



# Entrepreneurship in nonprofit organizations: a systematic review of the literature

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## Abstract

Nonprofit organizations play an important role in society. Given the importance of this sector and theme, this study aims to identify, analyze and systematize research on entrepreneurship in nonprofit organizations. For this purpose, a temporal analysis, as well as one for the methodologies used, and the evolution of the last three decades of research on the theme will be the object of this study. We adopted a systematic literature review as research method. We used the ISI web of Knowledge database to collect data, and after the selection process, 36 papers were identified and analyzed. Through the analysis of the results, we perceived that this is a recent topic addressed in the literature, with this review identifying the first research in 1995. Another conclusion is that most studies are of the empirical-quantitative type. Of the three decades analyzed in this study, the last decade (2011–2019) was the one in which the largest number of publications was registered. Finally, we present conclusions, theoretical and practical implications, suggestions for future research and limitations.

**Keywords** Nonprofit organizations · Entrepreneurship · Systematic review of literature

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## 1 Introduction

Nonprofit organizations play an important role in society worldwide (Gottesman et al. 2014). However, in recent years, alongside the notorious increase in the number of nonprofit organizations (Choi 2016), we perceive a reduction in governmental support given to these organizations and an increase in the demand for services rendered to society (Mittelman and Rojas-Méndez 2013). In addition to the reduction of government support, it is further noted that the access to private donation is also becoming increasingly difficult (Stecker 2014; Andersson 2016), which can be related to the context of the world economic crisis.

In this scenario, nonprofit organizations need to identify ways to increase their donation revenues and/or adopt a more entrepreneurial management. From this perspective, several authors sought to understand the importance of entrepreneurship in nonprofit organizations. For example, Helm and Andersson (2010), reinforce that entrepreneurship is a relevant topic to be researched in the context of nonprofit organizations, as it is still not well consolidated in the literature, lacking a clearer and more shared definition or conceptualization of how entrepreneurship is used by nonprofit organizations.

Thus, we consider it relevant to research the theme of entrepreneurship in nonprofit organizations, not only from the perspective of business creation and innovation (Huang and Hui-Kuang Yu 2011), but also from the point of view of the personality and motivations of the entrepreneurial leaders (Lukes and Stephan 2012), from the use of entrepreneurial guidance (Morris et al. 2011), the decision-making process (Yusuf and Sloan 2015), the entrepreneurial orientation (Morris et al. 2011; Lurtz and Kreutzer 2017) and the minority entrepreneurship (White 2018).

In this connection, social entrepreneurship can also be referred, even being often considered synonymous with entrepreneurship in nonprofit organizations. However, according to Weerawardena and Mort (2012), social entrepreneurship does not only occur in nonprofit organizations, but may also be present in profit-orientated organizations, often associated with social responsibility practices (Sagawa and Segal 2000). Thus, in this paper, social entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship in nonprofit organizations will not be treated as synonyms. Another theme related to the scope of research is the issue of hybridity, which according to the study by Haigh et al. (2015), occurs when organizations seek to integrate profit-making and the social mission. We thus realized, that the literature on entrepreneurship on nonprofit organizations is fragmented and not consensual. On the other hand, no systematic reviews have been identified that seek to organize the studies on this subject.

The systematic reviews identified in the ISI Web of Knowledge are recent and focused specifically in social entrepreneurship (Phillips et al. 2015; Conway Dato-on and Kalakay, 2016; Bittencourt et al. 2016). The systematic review by Maier et al. (2016) focused specifically in answering how nonprofit organizations are becoming businesses. In turn, we identified in the Scopus database in 2017, a bibliometric review that also specifically addressed the state of the art of social entrepreneurship (Ferreira et al. 2017).

Thus, this study aims to identify, analyze and systematize the literature on entrepreneurship in nonprofit organizations. For this purpose, we present a time scale of published papers, the methods used and finally an evolution and systematization of

the themes studied on entrepreneurship in nonprofit organizations in the last three decades (1990s, first and second decades of the 21st century).

In short, we believe that presenting a systematization of studies on entrepreneurship in nonprofit organizations, in an increasingly dynamic and competitive environment in which nonprofit organizations are inserted, tends to be relevant. Nonprofit organizations themselves feel the need to use new management strategies to stay competitive, becoming more entrepreneurial organizations, focusing on continuous improvement, on innovation, and on the efficiency and development of new fundraising strategies.

## 2 Methodology of the systematic review

In order to meet the objective of this study, we used a systematic review of the literature as a research method. This method of systematic review of the literature must follow a transparent and rigorous scientific process (Tranfield et al. 2003). Cook (1997), even reinforces that the systematic review should establish explicit selection criteria, a critical evaluation of the research used and be replicable by other researchers.

Initially, the search terms were defined: the first search term defined was *entrep*, and this was searched with the asterisk (\*) in order to select all papers on entrepreneurship. This first term was cross-referenced with the term relating to nonprofit organizations, for this end, a set of 11 terms were searched (*Nonprofit; Non profit, Non-profit, NGO, Non governmental, Non-governmental, Nongovernmental, Not for profit, Not-for-profit, NPO, Not for profit*). These 11 key terms have been used previously in the systematic review by Maier et al. (2016).

Once the key terms were defined, we selected the database to be searched, in this case, the ISI Web of Knowledge, having been accessed on 21/10/2019. The ISI database was recently used by several researchers (e.g. Phillips et al. 2015; Liñán and Fayolle 2015; Bengtsson and Raza-Ullah 2016; Conway Dato-on and Kalakay, 2016; Bittencourt et al. 2016), wherefore, in this review we also opted for this same database. The search was done only by “title”. As for the filters applied in the database, only papers were considered, as for the filters applied in the database, we only considered papers, reviews and papers published in English. Books, book chapters, reports and conference work were excluded because of the variability in peer review processes, according to what is recommended by Jones, Coviello and Tang (2011). We did not define a search time period in the database, wherefore all papers were collected.

After defining the key terms, the base we were going to search and the filters, a total of 73 papers were obtained, as shown in Table 1. It can be observed that there are 11 terms representing nonprofit organizations, where the term “nonprofit” tends to be the most representative, since it presented the largest number of papers identified (32 papers).

Then, we carried out the process of selecting the 73 papers identified (Fig. 1). We began downloading the 73 papers identified in the database. After the files were collected, we excluded the eighteen repeated papers first, due to the different ways of joint search of key terms. Were then read the titles and abstracts of the paper and fourteen were excluded, as they did not specifically address the theme of entrepreneurship in the nonprofit organizations. After the exclusion of titles and abstracts by reading, we read all papers in full and at this stage another five papers were excluded,

**Table 1** ISI web knowledge research process

No.	Terms searched			Web of science
	First term searched for	and	Second term searched for	
1	Entrep*	and	Nonprofit	32
2	Entrep*	and	Non profit	13
3	Entrep*	and	Non-profit	13
4	Entrep*	and	Not for profit	0
5	Entrep*	and	Not-for-profit	1
6	Entrep*	and	Non governmental	2
7	Entrep*	and	Nongovernmental	1
8	Entrep*	and	Non-governmental	2
9	Entrep*	and	NPO	0
10	Entrep*	and	NGO	2
11	Entrep*	and	Third Sector	7
	<b>Total of papers</b>			<b>73</b>

as they did not address the theme of entrepreneurship in nonprofit organizations. Finally, 36 papers that we used and analyzed remained. This entire selection and exclusion process can be visualized in Fig. 1.

After this process, the 36 papers selected were individually and thoroughly read. They were also encoded for the data analysis performance. We initially performed a description of the studies in the process of analysis (time scale of publications; research methods used, and finally a content analysis by decades). The results of the analyzes are presented in the next section.

### 3 Results of the systematic review

In this section, we describe in an analytical way the investigations carried out on entrepreneurship in nonprofit organizations. For this purpose, in the first section the research presents the time scale of the publications and research methods used (qualitative, quantitative and theoretical). In the second section we present a content analysis of publications divided by decades. The first publication identified in this review on the theme is from 1995, and thus the analysis begins from the 1990s (1990–2000) up until the second decade of the twenty-first century (2011–2016). It should be noted that the current decade is still ongoing, and this study examined the studies published until October 21, 2019.

#### 3.1 Time scale of publications and research methods

It can be seen from Fig. 2 that this is a recent theme, with its first publication in 1995 by Rossheim, Kim and Ruchelman. In this study, Rossheim et al. (1995) addressed the importance of managers' role in nonprofit organizations, and highlighted that they need

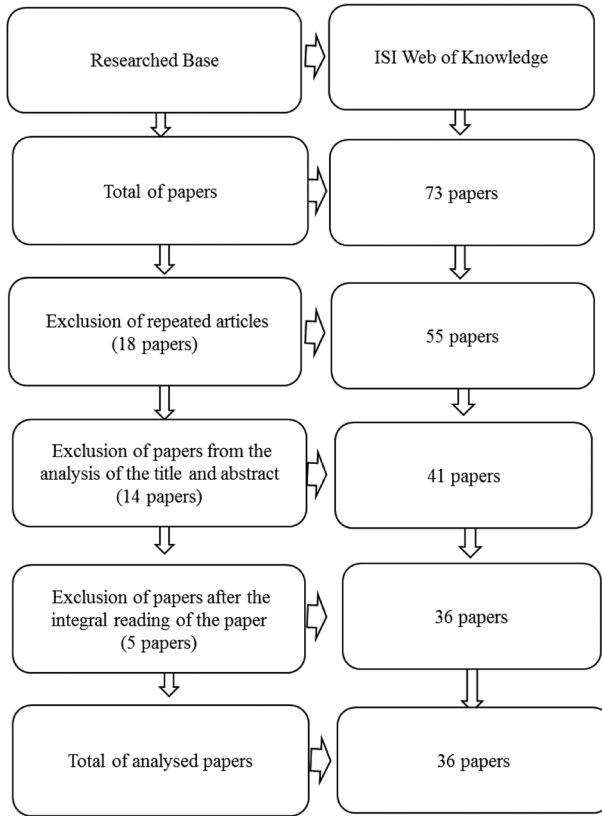


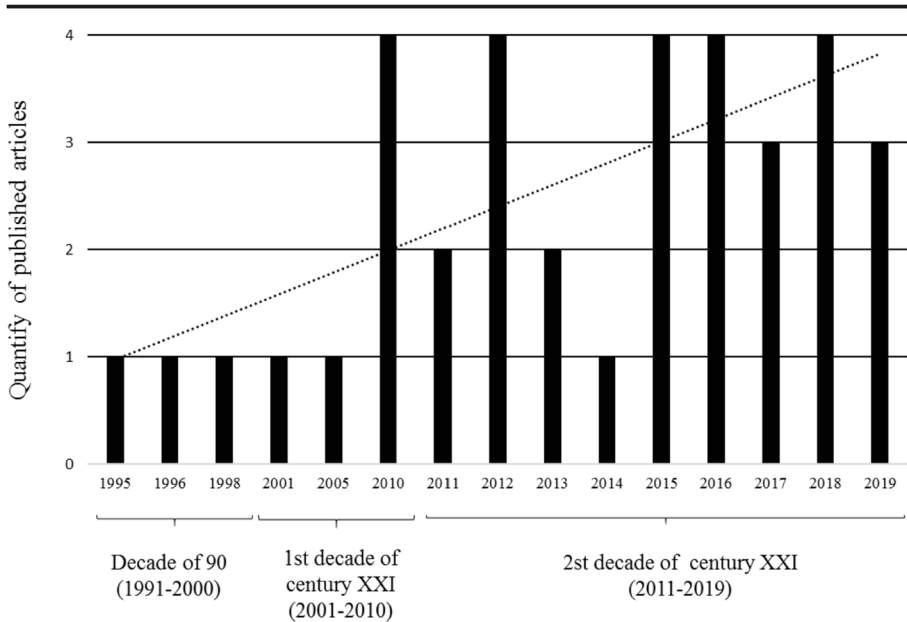
Fig. 1 Process of selection of papers

to have a combination of entrepreneurial and administrative skills to lead these organizations.

We verified that in the 1990s (1991–2000), there was a small concentration of papers on the theme, more specifically three papers published (Rossheim et al. 1995; Bilodeau and Slivinski 1996, 1998). At the beginning of the first decade of the twenty-first century only two publications were identified (Glaeser and Shleifer 2001; Leroux 2005); at the end of this decade, specifically in the year of 2010, we identified four publications on the theme (Dempsey and Sanders 2010; Helm and Andersson 2010; Ruvio et al. 2010; Chapelle 2010).

Finally, the second decade of the twenty-first century (2011–2019) presented the largest number of publications on the theme, with 27 published papers (Huarng and Hui-Kuang Yu 2011; Morris et al. 2011; Bahmani et al. 2012; Weerawardena and Mort 2012; Lukes and Stephan 2012; Mirabella and Young 2012; Chen and Hsu 2013; Felício et al. 2013; Stecker 2014; Yusuf and Sloan 2015; Hustinx and De Waele 2015; Lee 2015; Andersson and Self 2015; Andersson 2016; Parente 2016; Scheiber 2016; Andersson 2016, 2017, 2018a, b, 2019; Yu 2016; Lurtz and Kreutzer 2017; Addicott 2017; Andersson and Willems 2018; White 2018; Morais 2019; Thomas and Van Slyke 2019).

The largest number of publications was in the year of 2010, 2012, 2015, 2016 and 2018, with four publications each year. Finally, we can observe (Fig. 2) a growth in the



**Fig. 2** Time scale of publications

number of publications since the 1990s, with the largest number of publications occurring in the second decade of the twenty-first century (2011–2019). This increase may be related to changes that the sector itself has been facing, such as the increase in the number of nonprofit organizations and competition. In addition to this, there is a need for more research on aspects relevant to these entities (e.g. professionalization of the sector, innovation, greater efficiency and effectiveness in the use of resources).

### 3.2 Research methods

Table 2 shows the research methods used by the 36 papers identified and analyzed in this systematic review of the literature. The investigations were divided into four categories: Quantitative empirical research; Qualitative empirical research; Quantitative and qualitative empirical research; and Theoretical research.

We can verify in Table 2, that 75% of the studies carried out were empirical investigations, with 42% being quantitative (Rossheim et al. 1995; Leroux 2005;

**Table 2** Types of research

Type of research	Freq	Freq. Rel (%)	Freq. Accum (%)
Quantitative	15	42%	42%
Qualitative	11	30%	72%
Quantitative and Qualitative	1	3%	75%
Theoretical	9	25%	<b>100%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>100%</b>	

Helm and Andersson 2010; Ruvio et al. 2010; Lukes and Stephan 2012; Bahmani et al. 2012; Mirabella and Young 2012; Chen and Hsu 2013; Felício et al. 2013; Andersson and Self 2015; Andersson 2016) and 28% qualitative empirical (Dempsey and Sanders 2010; Huarng and Hui-Kuang Yu 2011; Weerawardena and Mort 2012; Yusuf and Sloan 2015; Hustinx and De Waele 2015; Lee 2015; Scheiber 2016; Andersson 2016, 2017, 2018a, b, 2019). The remainder, 25% of the investigations were theoretical studies (Bilodeau and Slivinski 1996, 1998; Glaeser and Shleifer 2001; Chapelle 2010; Morris et al. 2011; Stecker 2014; Parente 2016; White 2018; Thomas and Van Slyke 2019).

### 3.3 Analysis of studies by decade

In this section we present a content analysis of the evolution of papers by decades of publications. The first study identified in this review was published in 1995 by Rossheim et al. (1995). Therefore, we will present the evolution of the studies from the 90's to the current decade, that is, the research published between 1995 and 2019.

#### 3.3.1 Analysis of the 1990's (1991–2000)

In the 90's only three investigations were published on the subject, with two theoretical studies and one quantitative empirical, whose researched sector was the Arts Agencies located in the USA. The authors were affiliated with research centers and/or universities located in the USA and Canada. Of the three publications, two were theoretical studies (Table 3).

The first study identified was that by Rossheim et al. (1995), which aimed to analyze the role of managers or administrators of nonprofit organizations from creativity (innovation) and access to organizational resources (financial). To this end, they defined four types of manager profiles (Entrepreneur, Administrator, Artist e Caretakers). Finally, the authors of this study reinforce the importance of nonprofit organizations in selecting a manager or administrator who has entrepreneurial and administrative skills.

The other two research papers were published by Bilodeau and Slivinski (1996 and 1998). In the first study Bilodeau and Slivinski (1996) proposed a model to explain the factors that can influence the creation of nonprofit organizations that provide private services to the public sector. Thus, the model identified and reinforced that the reasons for entrepreneurship were managerial perks, career concerns, feelings of warm glow and seeking to impose one's views. In the other publication, Bilodeau and Slivinski (1998) presented a model to explain the foundation of nonprofit organizations, that is, the motives that lead individuals to start and run a nonprofit organization. The results identified mention that the main objective of starting an organization in this sector is the opportunity to provide services for the common good.

#### 3.3.2 Analysis of the first decade of the twenty-first century (2001–2010)

During the first decade of the twenty-first century, an increase in the number of publications (six papers) can be observed (Table 4). We also verified a variety of authors who published on the theme, all being affiliated to research centers and/or

**Table 3** Synthesis of the research carried of 1990's

No.	Year of publication	Author(s)	Country of author (s)	Published journals	Type of research	Number of citations	Sample and/or research Sector	Country of nonprofit organization	Theme
1	1995	Rosshheim et al. (1995)	Rosshheim (USA); Kim (USA); Ruchelman (USA)	Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly	Quantitative	2	123 art organizations	United States of America (USA)	Role of the managers or administrators.
2	1996	Bilodeau and Slivinski (1996)	Bilodeau (USA and Canada) Slivinski (USA and Canada)	Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization	Theoretical	19	Unspecified	Unspecified	Entrepreneurial behavior
3	1998	Bilodeau and Slivinski (1998)	Bilodeau (USA and Canada) Slivinski (USA and Canada)	Journal of Economics & Management Strategy	Theoretical	19	Unspecified	Unspecified	Foundation of a nonprofit organization



**Table 4** Synthesis of the research carried out in the first decade of the twenty-first century

No.	Year of publication	Author(s)	Country of author (s)	Published journals	Type of research	Number of citations	Sample and/or research sector	Country of nonprofit organization	Theme
1	2001	Glaeser and Shleifer (2001)	Glaeser (USA); Shleifer (USA)	Journal of Public Economics	Theoretical	203	Unspecified	Unspecified	Motives to start a nonprofit organization
2	2005	Leroux (2005)	Leroux (USA)	The American Review of Public Administration	Quantitative	37	63 nonprofits organizations/ Several sectors	United States of America (USA)	Entrepreneurial activity
3	2010	Chapelle (2010)	Chapelle (France)	International Entrepreneurship and Management Journal	Theoretical	11	Unspecified	Unspecified	Motives to start a nonprofit organization
4	2010	Dempsey and Sanders (2010)	Dempsey (USA); Sanders (USA)	Organization	Qualitative	87	3 Biographies of social entrepreneurs	United States of America (USA)	Biographies of social entrepreneurs
5	2010	Helm and Andersson (2010)	Helm (USA); Andersson (USA)	Nonprofit Management and Leadership	Quantitative	23	145 Nonprofit organizations/ Several sectors	United States of America (USA)	Social entrepreneurship (Innovativeness, risk taking and proactiveness)
6	2010	Ruvio et al. (2010)	Ruvio (USA); Rosenblatt (USA); Hertz-Lazarowitz (Israel)	The Leadership Quarterly	Quantitative	42	78 entrepreneurs from several nonprofit higher education institutions	Israel	Entrepreneurial vision/ Leadership

universities located in the USA, except, Hertz-Lazarowitz who is from Israel and Chapelle is from France. We observed a variety of peer-reviewed journals, and most of the studies were quantitative. The location of the organizations surveyed were mostly in the USA, which coincides with the authors' location. Another issue was the diversity of themes addressed in this decade; only the studies by Glaeser and Shleifer (2001) and Chapelle (2010) appear to have a relationship.

In this decade, with the greatest number of citations, the study by Glaeser and Shleifer (2001). In this research, the authors sought to present the reasons why an entrepreneur initiates a nonprofit organization rather than a for-profit organization. In line with this paper, was the study carried out by Chapelle (2010). For this purpose, the author proposed a model that suggests that nonprofit organizations tend to have higher levels of production, have more restrictions on access to credit, and even that nonprofit entrepreneurs tend to be more efficient than those who run for-profit organizations.

The study by Leroux (2005) sought to reinforce the importance of the use of entrepreneurial activities by nonprofit organizations, so that they can remain in an increasingly competitive market.

On the other hand, Dempsey and Sanders (2010) investigated the biography of three social entrepreneurs, in order to analyze their work-life balance. The results of this investigation reinforce that despite social entrepreneurship is seen as significant work (focused on helping people and/or solving social problems), is possible to identify some problems. Because being a social entrepreneur is the equivalent of having a life of self-sacrifice, low or even voluntary remuneration, and requires great commitment, all these aspects often makes social entrepreneurs abdicate of their health, family and other social aspects. These results of autobiographical analyzes also contribute to understanding the culture of work/life relations.

Helm and Andersson (2010) reinforced the importance of empirical studies on social entrepreneurship, due to the fact that there is still much confusion in the literature on the definition and use of social entrepreneurship. This study proposes a scale to measure entrepreneurial behavior, based on three constructs, innovation, risk taking and proactiveness.

Ruvio et al. (2010) conducted an investigation through which they sought to analyze the difference of the entrepreneurial vision in nonprofit organizations versus for-profit organizations. The entrepreneurial vision in this study was defined as a long-term strategy, with an impact on the organization's strategy and performance. The authors identified in the literature 26 variables that tend to be related to the entrepreneurial vision. As a conclusion, the study defined five types of social leaders (Communicative, Inspired, Realistic, Conservative, Flexible and General).

### 3.3.3 Analysis of the second decade of the twenty-first century (2011–2019)

As can be seen from Table 5, the second decade of the twenty-first century, which has not yet ended, was the period that recorded most publications on the theme (27 papers).

We observed a diversity of researchers analyzing this subject, being these linked to research centers of universities in several countries (Taiwan, USA, China, Germany, Cape Verde, Canada, Spain, Czech Republic, Belgium, Australia, Portugal, South Korea). However, we notice a predominance of researchers from the USA. Regarding the journals that have published on the theme in this decade, we highlight *Voluntas*:

**Table 5** Synthesis of the research carried out in the second decade of the twenty-first century

No.	Year of publication	Author(s)	Country of author (s)	Published journals	Type of research	Number of citations	Sample and / or Research Sector	Country of Nonprofit Organization	Theme
1	2011	Huang & Hui-Kuang (2011)	Huang (Taiwan); Hui-Kuang (Taiwan)	Management Decision	Qualitative	76	Libraries/Education sector	Taiwan	Financing, stakeholders and legitimacy – innovation and value creation
2	2011	Morris et al. (2011)	Morris (USA); Webb (USA); Franklin (Canada)	Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice	Theoretical	71	Unspecified	Unspecified	Entrepreneurial orientation
3	2012	Bahmani et al. (2012)	Bahmani (USA); Galindo(Spain); Mendez (Spain)	Small Business Economics	Quantitative	18	Unspecified	Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, UK and USA.	Entrepreneurship, social capital and economic growth.
4	2012	Lukes and Stephan (2012)	Lukes (Czech Republic); Stephan (Belgium)	Ceskoslovenska Psychologie	Quantitative	9	72 leaders of nonprofit organizations and 117 for-profit entrepreneurs / Several sectors	Czech Republic	Nonprofit leaders and for-profit entrepreneurs: personality and motivation.
5	2012	Mirabella and Young (2012)	Mirabella (USA); Young (USA)	Nonprofit Management and Leadership	Quantitative	25	Various Nonprofit organizations/Education sector	USA	Development of Education - Social entrepreneurship in a nonprofit management.
6	2012	Weerawardena (Australia);	Weerawardena (Australia);		Qualitative	38	9 nonprofit organization/ Several sectors	Australia	Social

Table 5 (continued)

No.	Year of publication	Author(s)	Country of author (s)	Published journals	Type of research	Number of citations	Sample and / or Research Sector	Country of Nonprofit Organization	Theme
7	2013	Weerawardena and Mort (2012) Chen and Hsu (2013)	Mort (Australia) Chen (Taiwan); Hsu (Taiwan)	Journal of Public Policy & Marketing The Service Industries Journal	Quantitative	11	307 nonprofit service organizations/- Unspecified sector	Taiwan	entrepreneurship (Innovation and differentiation) Entrepreneurial orientation, performance and market orientation.
8	2013	Felicio et al. (2013)	Felicio (Portugal); Gonçalves (Portugal); Gonçalves (Portugal)	Journal of Business Research	Quantitative	55	241 nonprofit organizations/ Several sectors.	Portugal	Social value and organizational performance in non-profit social organizations
9	2014	Stecker (2014)	Stecker (USA)	Journal of Economic Issues	Theoretical	15	Unspecified	Unspecified	Social entrepreneurship - Business Models
10	2015	Yusuf and Sloan (2015)	Yusuf (USA); Sloan (USA)	The American Review of Public Administration	Qualitative	6	Community development	United States of America (USA), Canada e United Kingdom	Decision-making process
11	2015	Andersson and Self (2015)	Andersson (USA); Self (USA)	Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations	Quantitative	5	67 Master of Public Administration (MPA) students.	United States of America (USA)	Social entrepreneurship - Perceptions of Nonprofit Effectiveness.
12	2015				Qualitative	9	Social grocery	Belgium	Hybridism

Table 5 (continued)

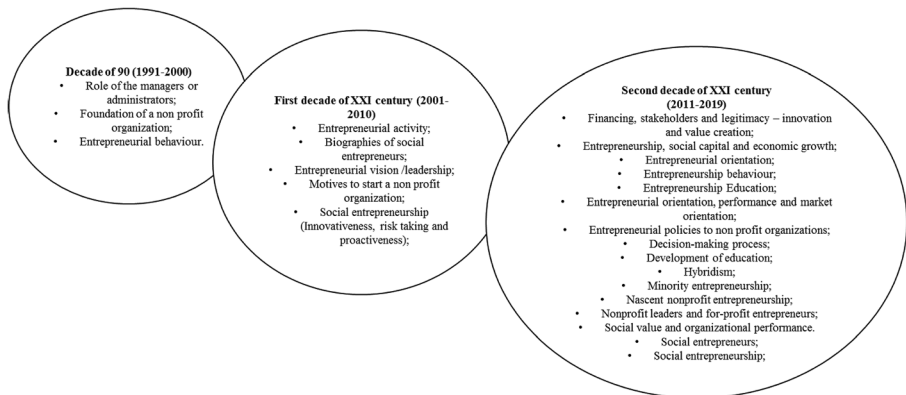
No. Year of publication	Author(s)	Country of author (s)	Published journals	Type of research	Number of citations	Sample and / or Research Sector	Country of Nonprofit Organization	Theme
13	Hustinx and De Waele (2015)	Hustinx (Belgium); De Waele (Belgium)	Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations	Qualitative	5	Several sectors	South Korea	Entrepreneurial policies to non profit organizations
14	Lee (2015)	Lee (South Korea)	Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations	Qualitative	1	Unspecified	Portugal	Social entrepreneurship in nonprofit organization of portugal
15	Scheiber (2016)	Scheiber (USA)	International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy	Theoretical	3	27 Social entrepreneurs(Interviews)/ Several Sectors	Brazil	Social entrepreneurs (role, skills, knowledge e motivations)
16	Andersson (2016)	Andersson (USA)	Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly	Quantitative	5	91 nascent nonprofit entrepreneurs/ Unspecified sectors	United States of America (USA)	Nascent Nonprofit Entrepreneurship
17	Yu (2016)	Yu (China)	China Perspectives	Qualitative	0	Multiple stakeholders (semi-structured interviews and participant	China	Social Entrepreneurship in China's

Table 5 (continued)

No.	Year of publication	Author(s)	Country of author (s)	Published journals	Type of research	Number of citations	Sample and / or Research Sector	Country of Nonprofit Organization	Theme
18	2017	Lurtz and Kreuzer (2017)	Lurtz (Germany); Kreuzer (Germany)	Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly	Qualitative	8	observation/ NGO sector Several samples/ World Vision Germany and World Vision International.	Germany	Non-profit Sector Entrepreneurial Orientation
19	2017	Andersson (2017)	Andersson (USA)	Nonprofit Management & Leadership	Quantitative	3	41 nascent nonprofit entrepreneurs/ Unspecified	United States of America (USA)	Nascent Nonprofit Entrepreneurship
20	2017	Addicott (2017)	Addicott (UK)	Public Money & Management	Qualitative	3	14 small-medium voluntary organizations (interviews)/ Several sectors	United Kingdom	Entrepreneurship Behaviour
21	2018	Andersson and Willems (2018)	Andersson (USA) Willems (Germany)	Journal of Nonprofit Education and Leadership	Qualitative/Quantitative	1	300 nonprofit managers/ Unspecified	Unspecified	Social Entrepreneurship
22	2018	Andersson (2018a)	Andersson (USA)	Nonprofit Policy Forum	Quantitative	0	69 nascent nonprofit entrepreneurs/ 21 nascent nonprofit entrepreneurs/Several Sectors	Unspecified	Nascent Nonprofit Entrepreneurship
23	2018	Andersson (2018b)	Andersson (USA)	Journal of Public and Nonprofit Affairs	Quantitative	1	103 nascent nonprofit entrepreneurs/ Several Sectors	Unspecified	Nascent Nonprofit Entrepreneurship
24	2018	White (2018)	White (USA)	Journal of Arts Management Law and Society	Theoretical	0	Unspecified	Unspecified	Minority Entrepreneurship
25	2019	Morais (2019)	Morais (Portugal)	Pasos-Revista de Turismo y	Qualitative	0	15 stakeholders/ Several sectors	Cape Verde	Several sectors

Table 5 (continued)

No. Year of publication	Author(s)	Country of author (s)	Published journals	Type of research	Number of citations	Sample and / or Research Sector	Country of Nonprofit Organization	Theme
26	2019 Thomas and Van Slyke (2019)	Andersson (USA)	Patrimonio Cultural Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly	Quantitative	0	77 nascent nonprofit entrepreneurs/ Several Sectors	Unspecified	Social entrepreneurship Nascent Nonprofit Entrepreneurship
27	2019 Thomas & Van Slyke (2019)	Thomas (USA) Slyke (USA)	Journal of Education for Business	Theoretical	0	Unspecified	Unspecified	Entrepreneurship Education for Nonprofit Organizations



**Fig. 3** Systematization of the researched themes in the last three decades

publications. As for the research methods, there was a predominance of quantitative empirical research (eleven published papers). There was a greater diversity regarding the sectors surveyed and the location of the organizations. However, and again as in previous decades, there is a predominance of nonprofit organizations located in the USA. As for the topics addressed on entrepreneurship in nonprofit organizations, there was also a wider variety of topics.

It is worth noting that the study by Huarng and Hui-Kuang Yu (2011) was the one that presented the highest number of citations (76) in this decade. The investigation of these authors addressed the case of TEBSCo (*Taiwan EBook Supply Cooperative*), a nonprofit cooperative of a library consortium. In this study, the authors sought to verify if the use of financing, stakeholder analysis and legitimacy influenced innovation and value creation.

The second study with the highest number of citations (71) was that by Morris et al. (2011). In this paper, the authors reinforced that more and more scholars have been interested in understanding entrepreneurship in nonprofit organizations. They addressed how the entrepreneurial orientation (innovation, proactivity and risk taking) is used and they analyzed its impact on the performance of nonprofit organizations.

Bahmani et al. (2012) analyzed the relationship between nonprofit organizations and economic growth from the Schumpeterian approach. The results indicated that the effects on economic growth of nonprofit organizations are indirect, and comes mainly from variables such as entrepreneurship and social capital.

The study by Lukes and Stephan (2012) aimed at studying the personality traits and motivations of entrepreneurs from for-profit organizations and leaders of nonprofit organizations, having carried out a comparative study. The results indicated a similarity between the personality traits of the entrepreneurs and leaders; but with regard to the motivations, some differences were identified - the motivations of leaders in nonprofit organizations tend to be more related to the meaning of their work, whereas the entrepreneurs of for-profit organizations tend to be more motivated by the sense of independence and by the profit or income generated from their business.

Another theme addressed in this period was entrepreneurship education in the research by Mirabella and Young (2012). These authors analyzed the curricular units of educational institutions related to social entrepreneurship, and how it is organized



and inserted in public and private educational institutions. This concern about educational development in relation to social entrepreneurship and the management of organizations, tends to be related to the growth and importance of this sector.

Weerawardena and Mort (2012) addressed in their research on how social entrepreneurship can use competitive strategies, such as innovation and differentiation in nonprofit organizations. Chen and Hsu (2013) emphasized the relationship between entrepreneurial orientation, performance and market orientation. Felício et al. (2013) presented a model to analyze the social value and organizational performance of nonprofit organizations regarding the effects of transformational leadership, social entrepreneurship and the socio-economic context.

Stecker (2014) reinforced in the research how the business model of nonprofit organizations is changing and needs to change to continue to stay in the market, through the adoption of competitive strategies for greater business sustainability.

Hustinx and De Waele (2015) aimed at understanding in practice the performance of a social grocery that was considered as a nonprofit organization practicing a hybrid management. This social grocery was considered as a model of innovative social organization in the fight against poverty. However, the authors emphasize that the conceptualization of hybridity is still confused both theoretically and in practice, and therefore requires further research.

Yusuf and Sloan (2015) sought to explain the decision-making process by nonprofit organizations, by taking into account the sector in which they operate, that is, a sector with high levels of uncertainty and resource limitations. Thus, the decision was addressed from an effectiveness approach. According to Yusuf and Sloan (2015), the effectiveness is the solution of a problem from the decision-making on certain conditions such as uncertainty, unclear objectives or lack of markets. The assumptions used to solve a problem or take a decision where the predictability, predetermined goals and certainty environment are not available to the decision taker.

Lee (2015), in the investigation of nonprofit organizations in South Korea, sought to explain the growth and development of social enterprises in this country. Thus, the authors reinforce that the use of entrepreneurial policies has greatly aided the growth and development of nonprofit organizations.

The authors who published on the theme are not repeated, except for Andersson who published seven papers, two of them being co-authored with Self and Willems (Andersson and Self 2015; Andersson and Willems, 2018) and five alone (Andersson 2016, 2017, 2018a, b, 2019).

In the first study, Andersson and Self (2015) sought to analyze social entrepreneurship in the context of nonprofit organizations, and how it is applied and administered. To this end, an experimental study was performed with 67 Master of Public Administration (MPA) students. In the experimental study, the following variables were analyzed: effectiveness, financial sustainability, community impact, legitimacy and reputation, and donation. The authors reinforce that although the results are inconclusive, the participants of the survey viewed social entrepreneurship as a positive factor. However, the authors reinforce that new research must be carried out, since this study is not generalizable.

In the second study, Andersson and Willems (2018) tried to understand the meaning of social entrepreneurship, from the point of view of the more than 300 managers of

nonprofit organizations. According to the authors, it is not yet possible to provide a definitive definition of social entrepreneurship, but this study was a good starting point.

Along this same perspective, the five individual studies of (2016, 2017, 2018a, b, 2019) sought to understand and to analyze the first phase of structuring a nonprofit organization. In the first study, Andersson (2016) identified eight variables in the literature related to nascent businesses (articulation of the nonprofit idea; development of a finished program/service; definition of market; development of an operational organization; core group expertise; commitment and prime motivation; beneficiary/payer relations; other nonprofit relations) and through these variables the author sought to examine the nascent capabilities of nonprofit organizations.

The second study addressed the need for a greater focus on understanding what happens before a new nonprofit is formally founded, this is, during the nascent phase of a nonprofit entrepreneurship (Andersson 2017). In the third paper, the author dealt with the negative external forces that can make an individual to act on their own in this sector; this phenomenon is labeled necessity nonprofit entrepreneurship (Anderson, 2018a). The fourth study sought to understand what are the sources of funding in the early stages of a nonprofit organization and whether there are differences in funding intentions between nascent non-profit entrepreneurs with and without previous start-up experience. The results indicate that in the initial phase there is a preference for philanthropic donations and private donations, along with personal contributions from the founder (2018b). Finally, in the last study, Andersson (2019) sought to identify potential problems that might be encountered during the early stages of a new nonprofit organization that could affect the success of the new startup. The results identified that financial, information and regulatory issues can affect the startup process of a new nonprofit organization.

Parente (2016) sought to discuss the challenges identified by a project created in 2008 in Portugal and implemented from 2010 to 2014. The objective of this project was to understand social entrepreneurship in the Portuguese context, which was a gap identified in the literature. For such purpose, Portuguese nonprofit organizations were analyzed from the point of view of social entrepreneurship. The author of this paper then sought, at a first moment, to theoretically understand the definition of social entrepreneurship, to later analyze whether this concept could be applied in Portuguese organizations.

Scheiber (2016) sought to understand the origin of the skills, knowledge and motivations of social entrepreneurs to take on this role. The results showed that social entrepreneurs are initially motivated by the contact with situations of socioeconomic inequality. Other factors that influenced the individual to become a social entrepreneur was the fact that they had already done voluntary work, religion, social or political activism, formal education, professional experience, reading, international interactions and the generation of innovative ideas.

Morais (2019) explored the notion of social entrepreneurship associated to Cape Verde's tourism context. Yu (2016) sought to discuss innovative action via social entrepreneurship following the Wenchuan earthquake in China. In turn, Addicott (2017) explored the challenges and benefits of managing social enterprise and nonprofit organizations, and the relevance of the entrepreneurial behavior in this sector. White (2018) addressed the issue of minority entrepreneurship in the nonprofit sector. Finally, Thomas and Van Slyke (2019) addressed the importance of entrepreneurship education for nonprofit organizations.

### 3.4 Systematization of the researched themes in the last three decades

We seek to present an attempt to systematize (Fig. 3) the themes investigated over past three decades, starting with 90s (1991–2000). We observed that in the three decades analyzed, there was a heterogeneity of topics researched.

It can be verified that in the 1990s, only two themes were investigated: the first was on the role of managers and/or administrators of nonprofit organizations (Rossheim et al. 1995); and the second theme was related to the founding of a nonprofit organization (Bilodeau and Slivinski 1998) and the entrepreneurial behavior (Bilodeau and Slivinski 1996).

In the first decade of the twenty-first century (2001–2010) we can verify an increase in the number of themes investigated in the scope of the entrepreneurial activity studies in nonprofit organizations (Leroux 2005). Dempsey and Sanders (2010) however, sought to investigate biographies of social entrepreneurs and Ruvio et al. (2010) analyzed the entrepreneurial vision from the leadership of nonprofit organizations.

Another theme addressed, still in this decade (2001–2010), is related to two studies that sought to understand the motives for starting a nonprofit organization (Glaeser and Shleifer 2001; Chapelle 2010). Social entrepreneurship was addressed from one strand in the study by Helm and Andersson (2010) where innovation, risk taking and proactiveness were analyzed.

Finally, in the last and present decade (2011–2019) a greater diversity of themes researched can be observed, this can also be related to the increase in the number of publications (27 publications). The first work that emerged in this decade was that by Huarng and Hui-Kuang Yu (2011), who analyzed how financing, stakeholders and legitimacy can influence innovation and value creation.

The most investigated theme in this decade was social entrepreneurship, under its various aspects. Stecker (2014) analyzed social entrepreneurship under the vision of a business model. Andersson and Self (2015) on the other hand, preferred to go on from the perception of the efficiency of nonprofit organizations. Weerawardena and Mort (2012), set off from innovation and differentiation and Parente (2016) analyzed social entrepreneurship in the context of Portuguese organizations. Complementarily, several authors also addressed the theme of social entrepreneurship (Yu 2016; Andersson and Willems, 2018; Morais 2019).

The study by Mirabella and Young (2012) sought to understand educational development, through the analysis of curricular units from the perspective of social entrepreneurship and management of nonprofit organizations. Lukes and Stephan (2012) analyzed the personality traits and motivations of leaders in nonprofit organizations. Similarly, to the study by Lukes and Stephan (2012), Scheiber (2016) studied social entrepreneurs from their role, skills, knowledge and motivations.

In turn, Bahmani et al. (2012) analyzed, in the context of nonprofit organizations, the relationship between entrepreneurship, social capital and economic growth. On the other, Huarng and Hui-Kuang Yu (2011) analyzed funding, stakeholders and legitimacy, and their effects on innovation and value creation in nonprofit organizations. Hustinx and De Waele (2015) sought to understand the management of hybridity in a social grocery.

Morris et al. (2011) and Lurtz and Kreutzer (2017) focused on the theme of entrepreneurial orientation in nonprofit organizations. In this context, of an

entrepreneurial orientation, Chen and Hsu (2013) analyzed the relationship between market orientation, performance and entrepreneurial orientation (innovation, proactivity and risk taking). Another study that focused on analyzing performance and social value in nonprofit organizations was that by Felício et al. (2013).

Several studies related to the theme of entrepreneurship in nonprofit organizations researched: the decision-making process (Yusuf and Sloan, 2015); entrepreneurial policies for nonprofit organizations (Lee 2015); entrepreneurial behavior in nonprofit organizations (Addicott 2017); minority entrepreneurship (White 2018); entrepreneurship education for nonprofit organizations (Thomas and Van Slyke 2019). Regarding to the research conducted between 2011 and 2019, we highlight several studies that sought to understand the nascent phase of nonprofit organizations (Andersson 2016, 2017, 2018a, b, 2019).

In short, from this systematization of the evolutions of the themes researched on entrepreneurship in nonprofit organizations, we can verify an increase in the number of research and diversity of themes. This may indicate that nonprofit organizations are gradually adopting entrepreneurship as a means to stay in this increasingly competitive market. Many of these themes and tools were previously used only by for-profit organizations.

#### **4 Conclusions, future research suggestions, implications and limitations**

This paper aimed at identifying, analyzing and systematizing the studies already conducted on entrepreneurship in nonprofit organizations and presented an analysis of the contents of the publications, of the methods used and an evolution on the theme in the last three decades (1995 until 2019). Through the results, we observed that the investigations on entrepreneurship in nonprofit organizations are relatively recent, with the first being identified in the 1990s (Rossheim et al. 1995). There has been an increase in the number of publications over the last three decades. Regarding the methods, we can verify that 42%, 30% and 25% of the investigations were respectively quantitative, qualitative and theoretical studies, which shows that it is still a developing theme in the literature.

As for the location of the authors and the nonprofit organizations researched, we perceived a predominance of the USA in the three decades. Regarding the most discussed themes within entrepreneurship in nonprofit organizations, a considerable diversity was observed, as presented previously (social entrepreneurship, biographies of social entrepreneurs, motives to start a nonprofit organization, hybridism, market orientation, entrepreneurial orientation, minority entrepreneurship, nascent nonprofit entrepreneurship, innovation and decision-making).

As a contribution for practices, the results of this research can help managers of nonprofit organizations understand the importance of entrepreneurship within the context of nonprofit organizations. For the theory, this study sought to identify, systematize and analyze studies on entrepreneurship in nonprofit organizations, presenting an evolution of the studies by decades. The systematic reviews already identified focused specifically on social entrepreneurship (e.g. Phillips et al. 2015; Conway Dato-on and Kalakay, 2016; Bittencourt et al. 2016) and the review by Maier

et al. (2016) focused specifically on how nonprofit organizations are becoming a business.

Regarding the limitations of this investigation, we emphasize four. The first, refers to the use of only one database, in this case ISI Web of Knowledge. The second, relates to the terms of the combinations of the searched keys, as there may be other terms that were not entered in the search. The third is related to the filters (only English papers, papers and reviews). Finally, the fourth limitation in this study - theses, books, dissertations, symposia and other scientific events are not considered.

Regarding the suggestions of future research, since this research sought to analyze entrepreneurship in nonprofit organizations, we suggest that a theoretical study could be conducted to define the conceptual evolution of entrepreneurship in nonprofit organizations, social entrepreneurship and hybridism.

Another suggestion of future research is to carry out a systematic review of the literature that seeks to understand the motives that lead people to have the intention to start nonprofit organizations. Other review could analyze the failures and successes of business activities developed by nonprofit organizations, something not yet identified in the literature. Future studies can also seek to identify what are the entrepreneurial characteristics present in managers of nonprofit organizations. And also understand the view of the various stakeholders regarding the use of entrepreneurship tools by nonprofit organizations.

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