

Evolution of Social Entrepreneurship Research in India : Bibliometric Analysis of Literature

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Abstract

Social entrepreneurship is a research area gaining attention from academicians and practitioners worldwide and in India. India is home to nearly two million social enterprises and is a developing country; this study is relevant to understanding the evolution of research in social entrepreneurship. An examination of existing social entrepreneurship literature reviews in India finds a scarcity of studies categorizing existing social entrepreneurship literature into multiple research themes and presenting popular and less popular research subjects. This work aims to address this gap by providing a detailed review of 54 journal articles published in Scopus indexed journals. It summarizes recent Social Entrepreneurship research, categorizing it into five major themes and highlighting the study thrust areas in each. We propose future study directions, contexts, and methodologies based on identified research gaps.

Keywords : Areas of knowledge, bibliometric analysis, emerging countries, social entrepreneurship

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Social entrepreneurship is gaining traction in India and across the globe. As per the Intellectap (2019) survey, there are more than two million social enterprises in India. Unique geographic and demographic diversity increases India's market and social complexity, due to which the rise of social entrepreneurship is relevant. Social entrepreneurship adds value to society with emergent solutions to social and ecological problems while creating a positive impact (Peredo, & McLean, 2006). Social entrepreneurship creates value in social, economic, and ecological dimensions to reduce societal disparity and imbalance. Hence, social entrepreneurship plays a vital role in emerging countries like India, where it contributes to and enhances social, ecological, and economic value (Nicolás, Rubio, & Fernández-Laviada, 2018; Seelos & Mair, 2005).

Although there is a rise in social entrepreneurial activities, an examination of the subject reveals that research on social entrepreneurship in the academic arena is nascent. Academia still determines the quality of research in this field. Hence, this narrows the scope of the investigation to social entrepreneurship and justifies current research.

This article presents a bibliometric analysis using Scopus database to review the research on social entrepreneurship in India. India is an emerging economy that enjoys its uniqueness in social, ecological, and socio-demographic setup. The study provides future directions to researchers and policymakers in India and other emerging countries. This study provides insights into the area of social entrepreneurship research in India. Accordingly, this study aims to track the evolution of social entrepreneurship research in India and, in the process, identifies critical research gaps that academia need to focus on in the future.

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Cursory analysis indicates increased research publications on social entrepreneurship in the last two decades. Literature analysis on social entrepreneurship has confirmed the existence of various research themes like social impact of social entrepreneurship (Ebrashi, 2013), innovations by social entrepreneurs (Phillips, Lee, Ghobadian, O'Regan, & James, 2015), SE business strategies and business models (Dentchev, Baumgartner, Dieleman, Jóhannsdóttir, Jonker, Nyberg, Rauter, Rosano, Snihur, Tang, & Hoof, 2016; Majumdar & Guha, 2021). Many scholars have attempted to describe social entrepreneurship as a form of entrepreneurship (Certo & Miller, 2008; Sinthupundaja, Kohda, & Chiadamrong, 2020). Social entrepreneurship generates social, economic, and ecological value by combining entrepreneurship ideologies (Vedula, Doblinger, Pacheco, York, Bacq, Russo, & Dean, 2021). Dees (2001) defines social entrepreneurship as combining a business approach with a social mission with an innovative approach to solve or provide a solution. In this case, social entrepreneurship adopts an entrepreneurial approach to solving social problems. Mair and Martí (2006) articulated social entrepreneurship as a means to catalyze social change by adopting innovative approaches and resources to pursue identified opportunities. Leadbeater (1997) expressed his opinion that although they work on a social cause, social entrepreneurs also seek profit. Social entrepreneurs may pursue goals or missions that are social, commercial, or both. Some researchers argued that social entrepreneurship is an independent area of study. For example, Mair and Martí (2006) claimed that social entrepreneurship is different in creating value for society by focusing more on fulfilling social needs rather than purely economic returns. The dynamic nature of the subject dimension makes it necessary to investigate the research themes in-depth to understand the concepts of social entrepreneurship.

Recently, in the Indian context, there has been a surge in research on social entrepreneurship. The major themes that this study focused on are the theorizing the social entrepreneurship movement, innovation and business strategies for social enterprises, social entrepreneurs' personalities, social business models, and innovation to serve the marginalized society, value creation, and value dissemination by social entrepreneurship. The themes provide a foundation to say that social entrepreneurship is an emerging and growing field of research that the researchers are presently focusing on. The research and publication on social entrepreneurship in the last decade constitute a large set of studies for review, offering opportunities to look back and reflect on how to move the field forward. Several articles cover specific research on social entrepreneurship; others may not have grabbed the social entrepreneurship researcher's attention, especially in India. In India, social entrepreneurship has evolved over some time. Social entrepreneurs identify societal problems, develop, design, and innovate solutions and deliver value through unique operational models. These models support the mission of social enterprises and help them achieve their purpose. Thus, a bibliometric review of the social entrepreneurship domain will provide an overview of the existing state of recent research and explain the evolution of social entrepreneurship in India. This study also draws the researcher's attention to the gaps that need to be addressed in future research works in emerging countries.

Methodology

The origin of bibliometric analysis can connect to library and information sciences research involving many materials (Broadus, 1987; Pritchard, 1969). A bibliometric analysis uses statistical tools to determine qualitative and quantitative changes in a given scientific research topic, define the profile of publications on the subject, and discover trends within a field (Bakker, Groenewegen, & Hond, 2005; Zupic & Čater, 2015). Additionally, experts wishing to evaluate scientific activities may benefit from this investigation because a bibliometric analysis leads to research status in a specific study domain (Bornmann, 2014).

This study used the Scopus online database which consists of research documents across various fields of study. Scopus database is considered one of the leading scientific research databases that provide detailed information on productivity, impact, and associations (Carpenter, Cone, & Sarli, 2014).

This study employed the VOSviewer software program to generate the bibliographic visual maps. VOSviewer provides a graphical representation of bibliographic maps (Eck & Waltman, 2010). This method helps the researcher visually understand the subject and the evolution of knowledge over time.

Table 1. Search string criteria

Keyword:	Research String	Scopus results
Social entrepreneurship, social enterprise, social entrepreneur, India	"Social Enterprise" OR "Social Entrepreneur" OR "Social Entrepreneurship" AND "India")	295

Units of Analysis

An analysis of the Scopus online database for this study focused on social entrepreneurship research, particularly in India. This study analysed the published research articles on this subject through Scopus. The resulting sample comprised 54 documents including research articles published in India and articles in the press. The selection of documents from the Scopus database is listed next.

Using the keywords "Social entrepreneurship" or "Social enterprise" or "Social entrepreneur" or "Social Business" and "India," the researchers extracted the 295 documents in Scopus online database. In the second phase of selection criteria, the researcher selected materials from Business Management, Accounting, Social Science, Economics, and Econometrics as an area of publication. In this phase, the research criteria selected 248 documents. In the next phase, the study is limited to only journal articles in the final publication stage, which comes to 185 articles consisting of case studies, reviews, book chapters, and other articles beyond the scope. Grey research papers are manually identified and removed from the database. After manually sorting research articles, the study selected 54 research articles.

The process of bibliometric indicators is as follows:

- ↳ Research on social entrepreneurship published between 1996 to 2021
- ↳ Subjects discussed in social entrepreneurship
- ↳ Authors who have published research articles in the research area
- ↳ Affiliation of the author who has published on social entrepreneurship
- ↳ Journal sources in which authors have published research on social entrepreneurship

Year of Publication

The term social entrepreneurship was first coined during the 1980s (Defourny & Nyssens, 2010). As per the Scopus database, the first article on social entrepreneurship in India appeared in 1996 but the article did not cite the concept of social entrepreneurship. Analysis of this paper shows that the article did not address the social entrepreneurship concept but shared insights on gender, religion, custom, caste and class, politics and social movements, legal and political structure, and philanthropic perspectives. Then the second article appeared in 2009 that discussed the concept of social entrepreneurship in India. The gap is possibly due to a lack of awareness about social entrepreneurship as a research area in India or because the focus of the research community was different from social entrepreneurship. Table 2 shows the number of research publications between 1996–2021.

Rey-Martí, Ribeiro-Soriano, and Palacios-Marqués (2016) in their literature review commented on the worldwide contribution of academic research on social entrepreneurship. As per the article, the research on social entrepreneurship in the Scopus database has increased since 2003, but in India, the research contribution has risen from 2015 onwards. Table 2 shows the interest in the area and the number of publications yearly. From 2009 to 2014, the discussion on social entrepreneurship was minimum. However, it is noticeable that since 2015 there has been a relative increase in publications. In 2020, the number of articles published increased to 10, higher than the previous year. The growth may be due to the pandemic COVID-19 and academicians realizing the importance of social entrepreneurship in India. For the year 2021, there were seven research articles published. The trend shows that the research interest in

Table 2. Year and Publication

S. No.	Year	Publication
1	1996	1
2	2009	1
3	2011	1
4	2012	1
5	2013	2
6	2014	2
7	2015	5
8	2016	3
9	2017	4
10	2018	9
11	2019	8
12	2020	10
13	2021	7

social entrepreneurship is gradually increasing in India but compared to how social entrepreneurship is evolving in India, the academic research contribution is meager. Research in this evolving field will help academicians, social entrepreneurs, and policymakers to define theories and develop policies that will contribute to the growing social entrepreneurship.

The ongoing interest is evident since social entrepreneurship is an emerging field of research that needs to address several gaps. Mair and Martí (2006) and Agrawal and Kumar (2018) attempted to define business typologies for social enterprise. They also tried to investigate the impact of social enterprises in developed and emerging countries and the effect of social entrepreneurship sustainability in emerging countries, cities, and regions. Saebi, Foss, and Linder (2019) proposed future research on social entrepreneurship and argued the need for studies such as identifying links between institutional ideas and the vision of the social enterprise. The hybridity of social enterprises focuses on social and economic value creation in social enterprises. Majumdar and Satyajit (2021) identified the following research gap that needs to be addressed in the future: an open discussion on business models for social enterprise, co-creation, and social innovation to create unique favourable values.

Subject Areas

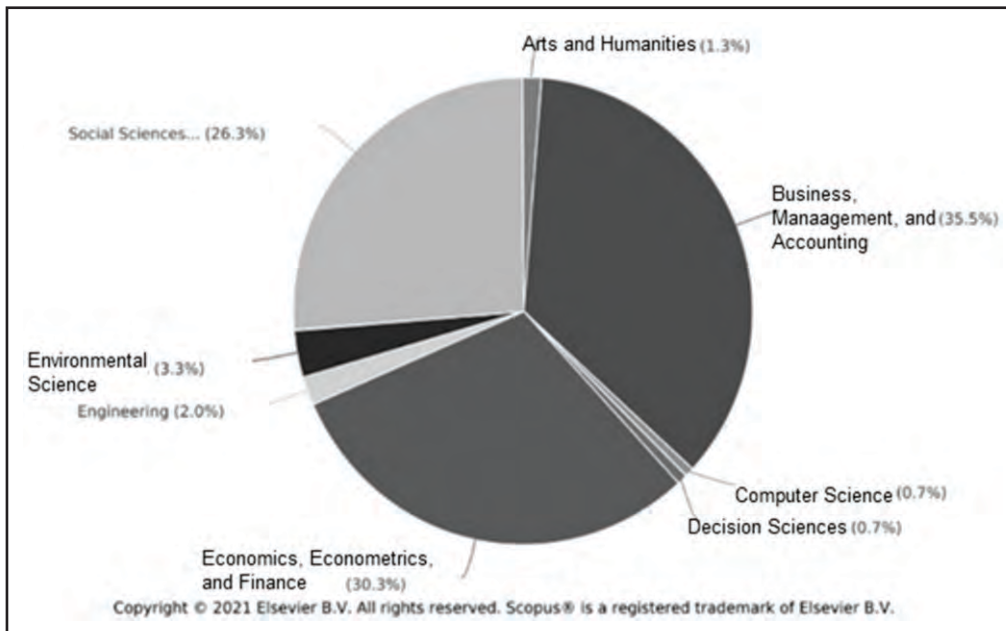
According to Low and MacMillan (1988), entrepreneurship research has been studied from economics, psychology, sociology, ecology, and anthropology perspectives. Initially, the study was derived to determine the relationship between economic growth and entrepreneurship. Later, perspectives from psychology, sociology, and anthropology were introduced to the basic domain of entrepreneurship research (Carlsson, Braunerhjelm, McKelvey, Olofsson, Persson, & Ylinenpää, 2013).

Table 3 shows the number of research articles published in different research areas. The Scopus database contains 54 research articles in business, management, and accounting, 46 in economics, econometrics, and finance, and 40 in social science and other topics. These numbers reveal the relevance of social entrepreneurship study in business and other knowledge areas.

The remaining four areas that address social entrepreneurship do not appear in the list as it is not irrelevant to the business and management area. The research articles in these areas, such as environmental sciences, engineering, computer science, and decision sciences are irrelevant because each category contains few research articles on social entrepreneurship.

Table 3. Research Area

S. No.	Subject area	No. of Publication
1	Arts and Humanities	2
2	Business, Management, and Accounting	54
3	Computer Science	1
4	Decision Sciences	1
5	Economics, Econometrics, and Finance	46
6	Engineering	3
7	Environmental Science	5
8	Social Sciences	40

**Figure 1. Subject Area**

The following visual map projects the evolution of the research discipline in India. The map projects the *hotspot* areas in social entrepreneurship research in India. The maps contain the keywords used in the research articles. The keywords of the articles are unique because they represent the authors' most important words in their work and might potentially discover trending study subjects over time (Pesta, Fuerst, & Kirkegaard, 2018). VOSviewer was used to create visual maps for the study. The data extracted from the Scopus database, which includes keywords and the abstract of the research articles are used to generate the visual map. VOSviewer creates a co-occurrence network in the map as shown in Figure 2 (Eck & Waltman, 2010).

Walter and Ribière (2013) and Eck and Waltman (2010) suggested that researchers may accomplish generic interpretations of strongly semantically connected ideas by developing a map based on keyword associations. This visual map shows the evolution of research concepts and their relationships. Chen and Xiao (2016) claimed that publication keywords are widely used to understand the knowledge formation of a research domain. Based on their analysis, social entrepreneurship research is growing in India across disciplines. It is also noticeable that from 2012 onwards, research in the social entrepreneurship area started increasing in the Indian context.

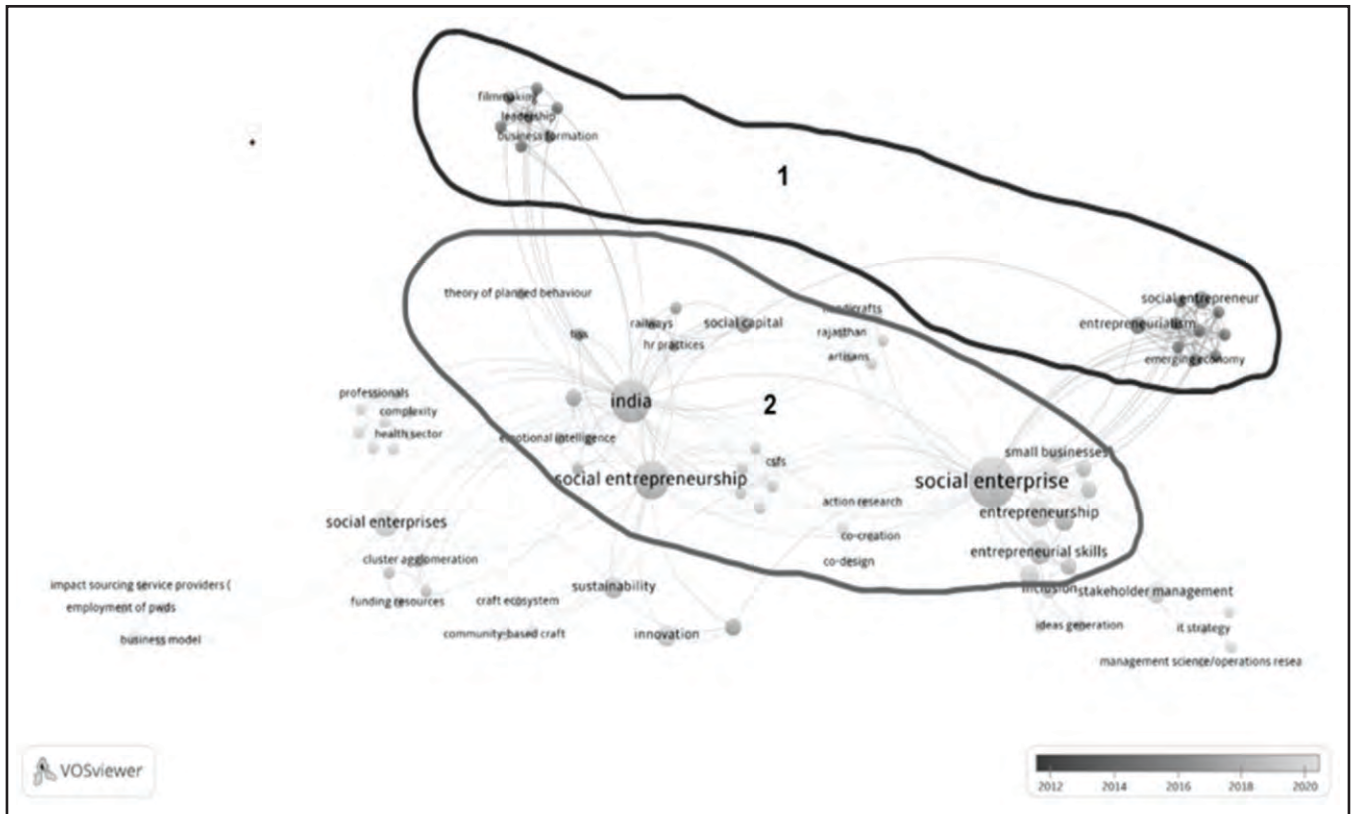


Figure 2. VOSviewer Visual Map

By observing the map, the following themes are identified:

- ↳ The role of social entrepreneurship in an emerging economy
- ↳ The enabling conditions under which social entrepreneurship is effective
- ↳ The strategic mechanism for the growth of social entrepreneurship
- ↳ The role of co-creation-design and social capital in social entrepreneurship
- ↳ The role of the community approach to increasing the impact
- ↳ The way business models and innovation impact the sustainability of social enterprises
- ↳ The effect of social entrepreneurship movement on individuals and organizations
- ↳ The role of trust and support in the social entrepreneurship ecosystem

Papers in the circle marked '1' discuss social entrepreneurship in emerging markets, that is, in India, how social entrepreneurship creates and captures social and economic values using entrepreneurial approaches. Research articles in this group are predominately developed on the case study and are conceptual papers. For example, Basu and Sharma (2014) debated how social enterprises are creating values and stewardship as antecedent behaviours influencing social entrepreneurship in India; the challenges faced by affordable housing aim to shelter the 'base of the pyramid' section (Mukherji, 2014).

The second significant theme emerging in the study is highlighted in the circle marked '2'. It represents the following sub-themes: enhancing organizational performance through social entrepreneurship (Mehrotra & Verma, 2015) and impact of social enterprises on empowering the marginalized society (Kummitha &

Majumdar, 2015). Incorporating social entrepreneurship in higher education creates awareness about the new business form. Social marketing boosts growth of social enterprises (Singh, Saini, & Majumdar, 2015), the concept of social farming in India (Sohoni & Joshi, 2015), and the cultural norms impacting women participating in entrepreneurial activities in emerging countries (Haugh & Talwar, 2016).

Authors

It is interesting to identify each author's contribution and affiliations. Table 4 shows the details of the top research authors and their publication details.

Over 113 authors contributed to the 54 social entrepreneurship research articles from 1991 to 2021. In Table 3, the study shows authors with more than two research publications. However, only six (5%) had written two or more papers among them: Narayana Murthy G. contributed five research articles, followed by A. K. Bhat with three articles. The study identified the authorship position pattern, suggesting that few research scholars are first authors, and some never played a leading role in research activity. This outcome might signal that social entrepreneurship topic has attracted many new scholars and practitioners.

In continuation of the study on authorship pattern, it is found that of the 54 articles, 43 (79%) were jointly co-authored, with two-person authorship 20 (37%) being the leading pattern. On the other hand, publications featuring a single author represent 20% (11) of 54 research articles.

Author Affiliation

The study reveals that 78 affiliations are responsible for 54 research articles. 13 (39%) institutes produced 31 (57%) publications for these affiliations. Institutions responsible for the majority of journals in social entrepreneurship research in India account for more than 30% of the total (De Bakker et al., 2005).

The majority of the publications of prolific authors are from premier management institutes in India. The number of authors that emerged from outside academic institutions was small yet significant. Eight (14%) affiliations were practitioners and institutes supporting social entrepreneurship who developed the research work in collaboration with academic researchers in India, but in recent times, the contribution from academic researchers increased significantly. Frame and Carpenter (1979) suggested that a country's research productivity differed for developed and emerging countries. The research output of developed countries is more compared to emerging countries. Since India is an emerging country, this suggestion holds good.

The inter-organizational collaboration is significantly increasing as the researchers are looking for a collaboration to help them develop stronger research communities. The pattern of such collaboration is visible and some researchers are open to collaborating with private universities and institutes. Also, multinational collaboration on social entrepreneurship research is significant (14%). According to the trend, in the number of articles released in 2010, academicians are engaging with international institutes to demonstrate an increasing interest in social entrepreneurship in India.

Table 4. Authors

S. N.	Name of the Author	No. of Publication
1	Narayanamurthy, G.	5
2	Bhat, A.K.	3
3	Tikoria, J.	3
4	Tiwari, P.	3
5	Jammulamadaka, N.	2
6	Majumdar, S.	2

Table 5. Institute Affiliation

S. No.	Affiliate Institute	Publications
1	Indian Institute of Management, Calcutta	4
2	Indian Institute of Management, Kozhikode	4
3	Birla Institute of Technology and Science, Pilani	3
4	Thapar Institute of Engineering & Technology	2
5	University of Liverpool	2
6	National Institute of Industrial Engineering	2
7	Tata Institute of Social Sciences	2
8	Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore	2
9	Amity University	2
10	Narsee Monjee Institute of Management Studies, Mumbai	2
11	IBS Hyderabad	2
12	University of Liverpool Management School	2
13	LM Thapar School of Management	2

Table 6. List of Journals

S. No.	Journal	Publications
1	Emerald Emerging Markets Case Studies	21
2	Social Enterprise Journal	4
3	South Asian Journal of Business Studies	3
4	International Journal of Scientific and Technology Research	2
5	Journal of Entrepreneurship	2
6	Journal Of Entrepreneurship in Emerging Economies	2
7	Journal of Social Entrepreneurship	2

Overall, the observation of a number of publications, the top productive institutions, and individuals generated 14% and 9% of the entire social entrepreneurship research output, respectively. Also, this shows that their institutional and individual research output is spread out more equally.

Journal

Understanding the journals that publish articles on social entrepreneurship research is essential in deciding the journal to read when performing a literature review. The process also helps us know the journal's focus areas on social entrepreneurship. Table 6 shows the journals that have published research articles on social entrepreneurship in India and their Impact Factors. This also gives us the scope to identify the focused areas of the research scholars publishing the research articles.

The impact factor of a journal relates to its prominence within the topic field and the information from the journal citation report by the science citation index. The journal citation report collects and shares data about scientific research in different subject areas and specialities in terms of citations made and citations received.

Table 6 shows that there are 21 research articles published on social entrepreneurship compared to other journals (Sohoni & Joshi, 2015). This indicates that most of the research articles published in the journal are case studies. Social Enterprise Journal published four articles, followed by the South Asian Journal of Business Studies, in which three

were published. The study considered only seven journals that have published more than two research articles. It is noted that research on social entrepreneurship is increasing, and the publication source, that is, choice of journal is also improving.

Directions for Future Research

The present research article presented the bibliometric analysis of social entrepreneurship research in India. The examination revealed the areas in which researchers investigated social entrepreneurship in India. The study shows the development in the research area in terms of the number of publications from year to year, the source of journals where research articles were published, the most prolific authors and prolific affiliations in India that published research articles on social entrepreneurship. The analysis of the research area aided in understanding the development of social entrepreneurship research in India. This analysis also offers a route map for those venturing into social entrepreneurship providing trends in social entrepreneurship research.

Most of the studies in social entrepreneurship are in India and other developing countries have adopted qualitative methodology, especially the case study approach. Through the method, the researcher tried to define one phenomenon. Since social entrepreneurship is emerging in developing countries with divergent concepts and unique business models, it is imperative to understand and generalize the stage of development. In future, researchers may adopt a more robust and systematic methodology and record the phenomenon.

Future researchers may focus on first developing a theoretical framework for social entrepreneurship specific to emerging countries. Social entrepreneurship is a dynamic field of study, and it is essential to define the theoretical boundaries. According to the study on the efficacy of social entrepreneurship specific to emerging countries, the theoretical component of the research has remained unchanged. Most of the research studies conducted in the field have concentrated on individual enterprises and social entrepreneurs without considering the theoretical framework. In developing countries like India, new typologies are generated and experimented with, and it is relevant to view these from the latest theoretical lenses and develop new models. Future studies focusing on multi-levels of analysis such as individual, organizational, intra-organizational, inter-organizational, group, and community levels aids social entrepreneurship in defining the theoretical framework specific to emerging countries like India.

The second future direction, the growth of social entrepreneurship is also subjective to the contextual environment and supporting ecosystem. Therefore, future researchers should consider different contextual, region, and country-specific studies with emerging theoretical lenses. The contextual study needs to consider social enterprise's level, that is, micro-level and macro environment level analysis. The micro-level context study can be on enterprise-level factors such as business strategy, value co-creation, business models and innovations, and talent management in social enterprises.

The macro-level context of the study is on the social entrepreneurship ecosystem. The entrepreneurship ecosystem consists of networks and interconnected systems that facilitate growth of entrepreneurship (Moore, 1993). Ecosystems act as supportive mechanisms in developing entrepreneurship in regions. In the future, researchers may study the effectiveness of the social entrepreneurship ecosystem in the emerging market. They may also focus on comparative research on the ecosystem in the developed market and emerging markets.

Value co-creation at the bottom of the pyramid is an emerging concept in social entrepreneurship. Value co-creation is an essential part of social entrepreneurship as it affects the growth of the triple bottom line (Tate & Bals, 2018) and social enterprise (Ge, Xu, & Pellegrini, 2019). Social entrepreneurship generates values at multi-levels and from multi-actors. A future study may focus on the relationship between various inter-institutional actors and stakeholders to help social entrepreneurship enhance the value creation process. As value creation takes the central theme in social entrepreneurship, it is essential to develop a new theoretical perspective and framework to help social enterprises enhance their value proposition. It is also interesting to study how emerging and developing countries are developing the mechanism to enhance the value creation process. Also, future research may focus on the factors affecting the co-creation of values in social enterprises to develop strategies to grow the business and create a meaningful impact on society.

Hybrid tension among social entrepreneurs is a global phenomenon. The hybrid nature of social enterprise also affects the social enterprise's governance and regulation structure. It is observed that countries like the USA have developed a legal structure – certified B Corporation – a hybrid legal structure under which all the social enterprises are required to register and follow the governance and regulation of the legal structure. Due to the complex legal system in India, it is difficult for social enterprises to manage their dual identity and hybrid model. Future research may focus on developing a suitable legal structure and governance model for a country like India. The models may support social enterprises in managing their hybridity without compromising their value capture and value creation processes.

Authors' Contribution

Nidhish Rao performed the data analysis and future research direction described in the paper. He prepared the research outline and analysed the output. Dr. K. Sankaran contributed to the future directions and introduction described in the paper. Shilpa Praveen performed the data analysis described in the paper. She prepared various tables and data tests, prepared various models, and analyzed the output.

Conflict of Interest

The authors certify that they do not have any affiliations with or involvement in any organization or entity with any financial interest or non-financial interest in the subject matter or materials discussed in the manuscript.

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