

# MOTIVATOR AND CHALLENGES OF WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS

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## Abstract

*Entrepreneurship is increasingly recognized as an important driver of economic growth, productivity, innovation and employment, and it is widely accepted as a key aspect of economic dynamism. The fast development in entrepreneurship has attracted women to join this field. Women did not miss the opportunity to jointly create a name in the industry and for those who want to succeed will be able to demonstrate the seriousness, willing to face challenges and the problems encountered. Women entrepreneurs will not be able to achieve success without high work, high morale and ability to face the challenges. Therefore, this conceptual paper will discuss the factors that influence women to become entrepreneurs, the challenges and problems faced by women entrepreneurs and suggestion to improve the potential and increasing of women's success in entrepreneurship. Based on the literatures that have been made, there are several factors that have driven women entrepreneurs involved in entrepreneurship. Those are family support, family background, independent factors, interest, education, work experience, self-satisfaction, to achieve ambitions, motivation, to change family fortunes and other factors which are likely to become a source of income support for those involved in entrepreneurship. Therefore, the findings of this study are expected to assist women entrepreneurs to reduce the problems faced in the business.*

**Keywords:** *motivator, challenges, women entrepreneurs*

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## Introduction

Entrepreneurship is about creating something new, or discovering a new way of making something that already exists (Henderson 2002, Schumpeter 1947, Stemberg & Wennekers 2005). Entrepreneurship is considered to be a key factor for development and growth of a country. Besides, entrepreneurs are essential to social department. Entrepreneurs benefit the social aspects by providing new jobs, raising incomes, creating wealth, and connecting the public to the bigger international economy (Henderson 2002). In China, for example, entrepreneurs were the main drivers for growth by generating new jobs, providing consumer goods, and ending the control of the firm (McMillan & Woodruff 2002).

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In Malaysia, this business industry has become the preferred career among the society. Their involvement in entrepreneurship can increase economic growth, create jobs and reduce unemployment. According to statistics of the Companies Commission of Malaysia (SSM), the number of registered companies and businesses has increased every year. This shows an increase of business and entrepreneurship activities in Malaysia. In recent years, we can see many women involved in business as their career and they have been recognized to be significant contributors to the global economy. According to Smith-Hunter and Leone (2010), the women comprise fifty percent of the population in most countries. While in Southeast Asia, the number of women entrepreneurs is more than fifty percent (Coughlin & Thomas, 2002). In Europe, about 25 percent of women have their own business empire while in Russia by 64 percent. From these figures, it has been shown that women have demonstrated a significant and sustained contribution to the national economy (website of Prime Minister Department).

Women entrepreneurs have become important players in the entrepreneurial landscape (Pages 2005). Although the number is still small as compared to businesses owned by men, this is encouraging as it shows that women no longer adhere to the stereotype that only men can be wage earners in the family. Besides numerous obligations assigned to women, including reproductive chores, such as child care and doing housework, women can find success through their own businesses (Syed Shah, Mohd Fauzi & Nor Asiah 2011). About 49% of a total of 12, 557, 700 people from the entire amount population in Malaysia is made up of women (Department of Statistics Malaysia 2009) and 48% of the total female population are labor force (Monthly reports performance of business activity 2001). This situation shows the involvement of women in national development activities is more positive and accentuated.

Though there have been limitation and obstacles faced by these women in the past, society have begun to accept that women entrepreneurs do contribute greatly to a country's economy. As such, it is no longer unexpected to see women preside their own companies and being successful at the same time. Moreover, it is no longer strange to have business dealings with a female. In Malaysia, women have played a very important role in economic development and stabilize the economy in periods of recession (Ndubisi & Kahraman 2006; Tan 1990). Tun Dato' Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamad also said in a speech at the National Convention for Women Entrepreneurs 2002 during his post as Prime Minister of Malaysia, achievements and the role played by women in entrepreneurship is now clearly proved the ability of women to face the competition. As a conclusion, the achievements of women in entrepreneurship and competition that arise must be received positively.

### **Motivator of Women Entrepreneurs in Entrepreneurship**

There are numerous researchers over the past few decades that have examined the motivations and reason of men to initiate ventures (Birley & Westhead 1990; Cooper et al. 1989; Denison & Alexander 1986; Hisrich & Brush 1987; Scheinberg & MacMillan 1988; Shane et al. 1991; Shapero 1957). However, there are few studies involving women entrepreneurs such as motivational or contribution factors that attract women to participate in business, challenges and problems faced by women entrepreneurs and suggestion to improve

the potential and enhancement towards the success of women entrepreneurs in business (Amran 2004; Noor Aini 2014; Norsidah 2006; Thuaibah et al. 2007).

There are many factors that have encouraged women to get involved in business. These factors have been identified through previous studies conducted by researchers in the country and abroad. The factors that encourage women entrepreneurs to participate in business are because of their family supports, family background, independent factors, interest, education, work experience, self-satisfaction, to achieve ambitions, motivation, to change family fortunes, source of income and so on. The previous studies show interest, want to achieve ambition and independent are the main factors that influence women to start their own business. Thuaibah et al. (2007) worked on Women's Involvement in Entrepreneurship in Johor: A Study about Critical Factors in Achievement and Failure in Handling Business. They found that three main factors that influence women to become entrepreneur were because of their interest to business, ambition and independent. Their research also found that attitude is an element that most influence women's achievement while skills are element that most influence women's failure in handling business.

According to Lee (1997), he found in his study in Singapore that family background and life experience such as marriage and education can influence women to initiate ventures. Findings from a study by Salfiya & Gunapalan (2012) also indicated that background factors such as education and family background are also contributing to the business success of women entrepreneurs in micro businesses. Neider (1987) found that 54% of women entrepreneurs have parents who run their own business. Lee-Gosselin & Grise (1990) also stated that women entrepreneurs run the similar business with their family business. According to Yusuf (1995), family support is also one of the crucial success factors for women entrepreneurs. Lee & Choo (2001) studied work-family conflict in Singapore found that family member can reduce the conflict of women entrepreneurs. Furthermore, Welsh & White (1982) found that most of women entrepreneurs are among young people, more educated and emphasized on information sources. The study also found the background, experience, desire for self-employment and changes in work are the factors that encourage individuals to become entrepreneurs.

A study of Donald & Richard (1989) showed that women entrepreneurs have a good educational background. Most of them have completed their studies at colleges and universities (Donald & Richard 1989). According to Dolinsky & Caputo (1993), educational achievement at different levels will affect women involved in entrepreneurship and sustain their careers. Women who are lack of education will face problems in terms of financial or capital that limits the growth of their business. Therefore, educational background and knowledge in terms of new technology or innovation are the impetus for women to generate ideas and implement them with appropriate planning. Similarly, Hannag (2012) also stated in her research that education is a factor of motivation and performance of women entrepreneurs who own small firms. Her research found that women's education and professional experience are the driving factors for women entrepreneurs decided to set up a company.

Other factor such as motivation is another important factor that can contribute to success in business. Vargheese & Edwin (2011) found that motivation from husband, father, or family are the main driver of women decided to become entrepreneurs. A study of contribution factors that attract women entrepreneurs to participate in business in Pasar Besar

Tanah Merah, Kelantan by Amran Daud (2004) found that all the factors such as interest, want to change family fortunes, source of income and self-satisfaction play a significant role in motivating or attracting women entrepreneurs in Pasar Besar Tanah Merah, Kelantan to get involved in business. On the other hand, Suaibah et al. (2005) worked on issues of entrepreneurship among single mothers in Johor found that the main factor that encourages single mother in Johor involved in business is as a source of income. Other factors that encourage single mothers to become entrepreneurs are their interest, as a side job and because of less satisfied with the old job.

A study of Lee & Grise (1990) found that one-third of women entrepreneurs have work experience before they start their own business. Previous work experience of women entrepreneurs are education, administration, secretarial, artistic, marketing, sales, advising, finance and executive (Hisrich & Brush 1987; Teo 1996). According to Burdette (1990), he reported that the majority of women entrepreneurs have work experience that related to entrepreneurship. Teo (1996) also stated in his research that 90% of women entrepreneurs in Singapore have work experiences before they start their own business. The time period they work are for eight years and on average, they had served at two companies before this. Similarly, Donald & Richard (1989) also found that women entrepreneurs have work experience in the entrepreneurial field which they get involved. Moreover, a study in Taiwan by Saikou and Wen (2008) proved that women entrepreneurs can do businesses carried out by male entrepreneurs. The findings also showed that women in middle age between mid 30 and mid 40 years are more likely to set up their own business.

In foreign countries, research on entrepreneurship among women has been carried out starting from the beginning of the 1970s. Some recent study from foreign researcher are Sunil & Sunita (2009) and Poonam (2012) that studied about women entrepreneurship in India, entrepreneurial motivation as a determinant challenges of women entrepreneurs (Chinonye & Roy 2010), the dynamics of motivation of entrepreneurship among women: a comparative study of women entrepreneurs in Saudi Arabia and Bahrain (Muhammad & Basheer 2012), this study examines the basic motivation of women entrepreneurs in Saudi Arabia and Bahrain and the findings showed a variety of different motivational factors found in both countries. The findings also revealed that the most important motivating factor among women entrepreneurs in Saudi Arabia is a factor of self-achievement, while for women entrepreneurs in Bahrain, the profit is the main motivating factor.

### **Challenges and Problems Faced by Women Entrepreneurs**

In order to achieve success, every entrepreneur will face pressure, challenges and problems beforehand. There are a few pressures that can be faced by an entrepreneur such as internal pressure and environmental pressure. According to Vijaya (2000), these pressures can weaken and affect the mental and physical health of an entrepreneur. However, there are some of entrepreneurs assume that these pressures enable them to become stronger in order to achieve success in business. For this type of entrepreneurs, they will rise up when faced with failure. This situation shows that they have the resilience to face any challenges and will earn high returns of success (Kuratko & Richard 2007). The resilience will distinguish whether an entrepreneur will obtain success or failure in business.

Besides, the challenges faced by entrepreneurs are internal challenges, external challenges and financial problems involving business and the entrepreneurs themselves. Internal challenge is a challenge that has elements that could challenge the credibility of a person in realization of a dream. These elements can give a positive or negative response, and it depends on the response or how someone would deal with it (Nazrolnizah et al. 2014). For example, some individuals will consider the problem or challenge they faced as a test for them to prove that there are advantages in themselves and strive to achieve success. However, there are individuals who consider the problem as a reason to stop trying. For a change, entrepreneurs should have an internal challenge to challenge themselves '*internal push factor*'. People that can help an entrepreneur is themselves other than referring to someone more experienced. Own experiences are the best teacher for an entrepreneur and to create an experience, an individual should have the courage. Therefore, entrepreneurs have to accept the challenge as a positive thing to achieve success and consider it as a must to achieve an ambition to become a successful entrepreneur (Winn 2005).

Besides the internal challenges, there are also external challenges or environmental challenges faced by entrepreneurs involving several levels such as family level (Nor Aini 2014), local community level that involved are neighbors or friends Hisrich et al. (2002), and industry level that they involved. A study of Nor Aini (2008) found that the challenge at family level can be seen among single mothers who become an entrepreneur where management problems especially in terms of care and education of children are a serious problem to be balanced with the demands of work. Meanwhile, the challenges in the local community (neighbors or friends) are challenges that related to narrow mental paradigm. For example, single mothers who become an entrepreneur are usually will be exposed to the society's negative perceptions because of their status (Hisrich & Shepherd 2002).

The challenges in industry happen when entrepreneurs could not identify an appropriate industry and able to give profits. Challenges in this industry include problems in obtaining capital financing from the banks, do not understand the business methods in the industry that they involved, problems in creating an appropriate network, competition with other businesses and the problems in ensuring the products or services offered are appropriate with the needs of consumers, the ability of the entrepreneurs in putting their business as a catalyst for the state economy and be a prime initiator pooling of state resources. These challenges represent a heavy responsibility to be shouldered by women entrepreneurs.

Financial problems are the problem that often faced by women entrepreneurs. Based on research that have been made against the women involved in the halal food industry, the main problem that occur among women entrepreneurs is a financial problem such as problem to get return on capital and problem to obtain loan (Nor Aini 2008). Findings from a study by Thuaibah et al. (2007) also indicated that business owners face unique challenges when they want to start their own business in which they may find that they are difficult to obtain financing or managing capital. A study of Poonam (2012) showed that financial shortage faced by women entrepreneurs and the majority of them will borrow money from their

relatives. Similarly, Lee & Grise (1990) also stated in their study that women entrepreneurs often encounter problems when starting their business. The new entrepreneurs who start a business will not be able to get a lot of confidence from the bank, suppliers and customers. Thus, the government must play an important role in providing loans to women entrepreneurs who need financial support.

In addition, a study done by Buttner & Rosen (1992) stated that another problems faced by most women entrepreneurs are marketing problem, pricing issues, problems of management and administration such as lack of management techniques skills and social issues such as prejudice. Moreover, another problem faced by women is internal personal problem such as conflict between partners and employees, production problems which are quality of products or unsatisfactory services, knowledge problem which is lack of knowledge about products or services produced and personal problems such as work stress and no support from the family (Teo 1996).

### **The Suggestion to Improve the Potential and Increasing of Women's Success in Entrepreneurship**

According to Thuaibah et al. (2007), women entrepreneurs who want to venture into the business sector should make a review and analysis about the business that they want to involve before opening it to avoid problems in the future. Hence, the women entrepreneurs who want to start a business should choose a potential business sector and accordance with current economic developments. They need to think wisely in looking for opportunities to expand their business. A lot of efforts have been made by the government to help women entrepreneurs to market their products to the further stage. For example, in 9th Malaysia Plan, Malaysian Government has encouraged the entrepreneurs to venture into agriculture based business by providing opportunities, incentives and assistance to expand their business to the global level by targeting Malaysia as an exporter of agricultural products in the world.

The women involved in business should be a member of association or organization to achieve success in entrepreneurship (Poonam 2012; Thuaibah et al. 2007). By participating in any association or organization, they will be able to receive the latest information related to business world and indirectly will increase the number of existing network. Furthermore, by joining the association, they can discuss the needs, problems, experiences and achievements in the business world (Poonam 2012). For example, every states in Malaysia have an association or related business organizations where can be joined by women entrepreneurs such as Malay Chamber of Commerce, Association of Women Entrepreneurs, Businesswomen Association and others. By being a member in these associations, they will be able to move in group so that the problems faced can be channeled to any related government or private agencies compared to move individually (Thuaibah et al. 2007).

Furthermore, by joining these association or organization, women entrepreneurs will acquire a variety of business information and new business opportunities. These association or organization are functioning as patron and monitor the activities undertaken by their entrepreneurs systematically. Thus, the women entrepreneurs who have registered under the association or organization will receive certain rewards. For example, they will get special attention from the government or any party if they have problem in their business. The application which has the support from the associations or organizations indirectly will be able to convince the government or other parties to provide assistance such as financial assistance such as capital (Thuaibah et al. 2007). A study done by Suhaila (2014) also stated that help and support from the government is still significant in contributing to the success of entrepreneurs in Malaysia. Hence, help, support and policies that have been conducted by the government before this through the relevant agencies should be continued and be improved in accordance with the government's aim to enhance economy in this country.

Women entrepreneurs also should strive to increase their knowledge and skills business Nor Aini (2008). To enhance knowledge and skills, they need to participate in formal courses organized by government and private training institutions. They also can participate in informal courses such as seminars, lectures and conventions organized by related parties. By joining these courses, they will be able to improve their knowledge about the business opportunities that exist around them. Therefore, women entrepreneurs need to be aware of current developments like knowing and identifying variety of schemes provided by government agencies such as Ministry of Entrepreneur and Cooperative Development, Ministry of Rural Development, Ministry of Youth and Sports, Ministry of Agriculture and other public and private agencies that are involved (Thuaibah et al. 2007). Similarly, Suhaila (2014) also stated in their study that the entrepreneurs need to increase their knowledge regarding to marketing by attending seminars and related programs through government agencies that are accountable.

In addition, women entrepreneurs also need to improve their ICT (Information and Communication Technology) knowledge in this era of globalization. Nor Aini & Mohd Ali (2011) have discussed the issue of the importance of ICT knowledge among women entrepreneurs which generally people in developing countries and low income get less benefit from ICT development that occur nowadays. The introduction of technology in the era of globalization has marginalized women from economic activities when men are given more training and education. As a result, the number of women as unskilled labors in the informal sector will increase. If the use of ICT problem can be solved, it will provide a lot of benefits to women entrepreneurs.

Fundamental changes on entrepreneurship also need to be done in every school, colleges, and university. Entrepreneurship subject should be formed at primary school level and subsequently developed at the secondary and higher education level. It is important to identify the potential that students have to become entrepreneurs and other opportunities should be provided accordingly (Poonam 2012). Furthermore, entrepreneurship among women should also be used as a tool to fight poverty at the grass roots level. The government and NGOs should make housewives as entrepreneurial potential and their potential have to be identified and opportunity should be given to them (Poonam 2012).

Besides, women entrepreneurs also need to have a good relationship with various parties to enhance their potential and success in business (Carter 2000). For example, women

entrepreneurs always need to maintain a good relationship with suppliers, customers, employees, government officers, intermediaries, banks and others. For women entrepreneurs who want to start a business, they always need to create a good relationship with these parties. There are many benefits obtained when creating a good relationship with these parties. One of them is they can help to solve the problems that the entrepreneurs faced by providing the right business opportunity for women entrepreneurs.

## Conclusion

Business field is the best opportunity for women who want to be an entrepreneurs. Therefore, women should not miss this opportunity. Regardless of any field, women had to deal with various of problems. Women entrepreneurs need to resolute in facing any problems that occur around them and take it as a challenge. They should try to figure out on how to solve the problems if they want to be a successful entrepreneur. Thus, to deal with this issue, a more comprehensive approach should be formed to assist and monitor the entrepreneurial activity among women entrepreneurs. To be an entrepreneur, one must have some specific characteristics that can encourage them to explore entrepreneurship such as have a high effort to venture into the business world and willing to take risks. In addition, women entrepreneurs are seen to have an attitude which is no confidence in themselves. This attitude has made them afraid to try something that could be beneficial to their business. They also may not know the proper channels to enable them to obtain a loan whether to start or expand their businesses. Therefore, they need to be assisted so that they are not left out and marginalized by the current global economic development nowadays.

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