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**ABSTRACT**

The objective of the study was to establish a relationship between social entrepreneurship and the principles of complex thinking in Peru. The research was quantitative, and non-experimental, with a probability sample of 166 entrepreneurs ( $X = 55.4$  years; 52% women). It was concluded that the structural models for the general objective and the specific objectives were acceptable ( $YB-X2/g1 < 5$  for both). The values for the general objective were  $rp = .855$  ( $p < .001$ ) and effect size of  $r^2 = .73$ . For the specific objectives the correlations in all cases reported statistical significance below  $p < .001$ , with large effect size ( $r^2 \geq .25$ ). Therefore, this research established a positive relationship between social entrepreneurship and the principles of complex thinking, contributing to the theory of SE under the lens of complex thinking.

**Keywords:** Social Entrepreneurship, Complex Thinking, Social Development.

**1 INTRODUCTION**

Social development was one of the most debated and relevant issues of the twentieth century. At the end of that century, this discussion was consolidated around the promotion of sustainable development, which highlights the interdependence between the variables that determine economic growth, social development, and environmental preservation (Veiga, 2005).

Social development and local development. Social development can be understood from the appropriation of three generations of human rights: political, civil, and civic rights; economic, social, and cultural rights; collective rights to the environment and development. Thus, equality, equity, and solidarity are integrated elements in the concept of development. The main objective becomes the promotion of equality and poverty reduction, maximizing the advantages of the less advantaged (Sachs, 2004).

For Sen (Ibid., p. 28-29) development "is related above all to the improvement of the life we lead and the freedoms we enjoy" and, therefore, income and wealth are desirable only because they are meant to acquire "more freedom to lead the kind of life we have reason to value". In other words,

economic growth is one of the means of promoting development. Therefore, poverty is seen as a deprivation of basic capabilities, not limited to a finding of low levels of income,

Sen (2007, 2008) emphasizes that even the most commonly accepted approaches, such as the one that conceives poverty in terms of low income, do not recognize the diversity that characterizes people and the different contexts in which they live. For that reason, they don't say much about wellness. Sen (Ibid.) points out that, from a programmatic point of view, the discussion of inequality must be based on different degrees of access to power and opportunities.

The opportunities to which Sen (2008) refers, termed real or substantive, involve more than the availability of resources. Opportunities must be equalized, in the sense of promoting conditions for people to achieve objectives linked to their well-being in genuine choices, that is, to exercise their freedom (Sen, 2008).

An important implication of this conception is that Sen (2000, 2007, 2008) points out that the expansion of economic, social, and political freedoms would be, in turn, the main purpose of any program, public or private, in the field of social development. To this end, it is necessary to eliminate conditions that cause the deprivation of freedoms, such as inequality in access to food, health services, and education, in addition to the absence of civil and democratic rights.

For Sen (2000, p.33), the individual assumes a central role in the development process: his condition as an agent, as "someone who acts and causes change, and whose achievements can be judged according to his values and objectives" is a vector for social transformations. In this context, individual freedom is a social product that derives from a "two-way relationship between (1) social provisions to expand individual freedoms and (2) the use of individual freedoms, not only to improve the life of each but also to make social provisions more appropriate and effective" (Sen, Ibid., p.46).

Accompanying these proposals, the economist Sachs sees in the sense of development the maximization of opportunities that enable human beings to manifest potentialities, talents, and imagination that bring self-realization and happiness. These opportunities can be created in combined individual and collective ventures and in time dedicated to non-productive activities. The universalization and effective realization of human rights, principles advocated by Sen's theory, reaffirm the need for the right to work to be central to development promotion strategies since decent work opens the way for the realization of other rights. In this environment, the maximization of opportunities occurs with the production of "means of existence" that supply the basic material needs of life. (Sachs, 2004).

For Sachs (Ibid.) promoting "fair" social inclusion becomes a central requirement for successful development. This "inclusive development" has as its fundamental value the access of all citizens to the following public services: - Assistance programs for minorities, aimed at compensating for natural

or physical inequalities, and compensatory social policies financed by income redistribution; - Access to education; health protection programs that provide for food safety; basic sanitation conditions and access to safe drinking water; quality and provision of adequate housing and working conditions; education and preventive measures.

Goldstein, Hazy, Silberstang, and Schultz (2010) analyzed how ideas, constructs, and methods arising from systems thinking and complex systems sciences can be applied to the study of social entrepreneurship. The authors argued that there is no general theoretical perspective that seeks to define social entrepreneurship in terms of complex systems or explain how such a perspective can contribute to the generation of positive social outcomes. To remedy this, they propose ways in which complexity theory can be used to develop a useful, and more practical, theory. In particular, they explore how ideas of complexity can be used to develop a robust theory of social business dynamics from the interrelated theoretical lenses offered in the complexity science approaches of social network theory, the study of emergence in self-organizing systems, complex adaptive systems theory, and nonlinear dynamical systems theory. After describing several possibilities, he offers some hopeful insights into the future of the field, particularly a call to initiate evolving partnerships between complexity scientists and social entrepreneur theorists.

Swanson and Zhang (2011) applied the social entrepreneurship zone model of Swanson and Zhang (2010) using complexity perspectives to enrich and develop SE knowledge. This model positions the SE on a map of organizational forms, thus providing a broad perspective in which many elements can be considered as they interact with, emerge to become, or cease to be SE entities.

Ireland and Gorod (2016) attempted to explain how the recognition of complex systems or complexity science enhances the recognition and achievement of entrepreneurial opportunities; provide information demonstrating the role of complex systems in business activities; and state that, while Lichtenstein's comprehensive model has not been tested, the components have and that in general, This model is strongly supported.

Russell and Smorodinskaya (2016) analyzed innovation ecosystems through complexity science, considering them as open nonlinear entities characterized by changing multifaceted motivations of networked actors, high receptivity to feedback, and persistent structural transformations. They differentiate the innovation capacity of various types of business networks by the complexity of their internal interactions, identifying the place of innovation ecosystems in the world of business networks, as well as the place of innovation clusters among other innovation ecosystems; describe the generic properties of innovation ecosystems in terms of complexity science, seeing them as complex adaptive systems, paying particular attention to the complexity of innovation clusters; And they compare the complexity thinking of modern economies, derived from their

emerging ecosystem design, with traditional thinking conceived for the industrial age, drawing ideas for a better transition to innovation-driven growth.

Along the same lines, Hazy and Goldstein (2010) pointed out that complexity science is used to describe innovation and entrepreneurship. The context is addressed by positioning entrepreneurship at the nexus of two categories of constraints: the rate of appropriation of resources and the speed with which information is available, which challenges the efforts of the organization in an evolved, specialized, and distributed environment. The phenomenon of complexity is the key enabler of entrepreneurship, while the recombination of skills, technologies, and social networks is a mechanism used by individuals to build a better way to exploit the opportunity.

Matei and Antonie (2015) raised complexity theory to build a connection between innovation and complex adaptive social systems. They question whether and how social media can facilitate innovations to overcome the seemingly insurmountable chasms of local solutions separate from a broad system transformation; that is, how to help innovations at "cross-scales". Using a complexity lens to understand the challenging goals facing the world and applying a social innovation framework to illuminate how local novelty extends to have broad impacts on the system, this paper proposes that institutional entrepreneurship enhances understanding of the agency that is active within networks. The public sector adopts strategies to address complexity, therefore focusing on outcomes (rather than inputs and outputs) that are demonstrable and measurable (if only qualitatively), collaboration and coordination (across sectors, fields, organizational boundaries, etc.), decentralization and self-organization (increasing the decision-making powers of local communities), building adaptive capacity (to support decentralization and self-organization and build resilience).

Social entrepreneurship (or social enterprise) is commonly defined as a hybrid organization (Doherty et al., 2014) built on an explicit social goal (e.g., improving education, health, nutrition, and security for segments of the population that are excluded, marginalized, or suffering) that strives to create social value while securing profits and doing so in an entrepreneurial/innovative way (McMullen and Warnick, 2016). A social entrepreneur is someone who designs and implements an intervention, product, or service that improves the well-being of marginalized individuals and populations. A social enterprise is an organization (whether non-profit or for-profit) that is formed to address a social or environmental challenge, that streamlines its operations and supply chain to maximize social impact and minimize resource use, and that uses a sustainable business model, replicable and potentially scalable (Chahine, 2016, p. 2).

The main problem of the research was: How are social enterprises based on the paradigm of complex thinking? The specific objectives (SP) were:

- SP 1: How does the systemic principle relate to social entrepreneurship?;

- SP 2: How does the hologrammatic principle allow an understanding of social enterprises?;
- SP 3: How does the feedback loop allow us to understand the functioning of social enterprises?;
- SP 4: How does the self-organization of complex thinking relate to the management of social enterprises in Peru?;
- PE 5: How much of self-eco-organization relates to social entrepreneurship?;
- SP 6: How can the dialogic principle enable a positive relationship with social entrepreneurship?;
- SP 7: How can the principle of reintroduction enable a positive relationship with social entrepreneurship?

The main hypothesis of the study was: There is a positive relationship between social entrepreneurship and the principles of complex thinking.

The specific hypotheses were:

- H1: The systemic principle has a significant positive effect on social enterprises;
- H2: The hologrammatic principle has a significant positive effect on social enterprises. In the organization, two planes coexist an orderly part, which attends to the most operational, and another disordered part, which allows innovation, creativity, and renewal. What guarantees that the organization does not dissolve in this struggle between order and disorder is the "lived solidarity" (Morin, 1994), which can be understood as the cohesion that is needed between the actors of the organization to maintain its continuity (Del Aguila, 2020), in the same way, the relationship can produce a result in which everything is more than the parts (organizational dynamics) (Morin, 2005a, p. 261).
- H3: Feedback has a significant positive effect on social enterprises;
- H4: The self-organization of complex thinking has a significant positive effect on social enterprises;
- H5: Self-eco-organization has a significant positive effect on social enterprises; the proper purposes of the parts of the organization within the systemic framework to which they owe their autonomy (Morin, 2010a).
- H6: The dialogic principle has a significant positive effect on social enterprises;
- H7: The principle of reintroduction has a positive and significant effect on social enterprises.

The overall objective of the research was: To establish a positive relationship between social entrepreneurship and the principles of complex thinking. The specific objectives (SOs) were:

- SO 1: Analyse how the systemic principle relates to social entrepreneurship;

- SO 2: Determine how the hologrammatic principle enables an understanding of social enterprises;
- SO3: Establish how feedback relates to social enterprises;
- SO 4: Analyze how the self-organization of complex thinking relates to the management of social enterprises;
- SO 5: Understand how self-eco-organization relates to social entrepreneurship; SO 6: Explain how the dialogic principle can enable a positive relationship with social entrepreneurship;
- SO7: Explain how the reintroduction principle can enable a positive relationship with social entrepreneurship.

## 2 METHOD

The present research was of non-experimental quantitative approach, of correlational scope.

The present correlation design was constituted in systemic investigation of the nature of relationships or associations between the variables, instead of direct relationships of cause and effect. The correlation design in the present study analyzed the direction, degree, magnitude, and strength of the relationships or associations that occurred between the two variables.

The study variables were *social enterprises*: "mission-oriented people who use a set of entrepreneurial behaviors to deliver social value to the less privileged, through an entrepreneur-oriented entity that is financially independent, self-sufficient or sustainable" (Abu-Saifan, 2012, p. 4); and *complex thinking*:

Complexity is not a foundation, it is the regulating principle that never loses sight of the reality of the phenomenal fabric in which we are and that constitutes our world. There has also been talking of monsters, and I believe, indeed, that the real is monstrous. It is huge, it is outside the norm, and it ultimately escapes our regulatory concepts, but we can try to govern that regulation as much as possible. (Morin, 1990, p. 146)

The research population was the set of social enterprises associated with the Kunan Network that are related to the activities subject of this study that amounted to  $N = 221$ .

A representative sample of the social enterprises associated with the Kunan Network of Peru – units of analysis – of the population was chosen, with a confidence level of 96% and an estimated error of the sample of 4%. It was calculated that for a population of 221 social enterprises, the sample size was  $n = 166$  organizations (Hernández et al. 2014, p.173). (See Annex 3)

As the population was finite (221 social enterprises), simple random sampling was used "A simple n-sized random sample of a finite n-size population *is a sample selected in such a way that*

*each possible n-size sample has the same probability of being selected"* (Anderson, Sweeney & Williams, 2008, p. 2008).

As selection criteria, 221 social enterprises that are operating in the country were selected, affiliated to the Kunan Network, a Peruvian platform for strengthening the country's social and environmental entrepreneurship ecosystem. The nonprofit sector represents "the main world of the social entrepreneur" (Thompson, 2002, p. 413) providing a valid context for our study.

While academics describe the benefits of using multiple respondents (Kumar, Stern, and Anderson, 1993), within our task of capturing the behavioral characteristics of social entrepreneurs at the level of strategy formation, the coalition was surveyed by managers, administrators, or heads of the ventures. Staff managers have specialized knowledge about organizational operations and are directly involved in strategy formation (O'Shannassy and Leenders, 2016). The data provided by such informants can be as valid as those obtained from multiple informants (Zahra and Covin, 1993).

The technique used in the present research was the survey. For the variable *social enterprises* (made up of the dimensions: of innovation, proactivity, risk management, social mission, and sustainability), the survey technique and the instrument (I1) of Dwivedia and Weerawardena (2018) were used, whose validity and reliability were reevaluated, to measure the variable. In the same line, the variable *complex thinking* was used as an instrument (I2) of elaboration by the authors (whose dimensions were: systemic, feedback, recursive, self-eco-organization, dialogic, holographic, and reintroduction).

Questionnaire 1 made it possible to measure *social enterprises* through five dimensions, 18 indicators, and 20 items. Questionnaire 2 allowed us to measure *complex thinking*, the dependent variable, through seven dimensions, 11 indicators, and 30 items.

The analysis of the instruments was made for the content. The content validity is closely linked to the planning of the questionnaire and then to the construction of the items adjusted to the plans and contents of the theoretical framework of the present research. It was done through 5 expert judgments (four thematic and one methodologist), using the V of Aiken. To evaluate the reliability or homogeneity of the questions or items, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was considered.

The collected data were transferred to Excel software and processed using the statistical package SPSS, version 26. To perform the data analysis, the structural equations method was selected.

The following ethical aspects were taken into consideration in the research:

- The citation of bibliographic sources in the APA style in its entirety.
- The reference of bibliographic sources in the APA style in its entirety.
- The informed consent of the collaborators of the social enterprises.
- The authorization of the social enterprises involved in the research.

- The confidentiality of the data by keeping anonymity as a context of direct study of the researchers.

### 3 RESULTS

The objective of the study was to know the relationship between social entrepreneurship and complex thinking in a sample of 166 entrepreneurs. It is observed (see Table 3, graph 1 and 2) that the goodness of fit indices such as the proportion of Chi-square on the degrees of freedom with Yuan-Blentler correction, obtained  $YB-X^2/df < 5$  values for both proposed models, considered acceptable (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007); likewise, the values of the fit index such as CFI and TLI were obtained  $> .90$  for both models, denominated as acceptable. Concerning approximation errors (RMSEA) and standardized errors (SRMR), values have been recorded at the acceptance threshold limit as acceptable ( $\leq .08$ ); However, the specific objective model has registered more acceptable values, compared to the general objective model. In short, it seems that the two models analyzed would be complying with the framework of models that would be adjusting to the hypothesized model.

Table 3: The goodness of fit index of the structural models, of each objective: general and specific (n=156)

	$YB-X^2$	Gf	$p$	$YB-X^2/df$	CFI	TLI	SRMR	RMSEA	IC 90% RMSEA
Structural Model of the General Objective	140.407	41	0	3.425	0.960	0.946	0.088	0.083	[.066, .094]
Structural Model of the Specific Objectives	118.408	29	0	4.083	0.931	0.912	0.072	0.061	[.054, .087]

Note:  $YB-X^2$ : chi-square with Yuan-Bentler correction,  $df$ : degrees of freedom, CFI: Comparative Fit Index, TLI: Tucker Lewis index, SRMR: standardized residual mean root, RMSEA: mean the square root of approximation error.

Figure 1. Structural correlation, the general objective

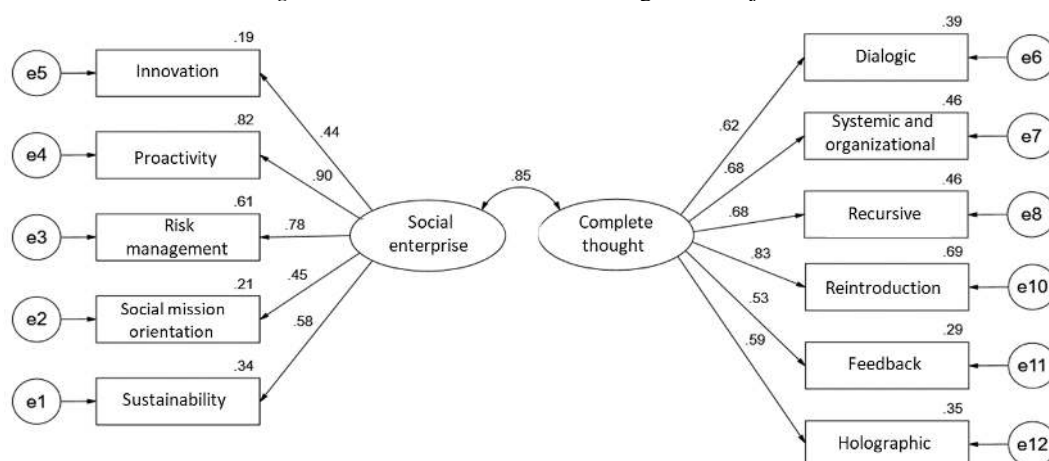
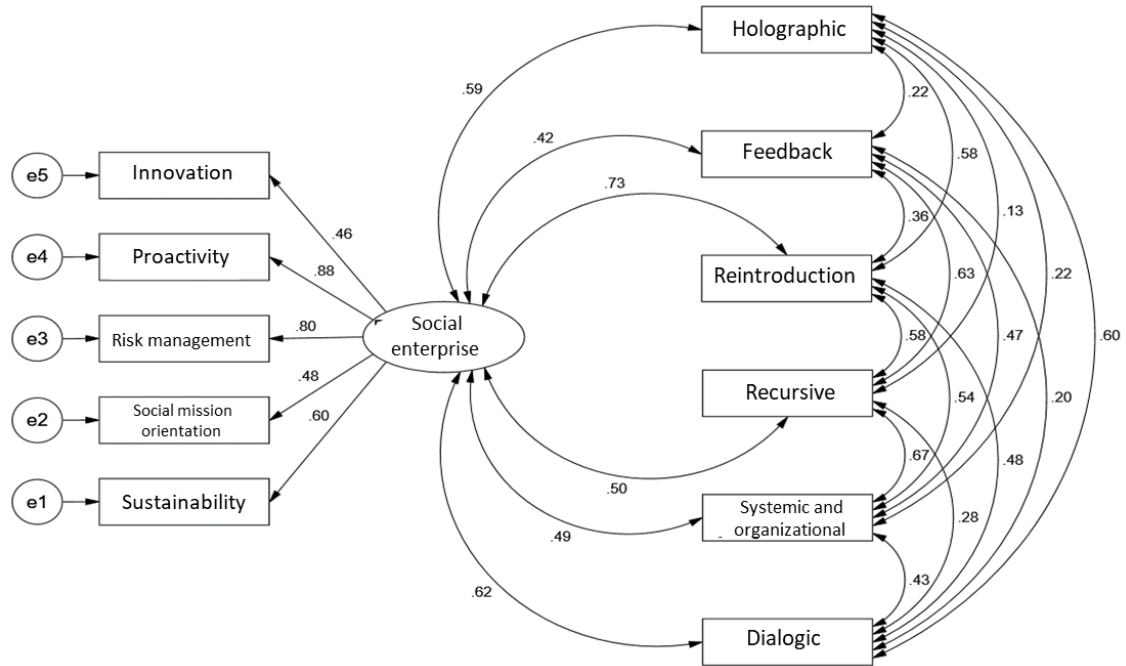


Figure 2. Structural correlation, specific objectives



Regarding the statistical significance of the structural correlations, it is observed that the general hypothesis raised is answered with correlation values  $r_p = .855$  ( $p < .001$ ) and effect size of  $r^2 = .73$ , for the general objective, that is, that the size of the phenomenon studied (correlation between social entrepreneurship and complex thinking) is observed in the study sample in 73%, considered large size (Ellis, 2010). Concerning the specific objectives, it is observed that the correlations obtained in all cases reported statistical significance below  $p < .001$ , with a large effect size ( $r^2 \geq .25$ ); however, in the relationships between social entrepreneurship and the feedback and systemic dimensions of the complex thinking variable, they reported mediated effect sizes ( $r^2 < .25$ ), which, although medium, therefore has a very significant value in the interpretation of the specific objectives of this research (see Table 1).

Table 1 General and specific objectives (n=166)

<i>General objective</i>		
Social Entrepreneurship	↔	Complex thinking
<i>Specific objectives</i>		
Social Entrepreneurship	↔	Holographic
	↔	Feedback
	↔	Reintroduction
	↔	Dialogic
	↔	Systemic
	↔	Recursive

Note. \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$ , rp: Pearson correlation, SD: standard deviation, r.c: critical ratio, p: statistical significance, r2: effect size.

## 4 DISCUSSION

In this part of the research work, the results found were analyzed, within the framework of the working hypotheses reached. The main hypothesis of the study: There is a positive relationship between social enterprises and the principles of complex thinking evidenced by the correlation values obtained  $rp = .855$  ( $p < .001$ ), in agreement with Swanson and Zhang (2011) who considered that complex thinking provides a broad perspective in which many elements can be considered as they interact with, emerge to become, or cease to be SE entities. All the established dimensions were positively related to social entrepreneurship as configured in Table 1.

Making a disaggregated analysis of the results we can infer that in the H1: on the systemic principle, which originates in Systems Theory, Bertalanffy (1989) that in the relationship with social enterprises, an understanding is manifested between the members of the enterprise and the organization (everything). It should be noted that the properties to manage optimally are not found in isolation in each entrepreneur, but in the interconnection of its members that will generate their way of existing, which has a significant positive effect on social enterprises.

In H2 it is established that the holographic principle has a significant positive effect on social enterprises since the fabric that forms the organization cannot be reduced to one of its elements (Morin, 2010). By establishing a relationship of the whole with the parties (Morin, 2005), the results showed that there is consistency in the level of organizational functioning and behavior that the members of social enterprises will have at the individual level. It should be noted that in each activity that develops the enterprise at a factual level, the physiognomy of the whole will be shown.

About H3, where it is assumed that feedback has a significant positive effect on social enterprises is part of the epistemological level, where complexity takes this principle from cybernetics and correlated in research, social enterprises should not be conceived in isolation from contexts, nor as an external determination, but as part of the ecological ecosystem, which in turn constitutes a component of the biosphere.

When it was established as H4 that the recursive dimension has a significant positive effect on social enterprises, it was possible to evidence the self-production and self-reproduction of the ecosystems in which the entrepreneur operates. It is worth noting that it constitutes a loop that regenerates. In social enterprises, it is observed that the products and the effects they generate as an activity are in turn producers or causes of those who produce it. Here there is a dynamic alignment between complexity (the recursive) and social entrepreneurship.

Also with the results obtained, it is possible to show in the H5 that the dialogic principle has a significant positive effect on social enterprises. Here appears the meaning of order with the disorder in social enterprises; they will relate to generating new configurations inside; the random, the uncertainties coexist "the archipelagos of certainty" (Morin, 2008), conceived in dialogic terms are those that make complementarity possible. Uncertainty (Heisenberg, 1972) in current times is part of the context.

In H6, where it appears that the principle of reintroduction has a positive and significant effect on social enterprises, it is constituted in a method-strategy, where the reality that is permanently investigated by the integral subject of social enterprises, is constructed by himself. In the thought of Morin (1996), he considers the subject (entrepreneur) as a central element in the cognitive process, where there is a positive relationship between spirit/brain, at a certain time and for the purposes that the ventures are established.

## 5 CONCLUSIONS

1. In this research, a positive relationship was established between social entrepreneurship and the principles of complex thinking, contributing to the theory of SE under the lens of complex thinking.
2. By establishing the relationship of complex thinking with social enterprises, it has been possible to approach at the theoretical level a positive epistemological correlation between the dimensions of each of them.
3. It has been argued in this paper that the theory of complex adaptive systems provides an integrative theoretical perspective that allows the introduction of a more dynamic interaction framework and draws attention to the role of cultural values in social entrepreneurship systems.
4. The relationship between complex thinking and social enterprises shows us that linearity and the traditional criterion of undertaking in balance must be abandoned because their natural state is the reduction of entropy (disorder) and where uncertainty is a component of permanence in the organizations that undertake.

5. The justified presence of the holographic principle in social enterprises leads us to infer that the solution to management problems is in the organization, while one of the parts of it will always respond to the whole.
6. The collective of social entrepreneurship is composed of members who are self-referential, and respond to relate to each other in often unpredictable ways, but with dialogic and self-production capacity that will make viable each of the actions undertaken.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Study the relationship between complex thinking and social entrepreneurship with a larger sample, involving non-profit organizations operating in the country at the factual level.
2. Investigate in greater depth social entrepreneurship under an interdisciplinary perspective, following Saebi, Foss, and Linder (2019) who pointed out that since the SE is based on different disciplines and fields (entrepreneurship, sociology, economics, ethics) dominant frameworks have not been built and identified gaps in SE research at three levels of analysis: individual, organizational and institutional that still need to be elucidated.
3. Conduct research that studies social entrepreneurship, social development, and social capital in depth.
4. Develop models that establish the relevance of complex thinking in the orientation that social enterprises should have for social development.

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