

Social impact measures for social innovation: challenges and pathways

JORGE MIGUEL OLIVEIRA SÁ CUNHA
UNIVERSIDADE DO MINHO

WELLINGTON ALVES
UNIVERSIDADE DO MINHO

MARIA MADALENA TEIXEIRA ARAUJO
UNIVERSIDADE DO MINHO

Agradecimento à orgão de fomento:

This work was financed by the Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology, under Project PTDC/EGE-OGE/31635/2017.

Social impact measures for social innovation: challenges and pathways

Introdução

The concept of social innovation (SI) has emerged as an important activity to enhance social value creation for both companies and communities, and thereby contribute to socio-economic inclusion (Weaver & Marks, 2017). However, measuring the impact of SI actions and/or practices is a very significant challenge for researchers, since research in this area has not yet reached the level of consolidated indicators (e.g. R&D expenditure, number of patents, graduates in science and technology, value added) used in the context of technological innovation (Cunha & Benneworth, 2020).

Problema de Pesquisa e Objetivo

Despite the growing interest on the topic of SI, the development of reliable and shared measurement practices has emerged as a barrier for the widespread adoption of SI practices (Unceta et al., 2019). How to evaluate the social impact of SI has emerged as an important question posed by academics, organizations, and policymakers in the recent years. To find an answer to this question, this research investigates the state-of-the-art in terms of SI impact measurement, drawing on both scientific literature and practitioner literature.

Fundamentação Teórica

In the last decades, the search for a better understanding about how can organizations build profitable operations, but at the same time address social concerns generating positive impacts to their target populations, has been a growing concern of the academy (Lazzarini, 2018). Social impact can be defined as beneficial outcomes resulted from prosocial behavior that are enjoyed not only by the targeted individuals but also by the broader community (Rawhouser et al., 2019). Social impact measures impacts in different domains (e.g. education, sustainability, poverty and healthcare).

Metodologia

In this paper, a qualitative research approach was adopted based on the literature review method. This method corresponds to a systematic procedure for reviewing extant literature on the topic under research. The research was developed based on different steps, in order to obtain information about the social impact measurement indicators, as well their overall contribution for SI advancement.

Análise dos Resultados

This research discusses the challenges posed by measuring the impact of SI initiatives, and how these measurements may potentially change the assessment process. The analysis finds that methodologies for measuring SI have been, mainly, undertaken in Europe, where these initiatives are largely addressed. The results also confirmed the lack of methodologies, frameworks, or tools capable of measuring the social impact of SI. Furthermore, a set of barriers in this field were identified, which can be used to better channel upcoming academic research on developing social impact measures for SI.

Conclusão

This paper sheds further light on the need for more practical methodologies, frameworks and tools to assess the social impact of SI. These new approaches can allow the strengthening of social innovative initiatives and practices providing public services authorities with tools better suited to design social policies promoting inclusive economies and societies. Despite an overview of the existing social impact measures for SI, has been presented in this study, additional research focusing on indicators to measure social impact of SI is still needed.

Referências Bibliográficas

Cunha, J., & Benneworth, P. (2020). How to measure the impact of social innovation initiatives?, *International Review on Public and Nonprofit Marketing*, 17, 59-75. Lazzarini, S. G. (2018). The measurement of social impact and opportunities for research in business administration. *RAUSP Management Journal*, 53(1), 134-137. Rawhouser, H., Cummings, M., & Newbert, S. L. (2019). Social Impact Measurement: Current Approaches and Future Directions for Social Entrepreneurship Research. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 43(1), 82-115.

