

Impact of Social Capital (SC) on Business Performance (BP) of Muslim Women Entrepreneurs (MWEs) in the Eastern Province of Sri Lanka (EPSL)

M. A. C. Salfiya Ummah, Chong Siong Choy, Ali Khatibi

Abstract— *Social capital (SC) is vital in the form of networks since it acts as an agent for change of information and resources that can enhance the success or continued existence of women owned business entities. This study aims to examine the impact of SC on business performance (BP) of Muslim women entrepreneurs (MWEs) in small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in the Eastern Province of Sri Lanka (EPSL). SC was measured with the dimensions of familial affiliation such as parents and or husband if married or support from any other family members, someone who acts as a role model, economic status during childhood and non-familial affiliations such as business associated or trade associations. Structured questionnaire was used as the data collection technique with the sampling frame of 260 respondents using simple random sampling technique. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with AMOS as the data analysis technique while employing SPSS 23.0. The analysis of the structural model showed that, non-familial affiliation had a significant and positive relationship with business performance of Muslim women entrepreneurs where as familial affiliation did not significantly influence on business performance of Muslim women entrepreneurs in Sri Lanka. In most of the conservative Islamic families, women are not often allowed go out of their homes and mix with their counter parts independently. This situation can be observed in Sri Lanka Muslim families specially, in the Eastern Province where majority come from rural areas. However, those who can break this situation and were able to make affiliation with the business associates and other related bodies could enhance their business performance. Muslim women entrepreneurs, trade chambers and decision making authorities may use this finding of the study as a template to gain insight in to the factors influencing social capital on business performance of Sri Lankan MWEs.*

Keywords: *Social Capital (SC), familial affiliation, non-familial affiliation, business performance (BP), Muslim women entrepreneurs (MWEs)*

I. INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship is the key drive for social and economic development and gives tremendous opportunities for women as well. Women entrepreneurship has become as an enthusiastic focus for researchers everywhere for few decades. This is due to the significant increase in the number of women business owners and their contributions to

economic growth, innovation and job creation in the last decade in many developed countries (Dangi & Ritika, 2014; Jiang, Monica and Guo, 2012). Today, women enter into almost all of the fields such as trade and industry, engineering, information and technology and contribute for the national economic development by means of showing outstanding achievement in their business initiative all over the world. According to Das and Goswari (2019), women entrepreneurs have fewer connections with outside networks as compared with males and males are more capable of maintaining connections with outside people which creates them to access with more business opportunities than women. As a result of underprivileged networking, women are kept in a position where they are unable to have more professional connections which can adversely affect their businesses in the long run. A recent survey of women entrepreneurs in Sri Lanka found that 41% of them do not belong to any business association (Annual Report, FCCISL, 2018). As far as the MWEs are concerned, the society in which they belong to have some social and cultural barrier where there are some mobility restriction for Muslim women entrepreneurs (MWEs) (Roomi & Harrison, 2010). These results, MWEs face major obstacles to accessing credit, training, resources, proper information and networking.

Accessing information is crucial to entrepreneurs for many reasons for making prudent business decisions and inspiring new business ideas and planning for the future. Accessing information through established networks about customer focus, employee and supplier relationships, market knowledge, knowledge of the business environment, professional associations and trade bodies, trade exhibitions and conferences, as well as research and development are essential for a woman entrepreneur to succeed in her venture. These problems are faced by Sri Lankan Muslim women entrepreneurs as well.

Researching on Muslim women entrepreneurship in Sri Lanka is hence crucial and timely. Muslim women entrepreneurs differ from other non-Muslim women entrepreneurs in their motives and aim, and for them to be able to manage their business effectively, they should also demonstrate their faith and belief of the religion (Nayeam, 2006). Islam proposes the highest rights of women to be

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M. A. C. Salfiya Ummah, Research Scholar, Management and Science University, Malaysia, South Eastern University of Sri Lanka, Srilanka.(Email: salfiyau@seu.ac.lk)

Prof. Dr. Chong Siong Choy, Finance, Accreditation Agency (FAA), Malaysia

Prof. Dr. Ali Khatibi, Management and Science University, Malaysia

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involved in entrepreneurship whilst obeying the rules which protect them (Ullah, Mohamed, & Yousuf, 2013). Previous studies have identified various challenges faced by Muslim women entrepreneurs (Illhaamie, Arni, Rosmawani, & Al-Bannah, 2014; Kargwell, 2012; Rehman & Roomi, 2012; Shmailan, 2014).

In Sri Lanka, among the Muslim entrepreneurs, only 7% businesses are owned by Muslim women entrepreneurs (Ampara, Batticaloa and Trincomalee Registry of District Chamber of Industry and Commerce, 2017). This shows under-utilisation of potential of Muslim women in business, where Muslim men tend to show a greater proportion of participation (97%). McElwee & Al-Fahad (2003) found that there is a lack of business networks for Muslim women entrepreneurs. Even if there are networks, Muslim women are often not allowed to go out of their homes or mixed with the other gender independently (Roomi and Harrison, 2010) and this limits their participation. According to Swati (2018), Muslim women face stiff challenges due to family belief and traditions in Sri Lanka which are expected to influence business performance of Muslim women entrepreneurs including in Sri Lanka. These gaps point to the need to research on the impact of social capital on business performance of Muslim women entrepreneurs in Sri Lanka and led the following research question;

Does social capital have a significant impact on business performance of Muslim women entrepreneurs in SMEs in Sri Lanka?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Women Entrepreneurship in Islamic Perspective

Entrepreneurship is a part of Islamic economics and business. There are notable stories of Muslims who are successful entrepreneurs in the world and Islam always encourages all Muslims to be active and succeeding entrepreneurs on their effort (Akhter & Sobhani, 2016). There has been much work done on issues relating to gender and economic empowerment in developing Islamic societies (McIntosh & Islam, 2010).

In Islam, women are advantaged and flattered figures where many Islamic laws are devoted to women (Anggadwita, Mulyaninogslh, Ramadhani, & Arwiyasn, 2015). According to Nayeem (2016), both men and women entrepreneurs hold positive perceptions and attitudes regarding the Islamic values in promoting productivity through entrepreneurship. There are no any barriers for a woman to engage in business initiatives in Islam (Anggadwita et al., 2015). Both men and women in Islam are treated alike (Hammawa & Norashidah, 2016). However, the responsibility of women may vary to some extent as compared with their counterparts. In fact, the involvement of women in Islam in various entrepreneurial activities has empowered them in social and cultural aspects.

2.2 Social Capital and Business Performance

Entrepreneurial development is entrenched in a multifaceted network of social relationships and these relationships are known as social capital. Social capital refers as one of the intangible resources in an organization which extend a collection of networks in order to enhance

mutual social contact and recognition. (Jiang et al., 2012). Social capital is imperative to provide a contact of information and resources that can enhance the performance of women-owned businesses (Alam et al., 2011; McIntosh & Islam, 2010). Specifically, the theory of embeddedness concerns the role of entrepreneurs within society and its formal institutions such as family and even gender (Aldrich & Cliff, 2003). To Michela, Poggese, De Vita (2016), family embeddedness supports entrepreneurs in various ways i.e. finding new business opportunities, making business start-up decision, and resource mobilisation process which enhances greater achievement in their businesses. Similarly, externally built up social relationships also create much enhanced networks to work with out of the family to find new resources and opportunities (Das & Goswari (2019). However, both recognition and realisation of opportunity are conditioned by the role of the Muslim women entrepreneurs in their social structure.

In the entrepreneurship literature, researchers found that social capital helps entrepreneurs in opportunity identification, gaining credibility and providing access to valuable information and resources (Ondiba & Matsui, 2019). Because of this, social capital enhances the business growth and expansion of women-owned businesses. Specifically, social capital arises from the norms, practices and relationships in the structure of a particular society that translates into conventions concerning individual behaviour, expectations and obligations.

Women entrepreneurs depend on two distinct networks-one based on family affiliations and the other based on sources outside the family such as business associates and trade associations (Dechant & Lamky, 2005). That is, if a parent and/or husband is/are entrepreneurs of a woman entrepreneur, she might be motivated to become one by picking up business experiences which subsequently leads to higher likelihood of improved business performance. Similarly, if they take part in networks of non-familial associations, they will be able to improve her business performance. Hence, the presence or absence of networks, such as access or membership in associations plays a role in influencing performance. However, the fact that women entrepreneurs are embedded in different personal and social networks than men and that division and barriers limit the reach and diversity of their networks have far-reaching consequences on business performance (Jiang et al., 2012). Moral support is also important for Muslim women entrepreneurs who may need to seek consent from their parents or husbands to be involved in business (Roomi & Harrison, 2010). Further, studies about MWEs showed that, family support are important to business success in Bangladesh (McIntosh & Islam, 2010); and Alam et al. (2011) found in Malaysia that family support, social ties and informal motivations influence business performance of Muslim women entrepreneurs.

Hence, the existence and extent of participation of Muslim women entrepreneurs in networks also affect their business performance. It is therefore expected that social capital in the form of familial affiliations well as non-familial affiliation predict the BP of MWEs in Sri Lanka.

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Conceptual Framework

The conservative Islamic culture tends to place restriction on women mobility and the ability of a woman to attract with people outside the home (McIntosh & Islam, 2010). Further, they indicated that those who wear *Hijab* enjoy better access to networks, which leads to better business performance. According to Dechant & Lamky (2005), women entrepreneurs often rely on family members to make introductions to potential business partners and other entrepreneurs. That is, especially, Muslim entrepreneurs actually rely on two distinct networks: one based on family affiliations such as parent(s) as an entrepreneur(s), husband as an entrepreneur, role model, and the other based on sources outside the family such as business associates and trade associations.

It is therefore expected that Muslim women entrepreneurs are motivated by **familial affiliation** such as support from parent(s), support from husband/guardian, role model, as well as the economic status in childhood and **non-familial affiliation** such as business associates and trade associations which influence their business performance. The following hypothesis thus ensures:

H1: Familial affiliation significantly influences the BP of MWEs in Sri Lanka.

H2: Non-familial affiliation significantly influences the BP of MWEs in Sri Lanka.

H3: Social capital significantly influences the BP of MWEs in Sri Lanka.

3.2 Methods and materials

The method used is cause and effect method, which conducted a structural equation modeling with AMOS to find the impact of social capital on business performance of Muslim women entrepreneurs. Conceptual framework in this study is based on a synthesis of the literature reviews on research various articles and journals. Structured questionnaire was used as the data collection technique with the sampling frame of 260 respondents using simple random sampling technique. Sample selection criteria over the business run more than 3 years; and have to be registered with any chamber. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with AMOS as the data analysis technique while employing SPSS 23.0 to confirm the measurement model used in this study.

3.2 Measurement model

The data in this study were analysed using the two-method approach (Hair, Black, Berry, & Anderson, 2010). In the first approach, CFA was used to measure the adequacy of the measurement model, after which the second approach, i.e. the structural model was performed using SEM. Hari et al. (2010) suggests for 3 or 4 indices to establish model fit and the recommended fit indices to include relative chi square, (CMIN/DF), Root Mean Square Error of Approximation

(RMSEA) and any one or two from goodness-of-fit index (GFI), adjusted goodness-of-fit index (AGFI), comparative-fit-index (CFI), normal-fit-index (NFI) and Turker-Lewisindex (TLI). If relative chi-square is less than 3, it shows better good fit and if it is below 5.0 also acceptable level. Similarly any one or two from GFI, AGFI, CFI, IFI, NFI, and TLI should be greater than 0.90. While RMSEA is less than 0.08 are considered to be a good fit (Hair et al., 2010).

The social capital construct in this study consists of two sub variables namely, familial affiliation (5 items) and non-familial affiliation (6 items). Hence, then first order CFA were performed and then the second order CFA was carried out for the construct of social capital for the measurement model.

Figure-1 shows the results of second-order CFA, indicating that the two components confirmed the composite indicators of social capital. The model fit the data in an acceptable level as follows: with χ^2 (df=41)=72.581; $p=0.002$; $\chi^2/df = 1.777$; GFI= 0.951; AGFI= 0.920; CFI= 0.986; IFI= 0.986; RMSEA= 0.055. The results showed that goodness-of-fit indices such as GFI, AGFI, CFI, and IFI significantly passed the cut-off value, including RMSEA of 0.051.

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Second Order CFA (Social Capital)

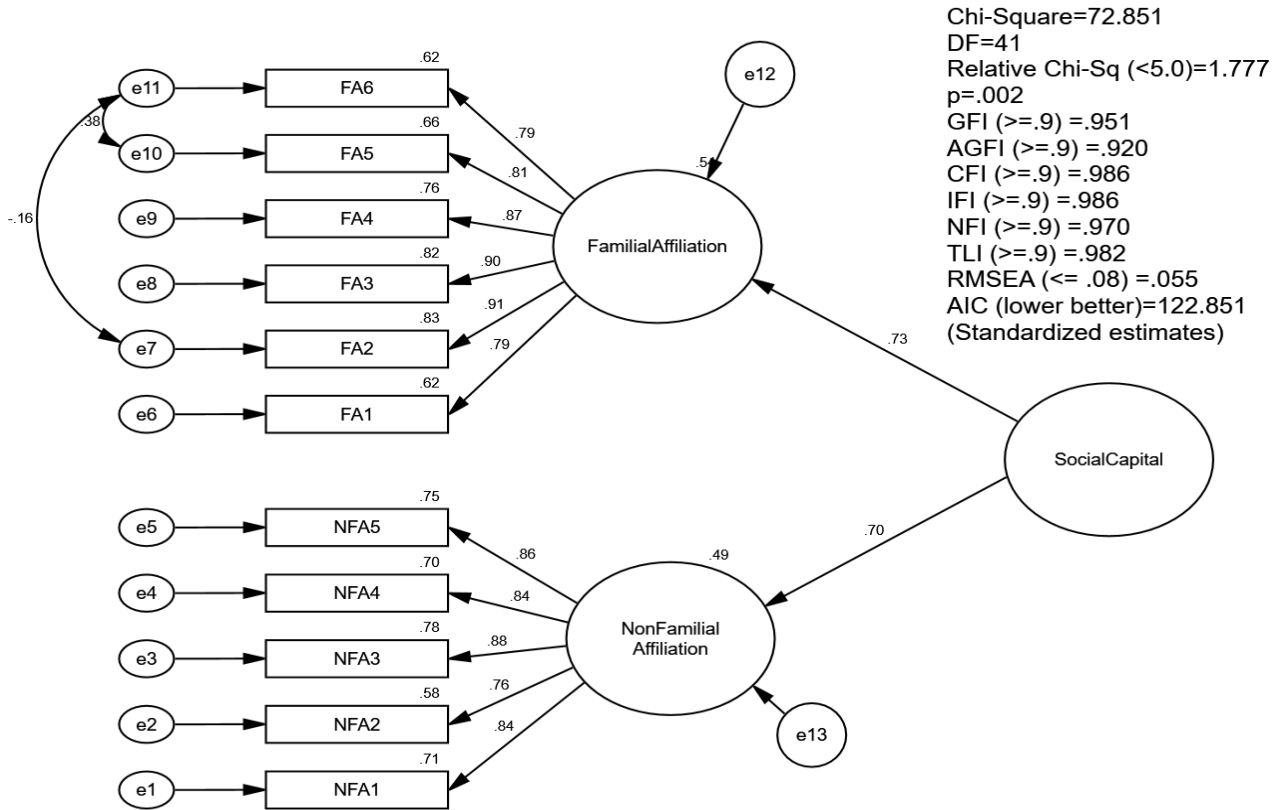


Figure 1 CFA for Social capital

Figure-2 indicated that the all five items confirmed the composite indicators of business performance. The model fit the data in an acceptable level as follows: with χ^2 (df=5)=10.401; p=0.065; $\chi^2/df = 2.080$; GFI= 0.987; AGFI=

0.945; CFI= 0.996; IFI= 0.996; RMSEA= 0.065. The results showed that goodness-of-fit indices such as GFI, AGFI, CFI, and IFI significantly passed the cut-off value, including RMSEA of 0.065.

CFA Business Performance

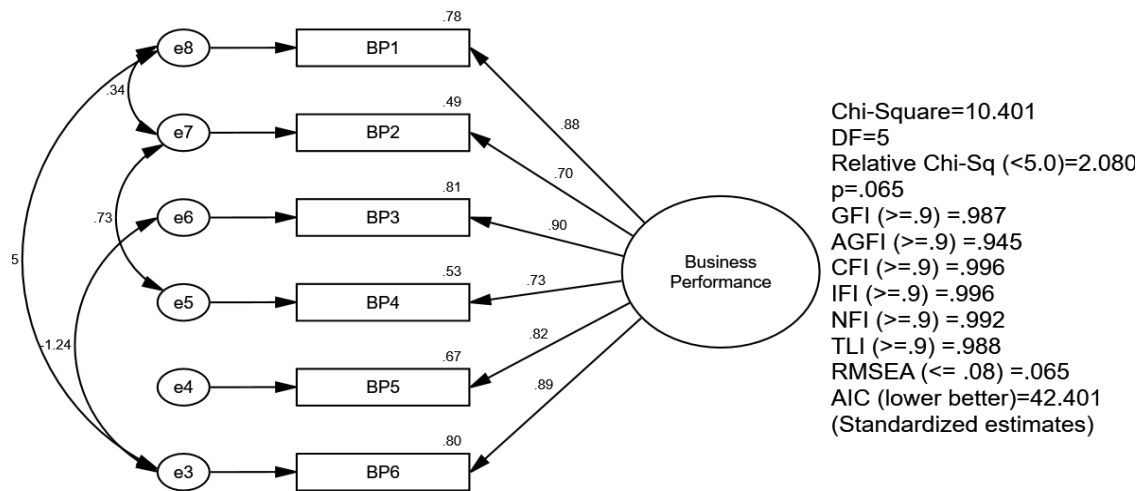


Figure 2 CFA for Business Performance

Figure-3 indicated that the model fit the data for the intergrated final measurement model in an acceptable level as follows: with χ^2 (df=109)=209.372; p=0.000; $\chi^2/df = 1.921$;

GFI= 0.9177; CFI= 0.993; IFI= 0.994; RMSEA= 0.060. The results showed that goodness-of-fit indices such as GFI, CFI, and IFI significantly passed the cut-off value, including RMSEA of 0.060.

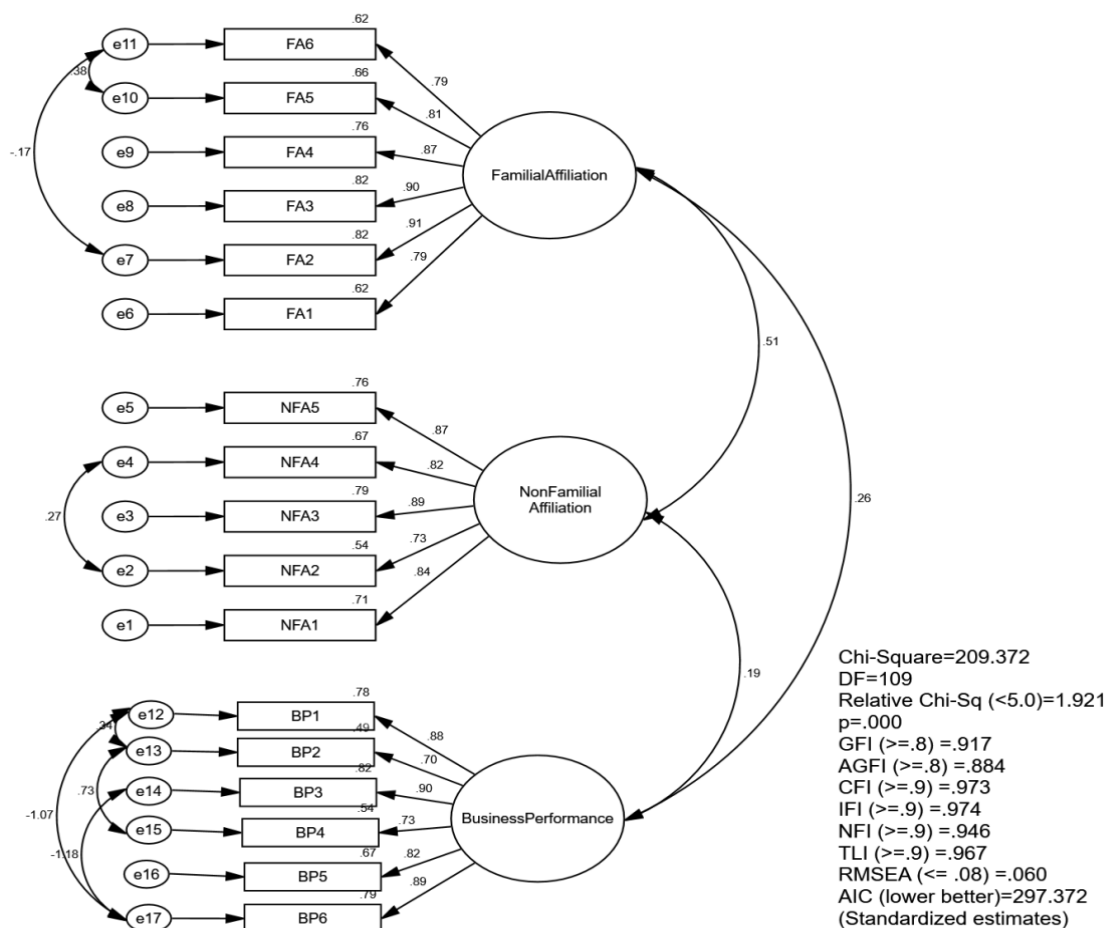


Figure-3 Final Measurement Model

IV. DISCUSSION & RESULTS AND CONCLUSION

4.1 Profile of respondents

In this study, frequency descriptions are used to demonstrate demographic information such as district, age, marital status, education level, type of business, number of employee, experience, parent/s as an entrepreneur, and husband as an entrepreneur.

| Demographic Variable | Frequency | Percentage |
|------------------------|-----------|------------|
| District | | |
| Ampara | 98 | 37.7 |
| Batticaloa | 90 | 34.6 |
| Trincomalee | 72 | 27.7 |
| Age | | |
| Below 30 years | 24 | 9.2 |
| 30-40 years | 52 | 20.0 |
| 40-50 years | 114 | 43.9 |
| Above 50 years | 70 | 26.9 |
| Marital Status | | |
| Married | 139 | 53.5 |
| Unmarried | 28 | 10.8 |
| Widowed/Divorced | 93 | 35.8 |
| Education Level | | |
| Below G.C.E. (O/L) | 137 | 52.7 |
| G.C.E.(O/L) | 57 | 21.9 |
| G.C.E.(A/L) | 49 | 18.8 |
| Degree and above | 17 | 6.5 |
| Business Type | | |
| Manufacturing | 61 | 23.5 |
| Craft & arts | 40 | 15.4 |

| | | |
|------------------------------------|-----|------|
| Services | 65 | 25.0 |
| Retail/Wholesale business | 52 | 20.0 |
| Agri-business | 42 | 16.1 |
| Others | 0 | 0 |
| Number of Employees | | |
| Below 10 | 176 | 67.7 |
| 11-50 | 75 | 28.9 |
| 51-200 | 9 | 3.4 |
| Business Experience | | |
| 3-6 years | 32 | 12.3 |
| 7-10 years | 138 | 53.1 |
| more than 10 years | 90 | 34.6 |
| Parent as an entrepreneur/s | | |
| Yes | 139 | 53.5 |
| No | 121 | 46.5 |
| If yes | | |
| Father | 105 | 75.5 |
| Mother | 27 | 19.4 |
| Both | 7 | 5.1 |
| Husband as an entrepreneur | | |
| Yes | 134 | 51.5 |
| No | 126 | 48.5 |

The result from the study indicated that majority of the respondents are within Ampara district represent 98(37.7%). This implies Majority of the Muslim population falls in Ampara district among twenty-five districts in Sri Lanka. Among the age category, majority of the respondents are within the age bracket of



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40-50 years represent 114(43.9%). This implies majority of the Muslim women entrepreneurs in SMEs are engaging business activities and join with chamber after 40 years. Majority of the respondents in this study were married representing 139(53.5%). This is because of married Muslim women come forward to engage in such activities since they take part of their family livelihood after their marriage rather than being single. Similarly, the respondents with educational qualification below G.C.E. (O/L) are the majority representing 137(52.7%) based on the education level. This also implies most of the respondents become unable to continue further higher studies find themselves in an alternative option that is entrepreneurship. It could be observed that, in most of the Muslim families two or three decade back parent did not like to send their children for further studies and wished to get them for early marriage. Among the type of the business majority businesses found in service industry representing 65(25.0%) followed by manufacturing industry 61 (23.5%). Similarly, majority of the SMEs owned by Muslim women entrepreneurs have below 10 employees representing 176(67.7%). This implies

most of the business establishments in SMEs owned and operated as micro level. And majority of the SMEs were established between 7-10 years represents 138(53.1%). Among the respondents, 139(53.5%) have their parent/s as an entrepreneur/s and among 139 of the respondent whose parent/s is/ are an entrepreneur/s, 105(75.5%) whose fathers are an entrepreneur, 27(19.4%) are mother as an entrepreneur, and 7((5.1%) are both as entrepreneurs. This also implies that lack of Muslim women participation in entrepreneurship in Sri Lanka. Similarly, Majority of the respondents husbands are found as entrepreneurs in this study represent 134(51.54%) and 126(48.5%) of the husbands are not an entrepreneurs. This indicates that in Muslim community, most of the male community prefers doing business as a way of income rather than seeking employment in other government and private sector.

4.2 Discussion on the Hypothesized Variables

Figure-4 and figure-5 depict the path between the exogenous variables and endogenous variable.

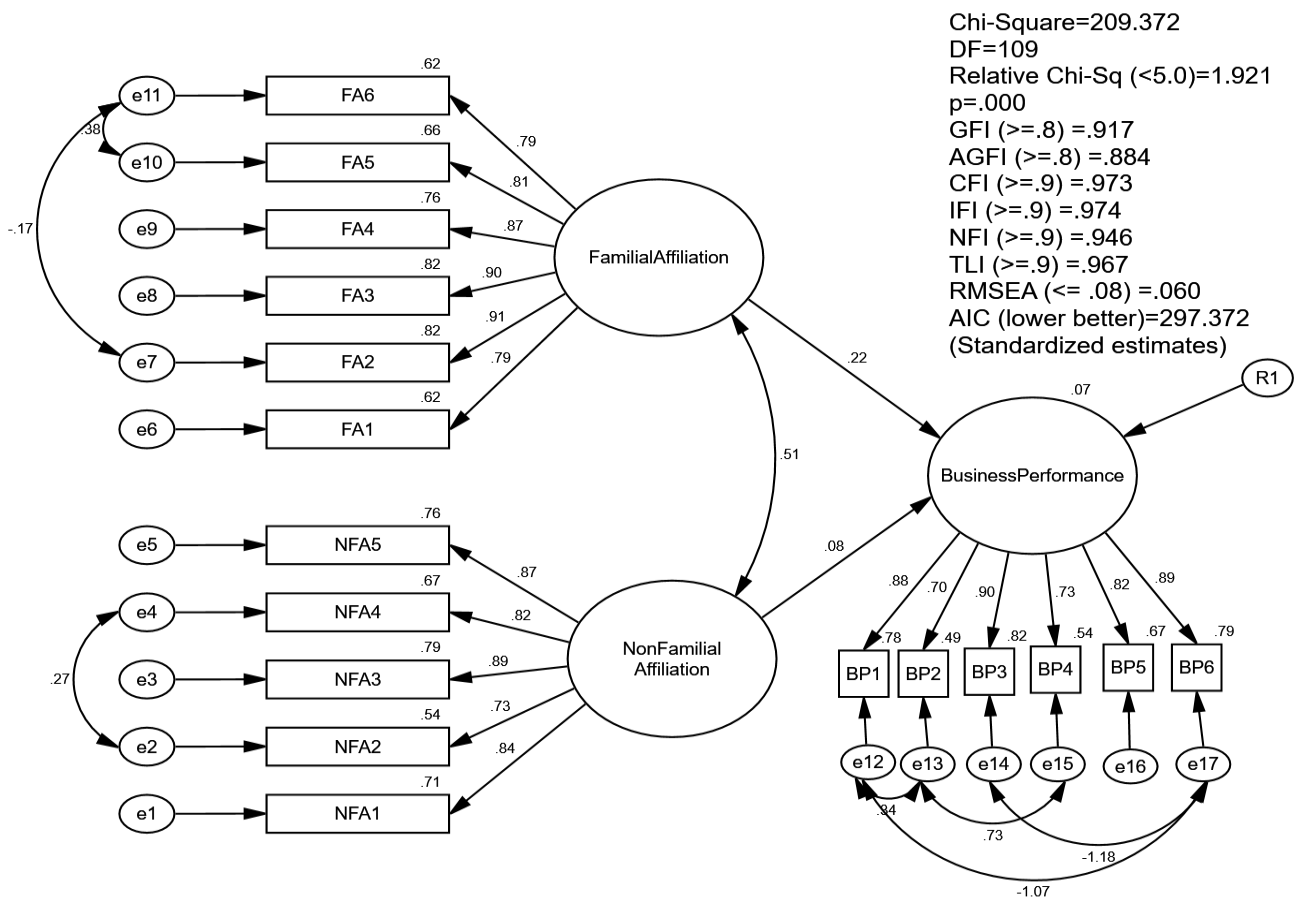


Figure-4 Structural model for the Dimensions of Social Capital and Business performance

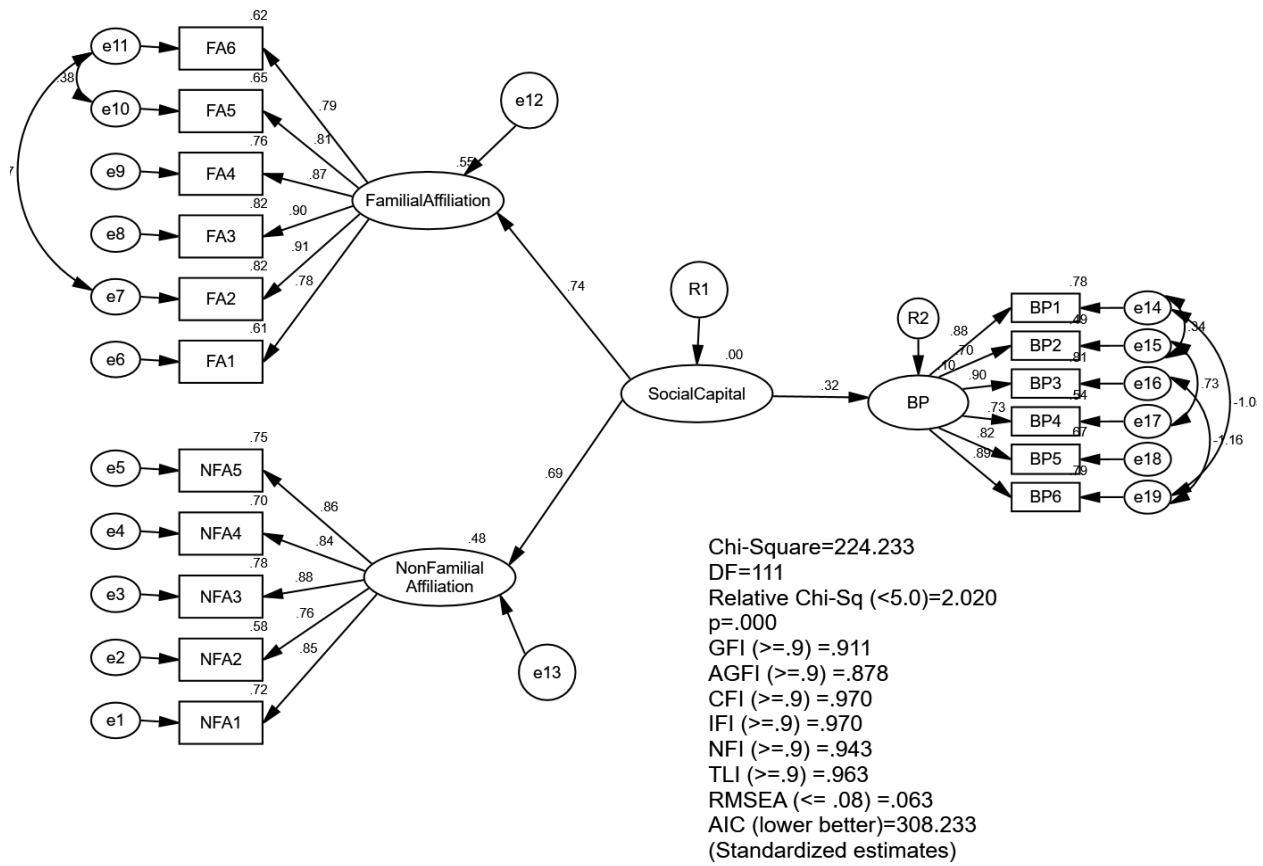


Figure-5 Structural Model

Table-1 Regression weights in the Hypothesised Path model

| | | Std. Estimate | Estimate | S.E. | C.R. | P |
|----------------------|-----------------------------|---------------|----------|------|-------|------|
| Business Performance | <-- Nonfamilial_Affiliation | 0.217 | .215 | .071 | 3.032 | .002 |
| Business Performance | <-- Familial_Affiliation | 0.083 | .078 | .067 | 1.170 | .242 |
| Business performance | <-- Social_Capital | 0.318 | .402 | .096 | 4.169 | *** |

Based on Table-1, non-familial affiliation is significant ($\beta=0.217$, $CR=3.032$, $p=0.002$) at 0.05 level of significance where as familial affiliation was not significant ($\beta=0.083$, $CR=1.170$, $p=0.242$) at 0.05 level of significance. It can thus be concluded that only non-familial has a direct impact on business performance of Muslim women entrepreneurs in Sri Lanka. This is despite social capital as a whole has a significant association with business performance with ($\beta=0.318$, $CR=4.169$, $p=0.000$) at 0.01 level of significance.

Hypothesis 1 was examined the relationship between familial affiliation and BP among Muslim women entrepreneurs in the Eastern province of Sri Lanka to achieve the objective of this study. The analysis of structural model showed that familial affiliation significantly contribute to BP ($\beta=0.083$, $CR=1.170$, $p=0.242$). This indicated that there is not a direct relationship between familial affiliation and BP in this study. Hence, hypothesis 1 was not supported in this study.

Hypothesis 2 was examined the relationship between non-familial affiliation and BP among Muslim women entrepreneurs in the Eastern province of Sri Lanka to achieve the objective of this study. The analysis of structural model

showed that familial affiliation significantly contribute to BP ($\beta=0.217$, $CR=3.032$, $p=0.002$). This indicated that there is direct relationship between non-familial affiliation and BP in this study. Hence, hypothesis 2 was supported in this study.

Hypothesis 3 was examined the relationship between SC and BP among Muslim women entrepreneurs in the Eastern province of Sri Lanka to achieve the objective of this study. The analysis of structural model showed that SC significantly contribute to BP ($\beta = 0.318$, $p=0.000 < 0.05$). This indicated that there is direct relationship between SC and BP in this study. Hence, hypothesis 3 was supported in this study. Thus, social capital especially non familial affiliation is expected to increase the business performance of Muslim women entrepreneurs in Sri Lanka.

4.3 Conclusion

The study found out that, there is a high level of social capital among the respondents. This depicts a positive significant relationship between social capital and business performance. It implies that, social capital contributed positively to business performance among Sri Lankan Muslim women entrepreneurs. This study findings is in line with (Omwenga et.al., 2013; Jiang et.al., 2012; Alam et.al., 2011). Thus, social capital such as familial affiliation and non familial affiliation are expected to increase their business performance in all levels. However, among the two dimensions such as familial affiliation and non-familial affiliation, non familial affiliation was significant positive relationship with business performance where as familial



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affiliation did not show the significant relationship with the business performance in this study. In most of the conservative Islamic families, women are not often allowed to go out of their homes or mix with male society independently from their childhood (Roomi and Harrison, 2010). This situation can be observed in Sri Lankan Muslim families especially in the Eastern Province where majority live in rural areas. However, those who came out from this situation and were able to make network affiliation with the business associates and other related bodies could enhance their business performance. Mean while familial affiliation had no significant relationship with business performance.

Findings will serve to District Chambers of Commerce and Industry may take into account to promote Muslim women entrepreneurs participation with the Chamber of commerce so that they may extend their network affiliation which would lead for business performance. Similarly, the environmental dimension has also demonstrated significant relationship with business performance and entrepreneurship theorists point out the important environmental factors such as family, network affiliation and socially acceptance to business performance (Ramana et al., 2008) which are equally important to Muslim women entrepreneurs. Since Most of the Muslim women entrepreneurs reluctant to join and registering, Chamber of Commerce may consider to separate window for only Muslim women entrepreneurs since there is a language barrier between Muslim and non-Muslims in Sri Lanka. That is majority of the Sri Lankan speak Sinhala language where as Muslim speak Tamil language as their mother tongue. If there is a separate window for Muslim women entrepreneurs, then they might feel as a comfortable zone in language which may motivate them to join with chambers. Also the findings can better support the recommendations in terms of roles of family members and spouses as well the social stigma posed by the community. Finally Sri Lankan government, as well as non-government decision making authorities could use the findings to develop policies that will assist and encourage Muslim women entrepreneurs.

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