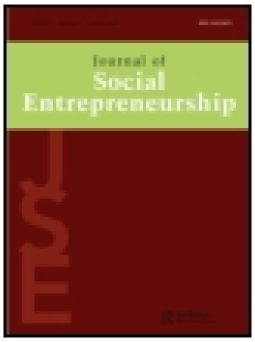

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REVIEW

Cognitive Determinants of Social Entrepreneurship: Variations According to the Degree of Economic Development

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ABSTRACT
A social enterprise besides mobilizing resources and generating employment responds to social problems usually ignored by institutions. We study key factors that may influence social enterprise creation. Particularly, we analyze the social entrepreneur's profile taking into account economic development and comparing results with non-social entrepreneurs. This will allow to design more effective policies that encourage the creation of social enterprises. Using a sample of 12,061 social entrepreneurs in 59 countries in different stages of economic development from the database of the GEM Project of the year 2015. The results point out that the influence of the variables varies with the level of economic development of the country analyzed.

KEYWORDS
Entrepreneurship; social entrepreneurship; development of the country; individual variables; subjective variables

Introduction

While the process of business creation has been studied widely and extensively since the early origins of economic science with research by Cantillon (1755), Say (1803) and Schumpeter (1934), it is only until recently that research began on the creation of this particular type of enterprises, which are created and guided since their origin by a strong, social mission giving them a number of particularities, which require special and differentiated attention (Austin, Stevenson, and Wei-Skillern 2006). In fact, it was not until the 90s when real scientific progress began, with early studies by Greg Dees (Bornstein and Davis 2010), followed by a group of researchers that aimed at defining the concept (Seelos and Mair 2007), revealing the main distinguishing characteristics of social enterprises and entrepreneurs (Peredo and Chrisman 2006; Estrin, Mickiewicz, and Stephan 2016), highlighting the ethical aspects of these enterprises (Zahra et al. 2009), pursuing theoretical frameworks (Meyskens et al. 2010), defining the most suitable legal forms for such organizations (Kistruck and Beamish 2010) or further deepening into the possible differences between social and non-social entrepreneurship (Austin, Stevenson, and Wei-Skillern 2006). Despite the large amount of research done (Short, Moss, and Lumpkin 2009), the academic community has recognized that many issues about the process of creation and development of social enterprises are still unknown, describing it as an unclear area of study, still not totally legitimized and in need of scientific contributions (Hechavarría et al. 2012). This weakness is, however, an opportunity for researchers, since there are interesting lines of research (Mair and Martí 2006).

In this paper, we focus on exploring in more detail the individual factors affecting the likelihood of undertaking a social enterprise and then analyzing whether the influence of the variables analyzed varies depending on the level of development.

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This contributes to enrich the literature for the following reasons. First, because although many studies have analyzed the influence of the entrepreneur's personal factors on the business creation process (Baron 2004; Arenius and Minniti 2005; García, Martínez, and Fernández 2010), research from the social aspect has hardly received attention in previous empirical literature (Zebeda 2012).

Second, the fact that we are aware of the high variability of the rate of social entrepreneurship by regions, countries and economic zones leads to contrast the hypotheses in three different sub-samples: developed, developing and underdeveloped countries, following the World Bank's Country Income Categories for 2015.

And finally, precisely linked to that sample and the quantitative approach to the study, due to the difficulty of obtaining data, most research to date is based on theoretical reviews or case studies.

To achieve the objectives, the paper is structured as follows. In the first place, the influence of individual variables is analyzed, in particular for the case of social entrepreneurship. Different hypotheses proposed in the research are derived from this review. These hypotheses are then contrasted with a sample of 12,061 social entrepreneurs from 59 countries grouped according to their level of development. The paper ends with a discussion of the results and analysis of the implications for research, as well as for enterprises and the administration at a practical level.

Decision to become an entrepreneur

The study of what are those qualities, skills or distinctive competencies of the entrepreneur that lead him/her to implement the decision to create a company has focused on the analysis of a large number of variables (McClelland 1961, 1987; Hornaday and Aboud 1971; Timmons 1978; Brockhaus 1982; Begley and Boyd 1987; Solomon and Wislow 1988; Chen, Greene, and Crick 1998; Shane and Venkataraman 2000; Mueller and Thomas 2001). This paper will focus on the analysis of the three variables on which the GEM model supports its individual perspective (Global Entrepreneurship Research Association 2017): self-perception of good opportunities about entrepreneurship, self-perception about having the capabilities to start a business and fear of failure.

Self-perception of opportunities: intuition, pro-activity and autonomy

First, entrepreneurs are often characterized by a strong intuition when identifying profitable business opportunities and tend to believe in their ideas anticipating the rest of market players (Baron 2004; Zander 2004).

Perhaps, the main difference between social and non-social entrepreneurs is that the former find their opportunities in places where the non-social entrepreneur is probably only perceiving problems elsewhere. Health, education, poverty, hunger or environmental issues such as energy, water and global warming are problems, which, however, become sources of opportunities for social entrepreneurship (Neck, Brush, and Allen 2009). Some authors like Austin, Stevenson, and Wei-Skillern (2006) argue that in the social field, it is even easier to perceive opportunities than in the non-social field.

The literature reveals that the rate of creation of social enterprises is lower than it should be because in the first place, individuals perceive that social problems are complex, if it were not that way, they would probably not exist, and multidimensional (Weerawardena and Mort 2006). Multidimensionality makes the solution to social problems require highly innovative approaches, which can challenge entrepreneurs to start their business, as they are not clear about the most efficient way to solve the problem (Weerawardena and Mort 2006).

Second, the so-called pro-activity is also considered a determinant factor when the social entrepreneur perceives a business opportunity as feasible (Bojica, Ruiz, and Fuentes 2012). Specifically, it is stated that pro-activity is the ability of the entrepreneur to identify pressing problems in society (Lumpkin 2011).

Third, the autonomy of the social entrepreneur varies depending on the type of opportunity. While there are social opportunities that can be exploited by social enterprises with complete autonomy, on other occasions, however, their nature requires entrepreneurs to collaborate with stakeholders, public bodies, other enterprises, and disadvantaged population that are targeted at, among others, with the result of what the literature recognizes as mixed autonomy (Lumpkin 2011). If an individual has to collaborate and therefore rely on other organisms that are, maybe not as interested in his/her cause to run his/her social enterprise, perhaps he/she does not perceive the social problem as a feasible business opportunity.

These arguments allow to state:

Hypothesis 1: Self-perception of opportunities positively affects the likelihood to be a social entrepreneur.

Self-perception of capabilities

Perceived self-efficacy has its origin in the concept that the entrepreneur has and reflects of himself. Therefore, it is not a real situation, but the perception by a person of whether he/she has the necessary skills and is able to use those skills to achieve a desired result (Boyd and Vozikis 1994; Bandura 1997).

Any approach to the figure of the social entrepreneur, as to any type of entrepreneur, means not only paying attention to his/her abilities, but also to the perception that the individual has of them (García, Martínez, and Fernández 2010).

In this sense, the fact that the social entrepreneur is often possessed by his/her idea of making the world a better place, sometimes performing in really adverse situations of resource scarcity and high uncertainty, suggests that the perception that he/she has of his/her capabilities is higher than the other entrepreneurs have. However, this situation of poor access or lack of resources is quite common in the social sector, which rarely stops the entrepreneur's intention to start his/her business. The individual who decides to pursue a vision that involves solving a social problem usually continues his/her activities, thinking that he/she is able to do more with less by using scarce resources efficiently, exploring all options to obtain them, from pure philanthropy to commercial methods of the business sector (Dees 2001; Langowitz and Minniti 2007).

Based on all the above, we propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2: Self-perception of capabilities positively affects the likelihood to be a social entrepreneur.

Fear of failure

When discussing the individual variables of the entrepreneur, we must take into account that the decision to start a business exposes the individual to the uncertainty surrounding the business idea. If the entrepreneur is afraid and perceives that the option of creating a business is too risky, he/she will not get involved in that venture (Arenius and Minniti 2005).

The literature on the variable fear of failure and social entrepreneurship states that, like every entrepreneur, the social one operates under risky conditions in his/her day to day life (Leadbeater 1997; Dees 2001; Mort, Weerawardena, and Carnegie 2003; Weerawardena and Mort 2006; Peredo and Chrisman 2006; Shaw and Carter 2007; Zahra et al. 2009; Di et al. 2010; Lumpkin 2011).

Like any entrepreneur, the company must adapt the demand to the supply of goods and services, while taking into account all the risks involved in carrying out this activity (Knight 1921). He/she must be able to withstand the uncertainty and risk when starting a business to become an entrepreneur (Parker 2009). For the specific case of the social entrepreneur, taking risks is a key feature recognized in the social enterprise literature (Leadbeater 1997; Peredo and Chrisman 2006; Zahra et al. 2009). This is so because the social enterprise is created aiming to overcome multiple challenges, so as to solve neglected social problems, as can be achieving to mobilize resources or its own location in markets that do not work well (Weerawardena and Mort 2006).

However, due to the particular characteristics of social entrepreneurship, some authors have come to distinguish different degrees of risk taken by the social enterprise when trying to access resources and financing (Lumpkin 2011). On the one hand, the authors state that individual donors can encourage the organization to take risky decisions because they only think about solving the social problems that encouraged them to donate resources for the company, while institutions that donate (foundations, government agencies, banks, etc.) require a lower risk tolerance of the business organization, because what they want is to help the beneficiary achieve their purpose and, therefore, are also interested in the long-term continuity of the enterprise.

On the other hand, regarding non-monetary resources of the social enterprise, such as volunteers and in-kind contributions, not being considered own resources of non-social enterprises, it is stated that they could alter business processes in the social context. However, although the literature on social entrepreneurship argues this fact, it still has not been proven empirically (Lumpkin 2011).

Finally, the literature states that the fact that social entrepreneurs are financed from resources that are not specific to any type of company, like the ones mentioned in the previous paragraph, necessarily leads to lower levels of fear of failure by the social entrepreneur. This is so because the resources used for survival and good performance of the company do not have to be part of the social entrepreneur's personal or family inheritance (Weerawardena and Mort 2006; Shaw and Carter 2007; Lumpkin 2011) and many of them do not have to be returned to individuals or organizations that donated them to the social enterprise.

However, one must not necessarily think that being a social entrepreneur involves taking fewer risks than a non-social entrepreneur does. What is more, the literature states that social entrepreneurs face a specific set of challenges because they intentionally locate their activities in areas where markets function poorly (Di et al. 2010). Even so, the social entrepreneur does not let fear prevent him/her from following his/her visions, he/she takes the calculated risks and manages them downside, in order to reduce the damages resulting from failure (Dees 2001). Despite the social entrepreneur's proximity to risk and failure, he/she understands the importance of his/her actions. Therefore, he/she observes the tolerance to risk of his/her stakeholders and uses this to diversify the risk of those who are better prepared to accept it (Dees 2001).

These arguments allow us to state that:

Hypothesis 3: Fear of failure negatively affects the likelihood to be a social entrepreneur.

Economic development of the country

The environment is a key variable when an individual decides to create a company (Hofstede 1980, 1991, 2003; Verheul, Stel, and Thurik 2006; Urbano, Toledano, and Ribeiro Soriano 2010; Shinnar, Giacomin, and Janssen 2012). When the entrepreneurial characteristics are analyzed, it is observed that they can change from one country to another. Specifically, there are studies showing that the level of development of the country is mainly what causes the variation of the entrepreneurial profile (Shapero and Sokol 1982; Shane 1994; Gartner 1985; Gnyawali and Fogel 1994; Díaz, Urbano, and Hernández 2005; Kerlin 2010; Mair 2010; Iakovleva, Kolvereid, and Stephan 2011).

Like any commercial entrepreneur, the social entrepreneur can also be conditioned by the level of development of the country (Nicolás 2014; Bosma et al. 2016). So, if it has been demonstrated that the entrepreneurial profile changes depending on the country analyzed, as any personal characteristic, self-perception of opportunities, self-efficacy and fear of failure are variables that will be influenced by the level of development.

Based on this, the following hypotheses are proposed:

Hypothesis 4: Self-perception of opportunities positively affects the likelihood to be a social entrepreneur depending on the level of development of the country analyzed.

Hypothesis 5: Self-perception of capabilities positively affects the likelihood to be a social entrepreneur depending on the level of development of the country analyzed.

Hypothesis 6: Fear of failure negatively affects the likelihood to be a social entrepreneur depending on the level of development of the country analyzed.

Methodology

Sample and data collection

In this work, the unit of analysis is the individual, analyzing the data collected by the GEM[1] project in 2015, the only year available to date in which special section is devoted to the study of the social entrepreneur. The data were collected by telephone or face-to-face interviews, with a standardized questionnaire. Table 1 shows the composition of the sample and its distribution by countries according to their level of development[2] following the World Bank's Country Income Categories for 2015.

Measurement of the variables

Dependent variables

To be classified as a social entrepreneur, respondents have answered: yes currently leading, yes currently starting, or currently starting and leading to the following question: Are you starting or currently leading any kind of activity, organization or initiative that has a particularly social, environmental or community objective? A new dichotomous variable was developed, 1 (social entrepreneur) and 0 (non-social entrepreneur), with the results of this question.

Independent variables

Data on self-perception of opportunities, capabilities and fear of failure collected by the GEM Project through the questions (1) Do you think there are good opportunities to start a business in the area where you are living in the six months following the survey? and (2) Do you think you have the necessary knowledge, skills and experience to start a new business?, (3) Does fear of failure prevent you from starting a business? allowed us to create three dichotomous variables with value 1 when the respondent answered yes and value 0 otherwise.

Table 1. Sample characteristics.

Level of income[a]	Countries	Sample size	Social entrepreneurs	Non-social entrepreneurs
Underdeveloped countries (low and lower middle income)	Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Egypt, Guatemala, India, Indonesia, Philippines, Morocco, Senegal, Tunisia and Vietnam	31,033	3,089	27,723
Developed countries (upper middle income)	Argentina, Botswana, Bulgaria, Brazil, Colombia, China, Ecuador, Iran, Kazakhstan, Lebanon, Malaysia, Mexico, Macedonia, Panama, Peru, Romania, South Africa and Thailand	47,624	2,797	44,354
Developed countries (high income)	Australia, Barbados, Belgium, Chile, Croatia, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Korea, Latvia, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Puerto Rico, Slovenia, Spain, Slovak Republic, Switzerland, Sweden, Taiwan, United Kingdom, United States and Uruguay	102,624	6,181	92,316

[a] Low and lower income $\leq$ 1,025–4,035; upper middle income 4,036–12,475; high income $>$ 12,476.
Source: Authors' own data.

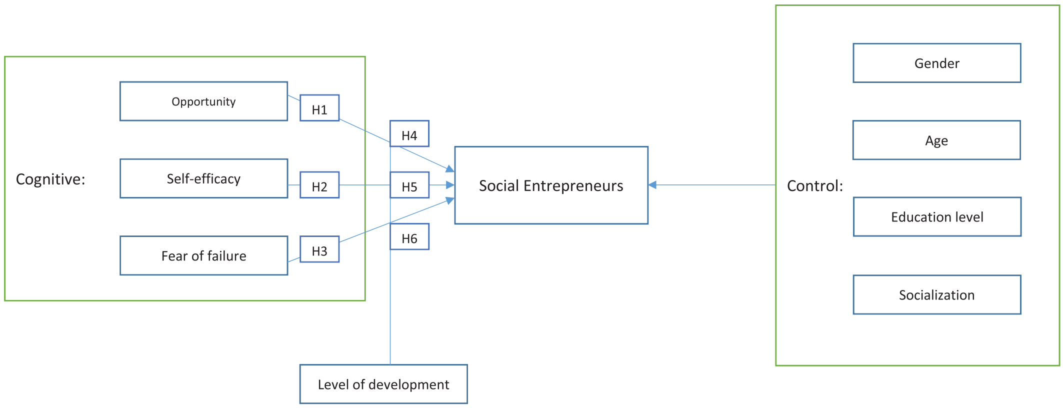

Figure 1. Proposed study model of social entrepreneurs.

Control variables

After reviewing the literature, four control variables were included, which the literature recognizes may influence the decision to start a business: age, gender, educational level (Peterman and Kennedy 2003) and the fact of knowing another entrepreneur, what is called socialization. The first one was measured by a continuous variable ranging from 18 to 64, the gender by a dichotomous variable where 0 = male and 1 = female, education by a variable of five categories where 0 = none 1 = low education, 2 = secondary degree, 3 = post-secondary (non-tertiary) and 4 = tertiary education, and for socialization a dichotomous variable was developed in which 1 was those that knew another entrepreneur and 0 those that didn't.

Specification of the model

The fact that the independent variables are dichotomous leads to test the hypotheses proposed through the technique of binomial logistic regression analysis (Figure 1). This model allows the possibility of using qualitative and continuous independent variables at the same time, and, moreover, it is not affected by the problems that arise when there is heteroscedasticity or the data do not follow a normal distribution (Kerlinger 2002).

To further understand the factors that influence the rate of creation of social enterprises through a general model in which all countries in the sample are represented, three additional models were built which are intended to contrast the results between different subsamples of countries.

To check the significance of individual regression coefficients, the Wald test was used. In addition, to make the interpretation of results easier, the Odds Ratio (OR) for each of the predictor variables was used. The OR is the exponent of the regression coefficient. Specifically, for the binary variables that are close to the most likely (or unlikely) amount, it is the result of being present among the respondents with a predictor value equal to one, compared to respondents with a predictor value equal to zero. From this, it can be inferred that a coefficient β is close to zero, that is, an OR close to 1 would indicate which changes in the associated independent variable will have no effect on the dependent variable Y.

Results

First, Table 2 shows the results of the analysis of the correlations of the variables included in the model and Table 3 shows the results of the means of the independent and control variables, as well as their frequencies by country groupings.

From these results, it is noted that the majority of social entrepreneurs are men and that all country groupings are close to the mean for both men and women. Regarding education, it is confirmed

Table 2. Table of correlations.

	Gender	Age	None education	Low education	Secondary degree	Post-secondary	Socialization	Opportunity	Self-efficacy	Fear failure
Gender	1,000									
Age	0.009	1.000								
None education	−0.035	−0.042	1.000							
Low education	−0.008	0.002	0.595	1.000						
Secondary degree	−0.001	0.055	0.688	0.671	1.000					
Post-secondary	−0.013	0.038	0.697	0.678	0.790	1.000				
Socialization	0.036	0.075	0.024	0.021	0.022	0.006	1.000			
Opportunity	0.006	0.063	−0.009	0.022	0.014	0.007	−0.173	1.000		
Self-efficacy	0.084	−0.029	0.005	0.037	0.026	0.010	−0.0194	−0.134	1.000	
Feat failure	−0.055	−0.001	0.034	0.014	0.014	0.013	−0.004	0.066	0.129	1.000

Source: Authors' own data.

that social entrepreneurs with post-secondary and secondary levels of education predominate. In addition, if the level of development is considered, it can be seen that in developed countries, social entrepreneurs have higher levels of education, while in less developed countries, the figures of social entrepreneurs are far below average for higher educational levels. If the variables socialization and perception of opportunities are considered, it is observed that over 60% of social entrepreneurs perceive opportunities and know another entrepreneur. Taking into account the levels of development, it is seen that in underdeveloped countries, the figures obtained are above average, and that they decrease as the level of development increases. The variables self-efficacy and fear of failure are a similar case. About 70% of social entrepreneurs are capable and are not afraid of failure, a figure that is above average in underdeveloped countries and decreases as development increases. Finally, regarding age, the mean age of social entrepreneurs is about 40 years. In addition, it is observed that in developed countries, social entrepreneurs are older and as the level of development decreases, their average age decreases.

Second, Table 4 shows the results obtained in the four models estimated using logistic regression in the case of the creation of social enterprises.

Table 3. Summary statistics regarding the independent and control variables.

		Mean	Underdeveloped countries	Developing countries	Developed countries
Frequencies					
Gender	Male	54.0	55.3	54.4***	53.1***
	Female	46.0	44.7***	45.6***	46.9***
Education	None	14.8	42.1***	9.7***	3.5***
	Low education	10.7	13.2***	12.3***	8.7***
	Secondary degree	28.7	21.9***	35.8***	28.8***
	Post-secondary	35.5	19.1***	36.6***	43.3***
	Tertiary education	10.3	3.7***	5.5***	15.7***
Socialization	Yes	58.5	71.2***	57.4***	52.6***
Self-perception of opportunities	Yes	59.0	71.0***	55.7***	54.2***
Self-perception of capabilities	Yes	70.4	81.1***	68.8***	65.6***
Fear of failure	No	66.5	72.6***	65.0***	64.1***
Age	Mean (SD)	39.11	35.8*** (11.66)	37.89*** (12.98)	41.33*** (13.11)

***$p < 0.01$;
Source: Authors' own data.

Table 4. Logistic regression model for social entrepreneurs.

Variable	Model I: All countries			Model II: Underdeveloped countries			Model III: Developing countries			Model IV: Developed countries		
	B	Wald χ^2	OR	*B*	Wald χ^2	OR	*B*	Wald χ^2	OR	*B*	Wald χ^2	OR
Age	0.000***	0.037	1.000	0.003**	4.367	1.003	0.006***	12.275	1.006	−0.006***	12.577	0.994
Gender	−0.089***	16.243	0.915	−0.015	0.235	0.985	−0.136***	9.697	0.873	0.220***	25.094	0.803
Educational level		753.002			584.255			177.000			237.788	
None	−0.527***	123.939	0.590	−1.017***	113.835	0.362	−1.126***	91.142	0.324	0.215*	3.305	1.240
Low education	−1.093***	502.160	0.335	−1.324***	397.832	0.266	−1.094***	93.307	0.335	−0.402***	10.217	0.669
Secondary degree	−0.959***	521.347	0.383	−1.065***	426.079	0.345	−0.790***	59.362	0.454	−0.618***	26.510	0.539
Post-secondary	−0.586***	199.584	0.557	−0.633***	164.041	0.531	−0.473***	21.194	0.623	−0.319***	6.874	0.727
Socialization	0.560***	582.475	1.751	0.576***	307.426	1.778	0.351***	59.005	1.420	0.677***	187.428	1.968
Opportunity	0.502***	479.145	1.653	0.489***	228.190	1.631	0.367***	65.573	1.444	0.645***	172.892	1.905
Self-efficacy	0.585***	542.415	1.795	0.575***	274.352	1.777	0.491***	99.941	1.634	0.598***	108.472	1.819
Fear of failure	−0.151***	41.297	0.860	−0.164***	24.172	0.848	−0.047*	1.041	0.955	−0.183***	390.576	0.059
							Assessment model					
Sample		125,567			66,097			36,233			23,237	
Model χ^2		20.866***			14.623*			16.194**			20.339***	
% Correct predictions		93.1			93.6			93.9			90.4	
R^2		0.072			0.080			0.045			0.099	

***$p < 0.01$;
**$p < 0.05$;
* $p < 0.1$.
Source: Authors' own data.

The results show, first, that the influence of the control variables varies depending on the level of development. On the one hand, regarding age, it is observed that, to a greater extent, it is old people who are social entrepreneurs in developing countries and in developed ones, but, as the level of development decreases, the sign of the relationship of the variable changes to negative, showing that in less developed countries, it is younger individuals who become entrepreneurs. On the other hand, gender achieved significant results in all models. Specifically, in all countries, developed and developing countries, it is observed that men are the ones who create social enterprises to a larger extent, while in the case of underdeveloped countries, the variable changes sign, indicating that it is women who create more social enterprises in these territories. In the third place, at all levels of development, the results indicate that it is individuals with a higher educational level who become social entrepreneurs. However, the results obtained in developed countries should be made more precise; because in the comparison between tertiary education and none, it is observed that it is individuals without studies are who undertake socially to a larger extent in these countries. In addition, the results show that the influence of this variable varies with the level of development, as the OR of all the educational levels in both models of less developed countries double the results obtained by developed countries, which would indicate that the possibilities of becoming a social entrepreneur would be double in these two types of countries if the individual has a high level of education. And finally, also at all levels, it is seen knowing another entrepreneur conditions positively when starting a social enterprise and, what is more, the OR shows that the more developed the country is, the greater the influence of this variable on the creation of social enterprises.

Hypotheses 1 and 4 relate the self-perception of opportunities with the creation of social enterprises. On this occasion, in all models, a positive relationship between the two variables is observed. Specifically, in underdeveloped countries, an individual who perceives opportunities is twice as likely to create a social enterprise as one who does not perceive them. This figure drops to 1.4 if the individual lives in a developing country.

Hypotheses 2 and 5 are to test whether individuals with a higher level of self-confidence are inclined to create social enterprises. The significant and positive results in all models are enlightening. In addition, the OR is about 2 in underdeveloped countries, so individuals who are confident about their skills will double their chances of creating a social enterprise. For the rest of country groupings, the OR of this variable is close to 1.5. Once again, it can also be seen that the results change depending on the economic development. Specifically, the lower the level of development, the greater the influence of this variable, which is shown by the OR, which changes from 1.8 in underdeveloped countries to 1.6 in developing countries.

Finally, Hypotheses 3 and 6 refer to the negative impact that fear of failure can cause when creating a social enterprise. Significant results were achieved for all country groupings except for developing countries. In addition, the OR results indicate that the level of development influences this variable; in particular, this indicator is lower in the case of underdeveloped countries.

Therefore, the variables of self-perception of opportunities and self-efficacy have a positive influence when an individual decides to create a social business. If a person has these factors, in a developed country, for example, if he/she perceives good opportunities and believes to have the capabilities needed, the probability of this person creating a social business is 3.3 times than the person who does not meet these factors. In developing countries, this figure drops to 3 times, whereas in underdeveloped countries, this figure is 3.7.

Conclusions

Among the main problems of research on social entrepreneurship are the lack of consensus in the conceptualization of the field of study and the limited progress that has taken place quantitatively. Most studies have used qualitative methodologies or are based on stories of successful entrepreneurs. The inability to generalize these results has led to slow scientific progress. This study contributes to solve this gap by conducting an analysis of the variables that influence the individual at the moment of starting a business, using a sample of 59 countries at different levels of development. This has allowed us to know the profile of the social entrepreneurship and the influence of individual characteristics depending on the level of development of the country.

It is possible to state that there are statistically significant differences between individuals of less developed countries. Specifically, the change in sign of gender indicates that while in developed countries, men are the ones who to a greater extent start a social business, in less developed and developing countries, women have a greater weight in undertaking. The literature indicates that women, due to stereotypes traditionally attributed to them (Eagly 1987; Connell 1990) and to cultural values that describe the appropriate behaviour for each gender (Griffiths, Gundry, and Kickul 2013; Stephan, Uhlaner, and Stride 2015; Terjensen, Bosma, and Stam 2016), are more social field oriented than men, so they are the ones who should undertake socially to a larger extent (Hechavarría et al. 2012). However, these arguments have not been proven (Hechavarría et al. 2012; Nicolás and Rubio 2016). What is observed is that there is greater gender equality in social entrepreneurship, but it is still men who have the greatest social commitment (Nicolás and Rubio 2016), a fact that occurs in the results of the groupings of developed and developing countries. For this reason, it is worth highlighting the results of this work, where for the first time it has been found that it is women who undertake socially to a greater extent in underdeveloped countries and, therefore, fulfil what was traditionally argued in the literature. It has been proven that women undertake to a larger extent in underdeveloped countries because these territories have fragile economic systems characterized by high unemployment, high levels of job insecurity and low wages, which cause women to try to escape from poverty by using self-employment (Minniti and Naudé 2010; Kobeissi 2010; Van der Zwan, Verheul, and Thurik 2012). Therefore, a higher female entrepreneurship rate can increase the number of social enterprises created and, therefore, it is women, who to a greater extent, undertake socially in these territories.

An even more unequal performance is presented by the age variable. Specifically, it is negatively associated with social entrepreneurship in underdeveloped countries, indicating that as age decreases, the likelihood of social entrepreneurship increases. A higher level of development can cause individuals who have observed neglected problems over the years and have enough experience to solve a social problem by creating a company, to decide to start one, since if they do not solve the problem, it seems that nobody will. Therefore, social entrepreneurs in these territories are older individuals. On the other hand, the results obtained for this variable are negative in underdeveloped countries, indicating that young people are the individuals who to a greater extent undertake socially. This fact can be explained with the discussion in the literature. Specifically, it is stated that while in more developed countries, one is considered young until a higher age, in less developed countries, family responsibilities make young people become adults (De Gispert, Conde, and Zamarra 1999). In addition, if the average life expectancy of the population is taken into account, it differs according to the level of development of the country. Thus, while in developed countries the average life expectancy is about 80 years, in less developed countries, it falls by half (Foschiati and Ramirez 2000). It is precisely this difference in culture and life expectancy between countries that can cause young people in underdeveloped countries to be the ones, who, to a greater extent, set up this type of business organization, since individuals from less developed countries, in spite of being young for the rest of the world, are considered adults in their territories.

An analysis of the level of education shows that for the three country groupings, university education is established as a variable that positively influences the propensity to become a social entrepreneur. As indicated by the literature, in order to create and run a social enterprise, it is necessary for entrepreneurs to have a high level of education. This type of company is faced with added difficulties when trying to solve social problems (Estrin, Mickiewicz, and Stephan 2016). For this reason, they are usually located in markets that do not work well, where precisely there are social problems (Di et al. 2010). As a result, it is stated that these companies involve greater complexity and to be able to manage this complexity, it is useful if social entrepreneurs have a high educational level (Estrin, Mickiewicz, and Stephan 2016). Nevertheless, the relationship between individuals without studies and highly qualified individuals in underdeveloped countries should be emphasized. In this type of country, not all individuals have access to training as in more developed territories, so although training helps manage the greater complexity of social enterprises, the fact that the population in these territories has less training can lead to the results obtained in this type of territories (Alonso 2004; Nugent 2006; Lepoutre et al. 2011).

To end with control variables, the socialization variable must be mentioned. It is positively related to being a social entrepreneur in all country groupings, which is shown in the literature (Stevenson 2000). However, the fact that this variable is more determining in less developed countries can be due to their population having less training. Individuals from less developed countries can compensate for less training with the experience of knowing and being able to learn from another entrepreneur to start up their company (Nicolás 2014).

In addition, the study results also indicate that all the subjective variables have a significant influence on social entrepreneurs. First, the perception of opportunities has a positive influence when creating social enterprises. This would explain the comments in the literature indicating that although social problems are obvious to any observer, only those who perceive them as business opportunities will become social entrepreneurs and the others will not (Neck, Brush, and Allen 2009).

Regarding the second hypothesis, it is confirmed that for social entrepreneurs, the perception of their own abilities when undertaking in all types of countries analyzed is decisive. So, as indicated by the literature, feeling that you have the skills to start and run a business helps the individual to decide to undertake (Boyd and Vozikis 1994).

With regard to the third hypothesis, it is observed that the fear of failure variable is negatively associated with the decision to become a social entrepreneur in any group of countries. The results are consistent with the literature, suggesting that the perception of risk of an individual reduces business incentives, as the perception of failure increases (Arenius and Minniti 2005; Bojica, Ruiz, and Fuentes 2012). When an entrepreneur decides to start a business, he/she analyzes the risk associated with his/her company; for example, the perceived probability of receiving benefits and the consequences associated with failure. All these factors will vary depending on whether starting a social enterprise is being considered, as social entrepreneurs create their enterprise with a mission to solve neglected social problems. Therefore, they tend to locate their companies in a market that does not work as well as other companies (Di Domenico, Haugh, and Tracy 2010), so it seems that fear does not prevent them from achieving their vision, they simply manage to get to solve the social problem that encouraged them to initiate the business activity (Dees 2001; Christopoulos and Volg 2014).

Finally, the entire analysis conducted allows to respond to an issue that is still open: Does the level of development determine the influence of the variables? As the level of development decreased, gender and age changed sign and, although others were not affected by significance or sign, it did affect them with their levels of influence, indicating that as the level of development decreases, the variables are less determinant when undertaking. Thus, coinciding with the literature, the results show that the perception of opportunities and self-efficacy are positively associated with the decision to become an entrepreneur. Specifically, self-efficacy and perception of opportunities are the most relevant variables for social entrepreneurs in all country groupings. Moreover, fear of failure negatively affects three models studied, not being a significant variable in developing countries.

The results of this study have potentially important implications. In this study, it was found that the profile of the social entrepreneur becomes increasingly differentiated as the level of development of the country decreases. Therefore, as the level of development of the country influences the profile of the individual who decides to start a social enterprise, with appropriate measures, such as assistance, training, and financing, adapted to each country, promoting social entrepreneurship would be simpler, which in turn would trigger an increase in social benefits, which it creates for the population. For example, measures related to promoting female entrepreneurship in developed and developing countries would be necessary, as this group is oriented more towards the social and environmental field, and so if women create companies, they will usually focus on the creation of social organizations and, therefore, the number of social enterprises will increase in these territories. Thus, as in less developed countries, it would also be women who would undertake socially to a greater extent in developed and developing country groupings. It would also be interesting to encourage entrepreneurial education in all country groupings, by which individuals could manage higher complexity more efficiently, perceive business opportunities, feel more capable or have lower levels of fear of failure, variables that by conducting this study have proven their importance when an individual decides to start up a social enterprise in any territory. In addition, it would be interesting to promote business incubators and co-working centres, especially in less developed countries, where one can learn from other entrepreneurs and, thus, compensate the possible lack of training of the population.

For researchers, there are many lines for future work on the social entrepreneur. For an in-depth study, it would be interesting to study the gender, age and educational level variables deeper, as the results obtained in the existing literature are contradictory. In addition, due to the evidence that depending on the level of development of the country, the social entrepreneur's profile varies, it would be necessary to analyze the institutional factors that influence the creation of social enterprises.

To finish, a limitation of this study is the countries included in the database used as they are not necessarily representative of the economic and geographic groups from which they are drawn. Besides the classification used, in this case, the World Bank's Country Income, as any other approach selected, could not capture all the differences existing across countries. It also should be taken into account that the data analyzed have not been prepared exclusively for this research. And, regarding this research, the data derived from the survey conducted in 2015 was taken into account, so this study was proposed with a cross-sectional design, which makes it impossible to examine the relationships between the variables over time. It is necessary to recognize that the factors listed condition the start-up of social enterprises in this year, and probably in the next few years, but the passage of time may also cause some of these variables to decrease in importance or others not considered until that moment to arise.

Notes

1. For more information on GEM and its methodology, refer to Reynolds et al. (2005) and Lepoutre et al. (2011).
2. According to the World Bank's country Income Categories for 2015, developed countries are those with economies whose per capita income exceeds $12,476. The developing country group consists of countries whose per capita income ranges from $4,036 to $12,475. Finally, underdeveloped countries are those economies whose per capita income is between $1,025 and $4,035.

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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