



Social Innovation in Non-Profit Organizations (NPOs): A Measurement Scale

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The world today needs social innovations (SI) more than ever. And NPOs stand out as particularly vivid examples of socially innovative organizations.

The main goal of the article is to propose a reliable and user-friendly tool for assessing how much an NPO's initiative (whether a program, project, product, service, or organizational process) qualifies as a SI. This scale also can be employed by practitioners and policymakers to support the development of SI, in particular to identify gaps that need addressing to improve SI and make it more scalable.

The scale enables a comprehensive assessment of **four main SI dimensions**: (1) social goal orientation, (2) social process orientation, (3) sustainable improvement and (4) transformational impact.

Additionally, the **SI drivers** are identified, along with the interconnections between them. Specific mechanisms for boosting these drivers are proposed to enhance the **scalability of SI**.

The methodology: (1) a comprehensive literature review, (2) meetings with experts / practitioners, (3) quantitative research with 201 Spanish NPOs, and (4) testing a SI measurement scale. Different statistical analyses were used to assess the dimensionality, reliability and validity of the scale.

[#SocialInnovation](#) [#NPO](#) [#MeasurementScale](#) [#SIDrivers](#) [#SIScalability](#)

Background & Context



- **SI is a research priority** because of different reasons:
 1. Traditional welfare systems are insufficient to address the increased social and environmental challenges.
 2. The shift to a society built on knowledge and services means we need SI to solve this challenges effectively.
- SI are statistically invisible. There are very little **complex quantitative-based contributions**; mostly case studies of particular SI.
- **8 relevant research areas** have been identified to study SI: social entrepreneurship, social change, social value creation, community psychology, territorial development, welfare economics, institutional and structuration theories.

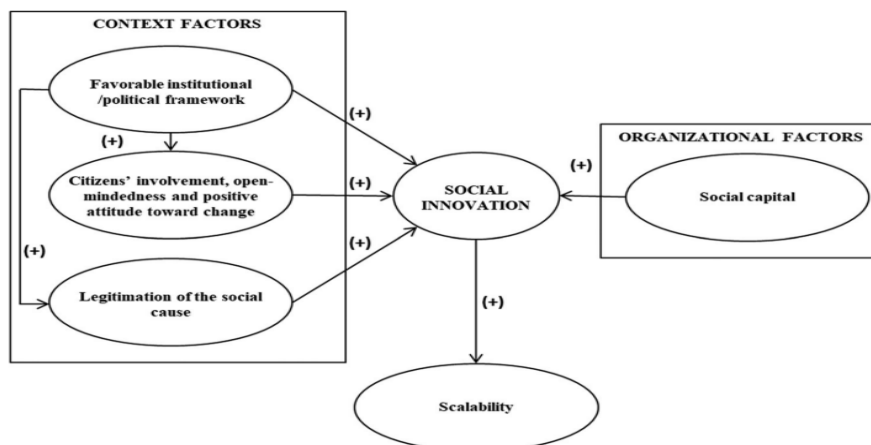
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Take aways & Learnings



- Based on the findings, the authors suggest **four dimensions of SI**. **To be a SI a NPO's initiative must** (1) be aimed at satisfying a social need and oriented to the common good, (2) involve a process in which the stakeholders of the organization (especially, the most deprived groups) participate proactively that leads to (3) a significant and sustainable improvement (4) with transformative impact at a micro, meso, and macro levels (changes in social behaviors or relationships).
- The measurement scale of SI is designed to be 'as simple as possible'**: 31 easy-to-understand questions about NPO's initiative.
- SI Drivers**: based on the literature review, **the following SI drivers were identified**: external **context** (the institutional-political framework, the societal climate, the legitimation of the social problem) + **organizational** factors (NPO's social capital).
- The study found there is a positive effect of '**societal climate**' on SI (citizens' involvement, open-mindedness and positive attitude toward change). The **level of legitimation of the social cause** also presents a positive coefficient, but it is not significant. The **institutional-political framework** affects SI only indirectly, through its positive influence on the societal climate.
- To promote SI, policymakers should** pay special attention to the mechanisms that can **enhance civic engagement** (creating and supporting youth advisory councils, funding school service-learning programs etc.).
- The NPOs' **social capital** exerts a strong and positive effect on boosting SI. This calls for training in those 'soft' skills (networking and conflict resolution skills, change management etc.).
- The extent to which an innovation shares the four dimensions of a SI positively and significantly influences SI **scalability**.



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