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Role of Religiosity and Subjective Norms in Forming Social Entrepreneurial Intention: Evidence from India

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Abstract

This study investigates the differential impact of intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity on an individual's intention to start a social enterprise through subjective norms. Even though entrepreneurs have started exploring the role of religion in starting a social enterprise, research has yet to examine how different religious motivational dimensions — intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity — might influence one's social entrepreneurial intention. Using structural equation modelling on a valid sample of 210 respondents from India, results show that extrinsic religiosity positively influences social entrepreneurial intention via subjective norms. However, intrinsic or extrinsic religiosity does not directly influence social entrepreneurial intention. Our model indicates that individuals' intention to start a social enterprise partly depends on their extrinsic religiosity and subjective norms. Our findings present interesting theoretical implications for social entrepreneurship literature and practical implications for organizations that seek to promote entrepreneurship.

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Keywords
Religiosity, Entrepreneurship, Social Entrepreneurship, Subjective Norms and Social Entrepreneurial Intention

1. Introduction
Researchers have consistently explained that social enterprises are the highest form of others-oriented action or behaviours based on pro-social intent (Tucker, Croom, and Bacq, 2019). Given that pro-social intentions drive actions for the benefit and well-being of others, social enterprises are inherently engagements in business to solve social and environmental issues (e.g., Bacq and Janssen, 2011). Social entrepreneurship is a long-term involvement in benevolent actions by developing an enterprise that is dedicated to solving social and environmental issues sustainably (Veludo-de-Oliveira et al., 2015). Moroever, social enterprise is key to fulfilment of different sustainable development goals. As per United Nations Sustainable Development Goal number 12 (SDGs), responsible consumption and production are key to sustainable development (UN.org, 2024). It has a crucial role to play in addressing global challenges — decreasing environmental degradation and reducing inequality at both social and economic levels. The primary objective of sustainable consumption (SC) is to fulfil human needs while minimizing environmental degradation and safeguarding resources for the benefit of future generations. Therefore, it is imperative to not only motivate consumers to adopt sustainable lifestyles, which are centred around minimalist consumption, choosing green products, and adopting pro-environmental practices (e.g., reusing towels, reducing water and energy wastage, recycling and repurposing used products) to decrease the overall carbon footprint in daily consumption activities but also to inspire them to take the initiatives towards finding solutions and start enterprises focusing on solving social and environmental issues (pro-environmental and pro-social). More importantly, achieving sustainable consumption is impossible without collaboration among businesses, consumers, and governments and therefore, a balance between sustainable consumption and sustainable production initiatives is crucial (unep.org, 2024).

Scholars globally are increasingly acknowledging entrepreneurship as a viable means to address social challenges while simultaneously generating economic wealth (Shepherd, 2015). Social entrepreneurship, in particular, is regarded by both academic researchers and practitioners as a potent approach to combatting poverty (Zhao & Lounsbury, 2016), reducing unemployment (Pache and Santos, 2013), tackling climate change, and empowering women (Zhao and Lounsbury, 2016). Furthermore, it plays a crucial role in rebuilding communities impacted by disasters, offering opportunities for sustainable consumption, and co-creating solutions with consumers to address social issues (Williams and Shepherd, 2016). Consequently, the number of social ventures has surged globally, particularly in emerging and underdeveloped economies like India, where numerous social challenges persist (Zahra et al., 2014). There is a growing interest in examining entrepreneurial opportunities as a means to achieve social outcomes within the field of entrepreneurship. Additionally, research in entrepreneurship needs to focus on providing solutions that effectively address inequalities at local, national, and global levels (UNSDG No. 10). Previous studies have indicated that social entrepreneurship has emerged as a viable approach to reducing inequality by generating both social and economic value in a sustainable manner, especially in the emerging economies (Haugh and Talwar, 2014).

Past research has found that religiosity, through its values, norms, and beliefs, influences the type of entrepreneurial activity they engage in (Audretsch et al., 2013). However, most of the studies exploring the influence of religiosity on entrepreneurship have focused on Western contexts or/and Abrahamic religious affiliations. Given the influence of religiosity on individuals' values, attitudes, and behaviours varies across different cultures and affiliations, it is imperative to explore the influence of religiosity in an Eastern cultural context among individuals who majorly affiliate themselves with non-Abrahamic religious affiliation (Minton et al., 2022). More importantly, none of the studies in past have explored the distinct influence of intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity on social entrepreneurship intention, which presents a significant gap. To gain deeper insights into the psychological processes behind involvement in social entrepreneurship, it's important to consider the distinct influences of intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity because both may correlate with social entrepreneurship intention differently (Schwartz and Huismans, 1995). The influence of religiosity on social entrepreneurship can be both direct and indirect through different channels. We explore both the direct and indirect routes by exploring the influence of religiosity on social entrepreneurship intention through subjective norms. Past literature suggests that religiosity and subjective norms are interconnected and may demonstrate both independent and collective effects (Cai and Shi, 2019). Therefore, the primary objective of this study is to investigate the independent effect of intrinsic religiosity, extrinsic religiosity, and subjective norms on social entrepreneurship intention. And the secondary objective is to explore the differential indirect influences of intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity through subjective norms on social entrepreneurship intention.

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2. Literature Review and Research Model

Researchers are increasingly focusing on the role of religion in entrepreneurship and organizational studies (McIntyre et al., 2023). Religious dimensions influence various forms of entrepreneurship and shape its nature (Dana, 2010). Religion significantly affects the entrepreneurial decision-making process and helps explain the differences in entrepreneurial choices among different religious affiliations, such as Christianity and Hinduism (Audretsch et al., 2013). Furthermore, religion impacts the desirable outcomes of entrepreneurship, which may include accumulating wealth, creating value, or serving a societal or environmental purpose (Khurana et al., 2021). Therefore, religiosity, one's degree of compliance with different dimensions of any religion — values, beliefs, and norms, plays a crucial role in understanding the role of a particular religion in influencing entrepreneurial attitudes and behaviours (Hyodo and Bolton, 2020). More importantly, individuals can adhere to different religious dimensions to fulfil different motives, and hence, it is crucial to capture the influence of the different motivations of religious behaviour on any other attitude or behaviour. Religiosity can be both intrinsic and extrinsic in nature. Individuals driven by self-interest or/and utilitarian motivations can subscribe to extrinsic religiosity and use it to achieve their personal goals (e.g., social recognition) (Vitell et al., 2016). On the other hand, individuals who want to live the values and beliefs of their religion in their daily lives and are motivated by the inherent objectives of their religion adhere more towards intrinsic religiosity (Vitell et al., 2016). In the entrepreneurship context, an extrinsically motivated religious individual will be more inclined towards generating personal profit from their business, whereas intrinsically motivated religious individuals will try contributing to society through their business (Vitell et al., 2016). Therefore, as social entrepreneurs are more focused towards achieving social goals — helping others and providing benefits to society — than generating wealth for themselves in both the long and short run, we expect intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity to have a varying influence on the intention to start a social enterprise.

On the other hand, religion can significantly influence the selection of business ventures due to its strict norms (Dana, 2010). According to Hoogendoorn et al. (2016), religiosity and its related norms provide strict guidelines about acceptable and unacceptable actions, influencing even one's occupational choices, such as self-employment. For example, Jainism prohibits the trade of certain products, such as meat, and restricts self-employment options, like agriculture, because these practices contradict the principle of ahimsa, or non-violence (Iyer, 1999). Different religious affiliations can have different norms related to occupational choices. Therefore, we consider intrinsic religiosity, extrinsic religiosity, and subjective norms together to explore the psychological process behind one's intention to start a social enterprise. The exploration of these constructs together fulfils the past calls of researchers for a meaningful exploration of the influence of religiosity on social entrepreneurial intention (e.g., Giacomin et al., 2022). This is important as most recent studies on the relationship between religion and entrepreneurial intention have focused on the direct effect and have not explored the distinct influence of intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity (e.g., McIntyre et al., 2023). Moreover, to the best of the authors' knowledge, none of the studies have explored the collective influence of religiosity and subjective norms on social entrepreneurial intention. Our study fills this lacuna, too, as most of the studies have not empirically tested the influence of social norms in the entrepreneurship literature and have also not investigated the distinct influence of intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity through subjective norms on social entrepreneurial intention (McIntyre et al., 2023; Meek, Pacheco, and York, 2010)

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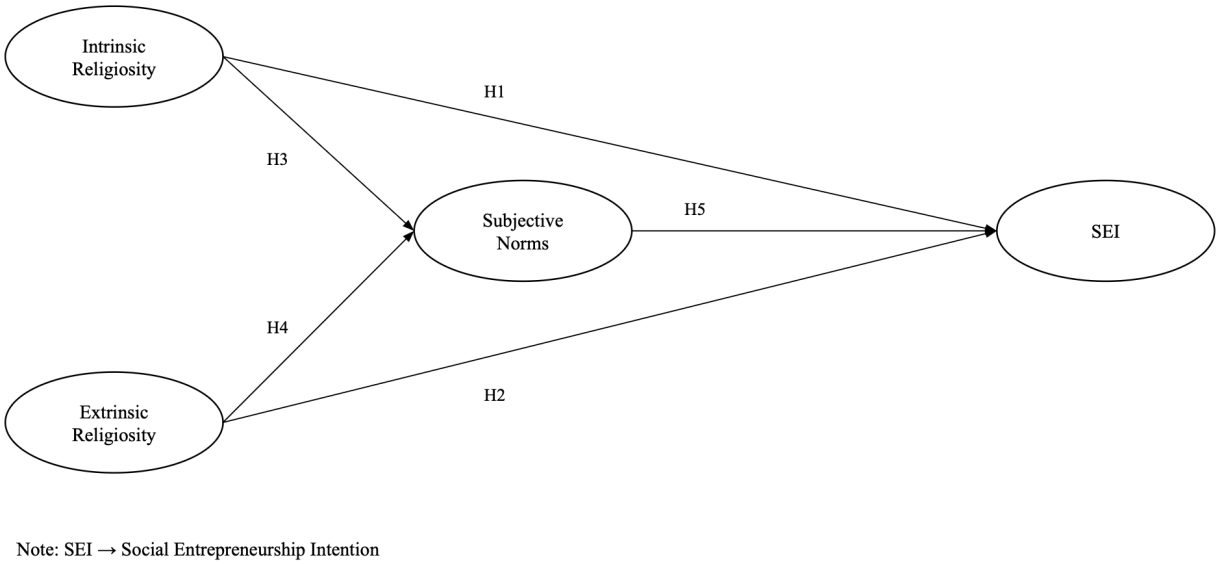


Figure 1.Proposed Research Model

Based on the above discussion, we propose the following hypotheses (Figure 1):
H1: Intrinsic religiosity has a positive relationship with social entrepreneurial intention.
H2: Extrinsic religiosity has a negative relationship with social entrepreneurial intention.
H3: Intrinsic religiosity has a negative relationship with subjective norms.
H4: Extrinsic religiosity has a positive relationship with subjective norms.
H5: Subjective norms have a positive relationship with social entrepreneurial intention.

3. Methodology

3.1 Study procedures and measures

We first conceptualised our theoretical framework based on a review of past literature. We developed a structured questionnaire using past scales. The items were measured using a 7-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". The structured questionnaire also included questions related to demographics (Gender and Age), education, occupation, and entrepreneurial education. The data was collected using an online self-administered survey, as a survey-based technique is most appropriate for understanding consumers' different behaviours in their natural context (Pinsonneault and Kraemer, 1993). The structured questionnaire consisted of four constructs, measured through 14 questions, as represented in Table 1.

Table 1.Measurement Items

Constructs	**Measurement Item**	**Reference**
Intrinsic Religiosity	My religious beliefs lie behind my whole approach to life.	(Worthington et al., 2003)
	I spend time trying to grow in understanding of my faith.	
	It is important to me to spend periods of time in private religious thought and reflection.	
	Religious beliefs influence all my dealings in life.	
	I often read books and magazines about my faith.	
Extrinsic Religiosity	I enjoy working in the activities of my religious organization.	(Worthington et al., 2003)
	I enjoy spending time with others of my religious organization.	
	I keep well informed about my local religious group and have some influence in its decisions.	
	I make financial contributions to my religious organization.	

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Subjective Norms	If I decide to create a social venture, my family members will approve of this decision.	(Linan and Chen, 2009)
	If I decide to create a social venture, my friends will approve of this decision.	
	If I decide to create a social venture, my colleagues will approve of this decision.	
Social Entrepreneurial Intention	I expect that at some point in the future I will be involved in launching an organisation that aims to solve social problems	(Ghatak et al., 2023)
	I have a preliminary idea for a social enterprise on which I plan to act in the future	(Ghatak et al., 2023)

3.2 Sample

An online self-administered survey helped to collect data at an optimised cost from different geographic regions in India (Coviello and Jones, 2004). Out of more than 300 questionnaires self-administered by respondents, only 210 complete surveys were deemed usable for this study. We used judgemental sampling, a type of convenience sampling, because of its wide-ranging adoption as a pragmatic approach to collect high-quality data across different entrepreneurship studies (Coviello and Jones, 2004). Moreover, past studies have found it most appropriate for developing an understanding of final consumers and their intentions and behaviours (Coviello and Jones, 2004). We focused on collecting data from respondents meeting the following criteria: urban adult individuals affiliating with non-Abrahamic religious affiliation with graduation as the minimum educational qualification. In the Indian sample, 69.5% of males and 30.4% of females participated in the study. Regarding religious affiliation, the majority affiliated themselves with non-Abrahamic religions. Finally, we used structural equation analysis to investigate the mechanisms through which intrinsic religiosity, extrinsic religiosity and subjective norms are related to social entrepreneurship intention (Table 2).

Table 2. Respondent Profiles

Variables	**Category**	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Gender	Female	64	30.4%
	Male	146	69.5%
Religious affiliation	No Religion	0	0%
	Hindu	196	93.3%
	Buddhist	0	0%
	Jain	14	6%
	Others	0	0%
Occupation	Working full time	183	87%
	Student	13	6.2%
	Housewife (Househusband)	14	6.66%
	Others	0	0%
Age	20-35	173	82.3%
	36-50	23	10.9%
	50&Older	14	6.66%
Entrepreneurship/Managerial Education (EE)	Yes	73	34.7%
	No	137	65.2%

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4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Measurement Model Validation

In this study, a two-step approach was utilized for model analysis, following the method suggested by Anderson & Gerbing (1988), where measurement models were examined initially, followed by a structural model. We performed confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) with the help of R and found the fit statistics for assessing the measurement model. This also yielded construct validity, estimated through the maximum likelihood method (MLE). As per the guidelines by Hair et al. (1998), to effectively utilise Maximum Likelihood Estimation (MLE), it is recommended to have a sample size of a minimum of 140 participants. Our sample size 210 was higher than the minimum required sample size and provided sufficient support to the guideline, ensuring reliable and accurate statistical results. In our assessment of the measurement models, we analyzed several indices to determine their adequacy. These included Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, and standardized factor loadings. The results presented in Table 3 indicate that all items within their respective constructs had standardized estimates greater than 0.5 and were statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) (Hair, et al., 1998). The values for Cronbach's Alpha and composite reliability for each construct exceeded 0.7 (Hair, et al., 1998), demonstrating a strong internal consistency in the measurement scales. Convergent validity was established, as all Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values were above 0.5 (Hair, et al., 1998)

Table 3 .Summary of Measurement Model Validation

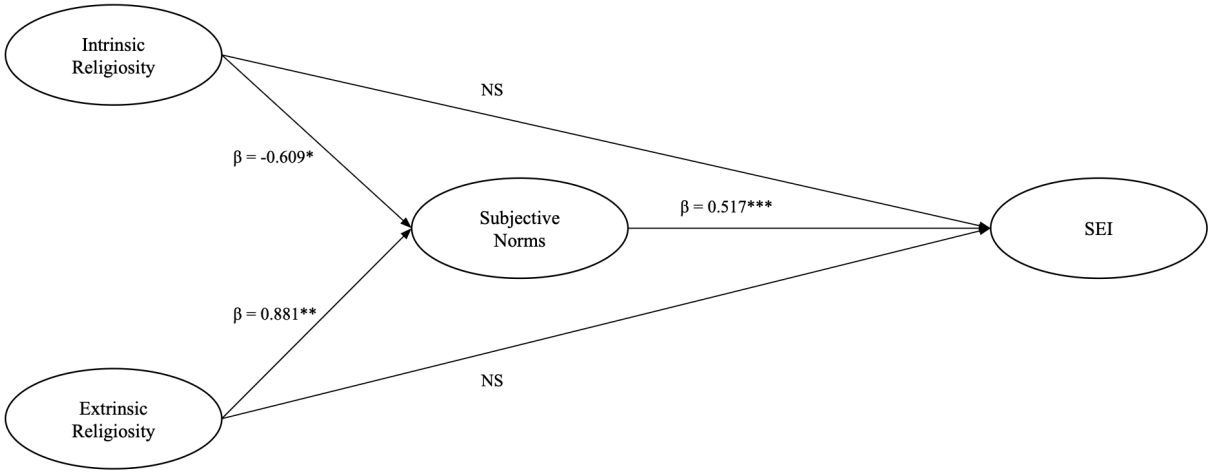
Factors	Mean	Std. Dev	Cronbach's Alpha	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)	Standardized Factor Loading	Composite Reliability
IR	3.84	1.75	0.908	0.657		0.892
IR1					0.756	
IR2					0.748	
IR3					0.840	
IR4					0.898	
IR5					0.802	
ER	3.45	1.79	0.919	0.733		0.906
ER1					0.892	
ER2					0.913	
ER3					0.814	
ER4					0.795	
SN	5.00	1.46	0.837	0.634		0.838
SN1					0.749	
SN2					0.871	
SN3					0.774	
SEI	4.51	1.71	0.837	0.722		0.838
SEI1					0.912	
SEI2					0.792	

All survey questions utilised in our study were based on established research. We assessed the reliability and validity of each survey item through confirmatory factor analysis using an R package. We implemented a series of scale purification processes on the initial model to achieve an optimal overall model fit. This led to removing two survey items – SEI3 and REL10 – due to lower factor loadings (<0.5). It is essential to recognise that all scales contained multiple items (at least two), which were needed to reduce measurement error (Jung, Kim, and Oh, 2016) (see Table 3). According to Hair et al. (1998), evaluating model fit involves several key indicators. The normed chi-square value, calculated by dividing the chi-square statistic by the degrees of freedom (DF), should fall between 2 and 5. Additionally, the Comparative Fit Index (CFI) and the Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) should each be greater than 0.9. Finally, the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) should be less than 0.08. The final measurement model demonstrated a good fit — $\chi 2/DF = 2.48$, CFI = 0.952, TLI = 0.939, and RMSEA = 0.07 — by fulfilling the desired cut-offs (Hair et al., 2010).

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4.1 Structual Model Validation

Using the Lavaan library in R, we estimated the model for India using structural equations, and the results are reported in Table 4 and Figure 2. Overall, the model yielded a good fit -- $\chi 2/DF = 2.09$, CFI = 0.960, TLI = 0.045, RMSEA = 0.064). We found that intrinsic religiosity has an insignificant positive relationship with social entrepreneurship intention ($\beta = 0.339$, NS). Therefore, H1 is not supported. Similarly, extrinsic religiosity has an insignificant negative relationship with social entrepreneurship intention ($\beta = -0.159$, NS). Hence, H2 is also not supported. Further, intrinsic religiosity is significantly and negatively related to subjective norms ($\beta = -0.609$, $p < 0.05$). Therefore, H3 is supported. Extrinsic religiosity has a significant positive relationship with subjective norms ($\beta = 0.881$, $p < 0.01$), supporting H4. Finally, subjective norms have a significant positive relationship with social entrepreneurship intention ($\beta = 0.517$, $p < 0.001$). Therefore, H5 is supported.



Note: SEI → Social Entrepreneurship Intention; *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; NS = Non-significant

Figure 2.Main effects research model

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Table 4.Summary of Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesized Path	**Beta coefficients**	**P value**	**Hypothesis Supported or Not Supported**
H1: IR → SEI	0.339	0.197	H1 not supported
H2: ER → SEI	-0.159	0.558	H2 not supported
H5: SN → SEI	0.517***	0.000	H5 supported
Gender → SEI	0.148*	0.020	--
Age → SEI	-0.059	0.387	--
EE → SEI	0.143*	0.028	--
H3: IR → SN	-0.609*	0.040	H3 supported
H4: ER → SN	0.881**	0.005	H4 supported
Gender → SN	0.023	0.760	--
Age → SN	0.146	0.062	--
EE → SN	0.048	0.522	--
Note: IR = Intrinsic Religiosity; ER= Extrinsic Religiosity; SN = Subjective Norms; SEI = Social Entrepreneurial Intention; EE = Entrepreneurship/ Managerial Education			

4.2 Discussion

This research is one of the first to explain the social entrepreneurial intention of Indians with non-Abrahamic religious affiliations based on their religiosity and subjective norms. The proposed conceptual model investigates several key aspects: 1) the varying direct influence of intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity on social entrepreneurial intention (H1 and H2); 2) the varying direct influence of intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity on subjective norms (H3 and H4); and 3) the influence of subjective norms on social entrepreneurial intention (H5). As discussed above, only two hypotheses were not supported (H1 and H2) that suggested a direct influence of intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity on social entrepreneurial intention. These results are in accordance with a few studies in past that suggest there is no relationship—neither positive nor negative—between religion and entrepreneurship (e.g., Giacomin et al., 2022). For instance, Drakopoulou-Dodd and Seaman (1998) found no influence of religious beliefs on entrepreneurial behaviour in the context of the United Kingdom. Along similar lines, Audretsch et al. (2017) explored religious values' relationship with entrepreneurship in different regions of the US and found that religious values did not significantly influence local entrepreneurship culture. One of the possible reasons for the observation of insignificant relationships between religion and entrepreneurship can be the mediating role of personal values. According to Rietveld and Hoogendorn (2022), religious individuals may not prioritize values that instigate entrepreneurship (e.g., openness to change). Another reason can be that religion promotes risk aversion, which can hinder one's intention to start an enterprise (Zhang and Liu 2021). On the other hand, our findings of an indirect positive influence of extrinsic religiosity on social entrepreneurial intention through subjective norms provide new insights. This finding indicates that presenting social enterprises as an avenue to fulfil goals in accordance with religion-induced socially desirable norms. For instance, presenting social enterprises as an avenue to garner material success and contribute towards the welfare of one's religious community, hence garnering social recognition, can motivate individuals to choose social entrepreneurship as an occupational choice. On the other hand, a negative indirect influence of intrinsic religiosity on

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social entrepreneurial intention through subjective norms suggests that intrinsic dimensions of religion, such as values and beliefs, may act as deterrents towards starting a social enterprise in India. Our findings contribute to the limited literature that suggests the extrinsic dimension of religiosity, which focuses on belonging to one's community and focusing on fulfilling social religious obligations, has a more positive influence on starting a social enterprise than the intrinsic dimension of religiosity, which focuses on beliefs, values, and rituals (believing and behaving) (e.g., Giacomin et al., 2022).

5. Conclusion

The main goal of this research is to explore and predict social entrepreneurial intention, focusing on two motivational aspects of religiosity—intrinsic and extrinsic—as well as subjective norms. The proposed model demonstrated a good fit. Among the five hypotheses tested, only two were not supported, while the remaining three received strong support. This research has theoretical and pragmatic implications too. First, it shows that extrinsically motivated religious individuals adhere to subjective norms related to social entrepreneurship and are more prone to start a social enterprise. Second, we provide an empirical contribution by testing our model in an Eastern context that includes an understudied country, such as India, with a focus on non-Abrahamic religious affiliations. Thus, we add to the very limited literature on religion and entrepreneurship, which has focused on Western developed countries with their dominant religion as Christianity (Rietveld and Hoogendoorn, 2022). Third, this paper, with its multi-focus on intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity and subjective norms, fulfils the calls of past researchers to consider multiple psychological determinants simultaneously to develop a holistic and deeper understanding of social entrepreneurial intentions (Balog et al., 2014). It also contributes theoretically towards a limited literature that emphasizes a simultaneous focus on religiosity and norms while understanding individual occupational decisions (e.g., Cai and Shi, 2019).

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