SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURS' LEADERSHIP AND PERCEIVED CONTRIBUTION TO THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS IN KWARA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study focuses on social entrepreneurs' leadership and its impact on the perceived contribution to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Kwara State Nigeria. Although social entrepreneurship has been gaining more attention as a solution to developmental problems, the role of leadership in attaining the SDGs is yet to be fully explored in the context of social entrepreneurship. This study used a descriptive survey design. The population were the social entrepreneurs and beneficiaries of the social entrepreneurship in Kwara State. The number of entrepreneurs in the target population was calculated using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table of 357 entrepreneurs, and Cochran's (1977) formula for an unknown beneficiary population, yielding a sample size of six hundred and seventyfour entrepreneurs. The total number of respondents analysed was 462 (222 entrepreneurs and 240 beneficiaries). Data were gathered using a structured questionnaire; SDG data and social entrepreneurs' leadership data were gathered through two distinct scales. .Data were gathered using a structured questionnaire; SDG data were gathered using a different scale as were social entrepreneurs' leadership data (vision articulation, resource mobilization, engaging with stakeholders, innovation promotion and collective action). Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) was used, which was obtained from the software, namely the SmartPLS 4.The software used is Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) software, which is available in the SmartPLS 4 software. There was a small, positive and significant relationship between social entrepreneurs' leadership and perceived social contributions to SDG ($\beta = 0.206$, $t = 4.95$, $p < 0.001$), and $R^2 = 0.042$, $f^2 = 0.044$. The results indicate that leadership capacity is linked to the mobilization of resources, stakeholder involvement and collective action for SDG achievement; however, SDG achievement is still multi-determined. The study suggests the need for targeted leadership development programmes for social entrepreneurs and recognizes the explanatory power of the study is limited and the design is cross-sectional and perceptions based, which should be interpreted with care.

Keywords: Social entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial leadership, Sustainable Development Goals, social impact, Kwara State, Nigeria.

1.0 **Introduction**

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide a global framework for addressing existing economic, social and environmental challenges through 17 interconnected goals targeted for achievement by 2030. However, progress towards these goals requires the involvement of multiple actors because governments alone may not have sufficient resources and institutional strength to address complex community-level challenges. Consequently, significant attention has been given to social entrepreneurship as an approach for creating social value while applying entrepreneurial methods to address societal challenges. Evidence shows that social enterprises can contribute directly and indirectly to several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly those relating to poverty reduction, employment, education, equality and environmental sustainability (Diaz-Sarachaga & Ariza-Montes, 2022).

Social entrepreneurship is particularly relevant in developing economies where poverty, unemployment, inequality and inadequate social services continue to hindere sustainable development. Social entrepreneurs identify social problems and develop innovative approaches to solve them while seeking to sustain their activities through entrepreneurial mechanisms. Recent studies from Nigeria indicates that social innovation and social entrepreneurship initiatives can improve poverty reduction, education, nutrition and broader community sustainability (Ipinnaiye & Olaniyan, 2023). Similarly, Aliu et al. (2025) found that social entrepreneurship contributes to sustainable community development in South-West Nigeria. These results illustrate the potential of social entrepreneurship to complement government and other institutional efforts towards achieving development objectives.

However, the role of social entreprkeneurship in sustainable development could strongly rely on the leadership skills of the social entrepreneur. Social entrepreneurs tend to work in conditions of resource constraint and institutional complexity, which involves assembling resources, forging new partnerships, involving stakeholders and facilitation collective action. Good leadership can thus aid social entrepreneurs to convert their novel concepts into long-term sustainable ventures that can bring about positive social change. Social capital, legitimacy, stakeholder relationships and collectively acting have been highlighted in recent research as being important to enhance the capacity of social entrepreneurial initiatives to deliver sustainable development outcomes. Without studying social entrepreneurship in the context of leadership, a full picture of the role of social entrepreneurship in attaining Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) cannot be formed.

This relationship is further reinforced in the Nigerian context. Despite the potential social entrepreneurship has in Nigeria to solve social issues, or challenges, institutional barriers, insufficient resources, and scalability challenges may hinder the social impact of the various initiatives that have seen success (Ipinnaiye & Olaniyan, 2023). The relevance of social entrepreneurship to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is also shown in evidence from South-West Nigeria (Aliu et al., 2025). In the current literature, however, some studies focus on the impact of social entrepreneurship, social innovation or social enterprises on development, but not so much on the specific impact of the social entrepreneurs' leadership in Sustainable Development Goals(SDGs) related outcomes.

This is vacuum to the level at which issues of poverty, unemployment, education, inequality and environmental concerns relevant is addressed in Kwara State. There is limited empirical evidence of the impact of the leadership of social entrepreneurs on development achievement within the state. This work therefore, focuses on the study of the influence of social entrepreneurs' leadership on the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals in Kwara State, examined the null hypothesis- social entrepreneurs' leadership has no significant influence on Perceived SDG contribution in kwara state. Nigeria.

2.1 **Conceptual Review**

2.1.1 **Social Entrepreneurship**

Social entrepreneurship represents an entrepreneurial approach in which business-oriented activities are deliberately directed towards solving social and environmental problems and creating value for society. Unlike conventional entrepreneurship, which places greater emphasis on economic returns, social entrepreneurship combines entrepreneurial opportunity recognition, innovation and resource mobilisation with a social mission. Yan et al. (2022) describes social entrepreneurship as an important driver of sustainable development because social entrepreneurs develop innovative responses to economic, social and environmental problems. However, the extent to which such activities produce sustainable outcomes depends on the conditions under which social entrepreneurial initiatives operate.

Recent empirical evidence supports the developmental relevance of social entrepreneurship. Bansal et al. (2023), using a multi-stage research design and PLS-SEM, found that social mission, collaborative networks, innovation, financial viability and scalability significantly contribute to sustainable development. The study further established that the objectives of social enterprises and the SDGs are mutually reinforcing, suggesting that social enterprises can serve as important actors in the implementation of sustainable development.

The relevance of social entrepreneurship is also evident in the Nigerian context. Arejiogbe et al. (2023) examined social entrepreneurship and poverty alleviation for sustainable development in Nigeria and emphasised its potential to create employment, improve access to goods and services and promote economic, social and environmental improvements. Thus, social entrepreneurship can be conceptualised as a mechanism through which entrepreneurial resources, innovation and social purpose are combined to address development challenges. Nevertheless, the success of these activities may depend considerably on the individuals who lead and coordinate them.

2.1.2 **Social Entrepreneurs' Leadership**

Social entrepreneurs' leadership refers to the capacity of social entrepreneurs to provide direction, mobilise resources, influence stakeholders, encourage innovation and coordinate collective efforts towards the achievement of a social mission. Leadership is particularly important in social entrepreneurship because social entrepreneurs frequently operate with limited resources and must work with diverse stakeholders, including government agencies, communities, non-governmental organisations, donors and private organisations.

In recent years, leadership gain understanding as an additional aspect of social entrepreneurship. Guzmán et al. (2024) conducted a systematic mapping of the literature to gain a good understanding of the topic of leadership and social entrepreneurship and its development over time and found that the focus on leadership is an important area of research on social entrepreneurship and that the study of the relationship between leadership and social entrepreneurship has increased over time. Similarly, Ribeiro and Leitão (2024) have found that there is a strong link between sustainable leadership and sustainable entrepreneurship in a study of 149 studies. They have discovered that leadership is a source of inspiration and support to entrepreneurs which may result in sustainable practices, and their involvement of various stakeholders, innovation and positive socio-environmental outcomes.

Conceptually, then, social entrepreneurs' leadership is not limited to the functions of a manager. It is about sharing a social vision, inspiring participants, establishing co-operation networks, accessing resources and engaging stakeholders to address social challenges. These are especially vital when social entrepreneurs are working within institutional boundaries and need to orchestrate collective action. Therefore, good leadership can help to shape ideas into innovative social practices to either be considered small-scale projects or to become more sustainable, creating broader social impact.

2.1.3 **Sustainable Development Goals Attainment**

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are global development goals, which include 17 goals to address the interrelated issues of economics, society and the environment. Thus, success in achieving SDGs entails achievement in issues such as poverty alleviation, good jobs, quality education, gender equality, reduced inequalities, sustainable environment and inclusive economic growth. In the case of research on social entrepreneurship, SDG achievement can be seen as the contribution made by the enterprises towards the development in these sectors.

It has been proven by empirical evidence from some of the latest studies that there is the possible role of social enterprises towards achieving the SDGs. It was identified by Bansal et al. (2023) that social mission, innovation, collaboration networks, economic sustainability, and scalability have considerable impact on the sustainable development process. In a similar vein, it has been proved by Yan et al. (2022) that social entrepreneurship may offer ways out of poverty through social entrepreneurship and sustainable development goals.

This is supported by evidence from Nigeria. According to Arejiogbe et al. (2023), social entrepreneurship holds promise to be able to help alleviate poverty and achieve sustainable development due to the creation of jobs, the offering of products and services and improvements in social and environmental situations. This means that SDGs achievement within the scope of this study is what can result from tackling social, economic and environmental problems.

2.1.4 **Social Entrepreneurs' Leadership and SDG Attainment**

subject to how the leadership of social entrepreneurs contributes to perceiving Sustainable Development Goal (SDG), this can be explained by virtue of the ability of leadership to transform

the social mission of individuals into sustainable development intervention. Leadership can help in facilitating resource mobilization, collaboration among stakeholders, innovations and implementation of socially-driven programs. However, despite the presence of good leadership, achieving SDG cannot be assured due to the fact that there are other factors influencing development.

This existing research literature offers both relevant and conceptually distinct evidence of this association. Bansal et al. (2023) recognise a social mission, innovation, collaboration, financial viability and scalability as the factors related with sustainable development. This indicates that leadership could be acting through this association indirectly through setting priorities within the organisation, resource mobilisation, and coordination of stakeholders. It should be noted that while the evidence that such organisational attributes lead to sustainable development exists, it does not necessarily imply that the association between leadership and contribution to SDG exists independently of these organisational attributes

Similarly, Ribeiro and Leitão (2024) connect sustainable leadership with sustainable entrepreneurship, emphasising responsibility, stakeholder engagement and innovation. Although this relationship supports the argument that leadership can encourage sustainability-oriented practices, sustainable entrepreneurship concerns entrepreneurial processes directed towards sustainability, whereas SDG contribution concerns the extent to which activities address identifiable development objectives. The two constructs overlap but are not interchangeable. An enterprise may adopt environmentally responsible practices without demonstrating a measurable contribution to poverty reduction, gender equality or other specific SDGs.

Research on entrepreneurial leadership within conventional organizations also serves as another ground for the hypothesis made. Shiferaw et al. (2025), Ageli et al. (2025), and Alharthi (2025) consider various cases of leadership within manufacturing and banking industries, in relation to sustainable performance, innovation, or enterprise sustainability. In the context of their research results, it may be concluded that leadership is capable of helping in developing organizational capacities related to sustainability. Still, all the above-mentioned studies work at the level of organizational performance, where success is evaluated either in terms of enterprise performance or sustainability, not the role played by social entrepreneurship in achieving SDGs.

This is especially true in the case of social entrepreneurship, where the viability of an organization does not always correspond with the outcomes that it seeks. An economically viable social enterprise may create little positive impact on the underprivileged groups while a financially struggling enterprise could create significant educational, environmental, or poverty alleviation impacts without being financially successful. Therefore, the concept of enterprise sustainability cannot be seeing as synonymous to SDGs. It is essential to examine leadership in the context of its outcomes instead of success of the organizations.

Structuration Theory offers an additional rationale for explaining the variable nature of the relationship within different institutional contexts. Social entrepreneurs exert agency through the interpretation of development problems, utilizing resources at their disposal and organizing collective activities, yet their decisions are influenced by institutional norms, resource scarcity

and social practices (Giddens, 1984). The concept of leadership can thus be regarded as an instrument of using the structures at hand while simultaneously reproducing or changing them. It means that the connection between leadership and SDGs contribution is contingent on the context.

The central empirical issue is consequently whether social entrepreneurs' leadership is positively associated with their perceived contribution to the SDGs within the institutional and socioeconomic conditions of Kwara State, Nigeria. Although previous studies establish relevant connections between leadership, sustainability and social entrepreneurship, these relationships do not provide sufficient grounds for assuming that organisational sustainability automatically translates into SDG contribution.

The present study addresses this distinction by examining social entrepreneurs' leadership as a specific predictor of perceived SDG contribution.

2.1.5 **Conceptual Review Summary**

The concept review defines three distinct yet interrelated aspects of the current study. Social entrepreneurship is viewed as a mission-oriented entrepreneurial approach that deals with social and environmental challenges. The issue of social entrepreneurs' leadership relates to the ability of guiding, mobilizing, influencing, and coordinating actions toward a certain social mission. Contribution to SDGs is viewed as perceived contribution of social entrepreneurs to particular sustainable development goals.

The difference between leadership and SDG contribution concepts is important because leadership concept is being used as an explanatory one, whereas the perceived SDG contribution is the outcome concept. Organisational performance, sustainable entrepreneurship and enterprise sustainability can serve as the contextual evidences; however, these concepts are not able to determine on their own the level of the impact of social entrepreneurs on the SDGs. This study investigates the relationship between the two concepts mentioned, understanding that the results of the research will show only perceived contributions to SDGs.

2.2 **Theoretical Framework**

The research is built on Structuration Theory that was formulated by Anthony Giddens in 1984. Structuration Theory gives a theoretical model of the connection between human agency and social structures, assuming that social systems are created and recreated by knowledgeable agents within structural settings.

Modern use of Structuration Theory in the analysis of social entrepreneurship suggests that this theory can be used in order to analyze practices of socio-ecological transformation carried out by social entrepreneurs (Krlev, 2026). It turns out that social entrepreneurs are not simply dependent on structural settings but interact with them and change them.

The theory becomes very useful in comprehending the impact of leadership of social entrepreneurs on SDGs. To begin with, social entrepreneurs are knowledgeable actors that

operate within the institutional context of rules, culture, economics, and politics that facilitate and inhibit the actions of social entrepreneurs (Giddens, 1984). Secondly, it is possible for social entrepreneurs to reshape social structure through innovations, challenges to the established systems, and creation of new institutions and practices (Krlev, 2026). Thirdly, the link between leadership of social entrepreneurs and achievement of SDGs can be perceived as a reciprocal one where leaders utilize the structural capabilities while at the same time changing the conditions of future social actions.

According to Structuration Theory, the social entrepreneur's leadership plays an important role in SDG achievement through several channels. First, the social entrepreneur can utilise structural resources such as financial capital, human capital, social capital, and institutional capacity to resolve issues of sustainable development. Second, the social entrepreneur can bring people together to take actions and change social structures in ways that would become more favourable for sustainable development. Inversely, the structural factors in Kwara State include poor infrastructure and lack of institutional support and resources that create the possibilities and limitations for the social entrepreneur's leadership.

2.3 **Empirical Review**

Recent empirical studies have examined the relationships among social entrepreneurship, leadership and sustainable development. The review is organised thematically to facilitate critical synthesis.

2.3.1 **Entrepreneurial Leadership and Sustainable Development Outcomes**

Research on entrepreneurial leadership and sustainability provides evidence that leadership may support organisational capabilities and outcomes associated with sustainable development. However, differences in the dependent variables, organisational settings and explanatory mechanisms limit the extent to which these findings can be transferred directly to social entrepreneurship.

The study by Shiferaw et al. (2025), which used a cross-sectional survey of 501 individuals and PLSSEM analysis in manufacturing firms in Ethiopia, discovered a connection between entrepreneurial leadership and sustainable performance with leader innovativeness behavior being the mediating mechanism. Hence, the implication from this study is that leadership impacts sustainability, perhaps partly through innovation processes. The major contribution of the paper, therefore, is not only the importance of leadership, but also how leadership impacts sustainability through organizational capabilities. However, manufacturing firm performance is different from social enterprise development contributions.

Similar results were obtained by Ageli et al. (2025), who found a positive link between entrepreneurial leadership and sustainable performance of banks in Turkey ($\beta = 0.371$, $p < .001$). Unlike Shiferaw et al. (2025), this study stresses the significance of employee-level and organisational climate factors more. Both papers provide theoretical support to the idea that there is a connection between leadership and sustainability, but no research demonstrates the

correlation between the leadership of social entrepreneurs and their contribution to specific SDGs.

Alharthi (2025) found a connection between entrepreneurial leadership and technology innovation, team creativity, analytical thinking and enterprise performance. Enterprise performance was further related to enterprise sustainability ($\beta = 0.177$, $p < .01$). Such results suggest the existence of the potential for leadership to work through a variety of organisational competencies without the direct impact on sustainability results. It is necessary to note that the link between firm performance and enterprise sustainability cannot be regarded as the same type of connection between leadership and contribution to SDG achievement.

Mohamed et al. (2026) conducted research regarding leadership, team psychological safety and sustainable development behaviour of 318 nurses in Egyptian university hospitals. Entrepreneurial leadership was found to be associated with sustainable development behaviour and was moderated by sustainable leadership as well as mediated by team psychological safety. The current analysis broadens the perspective beyond the traditional approach to financial performance. Nonetheless, employee behavior in healthcare organisations is different from the overall development efforts of social entrepreneurship initiatives.

The above research studies collectively point to the fact that leadership can be used for achieving sustainability through innovation and creativity, organizational climate and collaboration. However, the mechanisms and outcomes investigated by these researches are quite different from each other. Corporate performance, sustainability, sustainable development behavior and SDG contribution are related terms that should not be confused with each other. Therefore, the above literature provides evidence for the potentiality of a positive leadership-SDG association. 2.3.2

Social Entrepreneurship and Perceived SDG contribution

Research examining social entrepreneurship and the SDGs provides a closer connection to the outcome variable of the present study. However, this literature frequently focuses on the contribution of social enterprises as organisational actors rather than isolating leadership as an explanatory variable.

In a qualitative multiple case study comprising 20 interviews carried out in Uganda, Turyakira et al. (2025) investigated social entrepreneurship and SDG achievement. Findings from this investigation pointed to the contributions to poverty alleviation, education, gender equality, decent work and reduced inequalities, as well as financial constraints and poor managerial skills as challenges. This study gives contextually relevant evidence from Africa and shows that development contributions require some organisational capacities and resource availability. However, since it is based on qualitative research methods, it can only give contextual explanations but not an estimation of the independent relationship between leadership and SDG contribution.

The study carried out by Quaye et al. (2024) in Ghana used focus group discussions among stakeholders in order to examine social enterprises and SDG-based solutions. It put the focus on

mission-oriented operations, responsive innovation and social problem solving. Although it highlights the role of stakeholders' perspectives in explaining the way social enterprises contribute to development, compared to the study by Turyakira et al. (2025), evidence that stakeholders consider social enterprises as suitable for the SDGs does not prove independent leadership prediction.

According to Attah and Yonkor (2025), who have employed a mixed-methods approach through a quantitative survey of 250 and qualitative interviews with 20 social enterprises in Nigeria, Kenya, Ghana, and South Africa, enterprise size, diversification of funding, and sector appear to be significant determinants of SDG contribution. This research is very interesting since it involves social enterprises in Nigeria and focuses on development contributions, and not abstract concepts of sustainability. The other interesting thing about this study is that organizational resources and sectors can play an important role in the results of social entrepreneurship. But unless the concept of leadership was actually tested in this research, we cannot make any conclusions about it.

These three studies vary on how they analyze their subject matters. While Turyakira et al. (2025) highlight the experiences and challenges of social entrepreneurs, Quaye et al. (2024) concentrate on the stakeholders' perceptions of social enterprises. Also, Attah and Yonkor (2025) examine the enterprise attributes and SDG contribution through mixed methods. The main contribution of these three studies to this research lies in their ability to prove the importance of social entrepreneurship to development goals. However, their main weakness is that they do not separate the leadership of social entrepreneurs from the other factors in relation to SDG contribution.

2.3.3 **Social Entrepreneurial Competencies and Sustainability**

Research on competencies of entrepreneurs can provide another angle since they focus on the competencies through which the social entrepreneurs can create sustainable impacts. But competencies, leadership, and sustainability should not be considered to be same constructs.

In their study of competencies of social entrepreneurs, social innovation, and sustainable social entrepreneurship in Thailand, Wirotthitiyawong et al. (2025) used survey data collected from 200 social enterprises and analyzed the data using structural equation modeling. The findings of their research showed that competencies were significantly related to social innovation ($\beta = 0.972$) and social innovation had positive relationship with sustainable impacts ($\beta = 0.707$).

The results imply that social entrepreneurs' competencies can play a role in sustainability through innovation. Nevertheless, a competence approach is distinct from the one where leadership is treated as an independent construct. For leadership to be included in a more general competence measurement, it is necessary to prove its unique contribution by separately measuring and validating the construct. In addition, there is a difference between sustainable social entrepreneurship and SDG contribution because the former relates to sustainability, while the latter relates to achievement of developmental goals.

The study therefore provides conceptual support for examining leadership-related capabilities but leaves an analytical distinction unresolved. The present research treats social entrepreneurs'

leadership as a separate predictor and perceived SDG contribution as the outcome, thereby focusing on a relationship that cannot be inferred directly from a broader competencies–innovation–sustainability model.

2.3.4 **Critical Synthesis and Research Gap**

The empirical literature discussed in this paper provides three overlapping, but incomplete lines of evidence. The first line deals with entrepreneurial leadership and its impact on sustainable development outcomes in manufacturing, banking and healthcare organisations. The second relates to social entrepreneurship and impact on SDGs particularly in Africa. The third focuses on social entrepreneurial skills, innovations and sustainability of the business. Although these three lines of evidence clearly demonstrate the concepts of leadership, entrepreneurial skills and social enterprise are applicable to sustainable development, the evidence cannot be added together because there are conceptual and analytical differences.

In terms of conceptual considerations, the most significant differentiation is that which relates to the dependent variable. Sustainable performance has been defined as organisational performance in economic, social and environmental dimensions. Enterprise sustainability can be described as the ability of an enterprise or its activities to be sustainable in the long run, albeit it might be measured in different ways in various researches. Sustainable entrepreneurship refers to entrepreneurship processes and opportunities that aim at sustainability. Social entrepreneurship means that social purpose is central to the process of entrepreneurship. Contribution to SDGs is the extent to which the activities contribute to specific development goals. All these concepts can be interrelated but evidence of one does not necessarily imply evidence of others.

Regarding methodology, the literature under review also differs in terms of what can be shown. Case studies and focus groups allow us to gain an understanding of the experience of stakeholders, institutional factors, and the way in which social enterprises can help development. They cannot provide information about the independent statistical connection between leadership and the SDG contribution. It is possible to evaluate such a connection using SEM and PLS-SEM methods when the constructs in question are operationalized independently, even though the use of the cross-sectional design still needs to be treated with caution. Mixed-methods approach allows for the integration of both types of research, yet the importance of the results will depend on whether the variables and relationships of interest have been studied. The problem here is not with the method in general, but rather with the need to test the leadership construct directly related to the SDG-contribution.

The theoretical evidence is similarly fragmented. Studies of entrepreneurial leadership frequently explain sustainability through innovation, creativity, psychological safety or organisational climate, whereas studies of social entrepreneurship and SDGs tend to emphasise social mission, enterprise characteristics, stakeholder engagement and resource availability. Structuration Theory offers a way to connect these explanations by treating leadership as agency exercised within enabling and constraining social structures. However, the reviewed evidence does not, by itself, establish how this relationship operates in the institutional context of Kwara State. The present study therefore uses the theory to frame the relationship while recognising that its

empirical model tests the direct association rather than the full reciprocal relationship between structure and agency.

On a contextual note, examples of empirical evidence from Ethiopia, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Uganda, Ghana, and even a multi-country study in Africa suggest that there has been a study of the role of leadership and social entrepreneurship under various circumstances. Inclusion of Nigeria in a multi-country study is also worth considering, but evidence obtained from national or cross-country research does not necessarily provide an answer for sub-national differences. The Kwara State serves as a bounded context in which social entrepreneurs and their beneficiaries could be studied in a specific institutional, socio-economic, and community setting. The relevance of this setting is to test the proposed relationship rather than to assume that the state is unique compared to other places.

Based on this reasoning, the current study points to an empirical gap as follows: The literature review lacks sufficient evidence on the independent relationship between social entrepreneurs' leadership and the perceived SDG contribution in Kwara State, Nigeria. It is important to note that the above assertion is based on the literature review and not because no researcher anywhere has ever examined the relationship before. For one to conclusively state that no such research exists, there must be a systematic search of the literature in relevant databases with relevant search strings and years of publications, as well as confirmation of the methods used in the original research.

Through PLS-SEM, the study explores the independent relationship between social entrepreneurs' leadership and perceived SDG contribution. Specifically, the contribution of this study is to make a focused investigation of the independent relationship between the variables under study, as well as differentiating perceived development contribution from actual SDG contributions and organisational sustainability. The research will therefore help in determining the independent relationship between the variables of interest.

2.3.4 **Synthesis and Research Gap**

Table 2.1:

Comparative Summary of Reviewed Empirical Studies

Author(s) & Year	Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Context	Methodology	Leadership Isolated?	SDG Measured?
Shiferaw et	Entrepreneu	Sustainab	Ethiopian	Quantitat	Yes	No
Author(s) & Year	Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Context	Methodology	Leadership Isolated ?	SDG Measured?

al. (2025)	rial Leadership	le Performa nce	Manufactu ring	ive; PLSSEM		
Ageli et al. (2025)	Entrepreneu rial Leadership	Sustainab le Ban k Performa nce	Turkish Banking	Quantitat ive; SEM	Yes	No
Mohamed et al. (2026)	Entrepreneu rial Leadership	Sustainab le Develop ment Behaviou r	Egyptian Healthcare	Quantitat ive; Regressi on	Yes	Aligned
Alharthi (2025)	Entrepreneu rial Leadership	Enterpris e Sustainab ility	Saudi Manufactu ring	Quantitat ive; SEM	Yes	No
Turyakira et al. (2025)	Social Entrepreneu rship	Perceived SDG contributi on	Uganda	Qualitati ve; Case Study	No	Yes
Quaye et al. (2024)	Social Enterprises	SDG Achieve ment	Ghana	Qualitati ve; Focus Groups	No	Yes
Attah & Yonkor (2025)	Social Entrepreneu rship	SDG Contribut ion	Nigeria, Kenya, Ghana, South Africa	Mixed-Methods	No	Yes
Wirotthitiya wong et al. (2025)	Social Entrepreneu r Competenci es	Sustainab ility	Thailand	Quantitat ive; SEM	Compo nent	Aligned

Source: Researchers' compilation (2026) The empirical review reveals three critical gaps. Methodologically, studies directly linking social entrepreneurship with Perceived SDG

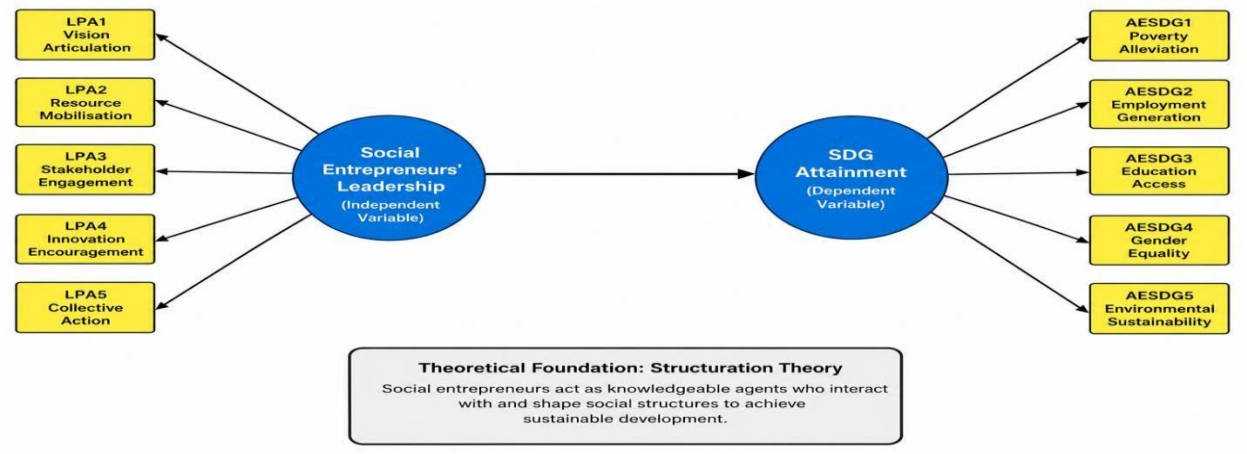
contribution have largely adopted qualitative approaches (Turyakira et al., 2025; Quaye et al., 2024), while studies examining leadership effects on sustainability have focused on conventional organisations rather than social enterprises (Shiferaw et al., 2025; Ageli et al., 2025; Mohamed et al., 2026; Alharthi, 2025). Conceptually, no study has directly isolated leadership as a specific predictor of Perceived SDG contribution among social entrepreneurs. Leadership has been treated either as an independent variable in conventional organisations or as a component of broader entrepreneurial competencies (Wirotthitiyawong et al., 2025). Contextually, while African evidence on social entrepreneurship and SDGs exists from Uganda (Turyakira et al., 2025), Ghana (Quaye et al., 2024), and multiple African countries (Attah & Yonkor, 2025), no study has examined the influence of social entrepreneurs' leadership on Perceived SDG contribution specifically in Kwara State, Nigeria.

This study addresses these gaps by: employing a quantitative PLS-SEM approach to test the influence of social entrepreneurs' leadership on Perceived SDG contribution; isolating leadership as a specific independent variable; and (3) providing empirical evidence from Kwara State, Nigeria.

2.3.5 **Conceptual Framework**

Based on the theoretical and empirical review, the conceptual framework for this study is show in Figure 2.1. The framework explain that social entrepreneurs' leadership directly influences Perceived SDG contribution in Kwara State, Nigeria.

Figure 2.1:
Conceptual Framework



Source: PLS SEM Structural model (2026)

This model represents the assumed relationship between leadership of the social entrepreneurs and achievement of the SDGs. In this model, the concept of leadership is defined as the ability of

the social entrepreneurs to lead by offering vision, resource mobilization, stakeholder influence, coordination of collective action, innovation, and guiding of social entrepreneurship activities towards sustainable social outcomes. The achievement of the SDGs is defined as the degree to which the activities of the social entrepreneurs result in sustainable development outcomes.

2.3.6 **Summary of Literature Review**

The findings from the literature review clearly show that social entrepreneurship can be an effective method of tackling various social, economic, and environmental problems using a mission-driven strategy, whereas the concept of leadership may assist in making the missions of social ventures work through effective collaboration. Social entrepreneurship, sustainable entrepreneurship, enterprise sustainability, sustainable performance, and SDG contribution are separate analytical frameworks. Research evidence on the link between leadership and organisational sustainability thus constitutes the foundation for the current research.

The empirical review reveals similar results that have been reported through studies on entrepreneurial leadership in traditional organizations, social entrepreneurship and SDGs related activities in Africa, and social entrepreneurial competencies and innovations. The difference is in their theoretical orientation, outcomes, designs, and locations. Their collective contribution is to establish the plausibility of a leadership–development relationship, while leaving the specific relationship between social entrepreneurs' leadership and perceived SDG contribution insufficiently resolved within the literature reviewed.

Structuration Theory provides the theoretical explanation by positioning leadership as agency exercised within enabling and constraining social structures. Kwara State offers a defined subnational context in which this proposed relationship can be tested. Accordingly, the present study uses PLS-

SEM to examine the direct association between social entrepreneurs' leadership and perceived SDG contribution, while interpreting its findings in line with the cross-sectional design and perceptionbased measurement of the outcome.

3.0 **Methodology**

Descriptive Survey Research was the research design that was employed in investigating the effect of leadership of social entrepreneurs on contribution towards SDGs in Kwara State, Nigeria. The study population comprised social entrepreneurs and their beneficiaries in Kwara State. The sample size determination of the study was done by employing two sampling techniques. For the beneficiaries whose population size was not known, Cochran's (1977) formula was adopted and the resulting sample size was 384 respondents. For the social entrepreneurs whose population was 357, Krejcie & Morgan (1970) table was adopted and resulted in a target sample size of 290 respondents. Therefore, there was an expected respondent pool of 674 respondents (290 social entrepreneurs and 384 beneficiaries). The data collection involved administering an online questionnaire measured on Likerttype scale. Though the expected respondent pool was 674, there were 462 valid responses obtained for analysis, with 222 social entrepreneurs and 240 beneficiaries, giving a response rate of 68.5% (76.6% for social

entrepreneurs and 62.5% for beneficiaries).The shortfall between the expected and achieved samples is acknowledged; however, the achieved valid responses were considered adequate for the intended analysis, as they exceed the minimum sample size requirements for Partial Least Squares Structural Equation

There were several rationales for considering Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) suitable for this research. Firstly, the research aim is concerned with predicting and exploring the relationship between social entrepreneurs' leadership and perceived SDG contributions, which corresponds to the predictive focus of PLS-SEM. Secondly, the conceptual model contains a few constructs with very reliable indicators, and the number of respondents (n = 462) is greater than needed according to the model complexity. Thirdly, PLS-SEM does not assume that all variables must have multivariate normal distributions, thus it is suitable for the type of data used in the research. Finally, the technique allows obtaining necessary indices (e.g., R^2, f^2, Q^2).

(PLS-SEM) given the complexity of the model, and the response rate is consistent with those typically reported for online-administered surveys. For this study, the analysis focused on social entrepreneurs' leadership, measured using four indicators (LPA2–LPA5), and perceived SDG contribution, measured using four indicators (AESDG2–AESDG5). The data were analysed using PLS-SEM with SmartPLS 4. The measurement model was assessed for reliability and validity, while the structural model was evaluated using collinearity statistics, coefficient of determination, effect size, predictive relevance, and hypothesis testing. Bootstrapping with 5,000 subsamples was employed to assess the statistical significance of the relationship between social entrepreneurs' leadership and perceived SDG contribution.

3.1 **Model Specification**

The model specification is written like this:

$SDG = \beta_0 + \beta_1 LEAD + \varepsilon$ where SDG = Perceived SDG contribution,

LEAD = social entrepreneurs' leadership, β_0 = constant, β_1 = path coefficient, and ε = error term.

The null hypothesis of the study is given below:

H_0: Social entrepreneurs' leadership has no significant influence on Perceived SDG contribution in Kwara State, Nigeria.

4.0 **Data Analysis, Results and Discussion** 4.1 **Data Analysis**

Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) using SmartPLS 4 software was employed to analyse the data in this study. The population for this research consists of 462 observations containing both social entrepreneurs and beneficiaries. The data from the entire study was analyzed, and results that specifically deal with the impact of social entrepreneur's leadership on SDGs were extracted for this paper.

The analysis included an assessment of the measurement model (reliability, internal consistency reliability, convergent validity and discriminant validity), as well as the structural model (collinearity, coefficient of determination, effect size, predictive relevance, and hypothesis testing). Bootstrap procedure with 5,000 subsamples was employed to generate t-statistics and p-values.

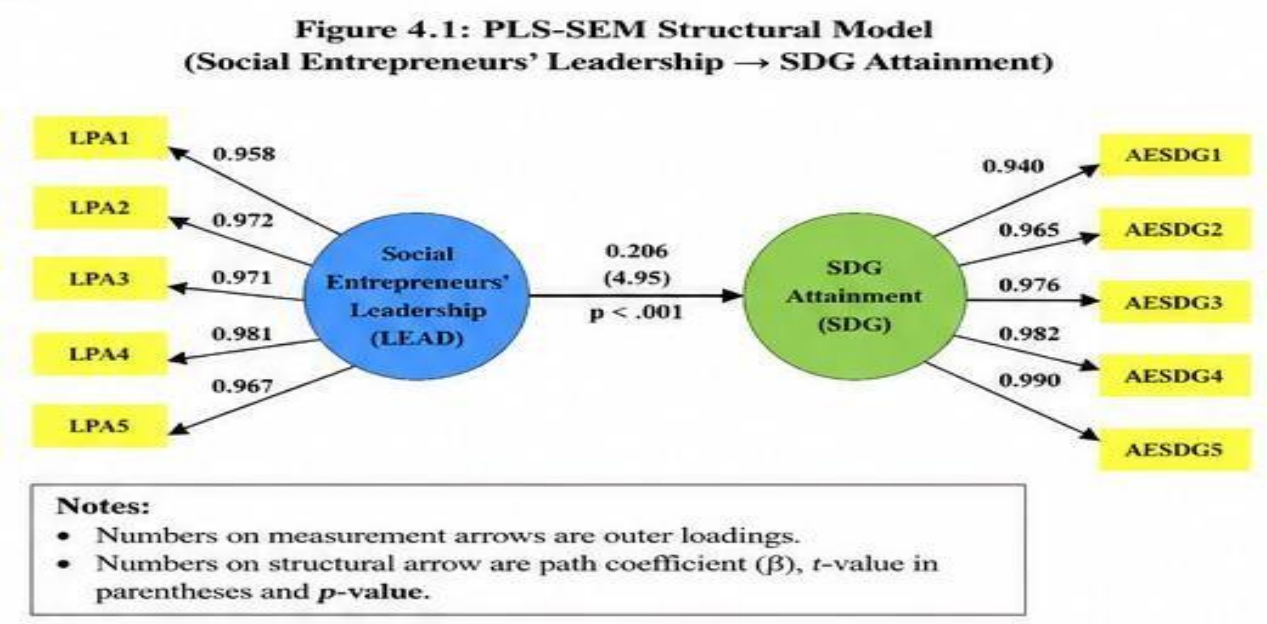
4.2 **Operational Model**

Variable Construct		Indicators	Role
Variable Construct		**Indicators**	**Role**
LEAD	Social Leadership	Entrepreneurs' LPA1, LPA2, LPA3, LPA4, LPA5	Independent Variable
SDGA	Perceived SDG contribution	AESDG1, AESDG2, AESDG3, AESDG4, AESDG5	Dependent Variable

Source: Researchers' Compilation, (2026)

F**igure 4.1:**

PLS-SEM Structural Model (Social Entrepreneurs' Leadership → Perceived SDG contribution)



Source: PLS SEM Structural model (2026)

4.3 **Measurement Model Assessment**

4.3.1 **Indicator Reliability**

Table 4.1:

Outer Loadings (Indicator Reliability)

Construct	Indicator	Outer Loading	Construct	Indicator	Outer Loading
Social Entrepreneurs' Leadership (LEAD)	LPA1	0.958	Perceived SDG contribution (SDG)	AESDG1	0.940
	LPA2	.972		AESDG2	.965
	LPA3	.971		AESDG3	.976
	LPA4	.981		AESDG4	.982
	LPA5	.967		AESDG5	.990

Source: PLS-SEM Output (SmartPLS 4, 2026)

As illustrated in Table 4.1, all the indicators have outer loadings greater than the recommended value of 0.70, ranging between 0.940 and 0.990, which reflects high levels of indicator reliability. Therefore, all indicators sufficiently measured their construct and were kept in the analysis.

4.3.2 **Internal Consistency Reliability**

Table 4.2:

Internal Consistency Reliability

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	Decision
Social Entrepreneurs' Leadership (LEAD)	.988	.988	.991	Reliable
Perceived SDG contribution (SDG)	.996	.997	.997	Reliable

Source: PLS-SEM Output (SmartPLS 4, 2026)

According to Table 4.2, reliability was high for both constructs, with all the values of Cronbach's alpha, rho_A, and Composite Reliability being above the threshold value of 0.70. The values for leadership were 0.988, 0.988, and 0.991 respectively, while those of Perceived SDG contribution were 0.996, 0.997, and 0.997 respectively. 4.3.3 **Convergent Validity**

Table 4.3:

Average Variance Extracted (AVE)

Construct	AVE	Decision
Social Entrepreneurs' Leadership (LEAD)	.955	Valid
Perceived SDG contribution (SDG)	.925	Valid

Source: PLS-SEM Output (SmartPLS 4, 2026)

From Table 4.3, it can be seen that AVE values for the constructs of leadership (0.955) and Perceived SDG contribution (0.925) exceed the recommended 0.50 criterion, signifying sufficient convergent validity.

4.3.4 **Discriminant Validity**

Table 4.4:

Fornell–Larcker Criterion

Constructs	LEAD	SDG
Social Entrepreneurs' Leadership (LEAD)	.977	
Perceived SDG contribution (SDG)	.882	.962

Source: PLS-SEM Output (SmartPLS 4, 2026)

As evident from Table 4.4, the value of square root of AVE for the constructs of Leadership (0.977) and Perceived SDG contribution (0.962) is greater than their inter-construct correlation (0.882). This proves that there is discriminant validity between the two constructs.

Table 4.5:

Heterotrait–Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

Constructs	LEAD	SDG
Social Entrepreneurs' Leadership (LEAD)		
Perceived SDG contribution (SDG)	.888	

Note: HTMT values should be < 0.90 (conservative) or < 0.95 (liberal).

Source: PLS-SEM Output (SmartPLS 4, 2026)

As shown in Table 4.5, the HTMT score is at 0.888 and below the cutoff point of 0.90. This validates the discriminant validity of Social Entrepreneurs' Leadership and Perceived SDG contribution as unique constructs.

4.4 **Structural Model**

Assessment 4.4.1 **Collinearity**

Assessment Table 4.6:

Collinearity Statistics (VIF)

Predictor	VIF	Decision
Social Entrepreneurs' Leadership (LEAD)	1.000	No collinearity

Source: PLS-SEM Output (SmartPLS 4, 2026)

Table 4.6 reveals that the VIF value is 1.000, which falls far short of the suggested level of 5.0. This shows there is no issue of collinearity, and thus the predictor is appropriate for use in the structural model.

4.4.2 **Coefficient of Determination (R^2)**

Table 4.7:

R^2 for Endogenous Construct

Endogenous Construct	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Decision
Perceived SDG contribution (SDG)	0.042	0.040	Small

Note: R^2 = 0.042 means 4.2% of the variance in Perceived SDG contribution is explained by social entrepreneurs' leadership.

Source: PLS-SEM Output (SmartPLS 4, 2026)

Table 4.7 reveals that the model accounts for 4.2% of the total variance in SDG achievement (R^2 = 0.042) with an adjusted R^2 of 0.040. This indicates a small explanatory power for the single-predictor model.

4.4.3 **Effect Size (f^2)**

Table 4.8:

Effect Size (f^2)

Predictor	Endogenous Construct	f^2	Interpretation
Social Entrepreneurs' Leadership (LEAD)	Perceived SDG contribution (SDG)	0.044	Small

Source: PLS-SEM Output (SmartPLS 4, 2026)

Table 4.8 reveals that Social Entrepreneurs' Leadership has an f^2 of 0.044, which meets the 0.02 threshold for a small effect size. This implies that while leadership has a statistically significant role, its unique contribution to explaining the variance is modest. 4.4.4 **Predictive Relevance (Q^2) Table 4.9:**

Predictive Relevance

Endogenous Construct	Q^2 (=1-SSE/SSO)	Decision
Perceived SDG contribution (SDG)	.351	Relevant

Note: Q^2 was obtained via blindfolding using an omission distance of D = 7.

Source: PLS-SEM Output (SmartPLS 4, 2026)

As can be seen in Table 4.9, the obtained Q^2 value is equal to 0.351, which exceeds zero. This means that the model is predictive in respect of Perceived SDG contribution. 4.4.5 **Path Coefficient and Hypothesis Testing Table 4.10:**

Path Coefficient and Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesised Relationship	β	Bootstrap SE	95% BCa CI	t-value	pvalue	Decision
LEAD → SDG	.206	0.042	[0.125, 0.288]	4.95	<0.001	Reject H_0

Source: PLS-SEM Output (SmartPLS 4, 2026)

Social Entrepreneurs' Leadership's influence on Perceived SDG contribution is positive and statistically significant based on Table 4.10, where the beta coefficient is equal to β = 0.206, with tvalue = 4.95 and p-value < 0.001. The 95% confidence interval [0.125, 0.288] does not straddle zero, confirming significance. Consequently, H_0 is rejected, indicating the significant influence of Social Entrepreneurs' Leadership on Perceived SDG contribution.

4.5 **Discussion of Findings**

From the analysis carried out, it was clear that leadership in social entrepreneurship had a positive significant impact on the SDGs in Kwara state with a β of 0.206, t=4.95 and p<0.001 respectively. The effect size is small f^2=0.044 and the model explains only 4.2% of SDG contribution, but it is an important one. In complex social systems, macro-level outcomes such as attainment of SDGs are multi-determined, meaning that a path from a single individual-level construct (leadership) is significant at the statistical level and conveys a strong message.

The finding supports the importance of the leadership construct, suggesting the presence of a unique contribution of leadership on the attainment of SDGs. This leadership is what enables the social entrepreneur to be able to establish direction, rally resources, marshal stakeholders, and keep initiatives going on topics of poverty, education, gender equity, environmental sustainability and job creation.

This finding is congruent with the premise of Structuration Theory (Giddens, 1984) stating that human agents with knowledge can act in a structure-constrained way to produce social change. The social entrepreneur is a knowledgeable agent who applies leadership behaviours to overcome institutional voids and mobilise resources in Kwara State. In addition, this is congruent with previous studies (e.g., Mohamed et al., 2026; Shiferaw et al., 2025) that reported a positive association between leadership constructs and sustainable results, but this study applies this to the leadership construct in the broader context of social entrepreneurship and macro-level SDG contribution.

4.6 **Summary of Findings**

Based on the above, it can be said that leadership is one of the key factors that can help social entrepreneurs to implement sustainable development and make social missions and social entrepreneurship initiatives effective to realize the SDGs. Leadership is effective in providing direction, resource mobilization, stakeholder engagement, coordination of collective actions, and the sustainability of initiatives geared towards solving problems such as poverty, education, unemployment, gender equality, and environmental issues.

The study reveals that social entrepreneurs' leadership is an important determinant of the perceived SDG contributions in Kwara State, Nigeria based on empirical evidence. Lastly, the results corroborate with the core tenets of the Structuration Theory that requires knowledgeable human beings to interact with structures and change structures. Thus, better social entrepreneurship leadership fosters the capacity to engage and change the structure in order to realize sustainable development.

5.0 **Conclusion**

Based on the above, it is safe to say that the role of leadership is of paramount importance in the realization of SDGs through social missions and entrepreneurial actions, which if not achieved properly, would be a failure in the realization of SDGs. Effective leadership exists in the direction, mobilisation of resources, engagement of stakeholders, coordination of collective actions, and sustainability of activities focused on problem-solving related to poverty alleviation, education, employment, gender equality and environmental protection.

The study offers empirical evidence which shows that social entrepreneurs' leadership is a significant predictor of perceived SDG contribution in Kwara State, Nigeria. Lastly, the results support the core tenet of the Structuration Theory that an informed human can interact with structures and alter structures. Thus, better social entrepreneur leadership boosts their leadership capability to relate and change the structures to promote sustainable development.

5.1 **Recommendation**

Based on the result of the significant positive relationship of social entrepreneurs' leadership with SDG success in Kwara State, the recommendation is to create special leadership development programme for social entrepreneurs. This could be achieved through the help of government agencies and institutions dedicated to entrepreneurship development.

These programs need to develop their visioning skills, resource mobilization skills, stakeholder engagement skills, innovativeness, and coordination of collective efforts. The effect size for leadership is small, suggesting that SDG attainment is a multi-stakeholder process; however, the statistically significant relationship suggests that investments in leadership capacity will have measurable, positive impacts on the region's SDG process.

5.2 **Contribution to Knowledge**

The seminar contributes to knowledge by focusing specifically on social entrepreneurs' leadership as a predictor of Perceived SDG contribution, rather than examining social entrepreneurship generally. Existing studies reviewed in the seminar have largely examined social entrepreneurship and SDGs or entrepreneurial leadership and sustainability separately. The present study therefore provides empirical evidence from Kwara State, Nigeria, using a quantitative PLS-SEM approach to establish the direct relationship between social entrepreneurs' leadership and Perceived SDG contribution.

The study also demonstrates the relevance of Structuration Theory to social entrepreneurship by showing how social entrepreneurs, through leadership, can mobilise available structural resources and engage with stakeholders to promote sustainable development outcomes. In this sense, the study extends understanding of the role of individual agency in advancing SDG-related activities within a specific institutional and community context

5.3 **Suggestions for Future Research**

Based on the limitations of this study, the following areas are suggested for future research:

1.Longitudinal Studies: Longitudinal research design would have helped in establishing a cause-andeffect relationship.Future studies on the effect of the leadership of social entrepreneurs on the attainment of SDGs should use a longitudinal design to find out the influence of social entrepreneurship leaders on SDGs over time and how the impact of their leadership changes with growth and development of social enterprises.

2.Comparative Studies: Future research should focus on conducting comparative studies in other states or other African countries apart from the case study of Kwara State, Nigeria.The comparison between urban and rural social enterprises would also help a lot in identifying the factors that affect the relationship between leadership and Perceived SDG contribution in different areas.

3.Mediating and Moderating Factors: In this study, leadership is considered as a variable that directly affects SDG achievement.Future research should consider the role of mediating and moderating factors such as stakeholder engagement, effective partnerships, institutional support, availability of resources, and social innovations that mediate leadership's influence on Perceived SDG contribution (Wirotthitiyawong et al., 2025).

4.Multi-dimensional Leadership: Future studies should consider multiple dimensions of leadership to identify different leadership styles that affect SDG achievement.In this case, multi-dimensional leadership refers to visionary, participative, transactional, and transformational leadership.

5.Mixed-Methods Approach: Future research should adopt the mixed methods approach that combines both qualitative and quantitative designs to provide comprehensive information about

how the leadership of social entrepreneurs contributes to Perceived SDG contribution and the supporting or constraining factors (Turyakira et al., 2025).

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