

Organizational supports to Business Success: Ensuring the well-being of BoP entrepreneurs

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Abstract— recent schools of thought are suggesting to integrate the business with regional economic development. In doing so, market based approach has been applied as an underpinning theory to explain the phenomenon. One of the most noteworthy market based approach is addressing the base/bottom of the pyramid people who earn individually less than US\$ 1500 per annum. The purpose of the study is to propose a conceptual model which will be subsequently tested empirically to understand the impact of the creation of entrepreneurship initiatives on the well-being on BoP entrepreneurs among the marginalized group. This conceptual paper advances a conceptual framework that relates entrepreneurship and BOP entrepreneurs via an extensive review of the literature. It is expected that the proposed framework will generate a clear guideline to the NGOs, government, and especially private organization, who are aspiring to be engaged in social initiatives. The major proposition of this paper is that providing the necessary supports to the BoP entrepreneurs could lead to the enhancement of the well-being of the marginalized group as a whole.

Keywords- *BoP entrepreneurs; Organizational supports; Entrepreneurial competency; Business success*

I. INTRODUCTION

The concept of integrating business and regional economic development has been reflected in the well contentious proposition by Prahalad in the field of business strategy, that is the “Bottom or Base of Pyramid” (or known as BoP) [42]. The BoP initiative argued for a market based approach to alleviate poverty rather than the traditional approach. Traditional approach sees poor people as incapable and thus need charity. Market based approach on the other hand, considers and recognizes the poor as an “active” [28], “central” [47] agent in the development process. While identifying these “active agent”, researchers pointed out that there are 4 billion people in the world having less than US\$ 1500 per capita annual income [29]. This is, however, seemed to be as a tip of an iceberg [42]. BoP segment is the most unfortunate group who do not receive adequate market based supports other than aid or loan. In most cases, they are deprived of education, training, information, infrastructural facilities, and health [24]. In BoP domain, the major contribution is to consider this group of poor people as an untapped market. During the last decade, the first generation of the “Base of Pyramid” approach

primarily focused on finding opportunities by selling/sourcing product and services around the four billion poorest people of the world. But, the first generation BoP faced extensive debate and criticism, as it has been suspected as a way of exploiting the poor people. BoP 1.0 proposition do consider the poor people as consumer or producer. The second generation BoP approach on the contrary outlines the business model of entrepreneurship, where entrepreneurship is used as a mechanism to enhance the well being of the poor people. Being a new concept, it is not yet clear on what types of supportive factors could generate successful transformation to this initiative.

It is only recently that the business sector and the government sector have started to realize the benefit of development through entrepreneurship apart from traditional development tools such as grants, donations, or aid. Nevertheless, there is a lack of understanding and investigation on “how”, “what” and “from whom” supports could be obtained to enhance the BoP entrepreneur’s competencies that could eventually lead to entrepreneurship business success. It is important to investigate the necessary supportive factors which will enable them to be successful in their entrepreneurship business. On the other hand, past study claims that low level of entrepreneurial competencies can be found in “necessity based entrepreneurship” as entrepreneurs take the career as compulsion not choice due to deprivation [35]. The lack of adequate facilities affects the business environment and mostly the small scale entrepreneurship businesses. It is however expected that business success of the BoP entrepreneurs would facilitate the enhancement of their well-being and thus contribute to the development of the society as a whole. Based on this premise, the main objective of the research is to find what level of impacts has been created by the successful BoP entrepreneurship business to the well-being among the BoP entrepreneurs. The research will examine the influence of supportive factors and mediating role of entrepreneurial competencies which make the entrepreneurship a successful venture in BoP context. Conceptualizing the context of the BoP entrepreneurs and their business, this paper proposes an integrated framework (Fig. 1).

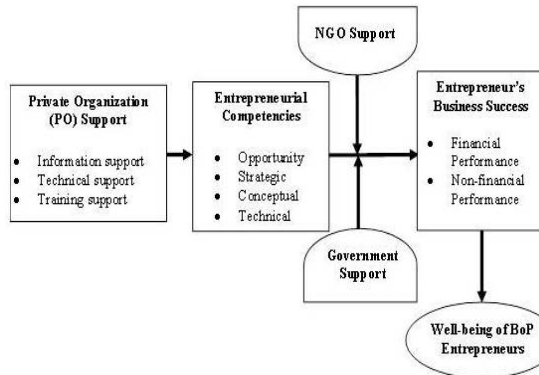


Figure 1: Proposed conceptual framework

II. PRIVATE ORGANIZATION SUPPORTS

In a very general sense, the poor entrepreneurs in the developing countries usually suffer from the lack of technical skills, managerial skills, and access to training facilities. According to researchers in many developing countries governments often do not have the budget to finance, expertise to train entrepreneurs and lack technical skills to develop the capabilities of the entrepreneurship business [50]. Therefore a private organization can play a pivotal role in doing so, based on their expertise, skills and competitive advantage. In the domain of BoP, private organization has large role in order to shape up the BoP market [19]. It is believed that private organization supports not only can benefit the business but could in return, gain financial rewards and market reputation for the private organization. From the practical point of view, it has been found that private organizations can provide information, training, and technical support to the other parties in the market.

Information support- According to scholars, information, communication and technology develop the social equality, social mobility through advancement in education, training, earning potential etc. [15]. In the domain of entrepreneurship, it has been argued that access to information, facilitates the new ventures to seize opportunities, products, and services. In China, access to information is found to be a vital tool for the entrepreneurship business among women entrepreneurs [21]. On the other hand, lack of information infrastructure (information flow, information dissemination) is one of the major barriers for micro enterprises in Bangladesh.

Technical support- Access to information is to a large extent depends on access to technology. This reality has put the developing countries at a disadvantage position, as there is still a huge technological familiarity gap between developed and developing countries. Therefore, this technical support can be derived from various sources like NGOs, government and as well as private organizations [48].

Training support- Training refers to the learning activities to knowledge, skills and abilities to perform and manage

efficiently which increases the business performance through financial gain. Small firms in business are usually lack of formal organizational structure, standardized processes and diverse pathways in the management and technical functions. Particularly in developing countries it has been observed that external assistance and preferences for small business are limited and entrepreneurs are largely lacking in business skills. Therefore, it is important for the small business entrepreneurs receive training support on a regular basis and in a structured manner from different sources like different private organization [7, 36].

III. ENTREPRENEURIAL COMPETENCIES

Competency is defined as the ability to apply clusters of knowledge, skills and attitudes in a certain professional context. In the usual manner, the competency approach directs to the organizational success through investigating individual characteristics [31]. The competency approach has been widely used in different contexts, for example, to study management development, managerial performance [1, 31, 49] and also in the field of entrepreneurial performance [1, 31], which specifically identifies different entrepreneurial competencies. A specific group of competencies relevant to the success of entrepreneurship business are recognized as entrepreneurial competencies [34].

Reference [32] suggest that to start and to have consecutive growth in the entrepreneurship business, competencies are essential which can be categorized into six areas. They are mainly, opportunity, relationship, conceptual, organizing, strategic, and commitment competencies. However, researchers believe that strategic, opportunity, and conceptual competencies are most important for entrepreneur business [1]. Strategic, opportunity, and conceptual competencies have been categorized as entrepreneurial role which includes carrying out activities such as formulating strategies, perceiving unmet needs, spotting high quality opportunities etc. As entrepreneurial roles require strong commitment, conceptual ability to seek, identify, asses and seize opportunities to transform into profitable outcome, it is important to investigate the competencies under entrepreneurial role along with the technical competencies in the context of BoP entrepreneurship business. As stated earlier, BoP segment is such a group of people who are usually deprived of essential requirements including technical knowledge to carry out ICT entrepreneurship business.

IV. ENTREPRENEURSHIP BUSINESS SUCCESS

The concept of success is subjective. People have different perception and it is quite difficult to decipher its comprehensive meaning. Scholars have come to a conclusion that entrepreneurship is indeed one of the vehicles for social mobility and community development; therefore it is important to understand its business success and performance. There are many ways to measure the success and throughout the research on entrepreneurship, it has been found that many researchers have used different ways to measure the success. Broadly, financial and non-financial performance can be considered to

measure the business success of the BoP entrepreneurs. Performance is multidimensional in character, and therefore it is useful to integrate the different dimensions of performance [52]. Business performance centered on the indicators of financial performance as it is assumed to fulfill the economic goal of a firm [51]. The typical indicators of financial performance include: sales growth, profitability, return on investment, survival, and satisfaction [5, 51, 46, 2]. Nonfinancial performance reflects the realm of intangible values conceive by the business firms, though few of the firms actually realize the benefits. There are however, different indicators have been put forward for measuring nonfinancial performance. Based on a comprehensive review of the literature from both western and eastern context, researchers suggested some of the indicators of nonfinancial performance for SMEs business success such as: customer satisfaction, customer retention, owner's self-satisfaction, firm's image and reputation, employees' satisfaction, and good workplace relations [4]. In another qualitative study the scholars have brought into light the satisfaction of the owner regarding lifestyle and social responsibility as indicators of non-financial performance to the business success [3].

V. NGO AND GOVERNMENT SUPPORT

The function of NGOs in entrepreneurship especially in small business in both developed and developing countries has been extensively debated and also well acknowledged as an alliance partner. NGOs around the world are mostly renowned by the financing activities they provide to the marginalized people. The lack of sufficient financing may create significant problems for small business activities, specifically to the ability to grow and success. It is essential to facilitate small business entrepreneurs through financing to set up and expand their operations [39]. A report based on the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, put forward that entrepreneurs expected to get financing from multiple sources such as: Family, Friends, and Foolhardy strangers [14]. The report also shows that 42 percentage of entrepreneur's source financial assistance from banks and financial institutions, 32.9 percentage source come from the close family, 19.7 percentage come from the government program, and rest of the entrepreneurs source financing from other relatives, friends, strangers etc.

Reference [23] noted that effective government assistance may help to overcome institutional and other barriers in an uneven playing field to ensure business success of the entrepreneurs. In a study conducted on Vietnamese entrepreneurs found that government support during start-up had no significant impact on enterprise survival, while there was a positive impact on the long-run revenue growth rate [21]. Many past studies showed the significance of government support on entrepreneurs that actually lead to the satisfaction of the entrepreneurship business. Therefore, government must form an environment that is conducive for the small and entrepreneurship business success [2].

VI. SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING

Well-being generally draws upon the philosophy to describe what is ultimately good for a person and concern about the optimal functioning [44]. However, from the philosophical lens, there is a contradiction. In a general sense, happy life relates to the mental emotional, satisfaction, and also physical state of the human being [12]. According to the literature, well-being is understood by pleasure attainment and pain avoidance reflecting to the happiness, and degree of functioning which refers to the self-realization [44]. To understand the quality of life, it is important to emphasize the basic human needs of dignity and self-respect. Meeting up the all these needs of human being leads to the well-being of people [38]. While providing deep insightful thought on poverty issues, Noble laureate Amrtya Sen argued that well-being should be seen and measured through a combination of functioning, or capacity to realize the functioning's [45]. The functioning that has been proposed so far are: being adequately nourished, escaping morbidity and mortality, having mobility, being happy, achieving self-respect, taking part in the life of the community, appearing in public without shame [38].

However, researches adjoining well-being and business success is rather rare. Owners of the businesses usually assert greater freedom, flexibility, and opportunity for self-fulfillment as reflecting their well being. In the domain of well-being studies, a large number of researches have been concentrated on subjective well-being especially in measuring the quality of life. Subjective well-being measures happiness through asking how individuals have felt about their lives. On the other hand, objective well-being measures the observable variables, such as life expectancy. The literature on the subjective well-being mostly concern with the approach and the reasons of experiencing a life in positive way including the cognitive judgments and affective reactions [11]. The area of subjective well-being roams around three hallmarks, such as: it is subjective, it includes positive measures, and it includes a global assessment of all aspects of a person's life [11].

VII. PROPOSITION DEVELOPMENT

A. The relation between Private Organization (PO) support and entrepreneurial competencies

Entrepreneurs from BoP segment often lack of resources like information, training, and technical. As they are the deprived group of the society, it is difficult for them to get access to the resources that are needed to run especially technology based entrepreneurship business like community information center (CIC). Hence, information support of the entrepreneurship business is very important as it strives towards business success, a source of opportunity, and crucial for decision making, which actually develops the entrepreneurial competencies. Along with information, if the entrepreneurship business is well equipped with technical support, it has presumably impacted on the development of entrepreneurial competencies. On the other hand, a study

supports that entrepreneurial competence is not only an issue of predisposition, but these are dependent on learning which actually comes from training [25].

Proposition 1: PO support is positively related to the development of the entrepreneurial competencies.

B. The relationship between entrepreneurial competencies and the business success

Past studies show the evidence that entrepreneurial competencies lead to the entrepreneurship business success and has a direct positive relationship [1, 32, 34, 35]. Earlier studies revealed that opportunity competencies, strategic competencies contribute to the success of entrepreneurship overall performance [30]. Conceptual competencies include the ability to diagnose problems, connect and rearrange ideas, and cautiously adjoin new ideas with existing knowledge and capabilities. Technical competencies are having knowledge of instrument and tools, machines and expertise of the work as a requirement for entrepreneurial business success [1]. All of these four competencies discussed above proposed to have positive relations with the entrepreneurship business success.

Proposition 2: Entrepreneurial Competencies are positively related to the entrepreneurship business success.

C. The mediating role of entrepreneurial competencies between PO support and business success

Entrepreneurial competencies have been acted as mediator in different studies. In a study, entrepreneurial competencies have been proposed as a mediator between entrepreneurial learning and entrepreneurial performance [54]. There is an evident relationship between information, technical, and training support with entrepreneurial competencies [41] and in the same manner also between entrepreneurial competencies and entrepreneurship business success [1]. In the business field, as the private organization holds most efficient and effective resources then other organization, they can provide information, technical, and training support to the small entrepreneurship business in order to develop their competencies. While these competencies are being developed, it is expected that entrepreneurship business would achieve success.

Proposition 3: Entrepreneurial competencies significantly mediate the relationship between PO support and business success.

D. The moderating Effects of NGO and Government support

Entrepreneurs are often restrained due to insufficient wealth and in need of external financing to pursue their business opportunities. Hence, financing becomes one of the important elements in the process of entrepreneurship business especially among the marginalized group. As such, even though equipped with competencies, entrepreneurs in

developing countries may face significant obstacles to carry on the business towards success due to financial support, notably provided by NGO [46].

On the other hand, governments in developing countries, bolster economic activities by formulating industry development plans and setting regulatory policies. A past study referred a special issue of Small Business Economics, which suggested that various government policy interventions have played a significant role in the explanation of SME successes in the Asian region [20]. However, in the context of developing countries, government officials found to be misusing the bureaucratic power. Another study found political stability, rule of law and infrastructure facilities are the determinants of entrepreneurship business success in developing countries like Bangladesh which ought to be provided by the government [9]. Having the entrepreneurial competencies, which mainly leads to business success, Government support in particular, can also play the moderating role through various supports in the relationship between entrepreneurial competencies and business success.

Proposition 4: NGO and Government support significantly moderates the relationship between entrepreneurial competencies and business success.

E. The relationship between entrepreneurship business success and well-being of BoP entrepreneurs

Entrepreneurship business success develops the economic condition of the BoP entrepreneurs through financial growth. Individual's financial better off position allow people to engage in more rewarding activities that advances well-being as they could have fulfill the basic needs at earlier [10]. According to conventional economics money can buy happiness through exchange of goods and purport that higher income of the individual leads to greater happiness. Scholars submit that improving well-being is the ends of development [40]. Hence, it can be assumed that entrepreneurship business success might produce well-being of the BoP entrepreneurs. In other way, it can be asserts that the well-being of the BoP entrepreneurs is the outcome of the entrepreneurship business success.

Proposition 6: Entrepreneurship business success is positively related with the well-being of BoP entrepreneurs.

VIII. GENERAL RESEARCH DESIGN

The target population of the study will be GPCIC (GrameenPhone Community Information Centre) in Bangladesh. At present there are 516 GPCIC successfully running the entrepreneurship business in Bangladesh [18]. The reason for choosing GrameenPhone is, it is the largest telecommunication industry in Bangladesh having 44.25 percentage of total telecom market share and the company is well engaged in social initiatives (GrameenPhone Community Information Centre, GPCIC) to increase the well-being of poor

people. The objectives GPCIC is to disseminate information to the poor and create opportunities for entrepreneurship business in the BoP community. GPCIC is equipped with a computer, a printer, a webcam and a GrameenPhone's EDGE-enabled modem to access the internet nationwide. GrameenPhone claims that it has designed the GPCIC business model to facilitate the local entrepreneurs especially in the remote area to run small business. GPCIC services are: internet surfing and emailing, content on health and agriculture, locally relevant customized and open content, chatting with voice, video conferencing, typing, scanning, printing, commercial mobile call, E-governance services, GP value added services such as: FlexiLoad, Ring tones downloading, E-fax, CD writing, Telemedicine services, Multimedia education for children.

Therefore, the entrepreneurs who run the Community Information Centre of GrameenPhone (GPCIC) are the unit of analysis for the proposed study. The measurements for operationalizing the variables namely; Private Organization support which has three dimensions: information, technical support, and training support with total 19 items [23, 37, 17, 16, 8] and self-constructed. Entrepreneurial competencies have four dimensions, namely, opportunity, conceptual, strategic, and technical with a total number of 24 items [30, 33, 27, 6, 3, 41]. Entrepreneurship business success with financial and nonfinancial performance will be measured with 9 items [26, 4]. NGO support has 6 items [22], and government support has 7 items [23, 53, 20, 43]. In addition the study proposes well-being of BoP entrepreneurs as an outcome, which is to be measured by 8 items [13].

IX. CONCLUSION

The poor people are not liable for the situation that they are going through. It is the responsibility of the society to nourish them in order to overcome hurdles of the life. In many instances it has been observed that while they are given adequate supports and facilities they can turn around their life to a better position. As the world has now become extremely information and technology oriented, creation of entrepreneurship business in this sector can overthrow many of the barriers. It is believed that information can be weapon to win the battle of poverty. Thus, if they are given support from the resourceful organizations with accurate information, the BoP group will have the leverage to ensure the well-being of their life and thus foregone from curse like poverty.

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