

Factors that Affect the Success of Physically Challenged Entrepreneurs in their Business Activities: A Survey of Thika Municipality - Kiambu County, Kenya

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to establish the factors that affect the success by physically challenged entrepreneurs. The general objective of the study is to assess the entrepreneurial success among the physically challenged entrepreneurs in Thika Municipality-Kiambu County. The study seeks to establish the typical problems faced by the physically challenged entrepreneurs.

The study targeted the population of physically challenged persons who run businesses in Thika municipality. The respondents were 27 physically challenged adult male and female entrepreneurs. The municipality was selected because it represented a true population of the republic of Kenya. Having a school for physically challenged proved passion and commitment by municipality community.

Snowball method was used in identifying the participants since their population was less and not well established. The research design adopted was a survey research since the participants were few. Both qualitative and quantitative research was applied in order to triangulate the research findings. The two design methods were employed to complement each other.

Data was collected using interviews as the main data collection instrument, questionnaire and observation methods were also used. Raw data was analyzed and interpreted in terms of pie charts and tables and conclusion was drawn. Pilot study was carried out in a different environment but with similar characteristics as those of the participants of the real study.

The research findings showed that the most prominent barrier to starting a business among the physically challenged persons was difficulty in obtaining start-up capital, lack of suitable premises and mobility barriers in the environment. It was concluded that the physically challenged persons are in self employment; they successfully run enterprises with minimal challenges when the surrounding environment is barrier free and with the right skills for the particular work.

Keywords: Physical challenge/disability, Entrepreneurial success, Typical problems.

1.0 Introduction

According to ILO 2008 challenged people worldwide face barriers to formal employment. One possible solution for challenged people with entrepreneurial skills is self-employment. The establishment and expansion of small businesses by persons with disabilities, however, tends to be restricted by limited access to credit markets and by inadequate business training. Limited by their physical conditions, the areas of employment are limited for persons with disabilities. They do not have many options. Sometimes, even if they get a job, they are found to be unsuitable for it and have to give up shortly, and are back to the status of not working.

Various studies have revealed that Kenya has a large population of physically challenged people who have shown great interest in entrepreneurship by engaging in owning, managing and running enterprises (Kenya National Survey on persons with disabilities 2008). People with disabilities (PWD) make up 10 percent of the total population of Kenya, WHO (2006).

Gartner *et al.* (1994) says that it is more expensive to create entrepreneurs from the challenged population because people with disabilities live in a state of high vulnerability. It is argued challenged people are largely invisible, are ignored and excluded from mainstream development, Burchardt (2003). In general, they face disempowerment and economic exclusion. With the increase of the challenged demographic due to HIV/AIDS, road accidents, disasters, etc., the government of Kenya should embrace inclusion in the economic activities of its citizens.

According to Shepherd (2009) the world economy today is driven by entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurship therefore being another factor of production just like capital, land, and labor, it is necessary for a country to maximize on the growth of its economy and to be thoroughly considering supporting all the enterprises to grow into large enterprises. There should be inclusivity in entrepreneurship; implying that no member of the society should be excluded in terms of starting business on the grounds of disability. Inclusive entrepreneurship is about a set of attitudes, competence and skills which allow people to turn their dreams into concrete projects or enterprises and then see through to fruition, Bwisa (2011). Through this, the country will be assured of little or no unemployment, hence a stable nation.

1.1 Problem Statement

The Persons with Disabilities Act, 2003 came into force in June, 2004. In one of the objectives, it states that persons with disabilities should have equalization of opportunities. They should enjoy these opportunities in many ways for instance, in terms of inclusive education, career development, employment, accessible physical environment and tax exemption. It is notable that there are great strides in the area of inclusive education. There are many graduates from such institution who have pursued college and university education but after completion, they are shocked to come to the reality that the job market is not fully accommodative. This forces

the graduates to venture into self employment where the same trend of discrimination is prominent.

However, the Kenya government through the Ministry of Gender and Social Services and in conjunction with the National Fund for the Challenged of Kenya (NFDK) has been assisting people with disabilities with various devices. Despite all the efforts from the government, many barriers exist which actively discourage participation by challenged people in business. There are those barriers that affect the individual skills, confidence and personal resources that a challenged person has, for instance, personal ambitions and expectation whereby there is the culture of inability.

The mainstream of the society see the disability first and see the person afterwards which makes confidence issue a major barrier for challenged entrepreneurs. There are also barriers to external facilities and support that limit the ability of challenged person to participate on equal basis with non-challenged people for instance in access to information on business development, communication and infrastructure.

Should these barriers not be removed and the physically challenged entrepreneur accorded the right business environment, then the situation will continue getting worse and Kenya as a country may not realize some of its vision 2030 goals. These claims about the challenged entrepreneurs in business cannot be generalized until a bigger study is done, hence the need to investigate the factors that affect the entrepreneurial success of physically challenged entrepreneurs in their business activities.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 People with Disability

According to the World report on Disability by the World Health Organization and the World Bank released in New York on June 2011, the number of people living with disabilities has overly increased and that a billion people or 1 out of 7 people is someone with a disability. Persons with Disabilities continue to live in extreme poverty wherever they are in the society, this is so given the unequal power relations witnessed in the society and emphasized by discrimination and negative myths associated with disability.

According to Hans and Patri (2003) the number of people with disabilities is expected to increase. The reasons are complex and multifaceted and largely due to health, demographic, and development factors. These include poor nutrition (including vitamin A deficiency), the aging population, and increase in violence and conflicts, landmines and unexploded ordinance, HIV/AIDS, measles and polio, traffic and occupational accidents, disaster, and substance abuse.

Increased commercialization of the health sector is also a factor, as is the inaccessibility of services to address such basic needs as prenatal and primary health care, rehabilitation, education, access to clean water and sanitation, and employment and income security. Finally,

reductions in infant and maternal mortality rates are leading to survival of more people with disabilities.

Elwan (1999) argues that it is a two-way relationship; disability adds to the risk of poverty, and conditions of poverty increase the risks of disability. Addressing disability will contribute to poverty reduction. With little or no access to education, discrimination on the grounds of disability in the job market, lack of access to credit facilities, infrastructural challenges, disability and the fact that majority of the challenged persons are born from poor families; a seed for extreme poverty is often sowed. Most people involved in development have not directly associated with people with disabilities or their issues. Accordingly, they may not appreciate the extent to which people with disabilities and their families are excluded, impoverished, and marginalized within a vicious poverty-disability cycle (DFID 2000).

2.2 Motivations for Self –Employment

Godley (2005) states that people who are in some way excluded from society often derive from this situation the motivation to take the initiative of starting their own enterprise, although frequently this may occur because a person has no alternative. Harper and Momm (1989) suggests that people with disabilities make natural entrepreneurs since having a disability can also be a stimulus for independent problem-solving and innovation. They suggested that children with disabilities often develop new and effective ways of moving around, communicating, or otherwise overcoming their problems. The experience of facing and coping with difficulties which are unfamiliar can be a valuable, though onerous, form of personal development.

According to Harper and Momm (1989) entrepreneurs have been defined as “people who put things together in new ways”, which is exactly what challenged people have to do. There are a number of positive factors which may make it easier, rather than harder, for some people with disabilities to survive in their own businesses. Often the psychological condition of the people with disabilities makes them particularly likely to persevere in self-employment and do well.

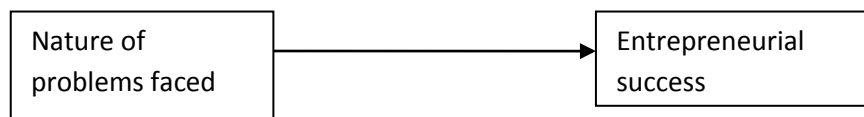
Cooney (2008) observes that an alternative career option for people with disabilities is to become self-employed, which has the benefits of freedom, flexibility and independence associated with self-employment as well as autonomy from access-related obstacles such as transportation, fatigue, inaccessible work environment and the need for personal assistance. According to Jones and Latreille (2005) it is now widely recognized that having a disability has a negative effect upon the rates of employment and earnings.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

This research is in consistent with Sokol's (1982) Entrepreneurial Event Model. Shapero and Sokol (1982) presented a process model of new venture formation which included what they called a displacement event. They argued that inertia guided human action and as a result there needed to be a displacing event to push or pull an individual to change course, and in this case to found a business. This displacement has also been called the 'trigger' or 'precipitating' event.

As a process model, they argued that the displacement made one open to consideration of different paths that he/she could choose. He proposed that any path being considered had to be perceived as not only desirable but feasible, and that there had to be some general propensity to act on an alternative.

2.4 Conceptual Framework



Independent variable

Dependent variable

2.4.1 Nature of problems faced

The Disability Act 2003 addresses people with disability with the intention to make it easier for them to carry out their daily activities without undue pressure and discomfort; however there is a lot that need to be implemented to ensure that the necessary conditions are put to place. People with disabilities confront a range of handicapping situations depending on the extent of their disability, Schur (2003). The nature of the problems faced may be policy related, societal attitudes or inaccessibility to basic facilities.

Noakes (2006) states that people generally relate people with disabilities with a lack of different types of capital resources which are human, social and financial resources. Accordingly, challenged entrepreneurs are often regarded as having competitive disadvantages due to increased labor costs e.g. the need to hire a person to carry merchandise instead of carrying it oneself, additional transportation costs, slower production etc.). In many cultures, due to prejudice and superstition, being challenged can also result in marketing disadvantage since consumers might not want to contract products or services from challenged entrepreneurs, Handojo (2004). Hence, being challenged may turn into a competitive disadvantage when a challenged entrepreneur faces competition from non challenged entrepreneurs.

2.4.2 Entrepreneurial success

The measurement of the entrepreneurial success among persons with physical disability was assessed along key performance indicators that would measure the general entrepreneurship trend and measurement of the entrepreneurship climate/culture. The indicators included things like; increase in the entrepreneurial potential of the population, increase in the preconditions for becoming an entrepreneur; decrease in obstacles, and improvements in social attitudes towards entrepreneurship. Level of business start-ups, exits and growth of firms (dynamism), reduced time needed and cost to start a business and reduced barrier to hiring the first employee.

The creation of the right environment and circumstances motivates and stimulates physically challenged individuals to become entrepreneurs. This includes: enabling policies both to help them acquire the appropriate skills and learning, and to surround them with opportunity (i.e., access to start-up resources and supports). Raising the profile of entrepreneurship; increasing awareness of entrepreneurship by presenting credible role-models and media promotion of successful entrepreneurs with disability. Generate interest in exploring entrepreneurship as an option; stimulate favorable attitudes towards entrepreneurship as an option; increase societal support for entrepreneurs with disability.

2.5 Critique of the existing literature relevant to the study

According to Elwan, A. (1999) poverty is not simply the consequence of a lack of resources. Some people are unable to access existing resources because of who they are, what they believe or where they live. Such discrimination is a form of exclusion and a cause of poverty. Because disability and poverty are inextricably linked, poverty can never be eradicated until disabled people enjoy equal rights with non-disabled people, Coleridge, P. (1993).

According to Jean, F. and Christine, E. (2010) people with disabilities make good, dependable employees. Many cases document comparable productivity, lower accident rates and higher job retention rates between employees with disabilities and a company's general workforce. People with disabilities represent an untapped source of skills and talent, including technical skills if they have access to training, and transferable problem-solving skills developed in daily life. People who develop disabilities while working often have valuable skills and experiences learned on the job, in addition to their formal skills qualifications.

3.0 Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design and Target Population

The study employed both quantitative and qualitative research design. The qualitative approach enabled the researcher to highlight the perspectives held by the physically challenged entrepreneurs in regard to the activities they do and the challenges faced. Through this research design, the researcher was able to gain insight into the experiences of the physically challenged in business from their own perspectives. In addition, this research design was flexible, Bogdan & Biklan (1982), and provided an opportunity to obtain information that was rich with details to better understand the phenomenon of disability and entrepreneurship.

The qualitative approach was triangulated by the quantitative approach which enabled the researcher to fulfill the objectives of the research. Wright (1995) argues forcefully that by combining qualitative methods to quantitative methods, the resulting results would be much more meaningful and would have greater probability of being valid, of actually measuring what it purports to measure.

4.0 Research Findings and Discussions

4.1 Nature of problems faced

The research showed the most prominent barrier to starting a business among the physically challenged people to be difficulty in obtaining start-up capital, 37%; lack of suitable premises, 26%; mobility barriers 22%; and lack of skills 15%.

Table 1: Nature of problems experienced

Barrier	Frequency	Percentage %
Start-up capital	10	37
Unsuitable premises	7	26
Mobility	6	22
Lack of skills	4	15
Total	27	100

From the above table it is clear that the major problem that the physically challenged entrepreneur experience is mainly the start-up capital which is 37%. Respondents who were in the formal employment before acquiring their disability had some savings while those who were disabled since birth got their start up capital from various sources like family and friends, well wishers and financial institutions.

Those that attributed their problems to unsuitable premises were 26%, whereby their movement is restricted by the architectural designs of the buildings where their businesses are located. 22% of the respondents had mobility problems and needed a totally barrier free environment. These are the respondents who use mobility devices like the wheelchair, calipers and prosthesis. 15% of the respondents had skill-related problems whereby they dealt with businesses that required skill which they did not have.

4.2 Entrepreneurial success

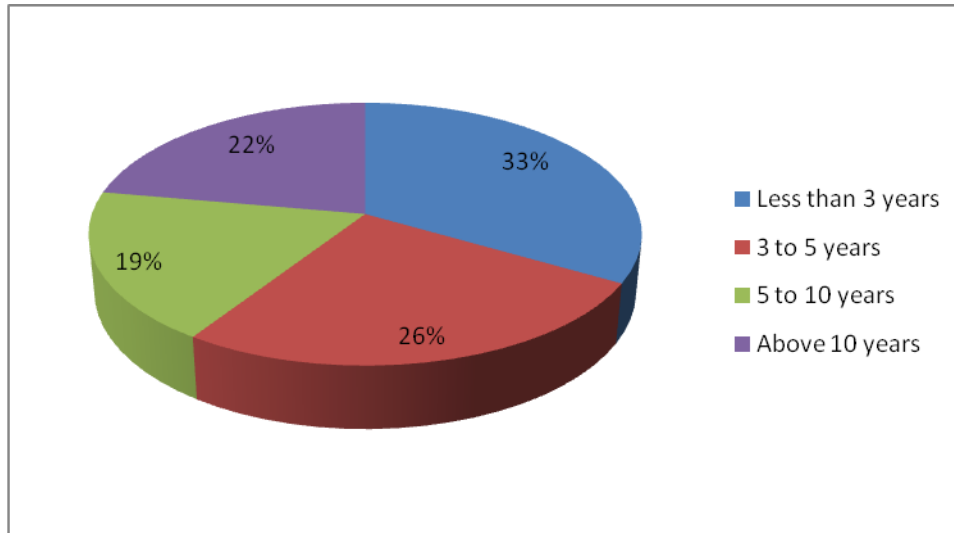


Fig 1: Duration the physically disabled entrepreneur has been in business

From the above chart, 33% of businesses run by physically challenged have been in operation for less than 3 years, 26% of the respondents have been in business for a period between 3-5 years, 19% of the respondents have been in business for 5-10 years while 22% have been in business for more than 10 years.

According to the research, most businesses that survive are those that are run by entrepreneurs who have had prior training and have the necessary skills. Such businesses are for instance, shoe repair, carpentry, electrical and electronics, welding, tailoring, weaving and hairdressing. The businesses that dealt with food outlet, green groceries and hawking of second hand items had little survival and the owners often switched to new businesses frequently.

Table 2: Measure of entrepreneurial success

Nature of success	Frequency	Percentage %
Repeat customers	18	67
Positive comments	4	15
Better premises	5	18
Total	27	100

From the above table, the respondents who attributed their success to repeat customers were 67% while 18% received customers who were directed to them through friends. Those who

attributed their success to positive comments from their customers were 15% while 18% attributed their success to better premises.

5.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

It is clear that the physically disabled persons are in self employment and that they can successfully run enterprises with minimal challenges if the surrounding environment accommodates their diverse needs. The research found that those who were working in a barrier free environment experienced less problems related to their movements around their businesses thus stood higher chances of success. A few of the physically challenged people who run entrepreneurial businesses were successful; they competed favorably with their counterparts who are not disabled and are able to eke a living from the activities they perform.

5.2 Recommendations

From the study carried out and the analysis that has been done it is clear that the physically challenged people are part of the society and are in self employment too. They have a part to play in moving the economy of our country towards the achievement of the vision 2030, if whatever activities they undertake are supported by all. The researcher recommends that the physically challenged entrepreneurs require a barrier free environment to carry out their businesses. Environments that will accommodate each person's disability and eventually minimize on limitations are highly recommended. They also need to get involved in skillful activities which will help in making their businesses grow into bigger enterprises thus achieve entrepreneurial success.

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