

WORKING PAPER SERIES

2024/002

Strategic Responses to Institutional Factors – Investigation into Waste Management Social Enterprises in India

Sumita Kektar
School of Organisations, Economy and Society (SOES)
Westminster Business School, University of Westminster

All rights reserved

Strategic Responses to Institutional Factors- Investigation into Waste Management Social Enterprises in India

Keywords: Social Enterprise, Waste management, Institutional factors, Strategic Response

Abstract

Recent literature on social entrepreneurship has acknowledged the need to study the impact of institutional factors on social enterprises (SEs). However, few studies are from the developing country contexts. Even fewer have examined SEs in the waste management sector that have the dual goals of creating a positive environmental impact and financial viability. There has been significant progress in regulating waste management in India, yet waste continues to be a challenging issue. This paper examines the institutional factors affecting waste management SEs in India. Further, using typologies of strategic responses to institutional processes, as proposed by Oliver (1991) and Dahlaman et al (2023), the study looks at how SEs leverage opportunities and navigate challenges arising out of institutional factors. Results find the SEs go beyond the strategies identified by Oliver and adopt context-specific ways of dealing with institutional factors.

Introduction

India generates about 65 million tonnes of waste annually, the majority of which comprises municipal solid waste. This figure is expected to be about 165 million tonnes by 2030 (Cheela et al, 2021). Almost 75% of the solid waste is openly dumped in landfills and becomes a source of Greenhouse Gas Emissions (Kumari and Raghubanshi, 2023). Population growth, rapid urbanization and expansion of megacities, economic growth, the legacy of waste and trends such as fast fashion have all led to a rise in waste generated (Kumar and Agrawal,2021; Malav et al, 2020; Doron and Jeffrey, 2018). Since 2016, the Indian Government has focussed on the issue and introduced legislations (such as Solid Waste Management Rules, 2016); a framework for e-waste

and the 2nd Amendment of Plastic Waste Management Rules, 2022). It has also prioritised citizen awareness (through Swachh Bharat Abhiyaan) and facilitated collaboration between stakeholders including ministries, local government bodies, municipalities, recyclers, manufacturers, formal and informal waste management solution providers and universities (World Economic Forum, 2023). The evolving ecosystem for waste management in India has created opportunities for the sector and has prompted many new players to enter the market. Yet the sheer magnitude and complexity of the waste management problem continue to dampen the effort.

Like other developing countries, waste management and disposal in India happens through a partnership of governmental bodies with the private sector, both the formal and informal sector. While the public sector may not possess adequate resources, the informal sector lacks formalisation and the private sector tends to be driven by the need for profit maximisation. Environmentally focussed waste management social enterprises (SEs) collaborate with grassroots workers, public sector organisations and other stakeholders (Kumar et al, 2017) and are a focus of this study.

The emergence, survival and sustainability of the SEs is greatly impacted by institutional factors (Stervinou et al 2017; Johnson and Schaltegger 2020; Kerlin) A favourable context includes supportive factors such as robust supply chains, communication, availability of talent and finance, as well as technological support (Haugh et al 2022). On the contrary, SEs may experience failure due to their inability to achieve competing demands of mission and profits, which is often influenced by the lack of institutional support from financial and government bodies as well as from cultural attitudes (Esposito, Doronzo and Dicorato 2023; Ometto et al, 2019).

Literature examining the impact of institutional factors on SEs is limited (Bonfanti et al 2024; Kerlin, Peng and Cui 2021), particularly in developing country settings such as India (Argade,

Salignac, and Barkemeyer 2021; Gupta et al 2020). Even though there has been a proliferation of research on Indian SEs the focus has been on organisations providing a social value (Ramdani et al 2021; Cherrier, Goswami and Ray 2018). SEs can work towards mitigating environmental degradation by offering innovative solutions that have received much less attention (Banerjee and Anand 2021; Ketkar and Puri 2022; Ghag and Sonar 2023)

This paper aims to fill this gap in the literature by examining the factors influencing Indian waste management social enterprises and analyses how these organisations leverage unique institutional opportunities while mitigating challenges.

By drawing on an analysis of sixteen interviews from seven social enterprises, the study adds to literature in two ways. First, it identifies unique institutional factors affecting SEs in the Indian waste management sector and in doing so, points to ‘indigenous’ meanings of what comprises institutional factors in a specific context. Second, it advances the typologies of strategic responses put forth by Oliver (1991) and Dahlmans et al (2023) by introducing two new strategies that are relevant to the Indian context- namely, Innovation and transformation of the sector.

Literature review

Institutional Influences on SEs

Social Entrepreneurship is contextually rooted and emerges out of its sociocultural, political and economic settings (Welter et al, 2016; Johnson and Schaltegger, 2020; Weerakoon, 2024). Contextual factors can impact SEs’ ability to address market failures by identifying opportunities and delivering their mission through revenue-generating innovative products and/or services and business models (Newth, 2016; Hackett, 2016). Authors such as Welter (2021); Gupta et al (2020)

and Weerakoon (2024) have all championed the examination of contextual factors in the study of social and sustainable entrepreneurship through their conceptual and empirical works.

Institutional theory (IT) has been the dominant perspective in the study of social entrepreneurship. Scott (1995) identified three pillars comprising institutions namely, the regulatory (formal policies and rules), cognitive (embedded and informal values and beliefs) and normative (unwritten norms) factors. Together these formal and informal institutions exert pressures on SEs and create conditions that compel SEs to conform and demonstrate homogeneity in their responses to institutional factors. The pressure to conform may be *coercive* (arising out of the regulatory environment or mandatory requirements); *normative* (stemming from the norms, values and expectations of the society, industry or ecosystem) or *mimetic* (as organisations begin to imitate the successful players to mimic their success). These pressures result in organisations demonstrating homogeneity in their response to institutional factors (Dimaggio and Powell, 1983; Mair and Marti, 2009).

Contextual factors include formal and informal institutional factors such as economic environment, civil society, governmental policies, culture, financial institutions, and industry-specific factors, and can inhibit or facilitate the SEs' emergence, viability and impact (Argade et al 2021; Stervinou et al 2017; Coskun, Monroe-White and Kerlin 2019; Kerlin 2017). These can also guide SEs' strategic direction in terms of their choice of customers, degree of innovation and business model (Gupta et al, 2020; Bonfati et al 2020). Previous literature provides evidence found that governmental policies play a pivotal role in SE intention, opportunity determination, growth, and survival (Choi, Berry and Ghadimi 2020; Arghade et al 2021; Stirzaker et al, 2021; Bui et al 2023), On the contrary, the absence of supporting mechanisms inhibits SE activity (Scheuerle and Schmitz, 2015; Johnson and Schaltegger, 2020; Westman et al, 2022). When no legal provisions

for the founding of social enterprises exist or where no special benefits or financial support for the sustenance or scaling of such enterprises is offered (Satar and John, 2016; Ormiston 2023; Gupta et al 2020; Saebi et al 2019; Sahasranamam and Nandakumar 2020), SEs veer towards being self-reliant and find it hard to scale up. Indeed, a World Economic Forum report (2016) found countries that championed governmental support and recognition of the SEs (such as Canada, and the UK) ranked highly on SE activity while non-western countries lagged. Lack of financial resources and funding and its negative impact on SEs survival and growth has been a dominant theme in literature (Bugg-Levine, Kogut and Kulatilaka, 2012; Ko and Liu, 2021). Similarly, economic factors such as fiscal policy, income distribution in the society and employment (Nicolás, Rubio and Fernández-Laviada 2018; Klarin and Suseno 2023) also impact SE activity.

The sociocultural context including society's dominant cultural attitudes, values and beliefs and cultural conditioning of founders also affects the emergence of SE intention (Kruse, 2021; Brownell et 2024). The presence or absence of socio-cultural support for social goals also affects the legal form that these SEs might take, their ability to attract people to work with them and their access to financial resources (Bhatt et al 2019).

Research on the impact of contextual influences on SEs is underdeveloped (Gupta et al 2020). Instead, the context has been examined as a control or moderating variable in empirical studies, used to describe the research setting or future research agenda or addressed as a taken-for-granted variable (Chandra and Kerlin, 2021)

How SEs navigate institutional factors

The IT theory suggests due to institutional pressures organisations adopt ‘isomorphic’ strategies to gain legitimacy (Dimaggio and Powell, 1983; Mair and Marti, 2009). However, this has long been challenged in literature (Oliver, 1991; Cardinale 2018; Dahlmans et al 2023). Oliver’s seminal paper (1991) argues that organisations have a more active choice to manage institutional pressures. Ranging from passive to active resistance to institutional pressures there are five responses. Acquiescence (adherence to norms) is a passive response to the external environments, but the remaining four namely, Compromise (through bargaining for concessions), Avoidance (a precluding necessity for compliance), Defiance (active resistance to institutional demands), and manipulation (influencing, co-opting and even controlling institutional pressures) are progressively more active. Kerlin, Peng and Cui (2021) tested Oliver’s framework and found that SEs adopted different strategies to manage different institutional pressures. When the pressures were positive in that they supported SE activities, the SEs ‘conformed’. But when these were negative, some SEs chose to avoid the norms by adopting a different organisational form (for profit instead of not for profit). When faced with the need to conform to the economic logic of profit generation, some SEs chose to ‘compromise’ by adopting practices that had a social impact but also used this image to gain legitimacy and thereby earn profits. Similarly, some SEs managed the negative pressures from civil society and societal opinion by adopting manipulation strategy through which they aimed to influence and change public perception about social enterprise.

Oliver’s work has been further extended by Dahlmans et al (2023) who studied Vocational Education and Training Organisations and found that SEs may adopt ‘collaboration’ and ‘cooperation’ as their strategic responses and that these were more important than manipulation, defiance, and avoidance. Indeed networking and social partnerships are seen as useful ways to

balance contradictory institutional logics and manage institutional pressures (Cherrier, Goswami and Ray 2018; Ciambotti and Pedrini 2021).

Social Entrepreneurship in India- going beyond the western narratives

In a significant departure from the dominant North American and European focus on SEs, recent studies identify the need for studying non-western contexts and their influences on SEs (Argade et al, 2021; Tauber, 2021 and Kerlin, Peng and Cui, 2021). Authors note that contextual factors such as the institutional and socioeconomic environment, cultural ethos and the distinctive histories/ past legacy of a region/country, all impact the form and identity of social enterprises making it imperative to consider diverse perspectives and 'indigenous research' in SE scholarship (Bonfati et al, 2024; Singh and Awasthy 2023; Sahay and Sengupta 2018). For instance, Tauber (2021) studied the rise of SEs in Jordan and argued that the authoritarian context is not representative of SEs in other countries. Even within a national culture, particularly diverse countries, institutional pressures, and strategic responses to these might differ across regions.

Pastakia (1997) is among the early researchers who wrote about the influence of contextual factors on Indian ecopreneurs, but it is only recently that the study of SE in India has received attention (Sengupta and Sahay, 2018; Gupta et al 2020; Arghade et al 2021). Recent studies include the impact of access to finance and capital (Tirumalsety and Gurtoo 2021), cultural norms such as taboos around menstruation (Cherrier and Goswami 2018), interaction with government policies (Plutshack, et al 2019), and making a meaningful impact through social innovations (Banerjee and Shaban 2019) as key challenges for Indian social enterprises.

Indian SEs have adopted indigenised strategies to manage these challenges. For instance, SEs use "jugaad" (Agarwal et al, 2020) to bricolage (Gupta and Srivastava, 2024). Others simultaneously use strategies of engagement and disengagement in managing government policy (Plutshack et al.

(2019). The strategy of engagement involves government collaboration, networking with government officials and bureaucrats, and subtle lobbying. At other times, SEs disengage by avoiding interaction with the government and instead collaborate with corporate partners on CSR projects, or work with collaborators who secure government contracts and then outsource the work to social enterprises. SEs may also deploy resources that have the closest proximity to the beneficiaries (Hota, et al, 2019; Joshi and Khare, 2021) to gain legitimacy while working with disadvantaged communities and in rural areas.

Gupta and Srivastava (2024) presented a comprehensive review of research on social enterprises in India and identified key themes such as social value creation, paradox management, challenges faced by SEs, strategic responses to these as well as facilitators and inhibitors to SE activity. However, the authors argue that despite the plethora of work in recent years, the domain hasn't yet matured and necessitates further research. They point towards the need for more research on urban settings rather than the dominant rural context and examine industries other than the healthcare and energy sectors. Solid waste management is one such fast-growing sector that needs to be examined from the perspective of management literature and the majority of the scholarly work in this area is either technical or focuses on e-waste and may not always be accessible to non-technical readers (Sharma and Chandel 2021; Mandpe et al 2023).

By investigating the impact of contextual factors on Indian social enterprises operating in the waste management industry in India (urban context), and applying typologies given by Oliver (1991) and Dahlmans (2023) to examine the strategic responses of these organisations to the factors, the study makes a significant contribution to this field.

Method

The study adopts an inductive and interpretive research design and uses a multi-case study approach to collect in-depth and contextual data (Eisenhardt, 1989). This approach is in line with previous research examining the impact of context on SEs (Argade, Salignac, and Barkemeyer 2021; Shahid et al 2023).

First, as an exploratory phase, robust data was collected from one organisation over a period of one year (between 2019-20), and involved field visits, as well as interviewing a sample of employees, customers, and volunteers. In all, five interviews were conducted with several key stakeholders. In addition, an hour-long interview was conducted with an expert who had been closely associated with waste management at a governmental level for over fifteen years. This was supplemented by attending seminars organised on waste management by governmental and non-governmental organisations, and other industry bodies such as the Chamber of Commerce in India. Further, secondary data such as laws on waste management, as on the government website, data and reports available on scholarly sources (Statista, 2022 and Market Research, 2022) were examined. This investigation helped the researchers understand the context of the waste management industry in India and the regulations around solid waste management.

Sampling

A combination of purposive and convenience sampling strategies was adopted. Organisations were identified based on three common criteria. First, they needed to fit the definition of MSME (Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises) as provided by the Government of India (<https://www.smechamberofindia.com/about-msme-in-india.php>). Accordingly, the study focussed on organisations with a turnover of less than Rs. 50 crores for small enterprises. Second, as a proxy for success the sample needed to include organisations that were in existence for at least

three years, as evidence shows that 95% of SMEs tend to fail within the first three years (World Bank, 2021). Finally, in addition to financial viability the organisations needed to have a clear environmental mission. The waste management space is a fast-growing sector in India and has seen a significant rise in the number of private companies including multinationals with the primary objective of profit maximisation. Finally, to get better insights into differences that might exist between different states, the case studies were chosen such that they were located in different cities/ states.

Based on the above criteria, twenty-six SEs from across the country were contacted in August 2022 and provided with an information sheet. Seven SEs agreed to participate in the study including the one involved in the pilot study. Table 1 below gives some information about the participating organisations. The details are kept anonymous upon request for confidentiality by most of the respondents.

Details of the organisations are given in Table 1

Organisati on	Location	Scope of work	Years in existence	Environmenta l Goals (not verbatim to conceal identity)	Turnover	Sources of data
Alpha	Western India with operations across India	Composti ng, Services including CSR and EPR, awareness campaign s	More than 10 years	Innovative solutions for waste management, reduce waste going in landfills, citizen awareness	Less than Rs R50 crores	4 interviews (Founder, project manager, business development manager, volunteers); website, internal meetings, grant application

Beta	Northern India	Waste Management EPR, Recycling , Biominin g	More than 10 years	Achieving positive outcomes with respect to people, planet and profit.	Less than Rs 50 crore per annum	2 (Founders); Website, grant applications
Gamma	Eastern India with operations across India	Waste Collection and Recycling , awareness campaigns	More than five years	Reduce waste going into landfill, Reuse what's possible and recycle	Less than Rs 50 crores	2 (Owner and manager), Website
Delta	South India with operations across India	Waste Management Services, Consulting, EPR, awareness campaigns	More than 10 years	circular economy, have a positive impact on environment and people using technology-based solutions	Less than Rs 50 crore per annum	4 (CEO, Managers in different work streams), Website, published case study, impact documents
Epsilon	Western India (urban and rural)	Primarily composting, End-to-end services to assist any waste generator into turning waste neutral.	More than five years	Reduce burning or dumping of waste	Less than Rs 10 crore	Founder- 1; Website, Webinars
Zeta	Tier 2 city in Central India	End-to-end waste management solutions	More than 10 years	Using Innovation and technology to solve waste management problems	Less than Rs 50 crore per annum	Founder, CEO-2, Website, Webinars
Eta	Tier 2 city in	Solid Waste management	Nearly 10 years	Offering systemic solutions for	Less than Rs 10 crore per annum	Founder -1

	Western India	ent, green cover management, water body restoration		managing the problem of waste		
--	---------------	---	--	-------------------------------	--	--

Data collection

Based on the five exploratory interviews, secondary data and literature review, an interview schedule (Appendix1) was created and used for conducting semi-structured interviews. Interviews of about 60-90 minutes were conducted with the owners of these seven SEs. Five of these agreed to give us access to their staff while two suggested that their staff were busy on the ground and would find it difficult to participate. A total of sixteen in-depth interviews of 60-90 minutes were conducted. All interviews were recorded and transcribed. During the interviews, organisation-specific secondary data were requested which included award applications, access to webinars in which these organisations had participated, and information provided on the SEs' websites. This approach of triangulation helped enhance the validity of the data.

Data analysis

In line with previous studies (Dahlman et al, 2023) a thematic analysis approach was adopted. The study utilised NVIVO 14 for managing and analysing the data. After importing transcripts into NVIVO 14 the authors independently analysed and coded five interviews, based on which twenty-four sets of first-order codes were identified. After examining these alongside the research questions, a revised list of first-order codes was created. Subsequently, another set of five interviews was analysed using these first-order codes and the final list was revised which included

forty-four codes. This iterative process was done to analyse the remaining interviews. These were then compared with relevant literature (Kerlin et al, 2021; Dahlmans et al, 2023), according to which the codes were grouped into eight overarching second-order themes based on broad patterns and re-examined. Finally, four aggregate themes were synthesised from second-order codes based on previous scholarship on the role of context in the study of social enterprises. This iterative process is typical of similar studies in the domain (Misbauddin et al 2022). Table 2 details the final list of codes that were used to analyse the findings.

First Order Codes	Second Order Codes	Aggregate codes	
Lack of resources and priority given to waste management	Lack of implementation of laws by ULBs	Regulatory barriers	
Bureaucracy			
Regional differences- Lack of consistency (between different players in the ecosystem/ states)			
Corruption			
Partial compliance by corporates	Lack of implementation by waste generators		
Partial compliance by individuals (citizens) and building societies			
Lack of traceability of waste	Systemic Barriers		Socio-cultural barriers
Scale of problem and legacy waste (landfill code)			
Apathy or lack of understanding of waste management	Attitude and behaviour towards waste		
Unwillingness to pay for waste management			
Lack of access to finance	Resource dependency	Industry barriers	
Labour issue- absenteeism, Lack of working conditions			
Competition from informal sector and those offering Waste to Energy solutions	Industry structure		
Complexity			
Informal nature of the industry			

First Order Codes	Second Order Codes	Aggregate codes
Avoiding exposure to malpractices through collaborating with like-minded partners and offering capacity building to ULBs	Avoidance and collaboration	Strategic Response
Reducing resource dependencies through collaborating with corporates		
Slow but steady gains through focusing on niche market	Compromise	
Self-financing		
Focusing providing a positive customer experience	Transformation of the sector (Business like)	
Good people management practices		
Organisational Expertise and process orientation		
	Innovation	
Data Management		
Innovative/ product or service		

Findings

The following sections address two questions. One, what are the contextual factors that SEs face and two, what are the different strategic responses they demonstrate as they leverage the opportunities and overcome barriers?

Contextual influences on Social Enterprises

Institutional Opportunity

India has made significant progress in waste management, owing to pressures from multiple stakeholders such as national and international environmentally focussed organisations, government, communities, and individuals. To reduce waste generation and improve disposal, several progressive regulations have been enacted. These include Solid Waste Management rules

(2016, 2023), plastic waste management rules (2016, 2023) and Extended Producers responsibility rule (2022). The laws provide a comprehensive framework for municipal solid waste management. They put the onus of segregation at source on waste generators (households, vendors, event organisers, hotels and others) while assigning the overall accountability for SWM to the Urban Local Bodies (ULBs), who have their performance ranked and published annually. These efforts have been supplemented by nationwide cleanliness campaigns such as ‘Swachh Bharat Abhiyan’.

These regulations are based on the ‘polluter pays’ principle and are intended to encourage circularity in the system. Interviewees noted that corporations, smaller organisations, building societies, and ULBs lack the time, expertise, and personnel to manage their waste and fulfil compliance, thereby creating opportunities in the sector.

The following quotes illustrate the opportunity that the regulations have generated:

“...the government is coming down hard on to fulfil their plastic waste recovery through EPR rules for plastic waste management...this has benefited us on the ground”

“We are getting into strategic partnerships. For example, one of the large petroleum companies, has fuel stations. We collect oil cans from the fuel stations we send these to the recycler, who then makes bottles from those same oil cans, and gives it back to the same brand. So that's a case study that we have which is now finally starting to yield results.”

SEs also organise awareness campaigns to encourage children and households to segregate waste. Such campaigns build brand recognition and provide legitimacy.

Barriers in implementation of laws

Despite the well-drafted laws and the growing awareness, the implementation of these is still lacking. The interviewees identified several reasons for this.

Some pointed out that ULBs lack resources such as time, expertise, manpower and money to engage in waste management or to enforce the regulation. One of the interviewees mentioned 'Waste is perceived to be a far too complex and long-term problem to fix'. Without adequate training, planning and infrastructure, and faced with pressures to keep operations cost-effective, the ULBs are forced to partner with the lowest bidder, often independent contractors, who may not dispose of waste responsibly and even dump the collected waste at the nearest landfill. The quotes indicate the challenges.

The ULB officials are not trained and are not so aware of the ground-level challenges and good waste management procedures...even if they are bringing 80% -90% of the segregated waste to the transfer station after collection, there is no capacity to store it, or there is not enough time to load/unload it at the transfer station and waste tends to get mixed with the compost... It is not the fault of ULB officials... You rather need hardcore technical skills and planning.

They (contractors) end up being a part of the problem rather than being a solution.

Interviewees also alluded to malpractices including political agenda and quid-pro-quo. Most were uncomfortable sharing the details but noted the difficulties they faced when working with the ULBs as reflected in the quote below.

...there is a quid pro quo model. We once went to a place and promised to reduce the cost by about 50-60% (within the first 6 months of our operations). We received a lot of appreciation from them but within three months, we were evicted from the system because every time you innovate you take away money from the system. Inefficiencies exist for a reason.

Interviewees noted pockets of excellence in ULBs but lamented that periodic transfers of senior bureaucrats pose a hindrance to long-term strategy and implementation of waste management.

Implementation of laws is also impacted as waste generators may be unsure of their compliance responsibilities or may not be interested in committing to it. Some ‘buy’ certificates to show compliance, while some FMCGs and bulk generators may pay third-party contractors to pick up and dump their unsegregated waste including the unrecyclable multilayered plastic (MLP) wrappers they generate. This has been gradually changing but progress is slow as indicated by our interviewees.

There are disparities in the implementation of laws across regions as cities and states that have different local ecosystems, by-laws, consumption patterns, quantum of legacy waste, and availability of financial resources. For instance, the space allocated for waste storage and segregation in the material recovery facilities is limited in big cities. Some states prefer waste-to-energy processes while others focus on segregation. As our respondents noted:

“The ecosystem in City A is good...the commissioners are aligned with the national law on SWM... Compare that with City B which does not believe in treating unsegregated waste”

“In City A, we have to be empanelled by the municipal corporation who do due diligence on capabilities, quality, processes, factory etc. This doesn't happen in City B- two extremes of the ecosystem”

“City C is far better than City D. City A is better in certain pockets”

Socio-cultural barriers

Attitude and Behaviour towards waste

Traditionally Indian culture promotes reuse, recycling and upcycling of used products. However with the popularity of plastic products and the emergence of the short-term “use and throw” culture, the generation of waste has increased manifolds while segregation remains low. Our interviewees commented:

“Waste management is a daily affair. You have to segregate every day...The motivation of people to do this on their own is very little...The best default option is not to do anything, and it is very easy for people to fall back to that option.”

“Segregation required touching the waste, which nobody wants to do”

“Waste is not a technical problem in India, it is more of a socio-political problem.”

Households are also unwilling to pay for waste collection and disposal or for composting their waste. Instead, some prefer to pay a pittance to contractors to collect the waste and not knowing where it ends up. An interviewee noted:

“...because the waste is out of their sight, so out of mind...it doesn't matter to them how much of the waste is recovered.”

Despite efforts to promote environmental awareness, behavioural change is difficult as was evident for an SE that distributed free cloth bags to discourage the use of single-use plastic bags but found that their use was limited.

Systemic Barriers

Traceability of data is a big challenge for waste management in India. The estimates of waste generation, dumping and recycling are mere estimates and there are few mechanisms to capture data. Initiatives to capture waste management at the macro level have also met with limited success as pointed out by one of the respondents.

"While data about waste is captured as part of Swachh Bharat, because it is ranking related there are inaccuracies/ reliability issues."

SEs often use rudimentary ways to measure the quantum of their impact. The lack of data makes it difficult to measure the amount of work needed to address the waste management problem. It also allows some organisations responsible for waste management to break the rules. The challenges are highlighted in the quotes below

"150,000 MTs of waste in India and we do not know where 50,000 MT going. This in my eyes it is material- waiting to be tapped."

Industries that have obligations towards waste management can easily bypass their responsibility as the data that is coming is in grey.

Legacy waste is a big issue particularly for cities, as they tend to inherit waste that overflows in the landfills. Instead of clearing the landfills near large cities, authorities scout for new locations for waste dumping.

About 8000 tonnes of waste is carried every day to the landfill. 1000 trucks are being used to send this waste to the landfill, and these landfills are like 20-30 storey buildings...The waste continues to generate methane, catches fire at times, and during the heavy rains we have in City X, through the river finally comes back to us.

Industry level barriers

Resource dependency- Lack of resources

Access to funds continues to be a significant challenge for mission-driven SEs as they often work with small margins. As these SEs are registered as commercial enterprises, they receive no special concessions in interest rates that are usually available to NGOs. SEs working with investors and non-banking financial corporations (NBFCs) have a 'perpetual struggle' to demonstrate return on investment. This hampers the ambitions to scale as the SEs are keen on avoiding the dilution of their mission. These challenges are illustrated below:

"Mainstream bankers are not interested in giving funds. Although there are schemes to support MSMEs, those are not easy to tap...Most banks ask for collaterals, and we are asset light. Even if they give us money, the conditions they quote and the interest they charge is very high."

The social entrepreneurs also discussed the challenges of recruiting people to work in this sector.

An interviewee explained:

"Waste management people/ rag pickers in India come from a particular community who understand waste. But the next generation wants to explore other avenues of work (due to the stigma).. it is difficult to find people to work in it".

Traditionally, working in waste comes with a stigma and the majority of the workforce tends to be from groups previously ostracised by the society (residue of the caste system in India), leading to 'undervaluation' of work. Further, the norm is to work as a casual labour, who despite the variation in wages, likes the flexibility that comes with such non-standard jobs. Absenteeism and attendance issues happen even with those on the organisation's regular payroll. Another interviewee mentioned that contractors entice the waste collectors trained by the SEs, with the promise of more money which made retention difficult. This makes attraction and retention of people difficult as is evident in the quotes below.

"Sometimes the staff call in the morning sick... many times, the information is last minute and happens almost 5-10 days in a month"

"Labourers can be fickle minded..."

Composition of the industry

Waste management is a fragmented sector. Currently, the market is dominated by four players namely *large-sized organisations* (often with some technological tie-ups with international companies) primarily driven by the need for scale and revenue, *waste management NGOs* that focus on improving the lives of grassroots waste pickers, *independent informal 'kabadiwalas'* (comprising the informal sector), who have a 'recycle' and 'reuse' based business model and *smaller SEs* which were driven by the passion for the environment but aim to run financially viable organisations.

An interviewee mentioned that 90% of the waste management sector in India is informal. Apart from the waste pickers, small recyclers tend to be not registered with the authorities, due to the bureaucracy involved and may not be fully aware of the rules. Some turn to the quick fixes including waste- to-energy technology. SEs also face competition from traditional 'kabadiwalas' who buy recyclable waste from householders but may not responsibly dispose off waste.

Interviewees agreed that even though informal waste collectors are the 'backbone' of the sector, in the absence of training on the segregation of waste and lack of access to safety equipment, traditional practices have added inefficiencies to the system.

Strategic Responses to contextual factors

SEs have adopted several strategies to navigate contextual challenges and leverage opportunities.

These are discussed in the following sections.

Avoidance and Collaboration

The findings show that the SEs used the avoidance strategy and chose not to engage with unethical stakeholders or who lacked commitment. Some avoided the 'valuable' waste such as recyclable plastics, a domain fraught with unethical practices and worked with low-value 'multi-layered plastic' (MLP), which was not of interest to large waste management companies or the informal sector. An interviewee mentioned that if they were expected to indulge in 'gift giving' they stepped back at the cost of losing contracts. The following provides examples of the 'avoidance' strategy.

“We don't do pay anyone under the table... and had to decide whether we do something or take a step back”

“We were in the process of bidding for some work with one of those companies. One of the waste management organisations, which deals only in e-waste gave them a quote which was way lower than ours. We did not accept a lower rate and we stepped back. This sends out a message, that we will not deviate from having an ethical supply chain (no forging of documents, which happens a lot in the EPR business)”

“We designed it in such a way that ULB is not my paying customer”

SEs also adapted their business model and collaborated with like-minded stakeholders to ensure they achieved their mission. Some SEs ran awareness campaigns for ULBs and corporate clients, instead of undertaking segregation and waste management at ground level. One SE partnered with a well-known brand to set up centres for post-use packaging and used their CSR to educate customers about recycling, which had a significant impact on waste disposal. Some SEs instead of working on segregation and disposal with ULBs, provided capacity development and process management services.

Compromise

The need to achieve competing goals of environmental and/or social mission and financial sustainability has resulted in SEs making strategic choices about their customer base, access to finance and scaling efforts. Instead of growing fast and potentially diluting their mission, all the SEs in the sample chose to remain small and worked with a niche market segment. By working with niche B2B customers, the SEs managed to overcome the challenges of the B2C model. This approach has resulted in slower growth but helped the SEs to manage the dual objectives of environmental mission and revenue generation. This also enhanced their branding, and legitimacy and attracted customers. The compromise of letting go of customers and focusing on impact is reflected in the following quotes.

“We work with PSUs and big organisations and not SMEs...only those who approach us who have intentions to recycle...We cannot convince others who are not interested. If organizations do not provide material consistently, we discontinue”

“The market that we want to capture is a very niche market...We wouldn't compromise on the services that we want to provide”

“One of the clients wanted to be a distributor because he liked the machine...but we decided to let go, although we knew we would have made money as we did not see how our mission... we felt that he was not passionate enough and didn't know much about it”

“If you have to compare it with some other waste management company that is not aligned to the mission vision that we have, that growth would be higher than ours. We would take time for that. Other companies may have already reached that 100-crore revenue target a year. We would reach them in another two years of downtime, but we sort of balance it by associating or doing business with people who understand, why are we, you know, why are we doing what we are doing?”

Two interviewees from different SEs also reported that sometimes they compromised short-term goals in favour of long-term environmental impact. One decided to work with a customer who did not have an environmental reputation but showed intent and could be a stepping stone into providing CSR services to corporations.

Further, the SEs compromised on scaling by accessing funds through self-financing, angel or impact investors rather than working with banks or investors, who expect higher returns. This helped them stay focussed on both profits and mission. The quotes below indicate this.

“We had access to capital right at the inception stage, but we chose to let go of the capital...there was a belief that if you take capital early on, it is difficult to negotiate the ‘mission’ of your work with the investors”

“I didn’t pump in too much money- or take. I was never very focused on scaling up...We have grown very organically but we have kept our core purpose very clear- we don’t compromise on that.”

SEs forwent expanding in states that had an unfavourable ecosystem towards waste management and instead worked with ULBs which offered strong governmental support.

The compromise strategy is not without its perils as some of these SEs struggled during the pandemic as their market share was limited.

Innovation

The findings show that all the SEs harnessed technology to offer niche products, services, and processes to their customers. This differentiates them from their competitors including the informal sector and the larger private organisations.

One SE conducted rigorous research to create a state-of-the-art patented "easy, hygienic and odour-free composter. They supported their customers through extensive workshops and handholding sessions to improve the usability of the product and created awareness about how and why efficient segregation is needed. Another SE used a high-quality material recovery system, which reduced

the need for people to handle hazardous or unhygienic waste. Another created a specialised technology-led process of segregation of waste within their premises. Some SEs have also used innovative processes for capacity building of the ULB staff. An interviewee explained how they trained ULB staff to help them understand the flow of waste using their data management tools. The quotes below show different ways in which SEs have adopted innovation as a strategy to gain a competitive advantage while fulfilling their commitment to environmental goals. The quote below provides an example of this

We put a big segregation line with certain proprietary equipment that we designed so that the organic part can be pulverised before it goes to shredder and the plastic/ metals can be separated. This has been attractive for our clients.

Four of the seven SEs used advanced data management systems to support their operations and to capture data on the waste of which one adopted a well-integrated indigenous ERP (Enterprise Resource planning) system. Even though similar data is now being used by the new entrants particularly larger companies, the SE has already established a reputation of offering “compliance, data management and credibility”. Such data does not exist in the informal sector. Corporate partners are required to show compliance to authorities and their headquarters, need data to evidence impact. These companies find it valuable to work with SEs, which provide them with legitimacy and metrics. The unavailability of metrics on quantity and quality (waste character analysis) remains a significant challenge for the industry. However, this data is important for ULBs as it aids in planning. For instance, the DPR report (Detailed project report) is prepared based on secondary data due to lack of primary data and may not reflect the situation on the ground. By

providing such data to ULBs, SEs in the sample fill a significant gap in the market. The following quotes illustrate this.

“We use metrics such as how many people have helped, we also measure how much waste we have saved from going to the dumping ground, at least when we are working on the project”

“...it is all captured. Everyone working with us uses the process... we are able to collect data to see if we are creating an impact, where things might be getting better or sliding”

“...detailed reports with scientific details makes our reports more genuine and credible”

“We have trained international partners, Gram panchayats and ULBs, using our data management system. The methodology works across geographies/ languages”

However, technology has not been used at the cost of environmental and/or social impact (by replacing people with technology), instead, it is seen as complementing its operations for higher impact without incurring a human cost. A respondent noted

“We believe in technology, but we like to go for the technology that is aiding the employment rather than going against it.”

In summary, findings show that offering value-added innovative products and services helped the SEs improve branding and enhance legitimacy, thereby attracting a niche customer segment and

achieving both environmental and revenue goals. This also helped SEs in overcoming multiple contextual barriers including lack of implementation of regulatory requirements by waste generators and ULBs and traceability of data.

Transformation through a 'business-like' approach

The Indian SEs in waste management tend to be small-sized organisations, which attract customers through word-of-mouth publicity. The interviews show that these SEs have gained legitimacy by providing a positive customer experience and demonstrating expertise and professionalism in their work while focusing on their mission. This was achieved through building internal capabilities through people and processes. All the interviewees talked about how SEs were contributing to the 'formalisation of the waste management sector' by introducing professional practices. These included good people management practices, providing customers with good quality products and experience and improving traceability of waste.

SEs in our sample were all founded by individuals who had a passion and relevant experience or education in the field. One of the founders had worked in a recycling plant, while another had a failed social entrepreneurship venture. Yet another had run a voluntary organisation before starting a for-profit SE. One of the founders came from an agricultural family and had seen the impact of climate change closely.

Key team members in all the SEs also had experience or education in the domain, even though interviews suggested that as the organisations grew, they prioritised hiring professionals. The quotes below indicate how SEs have been able bring professionalism into the sector.

The SEs support ragpickers by employing them directly as full-time workers. They all pay them higher than the minimum and train them to learn professional, hygienic, and safe ways of working with waste. One SE works with ULBs to hire transgender and ex-sex workers. SEs also encourage their key partners including ULBs and contractors to ensure minimum wage, better working conditions and training for waste pickers. Through these efforts, the SEs help reduce the stigma attached to being a waste picker in Indian society and improve the living conditions of the waste pickers while reducing absenteeism and attrition. This shows that social inclusion and the formalisation of work in waste have been an important focus for all the SEs in the sample. The quotes below highlight these efforts.

“We are training our office boy in mechanical skills..and so he is getting exposure.”

“We sometimes find that some of these workers do not have Adhar cards (social security) or banking accounts as they belong to communities where they are not allowed to get one, many are not aware of their rights (such as weekly offs). we try to fix that”

“We give them all the benefits- PF (provident fund), Overtime, normal holidays and bonus. They get certain days off by rotation”

Some of SEs have standard operating procedures while others have a standardised process model.

“We do waste character analysis throughout the three seasons- monsoons, summer and winter. The moisture content plays a very important role in transportation and processing. But nobody covers that.”

“Value additions we bring include professionalism, compliance, data management and credibility”

“We give materials to our certified recyclers, who we have checked. We ensure that the processes are followed”

By adopting these approaches, SEs differentiate themselves from their competitors, particularly in the informal sector and are transforming by bringing in professionalism to the industry.

Discussion

The study investigates the impact of institutional forces on SEs in India and confirms that regulatory, normative and deeply embedded cognitive norms (Scott 1995), influence SE activity. Further, it applies Oliver's framework, later extended by Dahlman et al. (2023), to examine the strategic responses adopted by the SEs in the context of the Indian waste management sector.

The findings reveal that compliance-based regulations have created opportunities in the Indian waste management sector. SEs collaborate with ULBs and other waste generators to meet regulatory requirements for waste collection and recycling, thus filling the critical public waste management gap. This differs from research on countries like China, where strong institutional support for development led to the exclusion of SEs. However, the findings corroborate the previous literature indicating a regulations support SE activity (Bui et al., 2023; Weekarkoon, 2021; Bonfanti et al., 2024) and bring the focus on circularity in the economy (Mondol, Singh and Gupta 2020).

However, the study also highlighted that the lack of implementation of laws can hinder progress. The limited availability of resources to the local bodies and the lack of policies on supporting SEs by giving them legal status and financial assistance hinder progress. Resource dependency and the impact on SEs have been examined (Saebi et al. 2019; Sahasranamam and Nandkumar 2020; Stirzaker et al 2021) and discussed in the context of India (Argade et al 2023). Corruption concerns as a disincentive have been discussed in the literature from emerging markets (Liu 2019; Ghura et al 2020) but their impact on SE activity has not been studied.

The study also highlights the role of the industry-level factors. For instance, the informal sector is a competition to SEs in India. Even though the SE sector aims to collaborate with the informal sector to improve social mobility and formalise the labour market, they are constantly pitted against the cheaper services from the informal sector. This dimension is yet to be considered in studies from India.

Further, socio-cultural norms about waste and those working in the sector also undermine the scale of impact that SEs could achieve. This unique dimension has only been studied from the perspective of working conditions and wages of waste pickers (Singh et al 2023). Coletto and Bisschop (2017) is the only paper that examines the connection between the informal waste pickers and the formal parts of the economy, but their study focuses on the exclusion of waste pickers from the labour market.

The study also found that SEs faced hurdles due to variations in influence of institutional factors across 'regions'. Some states and cities in India have more supportive ecosystems than others. This

lack of uniformity in the regulatory environment has been highlighted as "many Indias in India" by Argade et al. (2023) and other researchers (Kumar and Agrawal 2020; Dutta and Jinsart, 2020). Indeed, the scaling plans of SEs tend to lean towards states with strong government support for waste management (Bloom and Chatterji 2009). The above highlights the importance of researching to look beyond national-level factors and understand local-level forces.

The findings, therefore, confirm previous literature, which shows that 'institutional non-munificence', or lack of institutional support makes it difficult for us to achieve their goals (Bhatt et al 2019; Mandpe et al. 2023). By uncovering contextual factors impacting SEs in the Indian context, the study advances the literature on social entrepreneurship in the waste management sector.

The study explores how SEs both leverage and navigate these institutional forces. It found that organisations have to strategize to deal with external institutional forces to gain legitimacy. The findings resonate with the work of Oliver (1991) and Dahlmans et al (2023) in that they frequently employed acquiescence, compromise and avoidance to work through the institutional pressures. The acquiescence strategy was used to comply with the legislative norms. The avoidance strategy was used to ward off the pressures of complying with unethical demands and expectations of customers and ULBs. The strategy of compromise through self-financing and working with a niche market segment was used to deflect pressures for being more commercial by financiers and also to avoid dilution of the mission. Similar to findings by Dahlamani et al (2023), the SEs used the above-mentioned strategies alongside collaboration and alliance building with the corporates and the ULBs. However, contrary to this framework the study found that avoidance and collaboration

were not separate strategies. Instead, by working with like-minded partners, working with a niche segment and reducing resource dependencies, the SEs were able to avoid the contextual challenges and hence, ‘avoidance’ and ‘collaborating’ are two sides of the same coin.

In addition, the SEs used innovation as a primary strategy to manage institutional pressures. This was achieved by introducing technology-based waste management solutions, technology-enabled reporting on data traceability, and functional integration of its operations using state-of-the-art technology. This gave them legitimacy and recognition as efficient, professional and reliable providers. The revelation of this strategy is a unique contribution of the present study. Innovation in social enterprises has been studied extensively (Gupta et al, 2020; Vedula et al 2022), but not as a strategic response to contextual factors. Our study finds that innovation is a critical tool that gives SEs their edge and makes them competitive as well as credible (by enhancing their legitimacy). The study therefore adds to Oliver’s work.

The SEs also used ‘transformation’ as a strategy by approaching their work in a “business-like” manner. This is unusual for smaller companies, particularly in the waste management sector in India. However, through the implementation of professional practices such as progressive people management practices, use of standard operating procedures and providing good customer experience, these SEs aim to ‘transform’ the sector. In addition, they introduced clear processes such as standard operating procedures and other mechanisms for improving customer satisfaction. The two strategies namely innovation and transformation are additions to the existing frameworks by Oliver (1991) and Dahlmans et al (2023)

In summary, the study identifies two new strategic approaches namely ‘innovation’ and ‘transformation’ used by SEs in India to manage institutional forces.

Conclusion

The study makes two key contributions. It draws from Scott's definition of institutions as formal and informal regulatory, normative and cognitive forces. But while examining institutional factors, the study identifies the 'Indigenous' meanings of what comprises these. It points to the impact of the lack of implementation of laws (due to corruption, bureaucracy, regional differences, and non-compliance by waste generators and ULBs), deep-seated cultural beliefs of waste along with undervaluation of the work, and the fragmented nature of the industry, can have on SE activity. By highlighting these unique dimensions of the emerging market economy, the study contributes to the decolonisation of the SE domain.

Second, the study shows that while strategic responses, as suggested by Oliver and Dahlaman et al. (2023), are valid in India, how SEs adopt these is unique. For instance, avoidance and collaboration are not mutually exclusive but are used alongside each other. In addition to compromising strategy, Indian waste management SEs also adopt a 'transformation' strategy. This is not by manipulating (as described in Oliver's framework) but by implementing professional practices such as formalisation of labour, people management practices, and providing a positive customer experience and expertise to their customers. Finally, the SEs adopt the Innovation strategy, which involves offering differentiated products and services and filling the data gap, which has been a critical driver in enhancing the reputation and legitimacy of these firms. Adding 'innovation' and 'transformation' as strategic responses to SEs' institutional pressures is an important contribution of this paper.

The study was based on seven waste management SEs, somewhat narrowing the scope of the findings and its generalisability. Future studies could consider a more representative sample from across the country to provide a more nuanced understanding of SE activity in this sector. For a more in-depth study, comparative case studies between states would add value in terms of understanding the impact of institutional factors and strategic responses to these.

References

1. Argade, P., Salignac, F. and Barkemeyer, R., 2021. Opportunity identification for sustainable entrepreneurship: Exploring the interplay of individual and context level factors in India. *Business Strategy and the Environment*, 30(8), pp.3528-3551.
2. Banerjee, P. and Anand, K., 2021. Social Enterprises as an Emerging Platform in Waste Management. Climate resilience and environmental sustainability approaches: Global lessons and local challenges, pp.351-363.
3. Beaton, E.E. and Dowin Kennedy, E., 2021. Responding to failure: the promise of market mending for social enterprise. *Public Management Review*, 23(5), pp.641-664.
4. Bhatt, B., Qureshi, I. and Riaz, S., 2019. Social entrepreneurship in non-munificent institutional environments and implications for institutional work: Insights from China. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 154, pp.605-630.
5. Bonfanti, A., De Crescenzo, V., Simeoni, F. and Adai, C.R.L., 2024. Convergences and divergences in sustainable entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship research: A systematic review and research agenda. *Journal of Business Research*, 170, p.114336.
6. Bui, D.T., Vu, T.N., Tran, T.V.H., Duong, C.D. and Le, T.L., 2023. Impact of institutional environment on social entrepreneurial intentions. *Journal of Open Innovation: Technology, Market, and Complexity*, 9(3), p.100120.
7. Cardinale, I., 2018. Beyond constraining and enabling: Toward new micro foundations for institutional theory. *Academy of Management Review*, 43(1), pp.132-155.
8. Chandra, Y. and Paras, A., 2021. Social entrepreneurship in the context of disaster recovery: Organizing for public value creation. *Public Management Review*, 23(12), pp.1856-1877.
9. Charles, G., 2021. Sustainability of social enterprises involved in waste collection and recycling activities: Lessons from Tanzania. *Journal of Social Entrepreneurship*, 12(2), pp.219-237.
10. Cherrier, Helene, Paromita Goswami, and Subhasis Ray. 2018. "Social Entrepreneurship: Creating Value in the Context of Institutional Complexity." *Journal of Business Research* 86: 245–258.
11. Choi, D., Berry, F.S. and Ghadimi, A., 2020. Policy design and achieving social outcomes: A comparative analysis of social enterprise policy. *Public Administration Review*, 80(3), pp.494-505.

12. Coskun, M.E., Monroe-White, T. and Kerlin, J., 2019. An updated quantitative analysis of Kerlin's macro-institutional social enterprise framework. *Social Enterprise Journal*, 15(1), pp.111-130.
13. Dahlmans, H., Goessling, T. and Kenis, P., 2023. Beyond acquiescence and compromise: Organizational strategies in pluralizing institutional environments. *European Management Review*.
14. Dacin, M.T., Dacin, P.A. and Tracey, P., 2011. Social entrepreneurship: A critique and future directions. *Organization science*, 22(5), pp.1203-1213.
15. DiMaggio, P.J. and Powell, W.W., 1983. The iron cage revisited: Institutional isomorphism and collective rationality in organizational fields. *American sociological review*, pp.147-160.
16. Dixon, Sarah. E. A, and Anne Clifford. 2007. "Ecopreneurship—a New Approach to Managing the Triple Bottom Line." *Journal of Organizational Change Management* 20 (3): 326–345.
17. Esposito, P., Doronzo, E. and Dicorato, S.L., 2023. The financial and green effects of cultural values on mission drifts in European social enterprises. *Business Strategy and the Environment*, 32(1), pp.1-29.
18. Ghag, N. and Sonar, H., 2023. Sustainable entrepreneurship practices of Indian SMEs: A strategic approach using fuzzy Delphi and best worst method. *Business Strategy and the Environment*.
19. Gupta, P., Chauhan, S., Paul, J. and Jaiswal, M.P., 2020. Social entrepreneurship research: A review and future research agenda. *Journal of business research*, 113, pp.209-229.
20. Hackett, M.T., 2016. Solving 'social market failures' with social enterprises? Grameen Shakti (Village Energy) in Bangladesh. *Journal of Social Entrepreneurship*, 7(3), pp.312-341.
21. Haugh, H., Robson, P., Hagedoorn, J. and Sugar, K., 2022. The nascent ecology of social enterprise. *Small Business Economics*, pp.1-20.
22. Johnson, M.P. and Schaltegger, S., 2020. Entrepreneurship for sustainable development: A review and multilevel causal mechanism framework. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 44(6), pp.1141-1173.]
23. Kerlin, J.A., 2013. Defining social enterprise across different contexts: A conceptual framework based on institutional factors. *Nonprofit and voluntary sector quarterly*, 42(1), pp.84-108.
24. Kerlin, J.A., 2017. The macro-institutional social enterprise framework: introduction and theoretical underpinnings. In *Shaping Social Enterprise* (pp. 1-26). Emerald Publishing Limited.
25. Kerlin, J.A., Peng, S. and Cui, T.S., 2021. Strategic responses of social enterprises to institutional pressures in China. *Journal of Asian Public Policy*, 14(2), pp.200-224.
26. Ketkar, S. and Puri, R., 2022. Investigating the 'mission and profit'paradox: Case study of an ecopreneurial organisation in India. *Journal of Social Entrepreneurship*, pp.1-22.
27. Linzalone, R. and Saganeiti, L., 2015. Management settings enabling value creation: the case study of a social enterprise. *International Journal of Strategic Change Management*, 6(2), pp.182-193.
28. Mitra, S. and Deepak, A., 2024. Role of Technology in Solid Waste Management: Social Enterprise in a Pandemic. *Journal of Entrepreneurship and Innovation in Emerging Economies*, p.23939575231214136.
29. Munir, K.A., 2019. Challenging institutional theory's critical credentials. *Organization Theory*, 1(1), p.2631787719887975.

30. Newth, J., 2016. Social enterprise innovation in context: Stakeholder influence through contestation. *Entrepreneurship Research Journal*, 6(4), pp.369-399.
31. Nicholls, A., 2010. The legitimacy of social entrepreneurship: Reflexive isomorphism in a pre-paradigmatic field. *Entrepreneurship theory and practice*, 34(4), pp.611-633.
32. Ometto, M.P., Gegenhuber, T., Winter, J. and Greenwood, R., 2019. From balancing missions to mission drift: The role of the institutional context, spaces, and compartmentalization in the scaling of social enterprises. *Business & Society*, 58(5), pp.1003-1046.
33. Ormiston, J., 2023. Why Social Enterprises Resist or Collectively Improve Impact Assessment: The Role of Prior Organizational Experience and “Impact Lock-In”. *Business & Society*, 62(5), pp.989-1030.
34. Ramadani, V., Agarwal, S., Caputo, A., Agrawal, V. and Dixit, J.K., 2022. Sustainable competencies of social entrepreneurship for sustainable development: Exploratory analysis from a developing economy. *Business Strategy and the Environment*, 31(7), pp.3437-3453.
35. Saebi, T., Foss, N.J. and Linder, S., 2019. Social entrepreneurship research: Past achievements and future promises. *Journal of management*, 45(1), pp.70-95.
36. Sahasranamam, S. and Nandakumar, M.K., 2020. Individual capital and social entrepreneurship: Role of formal institutions. *Journal of Business Research*, 107, pp.104-117.
37. Satar, M.S. and John, S., 2019. The critical success factors of social entrepreneurship in India: an empirical study. *International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Small Business*, 37(3), pp.309-341.
38. Scheuerle, T., Schmitz, B., Spiess-Knafl, W., Schües, R. and Richter, S., 2015. Mapping social entrepreneurship in Germany-a quantitative analysis. *International Journal of Social Entrepreneurship and Innovation*, 3(6), pp.484-511.
39. Scott, W.R., 2015. *Institutions and organizations: Ideas, interests, and identities*. Sage publications.
40. Singh, D. and Awasthy, R., 2023. Expanding the Horizons of Social Entrepreneurship Through Indigenous Research: A Review and Research Agenda. *Journal of Social Entrepreneurship*, pp.1-26.
41. Stervinou, S., Bayle-Cordier, J., Narvaiza, L., Aragón, C. and Iturrioz, C., 2021. Exploring the interplay between context and enterprise purpose in participative social entrepreneurship: the perceptions of worker cooperative entrepreneurs. *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development*, 33(9-10), pp.758-788.
42. Tauber, L., 2021. Beyond homogeneity: redefining social entrepreneurship in authoritarian contexts. *Journal of social entrepreneurship*, 12(1), pp.50-68.

Appendix 1

1. Please tell us something about yourself and the organisation.
 - a. Any formal mentoring/training in this field?
 - b. How many employees?
 - c. Main phases in the journey?
 - d. Products and Key stakeholders/ customers?
 - e. Key successes and failures
 - f. Vision and key objectives.
2. Why do you define yourself as a social enterprise? Do you find that trying to achieve both mission and profit can be difficult? Examples- How do you make sure that revenue doesn't suffer when you go after mission and visa-a-versa
3. What are the main challenges you face and how do you navigate these? Examples
4. How difficult has it been to secure finance and how do you navigate this? Explain
5. Are there supportive mechanisms that help you achieve your objectives? Explain. How do you use these to promote social and economic benefits? Examples.
6. How is the industry evolving- Customers, Legal structure, partners, networking etc? Examples
7. What are your plans for scaling?
8. Where do you see the industry/your organisation going in the next 3-5 years?
9. Do you have any questions for us?