

Three Essays on Managing Social Enterprises

by

Pardeep Singh Attri

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Supervisor: Dr. Davide Torsello

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Author: Pardeep Singh Attri

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Abstract

Social enterprises are unique organizations that operate to pursue social or environmental goals while generating revenue through their business activities. They are sometimes considered a new phenomenon associated with the 21st century. Given the new field, there is limited empirical research on understanding issues related to managing social enterprises. This dissertation explores three aspects of managing social enterprises: knowledge management, talent management, and stakeholder engagement.

In the first essay, we examined challenges and facilitators to knowledge management, which is vital for organizations to stay competitive. Much of what we know about knowledge management barriers and facilitators are from large for-profit organizations, and social enterprises have received minimal attention. It would be wrong to assume that social enterprises do not manage knowledge, and the knowledge management challenges and facilitators in for-profit, non-profit, small and medium enterprises, and social enterprises are the same, with the only difference being in magnitude or scale. We address this gap through our in-depth qualitative study of 25 employees (including three volunteers) working at different social enterprises, field observation of two social enterprises, and participation in online events. Our study shows that social enterprises in India face various barriers to managing knowledge, namely underestimating value, resource constraints, cultural fences, technological barricades, and inconsistent stakeholders' expectations. Further, our findings suggest that knowledge management facilitators at social enterprises are social capital, socialization, and flat organizational structures. Through this study, we contribute to limited research on knowledge management in social enterprises.

The second essay explored what talent and talent management mean in social enterprises and what talent management practices these organizations follow. We conducted

17 interviews with experts from different social enterprises operating in India. We found that what talent and talent management mean to these organizations differs from what is considered talent and talent management in traditional businesses. For instance, talent management practices in social enterprises are driven by social purpose. Further, social enterprises focus on inclusive aspects and practice inclusive talent management practices for talent management. Our study contributes to the literature on talent management, explicitly emerging literature on inclusive talent management.

In the final essay, we study stakeholder engagement practices in social enterprises. While much research has focused on stakeholder management, in recent years, the founders of stakeholder theories have shifted from stakeholder management to stakeholder engagement, as stakeholder management is now considered a one-sided approach that does not work. On the other hand, the emphasis of stakeholder engagement is on inclusion, collaboration, and relationship-building, which also reflect a much-needed shift in society. However, we do not know much about stakeholder engagement practices, so in this essay, we ask how social enterprises engage with different stakeholders. To answer this question, we conducted 30 interviews with diverse stakeholders (including 11 employees, two volunteers, 10 beneficiaries, two community members, three funders/donors, and two government officials). Our findings show that social enterprises practice three stakeholder engagement practices, i.e., “inclusive participation and collaborative decision-making,” “transparent communication and reporting,” and “relationship and trust building.” All these findings indicate the inclusive nature of stakeholder engagement practices, and our study contributes to the growing literature on stakeholder engagement.

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Dedications

This thesis is dedicated to my parents.

For all those fighting for justice and equality and trying to make this world better.

For my daughters, Diana, Eisa, and Elina, in the hope that one day they will read it and strive to do better!

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Introduction

Social enterprises are unique organizations, making a significant contribution in India towards instilling positive change by effectively blending business acumen with a determination to address social issues. These organizations uniquely amalgamate entrepreneurship and social impact, utilizing innovative strategies to promote sustainable development. India's multifaceted cultural landscape and intricate socio-economic environment have made social enterprises a beacon of hope for marginalized communities. Their efforts are intently focused on empowering these communities and promoting inclusive growth. In this thesis, we explore three critical aspects of organizational success in three different essays. Scholars have argued that knowledge management (Granados, Mohamed, and Hlupic 2017; Granados et al. 2011), talent management (Ashton and Morton 2005; Collings and Paauwe 2015)), and stakeholder engagement (Freeman et al. 2017; Kujala et al. 2022) are crucial for the survival and growth of any organization. However, we know little about these aspects of social enterprises, especially in the Indian context, which hosts over 2 million social enterprises. We conducted three empirical studies (qualitative; semi-structured interviews) on these aspects to bring nuances to research on social enterprises.

1. The Uniqueness of Studying Social Enterprises in the Indian Context

Social enterprises in India exhibit several unique characteristics that set them apart from traditional businesses and social enterprises in other countries. Some of these distinctive features include the diversity and scale of issues (social, economic, and environmental) that exist in India and that these enterprises deal with (Swissnex India 2015). British Council (2016: 11) report finds that the most common objectives of social enterprises in India are “creating employment (62%) followed by improving health (41%), protecting the environment (40%), addressing social exclusion (40%), supporting agriculture and allied

activities (36%), empowering women (33%), promoting education (32%), addressing financial inclusion (31%) and supporting other social organizations (20%).”

While India is diverse, it is also a complex country where one can find high-rising skyscrapers on one side of the road and the other side slums. India has an extensive and multifaceted populace comprising individuals from diverse cultural, linguistic, and socio-economic backgrounds. In light of this, social enterprises are challenged with navigating a complex web of interrelated hurdles that frequently overlap and compound one another. For instance, addressing education disparities might also involve addressing caste issues, child labor, and gender discrimination. Such interlinks also offer rich and detailed data for researchers to understand the complexities of social enterprises.

Second, numerous social enterprises in India prioritize developing inventive solutions that cater to marginalized communities and rural areas while operating with limited resources. These enterprises frequently collaborate with local communities to create context-specific products utilizing traditional knowledge and services that tackle pressing issues. The notion of “jugaad” or frugal innovation involves discovering cost-effective methods to address intricate problems, making social enterprises more flexible.

In recent years, the Indian government has displayed a growing inclination toward backing social entrepreneurship through policies, funding, and initiatives. For example, it has created opportunities for these organizations to register and gain legal status under Section 8 (previously Section 25) of the Companies Act 1956 (Sengupta and Sahay 2018).

Furthermore, the new Companies Act Bill 2013 makes “every company with either: a net worth of INR 500 crore (c.78 million US\$) or a turnover of INR 1,000 crore (c.157 million US\$) or net profit of INR 5 crore (c.783,350 US\$) needs to spend at least 2% of its average net profit for the immediately preceding three financial years on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities.” (Swissnex India 2015: 4). Much of this money can go to

social enterprises. The synergy between the government and social enterprises brings an added layer of distinctiveness to the ecosystem.

While there are favorable factors that make social enterprises in India unique, there are unfavorable factors as well, which need to be mentioned. The challenges and unfavorable factors faced by Indian social enterprises are vast and varied, which sets them apart in terms of their impact and reach.

While, in Western contexts, social enterprises are supported by government bodies and communities, social enterprises in India face multiple challenges, which are enhanced by the diversity and scale of issues that persist in India. India is the most populous country in the world and the seventh largest in terms of land. About 70 percent of the Indian population still lives in rural areas, where sometimes necessities remain missing. Such a large population living in rural areas creates significant regional disparities in social and economic development. According to the British Council's (2016) report on social enterprises in India, India is home to about 40 percent of world's poor, with ever-increasing socio-economic issues such as illiteracy, poor healthcare, caste divisions, religious tensions, and social inequalities. Further, two-thirds of the Indian population is below 35. While India ranks as the fifth largest economy globally in terms of GDP, it ranks among the lowest in GDP per capita countries, highlighting disparities. While different reports have highlighted different numbers (from about 3 percent to 16 percent to 30 percent) on what percentage of Indians live below the poverty line, depending on who is considered poor and the methodology applied, there remains agreement that the numbers might be higher than the estimates with Covid19 further increasing them (Iqbal 2023; Kumar 2023). According to the United Nations Development Programme's 2021 report, India ranks 132 out of 191 countries on the Human Development Index (UNDP 2021). Recent reports have also highlighted that about 5 percent of schools in India do not have working toilets for girls, affecting millions of girl students and

leading them to drop out (The Federal 2023). Almost a quarter of the population in India is illiterate, and about 98 percent of young people enter the job market without proper skill sets (British Council, 2016). The latest report on the share of the farm sector in the country's employment also shows that the figure remains high at 45.5 percent, while yield decreases, increasing inequalities (Damodaran 2023).

While in recent years, India's government has focused on making it easier to establish businesses, attracting new investors in the social sector. However, weak law enforcement and sometimes a lack of laws in the informal sector, which employs almost 90 percent of the Indian workforce, lead to further challenges in doing business in India. Political influence over social activities remains high, with grants and opportunities offered to those aligning with political and dominant narratives. For instance, in 2019, the government of India banned almost 14,500 NGOs from receiving funds for their operations from foreign, ultimately leading to their demise (TOI 2019). Many of these organizations were working among lower strata of society, such as lower castes and minority religions. Such political influence over shaping the social sector also makes India an exciting context to understand various aspects such as knowledge management and stakeholder engagement. Moreover, most incubators to support social enterprises are based in big cities, and social enterprises in smaller towns are either unaware of these incubators or unable to participate for multiple reasons, such as a lack of resources and unawareness.

Similar to social enterprises, knowledge management, talent management, and stakeholder engagement in the Indian context are characterized by distinctive attributes and hurdles stemming from the nation's multifaceted cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic diversity. India's cultural emphasis on oral traditions and storytelling underscores the richness of its traditional knowledge systems. Furthermore, stakeholder engagement is central to successfully tackling many of the challenges highlighted above, a dynamic and revolutionary

approach that acknowledges the diverse viewpoints, skills, and contributions of all stakeholders involved. In addition, involving all relevant parties in the decision-making process fosters a sense of legitimacy and trustworthiness in the actions taken.

Additionally, prevailing hierarchies continue to wield significant influence across various domains. While most focus while writing about India has been on cultural aspects, little research has been on caste aspects, a unique aspect of Indian culture (Chrispal, Bapuji, and Zietsma 2021). The caste system creates divisions among people and restricts them from collaborating or sharing (Qureshi et al. 2023; 2022; Scaria and Ray 2019). The system is embedded deeply in society that it might appear normal to many when one person does not want to collaborate with the other for multiple reasons, e.g., not associating with meat eaters. However, some have argued that eating or declining to eat meat has been influenced by caste norms (Sathyamala 2019). Understanding such cultural nuances that affect knowledge-sharing or hiring practices is unique to India, and studying the impact of caste in the Indian context can pave the way to understanding other social stratification systems around the globe. Furthermore, without bringing caste aspects, our understanding of knowledge, talent, or stakeholder management in the Indian context would remain limited.

So, effectively navigating the realm of knowledge management and talent utilization in India necessitates a bespoke approach that not only acknowledges and incorporates the intricacies of cultural traditions, such as the emphasis on oral heritage and storytelling, but also adeptly integrates contemporary methodologies and technologies. This dynamic equilibrium between age-old customs and innovative practices is vital for harnessing the full potential of knowledge and talent in India's diverse and evolving landscape. In this thesis we aim to explore these aspects. Moreover, as our world becomes more intertwined and reliant on one another, we face many intricate societal obstacles that require collective and novel solutions, requiring better understanding of social enterprises.

To summarize, social enterprises in India have unique characteristics from the country's diverse challenges, innovative spirit, frugal innovation, inclusive approach, and collaboration with government and traditional knowledge. These elements work together to form a dynamic and impactful social entrepreneurship ecosystem in India. The numerous social-economic-cultural challenges in India offer multiple unexplored opportunities for businesses, social entrepreneurs, and researchers to explore the field.

2. A Brief Note on Thesis Structure and Writing Style

The thesis comprises three empirical studies (qualitative; semi-structured interviews). Choosing qualitative research that focuses on semi-structured interviews provides a comprehensive and detailed investigation of the research subject. In the first essay, we delved into the obstacles and enablers of knowledge management, which plays a critical role in ensuring that companies remain competitive. The second essay delves into talent and talent management in social enterprises and these organizations' associated talent management practices. Lastly, the final essay examines stakeholder involvement techniques in social enterprises, a crucial aspect of these organizations. The qualitative research method (semi-structured interviews) allows in-depth probing and flexible interaction, enabling the researcher to delve into participants' perspectives, experiences, and underlying motivations; hence was suitable for our research.

To acknowledge the contribution of participants, my supervisor, reviewers, colleagues, and others, I have used "we" instead of "I" throughout the thesis. I believe it was also necessary, as some have argued that knowledge is socially constructed. All errors are mine.

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Methodology

In this section, we describe the research context and steps we took to enhance the credibility, reliability, and trustworthiness of qualitative data. We list these two subsections here as these are broadly common in our three essays.

1. Research Context: Social Enterprises (SEs) in India

Historically (as there was always a necessity), there have been various examples of social entrepreneurship activities that attempted to positive change in India, such as the Amul co-operative revolutionizing milk production and Barefoot College bringing positive changes in the education of the marginalized. Social impact, sharing, and coming together to help others have been deeply rooted in the Indian ethos, with various religious scriptures emphasizing selflessness and living for others. So, co-operatives and community-owned businesses such as Amul have been present in India since the 1950s. According to the British Council's (2016) report, there are as many as two million social enterprises in India, working in various sectors such as skills development activities, education, agriculture/fisheries/dairy, financial services, and energy and clean technology. Further, 57 percent of the social enterprises in India were started after 2010, 24 percent of the SEs had women leadership, and on average, had 19 employees, indicating the emerging field in India. In India, socio-cultural factors such as religion, caste, family background, and social background influence social entrepreneurship and activities carried out by social enterprises (Budhwar and Varma 2010; Ganly and Mair 2009). According to some estimates, the social sector in India employs more people than many of the key industries; for example, the automotive sector in India employed about 1.36 million people in 2018, and SEs had about 40 million workers (British Council 2016). Various other recent reports have also painted a similar picture, highlighting growth in the numbers of social enterprises in India; for example, see (ISDM and CSIP 2021) and

(Chaturvedi, Saha, and Nair 2019). British Council's (2016) report also highlights the modernity and developed stage of SEs in India; however, unfortunately, scholars have paid little attention to it, creating a lacuna in our understanding of SEs in India. These enterprises operate across various sectors, ranging from education and healthcare to agriculture and environmental sustainability (Seelos and Mair 2005). They leverage innovative business models and entrepreneurial approaches to tackle social problems, often targeting underserved communities and marginalized populations (Ganesh et al. 2018).

Further, among scholars, debate continues whether SEs are for-profit or not-for-profit or what should be the legal structure of SEs. However, some have argued that the legal form is not a defining feature of SEs, but a strategic position taken by SEs in the given context (Weerawardena and Sullivan Mort 2006; Seelos and Mair 2005). Scholars have argued that the notion of SEs can be applied to a wide spectrum of organizations, from nonprofit to for-profit organizations, engaged in socially beneficial activities and if part of their income is earned (Kerlin 2006; Bielefeld 2009). In this research, we focused on those SEs that are conducting some economic activities while serving social goals.

In 2021, according to the World Bank report, India's GDP was 3.18 trillion USD, and India was among the fastest-growing economies in the world (World Bank n.d.). However, illiteracy, infant mortality, inequality, and gender bias remain high, and life expectancy, digital awareness, and financial inclusion remain low (UNDP 2022). All these factors, with poverty and discrimination based on one's caste and religion, make life difficult for most Indians who live at the bottom of the pyramid; the challenges for survival are even higher as formal institutions do not work well in those situations. These contrasting factors (high growth with high poverty and multiple social issues) make it necessary for not-for-profit and for-profit organizations to address these social problems. At the same time, successive governments cutting support for social services has given rise to various social enterprises

trying to fill the gaps created by such a lack of support in the hope of creating positive change. Further, in the last decade, the government of India's various campaigns around “Start-up India,” “Digital India,” and “Skill India” have given rise to social enterprises aiming to create positive social change and address pressing societal issues. However, at the same time, we know very little about social enterprises in India, especially their working practices and attributes around managing those social enterprises, which still need to be included in scholarly discussions.

In recent years, the legal and regulatory environment and frameworks for social enterprises in India have evolved to support their activities, with specific legal forms, certifications, and tax incentives available to encourage their growth. In the Indian context, social enterprises can register under Section 8 (previously Section 25) of the Companies Act, 1956. SEs whose aim is the “promotion of commerce, art, science, sports, education, research, social welfare, religion, charity, protection of environment or any such other object,” and “intends to apply its profits, if any, or other income in promoting its objects” and “intends to prohibit the payment of any dividend to its members” can register as Section 8 Company (The Gazette of India 2013, 17).” Despite having such legal provisions that closely mirror social enterprises, British Council's (2016) report finds that most of the social enterprises in India are registered under private limited companies (58 percent), societies and trusts (23 percent), sole proprietorship (6 percent) and partnership (5 percent). Considering these, we selected SEs operating as PLCs and societies and trusts. We also added a few SEs with Foundation status or in the registration process in the first essay, as research shows SEs can be of Foundation status (Serres and De Moor 2023).

According to a report by the British Council (2016), 78 percent of social enterprises in India aim to expand into new geographical areas, 73 percent aim to increase their customer base in the coming years, 71 percent aim to develop new products/services, 64 percent aim to

increase sales with existing customers, and 56 percent are looking to attract investments to expand. The involvement of different stakeholders is necessary to achieve these targets; however, we do not know how these social enterprises can engage various stakeholders to smoothen their work and achieve their targets. Social enterprises in India are an excellent context to study because they have the potential to make India's spectacular growth story work better for its poor citizens. Furthermore, social enterprises can be complex and hard for various stakeholders to understand for their hybrid nature (following economic and social goals) (Galaskiewicz and Barringer 2012).

In sum, Indian social enterprises as the research context for understanding knowledge management, talent management, and stakeholder engagement is rich with opportunities to explore the unique challenges and practices of engaging diverse stakeholders in pursuing social and environmental goals. With its diverse social and economic landscape, India presents a compelling context for studying social enterprises. The country faces a myriad of social challenges, including poverty, inequality, access to education and healthcare, and lack of empowerment of marginalized communities. In response, social enterprises have emerged as a significant force in addressing these issues, blending business principles with a social mission to drive positive change. Indian context offers an opportunity to explore the dynamics between social enterprises and their stakeholders and understand how different stakeholder groups contribute (and/or create challenges) to and benefit from the social enterprise ecosystem.

2. Credibility, Reliability, and Trustworthiness of Qualitative Data

We took multiple steps to ensure that the data we collected was credible, reliable, and can be trusted. First, we developed an interview protocol and tested it with four participants for the pilot for the first essay and with two participants each for essay two and three, refining

it further to capture valuable data. Purposive sampling, careful participant selection, semi-structured interviews, and data triangulation enhanced our credibility and reliability.

Purposive sampling is a technique used to select specific individuals from a larger population based on predetermined criteria. Researchers use it to choose participants who possess desired qualities or information relevant to the study, enhancing the research's depth and validity. A triangulation approach was also employed to enhance the credibility and reliability of the data. This involved cross-referencing and analyzing multiple sources of information, such as interviews, reports, social media data, and websites, to gain a comprehensive understanding of stakeholder engagement practices. The data became more robust and reliable by considering multiple perspectives and sources. Further, as Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested, prolonged engagement with participants can enhance the trustworthiness of qualitative data; we kept in touch with participants for an extended period. It also helped us return to participants during the data analysis and clarify certain unclear aspects. We also shared part of our findings to participants to avoid missing or misrepresenting their views and further included their feedback in our findings.

Further, we discussed the findings with other scholars not involved in this research but researching social enterprises, so peer debriefing also helped increase the trustworthiness of our data (Lincoln and Guba 1985). Ethical considerations, including informed consent, participant confidentiality, and participant identity protection, were strictly adhered to throughout the research process. As anonymity and confidentiality in data collection were promised to participants, we believe these encouraged participants to provide honest and unbiased responses. Further, we used careful phrasing of probing questions that did not encourage participants to answer questions in a socially acceptable manner that aligns with the perceived expectations. Additionally, we believe ongoing self-reflection, peer debriefing, and regular feedback from research colleagues on the findings helped us avoid biases. For

confidentiality reasons, we have assigned IDs to participants and social enterprises, such as SE02 for social enterprise number 02 and P03, showing that the participant number is 03. All these steps that we took have enhanced the quality and credibility of our data.

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Essay 1: Managing Knowledge in Social Enterprises: Understanding Barriers and Facilitators in Indian Context

Abstract

Understanding challenges and facilitators to knowledge management is vital for organizations to stay competitive. However, much of what we know about knowledge management barriers and facilitators is in large for-profit organizations, and social enterprises have received minimal attention. It would be wrong to assume that social enterprises do not manage knowledge, and the knowledge management challenges and facilitators in for-profit, non-profit, small and medium enterprises, and social enterprises are the same, with the only difference being in magnitude or scale. We address this gap through our in-depth qualitative study of twenty-five participants, field observation of two social enterprises, and participation in online events. Our study shows that social enterprises in India face different barriers to managing knowledge, namely underestimating value, resource constraints, cultural fences, technological barricades, and inconsistent stakeholders' expectations. Further, our findings suggest that knowledge management facilitators at social enterprises are social capital, socialization, and flat organizational structures. We contribute to limited research on knowledge management aspects in social enterprises.

Keywords: Social enterprises, Knowledge management, Barriers to knowledge management, Facilitators of knowledge management

1. Introduction

India is well known as home to cultural diversity; however, the sad reality is that socioeconomic inequalities also exist (such as illiteracy, malnutrition, social exclusion, and poor healthcare), where many do not have access to various necessary goods and services. Moreover, the government's new policies in India and worldwide are to withdraw from social development activities gradually. The gap created by the government pulling out has given rise to the unprecedented growth of social enterprises (SEs) that fill that gap. Further, the Covid19 pandemic has put pressure on public resources, so communities across India have come forward to help each other, sometimes establishing new SEs. SEs are organizations that trade, not for private gain, but to generate positive social and environmental impact, improving communities and people's lives (Doherty, Haugh, and Lyon 2014; Granados, Mohamed, and Hlupic 2017).

About 70 percent of India still live in rural areas with limited access to primary healthcare or good education. Widespread poverty and unemployment have led to various SEs, especially at the bottom of the pyramid. According to the British Council's (2016) report, as many as two million social enterprises in India are working in various sectors such as skills development activities, education, agriculture/fisheries/dairy, healthcare, financial services, and energy and clean technology. Further, 57 percent of the social enterprises in India were started after 2010, 24 percent of the SEs had women leadership, and on average, had 19 employees, indicating the emerging field in India. Such social ventures are well respected in society; however, there remains a gap in our understanding of the working of SEs in India. Moreover, much of the research has remained Western-centric and in large for-profit organizations (Granados, Mohamed, and Hlupic 2017; Granados et al. 2011).

The global competition pressures organizations to capture and use organizational knowledge to their advantage (Kogut and Zander 1992). Understanding challenges and

facilitators to knowledge management (KM) is vital to staying competitive in the growing SE field. However, much of what we know about KM barriers and facilitators is in large for-profit organizations (Gold, Malhotra, and Segars 2001; Nonaka and Takeuchi 1995; Granados, Mohamed, and Hlupic 2017). While there are various benefits of KM, there are also challenges and barriers to KM, such as lack of time to share knowledge, fear of sharing, poor communication skills, poor interpersonal relationships, rigid organizational structure, and cross-cultural constraints, among others (Riege 2005). However, all these barriers have been studied in for-profit and usually large organizations. Most of these SEs at the bottom of the pyramid remain under resource constraints, and these social ventures have little resources to spend on knowledge management tools. However, it would be incorrect to assume that SEs do not manage knowledge because they lack such sophisticated KM tools. Many SEs manage knowledge informally, without being governed by the concepts of KM, such as through regular informal meetings, learning from communities, and acquiring ideas from others, among other activities (Hutchinson and Quintas 2008; Granados, Mohamed, and Hlupic 2017). So, focusing only on formal KM processes alone would not give a complete picture (Hutchinson and Quintas, 2008), making it crucial to understand social enterprises' informal knowledge management aspects. Therefore, we ask:

What barriers do social enterprises face in managing knowledge, and how do they overcome those barriers, i.e., what facilitates knowledge management in social enterprises?

Our research shows that SEs in India face multiple KM barriers, namely underestimating the value of knowledge, resource constraints, cultural fences, technological barricades, and inconsistent stakeholders' expectations. Our findings show three facilitators to KM in SEs: social capital, socialization, and flat organizational structure.

Through our research, we make multiple contributions. First, most of the research on SEs has focused on Western contexts (Granados, Mohamed, and Hlupic 2017; Granados et al. 2011; Hume and Hume 2016), which cannot simply be extrapolated to the Indian context. Furthermore, scholars have paid little attention to cultural barriers hindering knowledge management in SEs. Second, overall empirical research on SEs is limited (Mair 2020; Short, Moss, and Lumpkin 2009). SEs are knowledge-intensive organizations; however, there is a lack of empirical knowledge about how SEs operate, what challenges they face in managing knowledge, and how they try to overcome those (Lettieri, Borga, and Savoldelli 2004; Granados, Mohamed, and Hlupic 2017). Third, even when there is some research, KM aspects of SEs have rarely been studied (Granados, Mohamed, and Hlupic 2017; Meyskens et al. 2010). Fourth, most of the research on KM has focused on for-profit organizations, and little to no emphasis has been given to understanding how social enterprises develop, manage, and distribute knowledge within the organizations and what factors facilitate KM (Granados, Mohamed, and Hlupic 2017). However, it would be wrong to assume that knowledge management challenges and facilitators in for-profit, nonprofit, SMEs, and SEs are the same, with the only difference being in magnitude or scale (Hutchinson and Quintas 2008). We try to fill these shortcomings by studying India's SEs, and contributing to emerging research on SEs. Addressing these gaps in understanding is vital because there are more than two million SEs in India, and to the best of our knowledge, there is no research paper on KM aspects of SEs in India. Our research also brings multiple perspectives from different stakeholders on KM in SEs, including senior leaders, employees, and volunteers' experiences, which scholars have urged to include to have a complete understanding of KM activities and challenges in SEs (Granados, Mohamed, and Hlupic 2017).

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. First, we start with a brief theoretical foundation on SEs, KM, and KM in SEs. Second, we describe our research context, data

collection, and analysis practices. After that, we present findings from the study. Finally, we conclude by discussing our findings, study limitations, future research areas, and implications.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1 Social Enterprises

The concept of social entrepreneurship emerged in the late 1990s, representing a relatively recent phenomenon compared to the long-standing practice of corporate social responsibility, which dates to the 1960s (Mulloth, Kickul, and Gundry 2016; Peterson and Schenker 2018; Short, Moss, and Lumpkin 2009). Since its inception, social entrepreneurship, characterized by social enterprises addressing societal challenges through revenue-generating activities, has gained significant attention from policymakers, practitioners, and researchers (Haugh 2012; Mair and Martí 2006; Short, Moss, and Lumpkin 2009).

These various stakeholders have recognized the potential of social enterprises to effectively deliver goods and services to underserved individuals and groups (Haugh, 2012). Notable examples include the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh, renowned for providing microfinance to empower impoverished individuals, and the Aravind Eye Hospital in India, known for offering high-quality, affordable eye care services, particularly cataract surgeries, to marginalized populations.

Defining SEs and figuring out the boundaries of the SEs has remained a complex task as the boundaries of SEs are expanding with every new idea of a social venture, and SEs have complex structures influenced highly by local political, social, and economic contexts (Dees 1998). For example, Dacin and colleagues (2010) present 37 different definitions of social entrepreneurship/entrepreneurs. Some have argued that such a lack of clarity over the social

enterprise and social entrepreneurship has affected the development of comprehensive scholarship in the field (Seelos and Mair 2005; Haugh 2012).

Notwithstanding the concerns about the definition of SE, the social entrepreneurship phenomenon has attracted much attention in recent decades from entrepreneurs, including those involved in nonprofit work. There are multiple reasons for nonprofit organizations to turn to social enterprises, such as to gain freedom from restrictions posted by the governments, make up for the lost government support money and grants, diversify funding sources, deliver long-term sustainability, develop an entrepreneurial spirit within the organization, and take benefits of new market opportunities (Bornstein 2007; Dees 1998; Dees, Economy, and Emerson 2002).

It is important to note that the difference between social and commercial entrepreneurship is not black and white but more accurately conceptualized as a continuum ranging from purely social to purely economic (Austin, Stevenson, and Wei-Skillern 2006). Even at the extremes, there are still elements of both. For instance, a social-purpose commercial enterprise may differ less from its commercial counterparts than a social enterprise lacking any commercial aspect (Austin, Stevenson, and Wei-Skillern 2006). Essentially, a social enterprise is an organization that seeks to achieve social, environmental, or cultural objectives while also generating sustainable revenue by selling goods or services. Social enterprises blend traditional business model elements with nonprofit organizations, integrating social or environmental goals into their core operations (Dacin, Dacin, and Matear 2010). This dual focus on social impact and financial sustainability distinguishes social enterprises from purely profit-driven businesses or traditional non-profits. Chaturvedi and colleagues (2019) highlight that the analysis of the core purpose of social businesses shows that social businesses have a more profound purpose than commercial enterprises or non-governmental organizations. They strive to achieve social missions while incorporating

market strategies and innovative measures for financial viability. This approach differs from the prejudices against capitalism often found in NGOs or community organizations. Funding agencies recognize this distinction and are more willing to support social enterprises (Chaturvedi, Saha, and Nair 2019).

SEs hold a unique place in the market as they differ from nonprofit and for-profit organizations (Seelos and Mair, 2005). Unlike traditional entrepreneurs, whose priority is financial returns and shareholder value, social entrepreneurs focus on social impact. The focus of SEs is to address social and environmental issues through creative business activities and, while doing so, improve the lives of underserved communities (Austin, Stevenson, and Wei-Skillern 2006; Dees and Anderson 2003; Defourny and Nyssens 2010; Bacq and Janssen 2011).

Other than social goals, some of the features of SEs are double-or-triple-bottom-line, i.e., demonstrating healthy social, environmental, and financial returns, generating income to invest back and not entirely for distributing to shareholders, and pursuing some market-oriented activities (Thompson and Doherty 2006; Battilana and Lee 2014). The multi-bottom lines of SEs create tension between the social and economic missions, resource allocations, decision-making, and ways of managing capabilities (Granados, Mohamed, and Hlupic 2017; Battilana and Lee 2014).

Further, in recent decades, multiple social incubators have come up that assist social enterprises in their early stages, providing them with the necessary support to establish a sustainable business model (Chaturvedi, Saha, and Nair 2019). For example, there are several social incubators in India, such as Action for India, Centre for Innovation, Incubation and Entrepreneurship (CIIE), Dasra, and UnLtd India Villgro. These organizations are dedicated to supporting social entrepreneurship.

Overall, SEs remain under-researched (Haugh 2005; Granados, Mohamed, and Hlupic 2017). Further, most of the time, while researching social enterprises, scholars have focused on Western settings; however, those findings and perspectives become troublesome when they are implemented in entirely different social-cultural settings such as India (we also discuss social enterprises in India under the research context of the methodology section) (Granados, Mohamed, and Hlupic 2017; Granados et al. 2011; Hume and Hume 2016). Next, we discuss knowledge management.

2.2 Knowledge Management

Knowledge management is a vast field, and scholars have offered various definitions of what makes knowledge management. Please see Table 1 for various definitions scholars have used for it. Gold and colleagues (2001, p. 186) have argued that “knowledge process architecture of acquisition, conversion, application, and protection are essential organizational capabilities or “preconditions” for effective knowledge management.” Technological advancements, growing competition, and globalization have increased pressure on organizations to develop, implement, and retain knowledge for their competitive advantage (Kogut and Zander 1992; Teece 1998). Kogut and Zander (1992) build up a dynamic perspective that firms learn new skills by recombining their current capabilities; also, as new ways of cooperating cannot be easily acquired, growth occurs by building on the social relationships within the firm.

Knowledge-based theory builds upon and extends the firm's resource-based view and considers knowledge a significant strategic resource. The sustainable knowledge-based competitive advantage proposes establishing heterogeneous knowledge structures across the organization, as knowledge-based resources are hard to imitate and socially complex. Organizations have various benefits for actively managing knowledge, such as better decision-making and organizational performance (Gold, Malhotra, and Segars 2001).

Table 1: Various Definitions of Knowledge Management

| Reference | Definitions of Knowledge Management |
|--|---|
| O'Dell and Grayson (1998) | Knowledge Management is therefore a conscious strategy of getting the right knowledge to the right people at the right time and helping people share and put information into action in ways that strive to improve organizational performance. |
| Hernandez, Liang, Prescott, and Kirch (1999) | KM is a newly emerging, interdisciplinary business model dealing with all aspects of knowledge within the context of the firm, including knowledge creation, codification, sharing, and how these activities promote learning and innovation. |
| Davenport and Prusak (1998) | Knowledge Management draws from existing resources that your organization may already have in place-good information systems management, organizational change management, and human resources management practices. |
| Siegel and Shim (2010) | The process of connecting people to people and people to information to create a competitive advantage. |
| King (2005) | Knowledge Management is the systematic process and strategy for finding, capturing, organizing, distilling and presenting data, information and knowledge for a specific purpose and to serve a specific organization or community |
| Petrides and Nodine (2003) | Knowledge Management a set of practices that helps to improve the use and sharing of data and information in decision making. |
| Little (2010) | The process of knowledge management begins with the identification and classification of the types of the knowledge which currently exist in the organization followed by the understanding of where and how the knowledge exists. |
| Katsoulakos and Zevgolis (2004) | Knowledge Management is about the protection, development and exploitation of knowledge assets. |
| Levinson (2007) | Knowledge Management is the process through which organizations generate value from their intellectual and knowledge-based assets. |
| Uriarte (2008) | Knowledge management is the conversion of tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge and sharing it within the organization. |

Adapted from Girard and Girard (2015)

Building from the resource-based view of the firm (Grant 1991), scholars from the knowledge-based view (KBV) of the firm consider knowledge as one of the resources that can be beneficial for the organization if used properly (Grant 1991; 1996). Initially presented in the strategic management literature, KBV has been widely used by scholars to investigate KM (Chen, Wang, and Qu 2021; Marjanovic 2022). Literature also talks about tacit and explicit knowledge that exists inside the organizations, and such knowledge sharing and transfer among employees can improve performance and competitiveness (Nonaka and

Takeuchi 1995). The knowledge-based view's proponents have also argued that knowledge-based resources are socially complex and heterogeneous, so they cannot be easily imitated, which decides superior performance. Knowledge is also embedded in organizational culture, systems, and policies, and all these factors also play an essential role in how knowledge is created and shared with the organization (Mcdermott and O'Dell 2001). For example, with the rise of informational technologies, these digital tools, such as software and hardware, play an essential role in synthesizing, enhancing, and speeding up the knowledge management process (Alavi and Leidner 2001). Other facilitators of knowledge are willingness to share, integration of KM with the organization's goals, flat organizational structures, face-to-face interactions, and organizational culture, among others (Allen, James, and Gamlen 2007).

Furthermore, given that the field is vast, it lacks consensus over the most critical knowledge management processes. It has led to various scholars using different terminology for similar processes, such as Alavi and Leidner (2001) use transfer knowledge and (Laudon and Laudon 2014) use communicating and sharing knowledge. So, to guide and structure our research, we follow what previous research by Hutchinson and Quintas (2008) has done in such a situation and focus on finding challenges and facilitators to acquire, create, convert, apply, and protect knowledge. So, our working definition of knowledge management in this essay is *the systematic process of acquiring, creating, converting, applying, and protecting knowledge and information within an organization to support its goals and objectives*.

While there are benefits of managing knowledge, there are many challenges to managing that, such as lack of resources to devote, lack of time to share knowledge, fear of sharing that sharing might jeopardize a job, lack of social networks, poor communication skills, difficulties developing absorptive capacity, rigid organizational structure, cross-cultural constraints, among others (Riege 2005). However, most of these benefits and challenges are studied in for-profit and usually large organizations, and there is little understanding of social

enterprises' barriers and facilitators in managing knowledge (Granados, Mohamed, and Hlupic 2017).

2.3 Knowledge Management in Social Enterprises

Most of the research on knowledge management has focused on private organizations, and little to no emphasis has been given to understanding how organizations from other sectors, such as nonprofit organizations or social enterprises, develop, manage, and distribute knowledge within the organizations (Hume and Hume 2016; Granados, Mohamed, and Hlupic 2017; Granados et al. 2011). One of the reasons for this could be that the private sector has well-established resources, but the social sector lacks those resources to engage in research. However, given the competitiveness of the economic environment and to be successful, SEs have no other option but to become more like for-profit organizations and adopt management practices such as KM (Granados, Mohamed, and Hlupic 2017; Granados et al. 2011; Hume and Hume 2016).

Investigating KM practices in SEs in the United Kingdom, Granados et al. (2017) find that SEs have KM practices like those already identified in SMEs. Their research finds that KM practices are associated with informality, where knowledge is rarely formalized and remains fragmented, relying on external sources and focusing on socialization activities. Further, SEs face unique challenges in managing knowledge, given their hybrid nature. Meyskens and colleagues (2010) highlight the significance of KM in social ventures and find that utilizing and transferring the knowledge created by the social entrepreneur was key to the competitive advantage for social ventures. Further, they also observed greater knowledge transferability when structured KM practices were in place. Scholars have also found that tacit knowledge is vital in social ventures serving local communities (Meyskens, Carsrud, and Cardozo 2010). Hume and Hume (2008) highlight the challenges of managing the knowledge social sector, such as the sector's dependency on volunteers with different motives than full or

part-time employees. Further, scholars have highlighted technological barriers, often arising because of financial constraints, as challenges to managing knowledge in SEs (Granados, Mohamed, and Hlupic 2017).

Overall, research on KM in SEs remains scarce despite SEs being considered knowledge-intensive organizations, and these enterprises also try to develop and utilize knowledge for its benefit and improve organizational efficiency (Lettieri, Borga, and Savoldelli 2004; Granados, Mohamed, and Hlupic 2017).

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Context: Social Enterprises in India

Please see the Methodology section for details on the research context. Here, we would mention that for consistency and not to club start-ups with established social enterprises; we selected only those social enterprises that have been operating for at least five years. Thus, this setting is appropriate for studying the challenges and strategies social enterprises employ to manage knowledge. Please see Table 2 for a short description of SEs and Appendix I for a detailed description of SEs.

Table 2: Organizational Details

| Social Enterprises Details | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------|---|--|----------------------|
| Social Enterprise | Participant No. | Objective of Social Enterprise | Income Generating Activities | Number of Employees* |
| SE1 | P1 | Promoting education and literacy | Seminars for businesses; books publications | 20-30 |
| SE2 | P2 | Encouraging political participation | Consulting work for the government | 10-20 |
| SE3 | P3 | Promoting education and literacy | Consulting work for the government and private sector | 1-10 |
| SE4 | P4 | Promoting education and literacy | Providing skills development training | 10-20 |
| SE5 | P5 | Providing access to clean water | Selling water cleaning products | 10-20 |
| SE6 | P6 | Supporting vulnerable children and other marginalized groups | Consulting work for the government and private sector | 1-10 |
| SE7 | P7 | Addressing social exclusion | Providing skills development training | 10-20 |
| SE8 | P8 | Promoting cultural activities | Conducting tours at cultural heritage | 20-30 |
| SE9 | P9 | Addressing social exclusion | Consulting work for the private sector; Running e-commerce platform; YouTube Ads | 10-20 |
| SE10 | P10 | Promoting cultural activities | Sales of artifacts and cultural items | 20-30 |
| SE11 | P11 | Addressing social exclusion | Seminars for businesses; Consulting work for the government | 10-20 |
| SE12 | P12 | Promoting education and literacy | Providing career development training | 10-20 |
| SE13 | P13 | Addressing social exclusion | Seminars for businesses; Google ads earning; publications | 10-20 |
| SE14 | P14 | Poverty alleviation through creating employment opportunities | Providing skills development training | 10-20 |
| SE15 | P15 | Addressing social exclusion | Consulting work for the government | 10-20 |
| SE16 | P16 | Addressing social exclusion | Training local communities and private businesses | 10-20 |
| SE17 | P17 | Supporting agriculture and allied activities | Sales of goods, e.g., dairy products | 1-10 |
| SE18 | P18 | Providing legal guidance | Consulting work for the government; designing and running workshops | 10-20 |

| | | | | |
|------|-----|---|---|-------|
| SE19 | P19 | Empowering and uplifting women | Consulting work for the government and private sector | 20-30 |
| SE20 | P20 | Creating employment opportunities | Providing computer training; selling second-hand computer parts | 10-20 |
| SE21 | P21 | Providing access to medical services and improving health | Contracts with various government and private agencies | 20-30 |
| SE22 | P22 | Empowering and uplifting women | Online shop to sell art-work; Consulting work for the government and private sector | 10-20 |

* We provide a range of the number of employees to maintain the anonymity of the SEs. The number of employees includes both full-time and part-time employees. Volunteers are not included in the data on the number of employees. Volunteers at these social enterprises ranged from 10 to 50+ every year.

3.2 Data Collection

Our research focuses on understanding barriers faced and facilitators of managing knowledge in social enterprises. We focused on diverse social enterprises to answer our research questions. We investigated formal KM processes and a wide range of processes not directly labeled as KM; however, they are concerned with managing knowledge.

Given the objectives of our study and the limited past research on the topic, we chose a qualitative research methodology (Hammarberg, Kirkman, and de Lacey 2016) and conducted semi-structured interviews to dig deeper into the issues (Patton 2005; Adams 2015; McCracken 1988). An exploratory research method is particularly well-suited for studying knowledge management aspects of social enterprises in India due to the complex and multifaceted nature of these aspects (Creswell 2007). Exploratory research allows researchers to delve into relatively unexplored areas, gain a deeper understanding of the context, and generate insights to guide future investigations (Ponelis 2015). The semi-structured interview method was selected as the most appropriate research method because the research topic is unexplored; there remains a scarcity of relevant literature, and research is focused on “what” and “how” aspects. We conducted 25 semi-structured interviews with 22 SEs, lasting 75-90 minutes, with participants from social enterprises (McCracken 1988; Adams 2015). Out of 25 participants for the interview, 16 were men, and nine were women. We tried to add diverse social enterprises representing the total population of Indian social enterprises. These individuals worked in different SEs dealing with various issues, and these SEs had different objectives, from creating employment to promoting cultural activities to addressing social exclusion and promoting education and literacy to providing access to medical services. Of the 25 participants, three were volunteers at SEs. We included volunteers in our research as SEs in India are heavily dependent on volunteers, and they

carry out various knowledge-intensive work, such as handling information and technology. Given the geographic dispersion of participants and the Covid-19 situation, these interviews were conducted virtually using Zoom video communications software, except for five interviews that were conducted during a field visit.

To begin with, we developed in-depth interview questions and conducted a pilot study with four participants. Please see the interview protocol in Appendix II. The pilot study made it clear that social enterprises in India have little to no understanding of knowledge management terminology and practice informal knowledge practices to manage knowledge. We refined our interview questions based on the pilot study's response to capture such informal aspects of knowledge processes. We asked participants about their day-to-day working practices, the nature of the work, sources of their ideas/information used in problem-solving, challenges faced to acquire information, and other sources of knowledge (Hutchinson and Quintas 2008; Kim 2011). We choose this approach to avoid skewing the results in favor of those familiar with KM terminology (see Hutchinson and Quintas, 2008; Woods and Joyce, 2003).

To obtain a complete picture of the working of social enterprises, knowledge processes, and the circumstances under which they operate in India, we also conducted a field study at two of the SEs whose objectives were to promote education and literacy (SE1) and empower and uplift women (SE19). Further, with limited interaction, we participated as an observer in social enterprises' online events and planning meetings (Spradley 2016). We also triangulated the data from the social media activities of SEs and media representation of SEs to develop an all-inclusive understanding of different aspects of KM practices, challenges, and facilitators at social enterprises (Carter et al. 2014; Patton 2005). See Table 3 for the description of the data collected and its use in the analysis.

We used our contacts and directory searches to recruit the participants, leading to snowballing, where we got contacts from the participants. To avoid the sampling bias because of snowballing and personal contacts, we rely on the previous research that has justified using these approaches, arguing that “in the key area of KM practice, there was no indication a priori that the chosen firms *had*, or *did not have*, any interest in KM” (Hutchinson and Quintas, 2008, p. 136, *italics in original*). This was the case with our participants, and we found SEs do not understand KM functions well.

Table 3: Description of Data Collected and Its Usage in Analysis

| Data type | | Description | Use in analysis |
|----------------|---------------------|---|--|
| Primary data | Interviews | 25 semi-structured interviews, lasting between 75-90 minutes | Provided insights into participants' experiences of working in social enterprises, KM practices, and ways they navigated the challenges |
| | Field observation | 14 days at two social enterprises | Provided insights into day-to-day KM activities carried by social enterprises |
| Secondary data | Social media | Twitter and Facebook pages of social enterprises | Provided insights into the current situation on social media usage to share and acquire knowledge and confirmed participants' experiences |
| | Media | Blogs, forums, and media articles written about social enterprises and participants | Provided insights into how media portray social enterprises, participants, and their experiences |
| | Online observations | Online events and planning meetings of social enterprises (6 hours of observation) | Enabled access to participants, confirmation of participants' responses in interviews, and understanding practices used to acquire, convert, and apply knowledge |

Further, we selected only those participants who had several years (on average around 16 years for our participants) of experience working in the social sector (please see Table 4 for interviewee characteristics). All these measures also helped us improve the trustworthiness of the data collected (Lincoln and Guba 1985).

Table 4: Participant Characteristics

| Participant Characteristics | | | | |
|-----------------------------|--------|------------------------|--|-------------------|
| Participant Id. | Gender | Current Job Title | Years of Experience in the Social Sector | Date of Interview |
| P1 | Male | Founder | 20 | December 11, 2021 |
| P2 | Male | Managing Director | 17 | January 14, 2021 |
| P3 | Male | Head Documentation | 15 | March 2, 2021 |
| P4 | Male | Founder and CEO | 13 | February 9, 2021 |
| P5 | Female | Project Head | 12 | February 12, 2021 |
| P6 | Male | Founder and Director | 18 | March 8, 2021 |
| P7 | Female | Director | 22 | January 25, 2021 |
| P8 | Female | Communications Head | 16 | March 12, 2021 |
| P9 | Male | Founder | 21 | January 21, 2021 |
| P10 | Male | Membership Coordinator | 13 | March 16, 2021 |
| P11 | Female | Managing Director | 23 | February 15, 2021 |
| P12 | Female | Administration Head | 13 | March 19, 2021 |
| P13 | Male | Development Manager | 15 | February 17, 2021 |
| P14 | Male | Project Head | 18 | February 19, 2021 |
| P15 | Male | Founder | 16 | January 18, 2021 |
| P16 | Female | Program Manager | 12 | March 21, 2021 |
| P17 | Male | Managing Director | 16 | February 22, 2021 |
| P18 | Male | Program Manager | 12 | March 23, 2021 |
| P19 | Female | Community Manager | 13 | December 17, 2021 |
| P20 | Male | Technical Manager | 16 | March 28, 2021 |
| P21 | Male | Founder | 12 | February 26, 2021 |
| P22 | Female | Founder | 15 | April 2, 2021 |
| P23 | Male | Volunteer | 10 | December 11, 2021 |
| P24 | Male | Volunteer | 12 | December 15, 2021 |
| P25 | Female | Volunteer | 11 | December 17, 2021 |

Note: Years of experience include work experience in the non-profit sector as well, i.e., it is participants' years of experience working in the social sector, including social enterprises. For volunteers, years of experience show the number of years they were involved in

social/volunteering activities. At the time of the interviews, P23 and P24 were volunteers at SE01, and P25 was volunteering at SE19.

Wherever possible, written consent was obtained, and in other cases, informed verbal consent was recorded before starting the interview. Please see Appendix III for an informed consent form. We also obtained informed verbal consent during each interview, and participants were informed that they were free to opt out of the research at any stage. Further, as some social enterprises were dealing with social issues, participants were also informed that they were free to decline to answer any question that might bring emotional upheavals (Illing 2013).

We conducted interviews till we reached data saturation, a point where no new information emerged from the interviews (Saunders et al. 2018). After receiving the interviewees' consent, we recorded all interviews digitally. Further, for the recorded interviews, we generated transcripts and verified those for correctness (Poland 1995). Except for five interviews conducted in Hindi (local Indian language), all interviews were conducted in English. The interviewing author was native to Hindi. To ensure quality and consistency, we also used the back translation method for the interview protocol to conduct interviews in Hindi, where we translated the protocol to Hindi and then translated it back to English (Brislin 1970). A widely used quality assurance technique is back translation. The back translation process is carried out in the following manner: First, an expert translates the original text into the desired target language. After that, the content is translated back into the source language while adhering closely to the translation's intended meaning.

3.3 Data Analysis

Next, we generated line-by-line codes for the data and arrived at the themes using inductive coding content analysis (Charmaz 2014). First, building on the KM theories, we examined the data to identify challenges SEs face in managing knowledge. Then, we analyzed the facilitators and navigating strategies applied by SEs to manage knowledge. Table 5 shows the process we followed from participants' voices (first-order codes) to second-order codes and, finally, more conceptual aggregate themes (Gioia, Corley, and Hamilton 2013).

Table 5: Data Analysis: Analytical Coding

| First order | Second order | Aggregate theoretical dimensions |
|---|---|----------------------------------|
| Barriers to Knowledge Management | | |
| Lacking a transparent reward system to facilitate knowledge sharing (6) | Lack of encouragement to share | Underestimation of Value |
| Not asked to share knowledge (9) | | |
| Not given sufficient opportunity to share/acquire knowledge (9) | | |
| Concerns related to loss of power when knowledge is shared (5) | | |
| Lack of emphasis on stocking the knowledge (8) | | |
| Concerned over wasting resources for KM (10) | Unclear understanding of what KM can do | |
| Unclear knowledge-sharing goals (12) | | |
| Concerned about misuse and potential negative repercussions when knowledge is shared (10) | | |
| Not giving enough attention to the importance of tacit/explicit knowledge (10) | | |
| Little understanding of what KM is concerned with (12) | | |
| Not seeing immediate benefits (11) | | |
| Difficulties getting individuals to volunteer time to share knowledge (7) | Limited time availability | |
| Busy with routine tasks (14) | | |
| Too much personal time spent on capturing and maintaining knowledge (6) | | |
| Not given enough time to share knowledge (9) | | |
| Time pressures to finish projects (13) | | |

| | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|----------------------|
| Challenging to bring different groups together at one location (10) | Inadequate infrastructure | Resource Constraints |
| Ill-formalized knowledge management processes (7) | | |
| No mechanism in place for feedback collection (5) | | |
| Lacking proper offices as mostly involved in working at the grassroot-level (10) | | |
| Lacking absorptive capacity (5) | | |
| Location disadvantages (14) | | |
| Having no proper facilities (8) | | |
| Challenges of carrying out team-building activities at SE (6) | | |
| Lacking knowledge sharing space (8) | Shortage of experts | |
| Lacking business skills among SEs to promote products (9) | | |
| Inability to attract talent (13) | | |
| Lacking managerial skills (9) | | |
| Not appealing as low salaries (12) | | |
| Challenging to attract and retain volunteers with skills (7) | | |
| Discouraging remote locations of SEs (10) | | |
| Costly KM IT tools (8) | | |
| Lacking proper instruments to convert and store (14) | | |
| Decreased access to customers, partners, and other stakeholders during challenging times, such as Covid19 pandemic (17) | | |
| Insufficient working capital (15) | | |
| Declining revenues during Covid19 (17) | | |
| Challenges of acquiring funds (18) | | |
| Limited access to government schemes for financial support (14) | | |
| Not able to pay high wages to employees (12) | | |
| Accessing information from different divisions difficult (7) | Influence of subcultures | Cultural Fences |
| Cultural distances between different individuals (9) | | |
| Conflicting cultures and values at different branches of SE (4) | | |
| Multiple languages used by knowledge workers (12) | | |
| Communicator's credibility is challenged (6) | | |
| Accessing the information from different class/caste groups is difficult (7) | Differences among castes and classes | |
| Distrust among different groups stops socialization (9) | | |
| Resistance to sharing knowledge with different caste/class groups (10) | | |
| Prejudices and bias against different groups of people, leading to withholding information (10) | | |

| | | |
|---|---|--|
| Insufficient knowledge capturing tools (9) | Unavailability of ICT tools | Technological Barricades |
| Using mostly papers to record information (13) | | |
| Resistance to change to unfamiliar tools (8) | | |
| Unavailability of a suitable form of communication (8) | | |
| Absence of IT literacy among employees (11) | Having little understanding of IT systems | |
| Lacking technical know-how (14) | | |
| Concerns related to loss of privacy and security (12) | | |
| Technology fears as a barrier to knowledge sharing (10) | | |
| Fast technological changes leaving employees perplexed (12) | Lacking technical support | |
| Lacking formal training on IT tools (14) | | |
| Inability to attract talent to handle IT (18) | | |
| Lacking troubleshooting services in the cases of IT troubles (14) | | |
| Demands of supporters/donors to produce reports in the language (e.g., English) and methods not understood by most of the employees (6) | Challenging to meet supporters' demands | Inconsistent Stakeholders Expectations |
| Different agendas of diverse donors create conflicts (5) | | |
| Resistance from community (9) | | |
| Challenges of collaborating with other SEs or universities (10) | | |
| Stuck in bureaucracy, red tape, for getting information from government agencies (8) | Navigating governmental regulations tough | |
| Difficult to meet frequent changes in government policies (5) | | |
| Excessive paperwork to avail government schemes (14) | | |
| Challenges of meeting demands of governmental agencies (10) | | |
| Facilitators of Knowledge Management | | |
| Access to other SEs in the same projects for advice (6) | Having access to influential individuals | Social Capital |
| Discussing problems with sympathizers (9) | | |
| Reaching out to university professors for advice (5) | | |
| Taking advice from co-workers from other fields (6) | | |
| Meeting professional board to get support (4) | | |
| Access to directory of individuals who can help (3) | | |
| Access to politicians interested in grass-root work (4) | | |
| Ability to raise funds through crowdfunding (6) | | |
| Access to the latest information from government agencies (5) | Having a close relationship | |
| Access to leaders from community (8) | | |
| Readiness of communities to help in which they serve (12) | | |
| Local partnerships with other SEs working in unrelated fields (6) | | |

| | | |
|---|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Access to volunteers who help access other opportunities (6) | with the community | |
| Positive recognition from the community (12) | | |
| Large number of followers on social media (9) | | |
| Founders sharing history, culture, wisdom to new employees (7) | Sharing knowledge through stories | Socialization |
| Learning from watching seniors (14) | | |
| Collaborating on projects and learning (8) | | |
| Engaging in listening to community’s challenges (12) | | |
| Asked to share the success/failure stories (7) | | |
| Communicating “common knowledge” to new hires (5) | Sharing through informal channels | |
| Keeping in touch through social media (9) | | |
| Readiness to meet outside workplaces (10) | | |
| Meeting for lunches, drinks, and dinners (7) | | |
| Using social media, emails to share knowledge (9) | | |
| Conversations in the corridors (6) | | |
| Spontaneous meetings (e.g., sometimes in the field) (7) | | |
| Statements around interpersonal trust (9) | Openness within the organization | |
| Statements highlighting easy communication between staff (14) | | |
| Transparency about the decisions (11) | | |
| Shared values and principles (13) | | |
| Inclusivity and collaboration nature of work (8) | | |
| Approachability of employees (10) | Missing hierarchies | Flat Organizational Structure |
| Statements about no boss (13) | | |
| Organizational unity to pursue goals as unified team (9) | | |
| Statements highlighting all employees equally responsible for the success of projects (7) | Fluid working conditions | |
| Autonomy for employees (11) | | |
| Broadly defined jobs (14) | | |
| Flexibility between units and jobs (12) | | |
| Not constrained to fixed roles (9) | | |

Note: Numbers inside the brackets next to the first-order codes represent the number of times the particular code/idea appeared in participants' data (Tallerico 1991; Woodrum 1984).

To further improve the trustworthiness of the data, we took various measures (Lincoln and Guba 1985). First, we engaged with participants for a prolonged period, giving us enough information to understand the aspects under study.

Next, following Lincoln and Guba's (1985) suggestions, data collection triangulation, peer debriefing, careful participant selection, and researcher triangulation helped increase the trustworthiness of our data. Trustworthiness was also enhanced through the reflexivity of the current study's authors (Lincoln and Guba 1985). The author has been actively involved in nonprofit work for almost two decades. This rapport also helped us get rich and detailed accounts from respondents and understand nuances as participants were open to disclosing and having a difficult conversation (Poland 1995). We believe that our experiences of working in the social field, industry, and academic experience among authors enabled us to understand the nuances of KM in SEs. Once our findings were ready, we discussed these with other prominent SE leaders to get their feedback and understand their experiences. We also discussed our findings with the scholars not involved in this research and got feedback, helping us to refine and validate our findings. To avoid misunderstanding and not lose participants' intended meaning, wherever participants spoke in Hindi (a language in India) - to which the interviewer was native - we present those along with our translation (Smith, Chen, and Liu 2008). Further, we provide multiple examples of each theme for readers to draw their interpretations (Elliott, Fischer, and Rennie 1999). Lastly, to maintain the anonymity of participants and SEs, they are named P1, P2 ... P25 and SE1, SE2 ... SE22. Next, we present our findings.

4. Findings

We present our findings in the two sections. First, we start with the challenges SEs in India face in managing knowledge. Second, we present facilitators of knowledge management in SEs.

4.1 Challenges to Manage Knowledge in Social Enterprises

Our findings suggest SEs face challenges in managing knowledge as a) they underestimate the value of knowledge management, b) they are constrained by resources, c) there exist cultural

barriers, d) technological barriers, and e) they have to meet differing stakeholders expectations. All these create unique challenges for SEs in managing knowledge.

4.1.1 Underestimating the value

SEs underestimate the value of KM as there remains a) an unclear understanding of what managing knowledge can do and b) a lack of encouragement to share knowledge.

Unclear understanding of what managing knowledge can do. Our findings suggest that most SEs do not clearly understand what managing knowledge can do for them. This is because SEs are often concerned with serving the communities and remain wary of wasting resources for KM practices. Further, they cannot see the immediate benefits of KM, leading them to be further away from such KM practices. As one of the participants explained:

We are not much concerned about what will happen if we lose any employee or any information is not documented on the computer. (P5; Interviewed: 12.02.2021)¹

Another participant said:

We can always find a new source of information even if it takes us time, but our main target is to continue to train students for the future, that is what is our focus, not shouting [sharing] to others what we know and trying to fill some data forms in computers. (P1; Interviewed: 11.12.2021)

Such an unclear understanding of what managing knowledge can do for SEs hinders the sharing of tacit knowledge and conversion to explicit knowledge. Further, they remain concerned about

¹ Throughout the thesis, we will be using DD.MM.YYYY format to highlight the date of the interview.

the misuse of shared knowledge. The following words from a participant summarize the situation well:

What if I share and the receiver does not use that information, it is a waste of my time, and what are the benefits of recording everything when we can approach anyone within our organization any time for anything. (P17; Interviewed: 22.02.2021)

Furthermore, among employees at SEs, there remains no clarity over the goals of sharing knowledge and what they can achieve out of managing knowledge. Neither were they aware of appropriate processes in place to share knowledge. Such ambiguity hinders employees from pursuing KM.

Lack of encouragement to share. Most of the participants in our study noted that they lack encouragement from the top to share knowledge, and no mechanism or reward system is in place for such practices. None of the SEs in our study had financial incentives to encourage knowledge dissemination. Even when they are willing to share, they hardly find any opportunity to share knowledge as there remains a lack of emphasis on building knowledge networks. As one of the participants highlighted:

Given the nature of work [to educate marginalized] we do with limited resources, we cannot have a bonuses system to encourage people to file the documents appropriately or send them to conferences where employees could share what they know. (P4; Interviewed: 09.02.2021)

Another participant mentioned:

Keeping employees motivated to continuously expand their and organization's knowledge is difficult without a proper mechanism in place. (P19; Interviewed: 17.12.2021)

On the other hand, participants mentioned that they are self-motivated to do better; however, such self-motivation does not last long, given the tough situations in which SEs operate. One participant mentioned:

All these efforts [to maintain medical records] take time, energy, and resources, which we lack. We feel discouraged after doing so much without resources; it is not acknowledged. (P21; Interviewed: 26.02.2021)

4.1.2 Resource Constraints

SEs face serious resource constraints that stop KM. Our findings suggest three resource constraints: a) limited availability of time, b) inadequate infrastructure, and c) shortage of experts that restricts knowledge sharing, acquiring, and applying within the organizations.

Limited time availability. For SEs, time is critical while dealing with sensitive issues such as helping women in need. So, they spend most of their time serving and fulfilling the needs of the communities, making it difficult for them to find enough time to engage in KM activities.

Participants highlighted that they find it quite difficult to find the time as they are busy with their routine tasks or find someone who has time to volunteer their time to engage in knowledge management activities.

We have tight deadlines and critical issues [of vulnerable children] to deal with at our workplace [so] we are left with no time at all. (P6; Interviewed: 08.03.2021)

Another participant highlighted:

I often work during the weekends even, and all I think about is work, so time is a big issue. (P19; Interviewed: 17.12.2021)

Further, the time pressures to finish projects and no direct benefits participants see in KM activities create a disconnect between KM activities and further discourage them.

Coaching someone [to handle sensitive issues carefully] without seeing the direct benefits of that require extra effort and time from my personal life. ... I will be delaying my work if I continue to engage with discussion with others. (P11; Interviewed: 15.02.2021)

Inadequate infrastructure. SEs have very few formalized knowledge management processes in place, such as in our findings, only two SEs had a mechanism in place to get feedback from different stakeholders. They also do not have access to CRM systems. It is partly because of an unclear understanding of what KM can do for the SEs, as explained in the previous section. Lack of formalized KM processes increases not only the time employees waste on looking for the right information but also knowledge remains fragmented within the organization. A participant mentioned:

There are many challenges ... the methods that we use to capture knowledge and store are outdated, and there is no organized way of doing things. We handle things as they come from our own capacity and knowledge. (P3; Interviewed: 02.03.2021)

As SEs lack financial resources and mostly work at the grassroots level, they have no proper offices or facilities that could enhance knowledge sharing and application. Participants highlighted that they face challenges in carrying out team-building activities because of the lack of such facilities. It remains challenging for SEs to bring together different team members due to the dispersion of the work involved, sometimes in remote locations where it takes half a day to reach nearby cities. Such location disadvantages create another challenge for the SEs. Most SEs

serve the communities in remote locations where information and news sometimes reach after days. A participant said:

It is not easy to bring everyone to one place ... someone is involved in one activity, and another person is busy with another in some distant location, so how do you bring them together, [and] where to bring them when mostly our activities are done in different villages. (P7; Interviewed: 25.02.2021)

Another participant mentioned:

Hamare pass khas jagah nahi hai? [We do not have enough space] to organize our activities, so we sometimes rent a place or do those at community halls. (P19; Interviewed: 17.12.2021)

Shortage of experts. One of the main barriers to KM among SEs is a shortage of experts. The inability to attract talent because of low salaries, harsh working conditions, and slight chances of progress because of the small size of SEs create challenges for the SEs to carry out activities effectively. Such a lack of talent further creates an environment where managing knowledge is not valued. Furthermore, remote SE locations also discourage talent from relocating to those projects. One participant emphasized:

Because of the shortage of money, we cannot pay very well; that is one of the reasons that we do not have experts to handle technology. (P1; Interviewed: 11.12.2021)

Another participant highlighted a similar concern:

IT people can earn much more in nice locations; why would they want to waste their lives in remote areas and earn little money? (P4; Interviewed: 09.02.2021)

Further, SEs lack business and managerial skills, which are prominent in for-profit businesses, mainly because of a lack of experts from those fields working in SEs. A participant said:

If we could develop business plans, have someone to take care of marketing activities, and approach our work more business-minded, we could earn much more, but our team's emphasis and capabilities are missing. (P2; Interviewed: 14.01.2021)

SEs depend on volunteers to carry out many essential tasks, such as writing reports and documenting data on computers. However, it remains challenging for them to attract and retain volunteers for long as SEs have little to offer. It also creates another challenge: when volunteers leave the organization, they take the crucial learnings that are not imparted to other employees. One participant mentioned:

It remains a challenge for us to find volunteers ... sometimes, people come, but after a few weeks, their enthusiasm end, and they disappear. (P16; Interviewed: 21.03.2021)

Another participant said:

Managing a database of volunteers is a horrendous task ... they come and go frequently. (P3; Interviewed: 02.03.2021)

On the other hand, a volunteer at SE mentioned:

The biggest problem I as a volunteer face is that I want to volunteer but do not know where and how I can I ... and then I also do not want to volunteer someplace where their vision and mission does not match with my values. (P23; Interviewed: 11.12.2021)

Shortage of funds. Across the SEs, there remains a shortage of funds to carry out activities and achieve their full potential. SEs cannot afford to spend money on costly KM tools, so such a lack

of proper instruments to convert and store information and ideas create barriers for SEs. A participant said:

We do not specifically dedicate any funds for doing this stuff [buying technology], so that future of the organization is safe ... we are happy if we can pay our employees on time.

(P8; Interviewed: 12.03.2021)

Further, during difficult times such as the Covid19 pandemic, many of the SEs have faced challenges of decreased access to customers and other stakeholders, leading to insufficient working capital and declining revenues. Further, as the government is pulling out of most of the social activities, the support that SEs get is also reducing, affecting their bottom line. One participant puts this as:

Our priority is to serve communities better, so if we have some money, we spend on our programs rather than setting in place some structured procedures and processes. (P20;

Interviewed: 28.03.2021)

In our field observation, a shortage of resources was evident. We noticed that they often had no chairs or tables to organize meetings, and employees were sitting on the ground on a piece of carpet. Further, not everyone had a workstation either. Some employees had to bring and use their laptops while sitting on the terrace.

4.1.3 Cultural Fences

The diversity of cultures within India in terms of languages, food habits, and clothing also creates challenges for SEs to operate and manage knowledge through a) influence of subcultures within SEs and because of the b) differences among castes and classes.

Influence of subcultures. Subculture means a distinct culture within a larger culture, e.g., even though dominant groups consider them part of Hindu culture and many of them accept it, not all Dalits (lower castes in India) and Adivasis (tribals) follow the cultural practices of Hinduism. In some cases, their practices contest the dominant Hindu culture. For instance, instead of Rama, Dalits and Adivasis worship Ravana, whom Hindus consider a demon king in the Hindu epic Ramayana (Tare, 2017). Such subcultures create various challenges for the operations of social enterprises. Cultural factors at multiple levels create the most significant barriers to KM engaging in activities. The unique cultural complexities in the contexts these SEs operate make accessing information from different divisions of SEs difficult. Participants highlighted the challenges of navigating the conflicting cultures and personal values at different branches/divisions of SEs. At the intersection of national and organizational culture, various cultural factors create hostility toward sharing knowledge. One participant explained:

So, we are working here in South India, and some of the team members are working in North India and Eastern parts. ... I feel the dedication and understanding of the value of our work differs among all these divisions. They have different levels of commitments to work than we in Southern India. (P18; Interviewed: 23.03.2021)

Another participant mentioned:

Among ourselves, we can approach easily for any information, but it becomes difficult to ask someone who is located miles away, and you have never talked to that person. (P9; Interviewed: 21.01.2021)

Among SEs, there remains a dominant culture, and then subcultures developed based on work performed, language, location, and castes. All these factors continue to influence the way SEs

operate and handle knowledge, such as credibility being challenged based on the person's identity. One participant puts it as follows:

If I come from the same part of the other person, I will more than be willing to appreciate and work with that person; however, people become averse to someone different. (P14; Interviewed: 19.02.2021)

Differences among castes and classes. Among Indians, caste and class differences remain prominent, affecting SEs in multiple ways. Participants, especially those working among marginalized and vulnerable groups, highlighted the challenges of accessing information from different class and caste groups and distrust among them. Resistance to sharing information with different classes and castes of people remains. Such cultural barriers among different groups prevent the acquisition and application of knowledge. One of the participants summed up this situation:

We frequently go to government offices to access information about scholarships for our students who come from marginalized groups but saheb [boss] sitting there is from a privileged group, so he has no benefits of sharing information with us. ... We have to go like 4-5 times to his office for the same information and sometimes still would not get correct information. (P12; Interviewed: 19.03.2021)

Participants also highlighted the prejudices and biases against different groups that lead to withholding information and creating obstacles for SEs to function. Such communication barriers among different classes and castes hinder KM processes.

4.1.4 Technological Barricades

There are technological barricades for SEs in managing knowledge because of a) unavailability of ICT tools, b) having little understanding of IT systems, and c) lacking technical support.

Unavailability of ICT tools. Access to technology is a significant challenge for SEs. Social enterprises in our study broadly understood the importance of managing knowledge through ICT tools and that technology could facilitate and support the flow of knowledge sharing, even though they did not use the terminology of KM. The main challenge for them is insufficient knowledge of tools. One participant emphasized:

Right now, we are all over the place without any system in place to have all the information in one place ... we use social media groups, WhatsApp groups, emails to share information and to store we use google documents and online drives and we learn about new things from different places so, it would be good to have one unified place that would make our life easy. (P13; Interviewed: 17.03.2021)

On the other hand, as most KM tools are usually designed to keep large organizations in mind, these tools remain unfit for SEs. Our study finds that SEs often rely on unsophisticated ICT tools such as Google Documents or Microsoft Office to manage knowledge. The unavailability of reliable ICT tools that match their requirements and difficulties integrating them into their existing processes further increase resistance to adopting technology. So, tools that help increase absorptive capacity are missing in SEs. One participant said:

We have been trying to systematize the data collection [about cultural activities, successes, failures etc.] and filing that into the proper documents using computers and free software, but people are accustomed to what they are already doing, so we have had little success. (P10; Interviewed: 16.03.2021)

Having little understanding of IT systems. There remains little understanding of ICT technologies among the SEs, and IT literacy among participants remains low. The fast technological changes and the inability to handle technical demands restrict KM processes. Most of the time, they consider these technologies “unnecessarily complicated tools.” Our findings suggest multiple reasons behind that, such as fear of technology, fear that privacy is lost, underestimation of ICT technologies’ value, and resistance to change. One participant stated:

We are good with paper and pen ... this is the way we keep ourselves safe from leaking information to others [competitors] and information that is sensitive. (P19; Interviewed: 17.12.2021)

Some participants also highlighted concerns about the misuse and potential negative outcomes of knowledge sharing and documenting everything using computers.

If we store all data online and someone hacks all that? We have information about vulnerable children and women at risk, so we cannot afford to take any such risk. (P6; Interviewed: 08.03.2021)

Further, SEs cannot attract talent as salaries remain modest, so sometimes, they have to rely on volunteers to handle digital technologies. Such an approach brings challenges such as trust and privacy issues and stops the flow of knowledge. One of the volunteers highlighted:

I am good at IT; that's my background, and I can do multiple things for the organization, but I feel there is some uneasiness on their part to provide me access to social media or other accounts. (P25; Interviewed: 17.12.2021)

Lacking technical support. Our findings suggest that participants had no formal training on handling IT tools, such as taking full benefits of MS Excel. They miss the basic technical support that is needed during troubleshooting. Such inability of SEs is mainly linked with their inability to attract talent to handle IT (as discussed in the previous section in detail). One participant said:

I do not think I or anyone in the organization had any training ever on how to use computers or MS Office effectively. (P2; Interviewed: 14.01.2021)

SEs in our study do not have written training manuals to guide the usage of available tools to manage knowledge. Furthermore, limited finances also hinder the training needed to familiarize themselves with technology and their willingness to switch to more sophisticated ICT tools. SEs also struggle to send their employees on training outside. As one of the participants explains:

We would love to have a [CRM] system in place, but we would be happy to pay our staff salaries on time ... money is a big issue, we cannot afford to spend on training and installment of those tools. (P17; Interviewed: 22.02.2021)

In our field study, we also observed that SEs had implemented and integrated the usage of MS Office, such as Word and Excel spreadsheets, into their system to organize the information. However, they do not have dedicated employees to organize the information, so whosoever gets time or chance steps in to do that work. It sometimes creates confusion and hesitation to access folders created by other individuals. Lastly, we found no other signs of knowledge protection through gated content besides having secret files password-protected on computers and sometimes on cloud services. Overall, SEs were open to sharing their ideas and knowledge with other SEs.

4.1.5 Inconsistent Stakeholders Expectations

Our findings suggest that inconsistent stakeholders' expectations create another barrier for SEs in managing knowledge as it is a) challenging to meet supporters' demands and b) navigating governmental regulations remains tough.

Challenging to meet supporters' demands. Participants often felt stuck in fulfilling the expectations of different stakeholders, such as the community, donors, and employees. As many of the SEs in our study get funds from outside India to carry out their activities, the supporters want them to produce reports of activities in English. However, many of the employees within SEs do not understand English, so such demands from supporters create troubles for SEs in creating and managing the flow of knowledge. One of the participants explained:

So, our donors want us to produce reports in a particular manner using specific methods and formats. All this is illogical to me as none from my team would be able to do that, and I will be only doing that work, so things will remain limited to me ... the knowledge will not pass to others. (P10; Interviewed: 16.03.2021)

Similarly, participants also highlighted the resistance they receive from the community they are serving, e.g., community leaders sometimes question them for their motives to help and ask them to target and exclude certain groups from their activities. Furthermore, SEs face challenges from other SEs or universities even when they want to help each other. For example, the information they get from other SEs or universities is in such formats or language that only a few within the SEs can process and apply. In return, they have to produce reports in a similar fashion that are understood by a few, creating a system where knowledge gets concentrated in a few heads and SEs not getting benefits in KM.

Navigating governmental regulations tough. Participants in our study highlighted that there remains red tape and much bureaucracy that slow down their work, such as getting information from government agencies remains challenging. SEs have to meet excessive paperwork and frequent changes in governmental policies to avail of government schemes and participate in working for government agencies. According to participants, such demands consume time and create unnecessary pressure on SEs to fit into the dominant structures and put pressure on their already limited resources. One participant said:

Getting information from governmental agencies is like taking meat out of a lion's mouth ... we struggle a lot with different demands and papers for small things, and they keep on changing their words every time we go to their office. (P12; Interviewed: 19.03.2021)

Furthermore, excessive governmental control over information and sometimes political interference in the working of SEs, build fences around the SEs, restricting the flow of knowledge.

4.2 Facilitators of Knowledge Management in Social Enterprises

Our findings suggest that the main facilitators of KM in SEs are a) social capital, b) socialization, and c) flat organizational structures.

4.2.1 Social Capital

Our findings suggest that social capital aspects, i.e., a) having access to influential individuals and b) having a close relationship with the community, were conducive to managing knowledge within the SEs.

Having access to influential individuals. Participants from the study unanimously agreed that having access to influential individuals can help them in multiple ways, such as getting information from appropriate authorities, which becomes much easier if they know someone in the authorities. The support network that SEs have developed with universities, politicians, other SEs in the same and different fields, family, and friends of employees helps participants acquire the necessary tools and resources to perform their work. One of the participants mentioned:

If you have sympathizers and close contacts with people who know people, things fall into place easily, and you can acquire the required knowledge. (P14; Interviewed: 19.02.2021)

In our observation from the closed (private) social media groups, we observed employees frequently posting requests about whether someone knew anyone at a particular office. Furthermore, having such a network of influential people helps SEs raise necessary funds and spread knowledge. As one of the participants described:

If you know someone with large followers on social media, you can promote your event or ask that person to share your fundraising campaign, and within hours your crowdfunding appeals will reach millions, and it becomes much easier to raise necessary funds. (P8; Interviewed: 12.03.2021)

Having contact with noteworthy people becomes even more critical when SEs deal with marginalized groups or primarily have employees from marginalized groups. One of the employees working at such SE emphasized:

You know most of the [industry] associations and groups are based on caste lines as well, so you need to know the right people to become a part of the inner group. Without being a part of the inner group, you miss many things. (P1; Interviewed: 11.12.2021)

Most of the SEs also try to add some influential people to their professional boards so that they gain legitimacy and can help get in touch with sources of information.

Having a close relationship with the community. Participants in our study highlighted that having a close relationship with the community helps them in multiple ways, such as having face-to-face interactions with community leaders builds trust with them, making it easier to acquire and disseminate knowledge through re-contextualizing. One of the participants mentioned:

Once we have family-like relationships with the community leaders, it is much easier to express our feelings and emotions; they also feel the same way once they know us. (P4; Interviewed: 09.02.2021)

To have a close relationship with the community becomes even more crucial if projects are related to sensitive issues such as caste. Otherwise, SEs face challenges getting the required information and data to run their programs. Another participant highlighted:

Being on good terms with the community is everything; once you run some program [of social inclusion] and if the community agrees, then there are no troubles; otherwise, it can be challenging ..., especially if there are different castes involved. (P11; Interviewed: 15.02.2021)

Furthermore, having a good association with the community provides SEs with volunteers to carry out their projects. These volunteers also bring in the required knowledge and access to

local resources. Moreover, these volunteers become their ambassadors and voice, bringing more tacit knowledge into the organizations.

During our field observation, we attended a meeting with the community members, where SE1 spread the word about their activities and urged villagers to join their education programs. SE leaders were welcomed into the community and were offered food, space to organize a meeting, among other things.

4.2.2 Socialization

Socialization aspects of SEs were the facilitator of managing knowledge as knowledge sharing and acquiring occur through a) sharing through stories, b) sharing through informal channels, and c) openness within the organization.

Sharing knowledge through stories. Participants highlighted that when someone new comes to the organization, or even someone comes for a visit, the founders of the organization usually go through the tour of the history of SE. They share past mistakes and learning with each other, and such learning helps them perform the tasks at hand. As one participant explained:

We have little capacity to record everything, so everything is in the founder's head and a few other experienced people, so they [seniors] time to time, share with us the work stories and experiences ... we learn from listening to them. (P14; Interviewed: 19.02.2021)

Another participant highlighted as well:

Communicating the “common knowledge” to new hires is a ritual. (P12; Interviewed: 19.03.2021)

Participants also described that they learn from watching seniors perform the tasks as they collaborate on different projects, and while working and listening to them, they become experts in the field. They often learn from listening to the community leaders; their stories help them develop ideas.

We brainstorm and to test our thinking in the field ... we go to the community and see how they respond to medical services that we plan to provide ... then we find community needs are different. This creates a whole cycle of learning from the community where we listen to the community before making any decisions. (P21; Interviewed: 26.02.2021)

Most of the time, SEs share their success stories, and social media is often chosen as the means to share. One participant mentioned:

We put one display “employee of the month” and give certificates ... same then we put on our social media platforms ... even though that paper certificate or social media posts do not cost us anything, it boosts the morale of the workers ... they feel valued. (P8; Interviewed: 12.03.2021)

In studying the social media channels of SEs, we also observed that SEs frequently post founders sharing their journeys with a broader audience through tweets and videos. As the previous section explains, this approach further enhances their social capital.

Sharing through informal channels. Our findings suggest that most of the knowledge-sharing in SEs happens through informal channels and without the labels and terminology of KM.

Participants described a spectrum of activities that they do at the village level, and they acquire knowledge through discussions with the local communities. One of the participants said:

Local communities know better than us ... they have been living in the same place for decades, and they know their pain points and local illnesses better than us, so we discuss and involve communities in our projects, and we make quick progress. (P21; Interviewed: 26.02.2021)

Another participant mentioned:

Local farmers have been handling cows and crops for centuries, and we discuss things to improve the yield and help them with marketing their products, and they help us with the knowledge of local crops. (P17; Interviewed: 22.02.2021)

With the rise of social media, SEs have learned to exploit it for their benefit by forming internal (private) and external (open) social media groups to communicate, arrange, gather, and manage knowledge. Most of the time, socialization also happens through social media channels and emails, which has made it much easier to coordinate for work, especially during the Covid19 pandemic. As one of the participants described:

With the coronavirus's problems, we had some troubles running the educational programs, and we used social media to stay in touch with people at the village level ... social media helped us arrange relief activities as well. (P14; Interviewed: 19.02.2021)

Another participant mentioned:

When the organization gets awards, we share on social media, and they [employees and community] feel that they are part of something bigger and feel that they are doing something valuable ... this way, they stay motivated. (P3; Interviewed: 02.03.2021)

Furthermore, participants mentioned that they frequently meet outside the workplace to have drinks and meals with other colleagues. Such socialization helps them stay in touch with each

other's work and progress at work. Moreover, we find that SEs conduct spontaneous meetings (e.g., sometimes in the rice field) and conversations in the corridors that help them source, synthesize, and apply knowledge. In their search for knowledge, some of the SEs had also subscribed to magazines and journals related to their field.

Openness within the organization. Our findings suggest openness among the employees around the work that helps them build trust. Such openness further makes it easier for the employees to communicate. The participants highlighted transparency about decisions and finances, which helps avoid misunderstanding and mistrust. One of the participants puts it:

We have everything about finances and activities open to all ... any employee interested in seeing how we are spending and on what can see that ... and from where the money is coming and how much, we all know. So, there is nothing hidden. (P11; Interviewed: 15.02.2021)

Given the collaborative nature of the work, employees depend on each other, so they remain open and accessible to each other. Furthermore, the shared values and principles also help SEs stay open to employees, further enhancing knowledge sharing.

4.2.3 Flat Organizational Structure

The flat organizational structure of SEs helps organize, access, and implement knowledge easier as there are a) missing hierarchies among employees and b) there are fluid working conditions.

Missing hierarchies. Participants highlighted no hierarchies among different employees, and even founders and CEOs can be approached anytime. They also mentioned that even though

some of those have official job titles, they carry almost no weight as opposed to how strictly such job titles are valued among workers in for-profit organizations. SEs follow goals in a unified form, and to achieve those goals, everyone is involved, no matter how small that work is. As one of the participants describes it:

We all are equal here; no one cares about job titles or what kind of work one is doing ... our aim is to get our patients the best medical service that they can get, so to achieve that, if the founder, CEO, and any employee [of SE] has to come and work in the field, we do it. (P21; Interviewed: 26.02.2021)

While describing job titles, another participant put it philosophically:

Sab moh maya hai [Titles are illusion] ... we believe in work, not titles. (P4; Interviewed: 09.02.2021)

In our field study, we also observed that employees do not hesitate to ask questions and put their ideas forward to leaders. We also observed that leaders' leadership style was much more democratic, considering the opinions of everyone and making decisions based on that. Such missing hierarchies among employees let the juice of knowledge flow and generate ideas.

Fluid working conditions. Another aspect that participants stressed was the freedom to make decisions and flexibility in the work performed. Our findings highlight that job titles or fixed roles do not constrain them and have broadly defined jobs where participants are free to make decisions and do a broader set of tasks. One participant mentioned:

We are tiny compared to many organizations, so we have much freedom to pursue different tasks ... it was one of the reasons I wanted to work in the social sector. (P10; Interviewed: 16.03.2021)

Another participant described:

We put them [new hires] into leadership positions ... if they are working at some other organization, they might not reach that kind of position where they have responsibilities and decision-making positions. (P2; Interviewed: 14.01.2021)

While this is good for organizations where employees know and can perform different tasks when someone leaves the organization suddenly, there is no knowledge loss, not having well-defined tasks leads to accountability problems. However, given the small size of SEs, having such fluid working conditions is necessary and helps manage knowledge. The benefits for them outweigh the drawbacks. As one participant highlighted:

It would become a problem if some unique aspects of work are known to one person only, but this is not the case with our organization ... even though it is challenging everyone handles all kinds of legal work, so one person leaving us will not be an issue. (P18; Interviewed: 23.03.2021)

5. Discussion

In recent decades, social enterprises have gained traction as organizations that aim to address social and environmental challenges while pursuing financial sustainability. However, research on social enterprises is still emerging, especially in developing countries such as India. This essay addressed knowledge management challenges and facilitators in social enterprises. In this section, we will discuss our findings, contributions, acknowledge any limitations of our research, suggest potential areas for future research, and conclude with our findings' practical and social implications. We build on the limited previous research on knowledge management in social enterprises (Granados *et al.*, 2017) and extend to understand challenges and facilitators. Our

research shows that social enterprises in India face multiple knowledge management barriers, namely underestimating the value of knowledge, resource constraints, cultural fences, technological barricades, and inconsistent stakeholders' expectations. Our findings show three facilitators to KM in social enterprises: social capital, socialization, and flat organizational structure.

Through our research, we make multiple contributions. First, most of the research on SEs has focused on Western contexts (Granados, Mohamed, and Hlupic 2017; Granados et al. 2011; Hume and Hume 2016), which cannot simply be extrapolated to the Indian context. Based on our research, the complexities of social hierarchy, particularly those based on class and caste in India, pose unique obstacles when accessing, utilizing, and transforming knowledge within social enterprises. Recognizing and navigating these contextual nuances is paramount for effectively harnessing knowledge to drive social impact and sustainable growth. To overcome these challenges, social enterprises need to adopt knowledge management strategies that are culturally attuned and contextually relevant. It is essential to realize that social and cultural aspects, which scholars have paid less attention to, shape knowledge management practices in organizations. Social norms and historical factors that shape Indian society influence the functioning of social enterprises, creating management challenges. As factors such as gender, religion, and caste play a role in shaping the social entrepreneurship ecosystem (Qureshi et al. 2023; 2022; Scaria and Ray 2019), the research conducted in Western contexts may not fully capture nuances of social enterprises operating in India. Further, India's policy, institutional structures, and regulatory environment differ from others with recent mandatory Corporate Social Responsibility spending regulations. These factors influence the operations and funding of these organizations. Understanding the unique challenges related to resource constraints in the Indian context is

essential for developing effective strategies that work in local contexts. Our research contributes to understanding knowledge management in a non-Western context.

Further, the role of social and cultural aspects in accessing and using knowledge has also attracted limited attention, especially in the Indian context (Scaria and Ray 2019). However, given the social stratification in the society based on castes, which is unique in an Indian context, organizations face unusual challenges in accessing information, applying, and converting that to its use (Scaria and Ray 2019; Sutter, Bhatt, and Qureshi 2023). Furthermore, various social movements (especially among the marginalized communities) in India are changing the landscape of social entrepreneurship, so understanding those social changes, challenges, and opportunities would be helpful to progress the field (Mair and Martí 2006). Based on the above discussion, we contend that:

Proposition 1: Social norms (e.g., caste) influence knowledge management practices in social enterprises in India.

Pursuing knowledge management is a multifaceted endeavor that extends beyond the confines of organizational boundaries, deeply intertwined with the intricate fabric of the social and cultural context in which it operates. In India, the social structure is intricately interwoven, strongly emphasizing collectivism and community ties. Within this framework, social enterprises prioritize knowledge sharing beyond individual roles and extend to communal well-being. The dissemination of knowledge is commonly achieved through networks, social circles, socialization in free time outside workplaces, and community gatherings, where tacit knowledge is passed down through generations. This collective approach fosters a sense of shared ownership and mutual support, which ultimately contributes to preserving and transmitting indigenous practices and wisdom. This deeply ingrained social fabric reinforces the belief that the

community's prosperity depends on its members' well-being, strengthening the bonds between people and their communities and enhancing knowledge management. Building on our findings and discussions above, we assert that:

Proposition 2: Socialization enhances knowledge management in social enterprises in India.

Second, overall empirical research on social enterprises is limited (Mair and Martí 2006; Short, Moss, and Lumpkin 2009; Mair 2020). social enterprises are knowledge-intensive organizations; however, there is a lack of empirical knowledge about how social enterprises operate, what challenges they face in managing knowledge, and how they try to overcome those (Lettieri, Borga, and Savoldelli 2004; Granados, Mohamed, and Hlupic 2017). Despite the growing interest in social entrepreneurship, significant gaps in conceptual and empirical research remain for multiple reasons. For example, such research faces methodological challenges, including access to data, because such organizations operate in complex environments (the multiple bottom lines - social, environmental, and financial) that make data collection challenging and add complexity to empirical research. Third, even when there is some research, knowledge management aspects of social enterprises have rarely been studied (Granados, Mohamed, and Hlupic 2017; Meyskens et al. 2010). Our research contributes empirically to the understanding of knowledge management in social enterprises.

Fourth, the significant limitation in the existing research on knowledge management is its predominant focus on for-profit organizations and offers a business-focused perspective, with limited attention given to understanding knowledge management practices in social enterprises. Research studies have been relatively scarce exploring how social enterprises develop, manage, and distribute knowledge within their organizations, as well as the factors that facilitate

knowledge management (Granados, Mohamed, and Hlupic 2017; Granados et al. 2011). It is incorrect to assume that the challenges and facilitators of knowledge management in for-profit organizations can be directly applied to social enterprises, non-profit organizations, and small and medium enterprises (SMEs), as each type of organization operates within unique contexts and dynamics (Hutchinson and Quintas 2008). The unique nature of these organizations necessitates a different approach to knowledge management. Consequently, our research bridges these gaps and contributes to emerging social enterprise research.

Finally, most research on knowledge management has focused on top management and managerial views, which some scholars find troubling and urge to bring diverse views (Granados, Mohamed, and Hlupic 2017). Our research brings multiple perspectives from different stakeholders on knowledge management in social enterprises, including senior leaders, employees, and volunteers' experiences, which scholars have urged to include to have a complete understanding of knowledge management activities and challenges in social enterprises (Granados, Mohamed, and Hlupic 2017; Granados et al. 2011). For example, volunteers carry important knowledge and help these organizations operate efficiently, so understanding their perspectives is essential, which our research tries to do.

5.1 Limitations and Future Directions

We acknowledge various limitations of our study. First, we included various social enterprises; however, our results might apply to social enterprises similar to the one in our research, given that there are almost 3 million social enterprises in India. At the same time, we had included social enterprises that were dealing with creating employment, addressing social exclusion and empowering women, promoting education, and supporting agriculture and allied activities, which, according to the British Council's (2016) report, make the majority of the social

enterprises' objective. So, our findings can apply to these types of social enterprises. Previous research has highlighted such difficulties in engaging with small businesses that it is challenging to incorporate all types of small enterprises (Hutchinson and Quintas 2008). Further, given the breadth and size of the sector and country, the sample size is small to generalize results to the whole social sector in India. However, we took various measures to bring data from various sources to have an all-inclusive understanding of the challenges and facilitators of knowledge management in social enterprises. Second, while scholars in the past have urged to bring in perspectives from different stakeholders in knowledge management (Granados, Mohamed, and Hlupic 2017), we bring perspectives of volunteers and employees, not just top management; however, as there are multiple stakeholders in knowledge management such as government, associations, networks, among others, future research could focus on those aspects. In the future, more detailed ethnographic and quantitative research would also add to understanding knowledge management practices and challenges at social enterprises.

Furthermore, sector-specific studies on social enterprises are limited. However, conducting such sector-specific studies can generate rich insights into best practices and are necessary for developing targeted interventions. Longitudinal studies would also help us understand the barriers and facilitators over time and changes in formal and informal ways of knowledge management in social enterprises as social enterprises mature. As we found inconsistent stakeholder demands make it challenging to manage knowledge, future research can also focus on understanding stakeholder management and engagement. According to our research, social enterprises in India face resource limitations that compel them to devise inventive knowledge management practices. These approaches developed out of necessity, prioritizing efficiently utilizing scarce resources and cooperating with stakeholders. These give rise to distinct

knowledge management practices worth further examining. Furthermore, more understanding of social enterprises in India through studying what leadership styles of social enterprises leaders is effective in managing knowledge would be an avenue. We lay the foundation for understanding knowledge management practices in the social enterprises in India, and we believe it would guide researchers to bring out nuances.

5.2 Practical and Social Implications

Practical Implications:

Our research shed light on several important practical implications of managing knowledge in social enterprises. First, evidence-based policy development and advocacy efforts are impossible without knowing the challenges and facilitators of knowledge management in social enterprises. So, the findings of our study can be used for policy development, influence decision-making processes, and advocacy efforts. Second, the study's findings can enable social enterprises to make informed decisions to become more effective, i.e., by understanding knowledge assets, social enterprises can align their social and economic mission by optimizing resource allocations and streamlining processes. Such understanding can also help social enterprises scale and become replicable, which remains challenging for these organizations.

Further, our study has implications for not only for how social enterprises will develop in the future but also other micro, small, and medium enterprises, as many of the features of these enterprises intersect with social enterprises, e.g., size and limited resources. So, learning from this study can also be used in other organizations that aim to achieve social inclusion and sustainability. Lastly, knowledge management practices bring together diverse stakeholders and involve them in different activities, so having the understanding that socialization works best for stakeholders and organizations, social enterprises can enhance the relevance of such efforts.

Social Implications:

Our study has various social implications. The research on understanding challenges and facilitators of knowledge management has the potential to enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of these organizations. First, understanding knowledge management in social enterprises can improve outcomes in addressing social and environmental challenges, as leveraging valuable knowledge organizations can enhance their abilities to create positive social impact. Second, knowledge-sharing creates a culture of collaboration among individuals working toward common goals, increasing cohesion and flow of ideas and helping organizations tackle complex social problems. Such initiatives can empower communities by enabling them to engage in organizations' activities, fostering an environment where they can shape their futures according to the community's needs. Third, these organizations can develop creative solutions to social and economic problems by capturing and disseminating knowledge. These organizations cannot work effectively without knowing what helps and what does not work concerning knowledge aspects.

To sum up, the research on managing knowledge in social enterprises has various practical and social implications that can significantly improve these organizations' operations, outcomes, and sustainability.

6. Concluding Remarks

Our study of social enterprises in India highlights the importance of understanding the barriers and facilitators social enterprises face in managing knowledge effectively. For the survival and growth of social enterprises, understanding barriers and facilitators of knowledge is crucial. Further, as cultural and social norms can also affect knowledge management practices, these

aspects must be considered while developing knowledge management practices. Finally, our study contributes to limited research on knowledge management in social enterprises in the Indian context.

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8. Appendices

8.1 Appendix I: Organizational Details

While we have provided detailed accounts of social enterprises, some identifying details have been withheld to maintain the anonymity of the organizations.

Social Enterprise 1 (SE 1)

Started in 2011, this social enterprise aims to provide quality academic support to underprivileged students in India. Founded by three colleagues who worked together and shared common goals, this enterprise has over 25 staff members and a vast network of over 300 mentors. These mentors regularly conduct workshops and online and offline classes for the students. Till now, it has trained over 15,000 students, and about 900 of them have acquired admission to top Indian and overseas universities. Primarily focused in central India, it runs experimental labs, libraries, and community centers. It focuses on hard-to-reach areas and first-generation learners. Inspired by it, alums and supporters have replicated the model in three different parts of India. It depends mostly on donations and support from the community, though it also provides seminars and training for businesses and has published books to raise money. During the Covid19 period, it also ventured into providing training and guidance to students in digital format. In the future, it plans to build its residential building so that students can stay for free while studying and build a network of alums and volunteers.

Social Enterprise 2 (SE 2)

This social enterprise encourages political participation and raises funds through consulting work for the government. It was started in 2014 by three individuals and is committed to strengthening democracy and citizen engagement. At present, it has about 20 full-time and part-time employees. It empowers individuals to participate in political processes and foster positive

change by working closely with government entities. It designs and implements educational programs to understand political systems, policies, and processes and has conducted seminars and workshops in schools, universities, and communities across India. To raise money, it provides evidence-based policies and generates reports for government entities seeking to enhance their efficiency, effectiveness, and public service delivery. According to the enterprise, all the revenue is reinvested into educational and advocacy initiatives for informed citizenship. Its goal is to increase its presence by collaborating with additional government agencies and organizations throughout various areas.

Social Enterprise 3 (SE 3)

A socially conscious enterprise has made its mission to uplift communities through education and literacy advancement. They aim to provide life-changing learning experiences and close the educational divide by implementing innovative solutions, including creating concise and engaging videos. The founder of this organization is a firm believer in the power of education and literacy as crucial drivers of societal progress and has been successfully running this initiative since 2016. Despite less than ten employees and a lack of proper facilities, it has made a mark in parts of eastern India, where local community members trust it. It works closely with schools, colleges, community organizations, government bodies, and private sector organizations to design and create innovative teaching materials, interactive learning platforms, and teacher training modules. These activities earn the organization a part of its revenues. It also gets funds from big businesses' corporate social responsibility activities.

Social Enterprise 4 (SE 4)

Founded in 2015 by five friends, this social enterprise targets first-generation learners from marginalized communities by providing them with training and helping them acquire admission

to national and foreign universities. Founders come from the first generation educated and aim to break the cycle of poverty by providing marginalized educational opportunities. Before starting this enterprise, the founders also worked at various other social enterprises and sectors for several years. Its operation is focused on central India and brings scholars from across India to train and guide its students. The organization focuses on remote areas. Since its start, the enterprise has trained over 2,500 students, with almost 1,000 securing admission to national universities or secure jobs. Some of the students have also managed to go overseas to study with full scholarships. In the future, it aims to expand its operations to other parts of India and make a more significant social impact. It conducts paid skill development training for revenue generation and relies on donations and grants. During the Covid19 period, it faced multiple challenges to continue its operations, such as keeping students engaged and providing them with digital tools to stay connected to their studies.

Social Enterprise 5 (SE 5)

This social enterprise addresses the pressing issue of clean water access in underserved communities. The idea and motivation to start this enterprise are personal to the founders, two brothers, and their father. They have seen their parents and family falling ill from drinking contaminated water. So, after both brothers graduated from engineering university, they started this social enterprise in 2015 and have been operating in the western part of India. Though the challenges remain in scaling, it has been consistently growing in terms of the number of employees and revenue. The organization currently has about 20 employees and aims to grow in the coming years to different geographic areas. The organization also generates revenues by offering cutting-edge water-cleaning products to a broader market. Its product line includes portable water filters for individual use and larger filtration systems suitable for households,

schools, and community centers. Aside from providing water-cleaning products, the enterprise also provides extensive training and education programs. These initiatives aim to educate and empower local communities with knowledge about water hygiene, sanitation, and sustainable water management practices. Through the years, the enterprise has successfully impacted countless lives by providing a reliable source of clean water and raising awareness about water-related health issues.

Social Enterprise 6 (SE 6)

Founded in 2016, this social enterprise creates positive social change by uplifting vulnerable children and marginalized communities. The organization is dedicated to supporting vulnerable children who face unique challenges, such as those who have been orphaned, abandoned, or economically disadvantaged. Through its various initiatives, it strives to provide access to top-quality education, skill development, and empowerment programs. By equipping these individuals with the necessary tools and resources, it believes that we can help break the cycle of poverty and enable them to lead successful, fulfilling lives. This organization works closely with government agencies to develop and execute comprehensive policies, programs, and initiatives that cater to the requirements of disadvantaged children and marginalized communities.

Moreover, it provides customized consultancy services to enterprises that want to augment their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities. Specifically, the organization assists them in devising influential social programs and collaborations that align with their principles and significantly contribute to society.

Social Enterprise 7 (SE 7)

Established in 2012 by three compassionate individuals, this remarkable organization has set out to tackle social exclusion and inequality. Their approach is centered around providing skills

development training to marginalized and underserved individuals, which in turn boosts their employability and helps them secure stable jobs. To achieve this, they work closely with local community organizations and NGOs to identify and reach individuals who can benefit most from their programs. Operating in the northern region of India, this organization has a dedicated team of about 20 individuals committed to their mission. Their skills development training programs cater to various industries and sectors, including hospitality, retail, information technology, and vocational trades. Those who can afford to pay a nominal fee for enrolling in these programs also contribute to the organization's revenue generation, subsidizing training for those who cannot afford to pay. This approach ensures that nobody is left behind and everyone gets a fair chance to succeed. This organization plans to expand to new regions, diversify its training offerings, and partner with corporate entities.

Social Enterprise 8 (SE 8)

This esteemed social enterprise, established in 2010, is situated in the eastern region of India and is dedicated to preserving and promoting the area's cultural heritage. Alongside this objective, the enterprise also aims to provide sustainable livelihood opportunities to the local communities. Its unwavering mission is to celebrate and share the region's rich history, art, and traditions through immersive cultural tours. With a team of around 30 individuals comprising knowledgeable and experienced tour guides, this social enterprise generates revenues through guided cultural tours at historical and heritage sites and through fund-raising donation campaigns. The enterprise offers unique, interactive, and educational experiences that connect travelers with the local culture, history, and traditions. It collaborates with local cultural organizations, museums, and heritage groups to enhance the quality of tours. The enterprise also

engages participants in hands-on paid workshops to create an immersive and memorable experience.

Social Enterprise 9 (SE 9)

This enterprise was started in 2015 by someone who believes in the pay-it-forward philosophy.

This organization was founded by an individual who understands the value of support from others. Its main objective is to equip individuals with the necessary knowledge and skills to overcome obstacles, attain better opportunities, and become active community participants. It targets individuals from lower strata of society and employs about 20 people. Primarily based in central India, this organization also has offices in southern India. The organization offers various skills development programs, workshops, and courses on vocational skills, digital literacy, and communication. While participants are required to pay a small fee for these programs, the revenue generated is used to provide scholarships to those from underprivileged backgrounds. Furthermore, the organization also provides consulting services to private sector companies that invest in it through their CSR funds.

Social Enterprise 10 (SE 10)

Established in 2012, this socially responsible and vibrant enterprise is deeply committed to preserving and promoting cultural heritage while fostering economic empowerment within local communities. Situated in the south-eastern part of India, it employs a team of 30 individuals, mainly part-time. The enterprise has an unwavering passion for diverse cultures and traditions of tribal populations, reflected in its unique approach to curating and showcasing authentic artifacts and cultural items from various regions. It connects artisans and craftspeople from across the regions, and the enterprise aims to safeguard traditional practices, craftsmanship, and artistry that are at risk of fading away. The enterprise also organizes cultural tours and operates both as an

online marketplace and a physical store, offering a carefully curated selection of culturally significant artifacts, handicrafts, and artisanal products. Its diverse range of products includes intricately woven textiles, hand-painted ceramics, traditional garments, and other culturally rich creations.

Social Enterprise 11 (SE 11)

Founded in 2014 by someone who has worked in the social sector for over a decade, this organization aims to address social exclusion and inequality by providing skills development training to marginalized individuals, boosting their employability, and enabling them to secure stable jobs. It works closely with local community organizations to identify and reach individuals who can benefit most from our programs. It operates in central India and employs about 20 individuals. It offers a range of skills development training programs that cater to various industries and sectors, such as information technology. Those who can afford to pay a nominal fee for enrolling in these programs contribute to its revenue generation, and this also subsidizes training for those who cannot afford to pay. It also earns a part of its income from conducting business seminars and consulting for governmental and private entities.

Social Enterprise 12 (SE 12)

This enterprise was started in 2013 by a female entrepreneur. It aims to address education and literacy among marginalized sections in central India. It is rooted in the belief that education is a fundamental human right and a key driver of socio-economic progress and centers all its activities around the same. Over the last decade, it has partnered with schools, colleges, and local organizations to develop educational programs that empower learners of all ages. It employs about 20 full-time and part-time employees. Its programs range from early childhood literacy initiatives to adult education classes to evening schools, fostering a culture of lifelong learning.

The enterprise also offers a range of career-focused workshops, scholarship opportunities sessions, training sessions, and coaching services that enable it to stay afloat.

Social Enterprise 13 (SE 13)

This social enterprise was founded in 2015 and operates with about 20 employees. It aims to address the social exclusion that lower castes, LGBTQ+, and minority groups, among others, face in society. Since its inception, it has been working on the principles of equality, diversity, and inclusion within organizations and society. It equips businesses with the knowledge and tools they need to create inclusive workplaces, specifically through conducting seminars, training, and workshops for businesses on diversity and inclusion aspects. It has published reports, educational toolkits, and guides for industry and has influenced decisions. It has struggled to keep up with the increasing expenses and depends mostly on grants from businesses and others. It plans to scale up and collaborate with diverse NGOs and community groups to make a broader impact.

Social Enterprise 14 (SE 14)

This social enterprise, founded in 2014, despite having a small number of employees (about 20) has managed to have operations at three different locations in India. The founder believes that its strength lies in understanding the grassroots problems of poverty and innovative ways to overcome them. It aims to lift individuals and communities out of the cycle of poverty through skills development training and creating employment opportunities. As it is located near the IT hub of India, it primarily caters to the needs of IT companies and gets individuals ready for IT jobs with hands-on experience. It charges businesses a certain amount for each successful placement and invests that into training those who cannot afford to pay for training. It also runs

residential hostels on the outskirts of two major cities for students who come to cities looking for job opportunities and hosts the students at minimum charges.

Social Enterprise 15 (SE 15)

This social enterprise was founded by a person who was supported by others during his education years, so giving back to society was on his mind. He started this to empower individuals with the knowledge and skills they need to overcome barriers of social stigma of disability, access better opportunities, and become active participants in their communities. It offers a range of skills development programs for disabled individuals, workshops, and courses in areas such as vocational skills, IT training, digital literacy, and communication. While participants pay a nominal fee for these programs, a portion of our revenue is reinvested into providing scholarships for individuals from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. It also does consulting work for government bodies and the private sector, companies that invest in it from their CSR funds. The founder mentioned that the organization faced multiple challenges, such as infrastructure limitations, funding constraints, and cultural barriers. However, he believes that these challenges have driven the organization to be more innovative, resilient, and adaptable in its approach to social issues and economic sustainability.

Social Enterprise 16 (SE 16)

Started in 2015, this social enterprise, with about 15 employees, is dedicated to addressing the social exclusion of tribal communities and fostering economic empowerment. It recognizes the limited access to education, skills, and economic opportunities that tribal communities of the eastern part of India face. Using local knowledge, it has designed community programs, training, and skill development programs, imparting practical skills and empowering individuals to become self-reliant. Earning operating costs mostly depends on volunteers, donations, and funds

from businesses, and it sometimes conducts paid training seminars for businesses, bringing local knowledge to meet businesses' needs. It also connects trained individuals with employment opportunities within these businesses, helping businesses diversify their workforce.

Social Enterprise 17 (SE 17)

This social enterprise, founded in 2015, is dedicated to transforming agricultural communities through sustainable dairy production. The founder has received an agriculture engineering degree and operates this enterprise with about ten full- and part-time employees, with volunteers supporting its activities. It is based in a small town in northern India. The main objective is to support small-scale farmers, enabling them to increase their income and improve their living standards in rural areas. Doing so also ensures that the local population can access safe and nutritious dairy products, such as milk, yogurt, cheese, and ghee (clarified butter). It also relies on local farmers to understand the needs and opportunities. So, it has built a network of farmers and veterinary experts that the organization can approach for its activities. In the past, it has also collaborated with some businesses from abroad and received funds from foreign.

Social Enterprise 18 (SE 18)

Founded in 2016, this social enterprise with about 20 employees is primarily based in South India, even though it also has some offices in North India. It started when a group of lawyers came together to solve issues of lack of legal guidance and access to justice that marginalized face. The primary objective of this initiative is to narrow the disparities between legal services and underprivileged communities. It is achieved by providing proficient free legal advice for people, working in unison with government organizations, and conducting informative workshops. It earns a part of its revenue by consulting government legal bodies and designing

and running workshops for them; however, a significant part comes from grants and donations. In the future, it aims to utilize technology, e.g., creating informative videos to fulfill its aims.

Social Enterprise 19 (SE 19)

Established in 2012, this social enterprise, based in a small town in northern India, employs about 25 employees (mainly part-time). It aims to build pathways for women's economic empowerment and leadership development. It achieves its goals through training and mentorship programs dedicated to women, helping them build confidence, develop leadership competencies, and enhance their entrepreneurial capabilities. Through all these activities, it aims for a future where women's empowerment is not an aspiration but a reality. It had its short success when an organization in the USA invited a couple of team members to collaborate and work together in the USA for some time. It earns some of its income from consulting work producing reports for government and private bodies to influence corporate practices, but it largely depends on grants. Despite operating for almost a decade, it suffers multiple challenges, e.g., the need for proper office and funds.

Social Enterprise 20 (SE 20)

Established in 2014, this social enterprise's founder describes it as a social organization that is not money-hungry. It is based in a small town in central India and employs about 15 full and part-time individuals. It is committed to addressing unemployment and digital literacy issues within underserved communities. Understanding the power of technology to change lives, it provides computer training and runs comprehensive programs covering topics such as resume building, interview skills, networking, and job search strategies. It generates income from those who can afford to pay for its training and subsidize those who cannot. It also generates income by selling refurbished computer parts and helps reduce electronic waste simultaneously. In the

future, it aims to expand beyond a small town and collaborate with big IT companies to send its trainees.

Social Enterprise 21 (SE 21)

Founded in 2015, this social enterprise aims to provide access to medical services and bridge the healthcare gap in marginalized areas by delivering comprehensive medical services. It runs medical vans traveling to remote areas in southern India to learn about local challenges, treat patients, and offer on-site medical consultations. Primarily, its team has about 30 doctors who work primarily part-time and during the weekends. It has forged strong partnerships with government health departments, NGOs, and private organizations that share its vision. Through strategic alliances, it secures contracts to provide medical services from government and private agencies. These contracts generate income and enable it to expand its reach and serve more beneficiaries. It also charges a certain minimum amount from patients who can afford it, but most money it raises from private bodies.

Social Enterprise 22 (SE 22)

This social enterprise was founded in 2013 by a female who worked in the sector for over a decade. It has about 15 full and part-time employees and is based in northern India. The founder believes in transformative power art, and the organization aims to empower and uplift women through art and craft. It has set up training programs and community art projects in villages and provides material to women in villages to do certain arts and crafts work, which it takes to sell in the city. It has also set up an online store to sell art and crafts created by women. It has also consulted on gender-sensitive policy-making for the government and private sector, bringing it money. However, the primary income comes from selling the art-work, grants, and donations.

8.2 Appendix II: Interview Protocol for Semi-Structured Interviews

Date of interview:

Interviewee:

Location of interview:

Welcome message and consent: Namaste (Welcome). My name is Pardeep, and I thank you for agreeing to participate in this study on knowledge management in social enterprises. I appreciate your time and insights and look forward to discussing your experiences and perspectives in this important area of work.

- Tell them more about the study and the confidentiality nature.
- Ask if they allow me to record the interviews.
- Ask if they give me consent to use their anonymized data and tell them they can revoke consent anytime during the study/Confirm consent form.
- Remind them to speak for themselves and their own experiences.
- Remind them to respect the privacy of colleagues and no need to disclose names.
- Ask participants if they have any additional questions about the study.

Biography/Background Information

- Can you tell me a little bit about yourself? (Charmaz, 2006; Spradley, 1979)
 - Prompts for the level of education, background, gender,
- Can you tell me about your work? (Charmaz, 2006; McCracken, 1988; Casey, 2016)
 - Prompts for previous experiences, current title, role in the organization, number of years in the social sector, number of employees, and location(s)
 - Prompts for key priorities and responsibilities involved in the work.
- What motivated you to join this sector?

Knowledge Management

- Can you describe how does your organization typically collects data, information, and knowledge? (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995)

- Prompts for whether there is anyone responsible for managing knowledge – leader of knowledge management program.
 - Prompts for whether it is on paper, computer or in people's head.
- Can you describe how does your organization typically uses, coordinate and distribute knowledge? (Droege & Hoobler, 2003; Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995)
 - Prompts for IT practices and role of IT
 - Prompts for frequency and nature of staff coordination meetings – the collective culture of knowledge sharing.
- Describe how does your organization protects data/information/knowledge? (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995)
 - Prompts for how records are managed (electronically or manually) within the organization.
 - Prompts for where up-to-date information can be found within the organization.
- Can you describe how does your organization captures tacit knowledge (e.g., know-how, unwritten codes of work)? (Hofer and Charan, 1984; Rothwell, 2010; Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995)
 - What works and what does not.
 - Are there any mentoring programs where tacit knowledge is passed?
- Can you describe how your organization make tacit knowledge explicit (e.g., documents) and/or available to others? (Hofer and Charan, 1984; Rothwell, 2010; Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995)
 - What works and what does not.
 - Challenges?
- Can you provide an example of a time when you successfully shared or transferred knowledge to benefit the organization or team?
- What are the challenges faced in acquiring knowledge? (Rothwell, 2010)
 - Prompts on how the organization tries to overcome those challenges.
- What are the challenges faced in implementing knowledge? (Rothwell, 2010)
 - Prompts on how the organization tries to overcome those challenges.
- What are the challenges faced in distributing knowledge? (Rothwell, 2010)
 - Prompts on how the organization tries to overcome those challenges.

Questions specific to volunteers

- Why did you decide to volunteer at this organization?
- Do you feel involved in the organization?
- How does the organization involve you in various activities?
- Does it provide you with enough resources, information?
- Can you provide an example of a time when you successfully shared or transferred knowledge to benefit the organization or team?
- What tools do you use to document knowledge gained through your volunteer experiences? Describe your experiences of using those tools.
- Have you ever encountered any challenges in sharing your knowledge within the organization?
 - If yes, describe the context and the challenges.
- Are you familiar with the organization's tools to keep records or maintain knowledge?
 - If yes, describe your experiences of using those tools.

Closing

- Are there other important aspects of your experiences of working at social enterprises that you feel I have left out?
 - Please share if any
- Are there other people you suggest I speak with to understand social enterprises and knowledge management practices better?
- Let's return to the topic of consent. Do you wish to stand by your previous decisions, or would you like to make any changes to your consent form?

8.3 Appendix III: Informed Consent Form

Title of Study: Managing Knowledge in Social Enterprises: Understanding Barriers and Facilitators

Researcher: Pardeep Singh Attri

Supervisor: Davide Torsello

Thank you for considering participating in this study. This form details the study's purpose and your rights as a participant.

Purpose of Study: The purpose of the study is to gain a deeper understanding of what knowledge management means in social enterprises and the barriers and facilitators of knowledge management in social enterprises.

Study Procedures: If you agree to participate in the study, you will be invited to one-to-one interview where we will discuss various aspects of your work experiences and knowledge management practices and challenges in social enterprises. The session will last approximately 60 minutes and will take place at a mutually agreed-upon location or through a virtual platform, such as Zoom.

Confidentiality: All information collected during this study will be treated with strict confidentiality. The interview will be audio-recorded for accurate data collection and analysis. However, your data will never be shared with anyone else, and the interviewer will only hear recordings. If you feel uncomfortable sharing your data while recording, you may ask to turn off the recorder anytime. Further, your data will be anonymized while writing the report and will be used solely for the purpose of this study.

Voluntary Participation: Your participation in this study is voluntary, and no reward will be offered. You also have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without providing a reason. If you withdraw consent at any point in time during the study, your data will be erased. Your decision to participate or withdraw will in no way affect your current or future relationship with your organization as your data will not be shared with your organization.

Risks and Benefits: Participating in this study involves no risks. However, it is possible that you may feel some discomfort while discussing certain topics related to knowledge management practices. On the other hand, benefits include the opportunity to contribute to the understanding of knowledge management in social enterprises.

Contact Information: If you have any questions or concerns about the study, you can contact me at attri_pardeep@phd.ceu.edu or WhatsApp at +36/70-55-29-553.

By participating in this study, you acknowledge that you have read and understood the information provided in this consent form.

Participant's Name: _____

Participant's Signature: _____

Date: _____

Researcher's Name: _____

Researcher's Signature: _____

Date: _____

Essay 2: Unpacking Talent Management Practices in Social Enterprises in India

Abstract

Over the years, talent management has gained significant attention both in for-profit and not-for-profit organizations. However, the concept remains relatively understudied when it comes to social enterprises that combine business and social objectives. This research aims to fill this gap by exploring what talent and talent management mean in social enterprises and what talent management practices these organizations follow. We conducted 17 interviews with experts from different social enterprises operating in India. We found that what talent and talent management mean to these organizations differs from what is considered talent and talent management in traditional businesses. For instance, talent management practices in social enterprises are driven by social purpose. Further, social enterprises focus on inclusive aspects and practice inclusive talent management practices for talent management. Our study contributes to the literature on talent management, explicitly emerging literature on inclusive talent management.

Keywords: Talent, Talent Management, Inclusive Talent Management, Social Enterprises

1. Introduction

Talent management is paramount if organizations want to retain good employees and stay competitive (Collings and Paauwe 2015; Kaliannan et al. 2023; Collings, Scullion, and Vaiman 2011). It enables organizations to identify and nurture individuals, aligning their abilities with organizational goals and optimizing employee performance (Collings and Mellahi 2009; Tansley 2011). Furthermore, talent management is a strategic approach to succession planning. However, much focus on talent management has remained on exclusive talent management, i.e., finding a few talented individuals and getting them ready for future tasks (Thunnissen, Boselie, and Fruytier 2013). Such an exclusive approach generates animosity among employees and is ineffective in making organizations diverse and inclusive (Gallardo-Gallardo, Dries, and González-Cruz 2013).

At the same time, organizations are increasingly facing challenges associated with acquiring and retaining talent (Kulkarni and Scullion 2015), and competition to attract talent has increased after the recent recessions as many key individuals left organizations (Sparrow, Farndale, and Scullion 2013; Tarique and Schuler 2010). Specifically, to social enterprises, challenges do not decline as they mature. According to RippleWorks, an organization catering to the needs of social ventures, while funding and resources challenges become smaller, talent management challenges only worsen as social enterprises mature, as there is a lack of structured programs to access talent (RippleWorks n.d.).

Understanding talent management practices in social enterprises is vital for multiple reasons. First, social enterprises have unique types of organizations that deal with social or environmental issues along with pursuing economic activities. Understanding talent and having a set of practices to achieve multiple goals and have a more significant impact is essential. Second,

social enterprises often operate with limited resources, making it necessary to maximize the utilization of talent.

Furthermore, Collings and colleagues (2011) found that while the field of talent management is progressing, it remains US-centric, and the situation has not changed since then, with most research on talent management still focusing on Western contexts (Collings and Paauwe 2015; Kaliannan et al. 2023). In their review of talent management literature, Thunnissen and colleagues (2013, 1744) find that it is “too narrow and one-dimensional,” focused mainly on the managerial approach that focuses on organizational perspectives and has a limited perspective of practices and activities from different stakeholders. Collings and colleagues (2011) called for a balance and asked to bring different perspectives and traditions in talent management research. Moreover, much focus on talent management research has remained in the private sector, for-profit, and multinationals (M. Powell et al. 2012; Thunnissen, Boselie, and Fruytier 2013). This research is also needed to broaden and develop the view of talent management and bring different perspectives from social enterprises (Thunnissen, Boselie, and Fruytier 2013).

On social enterprises front as well, there remains limited empirical research, and research is narrowly focused, covering definitions and descriptions of social enterprises (Gonçalves, Carrara, and Schmittel 2016). Furthermore, scholars from talent management have also argued that more theory is required on talent management to have a better understanding and have suggested exploring different industries and sectors rather than focusing on traditional businesses (Gallardo-Gallardo, Dries, and González-Cruz 2013; Gallardo-Gallardo, Thunnissen, and Scullion 2019). As conceptualization and implementation of talent management can differ across organizations, sectors, countries, and/or cultural levels, using different contexts for

understanding talent management practices will enhance the field and enable critical examination of the talent management frameworks (Gallardo-Gallardo, Dries, and González-Cruz 2013; Thunnissen, Boselie, and Fruytier 2013).

Further, scholars have argued that social and cultural context can influence talent management practices. Cooke and Saini (2012) and Cooke, Saini, and Wang (2014) highlight that for managing talent in India, cultural diversity and social hierarchies based on the caste system were two major barriers. However, their research is not focused on social enterprises, but given the caste being an important feature of lives of Indians, it can be argued that it plays a role in social enterprises as well (Chrispal, Bapuji, and Zietsma 2021). Also, in non-profit organizations, anecdotal evidence suggest that caste plays a role. As we also found some evidence in previous essay that caste matters in social enterprises in India, so in this essay, we also aimed to understand whether caste impact talent management practices in social enterprises. So, in this essay, we examine the following research questions:

How is the concept of talent and talent management understood in social enterprises, how is talent management practiced in social enterprises, and whether caste influences those talent management practices?

To answer these questions, we conducted 17 interviews with experts from seven different social enterprises in India. We found that what talent and talent management mean to these organizations is not the same what is considered talent and talent management in traditional businesses. We found three talent management practices in social enterprises, namely: “purpose-driven recruitment,” “inclusive training and development,” optimizing employee performance

and engagement.” All these suggest that social enterprises focus on inclusive aspects and practice inclusive talent management practices for talent management.

In this essay, we seek to contribute to the empirical and conceptual understanding of talent management in social enterprises in India. We contribute to the growing literature on talent management, especially under-researched and less-focused inclusive talent management attributes of social enterprises. The study is also significant for its contribution to building effective practices for practitioners in social enterprises who can use understanding from this to develop more robust and better organizations. We also bring the lived experience of diverse employees, which scholars have asked and urged to bring to make organizational research more inclusive. Lastly, our research contributes to understanding the broader field of social entrepreneurship and sustainable business practices.

The rest of the essay is organized as follows. First, we provide a theoretical background on social enterprises, talent, talent management and briefly discuss these concepts in social enterprises. Second, we describe the methodology of our qualitative study regarding context, data collection, and analysis. Third, we present findings regarding how talent and talent management is understood in social enterprises. Further, we list our findings on talent management practices and finally, we discuss the theoretical, social, and practical implications of our findings and conclude with limitations and future directions.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1 Social Enterprises

The phenomenon of social entrepreneurship is relatively recent and was almost non-existent until the end of the 1990s, though corporate social responsibility has been used since the 1960s

(Mulloth, Kickul, and Gundry 2016; Peterson and Schenker 2018; Short, Moss, and Lumpkin 2009). Since then, the phenomenon of social enterprises seeking solutions to societal problems through revenue-generating activities has attracted the attention of various policymakers, practitioners, and research scholars (Haugh 2012; Mair and Martí 2006; Short, Moss, and Lumpkin 2009). All these different interest groups have “acknowledged the potential of social enterprise to efficiently and effectively deliver goods and services to impoverished and hard-to-reach individuals and groups” (Haugh 2012, 9). Some famous examples of social enterprises are the Grameen Bank of Bangladesh, which provides microfinance to empower impoverished individuals, and Aravind Eye Hospital in India, which provides high-quality and low-cost eye care services to underserved populations, including cataract surgeries. Primarily, a social enterprise is an organization that aims to achieve social, environmental, or cultural goals while also generating sustainable revenue by selling goods or services. These enterprises combine aspects of traditional business models and non-profit organizations, integrating social or environmental objectives into their core operations (P. A. Dacin, Dacin, and Matear 2010; M. T. Dacin, Dacin, and Tracey 2011).

At the same time, there remains disagreement among scholars on the universal definitions of social entrepreneurship or social enterprise as the boundaries of these are expanding (P. A. Dacin, Dacin, and Matear 2010; Zahra et al. 2009), lines between for-profit and non-profit are blurring (Dees and Anderson 2003), and the phenomenon of social entrepreneurship can be applied to non-profit and for-profit, making it a complex task for scholars to define social enterprises (P. A. Dacin, Dacin, and Matear 2010; Dees 1998; Haugh 2012). For example, Dacin and colleagues (2010) present 37 different definitions of social entrepreneurship/entrepreneurs. Many of these definitions arise because of the nature of the social enterprises and activities that

can be considered under social entrepreneurship (Seelos and Mair 2005). Further, as different paradigms and theoretical underpinnings are brought from various other fields, these also give rise to various definitions (Haugh 2012; Peterson and Schenker 2018).

While social enterprises can be for-profit or non-profit (Bacq and Janssen 2011; Dees and Anderson 2003), their main objective is to promote social values rather than maximize financial profits, regardless of the lack of definition (Bacq and Janssen 2011; Defourny and Nyssens 2010). The social mission remains central to social entrepreneurship and social enterprises, and commitment to social goals is necessary no matter what legal form (Defourny and Nyssens 2010; Austin, Stevenson, and Wei-Skillern 2006; Dees and Anderson 2003; Bacq and Janssen 2011). Moreover, some have argued that financing is not a significant concern in defining social enterprises, and it can be done through the organization's activities or donations (Bacq and Janssen 2011). While on the other hand, other scholars have argued that scholar enterprises serve a social purpose, earn a part of the money required to serve that purpose, and do not share profit with shareholders but invest back into the organization (Weerawardena and Sullivan Mort 2006; P. A. Dacin, Dacin, and Matear 2010; Seelos and Mair 2005). However, some have also argued that reinvesting any financial profits is not an obligation if social values are created and social goals remain at the forefront (Bacq and Janssen 2011). For this research, we focus only on such organizations, i.e., those who serve social goals and earn at least a part of their income through economic activities.

Social enterprises play a crucial role in improving society by tackling various problems such as poverty, education, healthcare, environmental sustainability, and community development, which governments of almost all countries are shying away from. These organizations generate at least a part of their income, which reduces their reliance on traditional

fundraising and grants, making them financially stable and sustainable in the long run (Seelos and Mair 2005). These organizations also give marginalized communities and individuals a voice by offering employment opportunities and training programs and promoting social inclusion. So, understanding various practices within these organizations is essential to comprehend their work and building better social enterprises to achieve their goals. However, most research on social enterprises has focused on describing the features, characteristics, and qualities of social entrepreneurs and social enterprises, taking an actor-centered perspective. It has paid little attention to practices within these, such as talent management or stakeholder engagement practices (Haugh 2012).

There are various challenges that social enterprises face, one of which remains the challenge of navigating social impact and financial sustainability, as social enterprises often operate in resource-constrained environments (Weerawardena and Sullivan Mort 2006). So, they must manage within limited resources, making managing their human resources and talent essential for long-term gains; however, we know very little about talent management practices in social enterprises (Manimala and Bhati 2012).

Furthermore, most research on social entrepreneurship has used research methodology favoring a conceptual approach, and empirical research has remained limited (Mair 2020; Short, Moss, and Lumpkin 2009). Moreover, most research on social entrepreneurship remains in Western contexts, and developing countries such as India have received little attention despite most social enterprises existing in India. We also discuss social enterprises in India under the methodology section as a context. Next, we discuss the literature on talent management.

2.2 Talent Management

This section presents theoretical background of talent management covered in different fields.

We specifically focus on understanding what previous research has shown on what is talent and talent management.

2.2.1 What is “Talent”?

The term “talent” can be quite ambiguous and be interpreted very differently by various individuals, and there is no consensus among scholars on what constitutes talent, and there remains conceptual ambiguity (Dries 2013; Gallardo-Gallardo, Dries, and González-Cruz 2013; Tansley 2011). The concept of talent is not completely understood even by the C-suite executives at the top organizations (Ulrich and Smallwood 2012). Some have suggested that “talent can mean whatever a business leader or writer wants it to mean, since everyone has his or her own idea of what the construct does and does not encompass” (Gallardo-Gallardo, Dries, and González-Cruz 2013, 291). Even authors who offer a definition of talent management often fail to define what “talent” is (e.g., (Dries 2013; Cappelli 2008)). Please see Table 1 for multiple definitions of talent.

Human capital theory, initially developed by economists such as Gary Becker and Theodore Schultz in the 1960s, underscores the idea that investing in individuals' education, training, and development would enhance their productivity and economic contributions to the organizations (Lepak and Snell 1999; 2002). Human capital is often regarded as a critical antecedent to talent management, influencing how organizations attract, develop, and retain their workforce to achieve competitive advantage and sustainable success (De Vos and Dries 2013).

According to Lepak and Snell (1999; 2002), there are two essential categories that any organization's human capital can be classified into: value and uniqueness. Value refers to the potential of the human capital to contribute to the organization's core competence and enhance its competitive advantage (De Vos and Dries 2013). Uniqueness, on the other hand, measures the degree to which the organization's human capital is irreplaceable, with high uniqueness being challenging to replace and low uniqueness being readily available in the labor market and quickly copied by competitors (De Vos and Dries 2013).

Table 1: Different Definitions of Talent Used in Literature

| Reference | Definition of talent |
|---|--|
| Gagné (2000) | "... superior mastery of systematically developed abilities or skills" (p. 67) |
| Buckingham and Vosburgh (2001) | "Talent should refer to a person's recurring patterns of thought, feeling, or behavior that can be productively applied." (p. 21) |
| Lewis and Heckman (2006) | "... is essentially a euphemism for 'people'" (p. 141) |
| Tansley, Harris, Stewart, and Turner (2006) | "Talent can be considered as a complex amalgam of employees' skills, knowledge, cognitive ability and potential. Employees' values and work preferences are also of major importance." (p. 2) |
| Stahl et al. (2007) | " a select group of employees – those that rank at the top in terms of capability and performance – rather than the entire workforce". (p. 4) |
| Ulrich (2007) | "Talent equals competence [able to do the job] times commitment [willing to do the job] times contribution [finding meaning and purpose in their work]" (p. 3) |
| Silzer and Dowell (2010) | "(...) in some cases, 'the talent' might refer to the entire employee population." (p. 14) |
| Silzer and Dowell (2010) | "In groups talent can refer to a pool of employees who are exceptional in their skills and abilities either in a specific technical area (such as software graphics skills) or a competency (such a consumer marketing talent), or a more general area (such as general managers or high-potential talent). And in some cases, "the talent" might refer to the entire employee population." (pp. 13–14) |
| Bethke-Langenegger (2012) | "we understand talent to be one of those worker who ensures the competitiveness and future of a company (as specialist or leader) through his organisational/job specific qualification and knowledge, his social and methodical competencies, and his characteristic attributes such as eager to learn or achievement oriented" (p. 3) |

Adapted from Gallardo-Gallardo et al., 2013.

Further, in different languages, the meaning of talent is also different (Tansley 2011). Tansley (2011) finds that the definitions of talent frequently depend heavily on the type of job being done and are unique to each organization. Further, she also found that management consultants remain highly influential in the development of the term.

Gallardo-Gallardo et al. (2013) distinguish between the talent-as-object approach (i.e., talent as natural ability; talent as mastery; talent as a commitment; talent as fit) and talent-as-subject approach (i.e., talent as all people; talent as some people). The talent-as-subject approach focuses primarily on inclusive (i.e., all are talent) versus exclusive approach (segmenting the workforce) to talent. However, overall, the focus on talent within organizations has been on a few individuals who set themselves apart from others, and in line with this, most peer-reviewed publications conceptualize talent as exceptional characteristics demonstrated by individual employees (Gallardo-Gallardo et al. 2013).

As evidenced by the above discussion, talent can mean different things to different individuals and organizations; however, we do not know what talent means within social enterprises that serve a dual purpose (social and economic). So, in this research, finding what talent means within social enterprises is one of the goals.

2.2.2 Talent Management

In the late 1990s, McKinsey consultants introduced a famous phrase, “the war for talent,” in the management lexicon that brought the attention and interest of scholars and practitioners toward talent management (Chambers et al. 1998). The phrase demonstrates how high-potential

individuals contribute to organizational success, and organizations fight to bring those high-potential employees. So, talent management has become an increasingly important feature of human resources management, with talent considered a competitive advantage (Ashton and Morton 2005; Collings and Paauwe 2015).

While employees bring knowledge and skills to organizations, organizations face talent shortages for multiple reasons, such as global competition for talent (Sparrow, Farndale, and Scullion 2013), making attracting and retaining talent challenging (Collings and Mellahi 2009). Further, competition to attract talent has increased after the recent recessions “given the outflow of key people from many organizations” (Sparrow et al. 2013, 1777; Tarique and Schuler 2010).

Overall, there remains little consensus regarding the definition of talent and talent management and what activities or practices constitute talent management (Lewis and Heckman 2006; Tansley 2011), and scholars have used various definitions for talent management. The lack of clarity on the definition of talent management, along with “vague but appealing rhetoric,” also gives opportunities to critics question whether “whether talent management is not just a management fashion” (Dries 2013, 274). Please see Table 2 for various definitions scholars have used for talent management.

Table 2: Definitions of Talent Management

| Reference | Definition of talent management |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| Sloan, Hazucha, and Van Katwyk (2003) | “Managing leadership talent strategically, to put the right person in the right place at the right time ” (p. 236) |
| Pascal (2004) | “Talent management encompasses managing the supply, demand, and flow of talent through the human capital engine” (p. 9) |
| Duttagupta (2005) | “In the broadest possible terms, TM is the strategic management of the flow of talent through an organization . Its purpose is to assure that a supply of talent is available to align the right people with the right jobs at the right time based on strategic business objectives” (p. 2) |

| | |
|-------------------------------|---|
| Cappelli (2008) | “At its heart, talent management is simply a matter of anticipating the need for human capital and setting out a plan to meet it ” (p. 1) |
| Silzer and Dowell (2010) | “Talent management is an integrated set of processes, programs, and cultural norms in an organization designed and implemented to attract, develop, deploy, and retain talent to achieve strategic objectives and meet future business needs” (p. 18) |
| Jerusalim and Hausdorf (2007) | “High potential identification and development (also known as talent management) refers to the process by which an organization identifies and develops employees who are potentially able to move into leadership roles sometime in the future” (p. 934) |
| Warren (2006) | “In its broadest sense, the term can be seen as the identification, development, engagement, retention and deployment of talent , although it is often used more narrowly to describe the short- and longer-term resourcing of senior executives and high performers” (p. 26) |
| Ashton and Morton (2005) | “TM is a strategic and holistic approach to both HR and business planning or a new route to organizational effectiveness. This improves the performance and the potential of people—the talent—who can make a measurable difference to the organization now and in future. And it aspires to yield enhanced performance among all levels in the workforce, thus allowing everyone to reach his/her potential, no matter what that might be” (p. 30) |
| Collings and Mellahi (2009) | “We define strategic talent management as activities and processes that involve the systematic identification of key positions which differentially contribute to the organization's sustainable competitive advantage, the development of a talent pool of high potentials and high-performing incumbents to fill these roles, and the development of a differentiated human resource architecture to facilitate filling these positions with competent incumbents and to ensure their continued commitment to the organization” (p. 2) |
| CIPD (2022) | “Talent management is the systematic attraction, identification, development, engagement, retention, and deployment of those individuals who are of particular value to an organisation due to their high potential or because they fulfil critical roles.” |

Adapted from Dries (2013)

As can be seen from Table 2, there are multiple definitions for talent management, so to streamline our research in the context of social enterprises, *we define talent management as systematic processes of identification, attraction, recruitment, development, and retention of*

individuals with necessary skills, values, and commitment to organization's missions (social and economic). So, while investigating what talent management practices exist in social enterprises, we will look for such practices.

Further, there remains a lack of empirical research on talent management (Collings and Mellahi 2009; Lewis and Heckman 2006; Thunnissen et al. 2013). In their literature review of the talent management field, Thunnissen et al. (2013) found that two-thirds of the articles were not empirical. Even though they also highlight that the number of empirical papers has been on the rise since 2010. Even when there is research on talent management, this has focused on the high potential, career, success, and commitment aspects of a few individuals (Thunnissen et al., 2013), i.e., most research on talent management has taken an exclusive approach (Powell et al., 2012; Thunnissen et al., 2013). Further, there is little empirical research on talent management that examines employees' perspectives, as most research has focused on the opinions of executives and HR professionals (Björkman et al. 2013).

Furthermore, Collings and colleagues (2011) found that while the field of talent management is progressing, it remains US-centric, and the situation has not changed since then, with most research on talent management still focusing on Western contexts. Collings and colleagues (2011) called for a balance and asked to bring different perspectives and traditions in talent management research. Moreover, much focus on talent management research has remained in the private sector, for-profit, and multinationals (M. Powell et al. 2012; Thunnissen, Boselie, and Fruytier 2013). Some scholars have highlighted that the organizational context matters in talent management as different meanings are attached to it in different contexts, but the context has remained underappreciated in talent management research (Gallardo-Gallardo, Thunnissen, and Scullion 2019).

Many scholars have argued that talent management should concentrate only on key positions, such as positions that contribute to an organization's competitive advantage (Collings and Mellahi 2009; Lewis and Heckman 2006). However, such an exclusive approach can enhance bias, create team conflicts, create destructive internal competition that hinders learning, and stop attempts to make organizations more diverse and inclusive (Gallardo-Gallardo, Dries, and González-Cruz 2013; Thunnissen, Boselie, and Fruytier 2013). In their review, Thunnissen et al. (2013) find that most companies follow a talent pool strategy, i.e., companies create a pool of talented employees, give them special treatment, and prepare them for succession or career path (Collings and Mellahi 2009). This also means hiring even before any vacancies (Cappelli, 2008) and then training and developing them before the need arises (Stahl et al. 2011). Some scholars have also remarked on buying talent (Cappelli 2008; Collings and Mellahi 2009; Thunnissen et al. 2013), and promoting internal talent, which might lead to risks of becoming inward thinking organization (Stahl et al., 2011). Thunnissen and colleagues (2013, 1754) conclude that “the dominant practices and activities in the talent management approaches are activities to attract, develop and retain talent.”

While there are inherent challenges in defining what talent is or what constitutes talent management, who should be considered talented, or whom shall organizations prepare for the future (Lewis and Heckman 2006; Ross 2013; Tansley 2011), some scholars have argued that all employees should be considered for talent management as each individual has own strengths and weaknesses so giving rise to the idea of inclusive talent management (Frost and Kalman 2016; Kaliannan et al. 2023).

Gallardo-Gallardo and colleagues (2013) also highlight the inclusive approach to talent that considers the entire workforce in the organization as talent. This positive approach of

considering every individual talent and providing opportunities to all individuals has attracted little attention for various reasons, such as organizations having limited resources to devote, so they cannot afford to provide everyone the same opportunities and resources needed. It also leads to exclusive talent management, with organizations focusing on their "A-players, high performers or high potentials" (Thunnissen, Boselie, and Fruytier 2013, 1751).

Talent management also aims to improve work engagement and alignment. According to Collings and Mellahi (2009), effective talent management can improve organizational performance indirectly. This is achieved through increasing work motivation, organizational commitment, and extra-role behavior, which positively impact individual performance. They argue that organizations should focus on improving individual performance by boosting motivation, commitment, and extra-role behavior to enhance organizational performance. Highly engaged workers tend to produce better business results, such as higher productivity, improved customer satisfaction, and better employee retention, as compared to disengaged workers (Thunnissen, Boselie, and Fruytier 2013).

In sum, the concept of talent management is diverse, and there remains a lack of consensus on the definition of it. Moreover, scholars have urged expanding beyond traditional businesses, multinationals, and top leadership to broaden talent management research. Next, we specifically focus on talent management in social enterprises.

2.2.3 Talent Management in Social Enterprises

The field of talent management in social enterprises is underexplored, and there is limited literature on this. In general, the state of theory in social enterprises is new, and the field is in the phase of borrowing theories from other fields and, based on that, trying to expand (Haugh 2012).

On the other hand, the non-profit and social impact field has developed to some extent, requiring new thinking, and understanding of social enterprises to make them more sustainable. To the best of our understanding, there was only one study (working paper) investigating talent management in social enterprises operating in the Indian context; however, this was a conceptual paper and does not go into any details but provides general information only (See Manimala and Bhati 2012).

However, at the same time, multiple reports have highlighted that the issue of talent is severe in social enterprises for multiple reasons; social enterprises cannot manage talent effectively, such as low salaries and high workloads discourage applicants from going for such positions (RippleWorks n.d.; ISDM and CSIP 2021). We also found this in our first essay, as discussed earlier. However, as following dual missions can be challenging, there is a need to understand how talent is managed within such organizations and what talent means to such organizations to make them competitive and sustainable.

3. Methodology

We divide the methodology section primarily into three sub-sections. First, we present the context of our study (social enterprises in India), and then the data collection and analysis processes are described.

3.1 Research Context: Social Enterprises in India

Please see the Methodology section for details on the research context. We selected only those social enterprises that have been in operation for at least seven years and had at least 30 full-time and part-time employees. Along with formal talent management practices, we also looked for informal talent management practices, such as the involvement of leaders in the career

of employees outside workplaces, in line with the previous research on small and medium enterprises (Festing, Schäfer, and Scullion 2013). See Table 3 for the description of social enterprises and social aims and economic activities carried by these and Appendix I for detailed description of social enterprises. Next, we discuss the data collection process.

Table 3: Description of Social Enterprises

| Social Enterprises Details | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------|---|--|---------------------|
| Social Enterprise | Participant Id. | Objective of Social Enterprise | Income Generating Activities | Number of Employees |
| SE01 | SE01P01 | Providing healthcare for rural areas | Mobile clinics | 60-70 |
| | SE01P05 | | | |
| SE02 | SE02P03 | Education for underprivileged | Training programs, tuition, mentorship | 30-40 |
| | SE02P12 | | | |
| | SE02P16 | | | |
| SE03 | SE03P13 | Finance for women | Finance/money lending | 60-70 |
| | SE03P14 | | | |
| | SE03P17 | | | |
| SE04 | SE04P06 | Recycling and waste management | Waste management contracts | 50-60 |
| | SE04P10 | | | |
| SE05 | SE05P07 | Sustainable tourism | Ecotourism activities | 50-60 |
| | SE05P09 | | | |
| SE06 | SE06P08 | Agriculture and livelihoods | Agriculture, livestock products | 30-40 |
| | SE06P11 | | | |
| SE07 | SE07P02 | Employment training for underprivileged | Training programs, career mentorship | 40-50 |
| | SE07P04 | | | |
| | SE07P15 | | | |

Notes: We provide a range on number of employees to maintain anonymity of the SEs and because demand of employees for these SEs is sometimes seasonal. Number of employees include both full time and part time employees. Volunteers are not included in the data of number of employees. Volunteers at these social enterprises ranged from 50 to 100+ every year. SE02P16 and SE03P17 are volunteers.

3.2 Data Collection

The following section outlines the data collection process.

3.2.1 Research Design

To understand the talent management practices and the impact of caste on those practices, the qualitative approach with an in-depth exploration of experiences and perspectives of those working in social enterprises was suitable for two reasons (Corbin and Strauss 2015). First, there is limited research on talent management in social enterprises, and as discussed earlier, social enterprises in India are small, lacking resources to keep records and invest in digital tools to manage, so to investigate talent management aspects, we also had to inquire about informal practices, even though some of the social enterprises have started to move toward more formal practices. Second, a qualitative study was required to investigate the role of caste as well, as quantitative measures are not developed to study the role of caste, and we were interested in human interactions influenced by caste.

So, the research design for this study is based on a qualitative approach; specifically, we implemented in-depth semi-structured interviews (Adams 2015; McCracken 1988). In-depth interviews provide a comprehensive understanding of the complexities, challenges, and strategies employed in managing talent within social enterprises in India. Finally, our qualitative study provides valuable insights into India's unique (caste) context.

3.2.2 Sampling

A purposive sampling technique was employed to select participants for the study. Purposive sampling has the advantage of capturing a range of viewpoints and ideas, resulting in rich and contextualized data that can support theory development and contribute to the existing knowledge on talent management in social enterprises. Scholars have also argued that an

advantage of purposive sampling is that it improves the study's rigor and the trustworthiness of data and results (Campbell et al. 2020; Lincoln and Guba 1985).

We approached 24 social enterprises with a size minimum of 30 employees (full-time and part-time) and in operations for at least seven years. We contacted them through various methods, including contacting social enterprise networks, professional associations, and leveraging personal networks. Only social enterprises with a social mission and economic activities were contacted and included in the data. At the end of the search process, 17 participants (including two volunteers at social enterprises) from seven social enterprises agreed to the interview. Of 17 participants, four were women, and the rest were men. Participants also helped us identify potential research participants within their organizations and outside. They also recommended additional materials in terms of organizational reports and documents that could contribute to the research question (Charmaz 2014).

Please see Table 4 for participants' characteristics. The sample includes diverse individuals in key positions and roles in talent management-related within social enterprises, such as HR managers, HR Head, Founders/CEOs, Co-founders, managing directors, and senior executives. Efforts were made to include participants from diverse social enterprises regarding sector, size, and geographical location.

Table 4: Participants' Characteristics

| Participant Id. | Gender | Current Job Title | Education Level | Years of Experience in Social Enterprises | Date of Interview |
|------------------------|---------------|--------------------------|------------------------|--|--------------------------|
| SE01P01 | Male | Program Manager | Bachelor's | 7 | August 20, 2021 |
| SE07P02 | Male | Human Resources Manager | Bachelor's | 5 | October 18, 2021 |

| | | | | | |
|---------|--------|--------------------------------|---------------------|----|--------------------|
| SE02P03 | Male | Founder/CEO | Master's | 12 | August 10, 2021 |
| SE07P04 | Male | Managing Director | Master's | 8 | September 8, 2021 |
| SE01P05 | Male | Recruitment Manager | Master's | 7 | August 24, 2021 |
| SE04P06 | Male | Community Manager | Bachelor's | 9 | September 10, 2021 |
| SE05P07 | Female | HR Head | Bachelor's | 6 | September 15, 2021 |
| SE06P08 | Male | Development Manager | Bachelor's | 12 | October 11, 2021 |
| SE05P09 | Male | Head of Community Partnerships | Master's | 10 | November 5, 2021 |
| SE04P10 | Female | Managing Director | Bachelor's | 8 | October 24, 2021 |
| SE06P11 | Male | Co-Founder | Master's | 12 | August 17, 2021 |
| SE02P12 | Male | HR Head | PhD (pursuing) | 10 | September 22, 2021 |
| SE03P13 | Female | Human Resources Manager | Bachelor's | 11 | October 27, 2021 |
| SE03P14 | Male | Program Manager | Bachelor's | 13 | October 14, 2021 |
| SE07P15 | Male | Training Manager | Bachelor's | 8 | November 2, 2021 |
| SE02P16 | Female | Volunteer | Master's (pursuing) | 5 | September 30, 2021 |
| SE03P17 | Male | Volunteer | Bachelor's | 3 | August 26, 2021 |

Notes:

- SE02P16 and SE03P17 are volunteers at SE02 and SE03 respectively.
- For volunteers, years of experience shows the number of years they were involved in social/volunteering activities.

3.2.3 Data Collection Procedure

After participants agreed to the interview, a background information survey was sent, recording their demographic characteristics and social enterprise details. Please see Appendix II for survey

details.² Before starting the interviews, participants were again informed study's objectives, confidentiality, voluntary participation, and their right not to answer any question that they did not want to. Wherever possible, written consent was obtained, and in other cases, informed verbal consent was recorded before starting the interview. Please see Appendix III for an informed consent form. They were allowed to ask questions at the interviews' beginning and end. We did not receive any hostility, and participants were willing to share their experiences openly during the interviews.

First, we developed in-depth interview questions with open-ended questions related to talent, talent management practices, challenges, strategies, and the specific context of social enterprises in India. Please see Appendix IV for the interview protocol. Further, before conducting the main interviews, we conducted pilot interviews with two individuals and refined the questionnaire. All interviews were conducted using Zoom or WhatsApp mobile application, depending on the participant's choice (Oliffe et al. 2021). We provided a safe environment where participants could engage in extensive discussions about their experiences during the interviewing process (Charmaz 2014; Spradley 1979). The interviews facilitated a free and open exchange of ideas between the participants and us as interviewers, allowing for the generation of valuable suggestions for further exploration. We recorded all interviews to ensure accurate data capture. The interviews lasted between 40 and 60 minutes. Besides two interviews in Hindi (a local language in India) with participant id. SE04P06 and SE05P09, all were conducted in English. Interviewing author was native to the Hindi language. To conduct interviews in Hindi, as suggested by scholars, we used a back/reverse translation method for the interview guide, where we translated to Hindi and then re-translated to English to check the consistency and

² Some social enterprises' details were collected separately by contacting the administration within social enterprises as participants were not aware of some data. This step was also taken for verification purposes.

quality of the questions (Brislin 1970). We conducted interviews until theoretical saturation was reached, i.e., no new information was coming out of interviews (Corbin and Strauss 2015; Saunders et al. 2018).³

Finally, we also triangulated the data using social enterprises' reports, social media data, websites, and news reportage. All these steps gave us rich data to understand talent management practices.

3.3 Data Analysis

We generated transcripts of the recorded interviews using transcription software and verified them for correctness (Poland 1995). To maintain data integrity and reduce bias, we read the transcripts and interview notes multiple times, making comments and raising questions for further inquiry. Then returned to the participants for clarification. We used the thematic analysis process (Braun and Clarke 2006) and analyzed the data in three stages: 1) identifying codes, 2) developing second order themes, and 3) developing theoretical constructs. The data analysis in this study was conducted within the constructivist framework for theory-building where data coding played a pivotal role in constructing grounded theory (Charmaz 2014). The data coding process enabled us to develop an initial set of codes for different practices highlighted by participants, such as “Attracting diverse pool of talent,” “Hiring those with strong community connections,” and “Involving employees and stakeholders in hiring process.” We then grouped the various codes through an iterative process and developed second-order themes such as “Responsible talent attraction” and “Hiring for alignment with a social mission.” In turn, we

³ It must also be noted that some scholars have argued against focusing on theoretical saturation or on counting the number of interviews required for qualitative studies and defining theoretical saturation as a point where no new information emerges from data analysis (e.g., see Jamjoom and Mills, 2022) and suggested that data saturation “is a logical fallacy, as there are always new theoretic insights to be made as long as data continues to be collected and analyzed” (Low, 2019, p. 131).

grouped these second-order themes to develop aggregate theoretical constructs that demonstrated talent management practice. We continued this process to find out all the themes from the data.

Table 5 demonstrates how we moved from first-order to second-order codes and, ultimately, more conceptual aggregate themes (Gioia, Corley, and Hamilton 2013). The iterative approach we took in going back and forth between the data and the regular meetings to discuss the coding process and emerging themes, together with the theoretical underpinnings, helped us move closer to a conceptual understanding of our unique data set (Gioia, Corley, and Hamilton 2013). We adopted various measures, such as prolonged engagement, to ensure the trustworthiness of our findings (Lincoln and Guba 1985). Once we had the themes and constructs, we returned to the participants with our findings, and they provided feedback that the results accurately reflected their experiences. To further assure the quality of our qualitative research, we followed the advice of Elliott, Fischer, and Rennie (1999) and provided multiple example quotes for the emerging themes and issues so that readers may draw their own interpretations. We believe that the careful selection of participants and the steps we took during data collection and analysis also helped us achieve trustworthiness in our results (Lincoln and Guba 1985).

Table 5: Data Analysis: Analytical Coding

| First order codes | Second order codes | Aggregate theoretical dimensions |
|--|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Attracting diverse pool of talent (11) | Responsible talent attraction | Purpose-driven recruitment |
| Hiring those with strong community connections (7) | | |
| Involving employees and stakeholders in hiring process (6) | | |
| Promoting equal opportunities for all candidates (9) | | |

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| Looking for individuals with mission driven skills and experiences (8) | Hiring for alignment with a social mission | |
| Looking to hire those with commitment to social change and societal progress (10) | | |
| Acquiring those with personal values aligned with social mission of enterprise (10) | | |
| Harnessing the power of employee referrals (8) | | |
| Building consensus among team members during the decision-making process (6) | Collaborative decision-making | Inclusive training and development |
| Having transparent communication during decision-making (11) | | |
| Employing effective conflict resolution techniques, such as facilitation, mediation etc. (10) | | |
| Involvement in cross-functional projects and teams (6) | Peer learning and development | |
| Encouraging employees to work together and leverage each other's strengths (8) | | |
| Mentoring peers for the work (13) | | |
| Creating opportunities for peer-to-peer learning sessions (7) | | |
| Providing feedback on different aspects of work (5) | | |
| Evaluating based on commitment to integrity, honesty, and responsible behavior (10) | Holistic performance management | Optimizing employee performance and engagement |
| Planning performance measures with employees (6) | | |
| Valuing responsiveness, empathy, and commitment to goals (12) | | |
| Looking beyond the financial performance of individuals (10) | | |
| Creating meaningful work and workplace – feeling of community within workplaces (9) | Fostering employee engagement | |
| Encouraging work-life balance with flexible working (7) | | |
| Providing opportunities to engage in personal development training and learning outside workplaces (9) | | |
| Recognizing and rewarding employees for their achievements (6) | | |

Note: Numbers inside the brackets next to the first-order codes represent the number of times the particular code/idea appeared in participants' data (Tallerico 1991; Woodrum 1984).

Furthermore, to avoid misinterpretation, wherever participants spoke in the local Indian language, in which the interviewer was also native, we present excerpts of this along with our translations (Smith, Chen, and Liu 2008). Finally, based on the themes identified (see Table 6 for themes and additional illustrative quotes), we summarized our findings and developed a narrative accordingly, which we present in the sections that follow.

Table 6: Themes and Illustrative Quotes

| Theme | Illustrative Quotes |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Purpose-driven recruitment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We evaluate individuals based on their skills, qualifications, and potential, free from biases or prejudices ... these things do not matter to us. We always look for those people who would be the best for our enterprise working for imparting education. (SE07P02) • When hiring anyone [local guide], we ensure that the person joining our team is equipped with the necessary expertise and passion to make a meaningful impact on our social enterprise. If that is missing, then we might not hire the person. (SE05P07) • At our organization, we believe that hiring individuals who share our commitment to social change and progress is essential. This not only strengthens our mission but also fosters a sense of purpose and shared values among our employees. (SE03P13) • By aligning personal values with our social mission, we create a culture of authenticity and dedication, leading to higher employee satisfaction and engagement. (SE07P04) |
| Inclusive training and development | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Everyone has equal opportunities to get to know things [about agriculture business] within the organization and get help if needed. I do not think anyone has ever said no to me if I ask for support. (SE06P08) • Almost all the employees often go to the field and learn all the workings of our business. It is not that if you have an office job and you will not go in the field. Everyone in this way get the opportunity to develop themselves and become kind of all-rounder. (SE06P11) |

| | |
|--|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hum ne demand kiya tha ki koi expert aaye [...] university se jo or seniors ne bahut try kiya or laye uss expert ko jis ne din bhar train kiya bahut si kaam ki baton se. Bahut badiya experience tha. [So, we had asked once to bring in expert from the [Name of the university] university and seniors did everything to bring a person from that side of expertise and the person provided whole day training on various technical and practical things. It was a great experience.] (SE05P09) • We are good at handling social side of education and bringing different perspectives to young generations, so we value those individuals who are passionate about social change, and we evaluate then those according to the social impact that they are creating. (SE02P03) • Without involving everyone in training it is not possible to achieve our goals. Everyone in the organization plays its part and all these parts have to fit together and be on the same plane to function well. (SE07P15) • Training toh bahut hi zaruri hai, sab ki training pe hi zor rehta hai. Uss ke bina toh gum jaege (Training is very important, focus remains on training everyone. Without that we will be lost). (SE04P06) |
| Optimizing employee performance and engagement | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At market standard, our pays are quite okay, not bad. On to that, there are some other rewards as well, you get to do what you love to do, that is the best part, and everyone is nice. (SE07P02) • They give us freedom to pursue and get in touch with others at times of need, this is how has been from the very first day I joined here ... I have never felt that I do not belong here. From the start I felt welcomed. (SE03P14) • I think the work that I do and salary I get is fair ... it is not the best and can sure be high, but I would say it is a good pay for the work I do. (SE05P07) • Performance measurement is not easy here as we do multiple things and in group (conducting medical services), so I do not think it is easy to measure so seniors also do not put much focus on money parts but how well we are doing with those whom we are serving. (SE01P05) |

4. Findings

Our findings suggest that participants in social enterprises employed talent management practices but not only the traditional practices found in for-profit organizations. We find that all

these practices are influenced by the dual purpose of these social organizations, as we explain in detail below. We also found that there are primarily three talent management practices that social enterprises in India follow, namely: *Purpose-driven recruitment, Inclusive training and development, and Optimizing employee experience and engagement*. All these practices show the inclusive nature of talent management at social enterprises.

Before we mention our findings, a few general comments on the findings are necessary. First, while describing their experiences in social enterprises, participants' emphasis was on “we-ness” or “us,” and rarely do participants talk in terms of “I,” which could be probably because of the nature of these organizations and the work they do. Second, while we found retention practices, we did not find specific practices related to succession planning. This suggests that social enterprises in India are in the early stage and have yet to grapple with succession challenges. Third, we present participants' quotes verbatim, with little grammatical fixes, and wherever some words are omitted to keep relevant information only, those omitted words are represented by three dots (...). We also add participant IDs at the end of the quotes. Finally, we start by presenting our findings on how the concept of talent and talent management is understood and then move to talent management practices.

4.1 Understanding the concept of talent in social enterprises

As opposed to what is considered talent in traditional for-profit organizations or who is considered talented (a few selective individuals) in social enterprises, we found that talent is understood differently. Participants described all being talented and talent being everywhere, suggesting very inclusive definitions of talent.

The understanding of talent in social enterprises goes beyond traditional notions of skills and qualifications. In our research, participants rarely mentioned having qualifications from known universities or certifications as a measure of talent. Participants in social enterprises perceive talent as individuals who are deeply committed to the organization's social mission, demonstrate adaptability and collaboration, and possess an entrepreneurial mindset to tackle difficult situations they face in day-to-day work. They value individuals who show empathy, ethical practices, and leadership skills at times of ambiguity. They believe that by embracing and nurturing such talent, social enterprises can drive meaningful social change and create a sustainable impact in the communities they serve.

Based on how participants described what talent means, talent in social enterprises can be categorized into four categories.

1. Individuals with a commitment to the social mission
2. Individuals with the ability to collaborate and teamwork
3. Individuals with empathy and cultural sensitivity
4. Individuals with adaptability and resilience

Please see Table 7 for how participants described talent.

Table 7: Definitions of Talent According to the Participants

| <i>Description of talent</i> | <i>Excerpts from the interviews</i> |
|---|--|
| Individuals with a commitment to the social mission | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is someone with a passion for the social mission of the enterprise. (SE01P05; Interviewed: 24.08.2021) • The ability to align with the organization's mission and values. (SE06P08; Interviewed: 11.10.2021) • [Talent is someone with a] strong sense of social responsibility. (SE01P01; Interviewed: 20.08.2021) • [Someone] having a thorough awareness of the structural problems that cause lack of education ... that underlie social and environmental difficulties that organization is solving and through understanding of economic activities also is talented. (SE07P02; Interviewed: 18.10.2021) |

| | |
|--|--|
| Individuals with the ability to collaborate and teamwork | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talent for me is the capacity of someone to establish solid networks and partnerships. (SE02P03; Interviewed: 10.08.2021) • Mujhe nahi lagta ki koi bhi talent ke sath paida hota hai, sab train ho sakte hai or experts ban sakte hai (I do not think that anyone is born as talent; everyone can be trained and can become experts). (SE04P06; Interviewed: 10.09.2021) • It is about opportunities... if someone has opportunities, one can perform, no matter how hard the situations, so for me talent is directly connected to opportunities. Utilize those opportunities and you are set. (SE07P04; Interviewed: 08.09.2021) • Talent is a combination of knowledge and expertise of the team that may contribute to new ideas and approaches for tackling [social and environmental] issues. (SE05P07; Interviewed: 15.09.2021) • Talent is something that can be developed within organizations with training and help. (SE06P011; Interviewed: 17.08.2021) |
| Individuals with empathy and cultural sensitivity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All of us has talent. For me talent in individuals is not something special but understanding that we all have something to offer and recognizing that what matters. It is the emotional intelligence that matters. (SE03P13; Interviewed: 27.10.2021) • I consider someone as talent who is empathetic to the needs of others. (SE04P10; Interviewed: 24.10.2021) • One just need to look for it, talent is everywhere in India. (SE02P12; Interviewed: 22.09.2021) • I would say talent is when people are able to recognize the needs of others and are ready to do everything to meet those needs. (SE02P16; Interviewed: 30.09.2021) • Having empathy and humility, as well as the ability to forge connections based on mutual respect and trust, are qualities that define talent in social businesses. (SE07P15; Interviewed: 02.11.2021) |
| Individuals with adaptability and resilience | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ability to communicate and navigate through complex relationships with stakeholders and have real impact on others' lives [through making them financially independent] is a talent in social businesses. (SE03P14; Interviewed: 14.10.2021) • Kam hote huye bhi acche se job karna hi talent hai (For me talent is something when someone with little resources is able to do good work). (SE05P09; Interviewed: 05.11.2021) |

| | |
|--|--|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Each individual has capacity to be expert in their fields ... talent is everywhere ... the concept of having natural talent is too biased. What matters is how one persists and gain experience to become talent. (SE03P17; Interviewed: 26.08.2021) |
|--|--|

4.2 Understanding the concept of talent management in social enterprises

Based on how participants described what talent management means, talent management in social enterprises can be categorized into four categories.

1. Nurturing and developing all individuals
2. Assigning all individuals in the right positions
3. Creating a supportive and inclusive environment for all
4. Utilizing and engaging everyone's talents

In Table 8, we present how participants in our study described the concept of talent management in social enterprises. These quotes from participants reflect the diverse perspectives and understandings of talent management in social enterprises and highlight the importance of nurturing and developing all individuals, assigning them to the right positions, creating a supportive and inclusive environment, and utilizing and engaging their talents.

As can be seen from the quotes that the focus of participants remains on inclusive nature of talent management, where focus is on nourishing everyone, not a selective few, which is again opposite to what scholars have found in traditional businesses. These findings provide valuable insights into talent management practices within social enterprises and what is important for individuals working in the social sector.

Table 8: How Participants Described Talent Management

| Definition of talent management | Excerpts from the interviews |
|---|---|
| Nurturing and developing all individuals | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [Managing talent] is about nourishing everyone so that they can be a productive member within the organization. (SE04P10; Interviewed: 24.10.2021) • It is basically about keeping count and track of all who can fit in the particular job function [to perform medical services]. (SE01P05; Interviewed: 24.08.2021) • Managing talent is knowing the requirements within the company, then hiring, training, and trying to develop all of them for more responsibilities. (SE01P01; Interviewed: 20.08.2021) • Training all individuals and getting them ready for the future challenges is managing talent. (SE02P12; Interviewed: 22.09.2021) |
| Assigning all individuals in the right positions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It [talent management] is about providing resources to employees so that they can achieve organization and individual goals... key is to assign employees in the right position. (SE03P14; Interviewed: 14.10.2021) • It is about looking best in all the people and students working at the organization and then maybe trying to develop their strengths through various ways, providing them opportunities. (SE02P03; Interviewed: 10.08.2021) • I would say it is mainly about keeping track of strengths of everyone and needs of the workplace ... assigning individuals to those work needs is about managing talent. (SE05P07; Interviewed: 15.09.2021) • Training everybody and getting them ready for the future challenges is managing talent ... not for tomorrow or day after tomorrow but maybe down the line in next 5 years ... preparing for those challenges. (SE07P02; Interviewed: 18.10.2021) |
| Creating a supportive and inclusive environment for all | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is about creating a supportive and inclusive environment that fosters individuals' growth and engagement, enabling them to contribute their unique talents and skills to advance the social enterprise's goals. (SE06P11; Interviewed: 17.08.2021) • Talent management for a community development manager is creating opportunities for community members to showcase their talents... it is also about building and nurturing a strong community of individuals [farmers] for achieving the set targets. (SE06P08; Interviewed: 11.10.2021) • Creating a culture that values and invests in the professional growth and well-being of employees, where they can thrive, collaborate, and innovate is what talent |

| | |
|---|---|
| | <p>management looks to me. (SE07P04; Interviewed: 08.09.2021)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sab ko support karna unke kam mein, sahi se unko kam ko reward karna ki wo khus rahe hi talent ko manage karna hai (To support everyone in their work and reward them appropriately so that they are satisfied is managing talent). (SE05P09; Interviewed: 05.11.2021) |
| Utilizing and engaging everyone's talents | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sach bolu toh yeh mujhe lagta hai ki hum sab mein talent hai to uss talent ko use karna hi managing talent hai (To tell the truth, as all of us have talent, talent management is about utilizing all that talent in individuals). (SE04P06; Interviewed: 10.09.2021) • Intentionally looking for talents in all individuals within the organization and then giving them training and guidance to do their work well is managing talent. (SE07P15; Interviewed: 02.11.2021) • It is building a diverse and inclusive workforce, recognizing the skills and experiences of all for the purpose of solving issues and challenges inside the working place. (SE03P13; Interviewed: 27.10.2021) • Once I leave this volunteer position, how the enterprise will keep in touch or keep me involved is about managing talent. I could be useful to them for multiple things in future so how they keep me interested and involved in their activities afterward is managing talent. (SE02P16; Interviewed: 30.09.2021) • As a volunteer for me the talent management refers to the process of effectively engaging and utilizing the skills, talents, and passions of me [volunteers] who contribute their time and expertise to the social enterprise. (SE03P17; Interviewed: 26.08.2021) |

4.3 Talent management practices in social enterprises

4.3.1 Purpose-driven recruitment

The unique type of organizational structure of social enterprises affects talent management practices, i.e., given that these organizations have to fulfill social missions while pursuing economic activities, these competing missions can create challenges and tensions in managing

talent. Social enterprises prioritize purpose-driven recruitment to manage their talent effectively. It goes beyond traditional recruitment methods and involves attracting individuals who share the organization's social mission, values, and goals. So, purpose-driven recruitment in social enterprises typically includes a) responsible talent attraction and b) hiring for alignment with a social mission.

Responsible talent attraction

Our study participants highlighted the practices and strategies involved in responsible talent attraction. They prioritize attracting candidates from diverse backgrounds, including genders, socio-economic statuses, and abilities. They also seek individuals with a deep passion for social change and a commitment to addressing societal issues while also not compromising on the technical skills and experiences required for economic activities. As participants mentioned:

At our organization, we believe in hiring responsibly. What this means is that we actively seek out candidates from diverse backgrounds, expertise, and experiences to ensure that our teams reflect the communities we are trying to serve. We are very inclusive in terms of hirings and bringing new people together. (SE05P07; Interviewed: 15.09.2021)

We actively seek out diverse talent [while hiring for educators] as that enhances our organization's ability to address complex social challenges from a variety of perspectives, leading to more effective and sustainable solutions [addressing educational needs]. (SE02P03; Interviewed: 10.08.2021)

It is a delicate balance that we try to maintain and look for people who are passionate about change, have the required skills and knowledge, and can bring innovative ideas to the table. After all, you know money matters, and that comes if you have the technical and other skills required to do your job. We can only run a mission for change if we have money and resources, so we look for both sides in the person when bringing in. (SE06P11; Interviewed: 17.08.2021)

Further, by involving present employees in the hiring process and seeking their input and perspectives, social enterprises ensure that hiring decisions are made collectively and reflect a shared vision. This inclusive approach promotes transparency, strengthens employee engagement, and cultivates a sense of belongingness and ownership among the workforce.

We believe that hiring individuals [medical professionals] with strong community connections is key to tapping into local networks and better understanding the needs and aspirations of the people we aim to impact. To achieve this, we involve present employees in the hiring process to gain valuable insights and diverse perspectives. This collaborative approach not only fosters a sense of ownership and commitment to the new hires but also promotes the idea that present employees are valued. (SE01P05; Interviewed: 24.08.2021)

When they needed more volunteers, they asked me my experiences and expectations so that they can understand what other volunteers might be interested in ... I felt quite good

that organization values my opinions on such matters. (SE02P16; Interviewed: 30.09.2021)

Further participants also highlighted the significance of attracting a diverse talent pool, individuals with strong community connections, involving employees and stakeholders in the hiring process, and promoting equal opportunities. They seek candidates with strong community connections as they deeply understand community needs, challenges, and opportunities. Such pre-existing links to the community also help social enterprises build trust and engage different stakeholders. As Participants stated:

We look for candidates with strong community connections as they bring invaluable insights and understanding of the local context, enabling us to establish meaningful connections and partnerships with the communities. They make our lives much easier. Ultimately, for us, responsible talent attraction goes beyond traditional hiring practices. (SE07P02; Interviewed: 18.10.2021)

When we prioritize mission-driven skills, commitment to social change, and shared values, we ensure that our work remains grounded in the lived experiences [of students] and needs of the communities we aim to serve. This, in turn, creates a workforce that is truly dedicated to making a positive impact in the lives of students and driving meaningful social transformation. (SE02P12; Interviewed: 22.09.2021)

Hiring for alignment with a social mission

Commitment to the organization's core beliefs and principles remains highly important for social enterprises, so when hiring someone, they put more emphasis on these aspects. As one of the HR managers mentioned:

The main thing for us is that the person has the same strong values and ideas as we have, so we look for such people mainly ... even if some technical skills or experience is missing, even then we hire the person if values are same. (SE07P02; Interviewed: 18.10.2021)

The same idea was echoed by a volunteer at another social enterprise:

I have never seen such an emphasis on mission and values anywhere, it sometimes feel too much but then it is what they do so they have to stay focus on these things. (SE03P17; Interviewed: 26.08.2021)

Furthermore, to achieve such goals of bringing in new employees who will be of the same values as already in the organization, employees are asked to refer. Employee referrals are the main way social enterprises in India ensure they hire the right person. Multiple participants in our study highlighted the positive aspects of hiring based on employee referrals.

To find the right talent, we rely on the power of employee referrals. This allows us to tap into our existing network of like-minded individuals who are already aligned with our

social mission ... employee referrals are a powerful tool for talent acquisition.

(SE07P04; Interviewed: 08.09.2021)

We hire mostly within the community ... referring to each other within the community and organization. This way, we know whom we are hiring and whether the person will fit in.

(SE03P13; Interviewed: 27.10.2021)

In sum, we find that social enterprises practice purpose-driven recruitment by attracting diverse talent to help them fulfill social and economic goals. Further, they build strong and cohesive teams by involving different stakeholders in the hiring process.

4.3.2 Inclusive training and development

The second practice of talent management in social enterprises that we found is inclusive training and development, which are essential components of managing and preparing the workforce. We found that there is no distinction between who can get which training or selection to acquire particular work skills. All employees are considered equally for training and development.

Developing such inclusive training and development programs are essential for social enterprises to foster a supportive and collaborative work environment. Such initiatives encourage peer learning, promote accessible learning, enable employees to work together effectively, leverage each other's strengths, and enhance their professional development. So, inclusive training and development primarily involve a) collaborative decision-making and b) peer learning and development.

Collaborative decision-making

The emphasis on collaborative decision-making remains strong in social enterprises. Participants believe that the decisions that are made in collaboration lead to fewer conflicts and better outcomes. It also gives them a sense of ownership and belongingness. As participants mentioned:

We are a team, work as a team ... there is no competition among us in a good way that we are not going after each other so that we will get more money or name. It is like a family. (SE01P01; Interviewed: 20.08.2021)

Yeh sath mein mil ke kaam karna ek tarah se jodta hai sab ko or kaam pe bhi accha mahol bana deta hai [Collaboration and teamwork promote a sense of belonging and solidarity among team members that helps foster a positive work culture.] (SE04P06; Interviewed: 10.09.2021)

Participants also highlighted several brainstorming and discussion sessions they had participated in, where they could talk openly about the matters at hand and give suggestions. They promote open and honest communication channels, encouraging employees to share their ideas, concerns, and feedback freely. However, they also highlighted that the final decision usually is taken by the higher authority, but it has rarely been the case that what is decided in meetings in discussions and the final decision is different. So, participants had their say in various decision-making processes. As participants said:

I have participated in a lot of meetings and discussions where decisions are made on financial as well as non-financial matters, and I have noticed that everyone can give their views without any restriction or fear or anything ... everyone listens and give their own thoughts then the decision is made on things. (SE03P14; Interviewed: 14.10.2021)

Brainstorming is key before starting any project. We sit together and decide [which areas to target and what new product to launch]. No decision is made without consulting the team. (SE06P08; Interviewed: 11.10.2021)

There is no hierarchical nature within the organization; everyone can approach anyone anytime. ... No concerns or hesitation at all. Ask anytime, anything to anyone. (SE07P15; Interviewed: 02.11.2021)

Further, participants also emphasized that the focus remains on understanding issues comprehensively, creating a harmonious work environment, and building consensus during discussions for inclusive and better outcomes.

We cannot work on projects if there is no consensus on how things should be done, so our focus during planning meetings remains on bringing everyone together so that from the start, we have our expectations and plans ready where everyone agrees on how things will be. (SE04P10; Interviewed: 24.10.2021)

Peer learning and development

Peer learning and development is another feature of social enterprises' inclusive training and development practice. It values and encourages employees to engage in cross-functional projects and teams actively and enables them to learn from each other. Social enterprises in our research engage employees from different departments or functions and areas of expertise to work together on projects or initiatives that require diverse skills and perspectives. As many of the participants stated:

Everyone has equal opportunities to work on different projects or learn new things; no one will stop you. You can do different things here. (SE03P14; Interviewed: 14.10.2021)

We have a lot of opportunities to explore different areas and work on different projects ... if one is interested in any project or work apart from one's own work, no one is going to stop you from joining that new work. (SE01P01; Interviewed: 20.08.2021)

Because we are not a very big company, we work in teams and collaborate on different things to get things done here ... it can get tiring for some people but working with like-minded people can be a really great experience, so we try to work in groups. (SE06P08; Interviewed: 11.10.2021)

Further, participants highlighted the number of opportunities to get trained available to them. Social enterprises emphasize informal knowledge-sharing activities and getting new joiners ready to perform work while they learn from experts and seniors on the work.

Maybe it is just the nature of our business, but we provide a lot of training to everyone.

When someone new comes, we start introducing that person slowly and slowly to the various things of our work and provide assistance to learn and gain experience.

(SE07P15; Interviewed: 02.11.2021)

Bahut kuch sikhne ko mila kuch ek saalon mein yaha (I got a lot of opportunities to learn in a short span here). (SE04P06; Interviewed: 10.09.2021)

Even as a volunteer, I had many opportunities to know each other and get together and work on various small and big projects, lending money to others. There has been a lot of learning during my short stay here. (SE03P17; Interviewed: 26.08.2021)

Participants also briefly highlighted that social enterprises also create dedicated opportunities for peer-to-peer learning and mentoring sessions as they had attended workshops, especially for new joiners. However, this was not the standard practice. These peer-to-peer learning sessions enable employees to learn from their colleagues' experiences, gain new perspectives, and expand their skill sets.

Mostly what we learn is from each other and while doing our jobs ... we had some workshops, but those were only a few. I think we do not need those also as mainly work is in the field, so we learn from doing the work, and seniors are there to guide and support, so there has not been any issue. (SE01P01; Interviewed: 20.08.2021)

Ek dusre se hi itna sikhe hai ki kabi koi zarurat hi nahi lagi ki koi training miss ho (I have learnt a lot from each other [about conducting tours for tourists] that I have never felt that there is any training is missing). (SE05P09; Interviewed: 05.11.2021)

Further, as a part of peer learning, getting and giving feedback to others is important in social enterprises. It could also be because of the nature of their work, as regulations and guidelines are not set, and these organizations sometimes work in informal settings, so employees often seek clarification and information from each other. They encourage each other to find help from others in case there are issues while working, which also drives the culture of mutual respect and trust among team members. As participants mentioned:

We do not win alone; we win as a team ... We work in a team, so we need help from each other to finish our work, so success also belongs to the team. (SE06P11; Interviewed: 17.08.2021)

I have always looked for help before starting anything new, and there has never been a case where others have refused to help. ... Most people here are nice and are willing to support you if you approach them with some genuine issues. (SE06P08; Interviewed: 11.10.2021)

In sum, learning and development practices within social enterprises were inclusive and collaborative, supporting one another in their work and recognizing and celebrating each other's success. By involving diverse employees in different projects, social enterprises also foster

collaboration and encourage knowledge sharing and skills transfer among employees, contributing to their professional development. Through all these activities, social enterprises manage talent; no matter whether participants did not use talent management terminologies or management language, these practices of inclusive learning and development act to keep them focused on their work and provide them with development opportunities.

4.3.3 Optimizing employee performance and engagement

The third talent management practice we found in social enterprises was optimizing total employee performance and engagement, which are critical factors for any organizational success. We found that the focus on these social enterprises remains on the total employee experience starting from day-to-day work to prioritizing and investing in optimizing engagement. Further, the focus is not only on financial performance but also on the social sides of work. They create a supportive and empowering work environment through various means, as we discuss below, which not only attracts and retains talented individuals but also enhances organizational performance. So, optimizing employee performance and engagement is made of looking at a) holistic performance management and b) fostering employee engagement.

Holistic performance management

In our research, we find that the performance evaluation process and criteria in social enterprises are not the same as in typical for-profit organizations. Social enterprises take a comprehensive approach to evaluate employees' performance and focus on various non-financial aspects of individuals' contributions, such as their commitment, responsible behavior, ethical approach, and team player, among others. As participants stated:

Focusing only on financial results misses the valuable non-material contributions that individuals bring, such as their creativity, problem-solving abilities, and capacity to work together harmoniously. Our approach acknowledges these factors, which has proven beneficial in maintaining overall satisfaction. (SE02P03; Interviewed: 10.08.2021)

Appreciating and acknowledging non-monetary contributions, such as innovative ideas and community happiness, creates a work environment that promotes constant growth and boosts the overall success of the organization ... considering these non-financial factors, we can pinpoint and cultivate individuals with talent and team-building strengths, leading to improved overall performance. (SE05P07; Interviewed: 15.09.2021)

Before setting the targets for individuals, they were consulted so that they knew what was expected from them, and by adopting such a holistic approach, social enterprises foster a values-driven culture and enhance employee engagement as well.

Taking a comprehensive approach to performance management that takes into account the goals of each individual employee as well as their well-being makes us come to work, and it creates a positive work atmosphere. (SE03P13; Interviewed: 27.10.2021)

When employees are involved in setting goals, they felt a sense of ownership and empowerment. This led to increased motivation and commitment to achieving the objectives of the social enterprises. Additionally, it also promoted a culture of shared accountability and teamwork, as participants highlighted:

By listening to me on how much work I can do and offering me a healthy work-life balance, an organization demonstrates its commitment to the well-being of its employees, which motivates me to put even extra effort and dedication if the organization cares for me. I should also give my extra to work. (SE01P01; Interviewed: 20.08.2021)

Jab company itna sochti ho toh hum kyu na soche company ke baare mein (When the company thinks of us so much then why shouldn't we also?). (SE05P09; Interviewed: 05.11.2021)

Fostering employee engagement

Another aspect of optimizing employee performance and engagement that emerged from our study is social enterprises fostering employee engagement.

Participants in our study mentioned that there is a sense of community within the social enterprises, as employees are more likely to stay engaged when they feel a strong connection with the organization, community, and purpose of it. This community feeling within the organization helps keep employees engaged in working. To create such a culture, as mentioned earlier, social enterprises start by hiring those who have similar values as social enterprises, and then throughout their journeys, social enterprises keep their emphasis on their mission. As participants said:

I find inspiration and motivation in my job, knowing that my efforts make a positive impact on people's lives, and within the organization, everyone is there for the same

purpose ... having the same sense of purpose makes everyone easier. (SE06P08; Interviewed: 11.10.2021)

We work as a community, and this community culture inside the organization is created from the very start, I believe ... there is a lot of focus on this inside the organization that we keep this community feeling. (SE06P11; Interviewed: 17.08.2021)

Further, they attempt to create meaningful work for everyone, knowing that they cannot compete with mainstream businesses in salaries:

I do not think we can compete with for-profit businesses, so what we are good at, we try to leverage on those... we give employees [educators/teachers] a sense of purpose and meaningful work. (SE02P03; Interviewed: 10.08.2021)

Work-life balance is an essential part of social enterprises, as they can afford that given that they are not large organizations, and some employees have to work in challenging situations. So, social enterprises foster employee engagement by offering them flexible working arrangements, which demonstrates the organization's commitment to supporting employees' overall well-being. Social enterprises enable employees to effectively manage both personal and professional lives, resulting in increased engagement and satisfaction.

It is difficult to have good salaries or benefits while working in the social sector as it is a sector-wide problem, but what we get is more than what money can provide, a lot of

freedom to do work, part-time work whenever required, or holidays whenever needed. I do not think this kind of flexibility exists anywhere else. (SE07P15; Interviewed: 02.11.2021)

Being able to balance my work and personal life has greatly improved my engagement and productivity. I feel valued and trusted by my organization, which inspires me to work harder, and I like being here. (SE07P02; Interviewed: 18.10.2021)

Finally, social enterprises try rewarding employees for their achievements in fundamental ways, such as some of the social enterprises having “star-of-month” boards in their offices. Further, some of them have appreciation letters, gifts at festivals, and financial letter options as well, which helps keep employee morale high.

I have been star-of-month a couple of times; it is a nice feeling knowing that your work has been recognized. (SE06P08; Interviewed: 11.10.2021)

We get festival gifts every year during the festival season, which is added bonus of working here. (SE03P14; Interviewed: 14.10.2021)

However, it is not just the monetary incentive that matters to some of the employees; they also highlighted the satisfaction and acknowledgment from the community that they receive for their work.

One can get recognition for their work; not only people inside the organization will know, but, in the community, people will know as well, whose lives you have impacted. Such relationships and acknowledgment keep me engaged and satisfied. (SE06P11; Interviewed: 17.08.2021)

In sum, social enterprises take a comprehensive approach to employee engagement. As discussed above, throughout the findings, they try to keep employees involved and motivated with various approaches, which encourage them to go above and beyond their responsibilities and contribute to the organization's success.

4.4 The role of caste in talent management

As in our first essay on knowledge management, caste-related features came to light; in this essay, we also investigated the role of caste. When inquired further on what participants meant by *hiring within the community* and what they mean by *candidates with strong community connections*, many participants mentioned that they meant the same social background (usually same caste in the Indian context) as most working in social enterprises. On the other hand, many denied such practice, emphasizing inclusive nature of working and disregard to such factors.

While social enterprises aim to eliminate biases and discriminatory practices and recognize the value of diversity and inclusivity, we find that their definitions of diversity and inclusivity are limited to bringing in women or people from different regions of India. When specifically inquired about the caste composition of employees within the social enterprises, in most cases, participants told us that most employees belong to the same caste as either founder or directors of the social enterprises. At the same time, they also mentioned that they look for merit

in terms of understanding social aims and business aspects and qualities of the person rather than caste. Further, none of the participants mentioned that caste plays a role in assigning tasks or in collaborations on different projects. Participants denied any such presence of favoritism even when we inquired whether income status matters (which is another marker of social status) in assigning work, hiring, or collaborations.

To further investigate the role of caste in talent management practices, we investigated the annual reports and websites and looked specifically for those in leadership positions. One critical finding suggests that almost all (25 out of 32; 7 we could not decide for generic names. More details below.) in leadership positions were from dominant or higher castes. However, it could be because resources are needed to start a social enterprise, which are typically unavailable for lower castes. We looked at the surname of the leaders as surnames in India can reveal the person's caste. We looked only for the founder, co-founder, directors, department heads, and any other leader (if any) listed on the website or annual reports. Whenever there were generic surnames such as Kumar or Singh, those were not considered as those could mean any caste; however, in our study, such surnames were few. Numerous management scholars have used this approach to study the role of caste in organizations, for example, Mani (2021), Vissa (2011), and Bhattacharya et al. (2022).

Overall, we do not find direct evidence of the role of caste in talent management; however, indirect evidence from secondary data, as highlighted above, suggests it might be an issue, and more research might be needed on this, which we discuss next and highlight in future research directions.

5. Discussion

With little understanding of talent management practices in social enterprises, we embarked on the journey of understanding what talent and talent management mean in social enterprises and what talent management practices do these organizations follow. We conducted 17 interviews with experts from seven different social enterprises operating in India. We found that what talent and talent management mean to these organizations is not the same what is considered talent and talent management in traditional businesses. Social enterprises focus on inclusive attributes and do practice inclusive talent management practices for talent management. In this section, we discuss our findings, highlight some of the limitations of our research, present future research areas, and end this section with the practical and social implications of this research.

Our empirical study contributes to understanding talent management practices in social enterprises. As there are few empirical studies on understanding talent management in social enterprises (Datta et al. 2021; Manimala and Bhati 2012), this study lays the foundation for understanding talent and talent management within the specific context of social enterprises. Through the diverse perspectives of participants working in social enterprises, our study highlights the multifaceted nature of talent. Our research also raises questions about the ethics of talent management, suggesting in line with previous research that existing literature carries a narrow view of what talent is (Kulkarni and Scullion 2015; Swailes, Downs, and Orr 2014) and needs to broaden the definition of talent that involves empathy, care, and cultural sensitivities.

Furthermore, we also bring an understanding of social enterprises and talent management practices from non-western contexts that have attracted less attention (Shukla 2020). Our research also brings diverse voices and experiences, making organizational research more inclusive. This research was also needed to understand whether social enterprises were following

traditional business practices or transforming those to the extent that fits their goals and motives or if they are developing new practices unique to such organizations. Our research suggests that social enterprises are not simply taking practices from traditional businesses but are transforming those into their specific context.

Our research contributes to understanding the inclusive nature of talent management practices, which according to one study by Kaliannan and colleagues (2023), is a new phenomenon. We believe in understanding the inclusive nature of various talent management practices; social enterprises are the best place to start as their work overlaps social and economic aspects, making such organizations more empathetic to inclusion and diversity. Social enterprises focus on the potential of individuals and see talent differently than qualifications and degrees that are valued in traditional businesses, which work for their benefit (Cadigan, Dries, and van Zelderen 2023; Frost and Kalman 2016). Starting with purpose-driven recruitment, where social enterprises emphasize finding and bringing individuals who align with the organization's social goals, these organizations set the agenda for future expectations and behavior for individuals inside the organizations. It, in turn, builds organizational culture and environment that values individuals for what they are rather than what a paper degree says. Such practices have implications for traditional businesses as well that want to create inclusive workplaces must start with purpose-driven recruitment. For example, if organizations want racial diversity, it could be considered one of their purposes and align the organizational strategies accordingly. Unless such dedication is shown, racial diversity will be harder to achieve.

As unique to the social sector, volunteers play an integral role in running social enterprises, filling the gap of human resources shortage, and acting as a bridging force between society and organizations. It also makes managing the talent of volunteers vital. Effective talent

management ensures that volunteers are engaged and motivated, providing opportunities matching their skills and interests. As we observed in our findings, social enterprises involve volunteers in various activities, and volunteers had no qualms, i.e., they were made an inclusive part of the organizations. Such an inclusive approach and involvement of volunteers enhance their sense of purpose and pride in being associated with the organization and increase their likelihood of remaining committed to the organization over the long term. So, organizations looking to develop volunteer bases must provide volunteers with the right opportunities and include them in their overall talent management approaches. Based on the discussion above, we propose:

Proposition 1: Social enterprises in India prioritize inclusive talent management practices (emphasizing empathy and care as crucial elements of talent) over practices of conventional businesses that focus on qualifications and degrees.

Our findings emphasize the importance of aligning talent management practices with organizations' missions, as these contribute to the broader discourse on responsible and sustainable business practices. Organizations that attract and keep employees who not only possess the necessary skills but also have a shared sense of purpose help organizations make a positive impact. This change in priority, from solely financial performance to a broader social mission, can boost employee engagement, loyalty, and productivity in businesses. This shift is also required to achieve United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and address inequalities that organizations produce (Bapuji, Ertug, and Shaw 2020; Swailes, Downs, and Orr 2014). Additionally, it is necessary to reassess performance evaluation and reward systems to recognize and value behaviors and outcomes that support social and environmental goals. It can

promote a cultural shift within traditional businesses, encouraging a greater sense of purpose, social consciousness, and sustainability.

While various traditional businesses follow narrow and selective approaches to talent management (Festing, Schäfer, and Scullion 2013; Gallardo-Gallardo, Dries, and González-Cruz 2013; Thunnissen, Boselie, and Fruytier 2013), social enterprises aim to foster a culture of belonging and empowering employees. However, as our findings suggest, there remain limits to the inclusion activities, e.g., social enterprises focus on within their communities and often show hesitation in hiring and training others. Exclusive talent management practices can unintentionally reinforce biases, inequalities, and obstacles for those not meeting specific predetermined criteria (Dietz et al. 2015). It can be a hindrance to achieving SDGs, making inclusiveness even more important.

Social enterprises serve as prime examples of inclusive initiatives. However, it remains a daunting task to overcome cultural norms and societal biases, so deliberate efforts are required to promote the voices of marginalized communities and provide them with equal opportunities. Our research findings align with Frost and Kalman (2016), who argue that organizations must ditch biased practices and invest in diverse voices to move from homogeneous to inclusive talent management. While social enterprises are ideal for such initiatives, cultural and social norms can hinder the implementation of such inclusive practices. Such as our secondary data suggest that caste could influence talent even though participants did not see caste as an issue in collaborations, work assignments, or hiring. However, the absence of lower castes in leadership positions in social enterprises could be because of various reasons, such as there remains comparatively lower education level among lower castes, and their financial positions are also weaker compared to higher castes, so they might not be in social enterprises.

In such cases, it becomes even more critical for leaders to promote the marginalized and offer opportunities. Crowley-Henry and Al Ariss (2018) highlight that organizations can realize better long-term outcomes regarding recognized brands internationally by making diversity inclusive commitment to talent management practices such as selecting and developing. So, to make organizations genuinely inclusive, a culture shift is required where individuals responsible for the recruitment and development of employees must see beyond individuals' social identities and provide opportunities to all, irrespective of their differences (Frost and Kalman, 2016). Further, management literature has only recently started considering caste (Bapuji and Chrispal 2020; Chrispal, Bapuji, and Zietsma 2021); we believe that in making talent management practices inclusive, organizations must consider social and cultural aspects while devising strategies. Based on the above discussion, we contend that:

Proposition 2: Cultural and social considerations are crucial in fostering inclusive talent management practices in social enterprises in India.

5.1 Practical and Social Implications

Our research has multiple practical and social implications that we discuss below.

Practical Implications:

First, by gaining this understanding of talent management practices, researchers and practitioners can now access knowledge on current practices in the field. Social entrepreneurs can utilize these evidence-based practices to navigate the delicate balance of achieving their social impact and revenue goals while keeping their focus on their internal stakeholders. For example, they now know what matters to employees within social enterprises, and they can focus on developing and promoting intrinsic motivation traits and continue to focus on inclusive training and development

opportunities for all. Moreover, investors also have proof of effective talent management practices and can attempt to invest accordingly.

Further, as purpose-driven recruitment and responsible talent attraction matter, organizations can use this insight to refine their recruitment strategies, attract individuals firmly committed to the social mission, and foster a diverse and inclusive workforce. Furthermore, social enterprises can utilize this information about inclusive training and development that matters to employees and works well for them to design training programs that promote collaboration, peer learning, and personal development. Lastly, holistic performance management is what employees value, where they look beyond the financial metrics, so organizations can focus on such approaches.

Social Implications:

Our research on talent management in social enterprises has social implications as well. By fostering the inclusive nature of talent management practices, social enterprises can create a supportive and inclusive work environment that empowers the employees and communities in which these organizations operate, giving them a shared purpose where everyone values inclusion. Social enterprises can continue to focus on such inclusive practices to help communities flourish. Further, talent management practices aligning with social enterprises' social mission have the potential to strengthen their societal impact. By attracting individuals with mission-driven skills and experiences and harnessing the power of employee referrals, organizations can enhance their capacity to address complex social challenges and drive positive change.

5.2 Limitations and Future Directions

We acknowledge that this research has multiple limitations, and future research is required to overcome these limitations. First, as we conducted all interviews using Zoom and WhatsApp software, the absence of face-to-face interaction could be a limitation as participants might have been more open or behaved differently in face-to-face interactions. However, we kept in touch with the participants for a long period of time, so we believe some of the initial hesitations that participants might have were not there when later we contacted them during the process of data analysis. Second, the small sample size could be another limitation; however, our participants were experienced and provided us with rich data and triangulated data from multiple sources. So, future studies could make use of a large sample and could involve different stakeholders of social enterprises to have a better understanding of talent management. We included volunteers as well, but there are multiple stakeholders for social enterprises which could impact talent management practices in social enterprises, such as beneficiaries, donors/funders, and government officials. Third, we believe the nature of talent management practices might look different if different types of social enterprises were selected; for example, if social enterprises of small/large size were in the data, talent management practices might have been different. Finally, we also acknowledge that given the Indian context and sheer size of India and the number of social enterprises in India, findings might not be generalizable to other contexts. However, as the research aimed to generate a theoretical understanding of talent management practices in social enterprises, we lay the foundation stones for the theoretical understanding of inclusive talent management practices in social enterprises, which can be explored in future research. More empirical studies on talent management in social enterprises are required to understand the nuances, especially in the Indian context. Additionally, further research is also required to

comprehend the influence of talent management practices on organizational performance, employee engagement, and social outcomes. Longitudinal studies would also be needed to understand how talent management strategies and outcomes change over the course of a social enterprise's development. Lastly, as our research was inconclusive about the caste aspects in talent management, further research is needed to explore the impact of caste on talent management in social enterprises in India.

6. Concluding Remarks

Talent management is critical to organizational success, regardless of the sector or type of organization. As unique to social enterprises, our study's understanding of talent and talent management highlights the focus on social mission and inclusion. The study of social enterprises in India also highlights the significance of integrating talent management practices with these organizations' social missions and values and offers practical and social implications for organizations seeking to optimize talent and enhance their social impact. This research adds to the existing literature on talent management by exploring the unique context of social enterprises.

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8. Appendices

8.1 Appendix I: Organizational Details

While we have provided detailed accounts of social enterprises, some identifying details have been withheld to maintain the anonymity of the organizations.

Social Enterprise 01 (SE01)

Founded in 2014, this social enterprise aims to provide affordable healthcare for rural communities that do not have access to quality healthcare. Based in northern India, this social enterprise works with about 60 professionals (mostly medical doctors working part-time) and serves almost a million people a year. It conducts health awareness camps, on-site operations for no serious illnesses, mobile clinics, and eye check-ups, and produces free medical distribution material (leaflets). It charges those who can afford to pay and compensates and offer free medical services to those who cannot. It has received some awards from local as well as state government bodies for its work among the marginalized. It also attracts a number of young volunteers (medical doctors) and aims to expand its operations in different parts. The major challenge for it has been to manage the demand from local communities, as demand for its services outperforms what it can handle till now.

Social Enterprise 02 (SE02)

This social enterprise, started in 2013, aims to provide quality education for underprivileged communities in eastern India. With a team of about 35 individuals (primarily educators/teachers, working part-time in their free time), this organization conducts classes for primary school-going students to students aiming to attend colleges and universities. It mentors those aiming for

college/university and connects them with present college/university students. To raise its money, it largely depends on funds and donations from various bodies and individuals; however, it raises a part of its income from conducting job searches, CV building, and interview preparation training for those already in universities. Furthermore, it charges a minimum amount for those students who can afford to pay.

Social Enterprise 03 (SE03)

Established in 2012, this social enterprise targets women and provides them with finances for starting small businesses, such as opening a shop or buying cows or other animals to sell milk. It aims to empower women by making them independent and aware of financial aspects. It has grown over the years and presently employs around 65 individuals. It lends money at a specific interest rate and helps borrowers with training and support to use the money in a helpful way so that the money is used for the purpose it is borrowed. Through such activities, it has successfully implemented multiple projects and changed many lives in remote areas of central India.

Social Enterprise 04 (SE04)

This social enterprise started in 2013, aims to revolutionize recycling and waste management practices while generating revenue through waste management contracts from various organizations. Working at the intersection of environmental sustainability and economic viability, this organization is committed to creating a greener and cleaner future for communities while fostering social and economic empowerment. Based in a small town in northern India, it has about 50 employees (mainly from marginalized communities) in waste collection, sorting, and recycling operations. This enhances economic livelihoods and contributes to skill development

within the community, and it contributes toward environmental conservation by diverting waste from landfills and promoting recycling.

Social Enterprise 05 (SE05)

Formed in 2012, this social enterprise aims to provide a great holiday experience and preserve nature, i.e., sustainable tourism. Based in eastern India, it has a network of over 60 local guides, who conduct walking tours, help tourists connect and interact with local life, and taste local cuisine. It also organizes tourists' stay in villages to have a complete experience of living in mountains and hills. In doing all these activities, it charges tourists and empowers local communities through income and others. It has been featured in national and international newspapers and received multiple acknowledgments from various bodies.

Social Enterprise 06 (SE06)

Established in 2011, this social enterprise stands as a shining example of a social enterprise deeply rooted in agriculture and livelihoods, fostering both sustainable farming practices and vibrant rural communities. With a steadfast commitment to uplifting lives and nurturing the land, it operates at the intersection of agriculture, livestock, and community empowerment, taking into account the need of the community. It also sustains its operations through agricultural endeavors, high quality dairy and livestock product sales, such as milk, yogurt, cheese, and meat, among others. With a team of about 35 individuals, it educates local farmers about what to grow and how to increase production. It sources agriculture and animal products from local farmers in north India and package organic products and upgrade those to sell to big businesses in cities. Guided by a vision of holistic development, it seamlessly blends economic viability with social impact.

Social Enterprise 07 (SE07)

Started in 2009, this social enterprise employs about 40 educators (primarily part-time). It aims to break the cycle of generational poverty by equipping underprivileged individuals in central India with the tools they need to access quality employment opportunities. It focuses on the village level, where opportunities are less, and quality education remains an issue. At the heart of its operations lies a dual purpose: to drive meaningful social impact and generate revenue through training programs and career mentorship services. It runs various training programs, such as career mentorship and job placement assistance, which also help it generate revenue. It also depends on grants and donations from individuals for its operations. After completing training, many students with marginalized backgrounds have been placed in various private companies.

8.2 Appendix II: Background Survey

Participant related:

Participant's name:

Education/Qualification:

Years of work experience in social enterprise:

Gender:

Current job title:

Social enterprise related:

Name of the social enterprise:

Founded in the year:

Number of employees (Full-time):

Number of employees (Part-time):

Number of volunteers (yearly):

Legal status:

Annual budget:

Products/Services:

8.3 Appendix III: Informed Consent Form

Title of Study: Unpacking Talent Management Practices in Social Enterprises

Researcher: Pardeep Singh Attri

Supervisor: Davide Torsello

Thank you for considering participating in this study. This form details the study's purpose and your rights as a participant.

Purpose of Study: The purpose of the study is to gain a deeper understanding of what talent and talent management mean in social enterprises, and how the concept of talent management is practiced.

Study Procedures: If you agree to participate in the study, you will be invited to a one-to-one interview where we will discuss various aspects of your work experiences and talent management practices in social enterprises. The session will last approximately 60 minutes and will take place at a mutually agreed-upon location or through a virtual platform, such as Zoom.

Confidentiality: All information collected during this study will be treated with strict confidentiality. The interview will be audio-recorded for accurate data collection and analysis. However, your data will never be shared with anyone else and recordings will be heard only by the interviewer. If you feel uncomfortable sharing your data while recording, you may ask to turn off the recorder anytime. Further, your data will be anonymized while writing the report and will be used solely for this study.

Voluntary Participation: Your participation in this study is voluntary, and no reward will be offered. You also have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without providing a

reason. If you withdraw consent at any point in time during the study, your data will be erased. Your decision to participate or withdraw will in no way affect your current or future relationship with your organization as your data will not be shared with your organization.

Risks and Benefits: Participating in this study involves no risks. However, it is possible that you may feel some discomfort while discussing certain topics related to talent or talent management practices. On the other hand, benefits include the opportunity to contribute to the understanding of talent management in social enterprises.

Contact Information: If you have any questions or concerns about the study, you can contact me at attri_pardeep@phd.ceu.edu or WhatsApp at +36/70-55-29-553.

By participating in this study, you acknowledge that you have read and understood the information provided in this consent form.

Participant's Name: _____

Participant's Signature: _____

Date: _____

Researcher's Name: _____

Researcher's Signature: _____

Date: _____

8.4 Appendix IV: Interview Protocol for Semi-Structured Interviews

Date of interview:

Interviewee:

Location of interview:

Welcome message and consent: Namaste (Welcome). My name is Pardeep, and I thank you for agreeing to participate in this study on talent management in social enterprises. I appreciate your time and insights and look forward to discussing your experiences and perspectives in this important area of work.

- Tell them more about the study and the confidentiality nature.
- Ask if they allow me to record the interviews.
- Ask if they give me consent to use their anonymized data and tell them they can revoke consent anytime during the study/Confirm consent form.
- Remind them to speak for themselves and their own experiences.
- Remind them to respect the privacy of colleagues and no need to disclose names.
- Ask participants if they have any additional questions about the study.

Biography/Background Information (Charmaz, 2006; Spradley, 1979)

- Can you tell me a little bit about yourself?
- Can you tell me about your work?
 - Prompts for positions held, educational qualifications, workplaces, and location of work etc.
- Can you briefly describe your responsibilities and areas of expertise?
- What motivated you to join this sector?

Talent, Talent Management, Talent Management Practices (Chambers et al., 1998; Collings and Mellahi, 2009; Dries, 2013; Thunnissen et al., 2013)

Talent

- How would you describe talent in your organization, i.e., what talent mean to you? Or what comes to mind when you hear the term talent?

Talent Management

- What comes to your mind when you hear the term talent management?

Talent Management Practices

Can you tell me about how the recruitment and selection process work at your organization?

What are the key skills and qualities organization look for?

- Prompts for how did you find the opportunity? How were your experiences when you were hired? Any challenges?
- Does social identity aspects/community (e.g., caste, religion) from which participant comes matter?

Can you explain to me about training and development opportunities that you have received while working here at this organization?

- Prompts for have you attended any off-site training? How does the organization ensure that employees have the necessary skills to succeed in their roles? Has anyone from outside come to train you?
- Do you think your social identity (e.g., caste or economic status) matters in the opportunities of development that you have received?
- What works or what does not, and possible reasons? Any challenges?

Can you tell me how your performance is evaluated? How does the organization measure the impact of your work?

- Prompts for who is considered successful and performing in your organization? Are you satisfied with how the performance is evaluated? Any challenges? What would you do differently if given a chance? Role of social status (e.g., caste or economic status)?

Can you tell me about the compensation and reward system?

- Prompts for are you happy with the salary? Is there anything that can be improved? Role of social status (e.g., caste or economic status)?

Can you tell me what makes you come to work every day?

- Prompts for how does an organization keep you engaged? What methods does your organization use to motivate and retain employees?

How does the organization ensure that the organization is diverse and inclusive?

Closing

- Are there other important aspects of talent and talent management experiences that you feel I have left out? Is there anything else you would like to add?
- Who else would you suggest I talk to inside/outside your organization to understand these aspects better?
- Thank the participant for their time, remind the participant the confidential nature of the study, and give them opportunity to ask questions.

Essay 3: Stakeholder Engagement in Social Enterprises in India: Practices and Challenges

Abstract

While much research has focused on stakeholder management, in recent years, the founders of stakeholder theories have shifted from stakeholder management to stakeholder engagement, as stakeholder management is now considered a one-sided approach that does not work. On the other hand, the emphasis of stakeholder engagement is on inclusion, collaboration, and relationship-building, reflecting a much-needed shift in society. However, we do not know much about stakeholder engagement practices, so in this essay, we ask how social enterprises in India engage with different stakeholders. To answer this question, we conducted 30 interviews with diverse stakeholders (including 11 employees, two volunteers, 10 beneficiaries, two community members, three funders/donors, and two government officials). Our findings show that social enterprises practice three stakeholder engagement practices, i.e., “inclusive participation and collaborative decision-making,” “transparent communication and reporting,” and “relationship and trust building.” All these findings indicate the inclusive nature of stakeholder engagement practices, and our study contributes to the growing literature on stakeholder engagement.

Keywords: Stakeholder Engagement, Social Enterprises, Stakeholder Management, Stakeholders in Organizations

1. Introduction

Engaging stakeholders is critical for organizations as it fosters positive relationships, builds trust, and helps them gain valuable insights for informed decision-making (Freeman et al. 2017).

Organizations can also better comprehend various stakeholders' expectations, needs, and concerns through stakeholder engagement and align their practices accordingly (Kujala and Sachs 2019). Furthermore, engaged stakeholders become advocates who support and promote the organization's goals, products, and services. However, the literature lacks a unified understanding of the essentials of stakeholder engagement and practices of stakeholder engagement, and the fragmented use of the stakeholder engagement construct challenges to its development and legitimacy (Kujala et al. 2022; Stahl et al. 2011).

Stakeholder theory, introduced by Freeman (1984), initially popularized the concept of managing stakeholders through the term “stakeholder management.” However, more contemporary literature has raised concerns about the term and shifted towards the more pertinent concept of “stakeholder engagement” (Freeman et al. 2017; Noland and Phillips 2010). Concerns such as stakeholder management's focus on processes rather than relationships with stakeholders and the emphasis of stakeholder engagement on inclusion, collaboration, and relationship-building are reasons that focus has been shifting toward stakeholder engagement (Freeman et al. 2017). Moreover, stakeholder engagement goes beyond merely managing stakeholders, which is a one-sided approach (Kujala et al. 2022).

However, there is limited empirical research on stakeholder engagement, and till now, stakeholder literature has put much focus on defining and exploring different important stakeholders (Freeman 1984; Kujala et al. 2022), and there has been a little emphasis on

examining the nature of stakeholder relationships and practices (Freeman et al. 2017). Freeman et al. (2017, 2) highlight that to create value for organizations, we still “need examples of stakeholder engagement from practice in order to build better stakeholder theory.” Further, with growing concerns about the societal and environmental impacts of businesses, along with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, stakeholders have been showing a growing interest in the workings of businesses (Dmytriiev et al. 2017). Therefore, it makes essential for organizations to understand their stakeholders and devise practices to engage with them actively (Freeman et al. 2017).

Further, stakeholder engagement is crucial to keep social enterprises on the path of growth and survival. Furthermore, as we found in our first essay, inconsistent stakeholder expectations create challenges for social enterprises, so understanding how these organizations keep different stakeholders engaged and navigate inconsistent expectations is crucial. Insight into stakeholder engagement would also enhance accountability on the part of social enterprises and foster sustainable impact as these organizations can keep in mind the requirements of different stakeholders while making decisions. So, understanding practices and challenges of stakeholder engagement is crucial to progress the theory on stakeholder engagement in social enterprises. Furthermore, understanding stakeholder engagement is vital to ensure that diverse perspectives are considered while decision-making on various aspects of social enterprises that are very much embedded in society. So, in this essay, we investigate:

How do social enterprises engage with different stakeholders, i.e., what are the practices and challenges for social enterprises in stakeholder engagement?

To answer this research question, we conducted in-depth qualitative study involving 30 interviews with stakeholders from six social enterprises in India, including 11 employees, two

volunteers, 10 beneficiaries, two community members, three funders/donors, and two government officials. While much focus has remained on higher management and managerial views of stakeholders, scholars have urged to bring different stakeholders other than top management and employees (Bissola and Imperatori 2012). Further, Mair (2020) also highlights the importance of incorporating beneficiaries into understanding social enterprises, arguing that social enterprises do not operate in a social, economic, or political vacuum. Furthermore, it is becoming more widely acknowledged that it is essential to understand how organizations engage the local community as stakeholders. However, limited research has focused on the local community's role as a stakeholder (Teo and Loosemore 2017). Keeping these in mind, we attempt to bring diverse stakeholders to this research.

Our research findings reveal that social enterprises employ three key stakeholder engagement practices: “inclusive participation and collaborative decision-making,” “transparent communication and reporting,” and “relationship and trust building.” These findings collectively highlight the inclusive nature of stakeholder engagement practices. Therefore, our research significantly contributes to advancing inclusive stakeholder engagement. Through examining stakeholder engagement within Indian social enterprises, this study seeks to enhance our understanding of stakeholder engagement theories and their practical implementation in the realm of social entrepreneurship. The outcomes of this research can aid in creating customized strategies and frameworks that facilitate effective stakeholder engagement within Indian social enterprises, thereby strengthening their capacity to effect positive social change and foster sustainable impact. Further, by delving into this context, the study aims to shed light on effective stakeholder engagement strategies and contribute to the growing body of knowledge on social entrepreneurship.

The rest of the essay is organized as follows. First, we provide a theoretical background on stakeholder engagement and briefly discuss concepts in social enterprises. Second, we describe the methodology of our qualitative study regarding context, data collection, and analysis. Third, we present findings regarding stakeholder engagement. Finally, we discuss the theoretical, social, and practical implications of our findings and conclude with limitations and future directions.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1 Stakeholder Engagement

First, who is the stakeholder? Scholars have presented multiple definitions of who is a stakeholder. Freeman (1984, 46) defined a stakeholder as “any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organization's objectives.” Stakeholders include employees, customers, suppliers, shareholders, communities, governments, non-governmental organizations, funders, donors, investors, and other relevant groups.

In their study, (Mitchell, Agle, and Wood 1997) examined 27 definitions of stakeholders and made a distinction between two perspectives: stakeholders as “claimants” and stakeholders as “influencers.” Almost a decade later, Friedman and Miles (2006; cited from (Miles 2012)) identified 55 definitions covering 75 publications and Laplume and colleagues (2008) reviewed 179 stakeholder definitions. The situation has been even worse in recent years. Miles (2017) found 885 stakeholder definitions from the systematic review. See Table 1 for a sample of stakeholder definitions.

Table 1: Various Definitions of Stakeholders

| Reference | Definitions of Stakeholders |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Rhenman, 1964 | “are depending on the firm in order to achieve their personal goals and on whom the firm is depending for its existence” (cited in Nasi, 1995) |
| Freeman, 1984 | “can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organization's objectives” |
| Bowie, 1988 | “without whose support the organization would cease to exist” |
| Evan and Freeman, 1988 | “fit from or are harmed by, and whose rights are violated or respected by, corporate actions” |
| Freeman and Gilbert, 1987 | “can affect or is affected by a business” |
| Savage et al., 1991 | “have an interest in the actions of an organization and ... the ability to influence it” |
| Hill and Jones, 1992 | “constituents who have a legitimate claim on the firm ... established through the existence of an exchange relationship" who supply "the firm with critical resources (contributions) and in exchange each expects its interests to be satisfied (by inducements)” |
| Clarkson, 1995 | “have, or claim, ownership, rights, or interests in a corporation and its activities” |
| Donaldson and Preston, 1995 | “persons or groups with legitimate interests in procedural and/or substantive aspects of corporate activity” |
| Deloitte, 2014 | “those groups who affect and/or could be affected by an organisation’s activities, products or services and associated performance. This does not include all those who may have knowledge of or views about the organisation. Organisations will have many stakeholders, each with distinct types and levels of involvement, and often with diverse and sometimes conflicting interests and concerns.” |

Adapted from Mitchell et al. (1997)

Some scholars have also made a distinction between primary and secondary stakeholders (Carroll 1993; Clarkson 1998). Primary stakeholders being those groups with whom organizations have close and formal ties and organizations have responsibilities toward (e.g., employees); on the other hand, secondary stakeholders being those groups that have indirect ties, but organizations might have moral duties of not harming them (e.g., communities where organizations operate).

In analyzing stakeholder definitions within the management literature, (Olander 2007, 279) categorized stakeholders into two primary groups. The first group consists of “internal stakeholders, who are those actively involved in project execution; and external stakeholders, who are those affected by the project.” This definition encompasses both influencers (internal stakeholders) and claimants (external stakeholders) (Mathur, Price, and Austin 2008). However, all these definitions follow, in one way or another, the widely accepted definition of stakeholders as individuals, groups, or organizations that have the potential to influence or are influenced by the activities of an organization (Freeman 1984). For this study, we will also follow this broad definition of stakeholders, as there is very little known about stakeholders in social enterprises.

Like stakeholders, engagement can also have multiple meanings. Kahn (1990, 692) defines the engagement of employees in organizational contexts as when they are “physically, cognitively, and emotionally” involved in “the roles they perform,” which we follow in our research. Like stakeholders and engagement, stakeholder engagement definitions vary across industries and contexts, adding more complexity (Kujala and Sachs 2019; Ramus and Vaccaro 2017). Kujala et al. (2022, 1139) define stakeholder engagement as “the aims, activities, and impacts of stakeholder relations in a moral, strategic, and/or pragmatic manner.” For Manetti and Toccafondi (2012, 365), stakeholder engagement is “a process that creates a dynamic context of interaction, mutual respect, dialog, and change, not a unilateral management of stakeholders.” Deloitte (2014) defines stakeholder engagement as “the process used by an organisation to engage relevant stakeholders for a purpose to achieve accepted outcomes.” Further, some have considered various forms of interactions between different stakeholders as stakeholder engagement (Maak 2007).

However, engaging with stakeholders involves more than just providing information or asking for their opinions - it is about having a real and continuous conversation to comprehend their viewpoints, resolve issues, and factor in their input when making decisions. Greenwood (2007, 317–18) defines *stakeholder engagement* as “practices that the organisation undertakes to involve stakeholders in a positive manner in organisational activities.” We use this definition for our research.

Most stakeholder engagement research used stakeholder theory as the framework (Greenwood 2007; Kujala et al. 2022; Noland & Phillips 2010). According to stakeholder theory, an organization's purpose is to create value for its various stakeholders (Freeman et al. 2017). Stakeholder theory emphasizes the importance of stakeholders in strategic decision-making and prioritizes analyzing relationships with stakeholders (Freeman 1984). As there can be stakeholders who can influence organizations or cannot or get affected by organizational decisions or do not or a mixture of these different stakeholders, such complexities have led in recent years to scholars focusing on the moral and ethical obligations of the organizations (Mitchell et al. 1997; Freeman et al. 2017). Dmytriiev et al. (2017) argue that highlighting shared goals, fostering trust, promoting mutual responsibility, and utilizing participatory approaches enable stakeholder engagement on a broader scale. In essence, organizations perceive stakeholder engagement as a means to achieve organizational goals rather than solely as a moral obligation (Greenwood 2007; Kujala and Sachs 2019).

However, stakeholder engagement as an area of research has been overlooked, especially in business and management contexts (Freeman et al. 2017; Kujala et al. 2022). In recent decades, multiple devastating events, such as pandemics and increasing inequalities across the globe, have given rise to demands and expectations from businesses to involve various

stakeholders in various organizational activities, including product development to handling corporate social responsibilities (Attri and Bapuji 2021). The lack of such engagement with different stakeholders can lead to various dark sides of businesses and has been criticized by scholars. For example, Attri and Bapuji (2021) have highlighted how various practices in sharing economy platforms can lead to discrimination on the platforms, and one of those was the non-involvement of stakeholders while designing the platforms.

Various other scholars in the past also have highlighted the importance and positive outcomes of stakeholder engagement, such as innovation (Chesbrough 2003), increased efficiency (Scherer and Voegtlin 2020), entrepreneurship (Alvarez and Sachs 2023), and the acquisition of a social license to operate (Scherer, Palazzo, and Matten 2014). Stakeholder engagement can also help marginalized groups protect their interests and help achieve sustainable development goals (Neugebauer 2003). So, scholars have suggested that stakeholder engagement should become part of the organizational strategy rather than stay outside the margins (Noland and Phillips 2010). Despite this, mainstream management research has yet to pay attention to stakeholder engagement and implicitly prioritized corporate elites as the decision-makers who act in the best interests of all stakeholders. Moreover, such an assumption that corporate elites represent all stakeholders is seldom challenged (Scherer and Palazzo 2007). So, there remains a void in understanding how stakeholder engagement is practiced and the challenges of stakeholder engagement (Freeman et al. 2017; Kujala et al. 2022).

2.2 Stakeholder Engagement in Social Enterprises

Ramus and Vaccaro (2017) highlight that the lack of stakeholder engagement in social enterprises can lead to the organization's mission drift and failure, so it becomes crucial for social enterprises to engage different stakeholders. Ramus and Vaccaro (2017) find that four

steps - stakeholder selection, dialog, action, and social accounting - enable a social enterprise to acquire prominence within a stakeholder network. Further, for social enterprises, stakeholder engagement helps in “re-establishing the equilibrium between social and commercial performance” (Ramus and Vaccaro 2017, 319). However, we know little about how social enterprises engage different stakeholders, who can also have inconsistent expectations from the organization. Freeman (1984) has argued that organizations that do not have appropriate strategies and practices in place are not socially viable and experience many challenges in survival.

In sum, stakeholder engagement is a critical component of organizational success, with effective stakeholder engagement practices being essential to organizational success in terms of enhancing reputation and long-run sustainability. However, we do not know social enterprise stakeholder engagement practices and challenges.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Context: Social Enterprises in India and Different Stakeholders

Please see Methodology section for details on research context. Here we would mention that, as with the earlier two essays, we focused on those social enterprises involved in economic activities and serving social objectives (see Table 2 for the description of social enterprises and social aims and economic activities carried by these and Appendix I for detailed description of social enterprises). We selected only those social enterprises that have been in operation for at least ten years and had at least 25 full-time and part-time employees.

Table 2: Description of social enterprises, social aims, and economic activities

| Social Enterprise | Objective of Social Enterprise | Economic Activities of Social Enterprise | Number of Employees |
|--------------------------|---|--|----------------------------|
| SE01 | Employment training for marginalized groups | Training programs; consulting; building and delivering courses for private sector | 40-50 |
| SE02 | Promoting education and literacy | Seminars for businesses; books publications; skill development workshops | 20-30 |
| SE03 | Empowering and uplifting women | Consulting work for government and private sector; online merchandize and subscription | 20-30 |
| SE04 | Promoting cultural activities | Cultural heritage tours; sales of artifacts | 30-40 |
| SE05 | Providing access to medical services and improving health | Contracts with various government and private agencies | 20-30 |
| SE06 | Education for underprivileged | Training programs; consulting work; guest speaking | 30-40 |

Note: We provide the range on number of employees to maintain anonymity. Second, the number of employees includes full-time and part-time. Volunteers are not included.

3.2 The Data Collection

In the following section, we describe the data collection process.

3.2.1 Research Design

A qualitative research approach was chosen to gain insights into stakeholder engagement practices and challenges (Corbin and Strauss 2015). Firstly, there is a dearth of research on stakeholder engagement in social enterprises, particularly in the Indian context. Additionally, many social enterprises in India operate with limited resources, making it challenging to maintain stakeholder management. Studying social enterprises in India and stakeholder engagement practices holds significant potential for advancing research and driving impactful change. For instance, India is the house of most social enterprises globally, with almost 3

million. The nation is characterized by immense diversity, encompassing varying cultures, languages, and socio-economic backgrounds. On the other hand, large-scale religious violence and caste divides also exist, setting communities apart. By studying social enterprises in India, researchers can gain access to a rich and diverse stakeholder landscape, allowing for a comprehensive exploration of stakeholder engagement strategies applicable to a wide array of contexts globally and making a larger impact. The unique challenges (fund shortage, religious and caste divides in society) and opportunities (young population, easy access to labor) social enterprises face in India necessitate innovative approaches to stakeholder engagement. Investigating how social enterprises navigate these complexities can yield novel insights and solutions that may be adapted to address stakeholder engagement challenges in other emerging economies.

Therefore, investigating stakeholder engagement practices necessitated exploring informal strategies alongside formal practices. Hence, this study adopts a qualitative research design, explicitly employing in-depth semi-structured interviews (Adams 2015; McCracken 1988). Semi-structured interviews offer an opportunity to understand the intricacies, obstacles, and strategies employed in stakeholder engagement within social enterprises in India. By delving into the perspectives and experiences of stakeholders, this approach allows for a comprehensive exploration of the complexities and dynamics involved in effectively engaging various stakeholder groups.

Through in-depth interviews, this research aims to uncover valuable insights into stakeholder engagement practices, shedding light on the role of different stakeholders and stakeholder interactions. This qualitative approach provides a platform for stakeholders to share

their first-hand experiences, perspectives, and challenges, contributing to a deeper understanding of effective stakeholder engagement practices in the context of social enterprises in India.

3.2.2 Sampling

This study employed a purposive sampling technique to select participants who would provide valuable insights into stakeholder engagement practices in social enterprises. Purposive sampling was chosen for its advantages in capturing a range of viewpoints and ideas, resulting in rich and contextually relevant data that can contribute to theory development and expand the existing knowledge on stakeholder engagement in social enterprises. Scholars have also highlighted that purposive sampling enhances the rigor of a study and the trustworthiness of the data and its findings (Campbell et al. 2020; Lincoln and Guba 1985).

To identify suitable participants, 30 social enterprises were approached, with a minimum employee size of 25 (including full-time and part-time staff) and a minimum operational history of ten years. Various methods were used to contact these social enterprises, including contacting social enterprises' social media platforms and professional associations, and leveraging personal networks. Only social enterprises with both a social mission and engaged in economic activities were considered for inclusion in the study. Ultimately, 30 participants from six social enterprises agreed to participate in the interviews, including 11 employees, two volunteers, 10 beneficiaries, two community members, three funders/donors, and two government officials. Among the participants, eight were women, and the remaining were men. The participants also played a vital role in identifying potential research participants within their organizations and outside, and they also recommended additional materials, such as organizational reports and documents, that could contribute to the research question (Charmaz 2014; Spradley 1979).

Table 3 provides detailed information on the characteristics of the participants involved in the study. Efforts were made to ensure diversity within the sample regarding the social enterprises' sector, size, and geographical location.

Table 3: Participants' Characteristics

| Participant Id. | Gender | Stakeholder | Number of years of involvement in social enterprises | Related to Social Enterprise | Date of Interview |
|------------------------|---------------|--------------------|---|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| P01 | Male | Founder | 12 | SE01 | October 29, 2021 |
| P02 | Male | Co-Founder | 10 | SE02 | November 7, 2021 |
| P03 | Male | Co-Founder | 14 | SE03 | November 21, 2021 |
| P04 | Male | Employee | 6 | SE03 | November 10, 2021 |
| P05 | Male | Employee | 4 | SE03 | November 4, 2021 |
| P06 | Female | Employee | 7 | SE04 | January 6, 2022 |
| P07 | Male | Employee | 3 | SE04 | January 11, 2022 |
| P08 | Male | Employee | 9 | SE05 | February 15, 2022 |
| P09 | Male | Employee | 6 | SE05 | February 16, 2022 |
| P10 | Male | Employee | 10 | SE06 | April 7, 2022 |
| P11 | Male | Employee | 7 | SE06 | July 1, 2022 |
| P12 | Female | Volunteer | 9 | SE04 | February 8, 2022 |
| P13 | Female | Volunteer | 7 | SE05 | May 13, 2022 |
| P14 | Female | Beneficiary | 2 | SE01 | January 25, 2022 |
| P15 | Male | Beneficiary | 4 | SE02 | December 12, 2021 |

| | | | | | |
|-----|--------|----------------------|----|------|--------------------|
| P16 | Male | Beneficiary | 8 | SE02 | December 12, 2021 |
| P17 | Male | Beneficiary | 3 | SE03 | December 13, 2021 |
| P18 | Female | Beneficiary | 3 | SE03 | December 14, 2021 |
| P19 | Male | Beneficiary | 4 | SE02 | December 14, 2021 |
| P20 | Male | Beneficiary | 1 | SE01 | September 30, 2022 |
| P21 | Male | Beneficiary | 5 | SE05 | March 13, 2022 |
| P22 | Female | Beneficiary | 2 | SE06 | December 21, 2021 |
| P23 | Female | Beneficiary | 1 | SE06 | April 4, 2022 |
| P24 | Male | Community Member | 8 | SE03 | December 18, 2021 |
| P25 | Male | Community Member | 3 | SE02 | December 19, 2021 |
| P26 | Female | Funder/Donor | 10 | SE01 | March 9, 2022 |
| P27 | Male | Funder/Donor | 9 | SE03 | February 25, 2022 |
| P28 | Male | Funder/Donor | 3 | SE06 | March 23, 2022 |
| P29 | Male | Government/Regulator | 5 | SE01 | April 19, 2022 |
| P30 | Male | Government/Regulator | 7 | SE05 | June 23, 2022 |

Note: “Related to social enterprises” column shows the participants are related to which social enterprise out of six social enterprises in the study. Further, the order of participants does not show the order of interviews conducted. We have clubbed together similar stakeholders for analytical purposes, though the interviews were not conducted in the listed order of participants.

3.2.3 Data Collection Procedure

Before commencing the interviews, participants were provided with a comprehensive explanation of the study's objectives, the importance of confidentiality, the voluntary nature of their participation, and their right to refrain from answering any question they were

uncomfortable with. They were allowed to seek clarification and ask questions at the interviews' beginning and end. Notably, no hostility was encountered, and participants willingly shared their experiences openly during the interview sessions. Wherever possible, written consent was obtained, and in other cases, informed verbal consent was recorded before starting the interview. Please see Appendix II for an informed consent form.

To ensure a thorough exploration of stakeholder engagement practices and challenges in the specific context of social enterprises in India, an in-depth interview protocol consisting of open-ended questions was developed for different stakeholders. Please see Appendix III for the interview protocol. Before conducting the main interviews, pilot interviews were conducted with two individuals, allowing for the questionnaire refinement. Both individuals were employees at social enterprises, and their data was not used in further analysis, except refining questionnaire.

Except for the interviews with six beneficiaries and two community members, all interviews were conducted using video communication platforms such as Zoom or the WhatsApp mobile application, depending on the participant's preference (Oliffe et al. 2021). Six interviews with beneficiaries and two community members were conducted face-to-face while we were in field for a short period of time (two weeks) at two social enterprises (SE02 and SE03 in our data). Creating a safe environment for participants to engage in extensive discussions about their experiences was a priority, facilitating a free and open exchange of ideas between the participants and the interviewers. This approach yielded valuable insights and suggestions for further exploration. To ensure accurate data capture, all interviews were recorded, each lasting between 40 to 50 minutes, except for interviews with beneficiaries and community members that lasted between 20 to 30 minutes. While most of the interviews were in English, all interviews with beneficiaries and community members were in Hindi, a local language in India. The

interviewer conducting the interviews in Hindi was a native speaker of the language. Following the recommendations of scholars, a back/reverse translation method was employed for the interview guide, involving translation to Hindi and subsequent re-translation to English to ensure consistency and quality of the questions (Brislin 1970). Interviews were conducted until theoretical saturation was achieved, meaning until no new information emerged from the interviews (Corbin and Strauss 2015; Saunders et al. 2018).

Finally, additional sources such as social enterprises' reports, social media data, websites, and news reportage were analyzed to enhance the data triangulation process and have a better understanding of how social enterprises engage with different stakeholders. Further, we also use some data from our field trip at two social enterprises (discussed in more detail in essay 1). These steps collectively provided rich and comprehensive data to gain insights into stakeholder engagement practices within social enterprises.

3.3 Data Analysis

First, transcripts of the recorded interviews were generated using transcription software and thoroughly reviewed for accuracy (Poland 1995). To minimize bias and maintain data integrity, the transcripts and interview notes were read multiple times, with comments and questions noted for further exploration. This process also involved returning to the participants for clarification, ensuring the accuracy and completeness of the data.

The data analysis followed a thematic analysis approach (Braun and Clarke 2006), consisting of three stages: identifying codes, developing second-order themes, and constructing theoretical constructs. Data coding was crucial in constructing grounded theory (Charmaz 2014). Initial codes were developed based on the practices highlighted by participants, such as “joint problem-solving sessions with different stakeholders,” “seeking external mediation to resolve

conflicts,” and “attempting for common ground for decisions.” Several codes were merged and refined to make sense of the data. Through an iterative process, these codes were grouped to form second-order themes, such as “continuous stakeholder interaction/consultations” and “stakeholder involvement in project monitoring.” These second-order themes were further organized to develop higher-level theoretical constructs demonstrating stakeholder engagement practices. This iterative process allowed for identifying all relevant themes within the data.

A detailed description of the process from first-order codes to second-order codes and subsequent conceptual aggregate themes can be found in Table 4, illustrating our analysis process (Gioia, Corley, and Hamilton 2013). Our iterative approach involved continuous back-and-forth discussions between the data, regular meetings, and theoretical foundations, enabling a deeper understanding of our unique dataset (Gioia, Corley, and Hamilton 2013).

Table 4: Data Analysis: Analytical Coding

| First order codes | Second order codes | Aggregate Theoretical Dimensions |
|---|--|---|
| Joint problem-solving sessions with different stakeholders (13) | Continuous stakeholder interaction/consultations | Inclusive Participation and Collaborative Decision-Making |
| Suggestion boxes for employees (5) | | |
| Seeking external mediation to resolve conflicts (4) | | |
| Regular meetings with the governmental officials (10) | | |
| Attempting for common ground for decisions (12) | | |
| Sharing regular updates on projects (14) | Stakeholder involvement in project monitoring | |
| Targeted outreach, such as engaging marginalized in decision making (7) | | |
| Ensuring representation of diverse perspectives and interests in projects (5) | | |
| Ongoing feedback and input (12) | | |
| Getting approval from government officials before projects (10) | | |

| | | |
|--|---|---|
| Participatory workshops and focus groups to involve stakeholders in decision-making (7) | | |
| Transparency in decision-making processes (12) | Reporting back to stakeholders | Transparent Communication and Reporting |
| Providing reports on organizational goals and performance (9) | | |
| Ensuring transparency in financial matters, such as sharing expenditure information (5) | | |
| Submitting regular reports to government offices (10) | | |
| Keeping donors involved with regular updates (8) | | |
| Accessible language – producing reports in the local language (5) | Information dissemination and accessibility | |
| Using multiple channels, such as social media, emails, and meetings, to communicate (13) | | |
| Using plain language and avoiding jargon (9) | | |
| Promoting two-way communication (6) | | |
| Providing internship opportunities for students (12) | Capacity building and empowerment | Relationship and Trust Building |
| Mentoring emerging leaders within the community (5) | | |
| Providing access to resources and tools of the organizations for community use (7) | | |
| Providing guidance on village level grant applications (4) | | |
| Providing training to the local community (10) | | |
| Actively listening to stakeholders' concerns (7) | Engaging with the community | |
| Responding promptly to community concerns (9) | | |
| Organizing community dinners/parties (5) | | |
| Participating as a team in community event celebrations (5) | | |

Note: Numbers inside the brackets next to the first-order codes represent the number of times the particular code/idea appeared in participants' data (Tallerico 1991; Woodrum 1984).

To enhance the trustworthiness of our findings (Lincoln and Guba 1985), we implemented several measures, including prolonged engagement with the participants. This

extended engagement fostered a stronger connection and understanding between the researchers and participants. Once the themes and constructs were established, we shared our findings with the participants, who provided feedback affirming that the results accurately reflected their experiences. This feedback further validated the trustworthiness of our qualitative research.

To ensure the quality of our research, we followed the guidance of (Elliott, Fischer, and Rennie 1999) by providing multiple quotes on emerging themes. We also provide additional quotes for each theme in Table 5. This approach allows readers to interpret the findings independently and minimizes the potential for misinterpretation. To further prevent misinterpretation, excerpts of participants' voices in the local Indian language, which both the participants and the interviewer were fluent in, were included along with our translations (Smith, Chen, and Liu 2008). Even when interviews were conducted in English, participants switched to Hindi or Hinglish (a combination of Hindi and English generally used in Northern India). To keep to the original voice, whenever they spoke in Hinglish, we present those quotes along with English translation as well. This approach maintains the authenticity and context of participants' voices in the research.

Finally, based on the identified themes, we summarized our findings and developed a cohesive narrative that is presented in the following sections. We attribute the trustworthiness of our results not only to the careful selection of participants but also to the meticulous steps taken during data collection and analysis (Lincoln and Guba 1985).

Table 5: Themes and Additional Illustrative Quotes

| Themes | Illustrative Quotes |
|---|--|
| Inclusive Participation and Collaborative Decision-Making | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sab ki ek ehmiyat hai yaha (Everyone has same value here in the organization) (P06; Interviewed: 06.01.2022) |

| | |
|---|--|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When there was a conflict within the community and the interests of social enterprises, we had to bring someone from outside who would understand both sides of the story well and try to resolve the situation. (P03; Interviewed: 21.11.2021) • When I know how my money is spent, it feels good and respected, so I think it is good that this organization does that and asks for my opinions. (P27; Interviewed: 25.02.2022) • We try to take into account everyone's view before starting anything new; it is not easy but at least we try for that. (P11; Interviewed: 01.07.2022) • Workshops where government officials can come and tell us regulations related to medical are really helpful in staying in line with rules and smoothening conflicts (P09; Interviewed: 16.02.2022) |
| Transparent Communication and Reporting | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As an employee, it is important for me to know how the organization is doing with respect to social and also money-wise, so if they have all these details on the website, it generates trust, and I would feel safe in terms of having future at the organization. (P07; Interviewed: 11.01.2022) • Clear aur (and) accurate information bahut zaruri hai (is very much important) as helps make informed decisions. (P04; Interviewed: 10.11.2021) • In my experiences, I have noticed that community appreciates when we provide reports and updates, even if those are small or insignificant. That creates environment that they (community) think that we care for them. (P01; Interviewed: 29.10.2021) • As a volunteer I need to know what my duties and responsibilities are ... it is not easy to figure out all time but recently I have started taking initiatives to approach different people here at the company and it is much more enjoyable now, knowing what I am doing and how it is helping the organization. (P12; Interviewed: 08.02.2022) |
| Relationship and Trust Building | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By involving local communities, we increase the credibility of our work, and it is very good for our purpose that people trust us. (P05; Interviewed: 04.11.2021) • Do tarafa hota hai yeh, aisa nahi ki hum kare jae or wo kuch na kare (Trust is a two-way street; it is not like that we keep on trusting and they do not.) (P24; Interviewed: 18.12.2021) |

| | |
|--|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hamara sara kaam hi relationship aur trust pe hai. Agar auroto ko aage le kar jana hai toh pehle trust banana bahut zaruri hai (Our whole work is based on relationship and trust. If we want to work on improving the situation of women, first building trust is must.) (P04; Interviewed: 10.11.2021) • From time to time, we organize workshops for women and teach them mobile and computer use, basic health awareness ... all kinds of things. (P08; Interviewed: 15.02.2022) |
|--|---|

4. Findings

We present the findings of our study in the following sections. Our findings suggest that social enterprises in India focus on inclusive stakeholder engagement, where they consider different stakeholders in planning, organizing, and implementing, among other various activities. In the following sections, along with the stakeholder engagement practices, we also discuss the challenges of stakeholder engagement. We found that social enterprises primarily follow three stakeholder engagement practices: “Inclusive Participation and Collaborative Decision-Making,” “Transparent Communication and Reporting,” and “Relationship and Trust Building.” We present participants' quotes precisely as they stated, with minimal grammatical corrections. In cases where we omit certain words to focus on relevant information, the omitted words are indicated by three dots (...). Additionally, we include participant IDs at the end of the quotes to highlight the participant's voice.

4.1 Inclusive Participation and Collaborative Decision-Making

Inclusive participation remains a foundation for social enterprises in India to engage with different stakeholders, helping organizations achieve their goals. Our findings suggest that this

practice involves “continuous stakeholder interaction/consultations” and “stakeholder involvement in project monitoring.”

Continuous stakeholder interaction/consultations

Continuous stakeholder interaction and consultations foster effective stakeholder engagement and decision-making processes as organizations gain valuable insights and build trust by maintaining ongoing communications with stakeholders throughout various stages. Our study participants highlighted joint problem-solving sessions with different stakeholders where they tried to find common ground on various issues, such as fund allocations or project implementations at the village level. As participants mentioned:

We meet very often and discuss almost everything and anything regarding issues related to students and community. (P02; Interviewed: 07.11.2021)

I have taken part in many problem-solving discussions where everyone will gather, sit on the ground on the mat, have dinner or drinks, and try to discuss challenges or all kinds of things. (P13; Interviewed: 13.05.2022)

While continuous stakeholder interactions can generate ideas, it can also be challenging for social enterprises to carry forward with all the ideas, risking making some stakeholders angry whose ideas are not implemented. Also, by involving different stakeholders, consensus reaching becomes even further difficult for social enterprises, as one of the participants puts it nicely:

It is like a madhouse of ideas; people have so many good ideas [to improve women's situation], and without discussion, we surely cannot get past anything. So, we try to discuss those with others before going forward, but it is almost impossible to take into account all the views, and if someone has strong views about something, it is like a never-ending struggle to bring everyone on the same platform. (P04; Interviewed: 10.11.2021)

When internal conflicts become challenging to handle, social enterprises seek external mediation. It involves bringing in a neutral third party, like a professional mediator or community head, to help guide constructive dialogue and reach a mutually agreeable solution between stakeholders. However, this only sometimes works, as approaching a mediator for minor issues can be time-consuming and takes social enterprises' focus away from their goals. As various participants mentioned:

Staying in a place where people talk about everything ... even a bird flying in the village gets known and talked, making things complicated for us with sometimes half-cooked information flows more than the real facts. So, from time to time, we had to seek help from externals on various small-small things. (P02; Interviewed: 07.11.2021)

There are kinds of godfathers in the region we operate, so if anything happens, not only us but the community also approach that godfather for mediation ... it's very flimsy, and people might not believe and think things have changed, but this is how it is at the ground. (P01; Interviewed: 29.10.2021)

Even after the community head or government official decided for all, things sometimes go back to where they were as various people would not follow or try to approach someone higher [in authority] than the community head or just try to find loopholes in those decisions. (P30; Interviewed: 23.06.2022)

Furthermore, social enterprises regularly consult and interact with government officials to find out about various schemes or the submission of paperwork. Such engagement was necessary for social enterprises to run smoothly, as one participant mentioned:

We have to keep community [governmental] officers leading the projects updated, unko sath mein liye bina kuch nahi ho sakta (nothing can be done without having them on our side). (P04; Interviewed: 10.11.2021)

Engaging with government officials does not come easy for social enterprises as various challenges remain, such as corruption and mismanagement of work, as participants highlighted:

There is so much bureaucracy that one of us has to, in a way, sit at some of the government offices almost every day to get information for example information for scholarships for marginalized students... it's really difficult but must be part of the work we do. ... and they give us appointments and then do not appear in meetings; we are sitting there, wasting our time, but they are nowhere. (P11; Interviewed: 01.07.2022)

Either we need information and support, or they need it, so we keep engaging with governmental officers from time to time. ... Many of them ask for bribes, but what can we do? You know how things are here in India. (P04; Interviewed: 04.11.2021)

On the other hand, when we talked to government officials. They mentioned that regulations regarding the working, funding, and various other aspects of social enterprises are not clear and keep on changing, so it is not easy to engage and provide the right information in time.

We have to follow certain procedures and guidelines regarding education, which keep on changing, and then we have to ask for the latest guidelines from higher authorities, which by the time we get and distribute, things change again ... what can we do in such a situation. (P29; Interviewed: 19.04.2022)

Furthermore, within social enterprises, they have suggestion boxes for employees to drop their suggestions and grievances, which some of the participants believe have been helpful for their organizations and increases stakeholder satisfaction and trust:

You know we have suggestion boxes at both of our locations. We also have an even anonymous email support system, where anyone can suggest anonymously as well using the internet. It feels like we have some mechanism in place to raise our voices for things that matter to us. (P10; Interviewed: 07.04.2022)

It is not that we have suggestion boxes, but we keep reminding our employees, everyone involved, that they should use it and tell us whatever they do not feel speaking out openly. (P07; Interviewed: 11.01.2022)

While suggestion boxes are a great tool, their usage and participation in those remain low, and the quality of suggestions also was not good, as a few participants highlighted:

We had to set up suggestion boxes as we felt people were not coming forward to tell us the reality, and we had to step in to have reality in front of us ... I think it has worked to some extent. We did not get many ideas or complaints, but a few of what we got were effective, so it was worth it, I guess, but surely more could be done with these. (P01; Interviewed: 29.10.2021)

Further, participants believe that power dynamics within the organizations influence which suggestion is taken forward and implemented, which creates a challenge for stakeholders to trust truly such mechanisms in place.

There is politics involved in what cultural projects are selected to follow as those suggestions are followed on a priority basis which can have more impact and keep everyone happy. (P06; Interviewed: 06.01.2022)

Stakeholder involvement in project monitoring

Stakeholder involvement in project monitoring refers to the active participation of relevant stakeholders in monitoring projects' progress and outcomes. By doing so, stakeholders can contribute their valuable insights and perspectives to ensure its success, along with enhancing transparency, accountability, and the overall effectiveness of project monitoring. Participants in our study highlighted various ways how stakeholders are involved in project monitoring, such as sharing regular updates with the stakeholders and asking for ongoing feedback and inputs.

Different people bring different minds and eyes to the project, which as community development officers or project leaders, we appreciate as we might not take into account many things or overlook, so bringing in others helps us identify potential issues and challenges to women upliftment. (P03; Interviewed: 21.11.2021)

We regularly share updates on our projects and activities with our supporters by email. (P02; Interviewed: 07.11.2021)

Yes, I have subscribed to the emails and occasionally get updates on the activities and things that are going on inside. (P13; Interviewed: 13.05.2022)

Furthermore, targeted outreach of marginalized individuals in decision-making ensures that diverse perspectives and interests are represented in projects. Participants highlighted that they try to engage with women, especially to bring them to the forefront, who otherwise remain missing from the decisions that affect them.

Main toh khush hu ki hame bhi bulate hai, sunte hai hamari baat. Nahi toh koun karta hai aise. (I am happy that they involve us and listen to us. Otherwise, who does that.)
(P24; Interviewed: 18.12.2021)

Jab wo naya course shuru kar rhe the toh mere se baat kiya or puccha tha course kaisa ho. Student hote huye yeh ek badi opportunity thi (When they wanted to start a new course, I was involved in the discussions that would shape the course material. As a student, this was a big opportunity). (P19; Interviewed: 14.12.2021)

However, societal and cultural norms hinder the involvement of women in social enterprises. Women participants highlighted that in society, it is still considered abnormal if they go out and participate in community meetings, and sometimes, they are seen with suspicion within their own families as well.

Ghar-wala ghar se nikalne dega toh na ... bahut baar jhagda ho jata hai ki kyu or kaha ja rahi ho agar aisi kahi aurto ki meeting ho toh. Asan nahi hai. (If only husband lets to get out of home ... many times, fights start that why and where am I going to women's meeting. It is not easy.) (P22; Interviewed: 21.12.2021)

Another aspect of involving stakeholders that came from our study was specific to government officials, as their approval was almost always required to start projects, so social enterprises attempt to invite them for participatory workshops and discussions with various stakeholders. Participants believe engaging important stakeholders in decision-making can be

achieved through participatory workshops. These interactive sessions allow stakeholders to share their thoughts and concerns actively. Such group exercises help gather stakeholders' collective wisdom and make decisions that reflect mutual agreement. However, as discussed above, challenges remain to bring everyone on the same platform. However, government officials enshrine credibility and enrich trust among stakeholders while keeping social enterprises legally compliant. As many participants highlighted:

Getting government approval gives us permits and licenses to operate and is necessary to implement our work on educating. It also gives us legitimacy to operate and increases our chances of success. (P02; Interviewed: 07.11.2021)

Government officers give credibility to our work and decision-making, which leads to less resistance from other stakeholders later. (P05; Interviewed: 04.11.2021)

In sum, inclusive participation and collaborative decision-making remain essential components of effective stakeholder engagement, and social enterprises try for inclusive engagement. They benefit from involving diverse stakeholders by tapping into their expertise. At the same time, challenges also arise in inclusive stakeholder engagement; as discussed above, those social enterprises that prioritize transparency, inclusivity, and ongoing engagement see benefits in terms of higher trust in social enterprises.

4.2 Transparent Communication and Reporting

Transparent communication and reporting play a crucial role in fostering meaningful stakeholder relationships. Through transparent communication, organizations show their commitment to integrity and responsibility, which in turn helps them build trust among different stakeholders. Our findings suggest that it involves a) reporting back to stakeholders and b) information dissemination and accessibility.

Reporting back to stakeholders

Our study participants highlighted that reporting back to stakeholders with work updates is crucial for accountability and transparency. It values inputs from different stakeholders, making them feel valued and responsible for the project outcomes. Regular and updated information builds a positive perception and two-way dialogue and having transparency in decision-making processes, which is essential for social enterprises to maintain strong community relationships. Further, such reporting back to stakeholders is taken as a sign of respect for their contributions and inputs.

Getting such regular updates helps me stay engaged and makes me feel valued and motivated for my contributions toward women empowerment. (P27; Interviewed: 25.02.2022)

I like it when I am kept in the loop for any decision that the organization takes, even if the information is not relevant to me, but it helps to stay updated on what is going on inside the organization. (P09; Interviewed: 16.02.2022)

Further, reporting back to stakeholders helps stakeholders assess the impact they are making and make sense of things moving forward with informed decisions. For them, it is more than information sharing but more about keeping an open line of communication with them and making them feel a part of the organization. As participants highlighted:

When I see communications from the company, it makes me feel that I am making good use of my time and energy volunteering at this place. (P12; Interviewed: 08.02.2022)

Acha lagta hai jab agar yeh bata deti hai ki muskil mein hai aur ham se koi madad chahiye. (You feel valued when an organization tells you it is struggling or wants your opinions on certain matters.) (P16; Interviewed: 12.12.2021)

While, on the one hand, it can be empowering to get all the information with updates, it can also be overwhelming sometimes with information overloads. As one of the participants mentioned:

I get the emails, then the same information on social media and personal WhatsApp chat, and things people talk about when you live in a small community, which sometimes is too much. I know what they want to do with all that to keep me updated, but it is too much. (P28; Interviewed: 23.03.2022)

Further, financial matters that can generate troubles if not disclosed appropriately, sharing and listing expenditure information in their financial reports takes away doubts from the minds of stakeholders.

We have made sure that financial data is reported as quickly as possible; you can see that listed on our website as well. All this takes away any concerns that anyone might have about our working ... we are very open with everything (P03; Interviewed: 21.11.2021)

Lastly, some aspects discussed above were common under this theme, such as keeping donors involved with regular updates and submitting regular reports to government officials. Further, as open and transparent communication involves giving opportunities to stakeholders to give feedback and hold the organization accountable, the role of suggestion boxes and anonymous emails also come under this theme. Further, when an organization operates in multiple locations, the regulatory and communication challenges for the organization increase.

Information dissemination and accessibility

Another way of transparent communication is the easy availability of information and accessibility, which social enterprises try to do by preparing reports in the local language and using social media to share information. Social enterprises also encourage two-way communication through social media where users and various stakeholders can engage with them. So, transparent reporting helps organizations keep stakeholders on the same level regarding the progress of various activities. As participants said:

We prepare reports in the local language so that everyone can read them. (P05; Interviewed: 04.11.2021)

The use of social media to spread information is really good, and I have seen the organization putting out updates and posts related to cultural activities on social media regularly. (P12; Interviewed: 08.02.2022)

Furthermore, social enterprises in their reports use language that avoids technical jargon and complexity; however, maintaining and regularly preparing such reports becomes difficult as it is not easy to strike a balance between various stakeholders who demand various levels of information. No matter, social enterprises do try to prepare reports in accessible language, it is not always possible for them, which builds language and communication barriers. As various stakeholders come from different backgrounds with varying literacy, it can be challenging for social enterprises on the path to inclusive stakeholder engagement to effectively communicate in all different languages, hindering transparent communication and reporting. As community members specifically stated:

Sab reports hamari language mein nahi hai, kuch hai par sab nahi. (Not all the reports they prepare are in the local language; some are, but not all.) (P24; Interviewed: 18.12.2021)

Bahut baar to jo kuch likha hua hota hai wo samj nahi aata hai kyuki wo dusri bhasha mein hota hai (Many times whatever is written is not understood as that is written in another language.) (P25; Interviewed: 19.12.2021)

In their defense and agreement, one of the founders of social enterprises mentioned:

Even though we have limited resources, we do try to generate reports in the local language. However, given government and funder regulations and demands, we have to prepare reports in the language they demand, so much of our energy and focus remains on that. (P02; Interviewed: 07.11.2021)

In sum, the more profound engagement with stakeholders gives organizations an understanding of stakeholder perspectives and needs. Reporting back encourages active engagement and collaboration. However, such attempts are not without challenges, as maintaining clarity and fulfilling the demands of each stakeholder are challenging for social enterprises. Even though they are trying, in their attempts to stakeholder-tailored approaches, social enterprises in our study appear to be struggling because these are not very big and lack resources. Overall, they understand the value of transparent communication and reporting in achieving goals.

4.3 Relationship and Trust Building

The final theme from our study on stakeholder engagement practices in social enterprises is relationship and trust-building practices leading to stakeholder engagement. It nurtures

connections and mutual respect between the organization and stakeholders and involves practices of a) capacity building and empowerment and b) engaging with the community.

Capacity building and empowerment

As social enterprises are embedded in society and work closely with the community, stakeholder engagement involves capacity building and empowerment to improve the knowledge and skills of individuals and communities. By investing in these areas, organizations foster active participation, decision-making abilities, and overall development and satisfaction among stakeholders. Many participants in our study highlighted social enterprises' capacity-building and empowerment opportunities, such as student internships and mentoring community leaders.

Social enterprises engage in providing training lessons to the community. It is one of their ways to keep the community engaged and get local labor ready for the work they do.

Jo yaha se training mila hai ussne hi hosilla diya aage padne ko; nahi toh kaha pta tha ki kya kya hota hai (Training opportunities have inspired me to apply for higher education; otherwise, I did not know what future options are there). (P20; Interviewed: 30.09.2022)

Jo support mil jaye utna badiya hai; sath mein mil ke gav ke bahut se kaam jaise puccha road bana diya. (Whatever support we can get is good. Together with them, we have built a concrete road in the village.) (P24; Interviewed: 18.12.2021).

Through training and workshops, I have learned a lot about the work. (P07; Interviewed: 11.01.2022)

Furthermore, social enterprises provide access to resources and tools that are not in use within the organization at certain times for community use, such as letting community members use computers in the evening classes. Such practices help organizations in building empowered communities and communities in accessing resources that otherwise are many times out of their reach.

The doors of the library started by the organization are open till late at night; one can access those books or computers for their use. (P10; Interviewed: 07.04.2022)

Kabi zarurat ho toh mang bhi lete hai; kabi mana nahi kiya unhone agar ho toh unke pas (If we need something, we ask; they have never said no if they have those things.) (P18; Interviewed: 14.12.2021)

Social enterprises provide workshops to enhance the skills and knowledge of various stakeholders. Even though some of the participants also agree that this is tactically done so that they keep the community on their side so that when there is time and need, an organization can rely on their support.

We do this very carefully, as at the village level agar kuch karna ho sab ko sath mein le jana toh muskil hai (it is difficult to take everyone along to do something). So, we pick a few strong people and follow through with their ideas. (P06; Interviewed: 06.01.2022)

Lastly, participants also believe that through such engagement with organizations and various stakeholders, social goals such as women's literacy and the importance of girl children have been improving in the villages, even though they also agreed that there is a long way to go, and the progress is slow.

Engaging with the community

The second part of relationship and trust building involves engaging actively with the community, primarily outside the workplace. It involves energetically listening to and responding to stakeholders' concerns outside the workplace. Many participants highlighted that the organizations engage with the community through various means, such as organizing community dinners or parties where they invite community leaders and other prominent guests.

I have been part of various community dinners organized by the company. It is a good way of connecting with the community and getting to know them and their concerns.

(P11; Interviewed: 01.07.2022)

Not only do the organizations invite individuals to participate in their functions, but also in the community functions such as the celebration of religious festivals or community events, the organization gets invited to those events organized by the local community. So, in a way, it creates a complete cycle where the dependency relationship is built.

Wo hum ko bula lete hai kabi koi function ho toh; aur hum unko bula lete hai apne functiono mein (They invite us whenever there is any function, and we invite them to our functions.) (P25; Interviewed: 19.12.2021)

There remain challenges in ensuring the representation of diverse perspectives and marginalized voices when engaging with the community, as women participants highlighted that late-night events or celebrations remain out of their reach as they are not allowed to go out.

Further, our participants also highlighted that cultural and religious differences sometimes create challenges in community engagement, as focusing on one particular culture or religion antagonizes others.

If we continue to observe all the different cultural and religious festivals celebrated in the community, it is not an easy job of teaching then to focus on the working of the organization. We do pick some non-religious festivals or events to observe and invite everyone. This way, I think it works for everyone. (P02; Interviewed: 07.11.2021)

In sum, social enterprises build stakeholders' capacity to advocate for their interests. They enable community empowerment while focusing on their financial goals. Further, involving in the community helps them harness the community's collective wisdom and expertise. At the same time, there are challenges in front of social enterprises on to what extent they can get involved in the community, given their limited resources.

5. Discussion

Stakeholder engagement is an emerging field; limited research remains on understanding stakeholder aspects. Moreover, there is hardly any research on stakeholder engagement in social enterprises. So, with very little understanding of stakeholder engagement practices in social enterprises, we set out to investigate how social enterprises engage with different stakeholders, i.e., what are the practices and challenges for social enterprises in stakeholder engagement? We build on the limited existing work on stakeholder engagement (Kujala et al. 2022; Greenwood 2007) and extend that to social enterprises. We conducted 30 interviews with stakeholders from six social enterprises in India to understand stakeholder engagement. Our findings show that social enterprises practice three stakeholder engagement practices, i.e., “inclusive participation and collaborative decision-making,” “transparent communication and reporting,” and “relationship and trust building.” All these findings indicate the inclusive nature of stakeholder engagement practices, so our research makes multiple contributions to inclusive stakeholder engagement, which we discuss in detail below. Further, in this section, we will acknowledge any limitations of our research, suggest potential areas for future research, and conclude with our findings' practical and social implications.

Contributions and Implications to Inclusive Stakeholder Engagement

Stakeholder engagement has remained an under-theorized and less explored area, and only in recent years have scholars started to shift from stakeholder management to stakeholder engagement, for it encompasses a much-needed shift happening in society and organizations toward making businesses inclusive (Greenwood 2007; Kujala and Sachs 2019; Kujala et al. 2022). Findings from the study contribute and provide valuable empirical insights into the conceptual understanding of inclusive stakeholder engagement practices.

Our research highlights the importance of the inclusive nature of stakeholder engagement and that organizations must understand that societal and organizational challenges can only be solved by considering the views of various stakeholders and working together for common goals (Kujala et al. 2022). Recognition and valuing diverse perspectives and actively involving various stakeholders can help organizations access knowledge and insights that they need to overcome operational as well as business challenges. The inclusive nature of such practices ensures that all viewpoints are considered, helping to progress social justice and equity within and outside organizations. Having a clear understanding of what is at stake (i.e., social goals for social enterprises), these organizations can shape their activities around those.

Inclusive stakeholder engagement is a comprehensive process that entails the active and meaningful participation of various stakeholders, including individuals, communities, civil society organizations, governments, businesses, and academia, among others. It transcends the mere act of seeking opinions and superficial representation to create an inclusive environment where diverse perspectives are cherished, voices are heard, and contributions are integrated into decision-making processes (Kujala et al. 2022; Freeman et al. 2017). This approach recognizes the interrelatedness of societal issues and endeavors to harness diverse stakeholders' collective wisdom and resources to achieve sustainable solutions. Our study also highlights that if organizations want to be inclusive, they must give importance to creating a safe space for stakeholders to participate. It involves creating an environment where marginalized stakeholders feel welcome to express their views. Furthermore, organizations must be ready to listen to grievances and have open discussions with stakeholders, fostering a culture of trust and enhancing stakeholder engagement. Further, we contribute to the understanding that capacity building and empowerment of local communities matter to stakeholders and practices that

organizations can use (Kujala et al. 2022; Freeman et al. 2017). Equipping stakeholders with skills, knowledge, and resources enables them to advocate for organizational goals actively.

While the benefits of inclusive stakeholder engagement are clear, our research also contributes to understanding the challenges organizations encounter in implementing such stakeholder engagement practices. Starting with identification of stakeholders to making sure voices of all stakeholders are accounted for, challenges for social enterprises are numerous. For example, our findings highlight that power imbalances and potential conflicts of interest can derail stakeholder engagement practices. It makes the representation of various stakeholders even more essential in handling any bias and building transparent organizations. Further, such inclusive stakeholder engagement comes at a cost and has multiple challenges that organizations must address. So, organizations must consider the benefits and costs of such inclusive engagement before embarking on such initiatives. However, as specific to social enterprises, our research highlights definite advantages for social enterprises in terms of achieving their social goals and gaining legitimacy for their economic activities. Based on the above discussion, we propose:

Proposition 1: Inclusive stakeholder engagement is instrumental in addressing complex societal challenges.

In the 21st century, many complex societal challenges have emerged, including poverty, inequality, environmental degradation, and public health crises. These challenges are often interconnected and transcend traditional geographical and sectoral boundaries, requiring a comprehensive and holistic approach to address them. At the same time, traditional top-down approaches and siloed decision-making have proven inadequate in effectively resolving these challenges (Kujala et al. 2022; Freeman et al. 2017). Our findings point toward collaborative and

inclusive strategies essential for achieving practical solutions. Furthermore, our findings suggest that social enterprises operate differently. The significant difference is the focus on collaboration within the organization and communities. While various organizational cultural studies (primarily focused on large traditional businesses) have placed India in a bucket where there is a high-power distance between the top manager and employees and power remains centralized in the hands of few, we find that in social enterprises, decisions are made in collaboration with employees and hierarchies and top-down structures are not strong. According to Hofstede (2001), cultural and societal norms play a significant role in shaping and sustaining various institutions with unique structures and methods. These institutions include education, political, and legal frameworks. Once these institutions are established, they further reinforce the pre-existing cultural and societal norms. However, overall, in the context of social enterprises in India, we find that the societal and cultural norms of hierarchies within the organizations are not followed strictly. It could be because of the smaller size of these organizations, where individuals depend on others, or because the nature of these organizations is different, i.e., focus on social aspects, making these organizations more empathetic to others and encouraging participation. Based on the above discussion, we propose:

Proposition 2: Social enterprises in India challenge the traditional high-power distance culture by fostering collaborative decision-making and decentralized power structures.

Our research also contributes to understanding stakeholder engagement practices of organizations operating in resource constraints environments. While for-profit traditional businesses have a large number of resources to devote to stakeholder engagement, social enterprises lack resources such as time, personal, and financial. So, to overcome such constraints, social enterprises must walk a fine line balancing various aspects of the organization. In such

situations, the inclusive nature of stakeholder engagement becomes crucial as involving various stakeholders can help organizations overcome some of the challenges, such as idea generation, gaining legitimacy, and local advocates.

Our research also highlights some of the dark sides of stakeholder engagement. While social enterprises believe they practice the inclusive nature of engagement, their definition of such inclusion is limited and sometimes ignores marginalized stakeholders such as women and marginalized caste groups (Qureshi et al. 2023; 2022; Scaria and Ray 2019). Their acceptance and following of traditions that kept specific communities and groups out of focus are troublesome and need to be modified for the 21st century. As marginalization aggravates inequality, ignoring the marginalized stakeholders would be counterproductive for social enterprises to achieve their social goals. So, organizations in the name of inclusion can also exclude those at the margin of society. In line with previous research (Kujala et al. 2022), such a dark side of stakeholder engagement can have unintended negative consequences on the well-being of individuals.

5.1 Limitations and Future Directions

While we took multiple measures to overcome any limitations, we acknowledge that there are limitations to this research, and future research should consider these aspects. First, as there can be multiple stakeholders in social enterprises, all were not included in the study. So, it limits the generalizability of the findings as these are valid for stakeholders included in this research and might have missed crucial aspects of stakeholder engagement from stakeholders not included in the research. In future research, scholars can bring in various other stakeholders, such as members of social enterprise associations, partners and collaborators, and industry groups.

Second, given the large size of India and various types of social enterprises, results might not be

generalizable to other types of social enterprises, e.g., the ones run by for-profit organizations. However, our results will be applicable to social enterprises that give equal importance to the social and financial aspects of their business.

Further, a large and diverse sample size might also improve our understanding of stakeholder engagement practices. Third, given that our study was conducted at one point in time (as interviews were conducted in a short period of time) and did not follow social enterprises over the period, we believe that longitudinal studies tracking the stakeholder engagement practices over an extended period can provide more valuable insights into evolution and effectiveness of stakeholder engagement practices. Future research can also use ethnographic accounts to understand these practices. However, we had spent short periods at two social enterprises, which was cut short because of Covid19; more time following the social enterprises in the field might give rich accounts of stakeholder engagement practices and challenges.

Finally, this research opens various avenues for future research, such as future research can also investigate communication strategies for stakeholder engagement practices, implementation strategies, and the impact of those and stakeholder engagement practices focused on each stakeholder. With the emergence of social media and digital technologies, the nature and practices of stakeholder engagement are also shifting, i.e., social enterprises are starting to use social media and other technologies, so future research can also focus specifically on understanding the use and role of technology in stakeholder engagement. While we discuss some of the social and cultural aspects, political aspects were not considered; however, political aspects can influence stakeholder engagement practices, and future research can also investigate that to have a more contextual understanding. We lay the groundwork for all such future research.

5.2 Practical and Social Implications

Practical Implications:

Our research has various practical implications. First, our research offers fresh perspectives on stakeholder engagement from a social enterprise lens. By having this understanding of the inclusive nature of stakeholder engagement that social enterprises practice, researchers and practitioners can use this knowledge to develop practices that would lead to the inclusion of various stakeholders that would bring many benefits to all. As our research suggests, at the community level, individuals are interested in getting involved in decisions affecting them, so organizations must listen to them and adopt the participatory approach, which can enhance the quality and legitimacy of decisions of the organization. While there can be multiple and conflicting stakeholder interests, leveraging the insights of each stakeholder is essential, suggesting that organizations involve various stakeholders. Further, our research also indicates the much-needed shift in product development from “designing for communities” to “designing with communities,” which would make products that fit the demands and needs of local communities (Attri and Bapuji 2021). Moreover, when there is transparency in how funds are used, funders/donors feel comfortable knowing how their money is being spent, so organizations should keep their financial data open and accessible all the time.

Lastly, as capacity-building and empowerment initiatives help local communities and get them involved in the organizations' activities, organizations can pay attention to such initiatives and gain much-needed legitimacy for their work while enabling local communities' personal and professional growth. Further, such activities can help organizations stay transparent and build a reputation and brand that local communities can trust.

Social Implications:

Our research shed light on several important social implications of stakeholder engagement practices, which have the potential to create a positive impact. The inclusive nature of stakeholder engagement practices can contribute to social justice by bringing in the voices of the marginalized in society in decision-making, helping iron out social disparities inside and outside organizations. By involving locals in their decision-making, social enterprises recognize and respect the local knowledge, which helps them handle social issues effectively. Though the participants claim and believe that the practices involve everyone in the various activities of social enterprises, i.e., they practice inclusive nature of stakeholder engagement, the power dynamics within the organization and society influence those practices. For example, societal norms about cultural and religious practices influence stakeholder engagement and decision-making. So, to make social enterprises truly inclusive and social, as their name suggests, societal norms and cultural practices must be considered while designing stakeholder engagement practices, and social enterprises must explore ways to address such power imbalances to promote more inclusive and equitable stakeholder engagement.

Our research also has implications for traditional businesses that do not consider societal factors and focus on stakeholder management rather than stakeholder engagement (Kujala et al. 2022). In the Indian context, almost 70 percent population lives in villages, and the bottom of the pyramid makes billions of USD worth of market, which multinational companies (MNCs) are trying to tap into; stakeholder engagement is what they need to focus on. Learning from the locals and developing products based on that can give an advantage to these MNCs, and such developments can take place while engaging with stakeholders. The inclusive and democratic nature of stakeholder engagement that social enterprises practice holds lessons for MNCs, i.e., at

the community level, locals want to be appreciated for what they know and want to be involved in the decisions that impact them. MNCs must pay heed to that.

6. Concluding Remarks

The significance of stakeholder engagement in social enterprises in India also stems from the distinctive nature of these organizations, making stakeholder engagement an integral to the success of social enterprises. Stakeholder engagement provides a platform for diverse perspectives, fosters a sense of ownership and accountability among stakeholders, and creates opportunities for meaningful participation, all these are highly valued by diverse stakeholders in social enterprises. By actively involving stakeholders and using their collective knowledge, social enterprises can develop a more inclusive, sustainable, and impactful approach to addressing societal challenges while engaging in business activities. While effective stakeholder engagement in social enterprises is not without its challenges, practicing inclusive stakeholder engagement can overcome some of those challenges.

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8. Appendices

8.1 Appendix I: Organizational Details

While we have provided detailed accounts of social enterprises, some identifying details have been withheld to maintain the anonymity of the organizations.

Social Enterprise 01 (SE01)

Started in 2008, this social enterprise with about 40 employees is dedicated to narrowing the opportunity divide for marginalized groups by providing comprehensive employment training. Based in central India, this organization was founded to fill the needs of IT companies and empower those with a lack of access to job opportunities. It trains individuals through in-house IT training programs and connects those individuals to various projects of IT companies. Since its inception, it has set up operations at two locations and has successfully placed thousands in decent jobs. It offers consulting services to organizations seeking to create inclusive and diverse workplaces. Through customized strategies, workshops, and guidance, the enterprise helps businesses foster an environment that embraces talent from all backgrounds, which ultimately also helps it place individuals it trains in those businesses. It raises most of its money from supplying the workforce to IT companies.

Social Enterprise 02 (SE02)

Established in 2010 and now operating with about 30 employees, this social enterprise aims to bring marginalized individuals from the fringes to the center by promoting education and literacy. The founder of this organization believes that education and literacy as powerful catalysts for societal transformation; hence, this organization came into existence. It aims to foster a culture of lifelong learning, bringing together individuals of all ages through dedicated

outreach and literacy programs. Providing access to education, vocational training, and literacy initiatives prepares individuals to enter the workforce. Its financial sustainability is anchored in its diversified revenue streams, including revenue generated from seminars for businesses, book sales, and skill development workshops. These revenue sources enable the enterprise to fund its educational and outreach programs for those who cannot afford to pay.

Social Enterprise 03 (SE03)

This social enterprise, based in northern India, was founded in 2009. It presently has about 25 employees who work closely with some of the government's social initiatives. Driven by a commitment to equality, it empowers and uplifts women across various spheres of life, such as getting them out of domestic abuse and harassment. Some of the women employees themselves have faced similar situations as those that women it tries to protect. Working closely with government and private bodies helps the organization raise funds and grants for its operations.

Social Enterprise 04 (SE04)

Started in 2011 in northern India at the foothills of the Himalayas, this social enterprise employs about 35 individuals (mostly tour guides). It is dedicated to promoting local culture in hill areas by organizing tours for tourists and, in doing so, providing employment opportunities for those in remote hills. It lets tourists blend in with the local culture through its cooking, art, and craft workshops (such as candle making and woodworking). It also organizes tourists who want to stay with locals. It organizes cultural heritage tours outside the hills as well and sells artifacts made by locals, and earns a substantial part of its income.

Social Enterprise 05 (SE05)

Started in 2008, this social enterprise is based in northern India and aims to provide affordable access to medical services. It employs about 30 individuals (primarily medical doctors who volunteer their time) to conduct its activities. It runs mobile clinics and collaborates with some private hospitals to provide quality access to medical services. It works closely with government and private businesses that plan to use their CSR money to provide medical services. So, this organization comes in and handles that part of the business.

Social Enterprise 06 (SE06)

Established in 2007 in western India, this social enterprise has about 30 employees (mostly part-time) and operates from two locations. It aims to promote quality education among the underprivileged. It runs various community activities and works closely with some government agencies to bring awareness to education. It runs a couple of community centers and community libraries. For its revenue generation, it mainly relies on grants and donations (for example, books for its libraries are donated by individuals); however, it also has paid training programs and consulting activities. As described by the founder, it has faced its share of challenges to survive. However, the community and supporters' help has kept this enterprise afloat, highlighting the importance of this enterprise in creating positive change.

8.2 Appendix II: Informed Consent Form

Title of Study: Stakeholder Engagement in Social Enterprises: Practices and Challenges

Researcher: Pardeep Singh Attri

Supervisor: Davide Torsello

Thank you for considering participating in this study. This form details the study's purpose and your rights as a participant.

Purpose of Study: The purpose of the study is to gain a deeper understanding of how diverse stakeholders are engaged in social enterprises. What are the practices of stakeholder engagement and the challenges associated with that?

Study Procedures: If you agree to participate in the study, you will be invited to a one-to-one interview where we will discuss various aspects of your work experiences and stakeholder engagement practices in social enterprises. The session will last approximately 60 minutes and will take place at a mutually agreed-upon location or through a virtual platform, such as Zoom.

Confidentiality: All information collected during this study will be treated with strict confidentiality. The interview will be audio-recorded for accurate data collection and analysis. However, your data will never be shared with anyone else, and only the interviewer will hear the recordings. If you feel uncomfortable sharing your data or any information while recording, you may ask to turn off the recorder anytime. Further, your data will be anonymized while writing the report and will be used solely for the purpose of this study.

Voluntary Participation: Your participation in this study is voluntary, and no reward will be offered. You also have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without providing a

reason. If you withdraw consent at any point in time during the study, your data will be erased.

Your decision to participate or withdraw will in no way affect your current or future relationship with your organization as your data will not be shared with your organization.

Risks and Benefits: Participating in this study involves no risks. However, it is possible that you may feel some discomfort while discussing certain topics related to stakeholder engagement practices and challenges. On the other hand, benefits include the opportunity to contribute to the understanding of stakeholder engagement in social enterprises and shape policy decisions.

Contact Information: If you have any questions or concerns about the study, you can contact me at attri_pardeep@phd.ceu.edu or WhatsApp at +36/70-55-29-553.

By participating in this study, you acknowledge that you have read and understood the information provided in this consent form.

Participant's Name: _____

Participant's Signature: _____

Date: _____

Researcher's Name: _____

Researcher's Signature: _____

Date: _____

8.2 Appendix III: Interview Protocol for Semi-Structured Interviews

Date of interview:

Interviewee:

Location of interview:

Welcome message and consent: Namaste (Welcome). My name is Pardeep, and I thank you for agreeing to participate in this study on stakeholder engagement in social enterprises. I appreciate your time and insights and look forward to discussing your experiences and perspectives in this important area of work.

- Tell them more about the study and the confidentiality nature.
- Ask if they allow me to record the interviews.
- Ask if they give me consent to use their anonymized data and tell them they can revoke consent anytime during the study.
- Remind them to speak for themselves and their own experiences.
- Remind them to respect the privacy of colleagues and no need to disclose names.
- Ask participants if they have any additional questions about the study.

Questions for Employees and Co/Founders (Charmaz, 2006; Freeman et al., 2017; Kujala and Sachs, 2019; Kujala et al., 2022; Spradley, 1979)

- Can you tell me a little bit about yourself?
- Can you tell me about your work?
 - Prompts for positions held, educational qualifications, workplaces, location of work etc.
- Can you tell me for how long they have been involved in social enterprises?
- Can you briefly describe your responsibilities and areas of expertise?
- What motivated you to join this sector? [In the case of Founder/Co-Founder – what motivated you to start this organization?]
- Can you describe what the involvement of different people (stakeholders) looks like in your organization?

- Can you share any examples?
- How do you establish and maintain open lines of communication with your stakeholders?
 - Can you tell me any challenges you have faced in that?
- Can you suggest ways your organization engages stakeholders in the decision-making process?
 - What specific approaches does your social enterprise employ to engage its stakeholders?
 - How do you ensure that diverse stakeholders actively participate in decision-making processes?
- What mechanisms or channels do you use to gather stakeholder feedback and input?
- Can you share any examples of successful stakeholder engagement initiatives or projects within your social enterprise?
- How do you incorporate diverse stakeholders' feedback into your organization's planning and decisions?
- Can you share any examples of when external stakeholders influenced the development or evolution of an organization's products or services?
- How do you address your stakeholders' diverse needs, expectations, and interests?
- What challenges have you faced in stakeholder engagement?
 - Can you share any examples?
- How have you addressed those challenges?
 - Can you share any examples?
- Can you tell me how you build and nurture long-term relationships with your stakeholders?
- Can you tell me how you ensure transparency and accountability in your stakeholder engagement efforts?
- Can you tell me any examples where power dynamics between different stakeholders created some challenges for the organization?
 - How did you/your organization navigate that?

Questions for Beneficiaries and Community Members (Charmaz, 2006; Freeman et al., 2017; Kujala and Sachs, 2019; Kujala et al., 2022; Spradley, 1979)

- Can you tell me a little bit about yourself?
- Can you tell me for how long they have been involved in social enterprise and in what relation?
- What are your (community's) needs and expectations from social enterprise?
 - Is social enterprise fulfilling those needs and expectations?
- Have you ever been in the decision-making process of social enterprise?
 - If yes, can you please describe the situation and context?
- How has social enterprise impacted your life or the community?
 - Do you see any benefits? If yes, describe.
 - If not, why? What are the challenges?
- Do you encounter any obstacles or difficulties when trying to access the products or services the social enterprise offers?
- Have you interacted with the organization in any other way? How often do you interact with it? How was the experience if you interacted? [Question specific to community members]

Questions for Volunteers and Funders/Donors (Charmaz, 2006; Freeman et al., 2017; Kujala and Sachs, 2019; Kujala et al., 2022; Spradley, 1979)

- Can you tell me a little bit about yourself?
- Can you tell me for how long they have been involved in social enterprise and in what relation?
- Why did you decide to volunteer (fund/donate) at this organization?
 - What were the motives?
- What are your needs and expectations from social enterprise?
 - Is social enterprise fulfilling those needs and expectations?
- How often do you interact with the social enterprise? [Question specific to Funders/Donors]
- Do you feel involved in the organization?
- What do you feel about the goals and mission of this social enterprise?

- Do you think it is making an impact? Describe your experiences and how it has impacted your life.
 - What specific outcomes or impacts do you expect to see from your volunteering/funding?
- How does the organization involve you in various activities?
 - Does it provide you with enough resources, information?
 - Do you feel a part of this organization?
- Can you provide an example of a time you participated in any decision-making or social event?
- How do social enterprise report or communicate to you? Do you feel that you get enough clarity/information on the working of the social enterprise?
- Have you ever encountered any challenges sharing your experiences within the organization?
 - If yes, describe the context and the challenges.
- Do you encounter any obstacles or difficulties when trying to access the products or services offered by the social enterprise?
 - Can you share any examples?

Questions for Government Officers/Regulators (Charmaz, 2006; Freeman et al., 2017; Kujala and Sachs, 2019; Kujala et al., 2022; Spradley, 1979)

- Can you tell me a little bit about yourself?
- Can you tell me for how long they have been involved in social enterprise and in what relation?
- How do you see the role of social enterprise in the community?
- Can you tell me the compliance requirements or reporting obligations the social enterprise needs to meet?
 - Can you share any examples?
- How often do you interact with the social enterprise?
- How does social enterprise engage with government policies and regulations? Tell me about your experiences of working with the organization.

- Can you share any examples of when the social enterprise failed to comply with the regulations or faced challenges?

Closing

- Are there other important aspects of stakeholder engagement that you believe I have left out? Is there anything else you would like to add?
- Who else would you suggest I talk to inside/outside your organization to understand these aspects better?
- Thank the participant for their time, remind the participant the confidential nature of the study, and give them opportunity to ask questions.

Conclusion

This thesis set out to understand how best social enterprises in India can be managed through knowledge management, talent management, and stakeholder engagement – all three aspects that scholars have linked to the survival and performance of organizations. This dissertation undertakes a comprehensive exploration of the multifaceted realm of social enterprises, shedding light on their distinct characteristics and management dynamics. As unique entities driven by social or environmental objectives while concurrently generating revenue through business activities, social enterprises have garnered significant attention in the 21st century. In this final part, we will revisit our research questions, summarize findings and furnish contributions, list a few social and practical implications, and highlight future research directions (we also provide these in detail under each essay).

1. Summarizing Findings and Contributions

In the first essay, we followed a research question: *What barriers do social enterprises face in managing knowledge, and how do they overcome those barriers, i.e., what facilitates knowledge management in social enterprises?* As knowledge management is an indispensable element for organizational competitiveness, limited research on knowledge management in non-western contexts and social enterprises has remained. While insights into knowledge management barriers and facilitators primarily stem from large for-profit organizations, the specific context of social enterprises has been relatively uncharted territory. Our in-depth qualitative study from diverse social enterprises in India and field observations and online event participation uncover a spectrum of knowledge management challenges, such as underestimation of knowledge's value, resource constraints, and cultural barriers based on caste. Conversely, we identify mainly social

capital, socialization, and flat organizational structures as pivotal knowledge management enablers. Based on these findings, we develop several propositions, as listed in the discussion section of the first essay, that future research can follow. This inquiry contributes significantly to the emerging field of knowledge management in social enterprises in India.

In the second essay, following the call from scholars to broaden the field of talent management and limited research on talent management aspects in social enterprises, we investigated the following research question: *How is the concept of talent and talent management understood in social enterprises, how is talent management practiced in social enterprises, and whether caste influences those talent management practices?*

Our in-depth interviews with experts from Indian social enterprises unveil a distinct perspective on talent and talent management, diverging from conventional business norms. Notably, talent management practices within social enterprises are inherently driven by their social purpose, and who is considered talented does not depend on paper degrees or qualifications. The focus of social enterprises in India remains on the inclusive nature of talent. The emphasis on inclusive talent management principles further underlines social enterprises' commitment to encompassing a diverse and socially conscious workforce. Talent management practices in these entities are inherently aligned with their social purpose, emphasizing a holistic approach that transcends traditional business paradigms. Based on these findings, we develop multiple propositions in the discussion section of essay two. This essay enriches the evolving discourse on talent management, particularly the burgeoning concept of inclusive talent management.

Lastly, while extensive research has focused on stakeholder management, recent shifts in stakeholder theories advocate for a transition to stakeholder engagement, recognizing that

stakeholder management can be one-sided and ineffective. So, the final essay examines: *How do social enterprises engage with different stakeholders, i.e., what are the practices and challenges for social enterprises in stakeholder engagement?* We find that stakeholder engagement practices in India's social enterprises are inherently inclusive, even though their definition of inclusion remains limited, adding to the burgeoning literature on this subject.

Finally, one central theme across the essays, apart from the shortage of funds, the lack of resources, and the lack of set processes, was social stratification based on caste, which participants were hesitant to mention most of the time. While one would imagine organizations working on social inclusion and social aspects to be open to diverse perspectives and groups, our findings also highlight that in the Indian context, caste plays a significant role in shaping the behavior and associations among people in social enterprises. We find that caste restricts the flow of information, restricts individuals in certain positions, and sets obstacles to meaningful engagement (Ganly and Mair 2009; Qureshi et al. 2023; 2022; Scaria and Ray 2019). We find that even when participants describe their organizations as inclusive and working for many and not for the few, their definitions of such inclusion are limited to gender or individuals from different states in India. They do not consider individuals from different castes or religions as a part of their diversity or inclusion actions. Such narrow definitions of inclusion have implications for how social enterprises will develop and cater to the needs of the most marginalized in society.

2. Social and Practical Implications

While we discuss in detail under each essay social and practical implications, in this section, we highlight broader social and practical implications based on three essays. First, knowledge and talent management, or stakeholder engagement practices, are destined to fail if differences in

caste or class lines are not considered by management while preparing policies or practices. For example, social enterprises in India must change their recruiting practices and develop set practices that include diverse groups of individuals from different castes, classes, and religions; without their inclusion, these organizations can not truly become inclusive.

Second, social enterprises rely on local knowledge to solve local challenges, ignoring, for example, what technology or knowledge management practices can do for them. As the data suggests, there are almost 2 million social enterprises in India employing on average about 20 full and part-time employees; however, these organizations have grown to a level where to grow further and scale their activities to different regions and sectors as most of the social enterprises in our study aim to; they need to adopt modern technologies and become more inclusive in their approaches to learning from outsiders' perspectives. It is not to suggest that they need to adopt Western perspectives or unthinkingly follow what other types of organizations are doing but to be ready and invest in adapting to societal and organizational changes. Modernization can offer these enterprises multiple opportunities, and they should not shy away from them. For example, they need to adopt technologies to manage knowledge, talent, and stakeholder engagement to grow further. Such adoption can help them fulfill their mission as well. Furthermore, most social enterprises struggle with funding, so using digital tools and setting up and promoting their fundraising campaigns on fundraising websites can bring them much-needed money, i.e., acceptance of digital technology is needed to scale their activities.

While in the Indian context, about 25 percent of social enterprises are led by women, which is higher than traditional business; in the United Kingdom, the number is about 50 percent (British Council, 2016; CEEDR, 2021). To grow further and make social enterprises more diverse and women-led in India, they also need to learn from what other countries are doing and

modify and adapt to those practices in the local context. While our study finds some social enterprises doing the same, the pace or interest in learning from other social enterprises, inside or outside the country, remains low. Until these organizations increase pace and catch up with technologies, self-sustainable goals will be harder to achieve.

Third, in the Indian context, very few social enterprises earn their income (about 25 percent deal with trading and income-generating activities; the rest depend on grants and donations), and even fewer make a profit (British Council, 2016). On the other hand, about 75 percent of social enterprises in the UK make a profit (SEUK, n.d.). Furthermore, the annual average turnover of social enterprises in India is about £80,000; in the UK, it is £600,000 (British Council, 2016, SEUK, n.d.). To escape this dire situation and scale up, as support from successive governments and grants from organizations are drying, the social enterprises in India need to learn best practices from social enterprises worldwide and develop and embed them in their day-to-day work.

Finally, as British Council's report (2016) suggests that in the social sector, there remains a shortage of talent, especially those with tech backgrounds and those with managerial skills; almost 80 percent of the general public and customers remain unaware of social enterprises, and only about 30 percent of banks and support organizations have understanding or awareness of social enterprises, to develop the sector further, social sector, industry associations, and government bodies need to work together to overcome these challenges. Lastly, public awareness, government, and businesses support toward social enterprises remain much higher in Western countries than in India. Public opinion toward social enterprises in India can only change if diverse industry groups work together and these enterprises engage with diverse stakeholders in their policies and practices.

3. Further Research Directions

Our research opens various opportunities for further research, some of which we have discussed in each essay. Here, we present broader future research opportunities, bringing together three essays.

First, as social stratification based on caste appeared as one of the main cultural aspects that influence knowledge management, talent management, and stakeholder engagement practices, dedicated research on the role of caste in these practices within social enterprises would pave the way for a better understanding of social enterprises in India. Second, longitudinal studies following a few social enterprises over several years to understand talent and knowledge management practices would give rich accounts. Further research can also investigate how social enterprises can ensure the sustainability of knowledge management and talent management practices over time, considering challenges related to leadership transitions, changing priorities, and evolving stakeholder expectations. Third, scholars can explore successful methods for managing the talents and knowledge of volunteers within social enterprises. It includes exploring the strategies to match volunteer abilities with the organization's needs and maintain their engagement over a prolonged period. Fourth, as digitalization is increasing, future studies can specifically focus on the role of diverse technologies in enhancing knowledge management, talent management, and stakeholder participation and communication in social enterprises, especially in resource-constrained settings. Finally, it would be worth investigating how best marginalized stakeholders, such as women, lower caste groups, and minority communities, can be meaningfully engaged in social enterprises' decision-making processes, i.e., what approaches work and what do not.

4. Concluding Remarks

In conclusion, this extensive thesis delves into the intricacies of social enterprise management, dissecting knowledge management, talent management, and stakeholder engagement. The thesis presents a fresh and insightful outlook on social enterprises in India, developing propositions and contributing to scholarship. Through three rigorous qualitative studies, insightful interviews, and keen observations of two social enterprises, the research uncovers the distinctive dynamics that shape these aspects within social enterprises, thereby contributing to the evolving understanding of unique organizational models of social enterprises.

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