

Exploration of the Lived Experience of Micro Entrepreneurs in the Food Processing Business Using a Phenomenological Approach

Gerry Z. Laggui

Associate Professor II, Institute of Business Management, Isabela State University, Cabagan, Isabela, Philippines

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Abstract

Entrepreneurship is not just a business but a state of mind and it is often touted as the best way to live a life. The entrepreneur often wears many hats and lay out the plans and pursue the steps needed to make the business a success. On the other hand, entrepreneur faces tremendous challenges as he operates his business. The number of entrepreneurs has risen and the numbers are continuously growing. However, there is a scarcity of qualitative literature on lived experiences of micro entrepreneurs in the food processing business. Hence, this study aimed to determine what are the lived experiences and personal competencies of micro entrepreneurs and how do they cope with the demands and challenges in the food processing business in the province of Isabela, Philippines. The study employed an in-depth semi-structured survey questionnaire and conducted with 15 participants who had operated a food processing enterprises for 5 years or more. The design of the study is psychological phenomenology. The research study concludes that the success of an entrepreneur can be contributed to his entrepreneurial competencies which may be innate to him, enhanced from learnings or derived inspirations from experiences of other successful entrepreneurs. Also, the entrepreneurs recognized that there is a divine intervention in their business endeavors because of their faith to God. Finally, entrepreneurs are personally driven by their passion to persevere and love what they do.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Roles and actions of micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) are enormous in building a sustainable world. As a group, MSMEs play a huge role in global economy, particularly in equitable income generation, employment creation, innovation and growth. In the Philippines, the MSME sector accounts for 99.5% of established businesses, employs 62.9% of the total workforce, and contributes 35.7% of the country's total value added (PSA, 2017). MSMEs play a key role in increasing competitiveness and promoting rural and global value chain development, thereby achieving inclusive growth and poverty reduction. MSMEs are often described as efficient and prolific job creators, the seeds of big businesses and the fuel of

national economic engines. Even in the developed industrial economies, it is the MSME sector rather than the multinationals that is the largest employer of workers (Mullineux, 2010).

In addition, MSMEs are vital in dispersing new industries to the countryside and providing gainful employment. With the abundance of labor in the Philippines, much is to gain from entrepreneurial activities particularly those that are labor-intensive. The MSMEs generate jobs in the locality of operation that extends to the immediate environs, as the case may be. Thus, MSMEs bring about a more balanced economic growth and equity in income distribution. Moreover, MSMEs contribute in setting new design trends, developing contemporary products, and bringing them to the marketplace

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ahead of the competition. They become channels for innovation to develop indigenous or appropriate technology, which may be developed into pioneering technological breakthroughs. The MSMEs are agents for effective increase of the value added in final goods that are processed and marketed by large manufacturing firms. MSMEs promote maximization in the use of scarce capital resources and are able to partner with large firms by supplying locally available raw materials in unprocessed or semi processed forms. Also, MSMEs can act as the seedbed for the development of entrepreneurial skills and innovation. They contribute in the provision of services to the community. Collectively, they can make an important contribution to regional development programs.

The 2017 List of Establishments of the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) recorded a total of 924,721 business enterprises operating in the Philippines. Micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) account for 99.56% (920,677) of the total establishments, of which 89.59% (828,436) were microenterprises, 9.56% (88,412) were small enterprises, and 0.41% (3,829) were medium enterprises. Large enterprises made up the remaining 0.44% (4,044).

MSMEs generated a total of 4,922,251 jobs in 2017 versus 2,909,838 for the large enterprises. This indicates that MSMEs contributed almost 62.9% of the total jobs generated by all types of business establishments that year. Of these, 30.3% or 2,369,748 jobs were generated by micro enterprises; 25.9% or 2,024,470 by small enterprises; and 6.7% or 528,033 by medium enterprises.

Meanwhile, food processing is one of the industries in the manufacturing business. The Philippine food processing industry is composed of the following major sectors: fruits and vegetables, fish and marine products, meat and poultry products, flour and bakery products, beverages, confectioneries, dairy products, food condiments and seasonings, food

supplements, bottled water, snack foods and fats & oils.

The driver of these MSMEs are the entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurs are persons engaged into starting and operating a business entity. They find out what customer wants and modify their products in line with the requirements of the market. The capacity and willingness of an entrepreneur to develop, organize and manage a business venture along with any of its risks in order to make a profit. According to Schumpeter, an entrepreneur is willing and able to convert a new idea or invention into a successful innovation. The term puts emphasis on the risk and effort of individuals who own and manage a business, and on the innovation that result from their pursuit of economic success.

Micro entrepreneurs distinguish themselves from SMEs by being owner-manager entrepreneur (OME) centric and are constrained by a tendency to be growth-averse. They have underdeveloped capabilities in key business areas, underdeveloped OME capabilities, and often inadequate business support provision. Although such businesses owners tend not to have a formal education in business or engage with external support agencies, they need support from community-based networks (Gherhes, 2016).

However, it is noted that entrepreneurial business is not a guarantee to have a success story on it. A study by the Small Business Administration (2012) found that one third of start-ups fail within two years of operation, half fail within 4 years, and nearly 60 % fail within 6 years. Finding out why these businesses fail and how to prevent it is vital to entrepreneurs and to our economy. There are many studies about it and one of the reasons found is that entrepreneurs failed to learn new knowledge, skills and abilities as their organization started to grow (Chupp, 2011).

There are numerous studies on MSMEs, On the contrary, studies on the food sector, growth

challenges, and their impact at a micro level are less studied. It is in this light that the researcher decided to conduct a study on the lived experiences of micro entrepreneurs in the food processing business in the province of Isabela. Thus, this makes the underlying study unique in itself.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This phenomenological study focused on the micro entrepreneurs in the food processing business in the province of Isabela. Specifically, the researcher worked out on the two central questions, to wit: What are the lived experiences and personal competencies of micro entrepreneurs? and, how do the participants cope with the demands and challenges in food processing business?

III. METHODOLOGY

Phenomenological research design is employed in this study. A phenomenological research focuses on describing what all participants have in common as they experience phenomenon. Its basic purpose is to reduce individual experiences with a phenomenon to a description of the universal essence “grasp of the very nature of the thing” (Van Manen, 2014) and its goal is the return to the concrete, captures by the phrase “back to the things themselves” according to Moustakas as cited by Creswell, 2013. Particularly, the study employed Psychological Phenomenology (also termed Empirical, Transcendental) wherein it focused less on the interpretations of the research but more on the descriptions of the experiences of the participants.

List of entrepreneurs were obtained from the Department of Trade and Industry Isabela Provincial Office and selection of participants is through Purposeful Criterion Sampling. The number of

participants is recommended by Polkinghorne (1989) as cited by Creswell (2013) suggesting that the researcher needs to interview 5 to 25 individuals who have all experienced the phenomenon.

The study was conducted on January to February 2019. The researcher interviewed fifteen (15) micro food entrepreneurs who have been in operation for five years and above in the province of Isabela and have a distinct kind of product/s. A predesigned general and open-ended research questions were used during the conduct of the interview. Secondary sources of data were from books, journals, and articles posted in the web.

For the treatment and analysis of data, procedures and guidelines in the phenomenology study were observed. Bracketing was the first step, followed by horizontalization, by which significant statements were generated by going through the interview transcriptions, which eventually provide an understanding of how the participants experienced the phenomenon. Third is theme clustering, wherein central themes were developed from significant statements and utilized to compose textural and structural descriptions of what the participants experienced. From the structural and textural descriptions, a composite description was created which eventually presents the essence of the lived experience of micro entrepreneurs in the food processing business.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study included fifteen micro entrepreneurs—three male and twelve female; and operated a business for five years or more. Table 1 shows the nicknames, age and type of products offered by the participants.

Table 1. Name, age and type of products offered by the participants

Table 1. Name, age and type of products offered by the participants			
	Name	Age	Products
1.	Marcial	45	Organic vinegar (plain, with chili, garlic and pepper), honey, banana chips and brewed coffee
2..	Ramon	65	Baked products, Naturally fermented vinegar (four seasons

			vinegar)
3.	Carlo	33	Gourmet tuyo, spanish bangus, chili oil
4.	Millet	40	Processed Meat
5.	Talie	58	Miki Production
6.	Debbie	36	Bakeshop
7.	Maricel	37	Pickled bamboo, bangus sardines and gourmet tuyo
8.	Loreli	40	Fruit wine (bignay, tropical, grapes) and apple cider vinegar
9.	Tets	42	Burong Isda, gourmet tinapa, tinapang isda, chicharon
10.	Elma	55	Chili sauce, vegetable chips and buchi
11.	Joy	50	Banana chips, taro chips and kamias prunes
12.	Marya	63	Native cakes
13.	Delia	50	Roselle wine, pickles, jam and tea
14.	Bicky	55	Bignay Wine, Turmeric Powder, Chili Paste
15.	Sally	41	Native cakes

The horizontalization of this study is presented through listing of significant statements, sentences or quotes that were extracted from verbatim transcription of participants' responses. These statements were read many times and analyzed to provide understanding on the participants' experiences the phenomenon considering the two central questions and its probing questions in the research interview protocol. The study extracted significant statements from 15 micro entrepreneur-participants. In theme clustering, central themes of the entrepreneurial experience were identified through detailed analysis of the descriptions from in-depth interview. With the objective of determining the lived experiences of micro entrepreneurs as well as the challenges and demands faced in the operation of food processing business, the researcher identified common elements across the experiences of all participants, to wit:

1. The lived experience and personal competencies of micro entrepreneurs

Theme 1: Entrepreneurs seek opportunity. Entrepreneurs usually engaged in searching what business to undertake or operating an enterprise that will be able to thrive in the jungle of business world. For this study, it was found out that the food processing business of the participants are either passed on by their parents, a totally new undertaking or it evolved as an spin-off of the previous business undertaking. They shared how they started

their businesses. Also, majority of the participants have a bloodline of being an entrepreneur. The participants who have passed on business revealed that they took the opportunity to own and operate the business with high degree of responsibility. For them, the challenge is on how to grow or sustain the business.

Debbie revealed - Ipinamana ng tatay ko ang bakery business nya. Ang challenge sa akin ay kung paano ko ito masustain o mapalago ang business. Ito ay isang oportunidad na mahirap tanggihan at malaking responsibilidad na nakaatang sa balikat ko. Sa awa ng Diyos, walong taon na itong business at lumago ng husto. Ito ang oportunidad na nagpa-angat sa aming pamumuhay. (My father passed on to me his bakery business. The challenge is for me to sustain or grow the business. This is an opportunity that is hard to resist but coupled with bigger responsibility. Through God's help, I have been operating the business for 8 years now and I saw how it grows and it's of great help to my family)

Meanwhile, Tets used to be a poultry contract grower She revealed that in 2011, their poultry houses with 30,000 –head capacity were blown away by Typhoons Pedring and Kiel. They were devastated since the investments in setting up the poultry houses were acquired through bank loans. Her parents helped them build a new life by passing-on their “tinapa” (smoked fish) business and taught her the processes. With that, Tets and her

family were able to recover from their previous losses and became profitable in the business. Aside from traditional tinapa they are now producing burong isda, chicharon and processed bangus.

On the other hand, some of the participants revealed that their present business were just a hobby in the beginning or were motivated to set up one because of inspiration they get from exposures to it. Maricel disclosed that her gourmet tuyo started as a hobby and it's just accidental that she pursued it. Her friend brought her to a trade fair intended for food processors in Cauayan City. After having exposure unto it, Maricel's interest in gourmet started. She quipped: I saw that businesswise gourmet tuyo has a potential in the market and it's an earning business.

On the contrary, Carlo revealed how he came to operate his business:

Lahat po tayo may pangangailangan.. Nakita ko that time na kung isa lang ang source ng ating finances eh mahirap... at parang bitin... kaya nag engage ako sa business. Nakita ko na yung opportunity na with your business, you can double ... or triple up your income on top of managing your own time. Kaya I convinced my wife to stop from her job and instead focus on our business. (Each of us has his own needs. I observed that if there is only one earning in the family, it is not enough to make ends meet. That is why I engage myself in doing a business and I saw its earning opportunity that can be doubled or tripled, aside from managing your own time. It is also the main reason why I convinced my wife to quit from her job and focus instead in our business)

Theme 2: Entrepreneurs take risk. Establishing a business makes an entrepreneur assumes significant accountability for the inherent risks and the outcome. The entrepreneurs put up resources together in order to realize his business objectives. It takes risk-taking to invest money, efforts, and other resources into a new undertaking whose result is uncertain. The risk of failure, unpredictable

business conditions, long hours of work and unwanted or unexpected responsibilities are faced by the entrepreneurs. He might win or lose, get rich or go bankrupt but he takes chances anyway.

As revealed by Carlo: I used to be employed with an 8-5 job and engaged in coco jam making at night time or during my off days. This made me to choose which path to take and to choose what to focus considering that my health was affected. I am weighing my options of having a fixed monthly income or have to earn through my coco jam thriving business. Coming up with the right decision that time was so hard since I just have a family with a new born baby and family expenses was getting bigger. It was a big challenge on my part. Finally, I gave up my job and focused on my coco jam business. After experiencing problems in the production of coco jam due to increasing prices and availability of raw materials, we shifted into gourmet tuyo which is more profitable and has its own niche in the market.

Ms. Delia, used to be a domestic helper for three years In Malaysia. After her contract has ended, she decided not to renew her contract. Instead, she brought back a flowering plant which she had no idea that will change her rural life. She brought back home Roselle – a species of Hibiscus native to West Africa and is widely planted in Asian countries. The Roselle plant has various health benefits like anti-inflammatory, antibacterial properties, aids digestion, lowers high blood pressure and high cholesterol level, and relieves menstrual pain and constipation. She started planting Roselle at her own backyard and experimented on extracting wine from the flowers of the plant. After numerous tries, she finally managed to produce wine out of the plant and that was the start of Delia's House of Wine.

Theme 3: Entrepreneurs are persistent. Persistence describes the ability to push and push toward the finish line, even if the finish line seems comically out of reach. It's about tenacity and stubbornness, in the best sense of both words. But entrepreneurs need

to take those steps, which is why persistence is key. Majority of the participants believed that success never comes to anyone. For them, you have to go out and grab it. These participants have the following convictions:

Millet said; Don't give up if things take longer than planned. Look for signals that you're on the right track, keep your burn rate as low as possible and keep moving forward.

Marcial testified: Maging matatag, have patience ... Alam natin na iyon ang prosesong. There is no overnight success. Sa lahat ng experiences encountered, iyon din ang treasure namin. All the lessons walang kapalit at kailangan mag-pursige. Kailangan ng pasensya. Waiting is a long process bago matagumpay sa buhay. maraming trials ang ma-encounter at mapagtagumpayan sa buhay (Be steadfast and have patience and we know that is the process and success can not be achieved overnight. We treasure all the experiences we encountered, the priceless lessons we learned from it. We have to be determined and have patience on it. We have to wait since it takes time to succeed in our life. We will encounter many trials but for sure we will conquer it)

Debbie expressed: Kung ano ang passion nila eh ituloy lang nila. Kung dumating ang panahon na pang hinaan ng loob...wag mag stumble. (Just go on with your passion, if ever you faced discouragement, do not stumble).

On other hand Carlo conveyed: Sabi nga nila it takes years to see the success of a business. Marami pang struggles along the way... but I know that from that struggles, may opportunity na mag-open at diyan ako matututo. (They say that it takes years to reap business success. There are struggles along the way but I know there are opportunities from these struggles and we will learn from it).

Furthermore, Talie mentioned : With perseverance, hard work, and dedication you can achieve anything even if you are uncertain of everything else, and if

you doubt yourself, you should always trust the process.

Meanwhile, Elma asserted that entrepreneurs should not quit when things get difficult. Instead, they should find their driving force to work and persevere.

Finally, Delia emphasized that with perseverance, hard work, and dedication you can achieve anything even if you are uncertain of everything else, and if you doubt yourself, you should always trust the process.

Theme 4: Entrepreneurs are committed. They actively seek leadership and responsibility. Many people need the comfort of following, rather than leading. When things go wrong, it's then easier to point to someone else as the scapegoat. As an entrepreneur, the promises anyone makes on your behalf are yours. They have the determination and dedication to follow through with commitments and they always appear confident and in control. They also accept full responsibility for problems encountered. In this study, it was found out that all participants demonstrated this characteristic, to wit:

Maria testified: Holiday break na pero hindi kami makapag pahinga sa dami ng order at sabay din ng pag bakasyon ng mga workers kaya ang family members na rin ang gumagawa ng bibingka. (It is holiday break and our workers took also their holiday break. With the influx of orders for native cakes, we kept on working with the help of my members of the family)

Joy said: Kung kailangan walang tulugan at gagawin mo lahat para maibigay ang kailangan ng customer.(If there is a need for us not to sleep just to meet the customers' demand, we will do it).

Debbie shared her experience: A walk-in buyer bought puto flan in my bakeshop but I was not present that time. The buyer was assisted by one of the trainees in the shop. All of the puto flan from the bread stand were sold so he got the stocks from

pulled out items which was unknown to him. After finding that a piece from items bought was not in good shape, the buyer complained and threatened to report it to authorities and to social media. Debbie assumed the responsibility and replaced all the items bought and returned his money back. According to her, she is serious about her business. Her advice is one has to take care of his name, his business and it's your integrity to protect. It took us years to establish our business so we have to safeguard it.

Meanwhile, Marcial expressed his commitment by having a continuous product development for his sugarcane vinegar. He also built up competencies to ensure that products are always available to the consumer and distributors where and when they want it.

According to Lorelie, she complied to FDA/BFAD requirements before she offered her Bignay wine to the public. She advised to do business in legal way. Based on her experience, she benefitted greatly when she complied to government regulations and let her have a big notch compared to other fruit wine producers in the province.

Finally, Ramon conveyed that as an entrepreneur, they should not destroy the trust of customers.

Theme 5: Entrepreneurs demand quality and innovates. A high standard of quality and efficiency is also dominant among achieving entrepreneurs. They expect excellence from themselves and their workers. So, in order to be able to meet these standards, they strive to find ways to do things better, faster, cheaper. As an innovator, he continuously creates and develops new products and services based on what he understands to be the needs of society. He also looks for ways by which these goods and services can be produced more economically.

A high standard of quality and efficiency is also dominant among the participants. They elaborated on how they achieve quality in their products as well

as ensuring themselves with integrity. The following statements were obtained from the participants:

Carlo said: Pag-aralan ang produkto mo lalo na ito ay processed food. Critical ang shelf life nito. Kelangan ang continuous product development (Study your products especially if it is a processed food because its shelf life is critical and needs to have a continuous product development)

Marcial noted: Maganda sa food business. . . basic needs ng mga tao. Kailangan din ang quality ng food products,, and also quality of entrepreneur... sa business... umpisahan sa sarili... ayusin din ang sarili mo ... para maging maayos ang negosyo. (Food business is good because it is a basic need of everyone. There is a need to ensure quality of food products as well as the quality of the entrepreneur to ensure smooth operation of the business)

Ramon quipped: Its not only about the product to be developed but also to develop the character of the entrepreneur, attitude to do business and be fair in business and all transactions.

Finally, Debbie said: Sa food business kailangan ingatan ito kasi kinakain ng tao. You must have a clean service ... ensure to have a quality products always. Ingatan ang pangalan... mahirap mag establish. (In food business, you have to take good care of it since it is being consumed. There should be a clean service to ensure quality products. It entails blood and sweat so take good care of your name)

Theme 6: Entrepreneurs are goal setters. This is the most important competency because none of the rest will function without it. Entrepreneurs set goals and objectives which are meaningful and challenging. Accordingly, these entrepreneurs need to see their goals and success in mind first if they plan on making them a reality. Napoleon Hill said it best: "What the mind can conceive and believe it can achieve." This saying were exhibited by the following participants:

Lorelie said: As a fruit wine processor, dati na akong may goal... kaya hindi na ako natakot kasi may vision na ako before at alam ko --- eto ang naging inspirasyon ko na mag patuloy sa business. (As a fruit wine processor, I already have a goal in mind. I have a clear vision and this serves as my driving force to engage in the business)

Meantime, Maricel stated: We are going to pursue what I want. My target is to penetrate the suparmarkets. But as of now we are not yet ready because of the bundled requirements from it. But for sure, we will take it slowly... and eventually... we will get there.

Similarly, Elma concluded that one should never enter a business without a business plan or a clear vision of the business.

Theme 7: Entrepreneurs are information seekers and establish networks . An entrepreneur undertakes personal research on how to satisfy customers and solve problems. They know that different people have different capabilities that can be of help to them. They seek relevant information from clients, suppliers, competitors and others. As exhibited by the participants, they always wanted to learn things which will help grow their businesses. Some of the participants have the following notations:

Joy said - Huwag pa dalos-dalos sa business.. kapag may gustong gawin... huwag mag rely sa sariling kaalamam o knowledge. . (Do not be in haste in business, If you want to do something, do not just rely on your own knowledge). They should seek counsel, ask information and follow the right process

Meanwhile, Maria quipped: Huwag gumagaya ng business dahil ito ay uso o maganda o successful. Kailangan gamay nya ang business.(Do not go into business because it's a new fad or it appealing. You should know the ins and outs of the business). One should study the business and train themselves.

Talie stated: I connect with persons with the same interest and exchange ideas and insights about the business and products being offered. I want to know their success stories and get inspiration from them

According to Carlo : People tend to set initiatives. They seek help from government offices or from somebody in the business. The trainings and methodologies provided by DTI and DOST helped us in mainstreaming our business. All you have to do is to follow their advice and for sure, they extend a big help in our business operations.

Elma stressed the value of establishing good relationship with prospective clients or distributors helped a lot in marketing her chili sauce and other products.

On the other hand, all of the participants admitted that they participated to countless seminars and trainings such as seminar on Packaging, Labelling and Good Manufacturing Practice, as well as receiving technical assistance from DTI and DOST. They also received free product packaging and labels from DTI. For DOST's part, they extended financial loans to Maria, Carlo, Ramon, and Joy to finance the acquisition of equipment and for additional working capital.

Theme 8: Entrepreneurs plan and monitor business operations. Entrepreneur plan for whatever they expect in the business. They do not leave things to luck. They also possess a sound working knowledge of the business they are involved in. Since entrepreneur knows what to expect at anytime, he is able to change plans and strategies to achieve what he aims at. Planning enables the entrepreneur to avoid costly mistakes and anticipate possible problems. It also enables him to determine what he needs for the business in terms of materials, supplies, equipment, skills, and finances. For this aspect, the participants' responses during the interview were the following:

Never enter a business without a business plan. Study the business first before going into it. Think

of the products to offer that should have quality. Always be ready for problems to come. Think of possible solutions. Just don't give up. There's always a solution for every problem faced. Also, having a balanced understanding of all areas of the business will allow a better command on how to improve in your business. (Tets)

Kapag nasa operation ka na doon mo makikita ang mga problema. Maraming mababasa sa books pero mahirap mai-apply. Through experience mo malalaman kung paano ito i-handle ...lalo na tao... kailangan long patience,. Pakikisama sa tao ang pinakamahalaga (You can only see the problems if you are in the business process itself. There are things written in the books but can not be applied or adapted in the real business scenario. You can only know the situation by experiencing it... especially on how to manage people and it entails more patience to deal with them). Being hands-on in business is vital for business development. (Debbie)

To ensure availability of gourmet tuyo, I usually mass produce during off peak months (from June to October). I see to it that I have enough stocks because during holiday season, my employees were in vacation mode, which is also the peak sales month for gourmet tuyo. I don't want to experience again my inability to meet the increasing demand for the product in year 2017 for that reason.(Maricel)

Theme 9: Entrepreneurs have self confidence. The true entrepreneur is one who believes in himself. He starts with the premise that "I can." Self-confidence is related to the belief in your capacity to achieve despite the overwhelming odds. The Entrepreneur also possesses a positive atmosphere. As revealed by all participants, they start business because they like to be their own boss, they are responsible for their own decisions as well as to make productive use of capital resources. Stated below were some of the responses of participants related to self confidence:

If a business owner fully believes in their business, to the point of getting involved at all levels, all around them will start to believe in it too (Carlo)

Positive attitude will produce positive results (Lorelie)

Believe that you can achieve great things with your strong will, commitment and hard work. (Delia)

Theme 10. Entrepreneurs manage people well. All of the respondents agreed that people are the most important asset in any business undertaking. One of the participants believed that having harmonious relationship with her employees is one of her secret to success. Another participant stressed that it is important that you have to trust your workers the same way they trust you. Another participant said that even if you have a fantastic product and packaging, if you don't have a good people to run the whole thing, it's not going to work. Your biggest asset is still your people. Moreover, majority of the participants agreed that they share what they know to their employees. They also send them to trainings and seminars for them to enhance skills and gain more knowledge. More importantly, they empower their workers for them to grow and have a chance to have a better life.

Theme 11: Entrepreneurs manage their resources wisely. The lifeblood of any business enterprise is cash flow. Entrepreneurs need it to buy inventory, pay for services, promote and market your business, repair and replace tools and equipment, and pay workers so that they can continue to work. Therefore, all business owners must become wise money managers to ensure that the cash keeps flowing and the bills get paid. For this aspect, all participants agreed on the aforementioned premises. For the value of hardship and the rewards they generate through the form of profits, these participants shared the following outlook:

I have learned that every centavo counts, The value of hardships encountered in the business paid off (Millet).

Budgeting and proper use of funds generated from sales is very important in the operation of the business (Lorelie).

Do not be in a hurry. Value your hardships and as much as possible do not borrow funds if you are capable to finance your business. It feels good to have more money but you have to think it where it came from. Whatever earnings you have, roll it out in the business and add it to your investments. Do not be in haste (Tets)

Separate funds from business and personal expenses (Maria)

Kapag may kita, magtabi ka. Mag save. Dun nakakaipon at kung may ibang opportunity na puede I business eh may mahuhugot. Hangga't maganda ang takbo ng business, mag ipon. (Always save something from what you earn. If there is another opportunity to open another kind of business, you will have a readily funds to use for it). Saving is the key. (Debbie)

2. Participants' recognition of factors that made them triumphant

Theme 12: Entrepreneurs have faith in God After meeting many successful entrepreneurs, there is an under-riding sense of optimism no matter what state their business is in. They laugh in the face of challenges, know that the end outcome cannot be controlled, but still go out there every day with the confidence that if the business sticks to its core, works hard and keeps focus, it will 'all work out'. According to the participants, entrepreneurship is not possible without faith. Faith is the essential characteristic that all successful entrepreneurs share. All participants acknowledged that the divine power, which they identified as God, played a very important role in their business activities.

Elma said: Kung ano ang goal mo thru God's help makukuha mo rin Lahat ng ginagawa mo (You can achieve your goal with the help of God). Trust in the Lord with all your heart and all thy ways

acknowledge Him and he shall bless you. May plano ang Panginoon.. lahat ng gagawin mo at dapat nasa isip ang Panginoon. (God has a specific plan for you so all you have to do is put God first whatever you do).

According to Marcial, God guided him in his business. Opening a new business is difficult. It is through God's intervention that I would forego my previous livelihood which was not acceptable in the sight of God. It's a hard way but with God on my side, this is the right way to do business.

Carlo acknowledged that God has strong intervention in his business. He said:

If you do good to humanity... planted more goodness.... You will reap the goodness you sow in the long run. It doesn't matter if you earn big or small...just do the business right and have good dealings with people around you, eventually God will reward you .

Millet also expressed her personal belief: Do not do bad things. Have a clean heart and mind in doing business. God is merciful. On other hand, Maria proved that that there is money in her native bibingka (cake) business by following her motto in life honesty is the best policy, and coupled with her strong faith in God.

Talie spoke that: Business is nothing if you just use your head but if you use it with a heart and believe in God, everything will be alright and in right places.

Lorelie affirmed that It takes faith and ability to stick it out no matter how rough the going gets, while Ramon added: Love your work and rely on God always.

Other participants also acknowledged the strong God's intervention to their business activities. They found out that it was impossible to ignore God in their lives. They said that business was full of uncertainties and there was no guarantee that business always prosper. So they put their trust to

God to achieve success in their respective business endeavors.

Theme 13. Entrepreneurs enjoy what they do. The researcher found out that all of the participants love their business. Their reasons for loving are varied, it might be the products they offer, the customers they have, or personal satisfaction for their undertaking, or because of the financial gains derived from it. Moreover, all of the participants affirmed that they enjoy what they do and these were supported by their insights

Bong shared: When you are passionate about your business, it never feels like you are working but more of a play.

Carlo said: My business is physically draining but I feel relieved once the job is done... It also sustains me because I like what I do.

Debbie added: Live with your passion to start an entrepreneurial endeavor. Your passion fuels your business so you have to work with something you love to do

Maricel further quipped: I love what I am doing. It is my passion. I patiently studied the process. If you don't have passion in it and with zero knowledge about it, you will soon be burnt-out.

Millet spoke: Love your business and in return your business will love you. Don't destroy the trust of customers. Always maintain the quality of products.

Maria shared: I've never had a vacation during holiday season since it's our peak in operation, but I'm not complaining.

Joy spoke: if you don't enjoy what you are doing, in all likelihood it's safe to assume that will be reflected in the success of your business--or subsequent lack of success. In fact, if you don't enjoy what you are doing, chances are you won't succeed

All of the participants agreed that success can not be achieved overnight. They faced various challenges and took risks while starting and operating their businesses. Some experienced birth pains of the business, rejections from the community or industry and experienced failures before becoming victorious with it. Finally, majority of the participants attest that they had the entrepreneurial competencies, while some believed that these competencies were innate in them, making their entrepreneurial life contented and accomplished.

Table 2
Thirteen Theme Clusters Categorized into Textural and Structural Themes

Category A. Textural (What)

Theme 1: Entrepreneurs seek opportunity

- Perceive new business opportunities
- Obtain financing assistance
- Learn new things to try and make them work
- Join trade fairs and seminars

Theme 2: Entrepreneurs take risk

- Never be afraid to try something new
- Doing business is not a game

- Every decisions made hold risk
- you can't expect to get the perfect formula on the first try of business but you can learn from it and you know better next time

Theme 3: Entrepreneurs are persistent

- Hard work
- Dedication
- Patience
- Do not quit when things get difficult
- Find your driving force to work and persevere
- Don't be impatient when having to experiment, improve and continuously improve and develop your product

Theme 4: Entrepreneurs are committed

- Have a continuous product development
- Build up competencies to ensure that products are always available to the consumer where and when he wants it
- You should have enthusiasm and commitment
- Integrity
- Do not destroy the trust of customers

Theme 5: Entrepreneurs demand quality and innovates

- Continuous innovation
- Implement product development
- Conduct research
- Do not be contented with what you have. Always improve and be open to change
- Good manufacturing practices
- Always maintain the quality of your products

Theme 6: Entrepreneurs are goal setters

- Clear vision of the business
- Never enter a business without a business plan
- If you have ambition, pursue it. Don't lose hope
- Hard work, perseverance and focus

Theme 7: Entrepreneurs are information seekers and establish networks

- Seek counsel
- Follow the right process
- Learn the how to's of doing business

- Do not be afraid to seek help when you need it
- Good relationship with prospective clients, distributors and customers
- Establish linkage with government and private sectors

Theme 8: Entrepreneurs plan and monitor business operations

- Hands-on in business
- Balanced understanding of all business functions
- One has to be passionate about what he offers
- Go slowly but surely

Theme 9: Entrepreneurs have self confidence

- Love of business
- Positive attitude
- Knowing yourself and knowing what you are capable of doing
- Believe that you can achieve great things with strong will

Theme 10: Entrepreneurs manage people well

- Harmonious relationship with laborers and employees
- Trust your workers the same way they trust you
- Biggest asset is still your people
- Send them to trainings and seminars
- Empower workers for them to grow

Theme 11: Entrepreneurs manage their resources wisely

- Every centavo counts
- Exercise budgeting and proper use of funds
- Save and save while earning
- Separate funds from business and personal

Category B. Structural (How)

Theme 12: Entrepreneurs have faith in God

- Love your work and rely on God always
- With honesty as her policy in business, and with her strong faith in God, she proves that there is money in her “native bibinka” business
- It doesn’t matter if you earn big or small...just do the business right and God will reward you
- Have a clean heart and mind in doing business. God is merciful.

Theme 13: Entrepreneurs enjoy what they do

- When you are passionate about your business, it never feels like you are

working but more of a play.

- I never had a vacation during holiday season since it is our peak in operation, but I'm not complaining
- I love what I am doing. It is my passion
- It is physically draining but I feel relieved once the job is done. It also sustains me because I like what I do

Textural Description

As the participants conveyed their lived experiences as micro entrepreneurs engaged in food processing business, various entrepreneurial competencies surfaced from the significant statements shared. These competencies were clustered into themes. The themes namely: Theme 1: Entrepreneurs seek opportunity; Theme 2: Entrepreneurs take risk; Theme 3: Entrepreneurs are persistent; Theme 4: Entrepreneurs are committed; Theme 5: Entrepreneurs demand quality and innovates; Theme 6: Entrepreneurs are goal setters; Theme 7: Entrepreneurs are information seekers and establish networks; Theme 8: Entrepreneurs plan and monitor business operations; Theme 9: Entrepreneurs have self confidence; Theme 10. Entrepreneurs manage people well; and Theme 11: Entrepreneurs manage their resources wisely. It is noteworthy to mention that these themes as exhibited by the participants validates the research conducted by a psychologist from Harvard University, Professor David McClelland, who had done extensive work on entrepreneurship since the late 1950s. His research demonstrated that everyone had inner motivation to improve. This “motive for action” was later called Personal Entrepreneurial Competencies. These competencies were lumped into three motivational types -led by the achievement, planning and power cluster. Achievement cluster has the following competencies: Opportunity Seeking, risk taking, persistence, commitment and demand for quality and efficiency. Planning cluster has goal setting, information seeking and systematic planning and monitoring as its competencies while persuasion and

networking, and self confidence falls under the power cluster.

Interestingly, all of the participants were motivated to achieve success in their individual endeavors. They want to accomplish great things. The participants accepted and dealt challenges squarely and excel under grace. Their desire to achieve is evident in all aspects of their personal and professional lives.

Meanwhile, planning is the most important competency because none of the rest will function without it. It was found out by the researcher that entrepreneurs know what they want and really know where they are going in business. Moreso, they are always thinking about the future and set goals. Most of the participants sought information from customers, suppliers and competitors. They also conduct continuous product development and consult experts for business or technical advice.

Convincingly, the participants were truly empowered as they exhibited self confidence and has the ability to establish networks or linkages. Majority of the participants expressed how they love their freedom and independence of being their own boss. Some recognized their freedom to pursue their own ideas, follow their own road. Indeed, the participants are the movers and shakers, the people who make things happen.

Structural Description

As to how the entrepreneurs' recognize the factors that made them triumphant in their business, two themes surfaced namely, entrepreneurs have faith

in God and entrepreneurs enjoy what they do. The participants believed that entrepreneurship is not possible without faith. They all shared that faith is the essential characteristic that all successful entrepreneurs should possess. All participants acknowledged that God, having a divine power, guided them and blessed their business activities. They added that their business can sustain because God guaranteed it. One participant expressed that if it is the will of God, everything can happen.

On other hand, all participants expressed that their motivation comes from within, and intrinsic in nature. The participants disclosed that on top of possessing entrepreneurial competencies required of them, they love what they do. Majority exclaimed that it is their passion, exercising creativity and flexibility, exploring ideas and being empowered are some of their driving force to excel in their endeavor. Some exclaimed their love on chosen career while others believed that they are happy because of their freedom of not working for someone else. Moreover, it was noted that successful entrepreneurs love their company as if it were their child. They live and breathe their company every minute of the day even if everyday is not a sunny day.

Essence

Entrepreneurship is the act of creating a business or businesses while building and scaling it to generate a profit. Entrepreneurship is what people do to take their career and dreams into their hands and lead it in the direction of their own choice. It's about building a life on your own terms - no bosses, no restricting schedules, and no one holding you back. Entrepreneurs are able to take the first step into making the world a better place.

As clearly evidenced by the responses of participants, thirteen themes were generated. It was observed that while the participants live what a true blue entrepreneurs do, the entrepreneurial competencies were imbibed in them. As an

entrepreneur, they seek opportunity, take risk, are persistent, has commitment, demand for quality, set goals, seek information, make plans, innovates, establish network and display self confidence.

Truly, all the participants possess an entrepreneurial mindset. These participants who followed the path of entrepreneurship are really grateful because they feel the pain, they feel the joy, they feel the journey more than any other people. They want to savor every moments of their entrepreneurial undertaking. Lastly, for the participants, entrepreneurship is a quest, a calling, a state of mind and it is often touted as the best way to live a life.

Findings

1. As to the lived experiences and personal competencies of micro entrepreneurs in food processing business

Reading and analyzing the verbatim transcript several times, and highlighting the significant statements with their meanings, eleven themes emerged explaining the lived experiences of the participants. These eleven themes were clustered into three, concluding that the entrepreneurs are achievers, planners and possess power. The participants are achievers. They were motivated to achieve success in their individual endeavors. They want to accomplish great things. The participants accepted and dealt challenges squarely and excel under grace. Their desire to achieve is evident in all aspects of their personal and professional lives.

Moreover, the participants are good planners and implementers. They know what they want, they know where they will be going in business. They always think of the future and goal oriented. Finally, the participants possess power. The participants were truly empowered as they exhibited self confidence and has the ability to establish networks or linkages. They love their freedom and independence of being their own boss. Their freedom to pursue their own ideas, follow their own

road paved them become the movers and shakers, the entrepreneurs who make things happen.

2. As to how do the participants cope with the demands and challenges in food processing business

Two themes emerged about how participants cope with the demands and challenges in the food processing business. Foremost, the participants have faith. They believed that entrepreneurship is not possible without faith. They all acknowledged that God, having a divine power, guided and blessed their business endeavors. Likewise, the participants love their business. Successful entrepreneurs love their company as if it were their child. They live and breathe their company every minute of the day. They love what they do. It's their passion that drives them to persevere.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that the success of an entrepreneur can be contributed to his entrepreneurial competencies which may be innate to him, or enhanced from learnings and derived inspirations from experiences of successful entrepreneurs. Moreover, the entrepreneurs recognized that there is a divine intervention in their business endeavors because of their faith to God. Also, they are personally driven by their passion to persevere and love what they do.

The researcher recommends to the participants-entrepreneurs that they should sustain their operation by continuously adapting their best practices and keep on improving their products and responding to the needs of the market. Meanwhile, for participants-entrepreneurs who have not yet achieved their desired goals in their business, they have to implement corrective measures such as studying the reasons behind such undesirable performance. They have to revisit their plans and determine if they complied or deviated from it; make an internal and external assessment to come

up with an improved strategy in their business operation.

Further, it is highly recommended to conduct follow-up research with a larger number of participants having different type of business. Another recommendation is to conduct the same type of research focusing on start-up entrepreneurs as participants which may provide comprehensive experiences on challenges of being an entrepreneur. Finally, it is recommended to conduct also phenomenological study on the lived experiences of entrepreneurs operating under cooperative, partnership or corporation to determine the similarities and differences in challenges and demands in the operation of the business.

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