



Relationship between perception of the entrepreneurial ecosystem and social entrepreneurial intentions in associations in Manabí

Relación entre percepción del ecosistema emprendedor y la intención emprendedora social en asociaciones de Manabí

Damaris Nohelia López-Espinoza*

Bryan Paul San Andrés-Mejía*

José Iván Zambrano-Farías*

Rogger Eduardo Paz Álava*

Received: September 09, 2025

Approved: November 13, 2025

López-Espinoza, D., Andrés-Mejía, B., Zambrano-Farías, J., Paz-Álava, R. (2026) Relationship between perception of the entrepreneurial ecosystem and social entrepreneurial intentions in associations in Manabí. *Espirales Revista Multidisciplinaria de investigación científica*, 10 (56), 14-26

Manabí Agricultural Polytechnic School Manuel Félix López, Business Administration
Calceta, Ecuador damarisno.lopez@espam.edu.ec
<https://orcid.org/0009-0001-4650-6483>

Manabí Manuel Félix López Higher Polytechnic School of Agriculture, Business Administration
Calceta, Ecuador bryan.sanandres@espam.edu.ec
<https://orcid.org/0009-0002-4798-5057>

Manabí Manuel Félix López Higher Polytechnic School of Agriculture, Business Administration
Calceta, Ecuador izambrano@espam.edu.ec
<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8181-0838>

Manabí Manuel Félix López Higher Polytechnic School of Agriculture, Business Administration
Calceta, Ecuador
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-323201226>
rpaz@espam.edu.ec

Abstract

This research analyzes the relationship between the perception of the entrepreneurial ecosystem and social entrepreneurial intent in associations in the province of Manabí, in order to understand how the structural and cultural conditions of the environment affect the willingness of associative actors to undertake social entrepreneurship. A quantitative, non-experimental, cross-sectional, correlational approach was applied. The population consisted of 111 members belonging to the ASOTEX, AMUCOMT, and ASOPROCOMSAL associations. A validated questionnaire with 14 Likert-type items was used, with a Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient greater than 0.80. The data were analyzed using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test and Spearman's correlation coefficient. A low and significant positive correlation ($r = 0.273$; $p = 0.009$) was found between the perception of the entrepreneurial ecosystem and the intention to engage in social entrepreneurship. The members reported a favorable environment with access to training, advice, and support programs, as well as a high willingness to develop initiatives aimed at collective well-being.

Keywords: associations, entrepreneurial ecosystem, social entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial intent, Manabí.

Resumen

La presente investigación analiza la relación entre la percepción del ecosistema emprendedor y la intención emprendedora social en asociaciones de la provincia de Manabí, para la comprensión de las condiciones estructurales y culturales del entorno inciden en la disposición de los actores asociativos para emprender con enfoque social. Se aplicó un enfoque cuantitativo, con diseño no experimental y de corte transversal, de tipo correlacional. La población estuvo conformada por 111 socios pertenecientes a las asociaciones ASOTEX, AMUCOMT y ASOPROCOMSAL. Se empleó un cuestionario validado con 14 ítems tipo Likert, cuya confiabilidad alcanzó un Alfa de Cronbach superior a 0,80. Los datos fueron analizados mediante la prueba de Kolmogorov-Smirnov y el coeficiente de correlación de Spearman. Se determinó una correlación positiva baja y significativa ($r = 0,273$; $p = 0,009$) entre la percepción del ecosistema emprendedor y la intención de emprendimiento social. Los asociados manifestaron un entorno favorable con acceso a capacitaciones, asesorías y programas de apoyo, así como una alta predisposición a desarrollar iniciativas orientadas al bienestar colectivo.

Palabras clave: asociaciones, ecosistema emprendedor, emprendimiento social, intención emprendedora, Manabí.

Introduction

Social entrepreneurship is a process that allows collective problems to be addressed through the design of sustainable solutions that prioritize generating social impact over economic profit (Villa et al., 2021). In this context, social enterprises position themselves as catalysts for change, acting through acts of service, and entrepreneurs are distinguished by their commitment to creating social value, intervening in issues such as health, education, and economic inequality (Gupta et al., 2022; Godwin and Crocker, 2024).

The consolidation of social enterprises depends on individual and contextual factors. At the individual level, entrepreneurial intention (EI) is the basis that drives entrepreneurial action, understood as the deliberate decision to start a business or social project (Anjum et al., 2021). This intention is determined by multiple variables: educational level, financial resources, culture, gender, and personal perceptions of risk and opportunity (Choque et al., 2025). At the contextual level, the entrepreneurial ecosystem (EE) plays an essential role, as it brings together institutions, public policies, financing, support networks, culture, and markets that, when interacting, can strengthen or limit the emergence of new initiatives (Rincón and Bgeng, 2025).

It has been demonstrated that countries with feasible public policies, adequate business infrastructure, and access to capital generate environments that are more conducive to entrepreneurship (Aranzana and Sánchez, 2021). In Latin America, the existence of educational programs and support networks in entrepreneurial ecosystems shows a positive relationship with the growth of entrepreneurial activity (Choque et al., 2025). However, in Ecuador, problems associated with access to financing, informality, low

technology adoption, and limited inter-institutional collaboration continue to undermine the strengthening of social enterprises (Aguirre et al., 2023; Altamirano et al., 2024).

Thus, Mazacón et al. (2021) and Costales et al. (2024) point to a low culture of innovation in the country, attributed to limited technical infrastructure and a lack of specialized advice. Added to this is the crisis of national insecurity, which affects business continuity and discourages the creation of new ventures. Despite these conditions, Ecuadorian entrepreneurs continue to develop socially-focused projects as a mechanism for resilience and collective well-being.

In this context, Popular and Solidarity Economy (PSE) associations are consolidating their position as actors in social entrepreneurship, as they operate on the principles of cooperation, solidarity, and sustainability, mainly in sectors such as tourism, agriculture, and artisanal production (Lalaleo, 2023). According to data from the SEPS (2024), there are currently 66,761 active associations in Ecuador, which demonstrates the importance of this sector in local economic development.

In this regard, the research problem focuses on understanding how the perception of the entrepreneurial ecosystem influences the intention to engage in social entrepreneurship within associations in Manabí, a province characterized by its productive dynamism, but also by structural limitations in terms of investment and support networks. Therefore, the overall objective of this study is to analyze the relationship between the perception of the entrepreneurial ecosystem and the intention to engage in social entrepreneurship in associations in the province of Manabí, taking ASOTEX, ASOPROCOMSAL, and AMUMCOMT as case studies.

Materials and methods

This research had human resources at its disposal, consisting of researchers and representatives of the three participating associations, who collaborated in the application of the instruments. Material resources included personal computers, Google forms, and mobile devices for data collection. In terms of financial resources, own funds were used for mobility, printing, and statistical processing. In the technical-administrative area, institutional support was provided by the associations and IBM SPSS Statistics software was used for data analysis.

A quantitative approach was developed, which, according to Acosta (2023), allows for the interpretation of facts through empirical logic and statistical analysis, making it possible to measure the conditions of the variables and their relationship objectively. The type of research was correlational, as it sought to determine the degree of association between the perception of the entrepreneurial ecosystem and the intention to engage in social entrepreneurship. The design was non-experimental and cross-sectional, as the data were collected at a single point in time, without manipulating the independent variables.

In this sense, the study population consisted of 111 members belonging to three associations in the province of Manabí, specifically ASOTEX, dedicated to textile production (22 members), AMUCOMT, focused on agricultural activities (67 members), and ASOPROCOMSAL, dedicated to the processing and marketing of seafood products (22 members). The study variables were: perception of the entrepreneurial ecosystem (VI); intention to engage in social entrepreneurship (VD). Each of the variables was operationalized in dimensions and indicators according to the proposal by Giraldo and Vara (2018), which guides the measurement of both constructs through specific factors. For the entrepreneurial ecosystem, the following dimensions were considered: formal institutions, culture, networks, infrastructure, demand, leadership, talent, financing, knowledge, and intermediary services. Regarding the intention to engage in social entrepreneurship, aspects related to motivation, proactivity, perception of opportunities, and social commitment were measured.

To this end, a structured survey was used as a data collection technique, consisting of 14 items on a Likert scale. In addition, a trend analysis matrix was developed to systematize the information on the dimensions of the ecosystem and contrast it with entrepreneurial intention, strengthening the statistical interpretation of the results. The questionnaire was subjected to Cronbach's alpha coefficient greater than 0.80, thus demonstrating high internal reliability of the instrument. The data collected were processed with SPSS version 25 software, initially applying the Kolmogorov-Smirnov normality test for data normality. Spearman's correlation coefficient was used because the data proved to be non-parametric.

Results

The perception of the members of the ASOTEX, AMUCOMT, and ASOPROCOMSAL associations on the impact of the entrepreneurial ecosystem on their associative growth was evaluated. In Table 1, the entrepreneurial ecosystem was determined from the perception of the members, showing feasible conditions for the entrepreneurial ecosystem within the associations of Manabí.

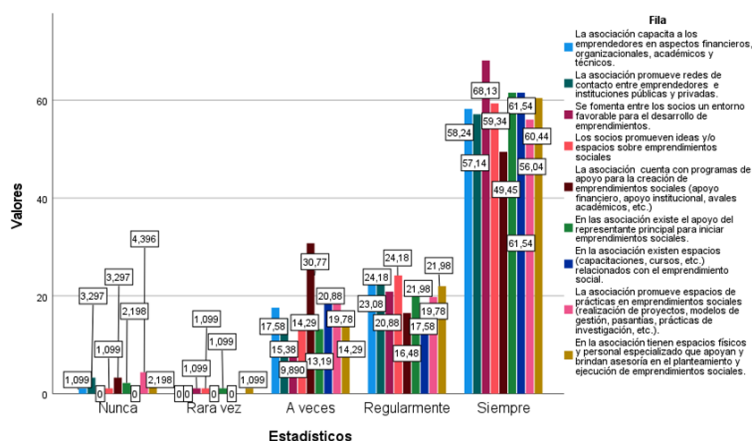


Figure 1. Entrepreneurial ecosystem

Members affirm that they always receive training in financial, organizational, academic, and technical aspects (58.24%) and that a feasible environment for entrepreneurship is fostered (68.13%). It is also recognized that the association has support programs for the creation of social enterprises (59.34%) and that there are training opportunities such as courses and training directly related to social entrepreneurship (61.54%). These same members report having access to physical spaces with specialized personnel who provide them with advice for the development of entrepreneurial initiatives (60.44%). In essence, it is an environment that strengthens entrepreneurial intent with a social focus, consolidating an associative culture where entrepreneurship is not only possible but actively promoted.

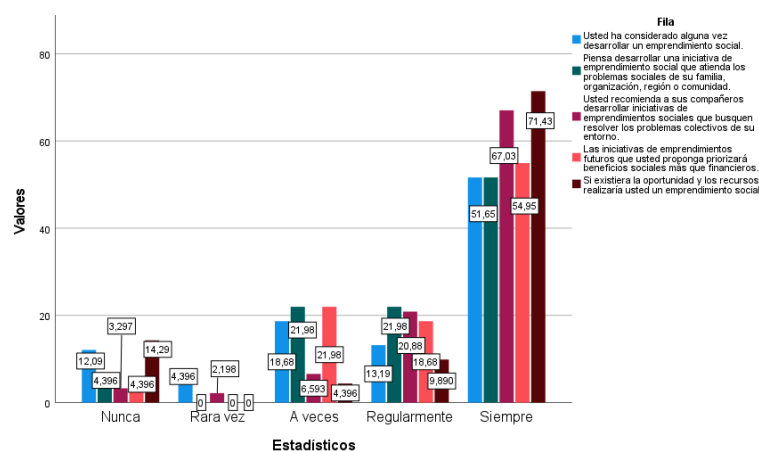


Figure 2. Entrepreneurial intent

Table 2 shows that 51.65% would consider developing a social enterprise, while 71.43% say they would do so if they had sufficient opportunities and resources. 67.03% recommend that their colleagues develop initiatives that solve collective problems, which means that these institutions have a culture of solidarity oriented towards social transformation.

Fifty-four point nine five percent of members stated that in their future ventures they would seek to prioritize social benefits over financial ones, reaffirming the ethical and community-oriented approach of their entrepreneurial intent. It is also noteworthy that 51.65% plan to start a business with the aim of addressing social problems in their immediate environment, such as family, community, or organization. In this sense, this set of information indicates that entrepreneurial intent is present in these spaces and is deeply rooted in social and collective values. These conditions strengthen the projection of an ecosystem committed to sustainable human development.

Table 1. Kolmogorov Smirnov normality test

	Statistic	gl	Sig.
Entrepreneurial intention	.127	111	.001
Entrepreneurial ecosystem	,141	111	,000

The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test applied to the variables "Entrepreneurial Intention" and "Entrepreneurial Ecosystem" shows significance values of 0.001 and 0.000, respectively. Since both values are less than 0.05, the null hypothesis of normality is rejected. This indicates that the data do not follow a normal distribution. Therefore, a nonparametric test was applied, specifically Spearman's correlation coefficient.

Table 2. Spearman's correlation coefficient

			Entrepreneurial intention	Entrepreneurial ecosystem
Spearman's rho	Entrepreneurial intention	Correlation coefficient	1.000	.273**
		Sig. (two-tailed)	.	.009
	N		911	111
	Entrepreneurial ecosystem	Correlation coefficient	.273**	1.000
		Sig. (two-tailed)	.009	.
	N		111	111

In Table 2, Spearman's correlation coefficient between entrepreneurial intention and ecosystem is 0.273, with a two-tailed significance value of 0.009, expressing a low positive correlation, significant at the 0.01 level. This means that as partners perceive a stronger entrepreneurial ecosystem, their intention to engage in social entrepreneurship increases. However, despite the fact that the relationship is low positive, its statistical significance supports the existence of a real connection between the two variables, confirming that a feasible associative environment can influence motivation to engage in social entrepreneurship.

This relationship suggests that factors associated with the ecosystem, such as financial support programs, training, and advisory spaces, may enable the intention to engage in entrepreneurship among members. However, this raises the idea that rather than depending purely on the environment, the entrepreneurial intention itself may be implicit in the "motivation" to initiate social proposals, the desire to create businesses based on shared values, and the commitment to territorial development and the sense of reciprocity of associations. This sense of cooperation, especially in rural communities, drives partners to engage in social entrepreneurship, whether for economic reasons or out of necessity, but with the desire to contribute to collective well-being and preserve local traditions.

Table 3. *Trend matriz*

Trend	Previously	Currently	Emerging
Leadership	Leadership concentrated in a few people with little generational turnover.	Participatory leadership with greater female presence in management positions.	Promotion of young leaders and training in project management with a gender perspective.
Talent	Empirical training based on experience.	Frequent training in finance, organization, and artisanal production.	Development of digital skills, social marketing, and strategic management for collective ventures.
Finance	Dependence on internal contributions and informal self-financing.	Limited but growing access to competitive funds and associative credits.	Promotion of community revolving funds, solidarity microcredits, and public-private financing programs for social entrepreneurship.
Knowledge	Poor systematization of acquired knowledge.	Greater technical assistance to document experiences and lessons learned.	Formal systematization and dissemination of good practices, guidelines, and methodologies to replicate successful social entrepreneurship models in other rural communities.

Thus, Table 3 shows the trend matrix based on scientific evidence and data obtained in the study, which made it possible to identify the evolution of the factors that shape the entrepreneurial ecosystem in rural associations in Manabí. Table 3 shows how associative dynamics have shifted from subsistence models to practices oriented toward social impact, cooperation, and female leadership. This allows us to project emerging trends associated with digitization, sustainability, and collaborative networks, reflecting an ecosystem more oriented toward collective well-being and social innovation.

The data indicate that the associative environment under study shows dynamics that promote social entrepreneurship, but it is necessary to strengthen technical and financial support mechanisms because, although members perceive a feasible environment for entrepreneurship and training, it was found that technical and financial support programs do not yet fully cover the needs for the implementation of social initiatives. According to Sigüenza et al. (2022), an entrepreneurial ecosystem must combine internal motivation with structural resources that allow these initiatives to scale up, although Duque and Ortiz (2022) consider that it is essential to address the lack of access to financing and to weave institutional networks to strengthen the sustainability of social projects. In this regard, Mazacón et al. (2021) argue that institutional support must be accompanied by concrete actions that turn ideas into solutions.

The data shows a high level of entrepreneurial intent with a social focus, which coincides with Sigüenza et al. (2022), who argue that entrepreneurial intent arises when individuals

perceive a feasible opportunity and feel supported by their environment. It was evident that the partners seek to undertake their ventures in a more social context. According to López et al. (2024), social entrepreneurs prioritize impact on the community over purely financial gain. Fonseca and Ruiz (2025) argue that the existence of an associative culture that promotes and recommends these practices acts as a determining factor since it fosters perceived self-efficacy; people feel the support of others, which increases the probability of entrepreneurship.

Conclusions

The evidence showed that the entrepreneurial ecosystem perceived by the members of associations in Manabí is functional and presents structural and cultural conditions that are feasible for promoting initiatives with a social focus. The constant presence of training, specialized advice, and support programs reflects a conducive environment that motivates associative actors to undertake initiatives with a sense of collective responsibility. There is evidence of strengthened social capital that, far from seeking only economic benefits, prioritizes the common good.

The members show a clear intention to engage in social entrepreneurship among the participants, with more than 70% expressing their willingness to do so if the right conditions were in place. This willingness is mainly oriented towards solving community and family problems, which reinforces the idea of entrepreneurship driven by ethical values, territorial commitment, and reciprocity.

The correlation between the two variables is positive but low, meaning that strengthening the entrepreneurial ecosystem could increase social entrepreneurial intent. This poses a challenge, or rather an opportunity, for public and private actors to consolidate policies, financing, and support networks that accompany these initiatives from a sustainability perspective.

Thus, the findings show that the entrepreneurial ecosystem perceived by the members of the organizations is positively associated with the intention to engage in social entrepreneurship; moreover, this willingness seems to arise even from collective and community motivations typical of the rural context. It should also be noted that lower male participation was identified within the associations, an aspect that raises the need to deploy future lines of research with a gender focus in these organizations.

References

- Altamirano, M., Salazar, A., & Riofrío, A. (2024). Determinants of female entrepreneurship in Ecuador: An individual and environmental perspective. *European Public & Social Innovation Review*, 9, 1–21.

<https://doi.org/10.31637/epsir-2024-1037>

Anjum, T., Farrukh, M., Heidler, P., and Díaz, J. (2021). Entrepreneurial intention: creativity, entrepreneurship, and university support. *Open Innovation Journal: Technology, Market, and Complexity*, 7(1), 11. <https://doi.org/10.3390/joitmc7010011>

Aranzana, C., and Sánchez, R. (2021). Public policies and women's entrepreneurship in the rural environment. A case analysis: The Alto Bernesga Biosphere Reserve (León). *Applied Economics Studies*, 39(3), 75. <https://doi.org/10.25115/eea.v39i3.3875>

Arteaga, I., and García, M. (2024). Social management and its influence on quality of life in agricultural associations: Case study of the Valle del Carrizal Association, Calceta-Manabí. *PENTACIENCIAS Multidisciplinary Peer-Reviewed Scientific Journal*, 6(6). <https://doi.org/10.59169/pentaciencias.v6i6.1250>

Aguirre, J., Coronel, K., and Valero, P. (2023). Financing Ecuadorian social enterprises: What is the role of impact investing? *Sustainability*. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su151411210>

Cekule, L., Cekuls, A., and Dunska, M. (2023). The role of education in fostering entrepreneurial intent among business students. <https://doi.org/10.4995/head23.2023.16159>

Costales, R., Villarroel, C., Avalos, J., and Cepeda, P. (2023). Analysis of the factors affecting the failure of entrepreneurship in the province of Chimborazo, Ecuador, 2023. *Revista Espacios*, 45(01).
<https://www.revistaespacios.com/a24v45n01/a24v45n01p08.pdf>

Choque, C., Barrutia, N., Huamani, R., and Varón, N. (2025). From the classroom to entrepreneurship: The entrepreneurial ecosystem and the intentions of future entrepreneurs. *Venezuelan Management Journal*, 30(111), 1584-1599.
<https://doi.org/10.52080/rvgluz.30.111.21>

Duque, P., and Ortiz, D. (2022). Perspectives and trends in social entrepreneurship research. *Management Development*, 14(1), 1–26.
<https://doi.org/10.17081/dege.14.1.5082>

Godwin, C., and Crocker, J. (2024). Social entrepreneurship. *Encyclopedia of Social Work*.
<https://oxfordre.com/socialwork/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780199975839.001.0001/acrefore-9780199975839-e-1304>.

Fonseca, G., and Ruiz, J. (2025). Entrepreneurship and social innovation from an associative perspective: a bibliometric review. *Finance and Economic Policy Journal*, 17, 1–32.
<https://doi.org/10.14718/revfinanzpolitecon.v17.2025.8>

Gupta, P., Chauhan, S., Paul, J., & Jaiswal, D. (2020). Research on social entrepreneurship: A review and future research agenda. *Journal of Business Research*, 113, 209–229.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2020.03.032>

Lalaleo, F. (2023). Business management strategies in artisan associations. ASOARCAQ case study. Multidisciplinary Peer-Reviewed Journal of Accounting, Auditing, and Taxation: CORPORATUM 360, 6(12), 2–15.

<https://doi.org/10.56124/corporatum-360.v6i12.0001>

López, H., Cadenas, J., Arroyo, G., & Gamarra, M. (2024). Strategies of Peruvian social entrepreneurs from a cognitive and environmental perspective. Management Studies, 41(171), 162-176.

<https://doi.org/10.18046/j.estger.2024.171.6290>

Mancero, M., Alvarado, J., Yunga, R., and Rodríguez, K. (2022). Social and community entrepreneurship in the context of change and crisis in Ecuador. University, Science, and Technology, 26(117), 98–108.

<https://doi.org/10.47460/uct.v26i117.665>

Marulanda, N., Herrera, J., Urrego, M., & García, A. (2023). Knowledge management in social enterprises: a bibliometric and scientometric analysis of trends. University and Business Journal, 24(43), 1–35.

<https://doi.org/10.12804/revistas.urosario.edu.co/empresa/a.11893>

Mazacón, B., Lozano, L., and Guevara, G. (2021). Analysis of management models for the sustainability of social entrepreneurship in the Province of Los Ríos. Journal of Science and Research: Revista Ciencia e Investigación, 6(Extra

3), 370–393.
<https://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/articulo?codigo=8170646>

Rincón, F., and Baena, P. (2025). Analysis of entrepreneurship resources in the Spanish social economy. CIRIEC-Spain, Journal of Public, Social, and Cooperative Economy, (113), 275–296. <https://doi.org/10.7203/CIRIEC-E.113.28379>

Robinson, D. (2022). Venture capital and technological entrepreneurship in Latin America: A comparative approach. Contributions to Management Science, 9–26. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-97699-6_2

Sigüenza, S., Álava, N., Pinos, L., & Peralta, X. (2022). University students' perceptions of the entrepreneurial ecosystem and social entrepreneurial intention. Challenges. Journal of Management and Economics Sciences, 12(24), 67–83. <https://doi.org/10.17163/ret.n24.2022.04>

Superintendency of Popular and Solidarity Economy (2024). SEPS data. <https://www.seps.gob.ec/>

Villegas, F., Verzosi, C., & Valero, M. (2025). The ecosystem of the popular and solidarity economy in Ecuador. Observatory of Social Sciences in Ibero-America, 5(3), 44–80. <https://doi.org/10.51896/ocsi.v5i3.556>

Villota, L. (2023). Characterization and sustainability of rural social entrepreneurship in associative agribusinesses in southern Nariño. Trends, 24(1). <http://www.scielo.org.co/scielo.php?pid=S0124->

86932023000100050&script=sci_arttext

Villa, A., Arias, M., & Peña, M. (2021). A training model for developing social entrepreneurship. *EDUCAR*, 57(1), 97–116.
<https://doi.org/10.5565/rev/educar.1153>

Yáñez, D. (2025). Strengthening marketing in agricultural organizations: Diagnosis and proposal for institutional improvement. *Tesla Scientific Journal*, 5(2).
<https://doi.org/10.55204/trc.v5i2.e491>