

Characterization of social entrepreneurship among university students, a comparative study

Caracterización del emprendimiento social en estudiantes universitarios, un estudio comparativo

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Abstract:

The Higher In the university context, social entrepreneurship encourages students to recognize real needs in their environment and design creative solutions to identify problems that promote welfare. Students must become agents of change, who apply the knowledge acquired in their professional training to transform their reality in an ethical and responsible way.

The objective of the research is to present an advance of the results obtained in a study of the characterization of entrepreneurship. The Social Entrepreneurship Profile Assessment instrument [1] was applied to students of seven bachelor's degrees. The results obtained are analysed through a descriptive analysis in the SPSS 2023 statistical package. At this stage of the project, a comparison is made of the results of three bachelor's degrees in the economics and administrative area, specifically in the social characteristics, which indicate that over 50% of the students surveyed have seriously considered starting their own business after graduation, which is positive for entrepreneurship. The most important now is to focus on social entrepreneurship.

Keywords: *Entrepreneurship, Social Entrepreneurship, Social Characteristics*

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Resumen:

En el contexto universitario, el emprendimiento social permite impulsar a los estudiantes a reconocer necesidades reales en su entorno y diseñar soluciones creativas a problemáticas identificadas que promuevan el bienestar común. Los alumnos se deben convertir en agentes de cambio, aplicando los conocimientos adquiridos en su formación profesional para transformar su realidad de manera ética y responsable. El presente estudio de investigación es un avance de los resultados obtenidos en un estudio de la caracterización del emprendimiento social en alumnos de nivel superior, se aplicó el instrumento de Evaluación del Perfil de Emprendimiento Social [1], a estudiantes de siete licenciaturas, los resultados obtenidos se analizan mediante un análisis descriptivo en el paquete estadístico SPSS 2023, en esta etapa del proyecto se realiza un comparativo de los resultados que se tienen en tres licenciaturas del área económico administrativas, específicamente en las características sociales, los cuales indican porcentajes por arriba del 50% de que los alumnos encuestados han considerado seriamente iniciar su propio negocio después de graduarse, lo que resulta positivo para el emprendimiento, lo importante ahora es enfocarlo al emprendimiento social.

Palabras Clave: *Emprendimiento, Emprendimiento Social, Características Sociales* Haga clic o pulse aquí para escribir texto.

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Introduction

Social Entrepreneurship is the crystallization of processes that, despite possible adversities, manage to find sustainable and profitable solutions helping economies of all classes. It can include the internalization of processes of self-management, self-exploitation and responsibility that are perceived as desirable since they are supported by important emotional bases such as self-realization, social commitment, environmental sensitivity or simply solidarity [2].

On the other hand [3], define that it is necessary to have a classification of social enterprises to determine the best tools to carry out a project of this nature, resulting in 3 large groups: non-profit, Hybrid Company and social Enterprise. On the social side, we can find traditional organizations, foundations (all of which depend on external aid and donations), hybrid companies (combining sources of income from both donations and generation of own resources) and social enterprises that generate income from offering goods and services in exchange for payment, but that help social or environmental needs.

Social entrepreneurship is a dynamic type of entrepreneurship, as mentioned above, and is extremely important because it has the characteristic of providing more comprehensive assistance to both the provider of the product or service and the customer. Depending on the type, it can also help the environment or society. It can be considered another type of entrepreneurship, with key elements of innovation and risk in the novel solution to a need or problem, offering customers different types of products or services. However, social and commercial entrepreneurship are very different. The first difference between the two types of entrepreneurship concerns social and/or environmental objectives over economic ones [4].

Characteristics of the social entrepreneur

The instrument proposed by [1] to measure the characteristics of social entrepreneurs includes statements to identify personal, social, and innovative characteristics. There are 9 phrases for personal characteristics, 11 phrases for social characteristics, and 10 phrases for innovative characteristics. The Likert scale is used with the following values: 1, strongly disagree; 2, disagree; 3, undecided; 4, agree; and 5, strongly agree.

The most important aspects to consider in personal characteristics are the ability to deal with specific situations, the determination to achieve goals, taking risks, and seeing the positive side of a bad situation, to name a few.

Helping friends in class, setting good examples, accepting the consequences of what has been said and done, volunteering with an NGO, finding new uses for common objects, and seeking innovative solutions are some of the aspects considered in the social characteristics that the instrument uses to measure the characteristics of social entrepreneurs.

At last, in the section on innovative characteristics, some phrases that are used include, for example, extracting opportunities from problems or difficult situations, formulating proposals for projects in which they participate, having participated in the implementation of projects with groups or associations, and knowing how to handle unforeseen situations.

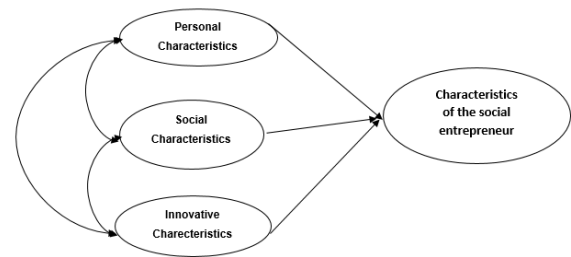


Figure 1. Characteristics of social entrepreneurship.
Source: Own elaboration based on Capella et al. 2020 [1]

The application of the aforementioned instrument for the specific case of the research is to analyze the characterization of social entrepreneurship in students from three bachelor's degree programs in the economic-administrative area, Administration, Marketing, and Foreign Trade, particularly in terms of social characteristics, and to obtain data enough to identify the characteristics of the students in the bachelor's degree programs under study on the subject of social entrepreneurship, since one of the main missions of universities is to provide theoretical and practical training to all students who aspire to start their own business, considering the social aspect as a catalyst for supporting the most vulnerable populations.

Social entrepreneurs are agents of change who help mitigate the effects of unemployment and social exclusion among certain groups by creating businesses whose primary purpose is the social and labor inclusion of

disadvantaged groups. Although their importance and interest are undeniable, there is no explicit and clear recognition of social entrepreneurship and the figure of the social entrepreneur in economic literature. An entrepreneur who creates a business out of a sense of vocation to meet social needs, where the viability of the company is fundamental to the continuity of the business. Specialized training to professionalize management or foster strategic alliances are the alternatives presented by experts to overcome some of the shortcomings of social enterprises [5].

In their research findings, found that those who emphasized the importance of the personal knowledge and skills that students must have to start a business. They also found the fundamental value of self-confidence that must be instilled in university students, which constitutes a strength of guidance and support for a good attitude and resilience aimed at developing entrepreneurial inten [6].

Methodology

The type of research was quantitative, descriptive, cross-sectional, and the sample size was determined using the following data:

Table 1.

Sample calculation

Variable	Description	Values	Formula
N	population size	Administration	
Z	95% confidence level	1.96	$n = \frac{z^2 pq}{e^2 (N-1) + z^2 pq}$
p	percentage of the population that has the desired attribute	0.5	
q	percentage of the population that does not have the desired attribute	0.5	
e	maximum acceptable estimation error	0.05	
	Administration	n=474	
	Marketing	n=327	
	Foreign Trade	n=225	

Source: Own elaboration, SPSS 23

A simple random sample was taken from students enrolled in the first to ninth semesters of three programs offered at the Institute of Economic and Administrative Sciences (ICEA) of the Autonomous University of the State of Hidalgo (UAEH): Administration, Marketing, and Foreign Trade, during the July-December 2024 school year. In this regard, it should be noted that, using technology, the survey was sent virtually via Google Forms to all enrolled students, and all responses were collected. The Social Entrepreneurship Profile Assessment tool proposed by [1] was applied. Once the surveys were administered, the database was created in Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23 for the development of the descriptive analysis.

The results are shown in a general way, however in a second proposal an analysis will be carried out by semester to identify the degree of knowledge with entrepreneurship according to the semester they are in.

Instrument

The data collection technique was made using the Social Entrepreneurship Profile Assessment tool proposed by Capella [1].

The aforementioned tool consists of two sections, the first collects information on sociodemographic variables, such as gender, age, marital status, area of knowledge, and current semester, to name a few.

The second section consists of 30 statements distributed as follows: 9 relate to personal characteristics, 11 relate to social characteristics, and 10 relate to innovative characteristics. It is important to mention that in this section, the Likert scale was: "Strongly disagree" = 1, "Disagree" = 2, "Undecided" = 3, 'Agree' = 4, "Strongly agree" = 5.

Analysis of results

From the 11 phrases included in the section on social characteristics, those related to and contributing to social entrepreneurship were selected. The results for each of the degrees under study are shown, and those points that are directly related to solidarity and support, which favour the creation of a social enterprise, are analysed.

Table 2.

Descriptive analysis of social characteristics, Administration

Set phrases	Social characteristics				
	Likert scale, results in %				
	1	2	3	4	5
I like to help my friends in class/at work	0	0	6.5	45.1	48.3
People who help others are role models	.4	.6	7.0	40.3	51.7
I enjoy finding good solutions to problems that no one has solved yet	0	2.3	14.1	51.5	32.1
I would love to volunteer for an NGO	1.9	4.2	29.7	41.4	22.8
I see new uses for common objects	.2	2.5	20.3	56.8	20.3
I have seriously considered starting my own business after graduation	.6	2.7	11.2	34.8	50.6
I prefer working with more people	.8	1.9	19.2	53.4	24.7

Source: Own elaboration based on survey results, SPSS 23.

Business administration students, in their responses to questions about social characteristics, gave higher percentages. For example, 48.3% of the students surveyed responded "strongly agree" to the statement "I like to help my friends in class/at work." This response is consistent with the statement "people who help others are role models," to which 51.7% responded "strongly agree," Table 2.

In this same section of the analysis, it is worth highlighting the percentage obtained in the phrase “I would love to volunteer for an NGO,” since a significant percentage is “undecided” (29.7%). In this vein, several students responded “agree” to the statement “new uses for common objects” (56.8%); with regard to the statement “I prefer working with more people,” 53.4% of the students surveyed “agree”; Table 2.

Table 3
Descriptive analysis of social characteristics, Marketing

Set phrases	Social characteristics				
	Likert scale, results in %				
	1	2	3	4	5
I like to help my friends in class/at work	0.9	0.0	6.7	43.7	48.6
People who help others are role models	0.3	0.3	9.5	36.1	53.8
I enjoy finding good solutions to problems that no one has solved yet	1.2	3.4	15.3	46.2	33.9
I would love to volunteer for an NGO	2.1	3.4	24.5	39.1	30.9
I see new uses for common objects	1.2	2.1	14.7	29.7	52.3
I have seriously considered starting my own business after graduation	3.1	3.7	20.8	48.9	23.5

Source: Own elaboration based on survey results, SPSS 23.

With regard to the descriptive analysis for the Bachelor's Degree in Marketing, of the responses that make up the phrases describing social characteristics, it is important to highlight the higher percentages. For example, 48.6% of the students surveyed responded “strongly agree” to the phrase “I like to help my friends in class/at work”; this response is consistent with the statement “people who help others are role models,” to which 53.8% responded “strongly agree,” Table 3.

In this same section of the analysis, it is worth highlighting the percentage obtained in the phrase ‘I would love to volunteer for an NGO,’ since a significant percentage are ‘undecided’ (24.5%), while 39.1% and 30.9% “agree” and ‘strongly agree,’ respectively. 29.7% of the students who responded to the survey agreed with the statement ‘I have seriously considered starting my own business after graduation’, with 29.7% “agreeing” and 52.3% ‘strongly agreeing’, Table 3.

Table 4
Descriptive analysis of social characteristics, Foreign Trade

Set phrases	Social characteristics				
	Likert scale, results in %				
	1	2	3	4	5
I like to help my friends in class/at work	0.0	0.0	4.9	36.0	59.1
People who help others are role models	0.0	0.0	4.9	34.7	60.4
I enjoy finding good solutions to problems that no one has solved yet	0.0	0.4	17.8	46.7	35.1
I would love to volunteer for an NGO	0.4	2.2	24.0	37.8	35.6
I see new uses for common objects	1.3	1.8	14.2	29.3	53.3
I have seriously considered starting my own business after graduation	0.4	4.0	26.2	47.1	22.2

Source: Own elaboration based on survey results, SPSS 23.

In the descriptive analysis for the Bachelor's Degree in Foreign Trade, it is important to highlight the highest

percentages among the responses that make up the phrases describing social characteristics. For example, 59.1% of the students surveyed responded ‘strongly agree’ to the phrase ‘I like to help my friends in class/at work.’ this response is consistent with the statement ‘people who help others are role models,’ to which 60.4% responded ‘strongly agree,’ Table 4.

In this same section of the analysis, it is worth highlighting the percentage obtained in the statement ‘I would love to volunteer for an NGO,’ since a significant percentage are ‘undecided’ (24.0%), while 37.8% and 35.6% “agree” and ‘strongly agree,’ respectively. With regard to the statement ‘I prefer to work with more people,’ 47.1% of the students surveyed ‘agree’; 29.3% of the students who responded to the survey in the phrase ‘I have seriously considered starting my own business after graduation’ “agree” and 53.3% ‘strongly agree,’ Table 4.

Table 5.
Comparison between the degrees under study

Set phrases	Social characteristics		
	Comparative		
	Administration	Marketing	Foreign Trade
I like to help my friends in class/at work	48.3	48.6	59.1
People who help others are role models	51.7	53.8	60.4
I enjoy finding good solutions to problems that no one has solved yet	51.5	46.2	46.7
I would love to volunteer for an NGO	41.4	39.1	37.8
I see new uses for common objects	50.6	52.3	53.3
I have seriously considered starting my own business after graduation	53.4	48.9	47.1

Source: Own elaboration based on survey results, SPSS 23.

Students of foreign trade have the highest percentage, with a 10.5% difference compared to the other two degrees, in their response of ‘strongly agree’ to the statement ‘I like to help my friends in class/at work’; the results are consistent with the percentages obtained in the following statement: ‘people who help others are role models’; the highest percentage is 60.4% for foreign trade, Table 5.

Regarding the statement ‘I enjoy finding good solutions to problems that no one has solved yet,’ the percentage of students who agreed was highest among business administration students, at 51.5%, followed by foreign trade students, at 46.7%, and marketing students, at 46.2%, with the latter two showing a very small difference, Table 5.

It should be noted that the statement ‘I would love to volunteer for an NGO’ received the highest percentage of ‘agree’ responses from business Administration students,

at 41.4%, with a difference of 2.3% from Marketing students and 3.6% from Foreign Trade students, Table 5.

Students in the three degree programmes under study responded to the statement 'I have seriously considered starting my own business' with 'strongly agree' at rates above 50%, with the highest being 53.3% for students in Foreign Trade. At long last, a characteristic of social entrepreneurs is teamwork, so for the statement 'I prefer to work with more people,' the highest percentage for the response 'agree' was for students in Administration, at 53.4%, Table 5.

Conclusions

According to the results obtained, students from the three degree programmes under study show a strong interest and motivation to start their own businesses, demonstrating a promising entrepreneurial spirit. However, for these ventures to generate a positive and sustainable impact on society, it is essential that they acquire solid knowledge on the subject of social entrepreneurship. This approach will allow them not only to seek economic success, but also to contribute to social and environmental well-being, integrating values that promote a more just and responsible development in society.

On the other hand, it is interesting to note the percentage of students who agree to collaborate free of charge with an NGO. The results for the three degree programmes are less than 42%. This point is noteworthy because the willingness of students to collaborate in this activity reflects a genuine interest in contributing to social welfare, an essential value of social entrepreneurship. This attitude shows that, beyond wanting to create businesses to obtain economic benefits, students recognise the importance of generating a positive impact on the community. In consequence, by integrating this social commitment with business skills, they can develop ventures that are not only economically viable but also respond to real social needs, promoting meaningful and sustainable change.

Based on the results obtained, we agree with the contribution made by Lioja [7], who mention that the university environment has a great responsibility in fostering positive attitudes and behaviours in students towards entrepreneurial intent. That is why it is necessary to implement talks, courses, classes, and workshops that are developed in an optimal, effective, and innovative way to awaken greater interest and motivation in order to develop entrepreneurial activity, with students prepared for a reality full of changes and challenges. The reason is that in this environment, they have the opportunity to

directly awaken the entrepreneurial spirit in their students [7].

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