



## African Journal of Biological Sciences



### The Impact of Intelligent Leadership on Social Entrepreneurship through Organizational Identification: The Moderating Role of Employee Engagement

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#### Abstract

The aim of the present study is to investigate the impact of intelligent leadership on social entrepreneurship through organizational identification considering the moderating role of employee engagement in sport teachers. The current research method is correlation, which was carried out in the field. The statistical population of the research was sport teachers in Iraq, 373 people were selected as a sample using the stratified sampling method. The intelligent leadership questionnaires of Farahbakhsh and Mohammadi (2014), the social entrepreneurship of Dwivedi and Weerawardena (2018), the organizational identification of Dai et al. (2022), and the employee engagement of Wang et al. (2020) were used. SPSS version 18 and PLS version 3 software were used for data analysis. The results showed that intelligent leadership has a significant relationship with social entrepreneurship and organizational identification. Also, there is a significant relationship between organizational identification and social entrepreneurship. Finally, employee engagement has a moderating role on the relationship between intelligent leadership and social entrepreneurship. The current research showed that intelligent leadership is a key concept for enhancing social entrepreneurship and organizational identification among sport teachers, especially when teachers have a high level of engagement.

## **Introduction**

Social entrepreneurship plays a crucial role in society for several reasons. Firstly, it serves as a mechanism for creating social value, promoting social cohesion, and addressing the needs of vulnerable groups within communities (Zainea et al., 2020). By focusing on social impact rather than solely profit, social entrepreneurship aims to solve social problems and create social value (Utomo et al., 2019). This approach is particularly important in driving societal transformation, leading to significant changes in social, political, and economic contexts for marginalized groups (Alvord et al., 2004). Furthermore, social entrepreneurship is essential for economic growth and value creation through innovation (Wang, 2022). It acts as a tool for addressing social challenges such as unemployment and famine, providing sustainable solutions to these issues (Lukman et al., 2021). Additionally, social entrepreneurship is linked to ethical education, which enhances social entrepreneurship competency and emphasizes the importance of social innovation in creating value (Vázquez-Parra et al., 2022).

Social entrepreneurship within organizations has gained significant attention in academic literature due to its unique characteristics and potential for social impact. Scholars have highlighted the distinction between social and commercial entrepreneurship, emphasizing the application of business expertise in the nonprofit sector to develop innovative income-generating approaches (Austin et al., 2006). This distinction underscores the importance of social entrepreneurship in addressing social needs and creating social value within communities. Moreover, the concept of social enterprises as hybrid organizations has been explored, focusing on elements such as opportunity, mission, capital acquisition, and human resource mobilization (Doherty et al., 2014). This framework provides insights into the operational aspects of social entrepreneurship within organizations, highlighting the multifaceted nature of social ventures. Research has also delved into the role of social entrepreneurship in creating social value, stakeholder participation, and persuasion, emphasizing the process of value

creation within social enterprises (Di Domenico et al., 2010). By engaging in entrepreneurial activities such as opportunity identification, resource mobilization, and innovation, social entrepreneurs aim to achieve their social mission and drive social change (Saebi et al., 2019).

Furthermore, the literature has examined the relationship between knowledge management and the growth of social enterprises, emphasizing the importance of leveraging knowledge resources for organizational development and sustainability (Maalaoui et al., 2020). This highlights the need for effective knowledge management strategies within social entrepreneurship initiatives to enhance their impact and scalability. While research in social entrepreneurship has been conducted in some fields, research has paid little attention to the predictors of social entrepreneurship. Therefore, there is a scientific gap in this field and the purpose of this research is to examine this gap. Social entrepreneurship is a vital area of study in organizational research due to its distinctive ability to merge business expertise with a focus on social impact. social entrepreneurship research underscores the significance of human and social capital in fostering business opportunities, emphasizing the crucial role these factors play in organizational success (Rahim et al., 2022). The principles guiding social entrepreneurship are fundamental for establishing common ground and facilitating future research in this field (Ran & Weller, 2021).

Intelligent leadership, characterized by traits such as being charismatic, team-oriented, and humane, has a significant impact on social entrepreneurship. Drawing from the theoretical framework of transformational leadership, which emphasizes culturally endorsed transformational leadership traits, such as being value-based and team-oriented, it is evident that these leadership qualities can play a crucial role in catalyzing social entrepreneurship efforts (Muralidharan & Pathak, 2018). Transformational leadership, rooted in the Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness (GLOBE) studies, highlights the importance of leaders embodying values that inspire and motivate

others towards a common goal, a key aspect in the realm of social entrepreneurship (Muralidharan & Pathak, 2018). Moreover, emotional intelligence, a key component of effective leadership, has been linked to entrepreneurial attitudes and intentions (Zampetakis et al., 2009). Emotional intelligence, encompassing competencies such as perceiving, appraising, and regulating emotions, is essential for visionary leadership and organizational change, which are pertinent in the context of social entrepreneurship (Groves, 2006). Additionally, emotional intelligence, along with social intelligence, has been found to positively correlate with authentic leadership, a style that is particularly effective in driving social impact through social entrepreneurship endeavors (Kelly et al., 2022).

Therefore, based on the theoretical foundations presented in the literature, it is acceptable to hypothesize that intelligent leadership positively affects social entrepreneurship.

Organizational identification, defined as the extent to which individuals associate themselves with an organization, is another significant factor influencing social entrepreneurship initiatives within organizations. Research by Lee et al. (2015) demonstrates that organizational identification uniquely impacts behaviors within organizations, surpassing mere attitudes. This indicates that strong organizational identification leads individuals to demonstrate behaviors that are in line with the organization's objectives and values. In the realm of social entrepreneurship, a high level of organizational identification can cultivate a sense of belonging and dedication among employees towards the organization's social mission, thereby enhancing their involvement in social entrepreneurial activities. Additionally, the study by Corner and Ho (2010) underscores the importance of entrepreneurial creativity in social entrepreneurship.

Individuals who strongly identify with the organization's social mission and values are more inclined to display entrepreneurial creativity in devising innovative solutions to

address social issues. This creativity, driven by a sense of organizational identification, can result in the creation of unique social entrepreneurial ventures that effectively tackle societal challenges.

Combining these findings, we can theoretically justify that organizational identification affects social entrepreneurship. Intelligent leaders who exhibit empathy, fairness, and ethical behavior are likely to cultivate a positive organizational culture that resonates with employees, leading to a stronger sense of organizational identification (Zhu et al., 2015). When employees view their leaders as caring, supportive, and in alignment with the organization's values, they are more likely to identify with the organization and its objectives (Costa et al., 2022). This alignment between intelligent leadership behaviors and organizational values can enhance employees' sense of belonging and commitment to the organization, ultimately influencing their level of organizational identification (Costa et al., 2022). Therefore, intelligent leadership is a key factor affecting organizational identification.

Employee engagement plays a crucial role in organizational success, particularly in moderating the relationship between intelligent leadership and social entrepreneurship. Intelligent leadership, characterized by authenticity, transparency, and inclusivity, has been demonstrated to have a positive impact on employee engagement (Besieux et al., 2018; Carasco-Saul et al., 2015; Jiang & Men, 2017). This engagement is essential as it can result in improved innovative work behavior, work performance, and organizational commitment (Inam et al., 2023; Jiatong et al., 2022; Li et al., 2019). When examining the interplay between leadership, employee engagement, and entrepreneurship, it is crucial to consider the impact of communication, social media, and change leadership (Bulińska-Stangrecka et al., 2021; Wijayati et al., 2022; Zeng et al., 2021).

Effective communication channels, supportive leadership, and adaptive strategies can enhance employee engagement, thereby driving entrepreneurial initiatives within the organization (Bulińska-Stangrecka et al., 2021; Wijayati et al., 2022; Zeng et al., 2021).

Thus, we posit that employee engagement moderates the relationship between intelligent leadership and social entrepreneurship.

According to the discussion, the aim of this research is to fill the scientific gap regarding predictors of social entrepreneurship. Therefore, the researchers in this study seek to investigate whether intelligent leadership and organizational identification play a key role in social entrepreneurship considering the moderating role of employee engagement in sport teachers.

## **Methodology**

The current research method is correlation, which was carried out in the field. The statistical population of the research was made up of sport teachers in Iraq, based on Morgan's table, at least 384 people were selected as a sample using the stratified sampling method. For this purpose, each city (eight cities) was divided into five regions (North, South, East, West and Center). From each city, teachers were selected. The response time was approximately 23 minutes. Since there is a possibility of dropping and incomplete filling of questionnaires in the research, according to the previous literature, researchers distributed 400 questionnaires with a probability of 10-15% of dropping, and 373 complete and correct questionnaires were collected.

First, the library method was used to review the literature. The following standard questionnaires were used to collect data. Intelligent leadership: the sixty-six-question questionnaire of Farahbakhsh and Mohammadi (2014) was used, which has six sub-components of emotional intelligence with six questions, social intelligence with six questions, spiritual intelligence with six questions, organizational intelligence with six questions, cultural intelligence with six questions, and strategic with six questions. Social entrepreneurship: Dwivedi and Weerawardena's (2018) nineteen-question questionnaire will be used, which has five sub-components of innovativeness with four questions, proactiveness with four questions, effectual orientation with five questions, service innovation with two questions, and social mission orientation with four questions.

Organizational identification: The six-question questionnaire of Dai et al. (2022) was used. Employee engagement: The seven-question questionnaire of Wang et al. (2020) was used. In the results section, the reliability of the questionnaires is fully reported. To measure content validity, questionnaires were reviewed by 8 sports management professors. Descriptive statistical methods and structural equation model were used to analyze the data. Therefore, SPSS version 18 and PLS version 4 software were used.

## **Results**

The results of the descriptive statistics section showed a total of 373 participants, 61% of whom are men (228 people) and 39 % women (145 people). In terms of education, the highest frequency with 56% (209 people) is bachelor's degree and the lowest frequency with 3.5% (13 people) is related to doctorate. Regarding the age distribution of the samples, the highest frequency with 35% (130 people) is 31 to 40 years old and the lowest frequency with 10% (37 people) is related to 60 years and above.

In order to fit the measurement model, confirmatory factor analysis was performed. To test the reliability of the external model, Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability were used, the results of which are given in Table 1. As can be seen in the table, Cronbach's alpha values and composite reliability are more than 0.7 for all constructs, and this is a sign of the suitability of the internal stability of the measurement model.

According to Table 1, the composite reliability is greater than the mean of the extracted variance, which indicates the appropriateness of the reliability of the measurement model. Also, the factor loadings of the items were between 0.57 and 0.96, which is one of the signs of the appropriate fit of the measurement model.

**Table 1.** Cronbach's alpha coefficients and composite reliability

Variable	Cronbach's alpha	composite reliability
Intelligent leadership	0.74	<b>0.76</b>
Social entrepreneurship	0.76	<b>0.79</b>
Organizational identification	0.81	<b>0.84</b>
Employee engagement	0.84	<b>0.87</b>

For the validity of the constructs (discriminative validity), Fornell and Larcker (1981) suggest that the root mean of the extracted variance of each variable should be greater than the correlation of that variable with other variables. This means that the correlation of each hidden variable and its indicators (manifest variables) must be higher than the correlation of that variable with other variables. The root mean variance extracted is given at the end of each row in Table 2. The values of each variable are higher than the correlation of each variable with other variables, and this indicates the acceptable validity of the measurement tools.

**Table 2.** Correlation matrix of research variables and square root of AVE

Variable	1	2	3	4
Intelligent leadership	0.71			
Social entrepreneurship	0.40	0.73		
Organizational identification	0.68	0.21	0.76	
Employee engagement	0.31	0.18	0.15	<b>0.79</b>

Based on the data analysis algorithm in the PLS method, after checking the fit of the measurement, structural and general models, the research hypotheses are tested by



checking the significant coefficients of each of the paths as well as the standardized coefficients of the factor load related to the paths.

If the t value of each path is more than 1.96, the corresponding path is confirmed at the 95% confidence level and the related hypothesis is confirmed. Based on the conceptual model tested in Figure (1), the output shows the t coefficients. Therefore, at the 95% confidence level, the predicted paths of intelligent leadership - social entrepreneurship, intelligent leadership – organizational identification, and organizational identification - social entrepreneurship are significant.

After the standard estimation was done, the cause-and-effect relationship between the research constructs was examined. As can be seen in figure number (1), the relationship between research variables is confirmed because their significant numbers are not between 1.96 and -1.96. In other words, intelligent leadership has a direct, positive, and significant relationship with social entrepreneurship ( $t=4.9632$   $\beta=0.36$ ) and organizational identification ( $t=16.14$ ;  $\beta=0.66$ ). organizational identification has a direct, positive, and significant relationship with social entrepreneurship ( $t=2.14$ ,  $\beta=0.17$ ). Employee engagement has a moderating role in the relationship between intelligent leadership and social entrepreneurship ( $t=2.80$ ,  $\beta=0.22$ ).

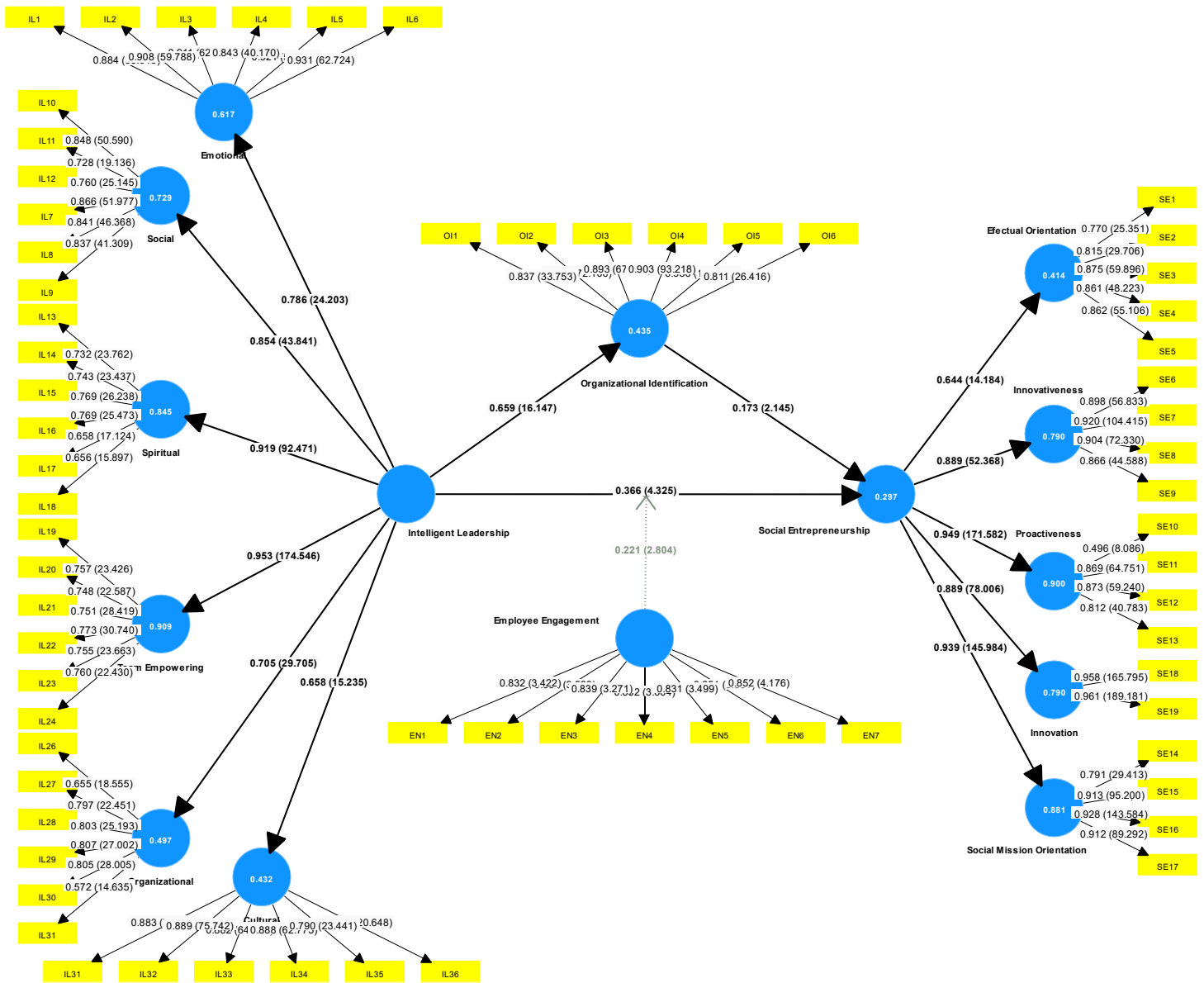


Figure 1. Structural model with T values and path coefficients.

## Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of this research is to investigate the impact of intelligent leadership on social entrepreneurship through organizational identification considering employee engagement in sport teachers. Results demonstrated that intelligent leadership influences social entrepreneurship in sport teachers. Research has shown that leadership styles, particularly those characterized by traits such as charisma, being team-oriented, and

humane, can act as catalysts for social entrepreneurs (Muralidharan & Pathak, 2018). These traits are essential in providing the necessary guidance and motivation for individuals to engage in social entrepreneurship activities. Additionally, emotional intelligence has been highlighted as essential in entrepreneurial contexts, where emotional elements play a vital role in leadership effectiveness (Antonakis et al., 2009). Emotional intelligence, along with cognitive intelligence, has been found to impact entrepreneurial attitudes and intentions, emphasizing the importance of emotional intelligence in fostering an entrepreneurial mindset (Zampetakis et al., 2009). Research indicates that enhancing entrepreneurial teaching competences among teachers is essential (Peltonen, 2015). This highlights the need for teacher trainers and policymakers to prioritize the development of skills and knowledge related to entrepreneurship to empower teachers in promoting social entrepreneurship in sports education. Furthermore, empirical research confirms that social entrepreneurial behavior positively impacts organizational performance, emphasizing the importance of incorporating social entrepreneurship principles into educational settings (Sipahi Dongul & Artantaş, 2023). This suggests that fostering social entrepreneurship initiatives within educational institutions can not only benefit the organization but also contribute to broader societal welfare through sports education.

Another result of the current research was that intelligent leadership affects organizational identification in sport teachers. Studies have also explored the relationship between positive leadership and organizational identification, suggesting that positive organizational culture can enhance identification with the organization (Ko & Choi, 2021). Additionally, ethical leadership, by caring for employees, treating them fairly, and setting ethical standards, can lead to increased organizational identification and influence important organizational outcomes (Zhu et al., 2015). Emotional intelligence has been found to strengthen the effect of paradoxical leadership on organizational identification, emphasizing the role of emotional intelligence in shaping identification processes (Lo et

al., 2023). When leaders demonstrate intelligence in their leadership approach, it positively influences teachers' organizational identification within the educational setting (Shie & Chang, 2022). This suggests that fostering intelligent leadership behaviors, such as trustworthiness and reliability, can enhance teachers' commitment and identification with the organization, leading to increased enthusiasm for teaching and a stronger connection to the school.

Our research highlighted that organizational identification has an effect on social entrepreneurship in sport teachers. Research has shown that organizational identification plays a crucial role in shaping individuals' attitudes and behaviors within the organizational context (Luu, 2017). Employees who strongly identify with their organization are more likely to exhibit organizational citizenship behaviors, such as going above and beyond their formal roles to contribute to the organization's success (Luu, 2017). This sense of identification can lead to a stronger commitment to the organization's values and goals, which are essential aspects of social entrepreneurship. This connection between organizational identification and social entrepreneurship highlights several practical implications. Firstly, fostering a sense of belonging and commitment among sport teachers through organizational identification can lead to increased motivation and dedication to implementing social entrepreneurship initiatives (Benson et al., 2016). Teachers who identify strongly with their organization are more likely to align their actions with the organization's values and goals, including promoting social change through entrepreneurial activities. Secondly, organizational identification can serve as a catalyst for innovation and creativity in developing social entrepreneurship projects within sports education (Chen & Lin, 2021). Teachers who feel a strong connection to their organization are more inclined to proactively seek out opportunities to address social issues through innovative approaches, leveraging sports as a platform for social impact.

Finally, we showed that employee engagement plays a crucial role in moderating the relationship between intelligent leadership and social entrepreneurship. In the realm of social entrepreneurship, employee engagement becomes even more vital as it can stimulate innovation, creativity, and organizational ambidexterity (Kang et al., 2021; Kassa & Tsigu, 2022; Katou et al., 2021). Social exchange theory posits that supportive and inclusive leadership cultivates a sense of obligation in employees, leading to increased engagement and innovative work behavior (Javed et al., 2019). Furthermore, psychological factors like trust, psychological safety, and empowerment play a mediating role that strengthens the connection between leadership styles and employee outcomes (Li et al., 2019; Qasim et al., 2022). Saks (2019) suggests that organizations can enhance employee engagement by focusing on factors such as skill variety, social support, rewards and recognition, fairness, and opportunities for learning and development. This implies that organizations aiming to leverage intelligent leadership for social entrepreneurship should prioritize these aspects to foster employee engagement effectively. Also, Popli and Rizvi (2016) propose that organizations can drive engagement by proactively leveraging employees, leaders, and organizational systems and strategies for change. This suggests that organizations should actively involve employees in decision-making processes, provide effective leadership, and align organizational systems to promote employee engagement in the context of intelligent leadership and social entrepreneurship.

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