

# Social Norms Influencing the Performance of the Youth Owned Small Micro-Enterprises in Mihuu Ward, Bungoma County, Kenya

By

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### **Abstract**

An entrepreneur is a person who is always looking for change, responds to change, and exploits it as an opportunity. With adequate requirement of capital, education facility and own creativity, intelligence, energetic youth can be turned into decent business people. The problem in this study is the high level of poverty amongst the youth who seem to be idle and not earning for themselves but simply being senior dependants on the few in the society who appear to be doing well. This study has both theoretical and practical implications for the future of Small Micro Enterprises in Kenya. The study used mainly the knowledge Spill over theory and the traits theory. The dependent variable is business performance while the independent one is cultural factors. The design of the study was descriptive and used mixed methodology because it involved both quantitative and qualitative techniques. The location of the study was in Mihuu ward in Bungoma County with a target population of 32 youth groups with a census of the entire study groups. The data collection instrument was questionnaires and interviews and pretesting of the questionnaire was done in one of the market centres within the study population. The researcher considered the analysis phase right from the beginning because the kind of data obtained can affect the choice of analysis procedures. In planning for research, the researcher intends to keep in mind the link between questions intended to provide the research answer, the data and their analysis. For the quantitative data, the researcher used SPSS technique in analyzing the data descriptively collected. The findings showed that the cultural values and practices have a significant impact in determining the performance of these enterprises by influencing the group formation, bonding, cohesiveness and goal achievement. These tenets of the culture are thus able to inculcate entrepreneurial traits into the members of the community. The study concludes by saying that cultural factors have a significant impact on the performance of youth - owned enterprises in Mihuu Ward, Bungoma County. The study recommends that the YEDF considers the social cultural factors as important determinants in promoting the use of YEDF.

**Keywords**: budget, business, culture, creativity, efficiency, investment

## **Background to the Study**

An entrepreneur is a person who is always looking for change, responds to change, and exploits it as an opportunity. With adequate requirement of capital, education facility and own creativity, intelligence, energetic youth can be turned into decent business people. Although there has been considerable research based on psychological and economic approaches to entrepreneurship, the influence of socio-cultural factors; religion, ethnicity, family, physical attributes, economic status and education make an impact on entrepreneurial development process in developing countries. In Bangladesh, the private sector has a vital role to play in raising the economy and creating employment opportunities. The private sector is the driving gear of innovation in all sectors of the economy. Entrepreneurship in Bangladesh currently thrives in two sectors of the economy -- among the poorest of the poor (14 million households) and among the well-off (about 2.5 million households). The reason for this is that both of these sectors have access to institutional financing (Akhter & Sumi, 2014).

Burns (2010), said that over the last century, until the 1960s, the U.K. saw a decrease in the importance of small firms, measured in terms of their share of manufacturing employment and output. The proportion of the U.K. labour force classified as self-employed was at its lowest point in the 1960s. It was no wonder that Bolton Committee (op. cit.) was set up in the late 1960s to investigate the role of small firms in the economy, concluded that the small firm sector was in a state of long-term decline, both in size, and its share of economic activity. From the 1970s the situation has been reversed. Since then small firms have increased in importance, measured in terms of their share of manufacturing employment and output. The number of small firms continues to rise as does the number of people classified as self-employed. In 1979 there were only 2.4 million S.M.E.s in the U.K. By 1999 this had grown to 3.67 million. The number has remained approximately constant since 1994.



Manoj (2004), a programme director of M.E.M.F.D. argued that Microenterprise and micro –finance development have emerged as major strategies to combat the twin issues of poverty and unemployment that continue to pose a major threat to the policy and economy of both the developed and developing countries.

While micro-finance as a means to empower the poor has been quite successful in many countries, the utilization of credit for adequate income and employment generation is a cause of concern for most of the stakeholders. Moreover, there is a growing concern that micro- enterprise development programmes are not successful to the desired extent because of the lack of adequate and timely availability of micro-finance, more often than not have been dealt with in isolation without any synergy between the two.

The author continued to argue that a number of agencies and NGOs are getting involved in both these developmental initiatives. However, there is a critical need to develop capacities of professionals from the development agencies to manage these initiatives. This programme has been developed to build managerial capacities of development to enable them to acquire and develop management skills, review current developments and adopt strategies to successfully implement the twin initiatives viz. micro-enterprise and micro-finance.

Paul (2004), the chairman of United Nations Commission argued that developing countries need to encourage small-scale businesses in order to create jobs, income and opportunities for the poor. The report by the U.N. Commission on private sector and development showed that by promoting access to bank loans, encouraging job skills, and training, setting up simple fairer rules and regulations can all help small-scale business to flourish in developing countries, particularly those ones in the African continent. The Co-chairman of the Commission went ahead to say that there is a new pillar of development unleashing local private enterprises supported by strong indigenous domestic institutions.

The report further highlighted that the private sector can provide a wider choice for consumer goods and services often at a lower cost. The report in conclusion emphasized on the need for large multi-national corporations to be encouraged so as to work with small-scale businesses in order to out - source work or to be suppliers of goods and services.

A report by the ministry of trade and industry reported that there has been a general recognition that the Micro and Small Enterprise (MSE.) activities constitute a viable and Dynamic Avenue through which Kenya's national development goals of employment creation and poverty alleviation can be pursued. The MSE activities are contributing at least 18.4% of country's GDP and 25% of non-agricultural GDP, employing close to 2.4 million people or approximately 17% of the total labour force of which 66% are in the rural areas. In terms of income contribution, workers in the M.S.E sector earn an average income of Shs.6, 000 per month, which is 2.5 times more than the minimum statutory wages in the formal sector on (PRSP, 2001),.

The Youth Enterprise Development Fund was conceived in June 2006 by the government as a strategic move towards arresting unemployment which is virtually a youth problem. The main mission of the fund is to increase economic opportunities for, participation by, Kenyan youth in nation building through enterprise development and strategic partnerships. The fund targets all forms of youth owned enterprises whether owned individually, as a company, in groups, in cooperatives or any other legal forms of business ownership; Seventy five percent (75%) of those unemployed are the youth. The government set aside Kenya shillings One billion (Ksh. 1 billion) in the 2006/07 budget to fast-track this noble and timely initiative. According to the YEDF report 2011. Entrepreneurship training and provision of appropriate Business Development Services are key to the Fund's achievement of its mandate. Besides ensuring that the youth have adequate skills, it also assists them in identifying and tapping into business opportunities, while embracing modern business management techniques. The objectives of the YEDF is to Provide loans to existing micro-finance institutions (MFIs), registered nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) involved in micro financing, and savings and credit co-operative organizations (SACCOs) for on-lending to youth enterprises. The fund was also established to facilitate investment in micro, small and medium enterprises oriented commercial infrastructure such as business or industrial parks, markets or business incubators that will be beneficial to youth enterprises (Kanyari & Namusonge, 2013).

In Mihuu Ward where land is increasingly becoming limited, efforts should be geared towards focusing on empowering the youth groups in the sectors like: farming technologies such as green houses, small-sized livestock like rabbit keeping, dairy cows, goats, poultry and fish farming. This will create jobs for the youth and other local residents through agriculture. This way, the researcher believes the respective youth groups in Mihuu



ward who practice farming are not over reliant on employment but are involved in self-reliance projects in order to create jobs, income and opportunities for the poor in promoting enterprise development.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The task in this study was to analyse how the youth cope with the growing level of poverty, unemployment, changing family patterns and deteriorating environmental and health conditions in Mihuu ward, Webuye East Sub-County, Bungoma County. This is because the economic growth rate in Kenya and Bungoma County in particular has not been sufficient enough to create employment opportunities specifically to the energetic youth in order to absorb the increasing labour force of about 500,000 people in the country annually as only 25% of the youth are absorbed. This high level of poverty among the youth in Mihuu ward makes it necessary for both national and local initiatives towards poverty alleviation through short-term, medium-term and long-term investments. The specific problem that the study addressed in the high poverty levels among the youths due to poor performance of the enterprises they set up.

#### Literature Review

Due to societies being endowed by the nature with different physical environments, members of society must adopt environmentally relevant patterns of behaviour to achieve success. These environmentally relevant patterns of behaviour lead to the formation of different cultural values in different societies, some of which influence the decision to create new businesses. Thus, culture, as distinct from political, social, technological or economic contexts, has relevance for economic behaviour and entrepreneurship. Socio-cultural environment in broad terms consists of both the social system and the culture of a people. It refers primarily to man created intangible elements which affect people's 'behaviour, relationship, perception and way of life, and their survival and existence. In other words, the social-cultural environment consist of all elements, conditions and influences which shape the personality of an individual and potentially affect his attitude, disposition, behaviour, decisions and activities. Such elements include beliefs, values, attitudes, habits, forms of behaviour and life styles of persons as developed from cultural, religious, educational and social conditioning, (Bennett and Kassarjian, 1972; Adeleke et.al, 2003). These elements are learned and are shared by a society and transmitted from generation to generation within that society. Thus, social-cultural environment, in relation to entrepreneurship, can be defined as consisting of all the elements of the social system and culture of a people which positively or negatively affect and influence entrepreneurial emergence, behaviour and performance, and entrepreneurship development in general. All such elements which condition the values, thinking and action of an individual with respect to entrepreneurship comprise the social-cultural environment of entrepreneurship (Akhter and Sumi, 2014).

Steel (1993), in his book presents a long standing practitioner's view on policy biases, market distortions and other factors, which pre-empt or prevent the growth of Small Micro Enterprises (SMEs). The factor that affect the availability or opportunities and resources for S.M.Es as well as entrepreneurs' ability and willingness to respond are discussed under four headings, namely investors, environment, inputs and facilitating institutions.

With regard to investors he emphasizes policies which expand domestic demand in particular through agriculture. Many other measures designed to improve SMEs productive capabilities are likely to fail in the absence of growing demand. Trade policies are considered important in creating new opportunities for SMEs. Further by improving access to imported inputs SMEs will be in a better position to adjust to new market conditions.

With regard to the environment, policies should redirect entrepreneurship away from rent thus seeking towards socially relevant productive activities and give priority to training in Entrepreneurial capabilities, especially technology and markets. He argued that African policy makers should take into account the importance of the following as key issues which shape the SMEs environment: Positive attitudes towards the private sector, stability of the economy and particularly economic policy and minimal regulations as at the latter can cause evasion and non-compliance. Small Micro Enterprises are small buyers of inputs. Efforts on the part of SMEs to compensate for this disadvantage should not be thwarted by policies. Access to Equipment should not be made difficult by restrictive legislation such as Import Licensing; Restrictive labour legislation may push SMEs into non-compliance and prevent other SMEs from growing.

With regard to facilitating institutions, he gave most attention to policies that make the financial system more responsive to the needs of the S.M.Es. Although a low propensity of banks to provide loans to SMEs may be caused by pre-conceptions or sound business practices, measures can be adopted to improve the system for this



market segment. For very Small Micro Enterprises informal schemes that provide credit and mobilize local savings are considered desirable.

Mathenge (2004) in his article argued that a cross-section of professional and trade associations have raised concerns that the government has done too much talking but little action to deliver on its promises to revive the economy, improve the infrastructure and create jobs.

Kenya needs legislation to allow information sharing by credit institutions so as to lend to more people with confidence and less strictures. There is need to automate government departments so that information like research or registration of a business at the registrar's office is done smoothly and speedily. All roads in industrial zones in Nairobi, Mombasa, Thika, Nanyuki, Kisumu, Eldoret and other areas are in tatters. The feeder roads and highways are a nightmare to motorists, and some have completely fallen apart. The cost of power to local industries is higher and therefore their products cannot compete with imports for example from Egypt and South Africa where power is much cheaper. A second telecommunications operator to compete with the costly and unreliable monopoly of Telecom has not yet been licensed.

Manufacturers want the state to reduce tax on power production inputs to ease the burden on manufacturers. When it comes to procurement and awarding government contracts that spread money into the economy, the situation is bleak. It takes up to six months to engage suppliers or contractors due to lengthy procurement procedures that require up to 20 approval and counter-approvals and signatures. There are out-dated laws and procedures that hinder business. The Registered Land Act, on which many financial transactions are hinged, which was a revision of 1892 property Act of India.

Others are the Archaic Evidence Act that still cannot admit Electronic evidence despite the great technological advancement the world has made in that direction of the Auctioneers Act and Companies Act. While other nations such as Uganda, Tanzania and Rwanda – are anticipating situations making appropriate legislative preparations to enable business to respond in time, the Kenya Government seems to be ignorant or afraid of the reality, and continues to live on political populism.

The Government's aspiration to create 500,000 jobs annually is greatly undermined by its failure to facilitate access to credit by productive individuals and enterprises. The Federation of Kenya Employers (FKE) Chairman said that economic growth had been hampered by rampant insecurity, the stalled privatisation process in the telecommunication sector and poor infrastructure across the board.

Kinusu et al. (2004) argued that the launch of MSME competitiveness project is an important step in addressing impediments for the growth in Kenya and helping in the graduation of the informal sector to the formal sector. This is an ambitious objective but it is an important and possible one. The economic recovery strategy (ERS) sets out a programme recovery centred on a reanimated private sector, one that is largely composed of MSMEs.

However, as in many developing countries, SMEs in Kenya have been constrained by lack of access to information, finance and business development services to improve their competitiveness and productivity. In addition, SMEs lack networks and information of larger corporate and cannot access markets successfully. While the over 40 commercial banks in Kenya have enough liquidity to set in motion, significant growth in the small business sector, these institutions often lack the necessary know-how to lend effectively to this segment.

Access to credit is limited by the relatively high collateral requirements that the small firms find difficult to meet. And although entrepreneurs in this sector may have the requisite resilience and work ethic, survey shows that the broad range of skills necessary for sustained business success are still in short supply.

Another hindrance is the cumbersome registration process and general administrative barriers, including sector licenses. The World Bank administrative barrier study indicates that it could take on average 60 days to register a business in Kenya and costs U.S \$ 195, which does not include the cost in terms of lost management time and unauthorized payments. However, the World Bank is assisting the ministry of trade and other relevant ministries in informing business environment through activities such as streamlining the number of licenses required by business, it is actively finding ways to assist in addressing the challenges of S.M.E. development. They are committed to working together to build synergies among these programmes and maximize impact to the client. On the agenda is to revive the private sector and investment and specifically M.S.M.E development feature prominently in the government's strategy for raising incomes and employment. This sector cannot be ignored especially if the objective of equitable and shared growth in Kenya is to be achieved.



### Research Methodology

The location of the study was in Mihuu ward in Bungoma County with a target population of 32 youth groups with a census of the entire study groups. The data collection instrument was questionnaires and interviews and pretesting of the questionnaire was done in one of the market centres within the study population. The researcher considered the analysis phase right from the beginning because the kind of data obtained can affect the choice of analysis procedures. In planning for research, the researcher intends to keep in mind the link between questions intended to provide the research answer, the data and their analysis. For the quantitative data, the researcher used SPSS technique in analyzing the data descriptively collected. The findings showed that the cultural values and practices have a significant impact in determining the performance of these enterprises by influencing the group formation, bonding, cohesiveness and goal achievement. These tenets of the culture are thus able to inculcate entrepreneurial traits into the members of the community. The study concludes by saying that cultural factors have a significant impact on the performance of youth – owned enterprises in Mihuu Ward, Bungoma County. The study recommends that the YEDF considers the social – cultural factors as important determinants in promoting the use of YEDF.

## Results

Table showing the results for Influence of Social Norms on Performance of Youth-Owned Firms

SD Variable items NA D SA SD A Mean Communal social norms are highly supportive of 2.3 2.7 18.4 77.6 4.73 0.59 success through one's efforts Communal social norms emphasize self -2.7 67.8 30.5 4.30 0.47 sufficiency, autonomy and personal initiative Communal social norms encourage 1.1 2.8 40.2 48.9 8.0 3.88 0.71 entrepreneurial risk - taking 32.2 0.74 Communal social norms encourage creativity 1.6 62.6 2.6 2.54 and innovativeness Communal social emphasize 2.9 0.6 9.2 53.4 33.9 4.12 0.93 norms responsibility

**Table 1: Communal Social norms** 

### Source: Research data (2019)

Table 1 highlights the various dimensions of the communal social norms that tend to affect entrepreneurial firms. As it can be deduced from statistics, the social norms affect the entrepreneurship by supporting individual efforts geared towards successful living (Mean = 4.73, SD = 0.59) Communal social norms also emphasize self – sufficiency, autonomy and personal initiative (Mean = 4.30, SD = 0.47) which provide the framework for the pursuance of the entrepreneurial initiatives. Further, the social norms encourage the risk – taking aspects of entrepreneurship (Mean = 3.88, SD = 0.71) and thus it can be said that the social norms promote the entrepreneurship within the community while emphasizing on the personal responsibility (Mean = 4.12, SD = 0.925). However, most respondents affirmed that social norms discourage creativity and innovativeness (Mean = 2.54, SD = 0.740).

The indications are that social norms contribute greatly to the development of the entrepreneurial spirit by infusing autonomy, personal initiative, while emphasizing on personal responsibility. The social norms as an indicator of the cultural practise of specific communities' impact on the performance and Notably, Thornton, Ribeiro-Soriano and Urbano (2011) observed a direct effect of socially-supportive cultural norms, on national entrepreneurship rates. These socio-cultural norms indirectly impact on entrepreneurial start-up success through supply-side variables (Hopp and Stephan, 2012).

Many individuals are mainly influenced by social circumstance and express a broad range of idiosyncratic motives to pursue entrepreneurial opportunities (Baker, Gedajlovic and Lubatkin, 2005). Thus, the same strong ties that enables group members to obtain privileged access to resources bar others from securing the same assets. In a similar vein, the particularistic preferences granted to members of a clan or circle of friends are commonly at the expense of the universalistic rights of others (Thornton, Ribeiro-Soriano and Urbano, 2011).



Table 2: Societal values

Variable items	NA	SD	D	A	SA	Mean	SD
The societal values intrinsically prepare one's		40.0	2.3	20.7	37.0	4.76	0.47
for life challenges							
The societal values instil individuals with	5.7	9.2	2.7	52.9	30.5	3.95	1.09
entrepreneurial values							
The societal values confer individuals with a		2.3	2.3	36.8	58.6	4.54	0.63
sense of self-worth							
The societal values challenge one's self beliefs,	5.2	2.3	2.9	58.0	31.6	4.10	0.94
ambition and achievement							
The societal values impact practical knowledge	7.5	4.0	1.7	43.1	43.7	4.12	1.13
on commercial activities							
The societal values inculcate accountability and	9.8	4.0	4.0	42.5	39.7	3.99	1.22
responsibility							

Source: Research data (2019)

Table 2 highlights the respondents' views on how societal values influences entrepreneurships. The statistics show that the respondents viewed the values preparing individuals for life challenges (Mean = 4.76, SD = 0.47) by instilling individuals with entrepreneurial ideals (Mean = 3.95, SD = 1.09). Further, the communal values are important in inculcating sense of self – worth (Mean = 4.54, SD = 0.64) while challenging one's self beliefs, ambition and achievements (Mean = 4.10, SD = 0.94). The respondents also affirmed that the values impact practical knowledge on pursuance of commercial activities (Mean = 4.12, SD = 1.13) while inculcating accountability and responsibility (Mean = 3.99, SD = 1.22).

There are various ways that the respondents suggested were the most appropriate to the generation of entrepreneurship spirit. This would include; life challenges, sense of self – worth, self-belief, ambition and achievement. These constituent elements would be enhanced by the accountability, responsibility and practical knowledge which the respondents were able to draw from the societal values. All these aspects are drawn from the one's own culture which is known to shape individuals' thoughts about risk, reward, and opportunity, and the way they think about progress (Javidan et al., 2006) and therefore entrepreneurial intentions are in line with the wider societal expectations of taking charge of one's life and working towards the achievement of that goal (Hopp and Stephan, 2012).

Because societies are endowed by nature with different physical environments, members of society must adopt environmentally relevant patterns of behaviour to achieve success. These environmentally relevant patterns of behaviour lead to the formation of different cultural values (Thornton, Ribeiro-Soriano and Urbano, 2011). Supportive environments which allow for such experimentation have a greater tolerance towards making mistakes and failures, which is crucial for learning and developing mastery. A society is a series of connected or tied nodes of individuals (Thornton, Ribeiro-Soriano and Urbano, 2011). These network forms a set of relationship that defines the perceptions of a community or more general notions of community in a society. Thus, socially supportive cultural environments enhance individuals' self-efficacy beliefs increasing their faith in their abilities to master challenges (Hopp and Stephan, 2012).

**Table 3: Customs and Beliefs** 

Variable items	NA	SD	D	A	SA	Mean	SD
The communal customs encourage one to be	1.7	1.1	2.9	13.2	81.0	4.71	0.63
independent and self – reliant							
The traditional way of life inducts one to be	0.6	1.1	2.9	28.2	67.2	4.27	0.75
entrepreneur							
The communal customs encourage teamwork and	1.1	1.7	4.0	25.9	67.2	4.39	0.85
collaborations							
The communal beliefs orient one towards gainful	5.2	2.9	9.2	23.6	59.2	3.57	1.45
economic activities							
The shared beliefs restrain one from pursuing	1.1	51.7	18.0	17.8	11.8	2.57	0.81
personal interest							
The communal beliefs accord honour to successful	1.2	1.1	6.9	24.7	66.1	4.32	0.66
individuals							



### Source: Research data (2019)

The statistics on Table 3 concerns the customs and beliefs held by the community with regard to the entrepreneurship. The statistics show that customs encourage independence and self – reliance (Mean = 4.71, SD = 0.63) by inducting and orienting individuals to pursuance of entrepreneurship (Mean = 4.27, SD = 0.75). Further, the

Customs encourage teamwork and collaboration among the community members (Mean = 4.39, SD = 0.85) while orienting one towards gainful economic activities (Mean = 4.27, SD = 0.75). The communal shared beliefs do not restrain individual pursuance of the personal interest (Mean = 3.57, SD = 0.81) however, it accords honour and recognises successful entrepreneurs (Mean = 4.32, SD = 0.66).

As indicated, the communal customs and beliefs influence entrepreneurship by encouraging and promoting independence, teamwork and collaboration among the community members while providing guidance on the pursuance of lawful gainful employment of personal interest. This is evident through the recognition and honouring of successful entrepreneurs within the community. Culture is a large component of his or her self-concept and will have a strong and pervasive impact on his or her beliefs which in every culture, people to uphold beliefs different from those typical. (Leung et al., 2005). Hopp and Stephan, (2012) noted that entrepreneurship should thrive in socio-cultural environments which support performance-based behaviours including taking initiative, working to high standards, and achieving success through one's own personal effort rather than through status or inheritance.

### Conclusion

The communal social norms are able to bring individuals together to form a group which forms the basis of the youth – owned enterprises. The tight bonds created by the norms enable the groups to pursue shared goals which in most instances relate to establishment of entrepreneurial groups that closely match the aims and objectives of the YEDF committees.

Based on the findings and results, the study concludes that societal values have a significant effect on the performance of the youth – owned enterprises in several ways. The societal values form the glue that holds the group together and thus promote the existence of the entrepreneurial groups. These values which range from communal ideas, ways of living, opinions hold a great sway in determining the direction in which the community will take and thus in the cases of the entrepreneurs, the largely determine the direction of the youth - owned enterprise.

The communal customs and beliefs of the community form the traditions, beliefs and customs from which the entrepreneurs get inspiration from. Beliefs are central to faith and inculcate commitment by the group members towards the attainment of the business objectives and thus it is crucial in the determination of the success of the enterprise.

### Recommendations

Based on the findings the study recommends the following:

- i. The YEDF takes more consideration into the cultural orientation of the entrepreneurs in that the communal and societal practices have a significant impact on the performance of the youth owned enterprises.
- ii. The performance of these enterprises is also influenced by other factors which are more external to the business and thus the YEDF should be cognizant of those factors when determining the success of the enterprises.
- iii. Since this study was descriptive in design and focused on the cultural factors, other studies may focus on other socio-economic factors such as demographics which appear to influence the entrepreneurial spirits of the youth in the county.



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