

# Influential Factors of Social Entrepreneurial Intention in Bangladesh

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## Abstract

The concept of social entrepreneurship (SE) is gaining attention in developing economies for the purpose of greater societal welfare maximization. Still, findings in the field of SE studies have been riddled with conflicting results and counterstatement. Also, the determinants of developing SE are not robustly investigated in developing economies like Bangladesh. This context has mobilized the authors of this current study to focus on determining student's intention to pursue SE as their career choice. Hence, the study aims to examine the predictive determinants of social entrepreneurial intentions (SEI) among Bangladeshi students. The study has investigated the influence of entrepreneurial self-efficacy, social support, prior experience, and educational support on SEI. The survey was conducted from a public university of Bangladesh, and 231 students participated in the study. Questionnaire items under each construct variable have been adopted from pre-tested research studies. Five-point Likert scale questionnaire was applied to measure the variables. SPSS version 23.0 has been used for statistical analysis through which correlation and multiple regression analysis were conducted to measure the impact of the independent variables on SEI. Results exhibited that self-efficacy, social support, and educational support positively and significantly predicted SEI, while prior experience does not influence SEI.

**Keywords:** Social Entrepreneurial Intention, Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy, Social Support, Prior Experience, Educational Program

**JEL Classification Code:** M10, M13, J26

## 1. Introduction

Poverty, unemployment, scarcity of clean water, environmental degradation, gender discrimination, child labor, lack of education facilities, political unrest, financial inequality, hunger, insufficient medical opportunities, natural calamities are some fundamental problems faced by underdeveloped and developing countries like Bangladesh (Nowak, 2012). The underlying concept of social

entrepreneurship (SE) for creating economic value and dealing with social issues is a tool to address problems unsolved by the government and the private sector. SE is an innovative method of creating social value while ensuring a substantial financial return. In recent times, social entrepreneurship (SE) is gaining scholarly attention, especially in the developing economies, to counteract social problems (Luc, 2018). It can be regarded as a catalyst for a society to make significant economic and social development by conquering economic, social and political disparities (Tiwari et al., 2017a). Bangladesh is considered as a leader for the concept of SE for having pioneer social enterprises like Grameen Bank and BRAC (Bornstein & Davis, 2010). Although the genesis of social entrepreneurs has been evolving, the growth rate of social entrepreneurs is still low in Bangladesh compared with the population and social problems faced by the country. To date, very insubstantial research studies have been carried out in the context of understanding the development of SE in developing countries like Bangladesh (Rashid, 2010).

Social entrepreneurs have been incessantly contributing to bringing a substantial social change through focusing and actively working on social problems in the society of developing countries (Zeyen et al., 2012). Tiwari et al.

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(2018b) argued that, although SE is beneficial for the welfare and development of the economies, still, the present rate of social entrepreneurial growth is rather slow. This context elevates an essential query for the policymakers and scholars to understand how can the development rate of SE be enhanced and reinforced? Hence, to motivate and support social entrepreneurs, it is crucial to understand the fundamental factors that shape an individual's thinking process (Tiwari et al. 2017a). Research study stated that following the determinants of social entrepreneurial intention (SEI) is critical for academics and policymakers for encouraging individuals to become social entrepreneurs (Hockerts, 2017). Liñán and Fayolle (2015) identified that previous entrepreneurial intention studies had focused on one or more of five perspectives – theoretical aspect, individual-related variables, entrepreneurial education, the situational factors, and intention-behavior linkage. Several scholars have signified the urgency to advance SE knowledge in the Asian region to comprehensively gauge the context of social entrepreneurial settings in local areas (Liang et al. 2017; Ip et al. 2017). This study has investigated the influential factors that are important and significant for fostering social entrepreneurial intentions (EI) among students in Bangladesh.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Social Entrepreneurship

The notion of SE is based on the concept of creating a new business venture along with realizing social benefits. SE has been defined as “a process that begins with perceived social opportunity, transfers it into an enterprise model, determines and achieves the wealth essential to execute the enterprise, initiates and grows the enterprise and yields the future upon goal achievement of the enterprise's goal” (Tiwari et al., 2017c). SE refers to “the creation of viable economic structures, relations, institutions, organizations and practices that yield ongoing social benefits” (Fowler, 2000, p. 83). Scholars have recognized that SE exhibits a dynamic process which could create value through leveraging resources in an innovative way (Shaw & Carter, 2007). Recently, SE has been regarded as a medium to lessen socio-economic problems (Chikha & Jarbou, 2017).

### 2.2. Social Entrepreneurial Intention

To date, many scholars have investigated the dimension of entrepreneurial intention (Lu & Wang, 2018). Entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial initiatives can only progress if entrepreneurial thinking grows and is supported (Krueger, 1993). Theory of planned behavior stated that the intention of an individual is a good determinant of a

person's future course of action (Ajzen, 1991). The EI is the future orientation of an individual to start a new venture and become an entrepreneur. SEI is the psychological behavior of an individual that induces a person to become a social entrepreneur by gathering knowledge, creating ideas and implementing the social business plan (Mair et al., 2006). According to Bird (1988), EI can be described as the state of mind that drives an individual to develop and establish a new business venture. Krueger and Carsrud (1993) stated that EI had been a reflection of commitment and determination towards initiating a new business venture. EI reflects an individual's personal conviction to launch and start a new business in the future (Thompson 2009). SEI can be considered as the faith and aspiration of a person to start a new social business venture (Tran & Von Korflesch, 2016). According to Mair, et al. (2006), SEI reflects the psychological behavior of individuals which directs them to obtain innovative knowledge, novel ideas and new business plans to act as a social entrepreneur.

### 2.3. Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy exhibits a personal appreciation of one's individual capability to accomplish a purposeful task (Bandura, 1977). Individualistic achievement is linked to one's self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is considered as individuals' belief about “their capabilities to exercise control over their level of functioning and over events that affect their lives” (Bandura, 1991; p. 275). Self-efficacy reinforces an individual's capacity to involved into initiating and completing an innovation task (Kim, 2019). The previous studies have evidenced self-efficacy as a significant predictor of social, behavioral actions, for instance, blood donation (Giles, 2004). Entrepreneurial self-efficacy (ESE) can be explained as the extent to which an individual believes that he or she can initiate a new business venture (Sánchez, 2010). ESE displays an individual's faith that he can bring some innovative solutions to the social problems within society (Hockerts, 2017). Giles et al. (2004) denoted ESE as a determinant of social behavior. Past research has found self-efficacy as a significant predictor of EI (Armitage & Conner, 2001). Since there are many daunting social challenges, exist in society, having a substantial degree of confidence in personal capabilities is theorized as a driver of SEI (Mair & Noboa, 2006). Mair and Noboa (2006) stated: “high level of self-efficacy allows a person to perceive the creation of a social venture as feasible, which positively affects the formation of the corresponding behavioral intention”. Self-efficacy has been a salient component in the study of social entrepreneurial intention (Tiwari et al. 2017c). Hence, ESE can be regarded as a personal belief which can stimulate an individual action to solve societal problems. Thus, the following hypothesis is derived:

**Hypothesis 1:** *Entrepreneurial self-efficacy has a positive impact on social entrepreneurial intention.*

## 2.4. Social Support

Social support (SS) reflects an individual's degree of essential support that is expected from his or her society or surroundings (Hockerts, 2017). SS can be of many forms, such as support from family, friends, government agencies, and social networks (Elali & Al-Yacoub, 2016). For an entrepreneur, family members can facilitate a vital role in establishing a robust network and bonding with the local community that would necessarily enable an entrepreneur to involve his or herself into social activities (Anderson et al. 2005). SS is deemed critical as a medium for an individual in achieving a predetermined social outcome, followed by an entrepreneurial spirit (Hockerts, 2015). Past studies have found that family support and social network ties significantly influenced university students to pursue an entrepreneurial career (Yurtkoru et al. 2014). Previous studies have exhibited a strong and positive association between perceived social support and SEI of students (Hockerts, 2017). Hence, the following hypothesis is derived:

**Hypothesis 2:** *Social support has a positive impact on social entrepreneurial intention.*

## 2.5. Prior Experience

Prior work experience (PE) and entrepreneurial parents have been found to be a significant and influential factor of EI (Kautonen et al., 2010; Carr & Sequeira, 2007). Past entrepreneurial experience and involvement in family business tend to influence family members' inclination for initiating entrepreneurial behavioral actions (Zhang et al., 2014). The research study demonstrated that previous experience drives pro-social attitude and activities, such as being part of a recycling initiative in society (Vining & Ebreo, 1989). Possessing knowledge about societal problems is likely to impact SEI (Hockerts, 2017). Private entrepreneurs tend to involve in charitable poverty alleviation initiatives if they have individual past experiences in the context of inadequate educational opportunities (Yiu et al., 2014). In this study, PE is assessed to reflect an individual's prior working engagement with social organizations. Hockerts (2017) found in his research that individuals with exposure to social issues are likely to exhibit a greater degree of SEI. Hence, the following hypothesis is derived:

**Hypothesis 3:** *Prior experience has a positive impact on social entrepreneurial intention.*

## 2.6. Educational Program

Several studies have substantiated the significance of educational support as a salient predictor of EI. EI is likely to be triggered by educational programs (Vodă & Florea, 2019). For example, the entrepreneurial educational program (EP) has been an orderly mechanism to equip students with the required level of information about entrepreneurship (Mumtaz et al., 2012). Cho (1998) advocated that EP facilitate EI since entrepreneurship-related knowledge and competence invigorate personal motivation to start a new venture. Educational institutions promote a significant role in stimulating social entrepreneurship to expand in society (Lacap et al., 2018). A study conducted by Wu and Wu (2008) exhibited that students, who used to be the follower of entrepreneurship education reflect a greater extent of propensity to start-up. Entrepreneurship oriented EP also transform the career choice of prospective students (Peterman & Kennedy, 2003). It is assumed in this study that a university's educational supports via EP will stimulate students' intention to solve surrounding societal problems through beginning a new start-up. Hence, the following hypothesis is derived:

**Hypothesis 4:** *Educational program has a positive impact on social entrepreneurial intention.*

## 3. Methodology

The sample of the study was university students who were enrolled under the department of management studies. The data has been collected from the a public university of Bangladesh. All the respondents were the final semester students of Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) program. Survey-based questionnaires were developed and distributed among the students through the class representative of each class. A total of 320 questionnaires were given to the students, and finally, 231 responses were kept for further statistical analysis, reflecting 72% feedback rate. The survey had two parts: the first part consists of necessary demographic information (i.e. age, sex), and the second part includes measurement items of variables. Likert scale was used in the current study, in which '1' represents extremely disagree and '5' represents extremely agree. A sample size of 231 can be deemed as sufficient to run multiple regression analysis (Ceresia and Mendola, 2019). For hypothesis testing purpose, the study adopted a previously tested survey questionnaire from various entrepreneurial studies.

To test the hypotheses, this study has applied the multiple regression analysis with the help of SPSS version 23, and correlation analysis has also been conducted for examining the relationship between dependent and independent variables. The item instruments of SEI, ESE, PE and SS

have been adapted from Hockerts (2017). The items under ES variable were taken from the study by Turker and Selçuk (2009), and later questions were slightly modified according to the study needs.

The first variable was SEI, which was examined by three items (i.e., “I expect that at some point in the future I will be involved in launching an organization that aims to solve social problems”). The variable demonstrates students’ intention to start a social entrepreneurial venture. The second variable was entrepreneurial ESE and was measured by three items (i.e., “I could figure out a way to help solve the problems that society faces”). The variable indicates students’ extent of efficacy to solve social problems. The third variable named SS was measured by three items (i.e., “People would support me if I wanted to start an organization to help socially marginalized people”). The variable measured students’ perceived support from society and the surrounding people. The fourth variable was PE and regulated by three items (i.e., “I have some experience working with social problems”). The variable examined students’ extent of experience with social problems and social organizations. The fifth variable was EP and it was measured by three items (i.e. “The education in university encourages me to develop creative ideas for being a social entrepreneur”).

#### 4. Results and Discussions

The sample size of the present study is 231 subjects, who are full-time BBA students of a renowned public university in Bangladesh. For the research purpose, it has been confirmed that all the surveyed respondents have taken courses on entrepreneurship in their BBA program. More than half of the respondents were male students, 137 or 59%, and 94 or 41% were female students. 89% of students were aged between 21-23 years, where 11% of students’ age has fallen in the category of 24-26 years of age. The age category of more than 26 years remained nil as no student reported his or her age more than 26 years. For reliability purpose, the study has applied the Cronbach’s alpha coefficient ( $\alpha$ ) (Cronbach, 1951) method to measure the internal consistency of the items under each variable. The Cronbach’s alpha ( $\alpha$ ) value

of each variable in the study was above 0.70 (see Table 1), which is acceptable (Hair et al. 2010).

Table 2 represents the correlation analysis of this study among the dependent and independent variables. The result reveals that EP was the most influential variable that was robustly and statistically correlated with the social entrepreneurial intention ( $r = 0.470$ ), which followed by ESE ( $r = 0.413$ ). Other two variables: SS and PE were also positively correlated with SEI.

The Durbin-Watson value of the regression model exhibited a value of 2.096, which falls under the acceptable range of 1.5 to 2.5 (Durbin & Watson, 1951). It does imply that the regression model is a good fit for the test. The tolerance values of each variable were in between 0.1 to 1.0, and the variance inflation factor (VIF) value was less than 5, which indicated that the model was free from the multicollinearity problem.

Table 3 presents the result of the regression analysis. The  $R^2$  value of 0.275 explains that the four dependent variables can explain the 27.5% variance in determining SEI. H1 states that ESE would positively impact on SEI, and the regression analysis reveals that the hypothesis is accepted ( $\beta = .172$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). The result is consistent with past studies (Forster & Grichnik, 2013). The higher degree of self-efficacy will lead students to start social ventures in the future. H2 states that SS positively impacts SEI, and this hypothesis is also supported ( $\beta = .141$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). It does imply that social and surrounding support will stimulate students’ intention for social venture creation. The finding is in line with prior studies (Hockerts, 2017). PE is hypothesized to

**Table 1:** Cronbach’s alpha coefficient ( $\alpha$ ) of each variable

Variables	Cronbach $\alpha$
Social entrepreneurial intention (SEI)	0.765
Entrepreneurial self-efficacy (ESE)	0.730
Social support (SS)	0.746
Prior experience (PE)	0.787
Educational Support (EP)	0.741

**Table 2:** Correlation Analysis

		1	2	3	4	5
1	Social entrepreneurial intention (SEI)	1				
2	Entrepreneurial self-efficacy (ESE)	.413**	1			
3	Social support (SS)	.385**	.490**	1		
4	Prior experience (PE)	.355**	.564**	.518**	1	
5	Educational Support (EP)	.470**	.513**	.490**	.535**	1
	Notes: n=231, * $p < 0.05$ ; ** $p < 0.01$					



**Table 3:** Regression Analysis

Variable	R2 Change	Standardized coefficients	t	sig.
	.275			
Entrepreneurial Self-efficacy (ESE)		.179	2.432*	.016
Social Support (SS)		.141	1.985*	.048
Prior Experience (PE)		.023	.301	.764
Educational program (EP)		.297	4.107**	.000
(n=231, *p<0.05; **p<0.01)				

affect SEI (H3), and the hypothesis is not supported ( $\beta = .023$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ). The reason for this insignificant result is that the students might have experienced the failure of social organization, which would demotivate them to start their career as a social entrepreneur. The fourth hypothesis predicted that an EP would affect SEI, and the explanation is accepted ( $\beta = .297$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). The result is consistent with past studies (Souitaris et al., 2007). The finding suggests that the university's educational program and support will trigger students' intention to start social entrepreneurial activities.

## 5. Conclusions

The objective of the study was to examine the influence of ESE, EP, PE and SS on SEI of students in Bangladesh context, where social entrepreneurial studies are still moving at a slow pace. This study has found that entrepreneurial ESE, EP, and SS are crucial to induce students to become social entrepreneurs. The findings of the current study would help academics and scholars to recognize the predictors of SEI of the students who might in the future start their career as an entrepreneurial social leader to solve social problems. Our results have potential implications for entrepreneurship educators in designing academic curriculum and practical project to empower students for a social entrepreneurial career. As our students are our future for society, they are required to motivate them to be aware of social problems. The findings of the current research can be beneficial for universities to recommend social entrepreneurial courses in Bangladesh. Advancing a platform for students to start a social entrepreneurial career and deal with social problems can purposefully be sustainable in encouraging SE.

Academics and policymakers should include SE educational materials, bring successful social entrepreneurs in the class, develop the skills and confidence, provide opportunities to experience voluntary activities, and ensure external supports that are needed to be a social entrepreneur. This study has examined the four determinant factors rather than a comprehensive model of intention process that induce an individual to become a social entrepreneur. Future studies may include all aspects of the intention formation

process. This study has assumed that behaviors are planned and intention to create a business lead to future action. Our assumption may be wrong in some cases as entrepreneurship can be unconscious and unplanned behavior. This study has focused on only two individual characteristics and one situation factor. Still, there are other variables like proactivity, risk-taking behavior, the moral obligation, and the environment of doing business that also may affect SEI. The study also has used the commercial, entrepreneurial intention-based model to social entrepreneurship perspective in Bangladesh.

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