

Emergent Social Entrepreneur Archetypes in India : An Evolving Viewpoint From a Pilot Analysis

*Nidhish Rao*¹
*Shilpa Praveen*²
*K. Sankaran*³

Abstract

Though many social entrepreneurs carry similar motivations to solve critical social issues, they differ in the types of problems to be addressed and their overall approach or orientation towards social issues. Surprisingly, barring few studies research studies have largely remained silent on these differences among social entrepreneurs. Therefore, in the past, experts have emphasized that such classification of social entrepreneurs (archetypes) on a few important criteria at any given point in time would greatly inform the social entrepreneurship domain. This study addresses this critical gap.

Keywords : archetypes, India, social entrepreneurship, social entrepreneur typology

Paper Submission Date : January 6, 2023 ; **Paper sent back for Revision :** January 20, 2023 ; **Paper Acceptance Date :** January 27, 2023 ; **Paper Published Online :** March 5, 2023

Social enterprises operate in limited geographic locations to predominantly solve local problems. Social entrepreneurs do not necessarily emphasize wealth creation; instead, they focus mainly on addressing specific societal problems or explore opportunities that in turn facilitate social equality, improved ecology, and living conditions for people. Essentially, these social entrepreneurs by using tactical market maneuvers accentuate relevant social goals over and above business goals to tackle societal problems. The social goals of these entrepreneurs include poverty alleviation, creating employment, social integration, education, healthcare, and environmental preservation, among other issues (Bacq & Eddleston, 2018; Goyal & Sergi, 2015; Saebi, Foss, & Linder, 2019).

Qualitative analysis of data from a pilot research on 24 Indian social entrepreneurs spread across seven states and adopting one of the three business models of not-for-profit, for-profit, or hybrid classifies them into four archetypes (exemplars) (Figure 1).

These four archetypes include social entrepreneurs who exhibit the predominant characteristics of seeking distributive justice, striking balance between financial and social goals, enabling network, and adding value to existing social enterprises.

¹ *Assistant Professor*, NITTE (Deemed to be University), Justice KS Hegde Institute of Management, NITTE, Karnataka - 574 110. Email : nidhishrao@gmail.com ; ORCID iD : <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9911-9882>

² *Assistant Professor*, NITTE, Justice KS Hegde Institute of Management (JKSHIM), NITTE, Karnataka - 574 110. Email : shilpapraveen@nitte.edu.in ; ORCID iD : <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1026-0928>

³ *Director*, NITTE (Deemed to be University), Justice KS Hegde Institute of Management (JKSHIM), NITTE, Karnataka - 574 110. Email : sankaran99999@gmail.com ; ORCID iD : <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8308-3072>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.17010/amcije/2023/v6i1/172744>

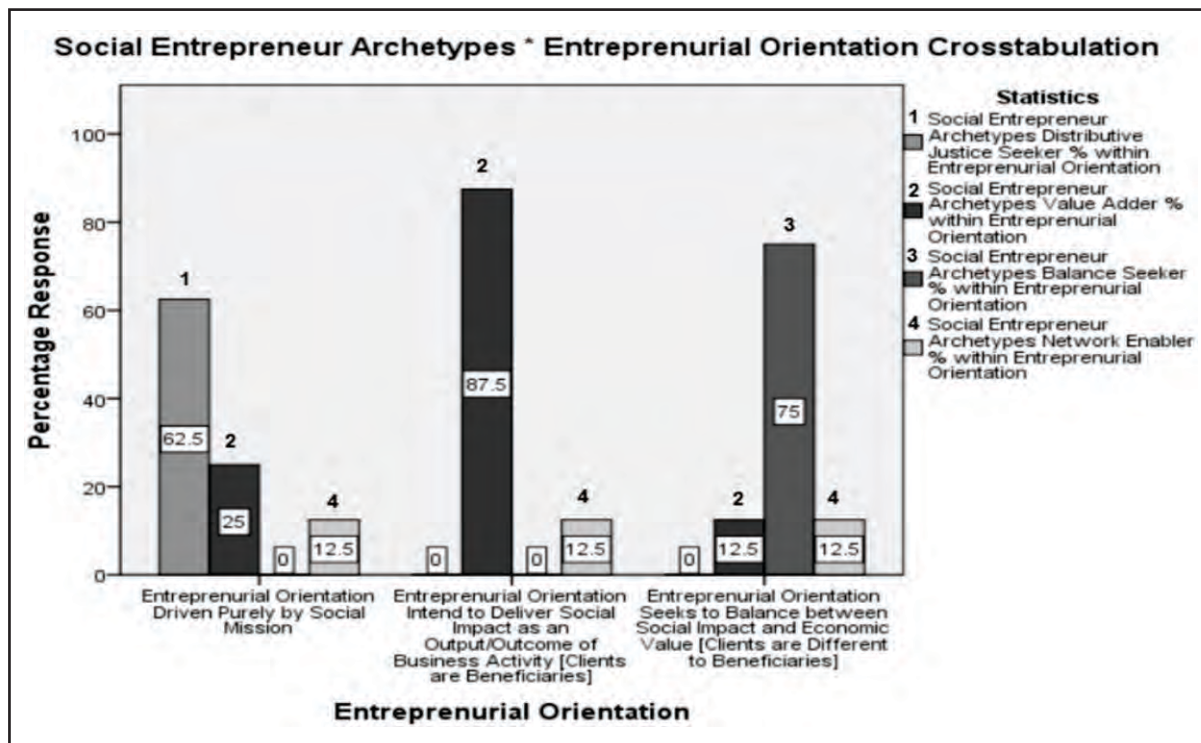


Figure 1. Emergent Social Entrepreneur Archetypes

(i) ‘*Distributive Justice Seekers*’ are those who with their initiative(s)/service(s) attempt to mitigate the existing gaps in myriad economic and social systems, notably among the underprivileged. This lays the foundation for the socialist approach that they adopt. Accordingly, the goal of a distributive justice seeker is to bring equality, equity, and empowerment among the under-represented and underprivileged sections of a society or community.

Scenarios of poor reach and access to education and educational facilities among the economically weaker sections of the society can for example, drive a social entrepreneur to mitigate this gap in the social system, especially in a rural setup. When it comes to education, India has a significant rural-urban divide. The government, social entrepreneurs, and numerous organizations have all made significant contributions towards improving the education situation in our country. Yet, illiteracy rates remain high, accompanied with inadequate investment in school infrastructure and poor student enrolment. The lack of teachers, infrastructure, equipment, and funds, combined with the rural population’s apathy/indifference towards the value of education, contribute significantly to this disappointing outcome, despite significant spending by multiple agencies. As regards education, distributive justice seekers not only attempt to provide affordable education to the underprivileged, but they also adopt unique teaching-learning systems that include a robust amalgamation of contemporary curriculum, pedagogical approaches, and assessment techniques to make learning more fun, engaging, and useful in terms of value delivery and development. The impact that distributive justice seekers create is highly localized and, therefore, the recognition and acknowledgement of their local initiatives remain conspicuously limited. Even when these entrepreneurial ideas are scalable, often they lack resources and motivations to scale beyond their local geographies. In their limited local reach, they are able to solve pressing social issues. In fact, they are able to do so as they leverage highly contextual, and often tacit local knowledge to identify social problems of unemployability and lack of access to education to mobilize local resources and develop solutions viable in the local context.

(ii) ‘*Balance Seekers*’, on the other hand, are driven by both social/ecological causes and the long-term economic sustainability of their respective enterprises. Balance seekers predominantly use hybrid business models where a

portion of revenue that is generated by selling / offering products and services (through for-profit enterprises) is channeled to their not-for-profit entities whose purpose is entirely cause and impact driven. They predominantly aim to effectively compartmentalize the social and commercial activities to interface the market and mitigate financial risk; though pursuing social mission of the venture. For instance, the revenue earned by for-profit enterprises (considered for this study) by selling products like water purifiers and solar batteries, bio-degradable and cloth based sanitary pads, and domestic and community composting equipments/products is used as a funding source for not-for-profit entities that focus on the social causes of healthcare, hygiene management, waste management, up-skilling of women, etc.

(iii) The third example of the social entrepreneurship archetype is '*Network Enablers*'. Networks have a significant influence on the sustainability of entrepreneurial firms. Poor access to useful social/business networks can drastically outweigh the benefits that strong networks bring to the table. In this regard, network enablers help social-enterprises develop a rewarding and sustainable network capability. Network enablers are those who support social enterprises by facilitating the process of networking to exchange crucial/important information and develop enterprise competence. This network includes funding agencies, domain experts, advisors, and policy regulators. A point worth noting in this regard is that network enablers attempt to improve enterprise network capabilities by eliciting continuous sharing of knowledge/information by experts (i.e., market, technical, legal), encouraging enterprises to participate in coordinated consumer events, engage in joint problem-solving exercises, and channeling social entrepreneurs towards resources/funds sourcing agencies. Network enablers view a poor value chain activity 'link' as a serious inhibitor to the development of network capability development leading to sustainability issues in the long run for enterprises. Network enablers in essence aim to facilitate the mainstream/traditional social ventures to perform more effectively and efficiently by offering services that are specialized and focussed only for the social entrepreneurial system. The main motives of network enablers are to reduce the learning curve of the new entrants, increase efficiency of ecosystem, facilitate partnerships and innovations, and empower/enable other social ventures to respond to new demand and challenges.

(iv) The fourth exemplar of social entrepreneurship archetype is '*Value Adders*'. Value adders are those who through their indigenous products and unique supportive services add value to individual businesses by enhancing their respective capabilities, optimizing processes, and increasing significant levels of customer awareness, resulting in a market presence and acceptance for such businesses that had not been explored earlier. For example, some social entrepreneurs considered for this pilot study commercialize skills and enable the financial self-reliance of artists, artisans, sculptors, and weavers from rural and semi-urban parts of India by providing them with a digital ecommerce and skill-marketing platform. Other social enterprises offer value by reducing the overall carbon footprint of their clients by offering products and related services to facilitate water, energy, and waste management, create awareness about environmental sustainability, assist smart agriculture for farmers (e.g., smart warehousing, intelligent/dynamic re-routing systems, AI assisted logistics and distribution systems, IoT based water pump controllers, etc.), convert farm losses to food ingredients by using farm gate sourcing process technology, and in some cases, add value through child and teacher driven knowledge (re)creation founded enquiry-based teaching learning methods and experiential learning, especially for students who are slow learners.

Value adders are sensitive to, and actively seek opportunities in the unattended markets and then leverage them to create ventures to address an ongoing social problem. Mostly these entrepreneurial archetypes adopt a for-profit orientation, or at-least have an earned-income strategy. However, their focus does predominantly remain on social mission and they aim remaining profitable rather than maximizing profit. Value adders do run the danger of mission drift. Not only the focus on commercial goals can make them neglect their primary social objective, but an over involvement with social mission can also make their venture financially non-viable in the long run. The respondents of this study emphasized the steps that they engage in to counter the possibilities of mission drift—diversification, strengthening the governance mechanisms, and mission-aligned operations.

When resources, inputs, processes, and policies are integrated to improve the lives of individuals or society as a whole, social value is created. Undoubtedly, profit drives some of the modern social entrepreneurs. However, they also

take a more holistic approach towards business and appear to be more concerned with the fate of the earth and humanity. Entrepreneurial strategies are used to provide systemic solutions to social and environmental issues. Social entrepreneurs frequently promote the development of ecologically friendly products, address the needs of marginalized communities, or engage in charitable efforts. Social entrepreneurs promote a wide range of environmental sustainability solutions through non-profit, for-profit, and hybrid businesses. Value adders are enablers/supportive hands for social entrepreneurs.

The Way Forward

Though many social entrepreneurs carry similar motivations to solve critical social issues, they differ in the types of problems to be addressed and their overall approach/orientation towards social issues. Surprisingly, barring a few studies (for example, Zahra, Gedajlovic, Neubaum, & Shulman, 2009), research studies have largely remained silent on these differences among social entrepreneurs. Therefore, experts in the past have emphasized that such classification of social entrepreneurs (archetypes) on a few important criteria at any given point in time (for example, Margiono et al., 2018; Wulleman & Hudon, 2016) would greatly inform the social entrepreneurship domain.

This qualitative pilot run of 24 social entrepreneurs from India revealed four archetypes under which all 24 social entrepreneurs could be classified. Notwithstanding the emergence of these archetypes, one question of concern is whether the findings of this study emerging from a sample of Indian social entrepreneurs can provide a generalizable globally acceptable model of social entrepreneurship that involves a complex interplay between internal and external factors. This is because the social entrepreneur archetypes and social entrepreneurship models are expected to be contingent on national disparities, availability or unavailability of resources, regulatory/policy environment, legal structures, individual/societal orientation, and the broad spectrum/gamut of the definition/purposes of social enterprises. Future studies on social entrepreneurship can also explore in detail whether there exist any similarities and dissimilarities between social entrepreneur archetypes as found in this study (that is, distributive justice seeker, value adder, network enabler, and balance seeker) and the ones proposed by Zahra, Gedajlovic, Neubaum, and Shulman (2009), and Wulleman and Hudon (2016) (that is, social - bricoleur, constructionist, and engineer). Also, studies in the future on business models may conceptualize and develop questions around the relationship between social entrepreneurs' archetypes and various social business model designs. Research in the future can also focus on examining whether variables like resilience and innovation interact with social entrepreneur archetypes to influence business model performance and sustainability.

Authors' Contribution

Nidhish Rao has performed the data analysis and prepared the future research direction described in the paper. He prepared the research outline and analyzed the output.

Shilpa Praveen has performed the data analysis described in the paper. She prepared various tables and data tests, prepared various models and analyzed the output.

Dr. K. Sankaran has contributed to the future directions and introduction described in the paper.

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.

Funding Acknowledgement

The authors have not received any financial support for the research, authorship and /or for the publication of the article.

References

- Bacq, S., & Eddleston, K. A. (2018). A resource-based view of social entrepreneurship: How stewardship culture benefits scale of social impact. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 152(3), 589–611. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-016-3317-1>
- Goyal, S., & Sergi, B. S. (2015). Social entrepreneurship and sustainability - Understanding the context and key characteristics. *Journal of Security and Sustainability Issues*, 4(3), 269–278. [https://doi.org/10.9770/jssi.2015.4.3\(7\)](https://doi.org/10.9770/jssi.2015.4.3(7))
- Saebi, T., Foss, N. J., & Linder, S. (2019). Social entrepreneurship research: Past achievements and future promises. *Journal of Management*, 45(1), 70–95. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206318793196>
- Wulleman, M., & Hudon, M. (2016). Models of social entrepreneurship: empirical evidence from Mexico. *Journal of Social Entrepreneurship*, 7(2), 162–188. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19420676.2015.1057207>
- Zahra, S.A., Gedajlovic, E., Neubaum, D.O., & Shulman, J. M. (2009). A typology of social entrepreneurs: Motives, search processes and ethical challenges. *Journal of Business Venturing*, 24(5), 519–532. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusvent.2008.04.007>

About the Authors

Nidhish Rao teaches Entrepreneurship and Marketing Management. His research interests include Social Entrepreneurship, Entrepreneurship Education, Consumer behavior and Digital Marketing. He has published in various national and international journals of repute. He has also conducted management development programs and faculty development programs in various organizations.

Shilpa Praveen teaches Marketing Management, Sales, and Negotiation. Her research interests include consumer preference, Digital Marketing and Tourism marketing. She has published in various national and international journals of repute.

Dr. K. Sankaran teaches strategic management and Corporate Governance. He has published several articles in national and international journal of repute. His research interests include Higher Education Governance, Indic Scholarship, Corporate Governance, and Social Entrepreneurship.

AMC INDIAN JOURNAL OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Statement about ownership and other particulars about the newspaper "AMC Indian Journal of Entrepreneurship" to be published in the 1st issue every year after the last day of February.

FORM 1V (See Rule 18)

1. Place of Publication	:	NEW DELHI
2. Periodicity of Publication	:	QUARTERLY
3. 4,5 Printer, Publisher and Editor's Name	:	S. GILANI
4. Nationality	:	INDIAN
5. Address	:	Y-21,HAUZ KHAS, NEW DELHI-16
6. Newspaper and Address of individual who owns the newspaper and partner of shareholder holding more than one percent.	:	ASSOCIATED MANAGEMENT CONSULTANTS PRIVATE LIMITED Y-21, HAUZ KHAS, NEW DELHI-16

I, S. Gilani, hereby declare that the particulars given above are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Dated : March 1, 2023

Sd/-
S. Gilani
Signature of Publisher