

# Exploring the Entrepreneurial Competencies of Female Inmates: Implications for Rehabilitation, Economic Empowerment, and Social Reintegration

<sup>1</sup>Christine A. Cayanan, LPT, DBA

<sup>1</sup>College of Business Studies  
Pampanga State University- Sto. Tomas Campus  
Santo Tomas, Pampanga, Philippines

**Abstract :** This study examined the entrepreneurial competencies of female inmates in one (1) selected Provincial Jail using the Personal Entrepreneurial Competencies (PEC) framework. A descriptive quantitative research design was utilized, employing a survey instrument measuring ten entrepreneurial competencies. Results showed an overall moderate level of entrepreneurial competencies ( $M = 16.90$ ). Goal setting ( $M = 19.20$ ), commitment to work contract ( $M = 18.52$ ), self-confidence ( $M = 18.22$ ), and systematic planning and monitoring ( $M = 18.10$ ) were the strongest competencies. Risk-taking ( $M = 13.82$ ) and persuasion and networking ( $M = 12.50$ ) recorded the lowest scores. These findings indicate that while female inmates possess foundational entrepreneurial traits, targeted entrepreneurship training programs are necessary to strengthen competencies that support successful reintegration and economic independence.

**Keywords:** *entrepreneurship, female inmates, rehabilitation, entrepreneurial competencies, reintegration*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship has increasingly been recognized as a pathway to economic empowerment and social reintegration among marginalized populations, including incarcerated individuals. For many former inmates, the lack of employment opportunities and persistent social stigma present significant barriers to successful reintegration into society (Visher & Travis, 2003). As a result, correctional systems are exploring alternative rehabilitation approaches that equip incarcerated individuals with practical skills that can support their economic independence after release.

Female inmates face particularly complex challenges upon reintegration. Compared with their male counterparts, incarcerated women often experience higher levels of economic vulnerability, disrupted family relationships, and limited access to employment opportunities (La Vigne et al., 2008). These structural barriers frequently increase the risk of recidivism and hinder successful reintegration into the community.

Entrepreneurship development has therefore emerged as a promising rehabilitation strategy. Entrepreneurship allows individuals to create their own economic opportunities rather than relying solely on formal employment systems that may exclude formerly incarcerated individuals. Research suggests that entrepreneurial competencies—such as opportunity recognition, persistence, and risk-taking—play a critical role in determining entrepreneurial success (Man et al., 2002).

The concept of Personal Entrepreneurial Competencies (PEC) is grounded in McClelland's Achievement Motivation Theory, which emphasizes the role of the need for achievement in entrepreneurial behavior (McClelland, 1961). According to this framework, individuals with strong achievement motivation demonstrate behaviors such as goal setting, persistence, and self-confidence—traits commonly associated with successful entrepreneurs.

In correctional settings, entrepreneurship education may serve as a mechanism for empowerment by enabling inmates to develop self-efficacy and economic independence (Zimmerman, 2000). Studies have shown that skill development and educational programs within correctional institutions can significantly improve post-release outcomes and reduce recidivism (Visher & Travis, 2003).

Despite increasing interest in entrepreneurship as a rehabilitation strategy, empirical research focusing specifically on entrepreneurial competencies among female inmates remains limited, particularly in developing countries. This study therefore seeks to examine the entrepreneurial competencies of female inmates in the Provincial Jail and identify areas that require further development to support entrepreneurship-based rehabilitation programs.

## NEED OF THE STUDY.

This study was conducted to address the lack of focused research on women’s experiences within the area being examined. While many studies discuss general trends, they often overlook the specific needs, challenges, and contributions of women. Recognizing this gap, the study aims to provide a clearer and more meaningful understanding of female perspectives. The findings are expected to help educators, policymakers, and program implementer design more inclusive and responsive strategies that truly reflect women’s realities. In doing so, the study contributes to ongoing efforts to promote gender equality by ensuring that women’s voices are heard and considered in decision-making processes.

The findings emphasize the value of including entrepreneurship education in correctional rehabilitation programs. This can be done by offering entrepreneurship training inside prisons, developing gender-responsive programs for women , and building partnerships with agencies like Technical Education ad Skills Development, Department of Trade and Industry to provide technical training and mentorship. These efforts can better prepare individuals for livelihood opportunities and successful reintegration into society.

### 3.1 Population and Sample

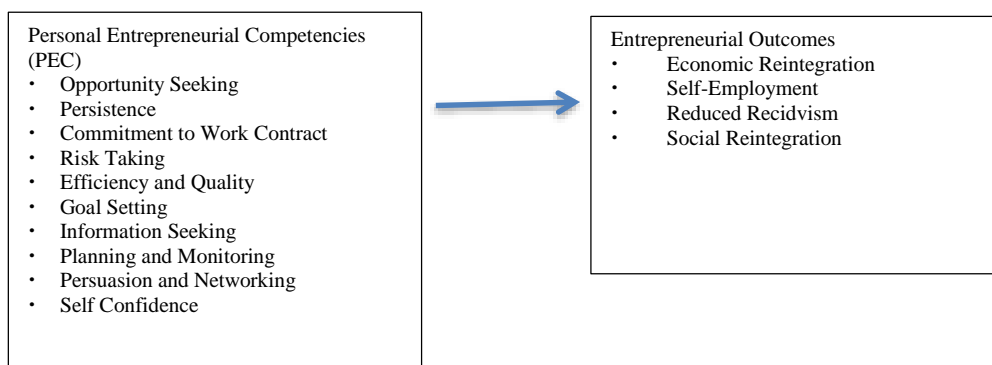
The study included 90 female respondents who represented the intended population of the research. This number was sufficient to provide meaningful insights into the topic being examined, especially within the specific context of the study. By focusing on women, the research was able to better capture their unique experiences, perspectives, and challenges, making the findings more relevant to gender-related concerns. The participants were selected based on clear criteria to ensure that they were appropriate for the study, which helped strengthen the credibility of the results. Overall, the responses gathered from these 90 women served as a solid basis for analysis and supported the development of practical and contextually relevant conclusions.

### 3.2 Data and Sources of Data

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire based on the Personal Entrepreneurial Competencies framework. The instrument measured ten entrepreneurial competencies using a Likert scale ranging from 1 (Never) to 5 (Always). Data collection was conducted with permission from jail authorities. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were informed of the purpose of the study prior to completing the questionnaire.

### 3.3 Conceptual framework

Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual framework linking entrepreneurial competencies to reintegration outcomes.



## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study utilized a descriptive quantitative research design to examine the entrepreneurial competencies of female inmates in the Provincial Jail. The descriptive approach allowed the researcher to assess the existing level of entrepreneurial competencies without manipulating variables. Participants consisted of female inmates currently detained at the Provincial Jail. Respondents were selected using purposive sampling to ensure that participants could provide relevant insights regarding entrepreneurial competencies.

Descriptive statistics, particularly mean scores, were used to determine the level of entrepreneurial competencies among respondents.

## IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 3. Results

Entrepreneurial Competency	Mean	Interpretation
1. Opportunity Seeking	16.77	Moderate
2. Persistence	17.65	Moderate
3. Commitment to Work Contract	18.52	High
4. Risk Taking	13.82	Low
5. Demand for Efficiency and Quality	16.37	Moderate
6. Goal Setting	19.20	High
7. Information Seeking	17.90	Moderate
8. Systematic Planning and Monitoring	18.10	High
9. Persuasion and Networking	12.50	Low
10. Self-Confidence	18.22	High
<b>Overall Mean</b>	<b>16.90</b>	<b>Moderate</b>

Table 1. Level of Entrepreneurial Competencies among Female Inmates.

### 4. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal that female inmates in the Provincial Jail demonstrate an overall **moderate level of entrepreneurial competencies**, indicating the presence of foundational entrepreneurial traits. This result suggests that incarcerated women possess the potential to develop entrepreneurial capabilities that may support their economic reintegration after release.

Among the competencies assessed, **goal setting emerged as the highest-rated competency**, followed by commitment to work contract, self-confidence, and systematic planning and monitoring. These competencies align closely with **McClelland's Achievement Motivation Theory**, which identifies goal orientation and persistence as key drivers of entrepreneurial behavior (McClelland, 1961). Individuals who exhibit strong achievement motivation tend to set challenging goals and demonstrate sustained effort in achieving them. The high scores in these competencies therefore suggest that female inmates possess motivational characteristics associated with entrepreneurial success.

The strong presence of **self-confidence** among respondents is also consistent with empowerment theory, which emphasizes the importance of psychological empowerment in enabling individuals to take control of their economic and social circumstances (Zimmerman, 2000). For incarcerated women, the development of self-confidence may serve as a critical factor in rebuilding personal agency and pursuing entrepreneurial opportunities after release.

However, the relatively lower scores in **risk-taking and persuasion and networking** highlight important gaps in entrepreneurial readiness. Risk-taking is widely recognized as a fundamental component of entrepreneurial decision-making because it involves the ability to pursue opportunities under conditions of uncertainty (Hisrich et al., 2017). Similarly, networking plays a critical role in entrepreneurship by enabling individuals to access resources, information, and social capital necessary for business development (Man et al., 2002).

The lower scores in these competencies may be attributed to the restrictive nature of correctional environments. Incarcerated individuals typically have limited opportunities to engage with external markets, entrepreneurial networks, or mentorship programs. As a result, inmates may have fewer opportunities to practice networking behaviors or develop risk management skills in real-world contexts.

These findings are consistent with reintegration research suggesting that access to education, training, and social support systems significantly influences post-release outcomes among incarcerated individuals (La Vigne et al., 2008; Visser & Travis, 2003). Without adequate training and institutional support, individuals may struggle to translate entrepreneurial intentions into viable business activities.

From a policy perspective, these results highlight the importance of **entrepreneurship education programs within correctional institutions**. Structured entrepreneurship training programs that include business planning, financial literacy, and mentorship opportunities may help strengthen weaker competencies such as risk-taking and networking. Such interventions can also enhance inmates' confidence and preparedness for economic participation after release.

Ultimately, strengthening entrepreneurial competencies among female inmates may contribute not only to economic empowerment but also to broader rehabilitation outcomes, including reduced recidivism and improved social reintegration.

#### REFERENCES

- [1.] Davidsson, P. (2015). Entrepreneurial opportunities. *Small Business Economics*.
- [2.] Fayolle, A., & Gailly, B. (2015). Entrepreneurship education impact. *Journal of Small Business Management*.
- [3.] Gorgievski, M., & Stephan, U. (2016). Psychology of entrepreneurship. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*.
- [4.] Hisrich, R., Peters, M., & Shepherd, D. (2017). *Entrepreneurship* (10th ed.). McGraw-Hill.
- [5.] La Vigne, N., Visher, C., & Castro, J. (2008). Prisoner reentry. Urban Institute.
- [6.] Man, T. W. Y., Lau, T., & Chan, K. F. (2002). Entrepreneurial competencies. *Journal of Business Venturing*.
- [7.] McClelland, D. (1961). *The achieving society*. Princeton University Press.
- [8.] Neck, H., Greene, P., & Brush, C. (2014). *Teaching entrepreneurship*. Edward Elgar.
- [9.] Shane, S., & Venkataraman, S. (2000). Entrepreneurship research. *Academy of Management Review*.
- [10.] Visher, C., & Travis, J. (2003). Prisoner reentry. *Annual Review of Sociology*.
- [11.] Zimmerman, M. (2000). Empowerment theory. *Handbook of Community Psychology*.

#### Copyright & License:

© Authors retain the copyright of this article. This work is published under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0), permitting unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.