

Social entrepreneurship: a holistic vision in Wayuu communities in the Riohacha district

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Abstract

The purpose of the article was to analyze social entrepreneurship from a holistic perspective in the Wayuu communities of the Riohacha district. The methodology used a quantitative paradigm, descriptive research, with a non-experimental, transactional, and field design. The population consisted of 30 female leaders of artisan SMEs registered with the Riohacha Chamber of Commerce. A population census was applied to collect information using a survey and a 13-item questionnaire, evaluated by five experts, with a calculated reliability of 90%. The data collected were interpreted using descriptive statistics. In conclusion, social entrepreneurship in the Wayuu communities of the Riohacha district represents a holistic vision that addresses the needs of the environment through integrated and sustainable solutions. This approach promotes collaboration and teamwork, focusing on sustainable construction through entrepreneurial initiatives, specifically the creation of artisanal products by Wayuu family SMEs, led by women, which stand out as a key strategy. These entrepreneurs generate viable economic alternatives, ensuring the well-being and quality of life of their communities. As

forgers of the common good, they drive local development that respects and values the cultural heritage of their ancestors, while also contributing to the economic and social sustainability of their ancestral spaces.

Keywords: Social entrepreneurship, holistic vision, Wayuu communities, women leaders, SMEs, Wayuu crafts.

1. Introduction

Social entrepreneurship in the Wayuu communities of the Riohacha District presents a holistic vision that addresses the current challenges of new socioeconomic models in Latin America. This approach facilitates the productive interaction of entrepreneurial SMEs in global markets, allowing the goods and services derived from their activities to meet social demand. Therefore, constant economic transformations drive the creation of strategies that ensure market stability, adaptation to emerging trends, and improved quality of life. According to Paz and Prieto (1), entrepreneurial activities must be structured to foster social well-being, generate income, improve coexistence, and promote socioeconomic development.

Within this framework, social entrepreneurship plays a role in generating social change by addressing local realities with a comprehensive and collaborative commitment. Social entrepreneurs, particularly women, seek opportunities not only to react to problems but to create positive impacts and transform traditional social structures into sustainable ones, ensuring the common good. This perspective views both men and women as a team, capable of contributing to income generation in an integral way (2)(3). Female entrepreneurship is seen as a tool for achieving recognition equivalent to that of men's efforts, while also valuing its impact on society, the local economy, and the progress of the environment.

According to Durán et al. (4) and Barragán et al. (5), entrepreneurship combines innovative ideas that respond to social needs, creating value and economic development. Paz, Castro, and Palacio (6) perceive it as an agent that fosters the inclusion of activities aimed at social transformation, implementing ideas that help solve community problems.

In this specific context, social entrepreneurship in the Wayuu communities of the Riohacha district involves women as key players, contributing to the creation of handicrafts for cultural preservation, economic development, and community empowerment. These women maintain cultural hegemony, acting as leaders and co-participants in the development of their communities, strengthening their work through inclusive policies, market access, and cultural recognition to ensure the sustainability of their communities with products made by their ethnicity.

According to Saavedra, Camarena, and Vargas (7), social entrepreneurship is grounded in a process where the entrepreneur's role is to add value to the economy through business opportunities, accumulating resources, marketing products and services, producing goods, building an organization, and responding to government and society. Franco, Prieto, Paz, and Meslier (8) state that social entrepreneurship creates opportunities that add value to community development through initiatives that help improve quality of life and the common welfare of all.

In this sense, handicrafts play a holistic role in the Wayuu culture, representing an economic activity vital to the community, with Wayuu women being the primary artisans. Their role in crafting handicrafts is multifaceted, encompassing cultural, social, and economic aspects. According to Meléndez, Montoya, and Vélez (9); Espinosa and Gelvez (10), in Wayuu culture, older women play a crucial role in transmitting traditions and values, especially during the transition from girlhood to womanhood. This knowledge transfer is interwoven with daily social life, where meanings are built that enrich understanding of culture, the connection to the land, and language mastery. These characteristics define the Wayuu woman as an entrepreneur in her community, actively participating in the general well-being through cultural practices and contributions to the creation of native products.

Women symbolize ancestral preservation as guardians of cultural heritage, which manifests in their crafts, especially weaving. From an early age, Wayuu girls learn weaving techniques from their mothers and grandmothers, making this practice an intergenerational legacy. Handcrafted products such as bags, hammocks, and blankets are not only utilitarian objects but carriers of ancestral symbols and

narratives reflecting the Wayuu worldview, from a holistic perspective that sustains their knowledge.

The role of the social entrepreneur, particularly the Wayuu woman, stands out for her commitment to the community and her role as a transformative leader of social change, which involves working collaboratively with her people to create continuous improvements in living conditions. In this context, inclusive businesses aim to build bridges between business opportunities and low-income populations, benefiting both sectors (11). Social entrepreneurs in the Wayuu communities must act by promoting cooperation and community integration to develop sustainable projects that benefit the collective.

Wayuu handicrafts have transcended the borders of the communities, gaining recognition in both national and international markets. Wayuu women play a crucial role in the economy of their communities by producing and marketing these handicrafts, being responsible for providing income to support their families and contribute to local economic development. Moreover, it becomes a source of empowerment as these women develop business and leadership skills by managing the production and sale of their products. This economic empowerment translates into greater participation in decision-making within their communities, promoting greater gender equality.

Wayuu craftsmanship is closely linked to a solidarity-based and sustainable economy. Wayuu women often organize in cooperatives and work groups, where they collaborate and share resources and knowledge. This model strengthens social cohesion, ensuring an equitable distribution of economic benefits derived from handicrafts. This practice transforms the social and economic environment, driving quality of life through innovation and solidarity-based economy (12).

Despite its importance, Wayuu women face challenges in creating handicrafts. Globalization and competition with industrial products can jeopardize the authenticity and value of traditional handicrafts. Additionally, the lack of access to broader markets and limited commercial infrastructure are significant obstacles. However, the growing global appreciation for sustainable and handcrafted products presents an opportunity for Wayuu artisans to expand their reach and strengthen their traditional practices. Therefore, this management

improves living conditions while also promoting innovation and a solidarity-based economy (13). Based on the aspects mentioned, the objective is to analyze social entrepreneurship as a holistic vision in the Wayuu communities of the Riohacha district.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Social Entrepreneurship: A Holistic Scenario

The social realm, along with environmental transformations, demands the protagonism of individuals capable of generating ideas based on their knowledge, skills, abilities, attitudes, and social values. These individuals must assume their behaviors, responsibilities, and functions as social entrepreneurs. According to Moreno, Parra, Villasmil, Hernández, and Durán (14), entrepreneurs integrate into their environment by adopting a participatory, consultative, and innovative management approach to address the needs of their community, transforming a traditional approach into a holistic scenario of full participation from their people to achieve the established and necessary objectives.

The role of the social entrepreneur is key to integrating and projecting the community toward the construction of a sustainable society. Sánchez et al., cited by Guedez (15) define the social entrepreneur as a manager who promotes participation, organization, and coordination of efforts to achieve common goals and integrate the community. They study present situations in communities and, with the support of their members, can plan actions to improve quality of life and culture, emphasizing the elements that determine national identity.

The social entrepreneur is a person who promotes social change with sensitivity and solidarity within communities, fostering the understanding and appreciation of the social, environmental, and cultural manifestations of their surroundings. This is the case of the Wayuu communities in the District of Riohacha, where efforts are made to unite with community leaders, particularly women, to integrate community members into the creation of native products

that contribute to sustainability and inclusive, endogenous economic growth, thus improving quality of life. According to Curto (16), for a social entrepreneur's initiative to have an impact, five key points must be evaluated: ensuring the product or service is ready for expansion, guaranteeing community acceptance of the project, planning available and future resources, evaluating risks, and defining expected outcomes.

In general, the aspects documented by the cited authors show that the social entrepreneur is a person committed to the social transformation of communities through socioeconomic participation mechanisms to address the community's needs, forming a symbiotic relationship between the entrepreneur and the community. This approach facilitates teamwork to improve quality of life and common well-being toward the sustainable development of the community. Gabaldón (17) emphasizes that sustainable development ensures continuous improvement in quality of life, with equity for the current population without compromising future generations.

Female social entrepreneurs are characterized by proposing initiatives based on a holistic scenario to change the dynamics of the Wayuu communities in the district of Riohacha, activating community work from their qualities to meet their socio-economic and cultural needs. Vainrub (18) describes a social entrepreneur as someone characterized by their initiative in social matters, decision-making ability, awareness of their own limitations, results-oriented approach, adaptability to change, and generosity, in addition to being a leader.

They also create spaces for coexistence that promote common well-being and social equity, symbolizing shared progress. Drayton, cited by Soto and Cárdenas (19) describes the social entrepreneur as someone who looks toward the future, identifying the key steps to move in the right direction. Calanchez, Ríos, Zevallos, and Silva (2) state that the social entrepreneur stands out for projecting objectives to improve the social, environmental, and cultural environment, creating creative and sustainable solutions to address complex challenges in society. The authors agree that social entrepreneurs develop strategies to drive meaningful transformations from the practice of their qualities.

The Wayuu women from the communities are guardians of their ancestral culture, characterized by their qualities as talented

and visionary entrepreneurs who play a vital role in the sustainable development of their communities. They create native products that reflect their unique identity and contribute to the economic and social progress of their people. Ordoñez et al. (3) refer to the qualities, knowledge, and invaluable competencies of women entrepreneurs, which allow them to identify improvement opportunities and generate positive changes that add value to their ventures. These skills, combined with their practical qualities, ensure local development, acting as an essential engine for the sustainability of society and the country in general. Furthermore, research results by Meléndez et al. (8) and Siiger (20) add that indigenous women are distinguished by possessing qualities that support rooted leadership, allowing them to understand their role within the normative and social framework of their community, recognizing their contribution to collective progress and well-being.

3. Materials and Methods

This research work adheres to the quantitative paradigm, specifically the empirical-analytical approach, also known as the positivist or pragmatist approach. According to Palella and Martins (21), this approach is based on the premise that data is the scientific argument. The positivist paradigm allows the analysis of the object of study through the application of methodological techniques and instruments that collect opinions and relevant information from participants, providing a foundation for subsequent statistical analysis.

The quantitative approach is particularly suitable for research that requires objectivity and precision. This method allows the use of specific instruments for data collection, which are then coded, tabulated, and statistically analyzed. The objectivity and neutrality investigated through positivism facilitate the identification of patterns and regularities through systematic observation and precise measurement. In this context, this research adopts a quantitative methodology to ensure objective results, thus contributing to an understanding of the variable.

The research is classified as descriptive, focusing on the identification and analysis of the tangible elements of the studied variable. According

to Méndez (22) and Hernández and Mendoza (23), descriptive research seeks to identify and analyze the interrelation of various components to delimit the studied facts. This non-experimental design means that the data was not manipulated by the researchers, allowing a natural observation of the phenomena. Hernández, Fernández, and Baptista (24) highlight that non-experimental designs are carried out without manipulating the collected data, simply observing the phenomena in their natural setting.

The research is categorized as cross-sectional descriptive, meaning that data collection took place at a single point in time. Hernández et al. (23) explain that cross-sectional non-experimental designs collect data at one moment, providing a snapshot of the studied phenomenon. According to Arias (25), field research refers to the collection of data directly from the environment where the events occur, without manipulation or control of variables by the researcher. This approach ensures the collection of authentic and relevant data from the studied population.

The study population consisted of 30 female entrepreneurs from Wayuu communities in the district of Riohacha, dedicated to making Wayuu handicrafts. These businesses are formally registered with the district's chamber of commerce, representing a census that includes all study elements. The selection of this population ensures representation of Wayuu female entrepreneurs, aligned with the methodological principles described by Méndez (22) and Paz et al. (26).

For data collection, a survey was used with a 25-item multiple-choice questionnaire (always, almost always, sometimes, almost never, never). This instrument was evaluated by five experts in the field of entrepreneurship, ensuring its validity and reliability with a confidence level of 95% using Cronbach's alpha formula. The professional and impartial evaluation by the experts guarantees the accuracy and relevance of the data collection instrument. The collected information was analyzed using descriptive statistics, interpreted through a scale for the observation of average data.

This approach allows for the interpretation of results, facilitating the identification of patterns and trends in the entrepreneurial qualities of Wayuu women. The use of descriptive statistics provides an overview of the studied phenomenon, ensuring that the results obtained are meaningful and applicable to similar contexts.

Table 1: Data Interpretation Scale.

Rank	Category
$1,00 \leq 1,80$	Very low
$1,81 \leq 2,60$	Low
$2,61 \leq 3,40$	Moderate
$3,41 \leq 4,20$	High
$4,20 \leq 5,00$	Very high

Source: Own elaboration (2024)

4. Results

According to the entrepreneurial qualities of Wayuu women, the analysis reveals the presence of qualities that distinguish them as essential attributes for social entrepreneurship. The results obtained allow for outlining a profile that supports the theories established in the literature on social entrepreneurs. 53% of the surveyed population almost always seeks alternatives to meet the needs of their community, while 47% always do so. The average creativity indicator was 4.31, placing it in the high presence category. This finding aligns with the theories of Soto and Cárdenas (27), who state that social entrepreneurs are creative, able to overcome obstacles and set goals, acting as leaders who can form teams and collaborate with various sectors.

Regarding the innovation indicator, 50% of the surveyed women always propose ideas to support planned activities in the communities, 43% almost always do so, and 7% sometimes. The average for this indicator was 4.31, positioning it in the very high presence category. This confirms the theory of Paz, Castro, and Palacio (28), who highlight that social entrepreneurs are innovators, capable of generating ideas that improve community well-being through alliances and networks with both public and private entities. Regarding the tolerance indicator, 60% of Wayuu women entrepreneurs almost always collaborate in social activities, even when they disagree with some decisions, showing satisfaction with the results obtained for the well-being of the community, while 40% always do so. The average of this indicator is 4.09, with a high level of presence. This result is consistent with the theory of Soto and Cárdenas (27), which emphasizes the importance

of judging with discernment, connecting with feelings, and paying attention to actions.

50% of the surveyed women always take control of activities and initiatives, involving the community to meet collective needs, 43% almost always do so, and 7% sometimes. The average responsibility indicator was 4.36, indicating a very high level of presence. These data align with Paz, Castro, and Palacio (28), who assert that the responsibility of social entrepreneurs lies in their ability to make decisions and take actions that benefit the community.

53% of the surveyed women mentioned that they always promote community activities to engage people in solving community problems, and 47% do so almost always. The average visionary indicator was 4.42, showing a very high level of presence. This result supports the statement of Paz, Castro, and Palacio (28) regarding the ability of social entrepreneurs to innovate and turn their ideas into sustainable reality. 57% of Wayuu women almost always propose the formulation of projects for the well-being of the community, while 43% do so always. The average value for the planning indicator was 4.41, placing it in the very high presence category. These results are consistent with Shapero, cited in Ferrero and Ríos, (29), who describes the social entrepreneur as a planned person who organizes resources concretely to achieve specific goals.

In general analysis, Wayuu women entrepreneurs demonstrate a high level of presence in the evaluated qualities, with an average of 4.32. According to Cajina (30), a social entrepreneur is distinguished by their organizational capacity, which allows them to face new challenges and projects, surpassing previously reached limits. This reflects a robust ability to drive sustainable development and well-being in their communities. Furthermore, these findings align with the research of Gálvez and Suárez (31). The life experience of a female entrepreneur offers a deeper understanding of the challenges she faces daily, highlighting her distinctive qualities as an innovative, creative, and responsible woman. This experience provides a unique perspective that allows her to tackle challenges with a combination of ingenuity, originality, and commitment.

5. Conclusions

According to the results, the entrepreneurial qualities of Wayuu women were evident, revealing a profile that is put into practice in the social entrepreneurship of the communities under study. In this regard, they indicate a strong tendency of these women to seek alternatives to meet the needs of their community, demonstrating a significant presence in the creativity category, showing a constant ability to propose ideas that support the planned activities in their communities.

However, tolerance is another quality in these women, who collaborate in social activities, being responsible and visionary when taking control of activities and initiatives that lead to satisfying collective needs, participating in the formulation and implementation of projects aimed at the well-being of their communities. Thus, these tireless protagonists working for the common good are women with excellent organizational capacity, allowing them to face new challenges and projects, surpassing the limits previously reached.

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