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Navigating Crossroads: A Comprehensive Literature Review On Collective Social Entrepreneurship

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Abstract

This study presents a comprehensive literature review on the concept of collective social entrepreneurship, which emerged in response to the dominant "lone hero" narrative in social entrepreneurship studies. Through a systematic scoping study approach analyzing 32 relevant articles from Scopus and Google Scholar databases using the PRISMA protocol, the study aims to address three critical challenges facing the field: (1) inconsistent definitions and typologies, (2) the diversity of theoretical frameworks used, and (3) the complexity of measuring social impact. The review reveals that collective social entrepreneurship is defined as collaboration among diverse actors applying business principles to solve social problems, with key activities including framing, convening, and multivocality. The analysis demonstrates that the integration of three key theoretical frameworks Social Network Theory, Institutional Theory, and Resource-Based View (RBV) complements each other in explaining this phenomenon, with institutional theory providing the context of the rules of the game, social network theory explaining the mechanisms of collaborative mobilization, and RBV analyzing sustainable resource utilization. The study also identifies various impact measurement frameworks (SROI, IRIS+, GRI, SASB, and B Corp) that can be adapted to suit organizational contexts. In conclusion, despite facing conceptual and methodological challenges, the field of collective social entrepreneurship offers rich research opportunities, particularly in comparative empirical studies, technology integration, and cross-disciplinary collaboration, which promise a deeper understanding of how collective action can

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create sustainable social change.

Keywords: Collective Social Entrepreneurship, Social Network Theory, Institutional Theory, Resource-Based View, Social Impact Measurement.

INTRODUCTION

Historically, the literature on social entrepreneurship has been dominated by narratives that focus on individuals as “lone heroes” or lone actors leading social change (Martin & Osberg, 2007; Montgomery et al., 2012). These narratives often glorify personal characteristics such as creativity, determination, and the ability to recognize and exploit opportunities (Martin & Osberg, 2007). However, researchers have raised concerns about this bias, pointing out that a single focus on individuals risks overlooking the crucial role played by external actors, stakeholders, networks, and institutions in overcoming barriers to success (Montgomery et al., 2012).

In response, the field has undergone a significant, relatively recent shift toward the concept of “collective social entrepreneurship” (Montgomery et al., 2012). This concept focuses on the role played by diverse actors collaborating to address social problems, create new institutions, and dismantle outdated institutional arrangements (Montgomery et al., 2012). These collaborations encompass a broad spectrum of initiatives, including social movements, alliances, and the formation of markets for social good. A better understanding of this phenomenon requires approaches that highlight the social capital and collaborative action that underpin effective social change (Montgomery et al., 2012).

This shift reflects broader trends in research methodology. The phenomenon of collective social entrepreneurship is being studied with an emphasis on cross-sector collaboration to solve complex social problems (Barraket & Loosemore, 2018), reflecting the nature of modern research methodology itself. Meta-analysis, as one of the most rigorous forms of literature review, is increasingly recognized as a "Big Science" project that demands collaboration from a larger group of researchers (Ali et al., 2021; Ashiq et al., 2021; Rehman & Galib, 2021). The increasingly complex nature of social problems demands collective solutions, which in turn encourages collaboration across disciplines and institutions among researchers (Kurata et al., 2023). In other words, the object of research namely, collective action parallelizes how the research is conducted, creating synergy between subject and methodology. This approach allows for a more comprehensive and multidisciplinary understanding of the issues underlying the phenomenon of collective social entrepreneurship.

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This literature review is structured to navigate three significant challenges facing the field of collective social entrepreneurship, which can be considered critical "crossroads" hindering conceptual and empirical progress. The first challenge is inconsistent definitions, where the diversity of models, organizational structures, and social goals makes findings difficult to compare (Montgomery et al., 2012). The second challenge involves diverse theoretical frameworks, as the use of different perspectives such as social, institutional, and resource theories can produce different and potentially conflicting findings (Ashiq et al., 2021; P. A. Dacin et al., 2010; Li & Bosma, 2025; Rehman & Galib, 2021). The third challenge is the complexity of impact measurement, a significant obstacle that encompasses not only financial metrics but also social and environmental impact metrics simultaneously (P. A. Dacin et al., 2010). This study aims to synthesize the existing literature to systematically address these three challenges, providing a solid foundation for further research in this area.

The theoretical background of this concept focuses on the role of multiple actors collaborating to address social problems (Montgomery et al., 2012; Phillips et al., 2015), create new institutions (Rehman & Galib, 2021), and dismantle outdated institutional arrangements. This collaboration encompasses a wide range of activities, including social movements, alliances, and the formation of markets for social goods (Jørgensen et al., 2021). A better understanding of this phenomenon requires an approach that highlights the social capital and collaborative action that underpin effective social change (Aldrich & Meyer, 2015; Putnam, 1994; Tabassum et al., 2018). The field of collective social entrepreneurship is supported by a variety of theoretical frameworks that are often used separately (Montgomery et al., 2012). A comprehensive understanding emerges from the integration of these theories, which are complementary rather than contradictory. Three primary theoretical frameworks used to analyze this phenomenon are Social Network Theory (Leyden et al., 2014), Institutional Theory (Vurro et al., 2010), and the Resource-Based View (J. B. Barney, 2001).

The social entrepreneurship literature has undergone a significant shift from the "lone hero" narrative to the concept of collective social entrepreneurship, which emphasizes collaboration across actors. However, conceptual and empirical progress in the field remains hampered by three interrelated critical gaps. First, the lack of a consistent definition makes research findings difficult to compare and synthesize. Second, the use of diverse theoretical frameworks such as Social Network Theory, Institutional Theory, and the Resource-Based View separately results in fragmented and potentially contradictory analyses, lacking adequate integration. Third, impact measurement remains highly complex, requiring simultaneous inclusion

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of both social and environmental metrics, going beyond traditional financial metrics. A key gap lies in the lack of a systematic effort to synthesize the literature to address these three challenges in an integrated manner, thus lacking a solid foundation for further research in the field of collective social entrepreneurship. A "Big Science" that explicitly integrates multiple disciplines to generate a richer understanding of the phenomenon of collective social entrepreneurship remains elusive.

METHOD

This literature review was designed as an initial scoping study that serves as an important prerequisite for potential future meta-analyses, despite the relatively young nature of the field of collective social entrepreneurship (Montgomery et al., 2012). The initial analysis indicated that the research base was sufficient for a comprehensive review (Rehman & Galib, 2021; Zolfaghari, 2023). The field of social entrepreneurship in general has grown exponentially in the past two decades and has become a "thoroughly studied and growing field of research" (Rehman & Galib, 2021). Numerous systematic reviews, bibliometric analyses, and scientometric studies have been published (Li & Bosma, 2025; Rehman & Galib, 2021). These findings validate that this topic is worthy and meaningful for further analysis.

To ensure the rigor and scope of the review, a series of methodological strategies were implemented. First, the jingle-jangle fallacy was explicitly avoided (Zolfaghari, 2023). This fallacy occurs when the same term is used for different concepts (jingle fallacy) or when the same concept is referred to by different labels (jangle fallacy) (Zolfaghari, 2023). By mapping and comparing different definitions and typologies, this review actively seeks to mitigate this issue.

Second, various biases in the literature search process are recognized and addressed. Availability bias is addressed by expanding the search to "grey literature" beyond traditional academic journals (Rehman & Galib, 2021), such as conference proceedings and papers. Cost bias is addressed by ensuring access to fee-based journals to avoid excluding important sources (Zolfaghari, 2023).

Familiarity bias is addressed by consulting databases from other disciplines, given the multidisciplinary nature of social entrepreneurship (Kurata et al., 2023). The Matthew Effect is addressed by not excluding low-citation sources, ensuring that contributions from lesser-known authors are also included in the analysis. The authors used the Publish or Perish application with Scopus-indexed articles, using the keyword "collective social entrepreneurship."

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To complement the search, a dual search strategy was implemented. In addition to standard database searches, a snowballing technique (also known as ancestry searching or pearl growing) was used to identify relevant publications (Kovanen, 2021). Finally, to manage and document the search process in accordance with PRISMA guidelines, the use of specialized software, www.covidence.org, is recognized as industry standard practice.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Literature Selection and Mapping Process

The literature review commenced with the identification of 200 articles from the Scopus database utilizing the Publish or Perish software, alongside an additional 9 articles retrieved from Google Scholar. Subsequently, the researchers employed the Covidence tool to systematically screen these publications, ultimately yielding 32 relevant articles for the comprehensive review. This screening procedure followed the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) framework, which is visually delineated in a flowchart detailing the sequential phases of identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and final inclusion.

The First Crossroads: Diversity of Definitions and Typologies

The publication titled "'It's not about me, it's about us': a narrative inquiry on living life as a social entrepreneur" by Jeong et al. (2020) offers profound insights into the paradigm of collective social entrepreneurship. By asserting that "It's not about me, it's about us," Jeong et al. (2020) underscore the fundamental nature of this concept, which prioritizes a collective entity over the individual. While the authors abstain from providing a formal definition, their study effectively encapsulates the core essence of this practice.

In a more formal context, collective social entrepreneurship is defined as the collaboration among both homogenous and heterogeneous actors aiming to apply business principles toward the resolution of societal issues (Montgomery et al., 2012). This paradigm shift from an individualistic focus to a collective perspective illuminates the collaborative mechanisms employed by social entrepreneurs to fulfill their objectives (Montgomery et al., 2012). To further operationalize this concept, Montgomery et al. (2012) identify three primary sets of activities that characterize the operational dynamics of collective social enterprises. The first is framing, a mechanism that facilitates the alignment of disparate interpretations among various actors toward a unified objective. The second is convening, which entails the aggregation and mobilization of diverse stakeholders in pursuit of shared goals. The third activity is multivocality,

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defined as the capacity to articulate a multitude of perspectives and establish legitimacy across a broad spectrum of stakeholders.

Although collective social entrepreneurship possesses a delineated definition within specialized literature, the broader domain of social entrepreneurship continues to grapple with conceptual ambiguity (Li & Bosma, 2025; Martin & Osberg, 2007). Martin and Osberg (2007) posit that the conceptualization of social entrepreneurship has become excessively inclusive, functioning as a broad umbrella under which a wide array of socially beneficial activities are categorized. They caution that this over-inclusivity threatens to dilute the fundamental premise of the field. Central to this theoretical conflation is a paradox wherein ostensibly incompatible elements, such as commercial and social logics, are forced to coexist (M. T. Dacin et al., 2011).

Illustrating this diverse conceptual application, Jørgensen et al. (2021) introduce the framework of collective tourism social entrepreneurship, which operates as a mechanism for community mobilization and social transformation within the tourism industry. Concurrently, Nordberg et al. (2020) examine community-driven social innovation, emphasizing the critical role of "quadruple helix" multi-stakeholder collaborations encompassing government, academia, industry, and civil society in rural development. Furthermore, P. T. Siivonen (2020) investigates the construction and regulation of collective entrepreneurial identities within student venture groups, underscoring the dynamics of identity formation in collective environments. Similarly, Tang et al. (2020) explicate collective policy entrepreneurship within the setting of post-disaster reconstruction in China, highlighting the necessity of inter-actor collaboration in formulating efficacious policies. Finally, Rodríguez (2023) evaluates associative entrepreneurship as a territorial strategy. Because this concept is fundamentally rooted in collaborative frameworks, it aligns closely with the principles of collective social entrepreneurship, notwithstanding the divergent nomenclature employed.

To address prevailing inconsistencies, researchers have proposed various typologies that classify social entrepreneurship based on their models, structures, and ambitions. These typologies are essential for establishing conceptual rigor. When categorized by legal structure, three primary frameworks emerge: the non-profit model, which is dedicated to resolving social issues without a profit motive (Borzaga & Santuari, 2003; Peris-Ortiz et al., 2017); the for-profit model, which leverages business strategies to generate revenue while simultaneously addressing social concerns (Borzaga & Santuari, 2003); and the hybrid model, which integrates elements of both to achieve an equilibrium between financial sustainability and social impact (Borzaga & Santuari, 2003; Peris-Ortiz et al., 2017). From a methodological standpoint, certain models are

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classified according to their strategic approaches. These include resource-based models, which emphasize the optimal utilization of accessible resources (Day & Jean-Denis, 2016; Diaz‐Gonzalez & Dentchev, 2022), and social innovation models, which concentrate on cultivating novel concepts to resolve societal challenges (Phillips et al., 2015).

Regarding ambition and scale, the organizational typologies proposed by Mustakallio et al. (2002) and Newey and Zahra (2009) influentially differentiate social enterprises into three distinct categories based on their operational magnitude and impact (Wulleman & Hudon, 2016). Social Bricoleurs address localized, small-scale problems by leveraging immediately available resources. Social Constructionists engineer innovative solutions, frequently utilizing hybrid operational frameworks. Meanwhile, Social Engineers strive to generate expansive, systemic change. Finally, from a business model perspective, Alter (2007) categorizes operational frameworks into embedded, integrated, and external models, thereby providing an alternative analytical framework (Wulleman & Hudon, 2016).

The existing conceptual framework directly addresses the jingle-jangle fallacy by establishing clear reference points for the comparative analysis of various studies. For instance, Newey and Zahra's (2009) typology classifies the Social Bricoleur as an actor who leverages available resources to address local issues, frequently relying on improvisation; the Social Constructionist as an architect of novel solutions and organizations, often employing hybrid models; and the Social Engineer as a catalyst for systemic change, focusing on large-scale reforms (Wulleman & Hudon, 2016). Concurrently, Alter (2007) differentiates between the Embedded model, wherein the business model is fully integrated within the organization's social mission; the Integrated model, which aligns the business model with the social mission through direct linkages; and the External model, which generates social value via external relationships rather than through core business operations (Wulleman & Hudon, 2016).

Furthermore, typologies based on legal structure encompass the Nonprofit model, which addresses social challenges without profit motives, relying predominantly on grants or donations; the For-Profit model, which utilizes business strategies to generate revenue while simultaneously tackling social issues; and the Hybrid model, which amalgamates nonprofit and for-profit elements to achieve a "double-bottom-line" (Borzaga & Santuari, 2003; Wulleman & Hudon, 2016). From a methodological perspective, the Resource-Based model effectively utilizes existing resources to mitigate social problems (Díaz‐González & Dentchev, 2022), whereas the Social Innovation model develops novel concepts to disrupt traditional approaches to social issues (Phillips et al., 2015). Finally, the Models and Actors typology proposed by Montgomery et al. (2012) delineates

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Framing as the process of aligning diverse actor interpretations toward a common objective; Convening as the mobilization and congregation of various stakeholders; and Multivocality as the capacity to articulate diverse perspectives and establish legitimacy across a broad spectrum of stakeholders.

The Second Crossroads: Diverse Theoretical Frameworks

The domain of collective social entrepreneurship is underpinned by a variety of theoretical frameworks, which are frequently applied in isolation. While each framework offers a distinct analytical lens through which to examine this multifaceted phenomenon, a holistic comprehension cannot be attained by relying on a singular theoretical perspective.

Social network theory is highly pertinent to collective social entrepreneurship, as it underscores the significance of relational ties, network density, and centralization in stimulating innovation and mitigating uncertainty (Leyden et al., 2014). Analyses of collective action indicate that resolving the free-rider dilemma necessitates the structural organization of potential contributors, thereby rendering their decision-making processes interdependent (Hardin, 2015; Oliver, 1993). Social networks are instrumental in facilitating this interdependence. Network density, defined as the frequency of interconnections within a given group, substantially bolsters the likelihood of successful collective action. Furthermore, the centralization of network ties wherein influence is consolidated among a select group of pivotal actors demonstrates a consistently positive impact on collective endeavors (Hardin, 2015; Oliver, 1993). Concurrently, Jørgensen et al. (2021) emphasize community mobilization and social transformation, drawing upon theories of social change and community development. Collectively, these findings suggest that the efficacy of mobilization within collective entrepreneurship is profoundly contingent upon the underlying structure of established relational networks.

Institutional theory conceptualizes entrepreneurship within the framework of the "rules of the game" encompassing formal, informal, and cognitive dimensions in both commercial and social environments (Medina-Molina et al., 2025). This theoretical approach posits that entrepreneurial success is predominantly dictated by social and institutional dynamics rather than mere economic efficiency (Eesley et al., 2018). Within this paradigm, "institutional entrepreneurship" functions as a form of collective agency that confronts and recalibrates these established rules (Wijen & Ansari, 2007). A burgeoning body of literature has integrated this theory into the study of social entrepreneurship, concentrating on how such organizations maneuver through and instigate change within environments regulated by heterogeneous

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institutional logics (Li & Bosma, 2025).

The Resource-Based View (RBV) is a strategic framework that posits a firm's internal resources as the primary foundation for achieving a sustainable competitive advantage (Bacq & Eddleston, 2018; J. B. Barney, 2001). Within the domain of social entrepreneurship, the RBV conceptualizes social enterprises as competitive entities whose capacity to fulfill their objectives and generate social value is contingent upon how they integrate and transform their acquired resources (Bacq & Eddleston, 2018). These resources can be classified as tangible, such as financial and physical capital, or intangible, encompassing reputation, innovation, and, crucially, partnerships (Bacq & Eddleston, 2018). Partnerships and collaborative efforts are regarded as critical resources, as they enable social enterprises to secure volunteers, funding, and supplementary distribution channels (Bacq & Eddleston, 2018). To function as a source of sustainable competitive advantage, these resources must exhibit VRIO attributes; namely, they must be Valuable, Rare, Inimitable, and Organized (J. Barney, 1991).

Each of the aforementioned theoretical frameworks contributes a distinct analytical perspective, and a more comprehensive understanding emerges from the integration of these three theories. Institutional theory establishes the structural context and the "rules of the game" within which collective social entrepreneurship must operate (Li & Bosma, 2025). Embedded within this predefined context, social network theory elucidates the mechanisms through which collective actors form alliances, mobilize resources, and mitigate impediments such as the free-rider problem (Oliver, 1993). The resources successfully mobilized through these efforts comprising partnerships, knowledge, and social capital subsequently form the analytical core of the RBV (Bacq & Eddleston, 2018). Finally, the RBV evaluates how these valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable resources, amassed through social networks, are strategically deployed to generate sustainable social value (J. B. Barney, 2000).

The dynamic interplay among these theoretical frameworks is of paramount importance. The collective action elucidated by social network theory represents the mechanism through which collective social enterprises operate within the context established by institutional theory. This alignment enables these entities to leverage their unique resources analyzed via the Resource-Based View (RBV) to generate sustainable impact. Consequently, future research should explicitly integrate these frameworks to construct a more robust analytical foundation, acknowledging that these theories are mutually complementary rather than contradictory. This theoretical integration is encapsulated in a conceptual mapping that delineates how Institutional Theory operates at the macro level by defining the structural rules that shape the operational

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context; Social Network Theory functions at the meso level by characterizing the processes of mobilization and collaboration; and the Resource-Based View and Knowledge-Based Theory operate at the micro or organizational level by examining internal resources and the interrelationships among entrepreneurship, innovation, and knowledge (Auerswald & Branscomb, 2003; Bacq & Eddleston, 2018; Hardin, 2015; J. B. Barney, 2000; Jørgensen et al., 2021; Leyden et al., 2014; Li & Bosma, 2025; Oliver, 1993).

The Third Crossroads: The Complexity of Impact Measurement

The Measurement Challenge: Transcending Financial MetricsQuantifying the impact of collective social entrepreneurship presents a substantial challenge, as it necessitates the simultaneous integration of financial, social, and environmental metrics (Mato-Santiso & Rey-García, 2019). A primary practical difficulty lies in the selection of appropriate indicators, specifically identifying the most pertinent metrics across diverse social sectors and programs (Mato-Santiso & Rey-García, 2019). Furthermore, data collection poses a significant hurdle; acquiring reliable and objective data, particularly in underdeveloped regions, is often an arduous undertaking. Establishing trust among the diverse institutional partners engaged in collective social initiatives most notably among public administrations, large corporations, corporate foundations, and non-profit organizations also constitutes a formidable challenge (Hanleybrown et al., 2012). Additionally, longitudinal tracking serves as a constraint; because profound social transformations frequently require years to actualize, short-term monitoring proves fundamentally inadequate (Hanleybrown et al., 2012).

To address these challenges, a variety of analytical frameworks have been established. Grounded in the Theory of Change, Mato-Santiso and Rey-García (2019) utilized the JEV method to evaluate accountability, assessing not only immediate outputs but also long-term outcomes and impacts. Moreover, the Social Return on Investment (SROI) methodology, pioneered by Emerson and his colleagues, posits that social returns can be quantified by evaluating the value delivered to communities and stakeholders, which is subsequently monetized to gauge overall efficacy and impact (Emerson, 2003). Concurrently, independent entities such as Sopact and Brightest have engineered distinct impact measurement models, developing digital applications that enable enterprises to evaluate the outcomes of specific social projects.

Nevertheless, while these frameworks offer essential structural blueprints, they do not constitute a universally applicable solution for all domains of collective social entrepreneurship.The IRIS+ model was developed and is administered by the Global Impact

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Investing Network (GIIN), a non-profit organization dedicated to expanding the scale and efficacy of impact investing on a global level. IRIS+ functions as a universally recognized impact measurement and management system. In parallel, the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) operates as an independent international standards organization that assists businesses, governments, and other entities in comprehending and communicating their impact on sustainability issues.

The Sustainability Accounting Standards Board (SASB) serves as an additional reference framework for evaluating the social impact of projects and corporations. While these standards were initially formulated by the Sustainability Accounting Standards Board, the International Sustainability Standards Board (ISSB) of the IFRS Foundation assumed responsibility for the maintenance and advancement of the SASB Standards in August 2022. Furthermore, the B Corp certification is issued by B Lab, a global non-profit organization that certifies enterprises adhering to stringent standards of social and environmental performance, accountability, and transparency.

In summary, these diverse impact measurement frameworks exhibit distinct analytical foci and target audiences. The Theory of Change concentrates on the strategic planning and mapping of the trajectory from inputs to outputs, predominantly targeting non-profit organizations and academia (Mato-Santiso & Rey-García, 2019). Social Return on Investment (SROI) emphasizes the quantification of social value generated per unit of financial investment, catering to investors, policymakers, and non-profit entities (Emerson, 2003). IRIS+ provides standards centered on metrics aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), primarily addressing investors and large-scale or multinational social enterprises. The GRI offers standards for non-financial sustainability reporting, intended for large global organizations and public disclosure. SASB establishes integrated standards for financial reporting, targeting large corporations, investors, and Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) disclosures. Finally, B Corp provides a certification that evaluates organizational impact across multiple stakeholders, rendering it highly suitable for startups, medium-sized enterprises, and for-profit, mission-driven organizations.

Key Findings and Synthesis of the Three Crossroads

The present analysis demonstrates that the three fundamental challenges conceptual definition, theoretical foundation, and impact measurement are not isolated phenomena but are intrinsically interconnected. Definitional ambiguities engender a multiplicity of organizational models and typologies, which subsequently necessitate multidisciplinary theoretical frameworks to elucidate their operational mechanics. This theoretical pluralism, in turn, accounts for the

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inherent complexity associated with quantifying impact. Furthermore, this review corroborates the central premise that the domain of collective social entrepreneurship is delineated by a paradigm shift from individualistic to collaborative frameworks of inquiry. This transition both mirrors and catalyzes collaboration within the praxis of research itself, as evidenced by the growing imperative for "Big Science" initiatives and robust interdisciplinary cooperation. Ultimately, the collective ontology of the research subject necessitates correspondingly collaborative methodological approaches, thereby generating a profound synergy between the object of study and the investigative methods employed.

Implications for Practitioners and Policymakers

For practitioners, this analysis provides an evidence-based heuristic for strategic action. It is imperative that practitioners collaboratively articulate their social objectives, select highly congruent organizational models, and synthesize the mapped theoretical frameworks to inform their strategic direction. Particular emphasis should be directed toward the capitalization of intangible assets most notably, strategic partnerships and networks as these resources are indispensable for cultivating sustainable competitive advantages within social contexts. From a policy perspective, governmental bodies are uniquely positioned to act as "institutional entrepreneurs" by cultivating regulatory and structural environments conducive to social entrepreneurship. Moreover, there is an unequivocal necessity for enhanced standardization in impact measurement methodologies. Leveraging globally recognized frameworks, such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), offers a viable pathway to augment transparency, accountability, and institutional legitimacy across the sector.

Future Research Agenda

Although the broader field of social entrepreneurship has been extensively reviewed (Rehman & Galib, 2021), collective social entrepreneurship remains an emergent and distinct domain that presents substantial opportunities for future scholarly inquiry. Drawing upon this review, prospective research trajectories to address the identified literature gaps encompass both empirical and comparative methodologies. Specifically, further investigation is necessitated to comprehend how hybrid organizational models successfully reconcile the dual institutional logics of commercial and social objectives (M. T. Dacin et al., 2011; P. A. Dacin et al., 2010). Additionally, comparative analyses examining the impact of varying institutional contexts on the practices of collective social entrepreneurship would contribute profound theoretical insights.

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Furthermore, the integration of technology represents a critical frontier. The capacity of nascent technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) and blockchain to optimize operational efficiency, augment transparency and credibility, and refine impact measurement demonstrates considerable potential and demands rigorous empirical scrutiny (Rehman Khan et al., 2022).

Finally, cross-disciplinary collaborative studies must be prioritized. Recognizing that this discipline has evolved to a stage suitable for meta-analytical evaluation (Ashiq et al., 2021), subsequent research should embrace a "Big Science" paradigm. This approach advocates for the explicit integration of theoretical frameworks from diverse academic disciplines (Kurata et al., 2023) to cultivate a more comprehensive and nuanced comprehension of collective phenomena.

CONCLUSION

This literature review confirms that the study of social entrepreneurship has shifted from the “lone hero” narrative to collective action involving collaboration across actors and sectors. Three critical crossroads are identified that are closely interconnected. First, the diversity of definitions and typologies of models ranging from distinctions based on legal entity, approach, to scale of ambition such as Social Bricoleurs, Social Constructionists, and Social Engineers creates conceptual ambiguity that hinders comparison of studies. Second, the field is underpinned by diverse and often separately used theoretical frameworks, such as Social Network Theory, which highlights the role of network density and centralization in mobilizing collective action; Institutional Theory, which explains the context of the “rules of the game” that shape and are challenged by social entrepreneurs; and the Resource-Based View, which emphasizes the importance of intangible resources such as partnerships for achieving sustainable advantage. A synthesis of these three theories demonstrates their complementary nature in understanding how collective actors operate within specific institutional contexts to mobilize resources and create impact. Third, the complexity of impact measurement arises from the need to capture social and environmental metrics simultaneously, which various frameworks such as Theory of Change, SROI, IRIS+, GRI, SASB, and B Corp attempt to address. Ultimately, the collective nature of this research subject demands a research methodology that is also collaborative and multidisciplinary.

For practitioners, strategy must begin with defining social objectives collaboratively with stakeholders. The choice of organizational model must be made carefully using a mapped typology, whether as a Social Bricoleur solving local problems, a Social Constructionist developing new solutions, or a Social Engineer pursuing systemic change. The primary focus should be on

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building and leveraging intangible resources, particularly dense and centralized partnerships and networks, as sources of sustainable competitive advantage. For policymakers, governments must play an active role as "institutional entrepreneurs" by creating regulatory and enabling environments. Concrete steps are needed to encourage the standardization of impact measurement by adopting global frameworks such as the SDGs through systems like IRIS+ or GRI, to increase transparency and legitimacy. For future research, empirical and comparative studies are urgently needed to examine how hybrid models balance business and social logics in different institutional contexts. Exploring the integration of technologies such as AI and blockchain to improve operational efficiency and transparency in impact measurement is also a priority. Finally, researchers should adopt a "Big Science" approach that explicitly integrates multiple disciplines to generate a richer understanding of the phenomenon of collective social entrepreneurship.

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