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great by
deeds, not by
birth"

-Chanakya

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**Organizational Stigma and Resource Mobilization Challenges in a
Social Enterprise: Arguing for a Grounded Research**

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Abstract

Social enterprises (SEs) blend social goals with for-profit motive and such a blending provides unique opportunity and challenges for the enterprise. Owing to their primary goal of solving social problems, SEs emerge in areas where government fails to solve issues and private sector does not find them to be profitable to pursue. Such a context poses unique challenges for social enterprise in terms of availability of resource because their predominant social focus fail to tap in to traditional sources for resources unlike their private counterparts. This creates challenges for resource management of SEs. SEs, which otherwise fulfill their social mission, but due to nature of their business are 'core-stigmatized' further discourage external resource holders to associate and share resources with such SE creating additional resource challenges because of the stigma attached to the business. Hence, it is interesting to understand how such 'core stigmatized' SEs manage their resources. With limited research in this area, studies may need to understand this through in- depth investigation of one or more revelatory cases of a SE that is stigmatized because of the nature of its core product like tobacco, men's' bath-house. Following established process of inductive theory building such studies may develop grounded resource management framework. Such studies have important implications for literature on social entrepreneurship particularly of the stigmatized type as also contribute to designing grounded research in such emerging areas.

Introduction

Social enterprises (SEs) are organizations that attempt to create social value in a financially sustainable manner (Thompson & Doherty, 2006; Defourny & Nyssens, 2007; Haugh, 2007). Hence, they address social needs with entrepreneurial process (Mair & Noboa, 2006; Meyskens et al., 2010; Perrini & Vurro, 2006) and in doing so they combine aspects of business with charity. The simultaneous pursuit of social value creation and financial sustainability means SEs do not fit neatly in to any established categories of organizations and hence they are regarded as hybrid organizations (Battiliana & Dorado, 2010; Doherty et al., 2014).

Resources are vital for emergence, sustainability and growth of any organization (Penrose, 1959; Brush et al., 2001; Villanueva et al., 2012; Newbert, 2008). SEs needs to have access to those set of resources necessary to achieve their hybrid organization objectives (Doherty et al., 2010). Although SEs require the same set of resources as required by their commercial counterparts (Meyskens et al., 2010), they face unique resource management challenges owing to their hybrid characteristics and operating conditions (Haugh, 2005; Austin et al., 2006). Further, because of strong focus on social value creation, diverse stakeholders with competing demands like investor/donors versus end beneficiaries, make it extremely difficult to tap in to resources that Commercial Enterprises (CEs) have access to (Austin et al., 2006, Doherty et al., 2014) due to doubts of return on investment and ambiguous performance management objectives. This is further aggravated by the presence of 'organizational stigma'.

Organizational stigma is defined as 'a label that evokes a collective stakeholder group- specific perception that an organization possesses a fundamental, deep-seated flaw that de- individuates

and discredits the organization' (Devers et al., 2009, p. 2). Stigma as a concept that was developed at individual level by Goffman (1963) was later adopted to organization context for the first time by Sutton and Callahan (1987) to study 'organizations that faced bankruptcy'. Realizing that not all types of stigmas are same, Hudson (2008) classified stigmas in to two different categories: *event stigma* and *core stigma*. Event stigmas occur for a short time period. For instance, during 2010, microfinance organizations in India faced financial resource challenges because their nature of business was considered to be profit making and exploitative of poor, drawing a lot of criticism from different sections of the society (Nair, 2010; Mader, 2013). However, this problem lasted only for a short time and hence it was an event stigma. On contrary, core stigma is one that in some way is linked to some core attribute or attributes of an organization. An organization may be "core stigmatized" because of "who it is, what it does, and whom it serves" (Hudson, 2008: 253). The stigma attached to a core stigmatized organization (Hudson, 2008) leads to multiple resource mobilization challenges. For a core stigmatized organization, there is some core attribute that stakeholders in the environment deem incompatible with general standards of organizational accounts (Elsbach & Sutton, 1992; Hudson, 2008). Such an organization is viewed as fundamentally flawed by stakeholder groups and hence may lead to harmful social and economic sanctions (Devers et al., 2009) giving rise to resource challenge for such organizations. It becomes difficult for the core-stigmatized organizations to get resource support from their stakeholders as the stigma attached makes stakeholders reluctant to share resources with such organizations (Hudson & Okhuysen, 2009; Hampel & Tracey, 2017).

Hence, for a 'core-stigmatized SE', the resource management challenges become exacerbating, having both hybridity challenges of a SE and also challenges of being a core stigmatized organization. So understanding of resource management for a core stigmatized social enterprise is an interesting but less researched area of scholarly inquiry. In this context the following research questions beg investigation.

- a. How stigma get manifested in a core-stigmatized social enterprise and how the organization responds to it?
- b. How core-stigmatized social enterprises mobilize resources to respond to the stigma while successfully addressing their dual objectives of social value creation and financial sustainability?

Being exploratory and less researched; an appropriate approach is inductive case study approach (Eisenhardt, 1989; Suddaby, 2006). Case study research is useful when a "why" or "how" question is being asked about a new or little know phenomena, as here (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007; Yin, 2003). Since little is known about the process underlying resource mobilization in social enterprises in general and stigmatized social enterprise in particular, case study was deemed to be suitable. Such a case study approach may be characterized as "revelatory" (Yin 1994; Siggelkow, 2007). Recognizing the paucity of in-depth field studies on resource management of stigmatized social enterprises, the strategy can be to study one unique case in depth (Sarker, Sarker, & Sahaym, 2012). Following suggestions from the methodologists (e.g., Patton 1990), one needs to identify an organization that could potentially be a unique and exemplary source of insights on this topic. Such a company primarily intends to create social value while being stigmatized where data collection through semi structured interviews, field observations, secondary sources, and documents from the organization provide a wide range of data to establish triangulation (Yin, 2003).

Overall data analysis could follow established process of inductive theory building research (Gioia et al, 2013; Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). While iterative in nature it could follow steps

suggested by Gioia et al. (2013) that helped us to generate first order codes, second order themes and aggregate dimensions. Once the research had those, it proceeded to build the data structure (Gioia et al., 2013). The data structure provides a graphical representation of how the research had progressed from raw data to the aggregate theoretical dimensions and hence it helps to demonstrate rigor in the research (Pratt 2009). However, the data structure is not a dynamic model but just the representation of concepts and relationship that emerged from the data (Gioia et al., 2013; Williams & Shepherd, 2016). Subsequently, revisited data from the second order themes and aggregate dimension perspectives to relationship and linkages between the themes, finally resulted in a grounded resource management model. Although data structures are important in providing understanding of the key concepts, it is important to specify linkage between these concepts to arrive at an inductive model. As Gioia et al. (2012) suggest “As important as the data structure might be, and as much energy as we put into developing it, it is nonetheless a static picture of a dynamic phenomenon, and process research doesn’t actually investigate processes unless the static picture—a photograph, if you will—can be made into a motion picture.” (p. 22). So it remains important to discuss the linkage between the aggregate dimensions to arrive at a process model.

The primary contribution of such a study is a model of resource management in stigmatized social enterprise. By identifying different ways in which stigma manifests in SEs and how the organization responds to it, such papers add to the understanding of organizational stigma. Such studies could demonstrate how social mission of SE can provide additional advantage to stigmatized organization (Hudson, 2008) which stigmatized CEs may lack. By focusing on the social impact, such organization can overcome stigma and get support from different resource providers.

Theoretical Background

Stigmatized organization: challenges and responses

Organizational stigma is “a collective stakeholder group-specific perception that an organization possesses a fundamental, deep-seated flaw that de-individualizes and discredits the organization” (Devers et al., 2008: 155). Proposed at the individual level by Goffman (1963), the concept of stigma was adopted to organization context for the first time by Sutton and Callahan (1987) to study the organizations that faced bankruptcy. The stakeholder group views a stigmatized organization as fundamentally flawed and this may lead to social and economic sanctions that is harmful for the organizations and may threaten its survival (Devers et al., 2009).

There are primarily two types of stigmas affecting an organization: *core stigma* and *event stigma* (Hudson, 2008) as discussed. Event stigma occurs for a specific violation and last for short period of time and in such case the organization can distance themselves from the stigmatizing events. For instance, during the Enron scandal, Arthur Anderson could distance themselves by decoupling or separating organizational unit or people dealing with Enron (Elsbach and Sutton, 1992). In contrast, core stigma is related to the essential attributes of the organization, such as “who it is, what it does, and whom it serves” (Hudson, 2008: 253) such that in place of acquiring stigma for a single activity, stigma is deeply rooted in the organization. For instance, cigarette manufacturing company have a stigma attached to them relating to the core product itself. Some other organizations with core stigma are strip clubs (Schlosser, 2003), men’s bathhouses (Hudson & Okhuysen, 2003), abortion service providers (Hudson, Wong-Mingji, & Loree, 2000). Being a

core stigmatized organization means that there is some core element or traits of the organization that the external stakeholders perceive to be immoral or in conflict with the established norms or value systems (Elsbach & Sutton, 1992). Such a core stigmatization leads to the belief that the corresponding organization is untrustworthy, tainted, morally unacceptable, suspect or less than standard organizational account. Such a belief leads to withdrawal of support from those stakeholder groups (Hudson, 2008).

A stigmatized organization faces negative evaluation by external audiences, who take actions that affects the core-stigmatized organization (Hudson, 2008) such as lack of acceptance by investors, customers, prospective employees and society. These stakeholders try to avoid the stigmatized organization as they fear being stigmatized by association resulting in lack of resource support for the stigmatized organization that can prove to be critical (Pozner, 2008; Sutton & Callahan, 1987). Besides minimizing interaction with the stigmatized organization, stakeholders might not share their resources or demand high economic exchange for interaction, or sever their ties completely, leading to high economic and social sanction for the organization (Hudson & Okhuysen, 2009; Hampel & Tracey, 2017; Devers et al., 2009).

Sometimes, core stigmatized organization may also lack legal or governmental support (Hudson, 2008) or even if market is legal as for cigarettes, stigma may prevent an organization to operate openly in the market and find buyers of their products (Wilson and West,1992). Stigmatized organization must take actions to combat or minimize the impacts of stigma (Thomson, 2018) and cope with its negative effects (Hudson & Okhuysen, 2009; Vergne, 2012) or in some cases use stigma to their advantages (Helms & Patterson, 2014; Tracey & Phillips, 2016). For instance, Sutton & Callahan (1987) suggested the strategies of concealing, denying responsibility, accepting responsibility, and withdrawing for the organizations facing bankruptcy. Discussing the case of core-stigmatized organizations, Hudson (2008) suggested multiple strategic, structural and network level responses for the management of stigma. Helms and Patterson (2014) suggest organizations to accept responsibilities and then use stigma as an image builder through three methods of audience persuasion such as enticement, pacifications and defensive education. On a similar note, Wolfe & Blithe (2015), proposed the strategies of passing enactments for brothels to deal with stigmatization.

Social Enterprises and Resource challenges

Social enterprises are organizations that attempt to address social problem or create social value in a financially sustainable manner (Austin et al., 2006; Doherty et al., 2014). SEs emerge in the condition of government and market failure to address social issues (Di Domenico, Haugh, & Tracey, 2010; Wei-Skillern 2007), having wide scope of opportunities but lack of resources to address these opportunities (Austin et al., 2006). They are pulled into rapid growth by demands from funders, demand for their product or service and by their social mission to meet those demands (Dees et al., 2004; Austin et al., 2006), creating further resource constraints.

For social objectives and financial sustainability, SEs must generate sufficient revenues for investing in business activities while maintaining investments in social projects (Moizer & Tracey 2010; Alvord et al., 2004; Mair & Marti, 2006). This is opposed to CEs, who are predominantly concerned about efficient resource utilization (Alter, 2006) and maximizing return to investors (Dees, 1998). Moreover, inability of their customers to pay means SEs cannot charge higher price for their product or services and generate greater profit (Desa & Basu, 2013; Doherty, Haugh, & Lyon, 2014), making SEs unattractive for traditional financial sources such as angel investors

(Austin et al., 2006; Peredo & McLean, 2006; Doherty et al, 2014; Gras & Lumpkin, 2012; Lumpkin et al., 2013). This forces SEs to depend more on their social network for obtaining resources (Meyskens et al., 2010), and to consider the intention of the funders in the operation of the organization thus curtailing their freedom to utilize the funds as per their assessment of community needs. Dependence on volunteers and external work force results in very little control on such type of workers and their approval of strategic direction (Royce, 2007) resulting in high turnover (Liu & Ko, 2011). With a diverse set of stakeholder with high bargaining power (Low, 2006), SEs face unique challenges to address divergent interests of these different stakeholders.

Resource mobilization challenges for a core-stigmatized social enterprise

Social enterprises have their own resource challenges and so as core-stigmatized organization (Doherty et al., 2014; Hudson, 2008), they have to deal with the difficulties of being a SE and also being a stigmatized organization, grappling with legitimacy challenges (Doherty et al., 2010; Pache & Santos, 2010). This makes it imperative to understand how such organizations experience stigma, how they respond to stigma and how they mobilize resources to achieve the dual mission of social value creation and financial sustainability.

Research Methodology

Adopting an inductive case study approach helps overcome problem of paucity of work done to understand the process of resource mobilization in core-stigmatized social enterprises (Eisenhardt, 1989; Suddaby, 2006). Case study research is useful when a “why” or “how” question is being asked about a new or little know phenomena, as here (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007; Yin, 2003). Since little is known about the process underlying resource mobilization in social enterprises in general and stigmatized social enterprise in particular, ‘revelatory’ case study is deemed to be suitable for such work (Yin 1994; Siggelkow, 2007). Recognizing the paucity of in-depth field studies on resource management of stigmatized social enterprises further encourages one unique case in depth (Sarker, Sarker, & Sahaym, 2012).

Empirical Settings

Following suggestions from the methodologists (e.g., Patton 1990), one needs to identify an organization that could potentially be a unique and exemplary source of insights on this topic, revolving around “the users”, “the use”, and/ or “the sellers” of the product.

Data Collection

In such an exploratory study, data collection was primarily through semi- structured interviews, associated field, secondary sources (newspaper articles, published cases, and research articles on the organizations), and internal organization documents (annual reports, project reports, and process documents) used for triangulation (Yin, 2003), albeit semi-structured interview remains

primary mode of data collection. For the semi-structured interview, one needs to develop an interview protocol that served as a conversational guide and directed the conversation during an interview (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). While collecting data, wherever possible, interviewee obtained the interviewees' consent to record the interviews and then transcribed them for further analysis.

Data Analysis

It was expected that overall analysis established a process of inductive theory building research (Gioia et al, 2013; Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014), by moving back and forth between data and emerging theoretical categories (Locke, 2001). For the Computer- Aided Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) Atlas.ti, NVivo, Nud Ist may be used for coding and data management (Friese, 2014). For coding the data one could follow guidelines suggested by Miles et al, (2014) and Saldana (2013). While iterative in nature, analysis need to be conducted by following three major steps as follows (Gioia et al, 2013; Williams & Shepherd, 2016).

Step1: Creating categories and first-order codes

Employ first order coding techniques to identify a set of first-order codes and provisional categories for further analysis (Gioia et al., 2013). When starting to read and compare sentences, researcher assigned first order code to them, identifying a segment of data for coding based on the concept of meaning unit (Campbell et al., 2013; Garrison et al., 2006).

Step 2: Aggregating first-order codes and creating second order themes

In this step, axial coding was used to move from first order codes and categories to more abstract level theoretical sub-categories and categories (Miles et al, 2014;. Saldana, 2013; Strauss & Corbin, 1994). One can start by looking for similarity and differences in the first order codes and then categorized them appropriately to arrive at second order theme. At this stage research considered “multiple levels simultaneously (i.e., at the level of the informant terms and codes and at the more abstract, 2nd-order theoretical level of themes, dimensions, and the larger narrative—answering the important question ‘What’s going on here? theoretically’ (Gioia et al., 2013, p.20). During this stage, researcher kept moving constantly between existing literature and data, becoming ‘knowledgeable agents’ (Gioia et al., 2013:20) and using existing concepts and theories to interpret the data on hand.

Step 3: Theoretical coding, overarching dimensions, and theoretical framework

Once the second-order themes were generated, focus was on understanding how these different themes can be fitted together to build a coherent picture (Gioia & Corley, 2013; O’Neil & Ucbasaran, 2016; Pratt et al., 2006). At this stage one were ‘firmly in the theoretical realm, asking whether the emerging themes suggest concepts that might help us describe and explain the phenomena we are observing’ (Gioia et al, 2013: 20); Raising the level of abstraction and focusing on identifying aggregate theoretical dimensions from the second order codes and relationship between these dimensions (Williams & Shepherd, 2016).

Once researcher had the first-order codes, second order themes and aggregate theoretical dimensions, proceed to build the data structure (Gioia et al., 2013). The data structure provides a

graphical representation of how research progressed from raw data to the aggregate theoretical dimensions and hence it helps to demonstrate rigor in the research (Pratt 2009). Subsequently, one revisited data from the second order themes and aggregate dimension perspectives to relationship and linkages between the themes. The goal was to identify the linkage between contextual dimensions and the bricolage activities (Langley et al., 2013; Gioia et al., 2013).

Conclusions

In identifying and discussing key concepts related to: Experiencing Stigma, Coping with Stigma, Mobilizing internal resources, Mobilizing external resources, and Achieving dual mission of a social enterprise, researchers arrived at these key concepts from the raw data. Although data structure are important in providing understanding of the key concepts, it is important to specify linkage between concepts to arrive at a inductive model. Such studies contribute to the social entrepreneurship literature by offering insights in to the practices used by social enterprises to mobilize resources while operating in resource constraint environment. Existing research highlighted several resource mobilization challenges faced by SEs (Battiliana et al., 2012; Doherty et al., 2014; Gras & Lumpkin, 2012; Lumpkin et al., 2013; Meyskens & Carsrud, 2013) and have highlighted the need for better understanding of their resource mobilization practices (Dacin et al., 2010; Desa & Basu, 2013; Di Domenico, et al. , 2010; McNamara et al., 2015; McDermott et al., 2018; Vestrum et al, 2013; vestrum, 2016). For instance, Desa & Basu (2013) mentioned “there has been limited theory development and empirical work on the different approaches that social entrepreneurs adopt to mobilize critical resources and the constraints that influence their choices” (p. 23). Scholars have started to address this gap by employing different theoretical perspectives: predominantly Bricolage (Di Dominico et al., 2010; Desa & Basu, 2013; Bacq et al., 2015) and Resource Dependency theory (McNamara et al., 2018). However, although bricolage is useful, it is not without limitations since not all resources can be bypassed or done away with (McNamara et al., 2018). Similarly, McNamara et al., (2018) employed resource dependency theory to understand how SEs mobilizing resources through a large scale events, making it is interesting to see how organizations that do not have such events mobilize resources. Research designs like that discussed here could address this gap by exploring different mechanisms through which social enterprises mobilize resources including a set of external and a set of internal resource mobilization mechanisms. For stigmatized organizations, external resource mobilization may be pivotal on building legitimacy to gain resource while being open to sharing resources with partner organization. Whereas the internal resource mobilization involves internal development of resources, upgrading resources, recombining resources and multiplying resources having taken into account the stigmatized nature of the resource. By understanding how resource challenges surfaces in social enterprises and how that is tackled by mobilization of resources such studies, even for stigmatized organizations, could echo and qualify recent critic of resource needy organization as “passive bystanders” (Katila, Rosenberger, & Eisenhardt, 2008: 325; also see Di Domenico et al., 2009).

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