
Organizational Capabilities and Social Entrepreneurship: A Fuzzy-set Approach

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Anna Kwiotkowska¹

Abstract:

Purpose: The purpose of this paper is to identify the leading organizational capabilities of social enterprises and their empirical verification in terms of their simultaneous impact on social entrepreneurship.

Design/Methodology/Approach: In this paper, a fuzzy set Qualitative Comparative Analysis (fs/QCA) was used to empirically analyze the complex relationships between a set of organizational capabilities and social entrepreneurship. These relationships were analyzed using data from selected social enterprises in Poland.

Findings: The results indicated that there was no single condition that necessarily and exclusively contributed to high or low social entrepreneurship. However, the sufficiency analysis performed revealed several configurations of conditions (organizational capabilities) that lead to high and low outcomes for social entrepreneurship.

Practical Implications: The main achievement of this research is the discovery of two configurations that lead to a high level of social entrepreneurship and one configuration of a low level of social entrepreneurship. This result is important for practice as it shows managers different combinations leading to social entrepreneurship. Importantly, by focusing on combining different organizational capabilities, it is possible to help formalization and encourage social entrepreneurship.

Originality/Value: This paper not only presents the different organizational capabilities that influence social entrepreneurship, but also tries to find out how the interplay of these different capabilities creates alternative configurations that contribute to social entrepreneurship.

Keywords: Social entrepreneurship, organizational capabilities, fuzzy set qualitative comparative analysis.

JEL Classification: L26, L29.

Paper Type: Research article.

¹Silesian University of Technology, ORCID ID: 0000-0001-5204-1259,
e-mail: akwiotkowska@polsl.pl;

1. Introduction

Social entrepreneurship is a sub-discipline within entrepreneurship which remains a complex and still poorly developed and understood phenomenon (Rey-Martí *et al.*, 2016). Social entrepreneurs undertake various activities aimed at introducing fundamental social changes that are transformative and innovative in nature (Zhang and Swanson, 2013). However, like other entrepreneurs, social entrepreneurs need to source valuable resources and develop capabilities to create sustainable and profitable organizations (Renko, 2013). It is important to note that social enterprises face significant resource constraints due to the fact that they operate in an environment that makes it difficult to obtain resources and their core social mission in many cases causes them to resign from higher margins in order to reach more beneficiaries (Desa and Basu, 2013). As a result, many social enterprises are unable to solve large-scale problems and thus the scale of their social impact is significantly limited (Renko, 2013; Smith *et al.*, 2016).

Despite previous suggestions in the literature for undertaking research focusing on the ‘enterprise’ side of social enterprises to understand how differences in their capabilities lead to differences in their social entrepreneurship, few empirical studies have used a resource-based approach (RBV) to investigate the scale of social entrepreneurship of these enterprises. Taking an RBV perspective, social enterprises are organizations whose scale of social impact depends on their ability to create, combine, and leverage resources and capabilities. In relation to social entrepreneurship, RBV creates a framework for understanding how resources and capabilities increase a company's competencies and enable it to more effectively serve the target market (Desa and Basu, 2013).

It should also be emphasized that in adopting the more radical alternative to RBV (Bel and Dyck 2011), attention is focused on the social enterprise's ability to exert social influence rather than on financial performance. Thus, by adopting the RBV extension for social entrepreneurship, the study may include the identification of capabilities that contribute to the achievement of social impact through the entrepreneurial activities of the social enterprise. Consequently, the aim of this research is to identify the leading capabilities of social enterprises and their empirical verification in terms of their simultaneous impact on social entrepreneurship.

This study attempts to answer the following research questions: “What are the basic capabilities for social entrepreneurship?” and “How do these capabilities combine to create alternative configurations (pathways) to social entrepreneurship?”. The study used a fuzzy set qualitative comparative analysis (fs/QCA), a set theory approach suitable for studying complex relationships on a sample of 83 Polish social enterprises. This approach enables the study of various social capabilities, such as the capability to engage stakeholders, the capability to earn income and the capability to provide mission-oriented management of social enterprises in an

interdependent manner. Rather than estimating the average net effect of particular capabilities, the study assesses how multiple alternative configurations of these lead to low or high social entrepreneurship.

The structure of this study is as follows: Section 2 explains the theoretical framework of social entrepreneurship and capabilities of social enterprises relevant to the development of the research model. Section 3 describes the study's method and data. Section 4 presents the empirical results. Section 5 discusses these results. Section 6 offers conclusions, highlights some limitations and future research opportunities.

2. Theoretical Background

The phenomenon of social entrepreneurship is an innovative area of research (Kraus *et al.*, 2014), however, the literature still lacks a common concept of who a social entrepreneur is. This, in turn, raises questions about which social or profit-oriented activities fall within the spectrum of social entrepreneurship (Abu-Saifan, 2012). There are essentially three perspectives in discussions of social entrepreneurship, namely, pursuing both social and financial outcomes, the duty of innovative spirit, and the adoption of commercial activities to generate revenue. In the first perspective, reference is made to the main goals of social entrepreneurship, which are the efforts of entrepreneurs to achieve social justice and ensure a decent quality of life for all (Thake and Zadek, 1997), or a source of a sustainable competitive advantage over time that enables the fulfilment of the social mission (Weerawarden and Mort, 2006) or identification of a situation that excludes a group of people who lack the resources or capabilities required for a decent quality of life and the possibility of solving this problem by creating a company (Peredo and McLean 2006).

The second perspective refers to an innovative approach to achieving desired goals. In turn, in the third perspective, it is emphasized that social entrepreneurs disseminate their socially innovative models through market-oriented activities, e.g. by creating alliances and partnerships, in order to achieve broader and more sustainable results (Huybrechts and Nicholls, 2012). In this study, following Carraher, Welsh and Svilokos (2016), social entrepreneurship is defined as a process involving the innovative use of resources and capabilities in order to trigger social change and meet social needs in the field of sustainable social transformation, as well as to achieving the commercial or economic objectives of the enterprise.

According to RBV, a competitive advantage is the result of a set of resources and competences that an enterprise possesses, as well as the managerial capability to organize and use them (Barney, 1991). While not necessarily committed to competitive advantage, social enterprises seek to build competencies that will help them serve their target market more effectively (Desa and Basu, 2013).

Moreover, these companies must compete for the attention and support of stakeholders (i.e., volunteers, government, customers). As indicated, for example, by Meyskens *et al.* (2010) it is essential for social enterprises to acquire resources and develop the capabilities to achieve social goals and the ability to acquire, organize, and transform a broad set of resources helps increase a social enterprise's ability to create value. There is some evidence in the literature on the existence of capabilities benefits for social enterprises but there is a need for further empirical research in this area. This study focused on three organizational capabilities, namely the capability to engage stakeholders, the capability to earn income and the capability to provide mission-oriented management, which are potential drivers of enhancing social entrepreneurship. They also reflect theoretical advances in this area, which confirm how social entrepreneurship depends on these capabilities.

The first of the analyzed capabilities relates to stakeholders engagement and is understood as the ability to effectively communicate and engage donors, beneficiaries, customers and the community. In their pursuit of social change, social enterprises communicate with a variety of stakeholders, which in turn can support them in overcoming various types of barriers to achieving their goals (Montgomery *et al.*, 2012). Previous research in the literature indicates that stakeholder engagement assists social enterprises in gaining resources and legitimacy (Desa and Basu 2013; Di Domenico *et al.*, 2010; Miller and Wesley, 2010). To accelerate change and gain support for their mission, social enterprises use their social networks (Alvord *et al.*, 2004).

As indicated by Di Domenico *et al.* (2010) stakeholder engagement is important to building and fostering a strong stakeholder network which, in turn, offers social enterprises the opportunity to increase their outreach and impact. The capability to engage stakeholders has also been shown to support social entrepreneurship in responding to external pressures and incentives set by major stakeholders such as partners or customers.

Given the importance of income streams that enable social enterprises to reduce their dependence on donations in order to remain profitable (Gras and Mendoza-Abarca, 2014; Swanson and Zhang, 2010; Zhang and Swanson, 2013), another capability included in the study was the capability to earn income. Social enterprises, despite the important mission they serve, often have problems with financing their activities.

For this reason, some social enterprises seek to generate income streams that reduce their dependence on philanthropy (Zhang and Swanson, 2013). The capability to earn income, recognized as crucial to the development of a strong business model (Dart, 2004), enables social enterprises to generate profit to finance their social activities. The source of earned income can come directly from the beneficiaries, in a "fee-for-service" operation (Ebrahim *et al.*, 2014) or from wealthier customers whose purchases support charitable services to beneficiaries. Previous research has shown that social enterprises that are capable of attracting paying customers by

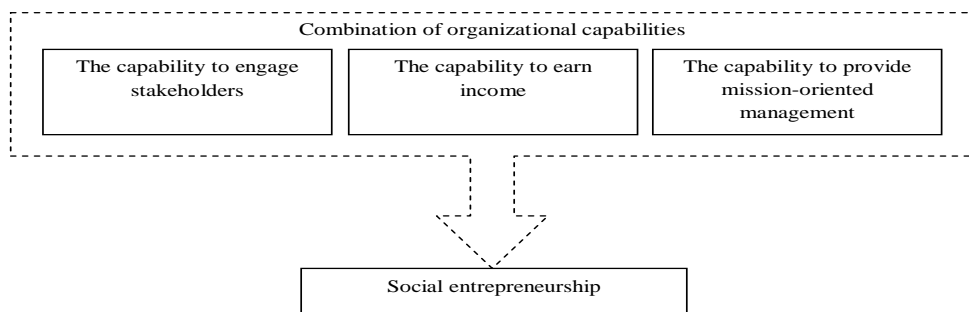
selling their products and services are more likely to receive support for their social cause (Marquis and Park, 2014). As a result, customers of these enterprises create close relations with them, supporting them and contributing to the implementation of their social mission. Therefore, in the context of social entrepreneurship and extended RBV, generating income is an important capability contributing to the effective functioning of social enterprises, enabling them to achieve their social mission.

Another analyzed capability is the capability to provide mission-oriented management. As a guiding element of the organizational philosophy, the mission can strengthen a common understanding of the role of the organization in relation to its stakeholders. As such, it presents a strong potential to support social entrepreneurship in creating common value (Grant and Sumanth, 2009). Social entrepreneurship reflects the establishment of new value creation models that have a transformative impact on society, both statically and dynamically. As shown by the research conducted by Flota Rosado and Figueroa (2016), clear and distinct missions help social enterprises to maintain their goals and objectives. The capability to provide mission-oriented management is a compass for making the right decisions in social entrepreneurship (Tate and Bals, 2016). This compass gives direction to all subsequent actions to progress. The following proposition is consistent with this theoretical framework.

Proposition: The capability to engage stakeholders, the capability to earn income and the capability to provide mission-oriented management combine to create alternative configurations to social entrepreneurship.

Based on the above proposition relating to the set of selected organizational capabilities of significant importance for social entrepreneurship, a research model (Figure 1) was developed to illustrate the complex causal conditions leading to the studied outcomes.

Figure 1. Diagram of the research model



Source: Own study.

3. Methods and Materials

The research sample consists of 53 social enterprises based in Poland, i.e., organizations whose main goal is to achieve the social mission through business practices (Dacin *et al.*, 2010). The sample included the following social enterprises, worker cooperatives (28.9%), foundations and associations (21.7%), social integration clubs (13.3%), and sheltered employment establishments (36.1%). The data used in this study were collected through a mail survey. The questionnaire was sent to selected respondents in the first quarter of 2021. The respondents to the survey were owners, managers or employees who had adequate knowledge about the activities and results of their enterprises. Although the sample size was small, it is appropriate for fs/QCA, as suggested by Ragin (2008).

All constructs were measured using 5-point Likert-type empirically validated scales. Respondents were asked the extent to which they agreed (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree) with the statements. In total, there were four constructs from 19 questions. The list of questions and Cronbach's alpha values for internal consistency are presented in Table 1. The individual reliability of each construct was greater than the minimum acceptable Cronbach's α of 0.7, indicating high reliability (Nunally and Bernstein 1994).

Table 1. Measurement of variables, sources, items and Cronbach's alpha values

Variable (source)	Item	Cronbach's alpha
Social entrepreneurship (Kraus et al. 2017)	Social Risk-taking 1. We are not afraid to take substantial risks when serving our social purpose. 2. Bold action is necessary to achieve our company's social mission. 3. We avoid the cautious line of action if social opportunities might be lost that way.	0.89
	Social Proactiveness 4. We aim at being at the forefront at making the world a better place. 5. Our organization has a strong tendency to be ahead of others in addressing its social mission. 6. We typically initiate actions which other social enterprises/social entrepreneurs copy.	
	Social Innovativeness 7. Social innovation is important for our company. 8. We invest heavily in developing new ways to increase our social impact or to serve our beneficiaries. 9. In our company, new ideas to solve social problems come up very frequently.	
The capability to engage	10. We have been effective at communicating what we do to key constituencies and stakeholders.	0.78

stakeholders (Bloom, Smith 2010; Bacq, Eddleston 2016)	11. We have been successful at informing the individuals we seek to serve about the value of our program for them. 12. We have been successful at informing donors and funders about the value of what we do. 13. We receive cooperative support from main stakeholders.	
The capability to earn income (Bloom, Smith 2010)	14. We have generated a strong stream of revenues from products and services that we sell for a price. 15. We have found ways to finance our activities that keep us sustainable.	0.79
The capability to provide mission-oriented management (Wang 2011)	16. We have clear missions and management philosophy. 17. We are self-motivated for social and environmental advancement. 18. Employees know and are able to interpret missions and management philosophy. 19. Employees can explain missions and management philosophy to external parties if required.	0.80

Source: Own study.

This study applied fuzzy-set Qualitative Comparative Analysis (fs/QCA) using fs/QCA 2.5 software (Ragin and Davey, 2014) to investigate the effect of complex causal conditions (organizational capabilities) on targeted outcomes (high and low social entrepreneurship). The fsQCA method is currently recognized as well documented (Ragin, 2008; Fiss, 2011; Woodside, 2014; Greckhamer *et al.*, 2018; Kwiotkowska, 2018; 2020). The first step in fs/QCA is to transform the raw data into fuzzy membership scores ranging from 0 to 1 (Ragin, 2008).

For this purpose, the three different anchors that make up the calibration structure need to be pre-defined, the threshold for full membership (indicated by a fuzzy score of 0.95 or higher), the crossover point (indicated by a fuzzy score of 0.50), and the threshold for full membership (indicated by a fuzzy score of 0.05 or less). In the case of three predetermined anchors, the calibration procedure proceeds with the log-odds method (Ragin 2008). In this study, the calibration values for the three thresholds anchors were set at the upper 95th percentile, median and lower 5th percentile. Table 2 lists the descriptive statistics of raw data and calibration values.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics and calibration values

Conditions and outcome	Mean	St. Deviation	Min	Max	Calibration values		
					Full Membership Point	Crossover Point	Full Non-Membership Point
Social entrepreneurship	33.4	5.7	24	20	41.6	34	27.1
The capability to	16.5	3.5	8	20	20	17	8.9

engage stakeholders							
The capability to earn income	17.4	2.3	7	10	10	6	3.4
The capability to provide mission-oriented management	16.8	2.9	8	18	17.9	13	7

Source: Own study.

4. Results

In this study, three conditions were analyzed. The three organizational capabilities (the capability to engage stakeholders, the capability to earn income and the capability to provide mission-oriented management) were used as antecedent conditions, and social entrepreneurship was used as the outcome (Table 3).

Table 3. Definitions of conditions and outcome

Condition/Outcome		Code
Outcome	Social entrepreneurship	SE
Antecedent condition	The capability to engage stakeholders	ES
Antecedent condition	The capability to earn income	EI
Antecedent condition	The capability to provide mission-oriented management	MD

Source: Own study.

In the first step, a necessity analysis was carried out. If the consistency score of a condition exceeds the threshold of 0.90, the condition is regarded as a necessary condition (Ragin, 2008). The necessity analysis showed that none of the conditions exceeded consistency score of 0.90, as shown in Table 4. In summary, it can be concluded that there is no necessary condition for high and low social entrepreneurship.

Table 4. Analysis of necessity of conditions

Condition	Consistency	Coverage
	High social entrepreneurship	
ES	0.61	0.58
~ES	0.64	0.42
EI	0.73	0.52
~EI	0.58	0.55
MD	0.55	0.59
~MD	0.78	0.51
Low social entrepreneurship		
ES	0.57	0.78
~ES	0.67	0.56
EI	0.49	0.63

~EI	0.52	0.40
MD	0.61	0.56
~MD	0.48	0.47

Note: ES - the capability to engage stakeholders; EI - the capability to earn income, MD - the capability to provide mission-oriented management, ~ logical negation - the absence of conditions.

Source: Own study.

Subsequently, a sufficiency analysis was performed where the dataset frequency cut-off was set to one, meaning that each configuration with less than one empirical observation was considered as a remainder and was not included in the analysis. This sufficiency analysis was based on complex solutions. The results of the sufficiency analysis showed two sufficient configurations of conditions for high and one for low social entrepreneurship outcomes. All combinations of conditions had a consistency value greater than 0.75, which was considered sufficient to obtain the expected outcome. The results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Results for sufficiency analysis of high and low social entrepreneurship

Complex solutions	Configurations	Raw Coverage	Unique Coverage	Consistency
Configurations leading to high social entrepreneurship				
CPH1	ES*MD	0.55	0.09	0.86
CPH2	EI*~MD	0.59	0.10	0.91
Overall solution coverage: 0.61				
Overall solution consistency: 0.93				
Configuration leading to low social entrepreneurship				
CPL	~ES*~EI	0.51	0.08	0.90
Overall solution coverage: 0.60				
Overall solution consistency: 0.91				

Note: ES - the capability to engage stakeholders; EI - the capability to earn income, MD - the capability to provide mission-oriented management; * logical AND; ~logical negation.

Source: Own study.

The solutions represent the high and low levels of each condition, and a "do not care" condition with respect to the outcomes examined (Fiss, 2007). In line with previous fs/QCA studies, these solutions can be interpreted as alternative configurations associated with the outcome (high/low social entrepreneurship).

5. Discussion

The necessity analysis showed that there was no single condition that necessarily and solely contributed to a high or low level of social entrepreneurship. In turn, the sufficiency analysis revealed several configurations of conditions that yielded sufficiently high and low expected outcomes. Therefore, this discussion focuses mainly on the results of the sufficiency analysis.

As the results show, there are two alternative configurations for a high level of social entrepreneurship and one configuration was derived for a low level of social entrepreneurship. The final solution can be expressed as follows:

- configurations to high social entrepreneurship:
 $ES*MD + EI*\sim MD;$ (1)

- configuration to low social entrepreneurship:
 $\sim ES*\sim EI$ (2)

Note: * logical AND; + logical OR.

The results with different solutions for high social entrepreneurship have good consistency (=0.93) and solution coverage (=0.61), solution CPH1 and solution CPH2. Similarly, the results for low social entrepreneurship have good consistency (=0.91) and solution coverage (=0.60), with one solution CPL.

Solution CPH1 indicates that combination of two capabilities, namely the capability to engage stakeholders and the capability to provide mission-oriented management leads to high social entrepreneurship. Solution CHP2 shows that the presence of the capability to earn income combined with the absence of the capability to provide mission-oriented management gives the same high level of social entrepreneurship as in the solution CHP1.

On this basis, it can be argued that the capability of a social enterprise to engage stakeholders in its social mission, coupled with its capability to be mission-oriented management, are critical to achieving exquisite social entrepreneurship.

Alternatively, a high level of social entrepreneurship can be achieved through the capability to earn income while absence of the capability to provide mission-oriented management. The following finding can therefore be made that the capability of mission-oriented management participates in the achievement of high social entrepreneurship, but depending on the context, its presence is required in the first configuration (CPH1) and its absence in the second (CHP2), in conjunction with the capability to earn income. Moreover, the capability to provide mission-oriented management was absent in the pathway for low social entrepreneurship. As the solution CPL indicates the combination of the absence of the capability to engage stakeholders with the absence of the capability to earn income leads to low social entrepreneurship.

This paper makes the following theoretical and methodological contributions to the literature on entrepreneurship. First, this study confirms the proposition that different organizational capabilities combine to create alternative configurations to social entrepreneurship. Secondly, the findings in Table 5 show that most configurations consisted of multiple antecedent conditions that led to high or low social entrepreneurship.

These results confirmed the principles of complexity theory that: (1) "... a simple antecedent condition is seldom sufficient for predicting high or low outcome"; and (2) "... two or more simple conditions is sufficient for a consistently high score in an outcome" (Woodside, 2014). Third, the findings show that the configurations leading to a high level of outcome were asymmetric to those leading to a low level of outcome, which is consistent with the causal asymmetry assumption. These empirical results provide a theoretical justification for the wide variety of social entrepreneurship and a basis for further theory building in the field of social entrepreneurship.

The methodological contribution is the introduction of the fs/QCA to research on the social entrepreneurship phenomenon. Previous empirical tests have assumed that individuals conform to a single dominant explanation of the "net effects" of the phenomenon and that any inconsistencies are due to random deviations. The fs/QCA, on the other hand, takes into account within-person (rather than within-sample) relationships between data and interdependence of conditions at the case level, rather than correlations between discrete variables at the aggregate level.

6. Conclusion

In summary, social enterprises that are able to scale their social impact rely on specific capabilities, which include the capability to provide mission-oriented management, the capability to gain support and engagement from various stakeholders, and generate income. Methodologically, the analysis conducted in the paper, contributed to the literature, combining the set of organizational capabilities in social entrepreneurship and at the same time simultaneously analyzing their relationships. This approach allows the application of complexity theory, which reveals a better understanding of causal relationships regarding the combination of conditions affecting the test outcome.

The study extends RBV to social entrepreneurship, revealing how organizational capabilities combine to lead to the exquisite social entrepreneurship of social enterprises. This study indicates that managers have different combinations to achieving a high level of social entrepreneurship. Importantly, by focusing on the combination of different organizational capabilities, it is possible to help formalize and encourage social entrepreneurship.

Several limitations of this study should be noted. Fs/QCA is helpful for exploring causal relationships with numerous interactions, but it is necessary to consider all possible configurations when using it. This in turn means that the data matrices grow exponentially as a function of the number of causal conditions. When considering the generalization of the findings to other contexts, it is important to keep in mind that the respondents in this study came from social enterprises located in Poland.

Some of the constructs used in the study may have different meanings in different geographic conditions. Thus, future research should analyze other sectors and contexts across in emerging and developed economies. In addition, further research would also be valuable, e.g. a longitudinal study on a larger sample to trace the relationship between capability and social entrepreneurship in relation to changes over time.

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Information about the author:

Dsc Phd Eng. Anna Kwiotkowska is Associate Professor of Management at the Silesian University of Technology, Poland. Participant and manager of many research projects as well as author/co-author of over than 100 original publications and papers in national and international journals and conferences. She conducts research on the configurational approach and the use of set-analytic methods: qualitative comparative analysis (QCA) in management sciences. Her research interests basically include entrepreneurship, technology transfer, strategic management, SMEs internationalization and Industry 4.0.