

# Exploring the Role of Social Entrepreneurship in the Economic Development of the North West Province, South Africa

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## Abstract

Social entrepreneurship has become a popular topic of interest across the world. Social enterprises are different from traditional enterprises because they can create products and services to benefit society and create opportunities for the less fortunate. However, social entrepreneurship in South Africa is still in its infancy by scope, support, and size. In a country facing chronic unemployment, short of skills and education, and a mixed economy, the study presents a perspective on social entrepreneurship as a process that catalyses social change and satisfies crucial social needs in a way that is not dominated by the entrepreneurs' immediate financial gains.

Social entrepreneurship is distinguished from other forms of entrepreneurship by the relative importance of increasing social value and development above obtaining economic gain. The authors offer the idea of embeddedness as a nexus between theoretical viewpoints for studying social entrepreneurship to drive future research. The study pursued a qualitative research method with a descriptive research strategy.

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# **1. Introduction**

## **1.1. Background**

For over four decades, social entrepreneurship has been viewed as a managerial practice to enhance social wealth through innovation and pattern-breaking solutions to social problems (Bacq *et al.*, 2017). Since the emergence of social entrepreneurship in 1970, the business practice has gained recognition in multi-dimensional academic research (Bacq *et al.*, 2017). The evolution of social entrepreneurship from 2000 to 2010 saw an influx of non-profit enterprises, the emergence of for-profit social enterprises and advanced academic research in the field (Bacq *et al.*, 2017).

The Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM, 2018) describes social entrepreneurship as a process or an approach for individuals who start a business or activity with a social or community objective mindset. Social enterprises create opportunities for individuals in society to be self-empowered by engaging in social activities that generate income (Moses & Olokundun, 2014:158). There are four types of social entrepreneurship: For-profit, Non-profit, Sustainable, Community-based, and Cooperative (Portales, 2019:85).

This study explores social entrepreneurship's role in the economic development of the North-West Province, South Africa. The research seeks to identify whether social entrepreneurship contributes significantly to the provincial economic growth strategies to reduce unemployment and eradicate poverty. Social entrepreneurship is a solution to economic revolution and a vehicle to drive change in communities' lives by creating job opportunities (Herrington *et al.*, 2017:24,28). This social enterprise is noted for its impact in adding value by addressing social issues and challenges.

According to Herrington and Kew (2018:17), the substantial rise of social entrepreneurs is the societal pressure enforced on individuals to contribute positively to society but also become directed to generating revenues and profits for long-term sustainability and business growth.

## **1.2. Problem statement**

Social entrepreneurship can be used as a strategic instrument to build social cohesion. Despite the motivation and intention of social entrepreneurship to enable growth and change in the economic index, the impact of social entrepreneurship on community development remains unknown, confusing, and negatively perceived by society (Lekhanya, 2015:67). Limited awareness of the effects of social entrepreneurship makes it difficult for social innovators to contribute to developing projects, improve community cohesion, gain community support, and create business organisations (Zeb & Kakakhel, 2018:107)

Social enterprises create a platform for new business opportunities like any other business enterprise (Lazear, 2015:649). Urban (2018:347) indicated that South Africa is facing problems in addressing the needs of communities by reducing unemployment, inequality, and poverty. The author suggests that many social enterprises are ineffective, unresponsive, and inefficient in creating employment opportunities and alleviating poverty (Urban, 2018:347). Social entrepreneurs constantly need support from government

agencies and corporate sectors to help them grow and remain sustainable. The government needs to partner with social entrepreneurs in fixing social issues faced by communities. Zeband Kakakhel (2018:121-128) argue that social entrepreneurs cannot solve large-scale problems without collaborating with key institutions to address social-economic issues.

There is inadequate research on social entrepreneurship in South Africa (Myres *et al.*, 2017:54). Not much is known about social entrepreneurship, resulting in weakened efforts to help social enterprises become profitable, business-oriented, and succeed long-term. Manyaka (2015:5) suggests that entrepreneurship should be an economic engine in our African continent, especially in South Africa, because social entrepreneurship can create wealth and employment opportunities for economically subjugated individuals. The author added that current problems experienced in the social entrepreneurship sector are due to a need for more comprehension of the subject.

### **1.3. Research purpose and objectives**

This explorative qualitative research aims to explore the role of social entrepreneurship in the economic development of the North West Province by analysing social entrepreneurs' experiences in gaining a deep insight into the challenges and opportunities. A literature review and empirical investigation were employed based on the research objectives below.”

- To establish the driving forces or motivation factors to become a social entrepreneur and the importance of social entrepreneurship in communities.
- To obtain insight into the challenges experienced by social entrepreneurs.
- To explore how social entrepreneurs accelerate inclusive economic growth in the community and North West Province.
- To explore and identify the impact of social entrepreneurship in the community.
- To conclude, suggest practical recommendations on overcoming social entrepreneurs' challenges and exploiting more opportunities in the community.

The rest of this paper is structured as follows: section 2 reviews the literature. Section 3 discusses the research methodology, while Section 4 presents the results and findings of the empirical investigation. Section 5 discusses the findings, Section 6 outlines the managerial implications, and Section 7 provides conclusions, limitations, and avenues for future research.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1. Overview of social entrepreneurship**

Phillips *et al.* (2015:432) describe social entrepreneurship as a field that combines innovative solutions to socioeconomic problems, leading to remedies that bring sustainable social transformation to all affected communities. Haugh and Talwar (2016:644) define social entrepreneurship as a "procedural perspective that extends entrepreneurship beyond the creation of wealth to include the action that brings

about the new economic, social, institutional, and cultural environment.” Although different meanings and definitions surround the social entrepreneurship topic, social entrepreneurship is a form of enterprise that ensures equality of resources and services to the people (Haugh & Talwar, 2016:644).

Social entrepreneurship is active in education, healthcare, human rights, culture, and the environment. Where there is a potential to change lives and bring transformation (Farrington *et al.*, 2011:28). According to Kim and Lim (2017:10), social entrepreneurship promotes sustainable local and regional development that contributes to economic value by developing and improving the lives of marginalised people. The socially oriented business can function within or outside the boundaries of non-profit, profit, business, and government sectors (Manyaka, 2015:2)

### **2.1.1 Importance of social entrepreneurship**

The emergence of social entrepreneurship has brought economic growth, sustainable development, and social cohesion (Busch *et al.*, 2021:66). Social entrepreneurship should not be perceived as organisations that only extend a helping hand to beneficiaries; the product and service of a social enterprise should be the social value derived from the perspective of any beneficiary involved in the end process (Busch *et al.*, 2021:66).

The creation of social value should be the end goal of social entrepreneurs. According to Spinelli and Adams (2016:77), social entrepreneurship as a business venture lies between the public, private and voluntary sectors and is at the borderline between non-profit organisations and for-profit businesses. Social entrepreneurs are change agents that combat social problems and create social value. The social enterprise can also operate within the financial discipline of a public or private sector. Thus, social enterprises are essential for the benefit of the following:

- Create employment to alleviate poverty.
- Innovation of goods and services that solve challenges faced by the community.
- Social capital to reinvest in more social programs.
- Promote social equity, regulating the labour market to provide affordable goods and services to the poor.

### **2.1.2 Characteristics of social entrepreneurs**

Social entrepreneurs start businesses to achieve social goals. Thus, a social goal can be achieved by addressing issues about education, environment, health, and human rights hindering the geographic region's sustainable development progress (Orlando & Ferri, 2018). The social enterprise venture is driven by compassion and having the attitude to pursue a social benefit (Rashmi, 2016:61). Social entrepreneurs are not different from profit-orientated businesses; they all should possess innovative minds, talent, risk-taking, and passion for the end goal.

Brouard and Larivet (2010:29) grouped the characteristics of social entrepreneurship into primary and

secondary elements in the table below.

**Table 1: Characteristics of social entrepreneurship**

Primary characteristics of Social Entrepreneurship	Secondary characteristics of Social Entrepreneurship
Represents a variety of activities and processes	Have various degrees of positive social transformation
Wants to create and sustain social value	Take advantage of new opportunities
Encourage more entrepreneurial approaches to social use	Use business concepts, principles, models, and tools
Displays various degrees of innovation and change	Want to resolve social market failures
Constrained by the external environment	Invested the profit in the activity of the venture itself rather than returning to investors
Creating a new business	Creating a new business

**Source: Brouard and Larivet (2010:29)**

As stated in Table 1, social entrepreneurs use creative, commercial, strategic and innovative approaches to solving challenges constrained by external ecosystems.

### 2.1.3 Social entrepreneurship typology

According to Smith *et al.* (2012:142), a significant difference in the type of social entrepreneurship is embedded in the geographic location. The environment where the business operates determines the behaviour of social entrepreneurship. The dynamics identified in geographic areas influence the type of business or social networks on which social entrepreneurship will be rooted (Smith *et al.*, 2012:179). Smit *et al.* (2012:143) identified three types of social entrepreneurship:

- Social entrepreneurship is driven by first-hand exposure to problems in the community (Hayek, 1945:520). The challenges are usually identified and experienced locally where the entrepreneur lives. The entrepreneur is aware of the problems such as violence, crime, unemployed youth, dilapidated infrastructure, and lack of service delivery. In this local social phenomenon, the motivation for a social entrepreneur is to explore business opportunities and solve problems. The success measure in this type of social entrepreneurship is the value added to the community.
- Social entrepreneurship finds an unbalanced social market and bridges gaps (Kirzner, 1997:62). This entrepreneurial concept is resources driven. The social entrepreneur solves problems such as addressing poverty and scarcity of water and food. They require the capability to address challenges by employing viable problem-solving strategies that will benefit the local community and expand to other geographical regions. Social entrepreneurs must ensure that their businesses are legitimate and get support from other organisations (Kirzner, 1997:62).
- Social entrepreneurs pursue to implement social projects that replace existing organisations' current solutions (Schumpeter, 1942:102). Social entrepreneurs of this type need to ensure their businesses

are legitimate to get support from other organisations. This entrepreneurial concept focuses on large-scale problems that are universal. Social entrepreneurs often affiliate with politics and world-recognisable organisations to access capital resources to aid the masses. Problems are not only solved at a community level; they focus on a system that eradicates barriers on a larger scale. The social venture concept aims to combat diverse problems such as corruption in a system, women empowerment in business, unjust policies, and many others. The solutions are sought to transform the entire system and significantly change the social system.

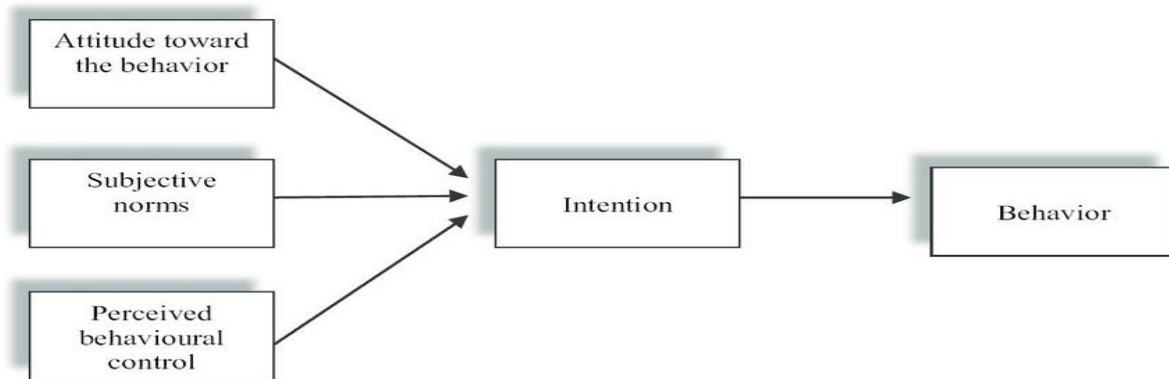
#### **2.1.4 The role and intentions of social entrepreneurship**

The intentions of social entrepreneurship are the persuasion and desire to act on a business that aims to solve social and economic issues (Barki *et al.*, 2015:387). Social entrepreneurship involves creating social value and significance for the community (Barki *et al.*, 2015:387). The intention is derived from being directed to develop a social value by closing social and economic gaps the government, corporates, and other institutions failed at (Aaltio & Wang, 2017:14).

A concern for resolving social conflicts, improper allocation of resources, damage, lack of infrastructure, and environmental maintenance contributes to adopting the business model that provides innovative solutions to complex social problems (Barki *et al.*, 2015:381). Social entrepreneurship is a link between businesses and the government that wants to overcome community problems and develop effective, sustainable, innovative solutions. Therefore, it can be clarified that a social entrepreneurship intention is an act of practice that drives a person's intention to start a business with a social core, but social entrepreneurial intentions are the possibility of forming the company to spread social change through innovation and open market systems (Prieto, 2010)

An old theory formulated by Ajzen (1988:43) is associated with recent literature and authors referenced above. The approach represents a theory of planned behaviour as a physiological measure of control where intentions and successive behaviours are a function of three primary factors namely:

- **Attitude towards behaviour** refers to one's favourable assessment of a specific action.
- **Subjective norm** entails the tension one gets from partners to participate in a specific behaviour.
- **Perceived behavioural control** is described as being influenced by either experience or future moments.



**Figure 1: Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behaviour**  
**Source: Ajzen (1988:46)**

Figure 1 above illustrates a graphical presentation of Ajzen's model. The theory helps to understand how more people can use social entrepreneurship to improve living conditions, close the unemployment gap, and develop their geographic economies. Santos *et al.* (2016:161) agree that in most cases, human behaviour is pre-planned to create plans to give solutions to society, and those intentions go before such behaviour.

However, Yitshaki and Kropp (2016:32) argue with Ajzen's theory of intentions and planned behaviour. According to the authors, social entrepreneurs are persuaded by passion and eagerness to make a powerful difference in society. Their conduct to be change agents is not a pre-planned behaviour. Siebold *et al.* (2018:22) also suggested that merging social and economic intentions in the quest for development and expansion must be the core mission of social enterprises as they increase their social impact. Social entrepreneurial intentions are essential in the North West Province, which has service delivery issues, corruption, and scarce employment opportunities. The service delivery protests resulted in a more dysfunctional economy whose ability to render adequate social services to its population was affected (Urban & Kujinga, 2017:639). The intention and passion must be met with the ability to respond to socio-economic challenges and provide positive changes. Barth *et al.* (2015:219) advise that the aim of social entrepreneurship should also emphasise creating income strategies to have a profit motive, use the profit proceeds in a quest to bridge disparity gaps and meet their social business objectives to remain sustainable and self-sufficient.

### **2.3 Social involvement and strategies to break poverty traps**

Littlewood and Holt (2018:527) describe South Africa as taking a reasonable, appropriate magnitude for understanding the significance of social entrepreneurship in the country. The failure of the government to remain consistent in solving the rising levels of poverty, unemployment, and lack of access to essential services for citizens, sees many ideas of social enterprises appearing to fill disparities (Urban, 2015:640). South Africa is pronounced for its greater poverty levels and unemployment, with youth keeping a high margin rate of 32.6% (Taborda, 2016). The president of South Africa, Mr Ramaphosa, in his State of the Nation Address (SONA, 2019), emphasised social entrepreneurship as a tool to alleviate the country's

social and economic challenges. Despite the government's desire to improve employment rates and eradicate poverty, the disproportions of income and equality remain a big economic emancipation problem (Urban, 2018:346).

In the current South African economic environment, Small and Medium-sized Entities (SMEs), social entrepreneurship has declined due to poor ratings on government programs, primary education, restricted and inhibiting regulatory environment, and restrictive labour laws. However, in 2019, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) indicated that more discussions and conversations about social entrepreneurship would gain momentum in a year. Many of these businesses will gain currency in the voicings of the public and private sectors (Herrington *et al.*, 2017). Despite the government's calls for prioritising support for entrepreneurship and its commitment, it remains concerned about what will generate higher levels of sustainable entrepreneurship in South Africa (Herrington *et al.*, 2017). Post-1994 and democracy, South Africa still faces multifaceted challenges such as socio-economic imbalances, crime, poor health services, education, and poverty (Seekings, 2016:2011).

To overcome the challenges, the government must rely on entrepreneurial interventions to develop communities in rural places that are more challenged and underprivileged (Seekings, 2016:1998).

#### **2.4 North West Province economy**

Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) report for Quarter two of 2019 estimated a population of over four million, representing 6.9% of South Africa's total population. According to Statistics South Africa (Stats SA), The province is an economic hub and boasts sectors in mining, arts and culture, manufacturing, agriculture, construction, business, and finance services. Compared to other provinces in South Africa, the North-West Province is reported by the North West Provincial Government (NWP) as rich in minerals, mining, and agriculture. It contributes 32.5% of the economy's Gross Domestic product (GDP). According to Statistics South Africa (Stats SA), mining operations generate more than half of the province's GDP, where minerals commodities such as gold, platinum, diamonds, and uranium are mined at respective places in Orkney, Klerksdorp; Rustenburg, Brits; Lichtenburg, Christiana, and Bloemhof.

The province also boasts many tourist attractions. As StatsSA (Quater2:2019) reported, more than half the population in the province region is unemployed, especially the youth. The employed margins consist of low-income groups. According to Marinescu (2014:10), entrepreneurship can potentially become a tool to develop the economy in the province. While the World Bank indicate that South Africa has a dual economy where the first economy can be compared to other developed countries, the second economy is characterised by poverty, unemployment, and exclusion. Urban and Teisse (2015:36) affirm that these secluded parts of the economy are based in non-urban areas, remote areas, predominantly townships and lack proper infrastructure.

Informal settlements are found in townships far from South Africa's economic hubs, such as Johannesburg and other metropolitan areas. Many people are forced to relocate or travel to cities to look for employment opportunities (Germak & Robinson, 2014:21). According to Herrington *et al.* (2017:24),



education can break poverty by encouraging people to position social entrepreneurship as a solution to overcome poverty and unemployment challenges. Awareness and knowledge of a social problem equip one with a better advantage in solving the problem, such as starting a social enterprise business (Germak & Robinson, 2014:18).

#### 2.4.1 North West Province economic development mandate

The strategic focus of North West Province is to generate a practical and sustainable economy by supporting the development of businesses. The economy is revived through promoting trade and investment opportunities. North West's economy is derived from mining, agriculture, tourism, agriculture, and manufacturing sectors (NWDC, 2015). The province is responsible for facilitating sustainable projects that impact job creation and improve community lives. According to NWDC (2015), support can be provided through government stakeholders and agencies such as the Small Enterprise Development Agency (SEDA) and National Youth Development Agency (NYDA). These support institutions also provide funding models, training, development skills, and mentorship to entrepreneurs (SEDA, 2022). The government builds strategic alliances with companies that invest in Corporate Social Investment (CSI) projects to support and promote social entrepreneurship.

The social enterprise sector accounts for 6.7% of all jobs, higher than the yearly percentage growth rate in the country's economy. This analysis indicates that social enterprises employ more in SA (Myres *et al.*, 2017:52).

2019 The National Department of Economic Development established a social sector policy to grow the social economy. Table 2 indicates the level of contribution social enterprises play in developing the social economy.

**Table 2: Activities and practices of South Africa's social enterprises**

Activity	Percentage
Education and literacy promotion, as well as the development of skills	73%
Assisting young people or women	70%
Quality improvement	67%
Developing communities in which they function	65%
Monitor and assess their impact	41%
Through established internal systems	21%

**Source: Lana and Ansulie (2019)**

## **2.5 Innovation and creativity**

To improve the efficiency of social enterprises, social entrepreneurs should pride themselves on being inventive and creative (Lepoutre *et al.*, 2013:693). Lepoutre *et al.* (2013:693) highlight that businesses have benefited from innovation because they operated cheaper than competitors and made more money. According to Lonescu (2015:53), innovation is essential to social entrepreneurship. Social entrepreneurship businesses lack ownership, resources, and capital control (Urban & Teisse, 2015:36).

Social entrepreneurs depend on their capacity to be inventive and creative to create sustainable solutions for communities (Urban & Teisse, 2015:36). According to Sassmannshausen and Volkmann (2018:263), addressing poverty, unemployment, and economic emancipation cannot be solved when resources are scarce. Kim and Lim (2017:1427) indicated that such challenges could be solved by applying a unique thinking approach, especially if people want to solve old and current social problems. Social entrepreneurs are already providing innovative solutions to some parts of the world. They have access to fair markets, distance learning, and low-cost but high-quality healthcare services (Urama & Acheampong, 2013:9). As mentioned by Urama and Acheampong (2013:9), innovative thinking makes it possible to bridge the gaps between scarcity and demand.

According to Kim and Lim (2017:1427), social entrepreneurs are simplified to have the ability to identify and pursue opportunities with the potential to solve community problems. With outsourced resources, social entrepreneurs should succeed in closing the market gap by providing goods and services necessary for consumers (Aliaga-Isla & Huybrechts, 2018:649). Bacq *et al.* (2016:711) consider that many social entrepreneurs and enterprises emerge from poor communities. The level of creativity and innovative solutions are practical responses offered by SEs to problems the government cannot rehabilitate. According to Bacq *et al.* (2016:712), social entrepreneurs often struggle to develop a commercial understanding of business for socioeconomic problems. From the research perspective, SEs require intensive skills, education, experience, a sophisticated level of comprehension, and a focus on creating innovative solutions.

## **2.6 Challenges faced by social entrepreneurs**

Social entrepreneurship is a revenue-generating business with a twist, and innovation will allow them access to both grants and commercial funds and grow the business's scale (Stevenson, 2010:287). According to Dacin *et al.* (2010:37), the lack of funding for SE is a significant disadvantage. Access to equity funding, debt, and unrestricted funds is difficult in the early stages of the business (Gordon Institute of Business Science, 2018:26).

According to Kickul and Lyons (2012:154), social entrepreneurs require financial investment to secure a future in the economic market. Funders and investors must commit to lending working capital to social entrepreneurs rather than pursuing a guarantee on the return of investments (Kickul & Lyons, 2012:156). Government, incubators, donors, and commercial funders are stakeholders in potentially opening a world of possibilities for social enterprises. To position social entrepreneurs for funding access, they must

be able to compete for innovative ideas with other commercial businesses.

Many social businesses were started by previously marginalised community people who lack essential business tools and cost structure (Kritikos, 2014:8). The South African economy is growing slowly. 2017, the economy was expected to grow at 0.7%, while unemployment has increased by 40% since 1994. Youth unemployment and underemployment have reached a high of 80% (Gordon Institute of Business, 2019:26). Social issues and unemployment have put more pressure on SMMEs with thin profit margins (Dzomonda, 2020:274). According to GEM 2013, the closure rate of small businesses in South Africa is higher than in established entrepreneurship, meaning the system is decreasing. Most of these small businesses are still in the early stages of exploring opportunities with limited income and lack of financial, managerial, technical, and marketing abilities, which compromise the business success (Herrington & Kew, 2017:236)

Receiving funding is difficult in the early stages of the business (Bandera & Thomas, 2017:142). According to Meyskens *et al.* (2010:661), strategies for scaling up social enterprises are challenging. Social entrepreneurs have external funders who place additional reporting. They do not have onerous reporting. It is an uncoordinated sector; rather than cooperate, they seem to compete and do not have a united voice, and, therefore, they battle to influence policies.

An investigation on social enterprises conducted by the Gordon Institute of Business Science (2018:28) revealed that sales of products or services are ranked high as a source of funds with high revenue. The second highest is government entities, corporate social investment projects, and charity foundations. The report further suggests how money is dispersed into social enterprises. Funding received by social enterprises was used to pay operational costs and improve the stakeholder relationship of existing beneficiaries (Myres *et al.*, 2017:58).

Many business owners cannot sustain businesses long-term, and most trade at the level of operability and struggle to scale up. North West Province needs game-changers who can create new value chains, companies, jobs, and more. According to Dzomonda (2020:274), social entrepreneurs have the potential to scale up, and doing so means creating new jobs, reducing poverty margins, improving infrastructure, and more. Gordon Institute of Business Science identified other significant common challenges faced by entrepreneurs in Table 3:

**Table 3: Social entrepreneurship challenges**

Poor infrastructure	The suitable premises and equipment	Lack of research and development
Regulatory conditions	Inability to pay for the right skills	Managing cash flows
Crime in the area	Access to public services	Support and advisory
Shortage of financial skills	Late payments from customers	Shortage of technical skills
Shortage of marketing skills	Lack of demand	Uneducated workforce

**Source: Gordon Institute of Business Science (2018:26)**

### **3. Research Methodology**

The researcher based the assumptions on rational explanations and social experiences. The research philosophy and paradigm of this study assumed an interpretivism paradigm. The researcher relied on people's understanding of the study or subject from their perceptions and experiences. The research describes objects, occurrences, and participants as individuals and understands the object in a social and human experience. The researcher interacts with participants to comprehend thoughts, meanings, purposes, philosophies, beliefs, and the self-understanding that individuals maintain (Bryman *et al.*, 2014:14).

#### **3.1. Research approach**

This study employs a general inductive research approach by collecting essential data and drawing coherent descriptions, explanations, or theories from observations. The degree to which a research study tests the existing theory or constructs new ideas is essential in any research study. Qualitative research provides non-numerical information and in-depth analysis (Saunders *et al.*, 2016:53). The researcher collects data to explore the role social entrepreneurs portray in addressing community challenges and improving economic conditions around the North West Province.

#### **3.2. Research methods**

The researcher followed a qualitative research approach, which entailed face-to-face semi-structured interviews as a method for data collection, followed by the thematic data analysis procedure of Saunders *et al.* (2019:652). These are discussed in more detail below under the relevant sections.

#### **3.3. Research participants and sampling**

Due to limited access to participants and resources, Saunders *et al.* (2019:292) cautioned that researchers cannot collect data from the total population under investigation in qualitative research. The study focused on eight social entrepreneurs and limited the population to select social entrepreneurs and social enterprises in the North West Province. This enabled the researcher to focus and choose a smaller sample to provide a more comprehensive exploration of the phenomena under investigation, social entrepreneurs. This approach is typical qualitative research where participants are purposefully selected from a non-probability sampling approach. The study employed a non-probability snowball sampling technique that allowed the researcher to find research participants. One participant refers and introduces the researcher to the second participant within their networks, and the process continues. The researcher selected a snowball sampling strategy as a useful way to reach the desired sample of respondents who possess comparable characteristics and, in turn, identify others (Cooper & Schindler, 2014:360). Most management and organisational researchers advocate using existing contacts to access the desired research sample (Saunders *et al.*, 2019:245).

The goal of this study, regarding participant sample size, is thus to attain data saturation. Saturation in

qualitative research is the criterion to inform the researcher to discontinue further data collection (Saunders *et al.*, 2018:1893). Saunders *et al.* (2018:1894) recommend that data can be collected until it reaches saturation to avoid data redundancy. Therefore, data collection until saturation was reached. The selected research sample consisted of approximately 8 (until saturation) or when gathering new data no longer sparks new insights or reveals new properties. When the categories (or themes) are saturated, the researcher should stop collecting data. Saturation means a sufficient sample size for the researcher (Creswell & Creswell, 2018:301).

### **3.4. Data collection**

The research study utilised face-to-face interviews to collect data. The researchers designed a semi-structured interview schedule as a data collection instrument to meet the study's goal and to adhere to the study's qualitative approach. The semi-structured interview schedule was designed as both an interview guide and a management tool to verify that the established qualitative trustworthiness was followed. The interview schedule comprised questions and prompts derived from the literature review on social entrepreneurship.

The research purpose guided the formulation of the questions and prompts. The semi-structured interview schedule consisted of open- and closed-ended questions to generate data into factual backgrounds and explorative insights from the participants.

The researcher applied for ethical clearance from the North-West University in this study. Each participant completed a voluntary informed consent form. The study, furthermore, complied with the Protection of Personal Information Act (POPI), and the main goals aimed to be achieved include:

- Ensuring that people take part voluntarily in the study
- Making people's comments confidential
- Protection of people from any harm
- And ensuring mutual trust between researchers and those studied (Silverman, 2014).

To obtain data, the researcher conducted three one-on-one and five online interviews with the participating social entrepreneurs. The interviews were recorded using audio recording devices and Zoom recording functions, and audio was downloaded and transcribed using transcription software and repeatedly rechecked for accuracy. After the first and second interviews, the researcher had to change and rephrase some of the questions because they were vague and not probing enough to extract more data from the participants. Some questions were complex and had to be simplified so participants could easily understand them.

### **3.5 Data analysis**

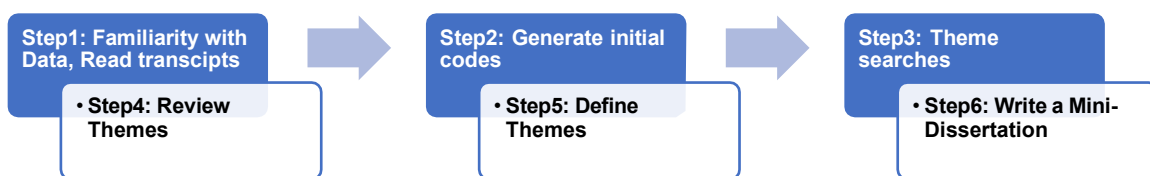
Data analysis is the method of transforming data into meaningful information that, in turn, allows for making interpretations of a phenomenon (Ghauri & Gronhaug, 2010:152). Zikmund and Babin

(2012:502) further state that when a researcher reports on the demographic profile of a sample, a descriptive analysis must be used to enable the researcher to summarise raw data collected in a manner that defines the basic features of that data.

In the case of a qualitative approach, the researcher uses coding, which refers to labelling every unit of data within a transcript (Saunders *et al.*, 2019:653). Interviews were recorded with a digital voice recorder and converted into a printed format only after the participant had signed a written consent document (Bryman *et al.*, 2014:336). Because of the study's qualitative character, the researcher paid no attention to the speaking or expressive behaviour method. The researcher also removed extra grammatical performance from transcriptions (Bryman *et al.*, 2014:341).

The thematic analysis approach allowed the researcher to make sense of the information by moving data from place to place to recognise developing topics from the data. Thematic data analysis in ethnography distilled how things work and named the essential features in themes in the cultural setting. Furthermore, consistent with describing and developing themes from data, the ethnographer segments the text, codes them, and formulates a small set of non-overlapping pieces. However, in an ethnography study, these themes mapped the shared behaviour patterns, thinking, or talking. After description and analysis, it followed interpretation. The ethnographer further drew inferences and formed conclusions about the learnings in interpretation.

Identifying themes entails searching and noticing relationships in the codes created in the coding process to minimise and focus only on those relevant themes to answer the research question (Saunders *et al.*, 2019:657). The researcher related both the narrative and the themes to a large portrait of knowledge, which often reflects some combination of the researcher making a personal assessment, returning to the literature on the cultural subject, and raising further questions based on the data. The researcher used a six-phase lead for analysis by Bryman *et al.* (2014:351) to amend the themes as necessary and test apparent propositions to eliminate personal bias.



**Figure 2: Six-phase lead**

**Source: Bryman *et al.* (2014:351)**

### 3.6 Trustworthiness

The study employed the following strategies and techniques throughout the research process to ensure the scientific soundness with which the study was carried out.

**Credibility** in the study was ensured by a.) adhering and b.) reporting on the qualitative research process followed within the expected scientific standards. Furthermore, in providing the **credibility** and

*transferability* of the findings, the data was shared with the participants to verify its accuracy before the data was finalised.

**Dependability** and **confirmability** were ensured through a peer debriefing process whereby two independent researchers were asked to confirm, via an audit, the records against the researcher’s findings. Additionally, in enhancing the **confirmability** of the study findings, a senior and experienced qualitative researcher reviewed a.) the scientific standards with which the study was carried out and b.) the objectivity with which the research findings were presented.

## 4. Results and Findings

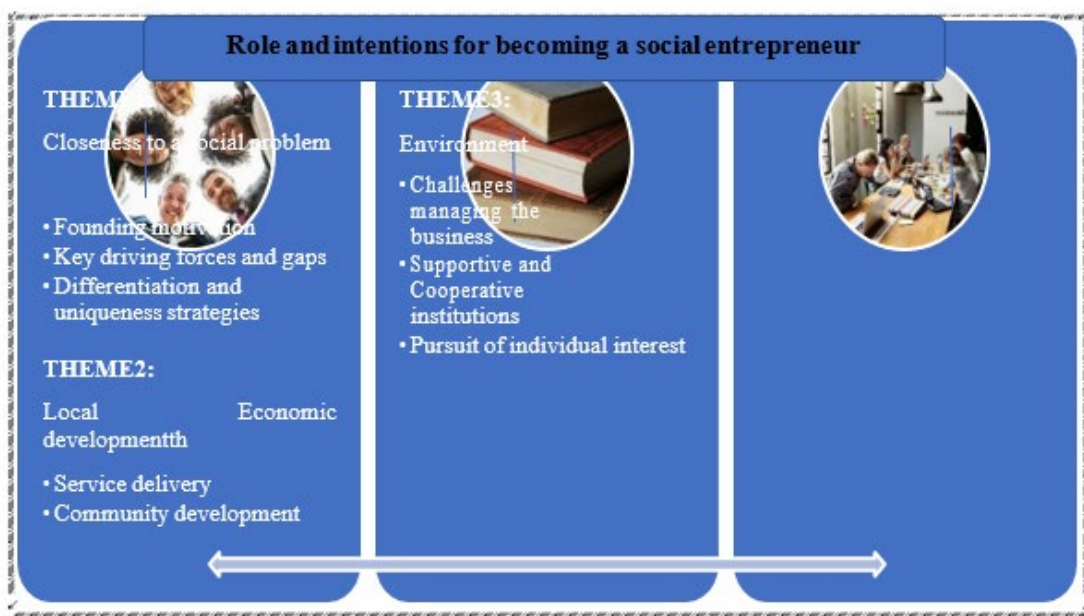
### 4.1. Demographic profile of participants

Table 4 below shows the demographic profile of participants, social entrepreneurs’ compositions, and their business profiles.

### 4.2. Themes of the study

The interviews with eight social entrepreneurs were conducted regarding their roles in the economic development of the North West Province. They yielded several opinions, categorised into three main themes and nine sub-themes.

The themes emerging from the analysis, as shown in Figure 3, are (i) Closeness to a social problem, (ii) Local economic development, and (iii) Cooperative and supportive environment. Themes and sub-themes were developed from different questions asked in the interview process.



**Figure 3: Themes that emanated from the research questions**  
 Source: Created by the researcher

1.1.1. Table 4: Demographic profile and business structure of study participants

Partici pants	Gender	Work Experience Before SE	Age	Ethnic group	Educational Background	Years of Operation	Sector/Industry	The legal form of business	Number of Employees	Source of Capital	Business Location
SE1	Female	Financial director, full time employed	41	Black	Postgraduate diploma	6	Production, manufacturing, and recycling	Company (For-profit)	5	Self-funded	Mafikeng
SE2	Female	Teacher	46	Black	Diploma, Certificate	8	Education	Non-Profit Organisation	15	Self-funded	Rustenburg Itsoeng
SE3	Female	Medical doctor	37	Black	MBCHB, LLB	8	Medical, health, property, and soccer	Non-Profit Organisations, Company (For-profit)	40	Self-funded	Mafikeng Lichtenburg
SE4	Female	Self employed	29	Black	Bcom	8	Recycling, Technology, Production, Manufacturing	Company (For-profit)	35	Self-funded	Rustenburg
SE5	Male	Corporate manager, full time employed	46	Black	Diploma	10	Social services	Non-Profit Organisation	15	Self-funded	Klerksdorp
SE6	Female	Domestic cleaner	35	Black	Bcom	6	Microfinance	Company (For-profit)	15	Self-funded	Lichtenburg
SE 7	Female	Regional manager	57	white	Psychology degree	118	Welfare social services	Non-Profit Organisation	115	Donations, sponsors	Lichtenburg & Klerksdorp
SE8	Male	Financial accountant	43	Black	Honours	15	Brand social awareness, textile, manufacturing	Company (For-profit)	10	Self-funded	Klerksdorp



## 5. Results and Findings

### 5.1. Theme1: Closeness to a social problem

The theme represents the direct awareness and knowledge of a social or environmental problem. Germak and Robinson (2014:3) suggest that social entrepreneurs must have first-hand knowledge of social and ecological issues. Individuals who identify a problem and a need in the community can identify a solution to the problem and drive them to start a social enterprise.

The findings on closeness to a social problem consist of:

- Founding motivation.
- Key driving forces and gaps identified in communities.
- Differentiation and uniqueness strategies.

#### 5.1.1. Founding motivation

Participants indicated that a great motivation to start social enterprises to overcome challenges emanates from the participants' business background information. The results depict the participant's behaviour, attitude, and principles of creating social value and significance for the community.

*I realised a niche for people having to access medical attention. The medical space created a platform for me to be able to engage with every individual to get more insight into what's been happening in their lives. So, instead of focusing on being a medical doctor alone, I was able to diversify. I was visiting these surgeries outside small little towns... ” (Participant 3: Zoom interview September 2022)*

*“After discussing it with my mother, I considered incorporating solar technology into the bags. She told me that she grew up studying with candles, which were unreliable as they burned out by Wednesdays...” (Participant 5: Zoom interview September 2022)*

The motivation and intention to find social enterprises are subjective and depend on the desire to act in solving social problems in the community (Barki *et al.*, 2015:381). The big motivation to start social enterprises to overcome challenges emanates from the participants' business background information. The results depict the participant's behaviour, attitude, and principles of creating social value and significance for the community.

Findings indicate that the market system and geographic location are drivers of social entrepreneurship. The behaviour manifested from situations participants face daily and are persuaded to make a difference and improve the community's quality of life.

*“I started consciously reading the labels to know what was in these products. Some of the things were harming our environment. For instance, the candles are made from Paraffin. When you light it up, you can see that it's black. And as much as it's a small candle, a billion people are lighting up those candles simultaneously. I started doing additional research about the candles that we make; they are*

*soy-based. It's made from beans. I started small and have a small factory in my yard where I produce products from waste” (Participant 1: Zoom interview September 2022)*

Phillips *et al.* (2015:428) consider the motivation to excel as another factor driven internally by a desire to pursue a challenging goal. Participants derive personal inspiration from the challenge of building a social entrepreneurial enterprise, and often the motivation to succeed is characterised by realistic goals to achieve. Participants sought a need to uplift a segmented group of disadvantaged people in the community and thereby help society at large. Several participants did not only venture into a social entrepreneurial business for financial terms but in terms of making a difference by meeting a social need. The participants were all orientated by a need to achieve. The achievement orientation significantly influenced the intention to become change agents through innovation to set up social entrepreneurial ventures.

*“I grew up in a low-income community. Rethaka was started by a need to tell a different story of what is possible for young people starting businesses” (Participant 4: Zoom interview October 2022)*

The findings indicated the motivation and intention to start social enterprises are subjective; it begins as a hobby or an attempt to exploit an opportunity. There are key driving forces participants choose to follow a business with a social value to address and serve the needs of society.

*It all started when I was employed; my colleagues had challenges accessing money for their personal needs. Some wanted to renovate their house and buy home appliances that make life easy. I realised banks had strict lending policies and red tape. I saw women who wanted to start selling Tupperware or clothes but could not because of a lack of finances to buy their stock. I saw such stories unfold in front of me while growing up. I use my business as an instrument to tackle poverty and promote micro-entrepreneurship” (Participant 6: Zoom interview October 2022)*

### **5.1.2. Key driving forces and gaps identified in communities**

Participants recognised fundamental driving forces or gaps that propelled participants to venture into social entrepreneurship. These key driving forces include unemployment and poverty, environment sustainability, poor healthcare system, access to financial services, poor education system and fewer social welfare services.

According to Charles *et al.* (2021:220), social entrepreneurs must possess conclusive competence, such as skills, knowledge and abilities to create socio-economic value by manifesting community value. Some of the critical driving forces influencing social entrepreneurship are the motivation derived from being directed to develop solutions that close the social and economic gaps (Aaltio & Wang, 2017:14).

Although unemployment, education, and skills shortage emerged as the pinnacle driving force for all the participants to become social entrepreneurs, participants must be driven by social challenges and exploit an opportunity to maximise social development and economic growth.

*“We all know that the employment rate is very high. So, I want to see myself training women in the villages to make products such as vases, candles, bath salts, bath bombs, and many other things I manufacture for myself, especially recycling bottles. I want to teach them to make those bottles, and then they can sell them for themselves, make a profit and improve their quality of life” (Participant 1: Zoom interview September 2022)*

Participants saw poor education systems and skills shortages in the labour market as significant contributors to low productivity, growth, unemployment, and poverty.

*“Our beneficiaries live in deprived communities without service delivery and infrastructure. They are unschooled and unskilled; therefore, they do not have easy access to the job market, contributing to some social issues the social worker addresses” (Participant 7: Zoom interview October 2022)*

One of the critical driving forces to encourage entrepreneurship and open the economy in small communities is ensuring SMMEs have access to financial services.

*“Why should banks shut down a vision because people don't have full-time jobs? And let's face it, people in villages and townships struggle to get jobs and are poverty-stricken. It's sad. I do microcredit and microloans for vulnerable groups, women in my case” (Participant 6: face-to-face interview October 2022).*

### **5.1.3. Differentiation and uniqueness strategies**

Social entrepreneurs employ commercial strategies to capitalise on transforming human and environmental well-being. What differentiates social entrepreneurs from traditional entrepreneurs is their ability to create products and services to benefit society and create opportunities for the less fortunate. Participants employed different strategies, nature of resources, and solutions to address a specific social challenge, therefore making them unique and different from traditional entrepreneurs. The goals to develop the community are achieved through establishing voluntary sectors such as healthcare, microfinancing, social work services, recycling, technology, and education.

*“Many doctors want to finish and get the medical career off the ground by having their surgeries based right within a town, competing with these large medical facilities without the true intention of giving back to the community, you know, and there's a lot of money greed as well that is very involved in terms of that. The price charged consultation fees are overly priced. To me, it's not about that. It's about the well-being of a person; how is a person doing and*

*feeling after they leave the surgery? You know, sometimes I've always thought a patient can come, even if it's just stress-related issues” (Participant 3: Zoom interview September 2022)*

While the traditional entrepreneur’s purpose is to create products and services to make a profit, social entrepreneurs are passionate about creating products, services, and processes from which the community will benefit. Participants indicated business model strategies adopted in their organisations to deal with the social problems faced by the community or the province.

*“We have brought change to many road accidents where kids are hit and run by cars. The product provides safety to kids while they walk to school. The school bag has reflective material for visibility day and night. Repurpose Schoolbag helps to change children’s lives by encouraging learners to commit to staying in school” (Participant 4: Zoom interview October 2022)*

*“I have transformed my headwear and apparel production to work within Planetary boundaries. Which includes areas of climate change and chemical pollution ensuring sustainable longevity” (Participant 8: Zoom interview October 2022)*

While the traditional entrepreneur’s purpose is to create products and services to make a profit, social entrepreneurs are passionate about creating products, services, and processes from which the community will benefit.

*“My business takes our severe plastic bag pollution and several challenges that children from low-income families face and provides a unique solution combating environmental and social problems” (Participant 4: Zoom interview October 2022)*

## **5.2. Theme 2: Local economic development**

Social entrepreneurs pursue business interests with commercial activities to solve community challenges. Comparable to other countries, North West Province has many social challenges, and it is essential to encourage social entrepreneurial activities because it is a prerequisite to economic development. The findings in the study indicated factors that contribute directly and indirectly to the accelerating economic growth and developing communities. Social entrepreneurs use various instruments to bridge economic development gaps and are not limited to one economic sector.

The findings on local economic development consist of:

- Sustainable solutions and growth
- Service delivery
- Community development

### **5.2.1. Sustainable solutions and growth**

There is a consciousness that small industries contribute to sustainable economic development and

improve quality of life; hence, social entrepreneurs also believe they are growing into critical players that provide financial and psychological rewards. The impact of social entrepreneurs is identified by their attempt to boost the economy and deliver innovative products and services towards sustainable economic growth, poverty mitigations, and job creation. As more people are employed, general economic development should improve (Lall & Park 2022:21).

Results from the study indicated that Participants stated that they had stimulated the economy by creating jobs and offered a broad range of solutions and initiatives such as education, skills development, fighting crime, and social inclusion strategies as efforts to address challenges faced by communities. For those reasons, it is imperative to ensure these social enterprises remain sustainable (Steinman, 2017:12)

*“I have rendered a service to two high schools, trained 30 teachers, and now taking in 36 more teachers for training. I have employed 15 catalysts to represent me so that we can take on many more schools to train for child-teacher emotional well-being. I plan to gain access to all schools in NW” (Participant 2: Zoom interview September 2022)*

Participants indicated that they, directly and indirectly, contribute to socio-economic development by stimulating new employment opportunities that rapidly grow the economy, boost local growth, and improve the community’s quality of life.

*“Other than creating jobs, I have positively impacted sustaining and cleaning the environment, the solution to affordable energy” (Participant 4: Zoom interview October 2022)*

Although participants highlighted that they had created employment, community development does not necessarily have to come as jobs. Social entrepreneurs can also use a broad range of solutions or initiatives to stimulate growth and sustainable development, such as education and skills training, enhancing competitiveness, social equality, fighting crime, and cultivating a culture of problem-solving. Other participants partnered with the government to create social and environmental value. Since no universal definition of social entrepreneurship exists, social enterprises are tasked to produce products and services directly linked to their objectives to benefit the community. While they rely on collective dynamics and involve other stakeholders to partner with in their activities, social entrepreneurs use a broad range of solutions or initiatives to stimulate growth and sustainable development.

*“We assembled a qualified team of professionals from different sectors such as Health, SAPS, and the justice department to help the youth deal with teenage challenges from drugs, crime, Identity crisis, and other issues” (Participant 7: Zoom interview October 2022)*

*“We also have a program where we have reached more than 30,000 young girls. There’re several schools where after our fun work programs, we receive sanitary towels that we share with those young girls to keep them in class during the menstrual cycle” (Participant 5: Zoom interview October 2022)*

*“During the beginning of Covid 19, we founded a campaign called: Each one, Feed one. We distributed more than thousands of food pastels to different families. We prioritised mostly the farm community in farming areas because a township has fewer economic activities.”*

*(Participant 6: Zoom interview October 2022)*

### **5.2.2. Impactful service delivery**

If social entrepreneurial solutions are impactful and increase presence in communities and understanding of local communities, then participants would have relied on feedback and reviews from the community as an attempt to investigate if they have brought social change, which has benefited society at large. Community involvement and participation position social entrepreneurs as organisations that value causes of outside profit. Participants indicated that communication was used as a strategy to guide and modify decisions, thus a measure of successful service delivery.

*“I usually go back to school regularly to get feedback or progress reports. The report contains before and after. It’s an ongoing project to assess challenges and improve. This is an attempt to stop kids from dropping out of school because of challenges I can assist professionally”*

*(Participant 2: face-to-face interview September 2022)*

*“We also report to our Giving Partners and corporates with information about how much plastic was recycled for their orders. So we are communicating with all stakeholders to review our strategies” (Participant 4: Zoom interview October 2022)*

The study suggested that social entrepreneurs create platforms to learn from other ecosystems that may influence their ability to work effectively, improve and scale up. Participants indicated an understanding of ecosystems by developing skills to raise impact.

*“I’ve got an open policy with all the patients and learners to say what they would like to see, what they appreciate, and where they would like to see improvements” Participant 3: Zoom interview September 2022)*

*“My services include institutional assessments, customised training, investment readiness training, financial workshops, and study visits to these women in small businesses. So, such propels me to check if there is success or regression. Then I step up to improve where things lack” (Participant 6: Zoom interview October 2022)*

The challenge social entrepreneurs encounter from the study is a regression from the community in pursuit of improving living conditions; the community shows less interest in community projects

that fail. Participants indicated a negative perception of the presence and significance of community development. Entrepreneurialism's measurement of success is profit, although a social entrepreneur's measure of success is social impact, time and commitment to the community, and other service delivery metric systems. Success is measured by counting the number of milestones reached and transformative changes to society. A successful service delivery depends on the community environment social entrepreneurs support and how well the community supports social entrepreneurial activities and innovations.

*"We identified a child-headed family led by two girls in their twenties. We provided them with a fully furnished house. The house was clean, painted, and electrified, with bathrooms. Those people lived in shallow shacks with nothing inside. We visited and received follow-up feedback on the progress two months after they moved into the house. We found the house in a mess, with dirty walls, etc. I was disappointed"* (Participant 5: Zoom interview October 2022)

*"Seeing those small businesses prosper, the low-income earners, the unlicensed, unregistered, non-tax-paying family or extended family businesses growing their business, also creating employment for other people, that is success for me"* (Participant 6: Zoom interview October 2022)

*"I think seeing my story, products being featured in publications, winning awards, is the social impact I can rightfully measure my success and ability to change and influence young people's mindset that all things are possible to do. Also, seeing my product acknowledged by winning awards is a huge milestone. After winning third place at the SAB Foundation Social Innovation Awards, we received money for setting up a small workshop and hiring employees. We have since expanded operations"* (Participant 4: Zoom interview October 2022)

Other participants measured success by seeing other people adopting a mission to create and sustain social value in the community and identified what success of impactful service delivery is to them.

*"I can safely say the success is if we were able to fundraise and help eleven learners and see nine graduating; for me, it is a great success. If we can say, we started the fun walk, and so many people are organising their fun walk"* (Participant 5: Zoom interview October 2022)

Seeing a steady influx of social entrepreneurial practice brings about a potential increase in social improvements in society.

*"We might not have scientific figures, but we have seen that people change their mindsets to improve their lives. Since we started, the number of registered NPOs has increased in my area. Not all of them are sustainable, but the fact that at least one or two people are assisted is a success"* (Participant 7: Zoom interview October 2022)

### 5.2.3. Community development and economic acceleration

Participants indicated that social entrepreneurs played a critical role in community development and economic growth, specifically in the North West Province. Social enterprises increased by 23% in 2019, making them essential contributors to job creation and contributor to national development objectives. The participants stated their general overview and perception of how they accelerate inclusive economic growth and the pace of social balance and economy. Social entrepreneurs contribute to accelerating the economy and community development, and community development sensitises economic acceleration. Although social entrepreneurship is not a magical solution to eradicating socio-economic challenges, it can shift the community's mentality into a different way of doing things.

*“My schoolbags might be the solution for everyone who needs to burn the midnight oil for study and work. Even for those lucky enough to never have a shortage of lights, perhaps this is a way for anyone, anywhere, to conserve energy” (Participant 3: Zoom interview September 2022)*

Microenterprises are the foundation of most developing economies; they contribute to economic exports, job creation, and social equity. Small enterprises help with the disproportions of wealth gaps and improve access to financial market opportunities. One participant referred to well-known social entrepreneurs who successfully designed township economies in the 80s and '90s and built successful business empires despite political restrictions in the past.

*“We need more of us; look at other countries where SE is prevalent; such countries are better off than Africa. We should let go of entitlement tendencies and rely on the government to implement social changes. They are failing, or we have more significant issues we tend not to realise. Hence, innovation and transformation is slow. This is how the likes of Mr Richard Maonya and Mr Herman Mashaba started. They lifted the economy of the township by lending money to the poor to start businesses” (Participant 8: Zoom interview October 2022)*

### 5.3. Theme 3: Environment

A cooperative and supportive environment relates to characteristics essential to social entrepreneurs to enable them to contribute to economic success but with the patience for growth to ensure longevity, financial viability, and sustainability. However, these environments are prone to include challenges social entrepreneurs face during the management stages of the business. Social entrepreneurs are pressured by the gradually competitive environment, which forces them to constantly create and improve on innovation in their social value activities. Based on the findings in the literature, there is a relationship between the impact of government, institutions, and social entrepreneurs; it is assumed that entering into partnerships and creating a supportive and enabling environment for social entrepreneurs will stimulate the economy. The findings indicated that government support and contribution are not satisfactory; the challenge is for financial institutions



to provide better financing models to support social entrepreneurs.

**The findings on the environment consist of:**

- Challenges managing the business.
- Supportive and cooperative institutions.
- Pursuit of individual interest.

**5.3.1. Challenges managing the business**

The researcher's findings in this study revealed that SEs encountered challenges managing the business. The participants indicated challenges in funding, cash flow, shortage of resources, skills shortage, education, and training. Participants described challenges experienced during the managing phase of the business. These challenges included funding, education, skills and training; socioeconomic factors, lack of marketing channels, laws and policies; barriers to entry, lack of support and sources; corruption and bureaucratic red tape.

Accessing funding is a great challenge for most social entrepreneurs. The aspect of risk places social entrepreneurs far from making a profit and needs a self-sustainability model employed in the start-up phase of the business. Social entrepreneurs are the type of organisations that are heavily constrained in generating funds. Unlike for-profit organisations with multiple funding sources such as bank loans and share issues, many social entrepreneurs rely on their resources, donations, pledges, fundraising, and family to get off the ground. They are not profitable enough to qualify for bank loans. Although a modern social entrepreneur is a social change agent with profit generating twist, access to funding has a great potential to grow and scale social enterprises. Some social entrepreneurs can self-fund their businesses and own all the equity; however, the disadvantages are that social entrepreneurs are financially and personally strained.

*"I've funded all these businesses myself. It becomes challenging financially. On the skills side of things, the level of service my standing doctors give will not be on par with what I would do if I were at a certain surgery, not emotionally invested with the patients" (Participant 3: Zoom interview September 2022)*

Social entrepreneurs find it challenging to entirely fund their businesses through investments and sales because they have yet to be profitable. Social entrepreneurs run through the risk of shutting down operations because they often struggle with debt capital or debt financing. When a social enterprise is not liquid, it may affect the ecosystems the business was supposed to serve its needs.

*"I don't have a 100% guarantee that loans will be paid on time. It's hard to ensure each of these women SMEs stands guarantee for the others; I struggle to ensure that I make loans to a pool of borrowers instead of individuals alone. So, I lend for shorter durations, which is not always favourable to the women" Participant 6: Zoom interview October 2022)*

South Africa has various financial institutions, such as cooperative and commercial banks, that offer various financial instruments. The country's commercial banks contribute to an average of 88% of the GDP, which makes them the most prominent endorsers of the Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (B-BBEE) and National Development Plan in the South African economy. However, the sector has stick lending policy requests they typically use during the vetting process before financing a social entrepreneur. Most social entrepreneurs assume their ability and accessibility to funding is discrimination against them primarily because their profit margins are relatively low, and some rely on sponsors and donors for financial support.

Based on the literature, social entrepreneurship is relatively under-researched in South Africa, and policymakers still have uncertainty about its benefits and what the sector can offer (Littlewood & Holt, 2018:525). Policies made by the government and other institutions can influence the environment social entrepreneurs operate. Participants indicated complexities of lending criteria to obtain funding and access to funding social entrepreneurs remain uneven in South Africa. Medium and large-sized organisations experience various degrees in accessing finance because they are more established. For-profit organisations and social enterprises in the growth stage have collateral and various alternatives to obtain funding at favourable terms. Participants described the familiar financing process they are already acquainted with. The participants shared the following:

*“Often, the funding comes with many terms and conditions and strict policies” (Participant 1: Zoom interview September 2022)*

*“I find banks very rigid with their lending policy; there are issues of red taps, leverages, security which is complex for a young starter.” (Participant 4: Zoom interview October 2022)*

*“I wish I knew the criteria financial institutions used to fund self-starters or social entrepreneurs. I am here to see the visible contributions financial institutions are making to businesses. I think there is still much they need to do.” (Participant 5: Zoom interview October 2022)*

*“Banks are not very fussy; their main interest is making sure that the person pays and doesn't have a bad credit record, have a good surety that they can borrow against.” So, in terms of approaching the bank, it depends on those two things that I've mentioned” (Participant 3: Zoom interview September 2022)*

### **5.3.2. Support and cooperative institutions**

The findings also found a relationship between support and sustainability, which the literature acknowledged that institutions that support social entrepreneurs' business environment promote growth and sustainability. Participants argued that partnerships and support networks should be

mutually beneficial exchanges where institutions receive good publicity and social entrepreneurs receive exposure and more project prospects. The study indicated that support is valued because it makes social entrepreneurs feel validated for their initiatives. Participants emphasised that a cooperative and supportive environment might stimulate the growth of social enterprises, and stakeholders could also benefit through outsourcing social entrepreneurs' services.

Regardless of government intervention in entrepreneurial programs, the government relies on different service departments to deliver service to its stakeholders. Participants indicated a great need for support in their social business endeavours. It was noted that policies implemented by the government can negatively impact the environment in which social entrepreneurs operate in and not stimulate the development of social enterprises.

*“The government is not even close to doing their part, not even by 5%. That's why I don't ever go out of my way to try and get subsidised by the government.” (Participant 3: Zoom interview September 2022)*

*“If I had to rely on the government, I'd be stagnating as we speak; the government is failing the youth and social entrepreneurs.” (Participant 4: Zoom interview October 2022)*

Though the government seeks to intervene in allocating funding mechanisms to support entrepreneurship initiatives, interest in funding social entrepreneurs has gradually increased and attracted other forms of funding. The notion is that supporting social entrepreneurs yields a promising strategy for achievement improvement and achieving social challenges. Therefore, it is believed that the government is expected to work closely with social entrepreneurs to help solve community challenges. Other participants indicated that the state has been able to assist in managing several adversities they faced.

*“I have seen the government providing support to other organisations. Support comes in different forms; I have received invitations for training and registered an organisation that is an example of support. They have helped draft the NGOs' constitutions and provided guidelines on how to operate” (Participant 5: Zoom interview October 2022)*

Private sectors have developed Enterprise and Supplier Development (ESD) programs and economic development strategies that are underpinned by building SMMEs and turning them into stronger and more inclusive competitive markets, thus stimulating economic growth.

*“I see the private sector as very helpful. They have a clear mandate to assist SMMEs with no security issues; they mentor, train, and do networking, help with financial literacy, and more service that comes after funds are provided” - (Participant 6: Zoom interview October 2022)*

Bureaucratic corruption is the abuse of public funds for private benefit and is bad for business and the environment. Corruption poses a serious threat to social entrepreneurs and may poison the

business environment for social entrepreneurs. If traditional companies can be affected by corruption, the effects could double for social entrepreneurs and cite extreme violence. One participant described a toxic encounter that could have damaged the credibility of his organisation. Unproductive institutions and structural and governance challenges could mean that the policies were harmed by corruption and hampered by red tape. Participants indicated government red tape, which refers to unnecessary rules and processes that could potentially affect the business's existence.

*“The system is failing public schools; it doesn’t have enough specialists who deal with such issues” (Participant 2: Zoom interview September 2022)*

*The government probably would focus more on the cause if I were an NGO, but I'm not an NGO” (Participant 1: Zoom interview September 2022)*

*“When covid 19 started, messages were circulating on WhatsApp where the government or its officials were looking for NGOs. The reason for that was that people in different organisations and governments wanted to put money into our NGOs for self-benefiting. For example, they would seek to put in R1 million and ask for R800 000 back the next day. Covid19 created an opportunity for people to loot. I have rejected such offers. Because firstly, how do I account to SARS for the missing*

*R800 000? A foundation is created to help the needy, not to embezzle money from it. Not to be an accessory and accomplice of crime and stealing” (Participant 5: Zoom interview October 2022)*

In addition, the findings indicate a lack of resources as social entrepreneurs face difficulty accessing the necessary resources to establish and run their social business ventures. When considering underlying theories, Lack of education and training results in unskilled labour. The business's success rests on the business owner employing people with the necessary skills to carry out operations and manage finances better. The theory also declares that social enterprises are challenged to do the right things, which is a marketing issue. According to Glatthorn *et al.* (2018:26), strategic marketing is fundamental to holding a Non-Profit Organisation (NPO) together in a competitive business environment.

*“Biggest challenge is supporting the transition of children in the children’s homes to adult life” (Participant 6: Zoom interview October 2022)*

*“I need more hands and more human resources. If I had started my project in January 2022, I would have made a big impact in the schools and community. Teachers are not trained to enhance learners’ emotional awareness, creativity, and happiness at home, in schools, in universities, and in the workplace” (Participant 2: Zoom interview September 2022)*

*“My biggest challenge is the marketing vehicle to push the brand out there to the people that am not just designing caps because I want to be like Nike, Adidas, Gucci or New Balance, my caps are better quality than them (laughing). To drive my objectives, I had to send caps as gifts to celebrities or influencers. The late Shona Ferguson was my actual vehicle. He articulated the message clearly in his social media platforms and TV production team, and my concept, product, the message started to be understood as a motivational tool and a social core. The marketing vehicle to push the brand out there to the people impacts my cash flow because I am forced to send caps as gifts to celebrities or influencers to push my objectives” (Participant 8: Zoom interview October 2022)*

### **5.3.3. Pursuit of individual interest**

Social entrepreneurship has become imperative worldwide and popular in many countries. But, besides its increasing popularity, there is an increase in uncertainty regarding the roles and functions of social entrepreneurship. Any member of the community can explore social entrepreneurship. The business model requires the utmost discipline and time and is a complex industry. Although money motivates people to start a business, social entrepreneurship is a venture not driven by greed, self-entitlement, and personally benefiting; it is instead a business that seeks to incorporate social responsibility in society. Social entrepreneurs are enduring and ambitious individuals who tackle significant social challenges by offering large-scale solutions.

*“It depends on the approach; social entrepreneurship requires patience. I started in 2018, but I still feel I am not making money to sustain my business objective. It is a difficult space, especially when you go to people to sell the idea to the people to solve a societal problem, and the other person doesn't share the same views.” (Participant 2: Zoom interview September 2022)*

*“Lately, people aren't driven, so I don't think it has become or still is a norm for people to want to benefit from the community. People are driven by greed. They want to see themselves growing personally. Anything outside themselves is very far-fetched in an individual's mind. People are money driven if they don't see any prospects of money; they don't want to tap into that space of solving social issues unless there's money involved. They would not want to get into anything that does not involve profitability. Yes, it's a give and take.” (Participant 3: Zoom interview September 2022)*

However, one must ask if there is still interest in social issues and if the novelty of coming up with ideas to address the challenges is slowly dying. How the social entrepreneur perceives the industry depends on the interest in developing social entrepreneurship to mobilise local resources for local development. How the social entrepreneur perceives the sector depends on the interest in developing social entrepreneurship to mobilise local resources for local development.

*“I think people are a bit sceptical going into the social space; we are trying to remedy social ills to assist the community. We're trying to mend a system ingrained into people, and it is hard to change it. Being a social entrepreneur, you rank the risks because people are usually very short-sighted and do not see the end goal of what you are trying to do. You try to refrain from being political. Our system wants people to lie to the government, and it's not teaching people to rely on themselves.*

*Social entrepreneurship is challenging, and you need to be very patient.” (Participant 1: Zoom interview September 2022)*

*“It's a tricky one, but I see younger people taking a keen interest in solving social issues as opposed to older people. I think older people are now tired and have accepted the general state of their condition. The youth are creating creative solutions despite funding and mentoring challenges.” (Participant 4: Zoom interview October 2022)*

## **6. Managerial Implications and Recommendations**

### **6.1 Improve funding mechanisms**

South Africa faces three macroeconomic issues: sluggish economic growth, upward inflation, and high unemployment. Social entrepreneurs depend on grants and funding that could be more sustainable because of the unpredictability of lending criteria and policies. Financial institutions' support should rely on incentives to enable social entrepreneurs to build the necessary infrastructure for NGOs and small enterprises. Financial institutions' marketing strategies should clearly state policies and requirements for start-ups and NPOs to increase competitiveness in the financial service sector strategies and improve their lending capacity. Banks may reduce the lending risk of start-ups and NPOs by improving laws that enforce contracts, register fixed assets, and collect guarantees. An effective law regulating property and land ownership rights should allow NPOs to use the assets for collateral.

### **6.2 Improve networks**

Numerous stakeholders create networks accessible to social entrepreneurs, and multiple stakeholders should create and manage a database of contacts where records are kept for future reference. Social entrepreneurs do not need to rely only on networks created by other stakeholders; they can also make and manage their formal networks within the industry where they can share information, advice, support, and mentors. This practice builds credibility and sustainability and increases business opportunities. Social entrepreneurs need to establish relationships and networks with the communities they are involved with to open market access has been regressing.

The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) is the government's authorised body structure to support new entrants to small businesses. The progress of eliminating policy barriers to new

entrants and reducing the burden of the licensing requirements of NPOS has been slow. The government should not over-regulate social sectors. Instead, it should ease the burden on social enterprises by implementing property rights laws that reduce challenges for social entrepreneurs. South African government should implement a policy of Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) on a larger scale for new entrants, and the procedure should not only include the health sector but must be concentrated on other sectors. PPPs are incentivised collaborative actions between the private sector and the government (World Bank, 2017). They can potentially improve service delivery efficiency and stimulate social enterprises' economic growth and sustainability. Therefore, the government and other stakeholders must collaborate with social entrepreneurs and outsource services in a bid for tenders to increase market access.

### **6.3 Encourage social entrepreneurship behaviour and innovation**

In a competitive market, it is usual for traditional businesses to compete at delivering products at services for profit takings. Unlike social entrepreneurship, the business model maximises social value and innovation. Such organisations should clearly describe their value-positioning strategies and provide higher-ranking services. Every individual has the potential to make a difference, and many organisations aim to uplift the youth through programs aimed at creating job opportunities by providing skills and training to the youth to launch and run their small business. Although Youth Venture is unique and different from other accelerator programs, its scale of accomplishment is relatively significant. Their philosophy of fostering entrepreneurship liberation is an excellent example for young people to stay committed to making positive changes in their communities. There should be a significant investment in exploring accelerator programs and training centres facilitated by both the government and private sector to train and support entrepreneurship effectively.

The researcher also made the following strategic recommendations to overcome social entrepreneurs' challenges in managing the business:

Social enterprises in South Africa face many challenges that prevent them from pursuing their social missions and finding sustainable solutions to aiding disadvantaged communities. The findings of the study were corroborated by social entrepreneurs interviewed.

#### **6.3.1 Strategies to overcome social entrepreneurial challenges**

Table 5 below illustrates the strategies recommended to overcome social entrepreneurial challenges.

**Table 5: Strategies to overcome social entrepreneurial challenges**

<b>Challenges</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
Access to funding	Social entrepreneurs need to look at the innovation of self-sustainability, create models to raise funds, and not be limited to one project. Social entrepreneurs need to empower themselves and invest in networks and social capital.
Financial, business management	Take accountability by ensuring social enterprises have qualified people to run the business, such as qualified accountants to manage books. Social entrepreneurs need to have a culture of learning and enrol in business administration courses to build skills and abilities for the team.
Social and economic factors	Crime affects the development and trajectory of doing business, thus increasing operational costs, profitability, and sustainability. Encourage businesses and communities to work proactively with police by establishing Community Policing Forums (CPFs). Integrate better town planning in urban areas. Invest in affordable security and insurance.
Support	Social entrepreneurs should be autonomous and learn to function without the expectations of funding to run social enterprises.
	Social entrepreneurs should specialise and collaborate in products and services that enable them to generate income Social entrepreneurs should demonstrate credibility to the funders and have solid business plans to show donors what they plan to do with the money.
Marketing	Create a simple marketing plan that defines initiatives and strategies. Develop digital marketing strategies required to create awareness about the cause the business is involved in. Redefine KPIs with missions to attract more potential investors. Use community support as a marketing strategy.
Education, skills, and training	Hire the best talent in the organisation, ensure they have proper skills, and fit the organisation's culture. Develop the team through training so that they can develop others. Create a system that enables workers to succeed in the business
Laws and policies	Social entrepreneurs need to research regulatory frameworks and procurement policies that incentivise and encourage collaborations to ensure they comply and participate in public service delivery.

**Source: Compiled by the researcher**

## **7. Conclusions, Limitations and Future Research**

### **7.1 Conclusions**

The results and discussion section covers participants' opinions on social entrepreneurship based on their lived experience. These views are mapped against existing literature on social entrepreneurship. There are many similarities between the findings of this empirical research study and other studies in different parts of the world. However, there are also new findings that could not be correlated with the existing literature on social entrepreneurship.



## 7.2 Limitations of the study

The limitations of the study are the following:

- Limitations of the study are that findings may not be generalised to other settings due to research methods and designs. Because a qualitative study was undertaken, information was recorded and transcribed from the perception and experiences of the social entrepreneur; therefore, the results cannot be confirmed for accuracy. The social entrepreneurs' opinions and perceptions may change in the future.
- Participants only included social entrepreneurs in rural and urban communities. The participant's organisation is in developing towns in the region of North West Province: Mafikeng, Rustenburg, and Klerksdorp. The areas do not represent the whole of North West Province. Empirical research on social entrepreneurs in the Northwest has not been previously conducted, and information is limited because the Northwest is one of the impoverished and corrupt provinces in South Africa.
- Only social entrepreneurs were interviewed. It would have been interesting to get perceptions of government, supporting and funding agencies regarding social entrepreneurs, i.e., SEDA, banks, and NWDC.
- Interpretations of responses and meanings may differ from the participant to the researcher. Participants' way of responding to the questions was guided by the researcher's limited understanding of the study.
- The researcher's selection criteria of participants were based on the biases of the researcher. The participants selected did not reflect a statistical representation of social entrepreneurs and may have possibly excluded other thought-provoking cases.
- Time constraints may have potentially excluded some social entrepreneurs from the study, and it was a challenge to access participants who met the criteria. Thus, a small sample size was selected.

## 7.3 Future research

Over the years, social entrepreneurship has interestingly gained momentum and seen a surge of research interest; however, some aspects call for future research based on the limitations of the study, i.e., evidence-based research to understand the relationship between social entrepreneurship and assess its significance in developing communities thus growing the economy (Saebi *et al.*, 2018:70).

A mixed research methodology could broaden the research landscape by including other provinces in SA and provide more detailed findings supported by statistical inferences. As mentioned earlier, including more participants, i.e., government and funding agencies, may produce valuable data variations in the sample criteria. Future research on the comparative study of unsuccessful and

sustainable social entrepreneurs by investigating how supporting institutions could efficiently influence processes, policies, and other variables that could assist in the successful running of social enterprises.

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