

Analyzing the evolution of research on social entrepreneurship pre and post Covid-19 crisis

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Abstract

The pandemic context has impacted the practice of social entrepreneurship all around the world, creating a new worldwide dynamic. In order to consider the Covid-19 crisis effect on the academic sphere, we analyzed pre and post covid scientific production to outline the evolution of research in the field of social entrepreneurship since its beginnings to nowadays.

To do so, this paper conducted a scoping review analysis based on several articles dealing with social entrepreneurship, regarding the main topic clusters discussed by scholars and their adopted methodologies pre and post Covid-19 crisis.

We argue that the advent of the covid-19 crisis has not significantly changed methodological orientation in social entrepreneurship research, but has instead shifted the focus of academics and practitioners to aspects more related to (1) the agility in the co-creation of solutions and impact in extremely disadvantaged circumstances which reinforce resilience abilities of actors, (2) the importance of social and human capital, and (3) the pressing need to think locally in order to value the knowledge, assets and practices related to each specific context, and even to each community.

Keywords : Covid-19 crisis, Research evolution, Social entrepreneurship.

Paper Type: Theoretical Research

JEL Classification : L31

1. Introduction

The evolution of the socioeconomic environment during the end of the last century has been a trigger for the emergence of new organizational forms, so-called hybrid organizations (Mair & Noboa, 2003). These new forms are found at the crossroads of the three traditional sectors: public, private (for-profit), and the social one (non-profit, third sector). Social enterprise is an emblematic form of this phenomenon and it is constantly growing and carving out a place in the organizational landscape.

This type of enterprise emerged in a very changing economic and social environment, where the three traditional sectors were exchanging practices and standards. Nonprofit organizations were under threat, their ambitions and survival compromised (Mair & Noboa, 2003). They were operating in a highly competitive environment, characterized by increasing costs and scarcity of funds (Boschee & McClurg, 2003). Indeed, government grants and subsidies have fluctuated significantly and philanthropic organizations have become more demanding and restrictive about their donations. This was exacerbated by the growing needs expressed by communities (Weerawardena & Mort, 2006). These organizations were eager to find new ways to survive. They adopted approaches from the business world to address the challenges they were facing, thus leading to the emergence of hybrid organizations called social enterprise, defined by the European Commission as “ an operator in the social economy whose main objective is to have a social impact rather than make a profit for their owners or shareholders. It operates by providing goods and services for the market in an entrepreneurial and innovative fashion and uses its profits primarily to achieve social objectives. It is managed in an open and responsible manner and, in particular, involves employees, consumers and stakeholders affected by its commercial activities”. Nevertheless, Social enterprises exist under a wide range of models and definitions, which give more scope to the phenomenon of social entrepreneurship in general .

Therefore, social entrepreneurship has been a topic in vogue for the last three decades. Indeed, the notion of social enterprise first found its echoes in the early 1990s in the United States and Europe (Defourny, 2004). Its emergence was highlighted by several noteworthy events such as the "Social Enterprise Initiative" initiated by the Harvard Business School in 1993.

Other initiatives were launched by the Yale School of Management and Social Enterprise London (Dees & Anderson, 2006). This was followed by the establishment of several training, promotions and support programs for social enterprises and entrepreneurs. As a consequence, a wide range of Foundations have been set up and many research centers have been born to serve and support the movement. This pace has been supported by the rise of international social entrepreneurs' networks, with an average of four to five new networks created per year over the period 2000-2012 (Convergences, 2012).

Since the 1990s, social entrepreneurship and social enterprise have become important research topics (Defourny & Nyssens 2008, Dacin & al., 2010). In the inaugural issue of the Journal of Social Entrepreneurship, Nicholls (2010) stated that there is “still little consensus on the key research questions, planned methodologies, available datasets, or most anticipated theoretical perspectives to identify and analyze social entrepreneurship”. As the field has evolved, scholars have come up with a myriad of constructs and frameworks to explain the concept.

According to this worldwide dynamic, we aim through this paper, to outline the evolution of research that has followed the development of the field. To do so, we will analyze the scientific production regarding the nature of the research (qualitative and quantitative) carried out in the field of social entrepreneurship, and the main topics that have been discussed by researchers. We will then examine the impact of the covid crisis on the previously mentioned analysis criteria.

2. Social Entrepreneurship as a Pathway

Social entrepreneurship is a practice far from its infancy; several researchers (Alvord & al., 2002 ; Mair & Noboa, 2003 ; Boutillier, 2009 ; Kerlin, 2010 ; Bacq & Janssen, 2011) agree on this basic assumption.

Across the world, the practice of earning incomes to fund charitable activities is not a new concept. Human history is full of stories of men and women who have attempted to meet social needs in innovative ways (Maalaoui & al., 2012). However, it is the extension of the term "social enterprise" to this phenomenon that presents its novelty (Kerlin, 2010).

The Literature on the subject provides a wide range of examples: Jean-Baptiste André Godin (1817-1888) was the main object of an in-depth analysis conducted by Boutillier (2009). Godin, a nineteenth-century entrepreneur, had the mission to conciliate both economic efficiency and social ethics, and he was one of a number of historical entrepreneurs who were convinced that they were working for the good of humanity by improving the access of the working classes to technical progress.

Nyssens and Gregoire (2002)¹, cited the best known and striking example in Belgium which is Terre. Founded in 1942, the Terre association worked for the very disadvantaged and decided in 1980 to launch activities offering work to marginalized people in Wallonia-Belgium.

In the same vein, Bacq and Janssen (2011) put forward three cases: the first case is Florence Nightingale, a British nursing pioneer, who fought for the reform of hospital practices during the Crimean War in the 19th century and thus reduced the mortality rate from 40% to 2%. The second case is Roshaneh Zafar, founder of the Kashf Foundation in 1996, who struggled to improve the economic conditions of women in Pakistan by opening thousands of microcredit institutions. The third case is the Fundación Social in Colombia, established in 1911 with the aim of generating and dedicating income to the creation of social value.

These examples, and many others, show that generating money to create social value is not new. The word, the concepts and the discourses that have been attributed to it are nevertheless worthy of study and analysis because of the gradual rise of social entrepreneurs since the early 1980s.

As such, social entrepreneurship is not new, but it is the "repackaging" (Teasdale, 2012) of an already existing phenomenon. The emergence of the adjective "social" attached to the common noun "entrepreneur" is therefore part of a much deeper evolution (Boutillier, 2009). An evolution that has affected several spheres, especially political and academic ones.

Indeed, the concept of social enterprise has gained political recognition in various countries and regions since the late 1990s. In the United States as well as in Europe, organizations and initiatives have been created to support the development of this phenomenon. The "Office of Social Innovation and Civic Participation" in the United States, created in 2009, the "Social Enterprise Unit" in England, which became "The Office for Civil Society" in 2010, the launch of the "Social Entrepreneurship Initiative" in 2011, as part of the Europe 2020 strategy, and the "Start-up and Scale-up Initiative" in 2016 are some of the major examples.

This dynamic has been supported in parallel by the academic sphere, with a growing number of articles and books devoted to the issue (Huybrechts & Nicholls, 2012).

In this line, several authors have applied this label to a broad spectrum of organizational forms, which, on the one hand, has revived debates about the phenomenon, and on the other hand, has created confusions at the conceptual and research generalization level (Teasdale, 2012). Dacin & al. (2010) counted 37 definitions of social entrepreneurship or social entrepreneurs. Bacq and Janssen (2011) noted 17 different definitions of "social entrepreneurs", 12 definitions of "social

¹ This paper is part of a larger research project entitled "The Socio-Economic Performance of Social Enterprises in the Field of Integration by Work" (PERSE).

entrepreneurship” and 18 definitions of “social enterprise”, “social entrepreneurial venture” or “social entrepreneurship organization” (Huybrechts & Nicholls, 2012). So social entrepreneurship is an area of research and scholarly enquiry, this is yet to emerge fully (Majumdar & Ganesh, 2020).

Nevertheless, the academic sphere does not save effort to assert the legitimacy of social entrepreneurship as a field of research and mobilizes various disciplines to build new paradigms.

Accordingly, the following sections will explore the evolution of the social entrepreneurship field, and highlight the main topics discussed by academics and their adopted methodologies to further research in this area of research.

3. Method

In order to get an overview of the research done on this topic, we conducted a Scoping Review. This type of exploratory research aims to quickly map the key concepts that underpin a field of research and the main available sources (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005), in order to provide greater conceptual clarity on a specific topic or field (Davis & al., 2009).

The choice of this method is justified by the following objectives: to identify the types of evidence available in the field of social entrepreneurship, then, to clarify the key issues raised by researchers and finally, to examine how research is carried out on social entrepreneurship with an emphasis on the qualitative or quantitative nature of the work. Thus, we focused on studies and articles that were published in the most important academic journals that deal with topics such as entrepreneurship, social entrepreneurship and social innovation (Granados & al., 2011; Kraus & al., 2014; Hossain & al., 2017; Dionisio, 2018; Hota & al., 2019). These articles were identified on the basis of the presence of selected keywords in their title, abstract and body of the article: "social entrepreneur", "social enterprise", "social entrepreneurship".

These five articles represent pioneer studies in the field, they contain 873 articles classified in table 1. 5 books cited by Kraus et al. (2014) are published by leading University Press of England (such as Oxford, Stanford, Cambridge, London) and 1 by Oxford University Press in New York.

Table 1: Articles ranking

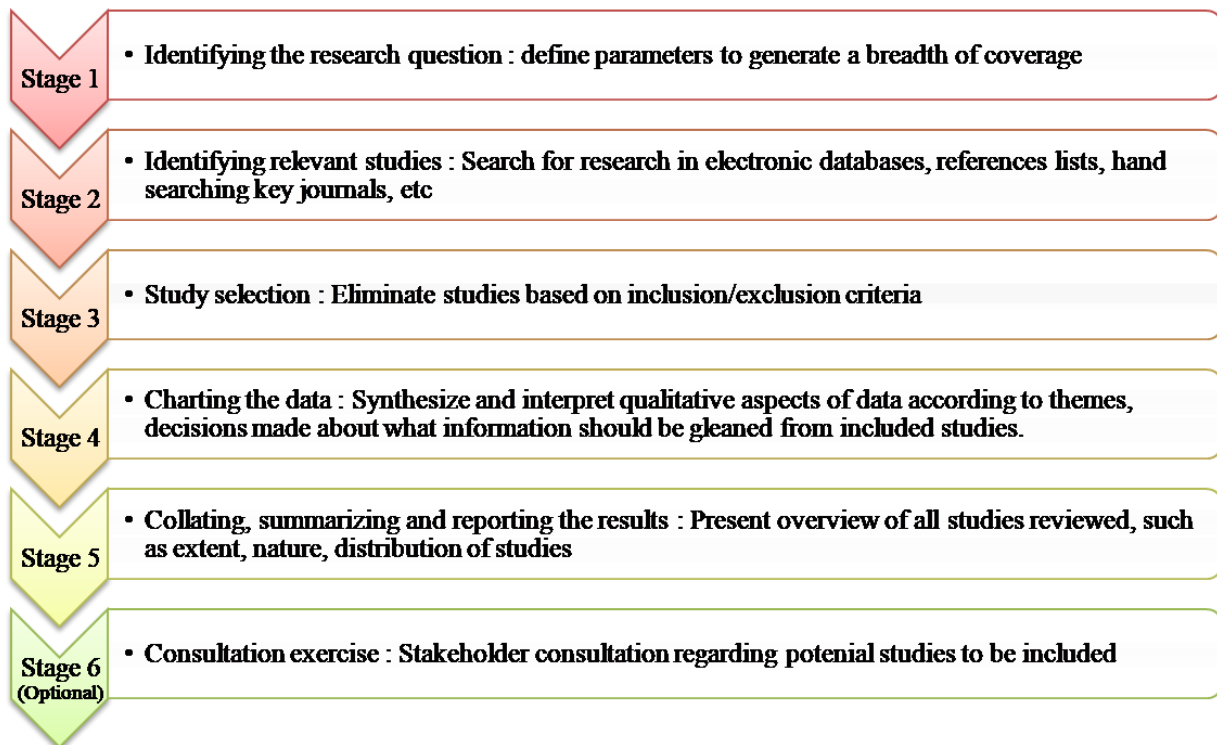
Authors	Rankings	N. publications
Granados & al., 2011	51-Q1. 69-Q2. 18-Q3. 6-Q4. 142 not-ranked	286
Dionisio, 2018	154-Q2	154
Kumar Hota & al., 2019	64-Q1. 7-Q2. 5-Q3. 33 not-ranked	109
Kraus & al. (2014)	10-Q1. 2-Q3. 6-Book. 2 not-ranked.	20
Hossain & al., 2016	23-4*. 67-3*. 154-2*. 66 not-ranked	310

Source: Auteurs

In order to respect the chronological approach that we have adopted, in order to know how covid crisis have impacted (or not) research in social entrepreneurship field, we have analyzed results on Google scholar by operating a research that had as a advanced criteria to find research containing the terms “social entrepreneurship” and “Covid-19” in the title of the paper and have been published from 2020 to 2022, at the date of July 2022 we have found 56 results, we have excluded papers related to a specific country, proceeding and book chapter, on the 56 results only 9 was relevant to analyze, so we have focused on the main topics of these papers, the adopted methodologies and their future avenues.

To do so, we followed the suggestions made by Arksey and O'Malley (2005), we implemented the scoping study in five stages as shown in the figure 1:

Figure 1: Six-Stage Methodological Framework for Scoping Review



Source: adapted from Arksey & O'Malley (2005)

4. Evolution of research in social entrepreneurship field

Social entrepreneurship is a concept in vogue for the last ten years (Huybrechts & Nicholls, 2012). At the academic level, it has been institutionalized (Dey & Steyaert, 2010) through the creation of research centers, chairs, programs and projects that are specifically dedicated to it. Several leading universities and international business schools have joined this movement. Harvard Business School, which launched the Social Enterprise Initiative in 1993, Oxford University and its Skoll Center, launched in 2003, as well as Stanford and Columbia, which have set up research and training centers in social entrepreneurship (Bacq & Janssen, 2006) are among them. In Europe, the "Social Entrepreneurship" chair at ESSEC, is an emblematic initiative of the Institute of Innovation and Social Entrepreneurship which has been working on measuring social impact, scaling up and co-creation between private, associative and public actors since the 2000s.

Not so long ago, Peter Druker was one of the first to refer to the "social sector" in the 1980s with his famous phrase "doing good and doing well" (Boschee, 2010), a sector in which citizens opt for different organizational forms to solve social problems (Dees & Anderson, 2006).

In the same vein, imminent researchers in management and strategy have addressed central questions related to the inherent opportunities of social needs: C.K. Prahalad's 'Fortune at the Bottom of Pyramid' and Stuart Hart's 'Capitalism at the Crossroads' represent leading works on this subject as cited by Dees and Anderson (2006).

In the early 2000s, Dees and Anderson took stock of this academic dynamic and described the field as being in its infancy even with the noticed flurry of activity. This fact has been confirmed once again by Short et al. (2009) who state that social entrepreneurship has been a topic of academic research for almost 20 years, but there is still a lack of academic evidence in this direction.

In 2012, Michaela Driver, a professor at the University of Colorado, published an article entitled "An Interview with Michael Porter: Social Entrepreneurship and the Transformation of Capitalism". This interview with Porter highlighted the scientist's vision in clarifying some aspects of social entrepreneurship and its potential to transform today's capitalism.

4.1. Social Entrepreneurship scientific productions: an increasing trend

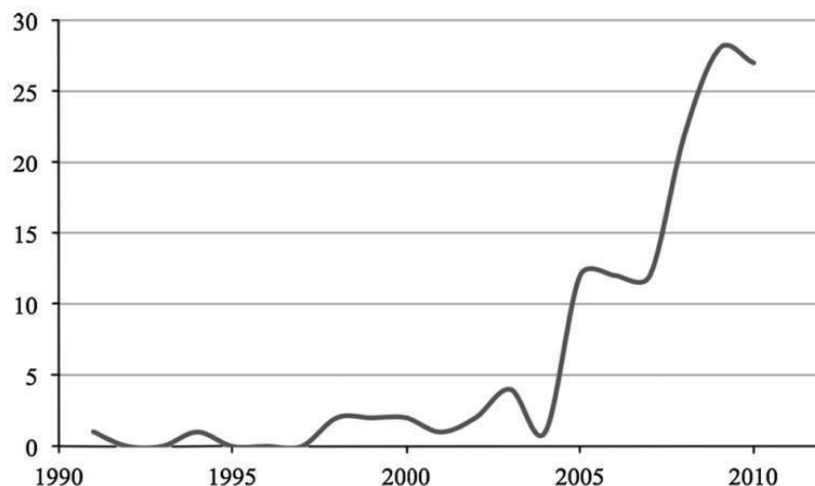
Social entrepreneurship is a field of research that attracts a large amount of attention and is characterized by a high degree of heterogeneity of investigated topics (Kraus & al, 2014), it has a relatively short history (Weerawardena & Mort, 2006). The first premises emerged in the early 1990s. The scientific production related to social entrepreneurship, from 1991 to 2009, has witnessed a significant evolution, with a publication increase of 62% in the last fifteen years (Short & al., 2009).

A study conducted in March 2011, using an Internet search through EBSCO and Google Scholar, identified 75 articles and 23 books that include the term "social entrepreneurship" (Huybrechts & Nicholls, 2012). Special issues of several journals have focused on social entrepreneurship and at least 3 journals have been created especially to deal with this and closely related issues: Social Enterprise Journal (Emerald), Journal of Social Entrepreneurship (Routledge) and Journal of Small Business and Entrepreneurship (Taylor and Francis Ltd).

Seelos and Mair (2009) reported that in 2006, a Google search of the word "social entrepreneurship" generated over one million hits, in 2011², over 2.5 million, and nowadays³ it has surpassed the 11 million mark.

Indeed, scientific production gained momentum only from the mid-2000s. Kraus & al. (2014) confirms this finding, highlighting the significant evolution of publications since 2005, as shown in the figure 2.

Figure 2: Number of articles per year



Source : (Kraus et Al, 2014, p. 276).

This finding was supported by Rey-Martí & al. (2016) who confirmed that the concept started to really attract the attention of researchers in the mid-2000s, and the number of publications began to increase year by year, reaching 381 papers published in 2014.

² Performed research on www.google.com for « social entrepreneurship », juin 2011.

³ Performed research on www.google.com for « social entrepreneurship », september 2019.

All the precedent findings confirm the increasing trend of scientific production related to the social entrepreneurship field, including works on the concept of social enterprise and social entrepreneurs.

In the following, we highlight the main topics dealt by researchers and adopted methodologies for their works.

4.2. The main discussed topics in the Social Entrepreneurship field

Kraus & al. (2014) conducted an exploratory study that involved biometric analysis of 129 articles and 5228 cited references, focusing on the top 20 most cited articles. The results of the study identified five "topic clusters" in the field of social entrepreneurship as well as 20 groups of researchers/researchers influencing the development of research in this field.

The grouping of the influencing publications revealed that a number of works present the theoretical frame of reference that formed the starting point for the emergence of social entrepreneurship research. The work that heads the list is Dees (2001) with his most cited article (48 times) "The Meaning of Social Entrepreneurship". Dees' article aimed to answer the question "what is social entrepreneurship?" and to do so, he based his paper on the works of Say (1803), Schumpeter (1934) and Drucker (1985).

Table 2 presents the most influencing clusters as identified by Kraus & al. (2014):

Table 2: the most influencing topic clusters

Cluster	Nb of influente references (articles /books)	the most cited article	Nb of citation
Definition and conceptual approach	5	Entreprising non profit (Dees, 1998)	28
Impetus	3	How to Change the World : Social Entrepreneurs and the Power of New Ideas (Bornstein, 2004)	35
Personality	3	The Rise of the Social Entrepreneur, (Leadbeater, 1997)	35
Impact and performance	2	Social Entrepreneurship and Societal Transformation: An Exploratory Study, (Alvord et al., 2004)	33
Future research agenda	3	Social Entrepreneurship research: A source of explanation, prediction and delight (Mair & Marti, 2006).	23

Source: adapted from Kraus & al., (2014)

In the same line, Sassmannshausen and Volkman (2013), conducted a bibliometric study to analyze the content of 124 research articles. This review focused on the most cited articles and not only on articles that met the preferences of its authors. In table 3, the major topics are displayed with the frequency of the analyzed articles (in percentages).

Table 3: Social entrepreneurship Research topics

	Research topics, areas addressed by articles	Freq.
1	definitions, theoretical constructs or frameworks for social entrepreneurship, description or understanding of phenomenon, typologies, taxonomies	54%
2	measuring social impact, social value creation, performance and other consequences of social enterprise or social entrepreneurship	12%
3	networks and communities in social entrepreneurship	9%
4	processes in social entrepreneurship	17%
5	reviews on social entrepreneurship research	12%
6	resources, supporting and financing social entrepreneurship, and decision-making by social investors	6%
7	social entrepreneurs and their motives, methods and psychology	6%
8	social innovation	5%
9	social opportunity recognition and development	9%
10	social enterprises from an organizational theory perspective	8%
11	Reports and narratives or interviews on (single) projects in social entrepreneurship	6%
12	social entrepreneurship education (i.e. education for and about social entrepreneurs(hip))	8%
13	Interviews, forum contributions, comments, notes (no original scientific research but expression of opinion, mind teasers etc.)	4%
14	(single) book reviews	12%

Source : Sassmannshausen & Volkman (2013)

Note. The sum of percentage exceeds 100% because some articles cover two or more areas, percentage rounded to full numbers.

More recently, Dionisio (2018) employed Gartner's (1985) four perspectives to describe business creation: (1) the characteristics of the individual(s) creating the business, (2) the process by which the new business is created, (3) the characteristics of that organization, and (4) the environment of the new entity. These dimensions are classically used in the entrepreneurship field in a broad sense, and considering their relevance, they can also be used to describe social entrepreneurship (Spitzeck & Janssen, 2010 ; Bacq & Janssen, 2011).

The author analyzed 154 conceptual articles published by Social Enterprise Journal covering the period from 2005 to 2017, with the purpose of identifying the main topics explored in the literature of this nascent field. These topics are (1) the characteristics of social entrepreneurs, and how they assess opportunities, (2) the functioning of social enterprises, their strategies and how they deal with their dual mission, (3) the institutional development and professionalization of workforce and measurement methods, and finally (4) the interactions of social entrepreneurship field with other components of the environment.

We notice that the different topics come under the same heading but are analyzed using different analytical approaches. Gartner's (1985) four perspectives seem the most synthetic approach which summarizes several aspects analyzed by other authors.

All of the previous studies address topics that we synthesize in three clusters : (1) the personal characteristics of the entrepreneur as an **actor of change**, his motivation, and how he deals with opportunities, (2) the organizational perspective of social enterprise as a **medium of change**, its managerial specificities and the place of innovation in its process and impact measurement , and finally, (3) **the context of change** that covers all interactions between the social entrepreneur and the social enterprise and their local and global environment.

4.3. Analysis of adopted methodologies

Short & al. (2009) argue that there is limited academic evidence in the field of social entrepreneurship, they find that there are more conceptual articles than empirical studies, and the latter rarely present formal hypotheses and rigorous methods.

The pioneering study conducted by Granados & al. (2011), built on the work of Bakker & al. (2005), classified 286 texts on social entrepreneurship according to their epistemological positioning and the nature of the produced knowledge that can be theoretical (conceptual, exploratory, predictive), prescriptive (instrumental, normative), or descriptive.

Following this framework, Granados & al. (2011) classified texts on SE and noted that theoretical ones represent 71% of all the analyzed texts, of which 52% are exploratory and intend to develop propositions and/or hypotheses, and 42% are conceptual. Only 6% of the theoretical texts are predictive, and attempt to test propositions or hypotheses.

As well, the Granados & al. (2011) analysis examined the nature of the data. It revealed that only 87 out of 117 empirical studies had a methodology section. Of the latter, 11% use formal hypotheses and 50% use more than one method of data collection. The analysis also notes that case studies are predominantly based on interviews with very few research using triangulating data; for example, very few used participant observation, focus groups as well as the use of secondary data.

This shows that many papers do not include an empirical component, while those with empirical results are mainly based on qualitative methods. Case studies (single) and exemplary cases or narratives as well as best practice reports are the most commonly used forms of empirical research. Cases and narratives are often used to illustrate theoretical concepts of social entrepreneurship.

Quantitative research on social entrepreneurship is very limited and focuses primarily on the development of quantitative measurement tools (Short & al. 2009), the measurement of social impact (Mair & Sharma, 2012), as well as the evaluation of social enterprise financing (Spiess-Knafl & Achleitner, 2012).

Hoogendoorn & al. (2010) and Granados & al. (2011) have also pointed to a quantitative research deficit in the field of social entrepreneurship. Hervieux (2013), on the other hand, confirms that predictive research seeking to test hypotheses is on the rise despite the limited amount of work in the field.

In the same line, we have focused on 4 works (Granados & al., 2011; Hossain & al., 2017 ; Dionisio, 2018 ; Hota & al., 2019) adopting a quantitative methodology for literature review named bibliometrics analysis. These articles are based on a great number of papers published in databases such as EBSCO, SCOPUS, Google Scholar, Web of Science and other ones, and covering the period from 1991 to 2017. Granados & al. (2011) provide intellectual structure of social entrepreneurship field and discuss its current maturation based on epistemological orientation, Hossain & al. (2017) examined the definitional debates within the literature, publication trends, theoretical frameworks and suggested a conceptual framework, Dionisio studied the development of social entrepreneurship as an emergent field, identifying key authors, institutions and their geographic origins, research and data collection methods and the key topics analyzed in each category, according to Gartner's framework, finally, Hota & al. (2019) Identified key scholarly contributions in the field and the linkages among them, tracing and analyzing its evolution over time. The main findings related to main adopted methodologies of these analyzed works are synthesized in table 4.

Table 4: The main adopted methodologies

References	N°. of papers Database	Period of time	Methodological orientation	Main findings
Granados & al., 2011	286 Articles several databases	1991-2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The epistemological orientation suggests that the published literature is largely of a theoretical and descriptive nature in both fields, with only a small number of predictive papers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Significant increase in the scholarly investigation of SE and SEship in recent years with greater collaboration and international research. ● Some countries are dominating the SE and SEship research area, such as the UK and the USA. ● No author or institution dominates the SE and SEship literature.
Hossain & al., 2016	310 Articles several databases	1991-2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The publication types identified in this study suggest the marked paucity of empirical work. ▪ The conceptual framework can be considered directional to show the proposed relationship of the various independent and dependent variables. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The SEship field is under-researched and not free from ambiguity—even after decades since the concept first originated as a separate field of academic research. ● Robust examination is proposed from a wider perspective to explore this highly potential area of academic inquiry and untapped area offering pathways for human development.
Dionisio, 2018	154 Articles EBSCO, SCOPUS GOOGLE SCHOLAR	2005-2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The research strategy most employed was qualitative through the use of case studies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Significant evidence supporting the positioning of social entrepreneurship as a domain of entrepreneurship research; ● There is a high level of internalization of the field; ● The most studied dimensions are respectively; the process dimension, the organization dimension and the environment dimension and at last the individual dimension presented the characteristics of social entrepreneurs with fewer articles.

Kumar 109 Articles 1996-
Hota & al., Web of science 2017
2019

- Qualitative research, specifically the case-based method, appears to dominate the empirical research on social entrepreneurship.

- The SEship field has grown significantly over the last decade and this field has evolved from conceptualizations of the concept to incorporate multiple organizational aspects, such as organizational mission, hybridity, resources, legitimacy, and ethics.
- The analysis uncovers unique insights into the structure of the SEship field.
- SEship research predominantly discusses the management areas of entrepreneurship and organization theory.
- Their analysis suggests that ethics is yet to be considered an important aspect in SEship research.

Source: Authors

It's clear that all these bibliometrics analysis argue that the predominant epistemological orientation in social entrepreneurship research is still qualitative, with a theoretical and descriptive nature, since the mid 2010's we notice the rise of the use of case study as a methodology approach. These findings are in line with the conclusions of the previously mentioned researchers (Short & al, 2009; Hoogendoorn & al, 2010; Mair & Sharma, 2012; Spiess-Knafl & Achleitner, 2012; Hervieux, 2013), which confirm the qualitative nature of research in social entrepreneurship field.

5. Covid 19 Crises and Social Entrepreneurship Research

It is clear that social enterprises and social entrepreneurs have played an important role, firstly in reducing the adverse effects of the pandemic on the well-being of the society. Secondly, SE researchers speculate that it is the prosocial motivations of social entrepreneurs that lead to positive social outcomes. Thirdly, the crisis has pushed SE researchers to pay more attention to the study of the organizational aspect of social enterprises (qualified here from social entrepreneurship). Finally, SE has long been recognized for its ability to challenge the status quo and navigate the workings of markets, institutions and governments to make the world a better place. Now more than ever, with a pandemic that has revealed breaches of established practices and chronic deficiencies in health, finances, housing, etc., and which has exacerbated the need for coordinated responses, we believe that governments should further facilitate SE work in terms of jurisdiction, funding, taxation, etc. The COVID-19 crisis has shown that SE researchers have a responsibility to seek a deeper understanding of SE outcomes and motivations, and to consider new roles and opportunities for SE within the framework of resource sharing and collective action that bring about social change.

To have a clearer idea about post social entrepreneurship research, the table 5 shows an analysis of the 9 more relevant articles published after the covid-19 crisis and sheds light on the main discussed topics and adopted methodologies:

Table 5: Post Covid 19 crisis scientific production: mains topics and adopted methodologies

Paper Title	Autors	Journal and ranking	Main topic	Methodology	Research agenda
Social Entrepreneurship and COVID-19	Bacq et Lumpkin (2020)	Journal of Management Studies. Q1	COVID-19 pandemic impact on research on the topic of SE.	No methodology section Qualitative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SE can not only agilely orchestrate new arrangements but also ‘be the glue’ that holds together cross-sector solutions. • SE researchers have a responsibility to seek a deeper understanding of the outcomes of SE and its driving motives, and to consider new roles and possibilities for SE within the scope of resource sharing and collective action that bring about social change.
The COVID-19 Virtual Idea Blitz: Marshaling social entrepreneurship to rapidly respond to urgent grand challenges	Bacq et al., (2020)	Business Horizons. Q1	real-time case description of a three-day “virtual idea blitz” organized in response to the COVID-19 crisis	No methodology section	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The value of the time-compressed virtual idea blitz in accelerating social entrepreneurial action. • Universities can play a valuable role in linking professionals, students, and researchers in shared endeavors that can achieve substantial societal benefits.
Reinventing social entrepreneurship leadership in the COVID-19 era: engaging with the new normal	Oberoi et al., (2021)	Entrepreneurship Education. Not ranked	critically explore the importance of social entrepreneurial leadership in this new COVID-19 era	No methodology section	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rethinking of the connections between social entrepreneurship and leadership and management.

The role of social entrepreneurship in the process of recovery from disaster a systematic literature review during COVID -19 ERA	Fawzia Alzahrani (2021)	International Journal of Economics, Business and Management Research. Q3	entrepreneurship in the process of recovery after disasters Evaluate the importance and roles of social entrepreneurs	systematic literature review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There should be a collective prosperity in societies to ensure that equitable economic growth is realized
Social entrepreneurship and COVID-19: managing the crisis	Satar, Mir Shahid; Alarifi, Ghadah (2022)	International Journal of Entrepreneurship Q3	The article identifies the main social entrepreneurial aspects of collaborative social value creation, social enterprise business models, networking as well value creation through digital collaboration as strategically suited to cope with the crisis emerging from COVID-19 or other such catastrophes.	No methodology section	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To aid the management, business, and entrepreneurship scholars and practitioners as well as the other stakeholders of the S-ENT ecosystem to stimulate the value-driven crisis management approaches that essentially integrate the S-ENT perspective.
Social entrepreneurship during the COVID-19 pandemic challenges and strategies in the context of the global crisis	Moron et Medeleanu (2021)	Universitary Journal of Sociology. Not ranked	To analyze and outline, in a realistic framework, the challenges, responses and strategies used by the social entrepreneurs to cope with the crisis provoked by COVID-19.	Narrative literature review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct analyzes that can interpret results in different economic and geographic contexts.

Operationalizing the construct of Social Entrepreneurship orientation during COVID-19	Rani et al., (2021)	SPAST Abstracts Not ranked	This study is intended to capture the construct of Social Entrepreneurship orientation on social enterprise sustainability during COVID-19 times.	Quantitative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understanding what social entrepreneurship is thus encouraging for social entrepreneurship research and empowering practitioners in the sector. In this situation of pandemics around the world, social entrepreneurship is a crucial practice to impact sustainability.
Social entrepreneurship during COVID-19: a case study of the only Karma (TOK)- AN NGO	Aggarwal et al., (2019)	Journal of Commerce and Business Studies. Not ranked	The present study identifies several endeavors that have played a significant role and created ripples in reducing the adverse effects of the pandemic on the well-being of the society.	Qualitative case study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The social entrepreneurship can tremendously help in bringing a change in the way we look at the world
Social and sustainable entrepreneurship in the context of COVID-19 pandemic	Marli Neis et da Silva Barbosa (2021)	Brazilian Journal of Development. Not ranked	This theoretical essay proposes a conceptual business model capable of reducing social inequalities and the exploitation of natural resources in the context of Covid-19 based on social and sustainable entrepreneurship.	Literature review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This theoretical essay is the result of an effort to find an effective solution for life after Covid-19. Therefore, they suggest the empirical application of the created SoS business model for practical testing purposes.

Source: Auteurs

According to this synthesis, we notice that the methodological orientation of the analyzed papers is qualitative, which confirms the same trend of pre-covid social entrepreneurship research. The main analyzed topics are related to the importance of agility, collective action, rethinking social entrepreneurship management, collaborative social value creation, sustainable and resilient social enterprise business models, and the importance of digital collaboration at different levels.

6. Discussion

According to this analysis, there is limited research in social entrepreneurship that goes beyond the exploration of the field, and consequently few generalizable ones, quantitative, empirical research and or transferable research are very limited. The findings are poorly generalizable and should therefore be interpreted cautiously (Hoogendoorn & al., 2010), and quantitative studies are therefore strongly encouraged (Short & al., 2009).

It is obvious that research on social entrepreneurship in the last decades has been mostly qualitative and case study based and the scholars have been mostly focusing on developing concepts to explain functions and processes while reporting the impact (Majumdar & Ganesh, 2020). Regarding our findings, most bibliometric analysis confirms that assumption: qualitative methodologies are predominant and there are very little quantitative studies.

The advent of the covid crisis has not significantly changed this reality, but has instead shifted the focus of researchers to aspects more related to the (1) agility in the co-creation of solutions and impact in extremely disadvantaged circumstances which reinforce resilience abilities of actors, the (2) importance of social and human capital, and the (3) pressing need to think locally in order to value the knowledge, assets and practices related to each specific context, and even to each community.

This could be explained by the nature of social entrepreneurship as a phenomenon which is very complex because of the following characteristics:

Social entrepreneurship is highly contextual: it covers diverse realities and practices around the world, the geographic location impact definition of the concept and the way it is analyzed, because of the variety of challenges and opportunities like historical roots of emergency, state role, NGOs involvement, academic research... that build the field;

Social entrepreneurship is a multidimensional: social entrepreneurship sits at the intersection of ethics and entrepreneurship because of its social mission (Syeiner & al., 2018), it also covers divers dimensions such as Gartner's ones (1985) to describe (1) the characteristics of the social entrepreneur, (2) the social entrepreneurship process, (3) the characteristics of the social enterprise and (4) the environment of its development;

Social entrepreneurship is multi-disciplinary: is a multi-disciplinary area of scholarly enquiry, recently it was associated with various disciplines (Staicu, 2021), it's a field which is in the crossroad of many others, like sociology, psychology, politics... Social entrepreneurship preparation is advancing not only in business schools but also in other academic divisions and departments (Steiner & al., 2018).

For all these specificities, we support the fact that social entrepreneurship is a field that needs more qualitative research to be analyzed and understood. The lack of quantitative studies is not awakening the field but we conclude that it is not fully understood enough in depth to proceed with generalization or advanced quantification studies. Qualitative research provides strength to unfold the concepts and allows enormous possibilities to open up new dimensions (Majumdar & Ganesh, 2020).

7. Conclusion

Social entrepreneurship is a field of inquiry that presents several challenges, it offers significant potential for discoveries and contributions that make sense (Hussain & al., 2017). Due to its momentum (Zeyen & al., 2013) and the large number of publications, social entrepreneurship has become a dominant discourse in entrepreneurship research (Kraus & al., 2014).

Trends in social entrepreneurship revolve around the different conceptions and meanings of the concept, schools of thought and practices, as well as the different discourses and narrative logic covering the phenomenon. While several advances have been made, this field of research still deserves more attention and more academic rigor (Hussain & al., 2017).

A better understanding of the institutional dimensions of social entrepreneurship, the use of network theories to position the role of power, as well as the integration of cultural approaches to study the phenomenon, are of great use. Added to this is the importance of focusing on the image and identity, largely neglected in the literature on the subject, and on cognitive theories in general, which can offer considerable perspectives for the construction of strong theoretical reference (Dacin & al., 2013).

This is a field of research that still has a long path to follow, with many avenues to be explored, many aspects to be clarified and, above all, a large number of perspectives to be critically examined in order to build a strong theoretical and conceptual corpus.

The respective and joint efforts of researchers and practitioners via research groups, alliances and networks at the local, regional and global levels only promise a bright future for this field. The advent of Covid-19 crisis has confirmed to the importance of the concerted efforts of different stakeholders at local, regional and international levels, it has also shifted the focus to aspects that are increasingly essential in the new era we are living in, which requires more co-creation, rethinking ways of sharing resources and investing in a more responsible way.

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