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ENTREPRENEURSHIP AS A PATH TO ECONOMIC INCLUSION: EXPLORING PUSH-PULL ENTREPRENEURIAL MOTIVES OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES IN PAKISTAN

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Abstract

This quantitative study was aimed at exploring the push-pull entrepreneurial motives among persons with disabilities in Pakistan. The Push-Pull theory helps to understand why deprived communities choose the path of entrepreneurship. The study was conducted in Punjab and the sample was taken through multi-staged proportionate random sampling. Six districts from three divisions of Punjab were the locale of the study. All persons with physical and sensory impairments were the population of the study. The sample size was 401. The data was collected through Google Forms, telephone, and in-person visits. The study found both, push and pull factors as strong motivators among PWDs to initiate entrepreneurship. Two push factors, economic motives and negating discrimination, were identified. Meanwhile three pull factors, personal fulfilment and social contribution, flexibility and autonomy, and fame, emerged. This study will provide policy makers and practitioners insights about this phenomenon to formulate disability-inclusive financial policies.

Introduction

Motives refer to internal or external forces which have the ability to compel a person to initiate a behavior, determine its form, intensity and duration (Mitchell & Daniels, 2003). It has been a topic of psychological studies for more than a century (Kanfer et al., 2017). Motives can predict the likelihood of a certain action like to initiate an entrepreneurship.

Entrepreneurship is an activity to find and fill existing gaps in markets (Maziriri et al. 2017). It is an activity to improve existing production facilities and processes for better outcomes by employing unique and innovative ideas and its objective is to produce new products and services (Tehseen & Ramayah, 2015).

Entrepreneurship not only provides people their livelihoods but also generates employment and serves as a contributor in the growth of national economy (Hisrich & Shepherd, 2017).

The importance of entrepreneurship is widely recognized. The great economies of the world like US and China are the examples of this boom (Sarri & Trihopoulou, 2005). Developed regions of the world encourage and support the entrepreneurial activities. Entrepreneurship not only allows a country to make efficient use of its human capital

but it's a great source of job creation and economic activities (Kirzner, 1973).

Moreover, it promotes inclusion for marginalized communities like persons with disabilities who are often out of traditional job markets due to their disability and other related disadvantages (Blanck& Millender, 2000; Boylan & Burchardt, 2002; EMDA, 2009; Foster, 2010; Hagner & Davis, 2002). Evidently, high self-employment and entrepreneurship rates are visible across US and Europe and these rates are even higher among PWDS (Boylan & Burchardt, 2002; Meager & Higgins, 2011). By comparison, developing countries do not pay much attention to promote entrepreneurship and uplift their economies. Poor governance, inadequate infrastructure and bureaucratic inefficiencies hinder such activities (Welter et al., 2017).

Literature Review

There are many contributing factors for higher inclination for entrepreneurship among PWDs in Europe and America. The Push Pull theory split these factors into two major categories e.g., push factors which consist on disadvantages faced by PWDs and pull factors which include motivators (Kirkwood, 2009; McClelland et al., 2005; Segal et al., 2005; Solesvik et al., 2019; Wilson et al., 2004). Pull factors, e.g. PWDS prefer flexible working hours over the fixed work timing of traditional job markets (Callahan et al., 2002; Doyel, 2002; Jones & Latreille, 2011; Meager & Higgins, 2011; Pagan, 2009; Prescott-Clarke, 1990). Entrepreneurship allows them flexibility and autonomy which complement their disability specific needs, therefore they are able to make necessary accommodations in their work environment. Moreover, inaccessible transport is another challenge which they face and entrepreneurship prevents them from daily commute which is almost a compulsion of traditional job (Ipsen, 2012). These factors are not limited to flexibility in physical environments, work hours and transportation but also include psychological factors. Consequently, they are often trying to prove their self-worth which is always underestimated due to stigma, discrimination and negative attitudes towards disability (Hsieh et al., 2019). Pull factors are considered as internal motives while push factors are generally external ones.

Push factors include, but not limited to, denial from inclusion to regular employment, workplace discrimination, negative attitudes, exclusion from social activities and stigma related to disability. According to Hogan et al., (2012) PWDs are often denied regular employment opportunities by either setting a criterion which systematically exclude them like the use of white board is a must-have quality for the job of a teacher which prevents visually impaired candidates from getting a job or having a driving license mandatory for the job which systematically exclude PWDs from this race. Employers pass negative comments about PWDs during the recruitment process. PWDs are offered lesser salaries in comparison to other employees to discourage them. Employers are not willing to make necessary accommodations to facilitate their employees with disabilities (Davidson, 2011; Lengnick-Hall et al., 2008).

In addition to workplace discrimination, there are systematic and cultural barriers which motivate PWDS to take the path of entrepreneurship Like due to their disability, they are unable to get education, vocational training and unable to forge social networks. They are systematically excluded from traditional job market and have limited choices other than to start their own business (ifiananovie & Tandir, 2020; Kirkwood, 2009; Kirkwood &Walton, 2010). According to a U.S. Department of Labor (2001) policy document, entrepreneurship has all the ingredients which facilitates the specific needs of PWDS. It is necessary to have a global perspective to better understand the intensity of this phenomenon.

Globally, the world population has crossed 8 billion mark and out of this 16% comprise PWDS (WHO, 2023). This number is approximately 1.3 billion and 80% (1.04 billion) of whom live in developing countries (World Bank & World Health Organization, 2011). This population is mostly financially inactive and depends on their families for their needs. This large-scale inactive population is a burden on already struggling economies and according to ILO estimates this account to 3-7% of global GDP which converted into 2025 data

amounts to $3.4-8 trillion per annum globally (ILO, 2009). Focusing on Pakistan, the situation is not different.

According to Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS, 2023), the country has a population of 241.49 million. Although, PBS doesn't reflect a significant number of PWDs in the country but by considering global figures of 16% WHO, (2023), the situation in Pakistan can be estimated as 38.64 million PWDs. ILO (2009) describe majority of this population as financially inactive. In Pakistan, everyone seems interested to get a government job. Even persons with disabilities are no exception. The government of Pakistan is trying to include them in financial activities by fixating job quota and by giving them daily wage jobs but this is not adequate considering the number of this population (Arsh& Darain, 2019).

However, the governments are not supposed to provide jobs to whole populations. Instead they provide a conducive environment for self-employment and entrepreneurship to engage their people in meaningful economic activities (Boylan & Burchardt, 2002; Meager & Higgins, 2011). But the government has not paid significant attention to promote self-employment and entrepreneurship among PWDs which can be a viable solution of this problem Sajjad et al. (2022). Therefore, this study is an attempt to survey the entrepreneurial motives among PWDs in Punjab so that research-based evidence could be presented.

Objectives

This study was conducted to explore the entrepreneurial motives based on Push-pull theory among persons with disabilities in Pakistan

Methodology

This survey study was intended to describe the entrepreneurial motives among PWDs in Punjab. For this purpose, a questionnaire was developed after rigorous literature review. The questionnaire was kept bilingual to accommodate the data collection procedure because the respondents had uneducated and less educated people among them. The questionnaire had six sections including demographics, economic motives, flexibility and autonomy, negating discrimination, self-fulfillment and social contribution and fame. These factors except fame were extracted from the scoping review conducted by Norstedt & Germundsson (2023). Five-point Likert scale was used to get the responses from the participants. The questionnaire had the options of not at all important, slightly important, moderately important, very important and extremely important. The questionnaire was validated by three experts of Special Education and two experts of the field of Management Sciences. The questionnaire was administered on 49 respondents for the purpose of pilot test. The reliability was .84 which is considered acceptable so after checking reliability the questionnaire was administered on the main population. Adult PWDs with physical and sensory impairments were the participants of the study. Two districts each from Three divisions of Punjab including Faisalabad, Multan and Sahiwal were the locale of the study. Data was collected by using multi-stage proportionate random sampling. The questionnaires were distributed through google forms and social media platforms such as WhatsApp and Facebook. In research, online surveys are one of the preferred and mostly used mode of data collection (Saleh & Bista, 2017). Although, response rates are 11-12% lower in online surveys compared to other data collection methods (Daikeler et al., 2020; Manfreda et al., 2008). In contrast, researchers like Uhlig et al., (2014) are of the view that online surveys are cost-efficient and time saving specially when sample size is above 300. Then, the participants who were uneducated were approached physically or through phone calls to get data. Persons with hearing impairments were approached through sign language interpreters and with the help of their family members. 401 responses were collected through online and physical means. The data was tabulated and analyzed by using descriptive statistics through SPSS. On the basis of analyzed data findings and recommendations were given.

Results

Table 1

Participant demographics

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	306	76.31
	Female	95	23.69
Disability	Physical Impairment	256	63.84
	Visual Impairment	117	29.18
	Hearing Impairment	28	6.98
Disability Acquisition	Congenital	213	53.12
	Acquired	188	46.88
Qualification	PhD	19	4.74
	M.Phil.	142	35.41
	Masters/BS	111	27.68
	Graduation	36	8.98
	Intermediate	37	9.23
	Matric	31	7.73
	Elementary	4	1.0
	Primary	11	2.74
	No education	10	2.49
Residential Background	Rural	213	53.12
	Urban	188	46.88
Financial Status	Independent	204	50.87
	Dependent	197	49.13
Work Experience	Yes	275	68.58
	No	123	30.67
Marital Status	Unmarried	258	64.34
	Married	143	35.66
Business experience	No	265	66.08
	Yes	136	33.92
Family Entrepreneurial or Business background	No	285	71.07
	Yes	116	28.93

Table 2
Responses on Economic Motives

Statement	Not at all important	Slightly important	Moderately important	Very important	Extremely important	Mean	Std Dev
Best possible reward for my hard work.	8	17	20	176	180	4.254	0.886
Desire to earn more money as greed.	134	44	73	80	70	2.771	1.516
Contribute to the income of my family.	3	18	14	139	227	4.419	0.821
Secure my future.	5	5	23	119	249	4.501	0.769
Improve the financial conditions/health of my family.	9	1	14	131	246	4.506	0.778
Eliminate the deprivations of my family.	4	5	13	133	246	4.526	0.714

The table 2 explains economic motives for the entrepreneurial intentions of PWDs. The descriptive statistics across the statements show significance of economic motives among PWDs as most means fall above 4.2, indicating strong desire for financial improvement, economic security, and family well-being.

On the question of eliminating family deprivations, the responses were strongly affirmative. Mean = 4.526, Std Dev = 0.714, the highest mean in this factor. The statement about improving the financial condition of the family also gathered highly positive responses. Mean = 4.506, Std Dev = 0.778, again demonstrating high importance. The statement about securing future stability again secured high ratings amongst the respondents. Mean = 4.501, Std Dev = 0.769, showing consistently strong emphasis. The statement regarding contribution to family income gathered strong responses. Mean = 4.419, Std Dev = 0.821, reflecting strong agreement. Similarly, the statement about seeking best reward for hard work draw higher ratings. Mean = 4.254, Std Dev = 0.886, indicating strong agreement with low variability. Whereas, the statement considering the desire to earn more money as greed, collected mixed responses. Mean = 2.771, showing overall differences with the idea that wanting more money is greed. (Std Dev = 1.516) indicates mixed opinions among participants.

All statements except considering desire to earn more money as greed, got strong endorsement. Mean scores range from 4.254 to 4.526, indicating strong economic motivation among respondents whereas standard deviations below 0.9 (for most items) indicate consistent responses.

Table 3
Responses on Negating Discrimination

Statement	Not at all important	Slightly important	Moderately important	Very important	Extremely important	Mean	Std Dev

Neutralize social biases by proving my capabilities.	8	8	28	166	191	4.307	0.844
I can do what I want.	9	18	39	138	197	4.237	0.957
I don't pay attention to society's view of disability.	52	30	53	116	150	3.703	1.374
Achieve higher social status.	19	15	37	145	185	4.152	1.053
Wish to earn respect in the society.	13	4	36	133	215	4.329	0.923

The table 3 reflects the respondent's opinions about negating discrimination as a motivating factor to start entrepreneurship. Descriptive statistics again reveal that this factor has a great significance for PWDs as most of the statements showing mean scores above 4.1. This correlates with a strong psychological and social motivation to negate discrimination through achievement, self-assertion, and social recognition.

When asked about wishing to earn respect in the society the respondents gave a higher affirmative. Mean = 4.329, Std Dev = 0.923, one of the highest in this factor. The statement regarding Neutralizing Social Biases by Proving Capabilities gathered strong affirmative responses. Mean = 4.307, Std Dev = 0.844, indicating high importance and low variability. The statement about Proving Personal Ability and Independence also gained higher affirmative ratings. Mean = 4.237, Std Dev = 0.957. The statement about desiring higher social status collected higher endorsement. Mean = 4.152, Std Dev = 1.053. Whereas, when asked about not paying attention to society's view of disability, more diverse distribution of responses emerged. Mean = 3.703, the lowest in this factor. Std Dev = 1.374, showing high variability. Respondents had difference of opinion on the impact of society's view of disability some totally disregarded this factor while others felt influenced by it.

Table 4
Flexibility and Autonomy Response

Statement	Not at all important	Slightly important	Moderately important	Very important	Extremely important	Mean	Std Dev
I prefer to work in my own style.	17	20	77	139	148	3.95	1.069
Want to work according to my preferred timings.	45	35	58	152	111	3.621	1.281
I oppose changes in work environment.	94	62	88	97	60	2.918	1.39
I want to take my own decisions.	18	5	50	176	152	4.095	0.975
I wish to be a self-reliant person.	5	10	21	118	247	4.476	0.809

Table 4 presents descriptive summary of factor flexibility and autonomy. The descriptive statistics suggest that the respondents preferred autonomy and flexible work arrangements, though they have difference of opinion on changes in work environment.

The statement about aspiration to be self-reliant, proved the strongest response. Mean = 4.476, Std Dev = 0.809, reflecting high importance with low variability. The question to take own decisions attracted 2nd highest endorsements. Mean = 4.095, Std Dev = 0.975, showing a strong agreement with moderate variability. The statement about

preference to work in own style also gathered positive responses. Mean = 3.95, Std Dev = 1.069, reflecting general agreement with moderate variability. Whereas, the statement about working according to preferred timings collected moderately high responses in terms of importance. Mean = 3.621, Std Dev = 1.281, indicating some diversity in attitudes toward time flexibility. When asked about opposing changes in work environment, the responses were widely distributed. Mean = 2.918, Std Dev = 1.39, the lowest mean and highest variability in this factor

Table 5
Personal Fulfillment and Social Contribution Response

Statement	Not at all important	Slightly important	Moderately important	Very important	Extremely important	Mean	Std Dev
become a leader.	40	29	55	144	133	3.751	1.264
get an employment.	21	30	37	121	192	4.08	1.157
use my skills without limits.	3	15	28	164	191	4.309	0.818
have business experience.	15	20	39	162	165	4.102	1.018
explore my talents.	5	6	23	149	218	4.419	0.774
take calculated risks.	30	18	55	157	141	3.9	1.155
to achieve big.	6	10	16	126	243	4.471	0.812
afraid to compete with others.	191	29	55	59	67	2.456	1.582
become a role model for other persons with disabilities.	15	20	28	126	212	4.247	1.037
empower other persons with disabilities.	11	12	17	117	243	4.422	0.917
aspire to leave my mark on the world.	16	22	48	128	187	4.117	1.074
provide quality services and products at competitive rates.	12	17	46	154	172	4.14	0.983

The table 5 presents the descriptive summary of the factor personal fulfilment and social contribution. This factor reflects respondent's motivation for leadership, skill utilization, personal achievement, social impact, and empowerment of others. The descriptive statistics show the respondent's inclination toward personal growth and contributing to society, while they have low fear of competition.

On the question for desire to achieve big goals, the respondents had highest agreement. Mean = 4.471, Std Dev = 0.812. The statement about becoming a source of empowerment for other PWDs, got 2nd highest positive ratings. Mean = 4.422, Std Dev = 0.917. Whereas, the question about the desire to become a leader garnered low endorsements. Mean = 3.751, Std Dev = 1.264 and on the statement about fear of competition, the respondents had strong negative tendencies. Mean = 2.456, Std Dev = 1.582, the lowest in this factor.

Table 6
Fame Response

Statement	Not at all important	Slightly important	Moderately important	Very important	Extremely important	Mean	Std Dev
I don't care what people think of me.	51	24	59	118	149	3.723	1.353
I like people to know about me.	49	30	74	126	122	3.603	1.317
I desire to have presence on media.	95	45	77	85	99	3.12	1.5

The table 6 presents a descriptive summary of the factor fame. This factor depicts respondent's desire to social recognition, visibility, and public presence. The descriptive statistics show moderate importance to social recognition as compared to personal recognition.

On the statement about not caring what other think, the respondents had a strong agreement. Mean = 3.723, Std Dev = 1.353. When asked about the desire to get the people know about you, the respondents rated positively. Mean = 3.603, Std Dev = 1.317. Whereas, on the question about the desire to have social media presence, the responses were equally distributed. Mean = 3.12, Std Dev = 1.5, the lowest mean and highest variability in this factor.

Discussion

The findings of this study present important insights into the motives which encourage PWDs in Pakistan to think about entrepreneurship. The five identified motivational factors are economic motives, negating discrimination, flexibility and autonomy, personal fulfilment and social contribution, and fame. These factors align strongly with established theoretical frameworks such as Push Pull Theory and are being presented according to their mean strengths.

Push Pull Theory argues that individuals opt for entrepreneurship either because they are pushed by unfavorable circumstances or pulled by attractive opportunities (Kirkwood, 2009; McClelland et al., 2005; Segal et al., 2005; Solesvik et al., 2019; Wilson et al., 2004). The results of this study clearly reflect both types of motives and interestingly the two strongest factors, "economic motives and negating discrimination", belong to push aspect of this theory.

The study found economic motives a strong motivating factor for entrepreneurship among PWDs. Economic insecurity, the desire to support family income, the intent to receive the best reward for their hard work, the desire to eliminate the deprivations of their families, and the need for stable financial resources also served as push factors. For many PWDs in developing countries, formal employment options are limited (Mufioz et al., 2019). Hence, economic independence becomes a compelling force pushing individuals into entrepreneurial activities. These findings endorse and strengthen the previous studies (Norstedt & Germundsson, 2023; Hsieh et al. 2019).

Negating discrimination emerged as another important push factor to start entrepreneurship. The PWDs wanted to negate discrimination by proving their competencies to neutralize social biases. They had a desire for higher social status and to earn respect. Participants reported that discrimination in workplaces, inaccessible environments, and limited reasonable accommodations pushed them toward self-employment. Entrepreneurship becomes a strategy to escape social stigma, biased recruitment practices, and limited growth opportunities (Goodley et al., 2014; Hogan et al., 2012). This aligns with push theory, which emphasizes escaping negative life conditions such as

marginalization or limited job opportunities. This finding is also supported by (Blanck& Millender, 2000; Hsieh et al., 2019; Norstedt & Germundsson, 2023; Schur, 2003). Besides push factors, which are mostly external, there are pull factors which are internal motivators like personal fulfilment, autonomy and social contribution which compel PWDs to take the path of entrepreneurship.

Similarly, this study found three factors, personal fulfilment and social contribution, flexibility and autonomy, and fame which were clearly representing *pull* motives.

Personal fulfilment and social contribution were found as another strong motivating factor for entrepreneurship. As PWDs wanted to become leaders and actively seek employment opportunities (Kitching, 2014; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2022). They wanted to use their skills without limits, had a desire to gain business experience, wanted to explore their hidden talents and to take calculated risks to achieve big goals. They had no fear of competition and they wanted to become role models for other PWDs. They had a strong desire to empower other PWDs and they wanted to leave a mark on the world. Besides they seek to provide quality services and products to their community at reasonable prices (RTC Rural, 2003).

This factor indicates that many PWDs are pulled into entrepreneurship by intrinsic goals such as achieving personal growth, proving their capabilities, contributing to society, and helping other PWDs. Pull theory states that individuals are attracted to entrepreneurship due to the potential for self-actualization, satisfaction, and meaningful engagement all reflected in this finding.

In addition, the research found higher importance for flexibility and autonomy as attractive or motivating factor for entrepreneurship. As PWDs wanted to work in their own style and according to their preferred timings. They had a strong desire to take their own decisions and wanted to become self-reliant. PWDs value the ability to manage their own schedules, work pace, and environments (Jones & Hansen, 2022; ODEP, 2013). Entrepreneurship offers autonomy, which pulls individuals toward self-employment because it uniquely accommodates disability-related needs such as medical routines, mobility constraints, or fluctuating health conditions (Ipsen, 2012). Many studies such as Callahan et al. (2002) Doyel (2002) Jones & Hansen (2022) Jones & Latreille (2011) Meager & Higgins (2011) Pagan (2009) ODEP (2013), also support this finding.

A smaller but notable group is motivated by recognition, social identity, and public acknowledgment. These motivational elements align with the pull side of the theory, where individuals are attracted to the prestige and visibility associated with entrepreneurial success.

This study provides a valuable source in Pakistani context, where disability inclusive employment policies and support for entrepreneurship for the disabled remain limited. By exploring key entrepreneurial motives among PWDs, this study will serve as a guiding source for policy makers and practitioners to develop programs that promote economic participation, social inclusion and empowerment of PWDs.

Conclusion

This study, through the Push Pull Theory lense, found strong support for two push factors, economic motives and negating discrimination. Whereas three pull factors, flexibility and autonomy, personal fulfilment and social contribution and fame emerged. The disability entrepreneurship is studied and implemented worldwide but in Pakistan systematic efforts, research and supportive policy framework remain limited. This study will pave the path for exploration of this phenomenon in depth for policy formulation for the economic rehabilitation of PWDs.

This was a preliminary survey seeking to gauge the intensity of the entrepreneurial motives among PWDs of Punjab. Therefore, it is recommended to conduct qualitative studies in future to gain deeper insights into this phenomenon. Moreover, this study included persons with hearing impairments, physical impairments and visual impairments so future studies should be conducted by separating each group of PWDs.

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