Systematic Review of Social Entrepreneurship: A Contemporary Approach

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Abstract

It has been shown that social entrepreneurship can be a strategy to combat contemporary problems such as poverty and the impact on the environment, among others. For this reason, the study of this topic becomes more important day by day as the new global challenges with a social focus become more acute. From there arises the need to offer an article that provides updated information from conceptualization, through theories to current trends and study agendas. To achieve this work, the systematic literature review technique was used, which allowed the consultation of 68 specialized texts located through the main databases [WOS, Scopus, Scielo, Dialnet and Latindex]. As a result, a compendium of the concepts, theories, schools, models, profiles and trends of contemporary social entrepreneurship is presented. As a conclusion, the new lines or "agendas" of current research are also presented, encouraging the scientific community to continue studying this topic so relevant to contemporary society.

Keywords: Social entrepreneurship, Innovation, Social problems.

Introduction

Global trends show how inequality in the distribution of wealth is progressively increasing (Li-Bonilla &Coto-Moya, 2023; Merino et al., 2023), which represents one of the current global problems that requires urgent attention from all levels. Faced with these needs of a social nature, one of the responses by administrative sciences is the creation of companies. This has been the case for many years since the origin of companies by their nature is to attend to the needs or problems of society (Bom Camargo, 2021).

In a more particular way, in the face of these current challenges, a creative process is presented that stands out for influencing the solution of global problems, from local contexts to world scenarios. It is not about traditional entrepreneurship but about one whose essence is the fair business model, called social entrepreneurship or social entrepreneurship.

There are many studies that have shown that social entrepreneurship helps to combat poverty (More, 2023; Ramos et al., 2019; Rodríguez, 2020), for which this topic becomes relevant in the scientific discussion on the models or ways that can be adopted to develop these creative processes.

The evidence from the literature regarding social entrepreneurship shows multiple reports, including the study of digital marketing trends for social entrepreneurs (Mariano et al., 2023), social innovation from social entrepreneurship (Díez et al., 2023), social entrepreneurship competencies (Vergaray-Charra&Deroncele-Acosta, 2023) and the impact of financial management on social entrepreneurship (Baquero& Parra Barrios, 2023). All these works are important contemporary contributions to the scientific discussion on this topic.

Given the great diversity of studies that exist around social entrepreneurship, this article is offered, which seeks to make known aspects of great importance for scientific analysis. Said work can be useful both for beginners and for specialists in the subject, since a brief analysis is presented that includes from conceptualization to the study of the most current trends on social entrepreneurship. The foregoing represents the main scientific contribution of this article, since it shows a "trends" section in which the most innovative lines of research in this field can be found.

Materials and Methods

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A study is presented from the qualitative approach (Hernández & Mendoza, 2018), with a bibliographic design (Gómez-Luna et al., 2014). The systematic literature review (RSL) model proposed by Beltrán (2005) and Carrizo & Moller (2018) was used. This method proposes 5 important phases: 1. Define a question. 2. Specify inclusion criteria. 3. Formulate the search plan. 4. Data recording and quality assessment. 5. Interpretation and presentation of results. For this research work, each of the phases was followed as described below:

- 1. Pose the research question. In the first phase, a main question was raised considering that it meets the FINER requirements (feasible, interesting, novel, ethical and relevant). The resulting question is: What is the current concept and the theoretical evolution of social entrepreneurship? Additionally, specific questions were raised for each dimension studied.
- 2. Specify inclusion criteria. The inclusion criteria considered were the publication period (2018-2023), language (English-Spanish), type of publication (scientific-empirical and review articles), and assumed focus (administration and economics).
- 3. Formulate the search plan. In this phase it was considered important to establish the key concepts and significant terms: social entrepreneurship, social entrepreneurship schools, social entrepreneurship theories and social entrepreneurship trends. These same terms represent the keywords or subject headings. It was also taken into account that the keywords were correctly linked to the problem described, for which the related word "social problems" was considered.
- 4. Data recording and quality assessment. A data collection matrix designed in the Microsoft Excel 2021 spreadsheet software was used. This matrix consists of a template that includes the data: 1. Question. 2. Answer. 3. Reference. 4. Font type. 5. Arbitration. 6. Indexing. 7. Country. 8. Language. 9. Year. Which are considered fundamental data for bibliographic analysis. For the quality evaluation, the articles were identified according to the indexing to which they belong (Látindex, Dialnet, Scielo, Scopus, Web Of Science). Consultation of articles indexed in Scopus or WOS was privileged, although since we did not have access to most of these texts, texts from open access databases (Látindex, Dialnet, Scielo) were also used. Table 1 shows the breakdown of texts reviewed by each index.

Table 1. Number of texts reviewed by index

Database	Introduction	Methodology	Results	Total
Latindex	4	1	16	21
Dialnet	4	2	1	7
Scielo	0	0	4	4
Scopus	0	2	12	14
WOS	2	0	20	22
	10	5	53	68

Note. Own elaboration.

5. Interpretation and presentation of results. To interpret the results, the constant comparison technique is used (Cuñat, 2007). This consists of coding and analyzing data to develop concepts by continually comparing specific incidents in the data, identifying their properties, and exploring their interrelationships. In this phase, graphic

organizers are used, which allow the presentation of the results. A total of 68 scientific documents that have been published in a period of 6 years (2018 to 2023) were reviewed. A source typology matrix was constructed, which is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Typology of consulted texts

Type of sources	Introduction	Methodology	Results	Total
Opinion piece	2	0	2	4
Scientific article	5	4	44	53
Chapter of the book	2	0	1	3
Book	1	1	4	6
Thesis	0	0	1	1
Work document	0	0	1	1
	10	5	53	68

Note. Own elaboration.

The search engine used was mainly Google Scholar, since it represents the opportunity to freely access multiple scientific texts. However, the difficulty of locating the articles was also greater in this search engine since many texts that are not refereed are included there. Articles were also located directly on the official sites of the journals.

The ScienceDirect database was also used, in which only 22 review articles were located with the English terms "social entrepreneurship", published in the period from 2018 to 2023, with open access in the area of Business, Management and Accounting. These articles are especially considered in the section on "social entrepreneurship trends".

Results

Conceptualization of social entrepreneurship

The search for the definition of the term social entrepreneurship continues, as it is a term that can be approached from different perspectives and with specific objectives for each situation, but with elements in common. And it is that the term is promising, it intends to be the answer to the social problems of the communities where the action of the state is non-existent or ineffective (Espínola& Torres, 2020, p. 2). From some perspectives, the term is not in conflict with profit, since this is what provides sustainability and sustainability in the ventures that managed to become institutionalized and from another

perspective, these ventures are seen as companies or nonprofit associations, which are fed by donations and charity from the same community, which is why the debate among academics continues.

Bill Drayton is considered the father of social entrepreneurship, he approaches the term from the entrepreneurial perspective and defines the social entrepreneur as "the person who, in an innovative way, solves important problems in society" (Drayton, 2003, p. 5). Other scholars such as Dees & Anderson (2004) approach the term from the business perspective and define social enterprises as a hybrid structure between a non-profit organization oriented towards a social objective and an economic company. Similarly, Guzmán & Trujillo (2008, p. 109) mention that "social entrepreneurship seeks solutions to social problems through the construction, evaluation and pursuit of opportunities that allow the generation of sustainable social value". However, whatever the approach, common characteristics can be observed in each of the definitions: One of the elements in common is the social nature of the ventures and another is the innovative complement. Together, these two elements take advantage of the opportunities in the environment to carry out ventures for the benefit of the society in which they are located.

Recently, the term social entrepreneurship has become popular and, despite being a term that has its origins in the 19th century as a result of the emergence of the social economy, "many are the authors who highlight the lack of a clear definition of this field" (Franco, 2016; Moreira & Urriolagoitia, 2011, p. 19).

Converging characteristics can be observed in the exposed definitions, the most common being the social element of the ventures and the complement of innovation to take advantage of the opportunities in the environment, so that the result can change the lives of individuals for the better.

Some schools and theories on entrepreneurship

Espínola& Torres (2020) recognize two schools of thought that seek to explain the origin and development of social entrepreneurship: the social enterprise school of thought (macro approach) and the social innovation school of thought (meso approach), in addition, other studies propose "a school of thought that speaks of social entrepreneurship from the point of view of the subject who undertakes, the individual, that is, the social entrepreneur (micro approach)" (Pareja Cano et al., 2015, p. 80).

The social enterprise school of thought (macro approach) raises the origin of social entrepreneurship from a third sector, the European Commission (2015) defines it as "a company whose main objective is to generate a significant impact on society, the environment and the local community", for their part, Dees and Anderson (2004) cited in Pareja Cano et al (2015, p. 83), recognize that there could be "a hybrid structure between a non-profit organization oriented towards a social objective and an economic company" as this ensures its long-term sustainability. Also Bagnoli &Megali (2011, p. 45), agree that even in this type of company "economic and financial efficiency must always be respected".

Regarding the school of social innovation, Waddock and Post (1991) analyze it from the point of view of the agent of social and political change. On the other hand, for Ortega Hoyos& Martín Verhelst (2019) the term of social innovation has proven to be effective in satisfying social needs. Mulgan (2019) also mentions that in recent years, social innovation has grown considerably, and that it is mainly focused on very specific circumstances in the world. In summary, this school of social entrepreneurship takes innovation and creativity as the first component to generate in the environment the satisfaction of the needs of the community and to benefit it with the social component.

The third school is that of the social entrepreneur; At the beginning of the 20th century, the economist Schumpeter (1934) cited in Castro et al (2015) defines the entrepreneur as an entity that generates economic growth. It can be considered as a "creative destroyer" (development process characterized by constant innovation), however, talking about the term entrepreneur is very complex, due to this, many authors have defined the term entrepreneur and have given it important differentiators depending on the purpose of their venture.

Dees (1998) makes a differentiation between a traditional entrepreneur and a social entrepreneur, for him, the great

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differentiator is that social entrepreneurs are clearly aware of a mission oriented more than profit to social impact, due to this, this type of entrepreneurs face very specific challenges. For Bornstein (2007, p. 119), the social entrepreneur is one who seeks innovative solutions to traditional problems and has a strong social commitment to the community in which it operates. This perspective of social entrepreneurship from the social entrepreneur school takes the previous schools as a basis to develop its approach.

There are various theories about entrepreneurship that have within their structure a social character that can be used in social enterprises. Terán& Guerrero (2020) manage to classify different theories of entrepreneurship and divide them according to the point of view by which they are defined.

From the General Systems Theory approach, companies are considered an open and adaptive system, which means that their environment has a certain level of influence and the company has the ability to adapt (Von Bertalanffy, 1989).

In addition to the above, some of the theories identified in this article are: (1) Hagen's (1962) theory of social change, which states that "entrepreneurial creativity is the key element of social transformation (Hamilton & Harper, 1994), (2) Hoselitz's (1963) theory of cultural factors, which postulates that" the supply of entrepreneurship is governed by cultural factors and culturally minority groups are the spark of economic-entrepreneurial development." (Terán& Guerrero, 2020) and (3) Becker's Human Capital

Entrepreneurship Theory (2003) which maintains that "people have different knowledge and skills that have an economic value that must be considered in the entrepreneurship process" (Ferreto Gutiérrez et al., 2018).

In addition to the theories, there are business models that can be perfectly applicable to social enterprises and, in addition, could favor existing enterprises, providing them with a solid business structure, which will cause greater and better management of information, generating a positive impact and dissemination of it.

Social entrepreneurship models

Currently, there are countless models that analyze entrepreneurship from different perspectives. Generally, these models have within their structure the value proposition of the company and its guidelines to generate its value and sustenance. According to Brazeal and Herbert (1999), it is impossible to talk about entrepreneurship without relating it to terms such as "change", "creativity" or "innovation". The entrepreneur is a change agent who must be aware of the transformations of the environment in order to adapt. In the description of the "simple model of the entrepreneurial process", Brazeal and Herbert propose the elements that compose it and are complemented by other disciplines (see figure 1). Under this scheme, it is understood that creativity is a characteristic of the entrepreneurial human being and innovation as a competitive advantage of the business (Hernán&Gálvez, 2008).

environmental change.
-Hostility.
-Dynamism

Psychology.

Innovation (2)

Psychology.

Innovation (1)

Technology

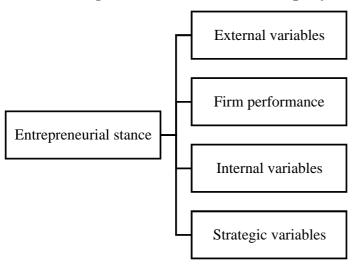
Administration

Figure 1. Simple model of the entrepreneurial process

Note. Interpretation of the figure by Brazeal and Herbert, adapted from Hernán et al. (2008)

Similarly, there are entrepreneurship models that analyze not only the performance of the entrepreneur within the company, but also involve elements external to the companies. In this model, the company is in continuous interaction with its environment. The limits of the application of this type of model (Figure 2) are defined by the level of interaction of the company with its environment (Hernán&Gálvez, 2008).

Figure 2. Social entrepreneurship model according to the behavior of the company



Note. Interpretation of the Covin and Slevin (1991) model adapted from Hernán et al., (2008)

A model allows differentiating the approaches of the schools of thought in practice and analyzing their elements to contrast them with each other (Espínola& Torres, 2020). Grassl (2012) states that the main element that characterizes any venture is the existence of a business model. Unlike the models previously proposed, Alter (2007) analyzes them based on three dimensions: orientation to its social mission, the integration of benefits and the market to which it is directed.

Given these three dimensions, Grassl (2012) identifies eight entrepreneurship models that can be perfectly adaptable and compatible with social value: Entrepreneurship supportmodel, Intermediarymodel, employmentmodel, cooperativemodel, Fee-for-service model, base of the pyramid model, Organizational support model and Service subsidy model.

As can be seen, the main interest of social enterprises, more than an economic benefit, is the solution to a problem or need of society, in some cases, it is intended to progressively mitigate the problem, or to attend to the causes that originate it.

Profile of the contemporary social entrepreneur

The characteristics that form the profile of the contemporary social entrepreneur are not only present at the moment of the creative process, rather they transcend to the business activity. Thus, Geradts& Alt (2022), recognize that "intrapreneurship" impacts very important aspects, not only in the process of creating a social company, but also in the operation of the company itself, such aspects are innovation, resource allocation and uncertainty management. However, the importance of "intrapreneurship", it is essential to know what are the elements that make up the profile of contemporary social entrepreneurs.

Ciccarino et al (2022) distinguish 3 types of "initiatives" or social entrepreneurial profiles: persistent, innovative or stagnant in the middle. Regarding these initiatives, they recognize that "the persistent ones" are the best when innovation refers to the reduction of risks and costs. If the primary goal is to solve a critical social problem, "innovative" entrepreneurs are best, and "stuck in the middle" tend to underperform.

On the other hand, Kim et al (2023) recognize the important role of emotion and psychological traits as fundamental characteristic elements in social entrepreneurial intention. But Zhao et al (2023) warn that emotion and psychological traits are often closely related to attentional elements in social entrepreneurship, and that these could be false.

The profile of the social entrepreneur is very diverse and complex, since according to Saleem and Anwar (2023) it is formed by personality traits (innovation, locus of control and propensity to take risks), social factors (social capital and subjective social norm) and cognitive factors (entrepreneurial attitude, recognition of opportunities, entrepreneurial education, perceived behavioral control) and entrepreneurial intention. Bu et al (2023) also recognizes that the factors of the entrepreneurial profile are

influenced by external agents such as the endowment of resources.

One of the variants of social entrepreneurship is the socalled "green entrepreneurship". Chen et al (2023) affirm that "gender, age, educational background and professional experience of entrepreneurs have significant effects on the orientation towards green entrepreneurship".

Another important characteristic of the profile of contemporary social entrepreneurs is that they are divided into 2 groups, in which some social entrepreneurs accept the assistance of their social impact business ecosystems (SIEE) to create and scale social enterprises while others do it alone and do not capitalize on the resources in their local communities. This divergence is very important, which is why various studies have been carried out, from which the so-called "theory of humility in social entrepreneurial ecosystems" arises (Roundy & Lyons, 2022).

Becker et al (2023) distinguish a key element among the characteristics of the contemporary social entrepreneurial profile, it is "entrepreneurial passion", which is socially contagious. In their studies they found that "the passion to found is more contagious among members of startup teams than among other peer ties. Surprisingly, none of these effects is significant for the passion to invent.

Trends in the study of social entrepreneurship

As already mentioned, the study of social entrepreneurship is very broad, since it has different topics that are of interest among the scientific community. To mention some of the trends reported in the literature are the "social vocation of entrepreneurs" and "companies to address priority environmental problems" (Duque-Hurtado & Ortiz-Ortiz, 2022).

Another trend identified is the so-called "Circular Economy" (Saltos et al., 2022, p. 64). It was also found that there is a strong trend towards social entrepreneurship studies in rural areas since most of the time these initiatives have a positive impact in highly marginalized areas (Macías-vera et al., 2022, p. 35).

On the other hand, studies on social entrepreneurship show that there is a strong trend towards digital ventures, such is the case of the use of Machine Learning (GalánZazo et al., 2022) and the new era Big Data (Martínez & Rodríguez, 2023), whose models help in the knowledge construction process and in practice in the field of contemporary strategic entrepreneurship.

Other new lines of research that have been little studied are those that refer to how self-effective social entrepreneurship processes can be (Newman et al., 2019) since the study has only been carried out at the company level. The study of "gender gaps" in social entrepreneurship processes is also proposed as a result of this review, since very little research is reported on this topic (Khalid et al., 2022).

There is very particular research regarding specific trending topics, such is the case of the study of the new mechanisms of how sustainability and digitization can interact along the lines of value proposition, creation, and capture in an entrepreneurial process (Holzmann&Gregori, 2023).

Finally, it is considered that cultural entrepreneurship has a strong link with the "cultural and creative industries" since these, in addition to promoting growth through the creation of value, also become a key element of the economy of a territory (Timarán Rivera et al., 2022, p. 221).

Conclusion

Social entrepreneurship is a subject that must be studied in depth, but, above all, its implementation is urgent, since society must look towards development rather than growth.

Regarding the concept of social entrepreneurship, it was shown that there are many attempts to present a single concept, however, the discussion about it is still ongoing. Even so, it was found that there is a consensus on some key elements to define the concept.

The most current trends on social entrepreneurship show that there are various contemporary studies in this regard and that the main lines of study are the new approaches to organizational structure, ownership, management and marketing.

Finally, some study proposals have also been presented as research agendas. These are particularly: a) the social vocation of entrepreneurs, b) how does the circular

economy become important in social entrepreneurship models?, c) Digital entrepreneurship as a model of social entrepreneurship, d) Machine Learning and the new Big Data era in entrepreneurship processes, e) how self-effective can social entrepreneurship processes be? And f) what are the gender gaps like in social entrepreneurship?

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