Multidisciplinary

A framework for scaling social entrepreneurship in Nigeria: strategies for creating sustainable social impact

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Abstract

Social entrepreneurship plays a critical role in addressing socio-economic challenges in Nigeria, yet scaling these ventures remains a persistent challenge. This study proposes a comprehensive framework for scaling social entrepreneurship in Nigeria, emphasizing strategies that foster sustainable social impact. The framework integrates key elements such as innovative financing mechanisms, strategic partnerships, technology adoption, policy advocacy, and capacity-building initiatives. A mixed-methods approach was employed, combining qualitative interviews with social entrepreneurs and quantitative analysis of scaling models from successful case studies. Findings highlight that access to funding remains a primary barrier, necessitating diversified financial instruments such as impact investing, blended finance, and social impact bonds. Strategic partnerships with government agencies, private sector actors, and international development organizations facilitate resource mobilization, policy influence, and market expansion. Additionally, technology-driven solutions, including digital platforms and data analytics, enhance operational efficiency, outreach, and impact measurement. The study further underscores the importance of policy support in creating an enabling environment for social enterprises to thrive. Recommendations include policy reforms that provide tax incentives, regulatory ease, and institutional support for social enterprises. Capacity-building programs, including leadership training, business development services, and mentorship initiatives, are also identified as crucial enablers for scaling social enterprises. The integration of local knowledge and community engagement ensures that social entrepreneurship interventions are culturally relevant, adaptable, and sustainable. This framework provides a roadmap for policymakers, investors, and social entrepreneurs to scale social enterprises effectively, maximizing their contribution to sustainable development. By leveraging innovative financing, fostering collaborations, and embracing technology, social enterprises in Nigeria can achieve large-scale, systemic change. Future research should explore sector-specific scaling strategies and evaluate the long-term impact of these interventions.

Keywords: social entrepreneurship, scaling strategies, sustainable impact, social enterprises, impact investing, technology adoption, policy advocacy, strategic partnerships, Nigeria

1. Introduction

Social entrepreneurship in Nigeria has emerged as a pivotal force for economic growth and social transformation, addressing critical issues such as poverty, unemployment, and inadequate access to healthcare and education. This sector is characterized by its dual focus on social impact and financial sustainability, distinguishing it from traditional business models that prioritize profit maximization (Achumie, Bakare & Okeke, 2024, Egbumokei, *et al.*, 2024, Iriogbe, Ebeh & Onita, 2024).

Social enterprises in Nigeria are increasingly recognized for their role in bridging gaps left by government interventions and private sector initiatives, particularly in underserved communities (Amadu, 2023; Osabohien *et al.*, 2022; "Social Enterprise Challenges in Nigeria: Multiple Cases Approach Nigeria", 2021).

Recent studies highlight the rise of innovative social enterprises across various sectors, including agriculture, renewable energy, education, and financial inclusion. These enterprises leverage technology and innovative practices to tackle complex social challenges, thereby contributing to economic development (Amadu, 2023; Osabohien *et al.*, 2022; Osabohien *et al.*, 2022). However, despite their potential, many social enterprises face significant hurdles in scaling their operations. Challenges such as limited access to funding, inadequate policy support, and operational inefficiencies hinder their growth and impact ("Social Enterprise Challenges in Nigeria: Multiple Cases Approach Nigeria", 2021; Ogbo *et al.*, 2019).

Scaling social enterprises is essential for national development, as it enhances their capacity to reach a broader audience, create job opportunities, and stabilize the economy. A well-structured framework for scaling can facilitate long-term sustainability, enable the replication of successful models, and attract necessary investments (Ogbo *et al.*, 2019; "Social Enterprise Challenges in Nigeria: Multiple Cases Approach Nigeria", 2021). The Nigerian context necessitates a focus on critical areas such as access to finance, strategic partnerships, supportive policy frameworks, and technological integration to foster an enabling environment for social enterprises (Osabohien *et al*., 2022; Osabohien *et al*., 2022; "Social Enterprise Challenges in Nigeria: Multiple Cases Approach Nigeria", 2021).

This research aims to develop a framework for scaling social entrepreneurship in Nigeria by identifying key strategies that ensure sustainable social impact. It will explore the challenges faced by social enterprises, examine best practices from successful models, and propose actionable recommendations for entrepreneurs, policymakers, and stakeholders (Abdul-Azeez, *et al*., 2024, Bakare, *et al*., 2024, Emekwisia, *et al*., 2024). By addressing critical areas such as financing, partnerships, and policy support, this study seeks to provide insights that can bolster the long-term growth of social enterprises in Nigeria, ultimately contributing to the reduction of social inequalities and promoting inclusive economic growth (Amadu, 2023; Osabohien *et al*., 2022; Osabohien *et al*., 2022; "Social Enterprise Challenges in Nigeria: Multiple Cases Approach Nigeria", 2021).

2.1. Methodology

This study employs the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) method to systematically review and synthesize existing literature on scaling social entrepreneurship in Nigeria. The methodology involves a structured and replicable approach to identifying, selecting, and analyzing relevant research studies.

A comprehensive search strategy was designed to include peer-reviewed journal articles, conference proceedings, and credible institutional reports. The search was conducted using multiple electronic databases, including Google Scholar, Scopus, and Web of Science, with a focus on publications between 2018 and 2024. The keywords used included "social entrepreneurship in Nigeria," "scaling social enterprises," "sustainable social impact," and "entrepreneurial frameworks." Studies were selected based on predetermined inclusion and exclusion criteria. The inclusion criteria comprised studies that focused on strategies for scaling social entrepreneurship, frameworks for sustainable impact, and empirical analyses related to the Nigerian context. Excluded studies were those that did not specifically address social entrepreneurship, lacked a clear methodological approach, or were not published in peer-reviewed sources.

The initial search yielded a total of 365 articles. After removing duplicates, 290 unique articles remained. These were screened based on title and abstract, reducing the number to 120 relevant studies. Full-text assessments were conducted on these articles, leading to the final inclusion of 45 studies that m*et al*l eligibility criteria. Data extraction focused on identifying key themes, methodologies, findings, and recommendations from the selected studies. The extracted data were synthesized using a thematic analysis approach to categorize different scaling strategies, challenges, and success factors for social enterprises in Nigeria.

The risk of bias was assessed using established quality appraisal tools, ensuring that only high-quality studies contributed to the synthesis. The final analysis integrates the findings to develop a conceptual framework for scaling social entrepreneurship in Nigeria, identifying strategic interventions that enhance sustainable social impact. Figure 1 show the PRISMA flowchart illustrating the study selection process based on the systematic review criteria. The PRISMA flowchart is illustrating the study selection process for the systematic review on scaling social entrepreneurship in Nigeria.

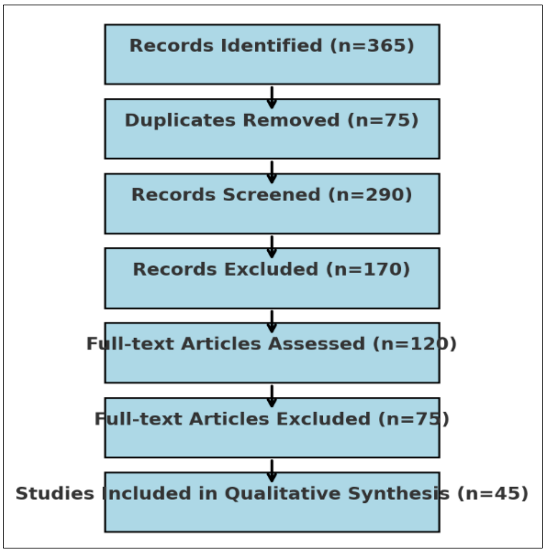

Fig 1: PRISMA Flow chart of the study methodology

2.2. Conceptual framework

Social entrepreneurship refers to the application of entrepreneurial principles to address social challenges in a sustainable manner. Unlike conventional businesses that prioritize profit maximization, social enterprises operate with a dual mission of achieving financial sustainability while creating positive social impact. These enterprises adopt innovative business models to solve pressing societal issues, including poverty alleviation, access to quality education, healthcare, and environmental sustainability (Adeniran, *et al*., 2024, Bakare, *et al*., 2024, Ezeafulukwe, *et al*., 2024). In Nigeria, social entrepreneurship has gained prominence as a response to the inefficiencies of both the public and private sectors in addressing social and economic disparities. Social entrepreneurs leverage creative problem-solving techniques to bridge critical service delivery gaps, particularly in underserved communities. By integrating business strategies with social objectives, they contribute significantly to national development, job creation, and economic stability. Figure 2 shows the characteristics of social entrepreneurs presented by Pangriya, 2019.

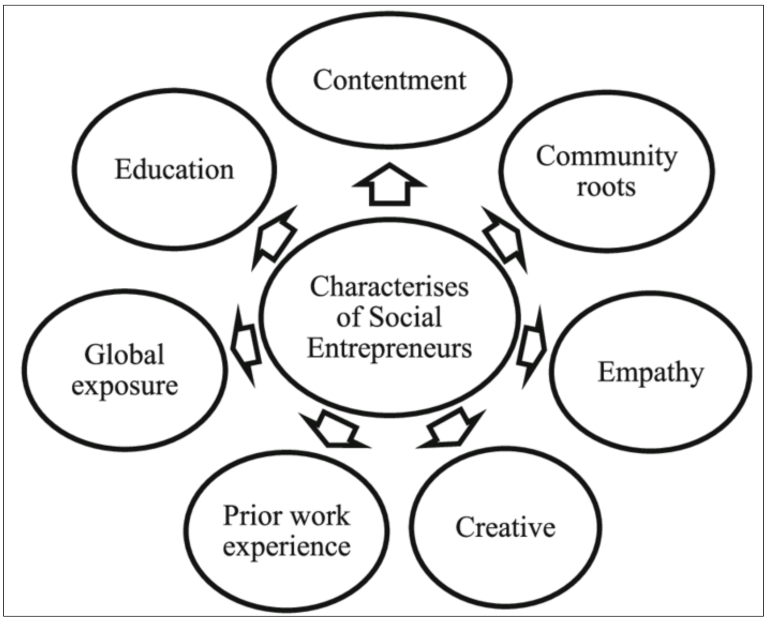

Fig 2: Characteristics of social entrepreneurs (Pangriya, 2019)

Scaling social impact is a crucial concept in social entrepreneurship, as it determines the extent to which a social enterprise can amplify its effectiveness and reach a broader segment of the population. Several theories provide insights into how social enterprises can scale their impact effectively. The first is the Diffusion of Innovation Theory**,** which explains how innovations spread within a society (Adekoya, *et al*., 2024, Bakare, *et al*., 2024, Farooq, Abbey & Onukwulu, 2024). According to this theory, for social enterprises to scale, they must adopt strategies that facilitate widespread acceptance and adoption of their solutions. This requires understanding the needs of target populations, engaging early adopters, and leveraging networks to promote social innovations (Adepoju, *et al*., 2024, Egbumokei, *et al*., 2024, Hassan, *et al*., 2024). Another relevant theory is the Theory of Change**,** which emphasizes mapping out the specific steps needed to achieve long-term social impact. By clearly defining inputs, outputs, and intended outcomes, social entrepreneurs can strategically allocate resources and measure the effectiveness of their interventions (Adegoke, Ofodile & Ochuba, 2024, Bakare, *et al*., 2024, Gil-Ozoudeh, *et al*., 2024). Additionally, the Resource-Based View (RBV) Theory highlights the importance of leveraging unique organizational resources—such as financial capital, human expertise, and strategic partnerships—to scale effectively. These theories collectively provide a structured approach to understanding the dynamics of scaling social impact within the Nigerian context.

Several key factors influence the scalability of social enterprises in Nigeria, and addressing these factors is crucial to ensuring their long-term success. Access to funding and financial sustainability remain primary concerns for social enterprises, as many struggle to secure adequate financing for expansion (Abdul-Azeez, *et al*., 2024, Egbumokei, *et al*., 2024, Ige, Kupa & Ilori, 2024). Unlike commercial ventures that attract private investments and venture capital, social enterprises often rely on grants, impact investors, and government support, which can be unpredictable. Developing innovative financing models, such as blended finance approaches and social impact bonds, can help bridge this gap and ensure sustained funding (Adeniran, *et al*., 2024, Bakare, *et al*., 2024, Ezeafulukwe, *et al*., 2024).

Another critical factor is government policy and regulatory support**.** Social enterprises operate within a regulatory environment that may not always be conducive to their growth. A lack of clear legal structures, excessive bureaucratic hurdles, and limited government incentives often hinder scalability. Policymakers must establish favorable policies, such as tax incentives, grants, and regulatory frameworks, that recognize and support the unique role of social enterprises in national development (Adepoju, *et al*., 2023, Basiru, *et al*., 2023, Hussain, *et al*., 2023). Additionally, strategic partnerships and collaborations are essential for scaling social enterprises. Building alliances with corporations, government agencies, and non-governmental organizations can enhance resource mobilization, market access, and operational efficiency. Partnerships provide opportunities for knowledge sharing, co-creation of innovative solutions, and leveraging existing infrastructure to reach larger populations (Iriogbe, Ebeh & Onita, 2024). Kumar & Yadav, 2023, presented as shown in figure 3, Image of Social entrepreneurship's difficulties.

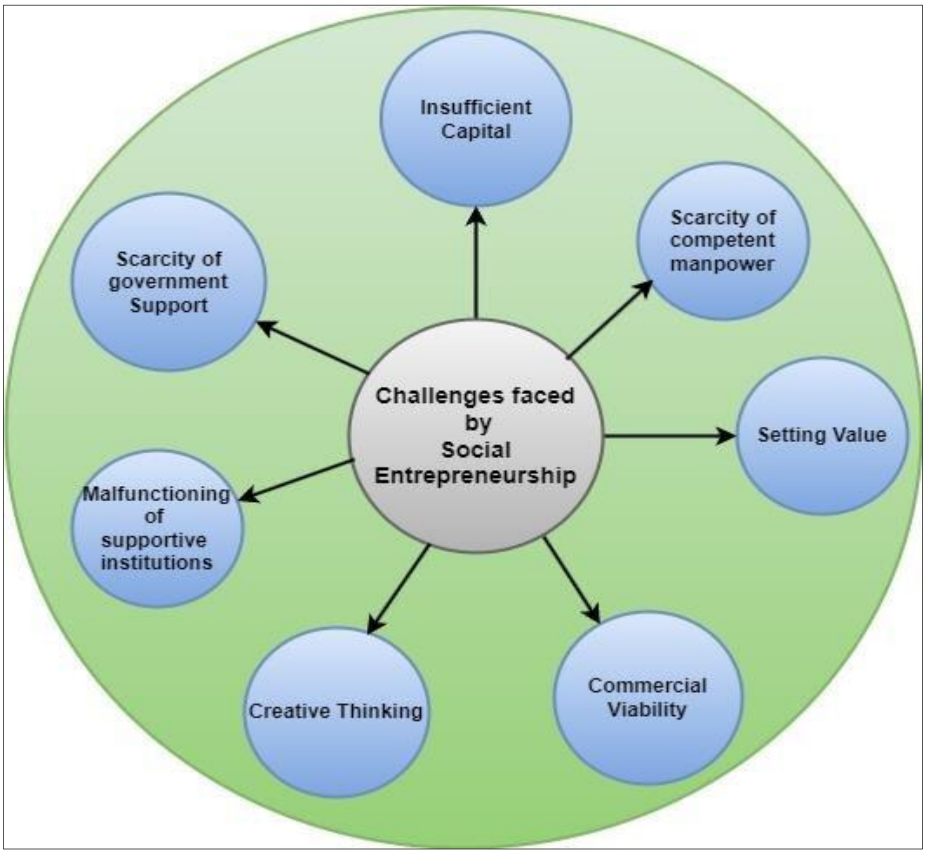

Fig 3: Image of Social entrepreneurship's difficulties (Kumar & Yadav, 2023)

Technology and digital transformation also play a pivotal role in scaling social enterprises. The integration of technology-driven solutions**,** such as mobile applications, e-commerce platforms, and artificial intelligence, can significantly expand outreach and improve service delivery. For instance, social enterprises focused on education can leverage e-learning platforms to reach students in remote areas, while those in the agricultural sector can use digital marketplaces to connect farmers with buyers. Adopting technological innovations can enhance efficiency, reduce costs, and create scalable models that can be replicated across different regions (Fredson, *et al*., 2021, Gil-Ozoudeh, *et al*., 2022).

Another factor that influences scalability is human capital and leadership capacity**.** A strong and visionary leadership team is essential for driving growth and sustaining impact. Social enterprises must invest in leadership development, capacity-building programs, and knowledge transfer mechanisms to equip their teams with the necessary skills to manage expansion effectively. Additionally, fostering a culture of innovation within the organization ensures adaptability to changing market dynamics and enhances problem-solving capabilities (Abiola-Adams, *et al*., 2023, Basiru, *et al*., 2023, Ikwuanusi, Adepoju & Odionu, 2023).

Market demand and social acceptance also determine the scalability of social enterprises. Solutions must align with local needs and cultural contexts to achieve widespread adoption. Conducting thorough market research and engaging stakeholders in the design and implementation of social initiatives can enhance acceptance and ensure relevance. Social enterprises should also focus on measuring impact through robust monitoring and evaluation frameworks, which enable them to track progress, demonstrate effectiveness to stakeholders, and continuously refine their strategies (Adefila, *et al*., 2024, Banji, Adekola & Dada, 2024, Farooq, Abbey & Onukwulu, 2024).

In conclusion, scaling social entrepreneurship in Nigeria requires a multi-faceted approach that addresses financial constraints, regulatory challenges, strategic partnerships, technological integration, leadership development, and market demand. By applying established theories of scaling social impact and focusing on key enablers, social enterprises can expand their reach, enhance operational efficiency, and create sustainable social impact (Adeniran, *et al*., 2022, Basiru, *et al*., 2022). A well-structured framework for scaling social entrepreneurship will not only empower social enterprises but also contribute to broader national development goals, fostering economic growth, reducing inequalities, and improving the quality of life for underserved populations.

2.3. Challenges to scaling social entrepreneurship in Nigeria

Scaling social entrepreneurship in Nigeria presents numerous challenges that hinder the growth and sustainability of impact-driven enterprises. Despite the increasing recognition of social enterprises as key players in national development, many of these ventures struggle to expand their reach and influence due to systemic barriers, operational difficulties, and environmental constraints (Adeniran, *et al*., 2024, Egbumokei, *et al*., 2024, Ewim, *et al*., 2024). The ability of social enterprises to scale effectively depends on several factors, including access to funding, regulatory support, partnerships, technology, and capacity development (Faith, 2018, Ike, *et al*., 2021). Addressing these challenges is critical for fostering a thriving ecosystem that enables social enterprises to drive meaningful change and contribute to economic and social transformation in Nigeria.

One of the most pressing challenges facing social entrepreneurs in Nigeria is limited access to funding and financial sustainability. Social enterprises often operate in sectors that are not traditionally attractive to commercial investors, making it difficult to secure the necessary capital for expansion. Unlike purely profit-driven businesses, social enterprises prioritize social impact alongside financial returns, which can make them less appealing to venture capitalists and traditional financial institutions (Adepoju, *et al*., 2023, Basiru, *et al*., 2023, Bristol-Alagbariya, Ayanponle & Ogedengbe, 2023). Many social enterprises rely on grants, donor funding, and philanthropic contributions, which are often unpredictable and unsustainable in the long term. The absence of dedicated financial instruments, such as social impact bonds and blended finance models, further exacerbates the funding gap. Additionally, stringent lending requirements from banks and financial institutions create barriers for social enterprises that lack the collateral or credit history needed to access loans (Abhulimen & Ejike, 2024, Eghaghe, *et al*., 2024, Garba, *et al*., 2024). Without stable and diverse sources of funding, scaling becomes a significant challenge, as social enterprises struggle to invest in infrastructure, hire skilled personnel, and expand their operations to reach larger populations.

Regulatory and policy constraints also pose significant challenges to scaling social entrepreneurship in Nigeria. The country lacks a clear legal and regulatory framework that defines and supports social enterprises, leading to uncertainties in governance, taxation, and compliance requirements. Many social enterprises operate as non-governmental organizations (NGOs) or small businesses, limiting their ability to attract investment and secure government incentives (Adeniran, *et al*., 2024, Banji, Adekola & Dada, 2024, Farooq, Abbey & Onukwulu, 2024). Additionally, bureaucratic hurdles, such as lengthy registration processes and complex licensing requirements, create delays and inefficiencies that hinder growth. The absence of a supportive policy environment means that social enterprises receive minimal government backing in terms of tax relief, subsidies, or grants. Furthermore, inconsistent policy implementation and frequent regulatory changes create an unstable business environment that discourages long-term planning and investment in social entrepreneurship (Adeoye, *et al*., 2024, Eghaghe, *et al*., 2024, Ezeanochie, Afolabi & Akinsooto, 2024). Without well-defined policies that recognize and incentivize the role of social enterprises in national development, their ability to scale remains severely restricted.

The lack of strategic partnerships and collaborations further limits the scalability of social enterprises in Nigeria. Successful scaling often requires collaboration with key stakeholders, including government agencies, private sector actors, academic institutions, and international organizations. However, many social enterprises struggle to build meaningful partnerships due to limited networking opportunities, lack of trust, and competition for resources (Adeoye, *et al*., 2024, Bello, Ige & Ameyaw, 2024, Ezeafulukwe, *et al*., 2024). Government agencies and policymakers may not fully understand the value of social enterprises, resulting in minimal engagement and support. Meanwhile, private sector organizations often prioritize corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives over direct collaboration with social enterprises, leading to missed opportunities for impact-driven solutions (Adepoju, *et al*., 2024, Eghaghe, *et al*., 2024, Ewim, *et al*., 2024). The absence of intermediary organizations that facilitate partnerships between social enterprises and stakeholders further exacerbates this challenge. Without strong partnerships, social enterprises face difficulties in accessing new markets, leveraging existing infrastructure, and scaling their operations efficiently. Collaborative efforts are essential for resource mobilization, knowledge exchange, and co-creation of innovative solutions that drive sustainable impact (Chikezie, *et al*., 2022, Fredson, *et al*., 2022).

Limited access to technology and digital tools is another major barrier to scaling social entrepreneurship in Nigeria. In the digital age, technology plays a crucial role in enhancing operational efficiency, improving service delivery, and expanding outreach. However, many social enterprises lack the financial resources and technical expertise to adopt digital solutions (Abbey, *et al*., 2023, Basiru, *et al*., 2023, Ikwuanusi, Adepoju & Odionu, 2023). Poor internet connectivity, high costs of digital infrastructure, and inadequate digital literacy among beneficiaries further hinder the integration of technology into social enterprise operations. For instance, social enterprises operating in the education sector may struggle to implement e-learning platforms due to unreliable internet access in rural areas. Similarly, those in the agricultural sector may find it challenging to leverage digital marketplaces for connecting farmers with buyers (Adefila, *et al*., 2024, Dudu, Alao & Alonge, 2024, Eyo-Udo, *et al*. 2024). The digital divide in Nigeria creates disparities in access to technological tools, preventing social enterprises from reaching underserved communities effectively. Additionally, cybersecurity risks and data privacy concerns further limit the willingness of social enterprises to adopt digital solutions. Without access to affordable and reliable technology, social enterprises face significant constraints in scaling their impact and optimizing their operations.

The skills gap and capacity development issues also present major challenges to scaling social entrepreneurship in Nigeria. Many social enterprises lack the managerial and technical expertise required to navigate complex business environments, secure funding, and implement scalable business models. Limited access to training programs, mentorship opportunities, and professional development resources further exacerbates this challenge (Achumie, *et al*., 2022, Gil-Ozoudeh, *et al*., 2022, Hlanga, 2022). Entrepreneurs and their teams often lack the necessary knowledge in areas such as financial management, impact measurement, marketing, and strategic planning. Without adequate capacity-building initiatives, social enterprises may struggle with inefficient operations, poor financial management, and limited scalability. Additionally, retaining skilled professionals in the social entrepreneurship sector is challenging due to competitive salaries offered by multinational corporations and traditional businesses (Iriogbe, Ebeh & Onita, 2024). The inability to attract and retain talent further weakens the growth potential of social enterprises, as they lack the human capital needed to drive innovation and scale their impact. Addressing the skills gap through targeted training programs, mentorship initiatives, and leadership development efforts is essential for building a strong foundation for scalable social enterprises.

In conclusion, scaling social entrepreneurship in Nigeria is fraught with challenges that require a comprehensive and multi-stakeholder approach to address. Limited access to funding and financial sustainability remains a major constraint, as social enterprises struggle to secure stable and long-term financial resources. Regulatory and policy constraints create an unfavorable business environment, limiting government support and incentives for social enterprises. The lack of strategic partnerships and collaborations hinders resource mobilization and knowledge exchange, making it difficult for social enterprises to scale efficiently (Iriogbe, Ebeh & Onita, 2024). Limited access to technology and digital tools further restricts growth opportunities, preventing social enterprises from leveraging digital innovations to enhance service delivery. Finally, the skills gap and capacity development issues pose significant challenges, as social enterprises require well-trained personnel and strong leadership to drive sustainable impact. Overcoming these challenges requires coordinated efforts from policymakers, investors, academia, and the private sector to create an enabling environment that fosters the growth and scalability of social enterprises in Nigeria (Achumie, Bakare & Okeke, 2024, Ejike & Abhulimen, 2024), Iriogbe, Ebeh & Onita, 2024. By addressing these barriers, social enterprises can unlock their full potential, contribute to national development, and create lasting social impact across various sectors.

2.4. Proposed framework for scaling social entrepreneurship

A structured and well-defined framework is essential for scaling social entrepreneurship in Nigeria to ensure sustainable social impact. Scaling requires overcoming financial, operational, regulatory, and technological challenges while leveraging partnerships, policy advocacy, and capacity-building efforts. The proposed framework for scaling social entrepreneurship in Nigeria focuses on innovative financing strategies, strategic partnerships, technology adoption, policy advocacy, and human capital development, all of which are crucial to expanding the reach and effectiveness of social enterprises (Abdul-Azeez, *et al*., 2024, Ige & Ameyaw, 2024, Farooq, Abbey & Onukwulu, 2024).

Innovative financing strategies are at the core of scaling social enterprises, as financial sustainability determines the ability to expand and maintain long-term impact. Traditional funding sources, such as grants and donations, are often insufficient, necessitating the adoption of diverse financial models that include impact investing, blended finance, and social impact bonds. Impact investing allows investors to support social enterprises while expecting measurable social and financial returns, creating a sustainable funding model. Blended finance combines public, private, and philanthropic funding sources to mitigate investment risks and attract capital into the social enterprise sector (Adepoju, *et al*., 2023, Basiru, *et al*., 2023). Social impact bonds serve as a performance-based investment model, where private investors provide upfront funding for social projects, with returns paid based on measurable outcomes. Additionally, crowdfunding and venture philanthropy are effective ways to mobilize resources from the public and philanthropic organizations, enabling social enterprises to scale without solely relying on traditional financial institutions. Crowdfunding platforms provide opportunities for individuals and communities to contribute to impactful initiatives, while venture philanthropy integrates philanthropic donations with venture capital principles to support social enterprises in scaling their operations (Adeniran, *et al*., 2024, Elachi Apeh, *et al*., 2024, Ige, Kupa & Ilori, 2024).

Government grants and subsidies play a crucial role in enabling early-stage social enterprises to develop and scale their models. By providing financial incentives such as low-interest loans, tax exemptions, and direct subsidies, governments can create an enabling environment for social enterprises to thrive. Sengupta & Sahay, 2018, presented Framework of Social Entrepreneurship shown in figure 4.

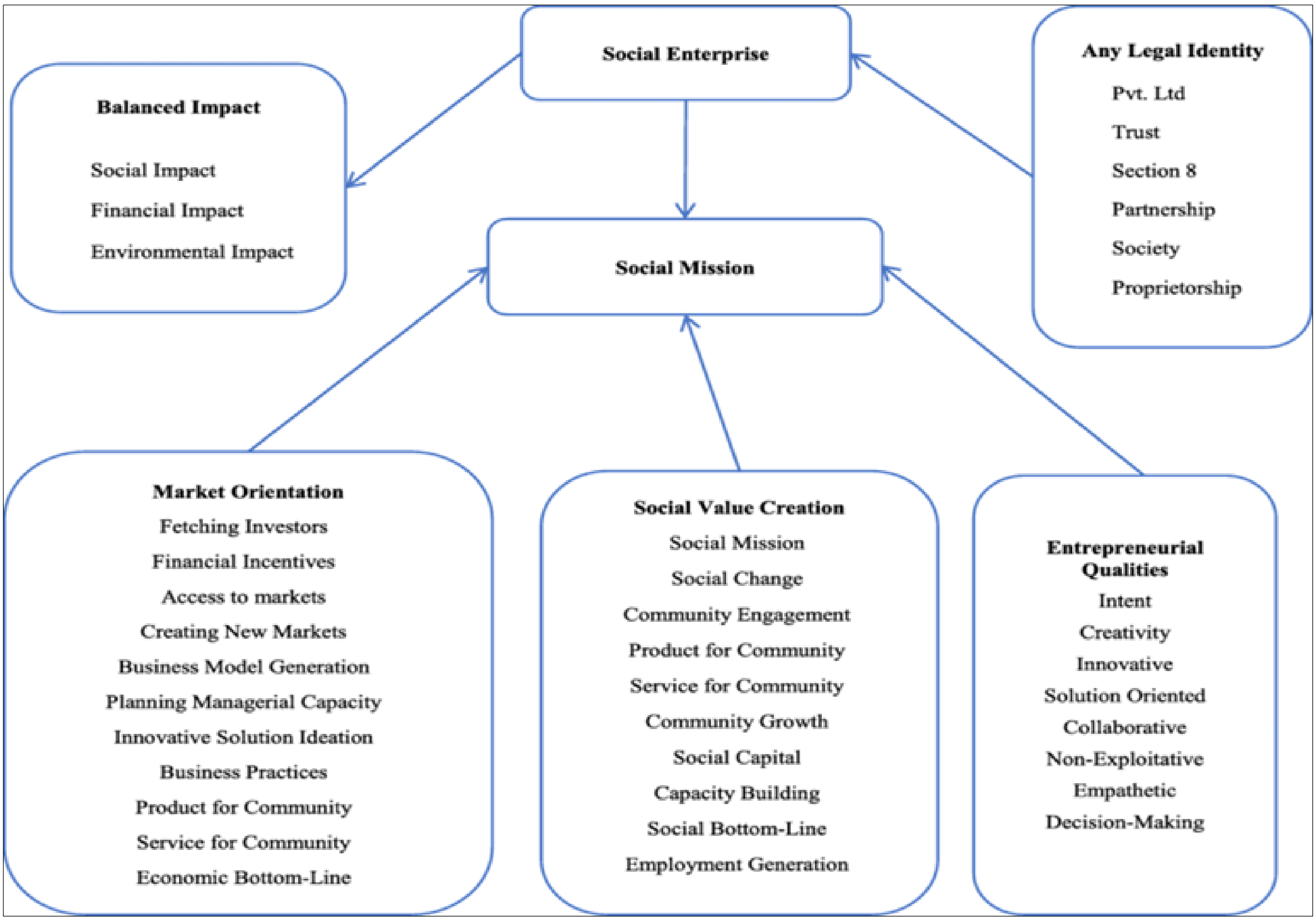

Fig 4: Framework of Social Entrepreneurship (Sengupta & Sahay, 2018)

Strategic partnerships and collaborations are fundamental to scaling social entrepreneurship, as they provide access to resources, expertise, and networks. Public-private partnerships (PPPs) enable social enterprises to leverage government support, infrastructure, and policy frameworks while maintaining operational efficiency and innovation from the private sector. Such collaborations can lead to improved service delivery in education, healthcare, and environmental sustainability (Fredson, *et al.*, 2021, Hussain, *et al.*, 2021). Engagement with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and international donors enhances funding opportunities and knowledge-sharing initiatives, helping social enterprises align with global best practices and secure long-term financial support. NGOs serve as key intermediaries that connect social enterprises with funding institutions, policymakers, and beneficiary communities. Corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives provide additional opportunities for social enterprises to scale through partnerships with large corporations that seek to integrate social impact into their business models (Adepoju, *et al.*, 2023, Bristol-Alagbariya, Ayanponle & Ogedengbe, 2023). By collaborating with corporations, social enterprises can access financial resources, mentorship programs, and operational expertise while helping businesses fulfill their CSR commitments in a meaningful and impactful manner.

Technology adoption is a vital component of scaling social enterprises, as digital transformation enables efficiency, automation, and broader outreach. Implementing digital transformation and automation solutions allows social enterprises to optimize operations, reduce costs, and enhance service delivery. Automation streamlines administrative tasks, enabling enterprises to focus on their core social impact initiatives (Adeniran, *et al.*, 2024, Bristol-Alagbariya, Ayanponle & Ogedengbe, 2024). E-commerce and digital marketing provide cost-effective ways to reach larger audiences, increase customer engagement, and generate revenue. Social enterprises can leverage social media, search engine optimization, and targeted online campaigns to increase visibility and attract funding and support. Data-driven impact assessment and analytics play a crucial role in evaluating the effectiveness of social enterprises and guiding decision-making. By utilizing data analytics tools, social enterprises can track key performance indicators, assess the success of their interventions, and optimize their scaling strategies based on real-time insights (Achumie, *et al.*, 2024, Ejike & Abhulimen, 2024, Ige, Kupa & Ilori, 2024). Digital tools such as mobile applications, artificial intelligence, and blockchain technology further enhance transparency, accountability, and operational efficiency in social entrepreneurship.

Policy advocacy and regulatory reforms are necessary to establish an enabling environment for social enterprises to scale. The creation of legal frameworks supporting social enterprises will provide clarity on their legal status, tax obligations, and eligibility for financial incentives. Policymakers should recognize social enterprises as distinct entities separate from traditional businesses and non-profits, allowing them to operate with greater flexibility. Tax incentives and ease of business regulations can significantly reduce financial burdens on social enterprises, encouraging growth and sustainability (Adefila, *et al*., 2024, Bristol-Alagbariya, Ayanponle & Ogedengbe, 2024). By offering tax breaks, reduced registration fees, and simplified compliance procedures, governments can create a more favorable business climate for social enterprises to thrive. Institutional support and policy alignment with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) ensure that social enterprises contribute to national and global development agendas. Governments should integrate social entrepreneurship into their national economic and social policies, aligning their objectives with SDG targets related to poverty reduction, education, healthcare, and environmental sustainability (Addy, *et al*., 2024, Dudu, Alao & Alonge, 2024, Hassan, *et al*., 2024). Collaboration between government agencies, industry stakeholders, and international organizations can strengthen the implementation of supportive policies and regulations.

Capacity building and human capital development are essential for equipping social entrepreneurs with the skills and knowledge needed to scale their enterprises. Entrepreneurship training and leadership development programs enhance business acumen, strategic planning, and problem-solving capabilities among social entrepreneurs. Training programs should cover critical areas such as financial management, impact measurement, marketing, and regulatory compliance (Adegoke, *et al*., 2024, Bristol-Alagbariya, Ayanponle & Ogedengbe, 2024). Business incubation and mentorship programs provide emerging social entrepreneurs with access to experienced mentors, technical expertise, and business development support. Incubators and accelerators play a crucial role in refining business models, securing funding, and scaling operations. Community engagement and local knowledge integration ensure that scaling strategies are culturally relevant, contextually appropriate, and aligned with the needs of target populations (Adeleke, *et al*., 2024, Ejike & Abhulimen, 2024, Garba, *et al*., 2024). Social enterprises should actively involve local communities in decision-making, program design, and implementation to foster ownership and sustainability. By leveraging indigenous knowledge, social enterprises can develop solutions that are both innovative and deeply rooted in the social, economic, and cultural realities of the communities they serve (Ige, *et al*., 2022, Ikwuanusi, *et al*., 2022).

In conclusion, a comprehensive framework for scaling social entrepreneurship in Nigeria must address key challenges while leveraging opportunities in financing, partnerships, technology, policy, and capacity development. Innovative financing strategies, including impact investing, crowdfunding, and government grants, provide sustainable funding sources for scaling (Adeniran, *et al*., 2024, Bristol-Alagbariya, Ayanponle & Ogedengbe, 2024). Strategic partnerships with public and private sector stakeholders enhance resource mobilization and operational efficiency. Technology adoption enables automation, outreach, and data-driven decision-making, while policy advocacy ensures regulatory support and business-friendly environments. Capacity building strengthens the skills and leadership capabilities of social entrepreneurs, fostering long-term growth and sustainability (Adeniran, *et al*., 2024, Ejike & Abhulimen, 2024, Ewim, *et al*., 2024). By implementing this proposed framework, social enterprises in Nigeria can scale their impact effectively, drive national development, and contribute to solving pressing social challenges in a sustainable and transformative manner.

2.5. Case studies of successful social enterprises in Nigeria

The success of social enterprises in Nigeria is driven by innovation, resilience, and strategic scaling models. Several enterprises have demonstrated the ability to balance financial sustainability with significant social impact, serving as models for others seeking to scale their operations. These case studies analyze local and international models of scalable social enterprises, highlighting lessons learned and best practices that can be applied within the Nigerian context (Adepoju, *et al*., 2022, Bristol-Alagbariya, Ayanponle & Ogedengbe, 2022).

One notable example is *Babban Gona*, an agricultural social enterprise that has successfully scaled its impact by leveraging innovative financing, technology, and strategic partnerships. Babban Gona focuses on providing smallholder farmers with access to credit, high-quality inputs, training, and markets to increase their productivity and profitability. By adopting a franchise-like model, the enterprise has expanded its reach, serving over 100,000 farmers across Nigeria. A key lesson from Babban Gona’s success is its innovative approach to risk mitigation (Abbey, *et al*., 2024, Chukwurah, *et al*., 2024, Ezeife, *et al*., 2024). The enterprise uses data analytics to assess the creditworthiness of farmers, reducing loan defaults and improving financial sustainability. Additionally, its strong partnership with government agencies, private investors, and international development organizations has provided the necessary funding and operational support for scaling (Adepoju, *et al*., 2022, Bristol-Alagbariya, Ayanponle & Ogedengbe, 2022).

Another successful example is *LifeBank*, a health-focused social enterprise that leverages technology to address blood shortages in Nigeria. LifeBank operates an efficient logistics system that connects blood banks with hospitals in real-time, ensuring timely delivery of safe blood and other essential medical supplies. The enterprise has scaled through the adoption of digital tools, including a mobile app and GPS tracking, allowing healthcare providers to place urgent orders for life-saving supplies (Adekoya, *et al*., 2024, Chumie, *et al*., 2024, Ige, *et al*., 2024). LifeBank’s success demonstrates the power of digital transformation in social entrepreneurship. By utilizing technology for impact assessment and operational efficiency, the enterprise has been able to expand rapidly and improve healthcare outcomes. One of the key lessons from LifeBank is the importance of continuous innovation and responsiveness to local challenges. The enterprise has diversified its services to include oxygen delivery, vaccines, and other critical medical supplies, demonstrating adaptability and scalability (Adefila, *et al*., 2024, Ejike & Abhulimen, 2024, Ezeanochie, Afolabi & Akinsooto, 2024).

In the education sector, *Andela* provides an example of a social enterprise that has scaled internationally while maintaining a strong social mission. Andela identifies and trains talented software developers across Africa, connecting them with global job opportunities. The enterprise has grown by leveraging a business model that integrates corporate partnerships, investor funding, and technology-driven learning solutions (Adeniran, *et al*., 2024, Dada, *et al*., 2024, Eyo-Udo, *et al*. 2024). Andela's success is rooted in its ability to attract significant investments from international venture capital firms, including the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative. One of the critical lessons from Andela's experience is the role of strategic partnerships in scaling social enterprises. By collaborating with major tech companies and global investors, Andela has expanded beyond Nigeria to other African countries, creating a sustainable model for workforce development. Additionally, the enterprise's emphasis on skills development and mentorship has contributed to long-term employability and economic empowerment for young professionals (Adeoye, *et al*., 2024, Ekechukwu, Daramola & Kehinde, 2024, Ijomah, *et al*., 2024).

Another impactful enterprise is *Hello Tractor*, a Nigerian social enterprise that provides access to affordable tractor services for smallholder farmers. Recognizing the challenges of mechanization in the agricultural sector, Hello Tractor introduced a digital platform that allows farmers to rent tractors on demand. The enterprise has successfully scaled by integrating mobile technology, IoT-enabled tracking systems, and strategic partnerships with agricultural cooperatives and financial institutions (Adepoju, *et al*., 2023, Basiru, *et al*., 2023, Ikwuanusi, Adepoju & Odionu, 2023). Hello Tractor's innovative approach to equipment-sharing demonstrates the effectiveness of leveraging technology for scalability. By addressing key barriers such as cost and accessibility, the enterprise has transformed agricultural productivity and improved farmers' incomes. One of the primary lessons from Hello Tractor is the importance of user-centered design and affordability in scaling social impact solutions (Abiola-Adams, *et al*., 2023, Gil-Ozoudeh, *et al*., 2023). The enterprise ensures that services remain accessible to low-income farmers while maintaining a financially sustainable model through partnerships with equipment manufacturers and financial service providers.

Internationally, one of the most recognized models of a scalable social enterprise is *Grameen Bank*, which pioneered microfinance as a tool for poverty alleviation. Founded in Bangladesh, Grameen Bank provides small loans to low-income individuals, particularly women, without requiring collateral. The microfinance model has been widely replicated across various countries, including Nigeria, through organizations such as LAPO Microfinance Bank. A key takeaway from Grameen Bank's model is the importance of financial inclusion in driving social entrepreneurship at scale (Achumie, Bakare & Okeke, 2024, Daramola, 2024, Gil-Ozoudeh, *et al*., 2024). By empowering underserved populations with access to credit, social enterprises can create long-term economic opportunities and promote self-sufficiency. The model also emphasizes the role of trust-based lending, peer support groups, and financial literacy in ensuring loan repayment and financial sustainability (Abdul-Azeez, *et al*., 2024, Ekechukwu, Daramola & Olanrewaju, 2024, Ikemba, *et al*., 2024).

Another global example is *Aravind Eye Care System* in India, which has successfully scaled its impact in healthcare through an innovative cross-subsidy model. Aravind provides high-quality eye care services at low cost, offering free or subsidized treatment for low-income patients while generating revenue from paying customers. The enterprise has expanded by adopting a highly efficient operational model, leveraging technology for service delivery, and training local healthcare professionals (Adeniran, *et al*., 2024, Dada, *et al*., 2024, Ewim, *et al*., 2024). One of the major lessons from Aravind's success is the importance of efficiency and cost management in scaling social enterprises. By standardizing processes and optimizing resource utilization, social enterprises can achieve financial sustainability while serving a larger population. This model can be adapted in Nigeria's healthcare sector, where access to affordable medical services remains a critical challenge.

A closer look at these case studies reveals several best practices that social enterprises in Nigeria can adopt to scale effectively. First, financial sustainability must be prioritized through diversified funding sources. Enterprises that have successfully scaled, such as Andela and Babban Gona, have secured investments from impact investors and venture capital firms while maintaining revenue-generating activities. Accessing blended finance options, including grants, loans, and equity investments, enables social enterprises to sustain their operations and expand their reach (Abdul-Azeez, *et al*., 2024, Daramola, *et al*., 2024, Igwe, *et al*., 2024).

Second, leveraging technology for operational efficiency and impact measurement is crucial for scaling. LifeBank, Hello Tractor, and Andela demonstrate how digital platforms, data analytics, and mobile solutions can enhance service delivery, improve accessibility, and drive growth. Social enterprises should integrate digital tools for financial transactions, supply chain management, and beneficiary tracking to optimize their scaling strategies.

Third, strategic partnerships play a pivotal role in enabling growth. Social enterprises that collaborate with government agencies, private sector actors, and international development organizations gain access to resources, expertise, and market linkages that facilitate expansion. Andela's partnerships with global tech companies and Babban Gona's collaboration with agricultural stakeholders exemplify the impact of building strong alliances (Adefila, *et al*., 2024, Dada & Adekola, 2024, Eyo-Udo, *et al*. 2024). Establishing partnerships with research institutions, NGOs, and corporate organizations can enhance knowledge sharing and create synergies that support scaling.

Fourth, adaptability and innovation are key drivers of scalability. Successful social enterprises continuously evolve their models to meet emerging needs and market dynamics. LifeBank's expansion beyond blood delivery to include oxygen and vaccines highlights the importance of flexibility in scaling. Enterprises must be willing to refine their strategies, incorporate feedback from beneficiaries, and explore new service delivery channels (Adepoju, *et al*., 2023, Basiru, *et al*., 2023).

Finally, policy support and regulatory frameworks are essential enablers for scaling social enterprises. Government incentives, tax breaks, and streamlined business registration processes can create a more favorable environment for social entrepreneurship. Countries with supportive legal frameworks for social enterprises, such as the UK's Social Enterprise Act, have seen significant growth in impact-driven businesses. In Nigeria, establishing policies that recognize and incentivize social enterprises can foster long-term growth and scalability (Adeniran, *et al*., 2024, Daramola, *et al*., 2024, Ezeife, *et al*., 2024).

In conclusion, the success of social enterprises in Nigeria and globally provides valuable insights into effective scaling strategies. Case studies from Babban Gona, LifeBank, Andela, and Hello Tractor illustrate the importance of innovative financing, technology adoption, partnerships, and adaptive business models. Lessons from international models such as Grameen Bank and Aravind Eye Care System further emphasize financial inclusion, efficiency, and sustainability as key pillars of scalable social enterprises (Abbey, *et al*., 2023, Bristol-Alagbariya, Ayanponle & Ogedengbe, 2023). By integrating these best practices, social enterprises in Nigeria can overcome scaling challenges, expand their impact, and contribute to sustainable social development. Creating a supportive ecosystem that includes access to funding, regulatory reforms, digital transformation, and strategic collaborations will be instrumental in enabling the growth of social enterprises across the country.

2.6. Implications and Recommendations

The development of a robust framework for scaling social entrepreneurship in Nigeria has significant implications for economic growth, poverty alleviation, and sustainable development. Social enterprises play a critical role in addressing societal challenges by providing innovative solutions to issues such as unemployment, education, healthcare, and environmental sustainability (Iriogbe, Ebeh & Onita, 2024). However, to scale effectively and create long-lasting impact, social enterprises require support from policymakers, investors, financial institutions, and other key stakeholders. Implementing targeted policies, financing mechanisms, and strategic interventions will be crucial to building a thriving ecosystem for social entrepreneurship in Nigeria.

Policymakers have a significant role in shaping the environment in which social enterprises operate. One of the most urgent recommendations is the establishment of a clear legal and regulatory framework that defines and recognizes social enterprises as distinct entities. Many social enterprises in Nigeria currently operate as either non-governmental organizations (NGOs) or for-profit businesses, which creates ambiguity in their taxation, governance, and funding eligibility (Adeoye, *et al*., 2024, Daramola, *et al*., 2024, Hassan, *et al*., 2024). Developing a formal legal classification for social enterprises would help streamline their operations, provide clarity in compliance requirements, and offer access to tailored incentives. Policymakers should also introduce tax incentives to encourage investment in social enterprises. Tax breaks, exemptions, and reduced business registration costs for certified social enterprises can lower operational burdens and make it easier for them to scale (Adepoju, *et al*., 2021, Egbumokei, *et al*., 2021). Additionally, the government should establish funding programs that specifically cater to social enterprises, including low-interest loans, grants, and subsidies that support expansion efforts.

Another crucial area for policy intervention is the integration of social entrepreneurship into national development plans. Governments should include social enterprises in public procurement policies, allowing them to compete for contracts that align with their social missions. Preferential procurement policies that allocate a percentage of government contracts to social enterprises can enhance their sustainability while ensuring that public resources contribute to social impact (Adeniran, *et al*., 2024, Daramola, *et al*., 2024, Idemudia, *et al*., 2024). Furthermore, policymakers should foster multi-sectoral partnerships between social enterprises, corporations, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to facilitate knowledge sharing, market access, and financial support. Capacity-building initiatives, such as government-backed incubator programs and business development services, should also be expanded to provide social entrepreneurs with the necessary skills, mentorship, and training to scale effectively (Adepoju, *et al*., 2023, Daramola, *et al*., 2023).

Investors and financial institutions are crucial to the growth and scalability of social enterprises. To foster a more supportive financial environment, investors should embrace impact investing as a viable asset class. Traditional venture capital models focus primarily on financial returns, often overlooking the long-term social impact of an enterprise (Addy, *et al*., 2024, Daramola, *et al*., 2024, Ewim, *et al*., 2024). By incorporating impact measurement metrics, investors can assess both financial performance and social value creation, ensuring that their investments contribute to sustainable development. Blended finance models, which combine grants, equity investments, and concessional loans, should be explored to reduce investment risks while encouraging capital flow into the social entrepreneurship sector. Financial institutions should also develop specialized funding instruments, such as social impact bonds and revenue-sharing agreements, that align with the unique needs of social enterprises.

Another key strategy for investors and financial institutions is improving access to credit for social enterprises. Many social enterprises struggle to secure loans due to a lack of collateral, unpredictable revenue streams, and high-interest rates. Banks and microfinance institutions should design flexible credit facilities tailored to social enterprises, with repayment terms that consider their social impact objectives (Abdul-Azeez, *et al*., 2024, Durojaiye, *et al*., 2024, Igwe, *et al*., 2024). Providing financial literacy training and mentorship to social entrepreneurs can further enhance their ability to manage funds effectively and sustain growth. Additionally, impact investment funds should prioritize sectors where social enterprises have the highest potential for scale, such as healthcare, agriculture, renewable energy, and education. Establishing investment networks that connect social enterprises with potential investors can also improve funding accessibility and streamline the capital-raising process (Adeniran, *et al*., 2024, Dudu, Alao & Alonge, 2024, Ewim, *et al*., 2024).

Social entrepreneurs themselves must adopt strategic approaches to ensure their enterprises are scalable and sustainable. One of the key recommendations is the development of innovative business models that balance social impact with financial sustainability. While grants and donations can provide initial support, social enterprises should explore revenue-generating activities that reduce dependence on external funding (Adeleke, *et al*., 2024, Durojaiye, *et al*., 2024, Ikemba, Akinsooto & Ogundipe, 2024). Hybrid models, which combine non-profit and for-profit elements, have proven effective in ensuring long-term viability. Social entrepreneurs should also prioritize impact measurement and data-driven decision-making. By establishing clear impact assessment frameworks, enterprises can track their progress, demonstrate effectiveness to investors and stakeholders, and refine their strategies for greater efficiency.

Another important strategy for social entrepreneurs is leveraging technology to enhance outreach and service delivery. Digital platforms, mobile applications, and artificial intelligence (AI) solutions can optimize operations, improve customer engagement, and expand market reach. For example, e-commerce platforms can enable social enterprises to sell products and services to a wider audience, while digital marketing tools can enhance brand visibility (Adepoju, *et al*., 2022, Bristol-Alagbariya, Ayanponle & Ogedengbe, 2022). Investing in automation and data analytics can also improve operational efficiency and help social enterprises scale with minimal additional costs. Social entrepreneurs should actively seek partnerships with tech companies, research institutions, and innovation hubs to stay at the forefront of digital transformation.

Building strong networks and collaborations is another crucial element of scaling social enterprises. Entrepreneurs should engage in strategic alliances with government agencies, private corporations, NGOs, and international development organizations to gain access to funding, mentorship, and market linkages. Participation in industry conferences, accelerator programs, and business incubators can provide valuable exposure to potential investors and partners (Adeniran, *et al*., 2024, Efunniyi, *et al*., 2024, Ige, Kupa & Ilori, 2024). Additionally, peer-to-peer collaborations among social enterprises can facilitate knowledge exchange, shared resources, and joint ventures that enhance scalability.

A critical factor in scaling social enterprises is leadership development and human capital investment. Social entrepreneurs must invest in continuous learning, skills development, and team-building to ensure that their organizations remain adaptable and resilient. Leadership training programs, mentorship initiatives, and executive coaching can enhance strategic thinking and decision-making capabilities (Adefila, *et al*., 2024, Efunniyi, *et al*., 2024, Eyo-Udo, *et al*. 2024). It is also essential for social enterprises to develop clear succession plans and organizational structures that support long-term growth. Recruiting and retaining top talent is another challenge that social enterprises must address by offering competitive salaries, career development opportunities, and a strong organizational culture centered on social impact.

Community engagement and beneficiary participation should also be central to social enterprise scaling strategies. Successful social enterprises are those that co-create solutions with the communities they serve, ensuring that their interventions are relevant, culturally appropriate, and sustainable. Conducting regular needs assessments, incorporating feedback mechanisms, and involving local stakeholders in decision-making can improve the effectiveness and acceptance of social enterprise initiatives. Social entrepreneurs should also invest in advocacy and awareness campaigns to educate communities about their services and build trust among beneficiaries (Adegoke, *et al*., 2024, Egbumokei, *et al*., 2024, Hussain, *et al*., 2024).

In conclusion, scaling social entrepreneurship in Nigeria requires a comprehensive approach that involves policymakers, investors, financial institutions, and social entrepreneurs themselves. Policymakers must create an enabling environment by establishing clear legal frameworks, offering tax incentives, integrating social enterprises into national development plans, and fostering public-private partnerships. Investors and financial institutions should embrace impact investing, develop innovative financing instruments, and improve access to credit for social enterprises (Adeniran, *et al*., 2024, Egbumokei, *et al*., 2024, Igwe, Eyo-Udo & Stephen, 2024). Social entrepreneurs must adopt sustainable business models, leverage technology, build strategic partnerships, invest in leadership development, and engage communities effectively. By implementing these recommendations, Nigeria can unlock the full potential of social enterprises as catalysts for sustainable economic development and social progress.

2.7. Conclusion

Scaling social entrepreneurship in Nigeria is essential for addressing pressing social challenges while fostering economic development and sustainability. Social enterprises play a critical role in bridging gaps in healthcare, education, financial inclusion, and environmental sustainability. However, the ability to scale and sustain impact is constrained by various factors, including limited access to funding, regulatory and policy barriers, weak strategic partnerships, inadequate technology adoption, and a lack of capacity development. To overcome these challenges, a well-structured framework that integrates innovative financing strategies, strong partnerships, technology-driven solutions, regulatory support, and capacity-building initiatives is necessary.

One of the key findings of this study is that financial sustainability is a major determinant of scalability for social enterprises. Diversified financing models such as impact investing, blended finance, crowdfunding, and government grants can help social enterprises achieve long-term viability. Furthermore, strategic partnerships with government agencies, private sector organizations, and non-governmental institutions provide the necessary infrastructure, expertise, and market access to scale operations effectively. The adoption of digital transformation strategies, including e-commerce platforms, mobile applications, and data-driven impact assessment tools, also enhances operational efficiency and extends outreach.

Policy and regulatory reforms are crucial for creating an enabling environment for social enterprises to thrive. Governments must recognize social enterprises as distinct legal entities and offer tax incentives, grants, and simplified business registration processes to support their growth. Additionally, fostering public-private partnerships and incorporating social enterprises into national development plans can create a more structured and sustainable ecosystem. The need for continuous capacity building and leadership development also emerged as a critical factor in scaling social enterprises. Investing in training programs, mentorship opportunities, and knowledge-sharing platforms ensures that social entrepreneurs and their teams are equipped with the necessary skills to manage growth and navigate complex business environments.

Future research should focus on developing sector-specific scaling models that address unique industry challenges. Investigating the role of artificial intelligence, blockchain, and other emerging technologies in social entrepreneurship can provide deeper insights into digital scalability strategies. Additionally, comparative studies between Nigerian social enterprises and successful models from other countries can help identify best practices that can be adapted locally. Further research should also explore the impact of gender and inclusion on social enterprise scalability, particularly how policies and funding mechanisms can be tailored to support female-led and community-driven initiatives.

Achieving sustainable social impact in Nigeria requires a multi-stakeholder approach where social entrepreneurs, policymakers, investors, and communities collaborate to create a thriving ecosystem. Social enterprises must move beyond short-term interventions and focus on building scalable, financially sustainable models that drive long-term transformation. By leveraging technology, strategic partnerships, and innovative financing mechanisms, social enterprises can expand their impact and contribute to national development goals. The government, in turn, must play a proactive role in fostering an enabling environment through supportive policies, investment incentives, and institutional backing. With the right framework in place, Nigeria has the potential to become a leading hub for social entrepreneurship, driving inclusive growth, reducing inequalities, and improving the quality of life for its people.

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