

Entrepreneurial orientation far beyond opportunity: the influence of the necessity for innovativeness, proactiveness and risk-taking

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Abstract

Purpose – This paper aims to investigate factors that induce entrepreneurial orientation (EO), i.e. what influences the manifestation of its fundamental attributes (innovativeness, proactiveness and risk-taking).

Design/methodology/approach – This study focuses on religious entrepreneurship in an emerging economy, employing a single case study approach. A total of 17 shepherd-entrepreneurs and 4 parishioners were interviewed.

Findings – The results suggest that two key driving factors influence religious entrepreneurs' EO: the search for the discovery of opportunity (a finding that strengthens current literature); and both the search for the creation of opportunity and overcoming challenges associated with the need for survival.

Practical implications – This paper allows entrepreneurs to understand better the factors and motivations that affect their entrepreneurial behavior. It is particularly relevant to entrepreneurs embedded in emerging and developing countries, in which the interchange between opportunity and need contexts is apparent. Further, this paper sheds light on significant dimensions for entrepreneurs' education and training programs. It also suggests elements capable of bolstering public policies.

Originality/value – The contributions of this paper are fourfold: it supports an integrative view of creation and discovery theories; it reinforces the alternating character of entrepreneurial motivations; it expands the literature by arguing that creating opportunity and the need for survival also influence entrepreneurs' innovativeness, proactivity and risk-taking; and it stresses the neo-Pentecostal shepherds' entrepreneurial propensity.

Keywords Entrepreneurial orientation, Small businesses, Opportunity, Necessity, Emerging economies

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

Entrepreneurial opportunities represent a subject of paramount importance in many entrepreneurship studies (Brändle *et al.*, 2019; Huang *et al.*, 2020; Wood and McKinley, 2020). For instance, Wood and McKinley (2020) highlighted the significance of a holistic approach, considering the opportunity as a cornerstone for exploring entrepreneurial opportunities. In addition, George *et al.* (2016) highlighted the importance of entrepreneurial opportunities as an entrepreneurship research focus. Although there is an ongoing debate concerning entrepreneurial opportunities (Shepherd, 2015; Song *et al.*, 2017), following Wood and McKinley (2020), this paper considers the opportunity as an umbrella construct, i.e. “an abstract representation of an organizational phenomenon that incorporates many meanings and is subject to multiple interpretations” (Wood and McKinley, 2020, p. 367). Opportunity as an umbrella construct incorporates different approaches and theories that understand opportunity from different perspectives, although all are fundamental to entrepreneurship (Wood and McKinley, 2020).



One such approach relates to entrepreneurial orientation (EO) (Adel and Habib, 2018; Corrêa *et al.*, 2021b; Covin *et al.*, 2020; Covin and Wales, 2019). EO is a set of individual or organizational behaviors comprising several fundamental attributes. Scholars have emphasized three of these: innovativeness, proactiveness and risk-taking (Bull and Whittam, 2020; Martins and Perez, 2020; Mondal and Chakrabarti, 2021; Montiel Campos, 2017; Wu *et al.*, 2020). The very definition of innovativeness, proactiveness and risk-taking highlights the relevance of opportunity specifically in the EO context. Innovativeness reflects the tendency to engage with and support novel ideas (Lumpkin and Dess, 1996). Proactivity refers to anticipating opportunities to develop and introduce new products (Ljungkvist *et al.*, 2019). Finally, risk-taking refers to accepting uncertainty and the risks inherent in identifying and operationalizing business opportunities (Adel and Habib, 2018). In this context, Ejdenberg (2016) pointed out how much of the literature on EO is based on economists' explanations, such as that of Schumpeter (1982), for whom individuals can find opportunities and produce value-added products or services. From this perspective, the absence of opportunities limits individuals' and companies' EO manifestation (Rodrigo-Alarcón *et al.*, 2018).

However, opportunity as an axiom of EO may ultimately narrow the understanding of the construct. Furthermore, still, little-explored anecdotal evidence points to the theoretical plausibility that factors other than opportunity could influence EO. In other words, the opportunity may ultimately not be a *sine qua non* for the manifestation of EO attributes (innovativeness, proactiveness and risk-taking). For instance, Corrêa and Vale (2017) underlined how entrepreneurial behavior could appear in response to environmental imperatives, while Ejdenberg (2016) highlighted how scholars should measure EO more subtly. This paper explores aspects of EO's attributes and identifies factors that drive them within these reflections. Thus, the following research questions guide this study:

RQ1. What aspects influence EO's attributes?

RQ2. In addition to opportunity, do other factors drive EO's attributes?

This article, therefore, aims to investigate EO inducers through two approaches. The first is theoretical, based on the association between EO and the literature on entrepreneurial motivations (Angulo-Guerrero *et al.*, 2017; Garcia-Lorenzo *et al.*, 2018). The literature on entrepreneurial motivations considers that individuals create enterprises driven by two main motivations: opportunity and necessity (Afandi *et al.*, 2017; Bosma *et al.*, 2020). Since its inception, the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) [the "world's largest and most extensive study of entrepreneurial activity" (Bosma *et al.*, 2020, p. 21)] has distinguished between entrepreneurial activity based on these two motivations (Bosma *et al.*, 2020). The second approach is empirical, based on studying a particular and emerging type of entrepreneurship (religious). In this paper, religion is not considered a set of ideas concerning the supernatural or transcendence but rather a social practice that encompasses business practices (Serafim and Feuerschütte, 2015).

In this context, Block *et al.* (2020) stressed how research linking entrepreneurship and religion has increased in recent years. Studies associating religion and entrepreneurship usually adopt one of two fundamental perspectives (Corrêa *et al.*, 2021c). Some authors have drawn attention to the influence of religion on distinct aspects of entrepreneurship (Altinay and Wang, 2011; Du, 2017; Gursoy *et al.*, 2017; Henley, 2017), understanding religion as an institutional structure (Welter, 2011). More recently, other scholars have focused on entrepreneurship manifested in the religious context (Corrêa *et al.*, 2021a, b; Kaszowska-Mojša, 2020; Pearce *et al.*, 2010; Wulandari, 2019). This research interprets the religious context from a broad perspective as a "lens" (omnibus context) (Welter, 2011). Furthermore, Welter (2011) highlighted the lack of entrepreneurship works considering the context from

this perspective. Although the religious context may not seem relevant to competitiveness, several authors have emphasized a competitive market among churches from different religions or even from the same religion (Corrêa *et al.*, 2021a, b; Wulandari, 2019). According to Nwankwo and Gbadamosi (2013, p. 619), the religion–entrepreneurship association is relevant because religion has become a “big business.”

Despite this, very few studies have attempted to investigate the association between EO and entrepreneurial motivations. This gap is particularly true considering the still little-explored religious entrepreneurship in emerging and developing countries, such as Brazil (Corrêa *et al.*, 2021b; Corrêa and Vale, 2017). Corrêa *et al.* (2017, p. 12) stated that “there are large gaps in Brazil, especially in the study of churches as enterprises and shepherds as entrepreneurs,” stressing the importance of novel studies investigating external factors influencing religious agents’ EO (Corrêa and Vale, 2017). The case studied was the Brazilian independent neo-Pentecostal Church, i.e. corporate churches that have started to adopt, in the religious context, practices standards in competitive markets (Corrêa *et al.*, 2017; Pierucci, 2011). The contextual dimensions considered were social, manifested within the limits of the neo-Pentecostal religious network, and spatial, limited to the Brazilian geographic context (Welter, 2011). Pierucci (2011) highlighted how these churches seem to have only one objective: to grow. For this, shepherds should be entrepreneurs, demonstrating a capacity to attract audiences and generate income for the Church (Prandi, 1996).

This present study also focuses on other research gaps, seeking to fill them partially. The first relates to entrepreneurship studies in emerging countries. Wales *et al.* (2013, p. 371) pointed out how “EO remains virtually unexamined in several strategically important countries such as Brazil.” This gap has been highlighted more recently; Singh and Gaur (2018) highlighted the scarcity of studies that associate entrepreneurship and innovation in such contexts. Further, Chakrabarti and Mondal (2018) and Corrêa *et al.* (2021b) stressed the absence of EO studies in a developing-country context, such as Brazil, while Moretti *et al.* (2020) stated how there is little research on EO in emerging or transitional economies, mainly when associated with small companies. The second gap relates to the absence of studies investigating EO in the religious context. Indeed, although EO “has been used to explain the performance of for-profit companies, [it has] seldom been applied to nonprofit organizations, such as religious institutions” (Wulandari, 2019, p. 52). The third gap relates to motivations (necessity × opportunity) in the context of EO’s dimensions. Although some authors have focused on the context’s influence (Floris *et al.*, 2020), they have not emphasized market opportunity and necessity and their influence on innovativeness, proactiveness and risk-taking. This article seeks to address this little-explored association.

Theoretical background

Entrepreneurial opportunity

The entrepreneurship literature is largely based on the notion that entrepreneurs are individuals attentive to opportunities, i.e. they can identify or create them, thus differentiating themselves from others (Adel Rastkhiz *et al.*, 2019; Baranik *et al.*, 2018; Corrêa and Vale, 2017; Estrin *et al.*, 2016). Adel Rastkhiz *et al.* (2019, p. 71) Adel Rastkhiz *et al.* (2019, p. 71) highlighted how opportunity is the “cornerstone of entrepreneurship.” Corrêa *et al.* (2017) highlighted how entrepreneurs are individuals attentive to opportunities. According to Song *et al.* (2017, p. 101), “while millions of people are exposed to the same events, only a few people ‘connect the dots’ by applying their previous knowledge to recognize an opportunity.” For Trusić *et al.* (2017, p. 343), the “freedom of interpretation of the phenomenon of entrepreneurship allows only those who recognize opportunities . . . to be considered entrepreneurs.” The notion of an association between entrepreneurship and opportunity is not new; it dates back to the neoclassical economic trend (Corrêa *et al.*, 2017).

For instance, the theory of firm growth (Penrose, 1959) posits that knowledge accumulation enables firms' and entrepreneurs' growth.

The extant literature investigating entrepreneurship and opportunities encompasses two fundamental theoretical strands (Hmieleski *et al.*, 2015; Shepherd, 2015; Song *et al.*, 2017; Wang, 2020). The first strand ("creation theory") is based on constructivism and a nominalist ontology (Hmieleski *et al.*, 2015; Ramoglou *et al.*, 2020) and considers that opportunities do not exist *a priori*; entrepreneurs create them in an unstructured, uncertain and unexpected way (Denrell *et al.*, 2003; Hmieleski *et al.*, 2015). According to Hmieleski *et al.* (2015, p. 290), "In this context, entrepreneurs are not able to develop and grow their firms based on clearly defined opportunities since the relevant information necessary for doing so is not available and/or does not exist." According to Guo (2019), it is the transformation and connection of internal and external resources that create opportunities.

The second strand ("discovery theory") is based on realistic ontology and posits that opportunity is not created but is present in the environment, available in the market regardless of the entrepreneur's knowledge (Borges *et al.*, 2017). Guo (2019, p. 344) highlighted how "opportunity recognition lies at the core of entrepreneurship research." It is the entrepreneur's sole responsibility to discover the opportunity before others do (Alvarez and Barney, 2010). This approach considers that information is available to entrepreneurs; they can formulate and execute specific plans to capitalize on opportunities (Hmieleski *et al.*, 2015). Several factors are associated with this line of reasoning, one of which is EO.

Recent studies have been calling for an integrative view of discovery and creation perspectives, stressing the possibility of integration between both theoretical strands (Borges *et al.*, 2017; George *et al.*, 2016; Hmieleski *et al.*, 2015). Hmieleski *et al.* (2015, p. 293) underscored how "opportunity contexts may naturally cycle between states of discovery and creation."

Entrepreneurial orientation (EO)

Luu and Ngo (2019) underlined how research on EO has recently received considerable attention, while García-Villaverde *et al.* (2018, p. 195) underscored how "EO has consolidated itself as a factor of differentiation of companies in the literature on entrepreneurship." EO is the "methods, practices and decision-making styles managers use to act entrepreneurially" (Lumpkin and Dess, 1996, p. 136). EO characterizes an entrepreneur who, searching for opportunities, is able to use various fundamental attributes (Rodrigo-Alarcón *et al.*, 2018). Three attributes are currently highlighted in the literature: innovativeness; proactiveness; and risk-taking (Adel and Habib, 2018; Corrêa *et al.*, 2017; Floris *et al.*, 2020; Luu and Ngo, 2019; Mondal and Chakrabarti, 2021; Pearce *et al.*, 2010; Randerson, 2016; Rodrigo-Alarcón *et al.*, 2018; Song *et al.*, 2017; Wales *et al.*, 2013).

Innovativeness is a requirement inherent to entrepreneurship (Adel and Habib, 2018). It refers to "the tendency to engage in and support new ideas, novelty, experimentation, and creative processes that may result in new products, services, or technological processes" (Lumpkin and Dess, 1996, p. 142). Schumpeter (1982) was a pioneer in associating innovation with the entrepreneurial process, coining the concept of "creative destruction" to illustrate how entrepreneurs can break the economy's circular flow by introducing innovations: in the "carrying out of new combinations we call 'enterprise,' the individuals whose function it is to carry them out we call 'entrepreneurs'" (Schumpeter, 1982, p. 105).

Proactivity focuses on a future perspective in relation to pioneering actions taken by entrepreneurs to seek three fundamental objectives (Adel and Habib, 2018; Sellappan and Shanmugam, 2020): to predict opportunities related to developing and introducing novel products and services ahead of competitors (Adel and Habib, 2018; Sellappan and Shanmugam, 2020); to bring about changes in current strategies and tactics (Rodrigo-Alarcón *et al.*, 2018); and to recognize future market trends (Adel and Habib, 2018).

According to [Rodrigo-Alarcón et al. \(2018\)](#), proactivity relies on the ability to take advantage of market opportunities.

Finally, risk-taking “represents the willingness to take advantage of opportunities that have arisen in the environment” although the firm and the entrepreneurs know “neither the likelihood of its success nor the consequences of its actions” ([Rodrigo-Alarcón et al., 2018](#), p. 196).

Entrepreneurial orientation (EO) in the religious context

EO in the religious context has been the subject of recent studies ([Corrêa et al., 2021a, b](#); [Pearce et al., 2010](#); [Wulandari, 2019](#)). [Pearce et al. \(2010\)](#) conducted a quantitative investigation of 250 Evangelical Lutheran Churches’ EO in the USA, concluding that churches benefit from their pastors’ entrepreneurial behaviors, especially innovativeness. The innovative capacity of pastors is positively associated with such behavior in the running of their churches. However, the research findings “do not support proactiveness and risk-seeking as independent behaviors associated with improved organizational performance” ([Pearce et al., 2010](#), p. 239).

More recently, [Wulandari \(2019\)](#) investigated the EO of the 19 priests in the Archdiocese of Jakarta, finding that “local parish priests need to act not only as religious leaders but also as business managers” (p. 52) and that “priests need to be enterprising” (p. 53). This author concluded that the priests’ EO, especially their innovativeness and proactivity, positively affect their churches’ performance; even priests from traditional Catholic churches are innovative and proactive. According to [Wulandari \(2019, p. 58\)](#), “this appears to contradict the assertion of [Pearce et al. \(2010\)](#),” for whom “proactivity correlates negatively to a Church’s performance because it conflicts with tradition.” However, Catholic priests appear not to be risk-taking. This author emphasized that the hierarchical system of the Roman Catholic Church prevents pastors from adopting risky behavior that could contradict the diocese.

In this regard, two other recent studies have sought to investigate entrepreneurship in evangelical churches. In the first, [Corrêa et al. \(2021a\)](#) integrated EO into the networking literature, specifically regarding social coupling and decoupling. These authors defended the importance of incorporating relational dimensions into the EO construct: entrepreneurs can influence their networks’ structure by appropriating EO attributes and vice-versa ([Corrêa et al., 2021a](#)). In the second, [Corrêa et al. \(2021b\)](#) qualitatively investigated the influence of social capital on neo-Pentecostal evangelical pastors’ EO in Brazil, concluding that “networks must be dense enough to stimulate religious entrepreneurs’ individual EO but not so dense as to harm innovativeness, proactivity, and risk-taking; relative social network equilibrium is necessary” (p. 2294). Although recent studies have used EO to study entrepreneurship in religious institutions, including neo-Pentecostal churches in Brazil, no work has sought to investigate the factors driving the EO’s attributes, as proposed here.

Entrepreneurial orientation (EO) motivations

Considering opportunity as the only factor inducing EO attributes may ultimately provide only limited understanding. Anecdotal evidence, still little explored in the EO literature, points to the theoretical plausibility that other inducing factors could influence the fundamental attributes (innovativeness, proactiveness and risk-taking). In a study on Africa’s subsistence entrepreneurs, [Ejdenberg \(2016, p. 825\)](#) stressed how the discovery of opportunities is not the reality of entrepreneurs embedded in contexts outside Western Europe and the USA, such as Brazil. In such regions, many entrepreneurs “also have to find the basic means for subsistence on a daily basis” ([Ejdenberg, 2016, p. 826](#)). In this sense, the manifestation of EO attributes could not be, as alluded to in the current literature, limited or conditioned to discovering market opportunities; other still little-explored factors could have some influence. [Corrêa et al. \(2017, p. 338\)](#) suggested how EO can ultimately “emerge in

response to environmental imperatives and economic need.” The literature on entrepreneurial motivations stands out in this context (Afandi *et al.*, 2017; Angulo-Guerrero *et al.*, 2017; Belda and Cabrer-Borrás, 2018; Chen and Zhou, 2017; Garcia-Lorenzo *et al.*, 2018; Trusić *et al.*, 2017).

According to the entrepreneurial motivations literature, individuals are driven toward autonomous activities by two seemingly dichotomous and mutually exclusive motivations: opportunity and necessity (Afandi *et al.*, 2017). Although entrepreneurship motivated by opportunity or necessity have different connotations, the importance of this dichotomy should “be interpreted with due caution” (Angulo-Guerrero *et al.*, 2017, p. 35). In general, opportunity entrepreneurs are “motivated to start a business activity in order to exploit a potential opportunity” (Belda and Cabrer-Borrás, 2018, p. 250), while necessity entrepreneurs create enterprises due to the absence of options (Nikolaev *et al.*, 2018). A necessity entrepreneur has no better income option than creating a business to support himself/herself and her/his family (Bosma *et al.*, 2020).

Since its inception in the 1950s, and boosted in 1999 by the GEM, the entrepreneurial motivations literature initially aimed to identify, between opportunity and necessity, the motivations leading individuals to entrepreneurialism (Belda and Cabrer-Borrás, 2018; Sahasranamam and Nandakumar, 2020; van der Zwan *et al.*, 2016). However, over time, new reflections have emerged, one of which relates to a temporal dimension. The opportunity and necessity dimensions can alternate along the entrepreneurship trajectory (Ejdenberg, 2016; Garcia-Lorenzo *et al.*, 2018; Ljungkvist *et al.*, 2019; Sahasranamam and Nandakumar, 2020).

Proposed conceptual model

The co-presence of, and alternation between, opportunity and necessity could ultimately affect the manifestation of EO’s attributes. Thus, the reflections presented so far suggest that innovativeness, proactiveness and risk-taking could theoretically be driven not only by opportunity but by the simultaneous or alternating combination of two fundamental factors. The first is already widely highlighted in the literature and is associated with discovering opportunities (Ejdenberg, 2016; Rodrigo-Alarcón *et al.*, 2018; Song *et al.*, 2017). The second is innovativeness, the features of which are associated with the need for survival. Figure 1 summarizes these reflections and illustrates the proposed integrated analytical framework, presenting two conceptual models. The first (A) illustrates the current theoretical perspective, i.e. EO scholars have stressed the fundamental relevance of opportunity for the construct, considering opportunity only from a realistic ontological perspective. The second (B) proposes a new conceptual model in which entrepreneurial opportunity is discovered (discovery theory) and simultaneously created in the development of the enterprises (creation theory). Furthermore, the opportunity is not a *sine qua non* for EO’s manifestation. The necessity for survival also affects entrepreneurs’ innovativeness, proactiveness and risk-taking.

Method

Design

The research strategy adopted is qualitative, as befits investigations seeking to understand the actors’ meanings and intentions within their social context (Yin, 2015b). The research method used is the case study. Randerson (2016) recently advocated a shift in the study of the EO construct, moving from the positivist perspective that has characterized investigations to date to a more constructionist perspective, considering entrepreneurship as a “form of socially constructed reality” (p. 582). This author highlights the importance of “research methods that are imaginative, critical and reflexive precisely in order to cultivate a critical sensitivity to hidden assumptions based on qualitative data such as case studies”

Entrepreneurial Orientation
attributes – innovativeness,
proactiveness, and risk-taking
– would be driven/employed
by:

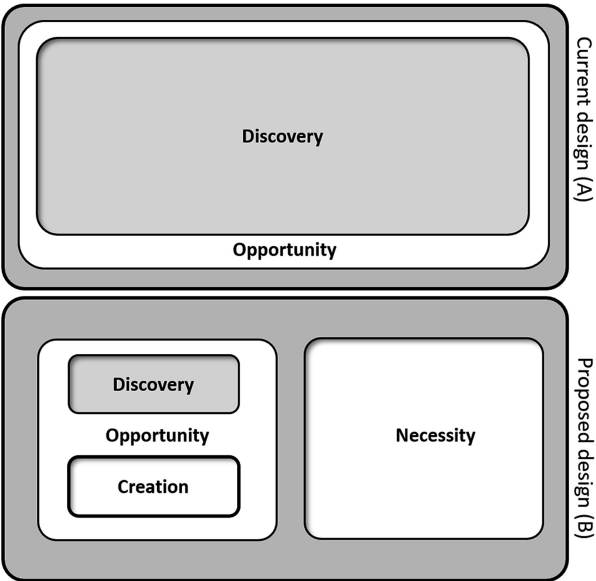


Figure 1.
EO inducing factors

Source(s): Authors

(Randerson, 2016, p. 582). As mentioned in the Introduction, the case is the Brazilian independent neo-Pentecostal Church. Single cases are considered adequate when the case can contribute to knowledge or when the case is peculiar or revealing, deviating from observational occurrences common to the area, such as religious entrepreneurship (Eisenhardt *et al.*, 2016; Yin, 2015a). According to Eisenhardt *et al.* (2016, p. 1118), “despite being clearly non-representative,” single cases “can also facilitate the novel insights,” as in the present study.

Case description

Independent neo-Pentecostal churches emerged in the 1970s (Pacheco *et al.*, 2007), representing a specific type of religious denomination that initially emerged in Brazil (Rabuske *et al.*, 2012). According to Pierucci and Prandi (1996, p. 275), the neo-Pentecostals are “novel protestants made in Brazil.” The development of novel non-traditional religious denominations, including the neo-Pentecostal evangelical one, reflects the secularization of the Brazilian state, i.e. state–church separation, which was made official in 1889 (Corrêa *et al.*, 2021c). This religious secularization has given rise to two complementary movements. The first was guaranteeing freedom of choice in terms of choosing which religion or faith to follow. The second was religious pluralism, i.e. the possibility of new non-traditional denominations arising and seeking institutional solidity (Corrêa *et al.*, 2021c). Pierucci and Prandi (1996, p. 276) emphasized how “there is no lack of religious freedom” in Brazil. This freedom has created a market of free competition between churches and denominations (Passos *et al.*, 2011; Pierucci, 2011; Pierucci and Prandi, 1996).

In this context, religious agents, including neo-Pentecostal shepherds, have acted in a proactive, professional and differentiated way to survive and grow (Corrêa *et al.*, 2021a; Mariano, 2007). Indeed, without guaranteed resources from the state, religious institutions depend solely on religious agents’ mobilization capacity (the pastors in the case of neo-Pentecostal churches) (Gracino Junior, 2008). According to Passos *et al.* (2011, p. 704),

“in an extremely heated ‘religious market,’” such as in Brazil, churches, religions or entrepreneurs who “do not mobilize to enter the competitive process of ‘fighting for souls’ in a more incisive way, end up ‘losing out.’” For [Correio \(2017, p. 100\)](#), in this context, agents behave “in the same way as professionals from other markets, with self-interest as their motivation.” In this sense, competition exists between religions as well as between evangelical churches of different congregations.

Congregations are “subunits of denominations” ([Pearce et al., 2010, p. 225](#)). For instance, within the neo-Pentecostal denomination, there are several congregations. These congregations have different names and are “relatively small groups of individual members who attend services together” ([Pearce et al., 2010, p. 225](#)). According to [Pearce et al. \(2010, p. 225\)](#), “such congregations are alternatively known as churches, mosques, parishes, synagogues, and temples.” [Gaarder et al. \(2000, p. 288\)](#) highlighted how various neo-Pentecostal congregations offer “religiosity that is highly powerful in pragmatic features and not excessively challenging in ethical aspects.” Moreover, such congregations have, as their chief characteristic, the offer of magical-religious services, of a therapeutic and thaumaturgical type, focusing on guarantees of divine concessions of material wealth and physical and emotional healing ([Rabuske et al., 2012](#)). Because there is no requirement for theological training to act as a pastor, any individual believing they have a “divine calling” and who receives the blessing of another pastor can act as a religious leader, subsequently creating their own congregation ([Rabuske et al., 2012](#)).

Although there are large neo-Pentecostal congregations, a representative portion of neo-Pentecostal pastors create and lead independent churches, with small, independent communities mainly on the “outskirts of large urban centers” ([Pacheco et al., 2007, p. 55](#)). These communities, or independent congregations, organize themselves around their pastors’ charismatic attributes ([Pacheco et al., 2007](#)) and are the focus of interest in the present study. Based on the demographic census, there are over 14 million evangelicals in Brazil (33% of the population). According to [Pacheco et al. \(2007, p. 55\)](#), the growth of the neo-Pentecostal community in Brazil is “the most significant issue for Christianity in the last century.”

Case delimitation

This study follows the integrated case approach ([Yin, 2015a, b](#)), with two observation units providing information on the case: the shepherd/pastor himself/herself; and Church members (parishioners). Further, the shepherd also constitutes an empirical unit whose analysis focused on her/his EO attributes (including innovativeness, proactiveness and risk-taking). [Randerson \(2016, p. 583\)](#) also stressed how “firm-level behavior is the consequence of the individual,” i.e. although the case is the Church, the behavior of its pastor may directly influence its entrepreneurial character. In all, 17 shepherds participated in the research (Stage 1). Subsequently, in Stage 2, the evidence obtained from the pastors was contrasted with that of four parishioners of their churches. The selection of pastors incorporated theoretical criteria, with shepherds being considered religious entrepreneurs. For this study, an “‘entrepreneur’ is a person who designs, launches, and operates a new enterprise” ([Sellappan and Shanmugam, 2020](#)). A religious entrepreneur is someone who creates a religious institution, including churches ([Corrêa et al., 2021b](#)). In this context, the pastors chosen had to have been responsible for creating the Church and being a part of its administration during data collection. Further, only full-time pastors took part in the study, i.e. pastors whose own personal income depended on the income and performance of their Church. Following these criteria, the initial selection of the first three pastors was intentional, based on the researchers’ contacts. Next, we used the snowball technique to select the other 14 pastors, in which the pastors suggested new relevant participants ([Ramadani et al., 2019](#)). Owing to access difficulties, the selection of parishioners was made by their pastors. The criteria for requesting nominations were parishioners who did

not have any family or kinship ties (even distant ones) with the pastor. Over 30 h of interviews were collected for the analysis. Theoretical saturation (when no further relevant incremental information is found) was used to delimit the number of shepherds and parishioners investigated (Yin, 2015b). Table 1 presents the pseudonyms identifying the shepherds and parishioners, their gender and the duration of the interviews.

Instruments

Semi-structured in-depth interviews were used for data collection. This technique is considered the primary investigation method in qualitative research and one of the most appropriate in the case study method (Lawrence, 2020). It allows in-depth details to be revealed from the study participant's perspective (Ebneyamini and Sadeghi Moghadam, 2018). Table 2 presents the interview guide and the main questions.

Data operationalization

Data analysis took place in two stages: making specific analytical notes immediately after recording the interviews; and data transcription and categorization. The data categorization followed a deductive logic, based on Yin's (2015b) general analytical generalization strategy. In this approach, the theoretical categories associated with innovativeness, proactiveness, risk-taking, opportunity and necessity guided data categorization. One or more theoretical categories could incorporate the same sentence or paragraph. Yin (2015a, b) highlighted how the analytical strategy aims to link the data in the case study to concepts of interest and how the researchers themselves can develop their strategy.

Analysis and discussion

Field evidence reveals some fundamental findings that are novel in the EO context, suggesting that neo-Pentecostal shepherds and their churches are entrepreneurs and that

Table 1.
Characteristics of
interviewed
entrepreneurs

	Pseudonym	Gender	Interview duration (minutes)
Shepherds	#sa	Male	116
	#sb	Male	99
	#sc	Male	72
	#sd	Male	101
	#se	Male	141
	#sf	Male	104
	#sg	Male	70
	#sh	Male	194
	#si	Male	177
	#sj	Male	195
	#sk	Male	142
	#sl	Male	136
	#sm	Male	82
	#sn	Male	73
	#so	Male	47
	#sp	Female	76
Parishioners	#sq	Male	83
	#pa1	Female	19
	#pa2	Male	69
	#pa3	Male	62
	#pa4	Female	30

Table 2.
Interview guide

Dimension	Attribute	Open question
Entrepreneurial orientation (EO)	Innovativeness	<i>OQ1</i> : How many new religious products or services has the Church created in the past five years? <i>OQ2</i> : What can be considered innovative in the religious context?
	Proactiveness	<i>OQ3</i> : Have competing entrepreneurial pastors ever copied your products or services? <i>OQ4</i> : Has the Church developed any initiatives that others have copied?
	Risk-taking	<i>OQ5</i> : What can be considered a risky attitude? Has the Church and or the shepherd already taken any risky action? <i>OQ6</i> : How do you prevent your Church parishioners from switching to another competitor?
Entrepreneurial motivations (EM)	Opportunity	<i>OQ7</i> : Does the Church and or the shepherd seek growth opportunities? How? <i>OQ8</i> : How to get more parishioners to the Church?
	Necessity	<i>OQ9</i> : Has the Church ever run the risk of closing? Has the Church ever been in need associated with its survival?
Associations between EO and EM	–	<i>OQ10</i> : How do innovation, proactivity, and risk-taking interfere in creating or discovering opportunities? <i>OQ11</i> : How do innovation, proactivity, and risk-taking interfere in helping to overcome challenges associated with Church survival? <i>OQ12</i> : What did you due to overcome moments of need for the survival of your enterprise?

neo-Pentecostal shepherds are innovative, proactive and take risks in pursuit of two major objectives. The first is to grow their churches. Parishioner #pa2 stressed how, in neo-Pentecostal churches, there is a sense not of companionship but of competition between shepherds: as shepherds' target audience is the same, "they end up competing with each other." Pastors #sq and #sh confirmed this perspective. #sq pointed out how churches are "managed as companies when discussing the neo-Pentecostal religious market." According to #sh, a religious institution is no different from any other institution: "There are different methods and technical developments in churches for how to increase the Church's size, how to increase and maintain its revenue." Shepherd #sd emphasized how "an industry of faith" exists nowadays.

Churches' growth is achieved by shepherds' seeking two fundamental goals. The first is attracting more parishioners (increasing the number of Church members). The second is avoiding losing parishioners to competing pastors (#sc, #sd, #se, #sj, #so): "Nobody wants to lose a parishioner" (#sn); "Pastors are afraid" (#sc). Employing a metaphor in which the parishioner is a sheep, and the Church is a trough: "What if the sheep goes to another trough and eats better food than he has at home?" (#se). For #sf, "there are shepherds who only care about money. If he is a full-time pastor [i.e. the salary depends on the Church's performance], when a parishioner leaves, his income from him decreases." In general, shepherds "understand that other churches are competitors. My Church is the one that saves; my Church is the one that heal; my Church will take you to heaven." (#sb). To achieve both objectives, pastors demonstrate entrepreneurial aspects, employing attributes representing their innovativeness, proactiveness and risk-taking.

Shepherds are innovative when they create new religious services, such as phone-blessings or phone-visits (#sb, #si), or invest in media and employment agencies to contact their parishioners (#sg, #sh, #sn) (Adel and Habib, 2018; Corrêa *et al.*, 2021b). Both initiatives

help to prevent losing parishioners. For example, phone blessings or phone visits involve providing parishioners with spiritual help at a distance: “You call a number, and you will receive help” (#sh). In turn, some larger churches invest in media to establish closer contact with their members and employment agencies only for parishioners (#sg, #sh, #sn): “If a miracle happens, you can grow the Church to a thousand members if you know how to take advantage of it in the media by advertising” (#sh).

At the same time, shepherds are proactive. [Adel and Habib \(2018\)](#) and [Sellappan and Shanmugam \(2020\)](#) emphasized how proactive entrepreneurs envision opportunities to develop and introduce novel products and services ahead of competitors. Shepherds demonstrate this characteristic when creating, ahead of competitors, various services to attract parishioners, such as mini-churches (#sa, #sd, #sg, #sk). In this practice, pastors seek to convert people from other religions. Shepherd #sh stressed how the goal is “to convert a Catholic person who we evangelicals believe will not achieve salvation.” According to him, if “the person was not born again [an expression used when converting to Protestantism], if he did not accept Jesus, he goes to hell.” Cell work involves forming leaders in the Church who hold religious meetings in their homes. Chosen by the pastors, leaders invite neighbors and family to take part in these meetings, facilitating members to convert to Protestantism: “A cell is not for converts; it is for converting” (#nd). According to #sh, “a mini-church is like opening a branch, a franchise.” #pa3 emphasized how churches, “when they see they are losing their parishioners, end up using the same strategy.” According to #sh, “sometimes you start a mini-church with a couple. In a little while, there are already eight or nine people meeting. These people end up being baptized and becoming members of their Church.”

Further, proactive entrepreneurs change current strategies and tactics ([Rodrigo-Alarcón et al., 2018](#)). Shepherds change their strategies and tactics for attracting and retaining followers by decreasing the tithes levied. This initiative helps, for example, in converting people and keeping the faithful in the Church. #sj stressed how a Church reduced its tithes from 10% to 9.5%. According to #sh, “such actions help attract the attention of people who are not ‘paying tithes elsewhere.’” Further, to retain parishioners, pastors offer leadership positions in the Church only to well-off parishioners. #pa4 highlighted how parishioners’ financial resources influence their position in the Church, suggesting a tactic used by shepherds to retain those most well-off. According to her, “if you look at who the leaders are within the Church, you see they are the people who earn the most.” Entrepreneurs who recognize future market trends can also be considered proactive ([Adel and Habib, 2018](#)). This proactivity is the case with neo-Pentecostal shepherds when they reduce expectations regarding the customs parishioners should adopt, i.e. rules of conduct and dress codes usually required of parishioners. For instance, some pastors and neo-Pentecostal churches prohibit parish women from using contraceptives. Some churches, however, “are relaxing the rules because they saw they were losing parishioners. The churches have cut a lot [of customs/rules].” (#sf). According to #sl, “for a Church to grow and not lose parishioners, you have to use a strategy of not requiring parishioners to follow habits and customs. Letting people come without asking them to obey the board, the Church administration.” Note the identification of a market trend among pastors. The stricter ones are probably losing parishioners over time.

Finally, risk-taking is the willingness to take advantage of opportunities, although the entrepreneur knows neither the likelihood of its success nor the consequences of her/his actions ([Rodrigo-Alarcón et al., 2018](#)). Shepherds are proactive and take different risks, for instance, by depending on the support of auxiliary shepherds. On the one hand, auxiliary shepherds help with the Church management. Indeed, #sa emphasized how auxiliary pastors help, for example, by offering courses aimed at parishioners’ professional and religious development. According to #sm, titular pastors who do not seek help from auxiliary pastors limit their Church’s growth possibilities: “They cannot handle everything: preparing the

preaching, taking care of the Church's finances, helping the faithful. It is too much." However, at the same time, several interviews highlighted how auxiliary shepherds are among the main reasons for losing parishioners (#sc, #se, #sh #sp). Pastors' dependency on auxiliary shepherds is one reason that leads pastors to lose their parishioners. Churches can become split because of fights between titular and auxiliary pastors, with parishioners following different pastors' leadership: "Many pastors are afraid of their assistant opening a Church within the Church. That is, creating another Church and taking the faithful from him." (#sc); "I have seen many cases like this ... Here is a case. A pastor left and took 60% of the parishioners." (#se); "it can happen that an auxiliary shepherd takes 100% of the Church" (#sm). According to #sh, there is a strategy that titular pastors adopt when they realize they might lose followers to their auxiliary pastors: "the strategy is to help him open another Church. You had better help him open another Church rather than wait for him to take all the members of your own Church."

Another risky practice is prohibiting parishioners from visiting other churches. #pa1 highlighted how "there are pastors who do not allow their parishioners to visit other churches." According to #pa2, "one thing I hear most is that we cannot meet with people from other churches because it ends up having a negative influence." A third practice considered risky is making threats and cursing those parishioners who intend to disobey them (#sf, #sg, #sh, #sl). A fourth risky practice is proselytizing, i.e. visiting members of other churches, which is a practice liable to retaliation. Proselytizing practices are often used by shepherds and aim to attract parishioners from other competing neo-Pentecostal churches. Although shepherds often plan such actions, they can also be a "question of opportunity" (#sh). According to #sh, "sometimes you find a person who is disappointed in another Church. You end up talking to him. Oh brother, go to my Church. We have a place for you there. How are you going to serve God with sadness in your heart?" For this shepherd, "sometimes it isn't a planned behavior, but it happens spontaneously." Still, the behavior is unethical: "It is like you are taking fruit from the basket instead of planting and harvesting it." (#sh). Even so, "there are shepherds who have no ethics at all. He invites his parishioner. What are you going to do? Are you going to hit him?" (#sh). According to #sh, when a competing pastor is interested in taking a parishioner from another pastor's Church, they even go to "people's homes. They do everything to find out the address. It is a full spy service." Therefore, the following proposition emerges:

- P1. Neo-Pentecostal shepherds are entrepreneurs. They exhibit innovative, proactive and risky behaviors.*

Field evidence corroborates and expands on previous evidence highlighting the existence of EO in the religious context (Corrêa *et al.*, 2021b; Pearce *et al.*, 2010; Wulandari, 2019). Pearce *et al.* (2010) concluded that traditional Lutheran Protestant churches benefit from their pastors' entrepreneurial behavior, especially innovation (although proactivity and risk-taking were not considered particularly relevant). More recently, Wulandari (2019) investigated the EO of 19 Catholic priests in the Archdiocese of Jakarta, concluding that innovativeness and proactiveness impact Church performance but not risk-taking. The present study substantiates previous studies by showing entrepreneurial attributes' positive influence. However, it broadens the understanding by verifying, in the neo-Pentecostal context, the relevance of the three investigated attributes. All EO attributes show some relevance to pastors and their churches, whether in the context of opportunity or need. Innovativeness, proactiveness and risk-taking are shown to be relevant for pastors and the development trajectory of their churches.

Another finding is related to EO's inducing factors, i.e. the influence of EO's attributes. As highlighted by Borges *et al.* (2017), Hmieleski *et al.* (2015) and Roscoe *et al.* (2013), data suggest that entrepreneurs use EO attributes to discover opportunities. For example, Hmieleski *et al.* (2015)

highlighted how entrepreneurs make and execute specific plans to capitalize on opportunities. According to #sh, there are different methods and technical developments in churches for “how to increase the Church’s size, how to increase and maintain its revenue.” In other words, empirical data suggest that pastors seek to discover opportunities through planned behaviors. Such planning is clear in all three types of initiatives: innovative (e.g. mini-churches); proactive (e.g. when pastors, in a planned way, reduce the percentage of tithes, seeking to attract the attention of new believers who seek to pay less or retain current parishioners); or even risky [e.g. when pastors visit parishioners from other churches (behavior liable to retaliation)]. Such planned behavior is influenced by all EO attributes: shepherds seek opportunities through planned innovative, proactive and risky behaviors.

Empirical evidence also suggests additional findings. The EO construct seems to relate to a constructivist perspective of opportunity associated with “creation theory.” Authors who defend a nominalist ontology concerning entrepreneurial opportunity hold that the opportunity does not exist *a priori*. Entrepreneurs create it in an unstructured, uncertain and unexpected way (Denrell *et al.*, 2003; Hmieleski *et al.*, 2015). Shepherds also employ entrepreneurial attributes in this way. For example, #sh stressed how proselytizing practices, which can be associated with proactive and risky behavior, also relate to the “question of opportunity.” According to this pastor, “sometimes it is not a planned behavior, but it happens spontaneously.” Pastors, therefore, also create opportunities in a somewhat unstructured way, employing proactive and risky behaviors. Visiting parishioners from other churches implies both an initiative that suggests changes in current strategies and tactics and a willingness to take advantage of opportunities that arise in the environment (risk-taking) (Rodrigo-Alarcón *et al.*, 2018). While such behavior may be planned, it also stems from unforeseen and uncertain situations. These findings reinforce an emerging strand of research supporting the integration of the perspectives of discovery and the creation of opportunities (Borges *et al.*, 2017; Hmieleski *et al.*, 2015). Therefore, the following propositions emerge:

- P2. The EO construct is associated with the realistic ontology of the “discovery theory.”
- P3. The EO construct is associated with nominalist and realistic ontologies.
- P4. Creation and discovery theories explain the EO construct.
- P5. Entrepreneurs plan innovative, proactive and risky behaviors (discovery theory), while creating opportunities seems to derive primarily from proactive and risky behaviors (creation theory).

Furthermore, field data suggest additional findings of theoretical relevance. Besides creating and discovering opportunities, aspects associated with need and survival also influence EO attributes. Although there is cooperative behavior between pastors, allowing the growth of churches from joint work between senior and auxiliary pastors, #sm underlined how “it can happen that an auxiliary shepherd takes 100% of the Church.” According to #se, “a pastor left and took 60% of the parishioners.” Given the pastor’s financial dependence on her/his Church’s performance, the need for survival is clear: “Many pastors are afraid of their assistant opening a Church within the Church. That is, create another Church and take the faithful from him.” (#sc). On these occasions, pastors find themselves forced to resort to representative attributes of their EO. In search of survival in the religious market, shepherds: prohibit parishioners from visiting other churches; make threats against and curse their parishioners; offer those most well-off leadership positions in the Church; and limit the rules and customs, among other things, that parishioners must follow (all representative of innovative, proactive and risky behaviors). Pastor-entrepreneurs carry out, in the religious context, initiatives representative of innovative, proactive and risky behaviors.

Thus, shepherds and parishioners have highlighted evidence suggesting that such behavior is associated with the creation and discovery of opportunities, on the one hand, and the search for market survival-related with needs, on the other. Given this, the following proposition arises:

- P6.* The need for survival is influenced by EO attributes (innovativeness, proactivity and risk-taking).

[Table 3](#) summarizes the field evidence, associating it simultaneously with the thematic and theoretical categories of interest.

An additional aspect related to the association between EO attributes and entrepreneurial motivations deserves attention, namely, the association of both constructs with the ontological dimension. For instance, anecdotal evidence suggests that, while innovativeness can help pastors in contexts of opportunity and need, such behavior derives fundamentally from planned behaviors (realistic ontology). On the other hand, data do not suggest that innovativeness can emerge from unstructured or unexpected behaviors (nominalist ontology). In other words, while religious entrepreneurs can plan innovativeness, proactiveness and risk-taking in relation both to opportunity and needs, they seem to undertake only proactiveness and risky behavior (in an unplanned and unstructured way) in the context of both opportunity and needs. [Table 4](#) summarizes this analysis, presenting entrepreneurial behaviors and classifying them according to motivation, EO attributes and the corresponding ontology. Thus, evidence suggests the following proposition:

- P7.* To discover opportunities and overcome needs, entrepreneurs can plan innovativeness, proactiveness and risk-taking or unexpectedly create proactivity and risk-taking.

Further, several authors have examined motivation, in the context of both opportunity and needs, when the entrepreneur enters the market, showing that motivation can alternate between being driven by opportunity and needs throughout the enterprise's development ([Garcia-Lorenzo et al., 2018](#); [Sahasranamam and Nandakumar, 2020](#)). This study identified such an alternation in the field. Data suggest relative recursion among the motivations that induce EO. #sm emphasized how there are cases of auxiliary pastors who take away 100% parishioners, forcing titular pastors, whose personal income depends on Church performance, to start from scratch (note the transition from opportunity to the need for survival). Auxiliary pastors, used to help the Church's growth, can also take away parishioners, affecting the institution's survival needs. An inverse relationship also exists. For example, need-driven pastors can identify or create opportunities by exploring religious miracles. Pastor #sh emphasized how "you can grow the Church to a thousand members if you know how to take advantage" of a miracle that has occurred within the Church. #sh also emphasized how the practice of mini-churches allows pastors to start churches with just one couple: "In a little while, there are already eight or nine people meeting. Those people end up being baptized and becoming members of their Church." Thus, evidence suggests the following proposition:

- P8.* Opportunity and need motivations can alternate over time.

On the one hand, this finding confirms [Garcia-Lorenzo et al.'s \(2018\)](#) and [Sahasranamam and Nandakumar's \(2020\)](#) propositions regarding the possibility of a temporal recursion between opportunity and need. On the other hand, it expands the EO literature regarding the temporal influence of opportunity and needs with the construct. [Figure 2](#) illustrates the conceptual model derived from the data, in which two fundamental motivations influence the manifestation of EO attributes: opportunity and necessity. Both the creation and

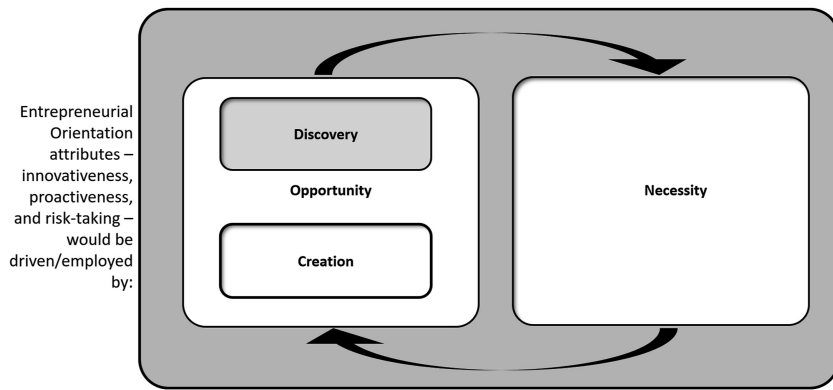
	Entrepreneurial orientation (EO)				
	Innovativeness	Proactiveness	Risk-taking		
Opportunity	Tendency to engage in and support latest ideas ... that may result in new products, services, or technological processes <i>Invest in the media</i> "If a miracle happens, you can grow the Church to a thousand members if you know how to take advantage of it in the media by advertising" (#sh)	To predict opportunities related to developing and introducing novel products and services ahead of competitors <i>Mini-churches or cell work</i> "A cell is not for converts; it is for converting" (#sd) "A mini-church is like opening a branch, a franchise" (#sh)	To bring about changes in current strategies and tactics <i>Reduce the percentage of tithes</i> "A Church has reduced tithing from 10 to 9.5%" (#sj) "... such actions help attract the attention of people who are not 'paying tithes elsewhere'" (#sh)	To recognize future market trends <i>Pastors convert people from other religions</i> The goal is "to convert a Catholic person that we evangelicals believe will not achieve salvation" (#sh) "... if he does not accept Jesus, he goes to hell" (#sh)	Represents the willingness to take advantage of opportunities that have arisen in the environment <i>Auxiliary shepherds</i> "Many pastors are afraid of their assistant opening a Church within the Church. That is, create another Church and take the faithful from him/her]" (#sc) "A pastor left and took 60% of the parishioners" (#se) <i>Visit parishioners' homes from other churches</i> They even go to "people's homes. They do everything to find out the address. It is a full spy service" (#sh)
	—	—	<i>Visit parishioners' homes from other churches</i> They even go to "people's homes. They do everything to find out the address. It is a full spy service" (#sh)	—	
Necessity	<i>Phone-blessing or phone-visit</i> "You call a number, and you will receive help" (#sh)	<i>Mini-churches or cell work</i> "When they see that they are losing their parishioners, they end up using the same strategy" (#pa3)	<i>Offer fortunate parishioners leadership positions in the Church</i> "If you look at who the leaders are within the Church, you will see that they are the people who earn the most" (#pa4)	<i>Reduce habits and customs</i> Churches "are relaxing the rules because they saw that they were losing parishioners. The churches have cut a lot" (#se) "For a Church to grow and not lose parishioners, you have to use a strategy of not requiring parishioners to follow habits and customs. Letting people come without asking them to obey the board, the Church administration" (#sl)	<i>Prohibit parishioners from visiting other churches</i> "There are pastors who do not allow their parishioners to visit other churches" (#pa1) "One of the things I hear most is that we cannot join people from other churches because it ends up having a negative influence" (#pa2)
	<i>Employment agencies</i> (#sg, #sh, #sn)	—	—	—	<i>Make threats and curse</i> (#sf, #sg, #sh, and #sl)

Table 3.
Field evidence and its association with theoretical topics of interest

Innovativeness	Opportunity Proactiveness	Risk-taking	Innovativeness	Necessity Proactiveness	Risk-taking
<i>Realistic ontology (theory of discovery)</i>					
* Invest in the media	* Reduce the percentage of tithes	* Auxiliary shepherds	* Phone-blessing or phone-visit	* Offer well-off parishioners leadership positions in the Church	–
* Mini-churches or cell work	* Pastors convert people from other religions	* Visit parishioners' homes from other churches	* Employment agencies		
	* Visit parishioners' homes from other churches		* Mini-churches or cell work		
<i>Nominalist ontology (creation theory)</i>					
–	* Visit parishioners' homes from other churches	* Visit parishioners' homes from other churches	–	* Reduce habits and customs	* Prohibit parishioners from visiting other churches
					* Make threats and curse

Table 4.
Entrepreneurial
behaviors and their
association with EO
attributes,
entrepreneurial
motivations and
ontological
perspectives

Figure 2.
Conceptual model
proposed based on the
empirical data



Source(s): Authors

discovery of opportunities influence entrepreneurs in their innovativeness, proactivity and risk-taking. Furthermore, arrows between opportunity and need show alternations between cycles of opportunity and need (Garcia-Lorenzo *et al.*, 2018; Sahasranamam and Nandakumar, 2020).

Conclusions

This article has sought to answer two fundamental questions:

- (1) What aspects influence EO's attributes?
- (2) In addition to opportunity, do other factors drive EO's attributes?

The findings make four fundamental contributions.

Entrepreneurial opportunity: creation × discovery

This article contributes to strengthening the extant literature defending the need to understand creation and discovery theories in an integrated manner. Overall, the literature on entrepreneurial opportunity is still divided into two fundamental streams: creation theory and discovery theory. The first perspective is based on constructivism and a nominalist ontology (Hmieleski *et al.*, 2015; Ramoglou *et al.*, 2020), in which opportunities do not exist *a priori*. The second is based on a realistic ontology, holding that opportunity is not created but is present in the environment, available in the market regardless of the entrepreneur's knowledge (Borges *et al.*, 2017). Recent studies have, however, highlighted the possibility of integrating these perspectives (Borges *et al.*, 2017; George *et al.*, 2016; Hmieleski *et al.*, 2015). This study supports this emerging research stream, suggesting that both the creation and discovery of opportunities influence EO manifestation. When associated with EO, data suggest that combining both better explains the entrepreneurial dynamics. Religious entrepreneurs create while discovering opportunities. Shepherds plan opportunities (realistic ontology) and also create them (nominalist ontology) in the church-development context.

Entrepreneurial motivations

Field data show how opportunity and need motivations can alternate. This paper thus reinforces an emerging strand of studies suggesting the alternating character of

entrepreneurial motivations (Ejdenberg, 2016; Garcia-Lorenzo *et al.*, 2018; Ljungkvist *et al.*, 2019; Sahasranamam and Nandakumar, 2020). Further, it supports the need to broaden the understanding of entrepreneurship beyond its restricted perspective of an opportunity. The notion that entrepreneurs are individuals who are aware of opportunities and have a unique ability to identify or create them predominates in studies in the area (Adel Rastkhiz *et al.*, 2019; Baranik *et al.*, 2018; Corrêa and Vale, 2017; Estrin *et al.*, 2016). For Trusić *et al.* (2017, p. 343), the “freedom of interpretation of the phenomenon of entrepreneurship allows only those who recognize opportunities . . . to be considered entrepreneurs.” Although this study supports the relevance of opportunity in entrepreneurship, it also extends the relevance of the need for survival. Whether as a factor inducing entrepreneurship or during the development process of business activities, the need for survival can affect entrepreneurial activities. For instance, despite researchers’ interest in entrepreneurship in poor, emerging and developing countries, Al-Dajani *et al.* (2019), Anderson and Obeng (2017), Moreira *et al.* (2019), Rooks *et al.* (2016) and Thapa Karki *et al.* (2020) have emphasized how our knowledge of entrepreneurship in such contexts remains limited. In this sense, limiting the understanding of entrepreneurship or entrepreneurs to creating or discovering opportunities can limit various entrepreneurial phenomena in such regions (Ejdenberg, 2016). In these places, challenges such as the fragility of formal institutional structures (Stam *et al.*, 2014) and limited access to credit (Venkatesh *et al.*, 2017) directly affect a higher incidence of entrepreneurship born of necessity (Bosma *et al.*, 2020). Therefore, understanding the factors involved in entrepreneurship born of necessity, as well as the different strategies and attributes associated with meeting these needs (including the influence of EO), seems fundamental.

Entrepreneurial orientation (EO) versus opportunity

This study shows that entrepreneurial attributes derive both from the discovery of opportunity as well as from the creation of opportunities and overcoming needs, expanding studies in both areas. The literature supports the still current concept that the discovery of opportunity is a *sine qua non* for the manifestation of EO attributes (innovativeness, proactiveness and risk-taking) (Wu *et al.*, 2020). Against this backdrop, this article highlights how the necessity for survival also influences entrepreneurs’ innovativeness, proactivity and risk-taking (Adel and Habib, 2018; Al Mamun *et al.*, 2017; Luu and Ngo, 2019; Rodrigo-Alarcón *et al.*, 2018). In this sense, both the discovery and creation of opportunities and the need for survival affect entrepreneurial attributes. This article also highlights another dimension associated with the construct. Table 3 provides empirical evidence for how both factors (opportunity and need) specifically influence the innovativeness, proactiveness and risk-taking of pastor-entrepreneurs. This study has allowed us to verify some fundamental considerations. Initially, the same entrepreneurial action may be associated with identifying opportunities or overcoming challenges associated with the need for survival. For instance, in the religious entrepreneurial context, pastors carry out mini-churches or cell work to explore opportunities, manifested in the conversion of non-evangelicals, and to overcome the need for survival. This finding suggests that the actions undertaken are essentially two sides of the same coin. The identification of such activities is relevant for entrepreneurs. Since entrepreneurs can employ activities in situations of opportunity and need, a better understanding of which activities fit each profile has theoretical and practical implications. Considering micro-practices, researchers can understand which initiatives are most relevant in each entrepreneurial context. Furthermore, anecdotal evidence suggests that pastors usually compete although, under certain circumstances, they can also cooperate with each other. For instance, relying on the support of auxiliary pastors lies at the threshold between

competing and cooperating (risk-taking). While they allow churches to grow by better meeting the needs of parishioners, they are at the same time among the main reasons that cause ministerial divisions. Second, data suggest that proactivity and risk-taking are the most important entrepreneurial attributes in times of need. Five activities developed by pastor-entrepreneurs are associated with both dimensions. Furthermore, this study associates entrepreneurial attributes with the ontology with which discovery and creation theories are associated, suggesting that, while entrepreneurs can plan using innovativeness, proactiveness and risk-taking, they can only create without prior planning (proactive and risky behaviors).

Religious entrepreneurship literature

Neo-Pentecostal shepherds are innovative, proactive and take calculated risks. Like other entrepreneurs embedded in competitive markets, neo-Pentecostal pastors also have entrepreneurial attributes. By emphasizing the neo-Pentecostal shepherds' entrepreneurial propensity, this paper highlights to management researchers the importance of understanding the still little-explored field of religious entrepreneurship. Although recent studies have shown the entrepreneurial propensity of traditional and neo-Pentecostal pastors (Corrêa *et al.*, 2021b; Pearce *et al.*, 2010), studies focusing on entrepreneurial attributes in the religious context are still relatively scarce. This study draws researchers' attention to the area, emphasizing the need for a better understanding of how entrepreneurship occurs in such emerging contexts. The study of religious entrepreneurship has implications beyond the already relevant empirical-idiosyncratic dimension. By studying developing contexts, management researchers can expand knowledge of the constructs and approaches associated with the general entrepreneurial phenomenon.

Implications

Practical implications. This article has several practical implications that impact management decisions. First, it encourages entrepreneurs in different contexts to understand better the factors impacting their entrepreneurial behavior. This is especially important for entrepreneurs embedded in emerging or developing countries, where the interchange between opportunity and need contexts is more apparent and frequent. This encompasses, for example, innovative and proactive actions related to the digital transformation phenomenon, specifically digital entrepreneurship (Beliaeva *et al.*, 2019; Kraus *et al.*, 2019).

Such actions can leverage shepherd-entrepreneurs' and churches' opportunities by improving the relationship between churches and their parishioners. In addition, by deploying efforts and investing in social media (e.g. YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, etc.), shepherds can optimize communication, products and services. For instance, many churches in Brazil have not yet implemented any strategy to collect tithes via apps or social media, which would have a direct impact on entrepreneurship and proactiveness. However, the digital transformation of churches in Brazil presents some complex issues. The first relates to the resistance to policies encouraging technology use among older and more conservative evangelicals. The second concerns the infrastructure availability in a country such as Brazil, i.e. there are many social differences among the regions. The third relates to the awareness among shepherd-entrepreneurs of the positive effects of digital entrepreneurship as an innovativeness and proactiveness strategy able to minimize risks to the Church.

In this sense, this article sheds light on the significance of entrepreneurs' education and training programs to explore how to create and discover opportunities and how

entrepreneurial attributes can help overcome challenges in times of need. For instance, this study shows that pastors proactively change their strategies and tactics to attract and retain parishioners. Questions such as which strategies and tactics are best, or which share similarities with those of entrepreneurs embedded in other competitive contexts, can be instrumental in designing entrepreneurial training and qualifications. This paper also suggests the necessity to integrate approaches from digital entrepreneurship into religious entrepreneurship. Digital entrepreneurship, therefore, should consider, in an integrated manner, distinct but complementary aspects, such as business models and processes, platforms, the ecosystem, education and digital social aspects (Kraus *et al.*, 2019). Such training programs should incorporate entrepreneurial motivations and orientation. Further, in addition to competitive behaviors, this study also identifies anecdotal evidence of cooperative behaviors among shepherds, suggesting the combined existence of competition and cooperation between such actors. In this sense, private development agencies could explore entrepreneurial behaviors that encourage cooperation between pastors or entrepreneurs embedded in different contexts while limiting the risks associated with competition between them.

Policy implications. Ecosystem. This study also suggests implications for the entrepreneurial ecosystem. The *GEM 2020/2021 Global Report* highlighted the impact of a country's per capita income on local entrepreneurship (Bosma *et al.*, 2020). For example, low-income countries, such as Brazil, have a higher incidence of need-driven entrepreneurship. In such contexts, low income can be both the cause and the effect of high levels of entrepreneurship. In this sense, a supportive environment favorable to entrepreneurship is fundamental. If such support is absent, entrepreneurs may find it more difficult to transition from need to market opportunity, even if they exhibit innovative, proactive and risky behaviors. Such support suggests the significance of legislation-based initiatives aimed at reducing bureaucracy around the opening and closing companies, as well as the tax burden, which is high in emerging contexts. It is also relevant to consider policies that encourage the creation and development of clusters in which cooperation between entrepreneurs can become more evident, thus helping to overcome contexts of need. The transition from entrepreneurship born of necessity to one based on opportunity is also of interest to policymakers. Opportunity-based ventures contribute more to the economy as they pay more taxes and generate more jobs and income (Bosma *et al.*, 2020; Isaga, 2019; Si *et al.*, 2020). Si *et al.* (2020, p. 2) highlighted how one "challenge is to further understand entrepreneurship's link to poverty reduction and how productive entrepreneurship can be encouraged." The transition between need and opportunity entrepreneurship may be at the heart of this issue. Need entrepreneurs demonstrate innovativeness, proactiveness and risk-taking; given that such attributes are also fundamental to transitioning to opportunity entrepreneurship, it is vital for the government and the entrepreneurial ecosystem to facilitate this through legislation. In addition, ecosystems that stimulate entrepreneurship foster long-term endeavors, highlighting the relevance of laws and regulations that drive such characteristics (Bosma *et al.*, 2020).

Public institutions. This article indicates the need for public policies to encourage necessity entrepreneurship beyond the conception of necessity as an inducing factor associated only with the enterprise's initial set-up. Initiatives to encourage entrepreneurship and the entrepreneur must incorporate the possibility of co-participation and alternation between opportunity and need. For instance, public funding agencies could create indicators enabling easy access to credit for necessity entrepreneurs (both when setting up the company and during its growth). In addition, more entrepreneurial training and education initiatives are necessary at all levels of education. As well as universities, elementary, higher and technical education schools should

incorporate knowledge of entrepreneurial attributes (innovativeness, proactiveness and risk-taking) in the contexts of both opportunity and need.

Legislation. Entrepreneurial enterprises partly reflect attributes in the wider context. In this sense, aspects such as uncertainties in the political environment, corruption, lack and confidence in the authorities and legal uncertainty, among others (usually present in low-income, emerging, and developing countries), may affect the type of entrepreneurship seen in the country. On the one hand, such characteristics can affect entrepreneurs' investment and credibility, limiting the likelihood of access to international sources of entrepreneurial financing. On the other hand, such characteristics suggest the relevance of legislation encouraging, among other aspects, greater integration between municipal, state and national government agencies and a reduction in the bureaucracy associated with entrepreneurial activity. Such legislation could reduce the prevalence of entrepreneurship out of necessity and facilitate a transition process to contexts of opportunity.

Limitations

This article is not exempt from limitations. First, the data collection was limited only to semi-structured interviews. Evidence from other sources would make the findings more robust and enable triangulation with the field evidence. Second, only churches were considered as companies. Although neo-Pentecostal churches and pastors have tangential elements with other companies, they also have ethical and religious characteristics and idiosyncrasies, the analysis of which was not within the scope of this study. Thus, this study did not address aspects associated with differences between entrepreneurship and the commodification of faith. A third limitation relates to the ethical and non-emic perspective adopted to classify enterprises as driven by necessity (Yin, 2015a). According to Yin (2015a), while an emic perspective looks for the native meanings of the study participants, the ethical perspective analyzes events through an external lens, e.g. that of researchers. In this sense, although the authors adopted and understood the notion of an enterprise born of necessity (ethical perspective), the pastors, for religious reasons, may not understand the concept of an enterprise as being driven by necessity or opportunity. Ethical-religious reasons not covered in this study could affect how religious entrepreneurs understand the motivations of their enterprises (emic perspective). A fourth limitation relates to the impossibility of obtaining financial data or the longitudinal evolution of the growth in the number of parishioners. Although asked this, the pastors interviewed refused to provide such information. In this sense, this study identifies theoretical associations between EO and entrepreneurial motivations, although it cannot suggest possible causality between both constructs in running churches as enterprises.

Suggestions for future research: proposing a research agenda

These limitations noted above present scholars and practitioners with several opportunities for further research, encompassing the following topics:

- (1) How the need for survival specifically influences each EO attribute and vice versa, i.e. how innovativeness, proactivity and risk-taking contribute to overcoming challenges associated with the need for survival.
- (2) Which attributes contribute the most in occasions of opportunity or need, identifying micro-practices associated with each.
- (3) The association between EO and motivations (need $\times$ opportunity) in other types of religious enterprises and companies is embedded in several other

contexts. For instance, are entrepreneurial attributes equally relevant in times of opportunity and need, regardless of the company's sector? Depending on the segment, is any specific attribute more relevant in opportunity or need scenarios?

- (4) Whether there are instances of cooperation between companies in the same sector. If so, how do such instances impact entrepreneurs' EO? Could cooperation between entrepreneurs from the same segment, for example, reduce the need for entrepreneurs to possess EO attributes? In this sense, do entrepreneurs embedded in productive agglomerations, such as clusters, for example, benefit in times of need from mutual solidarity between peers?
- (5) Specifically, in the context of religious entrepreneurship, do the competition, cooperation and coopetition practices occur among pastors of the same religious denomination as well as between those from different denominations? If so, how do they occur? Finally, what is the impact of competition, cooperation and coopetition on the attributes of EO, understood both separately and jointly?
- (6) What the impact is of entrepreneurial behaviors related to EO in running enterprises, considering the contexts of need or opportunity. Does innovation in an opportunity context have a greater impact (in terms of efficiency and effectiveness) compared to innovation in a needs context? If so, how, and why? What is the association between EO and entrepreneurial performance, considering both scenarios (opportunity and necessity)?

These questions remain unanswered, suggesting the need for further research on the topic. Table 5 presents the theoretical approach, the dimension of interest, opportunities for questions to be answered and suggestions from related literature.

Approach	Dimension	Open question (OQ)	References
Entrepreneurial orientation (EO)/entrepreneurial motivations (opportunity and necessity)	Entrepreneurial orientation (EO)	OQ1: How do EO's attributes influence the entrepreneurial intent of individuals in emerging and developing contexts?	Martins and Perez (2020)
		OQ2: How do entrepreneurial aspirations impact EO attributes?	Angulo-Guerrero et al. (2017)
	Entrepreneurial motivations	OQ3: What is the influence of economic and cultural factors on the opportunity/need of entrepreneurs immersed in different contexts?	Martínez-Rodríguez et al. (2020)
	Entrepreneurial orientation (EO) and entrepreneurial motivations	OQ4: How does EO impact the organization's performance in opportunities and need scenarios?	Huang et al. (2020), Mondal and Chakrabarti (2021)
		OQ5: Is there a relationship between entrepreneurial motivation and stages of EO? If so, what type of relationship?	Ljungkvist et al. (2019)

Table 5.
Proposed research
agenda

Final remarks

The findings reveal that pursuing opportunities both for creation and discovery influences EO attributes. Another significant contribution is that the necessity for entrepreneurs' survival also drives innovativeness, proactiveness and risk-taking. Further, there is an alternation between opportunity and need that also shows that EO attributes impact both contexts. Therefore, this study proposes that human behavior, among other aspects, regarding the awareness of opportunities concerning transforming the business model to improve survivability (e.g. digital entrepreneurship) is fundamental to the innovativeness of the Church. This paper reveals novel possibilities for investigating the different contextual situations in which EO attributes exert influence beyond discovering opportunities.

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