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**Factors Affecting Social  
Entrepreneurial Intent:  
Significance of Student  
Engagement Initiatives  
in Higher Education  
Institutions**

## RESEARCH PAPER

# Factors Affecting Social Entrepreneurial Intent: Significance of Student Engagement Initiatives in Higher Education Institutions

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## ABSTRACT

**PURPOSE:** The present study aims to test the social entrepreneurial intent model among students in the Indian scenario. Research on students opting for social entrepreneurial ventures as a career option is yet to be studied in-depth in the Indian context. The present study will help create a suitable ecosystem in higher education institutions through well-designed student engagement initiatives to convert job seekers into social value creators.

**DESIGN/METHODOLOGY/APPROACH:** The study used a questionnaire submitted to 439 students to collect their responses on the initiatives taken by higher education institutions in India to kindle students' social entrepreneurial intent. Smart PLS methodology was used to test the model.

**FINDINGS:** The findings show that prior experience, empathy, self-efficacy, and perceived social support directly impact social entrepreneurial intentions (SEI). In contrast, moral obligation has no impact on SEI in the Indian context. Student's exposure to organisations that deal with social causes is the most preferred student engagement initiative.

**ORIGINALITY:** There are few studies in India on higher education institutions' role in kindling social entrepreneurial intent among students. The present study proposed dedicated student engagement initiatives to bridge the gap in the existing literature on social entrepreneurship in the given context.

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**IMPLICATIONS:** Higher education institutions' student engagement initiatives can kindle social entrepreneurial intent among students pragmatic with an inclusive approach. It will, in turn, create a desirable social impact.

**KEYWORDS:** *Student Engagement Initiatives; HEIs; Social Entrepreneurial Intent; India*

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## INTRODUCTION

Social entrepreneurship is developing a sustainable solution to solve social problems by creating value in products and services (Alvord *et al.*, 2004). Social innovation focuses on addressing the challenges faced by society (Peredo and McLean, 2006), and can be achieved by improving people's quality of life and changing existing social paradigms (Garud and Karnoe, 2013; Robinson, 2006). The current COVID-19 pandemic scenario brought global disruption, increasing the need to tap individuals' innovative capability to solve social problems. Time and again, it has been proven that innovative minds always look for an opportunity amid misery or misfortune. Social entrepreneurs offer sustainable solutions to social problems and generate social value. The ability to overcome hindrances and the stimulus to achieve is the entrepreneur's quality (Prabhu, 1999). The capability to turn wild innovation into useful solutions, teamwork, decision-making, openness to change, and acceptance of failure are some of a budding social entrepreneur's many skills (Brouard and Larivet, 2009).

Social entrepreneurial intention is a psychological behaviour that persuades human beings to gather knowledge, perceive ideas, and execute business plans to become social entrepreneurs (Drayton, 2006; Light, 2006). In the present global scenario, time and geographical distance have become virtually zero if the intent is there to reach the aspired destinations. A large amount of the socially intended talent pool is a country's youth. To channelise such an innovative mindset among the youth and student community, particularly towards finding solutions for social problems and community development, the most promising catchment areas are Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) (Turner, 2011; Dees, 2007; Stephan *et al.*, 2015).

Antecedents of several pioneer models discuss the conceptual background of social entrepreneurship. The first model propounded was planned behaviour theory (Ajzen, 1991) that predicts entrepreneurial intentions and behaviour. The model focuses on three constructs to predict the entrepreneurial intent: the attitude towards a behaviour, perceived subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control. Mair and Noboa (2006) and Bandura (2006) studied how entrepreneurs form intentions to create social ventures. Their model proposes antecedents to social entrepreneurial intention. Hockerts' (2017) model improves Mair and Noboa (2006), adding experience as a mediating factor. With this backdrop, the paper aims to measure the social entrepreneurial intent among students in the Indian scenario by testing the Hockerts' SEI model. The study also intends to discuss the role HEIs can play in nurturing students' social entrepreneurial intent.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The theories developed on social entrepreneurial intent conceptualise that it is an offshoot of entrepreneurial intent. The social cognitive theory of Bandura (1986), social cognitive career theory developed by Lent *et al.* (1994, 2000), and others, have elaborated and explained that social entrepreneurial intent has remained influenced by factors such as self-efficacy, intent, and environmental elements. Social value is created through social entrepreneurship (Austin *et al.*, 2006; Fowler, 2000; Martin and Osberg, 2007; Peredo and McLean, 2006; Zahra *et al.*, 2008). Studies on social entrepreneurship were carried out in the Asian context to understand social entrepreneurship's background (Chell *et al.*, 2016; Ip *et al.*, 2017). The three approaches proposed by Armitage and Conner (2001) to measure entrepreneurial intent are the desire to perform an action, the probability to perform the action, and the intention to perform the action. The important elements in the SEI are perceived desirability influenced by self-efficacy and social support system, feasibility influenced by empathy, and moral judgement. The variables that influence or are responsible for the formation of social entrepreneurial intentions are attitude towards becoming a social entrepreneur (Chipeta and Surujlal, 2017) and empathy (Liu *et al.*, 2017). Bazan *et al.* (2020) proposed an SEI model that modified and extended Hockerts' (2017) model and Mair and Noboa's (2006) model (Theory of Planned Behaviour). The authors explore the influence of Universities' environment and support system (ESS), and impact of social, cultural and environmental issues on SEI, which is an extension of the already existing models.

### Social Entrepreneurial Intent (SEI)

The earlier studies on social entrepreneurial intentions are Ajzen (1991), and Shapero and Sokol (1982). The important SEI elements are perceived desirability (which influences self-efficacy) and a social support system; feasibility is influenced positively by empathy and moral judgement. Social entrepreneurial intent adds value to an existing social enterprise or creates a new one (Wu and Wu, 2008). The intent measures how serious a person is about a social issue, the time and effort one invests for a social cause and makes it a reality (Ajzen, 1991). Individual characteristics, to a great extent, influence entrepreneurial intentions (Bird, 1988). Social intent on implementation manifests into a social enterprise. Prieto (2020) defined SEI as the innovative purpose exhibited by a person to start a company to create social value. The antecedents that foster SEI used by the model developed by Hockerts (2017) are explained below.

### Prior Experience (PE)

Prior experience is the exposure and involvement in several social entrepreneurship activities; this may inculcate the desire to work with and find solutions to critical social issues. Prior experience with social issues gives confidence and makes people believe that they can make a difference in

society (Smith and Woodworth, 2012). The involvement in volunteering activities for a social cause results in a positive attitude towards social entrepreneurship and greater self-efficacy (Boyd and Vozikis, 1994). Prior experience is a determinant of entrepreneurial intent.

### **Empathy (EM)**

Empathy is the second variable under study. It is the capability to understand others' emotions, thoughts, and motivations and resonate with them. Empathy can be Cognitive and Affective (Mehrabian and Epstein, 1972). Cognitive empathy is the ability to recognise and understand another person's pain, whether or not one is resonating with them. Affective empathy is not just understanding their pain but also feeling others' pain and helping them (Barnett *et al.*, 1985). Empathy and compassion result in attitude towards the behaviour. It is one's assessment towards performing or not performing a certain behaviour, which positively impacts SEI (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980). Empathy is an antecedent to social intent. It can also act as a trigger for the social entrepreneurial process.

### **Moral Obligation (MO)**

The moral obligation is to help people excluded by society. According to the existing literature, personal moral values and standards are traits a social entrepreneur possesses. (Bornstein, 1996; Hemingway, 2005; Nga and Shamuganathan, 2010; Yiu *et al.*, 2014). Values and morals influence human decision-making. There is evidence of the role of values in attitude formation and behaviour. One of the determinants of behaviour is perceived moral beliefs and adherence to societal moral standards (Kaiser, 2006; Ravis *et al.*, 2009).

### **Social Entrepreneurial Self-efficacy (SE)**

The belief and confidence in one's abilities exhibit behaviour to achieve and succeed (Bandura, 1998). According to Smith and Woodworth (2012), individuals with high social entrepreneurial self-efficacy will create more social value. Past research contradicts the relationship between SE and SEI. Some studies identify a positive relationship (Naktiyok *et al.*, 2010; Zhang *et al.*, 2015; Lanero *et al.*, 2016; Miralles *et al.*, 2016; Karimi *et al.*, 2017; Munir *et al.*, 2019), and some others argue that there is no relationship between SE and SEI (Boukamcha, 2015; Bacq *et al.*, 2017; Miranda *et al.*, 2017). Self-efficacy is a variable in every social entrepreneurship model that makes a person believe in themselves and results in the perception that social venture creation is feasible.

### **Perceived Social Support (PSS)**

Social support supports trust and cooperation from the government, banks, family, and friends (Backman and Smith, 2000). Social support develops the intent in young people and enables the social entrepreneurial process. Family and friends share bonding and trust; these play a key role

in shaping the intention towards becoming social entrepreneurs (Hasan *et al.*, 2020). To a great extent, the perceived social support influences the perceived feasibility and, in turn, the intent. The degree of social acceptability and social support in providing resources is one predictor for SEI (Hawkins, 1993; Spencer and Gomez, 2004). The study by Taormina and Lao (2007) shows that social networks and social support do not drive students towards SEI.

## RESEARCH GAP

Most of the existing studies on SEI are from the western world. No significant studies have been carried out in the Indian context, especially about linking curriculum and higher education institutions' role in kindling social entrepreneurial intent among students. Universities and HEIs play a vital role in promoting, developing, and nurturing social entrepreneurship. The existing initiatives in the Indian context work towards entrepreneurial intent but not towards social entrepreneurial intent. The decisions about leveraging social entrepreneurship intent and starting social entrepreneurial ventures amongst students are yet to be researched in-depth in the Indian context. Such a study will help to create a suitable ecosystem of opportunities that leaves a social impact. A focused approach and dedicated pedagogy might kindle social entrepreneurship as a career option. One of this study's objectives is to propose a methodology that can help universities design their curriculum and student engagement activities to encourage students to consider social entrepreneurship as a career choice. In this context, this paper also proposes to discuss how the transformation in education is driving social entrepreneurial activity and deliberating the role of HEIs in promoting social entrepreneurial intent (SEI). The paper also lists a few ways or initiatives to be placed in the HEI ecosystem to promote social entrepreneurial intent.

## INDIAN CONTEXT

During ancient times, higher education in India focused on literature and arts, and skill-based knowledge orientation. The world-renowned pioneering universities of ancient India are Takshasila and Nalanda. The current education system was established under British rule. Primarily, the HEIs are situated in major port cities of India. For a long time, the Indian higher education system's focus was establishing higher education institutions (HEIs) and allowing students to graduate and seek jobs. It has led to a massive increase in the number of institutions and students opting for higher education. After India's independence in 1947, HEI's objective was to provide equal opportunity for the youth of urban and rural areas. The approach adopted by HEIs was to impart knowledge to students and make them job seekers. The universities and HEIs increased in number in both the public and private sectors. Currently, there are 1,044 HEIs in India under the categories of Central universities (54), State universities (412), National Institutions of importance (95), Private universities (356), and Deemed to be universities (127) (Sharma, 2020). Although the existing education system focuses on contemporary curriculum and pedagogy, it has several weak links in skill gaps, research gaps, and purpose and relevance gaps.

The following hypotheses are developed to support the current study:

- H<sub>1</sub>: EM and SEI are positively related.
- H<sub>2</sub>: MO and SEI are positively related.
- H<sub>3</sub>: SE and SEI are positively related.
- H<sub>4</sub>: PSS and SEI are positively related.
- H<sub>5</sub>: PE and SEI are positively related.
- H<sub>6</sub>: PE and SEI are mediated by EM.
- H<sub>7</sub>: PE and SEI are mediated by MO.
- H<sub>8</sub>: PE and SEI are mediated by SE.
- H<sub>9</sub>: PE and SEI are mediated by PSS.

## METHODOLOGY AND HYPOTHESES

The target population for the study was HEI students in India. The questionnaire was developed to test the social entrepreneurship intention model by Hockerts (2017), and collect student responses or feedback on universities' role in kindling students' social entrepreneurial intent. The antecedents of the model used for testing are Prior Experience (PE), Empathy (EM), Moral Obligation (MO), Self-Efficacy (SE), and Perceived Social Support (PSS) as independent variables, and Social Entrepreneurial Intention (SEI) as the dependent variable. The questionnaire was administered in India and completed by a random sample of 439 students from higher education institutions.

The questionnaire was administered online, and responses were collected from 439 students representing various HEIs across India. The survey yielded a response rate of 95.43%, and the responses were collected using a random sampling technique. The sample constituted 60.5% female and 39.4% male students. Of the collected responses, 34.3% were from students on an engineering bachelor's degree programme, and 65.6% were from students on a management bachelor's degree programme. In terms of age composition, half the sample belonged to the age group 20-22 years (50%), 23-25 years (23%), 17-19 years (21%) and above 25 years age group (6%), as shown in Table 1. The data were analysed using smart PLS. A five-point Likert scale (1= "Strongly disagree", 5= "Strongly agree") was adopted in the questionnaire.

The smart PLS (partial least square) method is used to test the model. PLS-SEM is structural equation modelling applied to behavioural research projects and is an alternative to CB-SEM (Wong, 2010).

## DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics, frequencies, and percentages of the study variables. The results illustrated that the study construct means were of a moderate level, and their values ranged between (3.205 and 4.173); the values of the standard deviations were low dispersion. Furthermore, skewness and kurtosis values were within the acceptable limits between -3 and +3 (Ghasemi and Zahediasl, 2012). We can therefore say that the collected data follow a normal distribution.

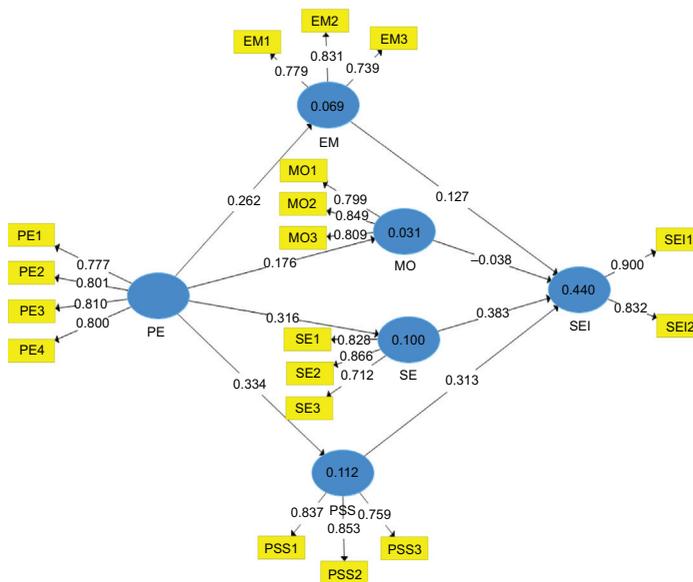
**Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables**

Variable	Mean	St.D.	Ske.	Kur.	Sex		Edu.		Age		
PE	3.205	0.910	-.156	-.433	M.	F.	En.	Bu.	<20	20-25	>20
EM	4.173	0.618	-.624	.388	173	266	151	288	92	320	27
MO	4.151	0.644	-.490	.055							
SE	4.004	0.632	-.371	.421	39.4%	60.6%	34.4%	65.6%	21.0%	72.8%	06.2%
PSS	3.601	0.767	-.430	.604							
SEI	3.551	0.768	.051	-.245							

Source: Calculated by author

The results in Figure 1 and Table 2 revealed that the factor loading values of all the study model items were higher than the assumed threshold point of 0.70 (Hair *et al.*, 2010). The reliability of the study variables' measurement were assessed using Cronbach's alpha; the reliability analysis indicated that the metrics were internally consistent because all alpha coefficients were more than 0.60 (Hair *et al.*, 2006).

The composite reliability values (CR) exceeded the cut-off of 0.70 (Chan *et al.*, 2015), i.e., PE = 0.875, EM = 0.827, MO = 0.859, SE = 0.845, PSS = 0.859, and SEI = 0.858. Moreover, the values of average variance extracted (AVE) exceeded the cut-off of 0.50 (Bagozzi and Yi, 1988), i.e., PE = 0.636, EM = 0.615, MO = 0.671, SE = 0.647, PSS = 0.668, and SEI = 0.751. Therefore, convergent validity assessment criteria were fulfilled.



**Figure 1: PLS Results of Study Model**

Source: Constructed by author

**Table 2: Convergent Validity**

Constructs	Items	Loadings > 0.70	$\alpha > 0.60$	CR > 0.70	AVE > 0.50
Prior Experience (PE)	PE <sub>1</sub>	0.777	0.816	0.875	0.636
	PE <sub>2</sub>	0.801			
	PE <sub>3</sub>	0.810			
	PE <sub>4</sub>	0.800			
Empathy (EM)	EM <sub>1</sub>	0.779	0.685	0.827	0.615
	EM <sub>2</sub>	0.831			
	EM <sub>3</sub>	0.739			
Moral Obligation (MO)	MO <sub>1</sub>	0.799	0.755	0.859	0.671
	MO <sub>2</sub>	0.849			
	MO <sub>3</sub>	0.809			
Self-Efficacy (SE)	SE <sub>1</sub>	0.828	0.729	0.845	0.647
	SE <sub>2</sub>	0.866			
	SE <sub>3</sub>	0.712			
Perceived Social Support (PSS)	PSS <sub>1</sub>	0.837	0.750	0.859	0.668
	PSS <sub>2</sub>	0.853			
	PSS <sub>3</sub>	0.759			
Social Entrepreneurial Intents (SEI)	SEI <sub>1</sub>	0.900	0.673	0.858	0.751
	SEI <sub>2</sub>	0.832			

Source: Calculated by author

To achieve multi-collinearity conditions among independent variables, tolerance and variance inflation factors (VIF) tests were conducted. The results in Table 3 confirm that all the tolerance values exceeded 0.05, and the inflation variance factor values were below 10. Therefore, the condition is achieved (Hair *et al.*, 2016).

Chin (2010) recommended that the square root of AVE of the latent variable should be more than the correlations between the latent variable and all other variables. This is shown in Table 3, where the values of square roots of AVE in each column were greater than the values of correlation listed in that column and row. Consequently, these findings confirm that adequate discriminant validity has been achieved (Almohammad *et al.*, 2021). Moreover, there are several significant correlations between the study variables, as shown in Table 3.

**Table 3: Discriminant Validity and Multi-Collinearity Test**

	PE	EM	MO	SE	PSS	SEI	Tolerance	VIF
PE	<b>0.797</b>						0.872	1.147
EM	0.262	<b>0.784</b>					0.542	1.844
MO	0.176	0.633	<b>0.819</b>				0.557	1.794
SE	0.316	0.554	0.522	<b>0.805</b>			0.527	1.898
PSS	0.334	0.335	0.35	0.524	<b>0.818</b>		0.688	1.454
SEI	0.436	0.42	0.352	0.598	0.544	<b>0.867</b>	–	–

The values in bold are the square root of AVE

Source: Calculated by author

Harman's one-factor test is one of the most common methods used to determine the common method bias (Bish *et al.*, 2015). The present study was administered on 18 items and restricted to a single factor, as shown in Table 4. The total variance was 33.572%; this is less than the cut-off of 50% according to Podsakoff *et al.* (2012). Therefore, bias was not found in the collected data in this study.

**Table 4: Bias Test**

Components	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	6.043	33.572	33.572	6.043	33.572	33.572
2	2.377	13.204	46.776			
.	.	.	.			
.	.	.	.			
17	0.302	1.677	98.498			
18	0.270	1.502	100.000			

Source: Calculated by author

Table 5 shows that the values of predictive relevance of study variables were more than zero; this supports the claim that this study model has adequate ability to predict (Fornell and Cha, 1994). Also, the value of the goodness of fit of the model (GoF = 0.316) is between 0.25 and 0.36. Therefore, we can conclude that this research's GoF model is medium enough to consider sufficient PLS model validity (Wetzels *et al.*, 2009).

**Table 5: Predictive Relevance and Goodness of Fit of the Model**

	Predictive Relevance	Recommended	Result	Goodness of Fit GoF
EM	0.018	Q <sup>2</sup> > 0	Acceptable	0.316
MO	0.039		Acceptable	
SE	0.060		Acceptable	
PSS	0.071		Acceptable	Medium
SEI	0.314		Acceptable	

Source: Calculated by author

To test the study's hypotheses, structural equation modelling (SEM) was conducted using Smart PLS software. Table 6 shows the direct effect of {prior experience (PE), empathy (EM), moral obligation (MO), self-efficacy (SE), and perceived social support (PSS)} on social entrepreneurial intentions (SEI). The results in Table 6 support hypotheses H<sub>1</sub>, H<sub>3</sub>, H<sub>4</sub>, and H<sub>5</sub>, where the empathy (Std. Beta = -0.127, and P-value = 0.012), self-efficacy (Std. Beta = 0.383, and P-value = 0.000), perceived social support (Std. Beta = 0.313, and P-value = 0.000), prior experience (Std. Beta = 0.552, and P-value = 0.000) are positively related to SEI, whereas MO is not related to SEI. Consequently, the second hypothesis (H<sub>2</sub>) is not supported.

Table 6 displays individual effect size for each independent variable on dependent variable of the research model. The findings in this table indicate the presence of four variables (EM = 0.025, SE = 0.141, PSS = 0.126, and PE = 0.046) has little effect on social entrepreneurial intentions (SEI), while (MO = 0.001) has no effect on social entrepreneurial intentions (SEI) because its value is less than 0.02, according to Cohen (1988). Moreover, the values of determination coefficients were (EM = 0.069, MO = 0.031 SE = 0.100, PSS = 0.112, and PE = 0.440); this means that there is a moderate interpretative ability according to Falk and Miller (1992).

**Table 6: Path Coefficients of the Research Hypotheses, Effect Size, and R Square**

H.	Path	Std. Beta	Std. Error	T-Value	P-Value	Decision	Effect Size F <sup>2</sup>	R Square R <sup>2</sup>
H <sub>1</sub>	EM → SEI	0.127	0.051	2.508	0.012	Supported*	0.025	0.069
H <sub>2</sub>	MO → SEI	-0.038	0.053	0.716	0.474	Not Supported	0.001	0.031
H <sub>3</sub>	SE → SEI	0.383	0.051	7.579	0.000	Supported**	0.141	0.100
H <sub>4</sub>	PSS → SEI	0.313	0.048	6.525	0.000	Supported**	0.126	0.112
H <sub>5</sub>	PE → SEI	0.552	0.034	7.446	0.000	Supported**	0.046	0.440

Significant at P\* < 0.05, P\*\* < 0.01

Source: Calculated by author

Preacher and Hayes (2008) recommended two basic steps to analyse the mediator. The first is that the relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable via the mediator variable must be significant, as shown in Table 6, where the relationship (indirect effect) between PE and SEI via the mediators was significant (Std. Beta = 0.552, T-value = 7.446, and P-value = 0.000). The second is that the boot-strapped confidence interval should not straddle to a zero between the lower level (LL) and the upper level (UL), as shown in Table 7. Consequently, we can conclude that the mediation effect is statistically significant for three hypotheses. Therefore, H<sub>6</sub>, H<sub>8</sub>, and H<sub>9</sub> are supported, while H<sub>7</sub> is not supported by the results.

**Table 7: Analysis of Boot-strapped Confidence Interval of Mediation Hypotheses**

H.	Path a	Path b	Indirect Effect	SE.	T-Value	95% LL	95% UL	Decision
H <sub>6</sub>	0.266 PE → EM	0.127 EM → SEI	0.034	0.014	2.413	0.006	0.061	Mediation
H <sub>7</sub>	0.176 PE → MO	-0.038 MO → SEI	-0.007	0.010	-0.669	-0.026	0.013	No-Mediation
H <sub>8</sub>	0.316 PE → SE	0.383 SE → SEI	0.121	0.024	5.043	0.074	0.168	Mediation
H <sub>9</sub>	0.334 PE → PSS	0.313 PSS → SEI	0.105	0.025	4.182	0.056	0.154	Mediation

Source: Calculated by author

Table 8 illustrates the various student engagement initiatives to be implemented by HEIs to kindle social entrepreneurial intent based on student responses. The most important initiative for students is their exposure to organisations that deal with social causes followed by guest lectures and student exchange programmes. Next came incubation centres to nurture new ideas of students dealing with social causes, followed by industry mentorship and participation in community development and sustainable development projects; these are networking with social entrepreneurs or alumni and social, emotional, and ethical skill training. Interestingly, the lowest scoring were activity workshops by government bodies.

The students expressed the need for HEI support in student engagement, developing curriculum, and offering courses on social entrepreneurship and innovation to ignite their entrepreneurial skills to create a social impact. Introducing students to success stories of successful social entrepreneurs and providing them with the opportunity to associate with the organisation can influence the decision to pursue a career in social entrepreneurship. Some of the skills needed by students as social entrepreneurs are the ability to overcome hindrances, the drive to achieve, turn innovative ideas into useful solutions, teamwork, decision-making, openness to change, and acceptance of failure.

**Table 8: Student Engagement Initiatives to be Implemented by HEIs to kindle Social Entrepreneurial Intent**

Rank	List of Student Engagement Initiatives by HEI's	Mean	Std. Dev.
1	Exposure to organisations that deals with a social cause	5.904	2.270
2	Guest lectures/student exchange programmes/NSS	5.175	2.272
3	Incubation centre to nurture new ideas of students dealing with a social cause	4.915	1.641
4	Mentoring (Industry/Institute)	4.838	2.192
5	Participation in community development projects/sustainable development projects	4.441	1.834
6	Networking with social entrepreneurs/Alumni	4.145	2.122
7	Social, emotional, and ethical skill training	3.649	2.206
8	Workshops by government bodies	2.929	2.343

Source: Calculated by author

## DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Based on earlier studies, in the Indian scenario, social entrepreneurial intent is not evident among students in HEIs. Many committees and commissions are set up to improve the quality of HEIs. As a result of recommendations, the education system underwent several reforms. In this context, HEIs need to implement the New Education Policy, 2020, focusing on skill development and disseminating knowledge with a purpose. In this context, this paper provides insight into the well-designed curriculum and student engagement activities that HEIs need to undertake to instil entrepreneurial intent from a social perspective as a career choice.

A universal approach needs to be used to design a sustainable social entrepreneurial curriculum at HEIs through which students can become familiar with both knowledge and core skills needed to start and run a social enterprise. Shahab *et al.* (2019) observed that social entrepreneurial education has a positive role in students' intention and self-efficacy. Wu and Wu (2008) proposed a flexible approach that should be adopted by universities to focus on students with different educational backgrounds and to nurture their entrepreneurial intent. The pedagogical content of social entrepreneurship courses needs to equip students with skills, such as how to acquire resources, to achieve the social goals and manage the practical aspects of their social businesses so there is a linkage between theory and practice (Soloman *et al.*, 2019; Souitaris *et al.*, 2007). Universities need to have linkages with banks and incubation centres so that students have hands-on experience on how to start a social enterprise. There should be some guidelines developed by HEIs to establish courses and design a curriculum for social entrepreneurship. Past studies indicate that social entrepreneurial mentoring plays a crucial role in kindling social entrepreneurial intentions in students (Fayolle and Gailly, 2015; Popescu *et al.*, 2016).

Kirby and Ibrahim (2011) and Salamzadeh *et al.* (2013) inferred that if awareness of social entrepreneurship is created in students, the importance of social enterprises to society would help more young people to start social ventures or think in that direction. Entrepreneurial education

significantly influences social entrepreneurial intentions by developing skills, behaviour, and attitude required in students to set up a social enterprise (Nian *et al.*, 2014; Nitu-Antonie and Feder, 2017; Yukongdi and Lopa, 2017). Students who attend courses or are involved in social entrepreneurial engagement have a higher degree of entrepreneurial intent. Universities need to align and incorporate social entrepreneurship and innovation in their vision and mission to achieve the desired outcome.

As per NITI Aayog (Policy Commission of India), students' first choice after their higher studies is mostly seeking jobs. Very few consider building their own business despite the favourable government policies and favourable cultural attitude. HEIs play a vital role in promoting entrepreneurial spirit amongst students, and empowering society is widely recognised across the nation. HEIs intend to offer social entrepreneurship courses to instill the mindset in students of being a "job creator" rather than a "job seeker". Salamzadeh *et al.* (2013) and Tiwari *et al.* (2017) identify that students' commitment to society directly impacts initiating a social enterprise.

Witt and Zellner (2007) elaborated on transferring knowledge from academic institutions to entrepreneurial ventures. In India, National Science and Technology (under the Ministry of Science and Technology) and Atal Innovation Mission (AIM) (under the aegis of NITI Aayog), were set up primarily to focus on developing and promoting innovation and social entrepreneurship, both at the school and higher education level.

## LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE STUDIES DIRECTIONS

To enhance students' interest in social entrepreneurship, universities should interact with NGOs, social entrepreneurs, skill development centres, banks, MSME technology centres, technology parks, incubation centres, and exposure to initiatives such as Atma Nirbhar Bharat Abhiyan (an initiative of the Government of India for self-reliance). These initiatives enhance social entrepreneurial intentions among potential social entrepreneurs.

The study was conducted in India, and the results cannot be generalised in HEIs of other countries. Leveraging social entrepreneurship and new business creations specifically amongst students through HEIs is still a question that needs to be analysed more closely because whether entrepreneurial skills can be taught or honed remains debatable. The current study focused on students in higher education institutions. The study's scope could be widened by incorporating students from vernacular mediums and vocational courses to design the curriculum and include activities that will kindle their interest in pursuing social entrepreneurship as an alternative career option.

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