Data Congruence in What They Say, Do, and Feel:
The Role of Researcher's Sensory Processing Sensitivity Trait

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Abstract

This chapter focuses on how qualitative research can capture the lived experiences of entrepreneurial individuals by exploring their subjective experiences. Traditional methods of data collection involve listening to what entrepreneurial individuals say and observing their actions, although particular attention to their feelings is often absent. To achieve data congruence and to gain a deeper understanding of their lived experiences, it is crucial to also take into consideration how they feel. This chapter will recount a confessional tale recorded during a recent field study in entrepreneurship that will shed light on the pivotal role that a researcher's sensory processing sensitivity trait can play during qualitative data collection in helping researchers becoming mindful of the feelings of entrepreneurial individuals, even when those feelings are not directly expressed by them. The introduction of the researcher's sensory processing sensitivity trait in promoting data congruence during qualitative data collection will be this chapter's principal contribution.

Key words: Qualitative research, Data collection, Lived experiences, Data congruence, Participant's unexpressed feelings, Sensory processing sensitivity (SPS)

1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on methodologies that explore the minutiae 'lived' and 'living' experiences of entrepreneurial individuals (i.e., their *Lebenswelt*). Our choice was motivated by the fact that entrepreneurship is inherently processual (Steyaert, 2007), is highly contextualised (Baker and Welter, 2020) and that qualitative research is widely recognized as being particularly effective at advancing insights into how entrepreneurial individuals think and feel (Javadian et al., 2020; Johannisson, 2018). To gain a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of entrepreneurial individuals, researchers must examine the underlying reasons and the methods used to manifest these individuals' behaviours, opinions, and experiences (Guest et al., 2013). To this end, considerable emphasis has been placed on research design, fieldwork, and analytical rigor (Van Burg et al., 2022). These methodologies have as their objective the exploration of how individuals consciously experience specific phenomena, of the things that surround them, and of the actions they and others take (Tracy, 2020). Otherwise stated, these methodologies are focused on the entrepreneur's agency as it is embodied and embedded in the life world in which they exist (Steyaert, 2007, p. 461).

To capture the lived experiences of entrepreneurial individuals, researchers can employ various techniques in order to gather qualitative data during field work (Flick, 2018; Van Manen, 2016). Traditionally, this involves the researcher listening to what participants *say* and observing their *actions*; however, we would contend that what is currently lacking from our qualitative inquiries about the lived experiences of entrepreneurial individuals is sufficient attention to their *feelings*. Compared with research in other fields, such as Health, relatively little importance has been attributed to the feelings of entrepreneurial individuals. However, delving into the feelings of entrepreneurial individuals is indeed crucial for any qualitative research intending to gain a deeper understanding of their lived experiences. As Langley and Klag (2019, p. 516) argue, "*only by becoming, at least to some degree, involved in the situations studied, by listening to those who live with them every day, and by seeing, touching, and feeling them for ourselves can we come to **understand them deeply** enough to be able to make sense of their experience*" (emphasis added).

To attain a deeper understanding of entrepreneurial individuals in a qualitative inquiry, we would put forward the proposition in this chapter that it is crucial to also take note of how they feel when qualitative data is being collected. This would achieve the desired data congruence as the degree to which the qualitative data mirror the views and perceptions of the individuals under study (Van Manen, 2016; Grafanaki, 1996; Grafanaki and McLeod, 2002).

In essence, we will outline in this chapter how that data congruence can be achieved through the identification of an alignment between what individuals under study say, do, and feel. The main objective of this chapter is to demonstrate how data congruence can be achieved in qualitative data collection by taking into consideration the feelings of entrepreneurial individuals.

To accomplish this main objective, we will provide a reflexive 'confessional tale of the field' related to our recent field study in a non-governmental organization (NGO) run entrepreneurship program for the poor in a rural setting. During the process of the qualitative data collection, an unanticipated discovery was made by one of the field researchers. This researcher in question was able to detect a misalignment between what the participants were saying, doing, and feeling by becoming mindful of the feelings of the individuals under study while qualitative data was being collected. By reflecting on this confessional tale, we will aim to demonstrate the value of a reflexive approach to qualitative research that emphasizes the researcher's role in shaping and adapting data collection during qualitative field work. We will also provide practical implications for scholars interested in enhancing their ability to be more perceptive to non-verbal cues and implicit feelings, which can assist them in acquiring a more nuanced understanding of the complex and dynamic social world of entrepreneurial individuals. Ultimately, this can generate data congruence between what entrepreneurial individuals say, do, and feel during qualitative field work.

2. **The data congruence between what they say, do and feel.**

Entrepreneurship is a processual phenomenon (Sarasvathy *et al.*, 2003; Steyaert, 2007) and calls for gaining a deeper understanding of how entrepreneurial individuals think and feel (Johannisson, 2018). Qualitative researchers endeavour to establish an in-depth knowledge of "*how things work in particular contexts*" (Miles et al., 2014), and to document the "*richness, depth, nuance, context, multidimensionality, and complexity*" (Mason, 2002, p. 1) of the lived experiences of entrepreneurial individuals. In essence, qualitative studies have the potential to provide insights, which refer to "*a clear, deep, and sometimes sudden understanding of a complicated problem or situation*" (Cambridge dictionary), or simply "*the acquisition of new understanding*" (Grosse Holtforth et al., 2007).

To obtain a deeper understanding of the nature and meaning of the everyday experiences of entrepreneurial individuals, researchers must engage in thoughtful reflections and employ modes of questioning, reflecting, focusing, and intuiting (Van Manen, 2016). Therefore,

qualitative research requires a state of "thoughtfulness," which entails "a minding, a heeding, a caring attunement" (Van Manen, 2016, p. 12). Researchers must also endeavour to investigate all modalities and aspects of the phenomenon in question to fully comprehend it. To simply rely on what entrepreneurial individuals have said or their observable actions would be insufficient vis-à-vis the drawing of the complete picture. As Van Manen (2016, p. 33) notes, "*to be oriented to an object means that we are animated by the object in a full and human sense*". Therefore, data congruence must be ensured in qualitative inquiry so as to acquire a deeper understanding of entrepreneurial individuals.

To attain data congruence, it is essential for researchers to be attuned to the *feelings*, *the moods*, and *emotions* (Van Manen, 2016, p. 64) of the entrepreneurial individuals being studied and to pay particular attention to sensory details such as how things look, smell, and sound during the process of collecting qualitative data (Van Manen, 2016). Being mindful of the feelings of the entrepreneurial individuals is crucial in gaining a deeper understanding of their lived experiences and to uncover the essence of the entrepreneurial phenomenon under investigation. Data congruence, therefore, refers to the alignment between what the entrepreneurial individuals under study say, do, and feel.

While qualitative researchers in the field of entrepreneurship have begun considering the feelings of entrepreneurial individuals (Frese and Gielnik, 2023), most studies have focused on feelings as the main object of study and have directly inquired about the feelings of entrepreneurial individuals (Wettergren, 2015). However, even in these studies, it remains a challenge to go beyond what entrepreneurial individuals are willing to disclose about their feelings. To date, the important question of how feeling the participants (Langley and Klag, 2019), "*what happens when we feel the research instead of just thinking it*" (Blakely, 2007, p. 60), and how to capture and recognize what entrepreneurial participants feel when we are "tuned in" remains largely unanswered in qualitative entrepreneurship research. Standard procedures—such as listening and observing—usually fall short when it comes to understanding and representing the affective aspects of the lived experiences of research participants (Kahl, 2019).

In addition, being mindful and *heedful* of phenomena also involves exploring that which is left unsaid. Although entrepreneurial individuals are often willing to share their experiences, the unarticulated or implicit data and the "countless other things" left unsaid (Presser, 2013, p. 53) are crucial in gaining further insight into how they "experience" the world. This is especially true during fieldwork, when researchers may sense that something is happening but this

"something" proves challenging to investigate and may even unexpectedly challenge the researchers' assumptions (see the special issue edited by Donnelly et al., 2013).

For scholars interested in gaining a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of entrepreneurial individuals, revising existing methods and techniques of data collection may be necessary to successfully identify non-verbal cues and scrutinise implicit feelings of individuals under study. While keeping one's eyes and ears open to what entrepreneurial individuals say and do during qualitative data collection is common practice, this chapter proposes an additional, underutilised approach of becoming mindful of the feelings of entrepreneurial individuals, and being open to "*a lack of fit between one's encounter with a tradition and the schema-guided expectations by which one organizes experience* " (Agar, 1986, p. 21). By being mindful of the emotional states (i.e. feelings) of the entrepreneurial individuals in our studies, we can expect to develop a more nuanced understanding of the complex relationships between individuals and their social environment, to cultivate a deeper sense of connection with the people we are studying, and, ultimately, achieve data congruence between what they say, do, and feel.

In the following section, we will outline the research setting of our recent field study that encouraged us to write a reflexive 'confessional tale of the field' in part due to an unexpected discovery made during the field work in an NGO run entrepreneurship program for the poor in a rural setting. Through our confessional tale of the field, we hope to demonstrate the value of a reflexive approach to qualitative research which emphasizes the researcher's role in shaping and adapting data collection during qualitative field work.

3. The Context of the recent field study

The confessional tale of the researcher immerses the reader in the "living" story and conveys his empirical and theoretical perspective in a particularly direct way (Langley and Klag, 2019). As qualitative researchers, we have four tasks (Goodall, 2000, p. 7): learning how to do fieldwork, learning how to write, figuring out who we are as a person/fieldworker/writer, and knowing how, where, and when these all intertwine. The thread uniting all four of these tasks is understanding and re-evaluating the constructed, fictional, and ideological nature of selves, 'realities and texts (Cunliffe, 2003). One form of tale that can cross realist, impressionist, and critical tales is the confessional tale (Cunliffe, 2011, Van Maanen, 1988).

The accounts shared here are based on our experience of conducting a qualitative field study that was set in a non-western country over a three-year period between 2019 and 2021. The main objective of our study at that time was to explore and understand the emergence of

entrepreneurial behaviour in a context of extreme poverty. The data collection took place with members and beneficiaries of a humanitarian organization (NGO). The NGO hosts adolescents and young adults (i.e., beneficiaries) from the world's poorest populations living on less than 1.90 USD a day (World Bank, 2020) who are on average 18 years old, (ii) 40 French and American volunteers, and (iii) 10 employees from the country's middle and upper classes.

The NGO is involved in a range of development and community building activities such as housing, natural disaster relief, livelihood development, education, sports, feeding programs and entrepreneurship training. We carried out narrative interviews, focus-group, diachronic in-situ observations and compiled relevant field notes. The empirical investigation was led by two experienced fieldworkers. The analysis team comprised three researchers – an outsider and two insiders.

Only one of the two fieldworkers was able to detect a misalignment between what the participants were saying, doing, and feeling by becoming mindful of the feelings of the beneficiaries when qualitative data was collected. The confessional tale of the field is reported by this fieldworker A. In the Discussion section, we make an effort to explain how and why Fieldworker A became mindful of the feelings of the beneficiaries while Fieldworker B did not.

4. The confessional tale of the field

4.1. Processing first verbatims: feeling struck by the stories.

Fieldworker A: I retrieved the data collected by my co-fieldworker B during her[1] first stay in the study site over an eight-day period in 2019. She conducted 20 narrative interviews with beneficiaries, three interviews with people in charge and wrote up observation field notes. She attended all the local events, went to the restaurant and occupied the same living spaces as the beneficiaries. She mainly asked the beneficiaries to talk about themselves, their entrepreneurial enterprises and their motivations, as well as about the local context in which they found themselves in the organization. In addition to the verbatim data (*what they said*), she also shared with me the memos and observations on what the participants under study do on a daily basis as she lived on the site throughout her first stay (*what they do*).

I processed the verbatim and observations data (2000 minutes of interviews) manually and with the aid of assistive software. We then studied my analyses while taking into consideration Fieldworker B's observations and further coding and processing steps were

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[1] We refer to the all participants as 'she/her' to hide their identities.

followed.

The interviewees' stories were moving and I was struck by the ease with which the beneficiaries shared their deeply traumatic experiences of hunger, deprivation, criminality and abuse suffered at the hands of their parents. As the NGO is deeply rooted in a populist Christian movement, my co-fieldworker and I were not overly surprised by the religious rhetoric but we did notice the recurring mention of the role of the NGO's founder, who was no longer part of the NGO at the time of the first interviews. My co-fieldworker reported that the participants under study experienced positive feelings and that the general atmosphere of the NGO was positive for the people who live there (*what they feel*).

4.2. Focus group interview with NGO personnel: becoming sensitised

Fieldworker A: My first contact with the participants was when we organized a focus group in late 2020 with the NGO's personnel including members of the management committee, the executive director and the operational manager. In addition, there were three additional people present: a French broker whose role was to source donations and establish collaborations with major business schools in France, a beneficiary who had graduated from the second batch (2015), and a French social entrepreneur involved in the NGO.

The focus group interview lasted 95 minutes and was preceded by an informal lunch (90 minutes). The data from the interview were digitally recorded. The themes were non-structured and dealt with the organization 's ecosystem and the interactions between its components, interactions with the people in charge of the beneficiaries, and the outcome of the beneficiaries' entrepreneurial initiatives.

During the focus group interview, members responded to all questions without any hesitation, including the more intimate ones (e.g., religious motivation). All of them were engaged in a "poor youth movement in the country". They all seemed to share sincere admiration, almost adulation, for the charismatic founder of the NGO (*what they say*). The participants of the focus group did not lack for openness and showed enthusiasm for sharing their stories and opinions (*What they say*).

However, I felt a growing sense of discomfort taking root inside me, a strange feeling that I could not explain away but which had grown since my first observations of the participants. My co-fieldworker asked most of the questions (I asked only two) while I silently observed and recorded the group lunch and discussion. I soon began to have a sense of foreboding and instinctually, I wanted to extricate myself from the situation. Despite this, I wished to stay so I could get to the bottom of the origins of my feeling of discomfort. By sharing

my uneasiness with my co-fieldworker, I was looking for a way to interpret it and to reason it. For her part, my co-fieldworker interpreted my malaise as an expression of misinterpretation of the cultural context in which the NGO operates and the vastly differing context of extreme poverty and its effects on individuals. She feared that my posture would introduce bias into our interpretation of the 'facts' that we were observing and recording (i.e., *what they say* & *what they do*). Even if it struck me every time I thought or spoke about it, I decided nonetheless to persevere with the research project as a way of understanding the participants under study and, also, my-self.

4.3. Second stay: listening to untold stories.

Fieldworker A: Two months later, in early 2021, my Fieldworker B and I went on an immersion in the NGO for two weeks. We accompanied/shadowed the beneficiaries from the moment they got up in the morning until they prepared dinner in the evening.

My feelings of doubt and discomfort that had grown when interviewing the beneficiaries puzzled me. As it was, the atmosphere in the NGO *seemed* positive: participants openly declared to have positive feelings, such as joy, as a result of being part of the NGO and that volunteering in this NGO has given meaning to their life. They lauded the positive and reciprocal learning exchanges happening between two different worlds (rich/poor; developed countries/ developing countries, etc.,). The verbatim data that we analysed at the end of every day also seemed to attest to these positive feelings such us 'happiness', 'pride', 'positive change' (*what they say*). Additionally, all the members of the NGO appeared to be enthusiastic about completing their daily activities. For example, they would sing and laugh while cleaning the common areas or while taking part in other extra-curricular activities (*what they do*). At the same time, I felt overwhelmed by the negative feelings (discomfort, worry) that I perceived among different participants during our interactions. I had the impression that what they were saying and what they were doing were not consistent with what they were feeling inside, despite their pleasant exteriors. I tried to understand why I was experiencing strong feelings of discomfort whereas Fieldworker B was not. I tried to put aside such ideas, but this uneasiness plagued me even as I walked around the site. I only shared my doubts and discomfort with my fellow fieldworker which was not an easy task as she was sceptical about my suspicions, suspicions which I had trouble substantiating. She implored me once again to be more open-minded given that the cultural and religious context of the study site differed significantly from our European background.

I decided to turn my attention to the foreign volunteers. The questions I put to them were

intended to provide me with a better understanding of their involvement in the beneficiaries' lives. In addition to the recordings, I spent time with the volunteers and asked them informally if they would like to have the same initiative in their home countries, whether they thought the beneficiaries and employees were really happy, and whether the volunteers had any information about the graduate beneficiaries and their entrepreneurial projects. Some volunteers seemed to be gloomy, disappointed, and almost depressed (*what they say*). Other volunteers were more enthusiastic (*what they say*). My co-fieldworker explained the difference by referring to the context of poverty and to the stories of trauma with which we Westerners have little experience.

I needed to clarify to myself why I was still convinced that something didn't feel right, a sentiment which was overwhelming me. I observed that one of the volunteers (Volunteer R) was very involved in supporting the entrepreneurial projects of the beneficiaries (*what she does*). Yet, I sensed that she was having some negative feelings even when she walked around, ate, or engaged in collective activities with others. I sensed her discomfort and felt as if she was hiding something. During the interview, the volunteer R answered all my questions. She initially spoke in positive terms: "*the youngsters have great potential, especially when you know where they come from! you saw how quickly they learn English! it's exceptional! I visited the villages where some of them come from, such as X (you know him?) his family is really poor, they don't eat every day and when they do eat, it's rice and water! It's amazing what he is doing now. It is great to contribute to his project*" (*what she says*). Issues that she brought up related mainly to the selection criteria of these three batches and the values she was looking for in humanitarian work. However, when questioned about her experience with the NGO (questions I asked at the end of the interviews to all the volunteers), these questions evoked non-tangible reactions (*What I sense*). Some of my questions prompted facial reactions on her part and caused a noticeable change in her eye movement which she was evidently trying to control When I asked her what was wrong, she responded that nothing was wrong. (*What she says*). I paused the recording and encouraged her to trust me, mentioning that I, as a researcher, would always respect her anonymity. This was to no avail as she said nothing more at the time.

That evening, however, Volunteer R called me back to tell me that she was actually leaving the next day and that my line of questioning had had an impact on her. She elaborated further, revealing that some time earlier there had been a suicide attempt by one beneficiary following a sexual relationship with the founder of the NGO. The founder had later abandoned the beneficiary and Volunteer R informed me that former beneficiaries were aware of the abuse and that it had been going for several years. For the first time, what she revealed (*what she said*) was in line with what I sensed in her (*what she felt*). I felt overcome although at least I was

beginning to comprehend why I had been alarmed from the start even though there were no explicit red flags; even my fellow fieldworker had not perceived of anything being out of the ordinary.

4.4.Studying the feelings of the participants: will they say what they feel?

Fieldworker A: That same evening, following the revelatory admissions from Volunteer R, I shared the information of the founder of the NGO's alleged abuse of some of the beneficiaries with my co-fieldworker. The news both shocked and horrified her. We decided that this revelation had to be investigated further before any action was to be taken. We would continue using open-ended questions and would insist on the asking of one of them in particular: how do you feel about the organisation?

However, I was insistent with my co-fieldworker that we should leave before the NGO found out that we had become aware of potential abuse in the NGO. While my co-fieldworker was more focused on cross-checking the data, I was preoccupied with the question of distancing ourselves from the situation as seamlessly as possible without raising any further questions. What was of prime importance to me was how to leave the site and get to a safer environment.

The next day, my interview/conversation with Volunteer 'J' was even more intense. Volunteer J admitted feeling perplexed about my questions and burst into tears. She showed me an e-mail exchange with the founder of the NGO where Volunteer J reproached him for the abuse of the beneficiaries. In the email exchange the founder of the NGO defended his position without apologizing.

We promptly decided to inform our universities of what we had uncovered and to leave the NGO and the country to allow ourselves to regroup and plot course forward. Before leaving the country, we carried out one final interview with an individual of significant importance to the NGO who had been a volunteer with them since the launch of the NGO. She confirmed that senior management of the NGO covered up the allegations as the founder (who had been removed from the NGO at an earlier date) is a prominent figure in the country. The cover-up was also intended to protect the beneficiaries. It appeared that several participants and beneficiaries in the NGO were aware of the abuse, which had been haphazardly swept under the rug. This testimony made it very clear to me that what had alarmed and unnerved me throughout my fieldwork was in fact due to what some participants felt but tried to hide behind their otherwise endearing and welcoming smiles (*what they say* and *do*).

4.5.Trying to desensitise

Back in our home country, it took us several months before we could reflect meaningfully on our experience and on the collected empirical data. The analysis of the data began when we were able to come to terms with our entirely unexpected and traumatic discovery. The co-author (not present in the fieldwork) asked us for reflexive feedback, first orally and then in writing, on the research process and our feelings (a reflexive validity, Stiles, 1993). This process allowed us to start interpreting and understanding the participants' feelings and how the sensitivities of a researcher (or its absence) help (or hinder) the process of becoming mindful (or not) of the feelings of the participants during the collection of qualitative data. It was not an easy task for us to recognize the boundaries and limitations of our roles as scholars and human beings proved to be a difficult task especially when highly charged emotional subject matter was being discussed (Garafanki, 1996). For us this process lasted for 7 months and would involve 1) self-analysis and analysis of one's own field notes, 2) exchanges with the co-author who was not present in the fieldwork, 3) exchanges with the co-fieldworker, and 4) discussions among the three of us.

The analysis process helped the two fieldworkers to partially dissociate from the field study and deal with their traumatic experiences. The process was also crucial in aiding them to go beyond the ethical dilemma and to tackle the 'ethical hangover' (Lofland and Lofland,1995) "*over what is viewed as a betrayal of the people under study*" (p.28).

5. Discussion

The objective of this chapter was to demonstrate how data congruence can be achieved in qualitative data collection by considering the feelings of entrepreneurial individuals. To this end, we provided a reflexive 'confessional tale of the field' related to our recent field study in an NGO run entrepreneurship program for the poor in a rural setting during which an unexpected discovery was made by one of the field researchers. This researcher in question was able to detect a misalignment between what the participants were saying, doing, and feeling by becoming mindful of the feelings of the individuals under study while qualitative data was being collected.

Data congruence is a 'golden rule' (Richards and Morse 2002: 171–172) which directs us how to obtain a deeper knowledge of the entrepreneurial individuals we study. While there is a well-documented and lively debate about what entrepreneurial individuals say and do, the field of qualitative research seems to be much less concerned with their feelings. Indeed, current practice in entrepreneurship qualitative research incorporates a number of research traditions by focusing on systematic inquiry techniques related to what participants say (interviews,

recordings, transcriptions) and do (participant observations). As such, traditionally research tries to ensure a data congruence between what the subjects say and do, which represents a challenge in itself.

Reflecting on our experience of conducting this qualitative field work, it appears to us that entrepreneurship qualitative researchers are keen to take into account everything which is said (in interviews, through observations) and written (archival documents) and then proceed with the qualitative analysis/coding. Our original field study also did what typically is done in qualitative inquiries to ensure data congruence between what participants say and do. The first data was collected through carefully designed interview protocol. In a sense, everything was structured so as not to omit anything the participants said and do while data was collected in the field through individual interviews, group interviews, document analysis, and field observations. All stages of the data collection were carried out as rigorously as possible based on the ten years of experience possessed by both fieldworkers in completing such research. The data were analysed by two insider researchers (the co-fieldworkers A and B) and one third-party analyst-researcher.

At the same time, it was only when Fieldworker A began musing on the importance of the entrepreneurial individuals' feelings, even when such feelings were not directly being expressed by them, that it was possible to gain a deeper understanding of what was truly going on regarding the participants' lived experiences. This subtext was not detectable through the established rigorous procedures of data collection concerning only what the people said and did. In fact, since first contact, Fieldworker A had been manifesting a higher degree of sensitivity to the subtleties of the stimuli and minor cues during data collection than Fieldworker B had and had been becoming increasingly more mindful of the unexpressed feelings of the individuals involved in the study.

5.1.Introducing Sensory Processing Sensitivity (SPS)

The difference between the two fieldworkers can be explained by the fact that Fieldworker A possesses the sensory processing sensitivity (SPS) trait, which refers to the innate ability to perceive subtleties and weak signals in the environment (Aron and Aron, 1997; Aron et al., 2012; Greven et al., 2019; Acevedo et al., 2021; David et al., 2022). Aron et al (2012) point out that the SPS trait is not so much about extraordinary senses but rather concerns the brain's capacity to process sensory information in a very careful and deep manner. Empirical research on the brain makes it clear how the brains of SPS people are more sensitive to the moods of other people, which helps them to get a sense of the feelings of others (David et al.,

2022; Acevedo et al., 2018; 2021; Fan et al. 2011). Several studies have also shown that individuals, including researchers, differ in their general sensitivity to both negative and positive stimuli from the surrounding world (see Greven et al., 2019 for a meta-review). Around 20% of the general population is estimated having the SPS trait (Aron and Aron, 1997; Aron et al., 2012).

As a consequence, individuals with SPS trait manifest higher emotional sensitivity, which allows them to notice all the subtleties of stimuli, make them hyperaware of social cues (Greven et Al., 2019; Aron, 2004), more empathic to others' affective cues (Aron and Aron,1997; Boyce and Ellis, 2005; Belsky and Pluess, 2009; Aron et al., 2012; Jagiellowicz et al., 2016) and thus experience hyperarousal to some stimuli, such as when feeling empathy towards others' distress (Acevedo et al., 2018: 375).

5.2.Sensory Processing Sensitivity (SPS) in the field work

In our field work, Fieldworker A experienced a higher degree of responsiveness to the moods and emotional states of the participants, which encouraged her to delve further into the reasons for her own personal emotional reservations, which seemed to contrast with what the participants were expressing (saying) in relation to their feelings. This process of 'pause-to-check' in novel situations (Aron and Aron 1997; Aron et al. 2012; Stenmark and Redfearn, 2022) makes it possible to capture the emotional state of others (Acevedo et al., 2014 :591). Furthermore, Acevedo's (2014, 2018, 2020) studies on brain activation indicate that the degree of empathy felt seems to be more pronounced with individuals possessing the SPS trait than those who do not. Looking at photos of their loved ones in an unhappy state, SPS people also demonstrated heightened activity in areas of the brain related to wanting to do something, to act, even more than in areas involving empathy. This is the 'brain's mirror neurons' that are more active in SPS individuals than others and tend to generate more activity when noticing anyone's sad faces (Ishikami and Tanaka, 2022). This is consistent with what Kisfalvi (2006), and Devereux (1967) called also a 'mirror sensitivity' that Fieldworker A developed with participants (e.g., Volunteer R) to gain a deeper understanding of people's lived experiences beyond their words and actions.

Finally, SPS scores are associated with greater activation of brain regions involved in awareness and action readiness in response to negative social stimuli (Ishikami and Tanaka, 2022) such as Fieldworker A's preparations to return home while Fieldworker B focused on continuing the data collection. At the same time, being overwhelmed by stimuli in fieldwork makes SPS people more susceptible to anxiety and emotional distress (Aron et al. 2012;

Acevedo et al., 2018; Acevedo et al., 2021; Fan et al. 2011). In our case, the absence of Fieldworker B and the anxiety and emotional distress linked to being overwhelmed could have hindered Fieldworker A from collecting and analysing data in a more systematic way.

In summation, we would propose that possessing this sensory processing sensitivity trait (SPS) (Aron and Aron, 1997; Greven et al., 2019) would help scholars to not only *think* about but also *become mindful of* and empathise with what is going in the study field. This, in turn, would suggest that the inclusion of researchers possessing this SPS trait into teams undertaking qualitative studies would allow us to benefit from the potential contributions related to this trait. We, as qualitative researchers, cannot exclude this more "humanized" inquiry process, despite its evident complications, from data collection and analysis. Yet, there is a "common humanity" that we researchers and the participants share; as qualitative studies are generally carried out by teams of researchers who work in tandem, it might be of interest to diversify these profiles and to accept that researchers, like the general population, have individually specific manners of processing external stimuli. This observation allows us to imagine a new form of triangulation which takes into account the unique personalities of researchers.

5.3. Practical considerations

A research team comprising members with diverse sensitivity traits can yield a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of the subjects under study. Colleagues who focus on the verbal and observable aspects can complement those who possess heightened sensitivity and can attune themselves to the emotional nuances of the subjects. However, it is crucial to acknowledge that in a research team with varying sensitivity traits, the discussion of highly sensitive and potentially distressing feelings among co-fieldworkers should be conducted in a constructive and inclusive manner. This means that the concerns, doubts, suspicions, and hesitations of highly sensitive colleagues should not be dismissed simply because other team members are not as mindful of the feelings of the individuals under study as the others. Therefore, an effective qualitative research team must be adaptable during fieldwork, allowing for the exploration of new and challenging ideas or themes that may emerge, regardless of their difficulty or potential emotional impact.

We also intend to reassure the remaining 80% of the population who do not possess the SPS trait, as there are various techniques available to develop their ability to discern subtle cues during fieldwork. For instance, Ekman (1993) and Ekman and Friesen (2003) have categorized numerous facial expressions, identified corresponding facial muscles, and provided extensive

guidelines to facilitate accurate decoding of emotions. For example, they discovered that genuine smiles, known as Duchenne smiles, can be distinguished from insincere smiles by the presence of small wrinkles around the eyes. Navarro and Karlins (2008) suggest that body language and gestures can be utilised to gain insight into the thoughts, emotions, and motivations of individuals. Among the many strategies they outline, it is noted that women often cover their suprasternal indentation (the dimple where the neck meets the chest) when feeling tense or uncomfortable. Additionally, Lewis (2012) offers practical tools for understanding and acquiring proficiency in non-verbal communication and body language. The Journal of Nonverbal Behavior regularly publishes a range of studies on non-verbal communication, proxemics, facial gestures, eye contact, personal interaction, and non-verbal emotional expression.

One can also develop the ability to observe and interpret facial expressions, physical movements, proxemics, posture, clothing, tone, timbre, and changes in volume during people's conversations and activities. This careful scrutiny of non-verbal signals enables researchers to assess the alignment between individuals' feelings, words, and actions. Such techniques can be employed to adapt interactions and formulate questions during fieldwork. However, it is crucial to approach this process with a genuine desire to understand and accurately perceive participants' feelings. This necessitates a dedicated commitment to learning and training in various contexts. The limbic system in the human brain plays a role in decoding subtle non-verbal cues (Greven et al., 2019), making this endeavor particularly valuable for doctoral students seeking insights into the lived experiences of the individuals they study.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, by sharing our confessional tale of the field involvement in exploring entrepreneurial behaviour in a context of extreme poverty, we highlight the power of the researcher's sensory processing sensitivity trait (SPS) (Aron and Aron, 1997; Greven et al., 2019) as one interesting means to capture the unexpressed feelings of the individuals under study (*what they feel*). We hope to have demonstrated how the SPS trait permitted Fieldworker A not only to *think* but also *become mindful of* what was going among the entrepreneurial individuals we studied to achieve data congruence in qualitative fieldwork.

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