

Factors Influencing Sole Proprietors' Business Performance

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Abstract

Sole proprietorship's business performance is the most neglected area of research. With taking up this crucial gap as the research objective, this study has been done among 200 sole proprietors in Puducherry with the main intention of assessing their business performance. Business policies, supplier's relationships, customer's relationships, sole proprietor's views towards the organization and the entrepreneurial empowerment are the factors inducing the business performance. For this purpose, the collected data are assessed using one-way ANOVA, Pearson correlation and the multiple regression analysis. Supplier's relationships and the entrepreneurial empowerment are the significant influencing factor of the business performance and the entrepreneurial empowerment is identified as the most inducing construct of the business performance. Study also found that the number of children influences the business performance of the entrepreneurs. Suggestions such as alteration in the business hours and using the help of the dependents for meeting their childcare needs without disturbing the business performance have been provided.

Keywords: Business policies, Supplier's Relationships, Customer's Relationships, Sole Proprietor's Views Towards the Organization, Entrepreneurial Empowerment, Business Performance

Introduction

Entrepreneurs are those individuals who are involved in selling of goods and services to the consumers and the customers in return of money. Such entrepreneurship has

different forms within itself based upon different criteria. Among such different forms of entrepreneurship, sole proprietorship plays a significant role as it is most common and easily accessible form of entrepreneurs with that of the common public. The business performances of such sole proprietors are affected by a variety of factors. Such factors change from business to business and from region to region. In addition, there are also many determining factors based upon several other benchmarks. The studies done by the authors and researchers such as Muhammad Haris Qureshi *et al.* (2012), Simon Mamadi Shiamwama *et al.* (2014), Mbugu Stephen Kamunge *et al.* (2014) and many others concentrated on identifying the factors inducing the business performance of the entrepreneurs, i.e., including all types of small-scale business located in different geographical locations.

Business performance is induced by many factors including the demographic, socio-economic and other organizational factors. Relationship between the demographic constructs with that of the performance of the business includes Sagire Lucas (2017) and to be more particular the studies done by the authors such as Simon Radipere & Shepherd Dhliwayo (2014), V. Kanti Prasad *et al.* (2015) focused on the impact of the age group on the performance of the business. While the researcher such as Maduenyoghasi *et al.* (2015) discovered the relationship between the childcare with that of the business performance. Similar to the demographic profile of the workers, the socioeconomic constructs also induce the performance of the businesses. It is also done by various authors such as those done by Myung Su Park *et al.* 2017, Avraam Papastathopoulos and Christina Beneki, 2010 and Sandra Gottschalk *et al.* 2014 who focused on the relationship between the experience and the business

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performance, while they all failed to concentrate on the relationship between the organizational factors with that of the business performance of the entrepreneurs. Hence, for this purpose, this study is undertaken.

There are even studies which focused on the influencing factors (organizational constructs) inducing the business performance of the entrepreneurs. Through the studies, the most commonly identified determinants of the business performance include business policies (Patrick M. Wright *et al.* 2003), proper strategies to improve the business performance (Ilori David Babafemi, 2015), proper relationship with the business stakeholders (Robert G. Eccles, *et al.* 2014), supplier's goods supplying timings (Inayatullah, *et al.* 2012) and analytical skills of the entrepreneurs (Ian Chaston, 2014). Since, these are certain limited numbers of predicting factors of the business performance among the entrepreneurs as a whole, there are further more influencers stimulating the performance of the sole proprietorship businesses. So, for this purpose, this study has been undertaken.

Brief Review of Past Studies

Tundui and Tundui (2012) identified that the income from the household and the skills required for running the businesses has a strong and the positive effect on the performance of the business. Leann M. Tigges and Gary P. Green (1994) revealed that the constructs such as size of the firm, status of the companies and the industry type are the strongest predictors of the success over the firm. Kathryn Watson *et al.* (1998) discovered the differences between the experiences, problems in running the businesses, motivations for start-ups and growth orientations among the business owners. Per Davidsson *et al.* (2000) discovered that the factors such as youth, freedom on the business and small size are the major driving forces of growth among the various small businesses in Sweden.

Paul Jones, *et al.* (2014) explored that the adoption of the ICT in the business helps the sole proprietors' in maintaining the sustainability of their business. Harrison and Hart (1983) exposed that unemployment is the major reason responsible for forming businesses in Northern Ireland. Dinesh Vallabh and Oswald Mhlanga (2014) opened up that the gender and the income in association with the performance of the business is significant. Sagire Lucas (2017) discovered that the educational qualification of the entrepreneurs and the businesses' age have an optimistic effect on the performance of the business.

Kanti V. Prasad *et al.* (2015) summed up that the age of the entrepreneurs and the business performance have an inverse association with one another. Simon Radipere and Shepherd Dhliwayo (2014) ended up in their research by stating that the age groups and the business size have no significant association with the business performance. Maduenyoghasi *et al.* (2015) found that the childcare policies have a direct impact on the performance of nursery schools in Nigeria. Maja Pervan *et al.* (2017) found that the age of the business has a negative effect on its performance. Christian Grund and Niels Westergaard-Nielsen (2005) found that the different age categories of the workforces are inversely associated with the performance of the firms.

Olutayo K. Osunsan *et al.* (2015) identified that there is a significant affiliation amid the company's age and the performance of the business located in Kampala, Uganda. Florian Kunze *et al.* (2013) identified that the undesirable age perception affects the performance of the organization as a whole. Avraam Papastathopoulos and Christina Beneki (2010) in their study identified that previous entrepreneurial experience and the ICT knowledge plays a significant role in the improvement of ICT performance among Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). Myung Su Park *et al.* (2017) found an inverse relationship amid the failure rates of the entrepreneurs and the performance of the SMEs situated in Korea. Patrick M. Wright *et al.* (2003) explored that the commitment and the HR practices are significantly connected with the business performance.

Robert G. Eccles *et al.* (2014) found that the firms with the high levels of sustainability have better performance as compared to that of their competitors. Werner Reinartz *et al.* (2004) found that the relationship with the customers has a moderate association with the performance of the business. Chao-Hsiung Lee *et al.* (2010) showed an optimistic and significant connection between the organizational performance with that of the information sharing, decentralization and coordination. Peter Suchanek and Maria Kralova (2015) discovered that the customer satisfaction affects the performance of the business.

Alemu Muleta Kebede and Zewdu Lake Tegegne (2018) found that the knowledge management is the major determinant of the performance of the commercial banks. Inyatullah *et al.* (2012) discovered that the supplier performance is optimistically associated with the organizational performance. Ian Chatson (2009) discovered that the entrepreneurs with the proper

analytical and decision making skills are running the firms successfully. Stanizin Mantok (2016) discovered that the entrepreneurship raises the empowerment among the women.

Research Gap

As most of the studies that are done with the object of measuring the performance of the business concentrates on various geographical locations except leaving Puducherry region aside. Such research works includes the works of Leann M. Tigges and Gray P. Green (1994), Kathryn Watson et al. (1998) and Davidson et al. (2002). In all these research works, the authors conducted their study on different regions apart from Puducherry. While, on the other hand, the researchers such as Dinesh Vallabah and Osward Mhlanga (2014), Sagire Lucas (2017) and P.S. Raghu Kumari and Pankaj Trivedi (2016) laid foundation of their research on the effect of the demographic factors of the entrepreneurs on the performance of their business. There is no study as of now to find out the most influencing factors of the business performance of the sole proprietors in the Puducherry region. Hence, for this purpose, the study has been undertaken.

Objective of the Study

The major objective of the study is to identify the factors influencing the business performance and assess the

relationship between the factors inducing the business performance with that of the performance of the sole proprietorship, whereas the ancillary objective is to find out the most influencing factor of the business performance of the sole proprietors in Puducherry region. In addition, keeping in view of the impact of sole proprietors' personal life into account, the relationship between the number of children and the study factors is also examined.

Limitations of the Study

As the study is limited on the sole proprietors situated in the Puducherry region alone with a total sample of 200 along with the five inducing constructs of the business performance, there are chances of obtaining different results if the sample setting, region, size and the number of inducing constructs of the business performance are improved.

Factors Considered for the Study

Based upon the extensive review of literature and based upon the results of the case studies done, the following factors are considered for the study. They are as the major influencers of the business performance among the sole proprietorship in the study area. They are presented below in the form of the diagrammatic representation as follows.

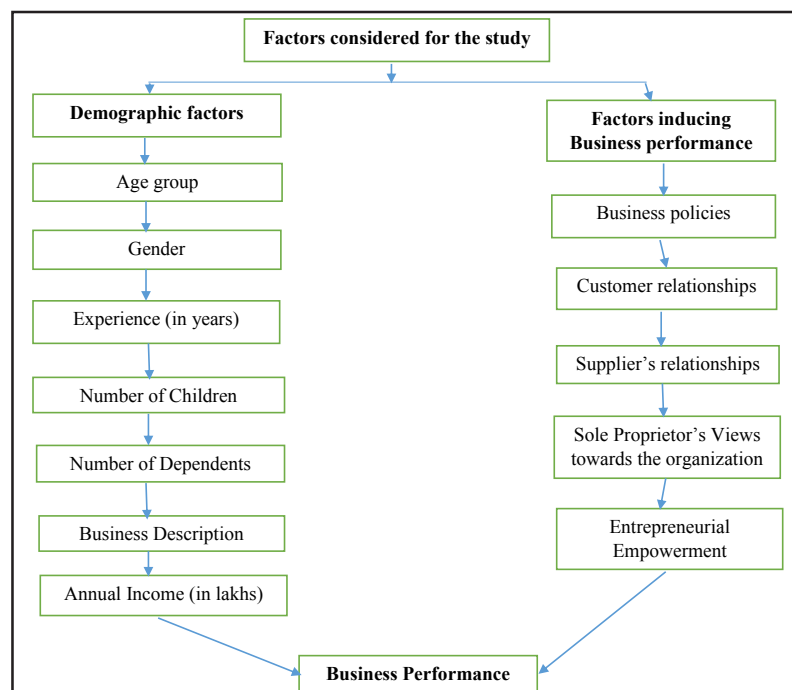


Fig. 1: Factors Taken for the Study

Demographic Factors for the Study

The study consists of the demographic variables such as the age group, gender, experience (in years), number of children, number of dependents, business description and annual income (in lakhs). Further, for the purpose of easier understanding, each and every factor is further divided into subgroups as follows. Age group is categorized into 21–25 years, 26–30 years, 31–35 years, 36–40 years, 41–45 years, 46–50 years, 51–55 years, 56–60 years and above 60 years; gender has been categorized into male and female and the experience (in years) is classified into up to 1 year, above 1–5 years, above 5–10 years, above 10–15 years, above 15–20 years and above 20 years. Number of children is categorized into the respondents with no children, having up to 1 child, those with 2 children and those having 3 children and above and the number of dependents has been classified into no dependents, those with just 1 dependent, up to 2–4 dependents and those with above 4 dependents. Business description of the workers has been classified into those indulged in groceries business, general merchants, small-scale restaurants and hotels and other types of business and the annual income (in lakhs) of the respondents is divided into those earning income up to Rs.1 lakh per month, those earning income from above Rs. 1 lakh to Rs. 5 lakhs and those with above Rs.5 lakhs per month.

Since the number of children is a peculiar construct among the demographic factors of the entrepreneurs which has a direct impact on their businesses, special attention is paid towards such personal construct in order to identify the relationship between the different categories of the number of children with that of the study factors. More the number of the children less would be the performance of the sole proprietorship business; on the other hand, the less number of children, more would be the business performance (*Hypothesis 1*).

Factors Inducing Business Performance

The performance of the business is affected by a number of factors depending upon the different criteria such as the type of business, operating hours of the firm, market share of the firm, locality of the business and many more alike. Such performance of the business also varies from business to business as mentioned above. There are certain

studies that assessed the performance of the different types of businesses namely those done by the Chavalit Nimlaor et al. (2014) in which they found businesses' characteristics, policies with regard to maintaining the businesses and the atmosphere of the business as the factors responsible for the performance of the business firms. The study done by Masood Nawaz Kalyar et al. (2013) revealed that the performance of the new product significantly affects the all-round performance of the company. The performance of the manufacturing companies has been studied by Ahmad Adnan Al-Tit (2017). In this study, the author identified that the factors such as adoption to the culture, performance orientation, supplier and customer partnership induce the performance of the organization. In a study, the factors namely financial steadiness, skills required for being a businessperson and the family base are responsible for influencing the performance of business run by the retired public officials of Kakamega, Kenya (Simon Mamadi Shiamwama et al., 2014). Constructs such as entrepreneurial aspects and cultural capability were determining the performance of the Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), which has been identified in a research study (Grisna Anggadwita & Qanita Yuuha Mustafid, 2014). In a study done by the researchers, the reasons vis-a-vis absence of appropriate training of the employees and lower investments in fixed assets are accountable for poor financial performance of the small-scale hotels in Tanzania (Amit Sharma & Arun Upneja, 2005). Miri Lerner et al. (1997), through their research work, identified association of a particular network, motivation and environmental-related factors related to the performance of the women-run business in Israel.

While, there is a lack of abundant number of the studies which focuses on assessing the business performance of the sole proprietors, the studies with this objective is quite rare. Through the extensive reviews of earlier studies, it has been identified that Nelson Kofi Adarkwah et al. (2018) found that the factors of production such as credit, labour and raw materials' inadequacy, information capabilities, policies of the state and higher exchange rate are significantly and negatively contributing to the development of the sole proprietorship in Ghana. Apart from the above-mentioned studies, there is a nonexistence of studies in the concept with the focus of examining the impact of the business performance among the sole proprietorship business.

On the other hand, it has been also identified that the earlier research works the factors namely organization culture, partnership of the suppliers and the customers and business policies are very much correlated with the constructs namely business policies, customer relationships and supplier's relationships of this present study. But, they all failed to study these above-mentioned influencing variables in the context of the sole proprietorship business performance. In addition, in order to investigate the performance from the viewpoint of the sole proprietors and the absence of research works with the influencing factors such as sole proprietor's views towards the business and the entrepreneurial empowerment, they are included as the research factors for this study. Hitherto, for this purpose, the present study has been undertaken with the major objective of measuring the business performance of the sole proprietors with the factors namely business policies, customer's relationships, supplier's relationships, sole proprietor's views towards the business and entrepreneurial empowerment in Puducherry.

Results of the Unstructured Interview Schedule Among 50 Cases

As stated earlier, the influencing factors of the performance of sole proprietorship business have been identified through the extensive review of literature and in order to confirm that whether such factors, are matching in the real life scenerio, case studies has been conducted among 50 cases i.e., the sole proprietors. Such 50 sole proprietors does not form part of the final sample size in the present study. After obtaining the confirmation that the constructs considered for the study are matching with their present situation, the factors such as business policies, customer relationships, supplier's relationships, sole proprietor's views towards the organization and entrepreneurial empowerment are considered to be the major influencers of the study. The results of the case studies are presented below.

Table 1: Frequency Distribution of the Case Studies Results Among 50 cases

Factors	Frequency	Percentage
Business policies	15	30
Customer relationships	13	26
Supplier's relationships	10	20
Sole proprietor's views towards the organization	7	14
Entrepreneurial Empowerment	5	10
TOTAL	50	100

Source: Primary data

Table 1 shows the frequency distribution of the case studies conducted among 50 cases. As per the results, business policies has been reported by over 15 cases (30%) as the influencer of the business performance, customer relationships are also reported by over 13 cases (26%), the supplier's relationships by over 10 cases (20%), sole proprietor's views towards the organization by 7 cases (14%) and the entrepreneurial empowerment by 5 cases (10%). The instrument has also been framed in the same hierarchy as projected in the case studies.

Research Methodology

Sample Region

Puducherry is the sample region considered for the study. Due to the presence of the Indo-French culture, which comprises of both the French and Indian Citizens, the study has adopted Puducherry as the sample region. Such a mixture of Indo-French citizens are involved in running their own sole proprietorship businesses in the places like White town, and Auroville areas of the study area and hence, for these reasons, the sole proprietors' operating their businesses in the Puducherry region is considered as the final samples of the study. So, in order to analyse the business performance in a inter-cultural context, the present study has been undertaken.

Methods

The study adopted the convenience sampling methods of data collection. Since, majority of the sole proprietors are uninterested to take part in the research because of their unwillingness and the feeling to produce the confidential information to the public, they regret. Hence, the researcher has been compulsorily pushed to take up the convenience sampling technique. Due to the presence of the plenty advantages over this sampling technique such as speediness, ease of access and quicker response from the samples, this technique has been adopted. The data have been gathered only from those respondents who agreed to participate in the research.

Materials

Prior to the collection of data, in order to finalize the study factors, the unstructured interviews have been conducted with 50 respondents using the data sheet specially designed for this purpose by the researcher (*Ref. Table 1*). In confirmation with the factors, the data for the

study have been conducted through the structured and self-administered questionnaire (*Ref. Annexure-I*), which is subjected to pilot study and later on for the final data collection.

Pilot Study

The collected data for the study have been subjected to the pilot study in order to identify the validity of the questionnaire adopted for the study. For the purpose of pilot study, the researcher adopted the Cronbach's alpha scale of reliability and validity for analysing the consistency of the questionnaire used in this research work (*Ref. Table 2*). The results of such analysis are presented below in the data analysis and interpretation part of the study.

Sample Size and Response Rates

Data for the study have been gathered from over 200 sole proprietors in Puducherry region. Prior to finalizing the sample size, the 350 questionnaires were distributed and a total of 223 were returned with a total response rate of 63.71% and based upon the accuracy of the information, the sample sizes are limited to 200.

Tools Applied

Collected data are subjected to the descriptive statistics like mean and standard deviation (*Ref. Table 3*) in order to identify the most affecting items of the study constructs. These have also been subjected to the inferential statistics such as one-way ANOVA (*Ref. Table 5*) to measure the relationship between the demographic constructs i.e., the number of children in the present study with that of the study factors including the influencing factors and the business performance itself, Pearson correlation (*Ref. Tables 6 & 7*) for identifying the relationship between the influencers and the business performance, while the multiple regression analysis (*Ref. Table 8*) is used for identifying the most influencing factor of the business performance.

Relationship Between the Factors Influencing Business Performance and Business Performance: Base for Framing Hypothesis

All these factors are taken into account as the influencers mainly due to their relevance and the research gap identified through the earlier studies. The policy of the businesses is significantly connected with the performance of the organization as a whole (Patrick M. Wright *et al.* 2003), if the proper strategies are implemented (Ilori David Babafemi, 2015). Since all these results are identified among the different types of business organizations as a whole, generally the large and medium-scale organization, there are no studies that consider the effect of the business policies on the business performance of the sole proprietors. Henceforth, to achieve this research gap, this construct has been added up to this list of the influencing factors. Proper implementation of the business policies leads to the enhanced business performance and on the other hand poor execution of the business policies ends up in the reduced business performance (*Hypothesis 2*).

Better sustainable associations with the stakeholders of the business increase the performance of the business organizations (Robert G. Eccles *et al.* 2014). Among such relationships, the association with the customers has its very own significant position. Customer satisfaction and retaining the loyal customers plays an important role in the improvement of the performance of the business organizations which leading to better profits for the businesses (Rozitta Chittaie, 2012; Werner Reinartz *et al.*, 2004). Since, the studies conducted by the authors and the researchers such as Chao-Hsiung Lee, *et al.* 2010, Petr Suchanek and Maria Kralova, 2015, Alemu Muleta Kebede and Zewdu Lake Tegegne, 2018, all focused on the large business and service organizations, they failed to study about this relationship of the sole proprietorship business. So, for achieving this research gap, the current study has been undertaken. When the customer relationships are good, there are chances of improving the performance of the business, but on the other hand, the improper relationship with the customers reduces the business performance (*Hypothesis 3*).

It has been identified that the supplier relationships is also considered to be more important as compared to that of the customer relationships in improving the organizational performance. Goods delivering speed by the suppliers' play a critical role in the determination of the business performance (Inayatullah *et al.*, 2012). As the supplier's relationships have not been studied as an influencer among the sole proprietorship business, these have been added up as a predictor in this study. A stable relationship with the suppliers plays a significant role in raising the performance of the business and, on the other hand, the unstable and poor associations with the suppliers reduce the organizational performance (*Hypothesis 4*).

Firm's performance underlies on the proper views and the feelings of the business organization. Entrepreneurs' proper decision-making skill determines the success of the business (Ian Chaston, 2014). So, it has been added up as the major determinant of the performance of the business. Optimistic views towards the business improve the performance of the business while the negative thought over the business reduces the business performance (*Hypothesis 5*).

Empowerment is a crucial term for any working professionals, which motivates them to work even harder and become more committed towards their business. Similarly, such empowerment is applicable to the entrepreneurs also; it is because the entrepreneurship makes the business owners to feel privileged, proper sense of belongings over the business activities and ultimately provides proper financial independence to them. This makes the driving force for the improvement of the business performance. Rise in entrepreneurial empowerment improves the business performance and, on the other hand, the reduction in the empowerment reduces their business performance (*Hypothesis 6*).

Theoretical Framework of the Study Factors

Factors Determining Sole Proprietor's Business Performance

After the confirmation with the study factors through the research gap identified and the results of the unstructured interview schedule (*Ref. Table 1*), the study factors such as business policies (BP), customer relationships (CR), supplier relationships (SR), sole proprietor's views

towards the organization (SPVTO) and entrepreneurial empowerment (EE) are considered as the factors determining the sole proprietorship business performance. In order to make the stakeholders of this research easier to understand the problem statement, the theoretical explanation for the study factors has been provided in this section.

Business Policies (BP)

Rules and regulations are framed for running different types of businesses. Rules as framed by the government should be adhered to and followed by every businessperson uniformly. But, the policies followed by the entrepreneurs, i.e., the sole proprietorship towards their businesses vary for each and every business subject to the fulfilment of the government norms. Such policies are done by most of the businessperson (sole proprietor) to attract their customers in order to fulfil their utmost object of maximizing the profits. Hence, it could be stated that the guidelines that are framed by the business owners for the purpose of the achievement of their business goals are referred to as business policies.

Customer Relationships (CR)

Having smooth and friendly relationships with the customers is quintessential for every business organization. Keeping in view the significance of the fact that 'customers are the real kings of the business' every business person tends to take necessary steps to build the better relationships with their customers. So, it could be inferred that the customer relationships is one of the essential elements required for the success of the business.

Supplier Relationships (SR)

As customer relationships are necessary for the success of the business at one end, the relationships with the suppliers also plays a critical role with regard to the progress of the business. To cater the needs of the customers and meet the business demands in a timely manner, the proper supply of the goods by the suppliers as and whenever necessary is essential. Henceforth, it is the utmost responsibility of the entrepreneur to have favourable relationships with the suppliers.

Sole Proprietor's Views Towards the Organization (SPVTO)

The sole proprietor's views, i.e., their thoughts and the perceptions towards their business organization, are one among the several key factors that are responsible for the growth of the business. Irrespective of many facts, such as business (tension) pressure, extended business hours, reduced income, the sole proprietors' passion towards their business is the only driving force that is responsible towards the improvement of the performance of the business. Positive perceptions regarding the business play a stronger role towards the enhancement of the sole proprietorship concern.

Entrepreneurial Empowerment (EE)

Though the sole proprietors are the single owner of their business and as they are only responsible for the decisions taken in their course of business operations, it is the driving force which makes them to take such decisions in today's modern business scenario. Since all the concepts likely reduction in prices, offering discounts, change of the business schedule and alike are responsible for the driving forces that are responsible for the success of the firm which arouse in the routine business activities, there are other forces which are taken in order to protect the brand of the business as well as that of the entrepreneur responsible for that brand building. Such driving forces include the factors such as upholding the entrepreneur's social prestige through fair business and social service activities, maintaining goodwill of the sole proprietorship business among the consumers and similar other factors. These factors make the businessperson feel privilege of being an entrepreneur and such kind of feeling automatically makes the businessperson concentrate on their business and ultimately on the enhanced performance of the business. Through these, it could be concluded that the driving factors that are undertaken by the entrepreneurs to maintain their honour feeling of running a business are referred to as entrepreneurial empowerment.

Business Performance (BP)

The Business performance is referred to as the amount of profit a business has earned through the volume of goods

sold with a minimized cost of production and if such sales is higher as compared to that of the previous years, then it could be stated as the performance of the business is progressing. But, such performance of the business is induced by a variety of factors and in this study, the constructs such as business policies (BP), customer relationships (CR), supplier relationships (SR), Sole proprietor's views towards the organization (SPVTO) and entrepreneurial empowerment (EE) by keeping in view the sample setting (i.e., Sole proprietorship business) considered for the study. The statistical analysis and the results of this study are presented in the upcoming sections.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Cronbach's Alpha Scale of Reliability and Validity Analysis

Cronbach's alpha scale of reliability is used for the purpose of measuring the validity of the questionnaire used for the data collection. 0.776 is the Cronbach's alpha scale of reliability and validity analysis. Since, the Cronbach's alpha scale of reliability is above 0.07, the instrument is accepted for the purpose of the further data collection. The results of such Cronbach's alpha scale of reliability and validity analysis have been provided below as follows.

Table 2: Cronbach's Alpha Scores for the Study Factors

<i>Study Factors</i>	<i>Scale Mean if Item Deleted</i>	<i>Scale Variance if Item Deleted</i>	<i>Corrected Item-Total Correlation</i>	<i>Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted</i>
BP	135.7640	154.299	.289	.782
CR	136.1440	149.114	.490	.775
SR	136.1770	149.790	.432	.777
SPVTO	136.0530	151.138	.434	.778
EE	136.0270	152.973	.340	.781
BP	136.0000	151.540	.451	.778

Source: Primary data

The above table describes the Cronbach's alpha values for the study factors and considering the factors influencing the BP. BP has over .782 coefficients (BP1 = .786; BP2 = .784; BP3 = .785; BP4 = .785 and BP5 = .785 coefficients), CR consists of .775 coefficients (CR1

= .784; CR2 = .779; CR3 = .782; CR4 = .773; CR5 = .780), SR has .777 coefficients (SR1 = .783; SR2 = .783; SR3 = .782; SR4 = .779; SR5 = .781), SPVTO has .778 coefficients (SPVTO1 = .783; SPVTO2 = .781; SPVTO3 = .785; SPVTO4 = .782; SPVTO5 = .784;) and EE has .781 coefficients (EE1 = .784; EE2 = .787; EE3 = .786; EE4 = .784; EE5 = .788). Taking into account, the BP, it has .778 coefficients (BP1 = .780; BP2 = .783; BP3 = .785; BP4 = .785; BP5 = .784). Since, the Cronbach's alpha value of all the above-mentioned factors is above .007, the questionnaire adopted for the study is considered to be consistent, reliable and valid and could be used for the purpose of the data collection (*Ref. Annexure-I for Questionnaire adopted*).

Table 3: Mean and SD for the Study Factors

Study Factors	Mean	Standard deviation
Business policies	4.1500	.69478
Customer relationships	3.7700	.83148
Supplier's relationships	3.7370	.87064
Sole proprietor's views towards the organization	3.8610	.75507
Entrepreneurial Empowerment	3.9140	.69731
Business Performance	3.8870	.74093

Source: Primary data

Table 2 describes the mean and the standard deviation for the study factors, i.e., the business policies, customer relationships, supplier's relationships, sole proprietor's views towards the organization, entrepreneurial empowerment and the business performance. Among the influencers of the business performance in the study, business policies have the higher mean value of around 4.1500 mean (BP1 = 4.4550; BP2 = 4.1600; BP3 = 4.2100; BP4 = 3.9100; BP5 = 4.0150), followed by it, the entrepreneurial empowerment has 3.9140 mean (EE1 = 3.9900; EE2 = 3.8900; EE3 = 8300; EE4 = 3.8800; EE5 = 3.8450), then sole proprietor's views towards the organization have 3.8610 mean (SPVTO1 = 3.9400; SPVTO2 = 3.8400; SPVTO3 = 3.8700; SPVTO4 = 3.8550; SPVTO5 = 3.8000), then the customer relationships have 3.7700 mean (CR1 = 3.8800; CR2 = 3.6800; CR3 = 3.7100; CR4 = 3.7450; CR5 = 3.8350) and the supplier's relationships have 3.7370 mean (SR1 = 3.7850; SR2 = 3.5950; SR3 = 3.6650; SR4 = 3.8350; SR5 = 3.8050). Finally, the business performance has 3.8870 mean (BP1 = 3.9900; BP2 = 3.8900; BP3 = 3.8300; BP4 = 3.8800; BP5 = 3.8450) (*Ref. Annexure-I for Questionnaire adopted*).

Table 4: Frequency Distribution of the Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Demographic Factors	Frequency	Percentage
Age group of the workers		
21–25 years	20	10.0%
26–30 years	46	23.0%
31–35 years	57	28.5%
36–40 years	36	18.0%
41–45 years	10	5.0%
46–50 years	13	6.5%
51–55 years	15	7.5%
56–60 years	2	1.0%
Above 60 years	1	0.5%
Total	200	100.0%
Gender of the workers		
Male	168	84.0%
Female	33	16.5%
Total	200	100.0%
Experience (in years) of the workers		
Up to 1 year	30	15.0%
Above 1–5 years	26	13.0%
Above 5–10 years	31	15.5%
Above 10–15 years	46	23.0%
Above 15–20 years	18	9.0%
Above 20 years	49	24.5%
Total	200	100.0%
Number of Children		
No children	19	9.5%
Up to 1 child	58	29.0%
Up to 2 Children	79	39.5%
3 children and above	44	22.0%
Total	200	100.0%
Number of Dependents		
No dependents	10	5.0%
Up to 1 dependent	20	10.0%
2–4 dependents	116	58.0%
Above 4 dependents	54	27.0%
Total	200	100.0%
Business description of the workers		
Groceries	110	55.0%
General merchants	48	24.0%
Small scale restaurants and hotels	32	16.0%
Other types of business	10	5.0%
Total	200	100.0%
Annual Income (in lakhs)		
Up to Rs.1,00,000	78	39.0%
Rs. 1,00,000 – Rs. 5,00,000	103	51.5%
Above Rs. 5,00,000	19	9.5%
Total	200	100.0%

Source: Primary data

Table 3 shows the frequency distribution of the demographic profile of the respondents. Considering the age group of the workers, 20 entrepreneurs (10.0%) are aged 21–25 years, 46 respondents (23.0%) are aged from 26–30 years, 57 interviewees (28.5%) are aged 31–35 years, 36 business owners (18.0%) are aged between 36 and 40 years, 10 sole proprietors (5.0%) are aged 41–45 years, 13 entrepreneurs (6.5%) are aged 46–50 years, 15 respondents (7.5%) are aged 51–55 years, 2 businesspersons (1.0%) are aged 56–60 years and 1 capitalist (0.5%) is aged above 60 years. As far as the gender of the workers is considered, 168 entrepreneurs (84.0%) are male and the remaining 33 (16.5%) are female. As far as the experience (in years) of the entrepreneurs is concerned, 30 entrepreneurs (15.0%) are experienced up to 1 year, 26 businesspersons (13.0%) are experienced above 1–5 years, 31 respondents (15.5%) are experienced above 5–10 years, 46 interviewees (23.0%) are experienced above 10–15 years, 18 respondents (9.0%) are experienced above 15–20 years and 49 professionals (24.5%) are experienced above 20 years. Taking into account, the number of children, 19 interviewees (9.5%) are having no children each, 58 respondents (29.0%) are

having up to 1 child each, 79 entrepreneurs (39.5%) are having up to 2 children each and 44 business persons (22.0%) are having 3 children and above each.

Concerned with the number of dependents into account, 10 respondents (5.0%) have no dependents each, 20 interviewees (10.0%) have up to 1 dependent each, 116 businesspersons (58.0%) have 2–4 dependents and 54 entrepreneurs (27.0%) have above 4 dependents. Considering the business description of the respondents, 110 entrepreneurs (55.0%) are indulged in groceries business, 48 businesspersons (24.0%) are general merchants, 32 respondents (16.0%) are the owners of the small scale restaurants and hotels and the remaining 10 interviewees (5.0%) are involved in other types of the businesses. Taking the annual income (in lakhs), 78 entrepreneurs (39.0%) are earning income of up to Rs. 1,00,000, while 103 businesspersons (51.5%) are earning income from Rs. 1,00,000 to Rs.5,00,000 and the remaining the 19 individuals are earning the income of above Rs.5,00,000.

Hypothesis: Number of children has no significant relationship with the study factors.

Table 5: One-way ANOVA for the Significant Relationship Between the Number of Children and the Study Factors

Study Factors	Number of Children								F	Sig.
	No Children		One		Two		Three and Above			
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Business policies	17.37 ^a	6.89	19.54 ^{ab}	4.71	21.02 ^b	4.40	20.50 ^b	3.90	6.251	.000 ^{**}
Supplier relationships	16.35 ^a	6.02	17.75 ^a	4.98	18.89 ^a	4.79	18.75 ^a	3.74	3.315	.021 [*]
Customer relationships	15.94 ^a	6.59	16.54 ^{ab}	6.10	18.39 ^{ab}	5.30	19.42 ^b	3.90	3.082	.028 [*]
Sole proprietor's views towards the business	17.29 ^a	6.13	18.35 ^a	5.24	19.25 ^a	4.91	19.83 ^a	3.74	2.070	.105
Entrepreneurial Empowerment	18.33 ^a	4.38	19.69 ^{ab}	2.89	20.25 ^b	2.69	20.00 ^{ab}	2.41	4.524	.004 ^{**}
Business Performance	17.08 ^a	6.87	18.87 ^a	5.52	19.71 ^a	4.94	20.00 ^a	4.73	3.076	.028 [*]

Source: Primary data

Note: 1. Different alphabets among the mean scores denote the significant at 0.5% level using Duncan Multiple Range test (DMRT).

2. * denotes significant at 0.05 level.

3. ** denotes significant at 0.01 level.

The above table describes the one-way ANOVA for the significant relationship between the number of children and the study factors. As the p values of business policies and the entrepreneurial empowerment are lower than 0.01, the null hypothesis is rejected at 1% level of significance. So, it could be inferred that business

policies and entrepreneurial empowerment have a significant relationship with the number of children at 1% level of significance. Since, the p values of the supplier's relationships, customer relationships and the business performance are lower than the 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected at 5% level of significance.

Hence, it could be stated that the supplier's relationships, customer relationships and the business performance are significantly connected with the business performance at 5% level. P value of sole proprietor's views towards the business is greater than 0.05, thus the null hypothesis is accepted at 5% level and it could be concluded that the sole proprietor's views towards the business are not significantly related with the business performance at 5% level.

Based upon the DMRT test, it has been identified that the respondents with no children have a significant difference with those having two and three and above children, but there is no such significant difference among those respondents having one child with regard to the business policies at 5% level of significance. It has also been found that there is no significant difference among the interviewees with different number of children with that

of the supplier's relationships, sole proprietor's views towards the business and business performance at 5% level of significance. It has also been found that there is a significant difference between the entrepreneurs having no child and those with three and above children, but there is no such significant difference among the businesspersons having one child and those with two children with regard to the customer relationships at 5% level. It has been found that those business persons who are not having any child are having a significant difference with those respondents having two children. but no such significant differences are found among those respondents who are having one child, those with three and those with no children towards the entrepreneurial empowerment at 5% significance.

Hypothesis: There is no relationship among the influencers of the business performance within themselves.

Table 6: Pearson Inter-Correlation Among the Influencers of the Business Performance

<i>Influencers of Business Performance</i>		<i>Business Policies</i>	<i>Supplier's Relationships</i>	<i>Customer's Relationships</i>	<i>Sole Proprietor's Views Towards the Organization</i>	<i>Entrepreneurial Empowerment</i>
Business policies	Correlation		.199**	-.099	.028	-.036
	Significance		.005	.162	.693	.616
Supplier's relationships	Correlation	.199		.084	-.020	-.052
	Significance	.005**		.235	.781	.463
Customer's relationships	Correlation	-.099	.084		.179*	-.002
	Significance	.162	.235		.011	.980
Sole Proprietor's views towards the organization	Correlation	.028	-.020	.179**		.047
	Significance	.693	.781	.011		.507
Entrepreneurial Empowerment	Correlation	-.036	-.052	-.002	.047	
	Significance	.616	.463	.980	.507	

Source: Primary data

Table 5 shows the Pearson inter-correlation among the influencing factors of the business performance within themselves. The results of the analysis are as follows.

Business policies are weakly and positively related with supplier's relationships and with sole proprietor's views towards the organization at .199 coefficients and at .028 coefficients at 1% significance respectively. While, the business policies has a negative relationship with the customer's relationships at -.099 coefficients and with entrepreneurial empowerment at -.036 coefficients.

Supplier's relationships are weakly and positively related

with the customer relationships at .084 coefficients, then negatively correlated with the sole proprietor's views towards the organization at -.020 coefficients and with the entrepreneurial empowerment at -.052 coefficients. Customer relationships are weak as well as positively connected with the sole proprietor's views towards the organization at .179 coefficients at 5% level of significance and negatively related with the entrepreneurial empowerment at -.002 coefficients. Sole proprietor's views towards the organization are associated with the entrepreneurial empowerment at .047 coefficients.

Hypothesis: Influencers of the business performance are not significantly related with the performance of the sole proprietorship.

Table 7: Pearson Correlation for the Significant Relationship Among Influencers of the Business Performance and the Sole Proprietorship Business

<i>Factors</i>		<i>Business Performance</i>
Business policies	Correlation Coefficient	-.079
	Significance	.263
Supplier's relationships	Correlation Coefficient	.211**
	Significance	.003
Customer's relationships	Correlation Coefficient	.030
	Significance	.669
Sole proprietorship towards the organization	Correlation Coefficient	.094
	Significance	.186
Entrepreneurial Empowerment	Correlation Coefficient	.170*
	Significance	.016

Source: Primary data

Table 6 shows the Pearson correlation for the significant relationship among the influencers of the business performance and the sole proprietorship business. Business policies are negatively correlated with the business performance at -.079 coefficients. Since, the p

value (.263) is greater than .005, the null hypothesis is accepted. Henceforth, it could be stated that there is no significant relationship between the business policies and the business performance. Supplier's relationships are weak as well as positively connected associated with the business performance at .211 coefficients. As the p value (.003) is lesser than .001, the null hypothesis is rejected at 1% level. So, it could be stated that supplier's relationships is significantly associated with the business performance. Customer's relationships are weak as well as positively connected with the business performance at .030 coefficients. As the p value (.669) is greater than the 0.05, the null hypothesis is accepted at 5% level. Therefore, it could be concluded that the customer's relationships is not significantly connected with the business performance at 5% level. Sole proprietorship towards the organization is weak as well as positively connected with the business performance at .094 coefficients. As the p value .186 is greater than 0.005, the null hypothesis is accepted at 5% level. So, it could be inferred that the sole proprietorship towards the organization is not significantly related with the business performance at 5% level. Entrepreneurial empowerment is weak as well as positively connected with the business performance at .170 coefficients. Since, the p value .016 is lesser than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected at 5% level. Henceforth, it could be concluded that the entrepreneurial empowerment is significantly related with the business performance at 5% level.

Table 8: Multiple Regression Analysis Among the Influencers of the Business Performance and the Sole Proprietorship Business

<i>Influencers</i>	<i>Unstandardized Coefficients</i>	<i>Standard Error of B</i>	<i>Standardized Coefficients</i>	<i>T Value</i>	<i>P Value</i>
Business performance (constant)	3.342	.554		6.030	.000**
Business policies (X1)	-.005	.078	-.004	-.061	.951
Supplier's relationships (X2)	-.080	.066	-.089	-1.201	.231
Customer's relationships (X3)	-.005	.062	-.006	-.076	.939
Sole proprietorship towards the business (X4)	.029	.071	.029	.404	.687
Entrepreneurial Empowerment (X5)	.197	.078	.186	2.542	.012

Source: Primary data

Table 7 describes the multiple regression analysis among the influencers of the business performance and the sole proprietorship business. .917 is the multiple R value and this displays the optimistic association the influencing constructs and the business performance. .789 is the R square value and as the p value (.000) is lower than the

.001, it is significant at 1% level. Therefore, the multiple regression equation would be

$$Y = 3.342 - .005X1 - .080X2 - .005X3 + .029X4 + .197X5$$

Business policies is negatively related with the business performance stating that the business performance falls

for every single unit downfall in the favourable business policies at 0.5% and it is not significant at 5% level. Supplier's relationships is inversely associated with the business performance and this shows that the business performance falls for each and every unit decrease in the favourable supplier's relationships at 80% and they are not significant at 5% level. Customer's relationships is also adversely connected with the business performance, thus stating that the business performance falls for every per unit downfall in the customer's relationship at 0.5% and it is not significant at 5% level. Sole proprietorship towards the organization is positively related with the business performance, thus stating that business performance rises with a single unit increase in the business performance at 29% and it is not significant at 5% level. Entrepreneurial empowerment is optimistically linked with the performance of the business and this shows that the sole proprietorship performance rises with per unit rise in the entrepreneurial empowerment at 19.7% and it is not significant at 5% level.

Depending upon the standardized coefficients it has been identified that among the factors influencing business performance, entrepreneurial empowerment factor is the most influencing factor of the business performance at .186 coefficients, then by sole proprietorship views towards the organization factor at .029 coefficients, thirdly, by business policies at -.004 coefficients, and fourthly by the customer's relationships at -.006 coefficients and lastly, by the supplier's relationships at -.089 coefficients.

Discussions and Conclusions

The study found that the supplier's relationships and the entrepreneurial empowerment are significantly correlated with the business performance. Business policies, customer's relationships and sole proprietorship views towards the organization are not significantly associated with the business performance. Among the influencers of the performance of the business, it has been identified that entrepreneurial empowerment is the most inducing construct of the business performance and the supplier's relationships is the least inducing factor of the sole proprietorship performance. This clearly shows that the entrepreneurs in the study area have reportedly stated that their performance of the business is highly affected by the number of children. More the number of children, lesser would be the business performance while the lesser

would be the number of children, higher would be the business performance. In other words, childcare affects the business performance of the respondents.

Childcare facilities of the sole proprietors are equally important for the entrepreneurs as that of looking after their business. Spending the time for the childcare is the major hindrance in the performance of the business. Entrepreneurs could easily concentrate on their childcare without disturbing their businesses by reducing their business time through limiting their activities during the non-business hours and meet their personal child demands easily. On the other hand, the family dependents could also provide their necessary help for the businesses. In case of any emergencies during the business hours, the businesspersons can easily meet such hard times by employing their dependents to look after the business as an alternative plan. By doing so, the childcare facilities of the entrepreneurs could be easily met and on the other hand, their concentration towards the business improves.

The improved concentration on the sole proprietorship business leads to the positive views towards their business and make the entrepreneurs to feel empowered over the business, in turn enhances the respondents to frame better policies for the businesses with a focus of improving the better relationships with the stakeholders such as the suppliers and the customers. This process in turn ultimately improves the performance of the businesses among the stakeholders. As a result of the enhanced organizational performance, it ultimately leads to the payment of more amounts of taxes to the government out of the enormous profits, i.e., the super-normal profits. This in turn increases the national income and also paves way for the growth of the economy.

Scope for Further Research

As the present study deals with the business performance of the sole proprietors alone, it would be better if the business performance of all major types of the businesses is studied as a whole. By investigating the business performance of the different types of businesses such as partnership, Hindu undivided family (HUF), joint stock companies and all other types of businesses in addition to the sole proprietorship businesses, the entire picture of the entrepreneurs' business performance in Puducherry region could be easily ascertained.

Annexure - I

Questionnaire Adopted for the Study	
Sl.No.	Factors Influencing Business Performance
Business Policies	
1.	Customer attraction and retention is the foremost policy of my business
2.	I have earned more revenue out of my business due to the better customer policies
3.	Policies of my business are within the framework of the law.
4.	Subsequent to better returns, my business also undertakes social service.
5.	Success of my business is based upon the better policies over the business.
Customer Relationships	
1.	Good contacts with the customers are possible because of my flexible business strategies.
2.	With better customer relationships, I can easily share certain business facts to loyal customers.
3.	I understood that the real owners of my business are my customers.
4.	Due to better business services, there is an absence of customer grievances.
5.	Gratification of the customer is the key to the progression of the business.
Supplier Relationships	
1.	Another supreme authority of my business is my suppliers.
2.	Timely supply of goods with best quality enhances my business performance.
3.	Extending goods on credit to meet the demands of my business is the major help done by my suppliers.
4.	There is a smooth relationships exists between myself and my suppliers.
5.	Contentment with the suppliers augments the growth of my business.
Sole Proprietorship Views Towards the Business Organization	
1.	Business freedom is the major factor responsible for my contentment in the business.
2.	Appropriate decisions could be easily taken by me in improving the business.
3.	My business gives a balanced life between the family and business.
4.	
5.	I was Very Much Gratified Over My Business
	Optimistic business performances are achieved through the existence of my positive business ideas.
Entrepreneurial Empowerment	
1.	Due to the maintenance of the social prestige, I extend my business operations.
2.	On account of upholding the goodwill, I render quality service by providing best products at reduced price.
3.	In order to withhold the competition among the competitors, I have extended my business hours of operations.
4.	My family members, friends and other acquaintances made me to feel privileged of being an entrepreneur.
5.	Better empowerment of the entrepreneurs plays a stronger role towards the achievement of the business objectives.
Business Performance (Resulting Factor)	
1.	Stable policies of the business are helpful in the improvement of my business operations.
2.	Smoother associations with the customers are the major factor responsible for the success of my business.
3.	Favourable supplier relationships play a critical role in the business progression.
4.	Sole proprietor's positive thoughts in the business pave way for a better sole proprietorship concern.
5.	Entrepreneurial empowerment rises my business performance.

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