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FACTORS OF SOCIAL INNOVATION REVISITED: LITERATURE REVIEW AND A RESEARCH MODEL PROPOSAL

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Abstract

The agenda of social sciences research has always included social innovation (SI) due to the rapid increase in the social problems and their expanded impacts as a result of climate crisis, political conflicts and disequilibrium in the political economy in both national and global levels. In recent years, researchers of SI struggled to provide frameworks for evaluating and measuring social impacts-of not only social innovation and entrepreneurship practices but also all corporate social responsibility projects and human development projects as a tool for ensuring the return on investment in terms of benefits, hence for providing the continuity of social investments. However, though the social impact analysis research has contributed to better interpret the validity of Social investments to the investors, there is still room for research on elaboration of drivers/success factors of social innovation activities to provide a framework for ensuring the outcomes of the social innovation efforts. For contributing the body of knowledge on the dimensions of drivers of social innovation, this study aims to present a framework of factors of social innovation derived from content analysis on literature, and to propose a research model on drivers and process components of social innovation practices for future studies. Findings revealed that the drivers of social innovation can be clustered as actors, resources, objectives and the process attributes where the innovativeness dimension is embedded in. Actors dimension presented highest numbers of sub dimensions. The social innovation research should utilize the theories of management, organization discipline.

1. Introduction

In the literature, authors reflected various theoretical criteria and variables which have impact on the results of social innovation practices. Reflecting the definitions of Social Innovation which was widely accepted in their publication period, Astorga (2004) indicated that, developing social innovation projects requires changes to the current social practice, to implement these changes requires an organized community or non-governmental organization in order to improve the impact on social care or the productive dynamics of social practice. Before that Engel (1997) had already outlined that SI practices are in need of a sum of skills of different social actors, social competence shared by social actors, and a continuous learning of the actors.

In this study we made a content analysis on literature to define (1) "factors that may act as enablers/drivers of Social Innovation Practices, that have impact on Social Innovation Practices' Outcomes", (2) "factors that act as Process Dimensions/Characteristics of Social Innovation Practices, that have impact on Social Innovation Practices' outcomes" and (3) "a research model proposal for exploring the factors that have impact on results of Social Innovation Practices". We conducted bibliometric Content Analysis method by using relevant keywords on the Journal Publications and the Books in the Books Citation Index, from The Scopus Publication Database in the first round and then in Research Gate database in the second iteration.

In the following sections, theoretical background, methodology, findings, results and model proposal, finally the conclusion and discussion of the research are presented.

1.1. Factors, Key Factors and Dimensions of Social Innovation Practices

One of the initial research on the important factors of Social Innovation Project success was conducted by Rodríguez Herrera and Alvarado (2008). In this study, the important factors or criteria that should be considered in a social innovation were listed as (a) associativity, which is the ability to organize and mobilize groups, especially the participation of actors; (b) integrality which is the articulation of knowledge, experiences and responses; (c) sustainability, which is continuity over time thanks to creative solutions that adapt to the restriction of resources, this criterion is a necessary condition for replication; (d) innovation, concrete transforming action generally of a collective nature that offers a response to a given) integrality problem, through new processes, new techniques, new ways of organizing the action; (e) replicability, which is the possibility of appropriating the teaching of an innovative experience by other authors in different circumstances. They also mentioned about endogenous (identification of the problem, the elaboration of a diagnosis of what is to be changed; the leadership) and exogenous factors (alliances and networks to mobilize resources especially of the knowledge, expertise of diverse actors; an alliance with the public sector to broaden the impact of innovations on a different scale). For Blanco, et al. (2012) the key factors that influence social innovation in non-governmental organizations are team training, leadership, organizational culture, team commitment, external pressure, resources and available means, external support and demands of interest groups. Nicholls and Murdock (2012a) also listed the dimensions (individual, organisation, network/movement, system) of social innovation.

Buckland and Murillo (2013) mentioned five important factors for social innovation projects, which they called the pillars of social innovation as (a) social impact, which is to achieve a social transformation and solve a problem addressed; (b) economic sustainability, is that the financial model and economic sustainability guarantee survival in the future; (c) type of innovation constitutes an innovation whether closed or open, that is incremental or radical and presents innovative features; (d) inter-sectoral collaboration; (e) scalability and replicability, scalability is that the initiative can expand or multiply and replicability is the initiative that can be replicated in a different situation. Sánchez (2014) mentioned that innovation is best developed when there are effective partnerships between small organizations and businessmen and large organizations that can develop the idea on a large scale. This publication revisited the associative factor among different social agents that form a group to carry out the social innovation project is important, considering the group to the community's institutionality, volunteering, de facto alliances, whether informal or contractual (Rodríguez Herrera & Alvarado, 2008). Howaldt et al. (2014) also mentioned that there are five key dimensions that affect the potential of social innovations, their field of action and their impact, as: (a) to conceptualize and understand social innovation, how social innovation relates to technology and business innovation, (b) Societal Challenges and needs, how systemic changes are addressed, (c) actors, networks and governance, how social innovation projects are managed,(d) dynamic process, how innovation is dynamically developed, (e) resources, capabilities and constraints, including financial, human resources, regulations, etc. Networks also can be considered as a way to assess the impact of social transformation processes in regional development context (Estensoro, 2015).

In contrast, Neumeier (2017) identified three key factors for the success of social innovations: (1) the relative advantage that the innovation would have over the current situation, compatibility with the current experiences and values of society; complexity, how complex it is for the environment where it is going to be developed; experience, degree of experience to develop it, observation of results; (2) factors that influence the margin of maneuver of the network of actors of social innovation, responsibility of the actors, organizational culture, organizational structure of the actors; and (3) factors that influence the actual participation process: commitment, skills, competence and willingness to innovate by the various actors.

Morais-da-silva et al. (2016) mentioned that social innovation goes beyond the initial phases of the project and hence it requires to be scalable as Kolk and Lenfant (2015) pointed out the challenges of scabilitiy and need for government support. One of the recent studies about the dimensions of Social Innovation was published by Correia et al. (2016), providing a developing country perspective from Brasil and was also adapted in the previous work of this paper's author (Yıldırım & Askun, 2017). In their work, Correia et al. (2016) presented a 5 dimensioned structure of Social Innovation Practices including Actors, Processes and Activities, Social Needs, Social improvements and answers and innovativeness. They also were inspired by (Assogba, 2010; Howaldt & Schwarz, 2010; Mulgan, 2007; Phills et al., 2008; Saucier, 2006) while constructing the Results Perspective, which includes Going beyond specific needs, based on values, creation of new meanings, aspirations, Process perspective of Social Innovation was quoted by Correia et al., 2016 (cited in André & Abreu, 2006; Bignetti, 2011)

including the emphasis on the participatory and collaborative nature of learning as the product cannot be isolated from the process or the way how innovation was organized and developed.

1.2. Levels of Social Innovation

Some studies also utilized the levels of social innovation as "dimensions" which may affect the outcomes. Multilevel perspective, it prompts researchers to distinguish and analyze three conceptual levels: niche innovations, sociotechnical regimes, and sociotechnical landscapes (Geels & Shot, 2007). Nicholls and Murdock (2012a,b) also clustered the levels as incremental, institutional and disruptive. Within level based approach, Social innovation, similarly to technical and economic innovations, is both intelligible and measurable at micro, meso and macro level, and has a key role in competitiveness. The levels of social innovation (Kocziszky et al., 2017) micro (organisational) level, meso (settlements, regional) level, macro (national) level, global level. Beside these levels, they also included innovator type, innovator form, financing and objective types as success determinants, those which align with objective, actor, resource dimensions that were offered in prior studies.

2. Problem Statement

Social innovation research has gained significant importance in the era of rapidly increasing social problems like climate crisis and political downturns, regional wars and conflicts, immigration, increasing aging, unemployment, ineffective social policies and public budget constraints which cause accessability, availability and quality problems in public health, social care and education services.

In the literature, authors reflected various theoretical criteria and variables which have impact on the results of social innovation practices. Success of social innovation practices and measurement of their social impacts are the most prior topics in this context, however it is possible to achieve the expected result only by the effective combinations of drivers and process attributes of social innovation

Though there exist number of studies which aimed to elaborate the dimensions of social innovation as drivers/enablers in the literature, literature reviews and content analyses that combine and consolidate the findings of these studies are limited, opening a room for research.

In this context, we aimed to provide a framework that present a detailed analysis of selected high impact publications on the driver and process dimensions of social innovation.

3. Research Questions

Our research questions are defined as follows:

"Which factors that may act as enablers/drivers of Social Innovation Practices, that have impact on Social Innovation Practices' Outcomes are mentioned in the SI literature?"

"Which factors act as Process Dimensions/Characteristics of Social Innovation Practices, that have impact on Social Innovation Practices' outcomes are mentioned in the SI literature?"

"Depending on the literature content analysis, which research models can be proposed for exploring the factors that have impact on results of Social Innovation Practices?"

4. Purpose of the Study

Within the theoretical context and problem definition that have been presented above, by a qualitative content analysis on the literature, this study aims to provide a theoretical framework about the factors and dimensions which may act like drivers of social innovation practices and which may represent the social innovation process characteristics. As well, based on this theoretical background, the study aims to present a research model proposal for exploring the factors that may have impact on the results and outcomes of social innovation practices.

5. Research Methods

In this study we made a qualitative content analysis on literature to define (1) "factors that may act as enablers/drivers of Social Innovation Practices, that have impact on Social Innovation Practices' Outcomes", (2) "factors that act as Process Dimensions/ Characteristics of Social Innovation Practices, that have impact on Social Innovation Practices' outcomes" and (3) "a research model proposal for exploring the factors that have impact on results of Social Innovation Practices". We conducted bibliometric content analysis method by using relevant keywords of the factors that may act as drivers and process characteristics of social innovation on the selected databases.

5.1. Selected Publication Databases

Content analysis was conducted in two rounds: on the Scopus Publication Database in the first round and then in Research Gate database in the second round. We included the Journal Publications and the Books in the Books Citation Index, but excluded the Proceedings in order to avoid the duplication risk of the same publication (as it first may be published as a Conference proceeding and then as an extended Journal Article).

5.2. Qualitative Content Analysis of Literature

In the first round, the Scopus Publication Database was included in the study and searched by these keyword combinations: ["factors" AND "social innovation"], ["key factors"AND "social innovation"], ["dimensions" AND "social innovation"], ["drivers" AND "Social innovation"], ["enablers" AND "social innovation"], ["challenges"AND "social innovation"], ["difficulties"AND "social innovation"], ["requirments"AND "social innovation"], ["elements"AND "social innovation"]. From these analysis, the following citations provided the exact matches with our search:

Key factors of Social Innovation, bibliometric analysis by Carvache-Franco, Candela, and Barreno (2018),

Three Dimensions of Social İnnovation by Nicholls and Murdock (2012a, b),

Five key dimensions of Social Innovation by Howaldt et al. (2014),

Three key factors for the success of social innovations by Neumeier (2017),

Associative factor among SI Agents by Rodríguez Herrera, and Alvarado (2008).

Due to the limited number of findings, we iterated the search process with the same keyword combinations in ResearchGate Database, which also includes the publications in the other citation indexes than Scopus. This search provided us a wider screening for the publications on this topic, especially from the fastly developing and developing countries' researchers. In the end of this second iteration of keyword search in Researchgate, we have finalized the list of publications about factors and dimensions of social innovation as given in Table 01.

Table 1. Referred Publications for Dimensions of Social Innovation

Author	Publication
Nicholls & Murdock (2012) cited by Carvache-Franco et al. (2018)	Three Dimensions of Social Innovation
Howaldt, Butzin, Domanski & Kaletka (2014) cited by Carvache-Franco et al. (2018)	Five Key Dimensions of Social Innovation
Neumeier (2017) cited by Carvache-Franco et al. (2018)	Three key factors for the success of social innovations
Rodríguez Herrera & Alvarado (2008) cited by Carvache-Franco et al. (2018)	Associative Factor Among SI Agents
Correia et al. (2016)	Dimensions of Social Innovation
Buckland & Murillo (2013),	Five important factors for social innovation projects
Blanco, Carreras, & Sureda (2012)	Key factors that influence social innovation in non-governmental organizations
Rodríguez Herrera, & Alvarado (2008)	Important factors or criteria that should be considered in a social innovation
	Key success factors in social innovation at the endogenous leve
	Key success factors in social innovation at the exogenous leve
Astorga (2004)	Requirements for Developing social innovation projects
Estensoro (2015)	Facilitators of Social Innovation
Engel (1997)	The current social practice must be accompanied by …
Sánchez (2014)	Innovation is best developed when there are …
Morais-da-silva, Takahashi, & Segatto (2016)	Factors that expand the impact of Social Innovation, Factors that promote SI scalability
Kolk & Lenfant (2015)	Difficulties of Social Innovation
Geels & Shot (2007)	Conceptual Multi Level Perspective
Caulier-Grice et al. (2012)	Core elements of SI

6. Findings

The list of all variables which define the outcome of Social innovation practices (as Drivers, enablers, challenges/difficulties etc.) which took place in the publications (given in table 04 above) are constructed first. As a result of the analysis of this list, Table 02 and Figure 01 are constructed:

Table 2. Frequency of Concepts for Drivers and Process of Social Innovation

Dimension	Concept	Frequency (Count) in selected Publications	% in Total
Actors	Driver	67	56%
Resources	Driver	21	18%
Innovativeness	Process	22	18%
Objective	Driver	7	6%
Process	Process	3	3%
Total	3 Driver, 2 Process	120	100%

Figure 1. Word Cloud for Factors of Social Innovation

As can be seen from the Table 4 and Figure 04, the Word Cloud for the bibliometric analysis of criteria of Social Innovation practices from Literature Review, mostly referred concepts are Actors and Resources which we classified as Drivers of Social Innovation. These are followed by "Innovativeness" which is an attribute of Process concept. Objective of the social innovation practice and the process itself are relatively less referred concepts.

6.1. Results and A Model Proposal for Research

As can be seen from the results of literature content analysis in Table 04, different authors used different terms for elaborating the dimensions that have impact on SI practices' outcomes. Most authors used the term "factors" (Blanco et al., 2012; Buckland & Murillo, 2013; Morais-da-silva et al., 2016; Neumeier, 2017; Rodríguez Herrera & Alvarado, 2008), while some others widely used the term "dimensions" (Correia et al., 2016; Howaldt et al., 2014; Nicholls & Murdock, 2012a, b) for interpreting the "concept" of their research.

On the other hand, some authors prevented to define the concept for the research question and they used the Word We must also note that various other concepts and constructs had been used by the other authors like "Core elements" (Caulier-Grice et al., 2012). Defining social innovation. A deliverable of the project: "The theoretical, empirical and policy foundations for building social innovation in Europe"(TEPSIE), European Commission–7th Framework Programme, Brussels: European Commission, DG Research, 22. 2012), Difficulties (Kolk & Lenfant, 2015), facilitators (Estensoro, 2015). From this variety of concepts used for the similar research questions, it is understood that the priorities of the authors may vary by their context and the concept /construct selection may be overlooked. This caused a blurred understanding about the research question operalisation. We also would like to note that one must avoid to blur the understanding of concepts and constructs in such a research domain, as some constructs can be lower level while factors can have higher level of abstraction. For example, Commitment of

Actors include willingness construct, which is more abstract then Government support of Network/alliance/support concept.

Hence, we preferred to use the term "Theoretical Variable (1st, 2nd level breakdown) in our analysis referring to the discussion of Markus (2008). By classifying the list of theoretical criteria of Drivers and Process of Social Innovation Practices in a structured research model (with one way causality to Results, excluding interrelations of dimensions) (Figure 02, Table 03), we have constructed the dimension clusters in the following figures (Table 03). These models have causality with the RESULTS construct, but they do not refer to inter-causality. These models can be adapted to qualitative studies of Grounded Theory (Charmaz, 2008). Grounded theory as an emergent method. Handbook of emergent methods, 155, 172.) or Case Study approaches (Yin, 2009) or Delphi studies. Previous research on factors of social innovation mostly utilized the qualitative approach, hence a consolidated model which includes all dimensions that were discussed in the literature can be practical in SI domain.
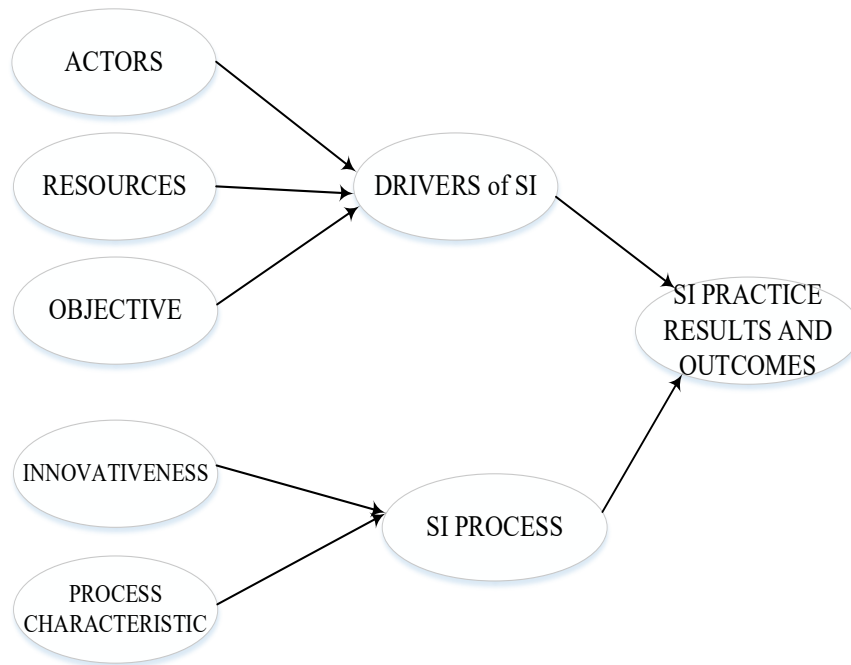
Figure 2. Proposed Research Model for Social Innovation Practice Research – Relating SI Drivers and Process Results and Outcomes

However, for structuring research models towards quantitative research which can adapt causality tests including Regression analysis, factor analysis (for validating the usage of the dimension/sub-dimensions) these models should be enhanced in a way which includes the hypotheses for elaborating the causalities in between these dimensions (from drivers to process and to results), as well as the correlations between the dimensions.

For this, latent variables or moderators must also be considered and added by further literature analysis on the previous quantitative research. The lack of sufficient data on the social innovation practices, either from statistical secondary resources or from the surveys may hinder the validity of these analyses.

Table 3. List of Concepts, Dimensions and Theoretical Variables of Social Innovation Practice

Concept	Dimension	Theoretical Variable 1st Level	Theoretical Variable 2nd Level
Drivers	Actors	Commitment	Volunteering
			Willingness and Commitment
			Team Commitment
		Commitment/organization	Responsibility
		Organization	Governance
			Communities' Institutionality
			Organizational Culture
			Experience in Business
			Organizational Learning competency
			Organizational Structure
			Experience in Partnership
			Organized Community
		Skills and Competence	Team Training
			Competence
			Skills
		Skills of Competence/Network	Sum of Skills
		Alliance Support	Associativity
		Network Alliance Support	Government Support
			Alliance with Public Sector
			Philantrophists
			Local Community Inclusion
			De Facto Alliances
			Civic Participation Volunteers
			Alliances and Networks
			External Support
			External Pressure
		Network Alliance Support/Leadership	Cooperative Leadership
		Leadership	Leadership
			Political Ability
			Experience
	Resources	Resources	Financial
			Human Resources
			Regulations
		Investors (Actors) (hybrid with Financial Resources)	Business organization
			Self Governments
			State Actors
		Capacities (Resources, Investors)	Financial
		Capacities	Human Resource
			Regulations
		Barriers	Human Resources
			Financial
		Framework Conditions	Political Awareness and Environment
			Inst., normative, regulative, cultural
		Resources	Social Needs and Commitment
	Objectives	Demands	Integrality
			Demands of Interest Groups
			Social Demands
		Identification	How systemic changes are addressed
			Precise Identification of the problem
Process Characteristic	Process types	Type of Diagnosis Process	
		Type of Innovation Process Dynamics	
	Innovativeness Capacity	Technology and Business Linkage	Relation to technology
			Relation to business innovation
		Multiplicity	Scalability
			Replicability
		Creating Change	Evident change in current practice
			Relevant advantage over current state
		Level of innovation-Scaling up capacity	Niche Innovations
			Sociotechnical landscape change
			Sociotechnical Regime change

7. Conclusion

By the qualitative content analysis of the selected publications on the concepts related to Social Innovation drivers and processes, there occurred significant number of similarities among the concepts and their sub-level categories that have impact on social innovation practices. The findings revealed that the concepts which act as SI drivers can be clustered under Actors, Resources, Objectives topics, while process attributes can be named as Process and Innovativeness which define the level of outcomes. Actors concept has various sub-level features like Organization, Leadership, Skills and Competence, Network/Alliance and Support, which are obviously major concepts that are widely explored and studied in Management and Organization disciplines. To elaborate these concepts, second level sub-categories are also listed (like governance, organizational culture, organizational structure, organizational learning, institutionality etc. within the "Organization" concept or Associativity, government support, alliance with public sector, local community inclusion etc. within the "Network/Alliance/Support" concept).

Our classification of findings that are derived from the clustering of all concepts in the literature are aligned with the approaches of Correia et al. (2016) and Howaldt et al. (2014). They both named the concepts as factors that have impact on social innovation performance. There exist a hybrid understanding for defining the concepts in the previous literature as the authors used both the concept of "factors" and "dimensions" and many others like "difficulties", "requirements", "elements" and so forth. However, in our research we preferred to use the term "concept" for higher levels, and theoretical variable for sub-levels to avoid confusions during operationalisation. As well, it can easily be seen from the list of concepts and variables which we presented in the findings, further analysis and thought is required to locate the variables as concepts or constructs, as their abstraction levels differ (for example Concrete variables like Financial Resources or Government support levels versus abstract variables like Commitment or Competence).

To understand the dynamics of both drivers and process attributes of social innovation practices and to provide insights on their sub-level concepts, the practices have to be analyzed by using scales and measurement tools with proved validity and reliability levels. At this point, social innovation research should utilize the theoretical background and accumulated knowledge on the organization and management concepts and make interdisciplinary collaborations to develop appropriate research models. In further research, the measurement scales and validated tools can be explored and recommended for each concept and theoretical variable of our consolidated list to provide a framework for SI social impact/ social investment researchers. As well, the bibliometric analysis can be expanded for covering conference proceedings and reports of official institutions like EC, OECD, World Bank and UNDP. Practitioners in third sector of NGOs and NPOs, managers/leaders of CSR activities in industry can refer to the findings of this study while designing and conceptualizing social projects. We also think all dependencies and interrelations among these factors of Social Innovation Practices provide a room for research, and a detailed literature review can help a lot for offering measurement scales to each factor from the theoretical background of management and organization discipline (e.g. leadership dimension can be measured by Multifactor Leadership Scale (MLQ) of Avolio and Bass (2004), or commitment dimension of actors by Goal Commitment Scale by Klein, etc.

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