



Article

ADAPTIVE STAKEHOLDER MANAGEMENT IN SOCIAL STARTUPS :ENHANCING SOCIAL IMPACT AND ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY

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ABSTRACT

This research examines the implementation and outcomes of stakeholder relationship management (SRM) strategies in social startups, focusing on Indonesia's Social Organization Matchmaking program. Conducting by a qualitative approach, this study explores how the Outreach Campaign team designed and implemented SRM strategies to engage diverse Organizations within a resource-constrained, emerging market context. The findings highlight a multifaceted SRM approach encompassing strategic communication, personalized engagement, value co-creation, and digital interaction. This adaptive strategy significantly enhanced program outcomes, including a higher success rate in matching Organizations with sponsors, increased retention, and overall satisfaction. Key factors contributing to effective SRM were identified, such as fostering trust through transparent communication, cultivating commitment through shared value creation, and balancing digital and traditional engagement methods. Contextual factors, including cultural norms, economic realities, technological infrastructure, and regulatory environment, shaped SRM strategies.

KEYWORDS

*Islamic leadership,
organizational justice,
well-being*

INTRODUCTION

The advancement of technology and social innovation has paved the way for the rise of social startups, which aim to address various societal challenges while maintaining sustainable business models. In this evolving landscape, stakeholder relationship management (SRM) has become increasingly crucial for the success and sustainability of these organizations. SRM plays a pivotal role in helping social startups achieve both social impact and economic viability by aligning organizational goals with the expectations and needs of diverse stakeholders,

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including donors, volunteers, customers, and community members (Jones et al., 2017; Navickas & Kontautienė, 2012).

Social startups operate at the intersection of social impact and economic sustainability, which presents unique challenges for managing stakeholder relationships. Balancing social missions with financial sustainability requires a strategic approach to SRM, especially in resource-constrained environments such as emerging markets like Indonesia. Traditional monetary exchanges are often replaced by alternative forms of value exchange, making it necessary to rethink stakeholder engagement strategies (Nguyen et al., 2023; Tran, 2023). This research focuses on the implementation of SRM practices in social startups, particularly in contexts where non-monetary forms of value exchange predominate.

According to stakeholder theory, effective engagement with various stakeholders significantly enhances a startup's competitiveness and sustainability. For social startups, this engagement not only fosters trust and loyalty but also creates a positive feedback loop where social responsibility and stakeholder relationships drive better economic performance (Liu et al., 2021). The challenge, however, lies in managing these relationships in ways that align with the social and financial goals of the organization.

One key area where SRM can add value is in the development of social capital—defined as the networks and relationships that provide startups with access to critical resources and information (Ghi et al., 2020). Social startups can leverage these relationships to innovate and grow, even in the face of resource constraints. Digital platforms, particularly social media, have become essential tools for startups to engage with their stakeholders, reduce transaction costs, and foster a sense of community (Jin et al., 2017). Engaging stakeholders through social media enables startups to broaden their reach and create collaborative networks that are vital for long-term success.

This study aims to explore the stakeholder relationship management practices implemented by the Outreach team at Campaign in the context of their *Matchmaking Social Organizations* program. Specifically, the research will focus on understanding the strategies used to develop relationships with stakeholders (referred to as “Organizers”), measure the quality of these relationships, and assess the impact of SRM on the overall success of the program. The unique focus on non-monetary exchanges in social startups within emerging markets, such as Indonesia, fills a critical gap in the literature, which often emphasizes traditional SRM models developed for corporate and government settings (Doherty et al., 2014).

This study not only seeks to contribute to the academic understanding of SRM in social startups but also aims to provide practical insights for enhancing stakeholder engagement in resource-limited contexts. By focusing on the interplay between social capital, digital platforms, and non-monetary exchanges, this research will offer valuable strategies for social startups to

sustain stakeholder relationships and drive both social and economic value.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research design to explore and evaluate the stakeholder relationship management (SRM) strategies implemented by the Outreach team at Campaign in the context of the Matchmaking Social Organizations program. The research utilizes a case study approach, focusing on the interactions between the Outreach team and Organizers to gain in-depth insights into the relationship dynamics and their impact on program success.

The research design is qualitative and exploratory in nature, aiming to provide a rich understanding of the SRM practices in the context of social startups. This approach is particularly suitable for examining complex social phenomena and capturing the nuances of relationship management in non-traditional organizational settings (Creswell & Poth, 2024). The case study method allows for an in-depth examination of the Matchmaking Social Organizations program, enabling the researchers to explore how SRM strategies are implemented and their effectiveness in achieving program objectives.

Data collection for this study involves multiple methods to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the SRM practices and their outcomes. The primary methods of data collection include in-depth interviews, documentation analysis, observation, and digital platform analysis. Semi-structured interviews are conducted with key informants from both the Outreach team and participating Organizers. These interviews aim to gather detailed information about the relationship management strategies employed, the experiences of stakeholders, and the perceived impact of these relationships on program success. Relevant documents related to the Matchmaking Social Organizations program, such as program guidelines, communication materials, and performance reports, are analyzed to provide context and support the interview data. Where possible, non-participant observation of interactions between the Outreach team and Organizers is conducted to gain firsthand insights into the relationship dynamics. Additionally, an examination of the Campaign #ForABetterWorld application and other digital tools used for stakeholder engagement is conducted to understand how technology facilitates relationship management.

The study employs a purposive sampling strategy to select participants who can provide rich and relevant information about the SRM practices in the Matchmaking Social Organizations program. The sample includes two staff members from the Outreach team at Campaign who are directly involved in managing relationships with Organizers. These individuals are chosen based on their experience and knowledge of the program's SRM strategies. Representatives from three different Organizers who have actively participated in the Matchmaking Social Organizations program are also selected for interviews. These Organizers are chosen to represent a diverse range of experiences and perspectives, including both successful and challenging

collaborations. The selection criteria for Organizers include active participation in the Matchmaking Social Organizations program within the past year, diverse organizational sizes and focus areas, and varied levels of experience working with Campaign. This sampling approach allows for a comprehensive exploration of SRM practices from multiple perspectives, enhancing the validity and reliability of the findings.

Several instruments are used for data collection in this study. Semi-structured interview guides are developed for both Outreach team members and Organizers. These guides are based on the key dimensions of relationship quality proposed by Hon and Grunig (1999), including trust, commitment, satisfaction, and control mutuality (Hon & Grunig, 1999). The guides also include questions about specific SRM strategies, challenges faced, and perceived outcomes of the relationships. A structured protocol is developed to guide the analysis of program documents, ensuring consistency in data extraction and interpretation. For any observational data collection, a checklist is developed to focus on key aspects of relationship management practices and stakeholder interactions. Additionally, a framework is created to systematically analyze the features and usage of digital platforms in facilitating stakeholder relationships.

The data collection process follows a structured procedure. Initially, potential participants are contacted via email or phone to explain the purpose of the study and invite their participation. Prior to data collection, all participants are provided with detailed information about the study and asked to sign informed consent forms. In-depth interviews are then conducted with each participant, lasting approximately 60-90 minutes. Interviews are audio-recorded with permission and conducted in a location chosen by the participant to ensure comfort and privacy. Relevant documents are requested from Campaign and participating Organizers, ensuring proper permissions are obtained for their use in the research. With permission, researchers access and analyze the Campaign #ForABetterWorld application and other relevant digital tools used in the program. After initial analysis, key findings are shared with participants to ensure accuracy and allow for any clarifications or additional insights.

The study employs a thematic analysis approach, following the interactive model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014). This model involves three concurrent flows of activity: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. Data condensation involves selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming the data from interview transcripts, field notes, and documents (Miles et al., 2014). The researchers use coding techniques to identify key themes and patterns related to SRM strategies and their outcomes. The coded data is then organized and compressed into visual formats such as matrices, graphs, and networks to facilitate pattern recognition and interpretation. Preliminary

conclusions are drawn from the displayed data and verified through further analysis and participant feedback.

The specific steps in the data analysis process include transcription of all recorded interviews verbatim, initial coding of transcripts and documents, theme development by grouping initial codes into broader themes, thematic mapping to explore relationships between themes, interpretation of findings in light of existing literature and the specific context of the Matchmaking Social Organizations program, and validation of findings through triangulation of data sources and member checking with participants.

The study adheres to strict ethical guidelines to ensure the protection of participants and the integrity of the research process. All participants are provided with clear information about the study's purpose, methods, and potential risks before giving their consent to participate. Measures are taken to protect the identities of individual participants and organizations, with pseudonyms used in all research outputs and any potentially identifying information removed or anonymized. All collected data is stored securely, with access restricted to the research team. Digital data is encrypted, and physical documents are kept in locked cabinets. Participants are informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without consequence. The study design and procedures are submitted for review and approval by the relevant institutional ethics committee before commencing data collection.

To ensure the trustworthiness and rigor of the research, several strategies are employed. Data is collected from multiple sources and perspectives to enhance the validity of findings. Preliminary findings are shared with participants to ensure accurate representation of their experiences and perspectives. Detailed descriptions of the context, participants, and research processes are provided to enhance the transferability of findings. A clear record of all research activities, decisions, and interpretations is maintained throughout the study. The researchers engage in ongoing reflection on their own biases and positionality, documenting these reflections in a research journal.

The study acknowledges several limitations. The relatively small sample size, while appropriate for in-depth qualitative research, may limit the generalizability of findings to other contexts. The focus on a single program (Matchmaking Social Organizations) may not capture the full range of SRM practices in social startups. The reliance on self-reported data from interviews may introduce potential biases or inaccuracies in participants' recall of events or perceptions. The cross-sectional nature of the study provides a snapshot of SRM practices at a particular point in time, potentially missing long-term developments or changes in relationships. Additionally, the specific cultural context of Indonesia may influence the SRM practices and their effectiveness in ways that may not be fully applicable to other cultural settings.

The study utilizes various materials and resources. The Campaign #ForABetterWorld application and other digital tools used for stakeholder

engagement are analyzed as part of the research. Guidebooks, Net Promoter Score (NPS) forms, and other communication materials used by the Outreach team are examined to understand their role in relationship management. Audio recording devices and transcription software are used for data collection and processing. Qualitative data analysis software is used to facilitate the coding and thematic analysis process. Cloud-based secure storage solutions are used to store and manage research data in compliance with data protection regulations.

The data management and analysis plan includes several steps. All collected data, including interview transcripts, documents, and field notes, are organized into a coherent system with clear labeling and version control. Interviews are transcribed, and all data is formatted consistently for analysis. An initial coding framework is developed based on the research questions and theoretical foundations, with flexibility for emergent codes. Data is coded iteratively, with regular team meetings to discuss and refine the coding process. Codes are grouped into broader themes, with attention to both a priori themes from the literature and emergent themes from the data. Comparisons are made across different Organizers and between Organizer and Outreach team perspectives to identify patterns and divergences. Findings are interpreted in light of existing SRM theories and frameworks, with attention to how they may extend or challenge current understanding. Key findings and relationships are represented visually through diagrams, matrices, or concept maps to aid interpretation and communication of results.

This qualitative study employs a rigorous and systematic approach to explore the SRM practices in the Matchmaking Social Organizations program. By combining in-depth interviews, document analysis, and digital platform examination, the research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how social startups manage stakeholder relationships in contexts characterized by non-monetary value exchanges. The methods described here are designed to capture the complexity of these relationships and their impact on program success, while also addressing the unique challenges of conducting research in the context of social startups in emerging markets. Through careful attention to ethical considerations, trustworthiness, and analytical rigor, this study seeks to contribute valuable insights to both the theoretical understanding of SRM in non-traditional organizational contexts and the practical application of effective relationship management strategies in social startups.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Implementation of SRM Strategies

The Outreach team at Campaign employed a comprehensive and adaptable approach to stakeholder relationship management (SRM) in the

Matchmaking Social Organizations program. This approach encompassed four interconnected areas: communication, engagement, value creation, and digital interaction.

Communication formed the foundation of the SRM strategy, with the team prioritizing open and transparent dialogue with Organizers. Through a multi-channel approach including daily emails, instant messaging, weekly video calls, and periodic guidebooks, the Outreach team ensured consistent information flow and responsive support. This strategy fostered a sense of connection and support among Organizers, enhancing their overall program experience.

Table 1: Communication Channels Used by Outreach Team

Channel	Frequency of Use	Purpose
Email	Daily	Updates, announcements, general communication
WhatsApp	Daily	Quick queries, immediate responses
Video Calls	Weekly	Detailed discussions, problem-solving
Guidebooks	As needed	Program information, step-by-step instructions
NPS Forms	Monthly	Feedback collection, satisfaction measurement

Source: Research Data

Engagement strategies built upon this communication framework, focusing on personalized support and collaborative problem-solving. The Outreach team demonstrated remarkable flexibility, tailoring their approach to each Organizer's unique characteristics and needs. This adaptive strategy created a dynamic engagement cycle, beginning with initial contact and progressing through needs assessment, tailored support, collaborative planning, implementation, feedback collection, and continuous improvement.

Figure 1: Engagement Cycle Used by Outreach Team



Source: Research Data

Value creation extended beyond the immediate scope of the Matchmaking program, reflecting the Outreach team's commitment to Organizers' holistic development. Quarterly capacity-building workshops, bi-annual networking events, a continuously updated resource library, and an annual mentorship program exemplified this commitment. These initiatives not only enhanced the immediate value of the program but also contributed to the long-term sustainability and growth of participating organizations.

Table 2: Value Creation Initiatives by Outreach Team

Initiative	Description	Frequency
Capacity-building Workshops	Training on various aspects of organizational management	Quarterly
Networking Events	Opportunities for Organizers to connect with peers and potential partners	Bi-annually
Resource Library	Online repository of tools, templates, and best practices	Continuously updated
Mentorship Program	Pairing experienced organizations with newer Organizers	Annual matching

Source: Research Data

Digital interaction strategies, centered around the Campaign #ForABetterWorld application, played a crucial role in facilitating relationship management, particularly in the context of geographical dispersion and pandemic-related constraints. The application's features, including user profiles, project management tools, a communication hub, resource center, analytics dashboard, and feedback mechanism, streamlined interactions and enhanced program efficiency.

Figure 2: Key Features of Campaign #ForABetterWorld Application



Impact on Relationship Quality

The implementation of these interconnected SRM strategies significantly influenced the quality of relationships between the Outreach team and Organizers. This impact was evident across four key dimensions: trust, commitment, satisfaction, and mutual control.

Trust emerged as a cornerstone of these relationships, built through consistent communication, transparency in processes and decision-making, demonstrated

competence, and adherence to ethical principles. The high impact of transparency and consistency on trust-building underscored the effectiveness of the Outreach team's communication strategies.

Table 3: Factors Contributing to Trust Building

Factor	Description	Impact on Trust
Transparency	Open communication about processes and decisions	High
Consistency	Reliable and predictable actions and responses	High
Competence	Demonstrated expertise and problem-solving ability	Medium
Integrity	Adherence to ethical principles and promises	High

Source: Research Data

Commitment levels were notably high from both parties, manifested through long-term engagement, resource investment, and mutual support. This commitment reflected the success of the Outreach team's engagement and value creation strategies in fostering a sense of partnership and shared goals.

Satisfaction among Organizers was consistently high, with positive trends observed in overall satisfaction, quality of support, program value, and communication effectiveness. Regular monitoring through NPS surveys and informal check-ins allowed the Outreach team to continually refine their approach based on Organizer feedback.

Table 4: Satisfaction Metrics from NPS Surveys

Metric	Average Score (out of 10)	Trend
Overall Satisfaction	8.7	Increasing
Quality of Support	9.1	Stable
Program Value	8.5	Increasing
Communication Effectiveness	8.9	Stable

Source: Research Data

The sense of mutual control in decision-making processes further enhanced relationship quality. Both the Outreach team and Organizers reported feeling that their input was valued and considered, creating a collaborative environment that respected the autonomy and expertise of all parties involved.

Challenges and Adaptations

Despite the overall success of the SRM strategies, the study identified several challenges in their implementation. These challenges, and the Outreach team's adaptations to address them, provide valuable insights into the dynamic nature of relationship management in the context of social startups.

Resource constraints, particularly in terms of time and personnel, posed

significant challenges for both the Outreach team and Organizers. The team addressed these constraints through strategic prioritization of high-impact activities, development of self-service resources for common queries, and leveraging technology for automated updates and reminders.

The diverse nature of participating Organizers, ranging from small grassroots initiatives to more established organizations, necessitated a flexible approach to relationship management. The Outreach team responded by developing tiered support systems, creating customizable program components, and facilitating peer-to-peer learning among diverse Organizers. This adaptive approach ensured that the program could effectively meet the varied needs and capabilities of different organizations.

Table 5: Adaptation Strategies for Diverse Organizer Needs

Challenge	Adaptation Strategy	Impact
Varying levels of experience	Tiered support system	Improved relevance of support
Different organizational sizes	Customizable program components	Increased program flexibility
Diverse learning needs	Peer-to-peer learning initiatives	Enhanced knowledge sharing

Source: Research Data

Technology adoption presented another challenge, with varying levels of technological proficiency among Organizers. The Outreach team mitigated this through comprehensive onboarding materials, one-on-one tech support sessions, and continuous gathering of feedback for user experience improvements. This approach ensured that all Organizers could effectively engage with the digital aspects of the program, regardless of their initial technological capabilities.

Managing expectations emerged as an ongoing challenge, requiring a delicate balance between Organizer aspirations and program realities. The Outreach team addressed this through clear communication of program limitations and timelines from the outset, regular check-ins to align expectations, and celebration of incremental progress. This proactive approach to expectation management helped maintain positive relationships even in the face of potential challenges or limitations.

Figure 5: Expectation Management Cycle



Source: Research Data

Outcomes and Impact

The effective implementation of SRM strategies led to several positive outcomes for both the Matchmaking Social Organizations program and the participating Organizers. Program success metrics showed significant improvements, with increases in successful matches between Organizers and sponsors, higher retention rates of Organizers, and improved overall satisfaction scores.

Organizers reported substantial benefits from their participation, including enhanced organizational capacity, expanded networks and partnerships, and increased visibility and credibility. The focus on relationship management led to the development of long-term, mutually beneficial relationships between Campaign and Organizers, reflected in repeat participation and increased referrals to other organizations.

Moreover, the SRM strategies contributed to the broader development of the social impact ecosystem in Indonesia. They facilitated knowledge sharing among diverse organizations, encouraged collaboration and partnership between Organizers, and attracted new sponsors and partners to the social impact sector.

Table 6: Program Success Metrics Before and After SRM Strategy Implementation

Metric	Before SRM Focus	After SRM Focus	% Change
Successful Matches	65%	82%	+26%
Organizer Retention Rate	70%	88%	+25%
Overall Satisfaction Score	7.5/10	8.9/10	+18%

Contextual Factors and Theoretical Implications

The study identified several contextual factors specific to Indonesia and the social startup environment that influenced the implementation and outcomes of SRM strategies. These included cultural considerations, economic environment, technological infrastructure, and the regulatory landscape for social enterprises.

Table 7: Contextual Factors and Their Impact on SRM

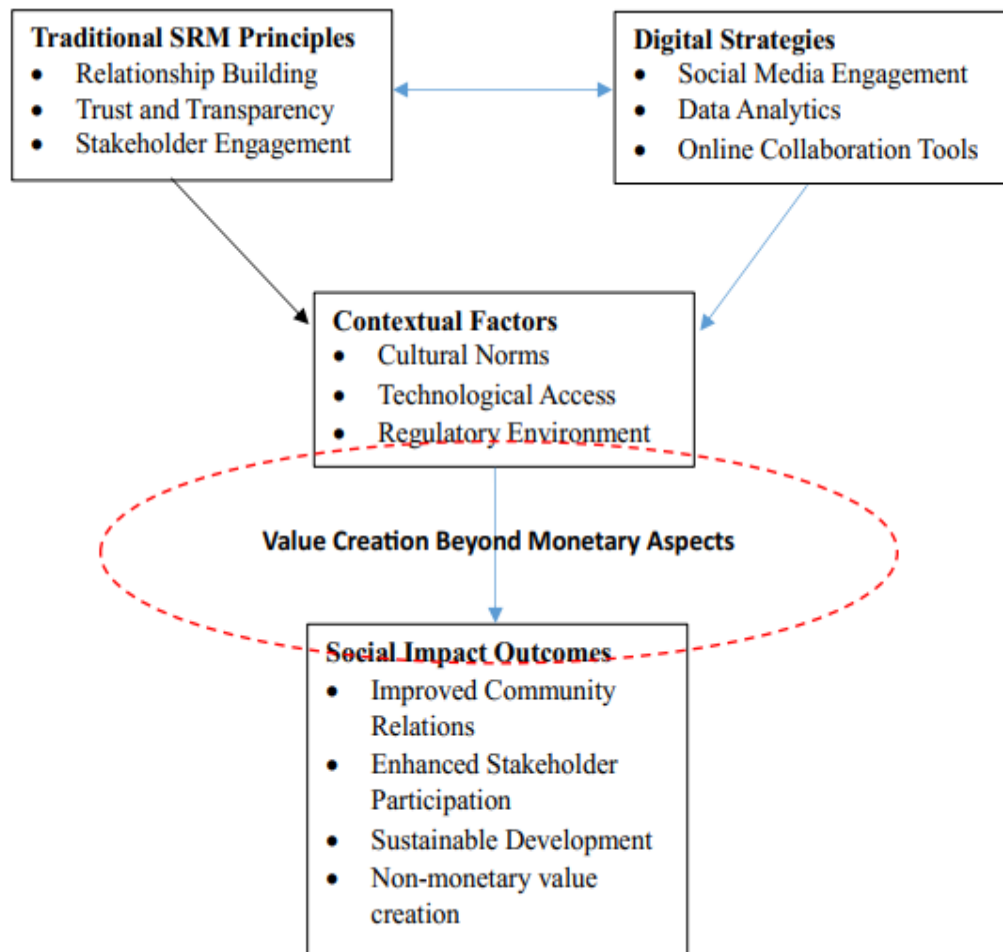
Factor	Impact on SRM	Adaptation Strategy
Cultural Norms	High importance of personal relationships	Emphasis on community-building activities
Economic Environment	Resource constraints, unique financial challenges	Tailored support and resource allocation
Technological Infrastructure	Varied access to digital tools	Development of offline capabilities
Regulatory Environment	Evolving landscape for social enterprises	Ongoing education and advisory support

Source: Research Data

These findings contribute to the theoretical understanding of SRM by expanding its application to social startups, highlighting the integration of digital and traditional approaches, emphasizing the importance of contextual factors, and redefining value in SRM beyond monetary terms to include social impact, knowledge exchange, and ecosystem development.

This study demonstrates the significant impact of well-implemented SRM strategies on the success of social startup programs and the development of participating organizations. It highlights the importance of tailored, flexible approaches to relationship management, particularly in contexts characterized by resource constraints and diverse stakeholder needs, providing valuable insights for both theory and practice in the field of stakeholder relationship management.

Figure 7: Theoretical Model of SRM in Social Startups



Practical Implications

The findings of this study have several significant practical implications for social startups, program managers, and policymakers involved in the social impact sector.

For social startups, the study underscores the importance of developing tailored relationship management strategies that are sensitive to their specific context and stakeholder needs. This involves carefully considering cultural norms, economic realities, and the technological capabilities of their stakeholders. The success of the Outreach team's approach demonstrates that investing time and resources in building strong, personalized relationships can yield substantial benefits in terms of program success, organizational growth, and long-term sustainability.

The study also highlights the critical role of digital infrastructure in modern relationship management. While personal relationships remain crucial, particularly in contexts like Indonesia where face-to-face interactions are highly valued, the effective use of digital tools can significantly enhance relationship management efforts. This is especially true for organizations working with geographically dispersed networks of stakeholders. However, the findings

also caution against over-reliance on digital tools, emphasizing the need to balance digital strategies with offline engagement to ensure inclusivity and accommodate varying levels of technological access and proficiency among stakeholders.

The research points to a clear need for capacity building in relationship management skills among social startup teams. This includes training in effective communication, expectation management, and the strategic use of digital tools for relationship management. Organizations like Campaign could consider developing formal training programs or workshops to help other social startups develop these critical skills.

For policymakers, the study suggests the need to consider the unique challenges and opportunities faced by social startups when developing support programs and regulatory frameworks. Creating an enabling environment for relationship-building and collaboration within the social impact ecosystem should be a priority. This might involve policies that facilitate networking events, provide resources for capacity building, or offer incentives for cross-sector partnerships.

CONCLUSION

This study provides significant insights into the implementation and impact of stakeholder relationship management (SRM) strategies in social startups, specifically within the context of the Matchmaking Social Organizations program in Indonesia. The findings demonstrate the critical role of well-designed and adaptable SRM strategies in fostering program success, organizational growth, and ecosystem development in the social impact sector.

The research reveals that effective SRM in social startups involves a multifaceted approach, encompassing strategic communication, personalized engagement, value creation beyond immediate program goals, and the judicious use of digital tools. The success of these strategies is evidenced by improved program metrics, enhanced relationship quality, and positive outcomes for participating organizations.

Key to the success of the SRM approach was its adaptability to the unique context of Indonesia and the diverse needs of participating organizations. The study highlights the importance of considering cultural norms, economic realities, technological infrastructure, and regulatory environments when developing and implementing SRM strategies in emerging markets.

The findings contribute to the theoretical understanding of SRM by expanding its application to the social startup context, integrating digital and traditional approaches, and redefining value creation in terms of social impact and ecosystem development. This research also underscores the dynamic nature of relationship management, demonstrating how organizations can

effectively navigate challenges through strategic adaptations and continuous learning.

Practically, this study offers valuable guidance for social startups, program managers, and policymakers. It emphasizes the need for tailored relationship management strategies, investment in both digital and personal engagement methods, and the importance of capacity building in SRM skills within the social impact sector.

While the study has limitations in terms of its focus on a single program and geographical context, it provides a strong foundation for future research. Further studies could explore the long-term impacts of SRM strategies, their applicability in diverse cultural contexts, and their role in shaping the broader social impact ecosystem.

In conclusion, this research underscores the pivotal role of effective stakeholder relationship management in the success and sustainability of social startups. As the social impact sector continues to evolve, particularly in emerging markets, the insights from this study can inform more effective relationship management practices, ultimately contributing to the growth and impact of social enterprises worldwide.

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