

Changing Aspects of Entrepreneurship: Post COVID-19 Case Studies from Visakhapatnam and Udaipur

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Abstract

The new decade holds much promise, especially in terms of socio-economic development and the development of the urban poor. The pandemic has shaken deep-rooted beliefs about a safe socio-economic condition for people around the world. Hardest hit were the semi-skilled workers, marginal workers and small business owners who today struggle to earn and survive every day. It threw life off the beaten track, sending them into a vortex of socio-economic unrest and despair. We trying to find out how we are been dealing with the challenges. This study also aims to understand how these entrepreneurs and workers have met the challenges and adapted to the paradigm shift in how they do business successfully. The psychosocial impact of the pandemic cannot be ruled out, which will undoubtedly affect urban poverty; and changes in entrepreneurial business dynamics are also an important part of the study. How these semi-educated entrepreneurs have dealt with and adapted to rapid change is also at the heart of this study. This article analyses the impact of COVID-19 on marginalized small businesses and also elicits their stories in the form of small case studies. It also focuses on how these entrepreneurs deal with the difficult financial situations caused by COVID-19 for their businesses.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship, socioeconomic development, COVID-19, strategy, small and marginalized workers, psychosocial impacts, urban poverty, reconstruction, livelihoods

INTRODUCTION

Conceptual Framework

COVID-19 was devastating to both small and large businesses. It threatened the success and survival of businesses across the country. Hardest hit were the semi-skilled workers, marginal workers

and small business owners who today struggle to earn and survive every day. This study seeks to examine how entrepreneurs and small, marginalized workers have met the challenges the pandemic has posed for them, and how they have fought back and gained ground. This study also aims to understand how these entrepreneurs and workers have met the challenges and adapted to the paradigm shift in how businesses succeed [1]. The psychosocial impact of the pandemic cannot be ruled out, which will undoubtedly affect urban poverty; and changes in entrepreneurial business dynamics are also an important part of the study. How the semi-skilled and semi-educated entrepreneurs of the world have dealt with and adapted to rapid change is also central to this study.

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SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH

Economic empowerment is vital for holistic development of a country. Empowerment refers to the process of transforming into a stronger and more confident individual, having, and exercising rights and controlling one's life independently [2]. In addition, the unprecedented change that the pandemic has brought about has changed the dimensions of the entrepreneurial fabric of the country, more so with respect to the marginalized groups of the society.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Crisis situations such as the COVID-19 pandemic have many negative effects on business performance and resilience [3] (Duchek, 2018; Grube & Storr, 2018; Stefan Korber & Rod B. McNaughton, 2018; Martina K. Linnenluecke & Brent McKnight, 2017; Monllor & Murphy, 2017).

A crisis begins with business failure, loss, and resource depletion. The scale of the crisis was felt by many small and local businesses in the UK after the 2011 riots. Arson, looting, and vandalism hit 4,444 small businesses, resulting in lost revenue, resources, content, and staff [4].

Some studies have also identified the personal, psychological and emotional effects of the crisis on entrepreneurs who reported poorer mental health after the crisis [5].

In addition to its negative impacts, permissive crises can motivate us to develop innovative new ways to acquire resources.

Monllor and Murphy argue that, in addition to negative impacts and conflicts, in some cases crises tend to create voids that create opportunities for business creation and lead to destructive entrepreneurship [6]. Most importantly, adversity has the ability to discover untapped opportunities that can achieve both the social and commercial goals of the entrepreneur, artificially focusing on alleviating the suffering of others alignment [7].

According to research by Grube and Storr (2018), [8] entrepreneurs are community-based and well-positioned to meet the challenges of the crisis and alleviate some of the sufferings of victims.

DATA COLLECTION AND RESEARCH METHODS

The research work relies on primary and secondary data. Secondary data are collected from various sources, print and electronic media, and primary data are collected from individual entrepreneurs and marginalized workers. Data are collected from focused group discussions, face-to-face interviews, and information gathering. A total of 30 people has been surveyed as a pilot survey to understand the intricacies and impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the marginalized sections of the society, yet only 17 responses are officially displayed in the paper due to convenient permission taken from the these survey people [9]. The survey has been conducted from two different states: Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan, to understand the variety of approach from a north and south perspective.

CASES FROM VISAKHAPATNAM, ANDHRA PRADESH

Case 1

Suresh, aged 60, runs a laundry shop. He has been running a laundry shop since the last two decades. His business runs in a ramshackle. His job primarily consists of collecting soiled clothes from households near his shop. His daily earnings depend upon the trust that he has built over the years with the households that he has been catering to over the past two decades [10].

He neither has any other source of income, nor does he have any family assets to fall back upon, in times of need. His family consists of his wife, a homemaker and two married sons and their wives, his sons are unemployed and so are his daughters in laws. As such, the entire responsibility of his family rests upon Suresh. He has never depended on any formal source of finance for meeting his family's

financial needs. Prior to the pandemic, his business was going fine with the regular customers that he catered to. He would use the extra profits saved after the expenditure, for his personal needs or requirements. During the lockdown, he found that the regular customers he had were also very much scared to give their clothes to him for laundry. They had also started working on their own, in the safe confines of their homes, using washing machines and ironed their own clothes. This made the customers self-reliant and pushed Suresh's business towards vulnerability and uncertainty. Since Suresh was neither literate nor had any other skill, he could not think of any other means of earning a livelihood. Today, Suresh has to work much more in comparison with the pre-pandemic days, to make both ends meet (Figure 1). He says that he has to go on till his sons start earning. The socio-economic damage that the pandemic has brought in their lives will hence have a ripple effect and will last even after the effects of the pandemic are over.

Case 2

Uma, aged 36 runs a tiffin shop. She has been in this business for about a year, yet only manages to earn just above Rs. 200 at her best (Figure 2). She has a husband who was an auto driver but due to a major accident, lost his identity as an auto driver, hence she tries all her best to earn for her husband's surgery and for their children so that they could live a better life and thus could be sent to a good school. Above those burdens, there comes their loans taken from the State Bank which keeps them working late at nights, but only manage to earn for their meals.



Figure 1. Suresh, aged 60, at his laundry shop.

Source: Researcher, during the interview.



Figure 2. Uma, aged 36 runs a tiffin shop.

Source: Researcher, during the interview.

The Pandemic shattered their livelihood, worsened their means of survival. During the COVID times it was a living prison for their family hence had to leave their children to their relative's house and she and her husband would roam through the houses searching for a means for job. As the pandemic's impact starts to fade, they look for new opportunities to give their children a better life.

Case 3

Tatarao, 45, works as a tree chopper for more than 20 years (Figure 3). He has a family of three, and his only goal is to give his daughter a grand marriage. Hence, he risks his life to climb trees and chop them, and in the process, he is collecting money to find a suitable groom for his daughter. He is the family's sole breadwinner, but half of the amount earned is squandered on his drinking habit.

The pandemic changed everything. Work slowed down, earnings dwindled, and with no savings, he and his family also had to shift to their relative's household. But as COVID's montage's graph shifts to a low scale, it does bring him to the city again, and hence he and his tools are on duty again. He does not have any strategies to come up with nor any plans to set for a futuristic business proposal, the only dream he ever has is to find his daughter a groom which will bring him and his daughter a smile on their face.

Case 4

Pallavi, 26 years old, a transgender, runs a business of an ice cream shop, she already goes through a daily abuse from this discriminant society but COVID made it worse (Figure 4). She has a family yet her parents do not support her gender fact, hence she has to live all alone without the support of her family. She has completed her MBA, yet has no support either from the college nor from the society, hence to prove herself she works daily to earn a limited profit. She has been in this business for the past 10 years and since that age has been doing a great social helping too via donating 15% of her profit to the orphanages.

COVID worsened her livelihood and hence had to bear the loss herself without her parental support. She went through a lot of physical as well as mental stress in the pandemic situation but did not stop fighting the pandemic. She might not have made a good profit but still made a success story of her own in the pandemic situation.



Figure 3. Tatarao, 45, a tree chopper.
Source: Researcher, during the interview.



Figure 4. Pallavi, 26 years old is a transgender at her ice cream shop.
Source: Researcher, during the interview.

As of today, the COVID might have loosened its roots but did awake the will of fire inside that daring heart of hers. Hence in future, she had set plans to open her own salon shop and hence she is daily saving her profit to give herself a bright future and to motivate people like hers to do something in their life which will acknowledge them.

Case 5

Pradeep, 38 years old, has a *panipuri* stall (Figure 5). He has been in this business for more than 10 years and has been living a stressful life, yet always managed to earn profit. He has a wife and one daughter; hence he always works for his family betterment. Yet, living a good life turned into a stressful monarchy of hell as soon as the COVID came into existence. It has made his life into a more non liberal months. Every second felt like a year passing by as they had no support from anyone, yet managed to get through the pandemic. Though the pandemic might have torn their business apart it, also gave them the strength to get through the pandemic.

Hence, he and his family strategized to spend less on their expenditures and more on their health-related issues. They got themselves help from their neighbors whenever needed and hence this effort made them get through the tough times of the pandemic. Yet this COVID time gave him an idea to build his own restaurant and hence has started to save their earnings to build a restaurant for themselves in the future.

Case 6

Hari, 29 years old is an auto driver and has to work more than anyone just to earn his profit every day, as he has a wife and two children; hence, they are the only reason for him to work from early morning till late nights just to give them a better life and an optimistic future (Figure 6).

As everything was going as planned, the COVID took his earnings from him and made his survival a living hell. As he has taken some money from his relatives, hence, he had to simultaneously earn for their livelihood. Hence this became more than a stress for him and his family. Yet he never gave up and planned strategically to pass through the COVID and hence did every single work he could to make his life better. Hence as the pandemic started to shed off his time to earn via auto driving came to his feet and hence started to work again. Hence this made him motivated to work harder and made him realize to pursue his dream of starting his business of cab centre for his coming future.

Case 7

Barber Ramu is a 40-year-old barber and a hair stylist, he has been in this business for more than 20 years; hence loves his job (Figure 7). He has a daughter who is studying at school and a wife who is a homemaker; hence he has a stable family with a wholesome profit that he earns every single month.



Figure 5. Pradeep, 38 years old, at his *panipuri* stall.
Source: Researcher, during the interview.



Figure 6. Hari, the 29 years old auto driver.

Source: Researcher, during the interview.



Figure 7. Barber Ramu.

Source: Researcher, during the interview.

Yet this fantasy turned into a horror movie when the COVID came up hence turned his life upside down. He had nowhere to go to earn his livelihood and had to look for every other job he could, but failed to do so.

He and his wife started selling pickles at home but it was not a successful plan, hence had to lose his patience. But in addition, the COVID eliminated the majority of the consumers from his life, as people started learning to cut their hair at home thus gave him a hefty loss to his business. Yet he never stopped from going on work; he aims to earn a good profit as in the past, hence works for that in a determined way.

Case 8

Parsuram, 42 years old is a clothes seller, goes to every household just to sell his clothes (Figure 8). He is a very determined person hence travels every day on his favorite cycle which his wife gave him as a gift. He has a son, who is studying, hence, Mr. Parsuram supports his family in every way via earning his living over selling clothes on a cycle.

This was an evergreen movie when suddenly there came the pandemic bringing his good old days to an end and made him suffer more. The pandemic took his job as a clothes seller and made him a jobless person hence he and his wife searched for every single job they could to overcome the struggle of their COVID time yet could only count the number of jobs they were rejected. But this only made them stronger and hence with the help of their relatives, they started a pickle centre that became a success story of their own. Today after the COVID, he still runs to every single household to sell his homemade clothes happily on his favorite cycle and hopes to endure his son's enriching future.

Case 9

Papamma, aged 40 has been working as a house maid for the last 20 years (Figure 9). She is called the super maid in and around the Vizag locality and has more than 50 customers who are excited to be her customer. No one has ever regretted her work because she does it as well as she can. Yet as she had a super maid life, the pandemic intruded her life, and made her struggle again for her survival. As she lives alone, she has to take care of herself and has to pay every attention to her health as her age is a growing factor.



Figure 8. Parsuram, the clothes seller.
Source: Researcher, during the interview.



Figure 9. Papamma, aged 40, a house maid.
Source: Researcher, during the interview.

Her customers were scared of the pandemic hence they were no help to her but she resisted being helpless hence fought through the pandemic situation without any fear. Today as the pandemic period trends to finish, she has again started to get a job from her customer and hence again started to earn a good old profit.

CASES FROM UDAIPUR, RAJASTHAN

Case 1

Karan is a Chaiwallah who is famous in and around Udaipur (the city of lakes) (Figure 10). He works more than enough to get his earnings via serving every single ounce of his tea flavor all over the city. He has a wife who is a homemaker but moreover she always supports him and his aspiration to come up with new ideas for business. They both were living the world of Disney when there came the existence of COVID which had to tear all their dreams apart.



Figure 10. Karan, the Chaiwallah.
Source: Researcher, during the interview.

The COVID time was more than a rough regiment hence all the people in Rajasthan had to take strict protocols. Therefore, Karan had to think of something to get through the pandemic time. As according to the rules established, in Udaipur, no more stalls could be there on road after 8 pm hence he did have to face a lot of struggle to come through this situation, surprisingly he came up with the idea of his new own business at that point of time, hence started to work on that. Today as when the COVID has started to fade it has given Karan the motivation to start his new business to open chai Patti production hence and his colleagues are working for their future to give themselves and their family a good life.

Case 2

Naru is a 43 years old lady who is a vendor working day and night to get through her family struggles via earning through selling fruits and vegetables at a profitable amount (Figure 11). She had to be a support for her daughter and his alcoholic husband, hence is the only medium of earnings. She was fighting really tough when the COVID changed the image of her situation.

The COVID made her personal and her professional life more miserable hence she had to go through a lot of struggles by waiting for the right time, she lacked the resources to launch a business. She had to search for a job in a way to overcome the fear of no earnings. This made her believe in herself hence gave them the courage to fight against the situation and get through the pandemic via supporting themselves in their struggling times. Hence when the COVID came to an end, it made them believe again to go to work and earn a livelihood, hence today, she is still again sitting down the tree working hard to earn her profit every day.

Case 3

Ratan is a 35 years old man who loves his job of cutting and hair styling, started his business when he was 17, and today, he has around 20 years of experience (Figure 12). He lives with his father and wife and has two kids who are still studying; therefore, he had to work hard every day to feed his family.



Figure 11. Naru, the 43-year-old vegetable vendor.
Source: Researcher, during the interview.



Figure 12. Ratan, the hair stylist.
Source: Researcher, during the interview.

His father is a retired barber hence his son has taken a good position as a medium of earnings via hair stylizing. They were having a good old hard day of youth when suddenly the existence of COVID shattered their household life and made them fear the word “pandemic”. They soon became helpless as they could not leave their house for work due to lockdown and it worsened when they started to finish their earnings. They soon realized the situation and hence started to work against it. Today as when the COVID period starts to fade away, it soon brings his joy of work back to him. Hence gives him a chance to work his day as a barber again hence he does not have any further plans, he just wants his family to be safe and happy with his mode of earning.

Case 4

Prem is a 28 years old man who works as a dog trainer and as well as a servant to a very big family (Figure 13). He works to look for his family and hence works 24 h for giving his family a comfortable life. He started to notice the situation earlier, hence came up with an excellent plan when the COVID was coming into the city.

He soon asked his customers politely and discussed his plan for *hisso*, called “work from home”. Hence, he gave them the clarification and he requested that he and his family would be staying in the basement of these customers’ house for a required time and would do every single work as a mode of earning; hence this gave him a huge advantage in the times of COVID and gave him and his family both the job security and home protection from the pandemic. He gave strict working rules to himself and therefore this idea made him a mature human being and gave him the realization to depend on his ideas. As when the COVID starts to knock off, he and his family are living a comfortable life hence he only hopes for his two daughters’ happiness and thinks for their future wishes.

Case 5

Ram Kumar, the owner of his own small restaurant, RK Momos, is 29 years old who worked every day and still works more than anyone to get himself an honest recognition in the society and a good sum profit for his only daughter at home who is still studying (Figure 14).



Figure 13. Prem, the dog trainer.

Source: Researcher, during the interview.



Figure 14. Ram Kumar, owner, RK Momos.

Source: Researcher, during the interview.

He is the only guy who works at a restaurant but never fades to give food on time and on call, with no reports ever given by his customers; he was having a wonderful life but the COVID turned his profit against himself, hence made him to think more in times of COVID. He had no customers coming to his restaurant due to the pandemic's lockdown process; hence that gave him an excellent opportunity to home-deliver his products. This made him work more and hence gave him the potential to get to greater heights as a one-man army yet made himself pass through the pandemic fighting against the problems one by one. Today, as when the pandemic has started to slow down its phase, it became a good start off for him to work towards achieving greater success.

Case 6

Rakesh is 22 years old yet works every day to become a huge successful entrepreneur one day hence works at his own *dabeli* stall (Figure 15). His parents never supported him to become an entrepreneur rather wanted him to become a farmer as his father but that never stopped him to lag away from his dream.

He came to Udaipur City to work for his dream, hence started his own *dabeli* stall; hence he has more than 1 year experience. He with his new friends that he made up after coming to the city all together came with different ideas to set up a business; as when they thought pulling it off, the pandemic stopped them from doing so. It was quite difficult for him to find work and earn his living but he never gave up on his dream hence searched everywhere to earn his livelihood. Therefore, when the COVID starts to end, he again starts his *dabeli* stall and in future, thinks to build a hotel with his new made friends.

Case 7

Kumari ji is a 54-year-old lady who has been working since she was 22, hence has more 30 years' experience to understand her business (Figure 16). After her husband's death, she now lives with her only son who works as a servant at a house. They struggle a lot to earn their profits, hence this made her stronger and more committed towards her work.



Figure 15. Rakesh, Owner, Dabeli Stall.

Source: Researcher, during the interview.



Figure 16. Kumari ji, a small business owner.

Source: Researcher, during the interview.

But the pandemic gave them huge losses from everywhere as she had to look for her health and had to look for sources of income, her only son started to have symptoms of COVID, hence she had to do everything in her cause to protect his son's health; so, she did face a lot struggle than anyone has, did not care about her health and started to work for her son's betterment. In no time when his son started to show recovery, it gave her a sense of relief and made them believe in themselves to work even harder to get through this pandemic situation together fighting as one. Today even, as the COVID starts to shade away it has given them a sense of relief and made their business income profits again in no time.

Case 8

Jagan is 26 years old and works every day losing sweat and tends to earn his living via serving *panipuri* and chaat at his own stall (Figure 17). He has a wife who is a homemaker and a father who is retired; due to his unstable health made Jagan being the only medium to earn his daily wage. He is a very sharp minded person hence could easily captivate his customers to come again to his staff to eat more, hence made him a brilliant entrepreneur to earn his daily wage. He has no asset to help him but only his brain to get into the profit margin every day.

This all was a good life for him when soon COVID hit the city. Yet he never lost his cool and soon started to predict his next moves to get profit from the only customers he could; hence started selling tea to the police officers who guarded at the times of pandemic; this gave him an advantage and made his name all over the city and soon made him popular among the cities. He again started to expand his business routine in these times while his wife started to sell herself made clothes to the neighbors, thus made them use their minds strategically. Therefore, he and his wife were able to get through this pandemic without any fear and at the same time supported the protection of the police and gave him good recognition in and all over the city. Hence today, when the deadly times of the pandemic starts to shed off, he with his wife started to go back to their normal life, but Jagan still aims to expand his business in future hence has started to implement his techniques and his ideas to practice and his hope for an enriching future.



Figure 17. Jagan, the Panipuri wallah.
Source: Researcher, during the interview.

DISCUSSION

The above stories are those of resilience and adaptability, these are the hallmarks of entrepreneurship. The ability to face crises and to rise above the problems is what makes an entrepreneur survive and attain sustainability. The people interviewed for the purpose of this study are from Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan. And there is no north-south divide observed in the way these people have handled their small businesses in the face of the pandemic. These people live on a survival mode, sometimes leading a hand-to-mouth existence, and yet have the zeal to survive, to live another day with as much dignity, grace and self-respect. There are cases where people have migrated from the rural areas in search of a better living and improved quality of life. Above all, the entrepreneurial spirit in them says, 'never say no, never say it is impossible'.

ANALYSIS

As an entrepreneur, it does not depend on the city you live or the work you do, but it is the will of fire that redeems their heart to work hard in heavy situation and thus get to know better of themselves and their potential, hence the following sociological cases had many things in common:

- They all had a goal to earn profit hence they did everything in their will to increase their production.
- They all had to go through a lot mentally and physically, yet never let those situations come in between their business.
- They all never had any government support to get their business going.
- They all were disappointed by the pandemic situation but grasped it and worked according to that in a way to earn their livelihood.
- People in the age of 20–30 were more enthusiastic about their future plans and expanding their businesses.
- People in their 30's had a more stable and a mature way of looking into the business ideas and hence making it a reality.
- People above the age of 40 do not have any business plans in the future and just want to earn for their family support and their personal expenses.
- Alcohol is one the major setback downsizing their work impact and profit margin.

CONCLUSION

All the cases studied, had the same situation like every citizen of the country and the world but it is their approach to a problem and the situation that divides them from a normal citizen of the country. It is their quick understanding of the situation and the predicting strategy to face the situation calmly without the hesitation and the creative aspect to show their true means of ideas to reflect into the arenas of the business, graphed their profit margin ratios, a theoretical mindset with a practical implementation where the risk factor becomes their only means of survival; these are the things that separates them from being a normal citizen and those aspects makes them the true entrepreneur of this country. As a researcher, we have understood that people at the bottom of the pyramid have to deal with much more than just the loss of income or livelihood. They have to deal with ripple effects of the pandemic, not only on themselves, but on their families and future generations as well. For some, it has been starting from sub-zero, for others it has been a loss of precious childhood for their children.

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