COMMUNITY BASED PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH: COMMUNITY BASED SUPPLY CHAIN FOOD PROVIDERS

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ABSTRACT

Community-Based Enterprises (CBEs) provide quintessential services to their local communities. However, the CBEs that deliver programs in impoverished communities face logistics challenges that limit their potential to deliver food. This research uses community based participatory research to understand the ability of these organizations to distribute, manage inventory, and transport food products. The qualitative analysis identifies critical factors needed to assess the availability and effectiveness of CBEs in impoverished communities and provide the foundation for survey construction and simulation modeling.

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Community Based Enterprises (hereafter, CBEs) in the U.S. play an important role in providing long-term support in local communities. These organizations are known to sustain and improve the quality of life for their constituents. Research has shown that adherents of these organizations are prone to increase their self-efficacy as a result of their regular attendance and participation (De Leon, Seeman, Baker, Richardson, and Tinetti, 1996; Seeman, McAvay, Merrill, Albert and Rodin, 1996). In essence, organizations such as CBEs have played an important support role in providing awareness and improving compliance to the community. However, while providing several outreach services and food programs to the community, these community based food providers still confront barriers that limit their potential to provide products and services, especially in impoverished areas (Felix, Levine, and Burstin, 2003).

One of these barriers is that these CBEs are generally not recognized for the critical role they play in providing food products and services. Not only are its constituents not universally aware of the benefits the organizations provide but many are not aware that these organizations provide support and efficiently deliver these supply chain and logistics services. CBEs are often reluctant to seek support from other sources. Instead, many prefer to remain self-funded to avoid substantial risks and complexities. Unfortunately, these tends to lead to other problems and shared efforts. This lack of shared efforts primarily leads to reduced transportation support services. This lack of transportation prevents easy access to quality food in the U.S. These and other barriers functions
impede the progress of CBEs in serving as agents for providing food benefits to members of the local community (Horton and Johnson, 2010).

The theory of planned behavior (TPB) offers one explanation of the role that behavioral intention plays in various social services contexts (Ajzen, 1991; Godin G, and Kok, 1996). Not only does this theory look into the intention of the individual in taking an action but also looks at the attitude toward the action. TPB examines the intentions of individuals prior to their initiating actions. The theory also addresses the individuals’ attitude toward the planned action. Social Cognitive Theory has been used extensively to understand human behavior and how action and motivation are influenced by the community and agents within the community (Godin and Kok, 1996; Bandura, 1986).

Community Based Enterprises also known as non-profit organizations have a history of providing social services to the community. While these organizations are mostly affiliated with religious organizations, many of them still provide social and food services to the general community to which they belong (Graddy, and Ye, 2006). These theories and prior research provide a foundation for this work and result in the underlying questions we seek to address:

a. Are CBE’s willing to act as food distribution centers for their constituents and community?
b. Are CBEs willing to serve as a site for service delivery? Are CBEs able to serve as distribution sites to the community including those of other communities?
c. Would CBEs that serve as service centers help provide better accessibility to food services? Reduced transportation costs? And allow for better utilization of food distribution services?

Distribution is a term that was not fully recognized by organizations till the 1970s (La Londe, Grabner, and Robeson, 1971). As a supply chain function, distribution provides several benefits to the organization. Distribution centers are often strategically located to help provide product and service deliveries with greater accessibility in terms of location and costs (Rushton, 2010). Accessibility is an essential supply chain function that this research seeks to understand within the context of CBEs serving as food distribution centers. We contend that these non-profit organizations can serve as food distribution centers as well as and support community social service efforts CBEs serving as distribution centers and supply chain providers could actualize benefits by providing improved and quality food service levels, reduced transportation costs faced by both food centers, suppliers and by CBEs’ constituents (Chen, 2001). Serving as distribution centers, CBEs would be able to reduce storage costs for food suppliers as well and be able to get such services to the food centers and community more quickly.

The research uses Community based participatory research to help understand the use of CBEs for providing access to food services. The intent of this research is to understand the ability of these organizations to distribute food services; reduce related transportation costs, and support community social services and healthy support and screening efforts (Horton and Johnson, 2010; Rowland and Chappel-Aiken, 2012). This research seeks to find out how constituents view these organizations and the offering of food services through them. We investigate if and how these organizations are willing to change the healthy behaviors of members and the local community. The research identifies the critical success factors needed for these CBEs to serve as social service agents in communities and increase the availability of healthy eating programs in impoverished communities. To further the research, these propositions help structure the current investigation.
P1: CBEs with an incentive to distribute food services are more likely to motivate their member of the community to be more health conscious.

P2: CBEs with an incentive to serve as food service centers are more likely to promote food programs.

P3: CBEs’ perception and involvement in food services would more likely positively influence behaviors towards food programs.

P4: CBEs willing to distribute food services will more likely influence community residents’ attitude and behavior towards better food programs.

REFERENCES


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