

Exploring the motivation of social entrepreneurs in creating successful social enterprises in East Africa

Successful
social
enterprises in
East Africa

79

Caroline Njeri Wanyoike and Matilda Maseno

School of Arts and Social Sciences, Tangaza University College, Nairobi, Kenya

Received 31 July 2020
Revised 25 September 2020
7 November 2020
16 January 2021
Accepted 22 January 2021

Abstract

Purpose – This paper aims to investigate the motivations of social entrepreneurs in East Africa to create a social enterprise and their identified links to successful social entrepreneurship in East Africa.

Design/methodology/approach – The authors employed a qualitative method by performing thematic analysis on a set of interviews on social entrepreneurs from East Africa who are Ashoka fellows.

Findings – The findings suggest that intense personal experiences linked to past-life events as well as a high achievement orientation towards improving livelihoods and creating impact serve as key triggers for social entrepreneurship. Successful entrepreneurship focusses on system change at national and local levels. Their success is also seen when the social entrepreneurs have achieved their mission and are no longer needed; thus, they become irrelevant. The paper discusses the implications of these findings on the model used for sustainable social entrepreneurship in East Africa.

Practical implications – Based on an exploratory research on Ashoka fellows, the study adds insight to their motivations and success which can be used in a wider scale study of the same.

Originality/value – The authors advance the scarce empirical research on East African social entrepreneurs, link success factors of social entrepreneurship to a recent framework on motivation to engage in social entrepreneurship and stimulate further research in the area. The study contributes to the literature on social entrepreneurship by linking success factors of social entrepreneurship to a recent framework on motivation to engage in social entrepreneurship.

Keywords Motivation, Successful entrepreneurship, East Africa, Social entrepreneurship, Systemic change, Ashoka

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

Social entrepreneurship in Africa is growing substantially and getting important attention as a mechanism to deal with social problems (Littlewood and Holt, 2018). Academic interest in social entrepreneurship in South Africa and across Africa (Kerlin, 2008) is also growing, but at present, this research remains relatively nascent and fragmented in relation to

© Caroline Njeri Wanyoike and Matilda Maseno. Published in *New England Journal of Entrepreneurship*. Published by Emerald Publishing Limited. This article is published under the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY 4.0) license. Anyone may reproduce, distribute, translate and create derivative works of this article (for both commercial and non-commercial purposes), subject to full attribution to the original publication and authors. The full terms of this license may be seen at <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/legalcode>

The authors wish to acknowledge the Ashoka East Africa Regional Director, Mr. Vincent Odhiambo for making these interviews possible through access to the informants. The authors also thank Mr. Bryan Chesoli for coordinating and linking the authors to the social entrepreneurs. The authors also thank all the Ashoka fellows who participated in this research as it was made possible due to their input. Finally, the authors thank Tangaza University College for the conducive environment provided while researching for this article.

Disclosure statement: No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.



New England Journal of
Entrepreneurship
Vol. 24 No. 2, 2021
pp. 79-104
Emerald Publishing Limited
2574-8904
DOI 10.1108/NEJE-07-2020-0028

African environments (Littlewood and Holt, 2018). Previous studies have focussed on the meaning and characteristics of individual social entrepreneurs and the extent to which they and their enterprises compare and contrast with those of traditional entrepreneurs. The focus, particularly, has been on how opportunities are identified and exploited, what these entrepreneurs do and what they achieve for their communities (Austin *et al.*, 2006; Dacin *et al.*, 2010; Murphy and Coombes, 2009; Sharir and Lerner, 2006; Spear, 2006; Thompson, 2002; Trivedi and Stokols, 2011; Van Ryzin *et al.*, 2009; Zahra *et al.*, 2009). A few studies, such as Sharir and Lerner (2006), have identified similarities between social entrepreneurship and traditional entrepreneurship in terms of their combination of various motives, their process of initiation, establishment and development of ventures. Majority of motivational research has examined traditional entrepreneurs as initiators of their businesses (Mitchell, 2003; Benzing and Chu, 2009) with variations on focus such as gender (Isaga, 2019). Other emerging areas of focus include ecopreneurs (Kirwood and Walton, 2010), senior entrepreneurs (Perenyi *et al.*, 2018) and youth in arts and technology (Toscher *et al.*, 2020).

Despite the extensive research on motivations of traditional entrepreneurs, there exists little research on social entrepreneurs' individualities and motivations (Boluk and Mottiar, 2014; Germak and Robinson, 2014; Omoredede, 2014; Ghalwash *et al.*, 2017) in developing economies. Traditional entrepreneurship motivation theory has benefited from studies such as Krueger *et al.* (2000) based on Ajzen's theory of planned behaviour (1991) and Shapero's model of entrepreneurial event (Shapero and Sokol, 1982). Though Sharir and Lerner (2006) extend theoretical knowledge through evaluation of the critical success factors for social entrepreneurship, more is needed regarding factors that cause sustained motivation towards successful social entrepreneurship. This study benefits theory through a model illustrating factors that motivate social entrepreneurs towards creation of successful ventures that deliver social value and impact to communities, through systemic change.

Recent research in Africa has focussed on the motivations and intentions to start a social enterprise (Boluk and Mottiar, 2014; Omoredede, 2014; Ghalwash *et al.*, 2017) and antecedents to become a social entrepreneur (Urban and Teise, 2015; Elliot, 2019). However, more studies are needed that emphasize context, value systems (Shapero and Sokol, 1982) and role of culture on entrepreneur motivation (Aramand, 2012). The influence of the environment is important based on Gartner's (1985) institutional theory, which emphasizes the importance of the environment on location of business (social entrepreneurship), social enterprise growth and the characteristics of the social entrepreneur. Since social entrepreneurship varies based on socio-economic and cultural environments (Mair and Marti, 2006), understanding these factors contributes to better understanding of individual social entrepreneurs (Bacq and Jansen, 2011) and their engagement in social entrepreneurship (Ghalwash *et al.*, 2017). Until recently, few studies have evaluated the motivations that drive social entrepreneurs in East Africa and how they perceive the successes of their ventures.

This study focussed on Ashoka fellows by borrowing insights from Ashoka in the context of East Africa. Ashoka East Africa was founded in 2001 and is the youngest programme in Africa with the smallest fellowship presence: in only four countries in the region. Out of the six countries in the East African region, only Kenya and Tanzania are lower middle-income countries with the others being low-income countries having a gross national income (GNI) per capita of less than \$1,035 (World Bank, 2020). In their multi-country study, that included the three East African countries represented in this study, Rivera-Santos *et al.* (2015) found empirical evidence indicating the significance of the sub-Saharan African context. Dimensions of acute poverty, ethnic group identity and other additional factors of colonial history and informality of employment were significant environmental factors that influenced social entrepreneurship. In addition, corruption, political landscape, illiteracy

and low education rates (Ghalwash *et al.*, 2017) make starting and running successful enterprises in sub-Saharan Africa more difficult than other regions of the world (Rivera-Santos *et al.*, 2015). The Ashoka social entrepreneurs working with the society are likely to exhibit strong community orientation (Chandra, 2018). As change-makers with system-changing ideas (Drayton, 2002), these social entrepreneurs can give attention to social problems with the same kind of determination and innovation that is in business entrepreneurs (Dees, 2007). This study explored how the motivations of East African social entrepreneurs who have started successful ventures in this challenging environment benefit social entrepreneurship. This study therefore aimed to investigate the motivations of social entrepreneurs in East Africa, why they create social enterprises and their identified links to successful social entrepreneurship. The study adds more inclusive knowledge to the global understanding and current debates on social entrepreneurship on African environments (Littlewood and Holt, 2018). It provides data that are African in the area of management (Rivera-Santos *et al.*, 2015) and increase base-of-the-pyramid (BoP) research (Kolk *et al.*, 2014), a characteristic describing majority of Africa's population (Acheampong and Esposito, 2014).

This paper builds on the theory presented by Germak and Robinson (2014) in which they propose a framework suggesting that there exists a unique blend of motivational components in nascent social entrepreneurs that could explain why they engage in social entrepreneurship over other types of work. The multifaceted framework suggests that social entrepreneurs would need to possess a blended motivation, including some levels of achievement orientation and self-actualization (personal fulfilment), in addition to the desire to help the society. The paper extends this framework to include past-life experiences as an additional component to expound on motivation theories and contextualize the study to Africa. This addition links motivation to start a venture to the components that define the success of the venture. The model proposed in this study validates Germak and Robinson's framework by bringing out additional findings from practising entrepreneurs on the motivational components. This study expands the regional study location which Germak and Robinson expressed as a limitation of a single-location study.

In seeking to understand the role that motivation plays in setting up new enterprises and how the entrepreneurs perceive success, this study explored the following research questions:

RQ1. What are the factors that motivate social entrepreneurs in East Africa to create social enterprises?

RQ2. How do social entrepreneurs define success in their social enterprises?

This paper starts by reviewing social entrepreneurship literature. It then details the methodology used to collect and analyse the data, followed by an examination of specific motivations of the social entrepreneurs interviewed. This paper extends the framework proposed by Germak and Robinson (2014) to include past-life experiences as an additional aspect which expands on motivation theories and contextualizes the study to Africa. A presentation of the key findings of the empirical data collected then follows linking the motivations to success in the social enterprises. The final section concludes with the broader implications of our research for the social entrepreneurship literature.

Literature review

The ideas fuelling social entrepreneurship are not new (Thompson *et al.*, 2000), though the term as it is used in academic literature encompasses a broad range of activities and initiatives. This section will review literature on social entrepreneurship, examine the motivations of social entrepreneurs in starting their ventures and identifying how this relates to success in their enterprises.

Social entrepreneurship and social enterprise

The term “social entrepreneurship” is accredited to the Ashoka founder and social entrepreneur Bill Drayton who coined it in the 1980s (Dees, 2007) and opened it up to the world of academia (Dees, 1998). Social entrepreneurship is defined in varied ways with no unified definition (Short *et al.*, 2009) due to disagreements of what constitutes social entrepreneurship (Austin *et al.*, 2006; Bacq and Janssen, 2011; Shaw and Carter, 2007). In the African continent, there is still no consensus on the meaning of the term social entrepreneurship (Mair and Marti, 2006; Zahra *et al.*, 2009; Dacin *et al.*, 2010) or how social enterprises differ from other ventures in other parts of the world (Littlewood and Holt, 2018; Rivera-Santos *et al.*, 2015). Short *et al.* (2009) bring out the various contexts in which the social entrepreneurship definition is used, making it more complicated due to multiple perspectives on the concept (Dacin and Dacin, 2011; Harding, 2004; Mair and Marti, 2006; Weerawardena and Mort, 2006). Social entrepreneurship has been mainly defined on the basis of the “social” (Tan *et al.*, 2005), where it alludes to addressing social problems in a society where governments and charity have not succeeded (Dees, 2007). Criticisms of the social entrepreneurship definition occur where it is deemed as too narrow (Light, 2006) or too broad, thus losing its meaning (Dees, 1998). In this study, social entrepreneurship is defined as the primary mission and outcomes of the social entrepreneur, which is embedded in creating social value through provision of solutions to social problems found in the society (Dacin *et al.*, 2010, p. 42).

Just as there is little consensus on what constitutes social entrepreneurship, the same lack of a unified definition extends to the definitions of social enterprises (Austin *et al.*, 2006; Choi and Majumdar, 2014; Mort *et al.*, 2003; Rivera-Santos *et al.*, 2015). However, agreement on social enterprise definitions exists on the dual bottom line of social enterprises with social and economic aims (Bacq and Jansen, 2011; Doherty *et al.*, 2014). While social entrepreneurship constitutes the process, the social entrepreneur who is the founder starts a social enterprise as a result of social entrepreneurship (Mair and Marti, 2006). Social enterprises are also part of the third sector (Sharir and Lerner, 2006), falling within specific domains and contexts of social entrepreneurship that influence their formation. Some researchers seem to agree that they are economically sustainable businesses that differ in scope and areas of operation (Sharir and Lerner, 2006). Social enterprises have thus, on the one hand, been defined from this dimension as ventures that address and respond to specific situations (Santos, 2012), that address and solve unmet needs in the society brought about by market failure or the inability of government (Galera and Borzaga, 2009; Haugh, 2005; Mair and Marti, 2006; Seelos and Mair, 2005; Shaw and Carter, 2007) or charities to meet them. They are the “new engines of reform” (Dees, 2007, p. 24). They have also been defined on the basis of schools of thought emphasizing either the innovative nature of the entrepreneur or the non-profit nature of the enterprise (Rivera-Santos *et al.*, 2015).

Social entrepreneurs

Despite the varied definitions of a social entrepreneur, there is general agreement that a social entrepreneur is one who is actively involved in starting a business or is the owner/manager of a business which has primarily social as opposed to profit-making objectives. The business uses the surpluses mainly to achieve these social goals and is located in either the non-profit, for-profit or government sectors (Austin *et al.*, 2006; Dees, 1998; Dees and Anderson, 2003; Emerson and Twersky, 1996; Galera and Borzaga, 2009; Thompson, 2002).

Social entrepreneurs are defined in a practical way as catalysts for social transformation Alvord *et al.* (2004), as transformational leaders and even as social heroes in some circles (Galera and Borzaga, 2009; Renko, 2012; Seelos and Mair, 2005; Boluk and Mottiar, 2014). Given that this study’s informants were all Ashoka fellows, this study’s informants were all

Ashoka fellows, this study embraced the Ashoka definition of social entrepreneurs as individuals “who conceive of, and relentlessly pursue, a new idea designed to solve societal problems on a very wide scale by changing the systems that undergird the problem” (Leviner *et al.*, 2006, pp. 92-93).

Motivations for social entrepreneurs to start their ventures

Motivation is viewed as an important construct in traditional entrepreneurship (Isaga, 2019) and an important path to describe social entrepreneurs. Motivation in social entrepreneurship is often interlinked with the intent of starting and running a social enterprise through having a conscious awareness to start an enterprise (Carsrud and Brännback, 2011; Elliot, 2019). By definition, social entrepreneurs are people “with new ideas to address major problems. . . who are relentless in the pursuit of their visions. . . and, who will not give up until they have spread their ideas as far as they possibly can” (Bornstein, 2004, pp. 1–2). This definition lends itself to the characteristics and motivations of social entrepreneurs (Dacin *et al.*, 2010).

Push and pull factors have also been credited to the motivation to start new ventures where entrepreneurs fall into either category (Gilad and Levine, 1996; Segal *et al.*, 2005; Schjoedt and Shaver, 2007). “Pull” motivations include the need for achievement, the desire to be independent and opportunities for social development, while “Push” motivations may arise from (the risk of) unemployment, family pressure and individuals’ general dissatisfaction with their current situation (van der Zwan *et al.*, 2016). Life events linked to push and pull factors have been found to motivate social entrepreneurs to start a business (Humphris, 2017).

Despite the limited research on antecedents of entrepreneurial intention in Africa (Urban and Teise, 2015), recent research indicates that the motivations and intentions to start a social enterprise is influenced by a number of factors, such as local conditions and an intentional mindset (Omoredede, 2014). Lifestyle (Boluk and Mottiar, 2014) as well as social problems, inspiration, previous personal experiences and social networks (Ghalwash *et al.*, 2017), moderated by gender and culture (Elliot, 2019), also influence entrepreneurial motivation. Urban and Teise (2015) include skills such as moral judgement and empathy and achievement and self-efficacy. Urban and Kujinga’s (2017) survey of university students in South Africa confirmed that motivation and ease of access in setting up a social enterprise is an important first step in encouraging social entrepreneurs.

Germak and Robinson (2014) suggest a blended social entrepreneurship motivational model with personal fulfilment, helping society (Galera and Borzaga, 2009; Nga and Shamuganathan, 2010; Renko, 2012; Urban and Teise, 2015; Zahra *et al.*, 2009), a non-monetary focus (Boluk and Mottiar, 2014), achievement orientation and closeness to the social problem as motivators leading to social entrepreneurship engagement, differentiating it from traditional entrepreneurship. Experiencing a personal problem can contribute to the setting up of a social enterprise, especially when the experience relates to a deprived background. It creates an understanding of the solution needed to solve the problem (Williams and Nadin, 2012; Germak and Robinson, 2014; Drennan *et al.*, 2015; Hervieux and Voltan, 2018; Elliot, 2019).

Social entrepreneurs exhibit motives not fully investigated in the literature, such as lifestyle (Boluk and Mottiar, 2014). Additional motivation is from social problems brought about by inefficient institutional frameworks found in developing economies (Ghalwash *et al.*, 2017).

Motivation as an antecedent to success in social entrepreneurship

Defining success in social entrepreneurship is difficult (Bornstein, 2010), given all the contexts that social entrepreneurs are involved in (Choi and Majumdar, 2014) and the few

studies done to identify the critical success factors of social enterprises (Sharir and Lerner, 2006). Many times, success is interpreted in terms of the social value and impact created (Alvord *et al.*, 2004, Hlady-Rispal and Servantie, 2018; Shaw and Carter, 2007; Zahra and Dess, 2001). Successful social enterprises are seen as those that generate social value directly or indirectly. Through provision of solutions to social problems (Mair and Marti, 2006), they emphasize the sense of mission and service (Sharir and Lerner, 2006) driven by the creation of social value and impact on communities.

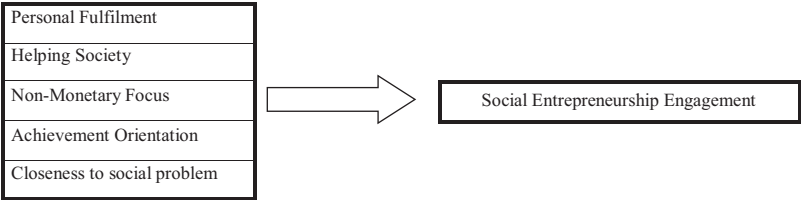
The most notable contribution towards understanding the antecedents of social entrepreneurial behaviour, though, is the work of Mair and Noboa (2006), who developed a theoretical framework of social entrepreneurial intentions. They suggested that empathy, moral judgement, self-efficacy and social support are the four antecedents of social entrepreneurial intentions. Specifically, empathy serves as a substitute for attitude towards the behaviour, moral judgement as a substitute for subjective norm, self-efficacy as a substitute for perceived internal behavioural control and social support as a substitute for perceived external behavioural control. Hockerts (2017) extended Mair and Noboa's (2006) model by including one additional antecedent: prior experience with social problems. Entrepreneurial intentions are key to the development of social enterprises and thus serve as important precursors to their success.

Alvord *et al.* (2004) determined in their study that "successful social entrepreneurship initiatives are led by entrepreneurs who have the capacity to work and bridge diverse stakeholder groups", (p. 274) leading to systemic change. "They create innovative solutions to immediate social problems and mobilize ideas, capacities, resources and social arrangements required for sustainable social transformations" (Alvord *et al.*, 2004, p. 262). Ashoka uses several criteria to measure the effectiveness or success of the social enterprises which should result in systemic change (Leviner *et al.*, 2006). Motivation is linked to successful social enterprises where it plays a foundational role in the launch, growth and success in not-for-profit enterprises (Carsrud and Brännback, 2011; Shane *et al.*, 2003). The motives and purpose of social entrepreneurs influences the success of their engagements (Sharir and Lerner, 2006).

Methodology

The qualitative method was employed in this study to derive rich descriptions appropriate to social entrepreneurship research (Miles and Huberman, 1984). Mair and Marti (2006) argue that the qualitative dimension helps to uncover the dynamics of success and failure in social entrepreneurships. The study was guided by research questions that explored the motivations of East African social entrepreneurs who are also Ashoka fellows. The study was exploratory and sought to build on the foundation of Germak and Robinson's social entrepreneurship motivational framework as suggested in their recommendations for further research (Germak and Robinson, 2014, p. 19). Consistent with the study of Shaw and Carter (2007), the researchers were able to approach the research with some objectivity in the collection of data since they are not Ashoka fellows nor practising social entrepreneurs. Figure 1 illustrates Germak and Robinson's (2014) framework and describes the five thematic

Figure1.
Germak and
Robinson's social
entrepreneurship
motivation
framework (2014)



constructs that impact the motivation of social entrepreneurs and lead to social entrepreneurship engagement. This unique blend of motivational factors may drive people from diverse backgrounds to engage in social entrepreneurship.

Sampling and data collection

The researchers began with identification of possible participants through a web search of organizations engaging in social entrepreneurship. The participants were representative of East Africa and met the following criteria:

- (1) They were social entrepreneurs aiming to create social value and catalysing change through not-for-profit enterprises (Alvord *et al.*, 2004).
- (2) They had no prior experience specifically with social enterprises before forming their social enterprises (Germak and Robinson, 2014).
- (3) They identified as change-makers (Leviner *et al.*, 2006).
- (4) They came from multiple locations in East Africa. This served to build on the limitation of the study by Germak and Robinson (2014) which was a single-location study.
- (5) The social entrepreneurs addressed wicked problems in various sectors which included poverty, unemployment and social shunning of marginalized persons (Ghalwash *et al.*, 2017; Omorede, 2014).

Ashoka fellows met these criteria, and we proceeded to contact the East Africa regional Ashoka office which gave us permission for its organization and the Ashoka East Africa fellows to take part in the study. Further selection of Ashoka fellows resulted in a sample of ten cases based on the following:

- (1) The fellows had passed through the rigorous criteria of a new idea, creativity, entrepreneurial quality, social impact of the idea and ethical fibre and had launched the current enterprise (Gartner, 1988; Leviner *et al.*, 2006; Shane and Venkataraman, 2000).
- (2) Their participation and facilitation as panellists in two international social entrepreneurship conferences held in Nairobi, Kenya, was notable. One was held in October 2019, with the theme “sustainable social entrepreneurship as a framework for social transformation” and the other took place in December 2019, themed “Impact! Africa Social Entrepreneurship Summit 2019”.
- (3) They represented multiple sectors and were from the three regions of East Africa, which translates into a diverse sample (Creswell, 2007) as indicated in Table 1.

The case study approach was used with each Ashoka fellow representing a social enterprise case. Since motivation of social entrepreneurs is still a nascent field, use of multiple case studies for robust data collection is recommended by Yin (2014) and Eisenhardt (1989), where each individual represents a case. The qualitative in-depth approach is supported by Gartner's (1985) arguments on heterogeneity and the complex phenomenon of creating new ventures. This qualitative method employed an exploratory and inductive approach appropriate to theory-building in understudied phenomena such as motivations of social entrepreneurs. The method enhanced in-depth information gathering of the social entrepreneurs' experiences capturing rich information leading to a better understanding of their motivations and success factors. This method is consistent with other related theory-building work by Boluk and Mottiar (2014), Omorede (2014), Ghalwash (2017) and Littlewood

Social enterprise	Founder	Registration year	Background	Sector	Country
Family Alliance for Development and Cooperation (FADECO)	Entrepreneur 1	1993	Provides small-scale farmers communities with technology to preserve and package produce	Agricultural	Tanzania
Flip Africa	Entrepreneur 2	2018	Leverages technology through a platform so youth find jobs and are included in social safety nets	Youth employment	Uganda
Fundi Bots	Entrepreneur 3	2014	A passion project to leverage robotics as a learning tool in classrooms and communities to learn how to programme computers and robots	Education science and technology	Uganda
Youth LITE (Lead, Inspire, Transform, Empower) Kenya	Entrepreneur 4	2012	Brands students as consultants, where they and local authority create business solutions	Youth employment	Kenya
Nafisika Trust	Entrepreneur 5		Delivers rehabilitation programmes for the inmates, to transition back into the society reducing the rate of reoffense creating safer communities	Correctional and prisons	Kenya
The Youth Banner Kenya (TYB)	Entrepreneur 6	2010	Founded through the Banner Economic Empowerment program (BEEP). Provides rural youth with skills training	Youth employment	Kenya
National Union of Coffee Agribusinesses and Farm Enterprises (NUCAFE)	Entrepreneur 7	2003	It is called the farmers ownership model with coffee farmers packaging and exporting their own coffee as a finished product	Agricultural	Uganda
Crafts of Africa People to People Tourism	Entrepreneur 8	1988 2001	Artisan communities host tourists who experience life in Kenya through cultural immersion in the homes of the artisans	Tourism/ export	Kenya

Table 1.
Profile of the case
studies

(continued)

Table 1.

Social enterprise	Founder	Registration year	Background	Sector	Country
Nampya Farmers Market	Entrepreneur 9	2014	Build fair and reliable markets for agricultural producers and retailers through mobile supply-based platform	Agricultural	Uganda
Hill Preparatory School	Entrepreneur 10	1988	Integrates children with learning disabilities and their regular counterparts	Education and special needs	Uganda

and Holt (2018). Data were collected through in-person, in-depth interviews with the ten Ashoka fellows. The interviews were conducted over a period of one month: from 30 October 2019 to 5 December 2019. The interviews averaged 50 min. In all the interviews, we probed for more information allowing us to build an in-depth narrative of each case, in line with Alvord *et al.*'s (2004) suggestion. Majority of the interviews were held at the location of the two conferences and one at the participant's office; all in Nairobi.

Interview guides were used to focus the questions. With the participants' permission, the researchers recorded the interviews through note taking and digital recordings. These recordings were then transcribed and checked for accuracy. Minor corrections were made where omissions were noted. Secondary information was also sourced from the social entrepreneurs' respective websites, Ashoka website, and the conference profiles¹. Data were analysed through thematic analysis where themes were identified on the first level such as personal background experiences, compassion, proximity to the issue and iterated until key themes emerged. These were then grouped into categories and compared to the selected framework used in the study.

A description of the case profiles is illustrated in Table 1 with the social enterprise name, year of registration, background, sector and country where the enterprise is located. The key sectors are tourism and correctional facilities/prisons in Kenya; agriculture in Tanzania and Uganda; education in Uganda with a focus on science, technology and special needs and youth employment in Kenya and Uganda. The social enterprises were formed between 1988 and 2018.

Findings

The findings discussed here start with the key findings presented under each research question on the factors that motivate social entrepreneurs in East Africa to create social enterprises and their definition of social entrepreneurship success which is linked to their own enterprises. *Verbatim* quotations were used to highlight the findings of the research and tables utilized to compare the patterns identified in the cases (Miles and Huberman, 1984). Since this was an exploratory study building on a fairly recent theoretical framework, the findings can be further developed using larger samples and incorporating wider coverage of the East African region.

Theme	Source theory	Component description	Social entrepreneur	Nature of motivation
Personal fulfilment	Maslow (1943)	Independence Self-actualization need to start a SE Motivated by high-order needs	Entrepreneur 8	Independence Self-employment
Helping society	PSM (Perry, 1996, 1997) Miller <i>et al.</i> (2012)	Commitment to public interest compassion	Entrepreneur 2	Statistics on unemployed youth
			Entrepreneur 1	Improve community
			Entrepreneur 7	Farmers own their coffee
			Entrepreneur 5	Safe society through rehabilitated inmates
		Past-life events –closeness to the problem, thus helping society	Entrepreneurs 1,2, 3, 5,7,10	Past-life events
Non-monetary focus	Financial management	Pure profit motive Triple bottom line	All 10 Entrepreneur 1	No-profit motive No patent on technology
Achievement orientation	McClelland's <i>et al.</i> , Need theory 1953	Need to complete a significant achievement or impact	All 10	Create systemic change
			Entrepreneur 9	Agriculture as a stable occupation for farmers
			Entrepreneur 3	Passion for a curriculum enhanced by robots
			Entrepreneur 5	Challenge mindsets on inmates
			Entrepreneur 2	National safety nets through youth employment
			Entrepreneur 6	Accelerate youth ideas
			Entrepreneur 4	Youth as the consultants
Closeness to social problem	PSM (Perry and Wise, 1990; Hsieh <i>et al.</i> , 2011) Miller <i>et al.</i> (2012)	Get some recognition for it Deep rooted compassion or closeness to the missions or causes supported by their organizations	Entrepreneur 1	Missionary to help others
			Entrepreneur 5	Avoid repeat offenders
			Entrepreneur 10	Integrate special and normal children
		Increased resonance of the motivational factor	Entrepreneur 1, 9	Poverty in a land of plenty
			Entrepreneur 2	Sibling unemployment
			Entrepreneur 3	Frustration with school
			Entrepreneur 4	Past low self-esteem
			Entrepreneur 7	Poor coffee farmers home
			Entrepreneur 10	Had a special needs child

Table 2.
Findings on the blend
of motivational
components

Motivations of the social entrepreneurs

RQ1. What are the factors that motivate social entrepreneurs in East Africa to create social enterprises?

The findings illustrated in [Table 2](#) centred on the themes of closeness to the problem, helping society, achievement orientation and non-monetary focus, with one entrepreneur in the personal fulfilment category. Past-life events combined both closeness to the problem and helping society. Achievement orientation was linked to creation of systemic change in both the community and national environments.

Personal fulfilment and independence

Findings reveal that only one social entrepreneur expressed personal fulfilment as a motivation. This finding was different from that in [Germak and Robinson's \(2014\)](#) study where nascent social entrepreneurs had a strong desire to be their own bosses. There is agreement that personal fulfilment was not the only driver but was tied to commitment to public interest and helping society. The founder of People to People Tourism said,

My motivation was working with the grass root communities. . . I had decided to be self-employed as this is where I get my satisfaction (entrepreneur 8, personal communication, 5 December 2019).

Helping society

Helping society emerged as a motivating factor in the setting up of social enterprises. A total of four entrepreneurs expressed compassion as a driving force to helping society and a contributor to their commitment to public interest. Family Alliance for Development and Cooperation (FADECO) recollected that:

My motivation was to make the community better. I mobilized people and looked at the needs of others. I looked at what is the common thing to make them successful (entrepreneur 1, personal communication, 30 October 2019).

The commitment of NUCAFE to helping coffee farmers in their communities is also evident. The founder echoes this sentiment by stating that:

Farmers did not have ownership over their coffee. They were just custodians. I therefore saw the need for the farmers to own their coffee (entrepreneur 7, personal communication, 4 December 2019).

Helping society was also observed through compassion and the ability to connect with people at an emotional level when they are experiencing hardships. The founder of Nafisika Trust explained that:

My bubble burst at the end of the year when I asked my students . . . about their plans after prison. . . one of my students . . . looked me dead in the face and told me he was going to go back and forge cheques. . . I was so heartbroken (entrepreneur 5, personal communication, 13 November 2019).

Social entrepreneurs with a business and entrepreneurship background aspire to help society. This is supported by the view expressed by the founder of Nampya Farmers Market:

My entry point was to see that agriculture becomes a stable occupation for the farmers to improve their livelihoods and so farmers can educate their children and even the urban dwellers can be able to access fresh food at better prices (entrepreneur 10, personal communication, 5 December 2019).

Non-monetary focus

Despite the challenges faced in raising funds, the social entrepreneurs persisted in their cause with help from their social networks. They were rarely driven by the profit motive. The founder of FADECO clarifies this by saying,

In my village people did not have firewood but had food so I initiated planting of trees like 100 trees. Membership was doing what we had agreed to do and was not based on money (entrepreneur 1, personal communication, 30 October 2019).

Achievement orientation

This component was evident in all the entrepreneurs since they showed the need to create something with significant impact. This was observable in the forms of systemic changes they chose to bring about. This theme is aligned with a core criterion required of Ashoka fellows: to create impact that leads to a wide array of change. From the study, systemic change was observed in the form of policy and structural changes which were not readily evident at the community-based level. However, at the national level, large-scale impact was more evident. Reflections from the entrepreneurs confirmed the same, as the founder of Nafisika Trust pointed out:

I was seeing the repeat offenders coming in . . . I decided to meet all the repeat offenders and find out the root cause. . . I asked them for interventions that they needed to change their lives. . . I began to research on how can we run prisons differently (entrepreneur 5, personal communication, 13 November 2019).

Creation of systemic change at the local level in the area of youth unemployment in developing economies is explained as follows by the founder of Flip Africa:

The way we have defined employment. . . excluded a lot of young people from social safety nets, access to health care, social security, access to credit. . . Our organization aims to reverse this where young people can find dignified work (entrepreneur 2, personal communication, 30 October 2019).

The idea to form an enterprise came from experience in the national arena. There was a need to create systemic change, as the founder of The Youth Banner (TYB) explained:

. . . when the government was starting the youth fund in Nairobi, I was part of the collaborative team. . . We decided to publicize entrepreneurship so that the youth could be assisted to generate ideas. . . I realized that it was not possible to train people on entrepreneurship in a week or two. A larger time frame was needed and that was when TYB was born (entrepreneur 6, personal communication, 4 December 2019).

Closeness to the problem

Deeply rooted compassion or closeness to the missions or causes supported by their organizations describes the component titled, “closeness to the problem”. Findings on informants’ motivation to create social enterprises have a common thread in which the trigger was intensely personal due to the informants’ increased resonance with the motivational factor. Having a child with special needs (Hill Preparatory School), living in poverty (FADECO) and being thrown out of school for lack of school fees (National Union of Coffee Agribusinesses and Farm Enterprises [NUCAFE]) influenced some of the social entrepreneurs towards the creation of social enterprises. An interviewee had this to say:

I grew up in a land of paradox. There was a lot of poverty. People had a lot of land, but the people were poor. I was exposed to many aspects of life which contributed to who I am now. I decided to become a missionary to make things better (entrepreneur 1, personal communication, 30 October 2019).

Past-life events

There were observable interconnections of closeness to the problem and helping society which can be themed as life events where their close resonance to the problem caused the social entrepreneurs to want to help the society. This was evident in Fundi Bots comments:

The motivation to start the enterprise was deeply personal. I was a tinkerer from an early age, and I thought school would tolerate this, but it did not. . . (Later on in life) I then realized two things: the curriculum had become worse than when I was in school, and secondly, there were people who were inquisitive about robot learning who wanted to explore so that is where the idea for using robotics came from (entrepreneur 3, personal communication, 31 October 2019).

We found accidental religious factors as a component of motivation, a finding not present in [Germak and Robinson's \(2014\)](#) framework. The founder of Nafisika Trust stated that

My journey into social entrepreneurship was almost out of "happenstance". . . This was really God ordering my steps into the prisons where I began to see the challenges that the prison inmates faced (entrepreneur 5, personal communication, 13 November 2019).

Our data showed that the findings could be used to build on those of [Germak and Robinson \(2014\)](#). Our study emphasized past-life events rather than the social entrepreneurs' previous experience within these sectors.

Motivation as an antecedent to success in social entrepreneurship

RQ2. How do these social entrepreneurs define the success of their enterprises?

In social entrepreneurship, success is linked to the creation of social value, change ([Alvord et al., 2004](#); [Dees, 1998](#); [Drayton, 2002](#); [Sharir and Lerner, 2006](#)) and impact in the transformation of individuals, community, society or region ([Alvord et al., 2004](#); [Drucker, 1994](#); [Mair and Marti, 2006](#); [Maseno and Wanyoike, 2020](#)). Social entrepreneurs act as change agents in the social sector by adopting a mission to create and sustain social value ([Dees, 1998](#)). The themes found in the definitions of successful social entrepreneurship support this assertion and included building local capacity, creation of social value and the creation of systemic change. These factors are also noted by [Alvord et al. \(2004\)](#):

Building local capacity involves working with the poor and marginalized populations to identify capacities needed for self-help and helping to build those capacities. This approach is based on the assumption that given increases in local capacities, local actors may solve many of their own problems (p. 267).

Success linked to building the capacity of poor and marginalized groups

The study found that the capacities of the poor and marginalized communities needed to be built in relation to the specific sectors that the social entrepreneurs operate in (see [Table 3](#)).

This study found that building the capacity of communities was seen as successful social entrepreneurship by all the entrepreneurs due to the social value and impact created. Success was linked to the social entrepreneurs' own enterprise. A total of two levels of systemic change were evidenced at the community and national levels. [Table 4](#) shows the social entrepreneurs' definitions of success, social value creation and level of systemic change.

All the social entrepreneurs added social value which was created by their enterprises building the capacity of the marginalized groups. This in turn left the communities better off than they were prior to the establishment of the social enterprises. Social value was evident through the transfer of technology which increased income for farmers who were drying and packaging fresh produce for exports in Tanzania (entrepreneur 1) and their ability to use technology through the use of a supply-based mobile platform to sell produce directly to retailers in Uganda (entrepreneur 9).

Table 3.
Identification of
capacities needed for
self-help in poor
marginalized groups

Theme	Social enterprise	Nature of marginalized group	Capacity needed
Building local capacities needed for self-help in the poor and marginalized groups	FADECO	Poor small-scale farmers in N.W Tanzania unable to leverage their land, resources and available markets	Technology to preserve and package perishable horticultural produce
	Flip Africa	Unemployed youth in Uganda left out of national safety nets	Jobs including access to credit medical cover, insurance
	Fundi Bots	Students in Ugandan schools lacking activity-based learning, relevant science and practical skills resulting in low skill sets	Robotic learning enhancing problem-solving skills and partnership with business mentors
	Youth LITE	Unemployed university youth in informal settlements with their ideas not accepted	Business linkage to youth for collaborative solutions
	Nafisika Trust	Unskilled Prison inmates with nothing to go back to after release, thus becoming repeat offenders	Rehabilitation through attitude change and entrepreneurship training of inmates
	The Youth Banner	Rural unemployed youth with no training or support to generate good business ideas	Empowerment through training and acceleration of their ideas
	NUCAFE	Poor coffee farmers who did not know the value of their coffee or own it due to lack of policy	Value addition to coffee through an enabling environment
	Crafts of Africa Nampya Farmers Market Hill Preparatory School	Artisans in Kenya with no markets for products Poor farmers bound to brokers for survival to reach markets for their produce Stigmatized learning disabled children who have to be educated out of the country due to lack of integrated schools	Export markets and tourism for their products Direct link to markets their produce Mainstreaming through integration of special and normal children in school

In the education sector, capacities were built and social value created with schools adopting the use of robotics to teach science (entrepreneur 3). The integration of regular and special needs children to learn from each other brought down the cost of special education and reduced the stigma on the child with special needs (entrepreneur 10). Youth employment added social value in different ways, whereby the training of rural youth was done with the precondition that they give back to society by teaching their community members what they had learnt (entrepreneur 6). Improved self-esteem and renewed commitment to providing innovative solutions to business added value to the youth through their ability to be employed as student consultants in companies (entrepreneur 4). Social value was created by and for unemployed youth who are able to offer their skills and talents by working, which allows them to enjoy the safety nets that come with employment (entrepreneur 2). Social value from the correctional facilities in Kenya came through changed mindsets and ecosystems allowing inmates to get rehabilitated and integrated back into society and reducing the rate of repeat offences (entrepreneur 5). Artisans had social value created for them by enabling them

Theme	Entrepreneur	Enterprise success in building capacity	Social value creating systemic change	Level of systemic change
Capacities built creating social value and systemic change	1	Farmers do what they could not do before through food drying technology and packaging for export	Farmers get the technology freely and modify it to make it better	National
	2	Consistent disruption of the ways people find work	Decentralizing power and shifting power from employers to the youth	Community
	3	Schools embracing robotic learning and integration to the national curriculum	Problem-solving skills for sciences and job skills are gained	National
	4	Impact and positive feedback from businesses and the student consultants	changed mindset due to starting from the slums	Community
	5	Volunteers gain work experience, prisoners are integrated back to their families as productive citizens	National discourse, changed mindsets and ecosystem is changed as the prison headquarter becomes a partner of change	National
	6	Achieving one's objectives	Empowered rural communities through the skills training	Community
	7	Influencing policy at a high level, creating an enabling environment for value-added coffee	Farmers sell value-added coffee and increase income by 250–900%	National
	8	Combined projects are able to run on their own even when one is not there	Artisans earn income from exports and hosting tourists	Community
	9	Farmers connect directly to food retail vendors in the city on a mobile platform	Improved lives of small holder farmers through better prices for their produce	Community
	10	Teaching techniques for integrated schools adopted by the Uganda National Institute of Special Education	Regular and special needs children are integrated and stigma is reduced	National

Table 4.
Social entrepreneurs' definitions of success on building capacity to create systemic change

to access international markets to sell their crafts and encouraging interaction with tourists who visit their premises, thus increasing their income.

Success from social enterprises at systemic level

Systemic change, which is a key Ashoka selection component (Ashoka, 2020; Leviner *et al.*, 2006), is a critical pathway to success. Achieving systemic change was also seen through the

creation of lasting structures that solve problems long term. Change at the national level influenced policy and impacted the top levels of government institutions. Community-level change involved the communities that the social entrepreneurs interacted with locally. Flip Africa was creating change at the community level, despite being in the infancy stage. It exhibits the potential for national change as more youth join its platform. The social entrepreneur from Flip Africa said that

Success can be defined as the consistent disruption of what work is. . . Looking at the way we are hiring and shifting power from employers who underpay. . . (entrepreneur 2, personal communication, 30 October 2019).

As observed from the social enterprise dealing with correctional facilities, systemic change was at both the community level and the national level where policy is made. The entrepreneur from Nafisika Trust reiterated that

Success in the prisoners is when one sees them integrating and are productive citizens and re-joining with their families. . . with the prison headquarter becoming a partner of change and stakeholder in issues affecting prisoners (entrepreneur 5, personal communication, 13 November 2019).

Systemic change in the ability to influence and change policy at the national level and transform lives was evident at NUCAFE, where the founder expressed that

Influencing policy is also a high level of success. The organization has transformed the lives of farmers in such a way that the policy created an enabling environment for farmers to add value to their coffee. Farmers who were selling completely raw material coffee are now able to sell value added coffee. Midway in the value chain when they graduated from primary raw materials, they increased their income by at least 250%. Then progressing towards the end of the value chain they increase their income by 900% (entrepreneur 7, personal communication, 5 December 2019).

Success through becoming irrelevant

The findings on how the social entrepreneurs defined success transcended systemic change, whereby the changes intended by the social entrepreneur had been achieved at national or community levels. The capacity of the community had also been built to such a level that the communities could now solve their problems without intervention ([Alvord et al., 2004](#)) and the entrepreneurs were no longer needed. A total of four entrepreneurs – Fundi Bots, Crafts of Africa/People to People Tourism, The Youth Banner and FADECO – defined success from this perspective. They opined that

Success is irrelevance: the minute we are not needed anymore, we know we have done our work (entrepreneur 3, personal communication, 31 October 2019).

Success is when you see the projects running on their own even when one is not there (entrepreneur 8, personal communication, 5 December 2019).

Success is achieving one's objectives. It is also when people learn from the ideas shared (entrepreneur 6, personal communication, 4 December 2019).

Successful social entrepreneurship through the use of mobilizing existing assets of marginalized groups, as proposed by [Alvord et al. \(2004\)](#), was supported. The combinations of success can be viewed as creations of systemic change through building capacities and no longer being needed. This is summarized by the entrepreneur from FADECO:

Success is helping people do what they could not do before. . . So, I used "copy left" where I teach people to use the technology and they can modify it and make it better and for me, I move on.

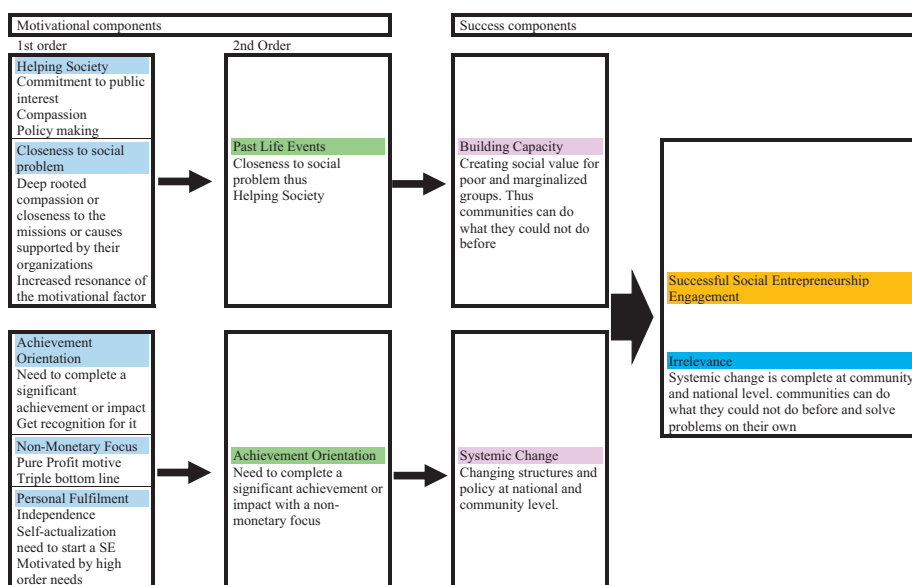


Figure 2.
Social entrepreneurs' motivations as an antecedent to successful social entrepreneurship engagement

Everyone is a changemaker in different ways. Remove the blinders and help them make it (entrepreneur 1, personal communication, 30 October 2019).

Success translated to identifying the capacities of the poor and marginalized groups, building their capacities and creating social value relating to systemic change at community, national or both levels. Figure 2 illustrates the motivational components stemming from Germak and Robinson's framework as antecedents to success. Success is attained where social entrepreneurs, motivated by past-life events and a strong achievement orientation, engage in building capacity of the communities triggering systemic change. Systemic change at community and national levels leads to successful social entrepreneurship engagement to the extent that they have served their purpose and are no longer needed.

Discussion

Theories building on motivation of social entrepreneurs contribute towards making it a structured field (Mair and Marti, 2006) right from definitions to motivations of social entrepreneurs in new venture creation. Understanding motivation contributes to theory on personal attitudes and characteristics of entrepreneurs (Kuratko *et al.*, 1997). This study provides a deeper understanding of the motivations of social entrepreneurs in the East African region to create a social enterprise. It also explores their definitions of successful social entrepreneurship as directly related to their social enterprises. To respond to the question of what factors motivated the social entrepreneurs in East Africa to create social enterprises, the five themes from Germak and Robinson's (2014) framework were supported, albeit with variations. The study came up with the category themed "past life events". These are events which are experienced by social entrepreneurs and thus cause them to see the flaws in what was currently available and work towards alleviating them or prevent a similar issue from happening to others (Humphris, 2017; Yitshaki and Kropp, 2015).

Gender-based studies in Europe, the USA and India found the need for achievement, independence, job satisfaction and economic necessity as key motivators for venture creation

(Buttner and Moore, 1997; Cromie, 1987; Goffee and Scase, 1985; Hisrich and Brush, 1984; Singh, 1993; Vijaya and Kamalanabhan, 1998). These findings are linked to Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory and McClelland's theory of need (achievement). Need for achievement and independence are similar to findings from Germak and Robinson (2014) and this study with the difference of achievement stemming from the need to create impact and systemic change in societies. Economic necessity or a monetary focus was not present in Germak and Robinson's study, nor in our study. Understanding how traditional entrepreneurs differ in theory and purpose (Roberts and Woods, 2005) from social entrepreneurs builds the nascent field of social entrepreneurship.

Rooted in Germak and Robinson's (2014) framework, past-life events connect closeness to the problem by linking it to helping the society through commitment to public interest. Cross-country studies on motivations of traditional entrepreneurs found communitarianism (Sheinberg and MacMillan, 1988) and contributions to group welfare (Dubini, 1988) as motivations for entrepreneurial engagement similar to those found in social entrepreneurs. In our study, past-life events were the most prevalent findings with the entrepreneurs. The life events connected to this study are those identified by Yitshaki and Kropp (2015) as present-life events which lead to wanting to help people who face similar problems (Drennan *et al.*, 2015) and past-life events which lead to wanting to help people to overcome events which they themselves have overcome (Omorede, 2014). Of the two life events, past-life events were observed in seven out of the ten social entrepreneurs. They included FADECO, Flip Africa, Fundi Bots, Youth Lead, Inspire, Transform, Empower (LITE) Kenya, NUCAFE, Nampya Farmers Market and Hill Preparatory School.

Closeness to the problem based on compassion (Miller *et al.*, 2012) builds on Elliot's (2019) antecedents of the intention to engage in social entrepreneurship where the individual has first-hand rather than remote knowledge of the problem which leads to identification of a solution through starting a social enterprise (Hervieux and Voltan, 2018). The findings on this component concur with the qualitative findings in earlier research (Germak and Robinson, 2014; Wong and Tang, 2007) and relate to the quantitative findings of Drennan *et al.* (2015) who used a much younger sample of respondents.

These findings are an important contribution to African data since past-life events and closeness to the problem are experienced by predominantly low-income countries such as those found in the East African region. Social entrepreneurs in these regions may have endured similar hardships to the poor and marginalized groups that they currently operate in. This finding supports prior research which argues that context is key (Aramand, 2012; Rivera-Santos *et al.*, 2015) when conducting research in developing economies (Omorede, 2014),

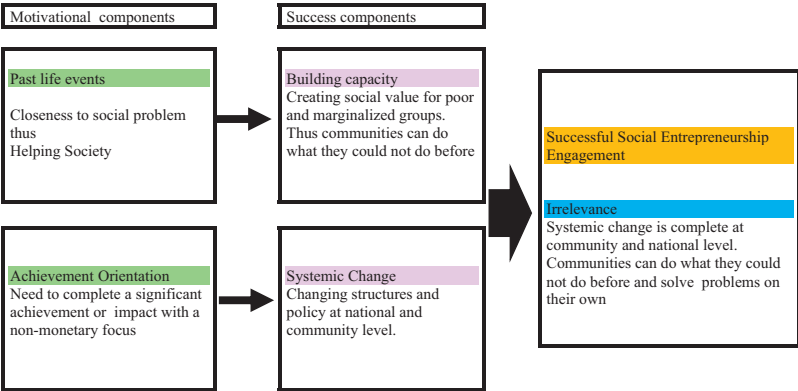


Figure 3.
Social entrepreneurship motivation and success framework

more so in low-income countries. This assertion should inform research carried out in developing economies on motivations for setting up social enterprises and what is perceived as successful social entrepreneurship.

As illustrated in [Figure 3](#), this study finds the two motivational components (past-life events and achievement orientation) are precursors to success through building capacity and creating systemic change. These in turn lead to the success of social entrepreneurship engagement where the social enterprises or the entrepreneurs become irrelevant. Motivational components found in the current study link to other studies carried out in Africa where helping society relates to compassion and empathy ([Elliot, 2019](#)), compassion and humanitarian aspects ([Ghalwash et al., 2017](#)) and the first-order concept of feeling the need to help others due to poor economic situations ([Omorede, 2014](#)). Religious conviction is a weak theme that translates to the aggregate theme of an intentional mindset stemming from alertness to a social cause and propensity to act ([Omorede, 2014](#)). Achievement orientation as a motivation for social enterprise creation is a strong theme found in all the entrepreneurs. This stems from the need to complete a significant achievement or impact as evidenced in [Table 2](#). This finding contributes to prior research on creation of social value and impact ([Alvord et al., 2004](#)) and the dimensions of success ([Sharir and Lerner, 2006](#)).

[Boluk and Mottiar \(2014\)](#) found additional motivational factors of profits and financial viability. Although these were not identified as key motivating factors in this study, money was seen as important in running a successful social enterprise: for operational expenses, scaling up the enterprise and especially in infrastructure. This may be a limitation to this study since Ashoka fellows receive a stipend in the initial years of running their social enterprises and could have influenced the non-monetary focus where all participants had no-profit motives. An interesting observation on the intention to create an enterprise was that most of the entrepreneurs did not start out as social entrepreneurs and were well into addressing the social problem when they realized that they needed to establish a legal form for their businesses. Thus, from the interviews, some enterprises started informally and were registered later.

A major contribution of this study is that it builds on linking the social entrepreneurs' motivation to engage in social entrepreneurship and how they define success for their social enterprises (see [Figure 3](#)). We found that the social entrepreneurs defined success based on the ability to identify the capacities of the poor and marginalized needed for self-help in the society; building those capacities to create social value to a level where the marginalized could help themselves through solving their own problems and creation of systemic change at the national and community levels. An interesting finding was that of irrelevance of the social entrepreneur or not being needed anymore. This was as a result of achievement of the objectives and the ability of the community to solve their own problems through the building of their capacities or as a result of achieved systemic change. This finding contributes to prior research on the criteria for success in social ventures ([Sharir and Lerner, 2006](#)) and social value and impact ([Alvord et al., 2004](#)). It validates the Ashoka criterion of being a change-maker and creation of systemic change ([Ashoka, 2020](#)) through small- and large-scale impacts. The use of technological or digital platforms could propel the social enterprises to national level due to the availability of the platforms to the masses. This was evident in the cases of Flip Africa with youth employment through a digital platform and Nampya Farmers Market through a mobile-based supply chain platform.

This finding connected to [Germak and Robinson's \(2014\)](#) motivation component of helping the society where success means not being needed anymore. In relation to this assertion, one of the respondents in their study stated that

If we do our job right and empower the community, we would not be needed. So, we're in the business to be out of business. . . (respondent in [Germak and Robinson, 2014](#), p. 14).

This study contributes to [Germak and Robinson's \(2014\)](#) social entrepreneurship motivation framework by linking it to success components leading to successful social entrepreneurship engagement. The motivational components in the framework – achievement orientation and past-life events – both linked to irrelevance when systemic change is complete. Systemic change is achieved through building capacities of the poor or marginalized people and changing of structures and policy at the national level influencing policy decisions at higher government levels. [Figure 3](#) shows the social entrepreneurship motivation and success framework resulting from this study.

Conclusion

The aim of this study was to investigate the motivations of social entrepreneurs and their identified links to successful social entrepreneurship in East Africa through qualitative enquiry. The researchers were more interested in getting social entrepreneurs with a proven track record such as Ashoka fellows to better understand their motivations in creating their enterprises and what they perceived as successful social entrepreneurship. For all of them, the creation of systemic change at community and national levels through the building of capacities of marginalized groups such as the poor farmers, the unemployed youth, vulnerable children, prison inmates and artisans formed the basis of their understanding of success linked to their motivations to start enterprises. The factors of motivation identified in this study were achievement orientation with a non-monetary focus and past-life events (a combination of closeness to the problem and helping society). A less prevalent finding was personal fulfilment from self-actualization and was more in line with a need for independence. Motivation was intensely personal in the intention to start a social enterprise. Some of the participants had no idea when they started their ventures that they were engaging in social entrepreneurship. It is hoped that the information generated from this research would be beneficial to Ashoka, social entrepreneurs, policymakers and other Ashoka fellows to illustrate how one's motivations are linked to one's success.

The use of cases allowed for an in-depth understanding of the variables as an exploratory study seeking to build on a recent framework and contribute to further studies. The study has limitations based on the small sample of the study and the participants' specific affiliation to Ashoka. Further research should be carried out on other critical success factors identified by [Sharir and Lerner \(2006\)](#) which could have been neutralized in this study by the fact that the respondents were Ashoka fellows. This may, by default, have created social networks and long-term cooperation with other organizations. At the same time, the large global network that Ashoka possesses creates opportunity for future research directed to the change-making impacts of Ashoka fellows in the countries and regions that they operate in. The social, cultural and regional context of research is important in social entrepreneurship, calling for further research in developing economies to act as comparative research to that done in developed economies.

References

- Acheampong, G. and Esposito, M. (2014), "The nature of entrepreneurship in bottom of the pyramid markets", *International Journal of Entrepreneurship Small Business*, Vol. 21 No. 4, pp. 437-456.
- Ajzen, I. (1991), "The Ajzen theory of planned behavior", *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, Vol. 50 No. 2, pp. 179-211.
- Alvord, S.K., Brown, D.L. and Letts, C.W. (2004), "Social entrepreneurship and societal transformation: an exploratory study", *Journal of Applied Behavioural Science*, Vol. 40 No. 3, pp. 260-282.

-
- Aramand, M. (2012), "Women entrepreneurship in Mongolia: the role of culture on entrepreneurial motivation", *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: An International Journal*, Vol. 32 No. 1, pp. 68-82.
- Ashoka East Africa (2020), available at: <https://www.ashoka.org/en-ke/program/ashoka-venture-and-fellowship>, Ashoka Official Website, www.ashoka.org (accessed 5 December 2005).
- Austin, J., Stevenson, H. and Wei-Skillern, J. (2006), "Social and commercial entrepreneurship: same, different, or both?", *Entrepreneurship: Theory and Practice*, Vol. 30 No. 1, pp. 1-22.
- Bacq, S. and Janssen, F. (2011), "The multiple faces of social entrepreneurship: a review of definitional issues based on geographical and thematic criteria", *Entrepreneurship and Regional Development*, Vol. 23 Nos 5/6, pp. 373-403.
- Benzing, C. and Chu, H.M. (2009), "A comparison of the motivations of small business owners in Africa", *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*, Vol. 16 No. 1, pp. 60-77.
- Boluk, K. and Mottiar, Z. (2014), "Motivations of social entrepreneurs", *Social Enterprise Journal*, Vol. 10 No. 1, pp. 53-68.
- Bornstein, D. (2004), *How to Change the World: Social Entrepreneurs and the Power of New Ideas*, Oxford University Press, New York, NY.
- Bornstein, D. (2010), *Social Entrepreneurship: What Everyone Needs to Know*, Oxford University Press, New York, NY.
- Carsrud, A. and Brännback, M. (2011), "Entrepreneurial motivations: what do we still need to know?", *Journal of Small Business Management*, Vol. 49 No. 1, pp. 9-26.
- Chandra, Y. (2018), "New narratives of development work? Making sense of social entrepreneurs' development narratives across time and economies", *World Development*, Vol. 107, pp. 306-326.
- Choi, N. and Majumdar, S. (2014), "Social entrepreneurship as an essentially contested concept: opening a new avenue for systematic future research", *Journal of Business Venturing*, Vol. 29, pp. 363-376.
- Creswell, J.W. (2007), *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*, Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, California, CA.
- Cromie, S. (1987), "Motivations of aspiring male and female entrepreneurs", *Journal of Occupational Behaviour*, Vol. 8, pp. 251-61.
- Dacin, M.T., Dacin, P.A. and Tracey, P. (2011), "Social entrepreneurship: a critique and future directions", *Organization Science*, Vol. 22 No. 5, pp. 1203-1213.
- Dacin, P.A., Dacin, M.T. and Matear, M. (2010), "Social entrepreneurship: why we don't need a new theory and how we move forward from here", *Academy of Management Perspectives*, Vol. 24 No. 3, pp. 37-57.
- Dees, J.G. (1998), "Enterprising nonprofits: what do you do when traditional sources of funding fall short?", *Harvard Business Review*, Vol. 76 No. 1, pp. 55-66.
- Dees, J.G. (2007), "Taking social entrepreneurship seriously", *Society*, Vol. 44 No. 3, pp. 24-31.
- Dees, J.G. and Anderson, B.B. (2003), "Sector-bending: blurring lines between nonprofit and for-profit", *Society*, Vol. 40, pp. 16-27.
- Doherty, B., Haugh, H. and Lyon, F. (2014), "Social enterprises as hybrid organizations: a review and research agenda", *International Journal of Management Reviews*, Vol. 16 No. 4, pp. 417-436.
- Drayton, B. (2002), "The citizen sector: becoming as entrepreneurial and competitive as business", *California Management Review*, Vol. 44 No. 3, pp. 120-132.
- Drennan, J., Kennedy, J. and Renfrow, P. (2015), "Impact of childhood experiences on the development of entrepreneurial intentions", *The International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Innovation*, Vol. 6 No. 4, pp. 231-238.
- Drucker, P. (1994), "The age of social transformation", *The Atlantic Monthly*, Vol. 274 No. 5, pp. 53-80.

- Dubini, P. (1988), "The influence of motivations and environments on business start-ups: some hints for public policies", *Journal of Business Venturing*, Vol. 4 No. 1, pp. 11-26.
- Eisenhardt, K. (1989), "Building theories from case study research", *Academy of Management Review*, Vol. 14 No. 4, pp. 532-550.
- Elliott, R.M. (2019), "Social entrepreneurship as catalyst to break the poverty trap: an analysis of the motivational factors in South Africa", *Acta Commercii*, Vol. 19 No. 2, p. 652.
- Emerson, J. and Twersky, F. (1996), *New Social Entrepreneurs: The Success, Challenge and Lessons of Non-profit Enterprise Creation*, Roberts Foundation, San Francisco.
- Galera, G. and Borzaga, C. (2009), "Social enterprise: an international overview of its conceptual evolution and legal implementation", *Social Enterprise Journal*, Vol. 5 No. 3, pp. 210-228.
- Gartner, W.B. (1985), "A conceptual framework for describing the phenomenon of new venture creation", *Academy of Management Review*, Vol. 10, pp. 696-706.
- Gartner, W.B. (1988), "Who is an entrepreneur?" is the wrong question", *American Journal of Small Business*, Vol. 12 No. 4, pp. 11-32.
- Germak, A.J. and Robinson, J.A. (2014), "Exploring the motivation of nascent social entrepreneurs", *Journal of Social Entrepreneurship*, Vol. 5 No. 1, pp. 5-21.
- Gilad, B. and Levine, P. (1996), "A behavioral model of entrepreneurial supply", *Journal of Small Business Management*, Vol. 24 No. 4, pp. 45-53.
- Ghalwash, S., Tolba, A. and Ismail, A. (2017), "What motivates social entrepreneurs to start social ventures? An exploratory study in the context of a developing economy", *Social Enterprise Journal*, Vol. 13 No. 3, pp. 268-298.
- Goffee, R. and Scase, R. (1985), *Women in Charge*, Allen and Unwin, London.
- Harding, R. (2004), "Social enterprise: the new economic engine?", *Business Strategy Review*, Vol. 15 No. 4, pp. 39-43.
- Haugh, H. (2005), "A research agenda for social entrepreneurship", *Social Enterprise Journal*, Vol. 1 No. 1, pp. 1-12.
- Hervieux, C. and Voltan, A.J. (2018), "Framing social problems in social entrepreneurship", *Journal of Business Ethics*, Vol. 151 No. 2, pp. 279-293.
- Hisrich, R.D. and Brush, C.G. (1984), "The woman entrepreneur: management skills and business problems", *Journal of Small Business Management*, Vol. 22 No. 1, pp. 30-37.
- Hlady-Rispal, M. and Servantie, V. (2018), "Deconstructing the way in which social value is created in the context of social entrepreneurship", *International Journal of Management Reviews*, Vol. 20, pp. 62-80.
- Hsieh, C.K., Yang, and Fu, K. (2011), "Motivational bases and emotional labor: assessing the impact of public service motivation", *Public Administration Review*, Vol. 72 No. 2, pp. 241-251.
- Hockerts, K. (2017), "Determinants of social entrepreneurial intentions", *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, Vol. 41 No. 1, pp. 105-130.
- Humphris, G.K. (2017), "Motivations of social entrepreneurs", *Fields: Journal of Huddersfield Student Research*, Vol. 3, p. 1.
- Isaga, N. (2019), "Start-up motives and challenges facing female entrepreneurs in Tanzania", *International Journal of Gender and Entrepreneurship*, Vol. 11 No. 2, pp. 102-119.
- Kerlin, J.A. (2008), *Social Enterprise: A Global Comparison*, University Press of New England, Lebanon, NH.
- Kirkwood, J. and Walton, S. (2010), "What motivates ecopreneurs to start businesses?", *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior and Research*, Vol. 16 No. 3, pp. 204-228.
- Kolk, A., Rivera-Santos, M. and Rufin, C. (2014), "Reviewing a decade of research on the "base/bottom of the pyramid" (BOP) concept", *Business and Society*, Vol. 53 No. 3, pp. 338-377.

-
- Krueger, N.F. Jr, Reilly, M.D. and Carsrud, A.L. (2000), "Competing models of entrepreneurial intentions", *Journal of Business Venturing*, Vol. 15 No. 5, pp. 411-432.
- Kuratko, D., Hornsby, J. and Naffziger, D. (1997), "An examination of owner's goals in sustaining entrepreneurship", *Journal of Small Business Management*, Vol. 35 No. 1, pp. 24-33.
- Leviner, N., Crutchfield, L.R. and Wells, D. (2006), "Understanding the impact of social entrepreneurs: Ashoka's Answer to the challenge of measuring effectiveness", in Mosher-Williams, R. (Ed.), *Research on Social Entrepreneurship: Understanding and Contributing to an Emerging Field Arnova Occasional Paper Series*, Association for Research on Nonprofit Organizations and Voluntary Action, Indianapolis, Vol. 1 No. 3, pp. 89-103.
- Light, P.C. (2006), "Searching for social entrepreneurs: who they might be, where they might be found, what they do", in Mosher-Williams, R. (Ed.), *Research on Social Entrepreneurship: Understanding and Contributing to an Emerging Field Arnova Occasional Paper Series*, Association for Research on Nonprofit Organizations and Voluntary Action, Indianapolis, Vol. 1 No. 3, pp. 13-38.
- Littlewood, D. and Holt, D. (2018), "Social entrepreneurship in South Africa exploring the influence of environment", *Business and Society*, Vol. 57, pp. 525-561.
- Mair, J. and Marti, I. (2006), "Social entrepreneurship research: a source of explanation, prediction, and delight", *Journal of World Business*, Vol. 41, pp. 36-44.
- Mair, J. and Noboa, E. (2006), "Social entrepreneurship: how intentions to create a social venture are formed", in Mair, J., Robinson, J. and Hockerts, K. (Eds), *Social Entrepreneurship*, Palgrave, London, pp. 121-135.
- Maseno, M. and Wanyoike, C. (2020), "Social entrepreneurship as mechanisms for social transformation and social impact in East Africa: an exploratory case study perspective", *Journal of Social Entrepreneurship*, pp. 1-26.
- Maslow, A.H. (1943), "A theory of human motivation", *Psychological Review*, Vol. 50 No. 4, pp. 370-396.
- Miles, M.S. and Huberman, A.M. (1984), *Qualitative Data Analysis*, Sage Publications Beverly, Hills, California, CA.
- Miller, T.L., Grimes, M.G., McMullen, J.S. and Vogus, T.J. (2012), "Venturing for others with heart and head: how compassion encourages social entrepreneurship", *Academy of Management Review*, Vol. 37 No. 4, pp. 616-640.
- Mitchell, B.C. (2003), "African entrepreneurs: an analysis of their motivation for starting their own business", *South African Journal of Economic and Management Sciences*, Vol. 6 No. 4, pp. 724-743.
- Mort, G.S., Weerawardena, J. and Carnegie, K. (2003), "Social entrepreneurship: towards conceptualisation", *International Journal of Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Marketing*, Vol. 8 No. 1, pp. 76-88.
- Murphy, P.J. and Coombes, S. (2009), "A model of social entrepreneurial discovery", *Journal of Business Ethics*, Vol. 87 No. 3, pp. 325-336.
- Nga, J.K.H. and Shamuganathan, G. (2010), "The influence of personality traits and demographic factors on social entrepreneurship start up intentions", *Journal of Business Ethics*, Vol. 95 No. 2, pp. 259-282.
- Omored, A. (2014), "Exploration of motivational drivers towards social entrepreneurship", *Social Enterprise Journal*, Vol. 10 No. 3, pp. 239-267.
- Perenyi, A., Zolin, R. and Maritz, A. (2018), "The perceptions of Australian senior entrepreneurs on the drivers of their entrepreneurial activity", *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior and Research*, Vol. 24 No. 1, pp. 81-103.
- Perry, J.L. (1996), "Measuring public service motivation: an assessment of construct reliability and validity", *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, Vol. 6 No. 1, pp. 5-22.

- Perry, J.L. and Wise, L. (1990), "The motivational bases of public service", *Public Administration Review*, Vol. 50 No. 3, pp. 367-373.
- Perry, J.L. (1997), "Antecedents of public service motivation", *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, Vol. 7 No. 2, pp. 181-197.
- Renko, M. (2012), "Early challenges of nascent social entrepreneurs", *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, Vol. 37 No. 5, pp. 1045-1069.
- Rivera-Santos, M., Holt, D., Littlewood, D. and Kolk, A. (2015), "Social entrepreneurship in sub-Saharan Africa", *The Academy of Management Perspective*, Vol. 29 No. 1, pp. 72-91.
- Roberts, D. and Woods, C. (2005), "Changing the world on a shoestring: the concept of social entrepreneurship", *University of Auckland Business Review*, Vol. 7 No. 1, pp. 45-51.
- Santos, F.M. (2012), "A positive theory of social entrepreneurship", *Journal of Business Ethics*, Vol. 111 No. 3, pp. 335-351.
- Scheinberg, S. and Macmillan, I.C. (1988), "An 11 country study of motivations to start a business", in Ronstadt, R., Hornaday, J.A., Peterson, R. and Vesper, K.S. (Eds), *Frontiers of Entrepreneurship Research*, Babson College, Wellesley, Massachusetts, pp. 669-87.
- Schjoedt, L. and Shaver, K.G. (2007), "Deciding on an entrepreneurial career: a test of the pull and push hypotheses using the panel study of entrepreneurial dynamics data", *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, Vol. 31 No. 5, pp. 1042-2587.
- Seelos, C. and Mair, J. (2005), "Social entrepreneurship: creating new business models to serve the poor", *Business Horizons*, Vol. 48, pp. 241-246.
- Segal, G., Borgia, D. and Schoenfeld, J. (2005), "The motivation to become an entrepreneur", *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behaviour and Research*, Vol. 11 No. 1, pp. 42-57.
- Shane, S. and Venkataraman, S. (2000), "The promise of entrepreneurship as a field of research", *Academy of Management Review*, Vol. 25 No. 1, pp. 217-226, available at: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/259271>.
- Shane, S., Locke, E.A. and Collins, C.J. (2003), "Entrepreneurial motivation", *Human Resource Management Review*, Vol. 13 No. 2, pp. 57-279, available at: <https://digitalcommons.ilr.cornell.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1840&context=articles>.
- Shapero, A. and Sokol, L. (1982), "Social dimensions of entrepreneurship", in Kent, C.A., Sexton, D.L. and Vesper, K.H. (Eds), *The Encyclopedia of Entrepreneurship*, Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, NJ, pp. 72-79.
- Sharir, M. and Lerner, M. (2006), "Gauging the success of social ventures initiated by individual social entrepreneurs", *Journal of World Business*, Vol. 41 No. 1, pp. 6-20.
- Shaw, E. and Carter, S. (2007), "Social entrepreneurship: theoretical antecedents and empirical analysis of entrepreneurial processes and outcomes", *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*, Vol. 14 No. 3, pp. 418-434.
- Short, J.C., Moss, T.W. and Lumpkin, G.T. (2009), "Research in social entrepreneurship: past contributions and future opportunities", *Strategic Entrepreneurship Journal*, Vol. 3, pp. 161-194.
- Singh, K.P. (1993), "Women entrepreneurs: their profile and motivation", *The Journal of Entrepreneurship*, Vol. 2 No. 1, pp. 47-57.
- Spear, R. (2006), "Social entrepreneurship: a different model?", *International Journal of Social Economics*, Vol. 33 Nos 5/6, pp. 399-410.
- Tan, W., Williams, J. and Tan, T. (2005), "Defining the 'social' in 'social entrepreneurship: Altruism and entrepreneurship", *Entrepreneurship Management*, Vol. 1, pp. 353-365.
- Thompson, J.L. (2002), "The world of the social entrepreneur", *International Journal of Public Sector Management*, Vol. 15 Nos 4/5, pp. 412-431.
- Thompson, J., Alvy, G. and Lees, A. (2000), "Social entrepreneurship - a new look at the people and the potential", *Management Decision*, Vol. 38 No. 5, pp. 348-338.

- Toscher, B., Dahle, Y. and Steinert, M. (2020), "Get give make live: an empirical comparative study of motivations for technology, youth and arts entrepreneurship", *Social Enterprise Journal*, Vol. 16 No. 2, pp. 179-202.
- Trivedi, C. and Stokols, D. (2011), "Social enterprises and corporate enterprises: fundamental differences and defining features", *Journal of Entrepreneurship*, Vol. 20 No. 1, pp. 1-32.
- Urban, B. and Kujinga, L. (2017), "The institutional environment and social entrepreneurship intentions", *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior and Research*, Vol. 23 No. 4, pp. 638-655.
- Urban, B. and Teise, H. (2015), "Antecedents to social entrepreneurship intentions: an empirical study in South Africa", *Management Dynamics*, Vol. 24 No. 2, pp. 36-52, available at: <https://journals.co.za/content/mandyn/24/2/EJC174651>.
- van der Zwan, P., Thurik, R., Verheul, I. and Hessels, J. (2016), "Factors influencing the entrepreneurial engagement of opportunity and necessity entrepreneurs", *Eurasian Business Review*, Vol. 6, pp. 273-295.
- Van Ryzin, G.G., Grossman, S., DiPadova-Stocks, L. and Bergrud, E. (2009), "Portrait of the social entrepreneur: statistical evidence from a US panel", *Voluntas*, Vol. 20 No. 2, pp. 129-140.
- Vijaya, V. and Kamalanabhan, T.J. (1998), "A scale to assess entrepreneurial motivation", *The Journal of Entrepreneurship*, Vol. 7 No. 2, pp. 183-98.
- Weerawardena, J. and Sullivan, G. (2006), "Investigating social entrepreneurship: a multidimensional model", *Journal of World Business*, Vol. 41 No. 1, pp. 21-35.
- Williams, C.C. and Nadin, S. (2012), "Entrepreneurship in the informal economy: commercial or social entrepreneurs?", *The International Entrepreneurship and Management Journal*, Vol. 8, pp. 309-324.
- Wong, L. and Tang, J. (2007), "Dilemmas confronting social entrepreneurs: care homes for elderly people in Chinese cities", *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 79 No. 4, pp. 623-637.
- World Bank Blogs (2020), "World Bank classification by income level 2020–2021", available at: <https://blogs.worldbank.org/opendata/new-world-bank-country-classifications-income-level-2020-2021> (accessed on 3 July 2020).
- Yin, R.J. (2014), *Case Study Research Design and Method*, 5th ed., SAGE, Thousand Oaks, California, CA.
- Yitshaki, R. and Kropp, F. (2015), "Motivations and opportunity recognition of social entrepreneurs", *Journal of Small Business Management*, Vol. 54 No. 2, pp. 546-565.
- Zahra, S. and Dess, G. (2001), "Entrepreneurship as a field of research: encouraging dialogue and debate", *The Academy of Management Review*, Vol. 26.
- Zahra, S., Shaker, A., Gedajlovic, E., Neubaum, D.O. and Shulman, J.M. (2009), "A typology of social entrepreneurs: motives search processes and ethical challenges", *Journal of Business Venturing*, Vol. 24, pp. 519-532.

The following websites were used for secondary data on the social entrepreneurs

- Ashoka, Changemakers (2009), "Hill preparatory school, a pioneer integrated special school in Uganda", available at: <https://www.changemakers.com/educationafrica/entries/hill-preparatory-school-pioneer-integrated-special> (accessed 5 December 2019).
- Ashoka, Changemakers (2015), "UConn SUSI student leaders on social entrepreneurship 2015", available at: <https://www.changemakers.com/uconn-susi-student-leaders-social-entrepreneurship-2015/entries/youth-lite-kenya> (accessed 5 December 2019).
- Nampya Farmers Market (2020), "Fresh food fair pricing", available at: <https://www.nampyafarmersmarket.com/> (accessed 5 December 2019).

Further reading

Smith, B.R. and Stevens, C.E. (2010), "Different types of social entrepreneurship: the role of geography and embeddedness on the measurement and scaling of social value", *Entrepreneurship and Regional Development*, Vol. 22 No. 6, pp. 575-598.

Corresponding author

Caroline Njeri Wanyoike can be contacted at: carolinegathaiya@gmail.com