## Dignity and the Consumer-Entrepreneur Duality in Bottom-of-Pyramid Markets

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**Abstract** 

Scholars have admitted that the notion of dignity is central to any poverty alleviation approach, yet it remains under-represented. Since the concept appears across multiple

Marketing by exploring its

dimensions in the BoP context. Specifically, the study explores the interplay between dignity and consumer-entrepreneur duality of roles in Bottom-of-Pyramid (BoP) markets. Invoking extant literature, this study examines , using dual

dignity in

itself gets problematized. The study argues that this de-dignification can possibly be resolved with the help of entrepreneurship. We also conceptually argue that highly skilled In

fact, the nature of work plays an important role, since subalterns engaged in stigmatized and at work. Thus, it is expected that the

interplay between the duality of roles

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## Introduction

"Two-thirds of people in India live in poverty: 68.8% of the Indian population lives on less than \$2 a day. Over 30% even have less than \$1.25 per day available -

- relationships between the bearers of honor and the non-bearers of honor; it has an . Here, elite humans or communities strive to establish and
- maintain dominant-subordinate relationships. For instance, kings protect their honor. As stated by Aslani et al. (2016), honor effectively depends up reputation and their own evaluation of what external agents think.
- c. Self-respect and self-esteem are often used interchangeably with dignity. But in fact,
  - has been a concern for many scholars, who proposed that researchers should make a distinction between dignity, and a

by themselves. However, Schachter (1983) clarified that human dignity does assume a more complicated idea of an individual. It acknowledges a distinct individual identity, celebrating thereby the independence of human beings, and the responsibility they assume. It recognizes that although dignity is associated with individuals, in themselves individuals are a part of a larger collective. So, these collectivities or groups must be taken into account in forming the conceptualization of the inherent dignity of the individual. Thus, we have the

ocial dignity, which acknowledges the roles that the groups we belong to, play in society. It dictates in effect, the dignity conferred to individuals with respect to their social groups (Kaufmann, Kuch, Neuhauser, Webster, 2011). Additionally, Catholic Social Teachings (CST) dictated that the idea of dignity should not be evaluated in isolation. Importantly, although dignity is an inherent worth, it does require a broader socio-political context for recognition (Sison et. al., 2016).

### Dignity and Roles

A large portion of extant literature conceptualized dignity as workplace dignity in organizational studies (Hodson, 2001; Crowley, 2012; Sayer, 2007). Here, dignity is associated with employees/workers/laborers/staff. Workplace dignity has been ability to establish a sense of self-worth and self-respect and to appreciate the respect of

(Lucas et. al., 2017). Within the ambits of Marketing literature, dignity has been associated with consumers (Sunstein, 2015; Costley, Friend, and Babis, 2005; Varela-Neira et. al., 2014). Because of the non-neutral nature of marketing actions and failure of antistigmatization cues, scholars have proposed moving

(Lamberton, 2018). Jagadale et. al., (2018) indicated the failure of marketing systems to be the reason for subaltern quandary, and thereby associated dignity with subalterns. However, as seen thus far, the normative conceptualization of dignity is closely associated with individuals assuming the role of citizens (Shultziner and Rabinovici, 2012).

Developmental studies have also associated dignity with the role of refugees, evaluating dignity from legal, social, and political lenses thereof (Grandi, Mansour and Holloway, 2018). Through some studies, scholars in the past have even debated if dignity can be conferred to creatures beyond human beings. Dignity of living beings has thus been coined to encompass the inherent worth of all living creatures (Jaber, 2000).

#### Dignity and BoP markets

There has been a dilemma for scholars in associating poverty and dignity. The confusion primarily arises from the fact that whether poverty symbolizes a violation of human dignity. Herein, it may be noted that some of the original conceptions of human dignity stated that for any violation to be caused, an individual/group must exist as the carriers of the cause. As a rebuttal, or a counter-argument, several scholars argued that poverty is not intentionally caused by external agents. Instead, it is an unintentional side-effect of the different acts (Kaufmann, Kuch, Neuhauser, Webster, 2011). However, it is important to acknowledge that poverty does not violate human dignity because of the lack of basic goods, or because they fail to realize their rights or they encounter violence to the body. But it violates human dignity because of dependency i.e., when the survival of the poor is at the mercy of others. This dependence tie becomes stronger as the poverty intensifies (Schaber et. al., 2011; Hochfield and Plagerson, 2011). When the poor depend on institutional support, these institutions themselves become the sources of disrespect and feeling of inferiority (Grossmann and Trubina, 2021). Relative poverty violates human dignity by humiliating and destroying an indivi self-respect. Relative poverty is also humiliating, because lowincome groups, due to the low-quality services experienced by them including housing, public transport, health, etc., do perceive themselves as second-dass citizens, which in turn, undermines their self-respect. Such individuals tend to exhibit a desire to compensate for a dignity deficit, aspiring for a stronger affinity towards social relationships, just to be a part of larger groups or communities, with a priority towards materialistic gains (Barki and Parente, 2010). For the poor, both dignity and self

gossiping and character assassination (Scott, 1985). Since marketing actions are never neutral towards dignity, Lamberton, Saldanha, and Ghai (2020) introduced marketplace dignity as a processing system, distinguishing it from the dual-processing systems that is dominantly present in the Marketing literature. Lamberton, Saldanha, and Ghai (2020) in fact, proposed three components that go on to contribute to marketplace dignity; they include recognition, equality, and agency.

## Research Gaps

- Extant literature has been relatively silent about how dignity is effectively earned and upheld by producers in BOP markets, and how does the interplay between consumer-entrepreneurial roles impact the concept of dignity.
- Extant research also does addressed the distinction between dignity in work and dignity at work, especially for subaltern producers, which in effect, is essential to understand where de-dignification derives itself from.

## Research Objectives

To explore the interplay between dignity and consumer-entrepreneur duality of roles -

- a. How is dignity delegated between the dual roles of consumers and producers?
- b. How does the earned dignity spill-over within a household?

## Propositions Development

, wherein, meaningful

work along with autonomy and self-esteem constitute dignity in work. P

(Varman and Belk, 2008). Importantly, these superior-subordinate relationships give rise to indignity, which manifests when individuals suffer instrumentalization, i.e. when they are treated as means to an end (Jagadale et. al., 2018), being dehumanized and de-realized (Varman and Vijay, 2018), discriminated and stigmatized (Sutton, Pemberton, Fahmy, Tamiya, 2014), subjected to physical violence (Viswanathan, Arias, and Sreekumar, 2021) and experience marketplace trauma (Bennett et. al., 2016). We argue that such experiences surface within the work environment via employee-employer relationships, working terms and conditions, meaningfulness of work, etc. BoP individuals are exposed to working under several socio-psychological, and economic constraints, such as low wages, unhealthy working environments, stigmatized jobs, public humiliation and violence, and lack of job security due to transient and chronic factors (Venugopal, Viswanathan and Jung, 2015). Hence, we propose:

deficiencies (Viswanathan et. al., 2012), create an identity for oneself, build respect and status, as well as derive a sense of meaning from work (Krishan, Latha, and Kamalanabhan, 2013). We thereby posit:

However, at

of absence of other opportunities. This suggests a failure at the overall institutional level.

Skilled vs Servile Entrepreneurs

Extant

## Implications and conduding remarks

When employers foster dignity in and at work, it leads to higher productivity, better learning, and lower mental stress. Several scholars have stressed the move towards a dignity-architecture that would help marketers to design effective dignifying cues in the

Theoretically, it comprehensively captures one of the sources of indignity and disrespect in the BoP context that is the work that subalterns undertake. Dignity being an underresearched concept in marketing literature, does provide a novel conceptualization of BoP markets. Dignity also unifies various approaches to alleviating poverty, such as the BoP approach, capabilities approach, moral economy approach, etc. The ability to lead a life without shame is a crucial social dimension of absolute poverty (Relyes, 2007). Even in the presence of functional hierarchy, it is possible to exist with equal dignity as others, referred to as egalisation. In turn, this facilitates equal chances, and an enabling environment (Lindner, 2002). Becoming self-sufficient ensures that the poor do not build unhealthy dependence relationships, which makes their living contingent on the mercy of others

(Hochfeld and Plagerson, 2011). As already stated above, employment itself is a tool for instrumentalization of human beings. Thus, marketers and policy makers are required to put conscious effort to make such experiences less de-dignifying, especially for the vulnerable sections of the society. An employment scenario comprises not just of singular controls but instead, bundles of control. In such conditions, dignity comes at a cost, in the form of stress, lesser space for creativity, personal growth, learning etc. (Crowley, 2012). Thus, alternate mechanisms for workplace dignification could be devised or a balance should be sought.