

THE AWARENESS TO INCREASE HOUSEHOLD INCOME THROUGH ENTREPRENEURIAL CAPABILITY: A CASE OF THE INDIGENEOUS PEOPLE IN SUNGAI PELEK, SELANGOR

Mohd Misuari Bin Abdullah
Ministry of Education, Malaysia

Marlin Marissa Malek Binti Abdul Malek
Universiti Utara Malaysia

ABSTRACT

There are a lot of researches on entrepreneurship in Malaysia however the ones on indigenous entrepreneurship are scarce. This case study explores the entrepreneurial preparedness of six respondents from the indigenous community in Sungai Pelek, Selangor. This case study goes in-depth in explaining how the respondents went from fixed-salary earners to full-time entrepreneurs. In-depth interviews were conducted on respondents to get more understanding on why they opted to go for their own businesses. The findings gathered shown that despite the risks involved in being entrepreneurs, the respondents were happy that they took the risks as they have managed to increase their household income. The conducive environment and family support were also influential in their decisions to be more entrepreneurial. Their entrepreneurial capabilities are also evidenced in their awareness to put aside some savings and using their own experiences in handling their business operations.

Keywords: *indigenous entrepreneurship, household income, business operations*

INTRODUCTION

The primary issue that continually haunts the indigenous community or ‘Orang Asli’ community in Peninsular Malaysia is financial constraint and living in poverty. Statistics show that up until 31 December 2010, there are 4,102 household still living in poor conditions with 7,321 household are classified as ‘hardcore poor’. These figures make up around 30% of the indigenous community (Source: Planning and Research Division, JAKOA 2010). It has always been a challenge for the indigenous community to live alongside the mainstream vying for the same economic opportunities in the nation’s quest for economic growth. On that note, to raise the economic status of this community, it high time that the community is actively involved in entrepreneurship and business activities. Data from the Department of Orang Asli Affairs show that up until 2008, only 305 indigenous people are actively pursuing entrepreneurship activities with the bulk are into retailing whilst the remaining are in construction and other activities. This is only a small fraction of the 178,197 Orang Asli in Malaysia in 2008.

Noordin (2011) in his article entitled, “Mampukah Orang Asli Berjaya SebagaiUsahawan?” stated that that the indigenous communities nowadays are currently being exposed to entrepreneurship activities through the establishment of cooperative activities in their villages. This has led to them being introduced to entrepreneurial activities. Noordin (2011) also emphasized that the Orang Asli community has a unique way of attracting the mainstream community to their villages, which is through ‘Rural or Village Tourism’, which they can fully utilize as part of their entrepreneurial activity for financial gains. Noordin reiterated that the unique ways of living in an indigenous community can be fully capitalized as a tourism and recreation destination. He went further to stress that it has not been thoroughly researched that the

entrepreneurial capability only belongs to a particular race or community. He stated that even if entrepreneurial capability has always been linked to the Chinese community, this has nothing to do to genetics or biological factors but more to discipline, psychology and upbringing of the said community.

For this study, a village in Sungai Pelek, Sepang, Selangor was chosen as the data from the Department of Orang Asli Affairs has shown that this particular village has quite a number of its villagers involved in entrepreneurial activities. Table 1 depicts the list of Orang Asli villager and their chosen entrepreneurial field.

Table 1 Orang asli entrepreneurs and their entrepreneurial fields

No.	Code Name	Type of Business
1.	BB 1	Contractor F Class
2.	BB 2	Contractor F Class
3.	BB 3	Contractor F Class
4.	BB 4	Contractor E Class
5.	BB 5	Buying and Selling of Palm Fruit
6.	BB 6	Restaurant
7.	BB 7	Sub-Contractor
8.	BB 8	Transportation and Bakery
9.	BB 9	Grocery Shop

Source: Department of Orang Asli Affairs (2011)

This case study aims to give an in-depth overview of what made the Orang Asli villagers opted to go into a higher risk type of activity in the forms of opening their own businesses. This is one of the few studies that aim to go deeper into the entrepreneurial capability of the Orang Asli community and how they wanted to distance themselves from being labeled as ‘hardcore poor’ or being too dependent on government handouts. This manifestation of entrepreneurial spirit clearly shows that the Orang Asli community is ready to shift to a more efficient way of deriving income for their families through a more active involvement into entrepreneurial activities.

Literature Review

To further understand issues related to entrepreneurship, it is better to start with the definition of entrepreneurship itself. KamusDewan (2005) defines entrepreneurship as rooting from the word entrepreneur. This term is derived from the being enterprise, which is making efforts to ensure an activity or task is carried out smoothly. Previous researches have talked about what is the rationale behind a person’s venture into entrepreneurship, what are their options with regards to being an entrepreneur and to what extent are they willing to take up risks. The following sections will delineate the relevant theory that relates to the subject matter, the characteristics of an entrepreneur and previous studies on Malaysian entrepreneurship.

Theory of Reasoned Action

In every research, there would be a very precise theory that could better explain or underpin the variables that would be used to guide the direction of a study. For this case study, a person’s entrepreneurial

preparedness can be better explained through the Theory of Reasoned Action (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980). This theory kicks off on the premise that a certain behavior starts with a strong belief of behavior's outcome. This theory shows that to start doing something, a person's behavior would be the deciding factor for any future changes. For example, take 'behavior towards entrepreneurship'. To prepare for this, a person will register in any subject related to entrepreneurship if he or she wants to go into entrepreneurship in the future. The correlation between the actual behavior and intention depends on factors like how determined a person is, the time frame between the intention and the desired behavior. Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) emphasized that attitude and behavior have four elements; a specific action, the target of the action, the context in which the action is taken and when the action is taken. The outcome of these behaviors may be utilitarian in nature, which is your experience with regards to rewards and punishments or it can be normative in the form of other's perception for actions taken.

Characteristics and Entrepreneurship Inclination

A person's inclination to participate in entrepreneurial activities depends on several factors. These factors can be categorized as Push Factors or Pull Factors. Push Factors include frustration and entrepreneurship culture that is inherited. Frustration may arise due limited opportunities, economic slump and dissatisfaction. On the other hand, Push Factors cover psychological factors and profit (Mohd Noor, et al., 2004). Individuals are pushed to get involved in entrepreneurial activities due to their frustration with regards to limited job availabilities and social mobility. Economic slump also pushed individuals to participate in entrepreneurial activities due to the limited job vacancies both in public and private sectors. Apart from these factors, individuals are inclined to be involved in entrepreneurial activities due to their dissatisfaction of their current working conditions, conflicts with their superiors and the inability to fit well with their organizational culture (Mohd Noor, et.al, 2004).

Past Studies on Entrepreneurship in Malaysia

There are various factors that motivate a person to have their own businesses and become entrepreneurs. In the study conducted by Mohd Noor, Ooi and Mohd Zin (2004) on the inclination of entrepreneurship among the academic staff of the Department of Commerce, Ministry of Polytechnics Education found that there are two factors of 'role model' and respondents' education level entrepreneurial inclination among academic staff. This is based on the answers given by 117 respondents or 59.7% who have family members' that have their own businesses. This study also suggested that this could be a trigger factor or the inclination to be entrepreneurs and to set up their own businesses. The factor 'role model' may be referring to the indigeneous community who may need the influence of role models among family members who are also in entrepreneurs just as in this study.

A Study by Norashidah, Norasmah and Noraishah (2009) in the research entitled 'Concept Readiness Based Entrepreneurship: A Case Study of Small and Medium Entrepreneurs (SMEs) in Malaysia' explores the concept of entrepreneurship readiness based on case studies of six successful SME entrepreneurs of various industries in Malaysia. The findings reveal that the concept of entrepreneurship readiness consists of two main categories, namely the willingness and ability. Willingness elements can be divided into readiness, strength, and spirituality and learning readiness. The readiness capability consists of aspects of the entrepreneurial mindset and thinking, entrepreneurial vocational and entrepreneurial knowledge.

Indigeneous communities have always been the majority of society living in rural areas. Information found on the participation of rural communities, in the research by Azizah and Hamzah (2012), entitled 'Community Participation in Rural Entrepreneurship: Studies in Kubang Pasu District, Kedah' describe and explain the level of participation of the factors that influence the level of participation in the study to

get the real picture is more detailed with respect to the problems in the research. This study was conducted in the selected villages in the district of Kubang Pasu, Kedah, namely Kampung Paya Natoi and Kampung Tradisi. Findings indicated that participation in the entrepreneurial population in the study area is moderate. Identified factors that influence the level of participation include capital / financial and entrepreneurial training courses. The findings also showed that cronyism and political relations also have a significant impact in influencing the level of participation of the population in the study area.

Based on the findings of previous studies, there are various factors that affect individuals and communities to get involved as entrepreneurs. Past studies have presented a pattern of their desire to become entrepreneurs. Past studies had also expressed how the Orang Asli community have the potential to become entrepreneurs. In terms of the personality of the Orang Asli community, results of previous studies has concluded that the self-awareness to develop themselves is among the reasons why they become entrepreneurs. However negative attitudes like low self-esteem and and low level of education has led the Orang Asli community to be a little bit behind as compared to the mainstream. Therefore, this research conducted on the Orang Asli community, which is based on the Theory of Reasoned Action may contribute in terms of identifying the reasons why certain Orang Asli community was successful in entrepreneurship activities and what obstacles did they face in their quests to alleviate their economic status. In the meantime it is also important to know the level of awareness of the Orang Asli community based on previous studies that can serve as a guide and direction for future researchers.

Method of Study

This study aimed to obtain answers on how the Orang Asli residents get involved in entrepreneurial activities. The research location is in an Orang Asli village in Sepang, Selangor. The study looked at how entrepreneurship can provide a change to the standard of living of the Orang Asli community and how the attitude of the community can change in order to increase the family income. Qualitative method was chosen in the form of a case study method in order to explore the issues that occur in the village.

According to Chua (2011) case study design involves the systematic collection and in-depth information about a particular individual behavior, social conditions, or special events to find out how individual behavior or social circumstances change happen. The most common method used in the case study, including field studies, historical research and survey. Chua (2011) reiterate, a case study may focus on an individual, group of individuals or entire communities and may use several methods of data collection such as documentation, historical data, in-depth interviews (in-depth interviews), participant observation and questionnaires. Researchers may also use individual interviews and document analysis to gather information and to analyze the data.

At the end of the study, researchers may be able to relate to the theory that has been used to form a basis for the case study research direction, which may have led to changes in the chosen Orang Asli community. Researchers are also interested in learning more about the role played by the village head or the Tok Batin in spurring the interest to switch to entrepreneurial activities as a form of income for the family.

Interview Method

In this study, the researchers chose to use semi-structured interview method to investigate on the reasons why they respondents chose to go into entrepreneurship. In semi-structured interviews, the researchers asked a number of questions that have been structured before the formal interviews are conducted and the

interviewers at the same time given the freedom to question and explore more about the respondent's answers.

Chua (2011) defines the interview as a two-way conversation that aims to bring research information. Interviews are face to face interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee or the respondent. Interviews are conducted with the purpose of obtaining information from respondents orally. Merriem (1998) and Chua (2011) state that there are three categories of interview, the structured interview, semi-structured interviews and unstructured interviews. Interview techniques in this study involving interviews with Village Head or the Tok Batin and 5 Orang Asli who were those involved in entrepreneurial activities in the village.

Methods of Data Collection and Sample

For information and data used in this study, the researchers must obtain permission from the Department of Orang Asli Affairs (JAKOA) as this department is fully responsible for the Orang Asli community. Before the interview sessions starts, researchers have sent letters to the JAKOA for approval of conducting such study. Towards this end, researchers have sent research application form approval. Upon approval, the researchers have made an appointment with JAKOA Sepang District Officer for approval of the specific village as the case study location. Researchers used purposive sampling (Purposive sampling) in choosing a sample in which the sample selected is a group of subjects that have the same characteristics of those involved in the business. In this case study, the respondents were those involved in businesses such as food and beverage outlets open, contractors, sub-contractors, small business, part time business and an oil dealer.

Data Analysis

Qualitative data, namely data from each interview was recorded and transcribed. Data analysis was made of raw transcriptions produced. Writing and data transcriptions were done based on the themes that have emerged out of the question and answer interview. To facilitate data analysis, the questions of the interview will be converted in the form of statements. Themes arising will be arranged under such statements. These themes were identified through coding strategies, and this strategy allows the separation of descriptive data. Coding strategy used is the encoding situation and coding activities (Bogdan and Biklen, 1992). The data was analyzed based on individual interviews and simultaneously looking at the reports, guidelines and entry by JAKOA officers and the Village Head. In short, the analysis will be categorized according to the themes inherent in each method. NVivo software was used to compile and make sense of the data.

Analysis Review

Before getting the answers to the research questions and achieve the objectives of the study, analysis of the interview responses have been carried out. The main themes that arise in the analysis was divided into several themes, namely Initial Situation and Current Situation. These themes are each divided into several sub-themes that emerged when the analysis was performed. The main themes that emerged was based on statements from two sides, from the operators / traders and from their inner self. In accordance with the ethics of data collection, and for the purpose of honoring the respondents among players / dealer, the name of the five respondents will be replaced by R1 (Respondent 1), R2 (Respondent 2), R3 (Respondent 3), R4 (Respondent 4) and R5 (Respondent 5).

Theme 1: Initial Situation

Under the pre-business theme, we will analyze respondents' view on the preparation involved before starting a business and their reasons on why they chose to get involved in entrepreneurial activities. All these descriptions can be found under the theme of 'Why do business'.

Why Do Business

When asked why he became an entrepreneur, R1 stated that he initially did not intend to go full fledged in business because he just came to help her aunt to do business in the shop. Although coming in without having the intention to do business but mainly encouraged by her mother, R1 took over the family business after his aunt's death and when none of his late aunt's children were keen to take over the family business. R2 started to go into her business on a part-time basis to supplement her household income but she went full force especially after the untimely death of her husband. R3 also stated that he started his small business in order to supplement the family income. He added, with doing the business, he can spend more time with his family as compared to working in a '9 to 5' job, where he is bound by office hours. In contrast, R4 went into business to avoid getting scolded. He is more willing to bear any impact and consequences of his decision rather than working for other people. He opened a business that suits his interests and experiences of being a sub-contractor. R5 also stated that the intention to do business arose after considering that the income gained from his husband who is only doing menial jobs in the village and she as only working as a cleaner would not be sufficient to cover the family's daily expenses. Deriving from this awareness, they (family R5) realize that they need to change and take the risk of hiring tents for events in the village like weddings. The decision had also been spurred by his husband's experience as someone who repairs tents. R5 also stated that the key success factors among Malay contractors can also be seen as a motivating factor for entering this field. As noted by R5, "other than the Orang Asli ..we would want to be successful like the contractors ..the Malays ..I have the desire to be successful like them .. The motivating factor mentioned by R5 actually serves as a guide to the Village Head to start his own business. He became a dealer / wholesaler of palm oil fruits when he became interested in business while working at the Kijang Mas Cooperative Kijang Mas and mini markets. To him, by doing business a person can earn more than being a salaried worker. As an example, a salaried worker will always get the same amount at the end of the month unless he is being promoted to a higher position. But with doing business, a person could gain more. To the Village Head, the profits can also be doubled as long as the person shows commitment and is a hardworking person. In addition, the Village Head also stated that the interest to do business has also risen due to influence of seeing other people from the Orang Asli community who have been successful as entrepreneurs.

Business Capital

To start any business, it is important for individuals or companies to have business capital. R1 states that to start a business which was taken over from his aunt, he had to raise his own capital. He managed to raise Ringgit Malaysia (RM) 3,000 as business capital from his own savings. The money was spent on purchasing of goods and material for cooking and for the snacks to be sold. He did not splurge for the eatery as it has already been equipped with the appropriate furniture. When asked why he did not borrow from the bank he replied, "fear cannot pay". R2 has always raised her own capital ever since she first started his coffee shop business with her late husband. When they were in the 'steamboat' business, his late husband used his savings from when he worked in Singapore and when opening the coffee shop, R2 had spent more than RM 5,000 to build a small shop and other equipments. R3 had only spend RM 200 of his savings to start a small business. As a sub-contractor, R4 is willing to fork out RM 10,000 from her more than 10 years of savings to start the operations. Just like the four respondents, R5 also stated that he did not need to borrow money to start his business but also used his savings as capital and used RM 8,000 to buy his first 5 tents for rentals. The Village Head also agreed that most of the Orang Asli community

did not borrow from the bank to get the business capital but mainly used their savings or borrowing from their siblings. The five respondents were found to have issued their own capital taken from their savings to start business and all the respondents do not need a bank loan to start a business. However, there are some data taken from the 2010 Annual Report from the Economic Unit, the Department of Orang Asli which shows that there are some Orang Asli who benefited from the financial assistance offered by the department in order for them to start their own businesses.

Theme 2: Current Situation

This theme was centered on how they can continue and survive with their own decision to pursue a career in opening up businesses. Under this theme, respondents will share how they have managed their business activities, describing the training and courses as well as profits, the challenges and obstacles they faced throughout their experiences opening their own businesses.

Manage Business

This theme highlights how the respondents have managed their business and survive. R1 states that she manages her business with her own way. She did not make any profit and loss accounts but mainly took out the money for daily salary for her and her workers and the rest was put away to be used as the rollong capital for the business. 'No, I did not take out money other than what is need as salary for myself and my workers. The rest I put them back to be used as capital'.. R2 also used the same 'system' as R1, which is taking some for his salary and the rest is used for working capital. In contrast, R3 who had some financial training kept a basic profit and loss account and also made a proper budget planning. R4 and R5 managed their businesses based on the day-to-day experiences.

The Village Head commented that the younger generation due to being sent to school have a basic knowledge of basic finance and mathematics. They know the basic of trading arrangements. He also commented that his mother although did not go to a proper school also knows the value of money and have a basic way of managing her own finances. *'The younger generation, they go to school that's why they know how to manage their accounts. But my mom knew the value of money although she is illiterate. That's the power of money. Money makes people stronger. She knows about five cents, ten cents, she knows ten dollars, three dollars, five dollars...'*

Course / Training

Under the theme of the course or training, the researchers are trying to uncover whether the respondents had attended any courses or training relevant to the business. From a training aspect, R1 attended a course on business organized by the Department of Orang Asli (JAKOA) (then still JHEOA). He stated that the course had a positive impact at first, but because he forgot (due to his age), he made his own way in managing the business. However, if given the opportunity to attend trainings, she was willing to do so, but the issue that arises is that her household income depends on their daily sales, so if she could not open her business for that day due to attending any training, she will not get a daily income for her family. She also commented that whatever course that she has attended was due to the encouragement from the Village Head who has given their names for training to the JAKOA. R2 had never attended any course and are interested in attending a course organized by relevant bodies, but due to time constraints; he is working during the day and running a business at night, he did not had any opportunity to attend any course. R3 also regularly attend courses organized by the 'Amanah Ikhtiar Malaysia' (AIM) which he finds very helpful for entrepreneurs in managing their businesses. Apart from that particular course by AIM, R3 also attended courses organized by the Selangor Zakat Board. Compared to AIM who did not

make it compulsory for the members to attend the courses, the Selangor Zakat Board made it compulsory for members registered with them to attend the courses offered to them. R4 also stated that he had never attended any course from any party. To renew a contractor license, it is a requirement by the Contractor Service Centre, for his license holders to attend courses related to them and he has to prove that he has attended these courses for his contractor license to be renewed. R5 on the other hand did not attend any courses specifically related to his tent rental business.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Introduction

In the final chapter of this research, namely Chapter Conclusions and Recommendations, the researchers aim to answer the research questions posed earlier. Each theme was analyzed, reviewed and summarized by researchers under this chapter. Conclusions resulting from these themes are put forth and used as recommendations for reference and future studies.

Conclusion

The main objective of this case study is to discuss on the awareness of entrepreneurial capability as a way of increasing household income of the Orang Asli community in a village in Sepang, Selangor. The questions posed to all respondents actually indirectly trying to see how did they ventured into becoming entrepreneurs, how did they survived in the more challenging business world and did the Village Head played a significant role in them becoming entrepreneurs, switching from being a salaried worker to entrepreneurs or businessmen.

Entrepreneurial Ability

The main objective of this research is to find out in detail how the Orang Asli community became engaged in running and maintaining their own business. To answer this question, researchers had some interview sessions with the chosen respondents and concluded that the entrepreneurial capability stems from the following factors:

- i. Desire to change the fate of the family

All those involved in the business (except one) was originally a salaried employee in their respective fields, until the point where the environment necessitated them to change professions due to the awareness to gain more household income. In addition, in the early stages, their awareness for venturing into business comes from the pressure of rising living expenses and the price of most goods.

- ii. Environmental influence

In addition, the researchers looked at the location of the village next to the settlement of the Malays, close enough to the Indians as well as having close proximity with the Chinese community has somehow opened their minds to go into business due to them wanting similar success as other communities.

- iii. Awareness to save

What is interesting about these respondents is that they all produce their own capital to start their own business and did not resort to applying for bank loans. Such cases are very unique coming from the Orang

Asli community as they had only earned less than RM 1,000 when they were working as salarymen but they to save some money and fund their own business. This clearly shows that the Orang Asli community is now at par with the mainstream community as they are aware of the benefits of saving for the future. In turn, their businesses were running smoothly because they are not tied to any bank debts. The positive attitude towards awareness of savings like this have made their business can survive until now. This primarily involves R4 and R5, who are aware that contractors and sub-contractors do not always get the jobs, and R5 himself stated in the interviews that he was prudent for one whole year because he found it difficult to get projects in 2012.

iv. Dealing on own experiences

Despite the respondents mainly were not formally trained in running businesses, they managed to have a basic financial system and managed to run their businesses based on the previous experiences and coupled with their determination to become successful in their respective fields. For businesses, large or small, they have basic financial management system without the need to write in the accounts book, or accounting ledger books. As in any business, the risks and challenges are still there, but they managed to resolve their own problems and from time to time, they opted to refer to close relatives and good friends for advice and guidance.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions, the following suggestions are put forth:

- i. This study will give insights to help government agencies specifically the Department of Orang Asli Affairs (JAKOA) to understand and identify factors that influence the individuals in the Orang Asli village to venture into business and entrepreneurial environment. This study has also provided a true and in-depth explanation on why they do business, and where did they get the passion to start a business of their own. Through this study, it is also possible to gain some opinions on the type of government assistance and help which are relevant to the Orang Asli community. Therefore, the government agency responsible for the Orang Asli community and other relevant bodies could take the issues raised in this study to formulate a better policy or framework to alleviate the socio-economic status of the Orang Asli community.
- ii. Relevant government agencies need to devise new strategies to attract other indigenous communities to venture into entrepreneurship. Perhaps agencies can make this as a case study discussions and exercises in motivational courses that highlight the success from this case study respondents. The points to highlight is the emphasis put forth by the respondents on savings for the future and they did not rely on bank loans to start their business. They also managed to have some form of basic financial and accounts system despite them being not formally trained or have limited opportunities to attend proper trainings.
- iii. The government should also intensify awareness campaigns aimed towards the younger generation so as to build entrepreneurial awareness at a very young age so that they become a more self-reliant generation. The government should also work together and have better and frequent communication with the Orang Asli community to try to understand the real problems at the grassroots level. This is because for this particular study, the onus to create the awareness for entrepreneurship in the Orang Asli community lies on the Village Head. Despite this, this particular community is fortunate to have a strong Batin or Village Head who is hardworking, highly motivated and have a passion towards the socio-economic development of his fellow

village folks. Having said that, it is also pertinent to identify such characteristics in a Village Head as a long-term strategy to develop the Orang Asli community.

- iv. The Department of Orang Asli Affairs (JAKOA) could use this case study as an example to other Orang Asli settlement as a point of reference and real success stories. Perhaps a study visit to the village can be organised as a way of knowledge and experience sharing with other Orang Asli individuals from other villages.
- v. This study used qualitative methods in order to find answers to the entrepreneurial awareness to enhance household income in an Orang Asli village in Sepang, Selangor. This study may provide the basis for a larger test sample through quantitative methods.
- vi.

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