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Francesca Sgrò

Intellectual Capital and Organizational Performance

An Empirical Focus on Social
Cooperative Enterprises



 Springer

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ISSN 2662-9879 ISSN 2662-9887 (electronic)
SIDREA Series in Accounting and Business Administration
ISBN 978-3-030-78478-2 ISBN 978-3-030-78479-9 (eBook)
<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-78479-9>

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The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

Disclaimer This volume is the result of the development of the Author's PhD thesis available at: <https://ora.uniurb.it/handle/11576/2655811#.YIb0CZAzbIW>

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Chapter 1

Introduction



In the knowledge-based economy, intellectual capital (IC) is considered an essential intangible resource for business success, and it is seen as the primary source of sustainable competitive advantage for both for-profit and nonprofit enterprises (Dumay et al., 2020). According to Inkinen (2015), the stream of research regarding the influence of IC on firm performance began to grow in the early 2000s and mainly focused on firms operating in the for-profit sector. However, as suggested by Dumay et al. (2020), IC studies should embrace a multifaceted perspective by proposing research covering subjects such as nonprofit organizations (Kong, 2010), IC utilization in practice (Dumay, 2013), innovation (Lerro et al., 2014), sustainability (Matos & Vairinhos, 2017), education (Secundo et al., 2018), and innovations in IC disclosure (Lombardi and Dumay, 2017).

Notwithstanding the growing interest in enhancing the theoretical and empirical foundations of the relationship between IC and performance, academic studies investigating the human, relational, and structural sub-components that improve corporate performance in the nonprofit sector are still limited (Ab Samad et al., 2017; Arshad et al., 2016; Bontis et al., 2018).

In fact, studies combining IC and NPOs show a fragmented trend, and publications on this subject have appeared mainly in recent years, especially since 2010. However, they are increasing, confirming that is a dynamic and emerging field of research that is thus far largely unexplored and, therefore, presents great opportunities for future research.

This study represents the development of a work published by Bontis et al. (2018) in the *Journal of Intellectual Capital*, titled “Intellectual capital and financial performance in social cooperative enterprises,” and it responds to the gap in the extant literature by focusing on the relationship between IC sub-components and a particular type of NPO, known as social cooperative enterprises (SCEs). These enterprises represent the most entrepreneurial, articulated, and advanced example of social enterprises (Bontis et al., 2018; Borzaga et al., 2020), and they are identifiable as hybrid organizations since they operate at a crossroads by