



# Understanding social entrepreneurship: A cultural perspective in business research



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## ABSTRACT

This study investigates the cultural drivers of social entrepreneurship (SE), focusing on the way in which Global Leadership and Organizational Behaviour Effectiveness (GLOBE) affects social entrepreneurial activity (SEA) in different countries. The Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) and GLOBE project were used as data sources. Cultural values, regional affiliation, and economic development levels were used to cluster the selected countries. Correlations between values and operating SEA were checked for the entire sample, as well as for each of the three clusters. A positive correlation between 'Gender Egalitarianism' and narrowly defined operating SEA and negative correlation between 'Uncertainty Avoidance' and the aforementioned SEA was confirmed for all the countries, while the linkage between 'Future Orientation', 'In-group Collectivism', and operating SEA was partially verified. Research results suggest that culture is not sufficient to justify national differences in SE rates.

## 1. Introduction

In recent years, the concept of Social Entrepreneurship (SE) has attracted the attention of both academics and practitioners, as shown by a growing body of theoretical literature as well as by the rise of new scientific and non-scientific communities (Chell, 2007; Dacin, Dacin, & Matear, 2010; Dwivedi & Weerawardena, 2018; Rey-Martí, Ribeiro-Soriano, & Palacios-Marqués, 2016; Zahra, Gedajlovic, Neubaum, & Shulman, 2009). Due to the fast growth of the phenomenon, emerging research areas are developing in the field of business strategy, entrepreneurship, public sector management, sociology, political science, economics, and education (Kedmenec & Strašek, 2017; Short, Moss, & Lumpkin, 2009) emphasising the need for new theoretical and practical contributions. Indeed, SE is characterised by a lack of theoretical boundaries, and is challenged by competing definitions and conceptual frameworks, gaps in the literature, and limited empirical data (Mair & Marti, 2006; Nicholls, 2006; Rey-Martí et al., 2016).

As Cukier, Trenholm, Carl, and Gekas (2011) show, the available studies about SE lack consistency in definitions and objects of focus, as well as rigorous comparative analysis. In a content analysis of 567 unique articles concerning 'social entrepreneur' or 'social entrepreneurship', the authors highlight the existing overlap between and

among different levels of analysis, including studies of individuals (micro level), studies of organizations and processes (meso level), and broader studies of the economic, political and societal context (macro level). They also find that the majority of existing contributions are more theoretically grounded than empirically based.

Definitions of SE are often vague, covering a wide variety of activities and representing different models worldwide (Hartog & Hoogendoorn, 2011; Kerlin, 2009; Nicholls & Cho, 2006). The multiplicity of actors involved in innovative and social activities, as well as the variety of motives that lie upon their adoption – from profit-driven to voluntarily to philanthropic not-for-profit – often leads to a misunderstanding about the concept (Canestrino, Bonfanti, & Oliace, 2015; Dacin et al., 2010).

Much of the existing research does not fully examine the antecedents of SE; thus, the factors hampering social entrepreneurship remain unexplored (Kedmenec & Strašek, 2017) and motivations under-theorized (Miller, Grimes, McMullen, & Vogus, 2012). Moreover, contributions that account for contextual differences across countries warrant further research as there is a lack of generalizable studies in the literature (Lepoutre, 2011; Lepoutre, Justo, Terjesen, & Bosma, 2013; Pathak & Muralidharan, 2016). Among them, some researchers propose investigating which cultural values may trigger or limit SE (Short et al.,

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2009). Based on the above, this study aims to fill this gap in literature by examining the relationship between cultural values and SE in different countries, drawing on empirical evidence arising from the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM).

Particularly, this paper purposes to understand how values and beliefs shape entrepreneurs' propensity to pursue social aims by investigating the existing relationship between cultural dimensions, as defined in the GLOBE project, and the level of SE prevailing in 36 countries. Since it has not previously been used to examine the linkage between national culture and SE, this study draws on the GLOBE framework. Moreover, if compared to the dominant metric for culture (Hofstede, 2001, 1980), GLOBE provides more cultural dimensions, enabling a broader picture of the phenomenon under investigation.

The study provides several implications on both the theoretical and practical levels. On the theoretical level, it extends previous research in the field of SE by examining the specific role exerted by national culture on firms' propensity to engage in social entrepreneurial activities. On a practical level, the knowledge of cultural traits may suggest how policymakers and different stakeholders can support the emergence and development of SE in different cultural contexts.

The paper is organized as follows. First, a background of SE is provided, mainly referring to the two notions – *Entrepreneurial* and *Social Orientation* – that belong to the concept. Both of these concepts are examined in the field of cultural studies in order to picture how some values encourage the rise of an 'other oriented' culture, the last one enabling the emergence of SE. After this, the methodological approach is detailed with reference to both data collection and statistical procedure. Results and discussions are presented in Section 4. Implications and suggestions for future research are discussed in Section 5. Finally, concluding remarks are presented in Section 6.

## 2. Theoretical framework

### 2.1. Defining SE: Pursuing social aims through market-based methods

The increasing recognition of SE contribution to economic and societal wellbeing is fuelling scholars' interests on the process and on its resulting impacts on social value creation (Dwivedi & Weerawardena, 2018). In recent years, a considerable amount of research has particularly focused on debating what is included or excluded in the notion of SE. As mentioned in the introduction, defining SE is not easy, mainly because the lack of homogeneity in the available definitions about the issue, as well as the flourishing perspectives used to approach the phenomenon (Dacin et al., 2010; Felício, Gonçalves, & da Conceição Gonçalves, 2013; Hoogendoorn, Pennings, & Thurik, 2010; Short et al., 2009). Moreover, SE is difficult to detail because of the complexity in defining its two constituent concepts: entrepreneurship and social outreach (Rey-Martí et al., 2016). Accordingly, Dacin et al. (2010) count 37 definitions of SE and Social Entrepreneurs.

Austin, Stevenson, and Wei-Skillern (2006) consider SE a sub-discipline of entrepreneurship; Zahra et al. (2009, p. 519) define SE as 'the activities and processes undertaken to discover, define, and exploit opportunities in order to enhance social wealth by creating new ventures or managing existing organizations in an innovative manner'.

Similarly, for Bosma and Levie (2010), SE is concerned with individuals or organizations engaged in entrepreneurial activities with a social goal. It may include the following:

- Nonprofit organizations that apply business expertise to become independent of grants and subsidies (Boschee & McClurg, 2003; Reis & Clohesy, 2001; Thompson, 2002);
- For-profit businesses that offer solutions for persistent social, economic and ecological problems using market-based models (Dees & Anderson, 2006; Dorado, 2006); and
- Hybrid organizations aiming to achieve social impact while maintaining a sustainable business model (Alter, 2007; Nicholls & Cho,

2006). Particularly referring to this last point, as Yunus (2008) illustrated, social entrepreneurship addresses a pressing social problem – such as poverty, homelessness, or the needs of underprivileged children – using free market principles. It means, therefore, that SE is profitable and sustainable at the same time, but profits are reinvested into the business instead of going back to the investors.

It is understood that meeting social needs with problem solving opportunities or getting social aims appears to be a common theme across the majority of definitions. Despite this, differences may be underlined with reference to both the characteristics of the undertaken activities – innovative vs. traditional – and the outcome – social and economic value – of the process.

Many authors (Alvord, Brown, & Letts, 2004; Austin et al., 2006; Dees & Anderson, 2006; Mair & Marti, 2006; Mort, Weerawardena, & Carnegie, 2003; Nicholls, 2007; Peredo & McLean, 2006; Rüede & Lurtz, 2012; Yunus, 2008; Zahra et al., 2009) recognize the 'innovative' trait of SE that adds to the 'social value' of its goals. Therefore, SE always involves the creation of something new, rather than simply the replication of existing enterprises or practices. This 'novelty' aims to meet social ends, usually referred as 'social good' (Cukier et al., 2011).

From a more general perspective, therefore, SE refers to 'the activities of individuals and groups (social entrepreneurs) who identify gaps in the social system as an opportunity to serve groups who are marginalized in different ways and aim to address these needs in entrepreneurial ways' (Björk, Hansson, Lundborg, & Olofsson, 2014, p. 35). This means that SE is clearly market-oriented, whilst Social Innovation is not necessarily market-based and can be found in any sector (Mulgan, Tucker, Ali, & Sanders, 2007; Phills, Deiglmeier, & Miller, 2008): public (Novy & Leubolt, 2005), private for-profit (Austin et al., 2006), or nonprofit (Gerometta, Haussermann, & Longo, 2005).

Referring to the outcomes of the social entrepreneurial activities, some authors ignore the economic results of the process, mainly focusing on the creation of social value and social returns. Among them, Bornstein (2004) stresses the main role of the entrepreneurs in pursuing their visions. They '*are people with new ideas (...) who will not give up until have spread their ideas as far as they possibility*' (Bornstein, 2004, pp. 1–2). Accordingly, social entrepreneurs act as change agents to create and support social value, which is the primary mission of their activities (Dees, Emerson, & Economy, 2001). Entrepreneurial actions developed in nonprofit and governmental sectors, but not in traditional for-profit businesses, usually belong to this field of management (Zahra et al., 2009).

In contrast, other authors associate the economic outcomes with social entrepreneurship, although not as its primary missions (Mair & Marti, 2006; Zahra et al., 2009). In line with this perspective, SE marries two distinct competing organizational objectives: creating social and economic values by employing market-based organizational forms (Austin et al., 2006; Dees, 1998; Hartigan, 2006; Miller et al., 2012; Van de Ven, Sapienza, & Villanueva, 2007). This is the reason why SE is usually explored by examining the two components – *Entrepreneurial Orientation* and *Social Orientation* – that constitute its essence (Mair & Marti, 2006; Tan, Williams, & Tan, 2005).

According to Mair and Marti (2006), examining the two components that belong to SE allows scholars to capture the essence of the notion and to explore potential differences between entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship in the business sector.

Entrepreneurship may be defined as the process of attempting to make business profits by innovation in the face of risks (Tan et al., 2005). Moreover, *Entrepreneurial Orientation* mainly refers to individuals' and organizations' ability to exhibit innovativeness (the introduction of new products, processes, and business models), proactiveness (actively entering new product/market spaces and seeking market leadership positions), and risk taking (a willingness among strategic decision makers to contribute resources to projects with uncertain outcomes) (Anderson & Li, 2014; Caputo, 2017). It may also be

referred as an individual (or organizational) propensity to engage in entrepreneurial activities. Similarly, *Social Orientation* depicts the actors' propensity to satisfy societal needs and to profit collective interests (Canestrino et al., 2015; Felício et al., 2013; Shane & Venkataraman, 2000; Van de Ven et al., 2007).

The interaction between entrepreneurial and social orientation is crucial to understanding the process of SE. Combining the above components, SE profits are mainly reinvested to sustain the pursued social aims rather than to be addressed to satisfy the needs of the shareholders and the owners (Dacin et al., 2010; Harding, 2004). Since economic outcomes make available financial resources that social entrepreneurs use to achieve their own social missions, responsibilities to both corporate and other stakeholders are not mutually exclusive (Donaldson & Preston, 1995), which encourages the co-existence of self and collective interests in SE (Van de Ven et al., 2007). Van de Ven et al. (2007) define self-interests as the pursuit of economic or power gains, regardless of the means through which they are achieved; conversely, collective interests always involve certain efforts made to satisfy the welfare of the others, regardless of whether personal interests are served in the process or not. According to the authors, the simultaneous consideration of self- and collective interests results in a more complete view of entrepreneurial opportunities when developing new ventures, as well as in a higher level of success in mobilizing resources for the venture. The relative balance between self- and collective interests is likely to be influenced by individual differences and cultural contexts. Specifically, culture is one of the main determinants of the various entrepreneurial activities undertaken in different countries (Wach, 2015). Nevertheless, further exploration is necessary to yield a wider understanding of the role it plays in shaping both the entrepreneurial and social orientation of SE. Both self-oriented (entrepreneurial orientation) and other-oriented cultures (social orientation) co-exist in SE (Miller et al., 2012). However, the relative balance between these varies with individual differences (Batson, 1998) and culture (Javidan, House, Dorfman, Hanges, & De Luque, 2006). Understanding the way values and beliefs affect each component of SE is, therefore, the first step to identifying the cultural drivers that underlie the adoption of social entrepreneurial practices.

## 2.2. Interpreting entrepreneurial and social orientation within the field of cultural studies

As supported by the wide body of literature about the topic, both firms' *Entrepreneurial Orientation* and *Social Orientation* are affected by culture (Canestrino et al., 2015; Cannavale & Canestrino, 2009; Husted, 2001; Kaasa & Vadi, 2010; Parjanen, 2012; Steensma, Marino, Weaver, & Dickson, 2000; Taylor & Wilson, 2012).

The relationship between entrepreneurial spirit and culture has already been investigated by scholars within the field of entrepreneurship, as well as within the so-called supply-side theories of SE (Hartog & Hoogendoorn, 2011). Many scholars recognize the direct impact of culture on *Entrepreneurial Orientation* and entrepreneurial behaviour among members of particular cultural communities (Castaño, Méndez, & Galindo, 2016; Hechavarría, 2016; Radziszewska, 2014; Tschauner & Engelen, 2016; Wach, 2015). They generally agree on the existence of a positive linkage between entrepreneurship and Hofstede's index for *Individualism*, which is included in his typology of cultural dimensions (Hartog, Van Praag, & Van Der Sluis, 2010; Mitchell et al., 2002; Tiessen, 1997); this index demonstrates that cultures high in individualism are supportive of entrepreneurship.

In addition, a positive relationship exists between entrepreneurship and *Masculinity*. *Masculinity* measures the extent to which a given society values competition, achievement and success (Hofstede, 1980). Masculine societies are highly success-oriented and driven (Hofstede, 2001); children are taught from an early age that competition is good and that to be a winner is important in one's life. In such circumstances, the material success achieved through successful entrepreneurial

ventures is recognized and valued (Canestrino et al., 2015; Radziszewska, 2014).

Both *Power Distance* and *Uncertainty Avoidance* negatively correlate with entrepreneurial orientation. *Power Distance* reflects the extent to which people accept unequal distribution of power within society. A high *Power Distance* means that a rigid hierarchy is established at the social level without the need of legitimization. Because of the protection of elites' prerogatives, there is a lower concern for society (Katz, Swanson, & Nelson, 2001). In contrast, fairness and equality are at the core of low *Power Distant* countries (Vitell, Nwachukwu, & Barnes, 1993). According to Radziszewska (2014), the lower a country's *Power Distance*, the greater the access to resources and entrepreneurial opportunities establishes, thus supporting entrepreneurial initiatives.

*Uncertainty Avoidance* refers to the extent to which people feel threatened by uncertain or ambiguous situations (Caputo, Evangelista, & Russo, 2018). High uncertainty leads to general avoidance of risk (Hofstede, 1980). A low level of *Uncertainty Avoidance* increases the willingness to take risks, fostering the initiation of entrepreneurial ventures. Empirical evidence has also found that low levels of *Uncertainty Avoidance* significantly relate to the individual traits commonly associated with entrepreneurship: internal locus of control, risk taking, and innovativeness (Hayton, George, & Zahra, 2002; Mueller & Thomas, 2001).

Elkington and Hartigan (2008) suggest that cultures encouraging entrepreneurship have positive effects on the development of SE, which means that the more entrepreneurial a culture is, the greater the chance that social entrepreneurial initiatives are undertaken is.

When referencing SE, authors tend to employ Hofstede's cultural dimensions. For example, Kedmenec and Strašek (2017) examine whether national cultures facilitate or hamper SE through an empirical testing of the relationships between Hofstedes' cultural dimensions and social entrepreneurial. According to their findings, *Individualism* and *Uncertainty Avoidance* have no direct linear association with social entrepreneurial activities of any kind. Lower levels of *Masculinity* are found to support the development of SE in factor-driven economies, while in the innovation-driven economies, social entrepreneurial ventures emerge more often in the cultures characterized by *Short-term Orientation* and *Indulgence*.

Puumalainen, Sjögrén, Syrjä, and Barraket (2015) explore the roles of culture, socioeconomic development, and governance institutions on the prevalence of social entrepreneurship in different countries. The empirical results based on Global Entrepreneurship Monitor report a negative relationship between *Power Distance* and all types of entrepreneurship, and a positive relationship between Inglehart (1997) *secular-rational values* and *self-expressive values* with established social entrepreneurship (in line with the recent findings of Stephan, Uhlaner, & Stride, 2015). Surprisingly, Puumalainen et al. (2015) show that neither *Collectivism*, *Femininity*, nor *Uncertainty Avoidance* are significantly associated with social entrepreneurship.

Referring to the GLOBE project, previous studies examined the impact of national culture on entrepreneurship. Ozgen (2012) investigated the influence of various cultural dimensions formulated by the GLOBE study on female entrepreneurial activities in emerging economies to better underpin the opportunity recognition process therein. Using the GLOBE results, Radziszewska (2014) proposed a relational concept linking cultural dimensions and the opportunities for the creation of family firms. Similarly, Şahin and Asunakutlu (2014) provide insights on entrepreneurship by examining the correlation between people's perceptions of national culture and entrepreneurial intention.

However, none of the aforementioned studies focus on SE.

## 2.3. Hypothesis definition

In contrast to the existing studies on the topic, this research considers the GLOBE cultural dimensions to investigate the effects of national culture on SE.

Recently the GLOBE project emerged from integrating existing cultural models and specifically extended Hofstede's cultural model to include nine dimensions to measure cultural differences across borders.

The GLOBE project uses data collected from 18,000 managers in 62 countries to identify nine dimensions that explain cultural differences, including those identified by Hofstede. This scale is widely accepted and includes a few complementary dimensions. As the application of the study is limited, especially in the field of SE, the GLOBE project provides a deeper understanding of cultural complexities.

Taking into account the mentioned considerations, the GLOBE model is used instead of that of Hofstede for the following reasons: (1) GLOBE data are more recent than that of Hofstede (Calza, Cannavale, & Tutore, 2016); (2) GLOBE provides more cultural dimensions than does Hofstede; and (3) GLOBE has not previously been used to investigate the linkage between national culture and SE.

According to House et al. (2004), cultural contexts can be studied through nine dimensions: Power Distance (PD), Uncertainty Avoidance (UA), In-group Collectivism (GCOLL), Institutional Collectivism (ICOLL), Gender Egalitarianism (GE), Performance Orientation (PO), Future Orientation (FO), Human Orientation (HO), and Assertiveness (AS), which explain the different perceptions and acceptance of leadership within each context. Each cultural dimension has been studied at two levels, the 'as is' scores, and the 'should be' scores, in order to understand both practices and values prevailing within society. Practices – the 'as is' scores – measure the way things are done in a given culture, while values – the 'should be' scores – measure the way the things should be done (Maseland and Van Hoorn, 2009; House et al., 2004).

This research considers 'should be' scores because they refer to the future, and to the individuals' wishes and inclinations. They consequently seem more useful in seeking to understand the relationship between culture and a firm's propensity to pursue social aims.

### 2.3.1. Power Distance (PD)

PD is defined as the degree to which members of an organization or society agree with the unequal distribution of power, power differences, and status privileges, since it is traditionally related to the perception of social inequality (Hofstede, 1980). Social inequality arises every time resources, such as wealth or education, allow some people to get more social power than the others. People in societies exhibiting a high PD accept a hierarchical order in which everybody has a place, which requires no further justification. In such circumstances, human rights and employees' equity are not perceived as important. In contrast, in societies with low PD, people strive to equalize the distribution of power and demand justification for inequalities of power (Puumalainen et al., 2015). Given that the main aim of social entrepreneurship is the creation of social value by stimulating or meeting social needs (Lepoutre, 2011; Lepoutre et al., 2013), the mission of a social enterprise may be reasonably identified in the attempt to reduce the inequalities of power resulting from social exclusion. While studies based on the GLOBE project do not explicitly consider the effect of cultural dimensions on SE, Puumalainen et al. (2015) found a negative relationship between PD and SE. Societies characterized by low PD are more receptive to SE than those with high PD.

Depending on the above, low PD contexts are expected to be more receptive to SE than high PD contexts. We therefore formulate the following hypothesis:

**H1:** PD is negatively related to SE

### 2.3.2. Uncertainty Avoidance (UA)

UA refers to the extent to which a given society prefers rules and order instead of uncertainty. More specifically, it describes the extent to which members of a society or an organization avoid uncertainty by reliance on social norms, rituals, and bureaucratic practices in order to reduce the risks of future events (House et al., 2004).

Empirical studies on the linkage between UA and SE present mixed results. Using panel data from 21 OECD countries, Wennekers, Thurik, van Stel, and Noorderhaven (2007) found a positive correlation between UA and business ownership rate. In contrast, Kedmenec and Strašek (2017) find no direct association, either positive or negative, between UA and SE in a given country. This result is also confirmed by Puumalainen et al. (2015). Ringov and Zollo (2007) described uncertainty avoiding societies as 'rule-and routine-oriented'. They generally find it more difficult to adapt to novel social demands and practices. If UA is strong, therefore, changes are felt as dangerous, and 'what is already known' is preferred to change. Within Multinationals Corporations (MNCs), for example, subsidiaries resist everything that is 'new', avoiding new techniques even if these promise increased efficiency. In contrast, subsidiaries in weak UA societies look for new way of doing things, thus enhancing flexibility and fostering learning process (Lucas, 2006). Referring to SE, risk taking and creative destruction (Schumpeter, 1934) belong to the process itself and there is therefore more likely to be a high prevalence of entrepreneurship (and also social entrepreneurship) in societies with weak uncertainty avoidance. According to the above, SE is expected to develop in societies that are low on this cultural dimension. We therefore formulate the following hypothesis:

**H2:** UA is negatively related to SE

### 2.3.3. In-group Collectivism (GCOLL)

GCOLL shows the extent to which individuals are loyal or cohesive within their own family, organization, and other social groups. Societies that score high on collectivism emphasize group goals more than individual goals; at an organizational level, pro-social behaviours are common. Motivation is socially oriented, and it is based on the need to contribute to the group (Del Giudice, Arslan, Scuotto, & Caputo, 2017). Collective interests particularly imply the notion of *altruism*, referring to the inner nature of human being and to his tendency to take care of the others (Jensen, 1994). Each person has a certain amount of egoism and *altruism*, which implies a subjective trade-off between self- and collective interests: the more *altruistic*, the more s/he attempts to 'innovatively profit society, in a way that involves society, at risk of personal loss' (Tan et al., 2005, p. 359). Research about GCOLL and SE provides conflicting results. As Pathak and Muralidharan (2016) note, GCOLL is positively associated with the likelihood of individual-level SE. In contrast, Kedmenec and Strašek (2017) find that more individualistic societies have higher rates of established social ventures. Understanding the relationship between collectivism and SE is not easy, mainly because the existing and opposite linkage between individualism and entrepreneurship. Supplementary analyses revealed that entrepreneurship is highest under balanced conditions of individualism and collectivism and lower in highly individualistic and collectivistic contexts (House et al., 2004). This is also consistent with research at individual level, according to which a combination of individualistic and collectivistic traits can enhance entrepreneurial success (Bhawuk & Udas, 1996) as well as SE (Lepoutre, 2011; Elkington & Hartigan, 2008; Lepoutre et al., 2013).

Since social entrepreneurs primarily focus on the needs of others (Bargsted, Picon, Salazar, & Rojas, 2013), it is expected that for a certain level of *individualism*, SE positively relates with GCOLL. We therefore formulate the following hypothesis:

**H3:** GCOLL is positively related to SE

### 2.3.4. Institutional Collectivism (ICOLL)

ICOLL is the degree to which institutions and institutional practices foster collective actions, as well as the collective distribution of resources (Javidan et al., 2006). More specifically, ICOLL shows whether the economic system emphasizes individual or collective interests, whether being accepted by other group members is important, and



whether individualism or group cohesion is valued more in the society. When the ICOLL is high, the economic systems of society emphasize group interests, employing resources in order to get their interests (House et al., 2004). Examining the role of GCOLL and trust on the level of SE, Pathak and Muralidharan (2016) stress the role of societies in supporting social entrepreneurs. In other words, in collective societies, the support that social entrepreneurs would receive in accessing information and resources from local social networks will be higher since the objectives of the enterprise are socially oriented. Accordingly, a positive relationship between ICOLL and SE is expected. We therefore formulate the following hypothesis:

**H4:** ICOLL is positively related to SE

#### 2.3.5. Gender Egalitarianism (GE)

GE reflects the extent to which an organization or a society reduces gender diversities and discrimination (House et al., 2004). Higher scores for gender egalitarianism indicate less male domination and a greater egalitarianism between genders. When high GE exists, educational systems are the same both for men and women, women are often employed in positions of authority, and less sex segregation exists. As Henry, Treanor, Griffiths, Gundry, and Kickul (2013) noted, gender equality significantly influences the rate of social entrepreneurship activity. In cultures in which female entrepreneurship is perceived as having lower legitimacy than male entrepreneurship, female-led new ventures contract as a consequence of women's self-perceptions and attitudes (Achtenhagen & Welter, 2003). In contrast, countries that exhibit a high level of gender equality, along with admiration and respect, are characterised by higher levels of female entrepreneurship activity (Baughn, Cao, Le, Lim, & Neupert, 2006).

GE is always associated with the Hofstede's dimension of *Femininity*, which consists of the propensity to take care of the others, valuing harmony, the quality of life, and the future generations (Katz et al., 2001; Peng, Dashdeleg, & Chih, 2012; Power, Klassen, Kull, & Simpson, 2015).

Given the crucial role that compassion, as proxy of 'other-oriented' culture (Miller et al., 2012) a positive effect of GE on SE is hypothesized. We therefore formulate the following hypothesis:

**H5:** GE is positively related to SE

#### 2.3.6. Performance Orientation (PO)

PO refers to the extent to which a given society fosters and rewards performance improvement, excellence, and innovation. PO is an important dimension of a society's culture. It shapes the way a given society defines success, as well as manages relationships with the outside world (Schein, 1996). Societies that score higher on PO emphasize results more than people, value assertiveness, competitiveness, and materialism, and desire to dominate rather than be dominated. The wish to be better than others and to defeat the rivals is driven by self-confidence and ambition. In addition, a high PO links to a monochronic approach to time. Therefore, societies tend to have a sense of urgency in making decisions and in facing challenges. In contrast, the societies that score lower on this dimension have a polychronic approach to time and do not feel much urgency to get things done. It means, therefore, that in low performance-oriented societies, societal members give low importance to short-term results (House et al., 2004) emphasizing people and their needs more than results.

Referring to SE, the mission of social improvement, that is, to create and sustain social value, plays a crucial role in motivating and orienting the actions of social entrepreneurs (Van de Ven et al., 2007; Zahra et al., 2009). It takes priority over short-term profit generation as social entrepreneurs seek to create lasting benefits for society. Mission-orientation particularly induces social entrepreneurs to take the long view, as true social improvements are rarely achieved through quick fixes. Consequently, we hypothesise a negative relationship between PO and

SE. We therefore formulate the following hypothesis:

**H6:** PO is negatively related to SE

#### 2.3.7. Future Orientation (FO)

FO is defined as: 'the degree to which individuals in organizations or societies engage in future-orientated behaviours such as planning, investing in the future, and delaying individual or collective gratification' (House et al., 2004, p. 12) and 'has been identified as a dimension of the more general construct, time orientation' (Ashkanasy, Gupta, Mayfield, & Trevor-Roberts, 2004, p. 282).

Particularly, societies characterized by a high FO show a high propensity to save now for the future, emphasize working for long-term success, tend to be flexible and adaptive, and consider material success and spiritual fulfilment as an integrated whole (Chui & Kwok, 2009; Javidan & House, 2001). In contrast, cultures with a low FO are able to enjoy the moment and to be spontaneous; they are free from both past worries and future anxiety. At the same time, they are not able to establish a plan to realize their own goals (Keough, Zimbardo, & Boyd, 1999). Depending on the above, social entrepreneurs from future-oriented societies are expected to take care of social concerns and try to solve the existing societal gaps. We therefore formulate the following hypothesis:

**H7:** FO is positively related to SE

#### 2.3.8. Human Orientation (HO)

HO is the degree to which individuals in organizations or societies encourage and reward individuals for being fair, altruistic, friendly, and kind to others. At a societal level, a high degree of HO leads to altruism, benevolence, and generosity, as well as generous and compassionate leadership (House et al., 2004). In high human-oriented societies, personal and family relationships lead to protect individuals, members of society are responsible for promoting the well-being of others (the state is not actively involved), there is a high degree of compassion for people in the immediate neighbourhood, and the state supports the private sector and maintains the balance between private and public domains (Evangelista, Caputo, Russo, & Buhnova, 2016).

In the field of pro-social behaviour, Meglino and Korsgaard (2007) suggest the inextricable tie between *empathy* and the pursuit of collective interests. *Empathy* refers to the ability of people to place themselves in the others' situations (Van de Ven et al., 2007). Consequently, entrepreneurial opportunities based on collective interests are more likely to be recognized and exploited when individuals show high levels of empathy. *Compassion* is depicted as the emotional connection linking an individual to a suffering community. It acts as a pro-social motivator for actions, compelling individuals to alleviate others' suffering (Goetz, Keltner, & Simon-Thomas, 2010), and fostering their desire to benefit others (Miller et al., 2012).

According to the above, it is stated that the more a given individual or organization is inspired by *empathy* and *compassion*, the more their decisions consider the satisfaction of others' welfare instead of the merely personal welfare. It means, therefore, that a *Social Orientation* is established under the mentioned conditions, encouraging the emergence of SE. According to the above, SE develops more easily in those contexts characterized by high levels of HO. We therefore formulate the following hypothesis:

**H8:** HO is positively related to SE

#### 2.3.9. Assertiveness (AS)

AS is the extent to which both individuals and organizations or societies are assertive and aggressive in social relationships (House et al., 2004). According to GLOBE findings, high AS societies tend to value dominant behaviour, success, and progress. At same time, they foster competition and performance achievement, emphasizing results

over relationships. Assertive societies value what one does more than what one is and build trust based on capabilities and calculation.

In contrast, societies that score lower on assertiveness value modesty and tenderness, as well as tradition, seniority, and experience. Non-assertive societies foster solidarity, loyalty, and cooperative behaviour (House et al., 2004). As Chui and Kwok (2009) suggest, people from assertive societies pay less attention to initiatives that overcome their own interests, thus suggesting a lesser concern for societal issues. Similarly, according to Parboteeah, Addae, and Cullen (2012) and Ben-Amar, Ding, and Piera (2014), assertiveness encourages individuals to behave in a self-interested manner to succeed, thus contrasting with the inner meaning of SE. According to this, a negative relationship between AS and SE is proposed. We therefore formulate the following hypothesis:

**H9:** AS is negatively related to SE

### 3. Material and methods

#### 3.1. Data collection

The research used two databases. The first one contains the survey results on Social Entrepreneurial Activity (SEA) from Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) in 2015 (Bosma, Schøtt, Terjesen, & Kew, 2016). In this special topic report, which was the first to be dedicated to social entrepreneurship, SEA is broadly and narrowly defined. According to the broad definition, SE refers to any kind of activity, organization or initiative that has a particular social, environmental or community objective. It means, therefore, that any kind of activity or initiative with a particular social, environmental or community concern may be considered the object of SE. In contrast, the narrow definition of SE imposes the following restrictions: (1) the social and environmental value has the priority over financial value, and (2) the organization operates in the market by producing goods and services (market-based). A distinction between the start-up phase and the operational stage was also made by GEM researchers. The SEA start-up indicator (SU) mainly refers to the nascent social entrepreneurs currently involved in SEA and that have taken concrete actions during the past 12 months to help start this venture. Then, the SEA operational indicator (OP) is used to measure relationships with individuals who are leaders of currently operational social entrepreneurial activity. A total of 58 countries were surveyed.

Additionally, the different stages of country development have been considered as the GEM researchers grouped countries according to Global Competitiveness Index (World Economic Forum, 2018), namely: factor driven (stage 1), efficiency driven (stage 2) and innovation driven (stage 3). Other stages are transitional, i.e., stage 4 represents transition from 2 to 3, and stage 5 represents transition between 1 and 2. These three main groups were distinguished based on their level of GDP per capita and other economic variables. The factor-driven countries have higher shares of exports of primary goods in their total exports. The efficiency-driven countries base their development mostly on scale-intensity, while the innovation-driven countries produce unique goods and services via sophisticated methods.

Countries that belong to the same group according to their stage of development have strikingly different SEA rates among themselves. Thus, their cultural dimensions might be among the important factors for explaining the prevalence of social entrepreneurial activity (Kedmenec & Strašek, 2017).

The second database describing the cultural dimensions was collected by the GLOBE study (House et al., 2004). Merging data from these two databases revealed that 36 countries have assigned both values in GEM SEA and GLOBE reports. Only these countries were considered in this research. Table 1 summarizes the acronyms and the definitions of all the variables used in the current study.

#### 3.2. Research approach

All data were combined into one dataset containing the list of countries, their classification as geographical areas, and the stage of economic development and data for each cultural dimension. The countries for which data were available in both databases (i.e. GEM SEA and GLOBE) were differentiated in terms of national culture (see Table 2). Due to this, we tested the relationship between SE and GLOBE values for these groups consisting of countries with similar national and organizational culture.

The following computations were conducted. First, the cluster analysis method was used to investigate groups of countries that are similar in terms of a society's culture. To choose the optimal number of clusters, groups were defined based on the Ward method with Euclidean Squared distance. Next, the composition of each group was optimized using the *k*-means method. Other variables, namely, regional affiliation and stage of economic development, were used for class profiling. Class profiling was carried out based on variables that did not participate in the process of classifying objects (division of countries in two groups). Frequency tables have been defined for clusters employing two variables used in class profiling. Finally, linear correlations between SEA variables defined in GEM report in broad and narrow sense and cultural dimensions for all countries as a whole, as well as for each of the three clusters, were calculated. Dimensional reduction in the set of four aspects of the SE has not been considered as this study was intended to determine which approach of the SE (i.e. distinguishing the start-up phase from the operational stage and based on a broad definition or narrow definition) showed the strongest link with cultural dimensions. A linear correlation coefficient was used as the purpose of the analysis was to check whether there are relationships between SE and nine cultural dimensions. To achieve the research objective, whether the detected relationships were direct or indirect (e.g. with mediator variables) was judged to be irrelevant. In the case of missing data for a particular factor, the case has been deleted from the analysis.

After checking the results against both broad and narrow meanings of SE, the biggest number of statistically significant correlations between Operating Social Entrepreneurial Activity defined narrowly (OPN) and broadly (OPB) has been identified, then nascent activities for start-up social entrepreneurial activity defined broadly (SUB) and narrowly (SUN). However, from the point of view of the research, a narrow definition of SE is important, as it stresses prioritization of social and environmental values over financial. It should be noted that OPN was established for 31 economies in the GEM report.

#### 3.3. Sample characterization

Applying the Ward method with Euclidean Squared distance showed that it was possible to distinguish 3 clusters (groups of countries). Refining these groups by the *k*-mean method in order to establish the optimal set of 3 clusters allowed us to describe these groups as follows. Cluster 1 characterizes the maximum mean value of GE (a slightly smaller mean value exists in cluster 3) and HO. For this group, the minimum mean value of variables is FO, AS (a slightly higher mean value exists in cluster 3), ICOLL, GCOLL (a slightly higher mean value exists in cluster 2), and UA.

Cluster 2 characterizes the maximum mean value for cultural dimensions AS, PD, and UA. In this group, the minimum mean values are for GLOBE dimensions GE and HO.

Cluster 3 describes the maximum mean value for cultural dimensions PO, FO, ICOLL, and GCOLL. The minimum mean value for GLOBE dimensions in this group is PD.

Calculation of frequency tables for clusters based on the variable 'Region' allowed us to describe these groups as follows. In cluster 1, countries from Northern Europe dominate. In cluster 2, the majority of countries constitutes Asiatic states; however, there are also three out of four countries from West Africa. Cluster 3 includes countries from Latin

**Table 1**  
Definitions and acronyms of the selected variables.  
Source: authors' adaptation from literature.

Variable	Acronyms	Definitions
Social Entrepreneurship	SE	The activities and processes undertaken to discover, define, and exploit opportunities in order to enhance social wealth by creating new ventures or managing existing organizations in an innovative manner (Zahra et al. (2009, p. 519).
Social Entrepreneurial Activity	SEA	Any kind of activity, organization or initiative that has a particular social, environmental or community objective (Broad Definition)Any kind of activity, organization or initiative that has a particular social, environmental or community objective for which: (1) the social and environmental value has the priority over financial value, and (2) the organization operates in the market by producing goods and services (market-based)
Nascent Social Entrepreneurship – Broad definition	SUB	Social entrepreneurs currently involved in nascent (start-up) social activities - Broad Definition of SEA
Operational Social Entrepreneurs – broad definition	OPB	Social entrepreneurs currently involved in operational social entrepreneurial activity – Broad Definition of SEA
Nascent Social Entrepreneurs – narrow definition	SUN	Social entrepreneurs currently involved in nascent (start-up) social activities - Narrow Definition of SEA
Operational Social entrepreneurs – narrow definition	OPN	Social entrepreneurs currently involved in operational social entrepreneurial activity – Narrow Definition of SEA
Power Distance	PD	Degree to which members of an organization or society agree with the unequal distribution of power, power differences, and status privileges
Uncertainty Avoidance	UA	Extent to which a given society prefers rules and order instead of uncertainty
In-group Collectivism	GCOLL	Extent to which individuals are loyal or cohesive within their own family, organization, and other social groups
Institutional Collectivism	ICOLL	Degree to which institutions and institutional practices foster collective actions, as well as the collective distribution of resources
Gender Egalitarianism	GE	Extent to which an organization or a society reduces gender diversities and discrimination
Performance Orientation	PO	Extent to which a given society fosters and rewards performance improvement, and excellence, and innovation
Future Orientation	FO	Degree to which individuals in organizations or societies engage in future-orientated behaviours such as planning, investing in the future, and delaying individual or collective gratification
Human Orientation	HO	Degree to which individuals in organizations or societies encourage and reward individuals for being fair, altruistic, friendly, and kind to others
Assertiveness	AS	Extent to which both individuals and organizations or societies are assertive and aggressive in social relationships

America and four of the 11 countries from South Europe (Table 2).

The dimension 'stage of development' used in frequency tables for clusters shows that countries from level 3 (innovation-driven) dominate Cluster 1. Countries from level 2 dominate Cluster 2. Cluster 3 consists of a mix of countries in terms of economic development, both in stage 2 or 3.

In summation, Cluster 1 has been labelled as 'sympathetic' with innovation-driven economy located in Northern Europe. Cluster 2 has been defined as 'pragmatic', efficiency-driven economy situated mainly in Asia and partially in West Africa. Cluster 3 has been described as 'progressive' countries with economy innovation or efficiency-driven, placed in Latin America and Southern Europe.

#### 4. Results and discussion

Table 3 presents the results of computing linear correlation for SUB, OPB, SUN, OPN and GLOBE's cultural dimensions ('should be') for all countries; Table 4 presents the divide among the three clusters. According to the results, more correlations appear with reference to OPN and OPB, followed by the other measures of SEA, such as broadly defined SEA in start-up (SUB) and narrowly nascent activity (SUN). Therefore, findings for OPN and OPB are jointly presented and discussed, as this gives a wider scope of correlations between variables.

OPN and OPB have the same correlations for all countries. In Cluster 1, OPN has one more correlation than OPB, which was found for FO. For Cluster 2, it emerges the same correlations for OPN and OPB. In Cluster 3, a correlation exists between OPB and AS. Therefore, data referencing OPN are presented, with reference to OPB only in Cluster 3.

For the group consisting of all countries, the significant statistical linear correlation appears between OPN and GE (0.523). Negative significant correlations are observed for variables ICOLL (−0.517) and UA (−0.433).

For Cluster 1, the OPN has a significant statistical correlation with four cultural dimensions, namely, FO (0.642), AS (0.841), GCOLL (0.701), and UA (0.666). Accordingly, an opposite sign can be noted in

the last cultural dimension, compared to the findings in the group of all countries.

Significant statistically correlations for Cluster 2 exist between OPN and GE (0.669). Negative significant correlations statistically exist with ICOLL (−0.756) and UA (−0.717).

In Cluster 3, a statistically significant correlation only between OPB and AS (0.699) emerges.

These findings are used to verify certain hypotheses (see Table 5). H2 and H5 are confirmed for the group consisting of all countries. Referring to Cluster 1, H3 and H7 are confirmed. Referring to Cluster 2, H2 and H5 are confirmed. Consequently, only H2 and H5 are fully confirmed, while H3 and H7 are partially confirmed. Therefore, H2 and H5 are confirmed for all countries, while H3 and H7 are confirmed only for Cluster 1.

As shown by the findings, more correlations appear after applying the calculation to various groups.

According to the results, a significant positive correlation between GE, GCOLL, FO, and OPN can be underlined. A significant negative correlation between UA and OPN is also confirmed for the group of all countries. When focusing on specific clusters, this negative correlation is no longer supported, suggesting further investigation about the moderating effect of both the 'stage of development' (the majority of the countries belonging to cluster 1 are innovation-driven) and 'regional affiliation' (these countries are mainly located in Northern Europe) is warranted. Correlations between GLOBE's dimensions and OPN were not significant for all the other cultural values. This outcome is coherent with previous research about the linkage between Hofstede's cultural dimensions and SE. Kedmenec and Strašek (2017) find no direct linear association between *Individualism* vs. *Collectivism* and *Uncertainty Avoidance* with social entrepreneurial activities of any kind. Similarly, Puumalainen et al. (2015) show that neither *Collectivism*, *Femininity*, nor *Uncertainty Avoidance* are significantly associated with social entrepreneurship.

Even if some cultural dimensions were explored referring to their influence on SE at country level, no previous studies used the GLOBE

**Table 2**

Cultural cluster types.

Source: authors' analysis.

Cluster	Country Name	Region	Stage
Cluster 1 (11 countries)	Australia	AUS	3
	Finland	EURW	3
	Germany	EURW	3
	Ireland	EURW	3
	Israel	AFR-W	3
	Kazakhstan	ASIA	5
	Netherlands	EURW	3
	Sweden	EURW	3
	Switzerland	EURW	3
	United Kingdom	EURW	3
	United States	US	3
Cluster 2 (11 countries)	China	ASIA	2
	Egypt	AFR-W	2
	India	ASIA	1
	Indonesia	ASIA	2
	Iran	AFR-W	2
	Malaysia	ASIA	Nd
	Morocco	AFR-W	2
	Poland	EURE	4
	South Africa	AFR	2
	Taiwan	ASIA	3
	Thailand	ASIA	2
Cluster 3 (13 countries) “progressive”	Argentina	LA	4
	Brazil	LA	2
	Colombia	LA	Nd
	Ecuador	LA	2
	Greece	EURW	Nd
	Guatemala	LA	2
	Hungary	EURE	4
	Italy	EURW	3
	Mexico	LA	2
	Philippines	ASIA	5
	Portugal	EURW	3
	Slovenia	EURE	3
	Spain	EURW	3

Note: South Korea (ASIA) was excluded from analysis because there is lack of data for variables ICOLL-sh and GCOLL-sh.

**Table 3**

Linear correlation of SEA's type and GLOBE's cultural dimensions for all countries.

Source: authors' analysis.

Variable	Mean	SD	SUB	OPB	SUN	OPN
SUB	0.032	0.025	1.000	0.597	0.934	0.579
OPB	0.039	0.028	0.597	1.000	0.433	0.965
SUN	0.017	0.015	0.934	0.433	1.000	0.491
OPN	0.023	0.016	0.579	0.965	0.491	1.000
PO	0.163	0.858	0.132	0.119	0.237	0.172
FO	−0.063	1.031	−0.069	−0.274	0.005	−0.240
GE	−0.005	1.082	0.214	0.454	0.246	0.523
AS	0.013	1.095	0.179	0.204	0.037	0.114
ICOLL	0.016	0.998	−0.347	−0.571	−0.192	−0.517
GCOLL	−0.037	1.018	0.208	0.232	0.280	0.290
PD	−0.026	0.967	−0.275	−0.003	−0.412	−0.065
UA	−0.043	1.078	−0.147	−0.401	−0.150	−0.433
HO	−0.007	0.979	0.277	0.281	0.313	0.296

The correlation coefficients determined at a significance level of 0.05. N = 30 (Data missing were removed by cases – data were not available for the following countries: Guatemala, Kazakhstan, Mexico, South Africa, Spain).

project to discuss the way national culture affects social entrepreneurial activities. Because of the mentioned, the available evidences within the field of corporate social responsibility (CSR) were also considered.

In particular, the results regarding the positive relationship between GE and SE are consistent with [Henry et al. \(2013\)](#) and [Ringov and Zollo \(2007\)](#). [Henry et al. \(2013\)](#) provide an empirical examination of the impact of the socio-political, economic, and cultural determinants of

**Table 4**  
Linear correlation of SEA's type and GLOBE's cultural dimensions for clusters 1, 2 and 3.  
Source: authors' analysis.

Variable	cluster 1*						cluster 2**						cluster 3***					
	Mean	SD	SUB	OPB	SUN	OPN	Mean	SD	SUB	OPB	SUN	OPN	Mean	SD	SUB	OPB	SUN	OPN
SUB	0.038	0.018	1.000	0.835	0.797	0.774	0.020	0.016	1.000	0.396	0.905	0.218	0.038	0.034	1.000	0.627	0.978	0.695
OPB	0.058	0.031	0.835	1.000	0.544	0.945	0.025	0.022	0.396	1.000	0.049	0.974	0.034	0.020	0.627	1.000	0.559	0.960
SUN	0.020	0.010	0.797	0.544	1.000	0.667	0.009	0.006	0.905	0.049	1.000	−0.107	0.023	0.021	0.978	0.559	1.000	0.665
OPN	0.034	0.018	0.774	0.945	0.667	1.000	0.013	0.012	0.218	0.974	−0.107	1.000	0.021	0.010	0.695	0.960	0.665	1.000
PO	−0.188	0.675	0.135	0.091	0.383	0.190	−0.251	0.613	−0.211	0.439	−0.346	0.515	0.928	0.751	0.053	0.437	0.067	0.433
FO	−1.020	0.417	0.695	0.577	0.655	0.642	0.329	1.133	−0.482	−0.392	−0.336	−0.314	0.502	0.653	0.259	0.492	0.225	0.567
GE	0.695	0.560	−0.255	0.151	−0.221	0.292	−1.269	0.801	0.017	0.665	−0.328	0.669	0.559	0.379	−0.338	−0.235	−0.217	−0.174
AS	−0.289	0.598	0.725	0.768	0.744	0.841	0.595	1.299	0.521	0.143	0.457	0.028	−0.268	0.502	0.227	0.699	0.077	0.510
ICOLL	−0.914	0.521	−0.451	−0.265	−0.369	−0.213	0.266	0.776	−0.408	−0.808	−0.111	−0.756	0.697	0.890	−0.430	−0.325	−0.292	−0.201
GCOLL	−0.375	0.975	0.556	0.669	0.399	0.701	−0.230	0.770	−0.818	−0.253	−0.696	−0.094	0.494	1.145	0.338	0.534	0.374	0.583
PD	−0.105	0.620	0.048	0.509	−0.142	0.530	0.925	0.656	−0.037	−0.061	0.057	−0.051	−0.896	0.585	−0.131	0.218	−0.327	0.009
UA	−1.348	0.549	0.673	0.725	0.407	0.666	0.887	0.512	−0.079	−0.721	0.265	−0.717	0.332	0.412	0.006	0.151	−0.034	0.102
HO	0.565	0.850	0.416	0.243	0.316	0.130	−0.552	1.001	−0.260	−0.269	−0.233	−0.295	−0.035	0.819	0.297	0.209	0.383	0.402

The correlation coefficients determined at a significance level of 0.05.

\*, \*\*, \*\*\* N = 10 (Data missing were removed by cases – data were not available for: Kazakhstan – cluster 1, South Africa – cluster 2, Guatemala, Mexico, Spain – cluster 3).



**Table 5**

Table of results by hypothesis.

Source: authors' analysis.

Hypotheses	Result of verification
H1: PD is negatively related to SE	not supported
H2: UA is negatively related to SE	supported in the group of all countries and Cluster 2 ('pragmatic', efficiency-driven economies mainly in Asia and partially in West Africa)
H3: GCOLL is positively related to SE	supported in Cluster 1 ('sympathetic' with innovation-driven economies in Northern Europe)
H4: ICOLL is positively related to SE	not supported
H5: GE is positively related to SE	supported in the group of all countries and Cluster 2 ('pragmatic', efficiency-driven economies mainly in Asia and partially in West Africa)
H6: PO is negatively related to SE	not supported
H7: FO is positively related to SE	supported in Cluster 1 ('sympathetic' with innovation-driven economies in Northern Europe)
H8: HO is positively related to SE	not supported
H9: AS is negatively related to SE	not supported

social entrepreneurial activity, revealing that the higher GE is, the higher the rate of social entrepreneurial activity. Within the field of CSR, Ringov and Zollo (2007) also confirmed the positive effect of GE on the social and environmental performance of companies around the world, examining approximately 1100 organizations from 34 countries.

The research results show a significant positive effect of GCOLL on SE (in cluster 1). This result finds support in Pathak and Muralidharan (2016, p. 180) who report 'an increase of 1 S.D. in values of in-group collectivism increased the likelihood of SE by 39 percent'. Similarly, by focusing on selected GLOBE dimensions in 33 different countries, Parboteeah et al. (2012) also confirm the positive relationship between collectivism and the individuals' propensity to support sustainability initiatives.

The correlation analysis also shows that FO positively affects SE (in cluster 1) and consequently that H7 is confirmed. This result finds support within the field of CSR studies, but not within the research on SE. Using the Carbon Disclosure Score (CDS) as a specific index, Calza et al. (2016) verify if and how national culture affects firms' environmental proactivity. Among the other results, a positive relationship was particularly found between the values of FO on firms' environmental proactivity, and a negative effect of UA on firms' environmental proactivity. Similarly, Parboteeah et al. (2012) also confirm the aforementioned correlation. In contrast, the results do not support those of Kedmenec and Strašek (2017), who verify the existence of a negative relationship between LTO and SE in innovation-driven economies. Theoretically, there is reason to think of GLOBE FO and Hofstede LTO as the same construct as 'the dimensions are conceptually similar, they would be significantly positively related and have similar relationships (in strength and direction) with other constructs' (Venai, Zhu, & Brewer, 2013, p. 364). As previously mentioned, while formulating the research hypotheses, FO was reasonably linked to Hofstede's LTO, thus supporting social entrepreneurial activities.

These contrasting results may be partially due to the limitations of the research method (measurement validity, cross-sectional design and small sample size, and correlation between the dimensions of culture) but also due to the difficulties in defining SE and its constituent parties. Given that values and beliefs affect both the building blocks of SE, as well as their relative balance differently, in-depth investigation of the moderating effects of culture on entrepreneurial and social orientation should be conducted to interpret conflicting research.

## 5. Implications and future research directions

### 5.1. Theoretical and practical implications

This study provides some implications at both a theoretical and a practical level.

On a theoretical level, it contributes to improving the body of literature on SE by providing a culturally based framework to deepen a still-unexplored field. Much of the existing research does not fully

examine the antecedents of SE, thus the factors hampering social entrepreneurship remain uncharted (Kedmenec & Strašek, 2017) and motivations undertheorized (Miller et al., 2012). Moreover, contributions that account for contextual differences across countries warrant further research as there is a lack of generalizable studies in the literature (Lepoutre, 2011; Lepoutre et al., 2013; Pathak & Muralidharan, 2016). Among them, some researchers propose investigating which cultural values may trigger, or limit, SE (Short et al., 2009). Depending on the above, this study seeks to fill the gap in the literature by examining the relationship between cultural values and SE in different countries, drawing on empirical evidence arising from the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM). In doing so, the GLOBE project was used instead of the Hofstede model for the first time. To the best of our knowledge, no previous research examines the linkage between GLOBE's cultural dimensions and SE. Thus, scholars may benefit from the results of this research, which provides new advancements in the field of motivations of SE, as well as in terms of contextual differences across countries. Finally, the findings may be employed in the field of entrepreneurship research to clarify commercial entrepreneurship and how it differentiates from SE.

On a practical level, this study expands the ability of both academics and practitioners to recognize culture as a key driver of SE. In particular, the knowledge of cultural traits may suggest how to support the emergence and the development of SE in different cultural contexts to policymakers and to different stakeholders. Moreover, it opens future discussions about the way culture and cultural diversities may be managed to improve the effectiveness of firms' practices, particularly referring to social well-being.

### 5.2. Limitations and future research directions

This study has some limitations. First, the GEM database encompassed 58 countries, while data on all nine cultural dimensions were available only for 62 countries. Merging data from the two selected databases revealed that 36 countries have assigned both values in GEM SEA and the GLOBE report, thus reducing the sample size. Moreover, the number of analysed countries varied due to missing data for some of those listed in Tables 2 and 3. Second, although GLOBE dimensions measure both national and organizational culture, the risk of excessive oversimplification arises in considering the coincidence between cultural values of countries and firms (Calza et al., 2016). As the researchers involved in the GLOBE project describe limitations related to the applied research methodology (House et al., 2004), it is useful to underline the risks from treating countries as having monolithic cultures.

Despite these limitations, this study suggests new trends in future research.

As mentioned in the review of the literature, SE is usually explored by examining the two components that constitute its essence (Mair & Marti, 2006; Tan et al., 2005), which means by focusing on the relative

balance between self- and other-oriented interests in the development of the entrepreneurial process. Given that culture affects both entrepreneurial and social orientation, there are still no convincing explanations of what stands behind the co-existence of the pursuit of economic and power gains and the need to satisfy the welfare of others. Thus, further research, investigating the impact of cultural dimensions on both the building blocks of SE, as well as on their relative balance, is required. Questions that may be fruitful for further investigation include:

- How do different cultural values affect entrepreneurial and social orientation?
- How does culture affect the relative balance between self- and collective oriented interests in SE?
- How does the interactive effect among the cultural values act as trigger/moderator of SE?
- What combination of values is needed to sustain the growth and pace of SE?

The emergence of these research questions emphasizes the existence of a still unexplored field of investigation, within which scholars may take advantage of these findings. In particular, institutional theory, a resource-based view, resource dependence theory, and theories of pro-social behaviour may be used to integrate cultural approaches in the study of SE.

## 6. Conclusions

Cross-cultural analysis confirms the impact of culture on both individuals' and firms' propensity to devote to social concerns. Within this field of research, scholars have explored the way Hofstede's cultural dimensions impact on SEA, but no work exists regarding the linkage between GLOBE cultural dimensions and SEA. However, the growing attention towards SE as a way to solve or reduce the problems arising at societal levels warrants a deep investigation about the drivers that underlie the adoption of social entrepreneurial activities.

According to the above, this study focuses on the impact of cultural values on SEA. In doing this, the GLOBE project was referenced instead of Hofstede's typology for three main reasons: (1) GLOBE data are more recent than that of Hofstede (Calza et al., 2016); (2) GLOBE provides more cultural dimensions than does Hofstede; and (3) GLOBE has not previously been used to investigate the linkage between national culture and SE. The GLOBE dimensions for 'should be' scores were considered, as they mirror the values that prevail in a given society; thus, they seem to be more explicative of social orientation. The correlation between each cultural dimension and SE was checked for all the stages of SEA, both broad and narrow defined (SUB, OPB, SUN, OPN), with the more frequent correlations appearing for operating social entrepreneurial activity narrowly and broadly defined. This is the reason why the attention is focused on OPN, as it covers the same correlations as OPB except one. Applying the Ward method with Euclidean Squared distance showed it was possible to distinguish among the 3 clusters (groups of countries). Thus, the correlation between GLOBE 'should be' scores and OPN was checked referring to whole countries, as well as to groups of them. According to the results, H2 and H5 are confirmed for the whole countries, while H3 and H7 are confirmed only for Cluster 1. Since many of the hypotheses were supported by current theory, the impact of cultural values on the constituent parts of SE should be considered in further research, as well as the role they play in the relative balance between the pursuit of self-oriented and other-oriented interests. Moreover, as more correlations appear after clustering, the variables Geographical Affiliation and Development Stage may be considered reasonably important drivers for OPN, concluding that culture is not sufficient to explain the national differences in social entrepreneurship rates. Therefore, for a full understanding of the phenomenon, their moderating effect should also be considered.

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