



Economics and Business Quarterly Reviews

Celeste, R. S., & Resurreccion, P. F. (2024). Factors Affecting Business Recovery from External Shocks (Marawi Siege and COVID-19 Pandemic): The Case of a Social Enterprise in Marawi City, Philippines. *Economics and Business Quarterly Reviews*, 7(4), 243-250.

ISSN 2775-9237

DOI: 10.31014/aior.1992.07.04.634

The online version of this article can be found at:
<https://www.asianinstituteofresearch.org/>

Published by:
The Asian Institute of Research

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Factors Affecting Business Recovery from External Shocks (Marawi Siege and COVID-19 Pandemic): The Case of a Social Enterprise in Marawi City, Philippines

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Abstract

Social enterprises are vulnerable during disasters due to their dual mission of fulfilling social and economic impact. This study explored the factors influencing business recovery from external shocks, focusing on a social enterprise which endured the Marawi Siege and COVID-19 pandemic. A qualitative approach was employed, utilizing in-depth interviews and thematic analysis. The data were meticulously coded and categorized into themes using Braun and Clarke's framework. Adaptive resilience, the ability to adapt and innovate in response to challenges, emerged as the central theme, helping the social enterprise to navigate challenges posed by external shocks. Moreover, government support such as financial aid, sponsored product exhibits and capability-building programs, greatly influenced business recovery, confirming the importance of a supportive regulatory environment. Also, establishing business connections with government entities and non-government organizations provided resources, information and technical support that expedited business recovery. Hence, the study highlighted the evolving nature of business resilience in disasters and the findings presented valuable learning insights for social enterprises and policymakers hoping to enhance disaster preparedness and business recovery strategies.

Keywords: Business Recovery, External Shocks, Marawi Siege, COVID-19 Pandemic, Adaptive Resilience

1. Introduction

The unique business model of social enterprises makes them highly vulnerable during crises because of their social and economic mission (Weaver, 2020). As they try to recover and rebuild from natural and man-made disasters, exploring the factors affecting their business recovery is critical for creating effective strategies to support their resilience and sustainability.

This study focuses on social enterprises in Marawi City, Philippines because of the complex problems they have been facing. On May 23, 2017, Marawi City was besieged by the Islamic State-linked Maute group, prompting the Philippine government to retaliate and take control of the situation. The war, which lasted for five long months, drastically changed the lives of the Meranaws. Marawi City, considered as the economic hub of Lanao, was greatly devastated, and all economic and entrepreneurial activities shut down. While the Meranaws were still trying to get

back on their feet, another disaster surfaced: the COVID-19 pandemic. This, along with ongoing efforts for lasting peace and development, has aggravated the struggles that social enterprises face, especially given that these enterprises are driven by their primary objective of addressing social issues such as poverty, armed conflict, and dying culture. This study focused on exploring how the social enterprises in Marawi City navigate the challenges they face and how various factors affect their business recovery from the Marawi Siege and COVID-19 pandemic.

While there have been few studies that have looked at how external shocks affected companies, little is known about social enterprises especially in Mindanao. This paper explored the business recovery particularly the financial performance of social enterprises in Marawi City highlighting adaptive resilience, network ties and government support. Learning how to create sustained resilience is equally relevant for social enterprises to ensure their survival and growth.

1.1 Research Questions

The major objective of this study was to investigate how adaptive resilience, government support and network ties influenced the business recovery of social enterprises in Marawi City, Philippines from the Marawi Siege and COVID-19 pandemic. The following sub-questions were also addressed:

1. How do internal resources, capabilities, and resilience strategies affect the social enterprise's ability to recover economically, particularly in response to the Marawi siege and COVID-19 pandemic?
2. How do external factors, such as government support, network ties, and the rise of digital economies, influence the business recovery of the social enterprise from external shocks?

1.2 Review of Related Literature

Adaptive resilience is a key factor for social enterprises to navigate challenges and ensure their survival and performance. The social enterprises in Malaysia for instance face critical challenges for survival and sustainability; and it is crucial for them to enhance their resilience and performance through internal and external capabilities (Rajah et al., 2023). When the COVID-19 pandemic came, it posed a challenging situation to social enterprises worldwide but social enterprises demonstrated adaptive resilience by restructuring their operations and manufacturing activities (Chen et al., 2022).

Research emphasizes the importance of adaptive resilience, particularly in post-disaster circumstances. Studies have shown that the ability to adapt and respond to existing circumstances is crucial. Settembre-Blundo et al. (2021) highlight the value of flexibility and resilience amidst unpredictability, stressing the proactive integration of sustainability in decision-making as pivotal for organizational adaptability. It is when organizations are adaptive and responsive to situations that they can handle challenges in an efficient manner. This planned approach aligns with a strategy emphasizing flexibility in decision-making, essential for navigating unforeseen challenges and fostering responsiveness. Moreover, Ye et al. (2022) emphasize the role of digital innovation and mindfulness in facilitating swift adaptation and recovery from disruptions, bolstering organizational resilience. The digital era allowed companies to tap its potential for business recovery and sustainability. In the context of the agricultural sector, adaptive resilience becomes paramount in mitigating the impacts of crises like COVID-19 (Siche, 2020). Additionally, Sharma et al. (2020) stress the importance of managing uncertainty and promoting preparedness, flexibility, and innovation in businesses to effectively tackle unexpected events, underscoring the necessity of strategic resilience. Hence, adaptive resilience could be instrumental to companies' survival and growth. The following proposition is made to examine the relevance of adaptive resilience to the recovery of social enterprises.

Innovative, adaptive and responsive social enterprises are more likely to recover economically from external shocks.

Another important factor for the performance of social enterprises and businesses is the government support. In this study, government support covers economic assistance provided by government agencies to micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) including social enterprises. Research has shown that government funding is

positively associated with various aspects of social enterprise performance, such as the employment of disadvantaged individuals, community contribution, and democratic decision-making (Choi & Berry, 2020). When government intervenes through the provision of funding and non-financial resources to businesses facing disasters, recovery is made more manageable. Additionally, government subsidy is a significant factor in the establishment and growth of social enterprises, impacting their social and economic performance (Kim & Moon, 2017). This is evident in the vibrant economic activities of affected social enterprises and businesses. During challenging times like the COVID-19 pandemic, government grants and funding have been instrumental in supporting the social enterprise economy (Sakib, 2021).

Moreover, there is no denying that government support is essential in guiding and bolstering businesses amidst disasters and crises (Salem et al., 2021; Sobaih et al., 2021), particularly through financial assistance (Ritchie & Jiang, 2019). This aid is critical as small tourism enterprises often grapple with reduced income and cash flow during such times (Sobaih et al., 2021). It is through this financial support that social enterprises and businesses keep their businesses going. Studies have explored the impact of government financial and non-financial aid alongside innovation capability on SME performance. Findings indicate a positive correlation between government support, innovation capacity, and SME success (Gligah & Zaidin, 2023). Enterprises and businesses are motivated to keep going because they have a reliable support system. In South Africa, the interplay of government financial assistance for small businesses was analyzed concerning business revenue and grant amounts post-support scheme implementation. The research revealed that grant amounts positively influence revenue growth among beneficiary firms, highlighting the amplifying effect of government grant initiatives on income and business profitability (Aluko & Bayai, 2023). Indeed, the role of the government is deemed imperative for social enterprises and businesses dealing with crises. Thus, the following proposition is presented:

Social enterprises receiving various types and forms of government support are more likely to recover economically from external shocks.

Social enterprises like any other businesses also thrive through their business connections. Research has shown that network ties help facilitate access to external resources, knowledge, and information, ultimately enhancing competitiveness and growth (Zhou et al., 2022). When managers and owners of social enterprises interact and build relationships with other businesses, their reach also expands which could be favorable to their survival and growth. Social network ties have been linked to positive work performance due to the valuable resources, information, and knowledge shared through these networks (Chen et al., 2019). This is because cooperation and collaboration among networks will be beneficial to all parties concerned. Connections with other social enterprises can provide key information and operational experience, contributing to improved performance (Ko et al., 2019).

Previous research emphasizes the importance of connectedness, often measured as social capital, in fostering resilience and recovery. Social capital refers to the value derived from social networks and relationships (Brown et al., 2018; Ritchie & Jiang, 2019). This concept underscores how the quality and quantity of a firm's relationships and networks can significantly impact its ability to adapt and thrive. Moreover, Xiaowei & Guanhua (2023) delve into the dynamics of alliance networks within firms. They explore the effects of strong ties (close, direct relationships) and bridging ties (connections linking different groups) on firm performance. Their study identifies how these ties influence the utilization of exploratory (innovative, new) and exploitative (existing, known) knowledge. They argue that leveraging both types of knowledge through network ties can enhance firm performance. Furthermore, Fonfara & Ratajczak-mrozek (2021) concentrate on the theory of business networks and their implications for firm success. They examine how a firm's position within its network—shaped by its business relationships—affects its performance. Their study highlights that changes in a firm's network position, influenced by its relationships and interactions, directly impact its ability to achieve performance goals. Given that connectedness can be an important enabler of recovery, the following is proposed:

Social enterprises with established networks, connections and associations are more likely to recover economically from external shocks.

1.3 Theoretical Underpinnings

This study is anchored on these theories: Resource-Based View (RBV), Institutional Theory, and Resilience Theory. The RBV highlights the relevance of internal resources and capabilities in attaining competitive advantage. Core internal resources include human, financial, physical, technological and cultural resources as well as intellectual property while organizational capabilities include planned and adaptive resilience. These are viewed to help social enterprises determine and capitalize on their contributions to foster social value and sustainability (Huang & Wang, 2011). Moreover, the RBV emphasizes how organizations capitalize on their available resources to make their operations more efficient which could lead to better productivity and firm growth.

Institutional Theory encompasses external pressures and influences that help shape organization behavior and performance amid constraints and norms (Lavandoski et al., 2016). In this study, these forces may emanate from government support and network ties. Government support may include tax relief and incentives; workforce development; infrastructure and technology; health care programs; financial aids; community grants and access to market linkages. The role of network ties may include access to resources and support; collaborations with donors and investors; advisory support; enhanced service delivery; and community engagement.

Resilience Theory explores the capacity of an enterprise to respond to challenges and recover from external shocks. Resilience in social enterprises is a multifaceted concept that includes the organization's ability to adapt to changing circumstances, innovate in response to challenges and effectively navigate crises to ensure continuity in service delivery (Weaver, 2020).

2. Method

2.1 Research Design

The research design for this study employs a qualitative research method. This is well-suited for exploring the depth of participants' thoughts on factors affecting business recovery of social enterprises due to their ability to address complex issues beyond simple yes or no hypotheses, accommodate situations where a large sample may not be readily available, and facilitate the emergence of themes from the data (Lewis, 2015). Qualitative research allows for open-ended questions that can delve into the nuances and intricacies of the phenomena being studied, providing a rich understanding of the experiences and perspectives of the social enterprises (Terzis & Beasley, 2023).

In qualitative research, selecting an appropriate research design is crucial as it aligns the theoretical framework, research questions, and research methods. When considering qualitative research designs, options such as phenomenology, ethnography, grounded theory, and case study are commonly explored (Cope, 2015). Phenomenology focuses on understanding individuals' lived experiences to uncover the essence of a phenomenon. Ethnography involves immersing oneself in a culture or social group to understand their behaviors and practices (Andreassen et al., 2020). Grounded theory aims to develop theories grounded in data collected during the research process, allowing theories to emerge from the data itself (Faria et al., 2018). Case study research involves an in-depth exploration of a particular case or cases to gain a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter (Cope, 2015). For this study, a case method was used.

2.2 Case Study Design

This study adopts a case study design conceptualized by Robert K. Yin. It is a robust empirical investigation method that delves into contemporary phenomena within their real-life contexts, particularly when the boundaries between the phenomenon and its context are complex (Simons et al., 2010). Yin's approach to case study research involves a structured methodological framework encompassing the formulation of research questions, development of propositions, determination of the unit of analysis, and establishing the logic connecting the data to the propositions (Marczewska, 2023). Moreover, this case study design helped the researcher to have an in-depth understanding and analysis of how planned and adaptive resilience affect the business recovery of social enterprises in Marawi City from external shocks.

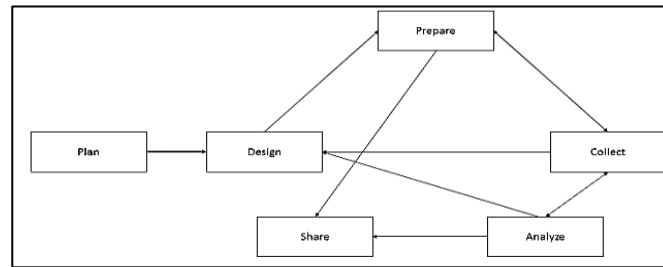


Figure 1: Phases of case study design by Robert K. Yin

2.3 Data Collection

Data was collected through in-depth interviews with a social enterprise in Marawi City which endured both disasters – the Marawi Siege and COVID-19 pandemic. An invitation letter to participate in the study as respondent was emailed to the respondent. Consent form was also obtained to ensure the respondent's willingness and permission to be part of the study. Consequently, the interview was conducted via Zoom which lasted for more than an hour to have a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the respondent's experiences during and after the external shocks under study. To protect the respondent's identity, neither the social enterprise nor the respondent's names are mentioned in the study. The interview session was recorded and transcribed for thematic analysis.

2.3 Data Analysis

In order to identify reoccurring themes, trends, and insights on the economic recovery of social businesses in Marawi City after the pandemic, the answers from interviews were transcribed and examined. Thematic Analysis, as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), is a methodical approach to identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (or themes) within qualitative data. The process involves several key steps:

- Familiarization with the Data.

The researcher immerses himself in the qualitative data collected from interviews related to the business recovery of social enterprises in Marawi City after the pandemic. This involves reading and re-reading transcripts to gain a comprehensive understanding of the content.

- Generating Initial Codes. The researcher can start by systematically coding interesting features of the data that might be relevant to the research questions. These codes can be descriptive or interpretative, capturing both explicit and implicit meanings.

- Searching for Themes. Once coded, the researcher begins to search for potential themes among the codes. Look for patterns, connections, and similarities in the coded segments. This involves sorting codes into potential themes based on shared meanings or content.

- Reviewing Themes. Review and refine the identified themes. Ensure each theme is coherent, distinctive, and meaningful in relation to the research questions. Themes should capture essential aspects of the data and be relevant to the study's objectives.

- Clearly define and label each theme to capture its essence. Develop clear and concise descriptions for each theme, highlighting what it represents within the dataset.

- Mapping and Interpretation.

Analyze how themes relate to each other and to the broader context of the study. Explore the implications of each theme and their significance for understanding the economic recovery of social enterprises in Marawi City post-pandemic.

- Writing Up. Finally, incorporate the thematic analysis findings into a coherent narrative. Present the themes alongside supporting evidence from the data (such as illustrative quotes) to demonstrate their validity and relevance.

- Coding and Categorization. The replies were then categorized and important concepts or ideas were found by coding the data. In order to aid in the discovery of significant patterns, this procedure entails methodically arranging the data.

3. Results and discussion

The study revealed that the external shocks – Marawi Siege and COVID-19 pandemic have greatly affected the social enterprise in Marawi City and the following key themes emerged from the thematic analysis:

Theme 1: Adaptation and Innovation

The social enterprise with no predetermined risk management strategies, no business continuity plan and no disaster risk and reduction management plan before Marawi Siege found the man-made disaster very challenging. But citing the meaning of the firm's logo, the social enterprise was able to adapt during Marawi Siege by exploring social media marketing. They were able to get more orders from customers across the country. Their regular postings on their social media fanpage attracted potential customers and partners.

Though they prepared plans on how to combat future armed conflicts in Marawi after the siege, the COVID-19 pandemic happened. But that time around, they were more ready to respond to the crisis. They also have gained traction online and their customers had repeated orders.

Theme 2: Government Support

Government Support was crucial for the social enterprise's ability to recover economically from Marawi Siege and COVID-19 pandemic. Financial assistance provided additional funding for their business operations. The Department of Science and Technology (DOST) and the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) also procured a shared service facility and supplied materials to help maximize their production capacity. This allowed them to have enough inventory to meet customer demand.

Government agencies such as the DTI, MSU-IIT, among others also purchased their products in large quantities which helped them gain profit. There was also a series of sponsored product exhibits which expanded their market reach and augmented their income. The capability-building programs such as digital marketing trainings also helped the social enterprise promote their products online. More importantly, the social enterprise received support from government dignitaries thru bulk purchases and network building.

Theme 3: Business Connections

Strong network ties also provided the social enterprise with valuable resources and connections. Non-government organizations for example have paved the way for the social enterprise to receive funding through winning business idea competitions, have free training and technical support and capitalize on the market linkage. The British Council, Bayan Academy, and CultureAid are among the NGOs that contributed largely to the social enterprise's ability to recover economically. They have their own networks and connections which also provided more opportunities for the social enterprise to have more customers and eventually gain profit. For instance, a prestigious athletic association in the country has tapped the social enterprise to create more than 4,000 medals/leis and this opportunity was made possible through networks and connections.

4. Conclusions

The study has highlighted the various factors affecting business recovery of a social enterprise in Marawi City from external shocks (Marawi Siege and COVID-19 pandemic). Using thematic analysis, these three themes have emerged: Adaptation and Innovation, Government Support and Business Connections which played a crucial role in the social enterprise's business recovery.

The social enterprise with no written documents to combat crises, was able to adapt, innovate and respond to the situation accordingly. Government interventions such as financial support, provision of shared service facilities, bulk purchases, sponsored exhibits and capacity-building programs also played a vital role in the economic recovery of the social enterprise. Moreover, business connections with NGOs and other entities have provided valuable resources, training, funding, technical support and market linkage.

Hence, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance the resilience and sustainability of social enterprises amid external shocks:

1. Encourage social enterprises to develop comprehensive risk management plans such as business continuity plans and disaster risk reduction and management plans. These plans will help address potential crises (both man-made and natural disasters) to ensure that social enterprises are better prepared.
2. Leverage technology and digital marketing as it allows social enterprises to have a broader market reach and promote customer engagement and loyalty.
3. For policy makers, they may create a social enterprise accreditation system to monitor the operations of social enterprises in the country. It would also serve as a database for designing appropriate interventions especially during disasters. The accredited social enterprises will also have a higher chance to receive funding opportunities, tax incentives and technical support.
4. Strengthen government and NGO partnerships. Networks and connections will play a huge role in helping social enterprises recover economically from disasters.

Author Contributions: All authors contributed substantially to this research.

Funding: This research was funded by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) of the Philippines.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Informed Consent Statement/Ethics approval: The subject gave her informed consent for inclusion before she participated in the study. Research ethics approval was obtained from MSU-IIT CEBA - College Research Ethics Committee with reference number CEBA-0001-2024.

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