

Factors Inducing Entrepreneurship: A Study of MSMEs in Aizawl District, Mizoram

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Abstract

Micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) play a predominant role in the socio-economic development of the country. They are considered to be the growth engine that triggers developmental process. Besides solving the problems of unemployment and poverty, this help generates additional family income. Mizoram is one of the most industrially backward states in India. Though some progress in industrial development was experienced and the MSME sector gradually gained momentum especially service industries, the growth of industry and industrial development in the state is relatively slow owing to its topographical and geographical disadvantages. Mizoram is predominantly an agricultural economy and lags far behind than the rest of the country as far as industrial development is concerned. The entire state has been notified as backward and is categorised as 'no industry state' due to non-existence of large and medium enterprises. Mostly MSMEs exist while big enterprises are almost absent. Development of industries in the state is an uphill task as the investors remain fearful to invest due to its topography, small size market, entry restrictions, low-end infrastructure and such other related factors. In this context, MSMEs play an important role in the industrial scenario of the state. This article, based on a study of 406 MSMEs in Aizawl district, Mizoram, attempts to trace out the factors which induced the entrepreneurs to start business activities.

Keywords

MSMEs, enterprises, entrepreneurs, entrepreneurship, motivation, industries

Introduction

Motivation is an indispensable function of management. Motivational factors constitute the inner drive present in an individual, which continuously demands from him to do something new and unique and also to perform better than others. These motivational factors stimulate the person to undertake entrepreneurial activities relating to creation of new business (Palanivelu, 2008).

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A study undertaken by Rao (1986) in coastal Andhra Pradesh classified entrepreneurial motivation into three broad categories, namely entrepreneurial ambitions, compelling reasons and facilitating factors. According to him, entrepreneurial ambitions include making money, continuing family business, securing self-employment, fulfilling the desire of self/wife/parents, to make independent living and gaining social prestige. These entrepreneurial ambitions influence an individual to undertake entrepreneurial activity. The compelling reasons include unemployment, dissatisfaction with previous job, make use of idle funds and revival of sick units started by fathers. The facilitating factors are success stories of entrepreneurship, previous employment in the same or other line of activity, property inherited, property acquired and encouragement from family members, relatives and friends. The encouragement received from family members, relatives and friends, the assistance received from government agencies, and the experience, skills and knowledge gained either in trading or manufacturing or previous employment are some of the important factors which influence the entrepreneurs. In some cases, there are some compelling forces which lead them into entrepreneurial activity. For example, a man who lost his job or a woman who is making a living after becoming widow may ultimately be forced to start a business. The process of the emergence of entrepreneurship in Aizawl district is centre focus of this article.

Review of Literature

In this section, an attempt has been made to make a brief review of some important studies on the factors which induced entrepreneurship in Indian context.

The Small Industries Extension Training (SIET) Institute, Hyderabad (SIET, 1974) conducted a survey of small units in Hyderabad and Secunderabad. The study revealed that the most important reasons for starting small industrial units were 'economic gain' followed by 'ambition', 'social prestige' and 'social responsibility'. The study revealed that 'capital shortage' and 'government red tapism' are the two most important discouraging factors.

Rao (1986) conducted a study in coastal Andhra aiming at evaluating forces behind the spirit of entrepreneurship. His study revealed that educational and income levels are important factors in entrepreneurship. Of all, money making is the major ambition of entrepreneurs.

Murthy (1989) studied the motivating factors of entrepreneurs in two selected towns of Andhra Pradesh (Anakapalle and Gudivada) and observed the loosening of the hold of caste on occupations. As a result, enterprising farmers and artisans were turning to occupations other than their caste occupations. The facilitating factors were encouragement by friends, relatives and family members, contact with business people, and success stories of entrepreneurs.

Aravinda and Renuka (2002) identified the important factors which motivated women entrepreneurs towards entrepreneurship. The facilitating factors that had an impact on maintaining the enterprises successfully were self-experience, interest, family help and support.

Sandra, Maily, Adel, and Peter (2003) found that motivational reasons for business start-up are dissatisfaction with the previous employment, inability to find suitable employment and wanting to be their own boss.

Ehigie and Umeron (2003) found that a high self-concept regarding their role in business and commitment to business can help women to become more successful entrepreneurs. The study also revealed that entrepreneurial success depends on psychological factors such as self-concept, managerial competencies and work stress.

Kamal, Mohammed, and Nuseibeh (2009) found that financial support from government especially for the start-up capital is an important factor that motivates women to establish their own businesses. Self-fulfilment, knowledge, skills and experience, including involvement in spouse's/father's business, are all important factors in the development of woman entrepreneurs.

The above studies attempted to understand the factors which induced entrepreneurship. However, these studies may not be adequate to explain the real characteristics of entrepreneurship in Mizoram. The policy recommendations which are applicable to these studies may not be necessarily suitable for Mizoram, which prompted the researchers to take up the present study.

The Present Study

Mizoram has no major industries worth mentioning and the entire state has been industrially backward due to non-existence of large or medium enterprises. The disadvantages due to topographical and geographical condition of the state coupled with underdeveloped infrastructure and transport bottlenecks are the main hurdles for the first generation entrepreneurs of the state to move towards industrialisation. The growth and performance of the manufacturing sector has been poor. The industry sector has contributed 26.05 per cent of gross state domestic product (GSDP) during 2013–2014 as against 22.02 per cent in 2012–2013 (Government of Mizoram, 2014a). The state has witnessed low scale of migration of workforce from agricultural to non-agricultural sector. Business activities such as tailoring, furniture making, automobile repairs, steel making, bakery, handloom weaving and blacksmith account for 80 per cent of the total number of business enterprises in the state. There is little scope for big enterprises as MSME sector dominates the industrial scenario acquiring a prominent place in the socio-economic development of the state (Government of Mizoram, 2014b).

About 60 per cent of the total workers were engaged in agricultural activities mostly by practising shifting cultivation (also known as *jhumming*). However, the share of agricultural sector in the GSDP was hardly 14 per cent at prices during 2013–2014 (Government of Mizoram, 2015). Therefore, the MSMEs have a specific role to play in the context of the economy of Mizoram. This sector requires less amount of capital and low level of technical skill. The vast natural resources and local raw materials can be utilised more efficiently by strengthening the MSMEs in the state, thereby creating employment opportunities mainly to the underprivileged people and local artisans which, in turn, would help realise the planned goal of inclusive development.

Objective and Methodology

The objective of this article is to study the ambitions, compelling factors and facilitating factors which induced the entrepreneurs to start entrepreneurial activities in Aizawl district, Mizoram. The study covers diverse range of MSMEs in Aizawl district. Since it is an exploratory study, it is mostly based on primary data collected from the entrepreneurs of MSMEs. As per the Third All India Census of Small Scale Industries (Government of India, 2001–2002), there were 2,718 registered small scale industries in Mizoram out of which 2,027 were in Aizawl district (1,914 were in Aizawl urban and 113 were in Aizawl rural). Precisely, all these enterprises constituted the population from which the sample for the purpose of the present study had to be chosen. The number of entrepreneurs engaged in activities such as manufacturing, printing/publication, food items, handlooms and tailoring are found to be abundant in

Aizawl district of Mizoram. Almost 75 per cent of the registered enterprises (2,027 out of 2,718) are located in Aizawl district. Therefore, it was thought that Aizawl district represents the whole of Mizoram. The size of the sample was fixed at 20 per cent of the enterprises in Aizawl district. Accordingly, a total of 406 enterprises (383 enterprises in Aizawl urban and 23 enterprises in Aizawl rural) were selected. The sample was drawn by using random sampling technique. However, in the course of identifying the sample enterprises for the field study, it was found that some of the enterprises were either non-functional or closed. In such instances, those sample units were selected randomly again. Information from the sample entrepreneurs was collected by administering a schedule. Data were collected at the place of work of the entrepreneurs. The data thus collected were further supplemented by unstructured interviews with the entrepreneurs.

The sample units drawn on the basis of random sampling technique fall under seven groups of business activities as follows, and 58 enterprises were selected from each group.

- Food items: This includes enterprises engaged in food items and other related products such as milk and milk products, biscuits and bakery.
- Wooden: This group includes enterprises engaged in making and repairing wooden objects and structures, cane and bamboo products.
- Repair services: All types of repair services are included here ranging from small electronic items to big machinery.
- Steel/metal: This includes the enterprises which are engaged in making, fabricating, repairing, constructing or manufacturing steel structures.
- Printing/publication: This group includes those who are engaged in all types of printing and publishing activities.
- Handlooms: The enterprises who engage in weaving of clothes and resell them to the market through middlemen or directly to the customers are included in this group.
- Tailoring: All enterprises involved in sewing of clothes made from cotton, wool, embroidery, etc., and making clothes or curtains are included here.

Results and Discussion

Ambitions

It is the ambition that directs man's action. The common saying that 'aimless life is a goalless game' emphasises the importance of ambition in life. But ambitions may differ from individual to individual on the basis of personal taste and preferences and from family to family depending upon the circumstances and the priorities which they have set for themselves. Sometimes, personal aspirations come in the way of family aspirations. So far as the ambitions of the respondents of the present study are concerned, the information is collected by administering schedule, asking them to mark any three out of six given ambitions, in order of importance. Based on the prior research on entrepreneurial motives (Bruyat & Julien, 2001; Collins & Moore, 1964; Manimala & Pearson, 1998; Mitchell, 2004), the ambitions that are given to them are shown in Table 1. They include—to continue family business, to make money, to secure self-employment, to fulfil the ambition of spouse/parents, to gain social prestige and 'others' (for those possible ambitions which are not given in the schedule). The entrepreneurs who marked 'others' column were requested to specify the reasons. However, no entrepreneur in the present study marked 'others'.

Table 1. Entrepreneur's Ambitions

S. No.	Ambitions	Entrepreneurs' Ranking of the Ambition					Rank
		Number One	Number Two	Number Three	Weighted Score	Rating (%)	
1	To continue family business	19	44	21	166	9.0	3
2	To make money	291	86	13	1,058	57.5	1
3	To secure self-employment	96	144	17	593	32.2	2
4	To fulfil the ambitions of spouse	–	4	2	10	0.5	5
5	To fulfil the ambitions of parents	–	6	2	14	0.8	4
6	To gain social prestige	–	–	–	–	–	6
7	Any other ambitions (please specify)	–	–	–	–	–	
8	No response	–	122	351	–	–	
	Total	406	406	406	1,841	100	

Source: The authors.

It can be seen from the table that 'to make money' is ranked first in the overall ranking of all ambitions (57.5% of rating). Altogether, its rating is higher than half of the overall ranking; this implies that the pull of money-making ambition is very high in the minds of the sample entrepreneurs. Money making ambition was one of the most important factors which induced entrepreneurship in other parts of India also. In a study conducted by Matharu, Changle, and Chowdhury (2016) among the woman entrepreneurs in Indore and nearby areas revealed that the important entrepreneurial motivational factors are ambition, supportive environment, professional competence, confidence, affluence, independence, and responsive and work environment. In another study undertaken by Sadhak (1989), monetary consideration is the most important motivating factor among small entrepreneurs. Research evidences confirmed that the economic considerations have been the major motivation to take up entrepreneurial careers (Franck, 2012; Laxmana & Ishwara, 2008). Drucker (1970) viewed profits as the necessary concern of being in and staying in business.

'To secure self-employment' stands second in the overall ranking (32.2% of rating). This means that many of the entrepreneurs in the present study wanted to become their own boss. That means many of the entrepreneurs want to become a job giver rather than a job seeker. 'To continue family business' ranked third in the overall ranking (9% of rating). The other ambitions, namely 'to fulfil the ambitions of spouse/parents' and 'to gain social prestige' were not considered as the most important ones by a majority of the sample entrepreneurs.

Compelling Factors

In some cases, it is the compulsion rather than the ambition that leads a person into entrepreneurship. The compelling factors of the entrepreneurs under the present study are shown in Table 2. They are unemployment, dissatisfaction with the occupation so far pursued, to utilise retirement money of parents, to make use of technical and professional skills and loss of previous job. It can be seen from the table that the most important reason that has compelled the sample entrepreneurs into entrepreneurial career was 'unemployment' (71.4% of rating). A total of 95.8 per cent of the entrepreneurs mentioned

Table 2. Compelling Factors

S. No.	Compelling Factors	Entrepreneurs' Ranking of Compelling Factors					
		Number One	Number Two	Number Three	Weighted Score	Rating (%)	Rank
1	Unemployment	342	34	13	1,107	71.4	1
2	Dissatisfaction with the occupation so far pursued	22	31	11	139	9.0	2
3	To utilise retirement money of parents	14	36	–	114	7.4	4
4	To make use of technical and professional skills	2	21	2	50	3.2	5
5	Loss of previous job	23	24	6	123	7.9	3
6	Any other reasons (please specify)	3	4	–	17	1.1	6
7	No response	–	256	374	–	–	
	Total	406	406	406	1,550	100.0	

Source: The authors.

Note: Other reasons include death of main earner of family members and change of ownership from parents.

unemployment either as the first, second or third compelling reason. As shown in the Table 2, 342 of them ranked it the first compelling reason, 34 of them as the second reason and 13 of them as the third reason. The problem of unemployment has become a big issue in the state of Mizoram. Statistics revealed that there were large numbers of registered job seekers in Mizoram. Various factors have caused this problem. There is enormous increase in the population every year. Besides this, every year hundreds of young graduates are produced from colleges and universities who are seeking jobs. Although Mizoram ranked third in literacy in the country (as per the 2011 Census), many educated youth in the state are jobless. This is mainly because of low industrialisation in the state. The service sector that has been a major growth driver in the Indian economy has not developed sufficiently in the state, although its contribution to the GSDP at current price was 57.69 per cent in 2013–2014 (Government of Mizoram, 2015).

The second important compelling reason which induced the entrepreneurs was ‘dissatisfaction with the occupation so far pursued’ (9% of rating). Here the line of demarcation between the first and the second compelling reasons is very high. Many of them have turned to entrepreneurship because they were dissatisfied with their previous job and they felt that their aspirations were more than what normally jobs provided. And they also felt that their abilities were certainly more than what the job required. May be they want to capitalise their extra capabilities by starting their own enterprises. Agriculturists and business persons also might have realised that entrepreneurship is a gainful proposition. This may be the reason why dissatisfaction with the occupation so far pursued is ranked second in the list of compelling factors. In another study undertaken by Kumar (1990), among the compelling factors, dissatisfaction with the previous job was one of the most significant compelling factors that made the respondents to become entrepreneurs.

The third compelling reason is ‘loss of previous job’ (7.9% of rating). ‘To utilise retirement money of parents’ is ranked fourth (7.4% of rating). ‘To make use of technical and professional skills’ is ranked fifth in the list of compelling factors (3.2% of rating). Every job has a requirement of formal qualification. Thus, for persons with no or little formal education, self-employment or entrepreneurship may be the only possible career prospect. In other cases, it may not be lack of employment but non-suitability or unattractiveness that may lead people to pursue a career in entrepreneurship.

It is interesting to note that all the 406 entrepreneurs have responded to the questions relating to the entrepreneurial ambitions and compulsions. However, it is difficult to draw a demarcating line between ambition and compelling factors. What is an ambition for some entrepreneurs may be a compelling reason for some other entrepreneurs. It is the attitude of the entrepreneur that makes the difference. For example, making use of idle funds may be an ambition for one entrepreneur whereas a different entrepreneur may take it as a compulsion.

Facilitating Factors

Ambitions or compulsions alone may not make a person an entrepreneur. The encouragement that the entrepreneurs get from the family members, relatives and friends, the experience gained in the previous employment in the same or other line of activities, the skills or property acquired or inherited, etc., are also the factors which influence entrepreneurship.

It can be seen from Table 3 that 'success stories of entrepreneurs' was ranked first of all facilitating factors (58.9% of rating). This shows that the success of others in business can have an inspirational effect on potential entrepreneurs. The influence of success stories of entrepreneurs has been recognised as an important factor which facilitates entrepreneurship. The success stories of entrepreneurs not only generate entrepreneurship but also improve the quality. Hence, there is a need to incorporate such stories in school curriculum and even in newspapers. Indian school curriculum is known for the inclusion of a few lessons on political leaders and social reformers. Success stories in business are conspicuous by their non-inclusion (Rao, 1986). Being a close-knit society, in Mizoram, people in general depend on informal sources of communication for sharing information and the news events.

Table 3. Facilitating Factors

S. No.	Facilitating Factors	Entrepreneurs' Ranking of Facilitating Factors					
		Number One	Number Two	Number Three	Weighted Score	Rating (%)	Rank
1	Success stories of entrepreneurs	142	112	33	683	58.9	1
2	Previous experience in the same line of business	41	25	2	175	15.1	2
3	Property inherited	13	5	1	50	4.3	5
4	Property acquired	22	6	1	79	6.8	4
5	Property belonging to spouse	11	6	–	45	3.9	6
6	Advice or encouragement of family members	24	8	1	89	7.7	3
7	Advice or encouragement of relatives and friends	9	3	2	35	3.0	7
8	Advice or encouragement of government agencies	1	–	–	3	0.3	8
9	Advice or encouragement of banks	–	–	–	–	–	–
10	Any other reasons	–	–	–	–	–	–
11	No response	143	241	366	–	–	–
	Total	406	406	406	1,159	100.0	

Source: The authors.

Even today, people remember and often discuss the success stories of Mizo business people such as Mr Pachhunga, Mr Hrangbana and Mr Buangthanga. Such business people run their retail and wholesale business houses under severe constraints such as lack of transportation facility, lack of financial support from banks and lack of government support. The first generation of entrepreneurs in Mizoram had conducted their business activities not only for profit but also with a social objective. They had to struggle even to buy certain essential products like common salt by travelling to nearby places namely Burma (now Myanmar) and Silchar (Assam). Pachhunga and Hrangbana were mainly responsible for establishment of colleges in the state. For example, Aijal College which was established in 1958 was renamed as Pachhunga University College. Similarly Hrangbana started a college in 1984 which is known as Government Hrangbana College.

Though Mizoram is one of the few states in the country with high rate of literacy, common people are not very much aware of the national development. Only highly educated people are aware of the national events and issues. Even today, the local newspapers and local channels do not cover the national events. Rarely the local newspapers and the local channels cover business news. Therefore, there is no possibility of getting successful entrepreneurial stories. However, it is heartening to note that many national newspapers, national magazines and journals are gaining more circulation especially in Aizawl. The young generation has better access to the internet. Even the local channels have started telecasting business news, interviews and discussions with the local business people. However, the local media have yet to play a proactive role in popularising the business news and in cultivating investment attitude among the people.

‘Previous experience in the same line of businesses’ is ranked second by the entrepreneurs of the study (15.1% of rating). This implies that the entrepreneurs gained self-confidence out of previous employment or experience. It is better to get training instead of straight away setting up an enterprise. Such experience instils confidence among the youth and serves as the nursery for building enterprises, and accelerates the process of generation of entrepreneurship (Murthy, 1989). As the sample entrepreneurs were engaged in those businesses such as carpentry, steel/metal making, handlooms, tailoring and printing which require a high degree of technical skills, it is but natural to acquire these skills in previous employment before starting their own enterprise.

The third facilitating factor was ‘advice or encouragement of family members’ (7.7% of rating). Family members may have different roles to play in making decisions within the family. A supportive family is the bedrock upon which lives and careers are built and this may not be more true anywhere than in entrepreneurship. In cases where the decision of the individual to enter entrepreneurial activity is in conformity with the established family tradition, normally one may not face any resistance. However, in the case of first-generation entrepreneurs, it is natural that there is some resistance because of their non-conforming behaviour even as, in fact, they might be in greater need of the support of family. The problem is even more severe for women desirous of a career in entrepreneurship. But over the years, things have been changing for the good. Increasingly, the parents are taking an open view on the aspirations of their children and departures from the traditions are taken not as non-conforming behaviour. Family is not only a source of the first social approval of entrepreneurial identity but is also a great source for investment of money, security of subsistence and so on. Hence, family support could be an important facilitator for setting up business (Juyal & Singh, 2009).

‘Property acquired’ (6.8% of rating) and ‘property inherited’ (4.3% of rating) were rated more or less equally, sharing fourth and fifth ranks respectively. Property belonging to spouse (3.9% of rating), advice or encouragement of relatives and friends (3% of rating) and the influence of advice or encouragement of government agencies (0.3% of rating) in facilitating entrepreneurship was not significant.

Conclusion

The above discussion reveals that ambitions alone are not enough for entrepreneurship to emerge. They are to be transformed into reality and entrepreneurs have to work in order to give shape to these ambitions.

The most important ambition that has led the entrepreneurs to start entrepreneurial venture was 'to make money'. The most important reason to have compelled them to go into entrepreneurship was 'unemployment'. It was further found that among the factors which facilitate the emergence of entrepreneurship, 'success stories of entrepreneurs' was most significant. It is found in the present study that unemployment was the most important compelling reason for opting to be an entrepreneur. Of the sample entrepreneurs, 95.8 per cent mentioned unemployment either as the first, second or third compelling reason. Young people even today have some reluctance in assuming calculated risk in choosing business as their career. The Mizoram government no longer would assume the responsibility of providing large-scale employment for educated youth in the government sector. In Mizoram, rich people and eminent people are generally from families belonging to politicians and high officials of government. Young generations always want to follow in the footsteps of these people. It is necessary to change the mindset of the young people. It is not difficult to mould the young minds than the matured minds. Therefore, in order to inculcate the entrepreneurial attitude in the minds of young generation, entrepreneurial education needs to be introduced and strengthened, especially from the secondary school level. This will help the young generation in visualising their career in entrepreneurship rather than in government sector. It is also desirable for potential entrepreneurs to acquire a few years of experience in the line of activity they intend venturing into. This would give them an insight into the functioning of a business enterprise and will therefore prepare them to better face the challenges ahead in the start-up and management of their enterprises. Almost 75 per cent of the enterprises are located in Aizawl district and the remaining 25 per cent of the enterprises are distributed in other districts of the state. It is suggested that the government should evolve a policy to cater to the needs of rural areas also, without focusing on Aizawl district only. The government, along with the entrepreneurship support organisations, should play a more proactive role with a view to tapping those rural small entrepreneurs who have potential to become successful entrepreneurs, so that there would be better inclusive growth. It is desirable that the entrepreneurship support organisations should give priority to the potential entrepreneurs who are below 30 years of age, who want to start their entrepreneurial activities by 'ambition' and not by 'compulsion'. Preference should be given to these young potential entrepreneurs in extending support so that they will be motivated to take calculated risks out of willingness to take up challenging tasks than out of compulsion.

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