



**THE DETERMINANTS INFLUENCING WOMEN'S MICRO-
ENTERPRISES INVOLVEMENT IN MALAYSIA**



DOROTHY CHIPFUNDE

MASTER OF SCIENCE IN ENTREPRENEURSHIP

2022



Faculty of Technology Management and Technopreneurship

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INVOLVEMENT IN MALAYSIA**

DOROTHY CHIPFUNDE

**A thesis submitted
in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in
Entrepreneurship**




Faculty of Technology Management and Technopreneurship

UNIVERSITI TEKNIKAL MALAYSIA MELAKA

2022

DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis entitled “The Determinants Influencing Women’s Micro-Enterprises Involvement in Malaysia” is the result of my research except as cited in the references. The thesis has not been accepted for any degree and is not concurrently submitted in the candidature of any other degree.



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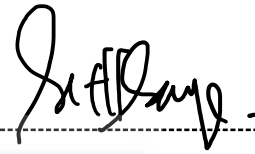
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APPROVAL

I hereby declare that I have read this thesis and in my opinion, this thesis is sufficient in terms of scope and quality for the award of the degree of Master of Science in Entrepreneurship.

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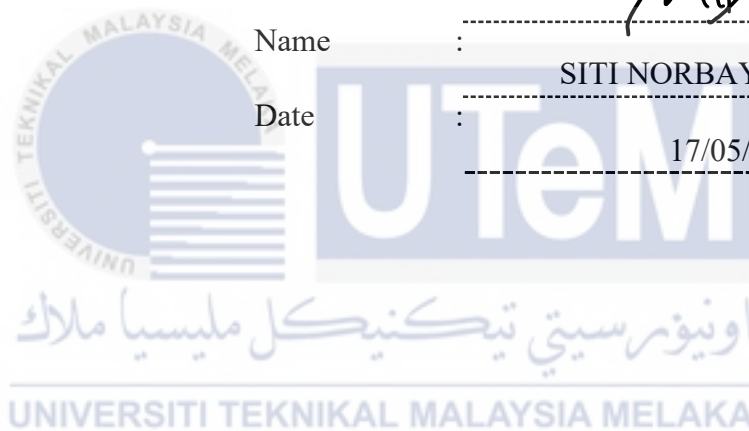


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DEDICATION

To God Almighty and my beloved father and late mother.



ABSTRACT

There is no doubt that the number of women involved in micro-enterprises is increasing globally. Women represent more than one-third of all people involved in entrepreneurial activity worldwide. However, women's micro-enterprises involvement in Malaysia experienced a drastic decline in participation, resulting in low financial freedom and poor economic growth in Malaysia. Lack of motivation, low-income family support, entrepreneurial skills, business networks and access to loans and financing have created enormous challenges for women's micro-enterprise involvement in Malaysia. As a result, SMEs have suffered a drastic loss of participation from women, and promoting women's micro-enterprises involvement would help increase adequate women's well-being and increase the growth of Malaysia's economy. This study examines the factors influencing women's micro-enterprise involvement in Malaysia. The phenomenal growth of women entrepreneurs and the gap in the current micro-enterprise involvement literature have necessitated this study. A quantitative approach is adopted as a survey strategy for data collection due to its ability to minimise biased questions and promote the positivism research model. Simple random sampling was adopted during the data collection. Primary data collection was carried out as a face-to-face self-administered survey, and questionnaires were emailed to the respondents. Out of 420 questionnaires distributed, 383 respondents were collected (91.2%) of the response and success rate from this survey. Descriptive analysis, exploratory factor analysis, normality, reliability, correlation, and regression analysis are some of the statistical tools used to look at the data in this study with the SPSS. These results indicate a relationship between motivation, family support, entrepreneurial skills, business network, access to loans and financing, and women's micro-enterprise involvement in Malaysia. In addition, the regression analysis explores hypothesis testing. It further affirms the positive effects of motivation, family support, entrepreneurial skills, business network, and access to loans and financing on women's micro-enterprise involvement in Malaysia. This study confirms that women entrepreneurs focusing on micro-enterprise involvement would create platforms to increase business opportunities, improve management skills, and strategize easy ways to access loans and financing. In addition, it would further help build solid ties for family support, create job opportunities, and promote the economy of Malaysia effectively.

PENENTU YANG MEMPENGARUHI PENGLIBATAN PERUSAHAAN MIKRO WANITA DI MALAYSIA

ABSTRAK

Tidak dinafikan bahawa bilangan penglibatan perusahaan mikro wanita meningkat secara global. Wanita mewakili lebih daripada satu pertiga daripada semua orang yang terlibat dalam aktiviti keusahawanan di seluruh dunia. Walau bagaimanapun, penglibatan perusahaan mikro wanita di Malaysia mengalami penurunan drastik dalam penyertaan, mengakibatkan kebebasan kewangan yang rendah dan pertumbuhan ekonomi yang lemah di Malaysia. Kekurangan motivasi, sokongan keluarga berpendapatan rendah, kemahiran keusahawanan, rangkaian perniagaan dan akses kepada pinjaman dan pembiayaan telah mewujudkan cabaran besar dalam penglibatan perusahaan mikro wanita di Malaysia. Akibatnya, PKS telah mengalami kerugian drastik dalam penyertaan wanita dan menggalakkan penglibatan perusahaan mikro wanita akan membantu meningkatkan kesejahteraan wanita yang mencukupi dan meningkatkan pertumbuhan ekonomi Malaysia. Kajian ini mengkaji faktor yang mempengaruhi penglibatan perusahaan mikro wanita di Malaysia. Pertumbuhan fenomena usahawan wanita dan jurang dalam literature mengenai penglibatan perusahaan mikro semasa memerlukan kajian ini dijalankan. Pendekatan kuantitatif diguna pakai sebagai strategi tinjauan untuk pengumpulan data kerana keupayaannya untuk meminimumkan soalan berat sebelah dan mempromosikan model penyelidikan positivisme. Persampelan rawak mudah telah diterima pakai semasa pengumpulan data. Pengumpulan data primer telah dijalankan sebagai tinjauan yang ditadbir sendiri secara bersemuka dan soal selidik yang dihantar melalui e-mel kepada responden. Daripada 420 soal selidik yang diedarkan, 383 responden telah Berjaya dikumpul (91.2%) jawapan adalah kadar kejayaan daripada tinjauan ini. SPSS digunakan untuk menganalisis data yang dikumpul dengan pelbagai alat statistik seperti analisis deskriptif, analisis faktor penerokaan, ujian normaliti, kebolehpercayaan, korelasi, dan analisis regresi untuk kajian ini. Keputusan ini menunjukkan hubungan antara motivasi, sokongan keluarga, kemahiran keusahawanan, rangkaian perniagaan, akses kepada pinjaman dan pembiayaan dan penglibatan perusahaan mikro wanita di Malaysia. Ia seterusnya mengesahkan kesan positif motivasi, sokongan keluarga, kemahiran keusahawanan, rangkaian perniagaan, dan akses kepada pinjaman dan pembiayaan ke atas penglibatan perusahaan mikro wanita di Malaysia. Kajian ini mengesahkan bahawa usahawan wanita yang memberi tumpuan kepada penglibatan perusahaan mikro akan mewujudkan platform untuk meningkatkan peluang perniagaan, meningkatkan kemahiran pengurusan, dan menyusun strategi cara mudah untuk mengakses pinjaman dan pembiayaan. Di samping itu, ia akan membantu membina hubungan kukuh untuk sokongan keluarga, mewujudkan peluang pekerjaan, dan menggalakkan ekonomi Malaysia dengan berkesan.

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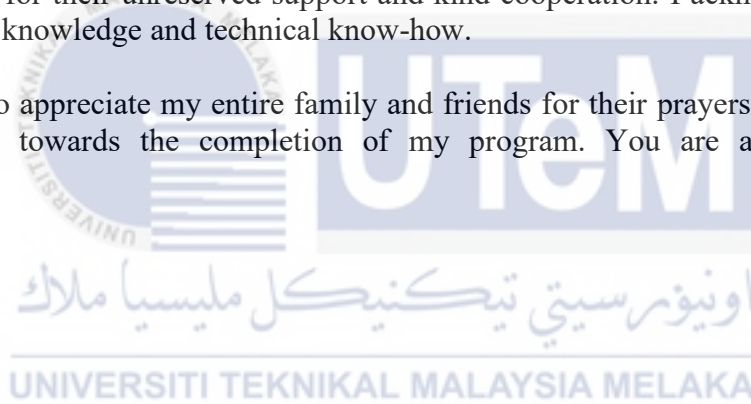


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LIST OF SYMBOLS AND ABBREVIATIONS

β	-	Path Coefficient
EFA	-	Exploratory Factor Analysis
GDP	-	Gross Domestic Product
IFC	-	International Finance Commission
KMO	-	Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin
NGO	-	Non-Governmental Organisations
SME	-	Small Medium Enterprises
SPSS	-	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
R^2	-	R Square
ROE	-	Return on Equity
RM	-	Malaysia Ringgit
SSM	-	Suruhanjaya Syarikat Malaysia
VIF	-	Variance Inflation Factor

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LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

Scopus Indexed Journal

Dorothy Chipfunde, Siti Norbaya Yahaya & Norfaridatul Akmaliah Othman, (2021). The Determinants Influencing the Business Performance of Women Entrepreneurs in Malaysia: A Conceptual Framework. *Estudios de Economia Aplicada*, 39(4), pp. 157-170.



CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Women entrepreneurs are vital to the economic growth of most countries, including Malaysia (Siba, 2019; Nor Hanim, Wan, Roslina & Nor Hayati, 2020). It further indicates that women's involvement as entrepreneurs is substantial in transforming and empowering society through innovation, job creation, alleviation of poverty, tax payment, and prosperity formation effectively (Hossain, Jahangir, & Nur-Al-Ahad, 2018). More than 52% of the world's women entrepreneurs population started up new businesses in various fields in 2016. The figure represents an additional 83 million women who had launched their business ventures for at least three and a half years. The rise of women entrepreneurs worldwide has gained attention from both spheres of business and academics (Abdul, Sze, Zubair & Sharmila, 2020). Studies on women entrepreneurs have witnessed rapid growth in Malaysia over the past 30 years (Arshad, Arshad, Mokhtar & Rashid, 2019). Women micro-enterprises are a district that needs specific research attention within the aspect of involvement as they are being affected in various ways in setting up business ventures (Kaur & Sharma, 020). However, Malaysia has been extensively supporting the women-owned enterprises in Malaysia since the inception of the 1975 police maker by the National Advisory Council on the Integration of Women in Development (NACIWID) (Ahmad, Subramaniam & Nasir, 2020). They aim to boost their business ventures, acknowledging their importance in improving Malaysia's economic growth. Although with the government's continuous support for the women-owned

enterprises of micro-businesses, there are still experiences low women's involvement in the building up business ventures in Malaysia.

Figure 1.1 depicted that the total number of SMEs was 1,151,339 consisting of 1.6% of medium businesses, 20.0% of small businesses and 78.4% of micro-enterprises in Malaysia. It further agreed that over 20.1% are women-owned entrepreneurs among the total SMEs in Malaysia (Awang, Ahmad, Wan & Sa'at, 2020; Zahari, Mahmood, Yaacob, Kadir & Baniamin, 2021). Regarding micro-enterprises as the SMEs category of this study, it concluded that it has 903,174 firms, and at 20.1% of women-owned enterprises would result in 181,538 firms effectively (Mohd Noor, Othman, Sa'At & Ismail, 2021). Comparing the micro-enterprises rate of 2019 (693,670) and 2020 (903,174), it sequentially agreed that there is an increase in the development of micro-enterprises within SMEs. Still, there is a reduction of women-owned micro-enterprises of 20.6% (2019) and 20.1% (2020) involvement in Malaysia's development (Alshami, Majid, Rashid & Adil, 2019; Xiong, Ukanwa & Anderson, 2020; Nor Azira et al. 2021).

SMEs are the backbone of the economy, representing 97.2% of overall business establishments in 2020

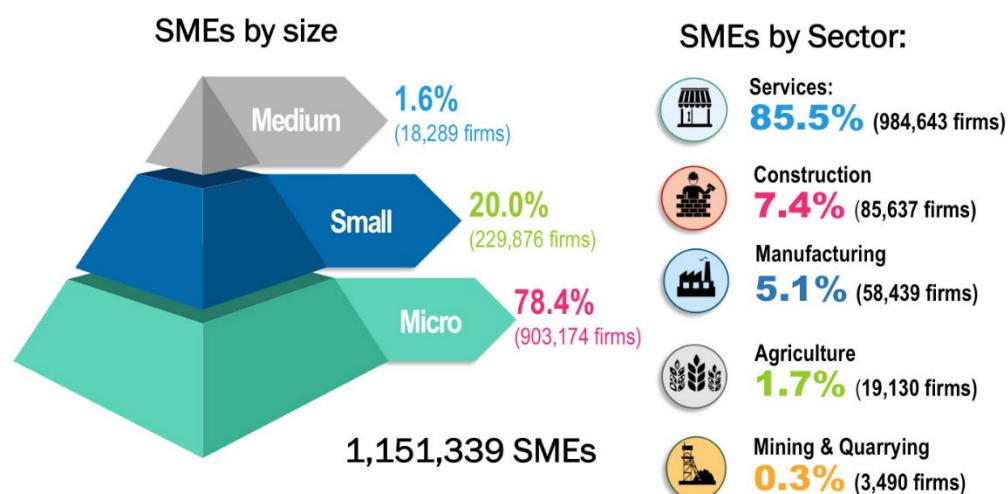


Figure 1.1: SME Statistics Report 2020 (Alshami, Majid, Rashid & Adil, 2019;

Xiong, Ukanwa & Anderson, 2020; Nor Azira et al., 2021).

This study further concurred a decline in the women micro-enterprises involvement in Malaysia. In addition, it highlighted the challenges that prompted the declining involvement, such as motivation, family support, entrepreneurial skills, business network, and access to loans and financing. These challenges identify as the critical stagnant of women-owned micro-enterprises' involvement in Malaysia.

A study conducted by Cho, Park, Han, Sung & Park (2020) agreed that entrepreneurs' motivation helps promote their willingness to engage in business ventures, create wealth, exercise financial freedom, and impact the economy of Malaysia. However, most entrepreneurs in Malaysia believe that there is a high level of fear, resulting in their reluctance to become entrepreneurs (Arshad, Arshad, Mokhtar & Rashid, 2019). According to Qureshi, Memon and Seaman (2021), overcoming the fear of the unknown in business ventures indicates motivation as one of the critical factors influencing potential women entrepreneurs needs to obtain before becoming future entrepreneurs. Furthermore, a study conducted by Alshami, Majid, Rashid and Adil (2019) in responses to the women-owned micro-enterprises in Sabah confirmed that over 8.7% of women experience motivation in participating in a business venture due to a lack of business experiences and resources.

Family support is a vital key factor that promotes women to participate in business venture development (Neneh, 2019). According to Akinbami (2021), women entrepreneurs require adequate support from its family to excel in a new business venture. He further claimed that emotional support is crucial for women in the family and business effectively. A study conducted by Sajjad, Kaleem, Chani and Ahmed (2020) with 250 respondents on the sustainability of Muslim women entrepreneurs agreed that lack of family support had influenced the rate of women staying in their business ventures. They further believed that operational support might reduce when poor financial and emotional support is gotten from their family members.

Entrepreneurial skills empower women-owned micro-enterprises to be successful in their business ventures effectively. According to Kamberidou (2020), entrepreneurs require essential skills to function effectively in business ventures, such as communication, leadership, problem-solving, and customer service relationships. Critical thinking has helped most women entrepreneurs identify their strengths and opportunities for effective business ventures (Gano-An & Gempes, 2020). Various women entrepreneurs have agreed time management and practices are instrumental to their source of growth in managing their micro-businesses effectively (Alozie & Isiwu, 2020; Kibirige, Singh, Dlamini, & Mavuso, 2020). A study conducted by Jamil and Iqbal (2020) indicates that specific skills drive such as leadership and management are crucial for women entrepreneurs to manage their daily business ventures. They further affirmed that these skills add value to the women-owned enterprises in terms of high customers rate, efficiency in tackling their customers and yielding a high level of productivity.

Several studies have agreed that the success of women's micro-entrepreneur involvement lies in their business network in capturing their customers (Njati & Box, 2020; Jaim, 2021). A survey conducted by Bernhard and Olsson (2020) believed that the success of any micro-business depends on the level of expected customers, referral network, and local community patronage that would positively support its business ventures for growth. Though social media concluded as an essential way of promoting business ventures, the implantation of the referral network and local community patronage helps promote the business effectively when it comes to micro-business. A study conducted by Savall, Pizarro and Valero (2020) agreed that micro-business venturing survival depends on the adequate local community patronage with the aid of family/friend connection and referral network support for the long-term.

Various studies have agreed that access to loans and financing influences women

entrepreneurs' involvement and effectively helps more business opportunities (Julius & Rugami, 2020; Fairlie, Robb & Robinson, 2021). Women entrepreneurs gained financing from several aspects such as personal, public, government and financial institutions effectively (Qi & Nguyen, 2021). However, most women entrepreneurs who want to start up micro-business encounter financing difficulties, which demotivates their intention to create financial freedom. However, some studies believe there is inequality in access to loans and funding for women entrepreneurs (Hussain, Mahmood & Scott, 2019). Moreover, financial institutions tend to look down on women rather than men entrepreneurs' priorities as they are perceived as severe and reliable in efficiently repaying their loans (Motta, 2020). These challenges need to be addressed in this study and provide desirable ways to encourage, promote, and strengthen Malaysian women micro-enterprises continuous efforts in the development of business ventures that would positively add value to both the women entrepreneurs and the growth of Malaysia's economy. Therefore, this study examines the factors influencing women's micro-enterprises involvement in Malaysia.

1.2 Problem Statement

Women entrepreneurs encountered severe issues in setting up business ventures globally (Nizamova & Smagulova, 2019). They also experience slack in terms of managing the propensity of business opportunities. Women entrepreneurs are the most challenged, as they have already been through current hurdles, like limited access to business ventures, lack of networks and expertise, and gender biases (Awang, Ahmad, Wan & Sa'at, 2020). Other important issues are, for example, the micro size and the young age of the women's business, the lack of business funds and the total reliance on informal financing (Nor Azira et al. 2021; Rachmawati, Suliyanto & Suroso, 2020). Though women entrepreneurs are the most talented employees, they are known as risk-

takers, innovative, and built with an entrepreneurial approach to enhance their involvement.

In Malaysia, women's micro-enterprises involvement faces various challenges, which has yielded stagnant business involvement amongst the women's micro-business ventures. Poor participation is perceived as a problem affecting the women entrepreneurs in micro-business in Malaysia. The statistics report concluded that the micro-enterprises in the Malaysian SMEs slightly reduced women enterprises' involvement from 2019 (20.6%) to 2020 (20.1%) (Awang, Ahmad, Wan & Sa'at, 2020; Zahari, Mahmood, Yaacob, Kadir & Baniamin, 2021). It further affects the potential women entrepreneurs in setting up a business venture and diminishes Malaysia SMEs' productivity (Ahmad, Subramaniam & Nasir, 2020; Mohd Noor, Othman, Sa'At & Ismail, 2021). Though there is an increase in micro-enterprises from 2019 to 2020, this increase does not represent a growth in women entrepreneurs' involvement in Malaysia. However, this stagnant involvement amongst women entrepreneurs has gradually reduced their contributions to the development of various sectors in Malaysia (Al-Shami, Muhamad, Majid & Rashid, 2019). In addition, this challenge has negatively influenced women entrepreneurs to create wealth and promote a standard of living effectively. Furthermore, the slight decrease in women's micro-enterprises involvement is influenced by several factors such as lack of motivation, lack of family support, inadequate entrepreneurial skills, poor business network and lack of access to loans and financing. This effect has drastically influenced the potential women entrepreneurs who intend to participate in business ventures and yielded low economic growth for Malaysia.

Several studies have identified motivation as influencing women entrepreneurs (Rajindra, Farid & Yani, 2020; Alshami, Majid, Rashid & Adil, 2019). Still, there are limited studies on the business experiences as a tactic that would explore the compelling

motivation for women entrepreneurs' involvement in Malaysia. Smitha and Mendon (2019) affirmed that lack of motivation influences the women entrepreneur's involvement in setting up micro-business ventures to create financial freedom and impact the growth of Malaysia's economy. A study conducted by Shastri, Shastri and Pareek (2019) agreed that few entrepreneurs in Malaysia suffer drastically in participating in micro-business due to a lack of motivation. Various studies concluded a positive effect of family support on women entrepreneurs (Rajan & Panicker, 2020; Roy, Mohapatra & Banerjee, 2021). Still, there are limited studies on emotional and operational support as a critical factor of family support in boosting women entrepreneurs' involvement in micro-business ventures in Malaysia (Wyndow, Clifton & Walker, 2020). Hassan, Hui and Wafa (2020) affirmed that a lack of family support reduces women's commitment to providing an edge for more substantial business growth. A study conducted by Duran-Encalada, Werner-Masters and Paucar-Caceres (2021) believed that emotional support triggers the continuous success of women entrepreneurs investing in micro-business to sustain the well-being of their family responsibilities.

Numerous studies have examined the relationship between entrepreneurial skills and women entrepreneurs (Welsh, Llanos-Contreras, Alonso-Dos-Santos & Kaciak, 2021; Njati & Box, 2020). Still, there are limited studies on customer services, leadership, and communication as critical factors of entrepreneurial skills in boosting women entrepreneurs' involvement in micro-business ventures in the Malaysian context. A study conducted by Arshad et al. (2020) agreed that over 23.4% of women entrepreneurs lack teamwork and experience poor customer services, which has affected the continuous participation of micro-business ventures in Malaysia. Entrepreneurial skills have helped women make the right decision (Gano-An & Gempes, 2020). In a situation where women enterprises experience inadequate effective decision-making, it will effectively affect

productivity and involvement (Basit, Hassan & Sethumadhavan, 2020). Though, practical skills, training, and teamwork positively impact the survival of most entrepreneurs' growth in Malaysia (Naval, Carig, Dolojan, Julian & Ngabit, 2021). Various studies have identified the effect of the business network on women entrepreneurs (Fatah, Mahmud & Diniyya, 2020; Ondiba & Matsui, 2021).

Still, there are limited studies on the referral concepts and local community patronage as critical factors that promote the business network towards developing women's micro-enterprises involvement in Malaysia (King, 2020; Wambui & Muathe, 2021; Bernhard & Olsson, 2020). A survey conducted by Surangi (2021) agreed that most micro-business ventures survive based on family connections and friend referrals, positively influencing their business ventures effectively. Network referral and word of mouth have been considered influential in promoting business networks (Welsh, Kaciak, Kołodkiewicz, Memili, Iyer & Ramadani, 2021). However, the micro-business requires extensively exploring and boosting its business opportunities effectively.

Various past research has studied the relationships between access to loans and financing and women entrepreneurs (Putra, Usman, Herawati, Fatimah & Latukismo, 2021.; Shell-Duncan, Moreau, Smith & Shakya, 2020). Still, there are limited studies on the business network and women micro-enterprises involvement in the Malaysian context. A survey conducted by De Andrés, Gimeno and Mateos (2021) agreed that access to loans and finance strongly affects women entrepreneurs' involvement in micro-enterprises. He further affirmed that due to gender inequity, women entrepreneurs suffer appropriate allocation of financial support from Malaysia's government and financial institutions. According to Daovisan and Chamaratana (2020), over 17.2% of women entrepreneurs indicate that financial institutions such as banks give different criteria in seeking business financing and which women entrepreneurs perceived as unjust meted to