

## Motivational Profile And Business Creation: Case Of Entrepreneurs In Sfax

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### Abstract

Entrepreneurship has nowadays become a priority for governments seeking to raise the level and pace of business creation given its many positive socio-economic benefits. Efforts have been made to promote, encourage and support entrepreneurs in their journeys. However, in the absence of entrepreneurial motivation and a favorable environment, all efforts will not have an impact. Knowledge of the motivational profile of the business creator thus becomes a key factor prior to the success of support programs and measures taken to promote entrepreneurship and business creation. It is in this context that this research work takes place, which aims to explore the motivations for business creation among entrepreneurs in Sfax (Tunisia). The results we achieved show the coexistence of several types and levels of entrepreneurial motivations. These motivations concern the entrepreneur himself, his direct entourage as well as the characteristics of his environment.

**Keywords:** *entrepreneurial motivation, business creation, entrepreneurs, Sfax.*

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## INTRODUCTION

In recent years, entrepreneurship has become a major issue for most countries in the world. Through its contribution to job creation, innovation and the renewal of the socio-economic fabric, entrepreneurship continues to arouse the interest of public authorities and individuals. The latter can find in entrepreneurial activities, and more particularly the creation of businesses, sources of satisfaction, or even a career choice.

One of the most common definitions of entrepreneurship consists of associating it, sometimes synonymously, with the creation of businesses. For Bruyat (1993), business creation is considered the heart of the field of entrepreneurship. Fayolle (2017) states that entrepreneurship can be defined by particular situations that create economic and social wealth, characterized by a high degree of uncertainty, by the existence of risks, in which individuals are very strongly involved and must develop behaviors based on acceptance of change and associated risks, taking initiative and autonomous functioning. These situations may concern:

- The creation of businesses by independent individuals or by companies;
- The takeover of companies, healthy or in difficulty, by independent individuals or by companies;
- The development and management of certain risky projects in companies;
- The framework and spirit of exercising certain responsibilities or functions in companies.

For Messeghem & Verstraete (2009), entrepreneurship is an initiative carried out by an individual (or several individuals joining together for the occasion) building or seizing a business opportunity (at least what is appreciated or evaluated as such) , whose profit is not necessarily pecuniary, through the impetus of an organization capable of giving rise to one or more entities, and creating new value (stronger in the case of an innovation) for parties stakeholders to whom the project is aimed.

In Tunisia, entrepreneurial action has experienced consistent growth since the beginning of the 1970s. This growth can be explained by the disengagement of the State from the sphere of property and investment, on the one hand, and the increased insertion of the Tunisian economy into an open, competitive and innovative global production system on the other hand (Saadaoui & Chtourou, 2023).

Public authorities continue to associate the two key concepts of Tunisia's future, namely youth and business. It is in this spirit that there has been a multiplication of initiatives, mechanisms and incentives with a view to broadening the horizons for young people and particularly higher education graduates. The objective being to give clear guidelines to the sectors of education and training, higher education and research, to instill an entrepreneurial mentality among young people, and this, to bring about a new generation of business leaders and economic players capable of consolidating the successes of the Tunisian economy and ensuring its integration into its globalized space. The Tunisian State has opted for the encouragement of private initiative, which constitutes a guarantee of the renewal of the entrepreneurial and industrial fabric, and therefore of the entire economy which finds itself more and more open especially after accession to the WTO and the signing of the association agreement with the EU (Mohamed Sghaier, 2023). This is a new stage in the evolution of the economy requiring collective action, proactive commitment and a sense of responsibility in order to ensure sustained growth for Tunisia in a turbulent international situation. , uninterrupted progress and more invulnerability (Saadaoui & Chtourou, 2023; Kraima & Boudabbous, 2022; El-Haddad, 2020).

Indeed, public authorities are seeking to give new impetus to business creation. Over the last three decades, considerable measures and resources have been put in place to raise awareness and encourage entrepreneurship and business creation in order to create a favorable environmental context.

The act of investing is above all a choice and a decision to undertake, certainly personal, but often influenced by environmental factors, that is to say factors relating to the family and professional experience of the entrepreneur, such as the various supports he receives, whether financial, material or psychological (Guerrero & al., 2021; Abdennadher & al., 2015). It is in this context that this research work takes place, which aims to explore the motivations for business creation of Tunisian entrepreneurs. Indeed, we will attempt to contribute to better knowledge in the field of entrepreneurship and to establish a motivational profile of entrepreneurs making it possible to identify the reasons for creating businesses.

## LITERATURE PAPER

In entrepreneurship, several schools of thought have succeeded one another in explaining the phenomenon of business creation, including the personality traits approach, the demographic approach, the environmental approach and the interactionist approach (Emin, 2004).

Several researchers (Davidsson, 1995; Krueger & Carsrud, 1993; Bird, 1988; Katz & Gartner, 1988) have advocated an approach based on the central role of intentionality in the process of organizational emergence (Maheshwari & al., 2023; Hueso & al., 2021; Botha & Taljaard, 2019). According to this approach, any intentional behavior can be predicted by the intention to have this behavior, the intention to create is, for its part, a function of the attraction that this choice represents for the individual and of his perception of the feasibility of the project.

Generally speaking, entrepreneurship is considered a dynamic and complex process resulting from psychological, socio-cultural, political and economic factors, and takes the form of attitudes, skills, perceptions, norms, intentions and of behaviors that manifest in a given context (Schmutzler & al., 2019; García-Rodríguez & al., 2018; Ozaralli & Rivenburgh, 2016).

Business creation is a complex phenomenon that can be approached from many angles. Several authors (Bachiri, 2016; Boudabbous, 2011; Hernandez, 2008; Tounés, 2006) note that intention or will is the first element necessary to create an organization because it reflects the objectives of entrepreneurs. Indeed, intention, at the heart of the entrepreneurial process (Bird, 2015), is of particular interest for understanding the path that leads to the act of entrepreneurship. According to Neveu (1996), it is defined as a cognitive representation of both a specific goal and the means to achieve it (El Boury & Qafas, 2021). For Krueger and Carsrud (1993), entrepreneurial intention is a cognitive structure that includes ends and means (Maaloui & al., 2018). According to Bird (2015), intention is presented as a cognitive process that arises with motivations, needs, values and beliefs.

Thus, intention makes it possible to predict human behavior, among other things, that relating to business creation. Understanding entrepreneurial intention helps identify the factors that motivate an individual's engagement in the entrepreneurial process well before seeking an opportunity or deciding what type of business to launch. As a result, entrepreneurial intention can help explain the personal and situational factors that intervene in the decision-making process, where increasing interest is given to attitudes and perceptions. For Bruyat (1993), entrepreneurial

intention is a will. Bird (2015), for his part, defines it as an individual will, a freedom, a state of mind that directs the attention, and therefore, the experience and action of individuals towards a specific objective with the aim to accomplish a well-defined mission. It is a personal will also dependent on contextual variables (Vesalainen & Pihkala, 1999) which structures and guides action (Krueger, 2017; Bird, 2015).

In addition to intention, researchers have focused on the study of the fundamental reasons pushing the individual to embark on an entrepreneurial adventure, that is to say entrepreneurial motivation (Kah & al., 2022; Hassan & al., 2021; Estay & al., 2013; Shane & al., 2003; Johnson, 1990). The authors agree that entrepreneurs demonstrate a lot of motivation and perseverance in their efforts.

For the most part, the existing literature on entrepreneurial motivation considers that business creation can be chosen or suffered. Thus, the decision to create a business can be triggered by the presence of an opportunity not yet seized on the market, or by a need linked to the individual. These two dimensions appear in the literature on entrepreneurial motivation in two aspects, namely "*pull motivation*" and "*push motivation*" (Martínez-Cañas & al., 2023; Coffman & Sunny, 2021; Yitshaki & Kropp, 2016; Gabarret & Vedel, 2015; Kirkwood, 2009; Amit & Muller, 1995).

*Pull motivation*, it is generally associated with positive factors such as, for example, the desire for independence or even accomplishment (Lubada & al., 2021; Damanik & al., 2019; Abbey, 2002). *Push motivation*, for its part, is associated with negative factors such as the need to survive or dissatisfaction with the current situation (Raimi & al., 2023; Carsrud & al., 2017; Chedli, 2016; Buttner & Moore, 1997). Thus, and according to Gabarret and Vedel (2015), we distinguish between a necessity entrepreneur motivated by the need for survival following difficult situations of which he has been a victim (unemployment, dissatisfaction in his job, etc.), and an opportunity entrepreneur who was motivated by the creation and/or growth of new businesses in order to pursue business opportunities to profit from them. However, some authors (Coffman & Sunny, 2021; Holloway & Pimlott-Wilson, 2021; Kirkwood, 2009) propose that entrepreneurial motivation should be studied as a push-pull continuum along which different combinations and dosage of push and pull factors traction can coexist.

Indeed, the literature reveals several types of motivations of entrepreneurs (Matharu & Juneja, 2023; Dal Bello & al., 2022; Figueiredo Belchior & Lyons, 2022; Riar & al., 2022; Carsrud & al., 2017; Jayawarna & al., 2013):

- Psychological motivations

At this level, we can cite, as examples, the need for independence and the need for accomplishment. For the desire to be independent and autonomous, it constitutes the explanation frequently given as a reason for creating a new business; the need for independence and autonomy is considered a characteristic of entrepreneurs. It has been recognized as one of the motivations for entrepreneurship (Ryff, 2019; Gelderen, 2016). Concerning the need for accomplishment or achievement, Fayolle (2017) makes it a dominant entrepreneurial motivation. This assumes that a person prefers to become an entrepreneur and start their own business rather than keep a frustrating job or suffer pressure from their professional environment. This motivation can also be interpreted as a need to prove one's personal value or as the desire to do better than others (Boubakary & al., 2017).

- Sociocultural motivations

Sociocultural motivations are elements directly linked to the different environments known and frequented by individuals, and which can play a primordial role in the emergence of entrepreneurial behavior (Maleki & al., 2023; Anggadwita & al., 2017; Abdennadher & al., 2015). Among these factors, we find the family environment that contributes to shaping the attitudes and behaviors of its members (Abdennadher & al., 2015). Several studies indicate that entrepreneurs most often come from families where the parents or other relatives are themselves in business since young people growing up in this type of family or environment consider their parents or those close to them as role models imitate (Basco & al., 2019; Hoffmann & al., 2015).

Other authors have insisted on the importance of education in the development of the propensity to undertake (Soomro & Shah, 2022; Lv & al., 2021; Abdennadher & Boudabbous, 2014). According to these authors, education provides the entrepreneur with skills and knowledge that he considers very useful, even decisive for the realization of his project.

Additionally, prior experiences can play a key role in business creation, growth, and success (Alene, 2020; Hopp & Sonderegger, 2015). These experiences concern functional experience, stem from technical knowledge, knowledge of the sector in which the organization that it is going to create operates or will operate, etc.

To these factors is the notion of territoriality, which plays a significant role in motivating entrepreneurs (Abdennadher & Boudabbous, 2022). Fayolle (2017) argues that a territory can constitute a pole of entrepreneurial attraction. It is considered to be a determinant through the availability of natural assets, various basic infrastructure, human resources, technological resources, etc. (Abdennadher and Boudabbous, 2022; Stam & Van de Ven, 2021; Nicotra & al., 2018).

#### ▪ Economic motivations

Economic factors occupy a determining position in the entrepreneurial process (Castaño & al., 2015). Among these factors, we can cite:

- Human resources: the presence of a qualified workforce promotes entrepreneurship. A region where labor is cheap necessarily sees its business creation rate increase (Qian, 2017). Indeed, new businesses have a greater propensity to locate in regions where workers have a high level of qualification rather than in areas where there is a concentration of less qualified labor (Pogodina & al., 2019; Atef & Al-Balushi, 2015).
- Financial resources: the availability of initial financial capital encourages entrepreneurship (Coad & Storey, 2021).
- Market accessibility: the existence of open markets positively influences business creation (Nicotra & al., 2018; Berger & Kuckertz, 2016).
- Etc.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In order to understand the motivational profile of Tunisian entrepreneurs, and given the exploratory aspect of our study, we adopted the qualitative approach as a research method. Indeed, qualitative methods seek to explore social phenomena, to represent them and therefore to understand them in context (Mosconi, 2021; Gallagher & Marceau, 2020; Aubin-Auger & al., 2008).

To answer our problem, we adopted the case interview method. Thomas (2021) believes that this method allows for an in-depth exploration of different facets of the interviewee's experience. The term "case" designates a business creator. Our unit of analysis is therefore the individual. Due to the purely exploratory aim of our research,



we adopted a multi-site study (several cases) focusing on a set of business creators representative of the real world because they belong to various sectors of activities.

Our sample includes 15 entrepreneurs from the city of Sfax. This region located in the south of Tunisia and characterized by an entrepreneurial spirit (Omri & Boujelbène, 2018), and considered as a region particularly focused on business (Ben Zaied & Siagh, 2012).

The entrepreneurs in our sample were identified through our personal connections and through our network connections. Appointments were made by telephone. Regarding the choice of cases, some authors argue that the sampling must be oriented, that is to say non-random (Thomas, 2021; Fourboul, 2020).

The data for our study were collected through semi-structured interviews on the research themes between October and November 2023. The average duration of each interview is 35 minutes.

The data collected was subject to manual content analysis. They were recorded, transcribed in their entirety and are presented in verbatim form. These verbatim subsequently underwent thematic coding in relation to our research problem (Paillé & Mucchielli, 2021).

## INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

Entrepreneurship has become an important socio-economic phenomenon and continues to gain interest in career choices and the concerns of public authorities around the world.

The entrepreneurs in our sample agree that their motivations were both positive and negative due to the fact that different combinations and dosage of push and pull factors can coexist during the entrepreneurial adventure from the "phase" of intention until the actual start of the business. This position confirms the push-pull continuum proposed by certain authors in the study of entrepreneurial motivation (Coffman & Sunny, 2021; Holloway & Pimlott-Wilson, 2021; Kirkwood, 2009).

*"At the start, I had to create my own job. In fact, I had a degree in computer science applied to management in 2015, and despite all my efforts, I could not get a job that met my ambitions. Afterwards, and from the moment I thought about launching my project as I imagined it, I really liked the adventure. » (Entrepreneur 12)*

*"From a young age, I always wanted to go into business. I think that each of us can only achieve our goals in our own project. It's true that it wasn't easy because of certain problems, but the motivation to move forward was there to counter the negative factors. » (Entrepreneur 2)*

Indeed, in the context of psychological motivations, our interviewees argue that the entrepreneurial adventure is fueled by very varied motivations. The majority of entrepreneurs are motivated essentially by the desire to create their own job (86.66%), to be their own boss (80%), to improve their financial situation (60%) and the desire to do proof that they are successful and distinguished people (53.33%). Thus, we can see that our entrepreneurs go into business to meet a need for independence and autonomy (80%) (Ryff, 2019; Gelderen, 2016) and to be accomplished (53.33%) (Boubakary & al., 2017; Fayolle, 2017).

In line with the classification of Carsrud and al. (2017), the results we obtained show, on the other hand, that the entrepreneurial motivations of the entrepreneurs in our sample fall into both the dimension of intrinsic and extrinsic motivations (Hutabarat & Wijaya, 2023). In this sense, intrinsically motivated entrepreneurs are pushed to act for the pleasure and challenge (80%) that this represents rather than

because of external incentives, pressures or rewards, or even extrinsically motivated (53.33%).

*"Becoming a business owner is something that has interested me since I was young. I always dreamed of taking my destiny in my hands and launching my own project and becoming my own boss. » (Entrepreneur 7)*

*"Honestly, several motivations pushed me to enter the world of entrepreneurship. First of all, it's a personal challenge. I have always wanted to be creative and show myself and those around me that I am not everyone and that I have the mental capacity to deal with risky activities. » (Entrepreneur 13)*

For sociocultural factors, our sample is predominantly male (80%). The rest of our sample (20%) are women. This male predominance can be explained by the preference of women to become independent in the informal sector, for fear of failure in creating businesses with all the consequences that ensue, which constitutes a barrier to formal entrepreneurial activity.

13.33% of entrepreneurs are in the age range 25 - 30 years. These are two entrepreneurs; the first pursued professional training in mechanics after obtaining his baccalaureate, the second holds a license in biochemistry. As a result, the nature of the lessons is in these cases an entrepreneurial catalyst (Abdennadher & Boudabbous, 2014).

*"The nature of my degree allowed me to move towards entrepreneurship. Besides, when I was in my second year of my degree, I had the idea for the project. So, I decided not to pursue the master's degree and start my own business as soon as I graduated. » (Entrepreneur 5)*

53.33% of entrepreneurs are in the age range 31 - 40 years. The majority of these entrepreneurs are either those who have lived for a long period of time in unemployment or who were not satisfied in their jobs.

The rest, that is to say 33.33% of the entrepreneurs in our sample, are in the age range 41 years - 50 years. These entrepreneurs embarked on business creation at a mature age after gaining significant professional experience and gathering the capital necessary for investment.

In terms of family background, the entrepreneurs in our sample come from different backgrounds. Some have lived in an environment of employees and others have been surrounded by entrepreneurs. The survey shows that 53.33% of the entrepreneurs surveyed come from an entrepreneurial family.

80% of respondents said that their parents or a family member had a great influence on them. This shows that family members play a role in consolidating the personality of the entrepreneur and in his commitment to the business adventure (Abdennadher & al., 2015).

53.33% of the entrepreneurs surveyed say they are not the only ones in the family to be in business, since they often have a father, brother or cousin who is an entrepreneur.

Having entrepreneurial role models in the family is generally considered to be a factor that positively influences entrepreneurial intentions. Thus, individuals whose parents or relatives own or have already owned a business would be more predisposed to creating businesses (Bouzekraoui, 2023; Dewitt & al., 2023; Porfírio & al., 2023). Thus, having an entrepreneurial entourage constitutes significant opportunities to receive advice or to immerse oneself in the entrepreneurial profession.

*"Growing up in a family accustomed to entrepreneurial activities is a major asset when starting a business. My uncle has been an entrepreneur for years, and he earns a very*

*good living. This model really encouraged me to start creating my own project. »*  
(Entrepreneur 4)

Regarding professional experience, this plays an important role in motivating people wishing to set up privately. This experience proves decisive in the choice of sector of activity. Indeed, 46.66% of respondents declared having worked and acquired sufficient skills in a sector similar to that in which they created their businesses.

*"I worked for 15 years in the food industry. This experience greatly inspired me in my entrepreneurial adventure. I did not find any problem when launching my project given that I work in a sector that I know very well. »* (Entrepreneur 1)

Professional experience allows you to acquire and perfect production techniques and mastery of the profession, as well as the possibility of weaving different networks, which can prove to be of paramount importance once launched into the creative activity (Algmi, 2023; Belchior & Lyons, 2021; Vanderstichel & al., 2021).

The studies and training followed also have an influence on entrepreneurial motivation. In addition to knowledge, certain studies and training have an entrepreneurial vocation and allow individuals to launch into business creation directly after obtaining their diploma. The majority of entrepreneurs surveyed have a higher (46.66%) or secondary (20%) level of education. 20% come from professional training and 13.33% have a fundamental level.

The percentage of entrepreneurs who did not pursue university studies is 53.33%. These entrepreneurs found in the training obtained, their families and their networks of relationships all the motivation and help to launch a business.

With regard to economic motivations, and in relation to the financing of business creation, our results show that the initial capital invested essentially comes from the personal savings of entrepreneurs (40%), family capital (26.66%), varied resources (personal savings, family capital and capital from friends) (20%). Two entrepreneurs used public structures. These percentages show the importance of the personal will of entrepreneurs, family support and friends in entrepreneurial motivation.

*«I was scared; the problem was purely financial. However, the support I received from my family and friends allowed me to get over the hump. »* (Entrepreneur 10)

The low share of financing structures set up by public authorities can be explained by the difficulty of accessing the services and credits of these structures or by the desire of entrepreneurs to remain independent and autonomous by relying on the resources family. Our survey found that 66.66% of entrepreneurs started their businesses because they had money to invest (Coad & Storey, 2021). This money comes mainly from personal savings, family capital and help from friends.

In addition to these factors, it turns out according to the results of our survey that the act of entrepreneurship is not only linked to the characteristics of the entrepreneur and the support of his relational network (Welsh & al., 2023; Neneh, 2022; Yamina, 2022; Vanderstichel & al., 2021; Abdennadher & al., 2015), but it is also determined by environmental factors. It emerges from our survey that all the entrepreneurs in our sample opted for the city of Sfax to locate their activities given its advantages and its socio-economic characteristics, which are in favor of business creation.

In this same vein, the majority of our interviewees (73.33%) were motivated to go into business by the entrepreneurial qualities of Sfax given the density and wealth of the city in terms of entrepreneurial activities.

*"The economic wealth of the city and the large number of projects that take place each year constitute a model for me to follow and prove that the pursuit of an entrepreneurial career is possible. »* (Entrepreneur 9)



These results show that the socioeconomic characteristics of a region constitute a source of entrepreneurial motivation. The presence of entrepreneurs can act as a model to follow by people who wish to set up on their own account. Proximity to other entrepreneurial activities has certain advantages and promotes direct contacts with other entrepreneurs, which can facilitate people's entrepreneurial journey. This entrepreneurial presence promotes maximizing the success of projects since it allows you to benefit from a certain publicity, to be known by customers or suppliers and to exchange and discuss the various problems encountered by entrepreneurs concerning developments, financing, marketing, etc.

## CONCLUSION

Our research aimed to explore the motivations for business creation of Tunisian entrepreneurs. More precisely, we questioned the motivational profile of entrepreneurs in the city of Sfax by exploring their entrepreneurial intention and trying to identify the reasons that pushed them to create their businesses.

Our results show that the creation of wealth in a given society is the result of a set of factors and conditions linked both to the entrepreneur himself and to his environment. The entrepreneurs surveyed constitute, as we have presented, a heterogeneous social group, with diverse social and professional origins, and having followed different itineraries, but they agree that their motivations were both positive and negative, confirming thus the push-pull continuum of entrepreneurial motivation (Coffman & Sunny, 2021; Holloway & Pimlott-Wilson, 2021; Kirkwood, 2009). They are motivated by the desire to create their own job, to be their own boss, to improve their financial situation and the desire to prove that they are successful and distinguished people.

One of the most remarkable characteristics of the entrepreneurs surveyed is that they frequently come from family backgrounds accustomed to entrepreneurial activities, which has a determining effect in the motivation to create businesses. It is clear that family members play a role in consolidating the personality of the entrepreneur and in his commitment to the business adventure (Abdennadher & al., 2015). The studies and training followed also have an influence on entrepreneurial motivation.

Our results also show, with regard to economic motivations, and in relation to the financing of business creation, the importance of the personal will of entrepreneurs, family support and friends in entrepreneurial motivation. . In addition to these factors, it turns out, according to the results of our survey, that business creation is linked to both the characteristics of the entrepreneur and the support of his relational network (Welsh & al., 2023; Neneh, 2022; Yamina, 2022; Vanderstichel & al., 2021; Abdennadher & al., 2015) and environmental factors. In this sense, the motivation of entrepreneurs is also fueled by the socio-economic characteristics and entrepreneurial qualities of the city of Sfax given its density and wealth in terms of entrepreneurial activities.

Despite these contributions, this research work has limitations. The first limitation is linked to the small number of cases in our sample. The second limitation is common in exploratory research since we appeal to the memory of the interviewees, which refers to a memory bias due to the fact that when responding, the individual attaches importance only to the elements that he remembers with the risk of rationalization bias since the interviewees tend to make the phenomena they discuss

coherent. Using triangulation with other data collection techniques will overcome these limitations.

Another alternative regarding the motivational profile of business creation is to carry out a comparative study with other regions (environments). Such a study would consist of confirming our results with a larger and more reliable sample. It would also make it possible to identify the differences and similarities in the motivation factors of entrepreneurs.

In addition, we opted for exploratory research. Complementing our work with quantitative research will allow us to overcome the limitations of research and provide greater external validity to our research.

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