having your own business.

In terms of labor rights, five respondents said that they feared losing their labor rights, such as social security and a guarantee fund, when opting for entrepreneurship: “The disadvantage is that being an employee, you have that guarantee, right? You have a proper job, you have a guarantee fund, you have a good salary, right? As an entrepreneur, no” (EG5). Also, they mentioned as a disadvantage the tax costs. According to the interviewee, the high tax burden makes them reflect before undertaking—“The disadvantage is very high taxes; then we think twice” (EG7)—a reality evidenced by the GEM (2017) when warning that high taxes are limiting for Brazilian entrepreneurship.

However, with the Individual Microentrepreneur program, it is possible to regularize entrepreneurial activities and guarantee social benefits such as retirement, exemption from federal taxes, and business registration fees through a single monthly payment (Behling, Pereira, Mazzoleni, Baccin, & Lenzi, 2015). Thus, the disadvantages mentioned by the interviewees are mitigated when choosing to formalize the business by joining the Individual Microentrepreneur program.

Even pointing out the need for discipline and organization and risk as disadvantages, the interviewees maintained a positive attitude about the possibility of undertaking entrepreneurship: “You have to wake up early, you have to maintain a certain time, you have to be disciplined or the business gets messy [...]” (EG5), and “Disadvantages are just the risk of investing and losing” (EG7). The positive tone is also recorded in the statements of three interviewees who were not able to point out any type of disadvantage in the possibility of having their own business.

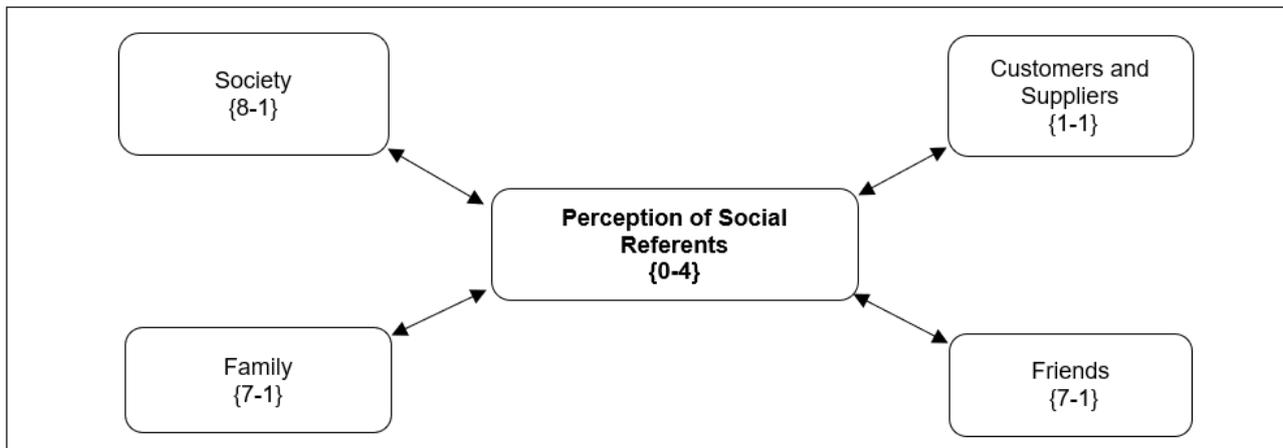
The reports confirm the results of research showing that positive beliefs about the possibility of starting a business are related to the formation of a favorable attitude and that are directly related to the entrepreneurial intention (Ferreira et al., 2017; Liñán & Chen, 2009).

### 4.3 Normative Beliefs

To investigate the influence of third parties on the entrepreneurial intent of the interviewees, the analysis category “Normative Beliefs” was linked to the context unit “Perception of Social Referents”, associated with four registration units. The units “Family” and “Friends” are considered as social referents that influence the individual, in line with the TPB (Ajzen, 1991), while the units “Society”



and "Customers and Suppliers" emerged during the analysis of data as new social referents and considered relevant findings of this research, as illustrated in the semantic network shown in Figure 6.



**Figure 6.**

#### Normative beliefs

Source: Elaborated by the authors with Atlas.ti (2020)

Normative beliefs indicate socio-environmental barriers to involvement in entrepreneurial activities (Ephrem, Namatovu, & Basalirwa, 2019; Liñán & Chen, 2009). This was confirmed by the identification of the referent ‘society’, cited by eight of the interviewees, who any type of action by a former offender with restraint.

The only interviewee who had already undertaken entrepreneurship after leaving the prison, opening his shop two months before the interview, agreed; he explained that he sees people's disbelief about his enterprise and his plans for the future: “Today I see that many people do not believe that you can grow. They don't really believe” (EG3).

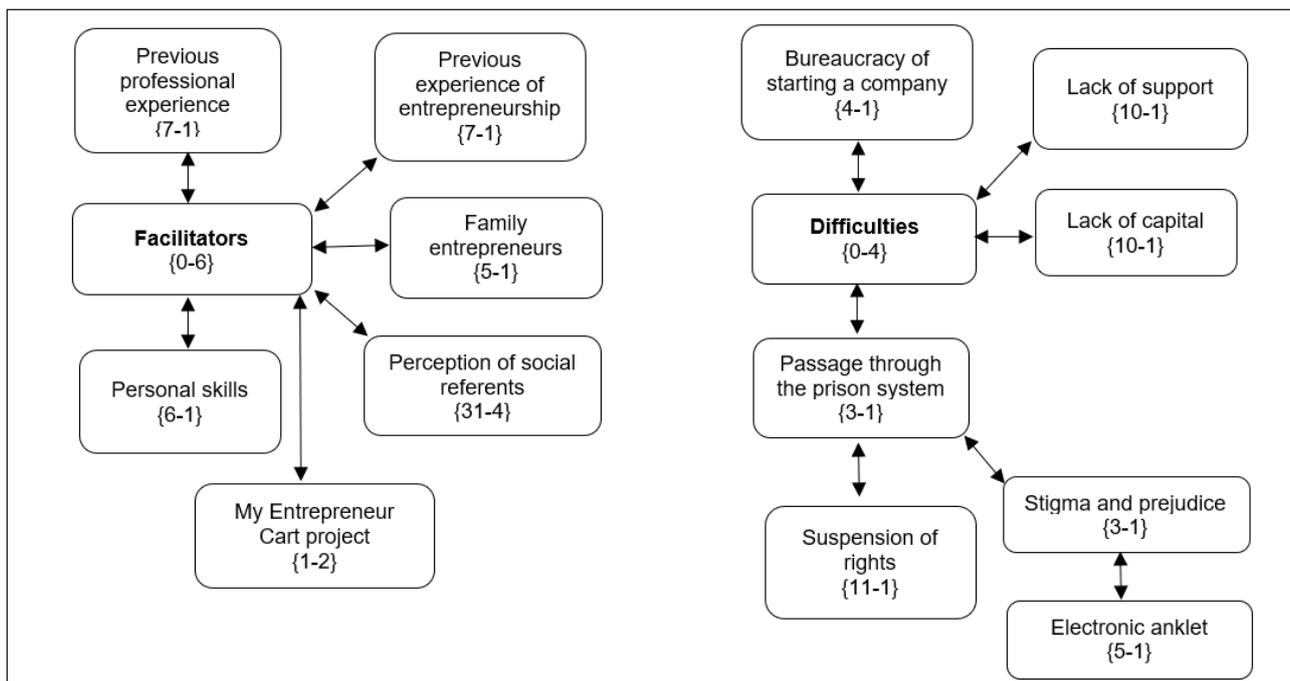
This negative belief agrees with Pastore (2011), indicating that the aversion to ex-offenders can last for a lifetime and extend to the whole of society, and can be considered a social problem. In addition, the GEM (2017) warns that society's perception of minority groups affects the entrepreneurial intention of these individuals, as social norms interfere with how these subjects view life and its possibilities.

The interviewee who had a car dealership mentioned his impressions of possible customers’ and suppliers’ perception of the possibility of him having his own business again: “For me to reopen my old business, there are many barriers. The biggest difficulty is how I would behave, not only with my client, but with the environment that I will relate to” (EG2).

The most cited social referents were family and friends, which exert great social pressure on entrepreneurial behavior (Ephrem et al., 2019; Grosholz et al., 2020). This corroborates the results of previous research, in which the expectations of these groups anchor the decision to become an entrepreneur (Barros, Madruga, Ávila, & Beuron, 2014; Ferreira et al., 2017; Grosholz et al., 2020), as they are the contextual predictors with greater proximity (Ferreira et al., 2017).

#### 4.4 Perceived Control Beliefs

To highlight the beliefs about their own capacity that facilitate and hinder entrepreneurial activity, the analytical category of perceived control was conceived. This was investigated through the context units ‘facilitators’ and ‘difficulties’, as presented in the network semantics of Figure 7.



**Figure 7.**  
**Perceived control beliefs**

Source: Elaborated by the authors with Atlas.ti (2020)

As facilitators, the following beliefs were identified: previous professional experience, previous experience of entrepreneurship, My Entrepreneur Cart project, personal skills, family entrepreneurs, and support from social referents. Difficulties comprised four beliefs: lack of capital, lack of support, bureaucracy, and passage through the prison system. Seven interviewees stated that previous professional experience would facilitate a new venture as an entrepreneur. One of the interviewees mentioned My Entrepreneur Cart, from the Living and Entrepreneurship Project, as something that would facilitate his plan to return to work as a freelancer selling barbecues, an activity he performed before going through the system. The potential businesses targeted by former convicts are not unattainable and require little initial investment given these subjects' previous experience (Grosholz et al., 2020). Thus, the interviewees recognize that entrepreneurial behavior is facilitated by experience, in line with Ajzen (1991).

Personal skills were considered facilitators in the attempt to open a business: some interviewees wanted to invest in areas that require a certain manual skill, recognizing their own skills and their ability to control and master their behavior (Grosholz et al., 2020; Liñán & Chen, 2009).

The interviews indicated that family entrepreneurs and support from social referents are facilitators of entrepreneurial behavior. However, the influence of family and friends is not considered a perceived control belief as it is not related to individuals' skills, although the context can favor the development of entrepreneurial skills (Grosholz et al., 2020; Rodermund, 2004).

As difficulties, lack of capital, lack of support, and the bureaucracy of starting a company emerged from the field. These are difficulties faced by Brazilian entrepreneurs in general, not only perceived by the interviewees. According to the GEM (2017), the lack of financial resources, bureaucracy, legislation, and tax burden are limiting factors for the development of entrepreneurial activity in Brazil.

Lack of support was pointed out as something that the interviewees perceived immediately after leaving prison. Some of the interviewees reported a lack of support from family members and close acquaintances, but it is important to note that three of them said they believed they lacked family

support because their family members are concerned about any possibility of further crime, becoming fearful and overprotective.

It is worth noting that lack of capital, lack of support, and bureaucracy cannot be classified as beliefs of perceived control, since they do not refer to individual skills and abilities involved in entrepreneurial activity.

Passage through the prison system emerged from the field and was created as a unit to group the entrepreneurs' perceived limitations for entrepreneurship, such as suspension of rights and stigma and prejudice, the latter associated with the electronic anklet, that hinders the performance of entrepreneurial behavior due to the limitations imposed on capacity, especially the movement of the interviewees.

The suspension of rights addresses obstacles such as restrictions on documentation and other temporary loss of civil rights. Displacement limitations were also scored as an obstacle to entrepreneurship. As for stigma and prejudice, reports on this topic were varied, specifically on prejudice linked to the use of electronic monitoring. For Ireland (2012), integrating the prisoner into social life means divesting oneself of social and cultural prejudices. The subjects' statements suggest that not everyone can do that.

From the data analysis, it was possible to understand that: a) the entrepreneurial motivations of the interviewees did not meet the dichotomous classification of the GEM (2017), and personal achievement emerged as another motivator; and b) behavioral, normative, and perceived control beliefs contribute to the formation of interviewees' entrepreneurial intention. The research findings are summarized in Figure 8.

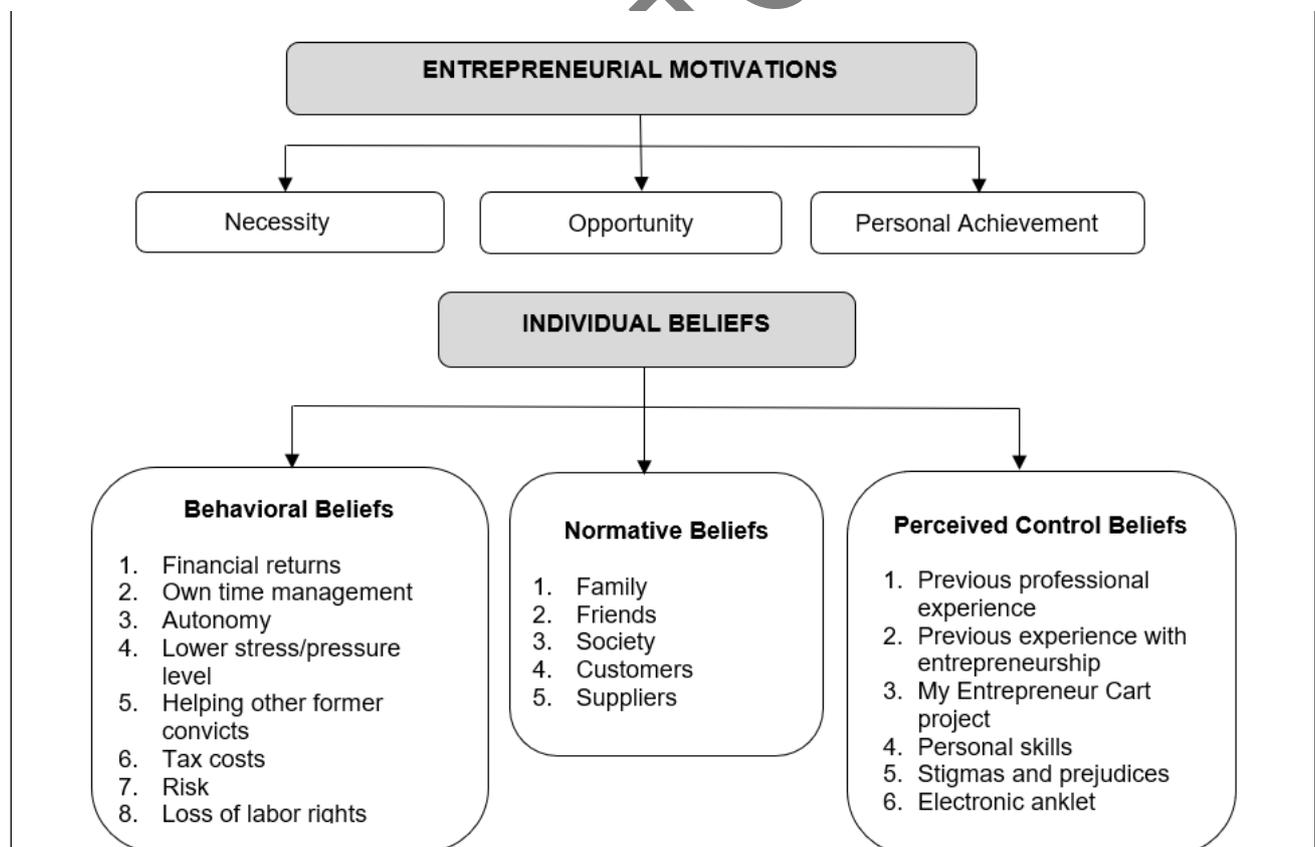


Figure 8.

**Conceptual map of the results**

Source: Elaborated by the authors (2020)



## 5. FINAL REMARKS

This research aimed to investigate the entrepreneurial motivations and the individual beliefs of individuals released from prison in Ceará regarding opening their own business, under the perspective of the TPB.

Regarding entrepreneurial motivations, all interviewees expressed their intention to open their own business, based on three motivations: by necessity, by identifying opportunities, and for personal fulfillment. This finding opposes the dichotomous classification proposed by the GEM (2017) and contributes to reinforce the perspective of Vale et al. (2014) that entrepreneurship is a result of multiple and non-exclusive motivations.

Individual beliefs were grouped according to Ajzen's (1991) classification. Behavioral beliefs about the advantages of starting a business were identified as financial returns, time management, autonomy, less stress/pressure to run the enterprise, and helping other former convicts who suffer the same difficulty getting a job. The perceived disadvantages were tax costs, risk, loss of labor rights, and the need for discipline and organization. However, three interviewees were unable to mention any disadvantage to entrepreneurship, suggesting a strongly positive attitude.

Regarding normative beliefs, society was considered the social referent that negatively interferes with the decision to undertake entrepreneurship. Meanwhile, family and friends were the most cited reference groups that would support the interviewees' decision to undertake entrepreneurship. Other social referents mentioned, but with less frequency, were customers and suppliers.

In terms of perceived control, previous professional experience, previous experience of entrepreneurship, the My Entrepreneur Cart project, and personal skills were considered to facilitate entrepreneurial intention, as they refer to the recognition of personal skills and the ability to control entrepreneurial behavior (Agolla et al., 2019). The interviews indicated that family entrepreneurs and the support of third parties are facilitators in the decision to undertake entrepreneurship; however, such beliefs were not classified as perceived control, but rather as reinforcing the importance of social referents, through normative beliefs, as influencers of entrepreneurial behavior.

The interviewees pointed out the beliefs that hinder the entrepreneurial intention, these being lack of capital, lack of support, bureaucracy of opening a company, and passage through the prison system. Only beliefs regarding passage through the prison system were considered difficult, since the interviewees have limiting beliefs about stigma and prejudice, and electronic anklets, in addition to being penalized by the suspension of rights, which can interfere with their ability to perform entrepreneurial behavior.

This research has the following limitations. Firstly, the sample diversity regarding criminal experience, which can interfere in perceptions of entrepreneurial motivations and beliefs. A second limitation was the difficulty accessing the public in the custody of the courts, even in an open and semi-open regime, as some of the nominees seemed suspicious and refused to participate hours before the interview was scheduled. It is suggested that future studies use a larger sample, considering the possibility of investigating inmates participating in the professional education programs offered by the prison system and proceeding to new analyses.

The main academic contribution of this study was to promote and expand the discussion on entrepreneurship as a career option after a period of deprivation of liberty. The study's innovative character is highlighted in presenting results that oppose the dichotomous classification of entrepreneurial motivation described by the GEM (2017), in addition to reinforcing the importance of



family and friends as social referents, since the interviewees reported that such referents would encourage them toward entrepreneurship.

Furthermore, the review of national studies on the reintegration of former offenders into the labor market under the management's bias seems scarce. Recognizing the low employability of ex-detainees as a management problem may be the beginning of the debate on strategies that seek to minimize the negative impacts of their low employability. This study is an invitation to discuss joint strategies between the government, the population, and academia to mitigate prejudices that go beyond the prison walls and imprison former offenders and society.

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