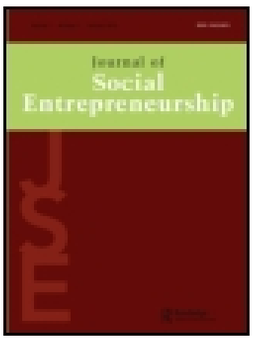

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Explaining Social Entrepreneurial Intentions among College Students in Zimbabwe

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ABSTRACT

While definitional clarity of social entrepreneurship as constituting a semblance of economic engagements that straddle entrepreneurial studies, social innovation and not for profit ventures had been established, the antecedents of such entrepreneurship are only beginning to emerge. This study tests moral obligation, empathy, self-efficacy and social support as main determinants of social entrepreneurial intentions in the depressed economy of Zimbabwe, where the pursuit of economic gains at a personal level is anticipated to thrive. The study employed the Mair and Naboa model, a quantitative approach, and survey design to explore the influence of the aforementioned antecedents on the social entrepreneurial intentions of a sample of 284 vocational training college students. Results suggest that only empathy, self-efficacy and social support had statistically significant relationships with social entrepreneurial intentions. Notably, social support had a negative predictive relationship with social entrepreneurial intentions. The outcome of the study partially validates the Mair and Naboa model.

KEYWORDS

Mair and Naboa; social entrepreneurial intentions; social entrepreneurship; students; Zimbabwe

Introduction and background

Despite the intense contestation around social entrepreneurship, there is some general consensus that it embeds as its main mandate the creation of social value (Peredo and Mclean 2006; Wang and Aaltio 2017) and fills the void left by national governments, corporate business and market players (Powell 2012), meeting complex social needs and grand challenges of contemporary society in the process (Prieto, Phipps, and Friedrich, 2012; Wilton 2016; Ballesteros, Useem, and Wry 2017; Wry and Haugh 2018). Social entrepreneurship, which describes 'innovative, social value creating activity that can occur within or across the non-profit, business, or government sector' (Austin, Stevenson, and Wei-Skillem 2006, 2) arises from multiple societal considerations. These include the need for collective responses to global humanitarian concerns precipitated by conflicts, resource exploitation, and depletion and environmental damage. It captures business' interactions with society to address the inadequacies of

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national government and corporations' relentless pursuits for profits at the expense of humanitarian concerns. As such, social entrepreneurs are deemed to make significant contributions to their respective communities by adopting business models to render innovative solutions to persistent complex social problems (Zahra et al. 2009). At the forefront of social entrepreneurship, therefore, is the acknowledgement that the pursuit of economic profit by businesses is intricately intertwined with attention to the community and natural environment. Despite these insights on the purpose of social entrepreneurship, there is a wider acknowledgement that research gaps persist surrounding definitions, contributions and broad questions around antecedents of entrepreneurship (Hand 2016; Wang and Aaltio 2017).

The recent prominence of social entrepreneurship has been attributed to *inter alia*, growing scepticism on the ability of governments and business to resolve complex societal problems such as poverty, crime, limited access to health care, social deprivation and environment (Thompson, Alvy, and Lees 2000; Wilson 2008; Terjesen et al. 2012) and seemingly 'shifted focus of modern economic activity from producing goods and services towards concentration of wealth at the top echelons of society' (Vansandt, Sud, and Marme 2009, 419). Other drivers include the recognition of altruistic and passionate personalities by influential global organizations such as the Skoll Foundation as well as the Schwab Foundation, and the assumed potential and relevance of social entrepreneurship as a legitimate domain of inquiry in its own right (Dacin, Dacin, and Tracey, 2011). Despite the wider recognition of drivers of social entrepreneurship, this field lacks rigour and is in its infancy compared to the wider field of entrepreneurship (Abu-Saifan 2012) hence necessitating further inquiry into this emergent field.

Despite this intellectual excitement into the phenomenon of social entrepreneurship, dystopian views have relegated social entrepreneurship as a fad whose potency remains questionable (Dey 2006). Social entrepreneurship, as the application of entrepreneurial skills, talents, and resources to create social value with the intention to solve social problems (Mair and Noboa 2003) remains an inherently fuzzy enterprise. The intricacy and muddiness of social entrepreneurship arises from its embrace of multiple disciplines (e.g. sociology, anthropology, economics, political economy) (Dacin, Dacin, and Tracey 2011), its muddling of for-profit and not-for-profit elements and lack of clarity of whether it is a variant of corporate social responsibility, which is already a component of corporate entrepreneurship. Literature suggests that reconciling social and economic objectives in the pursuit of growth remains at the centre of the missions of social ventures as they increase their social impact (Siebold, Günzel-Jensen, and Müller 2018). The fact that traditional entrepreneurship meets the demand for personal wealth accumulation as well as facilitates the achievement of common societal values (Anderson and Smith 2007; Lajovic 2012) further casts doubts on the need for another variant of entrepreneurship such as social entrepreneurship. Moreover, just like traditional entrepreneurship, social entrepreneurship also has hybrid models of for-profit and not-for-profit activities and embraces innovation in resolving complex societal problems (Prieto, Phipps, and Friedrich 2012) further blurring the boundaries between traditional and social entrepreneurship. These complexities make social entrepreneurship fertile ground for further intellectual inquiry.

In addition to the confusion surrounding definition and delineating the boundaries of social entrepreneurship is the difficulty of arriving at relevant and meaningful research questions relating to this term (Dacin and Dacin 2011). Our intention is not to contribute to the debate on the definitional clarity due to the flourishing of diverse variants of entrepreneurship such as cultural entrepreneurship, academic entrepreneurship, university entrepreneurship, and youth entrepreneurship. Rather we intend to postulate questions on the relevant antecedents of social entrepreneurial intentions. Addressing these questions contributes to addressing major concerns about the more muted academic response to social entrepreneurship (Short, Moss, and Lumpkin 2009; Dacin and Dacin 2011) in particular antecedents of social entrepreneurship. To determine the intentions of becoming a social entrepreneur, it is critical to identify and determine the antecedents of social entrepreneurial intentions. The antecedents of individual motivation for engagement in social entrepreneurship are important factors to consider in understanding the intentions of social entrepreneurship (Carsrud and Brännback 2011; Omorede 2014).

Unfortunately, there is limited knowledge on precursors of social entrepreneurial intentions (Chinchilla and Garcia 2017; Hockerts 2017; Hockerts 2015; Ip et al. 2018; Mair and Noboa 2006). According to Forster and Grichnik (2013), there is a stark deficiency of studies on social entrepreneurial intentions on a personal level. The overall picture on determinants of social entrepreneurship in emerging economies is blurred by the prevalence of data from contexts outside Africa (Hockerts 2015; Hsu and Wang 2019; Ip et al. 2017; Ip et al. 2018), with only a handful carried out in South Africa (Urban 2008; Urban and Kujinga 2017). Responding to Teise and Urban's (2014) clarion call on the need for more quantitative studies on social entrepreneurship in the under-researched African locales, the current study sought to augment understanding of the field by investigating determinants of social entrepreneurship in an emerging country context. The need to understand the complexities of social entrepreneurship, separate from entrepreneurship in general, is driven by claims in extant literature that 'theoretical embeddedness and social relevance are important for the legitimacy of social entrepreneurship research' (Urban and Kujinga 2017, 639).

The study of social entrepreneurial intentions is pertinent to the contemporary Zimbabwean context which is hamstrung by a dysfunctional economy whose capacity to provide adequate social services is greatly curtailed. Since 2000, Zimbabwe has persistently grappled with the challenges of restricted access to failing health services, increasing poverty and everyday food insecurity, city housing problems, and dropping standards of living (Stoeffler et al. 2016; Muchadenyika 2017). This situation is exacerbated by limited fiscal space on the government's part (Nyoni 2018) and reduced donor funding for social development programmes. Against this background, the current situation in the country can significantly improve only if more transformational individuals and groups who are prepared to use their entrepreneurial skills and attitudes in order to bring social change and address social needs emerge.

The remainder of the paper is arranged as follows: Firstly, it presents an overview of the theoretical underpinnings of the study. Next, it unravels the research design and methodology used. Further, the results of the statistical tests carried out are presented and discussed. The paper concludes with the study implications for practice and theory.

Theoretical overview and hypotheses development

Social entrepreneurship concept

Research on social entrepreneurship has stressed some underlying factors such as innovation (Dees 1998; Austin 2006) and social value creation which are integral to its implementation (Dacin, Dacin, and Matear 2010) and developing sustainable solutions for multiple stakeholders (Lumpkin et al. 2013). With regard to innovation, Dees (1998) conceive social entrepreneurs not only as social agents that drive social value creation in society but rather participate in continuous innovation, adaptation, and learning. Mair and Marti (2006) contends that social entrepreneurship studies have emphasized only the adding of value to existing social activities and the implementation of novel activities which are considered desirable to society. However, some scholars conceive social entrepreneurship as rendering innovative solutions to addressing intricate and continual social issues through blending traditional business solutions and market-oriented models (Spear 2006; Pearce and Doh 2005). Despite these different orientations and strategies for the realization of social innovation, social entrepreneurs are visionaries intrigued by adding value to societal activities and grant challenges such as poverty reduction, social deprivation.

Other attempts have been made to differentiate traditional entrepreneurs (i.e. business or commercial) from social entrepreneurs focussing on their motives (Dees 2001; Nandan and London 2013), opportunity search strategies, intentions and ethical constraints (Zahra et al. 2009). While some studies have zoomed in on the differences between traditional entrepreneurs and social entrepreneurs especially their focus on economic value and social value creation respectively (Nandan and London 2013; Murphy and Coombes 2009), other studies have highlighted the subtle differences in terms of the evolution of their individual passions and identities (Yitshaki and Kropp 2016). While some studies have delineated the actual mission of social entrepreneurs as value creation and social change agents over revenue accumulation (Nandan and London 2013), other studies acknowledge that economic outcomes form an integral part of social entrepreneurship (Mair and Marti 2006; Zahra et al. 2009). Yet others allude to a hierarchical ordering of social and economic imperatives (Dacin, Dacin, and Matear 2010) while others subscribe to the mixing of these for-profit and non-profit mandates (Prieto, Phipps, and Friedrich 2012). Other literature reconciles and balances social, ethical and environmental issues (Evans and Sawyer 2010; Tsai 2013) which orthodox entrepreneurship behaviour tend to downplay (Rae 2010). Yet others conceive them to operate at the intersection between, private, public and non-profit sector through their preoccupation with social justice and social value (Nandan and London 2013; Wang and Aaltio 2017).

Intentionality

It can be argued that the success of social entrepreneurship depends on individual social entrepreneurs' intentions to develop concrete plans to participate in this enterprise. Intention-based theories of individual behaviour suggest that most human behaviour is pre-planned, and that intention predates such behaviour (Santos, Roomi,

and Liñán 2016; Krueger, Reilly, and Carsrud 2000; Bird 2015; Ajzen 1991). Social entrepreneurs are driven by their passion, enthusiasm and excitement and a strong desire to make a mark in their immediate society (Yitshaki and Kropp 2016). As such, the significance of intentions in entrepreneurship research lies in the extent to which they strengthen, guide, and sustain effort towards meeting entrepreneurial objectives (Liñán, Rodríguez-Cohard, and Rueda-Cantuche 2011). The intentionality of social entrepreneurship finds expression in Zahra et al.'s (2009) nomenclature of social entrepreneurs as social bricoleurs, social constructionists, and social engineers. As social bricoleurs, social entrepreneurs strive to discover and address small-scale local social needs. The intention of social constructionists is the exploitation of market failures opportunities by filling gaps to underserved clients with a view to introducing reforms and innovations that impact the broader social system. Zahra et al. (2009) elaborate as social engineers, social entrepreneurs are bend on identifying systemic problems inherent in existing social structures and tackle them head-on by introducing revolutionary change. Viewed from these perspectives, therefore, social entrepreneurs are intentional, opportunistic and rational individuals who strive to meet preconceived deals that benefit society even though they can bring economic benefits to them at individual levels.

It is not coincidental that social entrepreneurs are applauded for their capacity to render a large-scale positive change in response to problems concerning social integration, socially dysfunctional behaviour, and socio-economic development (Friedman and Desivilya 2010; Bacq and Janssen 2011; Barth et al. 2015). Overall, Abu-Saifan (2012) delineates the intentionality of social entrepreneurs as two faceted, namely, the creation and management of non-profit with earned income strategies on the one hand, and for-profit with mission-driven strategies, on the other. The intention of former institutions is to use proceeds from their economic activities to meet their social objectives while maintaining their self-sufficiency. The mandate of the latter is to blend social and commercial entrepreneurial interests simultaneously to achieve sustainability (Abu-Saifan 2012).

Theorizing social entrepreneurial intentions

In explaining traditional entrepreneurship behaviour, entrepreneurial intentions are a consequence of attitudes, which emerge from one's perceptions of their capacity to pursue entrepreneurial actions (Omorede 2014). Krueger and Brazeal (1994), describe entrepreneurial intention as the commitment of a person towards some future behaviour, which is projected towards starting, a business or an organization. We, therefore, consider the valence of intentions as one of the crucial constructs in predicting the entrepreneurial behaviour of founding a social enterprise.

Ajzen's (1991) Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) suggests that traditional entrepreneurial intentions are predicated on three factors namely attitude towards behaviour, perceived social norms, perceived behavioural control (which can be internal and external). external behavioural control). Internal behavioural control is considered an equivalent of an individual's self-efficacy while external behavioural control is often associated with the social support that an individual entrepreneur received through

his interaction with the social environment. The model is considered to be a robust predictor of entrepreneurial intentions and behaviour (Kautonen, van Gelderen, and Fink 2015).

Despite the prevalence of literature on how entrepreneurial intentions form in traditional entrepreneurship, there is limited empirical and theoretical knowledge on the antecedents of social entrepreneurial intentions in literature. Mair and Noboa (2006) acknowledge the uniqueness of the social entrepreneurial environment which complicates the wholesale application of the concepts used in the TPB and relies on proxies of TPB variables. Drawing on the TPB, the Mair and Naboa model postulate that empathy is a proxy for attitude towards behaviour, moral judgment is a substitute for social norms, self-efficacy representing internal behavioural control and perceived social support as a proxy for external behavioural control (Hockerts 2015). They draw on entrepreneurial intentions theory (Krueger 1993; Krueger, Reilly, and Carsrud 2000) and Ajzen's (1991) TPB which emphasise the significance of intentions in predicting actual entrepreneurial behaviour. Empathy and moral judgment's effects on the formation of social entrepreneurship intentions are perceived to be mediated by perceived desirability while self-efficacy and social support's interaction with intentions are considered to be mediated by perceived feasibility. Therefore, the model is mediated by perceived feasibility and perceived desirability, variables extracted from Shapero and Shokol's (1982) Theory of Entrepreneurial Event. Nonetheless, in line with Hockert's (2017) revealed that the two mediators are not distinct factors, we do not incorporate them in the current study.

Mair and Noboa's (2006) model has not been widely tested on social entrepreneurship making it a relevant model to apply in the context of developing countries characterized by market failure, increased greed by business entrepreneurs and marginalisation of masses by governments. A few exceptional cases of its application include the following: Tukamushaba, Orobia, and George 2011; Ayob et al. 2013; Tran and Von Korflesch 2016; Hockerts 2017.

Determinants of social entrepreneurship intention

Empathy

Empathy captures an individual's ability to imagine what feelings another person has (Preston et al. 2007) or an inclination to respond to another being's mental state emotionally (Mehrabian and Epstein 1972; Hockerts 2015). Empathy which refers to the vicarious experience of another's emotions (Lazarus 1991) underpins the behaviours of social entrepreneurs as they act to create goods and services of social value or seek to correct injustices and excess of relentless pursuit for economic value. Within regards to empathy, researchers have documented how compassion is a proximal determinant of prosocial behaviour (Eisenberg and Miller 1987; Hoffman 1981) such as social entrepreneurial pursuits. This supports the postulation that social entrepreneurs tend to display altruistic motives in their activities (Roberts and Woods 2005) as they may place social values above the pursuit of profits in their missions (Dacin, Dacin, and Tracey 2011). However, this does not necessarily mean that by concentrating on social value,

they negate economic value as the sustainability of social value creation depends on the realization of economic value. This study, therefore, postulates that:

H1: Empathy is positively related to social entrepreneurial intentions of students.

Moral obligation

According to Ajzen's (1991) TPB, perceived subjective norms serve as the second predictor of entrepreneurial intentions. Moral obligations describe social norms and expectations of society that guide the behavioural conduct of social entrepreneurs. Subjective norms, therefore, represent the beliefs of an individual about expected and accepted behaviour (Forster and Grichnik 2013). For instance, critical questions can be posted on whether social entrepreneurs are expected to reap the economic benefits (e.g., shareholding, acquiring of properties in personal name) arising from their generation of social value (Allotey 2017). Considering moral obligations are positioned between societal expectations of individual conduct and one's moral judgement, Hockerts (2015) postulated that societal norms imply social entrepreneurs have a moral obligation to help marginalized people. The study, therefore, hypothesizes that:

H2: Moral obligation significantly predicts social entrepreneurial intentions.

Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy describes 'the individual's cognitive estimate of his or her capabilities to mobilize the motivation, cognitive resources, and courses of action needed to exercise control over events in his or her life' (Hamidi, Wennberg, and Berglund 2008, 308). Literature has considered self-efficacy as a reliable predictor of outcomes such as career options, occupational interests, personal effectiveness and individuals' resolve to ensure effective execution of complex difficult tasks (Wilton 2016). As such, complex enterprises such as the creation of social ventures that require the development of innovative solutions to complex societal needs and grand challenges demand social entrepreneurs to exhibit and exercise their self-efficacy. Self-efficacy has the potential to affect an entrepreneur's perceived feasibility of social entrepreneurship (Krueger and Brazeal 1994) which is a key consideration in the success of social entrepreneurship (Wilton 2016). As such, the exploration of underlying beliefs of cognitive structures such as self-efficacy renders rich insights into understanding the determinants of entrepreneurial intentions (Linan, Urbano, and Guerrero 2011). Hence the hypothesis that:

H3: Self-efficacy significantly predicts social entrepreneurial intentions of students.

Social support

There are suggestions in literature that the level of entrepreneurial activity depends on the supply and quality of cognate entrepreneurs (Weber 2012). Rationally, possession of a large resource base affords the fulfillment of the mandate and scope of social entrepreneurship in any society. For instance, the thriving of social ventures depend on the support that can be expected from significant others (Wilton 2016; Teise and Urban 2014) such as family businesses, family role models, family support for social entrepreneurship. However, even for-profit organizations confronted with

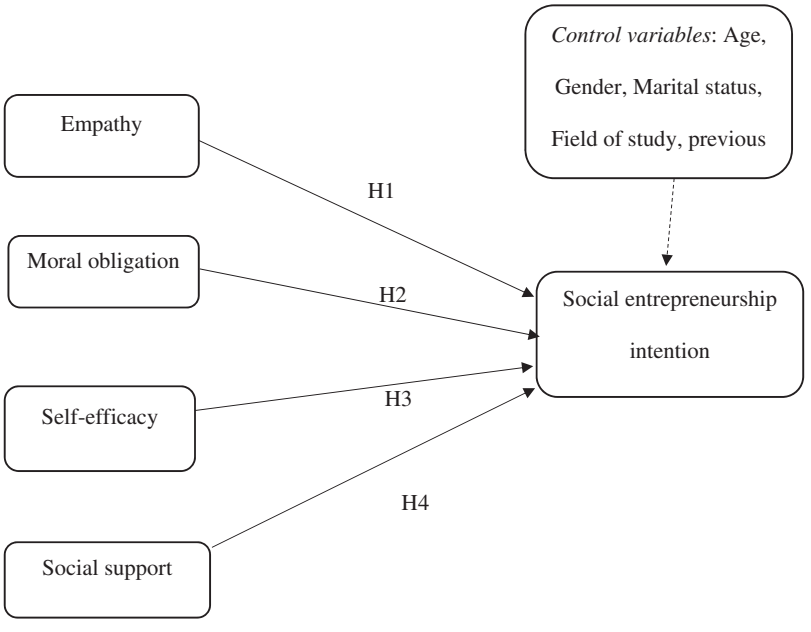

Figure 1. Conceptual model.

legitimacy challenges have strategically incorporated social welfare logic to positively influence stakeholders, with a view to potentially profit from their continuous support (Siebold, Günzel-Jensen, and Müller 2018). Social support is also implicated in the dual mission of social ventures where financial gain and generating social value are pursued simultaneously. For instance, complex scenarios have been reported where ventures generate profits from their pursuit of commercial activities aimed at market customers (e.g., sale of products), whose profits are subsequently directed at funding social activities that support beneficiaries as non-primary customers (Ebrahim, Battilana, and Mair 2014). In such, scenarios, the generation of social support is conceived as a consequence as much as it is the intention of pursuing profit in social ventures. It can be postulated that:

H4: Social support significantly predicts social entrepreneurial intentions of students.

The conceptual model of the relationships to be tested is presented in Figure 1.

Although Adriel and Aure (2018) have considered grit, prior experience, prior exposure to social action programmes, and the five personality traits as background factors in their model, we concentrated on the four latent variables consistent with Mair and Naboa's (2006) model. We also controlled for the possible extraneous effect of the following demographic variables on social entrepreneurial intentions: age of respondent, gender, marital status, the field of study, previous exposure to entrepreneurship.

Methodological issues

Research design and target population

The current study adopted a positivistic worldview and quantitative approach in order to address the research objective. A descriptive cross-sectional survey design was

employed to collect data from a sample of first-year students at a technical college in Zimbabwe. These students were about to complete a year-long course of study in entrepreneurship skills development (ESD). College students were targeted as respondents because of the possibility of them becoming future social leaders (Harding and Cowling 2006). Moreover, when compared to practicing social entrepreneurs, student respondents are likely to provide a greater diversity with regard to social entrepreneurial intentions (Urban 2008; Urban and Kujinga 2017).

Sampling and data collection procedure

Simple random sampling was used to select respondents from different fields of study which included engineering, business, and applied sciences. Class registers were used to create a sampling frame from which sample elements were drawn. Entrepreneurship lecturers at the participating institution were invited to assist with distributing and collecting questionnaires. The process of administering the questionnaires was carried out during lecture times to enhance the response rate. A total of 350 questionnaires were distributed, and 226 fully completed ones were received and analyzed. The researchers drew a relatively large sample size in order to meet the requirements of the statistical data analysis techniques employed, ensure representativeness of findings, and enable generalisability.

Ethical considerations

In line with research ethics, respondents were asked to participate voluntarily in the survey. They were apprised in clear terms of the purpose of the study and their right to withdraw from participating at any stage of the research process. They were also assured of the privacy and confidentiality of any information which they supplied in the course of the study.

Data analysis

Data were analyzed using the following computer software for conducting statistical tests: SPSS 23 and AMOS 23 software. Descriptive percentage analysis, multiple regression analysis, a confirmatory factor analysis (CAF), and structural equation modelling (SEM) were carried out on the dataset. The outcomes are presented in the next section.

Profile of respondents

Table 1 presents a statistical summary of the profile of the respondents. Frequencies and percentages were calculated for the following demographic variables: gender, age of respondents, marital status, level of education, and previous exposure to entrepreneurship.

The most frequently observed category of (i) gender was Male ($n = 133$, 59%), (ii) age of respondent was Between 21 and 30 ($n = 170$, 75%), (iii) marital status of

Table 1. Frequency table for nominal variables.

Variable	*n*	%	Cumulative %
Gender			
Male	133	58.85	58.85
Female	93	41.15	100
Age			
Between 21 and 30	170	75.22	75.22
Below 21	29	12.83	88.05
Between 31 and 40	27	11.95	100
Marital status			
Not married	192	84.96	84.96
Married	34	15.04	100
Field of study			
Business	21	9.29	9.29
Applied sciences	102	45.13	54.42
Engineering	103	45.58	100
Previous exposure to entrepreneurship			
No	119	52.65	52.65
Yes	107	47.35	100

Note. Due to rounding errors, percentages may not be equal to 100%.

respondent was Not married ($n = 192$, 85%), field of study was Engineering ($n = 103$, 46%), and for previous exposure to entrepreneurship was No ($n = 119$, 53%).

Measuring scale

Excluding gender, age of respondents, marital status, level of education, and previous exposure to entrepreneurship, all the latent variables were measured using multiple-item rating scales. For each scale item, a 5–point Likert format response extending from 1, 'strongly disagree' to 5, 'strongly agree' was used. The measuring items for the five latent variables (moral obligation, empathy, social support, self-efficacy, and social entrepreneurship intent) were adapted from Hockerts' (2017) study. Reliability and validity issues relating to the measurement of the latent variables are addressed in the next sub-section.

Reliability and validity

The study engaged the following techniques to assess the reliability of the measuring instrument: Cronbach's alpha test, Composite reliability (CR) and, and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) (Fornell and Larcker 1981). Reliability illustrates the internal consistency of items which are intended to measure a specific variable. Good reliability is demonstrated if the alpha and CR values are at least 0.7, and AVE is 0.5 or higher (Hair et al. 2010). In the present study, the results satisfied the aforementioned criteria for good reliability (See Table 2).

Further tests were carried out to assess convergent and discriminant validity. Convergent validity explains the degree to which a particular set of items purported to measure a certain latent variable actually reflects the said variable (Hair et al. 2010). Factor loadings at 0.5 or higher, AVE at 0.5 or greater, and CR at 0.7 or higher indicate adequate convergence and internal consistency (Fornell and Larcker 1981). On the other hand, discriminant validity illustrates the extent of the uniqueness of a latent variable. In other words, the concept demonstrates the extent to which a proposed

Table 2. Reliability and validity test results.

Latent variable	Item code	Factor loadings	Cronbach α value	AVE value	Marginal shared variance	Composite reliability
Empathy	Emp1	0.819	0.89	0.62	0.522	0.83
	Emp2	0.792				
	Emp3	0.749				
Moral obligation	Mo1	0.635	0.717	0.542	0.008	0.825
	Mo2	0.796				
	Mo3	0.779				
	Mo4	0.725				
Self-efficacy	Eff1	0.792	0.817	0.727	0.021	0.969
	Eff2	0.872				
	Eff3	0.890				
Social support	Sup1	0.764	0.758	0.669	0.019	0.938
	Sup2	0.902				
	Sup3	0.780				
Social entrepreneurial intentions	Int1	0.701	0.815	0.62	0.522	0.829
	Int2	0.825				
	Int3	0.830				

theoretical latent variable differs from related variables. Discriminant validity exists when the AVE for each latent variable is greater than the corresponding Marginal Shared Variance (MSV). The test results which are summarized in Table 2 confirmed both convergent and discriminant validity.

Measurement model

CFA was conducted to establish whether the latent variables moral obligation, self-efficacy, social support, empathy, and social entrepreneurial intentions adequately describe the data. Maximum likelihood estimation was performed to determine the standard errors for the parameter estimates. The following selection of model fit indices were used to evaluate the factor structure of variables in the data set: a statistically non-significant Chi-square/degree of freedom [χ^2/(df)] value $\leq$3, the Comparative Fit Index (CFI) value $\geq$0.9, the Tucker and Lewis Index (TLI) value $\geq$0.9, the Incremental Index of Fit (IFI) value $\geq$0.9 and the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) value $\leq$0.08 (Hair et al. 2010). The following results which were derived for the aforementioned indices are indicative of a good model fit: Chi-square goodness [$\chi^2(94) = 111.21$, $p = 0.109$); RMSEA = 0.03, 90% CI = [0, 0.05]; CFI = 0.99; TLI = 0.98; SRMR = 0.04].

To evaluate the extent of the common method variance bias, a challenge which is common with cross-sectional surveys, Harman's one-factor test was administered on the dataset. This test determines if a method-bias caused solitary factor explained the covariance in the statistical relationships between independent and dependent variables (Podsakoff and Organ 1986). Hence, all the observed measuring items were forced into a single factor using exploratory factor analysis (EFA). The outcome showed the factor explained only 24.46% of the variance. Since this value is less than 50% threshold, it is concluded that common method variance was unlikely to be a major problem in the present study.

Table 3. Fit indices for the SEM model.

NFI	TLI	CFI	RMSEA	SRMR
0.92	0.99	0.99	0.03	0.06

Note: RMSEA 90% CI = [0.00, 0.04]; – indicates that the statistic could not be calculated.

Table 4. Unstandardized loadings (standard errors), standardized loadings, and significance levels for each parameter in the SEM model.

Parameter estimate	Unstandardized	Standardized	*p*-Value	Decision
Social entrepreneurial intentions ← Empathy	0.80 (0.10)	0.75	<0.001	Reject null
Social entrepreneurial intentions ← Moral obligation	−0.15 (0.16)	−0.06	0.371	Accept null
Social entrepreneurial intentions ← Self-efficacy	0.13 (0.06)	0.12	0.044	Reject null
Social entrepreneurial intentions ← Social support	−0.31 (0.14)	−0.15	0.029	Reject null

Results

Control variables

A multiple regression analysis was performed to assess the degree of influence of the control variables (age, gender, marital status, the field of study, previous exposure to entrepreneurship) on social entrepreneurial intentions. The *F*-test for the model was not significant, $F\ (7,\ 218) = 1.32$, $p = 0.241$, $\Delta R^2 = 0.04$. This indicates that the control variables did not account for a significant amount of variation in social entrepreneurial intentions. Henceforth, we disregarded them from further predictive tests.

Structural model

Following the confirmation of a satisfactory measurement model, SEM model was constructed in order to test the study hypotheses. As indicated earlier, the aim of the present study was to test if the latent variables empathy, moral obligation, self-efficacy, and social support predicted social entrepreneurship intention. In combination with the Chi-square goodness of fit test, the following fit indices were used to measure the model fit: root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), comparative fit index (CFI), Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) and standardized root mean square residual (SRMR). The outcomes of the Chi-square goodness for fit test were not significant, $\chi^2(101) = 115.93$, $p = 0.147$, signifying that the model fitted the data well (Bagozzi and Yi 2012). The results for the other fit indices are presented in Table 3, and these also suggested a good fit (Fornell and Larcker 1981).

The results of the hypotheses tests are depicted in Table 4.

As presented in Table 4, empathy significantly predicted social entrepreneurial intentions, $B = 0.80$, $z = 8.21$, $p < 0.001$, indicating one-unit increase in the independent variable increased the expected value of social entrepreneurial intentions by 0.80 units. However, moral obligation did not significantly predict social entrepreneurial intentions, $B = -0.15$, $z = -0.89$, $p = 0.371$, suggesting there was no statistically significant relationship between the two variables. Apart from this, self-efficacy significantly predicted social entrepreneurial intentions, $B = 0.13$, $z = 2.01$, $p = 0.044$, suggesting one-unit increase in self-efficacy increased the expected value of social entrepreneurial intentions by 0.13 units. Lastly, social support significantly predicted social

entrepreneurial intentions, $B = -0.31$, $z = -2.19$, $p = 0.029$, demonstrating that one-unit increase in social support decreased the expected value of social entrepreneurial intentions by 0.31 units. It is clear that the regression coefficients for hypotheses 1, 3 and 4 only were significant at a 0.05% confidence level. Thus, the results support three out of four of the proposed null hypotheses.

Discussion

The fact that empathy significantly predicted social entrepreneurial intentions bodes well with extant literature. For instance, Batson, Early, and Salvarani's (1997) experimental design study of the impact of empathy demonstrated that participants who interpreted statements with high-empathy descriptive terms were more inclined to develop volunteering intentions than those who deciphered characterizations using only unadorned semantics. Chandra and Aliandrina's (2018) study affirmed that social entrepreneurs not only demonstrated their empathy to societal inequalities but also took action to address them; Moreover, empathy played a significant role in the social entrepreneurs' decision-making processes related to finding solutions to social inequalities. Even though Mair and Noboa's (2006) characterisation of empathy concentrated on an individual's attitude towards others [which seems inconsistent with Ajzen's (1991) construction of attitude as individual behaviour – for which empathy is a proxy] rather than a social behaviour, the fact that empathetic students are more inclined to demonstrate social entrepreneurship behaviour than less empathetic ones is logical and empirically convincing. Such students would be more pre-disposed to exhibit or support social entrepreneurial activities such as advancing explicit social missions, offering an innovative solution through the provision of certain products and services, and commitment to measure the social impact of their activities (Bosma et al. 2016). The participation in community development activities of voluntary, student-led initiatives such as Enactus Students in Zimbabwe epitomizes such empathetic disposition (Museva 2018). Such activities are considered altruistic in view of the reality that the Zimbabwean majority has slid into one of the poorest societies in the world.

The result that moral obligation did not significantly predict social entrepreneurial intentions seem consistent with some literature. The result coheres with Adriel and Aure's (2018) finding that moral obligation did not predict social entrepreneurial intentions. The same finding affirms the results of Ip et al. (2017) who reported that moral obligation was negatively associated with social entrepreneurial intentions. However, other research studies have contradicted this position. For instance, Barendsen and Gardner's (2004) study claimed that adherence to a sense of obligation was instrumental and one of the strategic approaches social entrepreneurs heeded to in the execution of their activities. Perhaps, the diversity in organizational forms that manage social entrepreneurship could explain the variance in results of the study. Applying Abu-Saifan's (2012) differentiation of non-profit with earned income strategies from for-profit with mission-driven strategies, it might be argued that since the former focuses mainly on deploying revenues and profits generated to improve delivery of social values, they may consider moral obligations to have a significant bearing on their social entrepreneurial behaviour than their counterparts. Since the pursuit of

sustainability could be the main driver for the simultaneous pursuit of social and commercial entrepreneurial activities by a social purpose business (Abu-Saifan 2012), such strategic business arrangements might give rise to negative associations between social obligation and social entrepreneurship, as financial sustainability is pitched above social considerations.

Nevertheless, since moral obligations are perceived normative beliefs that regulate social entrepreneurial behaviour (Ajzen 1991; Mair and Noboa 2006), they would be expected to exert social pressure which reinforces or diminish entrepreneurial expectations (Hockerts 2015; Schlaegel and Koenig 2014). The fact that moral obligations seem to reduce social entrepreneurial intentions in some cases and increase it in others could, therefore, be a consequence of the institutional and strategic arrangements as contended by literature (see Abu-Saifan 2012). This is because the strength of the moral judgment of social entrepreneurs as they found social enterprises varies widely just as much as not all social entrepreneurs are governed and compelled entirely by a moral judgement to create such ventures. This also bodes well with the reality that distinctions between purely social entrepreneurs and commercial entrepreneurs may be blurred given that some social entrepreneurs may give preponderance to financial impact for the organization simultaneously (or more than) pursuing creating value for society (Bosma et al. 2016). Therefore, the claims that personal moral values are essential attributes of social entrepreneurs should be conceived with circumspection as this is context-specific (Yiu et al. 2014).

The result that self-efficacy significantly predicted social entrepreneurial intentions confirms findings from previous studies. Multiple studies support the view that self-efficacy exert a large impact on social entrepreneurial intentions (Adriel and Aure 2018; Hockerts 2015; Mair and Noboa 2006). Tiwari, Bhat, and Tikoria (2017) also reported self-efficacy to have positive significant relationship with social entrepreneurial intentions. Having said this, we acknowledged some slight variations from established literature. For instance, in Hockerts' (2015) study, the effects predictive relations were stronger (at 0.51) than ours which were not so strong (0.12). We attribute this to the fact that Hockerts' (2015) study was conducted in advanced economies were feelings of individualism and personalization of agency may exert higher influence on self-efficacy with implications for social entrepreneurship intentions, than in Zimbabwe where elements of modernity (encapsulating individualism) tend to co-exist with some element of collectivism and *Ubuntu* (humanism). As such, the collectivist values may weaken the impact of self-efficacy on social entrepreneurial intentions. The provision of social support is often considered fundamental to the formation of entrepreneurship intentions (Davidsson and Honig 2003; Molino et al. 2018; Tatarko and Schmidt 2016). Evidence from the study was surprising as it suggested a negative association between social support and social entrepreneurial intentions even though the relationship was statistically significant. The negative correlation seems to contradict literature which tends to give preponderance to perceived social support in the formation of social entrepreneurship intention especially in resource-constrained environments (Desa and Basu 2013). This contradicts the claim that support from institutions such as local authorities is instrumental to the fulfillment of the social enterprise activities (Hostick-Boakye and Hothi 2011). In the same vein, the provision of a supportive

ecosystem characterized by incubators, accelerators, technological parks, co-working spaces, private, and public investors (business angels, venture capitalist, etc.) and specific services is considered instrumental in supporting new entrepreneurs (Cortese et al. 2015; Horowitt and Hwang 2012; Mason and Brown 2004).

Conclusion

Consistent with Mair and Noboa's (2006) model, we tested four antecedents that predict social entrepreneurship behaviour namely empathy, moral obligation, self-efficacy, and social support. Evidence suggested that apart from moral obligation whose impact was not statistically significant, empathy, self-efficacy, and social support were statistically significant predictors of social entrepreneurship intentions. At first glance, the fact that three of the four variables were significant predictors of social entrepreneurial intentions indicate that Mair and Noboa's (2006) model is a robust framework for explaining and predicting entrepreneurial behaviour. This postulation finds support from certain studies which either considered the model theoretically and applied it empirically in context drawing on all four variables (Tukamushaba, Orobia and George 2011; Forster and Grichnik 2013) or added antecedent variables (Tukamushaba, Orobia and George 2011; Hockerts 2015). For instance, Tukamushaba, Orobia and George's (2011) study found empathy as one of the important motivators for engagement in international social entrepreneurial behaviour, a finding which our study corroborates.

That said, our evidence demonstrates some variations with prior research as well. For instance, we found empathy to exert the highest impact of significance on social entrepreneurship intentions. This finding is inconsistent with Ernst (2011) who conceived empathy to have a negative effect on attitudes towards incubating social enterprise and argued that empathy is not a sufficient precondition for engagement in social enterprise as empathy needs to be accompanied by social responsibility for social entrepreneurship to happen. We assume that contextual differences here are fundamental to explaining these differences. For instance, in Zimbabwe, an impoverished emerging economy where poverty and social deprivation thrive, feeling of empathy could compel students to become social change agents through incubating social enterprises, a condition which might not have obtained in the advanced economy studied by Ernst (2011) in which individualism thrives. Our finding also deviates from Hockerts (2015) who presents social entrepreneurial efficacy as the strongest predictor of social entrepreneurship intentions. We attribute these differences to several considerations such as the fact that Hockerts' (2015) study concentrated on second-year Master students enrolled at a business school in a Scandinavian university who could have established and maturated their self-efficacy to become social entrepreneurs better than our sample comprising undergraduates who could have been trying to find their feet in terms of career choices. More, so, the fact that his study was conducted in advanced economies where self-efficacy could thrive better due to the prevalence of individualist values could further explain the higher predictive power of self-efficacy in the said scholar's results compared to our context where come collectivist values co-exist with individualist ethos.

Upon closer examination, our study also exhibits greater complexity in terms of the relationships between some antecedent and outcome variables. First, the fact that negative relationships persist between moral obligation and entrepreneurship intentions is surprising. Perhaps, the moral obligation-social entrepreneurial intentions could have been affected by other antecedent variables such as social entrepreneurial experience, social entrepreneurial exposure, social entrepreneurial passion and financial resources which were not considered in the present study, such that the more the moral burden of intervening in society through social entrepreneurship intensified among students, the more they found themselves to inadequately prepared in terms of entrepreneurial experience, exposure and resources to become social entrepreneurs in a depressed Zimbabwean economy. These antecedents have been considered critical to the pursuit of social entrepreneurship and the reinforcement of social entrepreneurship self-concepts. For instance, Hockerts' (2015) study presented entrepreneurial experience as a strong predictor social entrepreneurship intentions as much as entrepreneurial passion (i.e. enthusiasm, excitement and a desire to make a mark in entrepreneurial field) was reported to be a dynamic motivational construct that is associated with the self-concept of social entrepreneurs (Yitshaki and Kropp 2016).

Second, the negative association between the provision of social support and social entrepreneurial intentions is also unanticipated. In view of the centrality of conducive entrepreneurial ecosystems with financial, technical and social support to the thriving of social entrepreneurs (Tukamushaba, Orobia and George 2011; Horowitt and Hwang 2012; Cortese et al. 2015), the negative association could be attributed to lethargy and lack of creativity that may set among prospective social entrepreneurs with increased provision of support. For instance, research has shown technological entrepreneurship to decline with increased provision of support from business incubators and accelerators due to entitlement mentality, hesitation to transcend comfort zones combined with lack of creativity (Van Weele, Rijnsoever and Nauta 2017) combined with the general impression that such institutions might be reluctant to assist them (Cowell, Lyon-Hill and Tate 2018).

Managerial implications

The strong association between empathy and social entrepreneurial intentions implies that institutions that support social entrepreneurship such as incubators, accelerators, higher education and research institutions, and science parks should foster strategies of developing this psychological trait by appealing to the emotions of the youth. Cultivating a social change agent approach among youth can be combined with increasing their awareness of the political economy of social ills such as social deprivation and poverty to increase the emotional appeal of youth involvement in social entrepreneurship. However, since emotions are a critical but insufficient requirement for engagement in socially-oriented fields of work (see Ernst 2011), instilling a sense of social responsibility and increasing entrepreneurial exposure could increase the formation of social enterprises. This obtains even though social entrepreneurs have been found to have strong empathy for people affected by social problems (Bhawe, Jain, and Gupta 2007).

Mindful of the fact that moral obligation had a significant but negative relationship with social entrepreneurial intentions, which we attributed to the different organizational configurations and missions of social enterprises that students might have intended to form, managerial interventions for improving and explaining the formation of entrepreneurial intentions may need to consider such varying motivations of such missions and organizational configurations. This would ensure that such intentions are not only durable but may rather result in actual business incubations.

The reported significant but negative association between social support and social entrepreneurial intentions require further attention. For instance, a more targeted and sensitive approach to the provision of support would be required to ensure that increased support may not undermine the thriving of social ventures. The phasing out of support as prospective entrepreneurs get acclimatized to the incubation and sustenance of social ventures would be necessary to reduce lethargy, lack of creativity and limited knowledge of resources among social entrepreneurs, which are often blamed for the dwindling of social entrepreneurship. The provision of targeted support rather than holistic support would make entrepreneurs more sensitive to the type of support need and guard against staying in their comfort zones, which compromises social entrepreneurship through failure to dream big.

Implications for future research

The different variations obtained in this study in relation to prior studies imply that a contextual approach to the mission of social entrepreneurship would compel researchers to explore processes through which social entrepreneurial outcomes are achieved and develop novel theoretical insights into social entrepreneurship (Dacin, Dacin, and Tracey 2011). More so, future research could include other antecedents to social entrepreneurship such as social entrepreneurial passion, prior experience in social ventures and entrepreneurial exposure alluded to in this study.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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