

"The Influence of Individual Characteristics on the Intention to Pursue Social Entrepreneurship among MBA Students: A Study with Special Reference, Nellore, Andhra Pradesh"

¹Mrs. N Baby and ²Dr. Suja S Nair

¹Research Scholar and ²Professor

^{1&2}Department of Business Management,

Vikrama Simhapuri University, Nellore,

Andhra Pradesh, India

Mail Id: babymba@vsu.ac.in sujanair@vsu.ac.in

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ABSTRACT

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This research examines how individual characteristics shape the intention to pursue social entrepreneurship among MBA students in Nellore, Andhra Pradesh. Social entrepreneurship is increasingly recognized for addressing societal challenges through innovative, sustainable business solutions. Understanding the personal traits that motivate students to engage in socially-oriented ventures is crucial. This study focuses on key individual factors including self-efficacy, empathy, proactiveness, compassionate love, attitude, locus of control, and creativity. Using a structured questionnaire, data were collected from 30 MBA students and analyzed with descriptive statistics, correlation, and multiple regression techniques. The results reveal that empathy is a significant positive predictor of social entrepreneurial intention, whereas other traits (such as self-efficacy and proactiveness) show positive but statistically non-significant effects. The overall model explains a high proportion of variance in intention (Adjusted $R^2 = 0.833$), underscoring the important role of personal factors. These findings offer insights for educators and policymakers to cultivate empathy and related attributes in management education to nurture future social entrepreneurs. The study contributes to the growing literature on social entrepreneurship in India by highlighting how individual dispositions can influence students' propensity to become socially-oriented business leaders.

Keywords: social entrepreneurial intention, empathy, self-efficacy, proactiveness, attitude, compassionate love, locus of control, creativity

INTRODUCTION

In the evolving landscape of global development, social entrepreneurship has emerged as a transformative force for addressing pressing societal challenges through innovative and sustainable business solutions. Unlike conventional entrepreneurship focused mainly on profit, social entrepreneurship balances economic goals with the pursuit of social good. Across the world, there is a growing recognition of the need for responsible business leaders who look beyond self-interest and actively contribute to community welfare. In India a country marked by socio-economic disparities and underutilized human potential the relevance of social entrepreneurship is increasingly vital. Professional education programs, particularly MBAs, are uniquely positioned to instill both entrepreneurial skills and social consciousness in students

However, existing literature suggests a significant research gap in understanding which internal psychological and personality factors motivate or hinder students from developing intentions to pursue social entrepreneurship. While structural and environmental influences have been widely studied, limited scholarly attention has been paid to individual traits such as empathy, self-efficacy, attitude, locus of control, compassionate love, creativity, and proactiveness in this context. These personal characteristics may fundamentally shape a student's mental commitment to launching a venture with social impact. This study addresses the above gap by exploring the relationship between such individual traits and the intention to engage in social entrepreneurship among MBA students at Vikrama Simhapuri University in Nellore, Andhra Pradesh. Focusing on students undergoing professional business training provides insight into a group poised to enter the entrepreneurial ecosystem in the near future. Understanding what drives or discourages these young minds from choosing a socially responsible entrepreneurial path is crucial for educators, curriculum designers, and policymakers seeking to foster ethical, impact-driven entrepreneurship in higher education. Ultimately, this research aims to uncover how personal attributes from compassion to creativity interplay with entrepreneurial purpose, thereby shedding light on how tomorrow's business leaders can emerge as agents of social change.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social Entrepreneurship and Entrepreneurial Intention

Social entrepreneurship is defined as the process of pursuing innovative solutions to social issues, led by individuals driven by mission and purpose rather than profit alone (Mair & Martí, 2006). Social entrepreneurs leverage creative approaches and resources to address problems in areas such as education, healthcare, and environmental sustainability. The concept has gained prominence as a means to advance societal and environmental goals beyond traditional business paradigms. A key precursor to launching any venture is entrepreneurial intention, an individual's conscious commitment to starting a new enterprise. In the social domain, entrepreneurial intention often stems from a desire to make a positive impact and contribute to societal well-being (Moriano et al., 2012; Do & Dadvari, 2017). A strong intention to create social value drives individuals to take concrete steps toward founding social enterprises. This intention is influenced by both external factors (like support and exposure) and internal factors (personal values and traits). Research indicates that the interplay of internal factors such as self-efficacy with external factors like education and role models collectively shapes the formation of social entrepreneurial intention. In particular, individuals who develop high social entrepreneurial intention are more likely to initiate social ventures and contribute to sustainable development goals (Hockerts, 2015; Prasetyo, 2016).

Empathy

Empathy and Compassionate Love. Empathy is broadly understood as the ability to recognize, understand, and share the emotions and experiences of others. It encompasses both cognitive empathy (intellectual understanding of another's perspective) and affective empathy (emotional resonance with others' feelings). Empathy motivates prosocial behavior; empathic individuals can "place themselves in another person's situation," leading to compassionate responses and a drive to help. This trait is foundational in social contexts, where people high in empathic concern are more attuned to societal issues and feel motivated to address others' hardships (Bierhoff et al., 1991; Younis et al., 2021). Prior studies highlight empathy as an emotional force that encourages helping behaviors and altruistic action. In social entrepreneurship, empathy is considered essential: it sensitizes individuals to community needs and fuels the motivation to develop meaningful solutions (Bacq & Alt, 2018; Kim & Han, 2018). Compassionate love, a related concept referring to an altruistic concern for

others, also serves as a motivational force for initiating social ventures. It fosters integrative thinking and a deep desire to alleviate suffering attributes observed in successful social entrepreneurs (Miller et al., 2012; Lam-Lam et al., 2020). Compassion can enhance resilience and creativity in entrepreneurs by focusing them on community-centered approaches (Griffin-EL, 2021; Engel et al., 2020). In summary, empathy and compassionate love not only encourage caring behavior but significantly influence one's motivation to address social challenges, making these traits critical for those inclined toward "people-centered" entrepreneurship.

H1: There is significant relationship between social entrepreneurial intention and Empathy

Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in their ability to successfully execute actions required to achieve specific goals (Bandura, 1982). In entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial self-efficacy (ESE) is a critical cognitive factor influencing whether a person believes they can launch and manage a venture (Barbosa et al., 2007). Higher self-efficacy has been consistently linked to stronger entrepreneurial intentions (McGee et al., 2009; Schlaegel & Koenig, 2014). It serves not only as an antecedent to intention but also as a mediator between education and entrepreneurial action (Zhao et al., 2005), underlining the role of training in nurturing confidence. In the social entrepreneurship domain, ESE reflects one's perceived capacity to confront large-scale social challenges (Hockerts, 2017). For example, Piperopoulos and Dimov (2015) argue that high self-efficacy enhances motivation and engagement in social ventures.

H2: There is significant relationship between social entrepreneurial intention and Self-efficacy

locus of Control

Locus of control (LoC) is another pertinent trait, describing the degree to which individuals believe they control events affecting them. An internal LoC (believing outcomes are driven by one's own actions) fosters proactive behaviors and perseverance in entrepreneurship. Research shows that a strong internal LoC can bolster self-efficacy and thereby entrepreneurial intentions (Arkorful & Hilton, 2022). Individuals with internal LoC tend to build skills and networks to support their ventures, creatively overcome constraints, and adapt to challenges (Hsiao et al., 2015; Xiabao et al., 2022). Conversely, in some contexts, an external LoC (attributing outcomes to external forces) can also motivate entrepreneurial action if individuals perceive supportive external conditions (Ishak et al., 2015). Overall, both self-efficacy and internal locus of control contribute to confidence and capacity to engage in social entrepreneurship. These beliefs in one's effectiveness and control are expected to positively relate to intentions to start a social enterprise.

H3: There is significant relationship between social entrepreneurial intention and locus of control

Proactiveness

Proactiveness is the tendency to take initiative, anticipate future opportunities or problems, and act ahead of others. Proactive individuals often drive innovative social ventures by initiating change rather than reacting to events (Bateman & Crant, 1993). Studies indicate that proactiveness fosters favorable attitudes toward creating social value, thereby enhancing entrepreneurial intentions (Hu & Pang, 2013; Chipeta et al., 2016). Those high in proactive personality seek and exploit opportunities to achieve social impact without waiting for external prompts. They are willing to take calculated risks and innovate to solve pressing social challenges (Khan et al., 2021; Mohammadi et al., 2022). Educational experiences can strengthen proactiveness – for instance, entrepreneurship education has been shown to improve students' proactive attitudes (Satar & Natasha, 2019). However, a lack of

awareness or mindset can hinder proactiveness in youth, suggesting the need for educational and policy support to cultivate this trait.

H4: There is significant relationship between social entrepreneurial intention and proactiveness

Compassionate love

Compassionate love serves as a foundational element in social entrepreneurship, functioning as a key motivational force that inspires individuals to develop ventures aimed at addressing pressing social issues. This form of love nurtures empathy, integrative thinking and a profound commitment to alleviating human suffering qualities that are essential for effective social entrepreneurial motive centered on profit, compassion encourages a more holistic and inclusive approach to problem solving. It fosters resilience and creativity enabling social entrepreneurs to navigate and overcome challenges with perseverance (Engel et al., 2021). Moreover, compassion influences decision making through a prosocial lens, prioritizing social outcomes alongside financial returns (Miller et al., 2012). Practices such as loving kindness meditation which are designed to cultivate compassion have been linked to improved sustainability in entrepreneurial decision making (Engel et al., 2020). Compassionate entrepreneurs are also more likely to engage stakeholders, cross organizational boundaries and ensure that their ventures remain embedded within and responsive to community needs (Griffin-EL, 2021; Pittz et al., 2017). Additionally, compassion enhances both entrepreneurial self-efficacy and a sense of moral responsibility two factors that are pivotal in launching and sustaining social enterprises (Ukil et al., 2024). Nonetheless, the influence of compassion is not uniform across all individuals; some entrepreneurs may still prioritize economic objectives, thereby Potentially limiting the broader social impact of their initiatives (Miller et al., 2011). Despite such variability, fostering compassionate love remains a vital strategy for cultivating meaningful and sustainable social entrepreneurship.

H5: There is significant relationship between social entrepreneurial intention and compassionate love

Creativity

Creativity is the ability to generate novel and valuable ideas by recombining existing concepts in original ways (Plucker et al., 2004). It is the foundation of entrepreneurial innovation and problem-solving (Tiwari et al., 2017). Entrepreneurs often exhibit higher creativity than others, enabling them to recognize opportunities and “think outside the box” (Baron, 2004; Sternberg et al., 2004). In the context of social entrepreneurship, creativity is even more crucial because social enterprises typically operate under resource constraints and must devise inventive solutions to entrenched problems (Leadbeater, 1997; Prabhu, 1999). Research has found that creativity significantly predicts entrepreneurial intentions by enhancing one’s attitude and confidence in tackling social missions (Ernst, 2011). Creative individuals are more inclined toward starting social enterprises due to their ability to perceive complex social issues and frame innovative responses (Koe et al., 2020). Therefore, creativity is conceptualized as a key antecedent of social entrepreneurial intention, as it facilitates idea generation and strengthens the psychological readiness to pursue socially oriented ventures.

H6: There is significant relationship between social entrepreneurial intention and creativity

Attitude

Attitude in this context refers to one’s overall evaluation of social entrepreneurship as favorable or unfavorable. In Ajzen’s (1991) Theory of Planned Behavior, attitude toward a behavior is a core determinant of intention. A positive attitude toward social entrepreneurship can act as a catalyst encouraging individuals to launch ventures addressing societal problems. Prior studies show that personal values (like social responsibility and ethical consciousness) correlate with having a positive

attitude toward social enterprises (Godwin & Crocker-Billingsley, 2024). Cultural and religious values can also shape attitudes; for example, Islamic and environmental values were found to boost social entrepreneurial intentions via more positive attitudes (Kurjono et al., 2025). Educational influences are significant as well exposure to social entrepreneurship in academic programs tends to improve students' attitudes, thereby increasing their intentions (Chang & Wannamakok, 2019). Additional support from communities and mentors, and internal factors like emotional intelligence and hope, have been linked to more proactive and positive attitudes toward social enterprise (Jadmiko, 2020; Zaremohzzabieh et al., 2019). In summary, an encouraging attitude towards social entrepreneurship is expected to be associated with greater intention to pursue it.

Based on the above literature, one would anticipate that each of these individual characteristics empathy, self-efficacy, proactiveness, compassionate love, attitude, locus of control, and creativity has a positive relationship with social entrepreneurial intention.

H7: There is significant relationship between social entrepreneurial intention and Attitude

Research Gap

Although social entrepreneurship has emerged as a significant area of interest in addressing societal challenges, much of the existing research has primarily focused on institutional, environmental or policy level enablers, with comparatively limited emphasis on the role of individual characteristics in shaping entrepreneurial intentions. Furthermore, prior studies have largely concentrated on urban populations and students from well-established academic institutions, often overlooking semiurban and regional contexts. In particular, there is a noticeable lack of empirical research exploring how traits such as empathy, self-efficacy, locus of control, creativity and attitude influence the intention to pursue social entrepreneurship among a management students in regions like Nellore, Andhra Pradesh. Given the growing interest in nurturing entrepreneurial mindsets within educational settings, this study seeks to bridge that gap by examining the personal factors that contribute to social entrepreneurial intention among MBA students in this specific geographical and academic context, thereby offering fresh insights into an underrepresented population.

Objectives:

1. To analyse the individual characteristics on intention to pursue social entrepreneurship among MBA students
2. To examine relationship between individual characteristics and social entrepreneurship intention

Research Question:

What is the influence of individual characteristics such as self-efficacy, empathy, proactiveness, compassionate love, attitude, locus of control, and creativity on the intention to pursue social entrepreneurship among MBA students at Vikrama Simhapuri University, Nellore?

Methodology

This study employed a quantitative survey design to investigate how individual factors influence social entrepreneurial intentions among MBA students. A structured questionnaire was developed to capture all key variables, consisting of three sections: (1) demographic information, (2) measures of individual characteristics (empathy, self-efficacy, attitude, proactiveness, locus of control, compassionate love, and creativity), and (3) the social entrepreneurial intention scale. All items were closed-ended, with the individual trait and intention measures primarily using a five-point Likert scale

(where higher scores indicate stronger agreement with positive statements about that trait or intention).

The questionnaire used in this study was developed by adapting validated scales from established scholarly sources to ensure content validity and measurement reliability. Items measuring compassionate love, social entrepreneurial intention, self-efficacy, proactive personality, social enterprise outcomes, and social support were drawn from the works of Sprecher and Fehr (2022), Hockerts (2017), Urban (2014), Mohamad Osmani et.al. (2021), MOHAMMADI, P., et al. (2022) and Seyoum et al. (2021), with minor contextual modifications made to suit the MBA student population.

The target population was final-year MBA students at Vikrama Simhapuri University, Nellore, Andhra Pradesh. With permission from the Head of the Department (HOD) of Business Management, participants were recruited via purposive sampling. The researchers approached the MBA final-year students directly during class sessions and explained the study's purpose, assuring confidentiality and voluntary participation. The survey was administered in person to 30 students, yielding 27 valid responses (90% response rate) after excluding incomplete questionnaires. This sample included students from various specializations within the MBA program, providing a diverse perspective.

Ethical protocols were followed by obtaining informed consent from all participants and ensuring anonymity. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any stage without penalty.

After data collection, responses were coded and entered into SPSS (Version 26) for analysis. The data analysis procedures included: descriptive statistics to summarize respondents' demographic profile and the central tendencies of all constructs; reliability analysis (Cronbach's alpha) to assess the internal consistency of the measurement scales; Pearson correlation analysis to examine bivariate relationships between each individual characteristic and the social entrepreneurial intention; and multiple regression analysis to identify which factors significantly predict social entrepreneurial intention when considered together. The significance level was set at 0.05 for hypothesis testing. These statistical methods allowed for testing the research question: "What is the influence of individual characteristics (self-efficacy, empathy, proactiveness, compassionate love, attitude, locus of control, creativity) on the intention to pursue social entrepreneurship among MBA students?" The analytic approach thus moved from basic description to correlational insights and finally to regression modeling to determine the unique contribution of each predictor.

Data Analysis

Sample Demographics. The demographic profile of the respondents (Table 1) shows that the MBA student sample was fairly young, with the majority aged 22–23 years (about 52% of the sample). Approximately 41% were 23–24 years old, and a smaller fraction (around 7%) were 24 or older. There were no respondents below age 22. The gender distribution was roughly 59% male and 41% female. This indicates a slightly higher representation of male students in the sample. Overall, the sample of 27 students reflects a mix of recent graduates in their early twenties, which is typical for a final-year MBA cohort.

Data Analysis & Interpretation

Table:1 Demographic details of the respondents

Demographic Variables	Parameters	Frequency	Percentage
Age	21-22 Yrs	0	0
	22-23 Yrs	14	52
	23 -24 Yrs	11	41
	24 Yrs above	2	7.0
	Total	27	100
Gender	Male	16	59
	Female	17	41
	Total	27	100
Place of Residence	Urban	7	26
	Rural	20	74
	Total	27	100
Father's Educational level	Primary	12	44
	Secondary	6	22
	Diploma	0	0
	Graduate	0	0
	PG	1	4
	PhD	0	0
	Illiterate	8	30
	Total	27	100
Mother's Educational level	Primary	17	63
	Secondary	1	4
	Diploma	0	0
	Graduate	1	4
	PG	2	7
	PhD	0	0
	Illiterate	6	22
	Total	27	100
Father's Occupation	Agricultural	22	81
	Laborer		
	Cultivator	0	0
	Industrial	2	7
	Worker		
	Professional	0	0
	Self-employed	1	4
	Govt. employee	1	4
	Others	1	4
	Total	27	100

Mother's Occupation	Agricultural Laborer	10	37
	House wife	13	48
	Industrial Worker	1	4
	Professional	0	0
	Self-employed	1	4
	Govt. employee	2	7
	Others	0	0
	Total	27	100
Preference of employment	Private sector	13	48
	Public Sector	14	52
	Total	27	100
	Regular Income	17	63
	Job	10	37
	Security to the family	0	0
	Total	27	100
	Yourself	17	63
	Family	10	37
	Relatives	0	0
	Teachers	0	0
	Business People	0	0
	Others	0	0
	Total	27	100
	In course content relevant to the current market	13	48
	Introducing Social Entrepreneurship as a subject	8	30
	More emphasis on industrial training	2	7
	Guest Lectures from industry	4	15
	Total	27	100

The descriptive statistics for the study variables reveal moderate to high levels of agreement among the respondents across all constructs measured on a five point Likert scale. The mean score for social entrepreneurial intention was 3.36 (SD=0.68), indicating a generally favorable inclination among students toward pursuing social entrepreneurship. Among the individual characteristics, proactiveness recorded the highest mean value (M=3.48, SD=0.87), suggesting that students tend to exhibit initiative taking behavior and forward thinking attitudes. This was closely followed by attitude (M=3.47, SD=0.80), emphasizing a positive mindset toward social entrepreneurship. Empathy (M=3.43, SD=0.75) and Locus of Control (M=3.41, SD=0.83) also displayed relatively high mean values, indicating that participants generally feel emotionally connected to others and believe in their own ability to influence outcomes. Self – Efficacy (M=3.23, SD=0.67) and Compassionate love (M=3.30, SD=0.86) showed slightly lower mean scores, though still within the moderate range, implying that students possess a reasonable level of belief in their own capabilities and emotional

concern for others. The lowest mean was observed for creativity ($M=3.31$, $SD=0.86$), though it remained within the moderate range, suggesting that while students exhibit creative tendencies, this attribute is relatively less pronounced for compared to others.

Table:2 Pearson Correlation

Variable	SEI	SE	EM	Pro	CL	Att	LC	Cre
Social Entrepreneurial Intention	1							
Self-efficacy	.829**	1						
Empathy	.914**	.861**	1					
Proactiveness	.841**	.757**	.862**	1				
Compassionate Love	.706**	.844**	.769**	.816**	1			
Attitude	.761**	.793**	.833**	.866**	.813**	1		
Locus of Control	.848**	.878**	.873**	.900**	.846**	.886**	1	
Creativity	.739**	.857**	.787**	.845**	.876**	.893**	.933**	1

Significance level 0.01 (1-tailed)

Source: Author

The correlation analysis reveals significant and strong positive relationship between social entrepreneurial intention and all individual characteristics considered in the study. Notably, empathy shows the highest correlation with social entrepreneurial intention ($r=.914$, $p<.01$), followed closely by locus of control ($r=.848$, $p<.01$). The consistent significance across all variable ($p<.1$) supports the theoretical assertion that psychological and behavioral traits play a crucial role in influencing entrepreneurial motivation in a social context. These findings suggest that students with higher levels of empathy, a strong internal belief in controlling their outcomes, proactive behavior, and greater confidence in their abilities are more likely to exhibit stronger intentions toward pursuing social entrepreneurship.

Other individual characteristics also demonstrate strong and statistically significant correlation with social entrepreneurial intention, including attitude ($r=.761$, $p<.01$), creativity ($r=.739$, $p<.01$), and compassionate love ($r=.706$, $p<.01$). The consistent significance across all variables ($p<.01$) supports the theoretical assertion that psychological and behavioral traits play a crucial role in influencing entrepreneurial motivation in a social context. These inter relationship highlight the integrated role of emotional, cognitive, and behavioral factors in shaping students intent to engage in socially oriented entrepreneurial activities.

Table:3 Multiple Regression

Variable	Standardized Coefficients		t-value	Sig.	F-value
	Beta				
Constant			1.336	.197	
Self efficacy	.347		1.500	.150	19.507
Empathy	.504		2.209	.040	
Proactiveness	.373		1.601	.126	
Compassionate Love	-.195		-1.018	.321	

Attitude	-.116	-.548	.590
Locus of Control	.242	.770	.451
Creative	-.221	-.764	.454
R ²	.878		
Adjusted R ²	.833		

Source: Author

Table: 4 Reliability Test		
Factors	Cronbach's Alpha	No. of Items
SEI	.783	15
SEE	.785	15
Empathy	.838	15
Proactiveness	.901	15
Compassionate Love	.906	15
Attitude	.880	15
Locus of control	.887	15
Creative	.896	15

Source: Author

The results of the multiple regression analysis reveal that among the individual characteristics studied, empathy emerged as a significant positive predictor of social entrepreneurial intention ($\beta = 0.504$, $p = 0.040$), indicating that higher levels of empathy are associated with stronger intentions to pursue social entrepreneurship. While self-efficacy ($\beta = 0.347$, $p = 0.150$) and proactiveness ($\beta = 0.373$, $p = 0.126$) showed positive but statistically non-significant relationships, other variables such as compassionate love ($\beta = -0.195$, $p = 0.321$), attitude ($\beta = -0.116$, $p = 0.590$), locus of control ($\beta = 0.242$, $p = 0.451$), and creativity ($\beta = -0.221$, $p = 0.454$) did not significantly contribute to the model. The overall regression model was significant with an F-value of 19.507, and it explained 87.8% of the variance in social entrepreneurial intention ($R^2 = 0.878$; Adjusted $R^2 = 0.833$), suggesting a strong model fit.

The reliability analysis of the constructs used in the study was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha. All the factors in the study demonstrate good to excellent internal consistency, with Cronbach's Alpha values ranging from 0.783 to 0.906. The Social Entrepreneurial Intention (SEI) scale showed a reliability score of 0.783, indicating good internal consistency among its 15 items. Similarly, Self-Efficacy in Entrepreneurship (SEE) reported an alpha value of 0.785, also reflecting good reliability. Empathy exhibited a higher alpha value of 0.838, suggesting very good consistency in the measurement of the construct. Proactiveness and Compassionate love recorded excellent reliability with values of 0.901 and 0.906, respectively showing that the items are highly consistent in measuring their respective constructs. Attitude and Locus of Control also demonstrated very good internal consistency with alpha values of 0.880 and 0.887. Creativity showed excellent reliability with a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.896. overall, the results confirm that all scores used in the study are reliable and suitable for further statistical analysis.

DISCUSSION

This study's findings contribute to the understanding of what drives students toward social entrepreneurship by highlighting the primacy of empathy as a motivator. The strong influence of empathy is consistent with prior research that positions empathic concern as a cornerstone of social entrepreneurial intention. For example, Bacq and Alt (2018) found that empathy enhances prosocial

motivation and thereby increases social entrepreneurial intentions. Similarly, Kim and Han (2018) demonstrated that empathy can inspire individuals to engage in social ventures by heightening their prosocial motivation. Our results align with these studies, reinforcing the idea that the ability to emotionally connect with others' needs is a critical ingredient in the decision to pursue a social enterprise. In essence, students who genuinely empathize with social problems are more likely to feel compelled to address those problems through entrepreneurship. The lack of significant unique effects for other traits such as self-efficacy and proactiveness was somewhat surprising, given the literature that emphasizes their importance in entrepreneurship. Hockerts (2017), for instance, identified self-efficacy and perseverance (related to proactiveness and internal locus of control) as key determinants of social entrepreneurial intentions in a study of students. In our analysis, self-efficacy correlated strongly with intention ($r = .83$) but did not independently predict it in the regression model. One explanation could be the multicollinearity observed – many of these traits travel together, making it statistically challenging to parse out their individual contributions in a small sample. Another possibility is that for these MBA students, empathy acts as a gateway or precondition: only if a student is empathically driven will their confidence (self-efficacy), proactive stance, or creativity translate into concrete social entrepreneurial goals. Without empathy, those other traits might be channeled into traditional (non-social) entrepreneurial intentions or other career paths. In other words, empathy may provide the “social” mission that focuses a student’s general entrepreneurial drive toward societal good. This interpretation resonates with the concept of compassionate entrepreneurship, where compassion (an outcome of empathy) directs entrepreneurial energy toward altruistic ends (Miller et al., 2012). It is also important to consider contextual factors and limitations. The study’s sample was relatively small (27 students) and drawn from a single university and cultural context (South India). In such a tight-knit group, respondents might share similar training and influences, which could homogenize their responses on certain traits. The high internal correlations might reflect this shared educational environment where, for example, those who are engaged in community service might develop a suite of skills and attitudes collectively. Future research with larger and more diverse samples could help differentiate the roles of these traits more clearly. Additionally, a longitudinal approach could be valuable – measuring students’ traits and then tracking who actually initiates social ventures later on would provide stronger causal evidence. Prior studies like Hockerts (2017) took a cross-sectional approach similar to ours; building on that, subsequent research might incorporate experimental or longitudinal designs to see if enhancing empathy (through workshops or real-life exposure to social issues) causally increases entrepreneurial intention or action. From a theoretical standpoint, these findings support an integrated view of social entrepreneurial intention formation. Traditional models like the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991) emphasize attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control (similar to self-efficacy) as predictors of intention. Our results suggest that when it comes to social entrepreneurial intentions, emotional and prosocial factors (like empathy) might need to be incorporated explicitly into the model. Indeed, scholars have proposed extensions to the TPB to include moral and affective dimensions for social entrepreneurship (Hockerts, 2017; Mair & Noboa, 2006). The current study’s evidence reinforces the argument that empathic emotion is a distinct driver that should be considered alongside more cognitive factors in models of social entrepreneurial intention. It appears that the “compassionate impulse” is what differentiates someone who wants to be an entrepreneur in order to help society from someone who wants to be an entrepreneur for other reasons (e.g., personal profit or innovation for its own sake). Practically, the insights gained here point to recommendations for educators and policymakers (discussed in the next section). But in discussion terms, one key implication is that MBA programs might benefit from integrating social awareness and empathy development into their curriculum. Many MBA programs historically focus on hard business skills and profit-driven case studies; however, cultivating soft skills like empathy, ethical reflection, and community engagement could be just as important for producing socially conscious entrepreneurs. This could involve service-learning projects, social internships, or courses in business ethics and social entrepreneurship where students

interact with marginalized communities or social enterprise founders. Such experiences can deepen empathy and show firsthand how business tools can be applied to social problems. It's also worth noting that while empathy was the standout trait in our results, the high overall explanatory power of the model suggests that the combination of traits is powerful. Students who are empathetic and proactive and confident and creative are the ones most likely to turn intention into reality of a social startup. This composite "social entrepreneurial profile" aligns with the idea of an "ideal type" social entrepreneur who possesses a blend of compassion, efficacy, and innovation. Our findings hint that empathy might be the trigger that ignites this mix into purposeful intention. Hence, developing empathy in business students could activate their other abilities toward social entrepreneurship. The discussion underscores the central role of empathy in driving social entrepreneurial intentions among students, while acknowledging that other personal characteristics and contextual factors also interplay in complex ways. The evidence suggests fostering empathy could be a leverage point for increasing the pipeline of social entrepreneurs. These findings contribute to the literature by empirically demonstrating, in an Indian MBA context, that "head" factors (skills, confidence) alone are not enough without the "heart" factor (empathy) when it comes to inspiring the next generation of social entrepreneurs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the study's findings, several recommendations can be made for educational institutions, policymakers, and future research to support and enhance social entrepreneurial intentions among students:

- **Integrate Empathy and Social Awareness Training:** Educational institutions should focus on fostering empathy and social sensitivity in management students. This can be done through experiential learning programs, community engagement projects, and courses on ethics and social innovation. For example, MBA programs could include field trips to social enterprises, volunteering requirements, or design-thinking workshops on social issues. Such experiences can heighten students' ability to understand societal problems empathetically and inspire them to develop entrepreneurial solutions. As the results showed, empathy is a key driver, so nurturing this trait is critical. "Educational institutions and policymakers should focus on fostering empathy and social sensitivity among management students through experiential learning, community engagement programs, and courses on ethics and social innovation". By embedding empathy-building exercises into the curriculum, schools can cultivate the compassionate mindset that motivates students to pursue social entrepreneurship.

- **Strengthen Self-Efficacy and Creativity through Mentorship:** Although traits like self-efficacy and creativity were not independent predictors in the regression, they remain important parts of the entrepreneurial skill set. Schools and incubators should implement structured training and mentorship programs to bolster students' confidence (self-efficacy) and creative problem-solving abilities. This could involve pairing students with social entrepreneur mentors, offering innovation labs or competitions focused on social challenges, and providing resources for prototyping social venture ideas. The idea is to ensure that students have the skills and self-belief to act on their empathetic impulses. The study suggests that when combined with empathy, these qualities can enhance readiness to launch social ventures. As noted, even if not significant alone, "they remain important qualities that contribute to an entrepreneurial mindset" Therefore, efforts to improve students' entrepreneurial self-efficacy (through success experiences, role models, and feedback) and creativity (through interdisciplinary collaboration and creative thinking exercises) can further empower them to engage in social entrepreneurship.

• **Create Supportive Institutional Environments:** University leadership and policymakers should work on reducing barriers and creating a supportive ecosystem for student social entrepreneurship. This includes providing seed funding or grants for socially-oriented start-up ideas, establishing social venture incubation centers, and recognizing or rewarding student initiatives that address social problems. When students perceive institutional support (financial, advisory, network access), it can reinforce an internal locus of control and a “can-do” attitude toward social entrepreneurship. By removing practical hurdles, students who have the intention (especially those driven by empathy) are more likely to act on it. Additionally, integrating success stories of local social entrepreneurs into university events can provide inspiration and tangible networks for aspiring student entrepreneurs.

• **Focus on Empathy in Recruitment and Pedagogy:** Business schools might also consider emphasizing social consciousness in their student recruitment and pedagogy. For instance, admission essays or interviews could include questions about applicants’ social motivations or empathy-inducing experiences. In the classroom, case studies and problem-based learning can revolve around social enterprises and ethical dilemmas, prompting students to exercise empathy and moral reasoning in business decision-making. By normalizing and valuing empathetic thinking in business education, we can shape a generation of MBAs who view social impact as integral to their professional identity.

• **Future Research Directions:** Further research should expand on these findings in several ways. Firstly, studies with larger and more diverse samples (across multiple universities, regions, or countries) would help validate whether empathy consistently emerges as the strongest predictor of social entrepreneurial intention. Comparative studies could examine cultural differences for instance, does empathy play a similar role in Western contexts, or do other traits dominate elsewhere? Secondly, longitudinal research can track students over time to see if those with high empathy and intentions in university actually go on to create social ventures post-graduation. This would help confirm the translation of intention to action and the enduring impact of traits. Thirdly, future studies could incorporate experimental interventions (such as an empathy training workshop) to see if boosting certain traits causally affects entrepreneurial intentions or behavior. Finally, integrating environmental and contextual variables (like family background, exposure to entrepreneurship, or social support networks) in the analysis would provide a more comprehensive understanding of how personal traits interact with external factors to shape social entrepreneurial intentions. As suggested, “future research should expand the scope by including larger and more diverse samples across different universities and states, adopt longitudinal designs to track outcomes, and integrate environmental and institutional factors”. These steps will deepen insights into the complex interplay that encourages or discourages social entrepreneurship among youth.

The key recommendation is a call to “educate the heart” alongside the mind in business programs. By intentionally cultivating empathy and compassion, while also equipping students with skills and support, educational institutions can better prepare and inspire students to become social entrepreneurs. Policymakers and university administrators should recognize that developing humanistic and empathetic values in future business leaders is not at odds with entrepreneurial success – rather, it can drive a new kind of success measured not only in financial returns but in positive social impact.

CONCLUSION

The present study, conducted among MBA students of Vikrama Simhapuri University in Nellore, Andhra Pradesh, explored the influence of individual characteristics on the intention to pursue social entrepreneurship. The findings confirm that overall social entrepreneurial intention among these students is moderately high, indicating a growing awareness and interest in contributing to society

through entrepreneurial means Through correlation analysis, we found strong positive relationships between a range of personal traits (empathy, proactiveness, self-efficacy, attitude, locus of control, compassionate love, creativity) and the students' social entrepreneurial intentions. This suggests that students who are more empathetic, proactive, confident in their abilities, positive in attitude, internally driven, compassionate, and creative are more inclined toward starting social ventures. However, the multiple regression analysis provided a more nuanced insight: it revealed that empathy is the singularly significant predictor of social entrepreneurial intention, while the other factors showed no statistically significant impact when considered alongside empathy In practical terms, this implies that many traits might predispose a student to think about social entrepreneurship, but empathy is the critical spark that actually drives them to intend to pursue it. These findings underscore the uniquely strong role of empathy in motivating students toward social entrepreneurship. Empathy likely enables students to internalize social problems as personally meaningful, thereby transforming a general entrepreneurial mindset into a specifically social entrepreneurial intent. The other individual characteristics, despite their positive associations with intention, may need to operate in concert and often do so through empathy's influence. For educators and mentors, this conclusion highlights the importance of nurturing empathy and related prosocial values in training the next generation of entrepreneurs. By doing so, we don't just create business leaders, but socially conscious business leaders who can merge competence with compassion. this study contributes to the growing body of literature on social entrepreneurship in the Indian context by identifying which personal attributes matter most for aspiring social entrepreneurs. It provides evidence that "the heart of entrepreneurship" represented by empathic concern is crucial in an academic setting for inspiring students to consider social ventures. The insights obtained can inform how MBA programs and developmental programs are structured to cultivate purpose-driven entrepreneurs. By strengthening empathy and aligning it with students' entrepreneurial skills, universities can play a key role in nurturing purpose-driven, socially responsible entrepreneurs who will champion innovative solutions to society's challenges. As India and the world look to entrepreneurship as a means of addressing social issues, understanding and harnessing these individual drivers will be essential in shaping effective educational strategies and supportive ecosystems that encourage more students to take up the mantle of social entrepreneurship.

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