

Care ethics in social entrepreneurship promotes social sustainability

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Practicing ethics of care in social entrepreneurship has immediate and long-term impacts on sustainability, according to a recent University of Eastern Finland study published in *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development*.

Care ethics emphasizes responsibility and caring for other people. Care ethics refers to interaction that involves caring, taking responsibility, commitment, and listening. In the world of business, companies practicing care ethics see benefits to society as equally important as their profit margins.

Care ethics boosted local communities' self-esteem and economic activity

The study was carried out as [ethnographic research](#), analyzing two social enterprises operating in India. One of the case enterprises develops low-carbon and renewable solutions from biomass residue. The entrepreneurs worked with a [rural community](#) to produce an eco-friendly fuel from pine needles, a previously ignored waste that is plentiful in the forest. While generating earned income for locals, the enterprise also contributed to mitigating forest fires in the region.

The other case enterprise, on the other hand, reached out to [school children](#) in rural and semi-urban areas to increase their awareness about renewables, circular economy, and climate change. In addition, the entrepreneurs reached out to farmers to impart [technical skills](#) for becoming solar micro-entrepreneurs.

Both of the case enterprises studied operate in areas where people are living in difficult economic conditions. Care ethics practiced by the enterprises strengthened the local communities' self-esteem and increased their economic activity. In addition, practicing care ethics directed attention to [social structures](#) that maintain poverty and [social exclusion](#).

"The study provides interesting insight into how companies promoting social sustainability increase people's well-being and steer society

towards a long-term sustainability transition," Professor Hanna Lehtimäki from the University of Eastern Finland says.

The case enterprises studied in India operate under very challenging circumstances. However, care ethics can be practiced by companies anywhere.

"Companies practicing care ethics will also accelerate the sustainability transformation by increasing people's well-being and addressing the structures of society that need to be reformed in order for the sustainability transformation to happen," Postdoctoral Researcher Subhanjan Sengupta from the University of Eastern Finland says.

"For those who want to promote social sustainability, the results of this study are encouraging. Our own [sustainability](#) actions in everyday situations of interaction also shape social structures in a broader sense," Lehtimäki points out.

More information: Subhanjan Sengupta et al, Contextual understanding of care ethics in social entrepreneurship, *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development* (2022). [DOI: 10.1080/08985626.2022.2055150](https://doi.org/10.1080/08985626.2022.2055150)

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