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EDITORIAL

QUALITY OF LIFE, SERVICE QUALITY, AND SOCIAL ENTERPRISE

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One of the surprising outcomes of technological innovation is the way it fails to achieve sustainable social goals. Due to medical advances people live longer, but the quality of life may not generally improve. It is also surprising how much economic and social arrangements could impact people's lives and the society at large. The dynamics of these arrangements may vary across places and times, but they are considerably felt across board. Against this background, this issue brings together three articles discussing sustainability subjects from interdisciplinary and social science perspectives. Using quantitative and qualitative methods, the contributions are based on field and literature-review projects designed to address practical and theoretical problems.

The foremost problem addressed revolves around the elderly. As many societies lose the 'old' extended family system which hitherto took care of the elderly, or at least placed them within the warmth of the family, they have failed to create institutions that could provide similar benefits. With increased cultural replacement of the extended family system with the nuclear family system as the first unit of the society, children and grandchildren now seem to be distant from their elderly. Where children get married, they move away from their parents, forming a new 'nuclear family' and somewhat 'cutting' off the old one. Even where they remain unmarried, a majority prefer to live on their own once they become adults. This then leaves a gap that needs to be closed: between what the extended family system offers the elderly and what modern institutions such as 'elderly's,' 'seniors,' 'retiring,' 'adult,' old people's,' or 'aged care' homes, by whatever name they might be called, offer them. For example, these homes are primarily designed to meet welfare concerns, not psycho-social and emotional needs.

To address some aspects of this problem, the first article entitled "Quality of life among the elderly in a peri-urban community in Ibadan, Nigeria" investigates how the elderly perceive their quality of life,



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revealing and ranking what they perceive to be their most important needs. The participants in this study serve as a sample for envisaging what the elderly around the world might consider their biggest challenges. The research reveals that access to adequate social support and provision of health care services are their major needs within the study area. Of course, given the uniqueness of contexts in research, this finding might vary when one turns to another study environment.

Another important subject that this issue covers is the comparison between Islamic and conventional banks, and the implications this might have for people and the economic community. While conventional banks can be found in every economic setting, Islamic banks are only found in jurisdictions where one form of Islamic corpus—moral rules and traditions— or the other thrives. As such, it is interesting how the similarities and differences in the operations of the two banking models may impact a society. While there is no consensus on the question of which model is better, one might derive some lessons from ascertaining the distinct features of and functional equivalencies across both. In particular, how might their operations have an impact on efficiency and customer satisfaction?

On this note, the article entitled “Service quality perceptions: A comparative study between Islamic banks and conventional banks in Bangladesh” provides a starting point. While other variables within the research area might impact the comparison of Islamic and conventional banks, it is incontrovertible that some sort of competition exists between these banks. This becomes even more interesting when one considers the existence of competition within and across the two, for example, between different bank operators within and across the bank models. This eventually leads to the issue of efficiency: how much time and resources do they save in their operations? This also boils down to the issue of customer satisfaction. After providing data showing and concluding on strengths and weaknesses of both banking models, the article makes suggestions for improvements.

Social entrepreneurship also receives attention in this issue of the journal. While this concept seems to have a clear delimitation in the social sciences, there are those who believe it is not fully captured and properly recognized in the literature. In practice, social entrepreneurial organisations may be classified generically as non-governmental organisations which embed social or environmental goals in their business model. What, then, is the problem? The key problem is that not acknowledging social entrepreneurship might preempt the peculiar benefits it offers the society at large. Organizations depicting



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social entrepreneurship may be underused. Meanwhile, perhaps the potentials these organizations have and the benefits they offer may be handy in some sensitive concerns of mankind such as environmental protection and sustainable development.

This is the focus of the last article entitled “Impacts of social entrepreneurial organizations to environmental protection and development.” It reviews the body of literature on social enterprise to ascertain the emergence, form and purpose of social entrepreneurship. In doing this, it shows how the current model of governance neglects this important concept. It then conceptualises and contextualises how environmental protection organisations, generally designed as “for profit” or “non-for profit,” are a good case study of social entrepreneurship.

Overall, the articles in this issue show that conditions of sustainability vary across sectors, in time and space, and have strong socio-cultural dimensions. They cannot necessarily be achieved with ‘modernisation,’ whether in technological or economic arrangements. They require value clarification and agreement on best ways of action.