WHY DO SOME SOCIAL ENTERPRISES FLOURISH IN VIETNAM?
AN INTEGRATION OF PIVOTAL SOCIAL ENTREPRENEUR AND ECOSYSTEM FACTORS

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Thesis Abstract

Social enterprises have been promoted by the United Nations Development Programme as a new model for poverty reduction through targeted employment creation and support for human services (social, educational, and health) in marginalised communities. Social enterprises in Vietnam, a low- to middle-income country, have become a significant but as yet under researched aspect of the country's plan to meet the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to eradicate poverty. The key focus of this research is to explore potential multilevel interactions of social entrepreneurs (micro-level), social enterprises (meso-level) and ecosystems (macro-level) in fostering positive social impacts and contributing to the country's SDG achievements. The thesis employs a mixed-method approach comprised of a quantitative survey (Study 1, N =352) and one-off go-along interviews (Study 2, N = 20) with social entrepreneurs.

Study 1 develops and explores an integrative model predicting that Vietnamese social enterprises would enhance social enterprise performance (both commercial and social) through a combination of social entrepreneur attributes (e.g., social identity) and ecosystem supports, including networking, training, mentoring, and funding. Unexpectedly, ecosystem supports factored into quantity and quality, whilst performance factored into commercial and social. The quantity of ecosystem supports directly predicted commercial performance, but the quality of them predicted social performance. The material amount of support boosted profits, while the quality of support predicted social performance. Hence commercial and social performance were directly supported by different aspects of the same ecosystem. Turning to social entrepreneur attributes, self-interest, risk innovation and proactiveness each predicted commercial performance, while risk innovation was the only, and strong, predictor

of social performance. No mediating roles were evident for ecosystem supports, meaning they could be helpful, but were not necessarily pivotal. However, ecosystem supports did show moderate links between social entrepreneurs and performance. These moderations were confined to commercial performance. Both types of support interact with risk innovation and communitarian identity to predict commercial performance. Surprisingly however, the ecosystem supports sampled in this survey study have no apparent moderating roles, on links between social entrepreneurs and social performance.

Study 2 probed this surprising gap further, through interviews with a subset of the sample from study 1. The interviews offered qualitative evidence indicating the importance of the multilevel fit between (1) social entrepreneur leadership, (2) core societal and traditional Vietnamese village values, and (3) the structure and functioning of their enterprises. The mutual fit of these elements appears to be foundational to the achievement of social enterprises' prosocial missions to secure a better quality of life for disadvantaged groups and more sustainable community development.

Across both studies 1 and 2, this research reveals a symbiotic relationship between social entrepreneurs, social enterprises, and the ecosystem. The shape, character and function of social entrepreneurship is influenced by the ecosystem via supports which can enhance the ability of these organisations to realise their prosocial missions to create and sustain decent livelihoods (SDG-8) and reduce poverty (SDG-1). At the same time, successful social enterprises also draw on traditional village values to perform socially (redefined as prosocial efficiency). This prosocial efficiency created by social enterprises then has a positive influence on the ecosystem, which in turn promotes further social entrepreneurial development.

This thesis foregrounds the importance of cultural considerations and multilevel partnerships (SDG-17) between relevant stakeholders to promote the efficacy of social entrepreneurship in Vietnam, and possibly other emergent economies. Findings from this research have been fed back into the refinement of social enterprise support system in Vietnam, in response to demand from social entrepreneurs themselves. Hence the thesis concludes with an evidence-based policy brief, as requested by leading social entrepreneurs in Vietnam. This brief focuses on the role of traditional Vietnamese village values in boosting enterprising young people's entry into social entrepreneurship in Vietnam.

Keywords: Social entrepreneurs, Social Impact, Ecosystem Fit, Culture, Sustainable Development.

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Ethical Approval

Ethical approval for the study was then grained from the Massey University Human Ethics

Committee (MUHEC2018, reference number NOR 19/05, March 13, 2019).

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CIEM	Central Institute for Economic Management
CSIE	Center for Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship
CSIP	Centre for Social Initiative Promotion
DNES	DaNang Entrepreneurship Support Centre
FISS	FTU Innovation and Incubation Space
EU	European Union
IPP	Innovation Promotion Program
IBAVietnam	Inclusive Business Accelerator Vietnam
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OECD-LEED	OECD – Local Economic and Employment Development
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
Spark	Spark Center for Social Entrepreneurship Development
Project 844	Project 844/QĐ-TTg on supporting the ecosystem for national entrepreneurship and innovation approved by the Prime Minister of Vietnam
Project 1665	Project 1665/QĐ-TTg on supporting pupils and students in entrepreneurship approved by the Prime Minister of Vietnam
UN	United Nations
UN ESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
VCCI	Vietnam Chamber of Commerce and Industry

Chapter 1. Introduction and Critical Literature Review

There are a range of options for providing socioeconomic safety nets within contemporary economies. In many advanced Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) member economies, these extend well beyond the traditions of state-funded welfare (Hodgetts & Stolte, 2017). In emerging economies such as Vietnam, that do not have well-developed welfare systems of the sort evident in many OECD countries, the traditional village has served such mutual support functions (Kerlin, 2010; London, 2014). However, with increased urbanisation and rapid economic growth, many of these traditional structures have been changing and increasingly the supports they provided are being approximated through developments such as social enterprises (Birkhölzer, 2009). Social enterprise – enterprise pursuing both commercial and social missions in the same time (Dee, 2018) - is a relatively new phenomenon in the fields of economics and welfare (Sepulveda, 2015). Social enterprises are more than simply businesses with social goals; they provide a better way of exchanging products and services while providing wellbeing for all (Pearce & Kay, 2003). In social enterprises, social entrepreneurs are the change agents who aim to tackle social problems and create social impacts and transformations (Mastrangelo et al., 2017; Nicholls, 2006). The existence of social enterprises depends on social entrepreneurs, who may have unique personal attributes but whose efficacy in these roles is also shaped by local cultural and social contexts (Roundy, 2017; Thompson, 2002). To fostering the development of social enterprises in Vietnam, this doctoral research explores the preexisting attributes of social entrepreneurs then considers the role of the ecosystem in social enterprises' prosocial performance.

Entrepreneurship is traditionally defined in business circles as the opportunistic pursuit of economic success through the development of small- to medium-sized organisations, via the

innovative creativities of individuals, and often in uncertain environments that feature tangible resource limitations (Austin et al., 2006; Mitchell et al., 2002). Profit-focused, *commercial* entrepreneurship thereby dominates the marketplace, and is based predominantly on market exchange principles designed to maximise founder/owner (and shareholder) profits. Such enterprises may well generate spin-off positive social effects, including creating employment in the form of decent work[1], as well as negative consequences, sometimes dubbed 'externalities' which are supposedly outside of the market transaction, such as pollution and indecent work conditions (Estrin et al., 2016).

By comparison, *social* entrepreneurship involves the adoption of commercial principles, but with the wider intent to prioritise efforts to address social needs and issues (such as access to decent jobs), rather than solely seeking financial profit for owners and shareholders (Estrin et al., 2016; Shaw & Carter, 2007). These hybrid commercial-social enterprises (often services) embrace a combination of social and commercial missions and are implicated in efforts to promote more equitable and sustainable development around the globe (Littlewood, 2018; Martin & Osberg, 2007; Seelos & Mair, 2005; Sullivan Mort et al., 2003; Thompson et al., 2000).

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has recognised social enterprise (SE) as a key model for poverty reduction and economic development, and as one mechanism for delivering on aspects of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

[1] 'Decent work' sums up the aspirations of people in their working lives. It involves opportunities for work that is productive and delivers a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for families, better prospects for personal development and social integration, freedom for people to express their concerns, organize and participate in the decisions that affect their lives and equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men.' International Labor Organization, Access link: https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/decent-work/lang--en/index.htm

(Social_Enterprise_UK, 2015). The 17 SDGs belong to the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in which countries around the world commit to end poverty (SDG-1), supported, for example, by tackling inequality (SDG-10) and reducing climate destruction (SDG-13) while ensuring that no one is left behind (UN, 2020a). To achieve the SDGs requires collaboration among all stakeholder groups, including governments, civil society organisations, multinational corporations, public, private and social enterprises. In a sense, at the organisation level, social enterprises may contribute to the SDGs by translating prosocial missions into workable everyday SMART (small, measurable, accurate, reliable, timely) strategies and organisational operations (Carr & Bandawe, 2011). For example, the primary goal, SDG-1, is poverty eradication everywhere, in all its forms (UN, 2020b). Many social enterprises are developed with a mission to reduce poverty (Gupta et al., 2015) and may develop ways to measure their performance in relation to such organisational social impact goals (Arogyaswamy, 2017). These social impacts can include reducing poverty in a local area by generating employment; protecting the planet through the promotion of sustainable food production practices; and/or ensuring prosperity, well-being and social inclusion for marginalised persons through decent work (Ahmad & Bajwa, 2021).

SDG-1 is supported by 16 other goals (above), and previous publications have considered the contributions by social enterprises to the SDGs, such as Poverty eradication (SDG-1) (Alvarez et al., 2015; Ghauri et al., 2014; Tobias et al., 2013), gender equality (SDG-5) (Datta, 2012; Muntean & Ozkazanc-Pan, 2016; Teasdale et al., 2011), and employment in decent work (SDG-8) (Fonteneau et al., 2011; Terziev et al., 2016; Thomas et al., 2021). In such circumstances, Vietnam has been recognised by the UNDP as a key context for the

use of social enterprises to reduce poverty through the creation of decent work (Thang Truong, 2018).

For their part, researchers have begun to recognise that social entrepreneurship is central to addressing the complex issues involved in poverty reduction and that further understanding of its impacts requires a multilevel approach (Saebi et al., 2019). However, previous research has tended to focus separately on the characteristics of entrepreneurs themselves, the organisational structures and success, or on broader societal ecosystem factors that influence the sustainability of these enterprises (Gupta et al., 2020; Saebi et al., 2019). There is a lack of research focused on factors *across* these levels and how they may shape the establishment, function, impacts and sustainability of social enterprises in the emerging economy of Vietnam on in emerging economies in general (García-Jurado et al., 2021; Gupta et al., 2020; Persaud & Bayon, 2019). This thesis will explore social entrepreneurship from a multilevel perspective which combines insights from all levels — the social entrepreneurs, the organisational structures they create, and the broader socio-cultural ecosystem of Vietnam.

More specifically, the key focus in this thesis is on social entrepreneurship from the perspective of the people who establish, develop and lead social enterprises (Mair & Marti, 2006). We will explore how they engage in commercial business activities in order to address social missions that benefit society and which position them at the intersection of social and commercial sectors (Nyssens, 2007; Seelos & Mair, 2005). For instance, some of these entrepreneurs attempt to alleviate poverty by creating business activities as commercially self-sustaining initiatives that create meaningful, decent employment and workplace opportunities for marginalised communities (Cooney & Williams Shanks, 2010). In the process, social entrepreneurs face additional challenges to those faced by purely commercial enterprises. They not only need the persistence to establish new ventures that are financially

viable; they also need to grapple with the complexities that come with their social missions (Dees et al., 2001; Mueller et al., 2013; Thompson, 2002). Because of their leadership roles, research has begun to explore the personal attributes of social entrepreneurs and how they relate to, and fit with, the societal contexts in which they are operating (Welter, 2011). Extending that line of inquiry, which is reviewed in more detail below, this doctoral research explores the nexus of social entrepreneurial attributes in relation to the organisational social missions and factors in the ecosystem that influence the abilities of entrepreneurs to achieve their social and organisational goals.

In this chapter, I set the stage for an exploration of the development and performance of social enterprises in Vietnam. First, I consider the development of social enterprises within advanced OECD economies, and then emergent economies, before focusing on the setting for this thesis — Vietnam. After this review, the focus shifts to previous research into social enterprises, gaps in the literature (including the need for a multi-level approach which is the specific focus of this research), and what social entrepreneurship means to the social entrepreneurs themselves. It is these entrepreneurs who provide the core focus for this study, as well as how they set and understand their organisational goals and performance. The chapter is completed with an overview of the thesis questions and structure.

1.1 Historical Overview of Social enterprises in advanced economies

The first recognised social enterprise was started in the UK, in 1660 (MacDonald & Howorth, 2018). Thomas Firnin provided unemployed people who had fled London as the consequences of the Plague epidemic, with raw material to be able to work on their usual occupations (MacDonald & Howorth, 2018). This was the very first documented example of a social enterprise, in which social entrepreneurs create jobs for disadvantaged groups instead

of giving them charity. It is also a reminder that social enterprise is a form of work, and a field for work research in its own right.

One of the earliest social enterprises illustrating this point dates to 1902 in the USA, when Goodwill industries in Boston adopted a business model of *donated goods retail* (Gibbons & Hazy, 2015, p. 16) and created an enterprise that hired and trained unemployed people to repair donated goods to sell at reasonable prices. The profits from this enterprise were then used to fund a community program designed to improve the employability of local people (Doeringer, 2009). Demonstrating the potential for sustainability for such social enterprises, in 2020 this nearly 120-year-old social enterprise included 156 local organisations across the USA, Canada, and another 12 countries. This social enterprise network now serves nearly 22 million people (Goodwill, 2020).

Social enterprises became more widespread in the USA from the 1970s, in response to economic downturns, strained government budgets, and the re-emergence of charitable approaches to the provision of social safety nets (Doeringer, 2009; Hodgetts & Stolte, 2017). For example, social enterprises became prominent in USA from the late 1970s and early 1980s and in response to the rise of neoliberalism and national governments making major cuts to their welfare programs (Kerlin, 2006). By generating their revenue from commercial activities, the social enterprises that were formed at this time were able to create meaningful employment, and buffer communities against the harshest impacts of the economic downturns and the policies of austerity that were adopted by many OECD countries in the 1980s and 1990s, and from which many communities have arguably still not recovered (Hodgetts & Stolte, 2017). The number of social enterprises in the USA has increased significantly since 1990s, especially with the embedding of social entrepreneurship courses in

higher education institutions such as Harvard, Yale, and Stanford (Austin et al., 2006; Defourny & Nyssens, 2008).

The development of these enterprises mushroomed from the 1990s as many OECD countries faced economic difficulties, including high unemployment and gendered, educational, emplaced, and classed inequalities (Defourny & Nyssens, 2010). In these contexts, social enterprises later emerged out of the self-funded charity sectors in these countries. According to a European Commission report on social enterprises (Borzaga et al., 2020), these organisations were widespread across 35 European countries, including Ireland, Italy, UK, Bulgaria, Finland, Hungary, Croatia, Slovakia, Poland, Romania, Sweden, Serbia. The number of European social enterprises recorded in the period of 2015-2017 ranged from tens of thousands in France (>96,600), Germany (>77,450) and Italy (>102, 450) to a few hundred in Cyprus (190), Denmark (411), and Iceland (258) (Carlo Borzaga, 2020). In the United Kingdom, social enterprises have become one of the fastest-growing forms of business, with an increase from 70,000 social enterprises in 2017 to 100,000, employing 2 million people and contributing £60bn to the national economy, in 2020 (Whitfield, 2021). In a recent report *No going back: State of social* enterprise *report 2021*, Social Enterprise UK (2021) states that 12,000 new social enterprises were established in the midst of the Covid19 pandemic in order to address growing poverty and related community needs. A common feature across these countries is an emphasis on using social enterprises to create opportunities for disadvantaged groups.

In Canada, attention has been paid to the development of social enterprises as a means of addressing the 17 UN SDGs (Doeringer, 2009; Sataar, 2018). For example, in 2019 the Canadian Entrepreneurship Census indicated that 89% of enterprises were able to link their

activities to at least one of 17 SDGs. Social enterprises also generated $63 million in economic activity within marginalised communities in 2019 alone and produced a 4 dollar return for every dollar invested. Canada was recognised by the Thomson Reuters Foundation as the best country for social entrepreneurs to operate in out of the world's 45 largest economies (Shearman, 2019).

Social enterprises have grown rapidly in recent years across a wider range of OECD countries, in response to the retraction of traditional welfare states and corresponding growth in poverty and hardship for increasing numbers of people (Defourny & Nyssens, 2010; Hodgetts et al., 2013; Hodgetts & Stolte, 2017). This includes OECD countries in the South Pacific region. In Australia, nearly 7,000 of 20,000 social enterprises have focused on creating meaningful employment for disadvantaged people (Westpac, 2019). Australian Social Traders (2018) estimated these social enterprises contributed 3% of Australia's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and employed in excess of 300,000 people. Social enterprises have a significant presence in the state of Victoria for instance, with a $5.2 billion contribution to the Victorian economy and the creation of 60,000 jobs, in which 12,000 employees were people with [dis]abilities (Garrett, 2020). In New Zealand, the concept of social enterprise is relatively new. However, in 2014 the previous, National-led, government announced its first financial support for social enterprise with NZ$1.27M of funding being diverted from the welfare system to grow the social enterprise sector (Kartikasari et al., 2020). By 2019, New Zealand had about 3500 social enterprises contributing over 1 billion dollars to the economy (Mandow, 2019).

Social Enterprises in 'Emerging' Economies including Vietnam

Today, social enterprises are increasingly prevalent as part of social and economic development that addresses the 17 SDGs in emergent Asian, African and South American, or Global South, countries, (Social_Enterprise_UK, 2015). The remarkable contribution of this growing sector is recognised for helping to build more inclusive and sustainable economies, not only in the advanced economies of Japan, Korea, Hong Kong and Taiwan (Defourny & Kim, 2011), but also in emergent economies, such as Sudan, Kenya, India, and Vietnam (Social_Enterprise_UK, 2015). In emerging economies, the growth of social enterprises has been supported by international donors who literally buy organisations time to establish themselves and become sustainable (British Council & UN-ESCAP, 2017). Correspondingly, there is some evidence to suggest that social enterprises are lifting the revenues of poor households faster than middle income households — thus contributing to lowering economic inequalities in these settings (van Dijk et al., 2020).

According to reports on the state of social enterprises prepared by the British Council and UN ESCAP in 2018, the number of social enterprises in emergent countries was found to vary from tens of thousands to hundreds of thousands (numbering 5,000 in Jamaica, 11,000 in Sri Lanka, 20,000 in Morocco, 44,000 in Kenya, 55,000 in Sudan, 164,000 in the Philippines, 342,000 in Indonesia, and 2 million in India). Creating jobs was reported to be a primary mission for many of these enterprises (British Council et al.,, 2020). For example, a British Council report (2018) in Morocco revealed that 70% of social enterprises focused on job creation to improve livelihoods for marginalised communities and to empower employees to overcome poverty (Carr, 2021). Countries including Indonesia, Jamaica, Ethiopia, Sudan, Sri Lanka and the Philippines have reported the proportion of women in their social enterprise workforce has reached more than 50%. These social enterprises also provided sustainable incomes for vulnerable young people and people with [dis]abilities (British Council & UN

ESCAP, 2018). They have supported members of these groups to learn to take on leadership roles (e.g., almost 50% of the leaders of social enterprises in Indonesia, Malaysia, Vietnam, India are female; and more than 65% of the leaders in Kenya's social enterprises are young people aged under 44 (British Council, and UN ESCAP Report in 2021, 2018).

Many social enterprises are locally run, resourced, and focused. For example, in Indonesia, Kenya, Vietnam, Sudan, Ethiopia, Bangladesh and Jamaica it has been reported that the main focus of social enterprises is on the local community, often in the form of efforts to address the SDGs. This includes a focus on the reduction of crime and violence for human security (SDG-16) by increasing employment among marginalised communities (SDG-8 and 10) (British Council, 2018). Social enterprises in different countries are thereby addressing the different societal problems associated with permutations of poverty, including hunger, access to education, environment protection, sustainable livelihoods, and so forth (van Dijk et al., 2020).

Although the number of social enterprises has been rising all over the world, few countries have developed formal legal and policy frameworks for the regulation of the sector outside of those that regulate commercial enterprises in general. In 2014, Vietnam became one of the few countries to have issued a specific law regarding social enterprises. Since 2015, the number of social enterprises in Vietnam has increased fivefold (British Council, 2021) and social enterprises have become a key element of the National Action Plan to implement the SDGs (Hoa, 2020). According to a recent study by the British Council of Vietnam conducted through the country's Central Institute of Economic Management (CIEM) at the National Economic University (2019), there are more than 20,000 social enterprises in Vietnam. These, serve 1 million beneficiaries. Approximately 50,000 organisations and initiatives are

also informally active in the social impact business sector. Social enterprises in Vietnam have demonstrated considerable resilience and sustainability. During the Covid19 pandemic, for example, almost 80% of social enterprises remained profitable (ranked highest profit-making of social enterprises in South-East Asia) and 89% expect to grow after pandemic (British Council, 2020).

Despite rapid development and noted successes, the underlining reasons for the development of social enterprises in Vietnam remain relatively unexplored. With a 4,000-year-old unique culture and a history of responding to considerable societal disruptions — including long periods of conflict associated with invasions from China, France, and the United States — Vietnam has developed considerable resilience. This includes an ability to draw insights into sustainability from diverse philosophies including Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Socialism, Capitalism, and traditional Vietnamese village values (Nguyen, 2016). Studying the interactions of the characteristics of the entrepreneurs who have established and lead these organisations within this rich and varied societal and cultural ecosystem may reveal previously unrecognised reasons for the sustained development of social enterprises (Berry et al., 2011; Carr & Bandawe, 2011). This doctoral research will explore these underlying influences on the orientations of social entrepreneurs, the structures and functions of the enterprises they create and lead, and the broader ecosystem of Vietnam. For now, and in the absence of a Vietnamese scholarly literature on this topic, it is important that we turn to what previous research shows with regard to the actions of social entrepreneurs, their organisations and broader societal factors that shape their ability to achieve their social missions.

1.2 Research on Social Entrepreneurship

Growing attention is being paid to social entrepreneurship within the academic literature (García-Jurado et al., 2021; Gupta et al., 2020; Saebi et al., 2019; Short, 2009). The number

of publications on this topic first began climbing in the 1990s with a focus on social entrepreneurs, often called change agents, and the social and environmental problems they may face in trying to generate revenue for the sustainable development of their social enterprise (Bansal et al., 2019; Waddock & Post, 1991). Since the 1990s, the number of academic papers in the field of social entrepreneurship has increased significantly (Ahmad & Bajwa, 2021; García-Jurado et al., 2021; Gupta et al., 2020; Short, 2009).

Consistent with the history briefly reviewed above, a majority of the studies in this field have been conducted in North America and European countries, rather than in African, South American or Asian countries (Ahmad & Bajwa, 2021; García-Jurado et al., 2021; Granados et al., 2011; Short, 2009). Care needs to be taken when applying general observations from economically 'developed' and often relatively 'individualistic' contexts to Vietnam. European-inspired social enterprises and the associated research findings may not always be applicable for other contexts, including those in the Global South, due to socio-economic differences, and cultural and systemic variations, including levels of poverty, levels of access to decent work and sustainable livelihoods, and relatively collectivist norms (Carr, 2021; Hodgetts et al., 2013; Hodgetts, Stolte, et al., 2020; Maclachlan & Carr, 1994). For these and other reasons, recent meta-analyses of social entrepreneurship research by Admad and Bajwa (2021), García-Jurado and colleagues (2021), Gupta and colleagues (2020), and Saebi and colleagues (2019) have pointed to a need for further research into social enterprise in emergent economies and cultures, particularly in countries outside of North America and Western Europe (Ahmad & Bajwa, 2021; Gupta et al., 2020; Sengupta & Sahay, 2017).

More specifically, previous research into social entrepreneurship has focused primarily on either the characteristics of individual entrepreneurs, or on organisations, and to a lesser degree the broader societal contexts in which these social enterprises respond to social issues

like poverty. In the present research, I draw on (Bronfenbrenner, 1979)'s Ecological Systems Theory[2], in which the micro level refers to social entrepreneurs' personal factors, such as identity, motivation to set up social enterprises, entrepreneurial intentions, leadership, and professional skills, and so forth (Gupta et al., 2020; Saebi et al., 2019; Sengupta et al., 2018; Short, 2009). At the meso level, unique features of social enterprise, such as being a hybrid model with business, its management philosophy, focus on innovation, and social enterprise performance have all been studied (Liljenstrom & Svedin, 2005). Less scholarly attention has paid the interaction of micro level with functioning of social enterprises (meso level) and broader societal contexts for the development (macro-level) (Saebi et al., 2019).

The interaction of social entrepreneurs, enterprises and the local contexts in which they operate offers a further, expanded, multilevel systems orientation to social enterprise research (García-Jurado et al., 2021; Saebi et al., 2019). In reality, all three levels are intertwined because the phenomena of social entrepreneurship are multilevel. Examining people in the community, and the community in people, can provide deeper, more direct, and more fine-grained explanations and increase understanding of the deep reasons for the rise of social enterprises (Carr, 2006; Hodgetts et al., 2005). Specifically, macro-level events and conditions (culture, society, legal framework, policies, etc.) likely influence the actions of individual social entrepreneurs and in turn the actions of social entrepreneurs likely also contribute cumulatively to macro-level events and outcome(s).

[2] Ecological System Theory is the framework through which community psychologists examine the relationships between individuals, communities, and the wider society. Bronfenbrenner (1979) offered a new theoretical perspective for research into human development as the result of interactions between the person and his environment.

The following three subsections consider research findings at each of these three levels in turn: social entrepreneur (micro level) – organisation (meso level) – and ecosystem (macro level). My aim here is to pinpoint the key insights from each strand of the literature and to suggest how the pressing gaps in the research at each level might be addressed. This is followed by a description of the thesis focus and structure which follows an integrated multilevel approach.

1.2.1 Micro level – Social Entrepreneur

The term 'entrepreneur' in English is derived from a French word – *entreprendre* – which means to undertake, to take in hand and to try on (Carland et al., 2002). In the research literature, an entrepreneur is usually someone who undertakes a commercial enterprise, frequently with considerable personal financial risk to themselves. These entrepreneurs are often the managing proprietors of for-profit enterprises, for which they supply the capital, assume the risk and control the day-to-day activities or operation, in exchange for a profit margin (Chell, 2007). Under this definition, we could consider that a commercial entrepreneur is typically the founder, owner, and manager of a small commercial enterprise, whose principal purpose is to grow that enterprise to make money for themselves and any of their shareholders. Under this kind of view, employment and wages for employees would ultimately be secondary to private profit margins.

Such definitions only partly fit the *social* entrepreneur, however. That is, as well as being mindful of commercial efficiency and productivity, social entrepreneurs are also change agents who found and maintain enterprises not necessarily just to keep growing and enriching themselves and any of their shareholders (Koh, 2019). These social entrepreneurs are often more motivated by sustainability and generating self-sufficient financial returns for themselves and their employees, than by profit (Thompson, 2002). They are frequently focused on developing and supporting sustainable social networks that enable them to realise

social missions such as job creation and poverty reduction among workers, predominantly within local communities (Nga & Shamuganathan, 2010; Sullivan Mort et al., 2003). As such, a social entrepreneur shares qualities with entrepreneurs in general in terms of establishing and leading new organisations that operate viably and efficiently (Sullivan Mort et al., 2003). However, social entrepreneurs are also more likely than commercial entrepreneurs to do so for the benefit of others (Martin & Osberg, 2007). Thus, given that social enterprises do not eschew commercial efficiency but rather incorporate it alongside their social purposes, some of these same attributes may also in theory be partly relevant, and perhaps even uniquely relevant, to the success of social enterprises (Mair & Noboa, 2006). These include, for example, being able to identify social entrepreneurship opportunities for the wider community (Gupta, 2007).

Much if not most of the research on enterprise development and management has focused on the *personal attributes* of entrepreneurs that link to commercial creation and commercial success in private enterprises (Frese & Gielnik, 2014). Key historical developments in the literature on the key attributes of commercial entrepreneurs are reviewed below. This review is grouped historically by decade and highlights a core focus during each period with exemplars selected from the broader research on commercial enterprises which potentially have a bearing on social enterprises. These foci include arguably respectively, and chronologically, individual *motives*, personal *values*, personality *traits*, entrepreneurial *orientation*, and social *identity*. The latter finally links us to wider cultural and contextual considerations, such as social norms and values that may, potentially, resonate with *social* enterprise, as well as commercial.

Motives

The motivational approach to commercial enterprise became relatively prominent during the

1960s and 1970s. The most widely studied motive was the need for achievement, or *n*Ach (McClelland, 1961). This motive was defined by McClelland and others as centred on seeking individual success in competition with a standard of excellence, competing both against others and one's own personal best (Carr, 2006). In a landmark review that included archival and empirical evidence, McClelland (1965) and colleagues found that people who scored higher on *n*Ach became commercial entrepreneurs relatively more often than those who scored lower on in this indicator. Subsequently, McClelland and Winter (1969) took this and a range of related findings further, by designing training programs in *n*Ach commercial entrepreneurship skills for potential commercial entrepreneurs in so-called 'developing' countries at the time. A clear implication of such interventions, derived from McClelland's (1961) seminal book *The Achieving Society*, was that entrepreneurship in general, and commercial entrepreneurial motives in particular, could help reduce poverty; for example, by increasing not only self-employment, but also the provision of steady jobs for others.

Relatedly, research evaluations of training initiatives for work in India and other lower-income settings found that people with initial training in *n*Ach made more profit, employed more workers, invested more money, and were more successful in small- to medium-sized commercial enterprise development (McClelland, 1987). Interestingly, in the two-year evaluation of the effects of *n*Ach training in India, trainees who also respected cultural traditions were more accepted in their local communities and were ultimately more successful in sustaining their commercial enterprises. This finding begins to suggest that socio-cultural context is an important co-determinant of social enterprise development and sustainability (Carr, 2006).

Nevertheless, subsequent research continued to focus on the motive, per se, rather than its interaction and fit with local values-based traditions (Johnson, 1990). For example, Collins and colleagues (2004) conducted a meta-analysis of 41 studies of *n*Ach and commercial entrepreneurial behaviours and found moderate correlations of *n*Ach with both the choice of a commercial entrepreneurial career and entrepreneurial performance. Unfortunately, these studies did not pay much attention to traditional cultures and values (Munro et al., 2014). A focus on cultural values was taken up relatively more seriously in the following decade.

Values

A specific focus on links between values and enterprises arose in the 1970s, and then arguably peaked in the 1980s. A value can be defined as 'an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally or socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode of conduct or end state of existence' (Rokeach, 1973, p.5). Much of the 1980s research on values and enterprises focused on values that reflect individualism and collectivism in wider societal contexts (Hui & Triandis, 1986). The definitions of individualism and collectivism, in this literature, often hinged on how the individual construed the self –as valuing either a more independent 'me,' or a more interdependent 'we' (Markus & Kitayama, 1991).

Personal value differences likely link to commercial entrepreneurship intentions and performance. For example, Zampetakis and colleagues (2015) conducted a survey with a sizeable sample of college students in Greece and found that independent self-construal was linked to relatively positive attitudes towards taking up a career in commercial entrepreneurship. Zampetakis and colleagues (2015) also found that independent self-construal moderated (amplified) the relationship between their attitudes and intentions to start

up a commercial enterprise. The role of cultural context was signaled in a comparatively rare study in the relatively collectivistic, as well as lower-income, setting of Lesotho, in Southern Africa (Oni et al., 2020). Among 80 owners of small enterprises, independent self-construal linked positively to commercial innovation, it was also linked — but this time, in a different cultural context, negatively — to commercial growth. This small-scale study did not find a significant relationship between interdependent self-construal and commercial entrepreneurship growth.

Such findings at best suggest a potentially moderating role for socio-cultural context — in this case the possibility (untested) that the sustainability of entrepreneurial activities may depend at least in part on fit with socio-cultural context. Logically, for example, whilst a more individualist value set would predispose people to commercial entrepreneurship, a more inter-dependent value set would predispose them more towards social entrepreneurship. This thesis explores this possibility.

Traits

The traits school of thought arguably peaked in the 1990s (Costa & McCrae, 1992; McCrae & Costa, 1997). The trait school of psychology remains influential in work psychology and argues that commercial entrepreneurial behaviour is not solely based on learned reactions to situations. It is thought to rely mainly on stable dispositions within individuals (Ernst, 2012). As such, traits are approached as inherently individualistic, rather than collectivist phenomena. In the decades leading up to the 1990s, the concept of individualised personality had come under intense criticism for overlooking the importance of different, often social, situations as influences on the actions of individuals (e.g., Mischel, 1973). It was also criticised for the development of a seemingly ever-expanding list of traits to accommodate increased recognition of the range of personal traits that appear to manifest across a range of

situations (Barrick & Mount, 1991). However, in the 1990s there was a renaissance of trait theory and research, which claimed that all of the personality traits that had been identified could be reduced, through meta-factor analysis, to just five primary meta-factors in human personality (Costa & McCrae, 1992).

Often abbreviated to the acronym OCEAN, what came to be known as the 'Big Five' personality traits were defined as follows:

- *Openness* (to new experience) — includes sub-traits of imagination, curiosity, perceptiveness, and creativity with shallowness and imperceptiveness (Goldberg, 1993). This trait is potentially relevant to commercial enterprise development insofar as it includes spotting market opportunities.
- *Conscientiousness* is comprised of sub-traits of orderliness, thoroughness, decisiveness, and reliability, versus carelessness, negligence, and unreliability (Goldberg, 1993). These are potentially relevant to enterprises of any kind, since they often require due diligence and keeping accurate records.
- *Extraversion*. This factor includes secondary traits like sociability, talkativeness, assertiveness, and activity level, in contrast to silence, passivity, and reserve (Goldberg, 1993). This trait is clearly potentially relevant to networking and other more social aspects of enterprise development, at least in cultural contexts where being individually talkative and assertive are culturally appropriate traits to display.
- *Agreeableness* includes the personality descriptors of kindness, trust, humility, and warmth, which are contrasted with hostility, selfishness, and distrust (Goldberg, 1993). This is an especially interesting trait because logically it may be differentially relevant for commercial versus social enterprises – not necessarily so helpful in the highly competitive world of commercial enterprise but essential, perhaps, in the more

prosocial world of social enterprises.

- *Neuroticism* versus emotional stability (Goldberg, 1990) consists of secondary traits such as nervousness, moodiness, insecurity, and irritability. On a logical as well as psychological basis, emotional instability would likely be antithetical to enterprise development and sustainability, whether commercial or social.

According to Costa and McCrae (1992) every individual has a measurable profile that fits with these five traits, scoring from very low to very high on each (Costa & McCrae, 1992). In commercial entrepreneurship for example, Zhao and Seibert (2006) used these Big Five Factors as a reference system for their meta-analysis of 47 published studies from 1979-2002. These studies compared commercial entrepreneurs with commercial managers. The review study found that compared to commercial managers, commercial entrepreneurs tended to score relatively higher on openness to new experience and conscientiousness, and similarly on extraversion, but lower on agreeableness and neuroticism.

The finding of Zhao and Seibert (2006) regarding agreeableness is particularly interesting here because agreeableness was, somewhat surprisingly, negatively related to commercial success. Being agreeable with others was evidentially counter-productive for commercial enterprises. Logically, it would be hard to see the same kind of effect occurring in social enterprises where potentially the reverse relationship might be predicted — that is, agreeableness would likely be a positive predictor of efficacy in the social entrepreneurship space. This assertion remains highly speculative, however. Most of the 47 studies covered by the review were conducted in relatively individualistic settings (at a country level, Hofstede, 1989), did not include social enterprises, and did not yield large or even medium effect sizes. Thus, it would be important to explore empirically the role of agreeableness in social enterprises and their development in a relatively collectivistic setting.

In a more recent meta-analytic review of predictors of commercial performance across sixty studies conducted within what were perceived to be more individualistic, rather than collectivistic, cultural settings encompassing the period from 1979 to 2006, Zhao and colleagues (2010) found that four of the Big Five factors were linked with commercial performance. In this study, commercial performance was measured by (1) profitability (sales, profit, cost reduction) and (2) operational effectiveness (number of employees, productivity, enterprise survival and subjective ratings of overall performance). As expected, conscientiousness, openness to new experience, and extroversion related positively to profitability and operational effectiveness, while neuroticism had a negative relationship with commercial performance. These effect sizes were small (in the range from 0.09-0.2). But less predictably, in this review agreeableness did not link to commercial performance at all. Such findings further suggest that agreeableness may be somehow different from the other four of the Big Five traits, at least with regards to commercial, and potentially, social enterprises. Agreeableness, as suggested above, may be potentially the most relevant trait of the Big Five in the development of social enterprises.

One publication from Leutner et al. (2014) also reveals the potential association of agreeableness with social entrepreneurship. Almost 700 social entrepreneurs in the UK completed a survey that included questions about the Big Five and about participants' commercial success. The authors used structural equation modelling on responses from *N*= 670 participants and found a relationship between the Big Five and commercial entrepreneurial success. In this study, commercial entrepreneurial success was defined by both financial performance and *social* contribution (e.g., founding charitable organisations and creating value for the community). The study suggested that agreeableness *was* a significant factor in entrepreneurial success. This finding suggests that agreeableness may

also play a role with respect to socially-focused enterprise success.

In what was perceived to be a relatively more collectivistic setting, Nga and Shamuganathan (2010) report on a single quantitative study, of under 200 students in Malaysia. This study focused on links between the Big Five personality traits and social entrepreneurial intentions. In this study, social entrepreneurship was operationally defined by five dimensions: social vision, sustainability (effectively using resources to enhance people's quality of life), social networking, innovativeness (measured by employing innovative processes and technologies to penetrate the market at the bottom of the pyramid) and financial returns (reported by perceived profitability). Unlike the other four of the Big Five (which predicted between zero and three of these five dimensions), agreeableness had significant and positive links with *all five claimed dimensions.* This is the first study that concertedly suggests a potential role for agreeableness in predicting social enterprise development in relatively collectivistic settings. However, the study participants were students, not actual social entrepreneurs. My thesis considers the role of agreeableness among actual social entrepreneurs in Vietnam.

This focus on just one of the Big Five is also, in part, a response to recent critiques of trait approaches in general. Since the 1990s key criticisms of trait theory have been voiced by scholars such as Mischel (1973) who have argued that personality traits do not explain meaningful amounts of variance, for example, in entrepreneurial and other forms of work behaviour. Recently, Zell and Lesick (2021) synthesised results from 54 meta-analyses — mostly from North American and European countries, with a few from Australia (4), Africa (3) and Asia (5) — involving over half a million participants to examine the relationship of the Big Five with overall work performance in a variety of occupational roles (including military, police, sales, and entrepreneurship in general). The overall strength of association

between the Big Five and overall job performance was, in general, poor. Therefore, it seems prudent to select only the most promising of the Big Five, for the present study of social entrepreneurs in Vietnam.

Orientation

Presaging recurring critiques about the poor predictive power of traits, the 'Orientation' approach arose in the 2000s. Focused on commercial entrepreneurship, this approach has argued that certain *combinations* of personal attributes might still be robustly predictive of commercial enterprise development and performance. Situated at a relatively micro level, this Individual Entrepreneurial Orientation (IEO) approach also posits a combination of both traits and attitudes as factors in the study of entrepreneurs. To illustrate, the founding study of IEO was conducted by Krauss, Frese, Friedrich, and Unger (2005) in Zimbabwe and South Africa. Krauss and colleagues developed an IEO scale which combines personality traits and attitudes in the seven dimensions of *learning orientation*, *achievement orientation*, *autonomy orientation*, *competitive aggressiveness*, *innovative orientation*, *risk-taking orientation* and *personal initiative*.

The participants in this founding study were commercial enterprise owners (N=248) who completed a combination of structured interviews and surveys. The study found a small positive relationship between their overall IEO level with commercial performance. Specifically, achievement orientation, risk-taking orientation, and personal initiative together significantly supported commercial growth, contributing 4% of explained variance in business growth. Achievement orientation and personal initiative also explained a meagre 2% of the number of employees being hired by the commercial enterprise. Given the identified overlap between commercial and social enterprise, this research explores the role of IEO in social enterprises' development and performance.

Since 2005, IEO models and measures have been developed further by Bolton and Lane (2012). Based on the literature on commercial entrepreneurial orientation, and using factor analytical data reduction techniques, Bolton and Lane have refined the IEO measure from seven into a more parsimonious three dimensions:

- *Innovativeness* — the propensity of an individual to engage in new ideas and creative processes that could result in new products
- *Proactiveness* — the ability to lead and anticipate future problems and requirement to achieve goals
- *Risk-taking* — the entrepreneur's willingness to assume risk and commit to organisational strategy

Employing this validated IEO measurement model, Bolton and Lane (2012) conducted a survey in the US with 340 commercial enterprise owners based in south-western Kentucky and north Tennessee. This author found a small but positive and statistically significant relationship between risk-taking and proactiveness with self-reported commercial success. Bolton and Lane suggested that future research should explore the links between the innovativeness, proactiveness and risk-taking IEO dimensions with commercial entrepreneurship.

Responding to Bolton and Lane (2012), Al Issa (2020) surveyed 147 commercial entrepreneurs from the hospitality, wholesale, retail, building and construction sectors in Tripoli, Libya. Libya is considered to be a relatively collectivistic society (Hofstede, 2022). The survey found a small but positive and significant association between (a) overall IEO score (defined by the sum of IEO dimensions) and (b) commercial entrepreneurial success (defined by combined financial indicators of profit, sale, and growth). Similarly, Fatima and

Bilal (2019) employed Krauss and colleagues' (2005) IEO measure to conduct three-wave time-lagged surveys of 389 owners of SME service and manufacturing enterprises in Pakistan. This study found a positive link between the overall IEO score and commercial enterprise performance (defined by an increase in profitability in the last quarter). Correspondingly, this thesis explores whether a similar link, or links, may be found between IEO score and performance in social enterprises in Vietnam.

Identity

One aspect of orientation that was arguably missing in the IEO model, which may be central to social enterprise development, is social orientation. This concept was introduced to the study of entrepreneurship as a whole in the 2010s, by Fauchart and Gruber (2011). These authors developed a typology of social identity that was applied to nascent enterprises in general. The roots of this social identity approach can be found in Social Identity theory (Tajfel, 1979).

At the core of Social Identity theory is social identification with valued groups (Kelman, 1958; Tajfel, 1979). Social identification includes perceived shared values, traits and motives with a wider social group(s); and social identity reflects the strength of those identifications (Tajfel et al., 1979). The concept partly addresses the criticism of the theory for being ironically individualistic, by focusing on 'the group in the individual' (Brownbridge, 2003; Carr & Sloan, 2003). From this perspective people are thought to be motivated to define who they are by how they relate to others (Stryker, 2007; Tajfel et al., 1979). For social entrepreneurs, starting an enterprise may often function, at least in part, as a means of self-concept confirmation and as an expression of who such entrepreneurs see themselves as being in relation to the broader group of people engaged in similar practices (Conger, 2012). Considering the positioning of social entrepreneurs within the broader group of people

engaged in such work may advance our understanding about their motives and entrepreneurial decisions directed toward making social impacts (Murnieks & Mosakowski, 2007).

Based on Social Identity theory, Fauchart and Gruber (2011) developed a typology of social identities for founders of nascent enterprises in general. The identity attributes in this typology were derived empirically. Founders of 49 enterprises in sport-related industries — with many young enterprises from the West European Alpine region (Switzerland, Germany, and France) — were interviewed about their entrepreneurial journey since its beginning, focusing on their basic social motives, self-evaluations, and frames of reference (e.g., community or business success). By analysing the content of the interview transcripts, the authors found three main clusters of entrepreneurs, which they describe as follows:

- *Darwinians* — "I" (self) — are the enterprise founders who consistently stress self-interest when describing their motives, sense of self, and frame of reference. A Darwinian identity is thus the identity of the 'classic [commercial] entrepreneur' who sets up ventures for personal financial gain with the primary goal of establishing a strong and sucessful commercial business.
- *Communitarians* — personal "we" (and personal others) — are the enterprise founders who consistently stress community and collective benefits in their narrative interview transcripts, when describing their motives, self-evaluation and frame of reference. Communitarian identity entrepreneurs want to develop ventures to support others and to be supported by their social community and heir self-worth is primarily a reflection of their contribution to social community rather than industry. The number of products that reach their target audience is more important than profit for

this type of social identity. This identity may be linked to social entrepreneurship, which, as we have seen, hinges on social responsiveness.

- *Missionaries* — impersonal "we" — are the enterprise founders who pursue a missionary logic that embodies a strong sense of responsibility for the world, deriving self-worth from being able to behave and act in a manner that allows them to pursue their political vision and establish a better world. For missionaries, the venture is a platform to achieve their goals, either commercial or social. Their ventures aim at high adatability to market through creative solutions and innovation. This identity too may resonate with social entrepreneurship, which we saw is connected to a mission of helping others and doing social good.

Employing measures of the three types of social identity identified by Fauchart and Gruber (2011), Estrada-Cruz and colleagues (2019) conducted a quantitative study with *N*=271 Spanish university students who were commercial entrepreneurs. The study focused on the links between social identity (Darwinian, communitarian and missionary) and commercial enterprise performance, as defined by the following criteria: growth in sales, market share, profits, job creation and the innovativeness of the enterprise. The extent to which participants self-identified as Darwinians and missionaries had a small positive and significant relationship with enterprise performance. In contrast, having a stronger communitarian identity did not predict commercial enterprise performance. However, being communitarian may still be central to social enterprise performance, as argued above. Therefore, this thesis will explore the roles of all three types of social identity in the development of social enterprises in Vietnam. The inclusion of these factors also responds to a polemical call from Gruber and MacMillan (2017) and Pan et al. (2019) to include social identity in the study of entrepreneurship in general and social enterprises in particular.

Briefly, this thesis will explore the roles of relatively interdependent vs. independent self-construal, one trait (agreeableness), IOE ratings (risk-taking, innovativeness, proactiveness), and founders' social identities (Darwinian, communitarian, missionary). Following on from the latter, terms like 'identity', and 'identification', imply the existence of a reference group with which the social entrepreneur will identify. In addition to community, one of those reference groups, and perhaps the most obvious for entrepreneurship in general, is the social enterprise itself. These organisations are understood in this thesis as meso-level entities. The next section presents a brief review of present knowledge regarding social enterprise(s) as meso-level organisations.

1.2.2 Meso level - Social enterprises

The organisational concept of social enterprise is somewhat elastic, being conceptualised slightly differently by different researchers (Dees, 1998), and used interchangeably with 'social entrepreneur' and 'social entrepreneurship' (Defourny & Nyssens, 2008). To clarify, in this study 'social entrepreneurs' refers to the founders or people who initiate a social enterprise; 'social entrepreneurship' refers to a pattern of organisational behaviour related to the establishment and operation of an enterprise; and 'social enterprises' are the resulting organisations. These are the outcomes of social entrepreneurship (Mair & Marti, 2006), which is heavily influenced by social entrepreneurs at a relatively micro-level (1.2.1) and contextual factors (1.2.3) from the macro-level ecosystems within which they operate (Defourny & Nyssens, 2008). As these meso-level social enterprises are defined slightly differently in different contexts, a common definition of social enterprises is outlined briefly

before an introduction to the current state of social enterprises in Vietnam. This is followed with a brief review of key performance measures for social enterprises.

Defining social enterprise

As a form of organisation, social enterprises share many common features with commercial enterprises. However, a key difference is the primary focus on producing goods and services that promote positive social impacts. This focus is often enshrined in organisational strategic plans that promote the employment and inclusion of members of vulnerable groups, and organisational performance measures based on related prosocial impacts (UN, 2020a). Whilst sharing this general organisational orientation towards the use of commercial practices to produce prosocial outcomes, definitions of social enterprise vary across contexts (Kerlin, 2010). In the US, social enterprises have been defined as enterprises with market-based approaches to income generation and social change. In Europe, social enterprises have been located more directly within the cooperative tradition of collective social action (Doherty et al., 2014). The OECD Local Employment and Economic Development programme (OECD-LEED), which spans 38 countries across Europe, North America, Oceania and Asia, defined social enterprises as organisations that are recognised as a form of organisation by the legal system in which the entrepreneurial spirit is applied simultaneously in the pursuit of both economic and social goals (OECD-LEED, 2016). Accordingly, social enterprises do not operate only in social services sectors such as education and culture, and/or in the environment, but also in manufacturing, farming, and other sectors that offer decent employment opportunities for disadvantaged persons in both urban and rural areas (OECD, 2013).

The British Council in Vietnam (2012) defined social enterprises as organisations that display three key features: (1) social missions (defined as dealing with social, cultural, or

environmental problems) as top priorities; (2) use of commercial activities and fair competition practices as tools to meet these social missions; and (3) reinvestment of profits generated from commercial activities back into the organisations and society to achieve their social missions. In 2014, Vietnam Enterprise Law No.68/2014/QH13 and Decree 96/2015/NDCP (2014) on the formal legal status of social enterprises in Vietnam defined social enterprises as registered enterprises under the Enterprise Law. A registered organisation must meet the following criteria: (1) its objectives are to solve social and environmental issues for community benefits; and (2) at least 51% of its annual surplus is reinvested and used for registered social and environment goals. This legal definition notwithstanding, many organisations in Vietnam run as social enterprises whilst not being legally registered in accordance with the Enterprise Law (Thang Truong, 2018). This thesis adopts the broader British Council definition of social enterprises, which covers the key shared characteristics of performing commercial activities to generate revenues for use in the pursuit of social missions.

Roots of social enterprises in Vietnam

The roots of social enterprises in Vietnam lie in the response to the formation of the centralised economic system from 1954 to 1986. Under this system, the state planned and controlled all the economic activities in the country. During this period, the government took primary responsibility for social support and economic development. Community-centred organisations, including the Women and Youth Unions, were controlled by the government, and cooperatives were set up to provide opportunities for communities to work together for mutual benefit (ASIALIFE, 2017; VietnamCooperativeAlliance, 2011). Most of these cooperatives did provide employment for marginalised groups to help people obtain a better quality of life. As such, these cooperatives can be regarded as the earliest form of social enterprise in Vietnam (British Council, 2012). By 1986 the number of cooperatives had risen

to almost 75,000 (UNDP, 2010), and many later converted to social enterprises that reflect the national definition outlined above.

After 1986 Vietnam engaged in considerable economic reforms (Doi Moi). Central to these reforms was an 'open-door policy' whereby the private sector was increasingly allowed to participate in the economy and the establishment of NGOs and other humanitarian organisations was encouraged (Pham, 2016). These humanitarian organisations provided support for poverty reduction, health care and education, or developed essential services such as water and electricity. Private enterprises that employed and trained people living with disabilities and/or those from ethnic minorities received favorable tax reductions or exemptions in return for such economically inclusive activities (Pham, 2016). A 'socialisation policy' (supporting privatisation) initiated at this time was designed to motivate non-governmental entities to invest and commit to the development of a social safety net in terms of health, education, and social care.

Subsequently, in 2010 Vietnam was recognised by the World Bank as a low- to middle-income country. At that point in time a considerable amount of international humanitarian aid was formally withdrawn from Vietnam (Pham, 2016). As a consequence, there was less funding available for prosocial organisations. Increasingly, market-driven commercial entities were developed to provide resources that could be used to address social and environmental issues (Cung Nguyen, 2012). The development of many of these organisations was aided by the arrival of additional aid agencies including a number of organisations supporting the development of social entrepreneurship, such as the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the British Council (BC), Irish Aid, Lotus Impact, the Center for Social Initiative Promotion (CSIP), the Spark Center for Social Entrepreneurship Development (SPARK), and

the Centre for Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship (CSIE) (Pham, 2016; Thang Truong, 2018). According to research by the British Council, CSIP and SPARK (2011), by 2011 the activities of these agencies had contributed to the significant growth of centres, associations, clubs, cooperatives, funds, schools and commercial enterprises that sought to contribute to the sustainability and success of social enterprises. The resources provided by these agencies are invaluable because social entrepreneurs often face challenges to achieving and increasing their positive impacts because of resource constraints (Bacq & Eddleston, 2015). Correspondingly, an important organisational function for aid agencies that invest in social enterprises and for enterprises assessing their own prosocial impacts is performance measurement.

Social enterprises - performance measurement

Measuring the performance of social enterprises is arguably 'one of the greatest challenges for practitioners and researchers in social entrepreneurship' (Mair & Martí, 2006; p.42). The challenges arise due to the diverse nature of each social enterprise and the level of localisation. As alluded to above, social enterprises can adopt various organisational forms and quasi-commercial models in order to generate resources to support efforts to produce prosocial impacts (Doherty et al., 2014). The core features of social enterprises are manifest in their performance goals and commercial and social indicators of the impact of these. The performance of social enterprises includes not only the measurement of financial achievements and revenue generation, but also social achievements and the use of this revenue to engage in activities such as creating additional jobs and enhancing the lives of local people and society at large (Ebrahim et al., 2014). Both commercial and social indicators of performance are included in the definition of enterprise performance used in this thesis.

The very first approach to evaluating social enterprise performance was the Social Return on Investment (SROI), developed by the Roberts Enterprise Development fund in the USA in 1996. SROI is a specific method that includes both financial and social indicators to calculate the return on investment (Costa & Pesci, 2016). SROI assigns monetary value to both the market and social objectives of a social enterprise based on the assumption that all enterprises have an impact on people, society, and the environment (Clark et al., 2004). SROI is determined by comparing the value of the social benefits of an organisation's activities to the cost of achieving those benefits (cost-benefit analysis). This is done by evaluating how much social value (in dollars) is created for every dollar of investment, which is referred to as a ratio of monetised social value. For example, a ratio of 2:1 means that an investment of $1 delivers $2 of social value.

One key limitation of this method is that it converts all value into monetary value, whereas not all social impacts can be translated into monetary value — such as quality of life and social inclusion. Another key limitation is that implementing SROI is expensive and challenging due to the requirement to involve all relevant stakeholders and their potentially diverse understandings of the impacts being made by a given social enterprise (Arvidson et al., 2013; Moody et al., 2015). The resources to employ the SROI model to measure the performance of the wide range of social enterprises represented by participants in this research were not available. However, the model's cost-benefit analysis approach was used when asking social entrepreneurs to evaluate the performance of their social enterprises.

Another key instrument for measuring social enterprises' performance is the Social Enterprise Balanced Scorecard (SEBC) (Somers, 2005). These scorecards are considered balanced in the sense of being a sensible mix or trade off between the financial and social

aspects of enterprise performance and long- and short-term objectives. Respondents are scored in relation to their achievement of standardised targets or Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). The SEBC was tailored by Somers (2005) from Kaplan & Norton's (2005) four-dimensional Balanced Scorecard used for evaluating the performance of commercial enterprises. The Balanced Scorecard's four dimensions include: (1) the appropriate use of financial resources (as reflected in markers relating to cash flow, sales growth and return on equity) ,(2) customer service (measured in terms of quality of services, timely delivery, generation of new customers and other considerations that are important to customers), (3) internal processes and operational efficiencies aimed at maximising the value to the customer, innovative processes and products, product cycles and the number of deviant products, and (4) learning & growth, which relates to human capital investment, employees' training and development, employees acquiring new skills, and the development of innovative capability. In some versions of the SEBC, social elements are also added to the four commercial considerations above. For example, the SEBC designed by Somers (2005) also includes social goals and widens the scope of customer considerations and objectives to include broader beneficial impacts from the organisation to public or community beneficiaries. These might not be the people paying for the goods or services, but those who may be directly or indirectly impacted by the social enterprise or use its products. A key limitation of the SEBC, however, remains the disproportionate weighting given to commercial, rather than social imperatives. Thus, this thesis does not use the SEBC.

A more promising and relevant performance framework that has been adapted for this thesis is the multidimensional controlling model developed by Bagnoli and Megali (2011). This model was developed to measure social enterprise performance in three balanced dimensions: (1) economic — financial performance (profit, cost accounting, fair remuneration), (2) social

effectiveness — impacts on beneficiaries and the communities, and (3) institutional legitimacy — compliance with legal and societal norms. In comparison to the models above, Bagnoli and Megali' s (2011) achieves more of a balance between commercial and social considerations in organisational performance (Arena et al., 2015; Costa et al., 2017). Specifically, social effectiveness assesses to what degree the financial achievement (e.g., profit) has contributed to the well-being of targeted beneficiaries and the broader community. The institutional legitimacy dimension evaluates social enterprises' compliance with legal regimes and the organisations moral principles regarding prosocial impacts. For example, many Vietnamese social enterprises aim to address SDG-8 (Decent work). Correspondingly, this aspect of their social mission can be evaluated not only by the number of jobs created, but also by the quality of work life and sustainability of livelihoods for their employees.

One other approach to assessing performance takes achievements in addressing the UN SDGs themselves as a direct key social enterprise performance indicator. UN member countries have committed to achieving 17 interrelated SDGs with 169 associated targets and 230 indicators by 2030 (UN, 2020a). These 17 SDGs can also be translated into workable everyday targets as umbrella performance criteria for social enterprises (Carr & Bandawe, 2011; Carr & Marsella, 2013). For example, a recent report by British Council (2021) on more than 800 social enterprises in South East Asia, South Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa, and European countries reported that 58% of these social enterprises contributed to SDG 8 (Decent work and economic growth), 50% were working toward SDG 4 (Quality education) and SDG 3 (Good health and well-being), while 36% overtly targeted the primary goal, SDG 1 (No poverty). Following the Miller Centre for Social Entrepreneurship (2017), this thesis employs the SDGs as a framework to guide the measurement of social impact.

There are challenges in developing a common scale to measure the performance of social enterprises, in addition to their diversity across the domains of education, finance and commercial services, social services, agriculture, health and the environment (Alter, 2007) Social enterprises also adopt a range of organizational structures and operate within a range of different cultural contexts. The performance of social enterprises is also likely to reflect the social entrepreneurs' management philosophies and styles, which are often cultivated in response to particular socio-economic and cultural ecosystems (See Li , Hung & Hodgetts, 2020 for a general argument about why cultural considerations are crucial in the Asia Pacific Region and psychological research such as mine). It is beyond the scope of any one PhD project to address all these considerations and developing a single valid measure or set of measures for social enterprise performance. I will use a number of scales and interview questions in order to gain some sense of organizational performance as it is understood by my participants. To do this in a meaningful way, I will also include in the interviews a focus on cultural considerations, including values and practices that shape the pro-social mission focus and day to day operations of participating social enterprises.

The issues of resource access and social impacts as well as the role of various aid agencies in this section, are raised as macro level considerations and key elements of the ecosystem within which social enterprise activity is growing in Vietnam. This takes us into the discussion below of macro-level considerations regarding social enterprise development and performance in Vietnam (Costa & Pesci, 2016).

1.2.3 Macro level - Social Entrepreneurship Ecosystem

Considerations at the macro level of Vietnamese society are important if we are to extend present understandings of the performance of social enterprises in addressing social issues.

Despite a limited focus in the research on macro level factors, the success of these enterprises is likely shaped by macro level economic conditions, government policies and issues of culture (Easterly & Easterly, 2006). In this thesis, I refer to the macro level as the ecosystem within which social enterprises operate and surmise that their performance may be influenced by interactions between social entrepreneurs and meso-level relationships within Vietnamese society. This can be thought of as a combination of person-organisation and person-organisation-ecosystem fit (Carr & Marsella, 2013; Roundy, 2017) whereby if the necessary supports from the ecosystem are in place then social enterprises will be more likely to succeed and be sustainable.

Social entrepreneurs may have the necessary qualities to develop and lead their organisations, but if they do not have a supportive and responsive ecosystem within which to operate, then their efforts may well be less effective. The importance I am placing on macro-level considerations is in line with the perspectives of McMullen (2018) and Roundy (2017). These scholars first proposed a symbiosis between ecosystems and social enterprises. The ecosystem provides motivations, powers, means, opportunities and authority for social enterprises to operate and pursue their prosocial objectives of serving the needs of their communities (Biggeri et al., 2017). This is not simply a one-way relationship from the macro to the micro. Rather, social entrepreneurs can also shape the ecosystem by influencing its participants, increasing its attractiveness to stakeholders, engaging in local economic development, and by informing policy development (Roundy & Bayer, 2019).

There is a lack of local literature on ecosystems support in Vietnam. As a result, this research relies on insights from international literature on the topic, which is also sparse. However, insights can be gained from recent reports from the European Commission (2015) and the OECD-LEED (2016). The literature on entrepreneurial ecosystems in general and social

entrepreneurial ecosystems, including key elements of ecosystems that are thought to impact the development and sustainability of social enterprises, is also considered.

A report from the European Commission (2015) on the social enterprise ecosystem in Europe and the moderator's report from an OECD-LEED social enterprise capacity building seminar(OECD-LEED, 2016), both identify key conditions that facilitate social enterprises development. The five key factors are: (1) policy support (i.e. legal framework, tax policy), (2) finance access (i.e. funding policy, social investment market), (3) market access (i.e., networks, mutual support mechanism), (4) commercial support structure (i.e., incubators, social enterprises hubs with advisors/mentors) and (5) training and research (i.e., building skill and capability, and research and advocacy). According to the European Commission (2015), these factors are the commonly recognised features of social entrepreneurship ecosystems, regardless of geographical location.

Similarly, based on the EU7FP EFESEIIS[3] study involving 164 interviews with social enterprise stakeholders and a survey of 850 social enterprises in the EU, a policy brief by Biggeri and colleague's (2017) outlines an enabling ecosystem for social enterprises. Their proposal shares many common points with the European Commission and OECD-LEED reports cited above. The policy brief describes a social entrepreneurship-enabling ecosystem as one that social enterprises can operate in with minimal legal constraints, access a variety of resources (funds, volunteers, and skilled human resources), interact easily with different organisations (for-profit and non-profit), and is situated in a society that understands and values

[3] This project is designed to serve the purpose of 'Enabling the Flourishing and Evolution of Social Entrepreneurship for Inclusive and Innovative Societies'. It is funded by European Union's Seventh Framework Programme for research, technological development and demonstration.

its activities. Policy supports (i.e., legal infrastructure) and access to resources (i.e., finance, networks, training opportunities, and opportunities to access consultation) are the key features of social entrepreneurship ecosystems which are therefore studied in this thesis.

With notable exceptions and excluding the reports cited above, research into ecosystems has remained focused on commercial, rather than social enterprises. However, we can potentially gain some insights from this broader literature. The term 'ecosystem' was first discussed in business studies during the 1990s. James Moore argued in an influential article in the *Harvard Business Review* (Moore, 1993), that a commercial enterprise will develop more readily and create more employment if it is situated within a dynamic and supportive ecosystem. Such an ecosystem requires a supportive business environment that features good government policies, good market infrastructure/conditions, and transparency (Rosted, 2012). Such entrepreneurial ecosystems in general are thought to be more conducive to organisational development and sustainability if they feature a combination of key factors. These factors include the availability of resources and finance, opportunities for networking, conducive government policies and physical infrastructure, and cooperative relations between stakeholders; including the entrepreneurs, government officials, investors, and supportive institutions (Cohen, 2006; Stam, 2015). Despite having identified these key factors, previous research has produced little by way of knowledge regarding the ways in which the various partnerships among stakeholders and cultural considerations in social entrepreneurial ecosystems actually work. This everyday functioning is an issue that is investigated in this thesis.

When outlining the key features of well-functioning commercial entrepreneurial ecosystems, Isenberg (2010)[4] also includes policy, finance, infrastructure, human capital, market demand, and cultural considerations. This influence of societal conditions and cultural norms on the effectiveness of commercial entrepreneurial ecosystems has been demonstrated using various empirical methods (Isenberg, 2010) and across different locations from Puerto Rico to China, and Iceland to India (cf., Spigel, 2017). In social entrepreneurship too, Hazenberg and colleagues (2016) pointed to the importance of local cultural contexts for the development of social enterprises. In structured interviews and focus groups with 258 key stakeholders (i.e., practitioners, policymakers, social bankers and representatives from social enterprise support organisations) across ten European countries, these authors explored the uniqueness of different ecosystems. They found that local social and cultural conditions impacted social enterprise performance and how such performance was understood. In addition to ecosystem considerations such as policy and resource supports, this thesis also considers the influence of cultural and social considerations as key aspects of the societal ecosystem of Vietnam. Assessing the influence of cultural and traditional values (e.g., studiousness and harmony), and the links between the different levels —social entrepreneurs (micro), social enterprises (meso) and the ecosystem (macro) — will likely offer additional insights into social entrepreneurial development and performance in the country. A brief overview of the current state of the social entrepreneurial ecosystem in Vietnam is presented below.

Vietnam's Social Entrepreneurship Ecosystem

The nation of Vietnam was a long time in the making, with a history characterised by pragmatic responses to a 4000-year history of turbulence and upheaval as a result of waves of colonisation

[4] The Babson Entrepreneurship Ecosystem project has been established at Babson College to help societies around the world create the policies, structures, programmes and climate that foster entrepreneurship. Daniel Isenberg, Professor of Management Practice at Babson Executive Education, is the project director.

by China, France, and the United States (Vuong, 1996). The country has also experienced the installation of a centralised economy, which was recently dismantled and transformed into a market-driven socialist-oriented economy (Vuong & Tran, 2009). These disruptions have required an adaptability among Vietnamese people and the development of programmatic approaches to supporting each other through economic engagement in line with collectivist cultural values and practices.

Social enterprises existed in Vietnam long before the concepts of social entrepreneurship and social enterprises were introduced to the country in 2008 by the Center for Social Initiatives Promotion (CSIP) (British, 2019). For example, craft villages and craft associations have been active in the country for thousands of years, specialising in a single craft such as making ceramic products, painting pictures, or making children toys. People in these villages often share technology and resources and the work to promote the village business while ensuring equity of shared benefit for all village members (Bach & Vuong, 2015). In many respects the traditional Vietnamese village functioned as a social enterprise. This thesis explores some of the underlying cultural values and principles that have been transferred from the Vietnamese village into the development of contemporary social enterprises and how these may relate to the functioning and performance of these organisations.

Whilst a mode of thinking around using commercial activities to generate resources to then support social missions was already in place in Vietnam, the arrival of key aid agencies is also a key element of the ecosystem today. Together with CSIP, the British Council, Central Institute of Economic Management (CIEM) and SPARK are actively involved in cultivating further social entrepreneurship by promoting research, training, and technical supports for social enterprises. The British Council, CSIP, and SPARK are not the only intermediaries or

incubators. A number of small entrepreneurial incubators in the community also actively promote the development of social enterprises. Examples include Evergreen Labs which invest in social impact making commercial enterprises. Another is HATCH! Ventures which provides co-working space and social impact business incubation and acceleration. Additionally, UNDP's SDGs Challenge and Youth Co:Lab specifically encourages young social entrepreneurs to enter the sector. The country also has a number of research centres specifically focused on social entrepreneurship. These include the foundational Center for Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship (CSIE) at Vietnam National Economics University.

In Vietnam, ecosystem supports have mainly taken the form of providing access to resources and policy advocacy. Specifically, annual reports by CSIP and the report by Truong and colleagues (2018) on promoting social entrepreneurship indicate that the key supports offered by the ecosystem are in the development of networking, training, mentoring and consultation, and financial support. These supports are listed in Table 1.1, which also shows which development agencies, social enterprises and other groups have advocated for each type of ecosystem support. In Table 1.1, networking includes initiating the connection of social enterprises with other stakeholders such as investors, suppliers, and customers. Training includes providing knowledge and skills in business planning, finance management, marketing, sales and human resources management for social enterprise managers and employees. Mentoring and consultation is often delivered together with training and includes assigning mentors and consultants who are experts in the area to give technical and professional support for business planning and development. Finally, financial support might entail seed funding for social enterprises or advances and loans with favourable interest rates, or no-interest, for social enterprises, with repayment through products and services to communities (CSIP, 2021; Truong & Barracket; 2018).

Table 1.1 shows that each of the four forms of ecosystem support advocated by Truong et al (2018) has been built into the ecosystem to support the development of social enterprises and their various social impacts. However, to date there has been no systematic evaluation of the influence of ecosystem supports on the performance of social enterprises in Vietnam. This thesis aims to fill this gap.

Table 1.1 Support Programs to Social Enterprises in Vietnam.

Organisations	**Networking**	**Training**	**Mentoring/ Consultation**	**Finance**
British Council	X	X	X	
CIEM	X	X	X	
CSIE	X	X	X	
CSIP	X	X	X	X
DNES	X	X	X	X
Evergreen Labs	X	X	X	X
FISS	X	X	X	
IPP	X	X	X	X
HATCH! Ventures	X	X	X	X
IBA Vietnam	X	X	X	X
Lotus Impact	X		X	X
Oxfam	X	X	X	X
Spark	X	X	X	X
Thriive Hanoi	X	X	X	X
UNDP SDGs Challenge and Youth Co:Labs	X	X	X	X
VCCI	X	X	X	

In terms of policy, as a result of research and advocacy by the ecosystem enablers listed above, a 2014 amendment to the Enterprise Law of Vietnam introduced Article 10 defining a new type of legal entity: the social impact commercial [organisation]. These were in essence social enterprises with a broader definition and different label. The implementation guidelines for such entities were set out in Decree 96/2015/NDD-CP. The government also launched Project 844 to focus on the development of innovation and the entrepreneurship ecosystem and Project 1665 to support student-led start-ups, including social enterprises. The policy supports from the government facilitated and increased awareness of, and participation in, the sector by stakeholders (such as investors), national media, and higher education institutions working in the promotion of social entrepreneurship. Thanks to the increasingly supportive ecosystem, according to the report by CSIE and UNDP, by 2018 Vietnam had developed about 22,000 social impact commercial organisations. Of these, 80 were registered under the Enterprise Law as social enterprises. Despite such developments and efforts to grow social entrepreneurship, there remains limited research on links between ecosystem supports and social enterprise performance, or on social entrepreneurs' motivations for undertaking social entrepreneurship. This thesis partly addresses these gaps in the research.

1.3 Research focus and thesis structure

Increasing attention is being directed towards social entrepreneurship as a means of addressing key sustainable development challenges in OECD and emerging economies (Seelos et al., 2006). In accord with the core focus on developing financially viable businesses in order to generate prosocial impacts (Dees & Elias, 1998), social enterprises in Vietnam are developing a range of new initiatives that research has told us little about to date. The development and performance of these social enterprises is influenced by the social entrepreneurs, who are often identified as the change agents and driving forces for social entrepreneurship (Sullivan Mort et

al., 2003). In many respects, social enterprises are the reflection of the values, experiences, knowledge and preferences of these social entrepreneurs. They themselves have been shaped by social, cultural and economic influences in society (Child, 1972; Hambrick & Mason, 1984; Hodgetts, Stolte, et al., 2020). In this thesis, I also recognize how many social entrepreneurs are also simply the people from particular communities or villages who are leading commercial activities in order to help their communities as Vietnamese people have always done (Hertel et al., 2019). As such, this study of social entrepreneurship in Vietnam includes a focus on people in the context of organisations and societal processes (Hodgetts & Stolte, 2012).

This thesis is orientated towards the study of social entrepreneurship and the performance of social enterprises as multilevel phenomena encompassing individuals, organisational factors, and various ecosystem and environmental considerations. This multilevel orientation also responds to a gap in the existing literature. Most studies emphasise a single level of analysis, at the micro level of the social entrepreneurs themselves, or the meso level of the social enterprises, or the macro ecosystem level (Gupta et al., 2020; Saebi et al., 2019). There is a lack of research on the functions of factors on all three levels and how the characters of social entrepreneurs (micro- level), social enterprises (meso-level) and the ecosystem (macro-level) shape entrepreneurship and performance (García-Jurado et al., 2021; Gupta et al., 2020; Persaud & Bayon, 2019). Correspondingly, this thesis explores social entrepreneurship in Vietnam by adopting a multilevel approach that includes individuals, social enterprises and ecosystem factors.

Social entrepreneurs in emerging economies tend to be people from the communities they are trying to help (Sengupta & Sahay, 2017). Therefore, if they operate in accordance with local customs and relational practices, they may well be more likely to succeed. I would also note that psychological traits associated with social entrepreneurs are likely the result of their

socialisation and enculturation and emerge from their interactions within local communities as manifestations of broader social cultural systems (Hodgetts, Sonn, et al., 2020). Hence, in this thesis, I take into consideration insights about the motivating factors of entrepreneurship, but also broaden the focus to incorporate local perspectives, histories, and social-political situations. It is also important to explore the nexus of social entrepreneurs, social enterprises and ecosystem, in ways that are germane to local cultures (Groot et al., 2018; Liu & King, 2021). The influence of contextual and cultural factors on social entrepreneurship in countries such as Vietnam remains unexplored. The thesis considers cultural factors relating to social entrepreneurship in Vietnam.

1.4 Thesis structure

As required by Massey University for PhD Theses by publication, this thesis includes articles published in peer-review academic journals and articles under-review.

Thesis

Chapter 1 provides an introduction to the thesis that considers the landscape of social enterprises spanning different countries and the key points of development for this form of commercial and socially orientated organisation (especially focused on Vietnam). Brief discussions of the literature ofsocial entrepreneurship, including micro, meso, and macro level considerations, are included. The chapter also identifies a gap in the literature and describes the research focus for this thesis to address that gap.

Chapter 2 outlines the philosophy of science that underlies this research. Also presented is the methodology of the thesis and a justification for employing a mixed-method approach that encompasses a quantitative survey and series of one-off go-along interviews with social

entrepreneurs. The procedures for conducting both the survey and interview studies are outlined in detail. Ethical considerations and limitation for this research are discussed.

Chapter 3 presents the results of Study 1. This the quantitative survey of 352 social entrepreneurs focusing on how social entrepreneurs' attributes and ecosystem support may combine to foster the social enterprises' performance in creating social impact. This study has been published in a peer-reviewed academic journal:

Nguyen, M.H.T., Carr, S.C., Hodgetts, D. and Fauchart, E. (2021), "Why do some social enterprises flourish in Vietnam? A comparison of human and ecosystem partnerships", *Sustainability Accounting, Management and Policy Journal*, *12* (6), pp. 1312-1347. https://doi.org/10.1108/SAMPJ-04-2020-0137

Chapter 4 presents the findings of Study 2. This is the qualitative study of 20 social entrepreneurs in Vietnam. Study findings highlight the importance of the fit between the individual (miro-level), organisation (meso-level), and the cultural and social environment (macro-level) as fundamental to the sustainable development of social enterprises in this country. Study 2 has been published in a peer-reviewed academic journal:

Nguyen, M. H. T., Hodgetts, D. J., & Carr, S. C. (2021). Fitting Social Enterprise for Sustainable Development in Vietnam. *Sustainability*, *13* (19), 10630. https://doi.org/10.3390/su131910630

Chapter 5 presents the thesis discussion. where the central focus is revisited in light of the findings from both Study 1 and Study 2. As well as offering further interpretation of the research findings, this chapter also presents my reflections on how the findings from both

studies extend previous knowledge about the development and performance of social enterprises in Vietnam.

Often at the completion of the discussion chapter of a PhD thesis, candidates offer recommendations for further research or suggestions for action. **Chapter 6** concludes the thesis with a policy brief regarding the further development of social entrepreneurship among the youth of Vietnam. The policy brief was prepared based on the findings of my research and feedback from different stakeholders in the social enterprise sector in Vietnam. It has been revised and resubmitted for publication in the journal *International Perspectives in Psychology: Research, Practice, Consultation*.

Nguyen, M. H. T., Hodgetts, D. J., & Carr, S. C. (2021), Promoting social entrepreneurship among Vietnamese youth - A Policy Brief, School of Psychology, Massey University.

Chapter 2. Research Design and Methodology

2.1 Research paradigms

Psychological research is conducted in accordance with a range of paradigms, which offer different assumptions about the nature of knowledge, which is produced through research into various aspects of reality. The term paradigm is used in the philosophy of science to demarcate differing understandings of the link between knowledge and reality. Paradigms were defined by Kuhn (1962) as a set of beliefs upon which research stands or is conducted, and which is shared by a group of scientists. Paradigms in social science (e.g., positivism, social constructionism, and pragmatism) each adopt particular ontological and epistemological stances. Ontology is the study of how reality is viewed, whereas epistemology is the study of how we know the world.

Positivism assumes that reality exists independently from human action and experiences (Creswell & Creswell, 1994). From this perspective, reality is governed by immutable laws that can be revealed through systematic observation. The social world is conflated with the natural world (Comte, 2015). From this perspective, social science research seeks to identify regularities in phenomena and to explain these via cause and effect relationships. The researcher strives to be objective and separated from the subjects of the investigation (Comte, 2015). Positivists employ the hypothetico-deductive technique to test a priori assumptions, which are frequently articulated numerically, and from which functional correlations may be deduced between causative and explanatory factors (independent variables) and outcomes (dependent variables) (Creswell, 2014). The knowledge gained via a positivist lens is founded on thorough (systematic) observation and measurement of what are perceived to be aspects of an objective reality that exists external to human subjectivity. Emphasis is placed on

precision in observation or measurement as a means of ensuring reliability, validity, and replicability in research findings (Taylor & Medina, 2011).

In recent decades this stance has been subjected to considerable critique and is predominantly considered to be naïve (Esteve, 1990). For example, it has been proposed that positivism is more appropriate for the physical sciences whereby researchers are seeking to understand the properties of physical objects and chemical reactions (Gage, 2000). Scholars have proposed that positivism is less appropriate to social sciences because what we study is not simply a set of physical properties. Social science explores human experience, understandings, interactions, and relationships within which people are entangled. It is also argued that the researchers themselves are positioned within the social world and lack a bird's eye view of actuality. As such it is difficult, if not impossible, to achieve a truly objective elevation from which to observe the social world. Further, the social world has already been rendered meaningful by research participants. Social science often relies on these meanings and secondhand experiences to understand the social world beyond (Hodges, 2013).

People construct their socio-cultural worlds through social interactions, and in turn are socialised into these worlds over generations. These life-worlds can hold multiple social realities that often differ cross-culturally. This is why we must also embed local understandings into our research constructions that reflect the worldviews of local inhabitants and the social realities they create. A somewhat simple example of a social construction is money, which is a social object that is not naturally occurring in the physical world. Money is the product of a social agreement between people to assign value to the socially constructed thing we understand and use as money in our social exchanges, for example, as wages for labour. Identity and the human self can also be approached as social constructions along with

the organisations social entrepreneurs create as partial reflections of their own values, worldviews and relational senses of self.

Briefly, social science research participants' understandings of phenomena are not the phenomena themselves (Gage, 2000; Hodgetts, Sonn, et al., 2020). We explore participants' social constructions and the meanings and functions these have for particular groups and persons, such as social entrepreneurs. This once-removed relationship between the researcher and participant understandings is termed the double hermeneutic (Giddens, 1987; Zimmermann, 2015). Positivists in the social sciences operate as if there is a single hermeneutic, whereby they observe things objectively, much like chemical compounds that do not make sense of themselves. In comparison, social science involves a double (or second) hermeneutic, whereby social phenomena, such as setting up a social enterprise, have already been rendered meaningful by the persons involved (Heidegger, 1962). Our research participants construct interpretations of the world (first hermeneutic) and we as social scientists construct our own interpretations (second interpretation) of participant constructions at personal and collective levels. As researchers we construct our own understandings of social enterprises by surveying or interviewing the people involved in these organisations, in order to understand their motivations, the dilemmas they face, and the character of the enterprises they create. As such, we often conduct research *with* rather than *on* participants (Giddens, 1987; Zimmermann, 2015).

Departing from the positivist assertion that reality can be accessed through a single hermeneutic that is enacted by careful measurement and an objective (value-free) subject position of the researcher, social constructionists propose that the social world we study is the

product of ongoing social interactions and cultural reproductions across generations (Hodgetts, Sonn, et al., 2020). People not only make sense of the world around them through ongoing interactions and shared meaning systems, but they also create social realities through these ongoing processes. It is a primary role of social scientists to make sense of the social worlds that are created collectively by our research participants (Heidegger, 1962). The knowledge we create about phenomena such as social enterprises is based on the knowledge and experiences of the people we study, including those directly involved in establishing and leading these organisations. As researchers we are also located within the social world, we do not produce this knowledge in an objective vacuum or from the perspective of a detached deity. This means as researchers we can be systematic in our investigations, but social scientists cannot be truly objective (Hodgetts et al., 2021; Lefebvre, 2009).

From a social constructionist perspective, knowledge is constructed through social interactions, and this includes research engagements. The focus of social research is shifted to documenting and interpreting how people make sense of their social realities or life-worlds and the implications of different constructions or ways of understanding reality, such as research into people's lives and livelihoods (Creswell et al., 2011; Hodgetts et al., 2010). Attention is paid to how people make sense of their situations considering influences such as history and culture (Hodgetts & Stolte, 2012). Social constructionists realise that their own origins and worldviews (even those of scholarly disciplines and professions such as psychology) influence researchers' foci and interpretations of the research findings. As such, researchers often situate themselves reflexively in relation to the research topic and participants, in order to be transparent in terms of the perspectives they are applying to the research which are influenced by personal backgrounds and cultures (Hodgetts, Chamberlain

& Groot, 2011). Social constructionists often employ qualitative methods, including open-ended interviews, observations, and case-studies.

It can be argued that a key weakness of a strong version of social constructionism is that it downplays the role of the material and physical world in influencing the construction of social realities. There are biological and physical realities that must also be considered and which are all but ignored by some social constructionists (Sokal & Bricmont, 1999). A key issue with strong versions of social constructionism is that they can lead to relativism and an anti-realist stance. Relativism is the idea that all meaning is relative to the subjective perspective of human beings or the observer (Baghramian, 2004). The problem is that the claim that all meaning is subjective and relative and that we cannot access an external reality or truth poses an inherent contradiction. Such a claim needs to be itself relative to a particular theory, or it cannot be true. If the assertion is absolute or true, then it cannot be made from a relativist position that does not accept such absolute truths.

My key point in this section is that there is no epistemic stance that is unproblematic. All have particular foci, and debates between scholars associated with different perspectives on the nature of reality and how we can know the world or find truths (e.g., universal laws) or simply relative understandings have been raging for millennia, and are not resolvable (Chamberlain, 2015; Parker, 1998). This is why I have adopted a position that is also not perfect philosophically, but which combines an acknowledgement that we live in a physical world that sets some limits on what we can and cannot do, and that the social world we occupy is socially and culturally constructed and reconstructed through ongoing social interactions. This has led me to a *critical realist* stance with a pragmatic orientation that is

less focused on the nature of knowledge and more on how we use knowledge about social enterprises to help them achieve their very real and humane social missions.

Today, most social scientists do not subscribe to a relativist form of social constructionism and adopt milder variants that often combine a realist ontology with a constructionist epistemology (Parker, 1998). Many social constructionists would subscribe to what is known as a critical realist stance (Gorski, 2013). Critical realism does not accept the tenets of positivism and the preoccupation with establishing causal relationships in the social world and notions of objectivity. Yet, it does present a realist ontology (Bhaskar, 2010). This approach also distances itself from forms of social constructionism that delve into relativism and deny realism. As such, what critical realism offers is a realist ontology and a weaker constructionist epistemology (Gorski, 2013). It offers researchers a realist orientation to existence and being (ontology) and an open epistemology or theory of how we can develop knowledge of existence or the world. I am more inclined to position this thesis as being conducted from a critical realist stance that considers phenomena such as poverty and inequity as real and socially constructed — along with our knowledge of such phenomena.

Pragmatism is a paradigm that does not seek to resolve positivist (realist) and constructionist (relativist) debates. Pragmatists are concerned less with the nature of reality and how we know it, and more with the importance of producing knowledge that is practical and useful (Morgan, 2014). Pragmatists argue that the real world is not static or fully knowable via systematic observation. We are always boxing with shadows. Pragmatists values the production of knowledge in accordance with multiple worldviews (Creswell, 2013) that can be used to build up more complex and nuanced understandings of phenomenon with a view

to informing practical efforts to address, for example, social problems such as poverty (Tashakkori et al., 1998). This perspective values the rigour and precision of positivism and quantitative research as well as acknowledging that knowledge is socially constructed and often emerges from within dynamic human interactions that are shaped by histories, cultures, geography, biology, society, and politics (Dewey & Authentic, 1938). According to pragmatists, human actions can never be isolated from the past experiences and from the beliefs that resulted from those experiences; knowledge and reality are based on belief and habits that are socially constructed (Hodgetts et al., 2010; Morgan, 2014). The role of society, history, politics, culture, and context are all considered in the research, without commitment to any one system of philosophy and reality. As result, pragmatists focus on research problems, and employ all available approaches to comprehend the problem.

Pragmatist philosophy was formally introduced to Vietnam in the mid-twentieth century by Americans in the South of Vietnam and is recognised as one of influential philosophies in the 1970s, after Confucianism and Classical French philosophy (Mai, 2013). However, pragmatism was already long practiced in Vietnam in everyday life and in politics. For example, a popular proverb guides people to go through the upheaval of life events ‘Dĩ bất biến, ứng vạn biến’with 'Firm objectives and flexible strategies and tactics’ — which was also one of Ho Chi Minh' s principles in leading Vietnam toward independence and freedom (Thịnh, 2021). Following the approach of the socialist oriented market economy, the ideas that the pragmatist philosophy promotes are associated with the country’s economic reform (Pham, 2021). The country realised that local issues needed local solutions after having experienced failure in the adoption of theories originating in ‘advanced’ economies without considering local knowledge (Hayden & Thiep, 2007; Tran, 2016). In particular, the education system was criticised as impractical and unsatisfactory in the employment market

(Tran, 2016). A resolution to the mismatch of the education system with the real need of society was to embed the country's context, culture, conditions and traditions into research and teaching (Tran, 2012). Researchers are today encouraged to choose the research methods that can best address the research questions and provide practical solutions to serve the needs of society. Thus, this thesis adopts a pragmatic position and aims to understand social entrepreneurship in Vietnam in order to inform efforts to improve the functioning of social enterprises in achieving their social missions. Choosing a pragmatic approach enables me to engage with multiple experiences of the same phenomena using different methods, whilst at the same time directing the inquiry towards practical problem-solving initiatives.

2.2 Mixed methods

The critical realist and pragmatic paradigm are particularly evident in mixed methods approaches, whereby different assumptions are associated with different methods of data collection and analysis (i.e., quantitative and qualitative). A mixed methods orientation offers a means of collecting different kinds of data on the topic of investigation, through the use of both quantitative and qualitative methods (Johnson & Christensen, 2019). Relatedly, the use of mixed methods in psychology and other social sciences has increased significantly to support in-depth and complex investigations of social problems which are multifaceted, dynamic, and highly impacted by social, historical, and cultural contexts (Creamer, 2017; Headley & Plano Clark, 2020; Heyvaert et al., 2013). The complementary use of quantitative and qualitative methods enabled me to develop both a broad understanding, from engaging a larger sample of participants in the quantitative study, and in-depth understand, by exploring key findings in more nuanced ways with a subset of the original sample from the quantitative study (McCrudden et al., 2021). Most published research in social entrepreneurship has used

qualitative methods (Gupta et al., 2020; Short et al., 2009). I have continued this tradition whilst augmenting it with a quantitative survey. In addition, social entrepreneurship is a multidimensional phenomenon (Nicholls, 2010; Saebi et al., 2019), and by employing mixed methods, I can begin to engage more fully with these complexities.

A key issue in mixed methods research is that of integration, and how this is dealt with often varies in terms of the purpose of the study and proclivities of the researchers (Creamer, 2017; Greene et al., 1989). The purpose of this thesis is to develop an understanding of why some social enterprises flourish in Vietnam. As such, this research focuses on considerations at three levels: social entrepreneurs (micro-level), social enterprises (meso-level) and ecosystem (macro-level). In terms of specific methods, I have combined a quantitative survey with follow-up interviews with selected participants from the survey in which we consider key survey findings and additional issues of importance to these participants. In other words, both methods are integrated by using the results of the first survey to inform the second interviews (Greene et al., 1989; McCrudden et al., 2021). This sequential use of quantitative and qualitative methods capitalises on the benefits derived from each method (Åkerblad et al., 2021). The quantitative survey responses offer generalisable patterns of response, whilst the qualitative interview accounts provide more in-depth and nuanced responses and dialogue regarding key trends and issues (Cassim et al., 2015; Greene et al., 1989). In short, the sequential use of quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews in the present research enabled me to consider different, yet inter-related aspects of social entrepreneurship in Vietnam across the three levels noted above (cf., Creamer & Reeping, 2020).

In terms of the issues of interpretation associated with the double hermeneutic discussed in the previous section, it is also important that I reflect on my own position in relation to the

research topic and setting. Being a Vietnamese lecturer teaching entrepreneurship for more than 15 years, I have actively participated in various programs supporting social entrepreneurship, which have been organised by the British Council, United Nation Development Programme, the Innovation Partnership Program (IPP-Finland), and the Centre for Social Initiatives Promotion. Involving myself in social entrepreneurship promotion programmes in distinct roles such as national consultant, national expert, mentor, trainer and national researcher, I have worked closely with social entrepreneurs, become familiar with many social entrepreneurial journeys, and have gained insight into this sector. I was also one of the key people who established the Social Innovation Incubation Platform (SIIP – see http://soins.org.vn), which was funded by the Innovation Partnership Program (IPP-Finland) to provide a support ecosystem for social entrepreneurs and potential social entrepreneurs. As such, I am able to access a wide network of entrepreneurs and enter the research with a good understanding of the sector in Vietnam.

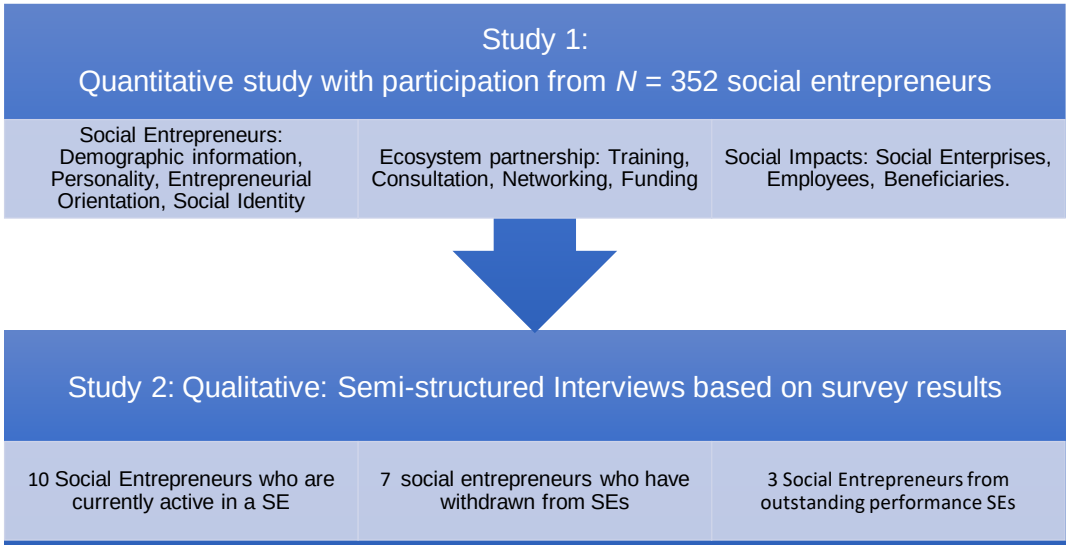
Even though this PhD was written in Aotearoa New Zealand, I remained in contact with the Vietnamese social enterprise network and was involved in training and consulting programmes and also produced a country report on Teaching Social Innovation in Higher Education in Vietnam (2020). These activities kept me up to date with the current state of social entrepreneurship in Vietnam in a manner informed by both grassroots and government perspectives. Thus, in this study I am not only a researcher. I am also a part of the sector network. In addition, the support and contributions of my supervisors, who have wide and extensive experience in doing research within communities and in partnership with organisations and services striving to address socially constructed issues such as poverty and sustainable development, have enriched the research. In this process, my local insights, conceptual constructs experience and understanding of participants were bought into the

research design and the conduct of this project. In particular, the research questions were developed from both my reading of previous research and my understanding of the Vietnamese context for which there is no substantive literature on this topic. It also means that the research is likely to be more relevant to local social entrepreneurs as we literally speak the same language and are culturally and professionally familiar with one another (Hodgetts, Sonn, et al., 2020; Hopner & Liu, 2021).

To recap, I have adopted a mixed methods design drawing on both a quantitative questionnaire (see Appendix One for a copy of the survey) of (N= 352) social entrepreneurs and qualitative follow up interviews (see Appendix Two for the general interview guide) with a subset of participants (N = 20). Participants are all Vietnamese nationals from the North, Central and South of the country. Materials were collected sequentially and analysed in order to develop both breadth and depth in understanding of the operation of social enterprises in Vietnam (Greene et al., 1989; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003; Tashakkori et al., 1998). The quantitative questionnaire data is made up of answers to closed-ended questions. To generate these materials, I predetermined participant answer options (i.e., responses ranging strongly disagree to strongly agree) to standard as well as exploratory measures (see article one for a detailed breakdown of measures and associated justifications). The questionnaire offers general insights into the prevalence of different perspectives and factors that shape social enterprise performance within the Vietnamese ecosystem. The qualitative interview accounts were comprised of open-ended responses to questions about key issues and trends that were highlighted in the quantitative survey. I sought to develop further explanations for trends in the survey responses and to explore the issues raised in a little more detail with key informants. The individual interviews also offered an opportunity for me to visit the various

enterprises and to explore them further by accompanying participants on tours of their organisations. Please see Figure 3 for an overview of the two studies.

Figure 2.1 Research structure



Briefly, I employ the mixed methods design to explore the nexus of social entrepreneurs, social enterprise, and ecosystem factors in shaping social enterprise performance in Vietnam. Below, I provide more detail on the participant recruitment and the samples for both the quantitative and qualitative components, the procedures for data collection, the analytical processes, and ethical concerns. Also discussed are the validation procedures for the quantitative component.

Study 1: A quantitative study using a survey to explore the relationships between *Social Entrepreneurs*, *Ecosystem supports* and *Social Impact.* A cross-sectional survey design was implemented for this thesis (i.e., data on the study variables were collected at a single point in time). The participants were social entrepreneurs in Vietnam. They were the ones who founded the social enterprises, and who satisfied the follow criteria: (1) social mission, (2) business activities that meet social objectives, by (3) re-investing profit generated from business activities into the organisation, communities and social objectives (Cung Nguyen,

2012). Using a sample survey approach, potential participants (volunteers) were identified from several pre-existing databases that listed social enterprises in Vietnam. The first list was extracted from on an open access social enterprises map: https://www.imapvietnam.org**.** The second list was extracted from a database of Vietnamese social enterprises provided in 2016 by the Center for Social Initiative Promotion (CSIP) (personal correspondence) and the Centre for Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship (CSIE) to which the candidate already had access. Snowball techniques were used. Social entrepreneurs, with whom the applicant had contact on the phone, by email, and in person during the involvement with social enterprise community in Vietnam, were asked to extend the survey invitation to other social entrepreneurs. All participants were volunteers under conditions of informed consent and confidentiality. These three different approaches to recruitment were used in parallel, not in series, until a sample of at least N=360 had been reached.

In the Study 1 survey, participants were asked about demographic information, their personal attributes, social enterprise performance, and ecosystem support. The general demographic variables assessed included age, education, and gender, which are commonly used when studying entrepreneurs. To investigate key attributes of the social entrepreneurs, I employed existing survey tools, including the popular Mini-IPIP (International Personality Item Pool) used to study personality, Bolton and Lane's (2012) scale for Individual Entrepreneurship Orientation consisting of ten items which are of the forced choice type, and a 15-item scale developed by Sieger and colleagues (2016) used to classify social entrepreneurs' types of identity. For ecosystem supports, participants were asked to report on the support received from their ecosystem during the past 3 years, with details about frequency and quality of supports. The questions about social enterprise performance focused on revenue, profit, cost reduction, employment, wages, training, number of beneficiaries, and the UNDP SDG

Indicators that the social enterprises had achieved during the last 3 years. Participants were considered as subject matter experts to tell us what had happened in terms of access to ecosystem supports and impacts over a standardised period of 3 years. The participants were given enough time to complete the questionnaire by being able to stop any time and return later to continue (for online participation) or had 3 days to complete questions (for on-paper participation).

Questionnaires had been translated from English into Vietnamese, and an independent translator back-translated the English version into Vietnamese in November 2018. In January 2019, the Vietnamese questionnaire version was sent to another independent translator to translate back into English to complete the standard process of 'back translation' (Byrne, 2010). In March 2019, the questionnaire also was shared with different social entrepreneurs and researchers, in order to have their opinion on questionnaire content and validity. Based on their feedback, the author developed a final version of the questionnaire that minimised any language or culture gaps, as well as fitting the purpose of the study. From April to July 2019, the questionnaire was disseminated and collected. The survey questionnaires were distributed to social entrepreneurs both online (via Massey University Qualtrics of, *N*=269) and offline (by delivering questionnaires to participants in person in their offices, *N*=300). The response rate was 51,3% (138/296) for online and 76.3% (229/300) for offline contacts. Survey results were peer-reviewed and published under conditions of informed participant consent, and ethical approval by the host research institution.

For the analysis, the author used the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20 and Mplus for the calculation. The descriptive and inferential statistical methods used were Cronbach's Alpha, Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), correlation, and linear regression analysis. The analysis process was as follows: I first conducted a descriptive

analysis which involved describing the sample characteristics, then checked the scale reliability before running multiple regression and path analysis. Cronbach's Alpha was used to measure the internal consistency of a test or scale. Alpha coefficients range in value from 0 to 1 and can be used to evaluate multi-point formatted questionnaires/scales. The higher the score, the more reliable the scale (Santos, 1999). Normally, Cronbach's Alpha should be at greater than 0.6, with 0.3 as the hurdle for corrected item – total correlation (Hair et al., 1998). Even though the set of original questions already has a qualified Cronbach Alpha (>0.70), because the questionnaires was translated from English to Vietnamese, it was necessary to test the consistency in each group of questions. Multiple regression and path analysis was used to test the hypotheses on the impact of independent variables (social entrepreneurs' attributes and ecosystem supports) on the dependent variable (social enterprises' performance), identifying both direct and indirect relationships among these factors. The method described is the examination of the appropriateness of the model and the assumption check. The analysis and findings of Study 1 were published in the 1st paper (Chapter 3).

Study 2: The culturally-patterned, semi-structured go-along interviews employed in Study 2 were designed to build on the findings from Study 1 and to delve further into the dynamic nexus of social entrepreneurs, social enterprises performance, and ecosystem supports. I was interested in discussing with experienced social entrepreneurs their understandings of how factors at the micro, meso and macro levels have shaped their organisations and efforts to achieve their social missions within the socio-cultural context of Vietnam (*cf.*, Creamer, 2017. The semi-structured interviews were culturally patterned in terms of employing Vietnamese greetings and social interaction practices. As such, I was careful to allow participants to introduce me to their organisational settings, to take me on a tour and to also

steer the conversation. Of central importance was the enabling of practices of reciprocity between myself, the interviewer, and participating interviewees. I had developed a general interview guide with topics for discussion, but it was not culturally appropriate to follow this rigidly like a highly structured interview schedule (*cf.*, Mason & Brown, 2004; Galletta, 2013; Cassim et al., 2015). After discussing issues that I had planned, including key findings from the survey, we entered more open dialogue with me gently prompting participants to elaborate upon their responses. The go-along technique enabled me to accompany participants and become familiar with their work environments and key staff we met along the way (Carpiano, 2009).

As well as talking as we walked, aspects of the interviews were also conducted in settings within which participants felt comfortable, including offices, houses, local parks, coffee shops, and so forth. This relaxed, go-along approach was culturally familiar to participants, encouraged open dialogue and facilitated more in-depth discussions (Kusenbach, 2003). I had a chance to experience the living and working conditions of participants, meet the staffs and observe the activities occurring within their organisations in real time. For example, when interviewing an entrepreneur running a social enterprise employing hearing-impaired people, I had my first experience inside a factory employing more than ten employees who were working actively, and the only sound was that of my conversation with the enterprise founder. All other conversations and dialogues were in silence as they used sign language. For interviewees who were social entrepreneurs still employed fulltime in other organisations, the interviews were conducted during their lunch breaks, before and after work, during their commutes to their workplaces or social enterprises, or at a local park.

Conducting these interviews in places familiar to the participants offered me a better understanding of the participants' work, and they felt relaxed enough to be open with me about their experiences. Within these environments, the participants felt safe enough to be open in sharing their personal reflections on the underlying reasons they became engaged in social entrepreneurship, what it was like to establish and run social enterprises, the challenges and opportunities they faced, and how they saw their futures (Kusenbach, 2003). Participants presented a high level of engagement. Some interviews were stopped for a moment when social entrepreneurs became too emotional to talk, becoming quiet and shedding tears.

There was a total of 20 interview participants. Thirteen were social entrepreneurs who were still engaged in social entrepreneurship. The other 7 had recently left the sector. This was an intentional split in that it gave me information on what it was like to develop a sustainable enterprise and one that had not survived. This number of interviews was also enough for me to reach data saturation (Guest et al., 2006), whereby new participants were not bringing any new insights. The 13 participants were survey study participants who chose the option of participating in an in-depth interview. The 7 social entrepreneurs who had founded social enterprises but had since withdrawn from managing the business were selected from the archive data of social enterprises from the British Council and Center for Social Innovation Program (CSIP) found in information published on their websites and social media pages (i.e. Facebook). In total, there were 12 male and 8 female founders. All participants represented social enterprises that had survived more than 3 years, from across different sectors and under different legal statuses (See Appendix 2.1 for details). Our discussions generated 22 interview hours.

The interview structure and prompts were initially designed in English with input from the survey results, literature and my supervisors. However, the interviews were then translated and conducted in Vietnamese. My co-supervisor and I had practiced and refined the interviews in English to give me experience in conducting semi-structured narrative go-along interviews. We also discussed cultural considerations in terms of how to conduct the interviews in Vietnam. A Vietnamese researcher with extensive experience in working with social enterprises also helped me practice the interview, this time in Vietnamese to ensure cultural and social appropriateness. These practices improved my interview techniques and the ability to generate dialogue with social entrepreneurs from diverse backgrounds. They also highlighted the need for me to draw on my own cultural habitus to read the situation and adjust my approach accordingly.

The recorded interviews were transcribed in Vietnamese. Preliminary analysis was conducted in Vietnamese with input from the supervisors through constant dialogue. This was done to preserve the cultural nuances associated with the Vietnamese language and to ensure that the cultural concepts and relationships participants were drawing upon were foregrounded (Hodgetts & Stolte, 2012). Once the patterns and exemplars from the transcripts were identified, quotes and associated preliminary points of interpretation were then translated into English for further interpretation, primarily by myself with input from my supervisors. Literature about Vietnamese culture was also used as an interpretive tool during this project to provide context for unpacking particular patterns of response and to develop the interpretation in a manner informed by Vietnamese culture. This culturally-informed process is increasingly recognised as important within community-based research in psychology (cf., Hodgetts et al., 2019). Particular extracts were also interpreted in relation to literature on social enterprises. An overall interpretation of key issues from the interviews emerged from

this iterative and abductive (logical inference) process (Peirce, 1878). This interpretation combined local stories relating to the situation in Vietnam and theoretical abstractions that also spoke to broader international concerns regarding social entrepreneurship. The findings of Study 2 were published in a peer-review open access journal (Chapter 4) as a means of ensuring access by Vietnamese social entrepreneurs and other interested parties who have less access to academic publications.

2.3 Ethics considerations and research limitations

2.3.1 Ethics considerations

I obtained full ethical approval from the Massey University Human Ethics Commitee. My supervisors and I had worked closely to identify potential ethical concerns for both Study 1 (the survey) and Study 2 (the interview). These included participant privacy and the cultural and social context as well the nature of social entrepreneurs. Throughout the study process, ethical issues such as informed consents, appropriate privacy and confidentiality were considered seriously. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the studies and/or refuse to answer any questions that they were not comfortable with. The participation was voluntary with guarantees of their privacy. They were provided with complete information about the research before receiving the consent form. They could agree to consent in the online questionnaire, in the audio recording or by signing consent papers. (See appendix 3 & 4 for information about consents for both studies).

As the research was in Vietnam with Vietnamese people, the mandated requirement from the Massey University Human Ethics Committee for us to relate the research to the provisions of the Treaty of Waitangi proved somewhat odd and problematic. However, we responded by framing the application in terms of the key treaty principles of partnership, protection and

participation. These principles were translatable to the Vietnamese cultural and research context. The questionnaire and interviews were developed in consultation with Vietnamese experts and social entrepreneurs. I also offered a giving small gift (koha) to research participants in appreciation of their participation, time, and Vietnamese cultural values (Lantz et al., 2005). The Ethics Committee did struggle with some of the cultural dimensions of study 2. For example, they suggested we offer the interview participants' the opportunity to edit their transcripts. We responded by informing them that Vietnamese people place less emphasis on individuals and ownership of personal accounts (Vuong, 1996), and would likely find such an offer to be a little strange and disconcerting because many are not comfortable when they listen to or read what they have shared. Furthermore, returning transcripts to participants is not a standard ethical practice in qualitative research where researchers are known to the sector.

2.3.2 Limitations

This thesis includes both quantitative and qualitative data. Study 1 surveyed a diverse group of social entrepreneurs using pre-determined scales with little opportunity for participants to set the agenda. The cross-sectional design, in which data on the study variables were collected at a single point in time, was not the best choice for the Study 1. A longitudinal data collection at different points in time would have enhanced the study. However, such an approach was also not possible due to the time constraints of the PhD study. In addition, study 1 was based on the memory and honesty of social entrepreneurs over a three-year period, while data from more diversified sources of information would have provided different views on the research subject (e.g., social enterprises' performance from perspective of beneficiaries, employees or local authorities). More time and money would have enabled assumptions to be better tested.

A key limitation of the follow up interview study (study 2) was that I did not include perspectives of other social enterprise stakeholders and so only gained social entrepreneurs' perspectives. Further studies should extend this work to include interviews with employees, beneficiaries, representatives from local authorities, and other ecosystem participants to provide other perspectives and a more complete picture on this research topic. The interviews were comprised of one-off engagements of about an hour to an hour and a half in duration. Future research would benefit from further qualitative and ethnographic inquiry through a series of engagements to deepen present understandings of the research topic.

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STATEMENT OF CONTRIBUTION
DOCTORATE WITH PUBLICATIONS/MANUSCRIPTS

We, the candidate and the candidate's Primary Supervisor, certify that all co-authors have consented to their work being included in the thesis and they have accepted the candidate's contribution as indicated below in the *Statement of Originality*.

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Chapter 3. Why do some Social Enterprises flourish in Vietnam? A Comparison of Human and Ecosystem Partnerships

Key terms: Social entrepreneur, social enterprise, social impact, ecosystem partnership, SDGs.

Abstract

Purpose: Social Enterprises can be found across Vietnam. However, little is known about how these organizations contribute to the country's broader efforts to meet the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This paper explores whether, and to what extent differences in social impacts by social enterprises may be explained by the psychological characteristics of social entrepreneurs and cross-sector "ecosystem" partnerships in training, networking, consultation, and funding.

Design: A survey of $N \approx 352$ Vietnamese social entrepreneurs explored relationships between individual entrepreneurial orientation (EO), social identity, self-construal, and personality, with elements of ecosystem partnerships (access to training, networking, consultation and funding), and social impacts over the previous three years (growth/jobs created and people helped, termed efficiency and generosity respectively).

Findings: Ecosystem partnerships factored into *frequency* and *quality* of partnerships. Frequency predicted social enterprise efficiency ($p<.05$) and quality predicted generosity ($p<.01$). Frequency of partnerships further moderated (boosted) significant links between EO (risk-innovation, $p<.05$) and efficiency; and between social identity (communitarianism, $p<.01$) to efficiency; plus, *quality* of partnerships moderated a link between EO (risk-innovation) and efficiency ($p<.05$).

Practical value: Ecosystem partnerships may foster social enterprise development through at least two pathways (Equifinality), i.e., frequency and quality. The former linked to efficiency and the latter to generosity, signaling interrelates but distinguishable outcomes. Direct links between EO and communitarian social identity leading to social enterprise development were

additionally boosted (p<.05) by the frequency and quality of partnerships. Thus, ecosystem partnerships brought about both direct and indirect benefits to social enterprises in Vietnam. **Social value:** Social impacts of efficiency and generosity support both decent work (SDG-8) and poverty eradication (SDG-1), through ecosystem partnerships in development (SDG-17). **Value:** This is the first empirical study to show that social enterprises in Vietnam may enhance social impacts through a combination of effects from (i) social entrepreneurs and (ii) ecosystem partnerships. Current models of social enterprises in low-income countries like Vietnam can be expanded to include ecosystem partnerships and social outcomes relating to SDGs 1 and 8, and especially the multiple paths benefits that ecosystem partnerships (under SDG-17) bring to social enterprise development.

3.1 Introduction

Social enterprises are a key mechanism for achieving sustainability as defined by the United Nations Sustainability Goals program (SDGs, United Nations, 2020). These enterprises constitute organizations that whilst adopting business principles also prioritize the creation of social value (Estrin et al., 2016; Kee, 2017; Shaw & Carter, 2007). In the last thirty years, the number of social enterprises addressing pressing social and environmental problems has exploded (Mair & Marti, 2006). This is especially so in emerging economies such as Vietnam (British Council, 2019). Despite Social enterprises being evident across Vietnam, little is known about the impacts of these organizations in relation to the country's efforts to meet the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Addressing that knowledge gap, this paper offers the first empirical study of how social enterprises may enhance social impacts in Vietnam, through a combination of effects from (i) social entrepreneurs and (ii) ecosystem partnerships. More specifically, we consider whether

differences in social impacts from enterprises may be explained by the psychological characteristics of social entrepreneurs and cross-sector “ecosystem” partnerships.

Key to the achievement of the SDGs is the ability of social enterprises to effectively create value for society (Nguyen et al., 2015; Truong Nam et al., 2018). Social enterprises are founded by entrepreneurs, who have been shown to share specific values (Renko, 2013; Zahra et al., 2009). Research has explored how these individual level factors affect social enterprise performance (Dees, 1998; Fowler, 2000; Glaveli & Geormas, 2018). Social enterprises have also been portrayed as collective endeavors that depend on various stakeholders to reach their goals (Estrin et al., 2016; Santos, 2012). Under-researched however is the role of ecosystem support and partnerships in helping social enterprises achieve positive impacts (Gupta et al., 2020). This research gap is most acute in emerging economies (Gupta et al., 2020; Nicholls, 2010).

This paper addresses the knowledge gap by studying a sample of 352 Vietnamese social enterprises that have been founded and are managed by individual entrepreneurs. We explore how ecosystem partnerships may affect the impacts from social enterprises. In particular, we test how ecosystem supports interact with individual level factors to explain the performance of social enterprises.

3.1.1 Theoretical section

By way of research context, a core theoretical concept in social enterprise theory and research is embeddedness in one's local context. In relation to this concept of embeddedness, it has been proposed that "it is impossible to detach the agent (social entrepreneur) from the structure (community, society, etc.)" (Mair and Marti, 2006, p. 40). For example, most

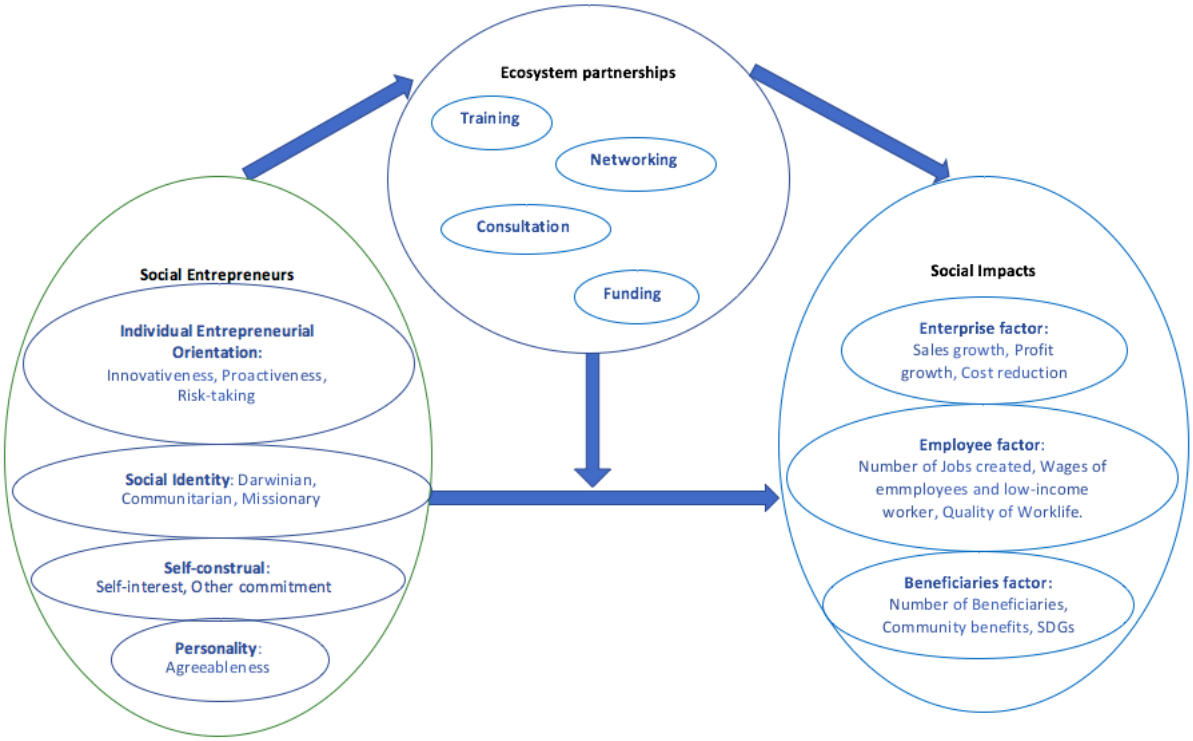
Vietnamese social enterprises remain very small, with very few resources at their disposal (British Council, 2019). In theory, this might suggest that a driving force behind social enterprise development, in this context, is likely to be a lack of resources that requires proactive behavior on the part of the social entrepreneur in pursuing their social mission (Pham et al., 2016). Social entrepreneurial activities depend on the characteristics of the entrepreneur and the supports that they may find, or proactively trigger, within the wider ecosystem in which they find themselves (Roundy, 2017; Villegas-Mateos & Vázquez-Maguirre, 2020).

Social entrepreneurial characteristics that have been shown to be particularly relevant include personal traits and motivations, for example entrepreneurial orientation (Short, 2009). Relevant ecosystem supports likely include developmental training courses and access to funding opportunities (Gupta et al., 2020; Spigel & Harrison, 2018). Also considered from this eco-systems perspective are the functions of social networks as forms of partnership (Mair & Marti, 2006; Spigel, 2017); referred to in this article as ecosystem partnerships. Further, behavioral aspects of ecosystem partnership, such as training, and networking may also reinforce or diminish, i.e., moderate, any significant linkages between individual level characteristics and social impacts.

Despite the existence of theory that foregrounds the importance of ecosystem partnerships, it still remains to be established whether, how precisely and why social enterprises may be able to achieve their goals *through* these individual and ecosystem factors (Gupta et al., 2020; Short, 2009; Van Ryzin et al., 2009). For the purposes of this study, an *Ecosystem* provides the means, opportunities and authority for social enterprises to pursue their objectives of addressing social needs (Biggeri et al., 2017; Roundy & Bayer, 2019; Spigel, 2017). Given this centrality of partnerships, it is important to study relationships between various stakeholders as key elements in the ecosystem (Laasonen et al., 2012; MacDonald et al.,

2019). The exploratory model (see Figure 3.1) presented below, takes these relationships into account and generates a series of questions about how individual level and ecosystem level factors interact in shaping the impacts of social enterprises in Vietnam. In unpacking Figure 1 we present the key factors in a clockwise order.

Figure 3.1 An Exploratory Model of Potential Direct, Mediation and Moderation links between Social Entrepreneurs, Ecosystem partnerships and Social Impacts



Enterprise factors reflect how social enterprises utilize business principles as a means to social ends (above). Known business performance criteria may logically serve as partial performance indicators for social enterprises (Mair & Marti, 2006). These include *Sales Growth, Profit Growth and Cost reduction*, designated collectively as elements in a single *Enterprise factor*.

Employee factors relate to how job creation is often included in pecuniary auditing models within social enterprises because jobs benefit people as well as suggesting healthy financial accounts in the organization (Javits, 2013). *Social Impacts* may in theory be gauged

by the *Number of jobs created*. Jobs in turn imply a tension, in social enterprises, between keeping wages low (in the name of efficiency) with keeping them livable, in accordance with social responsibility to enable decent work and a decent quality of living (International Labor Organization [ILO], 2020). In theory according the ILO's (2020) Decent Work Agenda, this includes *Wages of employees* and *Quality of work life* (Somers, 2005).

Beneficiaries refers not only to the *Number of beneficiaries* who have direct and indirect benefits throughout the progress of social enterprises (Arvidson et al., 2013; Hadad & Gauca, 2014). It also includes, in principle, *Community benefits* (Arvidson & Lyon, 2014; McCreless & Trelstad, 2012). These can include tackling poverty, protecting the planet, and ensuring prosperity and well-being for everybody - a "triple bottom line" for social enterprises (Gillis & James, 2015). Such benefits in turn may contribute toward achieving the UN *SDGs* (Littlewood, 2018; Rahdari et al., 2016). Therefore, Figure 3.1 included contributions to addressing the *SDGs* among *Social Impacts*.

Typically approached from a business perspective (Krauss, 2005; Lumpkin & Dess, 1996), the *Entrepreneurial Orientation* stresses the importance of the personal attributes of top management for small to medium enterprises (Krauss, 2005). In theory, *Individual Entrepreneurial Orientation* is a multi-dimensional construct, consisting of three main elements (Langkamp Bolton, 2012). First is *Innovativeness*, which is defined as an individual's ability to pursue new opportunities as well as their own creativity allows. Second, is *Proactiveness* or their ability to anticipate future problems or demands. Third, is *Risk-taking*, which was defined as an individual assuming personal risk and willingness to make commitments. Studies in 'developed' economies have found a positive linkage between

Entrepreneurial Orientation and enterprise performance in terms of *Sales growth, Profit growth* and *Cost reduction* (Keh, 2007; Krauss, 2005; Rauch, 2009; Wiklund, 2003).

3.1.2 Development of Exploratory Questions

From reading relevant literature related to this topic of research and our own practice experiences in the field, we have formulated a number of additional tentative questions to guide the present inquiry. Each question is provided below in relation to previous research where applicable. The studies just reviewed for example suggest that we can ask the following exploratory question 1: Does *Entrepreneurial orientation* positively predict social impacts from social enterprises?

Social Identity relates to how entrepreneurs see themselves in relation to others. This is a distinct focus within enterprise theory and research (Stephan & Drencheva, 2017). In their social identity theory of SMEs, Fauchart and Gruber (2011) proposed that there are three main facets to social identity in the business entrepreneur: *Darwinian, Communitarian, and Missionary. Darwinian* entrepreneurs resembled the 'classic entrepreneur' who sets up a business venture for personal financial gain (Alsos, 2016; Fauchart & Gruber, 2011). Previous research found a significant and positive relationship between *Darwinian* identity and business performance in terms of *Sales growth, Profit growth,* and *Number of jobs created* (De la Cruz, 2018; Estrada-Cruz et al., 2019). This individual attribute may also be useful to a social enterprise, in which generating a profit is necessary to fund social impacts.

A relatively *Communitarian* entrepreneur would consider their enterprise creation as an "important calalyst for the development of the community and for achieving recognition by their peers" (Fauchart & Gruber, 2011). *Communitarian* entrepreneurs supposedly want to

develop ventures to support others and to be supported by their social community. Their self-worth is derived from a sense of contribution to their community (Shah & Tripsas, 2007). If a relatively *Darwinian* business entrepreneur self-categorizes in terms of financial success, *Communitarian* social entrepreneurs may instead prefer to make more localised community contributions (Fauchart & Gruber, 2011). A previous study by De la Cruz and colleagues (2018) found no relationship between business entrepreneurs' *Communitarian ldentity* and business performance. However, the same attribute of *Communitarian Identity* might logically have much more relevance in a social than a business enterprise, and especially so, perhaps, in a country and culture such as Vietnam.

Missionary entrepreneurs "believe that firms can be powerful agents of change in society and engage in new firm creation to establish a platform form which they can pursue their political visions and advance particular causes, generally of a social or environment nature" (Fauchart & Gruber, 2011). *Missionary* entrepreneurs theoretically pursue a logic that embodies a strong sense of responsibility for the world and deriving self-worth from their ability to behave in a manner that allows them to pursue their political vision to realise a better world. Their primary frame of reference is society-at-large and their primary aim is to advance social justice (Brändle, 2018; Gruber, 2017) and societal change (Alsos, 2016). De la Cruz and colleagues (2018) found a positive significant relationship between *Missionary* identity scores of business entrepreneurs and the business venture's positive performance. In social enterprises, it is thereby plausible that a relatively *Missionary*-oriented social entrepreneur would boost *Enterprise factors*.

Exploratory Question 2: Is there any direct and positive link between Social identity of social entrepreneurs and social impacts?

Self-construal is also an important consideration in Figure 3.1. According to psychological theory from countries such as the United States, individuals fundamentally perceive themselves as independent and distinct from each other, versus being interdependently connected to others (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Previous studies have found a moderate relationship between independent self-construal with business entrepreneurship orientation in dominant group populations in such countries (Zampetakis et al., 2015). However, the 'self' in Asian societies, including Vietnam is often a relatively interdependent self, and less value is placed on independence (Wang, 2012). Interconnected understandings of the self may further suit social enterprises even more than business enterprises, particularly in Vietnam, which has been categorized by foreigners as markedly collectivist (Hofstede, 2016, 2019; Stankosky et al., 2010). One explanation for this orientation is the continuing influence of Confucianism. In order to survive 2,600 years of war (out of a total history of 4000 years), Vietnamese people have had to sacrifice *Self-interest* in favor of cooperation and stronger commitments to each other (Vuong & Tran, 2009).

Exploratory Question 3*:* Is *Self-interest* (negatively) correlated with social impacts from social enterprises?

Personality is an individualized construct that features prominently in research into business enterprises. A meta-analysis of personality profiles in different occupations found that whilst business and social entrepreneurs differed from other groups, they largely did not differ from each other (Stephan & Drencheva, 2017). Hence, we may again - cautiously - refer to one sector (business) to help derive predictions for another (social enterprise). For example, the meta-analysis of Zhao, Seibert and Lumpkin (2010) probed the role of the "Big Five" personality traits in business performance (Openness to new experience,

Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and, Neuroticism). Four of these factors (excepting *Agreeableness*) were linked significantly and positively to business performance. However, Leutner and colleagues (2014) later argued that indicators of performance, even in business enterprises, should include social or interdependent contributions, including founding charitable organizations and creating value for the community, which are more akin to the social impacts in Figure 1. In their meta-analysis of diverse occupations above, Stephan and Drenchewa (2017) found that social entrepreneurs were often relatively extraverted. However, again no links to social impacts were measured (Gupta et al., 2020). In their research on business entrepreneurs, Leutner et al (2014) found a positive, direct relationship between *Agreeableness* and social performance, but none of the other traits from the Big Five. Relatedly, in a rare study of personality traits and *social* entrepreneurship, Nga and colleagues (2010) found that *Agreeableness* had a positive link to the business aspects of social enterprise performance. Hence, previous studies have generally found that only *Agreeableness* appears to be uniquely associated with *Social impacts.* The present study set out to tentatively explore whether levels of *Agreeableness* among Vietnamese *Social Entrepreneurs* are linked to *Social impacts.*

Exploratory Question 4: Is *Agreeableness* linked to social impacts?

The OECD-Local Economic and Employment Development (2016) report states that social enterprises are dependent on the *Ecosystem*, including incubators, government agencies, development institutions, enterprises, consultants, and trainers who collaborate with social enterprises. The key partnerships between social enterprises and such ecosystem stakeholders are identified in Figure 1. They include *Training*, *Networking*, *Consultation*, and *Funding* (Frederick et al., 2018; O'Connor et al., 2018; Thompson, 2002). The OECD-LEED (2016) mentioned the importance of these *Ecosystem partnerships* for the development of

social enterprises. In a rare empirical study of how eco-system partnerships might foster social entrepreneurship, Thompson and colleagues (2000) conducted case-based research involving social enterprises in the United Kingdom (UK). These cases indicated that, for founding social entrepreneurs, access to *Trainin*g resulted in more confident and managerially skilled *Social Entrepreneurs*. Thompson (2002) later published case studies of successful Social Enterprises showing that besides *Training* and *Networking*, social impact also resulted directly from *Consultation* with mentors regarding how to improve self-confidence and control skills. Subsequently, Biggeri and colleagues (2017) found that *Fundin*g, as well as *Training*, *Consultation*, and *Networking* comprised key eco-system support activities for Social Enterprises. Hence together with *Training* and *Networking*, the present study explored whether *Consultation* and *Funding Ecosystem partnerships* might directly predict any *Social Impacts*.

Exploratory Question 5: Are Ecosystem partnerships directly linked to social impacts?

Ecosystem partnerships have been identified as important factors that directly help social entrepreneurs to achieve sustainability in financial and social goals (Sharir, 2006; Shaw & Carter, 2007). *Ecosystem partnerships* not only provide the *Social Entrepreneur* with knowledge (*Training* in Figure 3.1) and *Networks*, but also with the confidence to use and engage with these resources (OECD-LEED, 2016). Such findings imply that individual social entrepreneurs may be able to help *shape* ecosystem partnerships towards supporting their own social ends. For example, when a *Social Entrepreneur* proactively chases and secures grants (*Funding*, in Figure 3.1), or when their outwardly social motivation lends itself to building beneficial social networks (*Networks*) their organization is more likely to have increased *Social impacts* (Figure 3.1). In theory, this kind of essential support suggests a

mediated partnership relationship, for example, *between* social entrepreneur and social impacts.

Exploratory Question 6: Do Ecosystem partnerships mediate between social entrepreneur and social impacts?

Missing from the existing literature are explorations of potential interactive (moderating, buffering role) effects of *Ecosystem partnerships* on the relationship between *Social Entrepreneur* and *Social Impact*. For example, material ecosystem partnerships in the form of money and other resources, as well as behavioral elements like seeking new networks and applying for support grants, may conceivably amplify the benefits of certain personality traits and motives for *Social Impacts* (Moderation). As such, the present exploratory study aims to address this gap in our understanding of how social enterprises flourish in Vietnam. To do so, the article explores possible links between *Social Entrepreneur*, *Ecosystem partnerships* and *Social Impacts*, and, if so, whether or not these links are direct, mediated or moderated.

Exploratory Question 7: Do ecosystem partnerships moderate the links in Question 1-4?

3.2 Method

3.2.1 Context for Study

In Vietnam, although social enterprise is a new term and in an early stage of understanding, the foundations for building social entrepreneurship were conceivably established decades ago. Before and during the Vietnam war, there were cooperatives in the Communist North. After the reunification of the country in 1975, came the economic reforms of transition from centrally planned to market-oriented (Doi Moi) economy (in 1985). This period witnessed cooperatives transitioning from government control to being run by the

members, in forms recognizable as social enterprises (CIEM, 2012). After Doi Moi in the 1990s, under an open-door policy, the private sector was allowed to participate in the economy. Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) and other humanitarian organizations also started to operate in Vietnam (Pham et al., 2016). These organizations provided support for poverty reduction, health care and education, and developing essential infrastructure provision for water and electricity, including cross-sector partnerships.

Meanwhile, private enterprises that employed and trained people with disabilities and ethnic minorities received favorable tax reductions or exemptions from Government (Pham et al., 2016). At the same time, a "socialization policy" motivated non-governmental entities to invest in public services, such as health care and education. Each of these three historical elements is broadly consistent with social enterprises, which we have seen typically combine community cooperation and private enterprise, and thus together formed a promising foundation for the growth of social enterprises. Reinforcing that possibility, Vietnamese culture is influenced by Confucianism, which does not value business-oriented individuals who act solely in self-interest as much as people who contribute to the public good (Vuong & Tran, 2009). The social ranking of *Sĩ (Gentry Scholar/ Scholar/ Intellectual Officer) – Nông (Farmer) – Công (Craftsman)-Thương (Businessman),* places a profit driven business orientation at the bottom of the value system. These values shape how business is conducted and understood in Vietnam.

In 2010, Vietnam became a "lower middle-income country", which meant that nonprofit, non-governmental or civil society organizations had fewer options for receiving international development funding support. These non-public social organizations were now urged to pivot more towards purely market-driven business entities, to enable them to

generate income to deal with social and environmental issues (Cung Nguyen, 2012; Karlidag-Dennis et al., 2020). At the same time however, a number of civil-society, bilateral and multilateral organizations switched to supporting the development of social entrepreneurship, such as UNDP SDG Challenge and Youth Co: Lab, British Council (BC), Irish Aid, Lotus Impact, the Center for Social Initiative Promotion (CSIP), the Spark Center for Social Entrepreneurship Development (SPARK), Centre for Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship (CSIE) (Nguyen et al., 2020; Pham et al., 2016; Truong & Barraket, 2018). As a result, many NGOs in Vietnam transformed themselves from non-profit organizations to social enterprises. According to a recent joint report of British Council and UNDP in 2019, the number of social enterprises has increased significantly to more than 25,000 in the form of centers, associations, club, cooperatives, funds, schools or companies.

Today, Vietnam has a vibrant and rapid growing economy with a young labor force (70% of the population is under 35 years old) (World Bank, 2019). The country's poverty rate had dropped from more than 70% in 2002 to less than 10% in 2016, while its inequality index (GINI coefficient) just before the COVID-19 outbreak was at 0.35, which is below the global median (World Bank, 2019). Whilst these are positive trends, Vietnam still faces many challenges in improving people's livelihoods and, social enterprise is widely recognized as an important aspect of the country's economic development and societal well-being (British Council, 2019). In 2014 for instance, a Social Enterprise Law was enacted (Phan, 2015; Tran, 2016; Truong et al, 2018) that encompassed a code of conduct (Karlidag-Dennis et al., 2020; Nguyen et al., 2020) and which was designed to facilitate social enterprises as a central plank in the National Action Plan for Implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (British Council, 2019).

3.2.2 Participants

Participants were *N*=352 founding social entrepreneurs, representing *n*=352 Social Enterprises[5]. Each of these enterprises satisfied the British Council's (2019) definition of a Social Enterprise, which was widely accepted in Vietnam at the time of the study : (1) Social mission is the top priority; (2) using business activities to meet social outcomes; (3) re-investing any profit from business activities into the organization, community and meeting social objectives (Cung Nguyen, 2012). In addition, to be included in this study each social enterprise had to have been in existence for at least three years, in order to realistically capture developmental processes (above). Thus, the sample was both substantive and relevant to understanding social enterprises in Vietnam.

Mean years of experience in the sector was 8.9 years (*SD*=5.9). 65% of the sample was male, 34% was female, and 1% self-categorized their gender as LGTB. Forty-one (11.6%) reported that they belonged to a disadvantaged group, who otherwise had little opportunity to be integrated socially and economically, including lower socio-economic status, minorities, women, or people living with disabilities. The mean age of participants was 48 years (*SD*=10.8, Range=59). In terms of education, 36.9% of the sample had left school at Secondary level, 37.4% had a Bachelor degree, and 17.3% had a graduate (Masters or PhD), whilst 9.4% did not respond.

3.2.3 Measures

A full copy of the questionnaire is contained in Appendix 1.

Social Impacts. In Figure 3.1, a 16-item measure of self-reported Social Impact was developed for this study. Based on the extant literature (Introduction), there were three clusters of items: *Enterprise*; *Employee*; and *Beneficiaries factors* (Figure 3.1). An exemplar

[5] One Social Enterprise had more than one founder, and in this case, one entrepreneur was selected at random to be the representative founder.

item for Enterprise factors in Figure 3.1 was: “By how many percent has your enterprise's sale revenue been changed over the last three years?” (Positive change = increase, negative change = decrease). For Employee factors in Figure 1, an exemplar item was, “By how many percent has the median salary/wage of your employees changed on average in the last three years?” For Beneficiaries factors in Figure 3.1, an exemplar item was “What percentage change has been in the number of people who benefit directly from your enterprises’ product/services in the last 3 years?”

Although some of these items may appear ambiguous and overlapping, in social enterprise practice they do not. For example, "By how many percent has the number of jobs changed?" might appear to directly affect the item "By how many percent has your salary budget changed?". However, in social enterprises in Vietnam the two concerns are not necessarily connected because jobs often comprise volunteer roles and/or because payment is in practice made in kind, for instance, through the provision of accommodation. Although "By how many percent have your costs changed?" might appear to overlap with the item on profits (profits normally equal revenues minus costs), in practice many costs are non-pecuniary, whilst many profits are not. Likewise, whilst in a business enterprise adding 10 jobs to a workforce of 100 is only a 10% increase, in a social enterprise in Vietnam, an increase of one job in a one-person enterprise is a major achievement (given the context of resource constraints). In this embedded context, a relative (percentage) measure of job growth was chosen (and piloted) as a more apt measure of development than the customary business indicator (absolute) 'number of jobs.'

An additional *Social Impacts* question was, “*Which UN Sustainable Development Goals has your social enterprise addressed?”* (Appendix 1). This question was included in order to explore the SDG variable in Figure 1, and as a relatively directly indicator of social enterprise contribution to society/environment.

Individual Entrepreneurial Orientation. Bolton and Lane's (2011) 10-item measure of *Individual Entrepreneurial Orientation* was employed. All items used a 5-point Likert-scale (1 = Extremely disagree, 2 – Disagree, 3-Neutral, 4 – Agree, 5 = Extremely disagree). The factors were: Innovativeness (4 items, e.g., "*I often like to try new and unusual activities that are not typical but not necessarily risky*."); Risk-taking (3 items, e.g., "*I like to take bold action by venturing into the unknown*"); and Proactiveness (3 items, e.g., "*I prefer to 'step up' and get things going on projects rather than sit and wait for someone else to do it")*. This measure was originally generated, validated and tested on 1100 American undergraduate students, based on Lumpkin and Dess (2009)'s five firm's entrepreneurial orientation dimensions (Bolton and Lane, 2011). Prior to the present study however, the measure was untested in the social sector in Vietnam.

Social Identity. The author employed a 15–item measure developed by Sieger and colleagues (2016). This measure had a 5 - point Likert-scale scale (1 = Extremely disagree, 2 – Disagree, 3-Neutral, 4 – Agree, 5 = Extremely disagree). From Figure 1, it was used to measure to what extent a respondent was *Darwinian* (Profit-oriented), *Communitarian* (Community-oriented*),* or *Missionary*. Sample items from each factor were as follows: "As a firm founder, it will be very important to me to have thoroughly analyzed the financial prospects of my business" (for Darwinian); "I will create my firm in order to solve a specific problem for a group of people that I strongly identify with (e.g., friends, colleagues, club, community)" (for Communitarian), and "I will create my firm in order to play a proactive role in changing how the world operates" (for Missionary) (see Appendix 3.1). The factor structure for this instrument has been explored in business organizations in the European

Alpine region, and validated in thirteen countries and regions across 16 languages (Sieger et al., 2016). However, it remains untested in either Vietnam or in the Social Enterprise sector.

Self-construal. This measure focused on one bi-polar factor, *Self-interest* versus *Commitment to Others.* Vignoles and colleagues (2016) developed the measure by conducting a study of *N* = 2,924 participants from 16 nations, and validated it via a study of N = 7,279 adults from 55 cultural groups across 33 nations. *Self-interest* versus *Commitment to Others* was measured using 6 items based on a 5-point Likert-scale (1 = Extremely disagree, 2 – Disagree, 3 – Neutral, 4- Agree, 5 = Extremely agree). An exemplar item was "*I value personal achievements more than good relations with the people close to me."*. The existing measure was not validated in Vietnam or in the social enterprise sector and its structure was an issue to explore in our study.

Personality. Four items that measure *Agreeableness* were extracted from the Mini-IPIP (International Personality Item Pool) – a 20-item measure of the Big Five (Goldberg, 1990) on a 5-point Likert-scale (1 = Extremely disagree, 2 – Disagree, 3 – Neutral, 4- Agree, 5 = Extremely agree). An exemplar item was "I sympathize with others' feelings." The items were sourced from a freely available website – International Personality Item Pool (Goldberg, 2001). However, the items have never been tested in Vietnam.

There were four ecosystem constructs in Figure 1, but no existing measure for *Ecosystem partnerships.* Hence, we developed a specific measure for this study. For each of *Training*, *Networking*, and *Consultation* in Figure 1, three items were used to represent each construct, one about access, one about quality and one about frequency, each on a 5- point scale. An exemplar triplet from *Training* was, "*In your view, how easy was it for your social*

enterprise to receive Training support from the ecosystem?" (Access), of quality of *Training* support was, "*How would you evaluate the Networking supports from the ecosystem*?", and of frequency of *Consultation* support was, "*How was the frequency of your access to Consultation from the ecosystem*? The 5-point scale for access and quality was 1 - Very poor, 2 – Poor, 3 – Fair, 4 – Good, to 5 – Excellent. For the question on frequency, the 5-point scale was 1 – Never access (0 time/3 years), 2 – Rarely access (<3 times/ 3 years), 3 – Sometime access (<12 times/ 3 years); 4 – Often access (12-36 times/ 3 years); and 5-Very often access (>36 times/ 3 years).

The fourth factor in *Ecosystem partnerships* was funding (Figure 1). This factor was represented by five items, starting with, "*Have you received funding from the Ecosystem?".* If the answer was *No*, the score was 0 (no more items). If the answer was *Yes*, the next question was*," If yes, how much? (in US dollars, in total, over the past three years")*. Thus, a measure of total funding was derived, in US dollars. The participant was then also asked to report the level of accessibility, frequency and quality of the funds using the above scales from 1 to 5 (see Appendix 1).

3.2.4 Procedure

Whilst longitudinal dynamics have already been identified as critical in the literature, it was not possible to find a systematic way to measure people and situations at multiple points in time. Too many social enterprises had relatively short lives, or were at diverse stages of their own development, whilst there were too few at any one time who were simultaneously starting up. Thus, establishing a baseline prospectively and then following it up over several years was impractical. Therefore, we opted to survey a diverse group of social entrepreneurs and relying on them as subject matter experts to identify what had

happened, retrospectively, in terms of their access to ecosystem partnerships and social impacts over a standardized period of the preceding three years.

Initially, the authors worked in English on the overall questionnaire because the original measures (where any existed) were in English. The measures in English were first sent to two Vietnamese academics who were teaching business in English in Vietnam. They were asked first in English about item clarity, answerability, and reasonableness of the items in the context of Vietnam (Byrne, 2010). Very minor changes in English were suggested (and made) to the content of the items, to fit the Vietnamese context (e.g., using open versus closed options and removing any abbreviations).

The final questionnaire would have to be administered in Vietnamese. To derive a culturally competent and safe version of it, the author used a standard back-translation process (Brislin, 1970). First, the author translated the already-contextually refined Questionnaire from English into Vietnamese. This Vietnamese version of the questionnaire was then sent to an independent translator (neither of the above instructors), who translated it back into English. The two English versions were then compared, and minor modifications in wording were made.

Ethical approval for the study was then grained from the Massey University Human Ethics Committee (MUHEC2018, reference number NOR 19/05, March 13, 2019). Subsequently, pilot testing with n=10 social entrepreneurs resulted in further very minor changes to the questionnaire.

As social enterprises and records of them were very scattered across Vietnam, the authors first identified potential social enterprises from four main sources:

(a) A social enterprise website https://imapvietnam.org - a platform founded in Vietnam in 2018 to connect social enterprises and ecosystems startups. A moving total of approximately 500 social enterprises were listed on the website on a daily basis with name, physical address, telephone number or email.

(b) The Website the Center for Social Innitiative Promotion (CSIP) and a Facebook group of Thrive Vietnam, which listed events and occasional contact details for social enterprises.

(c) A contact list of 30 social entrepreneurs from a conference in Hochiminh City, which the author attended on 31st of March, 2019.

(d) The Author's personal connections with social entrepreneur groups in Vietnam.

Through these sources, the first author was able to create a single list totaling 619 social enterprises. Based on this list of potential participants were categorized into two groups: Group 1 consisted of 269 potential participants who had email and Facebook accounts and were thus approachable online. Group 2 consisted of 350 potential participants who had either a physical address, landline, or mobile phone number, and who (because they did not have an online presence or access) might be more easily recruited via telephone.

For Group 1 (approachable online) the first author sent each potential participant (the founding social entrepreneur) an email containing an Information Letter and an invitation to participate based on MUHEC (2019), via a link developed on Qualtrics. The protocol included informed consent and confidentiality. A total of n=269 emails were sent to potential respondents in Group 1, with n=138 positive (participating) responses (response rate=51.3%).

For Group 2 (approachable offline), the first author telephoned or met the potential participants in person and invited them to participate in the survey following MUHEC (2019)

guidelines. Using this kind of approach, *n*=350 paper questionnaires were delivered and *n*=229 returned (response rate=65.4%).

3.3 Results

Data were analyzed in steps 1. Data Reduction; 2. Path Analysis; and 3. Moderation.

3.3.1 Data Reduction

Because the measures were all either developed in-context or adapted from the private sector, data reduction was Exploratory, rather than Confirmatory. The main technique utilized was Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA). Factorability was based on the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin statistic ($0.5 < KMO < 1$) (Kaiser, 1974), and Bartlett's test of Sphericity. Only factors with eigenvalues greater than 1 were retained (Thompson, 2004). The factor extraction method was Principal Axis Factor (PAF). PAF seeks a least number of factors that account for common variance (correlation) across a set of variables (Borsboom, 2006; Borsboom et al., 2003). Oblique (Direct Oblimin) factor rotation was used to maximize simple structure and allow factors to correlate with one another. An item was eliminated if it failed to load significantly (<0.40), or cross-loaded significantly, in which cases the item was removed, and the entire analysis repeated. Coefficient Alpha was used to gauge the internal consistency of each Principle Axis (PAF), with any item that lowered Alpha by its removal being excluded, and the entire PAF analysis repeated.

Social Impact

A factor solution resulting from the application of the above protocol is presented in Table 1. From Table 1, there was no factor overlap, and a reasonable proportion of variance (75%) was explained. Coefficients Alpha were above .80. The solution was clear and interpretable, with two factors capturing an "economic efficiency" and a "social generosity" facet of *Social Impacts* that were manifested in our critical literature review (Introduction,

Figure 3.1). Item scores for each factor were therefore tallied and averaged (mean score per factor item) for *Efficiency* and *Generosity* (to represent *Social Impacts* in Figure 3.1).

Table 3.1 Factor Solution for Measures of Social Impact

Items	Factor	
	Efficiency	Generosity
Over the past three years:		
By how many percent has the number of jobs changed?	**0.971**	
By how many percent have your enterprise's sales revenues changed?	**0.904**	
By how many percent have your costs changed?	**0.868**	
By how many percent have your enterprise's profit changed?	**0.757**	
What percentage change has there been in the number of people who benefit directly from your enterprises' product/services?	**0.436**	
By how many percent has your enterprises' resources (money, product, services…) contributing to society changed?		**0.955**
By how many percent has your salary budget changed?		**0.835**
By how many percent has the median salary/wage of your employees changed?		**0.807**
How much percent of your budget has been put aside for the benefit of employees (holiday, entertainment activities, meal and transportation supports)?		**0.624**
Eigen-value	5.579	1.235
% of variance	61.985	12.72
Cronbach's alpha	0.854	0.852
Harman's one-factor-test - Loading of variance 57.50%		

As a precaution against common method bias we ran a Harman Test (Podsakoff et al., 2003). According to Podsakoff and colleagues (2003) this requires loading all items into an exploratory factor analysis (such as PAF, above), and examining the unrotated factor solution to determine the number of factors necessary to explain the bias in the variables. This test used two criteria for detecting common method bias, either (i) a single factor emerges from the EFA, or (ii) one general factor accounts for the majority of the covariance among the measures. From Table 3.1, although the number of factors>1, however the first factor explained more than 50 percent of the total variance (Table 3.1). This may reflect that efficiency and generosity are two sides of the same coin in social enterprise (Introduction), and thus that common variance is not necessarily 'bias', especially in exploratory research (Reio Jr, 2010).

Social Entrepreneur

Table 3.2 Factor Solution for Measures of Social Entrepreneur

Items	Component								
	Communitarian	AgreeP	Self-Interest	Risk-Innovation	Missionary	Proactiveness	Darwinian	AgreeN	Selfness
When managing my firm, it will be very important to me to support and advance a group of people that I strongly identify with.	0.709								
I will create my firm in order to play a proactive role in shaping the activities of a group of people that I strongly identify with.	0.698								
As a firm founder, it will be very important to me to provide a product/service that is useful to a group of people that I strongly identify with (e.g., friends, colleagues, community)	0.687								
I will create my firm in order to solve a specific problem for a group of people that I strongly identify with (e.g., friends, colleagues, club, community).	0.659								
When managing my firm, it will be very important to me to have a strong focus on a group of people that I strongly identify with (e.g friends, colleagues, club, community).	0.576								
I sympathize with others' feelings.		0.872							
I am feeling others' emotions		0.794							
I value personal achievements more than good relations with the people close to me.			0.797						
My own success is very important to me, even if it disrupts my friendships.			0.712						
I tend to act 'boldly' in situations where risk is involved				0.832					
I like to take bold action by venturing into the unknown.				0.753					
I often like to try new and unusual activities that are not typical but not necessarily risky.				0.586					
I tend to do things the same and not try different, unproven approaches.				0.449					
I prefer to try my own unique way when learning new things rather than doing it like everyone else does				0.424					
When managing my firm, it will be very important to me to have a strong focus on what the firm is able to achieve for society-at-large.					0.787				
As a firm founder, it will be very important to me to make the world a "better place" (e.g., by pursuing social justice, protecting the environment).					0.771				
When managing my firm, it will be very important to me .to convince others that private firms are indeed able to address the type of societal challenges that my firm addresses					0.610				
As a firm founder, it will be very important to me to be a highly responsible citizen of our world.					0.521				
I will create my firm in order to play a proactive role in changing how the world operates.					0.450				
I tend to plan ahead on projects						0.752			
I usually act in anticipation of future problems, need or changes						0.730			
I prefer to 'step up' and get things going on projects rather than sit and wait for someone else to do it						0.635			
As a firm founder, it will be very important to me to operate my firm on the basis of solid management practices.							-0.746		
As a firm founder, it will be very important to me to have thoroughly analyzed the financial prospects of my business.							-0.721		
When managing my firm, it will be very important to me to establish a strong competitive advantage and significantly outperform other firms in my domain.							-0.620		
When managing my firm, it will be very important to me to have a strong focus on what my firm can achieve vis-à-vis the competition.							-0.616		
I will create my firm in order to advance my career in the business world.							-0.588		
I am not really interested in others								0.821	
I am not interested in other people's problem								0.756	
I value good relations with the people close to me more than my personal achievements.									0.775
I always put my family first, even if it means giving up my personal goals									0.628
Eigen-value	6.372	4.031	2.435	2.000	1.842	1.496	1.318	1.098	1.012
% of variance	20.554	13.002	7.855	6.451	5.943	4.825	4.251	3.543	3.266
Cronbach's alpha	0.815			0.775	0.805	0.826	0.825		
Harman's one-factor-test - Loading of variance	18.14%								

The solution from applying the protocol is given in Table 3.2. From Table 3.2, there was no factor overlap and a reasonable proportion of variance was explained. Coefficients Alpha were above .75. The solution was clear, interpretable, and in line with the reviewed three- factor model (Introduction). The measure passes the Harman Test (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Hence mean scores per item per factor were computed.

Ecosystem partnerships included *Training*, *Networking*, *Consulting*, and *Funding*. There were only 36 participants responding to the items about *Funding*, from which 15/36 reported receiving any funding at all. Hence, *Funding* was excluded from all subsequent PAF analysis, and from our exploratory tests of the linkages model in Figure 3.1. The in Table 3.3 solution with the Harman Test in Podsakoff and colleagues (2003).

Table 0.3 Factor solution for measures of Ecosystem partnerships

Items	Factor	
	Quality of supports	Frequency of supports
How easy for your social enterprise to receive *Networking* support from the ecosystem ?	0.952	
how easy for your social enterprise to receive *Consultation* support from the ecosystem ?	0.886	
How would you evaluate the *Networking* supports from the ecosystem ?	0.802	
How would you evaluate the *Consultation* supports from the ecosystem ?	0.726	
How would you evaluate the *Training* from the ecosystem ?	0.662	
how easy for your social enterprise to receive *Training* support from the ecosystem ?	0.592	
The frequency that you have accessed *Consultation* from the ecosystem ?		0.852
The frequency that you have accessed *Training* from the ecosystem ?		0.810
The frequency that you have accessed *Networking* from the ecosystem ?		0.677
Eigen-value	5.409	1.224
% of vairiance	60.100	13.602
Cronchbach Alpha	0.914	0.848
Harman's one-factor-test - Loading of variance	55.385%	

The factor solution for *Ecosystem partnerships* (after excluding all funding-related items) can be found in Table 3.3. From Table 3.3, there was no significant overlap in factor scores and a reasonable proportion of variance was explained (73 percent). Coefficients Alpha were both above .90. The solution was clear and interpretable, with two factors capturing the quality and frequency of support activities included: *Training*, *Networking* and *Consultation*, which were manifest in our literature review (Introduction). Nonetheless, the first factor did account for 60 percent of the total variance. Again quality and frequency may be different (factorially distinct) sides of the same coin, rather than 'problematic' common method bias (Discussion). Hence, items score for each factor were tallied and averaged for both *Quality of supports* and *Frequency of supports*.

The reduced data from Tables 3.1-3.3 meant that we could now test the surviving potential linkages in Figure 3.1. Table 3.4 contains their means and standard deviations.

Table 3.4 Descriptive statistics

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Agreeableness Positive	301	4.3056	0.69494
Agreeableness Negative	297	4.2845	0.72296
Self-Interest	298	2.3607	0.81644
Selfness	296	3.29054	0.720201
Communitarian	295	4.10593	0.613654
Darwinian	295	3.78237	0.645414
Missionary	295	3.63169	0.614164
Risk-Innovation	290	3.50086	0.70092
Proactiveness	289	3.87197	0.743378
Quality of supports	273	2.990476	0.755756
Frequency of supports	254	2.63386	0.748748
Efficiency	241	-0.1405735	0.32719795
Generosity	243	-0.1195265	0.36425356

From Table 3.4, scores for *Efficiency* and *Generosity* (using factor scores since scale values were not uniform across items) were the only variables that demonstrated abnormal Skewness and Kurtosis. The Skewness of *Efficiency*=6.838 whilst *Generosity* was 7.397; *Kurtosis* of *Efficiency* = 59.520, *Generosity* = 70.024. Hair and colleagues (2006) and Byrne and colleagues (2010) argued that data is considered to be normal if Skewness is between -2 to +2 and Kurtosis is between -7 to +7. The Interquartile Range (IQR) had been applied with a distance of 3 (Tukey, 1977) to transform the two variables. After transformation, Skewness and Kurtosis respectively were 1.238 and 01.602 for *Efficiency,* and 0.712 and 0.569 for *Generosity*, which did not violate the normality assumption.

3.3.2 Path Analysis

The research employed a multiple regression analysis within a path analysis format. Prior to conducting any regression, a check was made on correlations between the variables in Figure 3.1. Table 3.5 presents a correlation matrix between all of the major variables, including demographic variables as statistical controls. Table 3.5 showed that correlation coefficients among the variables were all less than 0.700. There were no signs of multicollinearity, since all Variation Inflation Factors (VIF) statistics were less than 2 (Hair et al., 1995; Ringle, 2015). Thus, multivariate analysis was appropriate.

Table 3.5 Correlation matrix

No	Variable	Age	Gender	Education	Work Experience	Social Enterprise Experience	Agree Possitive	Agree Negative	Self Interest	Selfness	Communitarian	Darwiniar	Missionary	Risk-Innovatior	Proactiveness	Quality of Support	Frequency of Support	Efficiency	Generosity
1	**Age**																		
2	**Gender**																		
3	**Education**																		
4	**Work Experience**	.414**	-.245**	.161*															
5	**Social Enterprise Expe**	.374**			.417**														
6	**Agree Possitive**																		
7	**Agree Negative**						.433**												
8	**Self Interest**	.250**		-.190*	-.204**	.129*													
9	**Selfness**						.262**	.177**	-.261**										
10	**Communitarian**						.260**	.244**		.304**									
11	**Darwinian**							-.115*			.381**								
12	**Missionary**									.120*	.305**	.408**							
13	**Risk-Innovation**						.205**	.171**		.272**	.298**		.168**						
14	**Proactiveness**	-.210**	-.165**		.195**				-.230**		.319**	.403**	.357**	.271**					
15	**Quality of support**														.127*				
16	**Frequency of support**															.603**			
17	**Efficiency**				.294**				-.369**	.171**	.129*	.171**	.150*	.244**	.382**	.170**	.237**		
18	**Generosity**								-.170**					.225**	.175**	.344**	.237**	.497**	

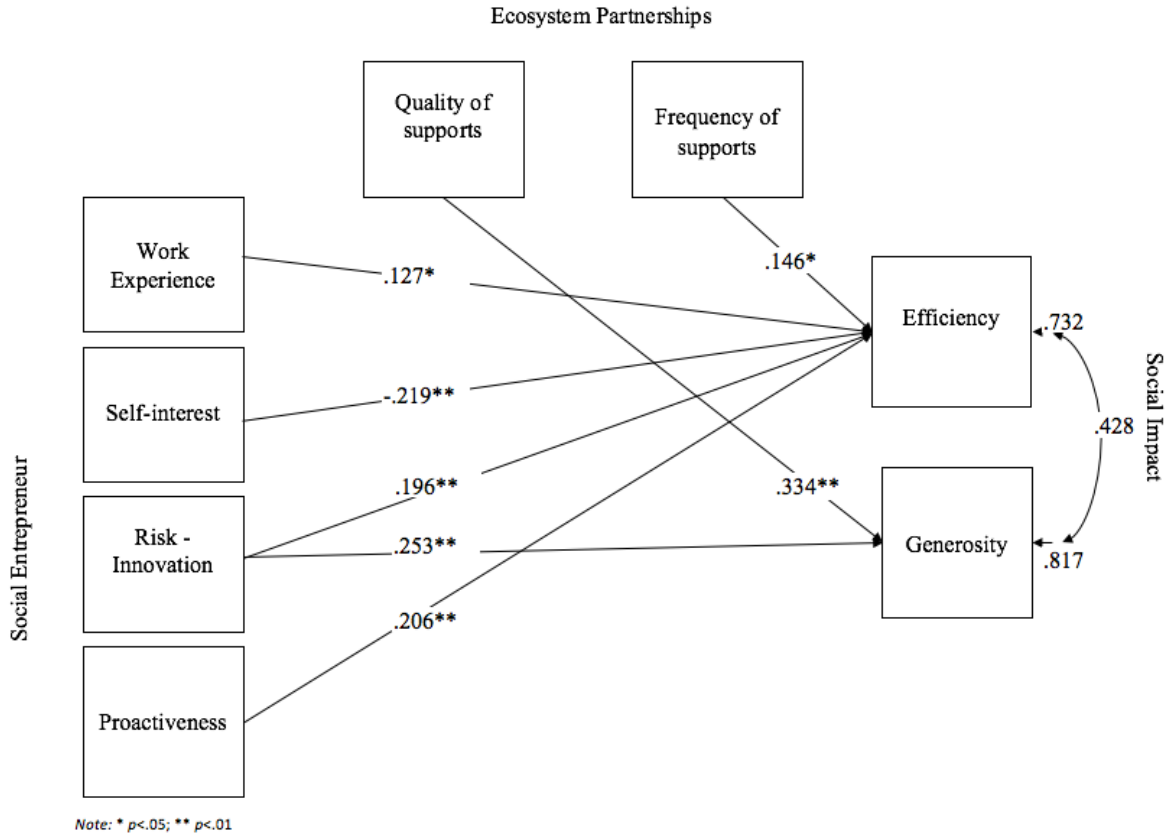
**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

NS correlation coefficients have been suppressed

Because the analysis was exploratory, an initial path analysis entered all the variables and potential/possible links in Figure 3.1. The only significantly predictive control variable in Table 3.5 was [years of] *Work Experience* (correlation with efficiency=.294, $p<.01$). Next, any links that were NS were progressively dropped and the whole path analysis repeated (after Atkins et al. (2005) and Schumacker et al (1996). All remaining, statistically significant paths are presented in Figure 3.2, including standardized beta weights. The model in Figure 3.2 was a "good" fit with the data, with *Chi-square of Model fit* =3.809 (p=0.577) , df=5, $\chi 2/df \leq 3$, *RMSEA* = 0.000 (90% of CI [0.00,0:08]), *Standard Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR*) = 0.023, and *Comparative Fit Index (CFI)*=1 (Bentler & Bonett, 1980; Hair et al., 2006; Kenny et al., 2015). The percentage of variance explained in Efficiency was 26.8% ($p<0.01$) and the percentage of variance explained in Generosity was 18.3% ($p<0.01$).

Figure 3.2 Path Analysis



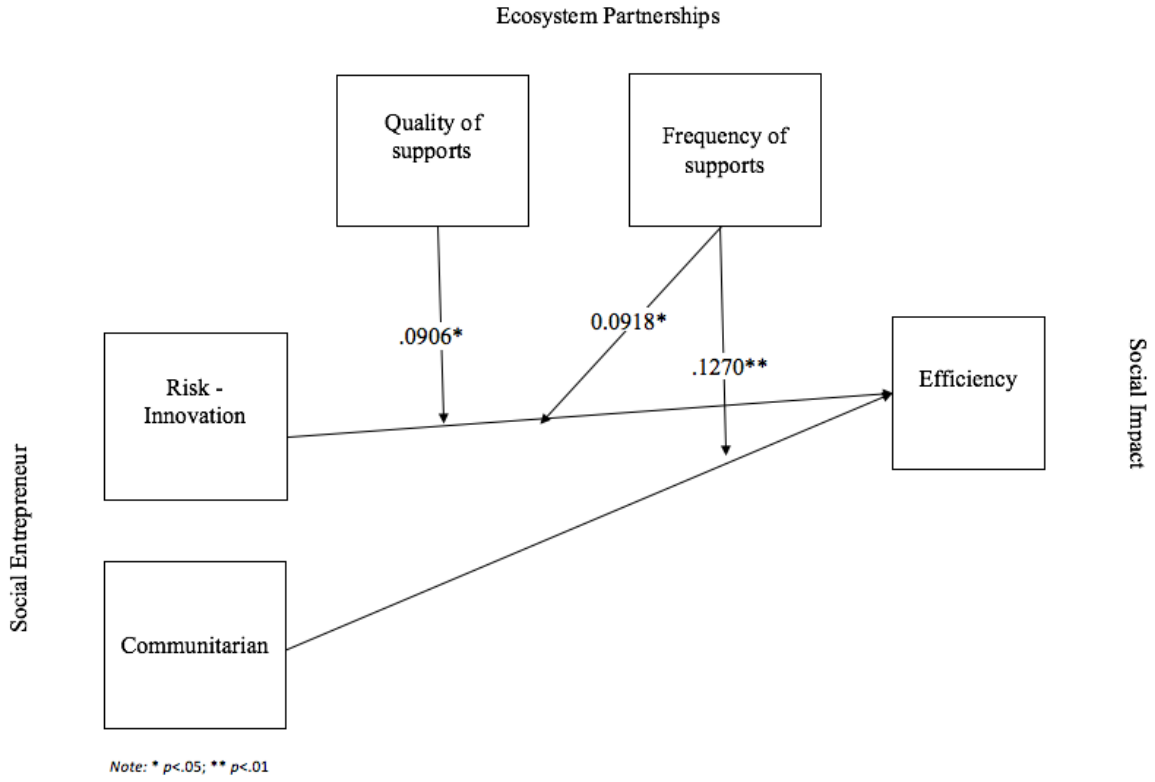
From Figure 3.2, the only significant control variable, *Work Experience* predicted *Efficiency* significantly and positively (*Beta*=.127, p<0.05). Beyond this control factor, the effects of antecedents in the model were all direct, rather than mediated, and moderate-to-small in magnitude (*Beta* ranging from -.219 to .334). *Efficiency* was predicted by *Work Experience*, *Self-Interest*, *Risk-Innovation*, *Proactiveness*, and *Frequency of supports. Self-Interest* presented the only negative *Beta* (-.219, p<0.01) with *Efficiency*, while all other variables had a positive *Beta* (i.e. increases in the predictor was linked to increases in the criterion). For *Generosity*, *Risk-Innovation* and *Frequency of supports* indicated a positive relationship with moderate *Beta* (.253, .334, respectively, *p*<.001).

3.3.3 Moderation

Besides the direct links in Figure 3.2, the analysis also explored potential interactions between all of the direct links in Figure 3.1. A moderation can occur even in the absence of a significant direct linkage between any two variables (Field, 2017). Hence, regardless of whether there was a significant direct effect in Figure 3.2, a separate moderation test was run with each *Ecosystem partnership* as a moderator of each link in Figure 3.1 between each *Social Entrepreneurs* and each *Social Impacts* factor, using the PROCESS Model 1 model (Field, 2017). Mean-centering was first employed to avoid any multicollinearity (Aiken et al., 1991).

Three moderation analyses were statistically significant. These three various moderations that were statistically significant are summarized in Figure 3.3.

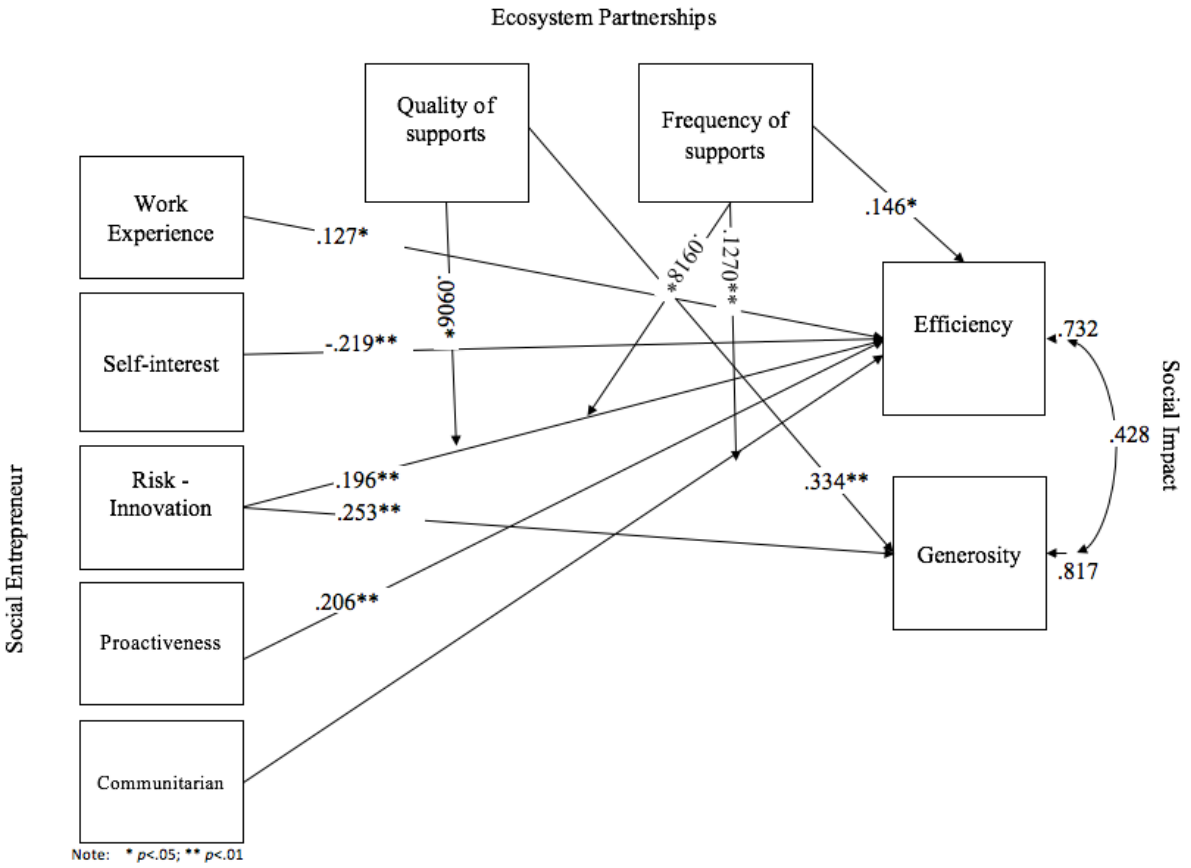
Figure 3.3 Moderation by Ecosystem partnerships of Social Entrepreneurs-Social Impacts



From Figure 3.3, *Quality of supports* moderated the relationship between *Risk-Innovation* and *Efficiency (b*=0.0906, *se*=0.0415, *t*=2.1797, *p*<0.05*). R-squared* was 10.42%, *R-squared change* was 1.8%, *p*<0.05. In addition, *Frequency of supports* moderated the relationship *between Risk-Innovation* and *Efficiency (b*=0.0918, *se*=0.0412, *t*=2.264, *p*<0.05*; R-squared*= 13.13%, *R-squared change* was 1.97%, *p*<0.05). Finally, Frequency of supports moderated the link between Communitarian and Efficiency (*b*=0.1270, *se*=0.548, *t*=2.3192, *p*<0.05; 9.52%, *R-squared change* was 2.22%, *p*<0.05).

Figure 3.4 is a distillation of the combined significant linkages from Figures 2 and 3.

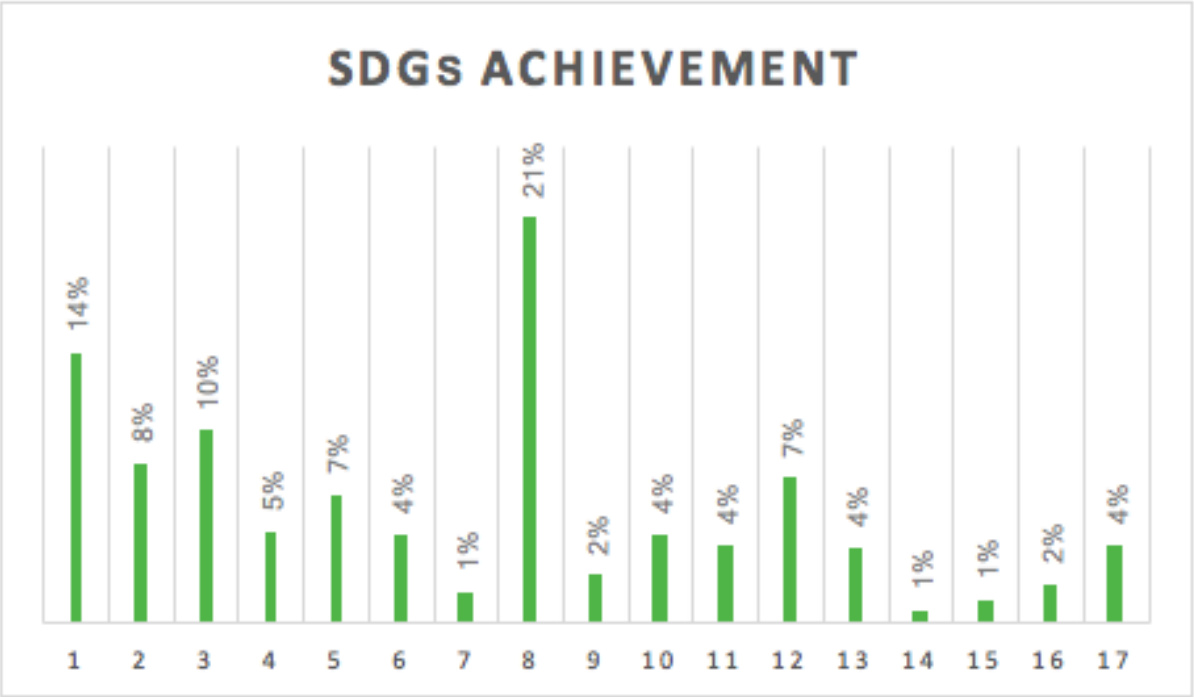
Figure 3.4 Model of nexus among Social Entrepreneurs, Ecosystem partnerships and Social Impacts



**Communitarian-Efficiency was not a direct effect but there was a significant interaction between scores on Communitarian and Frequency of Supports, on Efficiency. Hence the linkage was included in Figure 3.4.*

With respect to wider contribution to society/environment (above), the modal SDG mentioned by the social entrepreneurs was SDG-8 - Decent Work and Economic Growth (Figure 3.5).

Figure 3.5 Self-reported SDGs achievement



3.4 Discussion

The current study corroborates the vital role of social entrepreneurs and ecosystem partnerships in creating social impacts from social enterprises. It also points to possible forms of partnership and collaboration activities that buffer social enterprise performance. Our findings support the existence of links between ecosystem supports, through partnerships, in aiding social enterprises in contributing to the SDGs.

In terms of social impacts, Figure 3.4 suggests that these depended on which of two main features of social impacts were considered. From the perspective of relatively business-like *efficiency*, over-and-above the amount of work experience in the sector, a range of

personal attributes matter: self-interest; risk-innovation; proactiveness; and communitarianism. Frequency of supports *from ecosystem partnerships* also mattered for profit, revenue, cost, and jobs created. When it came to pro-social *generosity*, risk-innovation doubled as a predictor, alongside quality of ecosystem partnerships. Thus, both human and ecosystem partnerships may directly enable social enterprises to flourish in Vietnam.

In addition to comparing which variables predict social impacts, the study also indicates how these variables do so. With respect to ecosystem partnerships, there appear to be a combination of direct and moderated, rather than mediated linkages. Quality of supports interact with risk-innovation to help predict level of business-like efficiency. In addition, frequency of supports, another partnership factor, also moderates the relationship between risk-innovation and communitarian attributes on one hand with a social enterprise's efficiency on the other hand. Perhaps the finding that partnerships interact with risk-innovation should not be surprising, given the classical role that risk-innovation plays in both theory and research on entrepreneurship (e.g., McClelland, 1961). Therefore, moderated relationships (person-by-situation interactions) are confined to only one of the two main criteria – efficiency.

The significant positive relationship between *Individual entrepreneurial orientation* (Risk-Innovation and Proactiveness in our model in Figures 3.1 and 3.4) is consistent with Rauch and colleague's (2009) meta-analysis, which also found a significant meta-relationship between entrepreneurial orientation and business performance, in business enterprises (Keh, 2007; Krauss, 2005; Wiklund, 2003). The current findings suggest that the same relationship may apply, in part, to social enterprises in Vietnam. This might be expected given the overlap in function, with both types of enterprise, business and social, seeking efficiency.

In terms of *Social Identity*, social entrepreneurs score higher on measures of Communitarian than on Darwinian and Missionary social identities, which is broadly consistent with the community-driven, partnership ethos of social entrepreneurship (Fauchart & Gruber, 2011; Pan et al., 2019). However, scores on *Communitarian*, *Darwinian* and *Missionary* were all non-significant in the path analysis. In other words, in terms of direct linkages this theoretical connection was not supported by the present research. Rather, there was a significant moderation by *Ecosystem partnerships* (*Frequency of supports*) of the relationship between *Communitarian – Efficiency. Frequency of supports* may enhance the contributions that more of a *Communitarian* focus can make to social enterprise performance in Vietnam. Precisely how such a linkage may work will be explored in future, qualitative interviews with social entrepreneurs in Vietnam.

Considering *Personality*, social entrepreneurs scored high on *Agreeableness*, which was consistent with the findings of Nga and colleagues (2010). However, there was no significant relationship with social enterprise performance. The lack of predictive power from personality (between *Agreeableness* and social enterprise efficiency) is consistent with a meta-analysis conducted by Zhao, Seibert and Lumpkin (2010). It is also consistent with psychological research which suggests that the concept of personality, as envisioned in countries such as the United States has limited applicability in other cultural settings (Heinrich, 2010) and economic formations (Gloss et al., 2016).

Turning to *Self-construal*, only the self-interest facet survived the path analysis to suggest a negative relationship with *Efficiency*. This highlights a key aspect of Vietnamese culture as a low individualism society (Hofstede, 2016, 2019). Social entrepreneurs aim to

serve the community and sustainability (Thompson, 2002), rather than realize personal financial gains. Thus, less *self-interes*t contributes to higher *efficiency*.

Ecosystem partnerships had both direct and moderating links to social impacts of social enterprises in Vietnam. The finding of a significant relationship between ecosystem partnerships and social enterprise performance is consistent with the OECD-LEAD (2016) paper and with a study in Biggeri and colleagues (2017). These each found a direct relationship (see also, Roy et al, 2015). However, no study to-date has found a moderation relationship, by *partnerships*, between *Risk-Innovation-Efficiency* and *Communitarian-Efficiency*. Future research should explore the nature of this moderation through interviews with social entrepreneurs.

Consistent with one other study in Vietnam (Truong Nam et al., 2018), the most strongly endorsed SDG was SDG 8 (Decent work and Economic Growth), followed by SDG 1 (Poverty Eradication) and SDG 3 (Good Health and Well Being). A report by the Vietnam Ministry of Planning and Investment (2018) on the country's SDG achievements also highlights SDG1 and SDG3 as the top 2 achieved goals for all enterprises in Vietnam. SDG-17 – Partnerships for development, was endorsed by just 4 percent of the sample (Figure 3.5). This suggests that partnerships may not actually be seen as being overtly relevant to social enterprise flourishing, even though the evidence presented in this article suggests that partnership may well be important. This knowledge gap could be addressed by social enterprise training, selection, and support.

The present research surveyed a diverse group of social entrepreneurs and relied on them as topic experts to report what had happened in terms of their access to ecosystem

partnerships and impacts over a standardized period of three years. By positioning social entrepreneur factors such as personality and social identity as antecedents, it was assumed that these were relatively constant over the same time period. A longitudinal dynamic study, with a larger budget would enable this assumption to be tested, for example, by measuring traits and identifications over time.

This research is also based on the memories and honesty of social entrepreneurs over a three-year period. This period was kept relatively short to minimize memory distortions, or failings, or a lack of records. At the same time, there were too few social enterprises who reported receiving funding for us to test any roles for the funding variable. Extending the timeframe would allow this funding variable to be included as an additional, if relatively rare in the Vietnamese social enterprise sector ecosystem, partnership factor. In the interim, a qualitative study could explore the role of funding support on social impact-making. Such as study should also include social entrepreneurs who left the sector and thereby were not captured in the current study. Such leaders may be able to say whether funding was an ecosystem partnership factor that might have made a difference in their decision to leave, rather than remain in the sector. As was evident from the control variables, years of experience in the sector was a significant predictor of social enterprise performance.

Two of our three main measures of social impacts and ecosystem partnership show signs of possible common method variance, with the first factor in each accounting for more than 50 percent of the total variance. Reio (2010) cautions against using this single criterion to rule out the usefulness and informativeness for theory of novel findings, especially in exploratory research. We would argue that social impacts have two interrelated facets, social generosity, and business efficiency, and that the measures were drawing nuances between the

two facets. Similarly, for ecosystem partnerships these facets rely on both quality and quantity, potentially, but not necessarily in synergy with each other. In his analysis, Reio concludes that cross-sectional designs are often the only practicable approach in real-world research. A useful way forward is to find additional evidence in new studies with, for example longitudinal designs (*cf*., Reio , 2010). Therefore, we recommend that wherever possible our research is extended to other contexts, with alternative measures from more than one source.

This study included two main indicators for social enterprise performance, namely business-like efficiency and pro-social generosity. The implications of these two facets for enabling social enterprises to practically flourish in Vietnam can be parsed into three main levels: social entrepreneur (individual level); social enterprise (organisational level); and government and ecosystem (societal level, from government and other human service agencies).

At the individual level, a focus on social entrepreneurs deepens present understandings of the importance of the leaders' personal characteristics on the social impacts of the organization. This research offers insights for social entrepreneurs to think about the types of attributes that are important for the potential shareholders/ partners they may collaborate with, as well as how these relate to ecosystem partnerships and social impacts for their succession planning. In addition, training is a possibility for enhancing attributes such a communitarian orientation. The research results offer a useful reference point for self-training or training design for human resources in social enterprises.

At the organisational level, our findings may be used to encourage social enterprises to include strategic plans on how to access supports from the ecosystem. In addition, social enterprises can be encouraged to differentiate between supports for efficiency on the one hand (these might resemble traditional business enterprise training) and social generosity (which would be more unique to social enterprise) on the other hand.

At the societal level, this research signals the importance of effective partnerships between social entrepreneurs and intermediaries in enhancing social supports and impacts. The results can be used to inform policy-making that scales-up the impact of social enterprises and fosters the further resourcing and development of this sector to engender sustainable development and equality. Based on the findings, the Vietnamese government could develop further policy and support mechanisms to extend social enterprises in order to pursue the UN Social Development Goals by 2030 and foster a better society.

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DOCTORATE WITH PUBLICATIONS/MANUSCRIPTS

We, the candidate and the candidate's Primary Supervisor, certify that all co-authors have consented to their work being included in the thesis and they have accepted the candidate's contribution as indicated below in the *Statement of Originality*.

Name of candidate:	Nguyen Thi Minh Hieu
Name/title of Primary Supervisor:	Professor Stuart Carr
In which chapter is the manuscript /published work:	Chapter 4

Please select one of the following three options:

◉ The manuscript/published work is published or in press

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Nguyen, M. H. T., Hodgetts, D. J., & Carr, S. C. (2021). Fitting Social Enterprise for Sustainable Development in Vietnam. Sustainability, 13(19), 10630. https://doi.org/10.3390/su131910630

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Chapter 4. Fitting social entrepreneurs with organizations and broader ecosystems in Vietnam: Cultural leadership considerations

Abstract

Social entrepreneurs are leaders who seek to create financially sustainable organizations that can respond to pressing societal problems, including poverty and socio-economic exclusions. To effectively lead social enterprises in that direction, leaders must balance the dual commitments of achieving commercial viability with making pro-social impacts. This paper foregrounds the importance of understanding the leadership of social enterprises and their impacts in relation to cultural and social considerations. Employing semi-structured go-along interviews with 20 social entrepreneurs in Vietnam, the article documents the importance of considering fit between (1) core Vietnamese *village* values and (2) entrepreneur leadership, and (3) the structure and functioning of their enterprises, in order to achieve (4) their pro-social missions to address pressing societal issues. In considering these mutually fitting elements, this article contributes to an emerging literature on social enterprise leadership in emerging economies.

Keywords: Social entrepreneurship, Person-Environment fit, Leadership, Pro-social impacts, Culture

4.1 Introduction

Historical developments of social enterprises vary across countries. Such developments have mushroomed from the 1990s, particularly in countries facing rampant inequalities and associated socio-economic difficulties relating to employment and disparities in health, education, and gender (Defourny & Nyssens, 2010). There has been a significant rise of social entrepreneurs taking leadership to address such issues and contributing to sustainable growth in many emerging economies (Argarwal et al., 2018). Even within so called

developed economies, including the United states and Europe, the contributions of social enterprises to addressing socio-economic concerns is increasingly acknowledged. For example, in 2020, across European Union member states social enterprises created 13.6 million jobs (Carlo Borzaga, 2020). Social Enterprises UK (2021) estimates that 100,000 social enterprises operating in the United Kingdom employ 2 million people; and in the United states social enterprises are estimated to represent 3.5% to GDP, which is more than Silicon Valley. In terms of sustainability in the context of the present Covid19 pandemic, a study of 38 countries by the British Council in partnership with Social Enterprise UK and United Nations ESCAP (2020) found that social enterprises had proved resilient during the recent pandemic, with only 1% shutting down and a further 7% temporarily closing their services.

Academic publications on social entrepreneurship have increased significantly globally, though research is focused mainly on North America and European contexts that have produced more than 60% of previous publications (Gupta et al., 2020). Extant research is wider reaching however, and encompasses foci on the attributes of social entrepreneurs, organizational characteristics, and relationships between social enterprises and the socio-economic contexts within which they operate (García-Jurado et al., 2021). To date, scholars have paid far less attention to these issues in emergent economies. Such a focus is important because in contexts such as Kenya, for example, social enterprises contribute 45% to GDP (Social_Enterprise_UK, 2015). More research is also needed to extend present understandings of the role of leadership and cultural considerations regarding the functioning of these enterprises both within and across diverse settings (García-Jurado et al., 2021; Gupta et al., 2020; Nguyen et al., 2021). Correspondingly, this article considers cultural motivators

for the development, leadership, functioning, and pro-social missions of social enterprises in Vietnam.

By way of further background, social entrepreneurship is central to an organizational strategy for addressing societal issues, often poverty and exclusion (Weerawardena & Mort, 2006). These enterprises seek to balance sound commercial and pro-social imperatives (Shaw & Carter, 2007). Leadership in these organizations can be challenging (Carter & Greer, 2013) and involves pro-social efforts to ensure increased social and economic inclusion (García-Jurado et al., 2021). What is clear is that these enterprises reflect the core values, experiences, and knowledge of their founding entrepreneurs (Cannella Jr & Monroe, 1997; Hambrick, 2007), who offer strategic leadership and generally embrace ethical responses to the needs of a range stakeholders, rather than just their shareholders (Rowe, 2001). Both the entrepreneurs and their enterprises are immersed within societal and cultural ecosystems that play important roles in shaping what the organizations are seeking to achieve and how they are led to achieve their missions (Carter & Greer, 2013; Nguyen et al., 2021). Although emerging, research on the influences of culture and other contextual factors on the leadership of these organizations remains nascent (García-Jurado et al., 2021; Gupta et al., 2020; Persaud & Bayon, 2019).

This emerging leadership focus speaks to issues of fit between social entrepreneurs, their enterprises, and with the eco-systems within which they are operating (Markman & Baron, 2003; Nguyen et al., 2021). Person-environment fit theory comprises a prominent line of theorizing and inquiry within management and organizational psychology that offers fruitful insights for extending current research agendas on social entrepreneurship (Chuang et al., 2015; Oh et al., 2014; Schneider, 2001). This theory foregrounds the importance of person-

organization fit (Kristof, 1996), for example, with how founders often build organizations that reflect the values they embody (Carter & Greer, 2013; Schein, 1983). Scholarship in this area has also extended out to organization to organization fit in the context of mergers (Schraeder & Self, 2003), and investigations of the extent to which organizational cultures fit with broader societal cultural values including leadership (Hofstede, 2019; House et al., 2002) . Despite these conceptual developments, research that simultaneously investigates how social enterprise founders (leaders), their organizations and societal cultures fit to enable enterprise success or failure remain absent from the scholarly cannon.

In the most relevant study we know of, Nguyen and colleagues (2021) conducted a quantitative survey of social entrepreneurs in Vietnam, whose responses suggested that the fit between participants and their enterprises, and the broader societal eco-system was significant in terms of organizational performance: Efficiency (revenue, cost, profit, job creation) and Generosity (contribution to the society, change in quality of work-life for employees). Further the perspectives and decision-making practices of social entrepreneurs was found to result from their distal (e.g. institutional and cultural environment) as well as proximal contexts (e.g. family, personal situation) (Gupta & Fernandez, 2009; Persaud & Bayon, 2019; Waldman et al., 2020).

Building on the scholarship of Nguyen and colleagues (2021), the present article explores multi-layered forms of fit as these relate to the social enterprise sector, which prioritizes poverty eradication and socio-economic inclusion through the leadership of social enterprises in an emergent economy, Vietnam. In doing so, we draw on and extend existing conceptualizations of fit to consider the dynamics of social entrepreneurship as these relate to

the nexus of fit between social entrepreneurs, their enterprises, the broader social cultural context, and their pro-social social performance in Vietnam.

Vietnam is an ideal location for exploring these issues. According to recent report of British Council, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), and Social Enterprise UK in February 2021, 80% of Vietnamese social enterprises reported positive performance achievement and shared 50% of the profits generated with their staff and related beneficiaries. This is the highest rate of such resource transfer in South East Asia. In this paper we propose that these trends reflect long held cultural values (Nguyen, 2016) of economic generosity and duty of care towards others that stem from the traditional functioning of the Vietnamese village as well as Buddhist and Confucian belief systems that centralize the interconnection of human beings. We will document how, central are the harmonious relationships between traditional village values of inclusion, care and generosity (Vu′ ọ′ ng, 1992) that fit with social entrepreneurs (leaders), and the social enterprises (organisations) they found.

Organizational literature on Person-Environment fit, conducted largely in W.E.I.R.D (Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich and Democratic) contexts (Henrich et al., 2010) has resulted in two main types of fit: Supplementary; and complementary. While supplementary fit foregrounds psychological processes of similarity-attraction in terms of values, goals, and personality (Schein, 1983), complementary fit stresses instead the importance of how different personalities may complement one another (Muchinsky & Monahan, 1987). Although these two approaches purport to focus on the person-environment fit, they both rather accept uncritically the 'individualism' that pervades WEIRD psychologies today (Hodgetts et al., 2020), and focus on relationships between such individuals whereby personal needs and interests are prioritized and separated out from collective or contextual

needs (Chuang et al., 2015).

Their classic individualistic focus contrasts with more collectivist-orientated psychologies that operate in contexts such as Vietnam that place more emphasis on mutual responsibilities and interconnected selves (Hodgetts, Stolte, et al., 2020). Vietnam has a 4000-year history of unique cultural and socio-economic development that has withstood and adapted to waves of invasion. The country was colonized by China for 1000 years, by France for more than 100 years (until 1954), and reunified after the overthrow of a subsequent occupation by the United States (Vuong & Tran, 2009). In recent history, the country also experimented with a centrally planned economy, which was followed by an open-door period that led to the present socialist-oriented market economy (Van Luong, 2010). Whilst remaining true to its collectivist village values of interconnection and mutual support, the country's culture has also been influenced by an eclectic mix of Buddhist, Confucian, and Taoist and Western inflections, including socialism and later capitalism (Nguyen, 2016).

In surviving millennia of invasion, resistance and renewal, Vietnamese people have come to believe in the need to find balance and harmony in life, even when faced with conflict, hardship, and struggle. Despite the hardships collectively remembered, harmony has emerged as the key principle within the country's culture (Vu′ ọ′ ng, 1992), and a valuing and enacting of harmonious connections between the "Individual – Family – Village – Nation" underpins the sense of collectivism and mutual responsibilities and obligations (Nguyen, 2016; Vuong & Tran, 2009). Therefore, it is likely that the self-reflections of social entrepreneurs interviewed for the present research will entangle culturally laden understandings of leadership, enterprises, and their missions (Hodgetts, Sonn, et al., 2020; Shahin & Wright, 2004).

As noted above, a key aspects of Vietnamese society and culture is the 'Village' (Làng) - a key foundation that is embedded deep within the Vietnamese psyche and has enabled Vietnamese families to adapt to and survive various upheavals and challenges (Vu′ ọ′ ng, 1992). The 'Village' is often referred to as the smallest governmental entity in Vietnam (Nguyen, 2016). Each person in Vietnam learns to identify themselves with a village which helps them to cope with hardship, and contribute to something larger than themselves (HAI, 2009). Correspondingly, we will argue that it is core Village values of Vietnamese people (Insun, 2000; Mus, 1952) that underpin much of the orientation, relational and leadership practices, and pro-social impacts of contemporary social enterprises. Central is a valuing of community ties and supports that extend out beyond and connect across different ethnic groups. For instance, a popular proverb is:

> *"Squash, take care of melon (Bầu ơi thương lấy bí cùng)*
>
> *Despite your different races, you grow under same roof (Tuy rằng khác giống nhưng chung một giàn)"*

This proverb reminds people about the core values of compassion and inclusion in shaping positive and mutually supportive relationships among people in communal settings that extend out beyond familial or clan networks today. Recognition of the need for a sense of uniting and efforts to help each other that stems from the traditional village has remained pervasive for some time (Mus, 1952). We will argue that in establishing social enterprises, entrepreneurs in Vietnam emphasize village and pro-social values of inclusion, care and generosity *through* their strategic leadership. As such, the everyday leadership practices that underline the functioning of social enterprises in Vietnam are in keeping with or fit and reproduce aspects of a shared cultural heritage that enables them to contribute to the cultivation of more equitable and inclusive socio-economic structures.

To recap, this article documents the Village values and relational practices that shape the worldviews and leadership of social entrepreneurs and the focus and functioning of the enterprises they have created in Vietnam. We will show how this cultural adaptation of social enterprise leadership to the Vietnamese context also increases the fit between the entrepreneurs, the organizations, and the broad socio-economic environment within which they are operating. We are particularly interested in documenting how participating entrepreneurs implicated the dimensions noted above in their efforts to achieve their pro-social missions (*cf*., Bloom & Dee, 2008).

4.2 Method

Twenty social enterprise founders participated in the present study. All satisfied the following criteria*: "(1) Social mission is the top priority; (2) using business activities, fair competition as tools to meet social objectives; by (3) re-investing profit generated from business activities into the organization, communities and social objectives"* (British Council, 2012, p.24). All had at least three years' experience in the sector. Thirteen were recruited from the previous quantitative survey Nguyen et al. (2021) and had chosen the option of participating in a follow up in-depth interview. Seven participants were recruited from the archival database of local social enterprises from the British Council and Center for Social Innovation Program (CSIP) in social media. In total, 20 hours of interview were from 12 males and 8 female participants.

The authors designed the interviews to explore the results of a quantitative study by Nguyen and colleagues (2021) that focused on links between social entrepreneurs, social enterprise performance, and ecosystem supports. During the interviews, participants reflected on their

social entrepreneurship from inception, in relation to their personal backgrounds, leadership orientations, the societal ecosystem in which they operate, and the social impacts of their operations. All interviews were semi-structured (Creswell & Creswell, 2017) and involved the first author in go-along conversations where questions were kept open and were posed when transiting participants' organizations (Chamberlain & Hodgetts, 2018; Kusenbach, 2003). Questions included: "Please tell me a story about how this enterprise came about?" "How is leadership effective in your enterprise?" "What things help/harm the success of social enterprises?" "Do you think social enterprises are having a positive impact? Do you think some enterprises are having more impact than others?" "If you went back in time knowing what you know now and were about to start your enterprise again, would you?". Before closing each interview, the first author summarized the main points from the conversation to help spark further dialogue. All interviews were conducted in Vietnamese. A small gift was offered to participants as the appreciation and cultural norm of Vietnamese to break the ice and engaging in open and warm communication (Lantz et al., 2005).

Recorded interviews were transcribed in Vietnamese and the preliminary analysis was conducted in this language with input from the two non-Vietnamese authors through constant dialogue. This strategy was necessary in order to preserve and unpack important cultural nuances and concepts (Hodgetts & Stolte, 2012). Once the content of the interviews had been coded in terms of both deductive (from the interview questions above) and inductive (unanticipated themes raised by participants) categories, key quotes representing each category were translated into English and interpreted further by all authors. Literature about Vietnamese culture was combined with insights from international literatures from organizational psychology and management, which was used as an interpretive tool to unpack the quotes and develop the analytic interpretation (Hodgetts et al., 2019). Overall, the authors

worked together through a process of writing as analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Hodgetts & Chamberlain, 2009; Hodgetts, Sonn, et al., 2020).

Table 4.1 Key components in the overall interpretive frame for the analysis.

Theme	Category	Unit
Context	Culture	Think about other
		Harmonization
		Mercy
	Personal situation	Difficult life experience
		Studious
Social entrepreneurs	Resilience	Hardship to maintain both social and business objectives
		Persistently dealing with challenges
		Self-healing
	Faith in Fate	Belief in cause-effect
		Supporting others is their life mission
		Trust in the life's beauty
	Strategic leadership	Inclusive leadership
		Solidary vision
		Pro-activeness
Social enterprise - The village	Devoted to community	Understand the community
		Believe in social mission
		Commit to social impact making
	Partnership oriented	Open for collaboration
		Partnership with all stakeholders
Pro-social efficiency	Efficiency	Finance achievement
		Income improvement
		Job security for employees
	Generosity	Mental and physical health improvement for relevant stakeholders
		Customize benefit for to fit with the needs of disadvantaged groups
		Equity for disadvantaged people

Central to the resulting analysis are key cultural values that appear central to the accounts of participants and the orientations of their social enterprises, including generosity and studiousness of spirit, benevolent leadership in service to others, solidarity, and a strong belief in destiny or fate. This belief in fate appears to function to enable participating entrepreneurs to cope with adversity in the form of barriers to progress and failures without becoming despondent. The following analysis explores manifestations of core village values in the formation, orientation and operation of their enterprises. We are particularly interested in how the enactment of these values facilitate the fit between entrepreneurs, their social enterprises, and the local village communities that populate the broader societal eco-system. This focus is important because the fit between these elements is fundamental to strategic leadership of social enterprises in the delivery of pro-social efficiency in addressing pressing social problems (Carter & Greer, 2013; Shahin & Wright, 2004).

4.3 Findings

The analysis is presented in two sections. A first section focuses on the cultural background, values and inclusive strategic leadership style that participating entrepreneurs draw upon in creating their enterprises in a manner that fits Vietnam today. The second section explores how the strategic leadership and cultural values of participating village-styled enterprises reinforce their pro-social performance.

4.3.1 Fit between social entrepreneurs and the cultural ecosystem

Participants repeatedly proposed that the primary rationale on which they founded their social enterprises related to fate and destiny. Vietnamese people are socialized to believe that they

do not fully control their destinies or lives (Slote, 1998). This does not mean that they cannot exercise agency over their actions. It does mean that they are attuned to external influences beyond their control and the need to harmonise their efforts in relation to external factors (Vu′ ọ′ ng, 1992). This cultural mindset is logical when we consider the country's long history of war, invasion and subjugation (Vuong & Tran, 2009).

Correspondingly, participants emphasized the need to work towards realising one's fate or intended contributions in life, but to not blame one's self if one's aspirations are not fully realized. Participants positioned themselves as part of a larger cosmic flow (life course or karma) that is more harmonious when one is moving with the flow, rather than trying to swim against it. For example, Nhan is a social entrepreneur devoted to traditional handicraft production and promoting disablility wellness through job creation proposed that she was born for this work:

> *Since I finished my high school, I didn't do any other jobs. I followed this job since 18 years old… Many people quit, but I don't want to. I like the handicraft work. I think this is my karma, my destiny. Now, it has been 38 years that I am doing this job* (Nhân).

Such accounts are central to the assertion of a necessary fit between the person and their assigned character or fate as a social entrepreneur. Participants expressed a profound sense of belonging when realising their fate, which helps maintain their efforts to persist in assisting others. Several participants extended such statements to propose that central to their destinies is service to others through pro-social missions. They invoked a cause and effect logic in that the condition of fate sets the stage that results in their social entrepreneurship. Several introduced fate as a force that sets the conditions (*duyên*) for success or failure:

> *We can't reach our expected goals because we don't have enough condition (đủ duyên). Everything depends on fate, we haven't had the conditions to achieve our goal* (Cao).

These extracts refract aspects of how participants invoke a Viet worldview that centralizes the role of fate in setting their orientations in life (Slote, 1998), and the conditions for the performance of their enterprises. These dynamics of fate and personal agency that are well known through the Viet proverb '*Mưu sự tại Nhân, Hành sự tại Thiên'* (Humans make plans, Heaven makes them fail or succeed) (Thom & Ngoc, 2018).

Such thinking can be liberating for participants in that it harmonises an external and an internal locus of control. This worldview offers a source of purpose and strength in pursuing social missions. Participants are able to go with the flow and accept their roles and responsibilities towards others that come with their fate. Here, fate is not simply as simply an abstract concept. Fate exercises agency in guiding entrepreneurs to the resources and support that they need to achieve their missions. As Thao states:

> *I strongly believe that when we really need help, help will come to us. You don't even have to call for help, it will come, surely. I am sure about this. If the help does not come, it meant you don't really need it now. Don't wait, don't expect any help! Concentrate on what you are doing, do things that you are good at*.

Here, the belief in fate does not necessarily equate to a passive approach to achieving one's goals or help seeking. Rather, there is a combination of ideas in that one needs to concentrate on what one is doing and to get good at it, and if one does these things one is more likely to be successful. If things do not work out, then perhaps this is as fate intended (Hanh, 2006). This way of thinking about social enterprises enables participants to share or diffuse

responsibility between the force of fate and their own proactive actions within an uncertain societal setting. It enables entrepreneurs to focus on trying to overcome challenges as these arise and to work through problems themselves.

One's own agency does not only shape one's own fate. In acting generously towards others, one is also likely to have such efforts reciprocated (Van, 2020). For example, Thuy's mission is to build a happy and effective community of teachers who will then support the education and economic inclusion of students. By following her passion of helping others, Thuy not only contribute to a better world, but will also cultivate a successful life:

> *The person who receives enough love, they won't hurt others. If people are all respected, we don't need to work on human rights. You totally can use your passion to help others and earn money. The more you help others, the more money will come to you.*

Such extracts reflect the common belief that doing good things returns good fortune (Van, 2020). The key cultural assumption here is that if one shares with, and devotes themselves to helping others to the best of their ability then positive outcomes will come back to one's self. The understanding expressed around the role of fate and pro-social cause and effect in life seem to motivate social entrepreneurs. Central to participants' accounts regarding core values is the need to have and exercise a warm hearted or benevolent form of leadership that in the Confucian system is associated with the character Ren (Li et al., 2020; Liu, 2017). Whilst fate sets the conductions, human beings still need to exercise agency through a studious spirit and benevolent kind heartedness by dispersing good deeds/seeds to grow or ensure that positive destinies are realized for self and others (Schneider, 2001; Slote, 1998).

Many participants also talked about how difficult life experiences and witnessing hardship offered particular motivations for their social missions. These difficult experiences were often associated with their families:

> *Before, my parents fought a lot. I was a special student. I wanted to kill myself many times. Or leave my family. Luckily, there was a good teacher. I love her so much. Because of her, I turned into a good student* (Thuy).

Taking inspiration from adversity and in accord with the cultural logic of fate, Thuy works to cultivate a happy teaching community as a way to not only practice her karma, but to contribute to the karma of others. Likewise, Tu also talked about experiencing difficult life events with a mother living with a disability and how this shaped his path towards a related social mission:

> *"In fact, my mother has a disability. Since I was a child till now I do have a huge sympathy with disadvantaged communities as a result. My father was a soldier, we are not rich. When I was 18 -years-old, I got a government scholarship to study overseas. I really appreciated it. It changed my life. Since then, I realized the value of education. If I didn't have that scholarship, my life might be floating somewhere with no reputation. That is why I started my social enterprise in education*" (Tu).

From his formative experiences, Tu developed social enterprises in education that provide free tuition and job opportunities for disadvantaged young people. Further reflecting the studious spirit, such participants presented adversity as opening up opportunities for growth and actions, rather than being challenges that lead to inaction (Vu′ ọ′ ng, 1992). Evident in such accounts is how efforts to help others is presented as a logical continuation of a life-course and central to their very sense of self and purpose (Van, 2020). Whilst participants

emphasized the experiential and social aspects of their efforts, they also acknowledge the importance of commercial considerations in achieving their destinies.

It is crucial to note that hardships are not simply presented as motivating factors from the past. For example, several participants worked fulltime in other jobs and used this income to cover financial shortfalls in the social enterprises they were leading. They talked about the resulting pressures they faced in developing sustainable social enterprises:

> *I have to cover the cost of the social enterprises by my fulltime salary. I have my social enterprise team meeting at lunch. In the evening, after work, I follow up correspondence, work for my social enterprises* (Uu).

Such extracts speak to the depth of commitment these participants embrace in terms of creating opportunities and livelihoods for others. These also reflect the pressures that often come with leadership in this sector, which are met by the studious Vietnamese spirit. The importance of persistence or studiousness of spirit was repeatedly raised thoughout the interviewees. These leaders do not regret making considerable sacrifices to support others: *"I don't think I have anything to regret!"* (Cao).

Interviewees reported making a range of sacrifices to support the development of their social entreprises. For example, Lunar new year is an important occasion for Vietnamese people where the bonus of the 13th month's salary is paid to workers to support their new year celebrations (Chan, 2011). Social entrepreneurs often sacrifice their own new year celebrations to support employees:

> "*We never have any money lelf at lunar new year... All of our money is to pay for the workers, so we don't have any money at lunar new year. I am encouraged by the workers' recognition*" (Nhan).

Through such actions, respondents revealed resilence as a key quality of social entrepreneurs who are seeking to realize their destinies in meeting their cultural obligations as benevolent leaders who support others (Karakas & Sarigollu, 2012).

These entrepreneurs have developed organizations that fit with their cultural heritages and the contemporary socio-economic needs in society. The focus and function of their organizations reflects the collectivist values they espouse (*cf.*, Markma & Baron, 2003). These values are transformed into the organization's philosophy and pro-social missions (Hambrick, 2007; Schein, 1983). Devotion to their communities was the first philosophical tenant of participating social enterprises. The corresponding cultural value foundation for these enterprises reflects the entrepreneur's commitment toward a social mission as well as their inherent understandings of their community's needs. These understandings come from participants standing as leaders within the communities they serve:

> *First of all, you have to understand your community. Frankly speaking, many people do start-ups that follow a trend, rather than truly understanding about the pain points of the community. I always advise them to study about the pain points of the community, deep in the pain of the community* (Tú).

Participating entrepreneurs repeatedly reported targeting their enterprises to share the pain of the community and benefits of the enterprise: "*Your enterprise won't exist long if you don't care about farmers' benefit"* (Hoa). This is an important consideration in a country that professes to become a 'Start-up Nation". However, it is also recognized by our participants that start-ups should not simply follow international trends. Enterprises should address actual community needs or 'pain points' so as to help as many people as possible.

This orientation towards community needs reflects core aspects of the traditional *village* culture that developed as a collective pillar of support across the upheavals of the nation's history (Mus, 1952). In many respects, social enterprises are set up as village-styled and led organizations. Central to village culture is the valuing of partnerships as a means of bringing people into harmony and the pursuit of shared endeavors. Partnerships support not only workers inside their enterprises, but also make broader contributions to the local region and sector:

> *…We don't think that we are helping them. We are fair partners. They need to have their share in this partnership. The disabled people* [enterprise workers] *are treated as a regular partner as everybody* (Thanh).

Participants were aware of the mutual benefits of partnerships and how foundational these are to the viability and success of social enterprises, and for amplifying any pro-social impacts:

> *We prefer partners, rather than donors. Partners can contribute more to the development of our enterprise, bring more orders, create more jobs* (Nhu).

Such statements reflect a spirit of self-reliance that is also associated with the village tradition (Insun, 2000) in that these entrepreneurs are not seeking charitable donations. They are seeking to weave their enterprises within various mutually supportive or harmonious partnerships. This openness extended to sharing experiences of success with other entrepreneurs as well as agencies trying to support social enterprise development in Vietnam.

Whilst being open to partnering with others, social entrepreneurs also emphasized the need for long-term cooperation: "*We need to build relationships that are long-term"* (Nhu). Such thinking has long been valued within traditional Vietnamese village culture (Van, 2020; Vu′

ọ′ ng, 1992) and participants emphasized the importance of finding, establishing and maintaining equitable partnerships:

> *We need to have equality in partnership… We have to know how to listen… So that when we run our project, they will guide and help us out…. We need to be transparent with information. We need to dialogue with our people to reach common agreement…* (Dia).

Dia emphasizes the need for openness, transparency and consultation when forging fruitful partnerships. This extract also reflects how a market-oriented economy has only existed in Vietnam for 30 years. Many enterprises are still forming and developing through consultations with Commune/village structures and government departments as part of a centrally planned economy (Van Luong, 2010).

In this section we have considered the Viet worldview that emphasizes a collectivist response to addressing social problems through the development of social enterprises, which reflect the tradition of the village in Viet culture. Evident from participant accounts are important fits between village culture, the leadership of entrepreneurs, including their understandings of how fate brought them to social entrepreneurship, and the importance of cooperation, inclusion and partnerships both within and beyond the enterprises. Below, we further consider the organizational-societal fit through a focus on strategic leadership, village values and the pro-social performance missions for participating social enterprises.

4.3.2 Strategic leadership, inclusive values and pro-social performance

Employing many commercial business strategies, social enterprises utilize the revenue gained as a means of realizing pro-social missions (Arena et al., 2015). These missions include

developing and sustaining socio-economically inclusive community services that assist particular target groups (e.g., persons with disabilities), and address entrenched social and economic issues through job creation (Ebrahim et al., 2014). This section considers how social entrepreneurs conceptualize and emphasize the importance of pro-social efficiency in their organizations in the context of the cultural values of inclusion and generosity as central to their social impact missions. The emphasis placed on pro-social efficiency departs from hegemonic global business models that associate efficiency with lean organizations. Within the collectivist Vietnamese cultural context (Hofstede, 2019), which values responsibilities towards others and socio-economic inclusion, efficiency is associated with supporting more employees who predominantly struggle to find jobs in the industrial sector.

Participants emphasized the importance of balancing the commercial and social impact factors of their organizations in order to ensure sustainability and realize their pro-social missions:

> *For social enterprises, the 'enterprise' factor should be considered as much as the 'social' factor. We have to generate revenue and profit in order to pursuing our social mission. If we cannot generate revenue, we can't achieve the social mission. We gain customers by the product quality and design, not their sympathy* (Tan).

Emphasis on growing the business was also associated with increasing the organizations ability to grow its reach in terms of supporting employees and target client groups. Emphasis was placed on the importance of having a good product that attracts more trade and enables the organization to realize economies of scale and financial surpluses that can be used in a range of ways to achieve pro-social missions:

> *The first training course had 8 participants. They paid VND500,000 for the course… They shared with their colleagues, then the number of participants increased gradually, 15 people, 20 people, 30 people. At this moment, a training course during the school year is 120-150 people per course. In the summer holidays it is more than 200 people. 2 courses per month. Till now, the number of participants is 10,000, and our Facebook members are nearly 68,000 people* (Thuỷ).

Pro-social efficiency is enabled once revenue has grown sufficiently. Tú also raised the importance of generating surplus resources from activities such as training workshops to cross-subsidize people who cannot afford to pay for such training, and to support job creation:

> *There are students who are able to pay the tuition free. However, we have free training for disadvantaged students on soft skills, job hunting skills. Our target is that each year we provide free training for at least 1000 students… Till 2019, we directly educated, trained, provided workshops, and job connection for 10.688 persons… In 2018, the number of jobs that we connected was 900.*

In this extract, pro-social efficiency and additional positive social impacts are interwoven together within the efforts of the organization to subsidize access to training from students who can afford to pay to those who cannot afford to pay. The importance of growth or expansion was also presented - not in terms of profit taking - but in terms of supporting employment.

Contextual considerations are important here. As an emergent market, Vietnam has recently transitioned from an agricultural to an industrialized economy (Van Suu, 2009). This has contributed to a reduction in absolute poverty for many, but has also widened the gap

between economically marginalized and affluent groups. Vulnerable groups, such as people living with disabilities and health concerns often struggle to access new urban jobs in industry (Van Suu, 2009). Exercising responsive leadership, social entrepreneurs have embraced job creation and sustainability in their organizational missions. Generosity in employment creation manifests as a form of economic inclusion for marginalized groups, including middle aged women who are often excluded from work in the new industrial zones:

> *We hired quite a number of middle-aged women, aged 35 and over. There is no manufacturer in Mekong Delta industrial zone that hires them because factories only want young, easy-going people. My enterprise has flexible working mechanisms for these middle-aged women… I try to create a steady stream work for them, so they have a stable income according to their availability because they have to take care of their children… This is the social impact… My company does not use chemicals.... These women have changed from the toxic coconuts to my company, and their health is improved when working in my company. This bring happiness to them and their family* (Son).

Social entrepreneurs repeatedly invoked the importance of increasing inclusion in healthy work environments that feature happy employees, good hygiene, were toxic free, and that embraced flexible and positive working conditions.

With the development of industrial zones, the production of traditional handcrafts was under threat. One entrepreneur saw an opportunity to preserve the traditional craft industry by setting up a cooperative to employ people with disabilities:

> *The traditional handicraft was losing its market… Industrial zones are rising and attract young and healthy workers. My organization seeks to protect the traditional*

handicraft jobs and create jobs for poor, disable and unhealthy workers... Although these people are not qualified to work in industrial zones, they still have high expenses, so they definitely need a job… There were seasons that I employed 500 disadvantaged people … Let me tell you a story. I had an opportunity to work on growing mushrooms business. If I grow mushrooms, I only need to employ 3-4 workers and can have profit of at least VND10,000,000/month. If I work on traditional handicraft, I employ hundreds people with the same profit VND10,000,000/month. I choose to give up growing mushrooms... because of the hundreds of jobs that I can create from the same amount of profit instead of only 3 jobs – Nhân

This entrepreneur demonstrates leadership by responding to the exclusion of vulnerable workers within the industrial zones. A central pro-social strategy is to maximize the number of jobs that are created through the handicraft enterprise, which also contributes to the quality of life of employees (Haar et al., 2018). Behind such examples are tacit assumptions that derive from the collectivist mentality of the village and the pro-social valuing of those who have the means of helping others prioritizing such help over personal gains (Vu′ ọ′ ng, 1992). This orientation departs from the logic of the lean organization where efficiency and performance is associated with fewer jobs and increased profits (Bhasin & Burcher, 2006; Kilpatrick, 2003). For social entrepreneurs in this study, efficiency is equated with maximizing the number of sustainable employment opportunities (Carr et al., 2018; Hitt & Duane, 2002).

In further interpreting this inclusive leadership orientation it is important to consider the mutually supportive values of the traditional village, which emphasize the importance of leaders taking responsibility for the inclusion and livelihoods of as many beneficiaries as

possible (Insun, 2000). This orientation extends to cooperative enters with other persons beyond those directly employed in the enterprises (see farming example in the previous section). Central to such efforts are implicit assumptions about the importance of generosity of spirit in helping others not only through job creation, but also the quality of life of employees and their families, and access to nutritious food and healthcare (Nguyen et al., 2021). Further, recent historical cooperatives formed under Communism appear to have also carried forward notions of collectivism, shared benefits and mutual support into the social enterprise space (Van Luong, 2010).

Whilst embracing generosity as a key facet in how these organizations operate and their self-appraisals of success, a necessary pragmatism is also apparent in participant accounts. That is, generous pay, work conditions and benefits are presented as examples of the 'right thing to do' to meet one's cultural obligations as a leader and associated pro-social mission to enhancing life in Vietnam for vulnerable groups. In this context, participants foregrounded the importance of fair pay and good working conditions for improving both the mental and physical health of their employees. Emphasis was also placed on supporting employee satisfaction or happiness as this was seen as fostering positive change in not only their lives, but also the life of people living with them, and the communities to which they dwell. These factors are also linked in turn to productivity gains that generate more income in a kind of virtuous circle:

> *We see the improvement in their mental health. It is not only helpful for their work or themselves, but also for their beloved ones too. In return, they do their job better and that is good for my company.* – Tản

When discussing these issues, participants routinely pointed to the importance of cultivating a harmonious and inclusive organizational culture, which can sustain happy and well looked after employees as a nuance of a positive work cycle (UNDP, 2014):

> *A working environment where everybody is nice creates a positive energy. For example, whatever people are doing, they think about our social enterprise, they feel happy. Or when people partner with our social enterprise, in any circumstance, they feel positive energy making changes in their inner body, the huge inner change… When they are happy, they are committed with the organization. Their work is better.* – Thao

Creating such sustainable and productive livelihoods not only ensures the inclusion of marginalized groups in economic life, but can also lifts them and their families out of poverty traps (Carr, 2021). The consequences of such strategic leadership (Hitt & Duane, 2002) extends beyond issues of fair pay to the provision of accommodation and food, and access to healthcare and related benefits. As Giai's proposes:

> *We also offered free hearing support equipment for kids. Since we established in 2012 till now, I just wrote a report, we've given free more than 700 hearing support aids*.

Such extracts reflect how social enterprises were providing significant positive impacts for not only their employees, but also their children, and members of the local community. Such strategic leadership also spills out beyond successful social enterprises through cooperative ventures with smaller organizations, including local farms that may be struggling in terms of viability. In reflecting further on the farm fertilizer example from the previous section, Thanh proposes that:

> *The social impact that we've created is the contribution to agricultural community. The farmers experience the difficulties in production, but don't know how to deal with. We*

help them to deal with these difficulties, give them options to change while still maintaining effectiveness. We give them better solutions. They have positive change and have additional income monthly. They can use organic products instead of chemical ones. And they have additional income from their cooperation with us".

Thanh spoke to the importance of finding synergies and cooperative ventures with local farms as a means of increasing efficiencies for not only her enterprise, but also surrounding farms. Her organization collects farm waste to produce soil fertilizer that in turn can be used by the farms and increase their yields. Normally such waste from agricultural activities presents an additional cost for farmers because its disposal consumes considerable time and labor. However, Thanh now purchases such waste and also guides farmers in how to produce their own fertilizer from these byproducts. This increases the revenue for all the enterprises involved. Such activities also exemplify how a pro-social orientation to enterprise has a way of broadening out to support the sustainability of the local ecology.

Exemplars, such as the repurposing of farm waste also reflects how participating entrepreneurs value the cultivation of mutually beneficial fits between their own and their organizational values and local communities and associated enterprises (Kristof, 1996; Markman & Baron, 2003; Schneider, 2001). An orientation towards pro-social efficiency can result in increased congruence between enterprise efficiency and generosity where commercial and social considerations are brought into harmony. Participating entrepreneurs took as a matter of course efforts to support local socio-economic development in ways also consistent with the United Nations sustainable development goals (Haar et al., 2018). As with social enterprises elsewhere, their strategic leadership often extended to acting as positive change agents within the broader community.

4.4 Conclusion

Culture is the lifeblood of any society. Correspondingly, to understand social enterprises in Vietnam we have to understand the culture and how it shapes social entrepreneurship and leader's understandings of how they came to their pro-social work, the values enshrined in the organizations they create, their understandings of organizational efficiency and generosity, and how they relate to external partners. In many respects, these enterprises comprise new articulations of traditional Vietnamese village culture where responsible leadership, studiousness, compassion, harmonization, and inclusion are central to everyday socio-economic life (HAI, 2009). Social Entrepreneurs establish, manage and lead their social enterprises with the spirit of solidarity and mutual support from this 'Village' root, creating the uniqueness for the development of social enterprises in Vietnam. More importantly, with the belief in the natural order of the universe, in the chance and fate (Chang et al., 1997), social entrepreneurs turn the tensions between social and financial goals into creativity, novelty and sustainability.

The findings of this research support the assertion that societal context plays an important role in social enterprise development and leadership (Carter & Greer, 2013). It is important to consider the cultural backgrounds and associated worldviews and enacted values of social entrepreneurs in order to extend our understanding of fits between the leaders, their organizations and the broader context, and in the present case how cultural imperative towards generosity shape social enterprise functions and missions (Persaud & Bayon, 2019). Vietnamese social entrepreneurs are socialized within a collectivist culture and set of values that have been cultivated over centuries and which link the person, the village or community and the nation more broadly (Nguyen, 2016).

In closing, this paper foregrounds aspects of how this socio-cultural context has socialized social entrepreneurs to enact collectivist and harmonization values (Vu′ ọ′ ng, 1992) and to construct their pro-social efforts as a key element of their destiny or fate in life. We have also highlighted and reformulated Person-Environment fit theory within a non-Weird context and sector where it makes little sense to distinguish complementary and supplementary fits (*cf.*, Chang et al, 1997). Fit with the Vietnamese 'villagerian' worldview and associated values comprise the backbone the links the social entrepreneur, social enterprises, and pro-social changes that they contribute to society.

Chapter 5. Discussion

Research into social entrepreneurship has focused on issues of innovation, business strategy, value creation and the social entrepreneurs themselves, but has arguably not so far adequately considered differences in contextual settings, such as country-based location, and/or interactions and synergies between social entrepreneurs and the ecosystems within which they operate (Gupta et al., 2020). Person — organization —--environment fit has been one of the prominent lines of theorising in management and organizational psychology (Chuang et al., 2015; Oh et al., 2014). Theorizing has included person-environment fit (Su, Murdock and Rounds, 2014; Carr, 2013), person-organization fit (Kristof, 1996), for example how firm founders may build organisations that reflect their own values (Carter & Greer, 2013; Schein, 1983), and the extent to which organisational cultures may fit societal cultural values (Hofstede, 2001). Much rarer however is extant theory, or research, that examines *simultaneously* how individual founders, organisational and societal culture fit may enable an enterprise's success or failure as a gestalt phenomenon.

This multi-layered form of fit was an underlying supporting condition for the development of social entrepreneurship in Vietnam (Markman & Baron, 2003). My published research has found a multi-layered form of fit between individual (micro) — organisation (meso) — ecosystem (macro) levels, in which the social entrepreneur (micro) draws on village values (macro) to help sustain a social enterprise (organisation). In many ways, the ecosystem is a cradle for social entrepreneurship in Vietnam, in which social enterprises enrich the ecosystem with greater inclusion and progress towards the SDGs, as well as motivating more

involvement in the sector by young social entrepreneurs. In the rest of this review chapter, I unpack these nuanced relationships.

Incorporating commercial business strategies, social enterprises utilise revenue gained as a means of realising positive social impact objectives (Arena et al., 2015; Ebrahim & Rangan, 2010). These social impact objectives have ranged from the development of socio-economically inclusive community services, and helping particular target groups (e.g., persons living and working with disabilities) to addressing aspects of entrenched social and economic issues like inequality (Ebrahim et al., 2014). The need for social entrepreneurship to balance both commercial and social indicators applies across contexts internationally (Dees & Elias, 1998), but in its application also seems to need to reflect unique cultural contexts, including in Vietnam. Drawing on popular theories in western countries customised for the context of Vietnam, Study 1 (Chapter 3) therefore explored the hypothesis of potential ecosystem supports, which could then be probed more deeply, and in greater qualitative detail, in Study 2 (Chapter 4). This second study focused on, and found, underlying cultural and social conditions –key factors to understanding social entrepreneurship in the country. Chief among them was the importance for social enterprises of adopting and respecting a traditional Vietnamese structure – the village community.

5.1 Key findings from Study 1 and Study 2

Specifically, Study 1 outlined social enterprise performance in terms of two factors: efficiency (commercial performance indicator) and generosity (social performance indicator). This finding of two main dimensions of performance, commercial and social, is consistent with the dual-mission definition of social enterprises worldwide and in Vietnam (Cung

Nguyen, 2012; Dees, 2018). The finding of twin facets, with distinct antecedents and moderators, also addresses a limitation of pre-existing enterprise performance measurement methods such as SEBC, or SROI (Clark et al., 2004), which do not make the dual distinction. For example, two key recognised achievements of Vietnamese social enterprises (Thang Truong, 2018) are job creation and improving people's quality of life. In my studies, job creation was included as part of commercial performance, whilst quality of life improvement was implied by greater employee benefits which was part of a social performance factor which I called generosity (see Chapter 3 for details). Hence, both dimensions of performance — commercial and social — must be included in any future evaluation and monitoring measures for social enterprise in Vietnam.

In addition, the two social enterprise performance indicators were able to address the challenges of measuring social impacts due to the diverse nature of social enterprises, withbroad differences in size, scale, industry (see Alter, 2007). Efficiency and generosity might not be ideal economic measurements, however, they can reflect the core focus of every social enterprise (Austin et al., 2006) regardless of the differences among them by evaluating the changes they make. In particular, the use of 'percentage of change' in the performance measurement items rather than the specific financial numbers (i.e. sale revenue, number of employees, number of beneficiaries, salary budget) eliminated the problem of not being able to capture in any standardised manner the diversity in size and scale of social enterprises. The measure itself highlights how much change social entrepreneurs bring to their communities in comparison with the limited resources of their social enterprises. For example, creating one job in a one-man enterprise is an increase of 100%, while creating ten jobs in an enterprise with one-hundred employees only shows an increase of 10%. Thus, the two performance

indicators may be a fairer way of estimating proportional ‘just noticeable developments’ (MacLachlan et al., 2010).

In my research, self-interest was antithetical to performance, whereas communitarian identity was beneficial for it. For example, adding to our understanding of social performance by social enterprises, my exploratory research Study 1 showed (1) a significant negative relationship between self-interest and commercial efficiency — a similar finding to Oni and colleagues’ study of the relationship between independent self-construal and commercial growth in Lesotho, Southern Africa (2020), (2) positive links between Individual Entrepreneurial Orientation (IEO) with efficiency (commercial performance), thereby supporting and extending previous research on commercial enterprises to show relevance for social enterprises in Vietnam (Bolton, 2012; AI Issa, 2020). My Study 1 also found that the predominant form of identification among the sampled Vietnamese social entrepreneurs was communitarian. Again therefore, there was a dual-sided ethos to social entrepreneurship, in Vietnam.

Importantly, for the first time in the research literature, to the best of my knowledge, ecosystem supports were found to be amplifiers of the relationship between communitarian identity and social enterprise efficiency. Specifically, for example, my research revealed a moderating role for macro environment (ecosystem) in the relationship between risk-innovation and commercial performance. Entrepreneurs with a higher score on risk-innovation not only reported better commercial performance but also had that relationship amplified by a greater (a) quantity and (b) quality of support from networking, training, and mentoring opportunities present and accessible in their ecosystem.

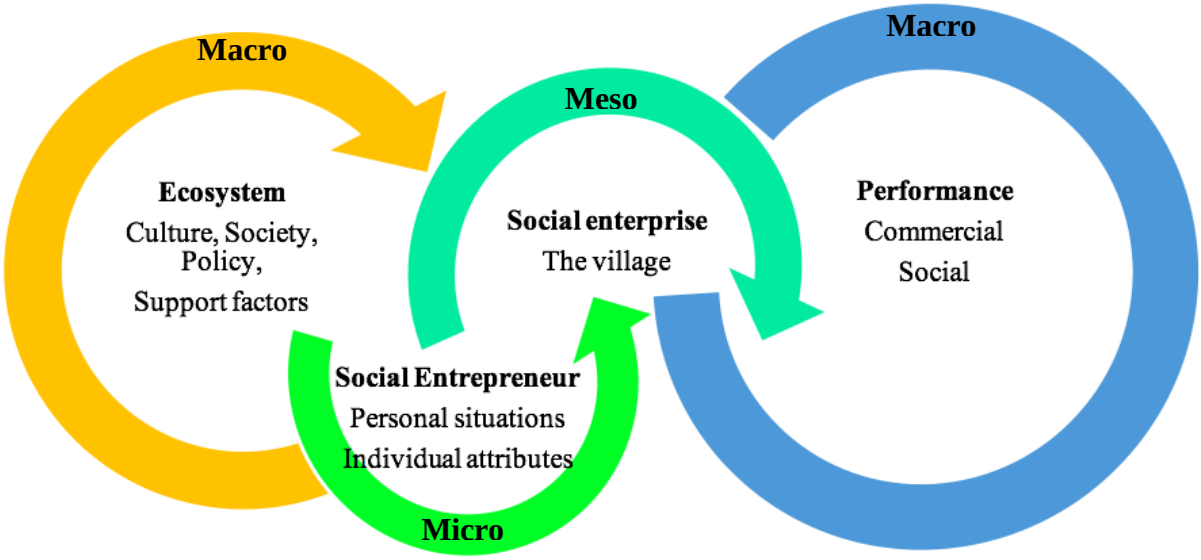
However, Study 1 also failed to detect any moderating role of these ecosystem supports on the links between social entrepreneurs and social performance. Furthermore, the probe for any mediation role of ecosystem supports, linking the social entrepreneur to their social enterprise's performance (e.g., conceivably by *forging* social network opportunities) had no statistical support. Mediation is theoretically possible since classic models of leadership envisage individuals changing the situation to suit their style of leadership (e.g., in Fiedler's classic [1973] model of leadership, in which leaders can and should change the situation in order to succeed). Curious as to whether the survey Study 1 had left out any key considerations, Study 2 took a closer and more exploratory look at the quality of person-in-situation dynamics.

In keeping with the cultural context of the research, Study 2 found a more rounded perspective on social entrepreneurship in Vietnam than Study 1. A semi-structured go-along interview format uncovered key qualities anchored in participant accounts, foregrounding the importance of understanding the leaders of social enterprises and their impacts in relation to cultural and social considerations. Study 2 highlighted a form of fit between the three often separated levels of analysis: micro – meso – macro. Specifically, Vietnamese traditional village values and social entrepreneur leadership employing those values, were shown to be pivotal to the successful social functioning of their enterprises, in order to achieve their prosocial missions to address pressing societal issues.

5.2 Symbiosis relationship of social entrepreneurs, social enterprises and the ecosystem

The nexus of individual – organization – environment in Vietnamese social entrepreneurship

Figure 5.1 The nexus of Macro - Micro - Meso



First is the fit of the ecosystem on social entrepreneur in Figure 5.1 (Macro-Micro): Culture, rooted in traditional village core values, nurtures the social entrepreneur, in their personal situation, to help shape their individual attributes (*Ref.* Chapter 4). Contemporary Vietnamese culture has been formed through the blended influences of collectivist traditions associated with the Vietnamese people: Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism, and Western thought, including socialism and later capitalism (Nguyen, 2016). Vietnamese social entrepreneurs are socialised within this collectivist culture and set of values that have been cultivated over centuries and which link the person, the village or community and the nation more broadly (Chuang et al., 2015; Insun, 2000; Nguyen, 2016). This ecosystem context has socialised social entrepreneurs to enact collectivist and harmonisation values (Te, 1987; Vu′ ọ′ ng, 1992) and to construct their prosocial efforts as a key element of their destiny or fate in life (*Ref.* Chapter 4). This mind-set offers a source of purpose and strength in pursuing the social missions of social enterprises (Figure 5.1).

Second is the fit in Figure 5.1 between social entrepreneur and social enterprise (Figure 5.1: Micro – Meso): The assertion of the role of fate in the fit between the social entrepreneur and social enterprise invokes a shared responsibility involving individuals doing their best and an external locus of control toward the prosocial missions (*ref.* Chapter 4). The social enterprise is the reflection of of social entrepreneur's values, experience, knowledge and preferences, which are founded intheir social and cultural influences (Child, 1972; Hambrick & Mason, 1984; Hodgetts, Stolte, et al., 2020). Keeping the cultural backgrounds and associated worldviews and traditional values in mind when exploring this fit helps explain the imperative towards the social performance that social entrepreneurs seek (Hodgetts, Sonn, et al., 2020; Persaud & Bayon, 2019). In particular, besides the individual attributes revealed in Study 1, Study 2 revealed key cultural values that appear to be central to the social entrepreneurs and the orientations of their social enterprises. These values include generosity and studiousness of spirit, benevolent leadership in service towards others, solidarity, and a strong belief in destiny or fate that enables participating entrepreneurs to cope with adversity in the form of barriers to progress and failures without becoming despondent or giving up. These values then manifest in the missions and operations of social enterprise. The complementary fit between these elements is fundamental to strategic leadership of social enterprise and the orientation towards and delivery of social performance (Carter & Greer, 2013; Shahin & Wright, 2004).

Social enterprises work towards a confluence (*ref.* Chapter 3) where commercial and social considerations are brought into harmony to complement each other (Markman & Baron, 2003). Specifically, social entrepreneurs define their social enterprise performance through growth in sales, growth in job creation and security, bringing more benefit to local communities, improving their quality of life and alleviation of poverty for vulnerable people

together with revenue generation (*ref.* Chapter 3). This is a stance that makes sense within the context of such a collectivist culture (Hofstede, 2019) with core values around responsibilities towards helping others and socio-economic inclusion. The orientation towards the community in social enterprises reflects core aspects of the traditional village culture that developed as a collective pillar of support across the upheavals of the nation's history (Insun, 2000; Mus, 1952).

Third is the expansion of traditional village values in the society – an influence of social enterprises *on* ecosystem (Figure 5.1: Meso – Macro). The inclusive and mutually supportive values of the traditional village emphasise the importance of taking responsibility for the inclusion and livelihoods of as many beneficiaries in the community as possible (Insun, 2000; Vu′ ọ′ ng, 1992). These values were revealed as framing Vietnamese social enterprises. In many aspects, *social enterprises are set up as village-styled organisations with prosocial benefits for the local community in producing sustainable livelihoods*. Central to village culture is the valuing of partnerships as a means of bringing people into harmony and the pursuit of shared endeavors (Vu′ ọ′ ng, 1992). This key principle of partnership *helps shape the ecosystem*, and supports local social and economic development in a manner consistent with the United Nations sustainable development goals (Haar et al., 2018). At the same time, the partnership philosophy of social enterprises challenges the cultural norm of many commercial enterprises underpinned by a belief in the importance of competitiveness in society or a belief in the rightness of having winners and losers. An alternative way of operating has been proposed and executed by social enterprises.

In short, this thesis highlights the importance of fit between people – organisation – environment by demonstrating the model of fit between the ecosystem – social entrepreneur –

social enterprise in an emergent economy, Vietnam. These findings fill a gap in context-based social entrepreneurship research (Gupta et al., 2020), indicating a consistent line rooted in the context and transmitting to social entrepreneur, who creates and operates a social enterprise for both commercial and social performance. The research presented useful information for the development of social entrepreneurship. Policy-makers and social enterprise support agencies should take context into account, especially the local traditions and culture, when designing support programs for social entrepreneurship. Current and future social entrepreneurs, who might be people living with disability, or belonging to disadvantaged groups, will find encouragement for their social entrepreneurial journeys: with faith in fate, resilience, and benevolent hearts, they can overcome the difficulties and achieve their social missions.

Last, and potentially most importantly, the thesis findings have been shared with many social enterprise stakeholders in Vietnam. For example, when I presented my research results to a seminar entitled, 'Vietnam enterprises — social impact making' organised by Vietnam National University on September 30, 2021, many seminar participants (researchers, policy-makers, social entrepreneurs, and incubator leaders) gave constructive comment on the findings and suggestions for implications. My two publications were also sent to a number of social entrepreneurs and incubator leaders and received positive feedback. Considering the feedback and suggestions from relevant stakeholders, a policy brief on promoting youth social entrepreneurship was developed as the conclusion and recommendations section of my thesis. The policy brief was submitted to the international peer-reviewed journal *International Perspectives in Psychology: Research, Practice, Consultation*, and currently is under review as an invited revision (revised version included as Chapter 6).

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Chapter 6. Supporting Social Entrepreneurship among Vietnamese youth – A policy brief

Executive Summary

Social entrepreneurship is gaining increased prominence internationally as a vehicle for addressing a range of socio-economic issues. In Vietnam, such enterprises are rapidly becoming a key component of the country's sustainable development strategy. Further sustainable growth in this sector can be achieved by supporting the engagement of young people. Vietnamese research evidence points to the key role of ecosystem supports in social enterprise success. Foundational to success are traditional Viet village relational values, including studious spirit, mutual support, harmony, inclusion, partnership, and sharing resources and responsibilities.

Given the centrally planned nature of enterprise in Vietnam, a national academy that centralizes the importance of village values and draws on the knowledge and skills of successful social entrepreneurs would be invaluable in cultivating, retaining, and supporting further youth engagement in social entrepreneurship. Establishing the academy would encompass:

- Sector lead engagements key stakeholders, including the Government and sector partners.
- Recruit successful social entrepreneur mentors, alongside various sector partners (Vietnamese Government, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), British Council, etc.), and Higher Education Institutions to plan and coordinate the academy.
- Develop sector-wide policy frameworks to guide research, mentoring, coaching, and internship activities.

Impact Statement: This brief speaks to the following United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs): SDG-1 - reducing poverty, through SDG-8 - creating decent work and SDG-10 - reducing youth inequities, via SDG-17 - promoting partnerships for development.

6. 1 Introduction

The use of social enterprises to address various socio-economic issues has increased globally over the past three decades (UN, 2020). Little is known about such pro social enterprises in emergent economies, such as Vietnam. This evidence-based policy brief addresses the need to enhance ecosystem supports to grow the social enterprise sector in Vietnam in a culturally appropriate and sustainable manner that promotes youth engagement. The recommendations are based on the results of a three-year study of the organizational orientations, enterprise fit within the Vietnamese ecosystem, and issues of enterprise sustainability and pro-social impacts from social enterprises. This mixed method research foregrounded the importance of local ecosystem supports, Viet village values, and community partnerships for the sustainable development of social enterprises.

This brief is intended for policymakers, applied psychologists, and sector partners in Vietnam. The brief presents:

(1) An overview of social enterprise activities in Vietnam and the role of sector partners in promoting social entrepreneurship.
(2) Key evidence on the features of the Vietnamese ecosystem that sustain social enterprises.
(3) The recommendation to establish a national academy to nurture social entrepreneurship among young people.

Contextually, the 4000-year history of Vietnam features pragmatic responses to considerable turbulence and upheavals resulting from waves of colonization by China, France, and the United States. The country has also experienced the installation of a centralized economy, which was recently dismantled and transformed into a market-driven socialist-oriented economy. These disruptions have required an adaptability among Vietnamese people and the development of programmatic ways of supporting each other through socio-economic activities. Social enterprises have existed in Vietnam long before the concept of social entrepreneurship was introduced to the country in 2008 by the British Council and Centre for Social Innovation Promotion (CSIP). For example, craft villages and craft associations have been active in the country for thousands of years. In keeping with emergent Viet village cultural values, people shared in various entrepreneurial endeavors, technologies and resources to promote the village economy, whilst sharing its benefits.

In 2016, Vietnam identified entrepreneurship as central to the national strategy for sustainable development. A National Startup Program (2016-2020) was implemented by the Government to foster business innovation in three domains: (1) Project 844 aims to develop a national innovative start-up incubator, (2) Project 939 promotes entrepreneurship among women, and (3) Project 1665 supports student entrepreneurship. All three Projects featured social (as well as commercial) entrepreneurship, and the number of social enterprises has increased five-fold to 22,000 (Truong et al., 2018). The Vietnamese government has further collaborated with various sector partners (e.g., BC, UNDP, CSIP) to promote social enterprises to realize the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Hanoi Television also broadcasts a weekly 20-minute program on social entrepreneurship.

As a country where half the population is aged between 15 and 39 years, Vietnam shares the challenges of youth unemployment with other emerging economies (ILO, 2020; OECD, 2021). There is much potential for social enterprise development because many of these young people are motivated to address pressing social problems associated with unemployment. Relatedly, social entrepreneurship offers viable paths for young people in term of poverty reduction (SDG-1), decent employment (SDG-8) and empowerment (SDG-10, SDG-17) to participate in sustainable development. To be realized these goals require planning and ecosystem supports, including training, financial support, and mentorship (UN, 2020b).

To date, efforts to promote social entrepreneurship in Vietnam have raised considerable public awareness, fostered growth in social enterprises, and are increasingly targeting generations currently aged between 15 and 39 years. Projects 1665 and 884 (above) provide support to fledgling social entrepreneurs. A key aim is to motivate and equip participants with the knowledge and skills to turn innovative ideas into viable social enterprises. In collaboration with the British Council, UNDP, and other social enterprises stakeholders, Project 1665 has also introduced the idea of social entrepreneurship into Vietnamese universities through a training for trainers' program. Included is an annual entrepreneurship plan competition that attracts hundreds of thousands of young potential social entrepreneurs who are exposed to the complexities of starting up and developing their ideas. However, this program is over-subscribed, and only three proposals are offered further start-up support. This approach of picking a few potential winners but many losers is problematic because a great number of potential social entrepreneurs are being lost to the sector.

6.2 Approach & Results

This policy brief draws on the finding of a research project employing a quantitative survey (N=352) and follow up interviews (N=20) with successful and unsuccessful social entrepreneurs from across Vietnam (*c.f.* Nguyen, Carr, Hodgetts & Fauchart, 2021 and Nguyen, Hodgetts & Carr, 2021). This original quantitative research indicated positive and significant relationships the quality and quantity of ecosystem supports and the performance of social enterprises in Vietnam (Nguyen et al., 2021). The frequency of these supports positively correlated with commercial performance, while the quality of supports had a positive relationship with social performance (for example creating opportunities for decent work). Also significant were partnerships between social entrepreneurs and the ecosystem in terms of training, networking, mentoring.

Follow-up interviews explored participant understandings of the importance of ecosystem supports and the reasons why they established their social enterprises. Participants pointed to the need for structures to further enhance ecosystem supports noted above. They also foregrounded the importance of Viet village values (e.g., studious spirit, mutual support, harmony, inclusion, partnership, and sharing resources and responsibilities) in the organization, orientation and functioning of their enterprises (Nguyen et al., 2021). These values have helped the Viet people survive and thrive in the aftermath of serious socio-economic disruptions including military invasions, hostile occupations, and associated hardships. When social enterprises are set up as proxy villages and can access ecosystem supports, their chances of success in realizing their social missions are enhanced. This is because they offer culturally familiar and safe spaces for staff and enable the enterprise to be woven more seamlessly into the local ecosystem.

6.3 Implications and Recommendations

The importance of such cultural structures in social enterprises and supportive ecosystem development needs to be considered when cultivating further initiatives to grow the sector in a sustainable manner. Below, we draw on these findings to recommend a general strategy for promoting social entrepreneurship for the young people and maximizing the implication of Project 1665 and others (such as 844, above). This can be done through the establishment of a National Academy to coordinate key aspects of the ecosystem in accord with the values of the traditional Viet Village. This National Academy should bring all the different initiatives and programs of support under one umbrella organization in order to achieve economies of scale, to set standards of practice, and to generate additional investment. Relevant sector partners should have a representative in this academy and be engaged as leaders of the social enterprises they represent. The academy would strengthen partnerships, create synergies, and support participation in the sector by potential young social entrepreneurs.

In terms of specific processes, inclusive participation and partnership (SDG-17) needs to be a key feature of the academy, along with contributions from the following stakeholders as partners in framing up the academy and establishing its core functions:

- Government, international agencies (UNDP, British Council, etc.), experienced local entrepreneurs, and new emerging entrepreneurs to develop and refine policy frameworks for the sector, lead sector promotion, co-ordinate and extend infrastructural and financial systems, and regulate practice. Guaranteeing the fairness and recognition for all stakeholders would be central to cultivating the solidarity of the village.

- Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) should provide knowledge and skills for participating social entrepreneurs via formal and informal training courses, capability building workshops, and seminars. HEIs should collaborate closely with existing successful social entrepreneurs in designing and delivering these events. Accordingly, HEIs should conduct evaluations of the academy in partnership with relevant sector partners and help to inform decision making within the sector. Partnerships among HEIs and various stakeholders will enrich the development of mentoring, teaching, and training programs, and inform the targeting of resources.
- Existing social entrepreneurs are the best mentors for new and potential entrepreneurs. Besides participating in the HEIs and incubators activities, these mentors should also be supported to create internship opportunities for new comers, which might also reduce the human resource burdens to existing enterprises whilst offering practical experiences for the next new entrepreneurs.
- Operational mechanisms of the Academy should be approved through dialogue involving all above stakeholders. Particularly, young people should be embraced as active stakeholders in the academy, not simply as beneficiaries. These young entrepreneurs are important contributors to social entrepreneurship development and innovation, and their feedback is valuable for the co-design and refinement of support initiatives. This positioning is in keeping with a traditional key function of the Viet village as a place to give and receive, share and connect different generations of social entrepreneurs.
- The academy should develop long-term and short-term strategic plans to contribute to the creation of an enabling social entrepreneurship sector within which the emerging generation can thrive.

- A sustainable financial model for the academy beyond an initial establishment fund should be considered. Revenue could be generated from membership fees, services fees (e.g., advanced training courses with certification, marketing via the association network), and government and international aid grants. The revenue should be used to cover the operational costs and to fund the social entrepreneurship ideas.

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Appendix

Appendix 1 - Questionnaire

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PART I: QUESTIONS ON SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURS

The following questions asked about your outlook on life, including social life, which may be relevant to your social enterprises. Please explain your opinion on yourself by ticking in the according box:

1: Strongly disagree
2: Disagree
3: Neutral
4: Agree
5: Strongly agree

No.	Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
A. Question about your personal reaction in social life						
1	I sympathize with others' feelings.					
2	I am feeling others' emotions					
3	I am not really interested in others					
4	I am not interested in other people's problem					
5	I value personal achievements more than good relations with the people close to me.					
6	My own success is very important to me, even if it disrupts my friendships.					
7	I follow my personal goals even if they are very different from the goals of my family.					
8	I value good relations with the people close to me more than my personal achievements.					
9	I always put my family first, even if it means giving up my personal goals					
10	I am more concerned with my friends' happiness than my own success.					

No.	Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
B. Questions about how you like to interact with other people friends, colleagues, club, community as the Social Enterprise founder.						
1	I will create my firm in order to advance my career in the business world.					
2	As a firm founder, it will be very important to me to operate my firm on the basis of solid management practices.					
3	As a firm founder, it will be very important to me to have thoroughly analyzed the financial prospects of my business.					
4	When managing my firm, it will be very important to me to have a strong focus on what my firm can achieve vis-à-vis the competition.					
5	When managing my firm, it will be very important to me to establish a strong competitive advantage and significantly outperform other firms in my domain.					
6	I will create my firm in order to solve a specific problem for a group of people that I strongly identify with (e.g., friends, colleagues, club, community).					
7	I will create my firm in order to play a proactive role in shaping the activities of a group of people that I strongly identify with.					
8	As a firm founder, it will be very important to me to provide a product/service that is useful to a group of people that I strongly identify with (e.g., friends, colleagues, club, community)					
9	When managing my firm, it will be very important to me to have a strong focus on a group of people that I strongly identify with (e.g friends, colleagues, club, community).					
10	When managing my firm, it will be very important to me to support and advance a group of people that I strongly identify with.					
11	I will create my firm in order to play a proactive role in changing how the world operates.					
12	As a firm founder, it will be very important to me to be a highly responsible citizen of our world.					
13	As a firm founder, it will be very important to me to make the world a "better place" (e.g., by pursuing social justice, protecting the environment).					
14	When managing my firm, it will be very important to me to have a strong focus on what the firm is able to achieve for society-at-large.					
15	When managing my firm, it will be very important to me .to convince others that private firms are indeed able to address the type of societal challenges that my firm addresses (e.g., social justice, environmental protection).					
C. Question about your daily way of doing reflecting your entrepreneur spirit as an individual.						
1	I like to take bold action by venturing into the unknown.					
2	I am willing to invest a lot of time and/or money on something that might yield a high return					
3	I tend to act 'boldly' in situations where risk is involved					
4	I often like to try new and unusual activities that are not typical but not necessarily risky.					
5	I tend to do things the same and not try different, unproven approaches.					

6	I prefer to try my own unique way when learning new things rather than doing it like everyone else does					
7	I favor experimentation and original approaches to problem solving rather than using methods others generally use for solving problems					
8	I usually act in anticipation of future problems, need or changes					
9	I tend to plan ahead on projects					
10	I prefer to 'step up' and get things going on projects rather than sit and wait for someone else to do it					

PART II: SOCIAL ENTERPRISE

Here are some facial questions where we can show the kinds and support impact that your social enterprise has had in the last 03 years (2016, 2017, 2018). Please answer by writing the appropriate criteria mentioned in the question, and feel free to check your records and send the form in next 03 days.

1.What is your enterprise's name (optional):……. .. ..2.Number of founders…….

3. What are the critical incidents that support your social enterprise development?

…….

4.What are the critical incidents that hinder your social enterprise development?

…….

A. Questions on Social Impact:

(Question 5-17: participants choose negative/ positive percentages – they need to write down the percentage.)

No.	Question					
5	By how many percent has your enterprise's sale revenue been changed over the last three years?					
6	By how many percent has your enterprise's profit been changed over the last three years?					
7	By how many percent has your cost been changed over the last three years?					
8	By how many percent has the number of job changed over the last three years?					
9	What percentage change has been in the number of people who benefit directly from your enterprises' product/services over the last three years?					
10	What percent of jobs has been offered to rural woman, minorities, poor and disadvantages peoples over the last three years?					
11	By how many percent your salary budget has changed over the last three years?					
12	How many percent of your enterprises' resources (money, product, services…) contributed to society has been changed over the last three years?					
13	How many percent has the number of people benefiting from your enterprises has been changed over the last three years?					
14	How percent of employees has been changed over the last three years?					
15	By how many percent the median salary/wage of your employees has been changed on average in the last three years?"					

16	Compared to your sector, how different your enterprise's wage/ salary on average?					
17	How much (%) of your budget is put aside for the benefit of employees (holiday, entertainment activities, meal and transportation supports) over the last three years?					
	Question 18-20 – participant enter the number					
18	How many week (s) per year on average do your employees have to work overtime?					
19	How many employee's events such as eating out, company holiday trip… that your company organize every year?					
20	How many days do your employees receive training (both on the job and off the job) annually?					
B. Questions on Ecosystem supports:						
Question 21-29: Very poor/ Poor/ Fair/ Good/ Excellent. *Likert scales 1-5*						
		Very Poor	*Poor*	*Fair*	*Good*	*Excellent*
21	In your view, how easy was it for your social enterprise to receive *Training* support from the ecosystem **?**					
22	How would you evaluate the *Training* from the ecosystem **?**					
23	In your view, how easy was it for your social enterprise to receive *Networking* support from the ecosystem **?**					
24	How would you evaluate the *Networking* supports from the ecosystem **?**					
25	In your view, how easy was it for your social enterprise to receive *Consultation* support from the ecosystem **?**					
26	How would you evaluate the *Consultation* supports from the ecosystem **?**					
27	Have you received financial support/ funding from ecosystem?	Yes (go to next 03 questions)			No (skip next 03 questions)	
	Please provide the total received support/ funding in **$US**	Text				
28	In your view, how easy was it for your social enterprise to receive *Funding* support from the ecosystem**?**					
29	How would you evaluate the *Funding* support from the ecosystem **?**					
	Question 30 – 32: Participants chose the options:	Never (0 time)	Rarely (<3 times/ 3 years)	Some times (<12 times/ 3 years)	Often (12 - 36 times/ 03 years)	Very often (>36 times/ 03 years)
30	How was the frequency of your access to *Training* from the ecosystem **?**					
31	How was the frequency of your access to *Networking* from the ecosystem **?**					

32	How was the frequency of your access to *Consultation* from the ecosystem **?**					

33. Which UN Sustainable Development Goals has your SE addressed? Participant check the box (es)

❑ SDG 1 No poverty; ❑ SDGs 2: Zero Hunger; ❑ SDG 3: Good Health and Well Being; ❑ SDG4: Quality Education; ❑ SDG 5: Gender Equality; ❑ SDG 6 Clean Water and Sanitation; ❑ SDG 7: Affordable and Clean Energy; ❑ SDG 8: Decent work and Economic Growth; ❑ SDG 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure; ❑ SDG 10: Reduce Inequality; ❑ SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities; ❑ SDGs 12 :Responsible Consumption and Production; ❑ SDG 13: Climate action; ❑ SDG 14: Life below Water; ❑ SDG 15: Life on Land; ❑ SDG 16: Peace and Justice Strong Institution; ❑ SDG 17: Partnerships to achieve the Goals

PART III. GENENAL INFORMATION

1. How many years have you worked in Social Enterprise sector?
   ……
2. How many years of working experience have you had?
   ……
3. Your year of birth?
   ……..
4. What is your gender? *(Optional)*
   ❑ Male ❑ Female ❑ Other
5. What's your education level
   …….
6. Are you *(Optional)*
   ❑ Minority ❑ Disadvantaged person
7. Would you like to be interviewed on your social enterprise's impact making?
   ☐ Yes
   ☐ No
8. Please leave your phone number to receive a gift voucher.
   ……..

THANK YOU

Appendix 2 - Interview questions

1. *The history of your enterprise*

Please tell me a story about how this enterprise came about?
Why did you set up your enterprises/ your enterprises' mission?

How the enterprise got started?

How has it changed over time?

How did you get involved in the first place?

2. Leadership

Who are the leaders in your organization?

Do they have different strengths and weaknesses?

What kind of leader is effective in your enterprise?

How leadership in social enterprises is different from commercial enterprises?

Link to findings of survey about the key factors in leaders

3. The environment within which you are operating

What things (Factors) help the success of Social enterprises?
What things (Factors) that harm the success of Social Enterprises;

What are the key supports that you think are important?

Does government help or hinder your enterprise? Can you give me some examples?

Do funders get in the way (hinder) at all?

4. Resources

Where do your resources come from?

Do you have enough?

Is your resource base sustainable?

What are the key issues around securing sufficient resources? Etc
In terms of funding, can you tell me about your positive and negative experiences?
What would be useful in helping you secure more funding?

5. The impacts of social enterprises

Do you think Social enterprises are having a positive impact? Tell me about it?
What the social impacts mean to you?
Are social enterprises influencing how problems or issues are addressed in our society?
Why do you think some enterprises are having more impact than others?

Present the Study I assumption and results. What do you think?

6. Reflections and the future

If you went back in time knowing what you know now and were about to start your enterprise again would you? Explain why or why not

What would you do differently?

If you were to give advice to someone planning to develop an enterprise what would you say to them?

7. *Closing the interview*

Summarize the key issues you took from the interview for the participants and ask they if that is correct and if they would like to add anything else.

In relation to what we have been talking about is there anything else you would like to discuss?

Appendix 3 – Survey Consent form

School of Psychology, Massey University Albany Campus
Private Bag 102 904, North Shore, Auckland 0745
Ph: 09 414 0800

INFORMATION SHEET – Survey Study

Why do some Social enterprises flourish in Vietnam?
A comparison of pivotal social entrepreneurs and eco-system factors

You are invited to participate in a research study being conducted by Minh Hieu Nguyen, a PhD candidate at Massey University, under Supervision of Professor Stuart Carr, Professor Darrin Hodgetts, and Professor Emmanuelle Fauchart.

Social enterprises and Social Entrepreneurs are a very important element in Vietnamese society today, and yet we know very little about how they can develop. This survey is a study of what social entrepreneurs, as subject matter experts, have observed in the sector. You have been approached because you have experience in this sector, and your outlook is important. Please feel free to decline this invitation at any point, but we would like to ask for your observations about social enterprises in Vietnam. If you decide to participate, we will take no more than 30 minutes of your time, and your answers will be completely confidential and anonymous. Participating in the survey will be taken as your informed consent.

You are under no obligation to accept this invitation. If you decide to participate, you have the right to:

- *decline to answer any particular question;*
- *withdraw from the study;*
- *ask any questions about the study at any time during participation;*
- *provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used unless you give permission to the researcher;*
- *be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded.*

Please leave your contact number to receive a top-up/ grocery voucher for the survey.

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Northern, Application NOR 19/05. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Associate Professor David Tappin (Committee Chair), Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Northern, email humanethicsnorth@massey.ac.nz.

For further information or question please contact Minh Hieu at: Minh.Hieu.Nguyen.2@uni.massey.ac.nz

Thank you very much for your kindness!

Appendix 4 – Interview consent form

School of Psychology, Massey University Albany Campus
Private Bag 102 904, North Shore, Auckland 0745
Ph: 09 414 0800

INFORMATION SHEET –Interview

Why do some Social Enterprises flourish in Vietnam? A Comparison of Crucial Human and Eco-system factors

You are invited to participate in a research study being conducted by Minh Hieu Nguyen, a PhD candidate at Massey University, under Supervision of Professor Stuart Carr, Professor Darrin Hodgetts, and Professor Emmanuelle Fauchart.

Social enterprises are a very important element in Vietnamese society today, and yet we know very little about how they can develop. This survey is a study of what social entrepreneurs, as subject matter experts, have observed in the sector. You have been approached because you have experience in this sector, and your outlook is important. Please feel free to decline this invitation at any point, but we would like to ask for your observations about social enterprises in Vietnam. If you decide to participate, we will take no more than 120 minutes of your time, and your answers will be completely confidential and anonymous. Participating in this interview will be taken as your informed consent.

You are under no obligation to accept this invitation. If you decide to participate, you have the right to:

- *decline to answer any particular question;*
- *withdraw from the study;*
- *ask any questions about the study at any time during participation;*
- *provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used unless you give permission to the researcher;*
- *be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded.*

Please accept our small gift as a Thank you for your participation. Please inform researcher within 15 days of interview participation once you want to withdraw from the interview.

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Northern, Application NOR 19/05. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Associate Professor David Tappin (Committee Chair), Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Northern, email humanethicsnorth@massey.ac.nz.

For further information or question please contact Minh Hieu at: Minh.Hieu.Nguyen.2@uni.massey.ac.nz

Thank you very much for your kindness!