

A Consequence of Social Entrepreneurial Intent: The Good Life

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Abstract

The study examined the relationship between personal dispositions, social entrepreneurial intent (SEI), and the good life in a sample of 2,000 college students in Los Angeles, Manila, Mexicali, Taipei, and Yantai. Social cognitive career theory posits that a specific career choice – in this case becoming a social entrepreneur – affects individuals' experience of the good life, and social entrepreneurial intent mediates the relationship between personal dispositions and the good life. The paper presents and empirically tests a broad conceptualization of the good life – going beyond happiness and satisfaction – to include subjective and psychological wellbeing, freedom to make life choices, quality of social relations, and pathways to reach goals. Extending the previous research, the study finds that the personal dispositions of trust, optimism, generosity, and healthy life expectancy were robust predictors of SEI, and that SEI mediated the relationship between personal dispositions and the good life. Finally, cultural context mattered; long-term orientation, low masculinity, and high indulgence partially moderated the disposition-to-SEI-to-good life relationship.

Keywords

Good Life, social entrepreneurial intent, culture, trust, optimism, generosity, healthy life expectancy, subjective wellbeing, psychological wellbeing

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A good life is a life worth living. The good life is manifested in the overall and comprehensive quality of one's life (Veenhoven, 2000; Wong, 2013). The present study sought to understand how a specific career choice – social entrepreneurship – might affect individuals' experience of the good life. The study used a broad conceptualization of the good life, rather than limiting it to happiness or satisfaction, and explored how one's intent to form or join a social enterprise (SE) might matter, what dispositional factors might lead a person to intend to pursue SE (SEI) as a career possibility, and what cultural context might enhance or diminish the strength of the disposition-to-SEI-to-good life relationship.

Why the interest in the relationship between SEI and the good life? While numerous studies have been made about the antecedents of SEI, few have contributed to an understanding of its consequences. SEI, if enacted, certainly has an effect on others and the environment. The present study sought to understand the consequences of SEI on the individual, in particular individuals at the start of their professional careers.

How might a college student's choice of SE as a career affect the quality of his or her life? Social cognitive career theory suggests that career choices affect happiness, wellbeing, and satisfaction (Kelly, 2009; Lindley, 2005; Schaub & Tokar, 2005). Moreover, researchers have posited that social cognitive career theory can explain entrepreneurship, social entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial intent, and social entrepreneurial intent (Belchior & Lyons, 2021; Liguori *et al.*, 2018). Liguori *et al.*, 2020: 16) called for research on entrepreneurship as a career choice in different “regional, educational, or cultural contexts (*e.g.*, Asia, Europe, South America, Africa).” The present study is not limited to a U.S. sample.

This paper presents a brief literature review of the good life and some of its components, and then discusses social entrepreneurial intent. The first hypothesis is about the relationship between SEI and the good life. The subsequent literature review and hypotheses address personal dispositions that may be antecedents of SEI. The paper goes beyond the well-established findings that Big Five traits and proactive personality predict SEI (Prabhu *et al.*, 2012) by including the personal dispositions of trust, generosity, optimism, and healthy life expectancy. Next, the paper examines the potential mediation effect of a specific career choice, SEI, by college students in five cities

around the globe on the relationship between personal disposition and the good life. Finally, the cultural context enveloping students in the five different places is examined, specifically the degree to which cultural factors enhance or diminish any relationships found. The paper ends with a discussion of directions for future research.

The Good Life

What constitutes the good life? There are numerous conceptualizations of what exactly such a life entails. *“The ancient Romans would counsel us to live fully each day by indulging our drives and appetites: ‘eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die.’ Many theologians would [...] advise us that the good life is an adequate preparation for the next life”* (DiCaprio, 1976: 196).

Veenhoven (2000) presented an insightful distinction between good life *opportunities* and the good life itself; the difference between potentiality and actuality. In Veenhoven’s model, the good life includes the objective utility of life as well as the subjective appreciation of life. Researchers agree that a good life means experiencing happiness (Fischer, 2014; King & Napa, 1998; Robbins, 2008; Stein, 1966; Wolf, 1997; Wong, 2013). However, the good life construct is much broader than happiness – it also includes experiencing meaning (Bowling & Windsor, 2001). *“The theoretical definition of the related concepts of happiness, well-being, and ‘the good life’ and the quality of life attracts much conceptual confusion, and preoccupies a wide range of disciplines, dating far back to early Greek philosophy”* (Bowling & Windsor, 2001: 55).

While recognizing its two facets, Aristotle concluded that the ultimate good was, in fact, eudaimonic. He insisted that a good life, a flourishing, a fulfilled, and worthwhile life (Machro, 2005, p. 4) requires *“goods of the mind (e.g., wisdom, moral virtue), goods of the body (e.g., health, attractiveness) and external goods (e.g., congenial/ just communities, wealth, friends)”* (Michalos & Hatch, 2018, p. 144.)

Recent studies have focused on “happiness,” “wellbeing,” and “life satisfaction” rather than a broad good life construct. Moreover, some studies even used happiness or wellbeing as synonyms for the good life. The paper discusses the good life in broad terms in order to examine the degree to which social entrepreneurship may have a role in contributing to an individual’s experience of

the good life. Next is a review of different constructs that may be components of the good life. Following the literature review and hypotheses, this paper discusses the measures used to assess constructs, and then the results of the study.

Subjective and Psychological Wellbeing

Happiness and wellbeing have been used interchangeably and are essential parts of a good life (Bauer *et al.*, 2005; Dittmar, 2007; Feldman, 2004; Kifer *et al.*, 2013; King, 2001). Although there may be many distinct types of wellbeing, subjective wellbeing and psychological wellbeing are the two main constructs.

Subjective wellbeing reflects the hedonic view of happiness and is commonly called life satisfaction (Diener, 1984; Diener & Ryan, 2009; Diener *et al.*, 2018). It has been widely used for global, longitudinal and trend studies (Ryan & Deci, 2001; Jebb *et al.*, 2020; Tay & Diener, 2011). Hedonic happiness occurs when one maximizes pleasure and optimizes self-interest (Ryan & Deci, 2001). Subjective wellbeing is a construct about people's evaluations of their experience and lives (Diener, 1994). These evaluations can be reflective and mainly include three dimensions: overall life satisfaction, positive affect, and negative affect (Diener, Oishi & Tay, 2018). Researchers have found that the outcomes of subjective wellbeing include positive social relations, health, and societal benefits (Watson, Clark & Tellegen, 1988). For example, Rego *et al.* (2010) found that affective wellbeing (the positive and negative affect of subjective wellbeing) leads to citizenship behavior. Life satisfaction (one component of subjective wellbeing) is positively associated with citizenship behavior (Lambert, 2010; Meynhardt, Brieger & Hermann, 2020). Deviant behaviors are norm-challenging or norm-breaking actions that target specific people or the environment (Robinson & Bennett, 1995). Individuals with high subjective wellbeing are more likely to follow norms (Stavrova, Schlösser & Fetchenhauer, 2013) and have good relations with others (De Neve *et al.*, 2013; Zhang *et al.*, 2023). Alternatively, individuals who report low degrees of subjective wellbeing may exhibit relatively high degrees of deviant behavior (McGuire, 2023).

Psychological wellbeing is closely associated with Aristotle's conception of eudemonic happiness, which focuses on human flourishing and full functioning (Ryan & Deci, 2001), individual growth, and fulfillment (Bryant & Veroff, 1982; Ryff & Keyes, 1995; Ryff & Singer, 2008). Psychological

wellbeing includes self-acceptance, positive relations with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth (Ryff, 1989).

Despite their theoretical distinctions, the two types of wellbeing are often found to be highly or mildly correlated empirically (Chen *et al.*, 2013; Hanley *et al.*, 2015; Joshanloo, 2019). Both are fundamental components of the good life.

Freedom to Make Life Choices

A good life includes but is not limited to happiness. For example, based on desire-fulfillment theory, individuals can have a good life if they actually live in ways that they want to live (Helliwell, *et al.*, 2023). Brülde (2007) proposed that self-knowledge and friendship are as essential parts of a good life. Accordingly, one needs to know oneself and figure out what one really wants in order to progress toward the good life. Fischer (2014) suggested that, in a good life, people demonstrate control over their destinies. To capture this aspect of a good life, freedom to make life choices is included in the model in the present study. Freedom to make life choices has been studied for decades in *The World Happiness Report* (Helliwell, *et al.*, 2023), and therefore the construct has been included in the present study.

Quality of Social Relations

Quality of social relations represents one's attachment, security, and affection in the social environment (West, 1994; West *et al.*, 1987; West & Sheldon, 1988). *The World Happiness Report* includes "Positive Social Relations" which explain how one determines life satisfaction even in times of difficulty or crisis (Helliwell, *et al.*, 2023). When people have high quality social relations, they have someone they can count on in times of trouble or need. Moreover, in a good life, counting on people goes both ways. People gain deep satisfaction from helping and caring for others: "*Caregiving is rewarding, but also difficult and painful and needs social support*" (Helliwell, *et al.*, 2023: 19). Clearly, the good life is more than short-term happiness, as the discomfort – but also the satisfaction – of caring for others is unavoidable.

Research has found that quality of social relations and happiness go hand-in-hand; happy people tend to spend more time socializing and have a rich and fulfilling social life (Seligman, 2002).

Both freedom to make life choices and quality of social relations fall into the subjective appreciation of life, which is an inner quality of life results (Veenhoven, 2000). Therefore, these two aspects as essential components of the good life.

Pathway to Reach Goals

A good life is value-driven and meaning-oriented (Robbins, 2008). In a good life, people pursue large purposes, achieve goals, and develop themselves (Brülde, 2007; Fischer, 2014). In the study of the meaningfulness of a good life, Wolf (1997) described it as active engagement in a worthwhile project.

In the management literature, goal setting is one of the most respected and well supported theories (Locke & Latham, 2006). Motivation, in this theory, is a function of having goals, being committed to them, being capable of working toward them, and therefore exerting effort toward their attainment. People have both short-term and long-term goals. The sense of progress toward a long-term goal is what generates a feeling of satisfaction and fulfillment. In fact, the achievement of an important goal requires the individual to establish a new goal, for it is the progress toward goals that brings meaning and satisfaction, not necessarily achievement of the goal.

Pathway to reach goals is included in the study in order to capture the extent to which people believe that they are planning and achieving life goals that they are committed to and are passionate about (Corn *et al.*, 2020; Snyder *et al.*, 1996).

Social Entrepreneurial Intent

Social entrepreneurs pursue social or public values in addition to economic or personal gains through innovative business activities, often by starting and scaling up a business organization (Zhang *et al.*, 2021). The objectives of such organizations are to “*provide goods and services that the market or public sector is either unwilling or unable to provide, to develop skills, create employment and foster pathways for the integration of socially excluded people*” (Trivedi & Misra, 2015: 38). Social entrepreneurship has been studied at three main levels: individual, organizational, and institutional (Gupta *et al.*, 2020; Saebi *et al.*, 2019). This paper focuses on individual level social entrepreneurship. Based on planned behavior theory, intention is the best indicator of actual

behavior (Ajzen, 1991). Social entrepreneurial intent (SEI) is an individual's tendency to start a social enterprise and use resources creatively for public good (Bazan *et al.*, 2020; Mair & Noboa, 2006). Researchers have conducted extensive studies to identify the antecedents of SEI in different contexts and cultures (Baierl *et al.*, 2014; Savitha & Lakkol, 2022; Tiwari *et al.*, 2022; Younis *et al.*, 2021; Drost & McGuire, 2011). However, the *outcomes* of SEI, especially the individual-level outcomes, remain understudied. In fact, Wiklunda *et al.* (2019) called for more future research to consider the results of entrepreneurship other than firm performance, such as entrepreneurial wellbeing.

To contribute to addressing this theoretical gap, the present study examined the connection between SEI and the good life: a life with both subjective and psychological and wellbeing, freedom to make important life choices, high quality social relations, and pathways to reach goals.

Social Entrepreneurial Intent and the Good Life

Social Entrepreneurs start social enterprises to address “*long-standing social problems, and they develop innovative solutions to do so*” (Trivedi & Mishra, 2015: 37). To *et al.* (2020) found that individuals' entrepreneurial efficacy, intent, and action enhanced their wellbeing; their finding was applicable to social entrepreneurship. Kibler *et al.* (2019) found that prosocial motivation enhanced entrepreneurs' wellbeing. Nikolaev *et al.* (2020) found that entrepreneurs tend to achieve a high degree of wellbeing while simultaneously pursuing personal and social benefits. Together, these findings suggest that individuals with a high degree of social entrepreneurial intent tend to experience wellbeing. Experiencing the good life, nonetheless, might not necessarily correspond to short-term happiness or work-life balance (Palumbo, 2022). Entrepreneurs are often passionate about their work and feel deep connections with the services and products they provide (Shir *et al.*, 2019). Social entrepreneurs are motivated to help others escape suffering (Miller *et al.*, 2012). With their commitments and motives for the social good, people with high SEI tend to be very dedicated to their choices, feel intrinsically rewarded, and have strong social connections and relations. Work can be fulfilling and expressive because it enhances human potential and develops individual talent (Morse & Weiss, 1955; Shir *et al.*, 2019; Rosso *et al.*, 2010; Wrzesniewski *et al.*, 2003). Through social entrepreneurial activities, individuals can find value and meaning not only in their work but also in their lives. Meanwhile, the on-going value and

meaning of work can convince people that they have been making progress toward the achievement of their life goals. Therefore:

Hypothesis 1: The higher the individual's social entrepreneurial intent, the higher the individual's experience of the good life.

Personal Dispositions as Antecedents of Social Entrepreneurial Intent

According to Kernberg (2016: 145), personality is the “*the dynamic integration of the totality of a person's subjective experience and behavior patterns.*” Researchers generally agree that personality deeply influences one's employability and career choices (Paunescu *et al.*, 2024) and social entrepreneurial intent (Koe Hwee Nga & Shamuganathan, 2010; Mair & Noboa, 2006; Zaremohzzabieh *et al.*, 2019). For example, proactive personality has been shown to explain SEI (Prabhu, *et al.*, 2012; Zhang *et al.*, 2021). Numerous studies on SEI have used Big-5 personality scales (İrengün & Arıkboğa, 2015; Liu *et al.*, 2021). Findings include, for example, that a high degree of extraversion and openness to experience are associated with high intent to become a social entrepreneur (Antoncic *et al.*, 2015; Hossain *et al.*, 2021; Luc, 2022). Kruse *et al.*, 2019 encouraged future research to explore how personal differences explain social entrepreneurial intent. Following Kernberg's (206) broad definition of personality, the present study included some relatively “unpopular” personal dispositions: trust, generosity, optimism, and healthy life expectancy.

Trust

Trust is a common word in daily life and is also a critical construct in different scientific fields. In psychology, sociology and related fields, trust is about expectancy and expectation (Hupcey *et al.*, 2001). Rotter (1971: 444) defined trust as “*an expectancy held by an individual or a group that the word, promise, verbal, or written statement of another individual or group can be relied on.*” Barber (1983: 165) defined trust as expectations that “*of technically competent performance and ... of fiduciary obligation and responsibility.*” Recent studies have justified trust as a social and emotional act and found that trusting individuals are more likely to receive social support and develop social capital (Adali *et al.*, 2010; Dunning *et al.*, 2012; Hamdi *et al.*, 2016). Social support can enhance perceived desirability and behavioral intentions (Hockerts, 2017; Mair & Noboa,

2006; Tiwari *et al.*, 2017). Trust is therefore a key antecedent of the behavioral intent behind becoming a social entrepreneur. Therefore:

Hypothesis 2(a): The higher the individual's trust, the higher the individual's social entrepreneurial intent.

Optimism

Optimism refers to the general tendency that people hold favorable views of their future. Optimistic individuals tend to achieve desirable views of their physical, emotional, and professional outcomes (Crane *et al.*, 2012; Rasmussen *et al.*, 2009). In addition, optimistic people are more likely to receive social resources, cope with stressful events by using effective strategies, and be perceived as models of living and learning by others (Carver *et al.*, 2010). Given the importance of optimism, social entrepreneurship researchers have shown growing interest in the construct. For example, Berzin (2012: 188) wrote that “*the values and the optimism of social entrepreneurs may be a natural source of inspiration for future social entrepreneurs.*” Despite a few nonsignificant findings, researchers generally believe that optimistic individuals are more likely to become social entrepreneurs. Optimists tend to be hopeful about their decisions and actions, demonstrate confidence in their plans and behaviors, and receive continuous support from others (Cohen *et al.*, 2019; Urban, 2020). Therefore:

Hypothesis 2(b): The higher the individual's optimism, the higher the individual's social entrepreneurial intent.

Generosity

Generosity is the behavioral tendency to offer good things to others freely and abundantly (Herzog & Price, 2016). Generous people often prioritize the need of others over their own (Allen, 2018). They tend to be prosocial, altruistic, and helping (Collett & Morrissey, 2007; Park *et al.*, 2017). Engaging in generous acts, such as giving gifts, donating to charitable causes, or providing support to those in need can increase subjective wellbeing. Moreover, generosity is a predictor of the good life because it involves selflessly contributing to the wellbeing of others and, in the long term, to oneself. When individuals engage in acts of generosity, they often experience a sense of purpose,

satisfaction, and a deeper connection with their communities. By helping others and making a positive impact, individuals can enhance their overall wellbeing and achieve a more meaningful and fulfilling life.

Generosity has received the attention of researchers in entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship. For example, Hjorth and Holt (2016: 51) proposed a definition of social entrepreneurship as “*generosity of action: the action of opening possibility without known ends.*” Toledano (2020) suggested promoting generosity-related parables in the teaching of social entrepreneurship. Generous individuals are more likely to care about the big picture of their communities and unlikely to be motivated solely by financial returns. Therefore:

Hypothesis 2(c): The higher the individual's generosity, the higher the individual's social entrepreneurial intent.

Healthy Life Expectancy

According to Helliwell *et al.* (2023: 2), “*a population will only experience high levels of overall life satisfaction if its people are also pro-social, healthy, and prosperous.*” While people tend to live longer lives today than they have in the past, a healthy life expectancy is the belief that one's relatively long life will be free of serious disease and/or impairments to one's independence. Healthy life expectancy focuses on perceived good health situations (Jagger & Robine, 2011). When individuals are in good health, they have the physical and mental capacity to engage in the activities they enjoy, pursue their goals, and maintain relationships with others. A long, healthy life also provides individuals with the opportunity to make meaningful contributions, achieve their aspirations, and derive satisfaction from their accomplishments. It allows them to enjoy a high quality of life with few health-related challenges, which, in turn, can enhance overall wellbeing and contribute to a sense of fulfillment.

Mair (2010) proposed that, with the increase of life expectancy and the improvement of living conditions around the world, people can make different uses of their education and experience and can become powerful agents to support social change through entrepreneurial activities. Similarly, Hakami (2021) and Yujuico (2008) posited a positive relation between life expectancy and social

entrepreneurial activities. It is important, however, to point out that an individual's disposition is relevant to understanding the good life as a healthy life *expectancy*, not a healthy life. That expectancy shapes career and life choices. Seligman (2002: 58) claims: “ ... [O]bjective good health is barely related to happiness; what matters is our subjective perception of how healthy we are, and it is a tribute to our ability to adapt to adversity that we are able to find ways to appraise our health positively even when you are quite sick.” Therefore:

Hypothesis 2(d): The higher the individual's healthy life expectancy, the higher the individual's social entrepreneurial intent.

Social Entrepreneurial Intent as a Mediator between Personality and the Good Life

Career choice profoundly affects one's professional and personal life. Social cognitive career theory examines career choice and development with vocational interest, choice making, outcome expectation, goal setting and contextual influences (Lent *et al.*, 1994; Lent & Brown, 2019). In addition, the decision to become a social entrepreneur can certainly be seen as a career choice (Tran & Von Korflesch, 2016). One's personal disposition will significantly affect career choices, including SEI. Applying social cognitive career theory, Schaub (2003) found that personality explained variances in social interest and career outcomes. In addition, researchers have applied social cognitive theory to explain the connections between career choices and happiness, wellbeing, and satisfaction (Kelly, 2009; Lindley, 2005; Schaub & Tokar, 2005). Social cognitive career theory has also been used to explain entrepreneurship, social entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial intent, social entrepreneurial intent, etc. (Belchior & Lyons, 2021). In fact, Liguori *et al.*, (2018) affirmed the importance of social cognitive career theory importance in predicting entrepreneurial intent, thus contributing a new perspective to the entrepreneurship literature.

Following social cognitive career theory, researchers theoretically proposed and empirically found that personality traits explained one's intent to become a social entrepreneur (Aure *et al.*, 2019; Munir *et al.*, 2022; Paunescu *et al.*, 2023). Based on the theoretical insights from Lent and Brown (2008; 2019) on social cognitive career theory, goals and relevant resources enhance the desirability of, and participation in, goal-directed activities, which can affect both work satisfaction and overall life satisfaction.

Therefore, as explained above, individuals with high degrees of trust, optimism, generosity, and healthy life expectancy tend to conceive of becoming social entrepreneurs. Their goal-directed career intent then contributes to their individual experience of the good life. Consequently:

Hypothesis 3: Social entrepreneurial intent mediates the relationships between (a) trust, (b) optimism, (c) generosity, (d) healthy life expectancy, and a good life.

The Contextual Effects of National Culture

Culture is the collective understanding of different norms and values (Doney *et al.*, 1998). Per Hofstede (1980: 18), culture is “*the collective level of mental programming [...] common to people belonging to a certain group [...].*” Culture can be deeply embedded, unconscious and/or irrational. Culture includes implicit, shared values, beliefs, and behavioral norms about how the world works, what is human nature, how activity should be organized and prioritized, and on what criteria decisions should be made (Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck, 1963). Researchers have used culture to explain entrepreneurial activity at the societal and tribal level (Pearson & Helms, 2023; Williams & McGuire, 2010, Shane, 1993, Harrison *et al.*, 2000), and Hayton *et al.* (2022) proposed that national culture influences both entrepreneurs’ mindset and their functioning environment.

Kedmenec and Strašek (2017) found that countries with high power distance tend to have few social entrepreneurial activities. They did not find a direct relationship between individualism and social entrepreneurial activities or between uncertainty avoidance and social entrepreneurial activities. Similarly, Canestrino *et al.* (2020) found that uncertainty avoidance played a significant and negative role in social entrepreneurial activities.

It is worth noting that the studies mentioned above focused on country-level social entrepreneurship. Distinct cultural environments influence individuals’ social entrepreneurship journeys and their perceptions of a good life. Therefore, national culture is a contextual factor within which individuals are embedded (rather than a predictor of individual’s intentions). Below is a description of cultural variables grouped by expectation of their positive or negative enhancement of the relationship between SEI and the good life.

Individualism

Individualism reflects the degree to which members of society are independent instead of interdependent. In countries with high scores of individualism, people develop their self-identities mainly as “*I*” instead of “*we*.” Societies with high individualism tend to have low-context and explicit communication (De Mooij & Hofstede, 2010; Hofstede, 2001; Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005). The present study examined whether individualism enhances the mediation effects of SEI on the personal disposition-to-good life relationship. In highly individualistic environments, people are more likely to take positive individual actions to address social issues and are less likely to wait for (or depend on) society, government, or others. In highly individualistic environments, people may pursue self-actualization or the good life through the journey of becoming social entrepreneurs.

Long-term Orientation

Long-term orientation indicates the extent to which people in a society collectively hold a pragmatic and future-orientated perspective (De Mooij & Hofstede, 2010; Hofstede, 2001; Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005). Long-term orientation may enhance the mediation effects of SEI. In environments with a long-term orientation, individuals are more likely to care not only about themselves in the current moment, but also about others and the future good. In these environments, individuals may commit to social enterprises and find meaning through their involvement in a social enterprise.

Hypothesis 4: (a) Individualism and (b) long-term orientation positively moderate the mediation effects of social entrepreneurial intent on the good life.

Power Distance

Power distance represents the degree to which members of society - especially low-power individuals - accept and expect that power is distributed unevenly (De Mooij & Hofstede, 2010). In high power distance cultures, people follow, obey and respect bureaucracy, authority, and rank. In high power distance cultures, people are unlikely to take individual actions that challenge existing norms, standards, and status. Therefore, power distance may negatively moderate the

mediation effects of SEI. Consequently, in high power distance settings, people are less likely to experience the good life by becoming social entrepreneurs and solving social problems.

Uncertainty Avoidance

Uncertainty avoidance demonstrates the extent to which people perceive uncertainty and ambiguity as threats and anxiety instead of opportunities and pleasure (De Mooij & Hofstede, 2010; Hofstede, 2001; Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005). In high uncertainty avoidance environments, people tend to follow procedures and rules to deal with the future and the unknown. Social entrepreneurs face uncertainty from many different sources. Therefore, uncertainty avoidance may negatively moderate the mediation effects of SEI. In high uncertainty avoidance scenarios, people are less likely to experience the good life by contributing and dedicating to social problems in the community.

Masculinity

Masculinity reflects the degree to which a society values performance and achievement. In countries with high masculinity, people are more likely demonstrate (even “show off”) their achievements. In countries with low masculinity, people may care more about others and are more likely to pursue quality of life (De Mooij & Hofstede, 2010; Hofstede, 2001; Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005). Being a social entrepreneur and having a good life provide mainly internal, rather than external, status and satisfaction. Masculinity therefore may negatively moderate the mediation effects of SEI on the relationship between personal dispositions and the good life.

Indulgence

Indulgence represents the extent to which a society allows the free gratification of basic and natural human desires. Research suggests that in indulgent societies people have more leisure and perceive more positive emotions (Hofstede, 2011). Empirically, researchers have found mixed effects of indulgence on social entrepreneurship (Canestrino *et al.*, 2020; Kedmenec & Strašek, 2017; Pounder, 2021). Individuals can achieve the good life by committing to a career as a social entrepreneur. Nonetheless, in countries with high degree of indulgence, people can experience the good life *without* a social commitment. Therefore, indulgence may negatively moderate the mediation effects of social entrepreneurial intent between individual traits and having a good life.

Based on the discussion above:

Hypothesis 5: (a) Power distance, (b) uncertainty avoidance, (c) masculinity, and (d) indulgence negatively moderate the mediation effects of social entrepreneurial intent on the good life.

Sample and Measurements

The study used a snowball sampling method and collected 400 responses from college students in each of the cities of Los Angeles, Manila, Mexicali, Taipei, and Yantai (2,000 responses in total). Participants had an average age of 22 and included 1,120 females (56%), 861 males, and 19 individuals who described themselves as a non-binary /prefer not to say.

Trust was measured with 4 items adapted from Rosenberg (1965), Rotter (1967), and Scheinkman and Soutter (2000). A sample trust item is, *“Most people are inclined to help others.”* Five generosity items came from Smith and Hill (2009). A sample generosity item is, *“It makes me very happy to give help to other people in ways that meet their needs.”* Optimism was measured with 5 items from Scheier and Carver (1985). A sample optimism item is, *“In uncertain times, I usually expect the best.”* Healthy life expectancy was based on a single item: *“I can reasonably expect to live a healthy life longer than my parents’.”* The study’s SEI measure came from 4 items from Prabhu *et al.* (2017). A sample generosity item is, *“In the coming 5 years, I plan to start my own organization to solve a social problem in my local community.”* The good life construct was measured by the quality of social relations (Crowell *et al.*, 2008; Ravitz *et al.*, 2010), freedom to make life choices (Helliwell *et al.*, 2023), pathways to reach goals (Snyder *et al.*, 1996; 1997), psychological wellbeing (Ryff, 1989; Ryff & Keyes, 1995; Cooke *et al.*, 2006; Linley *et al.*, 2009) and subjective wellbeing (Diener & Emmons, 1984; Diener *et al.*, 1985). The values of national culture come from HofstedeInsight.com. See Table 1 for construct means, reliabilities, and correlations.

-----Insert Table 1 About Here-----

Tests of Hypotheses

When testing hypotheses, all analyses controlled the effect of gender. As shown in Table 2.1, SEI explained the good life ($\beta=.213^{***}$). Hypothesis 1 was supported. Table 2.2.a to 2.2.d present the regression results of Hypothesis 2.a to 2.d. Trust ($\beta=.092^{***}$), optimism ($\beta=.277^{***}$), generosity ($\beta=.301^{***}$) and healthy life expectancy ($\beta=.119^{***}$) all explained the good life. Therefore, hypothesis 2.a to 2.d were all supported.

-----Insert Table 2 About Here-----

Mediation and moderated hypotheses were tested by SPSS PROCESS developed by Hayes (2012). Table 3 shows the mediation effects in Hypothesis 3. Results demonstrate that SEI mediated the relationships between trust, optimism, generosity, healthy life expectancy, and a good life. Hypothesis 3 was therefore supported.

-----Insert Table 3 About Here-----

Hypotheses 4 and 5 were partially supported (see Tables 4 and 5 for details). In contexts with high long-term orientation, low masculinity, and high indulgence, the mediation effect of SEI was stronger, especially for individuals with a high degree of generosity.

-----Insert Table 4 and 5 About Here-----

Conclusion

The present study found that social entrepreneurial intentions (SEI) explained the degree to which individuals in 5 different cities around the world experience the good life. Personal dispositions were robust predictors of SEI, namely trust, optimism, generosity, and healthy life expectancy, controlling for gender. In order to explain how personal dispositions affect career choices that

result in experiencing the good life, results indicate that SEI mediated the relationship between trust, optimism, generosity, and healthy life expectancy and an individual's experience of the good life. In other words, personal dispositions lead people to certain career intentions, one of which is SE, which have consequences for the degree to which they experience a happy and meaningful life. Finally, cultural context mattered. Some cultural variables enhanced the dispositions-to-SEI-to-good life relationship, while others diminished it.

Discussion and Future Research

Different people – in diverse cultural contexts – pursue the good life in different ways. The present study examined how one career choice, the intention to become a social entrepreneur, contributes to achieving a life worth living. The present study certainly allows that there are many other ways to achieve the good life, while addressing an area in the published literature that have been deserving of additional study. Specifically, while much research has been conducted into the predictors of SEI, few studies have examined the consequences or effects on individuals who have such intentions.

First, the present study's results reinforce and extend the findings of others (*e.g.*, Toledano, 2020; Urban, 2020; Yujuico 2008;) regarding the predictors of SEI, perhaps the most important of which are personal dispositions. Personality has been shown to be a powerful predictor of SEI in empirical studies using Proactive Personality (Prabhu *et al.*, 2017; Zhang *et al.*, 2021) and the Big 5 Personality Traits (İrengün & Arıkboğa, 2015; Hossain *et al.*, 2021; Liu *et al.*, 2021). The present study extends the research by including additional dispositions, namely optimism, trust, generosity, and healthy life expectancy.

Second, the influence of SEI exists in different aspects. For example, Ney *et al.* (2014) proposed the social results and the time results of SEI. The social results captured changes related to ideas, structures and practices. The time results represented the dynamic and interdependent nature between social entrepreneurs and their environment in the long run. Wiklund *et al.* (2019) called for research on the consequences of SEI other than performance. Similarly, in their literature review, Kamaludin *et al.* (2021) classified the impacts of social entrepreneurship into social, economic, behavior and governance dimensions. The social dimension includes value creation,

networking, and community changes. The economic dimension includes innovation, wealth, and accountability. The behavior dimension focuses on changes associated with culture, identity, cognition, and growth. The governance dimension is specific about autonomy and power (re-)distribution. The present study examined one of the consequences of SEI – its effect on individuals' experience of the good life. The most important finding of the present study is that social entrepreneurial intention (SEI) explained individuals' good life in five different cities around the world. College students inevitably reflect on the career choices they have upon completion of school. The study did not measure actual behavior, but perhaps it is the *intention* itself that explains the experience of a good life. The students in the sample have many choices and will likely pursue many different paths, but those who intend to use their energy and skills to solve social problems experience, the data show, will have a good life. As Confucius said, “*Choose a job you love, and you will never have to work a day in your life*” (Princeton University, 2016). Much more recently, the entrepreneur Richard Branson said, “*There is no greater thing you can do with your life and your work than follow your passions in a way that serves the world and you*” (Forbes, 2013). The present study, of course, does not preclude that there are many ways to serve the world in a job one loves, and that may very well come about by working in or starting a for-profit organization, in government, in a nonprofit, or as a social entrepreneur.

Third, social cognitive career theory tells us that career choices are affected by dispositions and result in different life outcomes. This theory very well explains how the intention to have a career as a social entrepreneur is influenced by personal dispositions, and in turn enhances one's experience of the good life. The present study extends the social cognitive career theory research by specifying how this career choice affects an individuals' good life. As Tran and Von Korflesch (2016: 24) noted: “[T]he decision of establishing a new social venture is not for entertainment. It rather is a career-related decision in accordance with the magnitude of problems faced around the global which need sympathetic and realistic solutions.” In the literature, researchers have been applying personality and individual traits to explain career choices. For example, Sajjad *et al.* (2012) explained the relationship between personality and career choices through opportunity recognition, person-job fit and career success. Usslepp *et al.* (2020) found that investigative or enterprising educators are more likely to select the general educational track (instead of the vocational track) than social or conventional educators. Future researchers may benefit from

integrating social cognitive career theory and personality theory to study social entrepreneurship, social entrepreneurial intent, and the potential outcomes.

Fourth, the present study was based on a broad understanding of the good life and included the components psychological and subjective wellbeing, freedom to make life choices, quality of social relations, and pathway to reach goals. Doing so does not restrict the understanding of the good life to “happiness” or “satisfaction” but instead reflects the thoughts of Aristotle, Martin, Myers, Seligman and others on what truly constitutes a worthwhile life. The present paper emphasizes that seeking an important goal, such as starting a social enterprise, may be a significant part of what enjoying a good life really is. It is the pursuit of a goal that matters, not necessarily the achievement of that goal, particularly if the goal is ambitious or long-term.

Fifth, while an extensive discussion of policy considerations is beyond the scope of the present paper, policy makers are certainly stakeholders of social entrepreneurship. According to the World Economic Forum (2024), social enterprises provide more than 200 million jobs in the world and are mainly led by minorities and/or underrepresented members in society. Despite their salient social contributions, social enterprises remain under-represented and under-supported. Recently, researchers in business administration, public administration and social welfare have collectively called for more supportive regulations for social enterprises (Choi *et al.*, 2020; Park & Wilding, 2013; Maksum *et al.*, 2020). Experts in entrepreneurship education have called for a re-orientation of academic programs to generate more student-driven business startups with greater access to resources (Shukla, Dwivedi & Acharya, 2022) and, in our view, these startups must include social enterprises. Obviously, social enterprises need favorable conditions to get started, to scale, and to connect with knowledge and resources from government, universities, and other organizations. Policymakers in the different countries of our sample would do well to reflect on how social entrepreneurship can be enhanced. For example, Chinese government incentives for start-ups could be extended to social enterprises. In Mexico, similarly, where generous incentives for certain types of entrepreneurship exist, we suggest that social entrepreneurship be included in such programs. In United States, there has been explosive growth in nonprofit and for-profit B corporations, however the need to address social problems such as homelessness, poverty, and civil rights remains vast. In the Philippines, programs such as the RISE UP initiative generate hope that

SEIs can receive support (ISIP, 2024), but the Philippines remain a challenging environment in which to start a social enterprise. Overall, several policies have been shown to positively promote SEI, including but not limited to (a) national and local government purchases of goods and services reserved to SE bidders; (b) encouragement of for-profit corporations to adopt socially responsible procurement process; (c) financing to help social enterprises scale up; (d) campaigns, awards, and prizes to raise the visibility of successful social enterprises, and (e) facilitating knowledge sharing to and between government and existing organizations, and between existing organizations and pilot projects or start-ups (OECD, 2024). All of these policy decisions potentially enhance the incidence of social entrepreneurship, which in turn potentially enhance the good life of the citizens of these countries.

Sixth, in the social sciences, researchers necessarily abbreviate and simplify reality in order to measure and discuss dispositions, thoughts, attitudes, intentions, and behavior. Sometimes context is ignored or minimized. The present study went beyond examining a direct relationship between personal dispositions and the good life. Results support a model in which SEI mediates the relationship between personal dispositions and the good life, and that mediation is potentially enhanced or diminished by the cultural context. Specifically, long-term orientation, low masculinity, and high indulgence enhanced the mediation effect of SEI, especially for individuals with a high degree of generosity.

Additional research is welcome into mediators and contextual variables that explain how individual dispositions affect career choices which in turn result in the good life. Certainly, many different career choices can result in enjoyment of a happy and fulfilling life. Future research can explore in greater detail the mechanisms between individual characteristics and a good life; SEI is unlikely to be the only mediator of that relationship. In particular, the role of SESE - social entrepreneurial self-efficacy (Zhang *et al.*, 2021; Wu *et al.*, 2021; Urban, 2020). SESE in certain contexts may, perhaps, allow an individual to overcome barriers that might otherwise drive another individual to a different career. Additional research into different cultural contexts would, of course, also be welcome additions to the literature, as well as studies with individual measures of cultural values and beliefs (rather than country aggregates). What the present study suggests, nonetheless, is that one consequence of an individual's SEI is the experience of the good life in

some cultures. As Pearson and Helms (2023: 43) noted, “*the importance of cultural heritage are vital components in the pursuit of economic and social goals [...].*” Finally, future researchers may consider further validating this study or investigating suggested research directions by collecting both qualitative interview data and quantitative survey data in different time series. Insights and quotes from current social entrepreneurs would be particularly beneficial to the practical and academic fields.

Data Availability

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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Tables

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics, Reliabilities, and Correlations

	Mean	STD	GL	SEI	T	OP	G	HLE	PD	INV	MSC	UA	LT	INL
GL	5.360	0.797	(.771)											
SEI	4.656	1.312	.212***	(.899)										
T	4.924	1.101	.421***	.092***	(.746)									
OP	5.181	1.054	.561***	.276***	.199***	(.834)								
G	5.392	0.888	.483***	.299***	.184***	.431***	(.781)							
HLE	5.082	1.467	.306***	.115***	.047*	.224***	.309***	(-)						
PD	70.600	19.184	.063**	.227***	.081***	.078***	.035	-.096***	(-)					
INV	38.000	27.114	.114***	-.062**	-.184***	.119***	.208***	.217***	-.673***	(-)				
MSC	65.200	12.547	.190***	.247***	-.044*	.215***	.240***	.064**	.698***	.057*	(-)			
UA	54.600	18.548	.001	-.001	-.253***	.021	.090***	.233***	-.098***	-.145***	-.331***	(-)		
LT	51.400	31.597	-.224***	-.162***	.288***	-.258***	-.373***	-.317***	-.089***	-.583***	-.653***	-.205***	(-)	
INL	56.000	24.882	.106***	.008	-.373***	.128***	.225***	.324***	-.202***	.331***	-.019	.815***	-.641***	(-)
GD	0.560	0.497	-.035	.015	-.019	-.056*	-.062**	-.118***	-.011	-.124***	-.138***	-.002	.192***	-.055*

Note: GL—Good Life Index, SEI – Social Entrepreneurial Intent, T – Trust, OP – Optimism, G – Generosity, HLE – Healthy Life Expectancy, PD – Power Distance, INV – Individualism, MSC – Masculinity, UA – Uncertainty Avoidance, LT – Long Term Orientation, INL – Indulgence, GD – Gender is calculated as the percentage of female respondents. Variable reliability (α) is on the diagonal. The Good Life Index includes Subjective Wellbeing ($\alpha=.876$), Psychological Wellbeing ($\alpha=.885$), Freedom to Make Life Choices ($\alpha=.792$), Quality of Social Relations ($\alpha=.881$), Pathway to Reach Goals ($\alpha=.894$). * $p<.05$, ** $p<.01$, *** $p<.001$.

Table 2.1. Test of Hypothesis 1, SEI→GL

	Good Life	
Gender	-.035	-.038
Social Entrepreneurial Intent		.213***
ΔF	2.390	94.689***
ΔR ²	.001	.045

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Table 2.2.a. Test of Hypothesis 2(a), T→SEI

	Social Entrepreneurial Intent	
Gender	.015	.017
Trust		.092***
ΔF	.464	16.986***
ΔR ²	.000	.008

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Table 2.2.b. Test of Hypothesis 2(b), OP→SEI

	Social Entrepreneurial Intent	
Gender	.015	.031
Optimism		.277***
ΔF	.464	165.902***
ΔR ²	.000	.077

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Table 2.2.c. Test of Hypothesis 2(c), G→SEI

	Social Entrepreneurial Intent	
Gender	.015	.034
Generosity		.301***
ΔF	.464	198.337***
ΔR ²	.000	.090

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Table 2.2.d. Test of Hypothesis 2(d), HLE→SEI

	Social Entrepreneurial Intent	
Gender	.015	.029
Healthy Life Expectancy		.119***
ΔF	.464	28.122***
ΔR ²	.000	.014

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Table 3. Mediation Effects in Hypothesis 3

Testing Path	Effect	Standard Error	95% Confidence Interval	
			Low	High
H3(a) T→SEI→GL				
Direct Effect	.292	.014	.264	.321
Indirect Effect	.012	.003	.005	.019
H3(b) OP→SEI→GL				
Direct Effect	.411	.015	.382	.439
Indirect Effect	.013	.005	.004	.023
H3(c) G→SEI→GL				
Direct Effect	.413	.018	.376	.449
Indirect Effect	.020	.007	.007	.033
H3(d) HLE→SEI→GL				
Direct Effect	.155	.012	.132	.177
Indirect Effect	.012	.003	.006	.018

Note: GL—Good Life Index, SEI – Social Entrepreneurial Intent, T – Trust, OP – Optimism, G – Generosity, HLE – Healthy Life Expectancy. All hypotheses were tested at the control of gender.

Table 4.1.a. Moderated Mediation Effects of Long-Term Orientation on G→SEI→GL

LTO	Indirect Effect	Boot SE	Boot LLCI	Boot ULCI
24	.009	.008	-.006	.024
27	.011	.007	-.004	.025
93	.049	.013	.023	.074
Index of Moderated Mediation		Boot SE	Boot LLCI	Boot ULCI
LTO	.001	.000	.000	.001

Note: GL—Good Life Index, SEI – Social Entrepreneurial Intent, G – Generosity. LTO – Long-Term Orientation. All hypotheses were tested at the control of gender.

Table 5.1.a. Moderated Mediation Effects of Masculinity on OP→SEI→GL

Masculinity	Indirect Effect	Boot SE	Boot LLCI	Boot ULCI
45	.029	.011	.008	.049
66	.010	.005	.001	.020
84	-.005	.008	-.022	.010
Index of Moderated Mediation		Boot SE	Boot LLCI	Boot ULCI
Masculinity	-.001	.000	-.002	.000

Note: GL—Good Life Index, SEI – Social Entrepreneurial Intent, OP – Optimism. All hypotheses were tested at the control of gender.

Table 5.1.b. Moderated Mediation Effects of Masculinity on G→SEI→GL

Masculinity	Indirect Effect	Boot SE	Boot LLCI	Boot ULCI
45	.052	.015	.023	.081
66	.016	.007	.004	.029
84	-.014	.012	-.039	.010
Index of Moderated Mediation		Boot SE	Boot LLCI	Boot ULCI
Masculinity	-.002	.001	-.003	.001

*Note: GL—Good Life Index, SEI – Social Entrepreneurial Intent, G – Generosity.
All hypotheses were tested at the control of gender.*

Table 5.2.a. Moderated Mediation Effects of Indulgence on G→SEI→GL

Indulgence	Indirect Effect	Boot SE	Boot LLCI	Boot ULCI
24	.042	.011	.020	.065
49	.028	.007	.013	.043
97	.001	.010	-.020	.021
Index of Moderated Mediation		Boot SE	Boot LLCI	Boot ULCI
Indulgence	-.001	.000	-.001	.000

*Note: GL—Good Life Index, SEI – Social Entrepreneurial Intent, G – Generosity.
All hypotheses were tested at the control of gender.*