

Hope and Resilience as a Management Strategy to Continue Women in Small Business -Experiences from Japan and Sri Lanka-

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Hope and Resilience as a Management Strategy to Continue Women in Small Business: Experiences from Japan and Sri Lanka

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Abstract

This study aims to identify how women in the flower business use their positive psychological capacities, hope and resilience to continue their small-scale business in Japan and Sri Lanka.

Research design is a qualitative inquiry and the total sample size of twenty women in a small scale flower business in Japan (10) and Sri Lanka (10). This research used thematic analysis and identified core categories as hope and resilience.

This research identified how hope and resilience help successfully strengthen, continue, and accomplish women in small scale flower businesses.

This research suggested practical implications: hope and resilience as a strong management practice and hope and resilience as a coping strategy to reduce stress and increase well-being.

This study may be the first known study that used women's psychological capacities in small businesses in the Asian contexts.

Keywords: psychological capacities, hope, resilience, self-efficacy, happiness, women in small business, development

Introduction

Women in business are a widely attractive business venture and identified as a dominant force in economic development (World Economic Forum, 2018). Women in business contribute to economic growth, poverty reduction, family prosperity, and employment creation. Studies acknowledged that the diversity of entrepreneurship provides avenues for women to express their business thoughts and potential successes. It is also evident that gender stereotypes, as generalised understandings about people, who create, maintain, and reproduce processes, frequently disadvantage women's business successes. This social issue has been becoming an important research theme in many societies in the world. In this way, most of the past studies of women in small businesses have been demonstrated considerably on two significant perspectives; on the one hand, studies have predominantly examined gender (womanliness) as an important limiting factor for the survival of women in business. Fewer studies have been conducted to discuss women's entrepreneurial competencies, expressions, potential talents, and emotions. On the other hand, many scholars looked at women entrepreneurship as a family embedded venture. Following family embedded understanding, the bulk of studies conducted to demonstrate the relationship between family capital, in terms of family social, human and financial capital, and small businesses in a different point of view (Welsh et al., 2014; Danes et al., 2009; Sorenson and Bierman, 2009; Jamali, 2008; Ahi, 2006).

Apart from the above major perspectives on women in small business, in organisational behaviour, Luthans has identified positive psychology as positively oriented human resource strengths and psychological capacities at an individual level (Luthans, 2002). However, there is no evidence to prove that the research has demonstrated the interplay of women's psychological capacities in small business, except a paper published by Jensen and Luthans (2002) about the positive psychological capacities of entrepreneurs in North America. This study focuses on positive psychological constructs, hope and resilience to understand how women in small scale business use their positive psychological capacities, hope and resilience to strengthen their small businesses in Japan and Sri Lanka. Accordingly, this study will establish practical implications for decision-makers to provide more opportunities and facilities for women in small businesses. It is also evident that no literature is found on women's positive psychological capacities in small scale businesses in

Japan and Sri Lanka. This study will provide new knowledge to the existing literature on women in small businesses and positive psychology.

Thus, this study aims to identify how women in the flower business use their positive psychological capacities, hope and resilience to strengthen their small-scale businesses in Japan and Sri Lanka. It is a prevalent social norm in both countries that the flower business, a sub-component of small-scale agricultural entrepreneurship, is considered a women-dominated industry. Despite women's growing interest in small scale business in both countries (Welsh, Memili, Kaciak, and Ochi, 2014; Fernando, 2012), their importance has received almost no attention in the literature. Section 2 looks at different theoretical concepts on women in small businesses and constructs of positive psychological capacities. The paper then goes on to explain the two research sites and methods used in Section 3. Section 4 presents the respondents' life stories to explore the research questions. The paper concludes with practical and theoretical implications in Section 5.

Women in Business: Theoretical Review

Studies on gender as a barrier to survival in business showed that women were segregated mainly into lower-level and slower-growing businesses (GEM, 2017; Global Gender Gap Report, 2016; Welsh et al., 2014; Henry and Marlow, 2014). Studies also showed that women-owned businesses tend to be less profitable than their male-owned counterparts' businesses (Narendranathan, 2016; Greene et al., 2003; Jamali, 2009). These small trade and service businesses are usually cheaper or easier to establish, and therefore women can rely on personal and family savings (Amine and Staub, 2009; Carter et al., 2001; Samaha, 2007). In many countries, female entrepreneurial ventures concentrated in sectors that focused on caring or services work, such as food production, hairdressing and beauty care (Amine and Staub, 2009; Prasada et al., 2013; Marlow and Swail, 2014). Another example is the flower growing enterprise. The flower growing industry, a sub-segment of agriculture, is considered a driver of economic growth, exports, and employment (Evers et al., 2014). The research highlighted that this small scale flower growing enterprise has 'undoubtedly energised and empowered' rural women and enhanced their livelihood, economy and biodiversity (Agoramoorthy and Hsu, 2012). It also provides both social status and identity for the family. However, one of the critical issues faced by new and growing women-owned

enterprises is the difficulty of access to networks to exchange information and assistance, often the primary source of information and contacts (Danis et al., 2011; McGowan and Hampton, 2007). Due to the lack of knowledge and training in marketing strategies, female entrepreneurs face difficulties finding new customers and increasing their market share (Buvinić et al., 2013; Minniti and Naudé, 2010).

Furthermore, female entrepreneurs are less likely to have generated credit track record, and in effect, they start with lower levels of overall capitalisation than their male counterparts (Shaw et al., 2001; Bruin et al., 2007; Samaha, 2007). The majority of existing literature acknowledged empirical studies focused on male and female comparisons, successes, failures, challenges, opportunities and constraints (Henry and Ahl, 2015; Bruin et al., 2007; Bird and Brush, 2002; Schein, 2007). It is also well documented in the literature, over 40 years, research on the area of gender and entrepreneurship has shifted from unclear explorations to highly informed conceptual frameworks from different viewpoints at different contexts (Carter et al., 2001; Carter and Shaw, 2006; De Bruin et al., 2007; Henry and Marlow, 2014; Neergaard et al., 2011; Ahl 2006).

Besides, studies also focused on the entrepreneurial competencies of women in business. Mitchelmore and Rowley (2013) noted that few studies were conducted to understand women's entrepreneurial competencies. Research also identified that men and women utilised their competencies in different ways. For example, Jennings and Cash (2006) identified that men and women in business use their competencies in different ways: social and human capital; motivations; goals and success criteria; growth orientations; strategic choices; and use of financial capital. Some research discussed women's weaker competencies in financial management compared to their men counterparts (Brush, 1992; Collerette and Aubrey, 1990; Stevenson, 1986; Chaganti, 1986). As per Man and Lau (2005), entrepreneurial competencies comprise a person's background (traits, personality, attitudes, social role and self-image) and the training and education the individuals receive from the workplaces (skills, knowledge and experience). Therefore women in business face many disadvantages when they have access to various entrepreneurial capitals because of influences of personal backgrounds and socio-economic and cultural conditions of a particular society (Carter and Shaw, 2006). Mitchelmore and Rowley (2013) identified four types of entrepreneurial competencies of women in business clustering: personal and relationship competencies, business and management competencies, entrepreneurial competencies, and human relations

competencies.

At the second level perspective, a unique highlight of women in business research is women entrepreneurship as a family embedded venture. Over the past 25 years, predominantly scholarly works in women in small and family businesses have focused on family capital. Small and medium scale businesses research identified that women, families and businesses are intertwined (Welsh et al., 2014; Ahl 2006). Business amongst families is based on a unique working environment, based on trust, loyalty, motivation, and they project an image of trustworthiness to the external environment (Ward, 1988; Tagiuri and Davis, 1996; Aronoff and Ward, 1995; Aldrich and Cliff, 2003). Accordingly, studies acknowledged that family embeddedness has a bright (or dark) side for their business (Sharma 2008; Steier et al., 2009). Family capital has been investigated in different perspectives as a critical resource for the success, failures, performance and sustainability of small scale businesses (Danes et al., 2009; Sorenson and Bierman, 2009). Scholars have identified family capital as the resources available in the family and can be used for business (Welsh et al., 2014). Family capital is defined as sub-sections of social, human and financial resources available to the business. The research identified that family social capital could not be hired or imported; it only exists within family relationships (Sharma, 2008). The moral infrastructure is also recognised as the heart of the family social capital (Dyer and Dyer, 2009; Hoffman et al., 2006; Sorenson et al., 2009; Haidt and Joseph, 2007).

Similarly, social capital is a critical resource for the family business (Surangi, 2018; Melin and Salvato, 2008). Scholars argue that social capital acts as a source of development of other forms of capital; human, financial, emotional, and physical (Steier, 2007). Family human capital includes individual family members knowledge, experience, ability, and energy available to the business. Family human capital ultimately acts as a potential source of resource advantage (Sorenson and Bierman, 2009). In this way, family human capital is considered instrumental in future development (Sorenson and Bierman, 2009; Stafford and Tews, 2009; Rothausen, 2009).

In the literature, family members who have positive relationships often share financial resources with other members (Danes et al., 2009). Family members share their finances like personal loans or gifts for different reasons, such as developing or sustaining a business (Bubolz, 2001). While engaging in this way, the family capital process enhances human capital and a sense of self-esteem, self-worth, and finally, personal mastery. It is evident that

throughout the women-owned family and small business literature, bulk of studies conducted to demonstrate the relationship between family capital (family social, human and financial capital) and small business from different viewpoints, such as trust, social, emotional and physical support (Friedemann-Sánchez, 2006) at different contexts (Welsh et al., 2014; Danes et al., 2009; Sorenson and Bierman, 2009; Jamali, 2008).

Apart from the literature discussed above on women in small businesses, positive psychology was a major modification called the new positive psychology movement. This positive approach shifted from not what is wrong with people (weakness) but what is right with people (strength) and not a vulnerability but resilience (Luthans, 2002; Seligman, 2000; Peterson, 2000). Analysing positive psychology, Luthans and colleagues identified positive psychology as positively oriented human resource strengths and psychological capacities at an individual level (Luthans, 2002). Furthermore, they identified positive psychological capacities that could be measured, developed, and managed for performance improvement in today's workplace (Luthans, 2002). These positive psychological capacities are confidence or self-efficacy, hope, optimism, subjective well being, and emotional intelligence (the acronym CHOSE) (Luthans, 2001, 2002). Highlighting the need for high hope human resources for turbulent society, Luthans et al. (2002) explained

Today's organisational environment is characterised by mergers, downsizing, bankruptcies, relentlessly advancing technology, a 24/7 highly competitive and uncertain global economy, and even the threat and horrific consequences of terrorism casting a dark cloud over people's work and daily lives. If indeed hope can be developed in human resources to help them better cope and thrive within this unprecedented environment and also have the bonus effect of making human resources more effective organisational performers, then we argue that hope has considerable power that needs to be recognised and understood to become a vital part of HRD (Luthans et al., 2002, p.305).

Snyder (2000) identified hope contains a sense of willpower (determination to begin and maintain the effort needed to achieve goals) and a sense of way power (belief in one's ability to generate successful plans and alternatives when obstacles are met in order to meet desired goals) (Luthans et al., 2002). Hope is defined as "a positive motivational state that is based on an interactively derived sense of successful (1) agency (goal-directed energy) and (2) pathways (planning to meet goals)" (Luthans, 2002; Snyder et al., 1991, p. 287). Hope is

identified as a distinct positive psychological construct; therefore, hope is different from other positive constructs (Snyder, 2002).

Another positive psychological capacity, resilience is also identified at the workplace setting as “positive psychological capacity to rebound, to ‘bounce back’ from adversity, uncertainty, conflict, failure, or even positive change, progress and increased responsibility” (Luthans, 2002, p. 702). Research has also shown that positive emotions enhance resilience (Tugade et al., 2004), and individuals can bounce back to the previous level or even above after adversity situations (Richardson, 2002). Bandura (1998) identified resiliency as “Success usually comes through renewed effort after failed attempts” (p. 62). However, there are few studies on resilience in the workplace. Available few studies have acknowledged that employees’ level of resilience correlated with job satisfaction and job commitment (Larson and Luthans, 2006). As Luthans et al. (2002) suggested, businesspeople must have hope (will power and way power) and resiliency. This is because if “they (entrepreneurs) lack sufficient hope, they (entrepreneurs) never actually launch the venture due to a lack of drive (not enough will power) or means (no pathways are formulated) to make the entrepreneurial optimism become a reality (Luthans et al., 2002, p.311). Apart from hope and resilience as positive psychological capacities, Luthans (2002) identified self-efficacy as a strong psychological construct at the individual level. Luthans (2002) is defined self-efficacy as “an individual’s conviction (or confidence) about his or her abilities to mobilise the motivation, cognitive resources, and courses of action needed to execute a specific task within a given context successfully” (p. 700). As Luthans, et al. (2007) explain, self-efficacy is a positive belief, but it is not either the ability or the outcome expectancy. Further highlighted that self-efficacy as “to best meet the inclusion criteria for Psychological Capital” (Luthans, Youssef, and Avolio, 2007, p. 549). Studies have also acknowledged that self-efficacy strongly correlates with work-related performance (Stajkovic and Luthans, 1998; Bandura, 2000).

Psychological capacities studies have been demonstrated for almost a decade in workplace settings (Dawkins et al., 2013; Luthans, 2002). However, there is no evidence to prove that scholarly work has demonstrated the interplay of women’s psychological capacities, except one paper published by Jensen and Luthans (2002) on Cross-cultural implications in entrepreneurship. Research on psychological capital repeatedly shows the need for further examinations on positive capacities’ strengths (Dawkins et al., 2013; Peterson and Luthans, 2002a; Luthans, 2002b) in entrepreneurship. The current study’s task

is to examine the role of hope, resilience, and self-efficacy in women in the flower business. Therefore, in this research, we discuss how women in flower businesses use psychological capacities, hope, resilience and self-efficacy, and how these psychological capacities act to continue their small business?

Women entrepreneurs in Japan and Sri Lanka

As with the traditional patriarchal culture in Japan, men start businesses at the double the times of women entrepreneurs (Kelly et al., 2011). On the contrary, the Annual Report on Japanese Women Entrepreneurs (2010) highlighted that women become entrepreneurs younger than men. Tamura for Japan (2002) explained that the following factors influenced women to start new businesses. Firstly, the opportunity to attain higher education contributes to this increase in women-owned businesses; the second factor contributing to this change is a drastic increase in service industries over manufacturing industries. Finally, technological development has also led women to develop home-based businesses. Citizens of Japan still believe women have significantly lower levels of capabilities, opportunity perception, and entrepreneurial intentions (Kelly et al., 2011).

Another issue identified is that Japanese women lack knowledge and skills in managing businesses (The Annual Report on Japanese Women Entrepreneurs, 2010). Access to financing is also a barrier for women to start a business (Takahashi 2002; The Japanese Ministry of Economic, Trade, and Industry 2010). It approvingly noted that Japanese women start businesses mainly for self-satisfaction, not only profit (Tamura 2002). In the global flower market, Japan consumes 6 per cent of the overall supply. Japan is the most significant producing and consuming region of North America and some European countries. The number of female entrepreneurs in Japan is still less than half that of males. Research on women entrepreneurs is also limited, and the concept of women entrepreneurship is not adequately developed (Welsh et al., 2014, in Japan). Many research highlighted the importance of further investigating entrepreneurship studies in Japan (Welsh et al., 2014; Hughes et al., 2012; Welter, 2011; Zahra, 2007).

Promoting women entrepreneurship is a top priority in Sri Lanka to reduce poverty (Institute of Policy Studies, 2014) and increase women's empowerment (Government of Sri Lanka, 2014). The Sri Lankan Constitution guarantees the fundamental rights of both men

and women to access education and employment. A more significant number of cultural conditions in Sri Lanka are conducive to expanding women's paid work than in other developing countries in the region (World Economic Forum, 2018). Presently, society values the dual-earner couple model as paid work is necessary to maintain a good family life. Studies show that women's career establishment and advancement opportunities in Sri Lanka are limited, especially for mothers with younger children (Gunawardane et al., 2006; Kodagoda and Duncan, 2010). Research on professional women with children in Sri Lanka shows how women are strongly limited by the demand for labour as consequences of macro-economic policies and the gender role assumptions of policymakers and employers as women being dependants and secondary earners (Kodagoda, 2012). These factors contribute significantly to increasing women's decisions on forming businesses. Hence, women-owned businesses are the fastest-growing segment of small to medium enterprises (SMEs) in Sri Lanka (Government of Sri Lanka, 2007).

Women's increasing self-employment choice may also reflect limited opportunities, gender-discriminatory actions and career issues in the Sri Lankan labour market. Even though a Sri Lankan woman entrepreneur was selected as the Youth Business International (YBI) Woman Entrepreneur of the Year in 2010, women's talents and potential remain largely untapped. Women entrepreneurs' activities are significantly and systematically lower than those of males in Sri Lanka. Female entrepreneurship issues and challenges are not adequately documented (Government of Sri Lanka, MDG Report, 2005). However, much motivation is given towards women entrepreneurs in Sri Lanka; societal expectations of women's roles within their families and households have not lightened. The movement of women into the flower growing and selling industries are gaining momentum in Sri Lanka. Five thousand direct employment and over 15,000 indirect employment have been borne through floriculture supplies and exports (Padmini and Kodagoda, 2017). Besides, the favourable climate condition has profited Sri Lanka to be recognised as the best source for flower production in the world. Exports of flowers have demonstrated a growth of 9 per cent from 2002 to 2007 (Government of Sri Lanka, 2007). Still, adequate information on women in small business entrepreneurship is not available due to a lack of emphasis on the subject. Therefore, further studies are needed to understand women in small scale flower businesses in Japan and Sri Lanka.

Research Method

This study's core research design is qualitative, and the total sample size is twenty women in the flower business. This intensive qualitative research aims to find out how processes happen by focusing on agency; thus, it is impossible and impractical and not necessary to do extensive research (see Mason, 2002). The sample consists of twenty women in flower businesses categorised as small scale businesses in Japan and Sri Lanka. In Japan, small business is defined as establishments that employ 4 to 299 employees and capitalisation at less than 100 million yen. In Sri Lanka, those with fewer than 49 employees and capital investment of less than 5 million are defined as small scale businesses (Department of Small Industries).

In Japan, ten women in flower businesses were approached by using in-depth, open-ended interviews. Sample focuses on the Western Province, which stands as the key production region in Sri Lanka. Of the 20, ten (10) Sri Lankan women in flower businesses approached a qualitative base by conducting interviews. Social networks and personal contacts were relied on to start the respondent snowballs, and friends were asked to introduce me to likely respondents. I visited flower growing farms in Sri Lanka and Japan. This situation enabled me to produce thick descriptions of each site. The interviews with the sample (20) began with some warm-up questions on topical. There were a series of structured questions asked about age, civil status, number of children, educational level, market segment (local/international), number of years in the industry (since entering), ownership status (sole/partnership) and number of employees working in the business. The interview guide mainly covered positive psychological constructs, hope and resilience. However, some topics were changed as to the respondents' responses to the interview questions.

Research ethics are also considered for this study. Before the participation interview, respondents were fully briefed verbally about the purpose of the research. And then inform all the data collection activities and how the collected data will be used. As with the consent given by each respondent, all the interviews were tape-recorded. All interviewees were assured of anonymity and ensured participants' confidentiality, and all the generated data was kept securely. In addition, pseudonyms have been used, and thus their real names were removed from all the quoted material.

The final core sample consisted of 20 women, and all the women in the sample had a good educational background or a high school certificate. Except for one woman, all are living with their husbands and family. Although the ownership is sole, the unique highlight of this sample is family embeddedness. Therefore, family embeddedness is seen as the highest valuable asset of this sample. Please see Table 1 for more details of the final core sample.

Table 1: Sample Demographics

Name codes	Age	Civil Status	Level of Education	Number of Children	Number of Employees	Number of years in the business
JPU1	41	Married	Graduate	03	03	100yrs
JPU2	65	Married	Graduate	01	06	35yrs
JPU3	37	Married	High School	02	04	49yrs
JPU4	54	Married	Graduate	00	05	70yrs
JPG5	65	Married	Graduate	02	10	40yrs
JPG6	35	Married	High school	01	10	51yrs
JPG7	64	Married	High school	02	05	50yrs
JPF8	64	Married	High school	01	06	40yrs
JPF9	70	Married	High school	03	08	60yrs
JPF10	70	Married	High school	02	07	40yrs
SLC11	58	Married	Graduate	01	02	30yrs
SLC12	60	Single	Advance Level	00	02	20yrs
SLC13	58	Married	Advance Level	02	03	25yrs
SLC14	63	Married	Advance Level	02	02	17yrs
SLC15	65	Married	Advance Level	01	03	16yrs
SLC16	56	Married	Advance Level	03	03	12yrs
SLC17	55	Married	Advance Level	02	04	16yrs
SLC18	55	Married	Advance Level	03	03	30yrs
SLC19	57	Married	Advance Level	02	04	20yrs
SLC20	60	Married	Advance Level	01	02	17yrs

(Source: Interview data, 2019/2020)

This research used thematic analysis as an analytical strategy. The thematic analysis offers flexibility to provide detailed, rich and complex data (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 96). It was important to become thoroughly familiar with the transcribed datasets (Mason, 2006). All the transcribed interview data were read several times to achieve this familiarity. Parallel with their stories, the analysis involved carefully reading the textual data, such as field notes (facial expressions). Similar statements were highlighted to identify the major elements of respondents' accounts. At the end of the coding process, core categories are placed. The categories identified were framed around the women in the flower business.

Identified core categories are hope and resilience. The most common refrain from all respondents is hope. Thus, it showed the highest occurring word in the coding process. Hope is identified as one's positive motivational state (Luthans, 2002). As to Luthans et al. (2007), hope is to succeed, persevering toward goals and redirecting paths to destinations. All the identified themes on this are labelled as hope. At the next level, all the respondents showed high concentration on resilience. Resilience is beset by problems and adversity, sustaining and bouncing back and even beyond to attain success (Luthans et al., 2007). The present study identified hope, and resilience as core categories for women in the small scale flower businesses.

Women's Life Stories: Positive Psychological Capacities

This section provides interview accounts highlighting the identified categories of hope, resilience, self-efficacy and happiness.

Hope

Hope is a positive motivational condition that is based on an interactively derived sense of success (Snyder and colleagues, 1991; Luthans et al., 2007). Hope has goal-directed energy and plans to meet goals. Hope has motivational power to accomplish intended or desired goals. It was fascinating to note that all respondents in the sample showed their future expectations and endeavours (hopes) as their motivational energy. For example, SLC11 explained how she started her flower growing business as a hope that has a goal-directed state.

My mother-in-law had lovely flower plants. Planting flowers is also my hobby. Thirty years ago, one of my friends told me there would be a good demand for these plants at XXX. Later on, I started thinking about starting the business and planned and planned [goal directed energy]. How to plant them in pots? How to arrange flower plants? With force [motivation], I started my business [goal directed state].

Recalling her past, she showed how she identified her inner abilities for happiness and success.

You wouldn't believe there was a very good demand on the first day itself. They [customers and friends] appreciated the flowers I potted. I was so proud of my capacities [abilities]. That is the way I achieve this success.

In this way, hope acts as motivational energy to achieve goals. Hope constitutes the will to succeed and the ability to identify, clarify, and pursue the route to success (Luthans, 2007, p. 546; Snyder, 2000). Hope helps to identify goals and subgoals as well as pathways. These pathways can be alternative ways to reach intended or desired goals. All the flower growers explained various challenges and obstacles they face when they run a business. One of the difficulties they highlighted during the interview was the younger generation unenthusiastic about the flower growing. This situation is explained by JPG5 as follows;

My mother had started this business with my father. They handed it over to me. Now I run this business. In the future, there will be a challenge [obstacle]... there is no one to hand this business over, when I get older. My children don't like to run this business and I don't want them to have this business. But I want to continue this business as this came from my parents.

Continuing the story, JPG5 explained the identified alternative pathway to reach the targeted goal.

If they [children] don't like to take the business up, my plan [hope] is to hand over this to someone who works in a trustworthy manner here and who loves the business [alternative pathway].

Another participant (JPG6) mentioned alternative pathways to keep for stable income throughout the year.

Flowers are seasonal, and the demand for flowers is also changing. We have local flowers and even some imported flowers. We have to understand the changes in the market, and if not, you cannot stay in the market [ability]. We had a great demand for Bonsai, but now there is no demand. We have to find new ways; we do research here and develop different types of flowers [goal directed behaviour].

All respondents in the sample acknowledged that they could think of many ways to get out of the event when they face dangerous circumstances. It was evident that women flower growers proactively plan for alternative pathways for task accomplishment (Luthans et al., 2007). In this way, using willpower and way power of hope, hope acts as a positive psychological construct for accomplishing women's business goals in this sample.

Resilience

Resilience is characterised by positive coping and adaptations when individuals face risk and hard times (Masten, 2001; Masten and Reed, 2002). It is a positive psychological capacity to bounce back from uncertain situations or failures. A common refrain from all the respondents from both countries was that “demand for flower plants and flower arrangements are badly declining”. As to their explanations, currently, they are in the face of adverse events such as sales uncertainties, failures, difficulties in finding markets, high cost and availability of imported flowers. JPG5 clearly explained the current negative situations and expected future uncertainties.

As to our understanding, the flower market is declining [uncertain situation]. The majority of our customers are people from the older generation. There is no demand for flowers from the young generation. Not only for us. It is common for all flower sellers. This situation can be worse in future.

Then she showed how she bounced back to her business from such adverse uncertain situations employing positive psychological capacity to accomplish goals.

We have to make the young generation aware of our customs. We do exhibitions near city councils. We arrange flowers as young people desire. You should understand their feelings. We do shows near schools, and we give small flower bouquets to children to make them attentive. These experiences provide me with a lot of happiness. I know I have such a capacity to face any hard time [resilience].

She also showed, during adverse periods, how she reached sub-goals to keep the stable profit,

To make awareness about flowers and our traditional plants, I conduct classes at a reasonable fee. I use different strategies to make people aware.

Another respondent explained (SLC12) how she perseveres with the business in the face of an adverse event and her capacity to face such circumstances.

I had a horrible time. I remember how I started the business after a hard time I faced. Once the flood came and washed out all cut flowers and ornamental plants. I did not have anything to sell. I felt so bad. But I didn't give up my business. I sold flowers and purchased plants from other flower farms. Meantime, I started growing new plants. I am proud to say, my business recovered within one year. I have

strength, and I know how to tackle problems. I can face any obstacles in future [resilience].

In this way, the above accounts depicted that respondents can cope and adapt to critical incidents by creating new avenues to their business and bounce back as a success.

Conclusion and implications

Approaching in-depth, open-ended questions to 20 women in the flower business in Japan and Sri Lanka, this research showed how constructs of psychological capacities, hope and resilience help to strengthen and willingness to continue their small scale business. This research identified positively oriented human resource strength, high in hope (willpower and way power) has the capacity to meet goals, forecast obstacles, identify alternative pathways, and formulate strategies. This study found that resilience helps respondents cope and adapt to critical incidents by creating new avenues to their business and bouncing back as a task is completed. This study identified attributes of resilient individuals, such as problem-solving skills, autonomy, and a sense of purpose and future enhanced task orientations (Benard, 1991, 1993). This study paralleled Luthans and Colleagues emphasis on psychological capacities for thriving business. In this way, business success and survival can be better conceptualised while meshing hope and resilience. Moving further to Luthans and Colleagues major works of positive psychological capacities (Stajkovic and Luthans, 1998a; Stajkovic and Luthans, 1998b, Peterson and Luthans, 2002; Luthans, 2002 and 2001), this study identified that women in small scale flower businesses generate positive attributions by themselves especially happiness, (and also positive feelings, self-satisfaction, and passions) which led to accomplish the task successfully.

Accordingly, this study suggested that hope and resilience, which are positively oriented human resource strengths, can be used as a positive managerial strategy to complete the task successfully and for business development. Secondly, this study identified that hope and resilience can be used to reduce the level of stress and increase wellbeing. Thus, hope and resilience capacity act as coping strategies to reduce stress levels and improve these women's wellbeing. Thirdly, this study identified that hope and resilience could be used as a strategy to meet obstacles in hard, uncertain times. Furthermore, this study acknowledged that hope and resilience are highly interconnected with each other.

Finally, approaching 20 women in the flower business from two countries, this research fulfilled the task of how psychological capacities, hope and resilience help to complete tasks successfully.

This research has contributed to the literature of women in small scale businesses in three ways. First, as there is a need for new directions and innovative, in-depth qualitative methodologies such as life histories, case studies or discourse analysis in women-owned small business research (Henry and Ahl, 2015; Mitchelmore and Rowley, 2013; Ahl, 2006). So the present qualitative inquiry fills the gap. Secondly, there is a dearth of demonstrations on the psychological capacities of small scale business research (Dawkins et al., 2013; Peterson and Luthans, 2002; Luthans, 2002). Thus, this study has contributed to the specific body of knowledge of positive psychological capacities and for [women in] small business development. This paper also extended the geographical scope of the literature on the positive psychological capabilities of women in small businesses.

The findings of this study have some important practical implications for women owners of small-scale businesses and agri-based authorities in government, non-government organisations and women research institutes in Japan and Sri Lanka. Women owners can use positively oriented human resource strengths to improve their businesses. Furthermore, relevant authorities who engage in women in small scale business, government, non-government and research organisations could encourage women to use their own hope and resilience capacities. Next, hope and resilience act as coping strategies to increase the level of well-being of these women. Thus, relevant authorities could conduct workshops and seminar series to highlight that women have powerful strengths to overcome business-related issues and minimise stress levels on their own. Finally, for researchers, the present research has provided new empirical information on how women in small businesses rely on their positively oriented individual-level human resources strengths.

This paper extended the geographical scope of the literature on the positive psychological capacities of women in small businesses. This study would be the first known research directly focused on the positive psychological capacities of women in small scale businesses in Japan and Sri Lanka. However, as with any investigation, there are some limitations for generalising from this research that demands careful attention and methodological lacunae, which inevitably became apparent only as the research unfolded. This study represented only women in small scale flower business views; however, it can be

expected that women and men in businesses are more likely to make different decisions. It is an informed fact that women in businesses face more obstacles and gender-related barriers than men (Agarwal and Lenka, 2015; Rehman and Roomi, 2012; Mathew and Panchanatham, 2011; Jamali, 2009). Thus it is essential to examine how women and men rely on willpower, way power, and the ability to adapt and cope in hardships, such as during the Covid-19 pandemic. As the sample size is small, it can be proposed that an extended research strategy is more effective for developing human resources strategies, especially for training and development strategy improvements.

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