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Challenges Faced by Speech Language Pathologists as Entrepreneurs: A Thematic Analysis

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ABSTRACT

Speech language pathology is a new profession in Pakistan. With cultural & linguistic variations, SLP entrepreneurship in Pakistan needs to be augmented to reach the needy as well as economic growth of the country, hence challenges need to be identified. **Objectives:** To determine the challenges faced by Speech Language Pathologists in becoming entrepreneur. **Methods:** This qualitative exploratory study was conducted at Riphah International University, Islamabad from April 2019 to Sept. 2019. Study recruited N=15 speech language pathologists of both genders, aged 25-50 years, running their own private clinics using purposive sampling. Individual interviews were conducted using interview guide with 11 structured interview questions. Audio recording and note taking methods were used for data collection. Data was transcribed and thematic analysis done manually & verified. **Results:** Study with a sample of N=15 Speech Language Pathologists mostly 11(73.33%) highly qualified females with most 14(93.33%) with master's degree & 10(66.67%) with < 10 years' experience came up with an array of rich data. Thematic analysis revealed the outcome themes in descending order with a frequency 45 for Infrastructure, 32 for Professionalism, 27 for Recruit, 26 for Inclination, 23 for Unity, 22 for Legislation, 21 for Self-regulation, 20 for Wealth, 17 for Determination, 11 for Optimism & Matriarchy each, 10 for Expertise, 8 for Customers, 8 for Obstacles and 2 for Ethics. **Conclusion:** The five most common and eminent issues/ themes faced by Speech therapists as an entrepreneur in descending order of their frequency include infrastructure, professionalism, recruit, inclination, & unity.

INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship plays an important role in economic growth of a nation by enhancing job market, productivity and result in structural improvements, and hence having positive effect on economy [1]. Social entrepreneurship which entails establishment of social values created by organizations and people who work for social innovations involving economic activity, enhancing the living standard and quality of life (QoL) is now gaining importance in healthcare system. Social entrepreneurship can positively impact job market, innovations, investment and trade in social sector, and also helps in reduction of poverty [2]. Though entrepreneurship is now increasing in the health

industry however challenges and barriers are also being faced by social entrepreneurs in Pakistan with lack of awareness, education, financial resource, governmental support, competition, & risk of failure resulting in layoffs etc [1-3]. Recently there has been a surge in healthcare entrepreneurship in a number of countries where entrepreneurs can play a significant role. Salminen L et al. in a study reported dearth of education regarding entrepreneurship in healthcare with only 23 % teachers involved in teaching entrepreneurship [4]. Female entrepreneurs face further challenges including gender discrimination due to sociocultural norms, attitudes and

policies; limitation of access to required knowledge, skills, network and markets; and dearth of business & financial facilities for females. Despite of all these barriers women are developing and making progress as entrepreneurs [5]. Religious barriers and conservatism in Pakistan are also barriers for female entrepreneurs [6]. Thus hampering their potential as entrepreneurs [7]. Even in this modern world, there is still dearth of female entrepreneurship through it has attraction for females including SLP's because it can help them become independent, fill a social gap, empower them, challenge patriarchy, increase income and wealth [8, 9]. However, they face barriers to entrepreneurship and need strategies to cater to those [3]. In healthcare entrepreneurship is becoming important and entrepreneurship is accepted nowadays. A study conducted in California by Hulbert, studied the dearth of SLP's with help of a variety of business models, since even in United States children face shortage of SLP's, which can be overcome if SLP's take a step forward towards entrepreneurship [10]. Kummer AW has highlighted the significance of concepts of business in SLP's practice, since the only way to stay in entrepreneurship and provision of services for the needy, since this is the only way to remain in business [11]. According to American Speech Language Hearing Association (ASHA), knowledge and importance of effect of culture and the linguistic variation is one of the essential requirements for SLP's entrepreneurs [12]. Speech language pathology is new profession in Pakistan with dearth of SLPs and cultural & linguistic variations SLP entrepreneurship in Pakistan needs to be augmented to reach the needy as well as economic growth of the country, hence barriers to SLP entrepreneurship need to be identified and remedial measures taken. Therefore, current qualitative study was conducted with the objective to determine the challenges for Speech Language Pathologists in becoming entrepreneur. This is of significant importance to ensure development of the profession of speech language pathology in Pakistan, equal employment chances for females, and for economic and health benefit of the community and the country.

METHODS

This qualitative exploratory study was conducted at Riphah College of Rehabilitation Sciences, Riphah International University over a period of 6 months from 1st April, 2019 to 30th September, 2019. Study was conducted following approval of research by Research Ethics Committee of Riphah College of Rehabilitation Sciences, Riphah International University, Islamabad vide registration # RIPHAH/RCRS/REC/Letter-00525 dated 18th March, 2019 and consent of all the participants SLPs. All ethical issues

were addressed and data and identity of the participants was kept confidential. Purposive sampling technique has the capacity to produce rich textured data, hence it was utilized to recruit a sample of N=15 speech language pathologists, with sample estimated to ensure data saturation [7]. Sample included SLPs of both genders, aged 25 to 50 years who were running their own private clinics in different areas of Lahore city, and had qualifications from diploma to masters in speech language pathology. Confounders were controlled by "restricting" the sample to SLP's working in private clinics, in metropolitan city of Lahore, with age group 25-50 years and avoiding younger and older age groups. Individual interviews were conducted using interview guide with 11 structured interview questions which steered the discussion was backbone of the study. Interview guide development followed literature search and testing of the on two expert SLP's to achieve a corrected 11 question structured interview guide in which the questions were sequenced and easily comprehensible. Effectiveness of the interviews was maintained due to the diversity of the range of items in the interview [13]. The questions were easily understandable and arranged in a sequence. After taking appointments for interviews, interviews were conducted by the first author in a comfortable environment of their clinics and the researcher just gave enough direction to the participant to keep them on track thus helping in exploration. Ample time was allowed for participants' response uninhibitedly. Audio recording and note taking methods were used for collection of data. Data of audio-recordings and notes were transcribed and thematic analysis done manually using Braun & Clarke REF A, 6 step framework for conducting thematic analysis. It was started with i) becoming familiar with the data and chalking down of answers of interview questions of participants, ii) generating initial codes/ keywords of answers and matching with keywords of notes taken during interviews, iii) searching and deriving themes and subthemes from keywords, iv) reviewing these themes, v) followed by designation of themes and vi) final write-up and frequency of these were also noted. SPSS version 21.0 was used for descriptive analysis of the demographic variables.

RESULTS

Current study utilized a sample of N=15 Speech Language Pathologists (table 1) with most 11(73.33%) being females with 7(46.67%) being 34-41 and 5(33.33%) being 26-33 years old with most 14(93.33%) with master's degree in SLP. Most 10(66.67%) had < 10 years' experience and were married 10(66.67%).

Variable	Group	n(%)
Gender	Male	4(26.67)
	Female	11(73.33)
Age (years)	25 to 33	5(33.33)
	34 to 41	7(46.67)
	42 to 50	3(20)
Education	PGD	1(6.67)
	Ms(SLP)	14(93.33)
Experience (years)	<10	10(66.67)
	>10	5(33.33)
Marital status	Single	5(33.33)
	Married	10(66.67)

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Sample Population (N=15)

The present study came up with an array of rich data as regards the challenges faced by Entrepreneur SLP's in Pakistan. The data of thematic analysis revealed (table 2), the outcome themes which arose following in depth interview with SLPs. The outcome themes drawn from the analysis in descending order of frequency were Infrastructure, Professionalism, Recruit, Inclination, Unity, Legislation, Self-regulation, Wealth, Determination, Optimism, Matriarchy, Expertise, Customers, Obstacles and Ethics.

S.no	Outcome themes	Frequency
1	"infrastructure" is fundamental for entrepreneurship	45
2	"professionalism" is knowing how to do it	32
3	"recruit" for attitude and train for skills	27
4	Where "inclination" is present, opportunities are not needed	26
5	"unity" is strength	23
6	"legislation" is the art of compromise	22
7	"self-regulation" is beneficial for all	21
8	"wealth" makes a difference	20
9	"determination" keeps you going	17
10	"optimism" is a happiness magnet	11
11	"matriarchy" is responsibility	11
12	"expertise" leads towards success	10
13	"customers" are backbone of a business	8
14	"obstacles" do not block the path, they are the path	8
15	"ethics" is mandatory for professionals	2

Table 2: Themes and their frequency: Thematic Analysis

DISCUSSION

In current study majority 11(73.33%) of the sample were females being a female dominated profession and most 7(46.67%) being 34-41 years old with 14(93.33%) being highly qualified with master's degree holders in SLP. Most 10(66.67%) had < 10 years' experience. Current study revealed that "Infrastructure" was important for clinical SLP set ups and attractiveness and luxuriousness of the clinics was beneficial to attract more clients. This is in compliance to a study by Audretsch D et al. which investigated the

linkage among infrastructure and entrepreneurship and reported that infrastructure is essentially linked to & significantly impacts entrepreneurship [14]. Entrepreneurship courses are essentially required with blended approach which could help them achieve required level of affective domain learning objectives [15]. This is validated in current study in which "Legislation" was highlighted as a theme with no registration and regulatory body for SLP's in Pakistan, the specialty is left unregulated. A theme, "Matriarchy" was derived from current research in which majority (73.33%) of sample comprised female gender, which supports the fact that gender wise impact of factors varies with different factors affecting number of women entrepreneurs and others affecting the share of women [16]. Though female entrepreneurs are equally important in economic growth of a nation especially developing ones, enhancing social inclusion as well as to combat discrimination and poverty [17]. SLP is a female dominated profession thus male therapists face biased attitude especially when they apply for a job. Female SLPs believe that their struggle is credible since they work harder for their entrepreneurship success compared to male entrepreneurs [18]. According to Van Wyk & Boshoff, entrepreneurial attitude is necessary and needs to be adopted to become successful [19]. Hence "Professionalism" also came up as a theme in the current study. It was revealed that most of the Speech language pathologists hire their staff on share basis. Literature also reveals that entrepreneurial behavior needs to be taught in educational systems [19]. Demotivating factors exist for both male and female entrepreneurs, hence motivation or "determination" came up as a theme and is essentially required for entrepreneurship with female entrepreneurs have higher levels of determination compared to male counterparts [20]. A local study revealed that women entrepreneurs in Pakistan are quite motivated towards entrepreneurship with factors like personal ambition, to improving personal financial position, with desire to contribute towards income of family, and to get personal satisfaction [21]. "Expertise" is another theme of the current study and literature seem consistent with this theme highlighting the importance of team work and referral and knowledge of critical processes including to find new entrepreneur opportunities as well as resource mobilization [22]. Meyer & Landsberg proposed that for female SLP's they should focus on marketing to reach all segments of society [8]. Obstacles do arise in businesses like a clinic both while starting a new business as well as to get social support during launching which result in stress and distress [23]. Hence "obstacle" was noted as a theme in current study. In medical and allied professions and health professions, ethics has a central role, same is true for

Speech and language Pathology entrepreneurship with "Ethics" being a theme of present study. Similarly Lyer & Solomon reported that it is essential to adopt ethical standards when beginning and running an entrepreneurship since bypassing ethics can result in temporary benefit but significant damages in the long run. Also knowledge of regulatory organizations and laws is important to avoid legal issues [24]. "Wealth" is crucial and it is also a theme of this present study. The success and lavishness of an entrepreneur revolves around wealth. Similarly according to a study to collect wealth prior to entering an entrepreneurship is important and the wealth-illiquid wealth ratio is a measure of economic constraints that might be faced [25]. A theme "Optimism" came up since it is a happiness magnet because if an entrepreneur has an optimistic approach he or she can reach every level of success. Optimism comes from determination, hope and positive approach. This theme is relevant to a study by conducted about entrepreneurial optimism and chance. They combined the optimism and chance into a theory to describe how optimistic entrepreneurs who get chance can become successful [26]. "Recruit" is another theme of this study which is in compliance to a study by Storey, which revealed recruitment of surrogate entrepreneurs resulted in a better team and success of business in a Swedish technology venture [27]. A Malaysian study revealed the role of educational institution for promotion of entrepreneurship, business curriculum and syllabus, gender, work experience and occupation of mother had significant association in inclination of students toward entrepreneurship [28]. Similarly "Inclination" was noted as a theme in current study. Another theme is "Unity" in entrepreneurship which is in compliance to a study about social capital access and entrepreneurship which helps entrepreneurs to overcome resource constraints and ultimately unity transforms a business environment into a suitable organizational culture [29]. "Self-regulation" is also one of the theme of the study though less explored O'Shea D et al. studied self-regulation by introducing an integrated model to map regulatory effects including action, cognition, motivation as well as emotion in entrepreneurship, making self-regulation an essential element in entrepreneurship [30]. Another theme of the study is "customers" and literature also supports the fact that customer is the main focus of a business and hence building a trusting relation with customers and customer's confidence is necessary for a business to succeed [31]. Population was mostly males from one city only hence study results lack generalizability.

CONCLUSIONS

Study concluded that the five most common and eminent

issues/ themes faced by Speech therapists as an entrepreneur in descending order of their frequency as demonstrated by thematic analysis include infrastructure, professionalism, recruit, inclination, & unity.

Authors Contribution

Conceptualization: HSK, EJ

Methodology: HSK, EJ

Formal analysis: EJ

Writing-review and editing: HSK, EJ

All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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