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BUSINESS COPING STRATEGY, ENTREPRENEURIAL ORIENTATION, IMPROVISATIONAL COMPETENCE, AND CRISIS READINESS OF THE MALAYSIAN MEDIUM-SIZED MANUFACTURING ENTERPRISES IN RECESSIONARY TIMES



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Thesis Submitted to the
Othman Yeop Abdullah Graduate School of Business,
Universiti Utara Malaysia, In Fulfillment of the Requirement for
the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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ABSTRACT

The main issue of this thesis was the hampered performance of the manufacturing small-and-medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Malaysia during economic recessions. The bona fide respondents of the study were the medium-sized manufacturing enterprises (MMEs). Crisis readiness (CR) was proposed as the surrogate measure for firm performance. While CR was examined in relationships to business coping strategy (BCS) and entrepreneurial orientation (EO), this study also assessed the mediating effect of improvisational competence (IC) on the BCS-CR relationship. Altogether, a three-pronged-objective research framework was theoretically underpinned by resource-based view. Simple random sampling technique was used to select the targeted respondents. Of the 295 usable responses, a random near-split-half of 145 and 150 were used for exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis respectively. Statistically significant positive relationships were found in two direct relationships: BCS-CR and EO-CR, while IC was found to mediate the BCS-CR relationship. Significant positive relationships were also evident between all dimensions of EO and CR, except risk-taking. While CR was a new performance surrogate, its examination with BCS, EO, and IC contributed nascent theoretical insights. Other theoretical gaps included the development and validation of the BCS and bricolage scales, psychometric revisions of the CR and IC scales, and the incorporation of a vignette into the measurement to provide standardization as to the recessionary context understudied. Practically, the findings provided the manufacturing entrepreneurs some guidance on the appropriate response strategy and decision making which would better-position them in recessionary situations. Likewise, the understandings may also assist the policy makers to develop or to adjust policies to better-fabricate assistance channelled to MMEs. Towards the end, methodological limitations and potential avenues for future research were also identified.

Keywords: Crisis readiness (CR), Business coping strategy (BCS), Entrepreneurial orientation (EO), Improvisational competence (IC), Medium-sized manufacturing enterprises (MMEs)

ABSTRAK

Isu utama tesis ini ialah prestasi terhalang yang dialami oleh perusahaan perkilangan saiz-kecil-dan-sederhana (SMEs) di Malaysia semasa kemelesetan ekonomi. Responden bona fide kajian ini ialah perusahaan perkilangan saiz-sederhana (MMEs). Kesediaan krisis (CR) telah dicadangkan sebagai pengukur tumpang untuk prestasi perniagaan. Selain mengukur hubungan antara CR dengan strategi penyesuaian perniagaan (BCS) dan orientasi keusahawanan (EO), kajian ini turut mengkaji kesan pengantaraan kecekapan improvisi (IC) ke atas hubungan BCR-CR. Keseluruhannya, tiga objektif kerangka kajian disokong secara teorinya oleh perspektif berasaskan sumber. Teknik persampelan rawak mudah digunakan untuk memilih responden. Daripada 295 respon boleh guna, pengasingan rawak menghasilkan dua set data berjumlah 145 dan 150 masing-masing untuk tujuan analisis faktor eksploratori dan analisis faktor pengesahan. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan wujudnya hubungan positif yang signifikan untuk dua hubungan langsung iaitu BCS-CR dan EO-CR, manakala IC didapati mengantara hubungan antara BCS dan CR. Hubungan signifikan positif juga terbukti wujud antara semua dimensi EO dan CR, kecuali pengambilan risiko. Memandangkan CR adalah pengukur prestasi tumpang yang baru, penelitian hubungannya dengan BCS, EO, dan IC telah menyumbang kepada pandangan teoritikal baru. Jurang-jurang teoretikal lain yang turut diterokai termasuklah pembangunan dan pengesahan skala ukuran BCS, pengubahsuaian psikometrik skala CR dan IC, serta penerapan vignet ke dalam instrumen pengukuran untuk menyediakan satu konteks standard kemelesetan ekonomi seperti mana yang dimaksudkan dalam kajian ini. Secara praktikalnya, dapatan kajian ini memberi panduan kepada pengusaha-pengusaha perkilangan tentang strategi respon balas dan pemutusan yang sesuai untuk memantapkan posisi mereka dalam masa kemelesatan. Kefahaman ini juga membantu penggubal polisi untuk membangun atau mengubah-suai polisi bagi memperkukuhkan bantuan yang disalurkan kepada MMEs. Menuju penghujung tesis, limitasi metodologi dan hala tuju masa depan kajian juga telah dikenalpasti.

Kata-kata kunci: Kesediaan krisis (CR), Strategi penyesuaian (BCS), Orientasi keusahawanan (EO), Kecekapan improvisi (IC), Perusahaan perkilangan saiz-sederhana (MMEs)

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AVE Average Variance Extracted **BCS Business Coping Strategy**

Bricolage Tactics Bri

CB-SEM Covariance-based Structural Equation Modeling

CC **Cost-cutting Tactics** CR Crisis Readiness DV Dependent Variable

DOSM Department of Statistics Malaysia **EFA Exploratory Factor Analysis Entrepreneurial Orientation** EO **Economic Planning Unit EPU** FB Financial Bootstrapping Tactics

Federation of Malaysian Manufacturing **FMM**

GDP Gross Domestic Product IC Improvisational Competence IV Independent Variable

KMO Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Max. Maximum score value

MEIF Malaysia Economy In Figures

MIER Malaysia Institute of Economic Research

Min. Minimum Score Value Measurement Model MM

Medium-sized Manufacturing Enterprises **MME**

Malaysia Productivity Corporation **MPC**

MSA Measure of Sampling Adequacy **NSDC** National SME Development Council

PLS Partial Least Square

PLS-SEM Partial Least Square Structural Equation Modeling

RBV Resource-based View

RDT Resource-dependence Theory RG Revenue-generation Tactics SEM Structural Equation Modeling

SMEs Small-and-Medium-Sized Enterprises **SPSS** Statistical Package for Social Science

VAF Variance Accounted For VIF Variance Inflation Factor

VRIN Valuable, Rare, Inimitable, and Non-substitutable f^2 f-squared (Denotes Effect Size of Predictive Power) *P*-value Associated with the Indirect Path a*b

Q-squared (Denotes Predictive Relevance)

q-squared (Denotes Effect Size of Predictive Relevance) R-squared (Denotes Coefficient of Determinant for Predictive Power)

Correlation Coefficient

 SE_{ab} Bootstrap Standard Error associated with the Indirect Path a*b

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

In Malaysia, small-and-medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and the manufacturing sector are two key economic elements that are intertwined deep-rooted. The strong connection between both lies in the fact that 95.4% of the manufacturing firms in Malaysia are made up of SMEs (Department of Statistics Malaysia [DOSM], 2012, Economic Census, 2011). The significance of SMEs in the manufacturing sector is in growing term. Since 2005, the SMEs' manufacturing growth has surpassed the overall sector's growth (National SME Development Council [NSDC], 2010); and their share to the overall value-added of the manufacturing sector has increased from 29.3% in 2005 to 30.4% in 2009 (NSDC, 2010), and later 33.9% in 2014 (DOSM, 2014).

Together or independently, both record a strong history of economic importance. On the one hand, the most recent Economic Census 2011 shows that SMEs account for approximately 97.3% of the total business establishments in Malaysia in 2010 (NSDC, 2012, SME Annual Report 2011/2012). Their economic contributions are vivid in their shares of 32.7% to the national gross domestic product (GDP), 19.4 % to the total export, and 57.4% to the employment in 2012, covering important sectors in the nation (DOSM, 2012; Asian Development Bank, 2014). SMEs' growing importance is evident in their GDP contribution which increases from 29.4% in 2005 to 33.1% in 2013 (NSDC, 2014), and then 35.9% in 2014 (DOSM,

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