

AN UNDERSTANDING OF STAKEHOLDER SALIENCY FROM WOMEN SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURIAL PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

Opportunity discovery lies at the heart of entrepreneurial activity. To succeed, entrepreneurs need to adapt to the complexity of stakeholders relationships and unveil the opportunities lying within those networks. Stakeholders are a source of opportunity and acceptance of new ideas. An enterprise has several stakeholders that need to be prioritized according to their relative power, legitimacy and urgency of claim. Social enterprises are no exceptions to the phenomenon of stakeholder's saliency. This article aims to contribute to the theory of stakeholder saliency based on stakeholders possessing one or more of the three relationships attributes. This study, explores a qualitative intrinsic case of a beauty salon run by a woman entrepreneur in the locality of Peshawar, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Pakistan. The paper captures the entrepreneur's ambitions and growth aspirations in the light of its salient stakeholders. This paper explores some interesting themes that present a whole new level in entrepreneurial theory and research. From an enteripreuneral perspective, this study examines the different stakeholders groups that the entrepreneur considers primary and degree of acceptability and entrepreneurial practices. It also explores the level of satisfaction the entrepreneur has towards these stakeholders. The findings suggested that the regulatory institutions, which in its capacity are the largest salient stakeholder acts as a barrier to social entrepreneurship. Moreover, the immediate family and clients as a salient stakeholder play a facilitative and supportive role thus resulting in a positive perception of women social entrepreneurship in a conservative developing society like KP, Pakistan. This study also provides an insight how entrepreneurs negotiate institutional barriers. The study suggests that the regulatory institutions should take remedial measures by devising such policies and programs that facilitate women social entrepreneurs in pursuing their passion and undertaking social entrepreneurial initiatives for the betterment of society. The results have clear implications for the ethics and activities of entrepreneurs.

Key Words

Social Entrepreneurship, Women entrepreneurs, stakeholder theory, stakeholder saliency

Introduction

In developing countries, women facing various social cultural boundaries tend to become entrepreneurs by adopting unique and contextually peculiar way (Junaid, Shah & Shah, 2015). An entrepreneur is described as a person who is brave and has the ability to make decisions, an unusual person who is motivated by dreams and opportunities that offers them a sense of power and independence and is driven by the will to conquer (Schumpeter, 1983). While the term social entrepreneurship is a composite phenomenon which encourages the adoption of socially responsible behavior. It combines the passion of a social mission with an image of business. It is a set of strategic responses towards environmental turbulence and contextual challenges (Dart, 2004).

In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), Pakistan, the cultural codes have resulted in a male dominant conservative society. Lately, despite the socio cultural impediments, Women of KP have emerged as successful entrepreneurs, though the culture of this context do moderated their entrepreneurial intentions, searching and exploiting the opportunities and decision to exploit the opportunity to create venture (Shook et al., 2003). The creation of opportunities presents an idiosyncratic challenge for women social entrepreneurs in KP society. Women social entrepreneurs are embedded in such a social context that can only create opportunities through the interstice allowed by the socio cultural context of KP. To sum up, the case of women entrepreneurs is particularly illuminating as women social entrepreneurs face a profusion of contextually unique barriers provided in a male dominated society which they must negotiate or overcome in order to succeed. It is necessary to understand these barriers and the ways around them from the perspective of the entrepreneurs. This can be achieved by studying real life stories of such heroic women social entrepreneurs. Real life stories allow individuals to relate to the reality thus has the power to really captivate the reader and inspire them. In this study the researcher has presented a real life story case study.

Accumulating evidence from the literature suggests that women social entrepreneurs are increased significantly, however, there number is lower than men (Jamali, 2009; Langowitz & Minniti, 2007). Previous studies has mostly focused on exploring the distinctive micro or macro level characters of women social entrepreneurship such as personal traits, drivers, experience, financial access, performance, issues of success, decision models, perceptions, or the size of the firm (Baughn et al., 2006; Jamali, 2009; Martinez Dy & Marlow, 2017). However, available literature lack focus on the important motives (such as self confident, assertive, creative, risk takers, hardworking and ambitious) that woman carries while starting a business (France, Vilares & Moreira, 2017). Previous researchers suggest that there are fewer studies that are concerned with environment for entrepreneurship (regional and institutional environment) (Bruin, brush & Welter, 2007, pg.324; Sambharya & Musteen, 2014). One way to describe the environment in which entrepreneurs operate is to identify stakeholders (Freeman, 1984). These stakeholders either affect or are affected by the activities of the entrepreneur. Once the entrepreneur has

identified the boundaries of its environment, then it can deeply analyze the capabilities of significant stakeholders for the identification of entrepreneurial opportunities and goals.

Theoretical Underpinning: Stakeholder Saliency

There is growing literature on entrepreneurship in developing countries but research on stakeholder perspective is certainly limited. Stakeholder theory helps manager to allocate and distribute resources by elucidating the relevant stakeholders and their interests thus balancing the conflicting stakeholder concerns (Freeman, 1984; Freeman et al., 2004). Resource allocation and distribution is an onerous task for managers. It requires a great deal of judgment by managers while evaluating stakeholder's significance (Mitchell et al., 1997; Agle et al., 1999). Therefore, stakeholder saliency is one of the most pressing issues of stakeholder theory. Saliency means importance accorded to a particular stakeholder during firm-stakeholders' dialogues and interactions. It clarifies which stakeholders really matter to the managers of the firm as compared to other. This argument was first addressed by Mitchell et al., (1997) who emphasized that those stakeholders that possess the attributes namely power, legitimacy and urgency (Fig. 1) are considered significant by managers. The term Power suggests the ability to bring about change that one desires. Legitimacy, on the other hand, implies "socially accepted and expected structures or behaviors" (Mitchell et al., 1997, p. 866). Urgency is "the degree to which stakeholder claims call for immediate attention" (ibid). Power and legitimacy together create authority, while urgency brings dynamism in manager-stakeholder relationship.

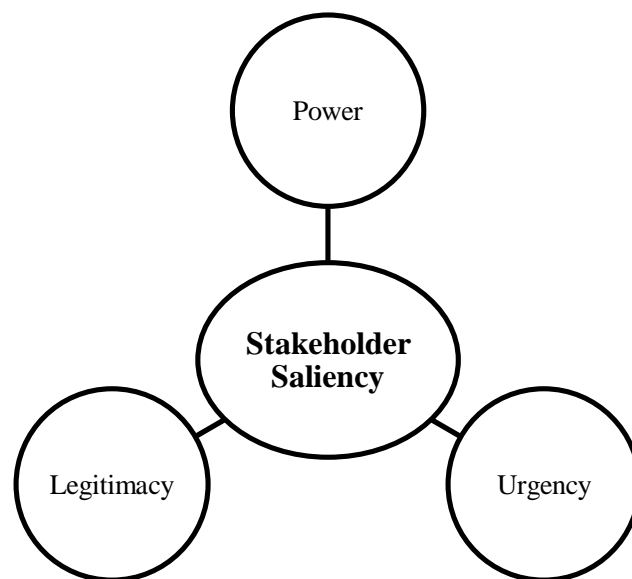


Figure 1: Stakeholder Saliency based on the work of Mitchell et al. (1997)

Existing literature on stakeholder saliency indeed posture the impact of entrepreneurial intensity but lacks to provide inside into drivers and barriers. Therefore, it is important to understand stakeholder positing and salience in social enterprise initiatives. The above conceptual framework presents an innovative theoretical lens to combine much needed integrated perspective. In this paper, capitalizing on the above conceptual framework, we empirically address the issue of stakeholder salience in the context of women entrepreneurship in the locality of Hayatabad, District Peshawar. More specifically, we present an in-depth examination of how a woman entrepreneurial ambitions and growth aspirations are shaped by the salient stakeholders. Drawing on the data collected and social capitol, the researcher suggests that stakeholders such as the Government, family and customers influence the women entrepreneurial decisions such as start-ups, business growth, business model as well as the social entrepreneurial initiatives. the more salient the stakeholder, the more influential it gets in shaping the aspirations of the women entrepreneur as well as their decisions to grow or wind-up the business.

Methodology

The researcher followed qualitative methodology as the researcher views reality as being multiple and created by human beings through actions and interactions with other fellow beings (Karatas-Ozkan & Murphy, 2010; Easterby-Smith et al., 2008). Following Stake (1998), the researcher has chosen an intrinsic context bound case study design as the researcher is interested in examining how the phenomenon of stakeholder saliency effects the growth aspirations of a woman entrepreneur who runs her own beauty salon in District Peshawar and has also undertaken the social entrepreneurial initiative of training nearby women as a beautician. This intrinsic interest led the researcher to choose the above mentioned research design.

Kvale (1983, p.174) defines the qualitative research interview as "an interview, whose purpose is to gather descriptions of the life-world of the interviewee with respect to interpretation of the meaning of the described phenomena". The data is collected through semi-structured interviews because of two primary considerations. Firstly, they are well suited for the exploration of the perception and opinions of the interviewee regarding complex and even sensitive issues. Secondly it enables probing (Barribal & While, 1994).

The researcher conducted multiple interviews of Miss S.W, each lasted for about 50 minutes. The interviews were conducted in Urdu and were recorded. The recordings were then translated into English by the author to ensure originality. The gained information (from the interviewee) was then analyzed and combined with knowledge from previous researches. The interview was focused on, her early life and circumstances in which she grew up, her struggle to become an entrepreneur, her social entrepreneurial initiative and the challenges she faced. Adhering to research ethics, we obtained her consent to use her real name initials in this paper. The results of the study cannot be generalized. This research is context bound and based on real life story so research does not claim generalization.

The narrative from qualitative data was analyzed through thematic analysis. This method is a common practice to explore entrepreneurial related practices and suits interpretative studies (Moult and Anderson, 2005). This research followed following spets for thematic anaylsis a). First , the researcher read and re-read interview transcript to get familiarty of the data. Second, the reseacher categorised and coded the qualitive data and Identified themes (see table 1) Finally disccused explanatory connections on how, what and why of their entrepreneurial practices.

Organizing themes	Basic Themes	Global Themes
The Entrepreneurial Journey and the Initial Success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Initial investment ➤ Usage of local on hand resources ➤ Initial success ➤ Quality and Services ➤ Innovative process ➤ Family support 	Startup barriers
The Social Entrepreneurial Initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Close interaction with clients ➤ Understanding of social economics needs ➤ Under privileged clients ➤ Type of initiative 	Sources of motivation
Informal Social Enterprises	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ No understanding of rules and regulation ➤ Expectations of family ➤ Regulatory institutions as hurdle ➤ Institutional Confusion 	Saliency of institutional stakeholder

Setting the Context

Miss S.W was born in 1989. She belongs to Hindko community of Peshawar, Pakistan. While growing up she saw that her family continuously faced financial problems. She had three sisters and one brother. Her father had a lot of health issues and he was not able to provide enough amenities for them. Her mother was a house wife. Miss S.W’s life was not the way she wished she had. Growing up she felt like she herself was a burden on her family. She with her brother and sisters went to a low cost school around her neighborhood and even that was hardly affordable for them. During the time she was studying at school, her father died of numerous health issues. His death was a big trauma for her and her family. Losing her father in the childhood was really hard for her. Such loss in a child’s life always leaves a great impact on

herfuture. With the loss of her father, the financial situation of her family worsened. At the time of her father's death, they were living in a joint family system which is normal in Pakistani culture. Mostly families live in same house with their grandparents, uncles and their families. Her brother was young at the time and there was no one there to support them financially. So her mother decided to sell part of the property, the home that belonged to her late husband. Miss S.W's uncles created hurdles during property case but her mother fought harder for her children's rightful inheritance. After selling that property her mother bought a small home enough for her family in Hayatabad Peshawar and put the remaining amount into an account for future expenditures.

Miss S.W experienced the cruel realities of life at a very young age. These experiences created a desire in her to achieve something big so that she can help her family financially. When she was done with her D.Com in 2005, her studies got interrupted because her mother could no longer afford her education expenses. Higher education in Pakistan is costly and at that time scholarships were not easily available. Miss S.W was a passionate and courageous girl. She wanted to do something better with her life and achieve success no matter what. She decided to get a vocational skill training that can help her earn. There was a private organization around the area that provided beautician training to women. Miss S.W decided to enroll for the beautician training course. The admission fee was fifty thousand rupees, which she could not afford. Her mother believed in her daughters dream and wanted to support her. So she started saving money from everyday use for a few months and finally they were able to pay the admission fee. Miss S.W successfully completed the training in 2007.

In order to earn money and financially support her family, she needed to put her skill to use. Miss S.W did not have any funds to start her own beauty salon but she did not lose hope. At that time Miss S.W made a brave and courageous decision to apply for a job. She would earn and save money until it was enough, then quit the job and start her own beauty salon. Pakistan has a collectivist culture due to which women career choices depend upon the joint decision of the family. That's why Miss S.W needed to have her mother's permission for the job. Miss S.W's mother was afraid of letting her daughter work due to societal norms of KP which does not approve of women working outside home. But she allowed her as they did not have any other choice. She worked at a parlor from 2008 till 2011, about 3 years. She used to save money from her salary which was not much but she was determined to achieve her goal. She continued working with zeal and honesty in the hope that one day she will be her own boss. During that time she faced multiple challenges related to her job. After working for three years, Miss S.W was able to save enough for her own small setup at home.

Narrative from Empirical Evidence

The Entrepreneurial Journey and the Initial Success

Miss S.W did not have enough money to start her own beauty salon in a commercial area. In this regard she mentioned *“In the start it was difficult, I did not know what to do. It was very expensive to buy a shop here in Peshawar”*. She bought the necessary equipment and products and started a salon in a small room of her house. She emphasized *“the only practically solution was to take a start from home”, “I had an extra room”*. Soon her investment in the business started reaping profits. She was happy as now she was able to financially support her family. She became quite famous in her colony within a few months. In this regard she mentioned *“I am so happy, now I am not dependent, and everybody knows me”*. The clients were happy to avail services at excellence beauty parlor because of so many reasons. She claimed that

“It (Parlor) is situated nearby and the clients had no problem visiting it. Secondly, the services provided by us are excellent. Thirdly, I charged them (customers) less as compared to the other beauty salons and lastly, I am available 24/7 for her clients. Other beauty salons have fixed time schedule. Furthermore, one has to make an appointment while availing their services”.

Miss S.W never complicated things for her clients by making things formal. She continuously made exceptions for her clients and that’s why they started preferring her over the well established beauty salons.

The Social Entrepreneurial Initiative

During her entrepreneurial journey she met many clients belonging from different families. As most of the services provided by a beautician take time because of their technical nature, Miss S.W had a lot of time to chat with the clients during her work. She thought it nice to chat so that the clients feel more comfortable. *“I always like to chat, try to know my customers, their families, problems and hobbies (S.W)”*. During these chats, she noticed the misfortunes of the girls in her society. She noticed that most of the girls around her were just sitting at home and not focusing on education or any other skill. Most of them were not even educated and nor had studied beyond primary level. Miss S.W realized that she is not the only one suffering. She mentioned, *“I could see they (clients) are not happy, I could see myself in them”* There are plenty others (female clients) who need support and mentoring. After listening to their misfortunes, Miss S.W considered herself blessed as she had a supportive and caring family, a home, a skill and a dignified source of earning. *“My family has been always very helpful. I would have been nothing without them; I have achieved everything due to them”* (S.W). She understood their misfortunes more because she herself had been through a lot in her life. This experience made her realize that she should help these women in the best way possible. Miss S.W decided to address this issue and felt it was her responsibility to contribute towards society by empowering such girls. *“They do not have any support, they have lot of problems (financial), nobody is there for them”* She emphasized *“this is my duty”* if *“I don’t help them, they will always stay the same”*, Hence, she decided to impart beautician services training to the underprivileged for free, eventually enabling them to become financially independent and active bread earners of their family.

Miss S.W trained eight girls free of charge while training academies are charging fifty thousand rupees for such trainings. Miss S.W was determined to face every hurdle in her way with courage and bravery. She wanted to do something positive with her life that can have a long lasting impact on society and she has been pursuing her dream with strong determination. Her mother and her elder sister approved of Miss S.W's determination and supported her through each stage of her life so that she can pursue her dream of bringing positive change in society as well as in her family's life circumstances.

It can be concluded; stakeholder salience of family is very obvious for the startup and initial success. The women are part of collective social set up, they are not only dependent on man (husband, father, brothers) but also support from the women (sister, mother, friends and mentors) is also very essential for a successful venture.

Salience of institutional Stakeholder

In 2015, Miss S.W faced a major challenge. Peshawar development authority (PDA) (the governmental regulatory authority Peshawar) sent her a letter to shift her business from the residential area to a commercial area within a month, otherwise, they would seal her home and she could be penalized as well.

“I was shocked and surprised, why they would do that. I am not doing something wrong and illegal. There are number of home based business from decades operating here (Hayatabad), nobody ever asked them. Why they are after my business” (S.W).

The penalty was Rs. 3 million. As Miss S.W had been continuously facing financial problems, she could not afford a place at a commercial area for her business. Also, she could not leave her business because that was a source of income for her family. She mentioned *“this is a huge amount; I can't pay it, not possible for me”*. At first, she took the matter lightly because there were other businesses running in the neighborhood for years and they never got sealed. She thought that it might be just another procedural notice by the Government and nothing serious. She continued working from home but then after a few days, the authorities conducted an inspection. The inspection team came to Miss S.W's home and warned her that if she does not comply with them, she will lose her home. This situation scared her mother and she asked Miss S.W to close down her business as they could survive somehow but, they could not afford to lose their only home. Miss S.W had no option and finally, she closed down her business and cleared the room. The authorities conducted another inspection of their home in a few days and cleared their home with a warning that they will keep inspecting in future, and if they found something business related, it would create trouble for Miss S.W's family.

“It was a nightmare, seems I have lost everything. I did not have money to start business outside my home. Also I am not sure if I work outside home my family would allow me”.

Nowadays, Miss S.W is working as a beautician but only for her trusted and loyal customers. The authorities did close down her business but her loyal clients kept coming for her services. She attends to them with whatever few services she can provide right now without her setup. This way she is earning a little but her dream of having a salon and achieving something big got targeted by her misfortunes once again. Moreover, the social entrepreneurial initiative of training women free of charge also met its unfortunate fate. The Government in this case, as a salient stakeholder, clamped down on the above mentioned social entrepreneurial initiative and thus, acted as a barrier in furthering the cause of social innovation and entrepreneurship.

Miss S.W can no longer advertise her work and run a business setup at home. She is earning her livelihood under the cloud of fear. She had a dream to work hard and earn enough so that she can afford to expand her business and help fellow beings too but, now she is facing her worst fears. With limited number of customers, she cannot earn enough to pursue her dreams and support her family whilst simultaneously contributing positively to society through her social entrepreneurial initiative of training women free of charge. Without advertising, she cannot attract new customers as she is not allowed to do so by the authorities. She is now hoping for a miracle that can save her dreams.

Discussion and Conclusion

The empirical evidence in this case suggests that business has been constantly supported by salient stakeholders i.e. her mother, sisters and brother in her endeavors. The woman entrepreneur was able to get beautician training and start her beauty salon at home. Her mother supported her financially in order to get the beautician training even though at that time their financial condition was very bad. Her mother saved money from daily home expenses. This clearly indicates the silence of a stakeholder family in the case of women entrepreneurs. This finding is consistent with the previous work in the context of developing countries (see for example Bullough & Abdelzaher 2017, Lindvert & Wincent, 2018).

Previous researches indicate that women entrepreneurs try to help and empower other women (see for example Datta & Gailey 2012, Mazumdar & Ahmad 2015). Miss S.W knew that there were many women around her who needed support and guidance. She had been through difficult times and knew what it is like to be part of such society. Therefore, she decided to help guide women around her. She could not help them financially given her financial conditions, but she had a skill that was worth much more. She gave beautician training courses for free. After completion of the training those women started earning respectably in their own respective areas. This social entrepreneurial initiative resulted in acceptance and recognition in society, which is why women kept coming to her parlor even when the PDA closed it down.

On the basis of the above discussion, we can conclude that social entrepreneurial initiatives, especially in the case of women entrepreneurs, cannot be facilitated unless and until the most

salient stakeholder, i.e. the Government is willing, supports and facilitates such social initiatives. In the case of Miss S.W, the Government has clearly acted as a barrier to social entrepreneurship rather than as a facilitator and promoter of social entrepreneurship. This case also demonstrated that the women entrepreneur's immediate family plays a pivotal role in shaping the growth aspirations of the women entrepreneur, and after the Government, one's family is the most salient stakeholder vis-à-vis its relative power, legitimacy and urgency. Furthermore, we can conclude that social entrepreneurial efforts create goodwill and reputation for the women entrepreneur to the extent that the clients can defy any rules and regulations to keep giving repeat sales and thus, enabling the sustainability of the entrepreneurial effort to some extent.

The above mentioned conclusions are in alignment with the literature as well. Gago and Antolin (2004) in the context of Spanish manufacturing sector find that the Government is the most salient stakeholder followed by owners, and customers. The extant literature reports consumer trust, improved reputation and enhanced sales as the consequence of engaging in socially responsible activities (Pivato et al., 2008; Husted & Salazar, 2006; Atiq & Karatas-Ozkan, 2013). The case of Miss S.W also illustrates that because of her social entrepreneurial initiative, she was later on enjoying the trust of her clients and her reputation as a beautician had considerably improved to the extent that the clients kept availing her services even though legally her beauty salon had been shut down.

Based on the above conclusions, we suggest that the Government should devise such policies and programs that enhance the capacity of the women entrepreneurs, especially with respect to their capacity building for initiating social entrepreneurship based start-ups. Unless and until the Government devises social entrepreneur-friendly policies, it will continue acting as a barrier to social and women entrepreneurs alike and social entrepreneurs like Miss S.W will continue being subjected to harsh rules and regulations without seeing their impact.

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