

JABM

**JOURNAL of
ACCOUNTING, BUSINESS and MANAGEMENT**

The Impact of Servant Leadership on Trust, Team Efficacy, and Intrinsic Motivation in Healthcare	
Salma Hayat, Siti Norida Wahab, Norashida Othman and Nikram Subramaniam	1-11
Student-led Classroom: Review on the Advantages and Disadvantages	
Ummi Habibah Mohd Shakil and Nurul Syifaa Mohd Shakil	12-22
Augmenting Consumer Acceptance of Robot-Assisted Technologies in Retail Industry: An Interdisciplinary Approach	
Khalufi Nasser Ali M.	23-36
Impact of Building Information Modelling in Achieving Sustainable Efficiency	
Linsy Kavanancheeri	37-47
Pandemic to Endemic: Changing Learning Styles as Coping Mechanism	
Nurmala Mustaffa Kamal, Mahfudzah Mohamed, Puteh Mariam Ismail, Asyaari Elmiza Ahmad and Roslina Abdul Rahim	48-65
Adaption of Artificial Intelligence (AI) to Enhance Business and Collaboration between Countries, Focusing on Saudi Arabia	
Nisar Ahmed Zafar	66-75
Crucial Elements in the Development of Cyber Security Strategies in Saudi Arabia	
Alhashmi Aboubaker Lasyoud and Lawrence Awopetu	76-83
Analyzing the Influence of Dividend Policy on Corporate Value: A Financial Perspective with Haier as a Case Study	
Wang Danni and Zhong Qi	84-90
Digital Financial Capability Towards Improving Entrepreneurial's Business Performance	
Nainatul Farzuha Nor, Noor Saidatul Natrah Saaidun and Noorkartina Mohamad	91-99
Exploring the Impact of Flexible Work Arrangements on Turnover Intention: The Mediating Role of Job Satisfaction and the Moderating Effect of Perceived Supervisory Support	
Joanna Benjamin George and Nitin Vihari Poluru	100-123
Household Budgets Among Different Income Groups in Klang Valley	
Al Sarah Alyaa Al Buhari, Kamisah Supian and Sharifah Hilmi Syed Abdullah	124-136

Entrepreneurial Competencies for Managing Business in Informal Economy: A Study of B40 Women Entrepreneurs in Malaysia

Nurul Hidayana Mohd Noor*
Syeliya Md Zaini†
Noralina Omar‡
Raja Mayang Delima Mohd Beta§
Chang Lee Wei**

Abstract

Globally, the lack of participation among women in entrepreneurship is credited to a series of factors, including a lack of education, inadequate competencies, gender stereotypes, and inadequate access to resources. This study aims to assess the current competencies level of women entrepreneurs in the informal economy in Malaysia. The informal economy—also referred to as the shadow economy- is far more significant than the formal economy and a way of livelihood for many people in most developing countries. Second, this study aims to discover the skills and knowledge required by women entrepreneurs. This study employed a qualitative research approach and purposive sampling technique where 20 women entrepreneurs were selected as key informants. This study only focuses on women entrepreneurs from B40 groups in Kuala Lumpur with more than one year of business experience and involved in informal businesses such as street vendors, hawkers, and home-based businesses. The interviews were analysed using thematic analysis. The study first found that most informants have limited business management competencies. The findings also have categorized the main competencies needed into seven main themes, namely, 1) communication, 2) strategic management, 3) financial management, 4) product innovation, 5) ICT skills, 6) time management, and 7) customer relationship management.

Keywords: B40 Group, Competencies, Informal Business, Women Entrepreneurs.

I. INTRODUCTION

Women are essential in ensuring a family's and community's well-being and align with Gender Equality (SDGs 5) as one of the United Nations 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); women's involvement in economic activities becomes essential because it will contribute to national and societal development (Beloskar et al., 2024). Realizing the countless roles of women, various attempts and approaches have been made to involve women effectively so that their potential can be optimized. The

* Faculty of Administrative Science & Policy Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), Seremban, Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia, Email: hidayana@uitm.edu.my

† Faculty of Accountancy, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), Puncak Alam, Selangor, Malaysia, Correspondence Email: syeliya@uitm.edu.my

‡ Department of Social Justice & Administration, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Universiti Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, Email: noralina@um.edu.my

§ Faculty of Business Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), Seremban, Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia, Email: drmayang@uitm.edu.my

** Centre for Civilisational Dialogue, Universiti Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, Email: cclw86@um.edu.my

participation of women in the business sector is a phenomenon that has been around for a while. Past studies have identified several factors that encourage women to be involved in business. Among them are the high cost of living and the improvement of the family economy (Cardella et al., 2020). Many women entrepreneurs also have been involved in the informal economy (Yadav & Jacob, 2024). The informal economy generally consists of activities that generate marketplace value but have yet to be officially recorded in the country's income and governing system (Khuong et al., 2021). It is estimated that about 60.0% of the total employment, or 2 billion workers, and 80.0% of companies worldwide are involved in the informal economy. In Malaysia, about 8.6% of the total workforce, or 1.3 million individuals, have been involved in the informal sector in 2021 (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2021).

Of these 1.3 million individuals, approximately 73.4% or 955,200 are informal entrepreneurs whose job status is under the informal sector, categorized as self-employed and employer (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2021). Undeniably, the business sector is seen as an exceptional prospect for women entrepreneurs, and the government needs to empower them. Empowering means giving an individual the power to contribute to society. Nevertheless, disadvantaged women often deprivation of the resources to empower their lives. A person in poverty commonly has obstacle in accessing education, occupation, resources, and opportunities. All over the world, poverty often has a substantial effect on women. Previous research has increasingly emphasized the issue of women's contribution in entrepreneurship at the national and international levels. One of the biggest confronts for women entrepreneurs is the need for business competencies (Rahman et al., 2023). In addition, they also need help obtaining capital loans and financial assistance. Previous scholars have revealed that women entrepreneurs must have unique personalities and specific attitudes, skills, and knowledge to succeed (Ataei et al., 2020; Aftab et al., 2022). An entrepreneur is an individual who exploits a business with innovation and effectively defeats risks to achieve achievement and revenue. Entrepreneurs are also psychologically calm and made wise decisions that are important in business to continue significant in the long term. Competencies provide a competitive advantage that can improve business efficiency and profitability. Entrepreneurial competence is a person's ability to perform entrepreneurial functions more effectively through his or her duties as an entrepreneur (Wadichar et al., 2024). This supports the resource-based view theory (RBV), which highlights the magnitude of ability as a drive to achieve competitive advantage (Barney, 1991). According to Barney (1991), competitiveness can be achieved through the uniqueness of physical and non-physical resources, including management skills, processes, the use of technology, and information.

A lack of basic knowledge in entrepreneurship has been known as a leading reason of business failure (Sedeh et al., 2022). According to Shahzad et al (2021), entrepreneurship success depends on the entrepreneur's effort and ability to handle issues and challenges. Al Koliby et al (2024) and Khan et al (2021) state that entrepreneurship underlies competencies that permit individuals to distinguish, generate, and exploit on opportunities to create value by pooling resources. Therefore, the empowerment of entrepreneurs should be given added value to the existing competence an entrepreneur possesses. Entrepreneurs must overcome various obstacles and business problems. For that, entrepreneurs must have high perseverance and tenacity (Polas et al., 2022). The accomplishment or catastrophe of a business depends on the quality of the information obtained, how well the information is collected, and how the information is used in decision-making (Al Koliby et al., 2024). At the same time, Shahzad et al (2021) have

identified ten criteria for entrepreneurial competence: knowledge, thinking skills, self-management, management skills, human resource management, decision-making skills, leadership skills, strategic planning skills, development skills, and organizational skills.

Thus, this study was conducted to identify the current competencies of women entrepreneurs in the informal economy and to assess the skills and knowledge required by low-income (B40) women entrepreneurs in the informal economy. This study contributes significantly to the current literature because this study focuses on different contexts in which B40 group women entrepreneurs. The Department of Statistics of Malaysia defines the B40 group as a household with an income below Ringgit Malaysia (RM) 4,850. Most of the studies have heavily focused on the generic category of women entrepreneurs, examining factors such as intention, behaviour, institutional support, and tangible aspects of entrepreneurship. This group of entrepreneurs faces different challenges and is sometimes more challenging as compared to other groups (e.g., M40 and T20 entrepreneurs). Moreover, the studies on women entrepreneurs' soft skills and competencies still need to be completed.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Entrepreneurship in the Informal Economy

Entrepreneurship is a procedure of generating something new and discrete for the purpose of establishing wealth for individuals and swelling value to society. An entrepreneur is an individual who runs a business until it succeeds with the motive of making a profit while practicing strategic practices to continue to succeed (Pennetta et al., 2024). The economic activities of a country are divided into two sectors, namely the formal sector and the informal sector. These two sectors illustrate how an economic activity is organized and carried out by the community. The difference between the formal and informal sectors can be seen from various angles, including regulation and recognition, social contribution, and income stability. Both the formal and informal sectors both have a great impact on development national economy. Informal sector entrepreneurship is part of the informal economy, which refers to the economic activities that usually operate on a small scale and are outside a controlled economic and tax system (Khuong et al., 2021). In Malaysia, Selangor has recorded the most significant number of traders in the informal sector, with as many as 8,214 businesses or individuals. This was followed by the state of Johor (6,849) and Perak (3,432). A total of 1,383,084 individuals or dealers from the informal and micro sectors were recorded in 2021. According to Malaysian Chief Statistician, Datuk Seri Dr Mohd Uzir Mahidin said more than 70 percent of employment in the informal sector was in the self-employed category. Employees in this sector consist of those who work as housebuilders, food vendors, bakers, lawnmowers, laborers, construction workers, roadside stall sellers, tailors, delivery people, and drivers. According to the International Labor Organization (ILO), the informal sector is a subcategory of businesses that is not incorporated where it can be characterized generally as an enterprise consisting of units involved in the creation of goods or services with the primary objective of producing employment and profits (Dell'Anno, 2022). These units normally manage on a small scale with a minimal grouping between labor and capital as a factor of production.

Department of Statistics of Malaysia defines the informal sector as an informal enterprise that meets the following criteria: 1) all or at least one item or the service issued is for sale or barter transaction, 2) the company is not registered with the Companies Commission Malaysia or any professional body, 3) employee size less than 10, and 4) not registered below any prescribed national legislation (Al Mamun et al., 2016). Therefore,

based on the informal sector's job description, self-employed individuals and employers are counted as informal entrepreneurs. Though employees and unpaid family workers belong to the informal sector, they are not counted as informal entrepreneurs (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2021). Social protection, such as retirement savings funds or social security organizations, does not protect informal entrepreneurs. Although the informal sector's business activities are classified as small and not well organized, this sector has a significant role in a country's economy, especially for developing countries. Among the roles are open employment and reducing unemployment. Business actions in the informal sector not only help people get jobs but also help people increase their income. The goods or services sold by the informal sector also increase the community's purchasing power. Because the price offered may be low and the product quality may be suitable. The informal sector also plays a fundamental function in the private sector, especially in the distribution of goods. Because the community's purchasing power is high, it is easier for the private sector to market products and reach consumers through informal sector efforts (Sultana et al., 2024).

2.2. B40 Women Entrepreneurship

Household income classes can be divided into three groups, namely households that earn the bottom 40 percent of the total income of Malaysians (B40), households that earn 41 percent to 80 percent of the total income of Malaysians (M40), and households earning the highest 20 percent of the total income of Malaysians (T20). A dividing line based on income has been used to establish these three groups where the B40 group is a household with an income of RM4,850 and below (Nasir, 2024). While the content of the determination of income class in Malaysia, namely the B40, M40, and T20 groups, is based on income lines. When the country is struggling to contain the outbreak of COVID-19, the Movement Control Order (MCO) has been implemented. This had a profound impact on the B40 group because their income being affected due to being laid off, being asked to take leave without pay, not being able to work or do small business during the MCO period (Rahman et al., 2021). The target for the B40 group has been refined and vigorously implemented to ease the burden of this group (Mayan et al., 2017). The Prihatin Rakyat Economic Stimulus Package (PRIHATIN) provides an injection of funds amounting to protect the welfare of the B40, M40, and small and medium enterprise (SME).

After post pandemic, many B40 women have enter informal business sector and the government has open learning space for the local B40 community who are interested in opening business. Malaysia, as one of the affiliates of the United Nations, has presented Gender Equality (SDG5) as one of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to be realized by 2030. However, the relevant facts and statistics has revealed that the gender equality agenda in Malaysia is not making progress and deteriorating in the eyes of the world and the region. The latest report of the Global Gender Gap Index shows that out of a total of 153 countries, Malaysia has fallen three places to rank 104 (Sharma et al., 2021). Within the Southeast Asian region, Malaysia is in ninth place, surpassing Myanmar and Timor Leste. Malaysia's highly highlighted position based on this index is mainly due to the large gender gap in two areas, namely political empowerment and economic participation. Cultural factors play a very large role in hindering the progress of women in Malaysia (Baqutayan, 2020). For example, the belief that women are better suited to be housewives than to work is very widespread, especially among conservative societies.

Many women including B40 group now have careers in their respective fields of expertise such entrepreneurship. However, in achieving a balance especially between demands as employees and the responsibility to the family is a challenge and not an easy

task. In fact, women's role is not only in managing the household, but as a provider to the family economy (Ogundana et al., 2021). In fact, this responsibility is not only borne by women who are married but are also part of it responsibility for those who are not married. There are many women who work from morning until late at night. If this continues, it will trigger emotional stress, mental and physical fatigue, domestic upheaval, divorce, and other issues (Davis, 2020). With the difficulties to balance work life and household, past studies have discovered several challenges faced by women entrepreneurs (Al Matroushi et al., 2021). For example, Mohd Noor and Omar' (2024) findings found that the B40 women entrepreneurs were faced with various challenges including lack of financial assistance, difficulty in choosing a location, problems related to customer management, marketing problems, sales product delivery problems, and fierce competition.

2.3. Entrepreneurial Competencies

This research aims to determine the competencies of women entrepreneurs as a competitive advantage through the resource-based view (RBV) method. The RBV centres on the recognizing of potential resources and capabilities. RBV has become one of the most dominant theories in management. Entrepreneurial competency is a critical competitive resource, which means the capability or ability of a person to execute entrepreneurial functions successfully. Entrepreneurial competency is possessed through behavioral systems because of the influence of a person's ethics and attitude. Through entrepreneurship competency, one will be more competent than others with the same intelligence and education (Ibidunni et al., 2021). A study by Sedeh et al (2022) showed a substantial relationship between specific entrepreneurial competencies and an entrepreneur's achievement. This opinion is endorsed by many researchers, such as Ataei et al (2020) and Aftab et al (2022).

Entrepreneurs often have an evangelistic value. They have great ideas and are competent at getting buy-in from the investors and customers (Pennetta et al., 2024). Entrepreneurs frequently seem more relaxed with risk than other business leaders. Entrepreneurs are prepared to live without a fixed salary and make short-term sacrifices for long-term results. Being an entrepreneur may seem bright and exciting, but a lot of hard work and time is needed to introduce something new into the market. Entrepreneurs are relentless when it comes to achieving projects (Lyons et al., 2020). Meanwhile, a study made by Polas et al (2022) on small and medium industries has identified some critical entrepreneurial competencies. These include 1) seeing and seizing opportunities, 2) business networking, 3) risk-taking, 4) goal setting, 5) tenacity, 6) freedom of decision-making, 7) systematic planning, 8) self-confidence, and 9) the ability to convince others. According to Khan et al (2021), entrepreneurs have the power to seize opportunities and identify existing business opportunities. They can grab opportunities by expanding the market and obtaining assistance for business. These competencies are essential factors for business success and resilience.

An entrepreneur needs to have financial literacy proficiencies in leading business operations. Oggero et al (2020) believes entrepreneurs who having a good financial footing can be an important resource to success a competitive business ecosystem. The entrepreneur who lack of financial literacy will lead to the termination of a business (Singla & Mallik, 2021). Moreover, entrepreneurs continually research to get information and response to provide goods or services that can converge customer satisfaction. Information and the feedback acquired will increase the achievement and execution of the business. An entrepreneur will continuously be able to do something unique with existing products, services, or processes (Karlsson et al., 2021). It is an ability to transfer

less productive resources into industrious resources to afford economic value. For instance, innovative packaging will give the business an advantage over the opponents. Expansions in packaging made will notably result in the changes in sales and income (Shkabatur et al., 2022).

The entrepreneurs also need to have time management skill. Time management includes how individuals plan, organize, and control their time each day. It is crucial because time is a non-renewable resource, thus efficiency in managing time is the key to success. One of the important aspects of time management skills is the capacity to shape an effective schedule (Sainz et al., 2019). Allocating enough time to each task and activity helps to prevent uncomplete business works. In addition, time management skills also concern on the ability to prevent the pitfalls of multitasking. Although many believe that doing multiple tasks at once can boost productivity, in fact multitasking can decrease the quality of work. Concentrating on one task at a time can help to enhance performance and guarantee that each task is finished well.

Entrepreneurs should be able to accentuate the high eminence of work to produce high-quality goods (Shahzad et al., 2021). They always evaluate the quality of work with the quality of other people's work so that it is equivalent or at a better level. Good entrepreneurs always warrant promises are fulfilled as agreed, especially with customers, suppliers, and other parties. Efficiency-oriented individuals always glimpse for ways to do something at a lower cost or shorter time than usual without compromising quality. Business efficiency will be able to increase profits and reduce waste and costs (Khan et al., 2021). The soft skills development program for women entrepreneurs is very essential in integrating soft skills such as effective communication, teamwork, and problem-solving skills (Aly et al., 2021). With a strong emphasis on soft skills development, women entrepreneurs will not only having the technical skills required in business but will also be viable and adaptable in a vibrant business environment (Ubfal et al., 2022)

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Data and information for this study were collected using interviews. The study's unit of analysis is low-income (B40) women entrepreneurs in the informal sector who live in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, and were selected according to purposive sampling. This study only focuses on women entrepreneurs from B40 groups in Kuala Lumpur with more than one year of business experience and involvement in informal businesses such as street vendors, hawkers, and home-based businesses. The informal sector includes informal enterprises that meet the following criteria: 1) all or at least one item or service is intended for sale or barter transaction, 2) the company is not registered with the Companies Commission of Malaysia or any professional body, and 3) the size of the employees is less than ten people and is not registered under any national legislation (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2021). The Department of Statistics of Malaysia defines the B40 group as a household with an income below RM4,850.

Twenty women entrepreneurs were designated as a study sample based on the similarity of characteristics and the saturation level in the data obtained. The data obtained from the interviews were analyzed using content analysis to find themes by interpreting the information provided by the study informants. In this study, the researchers used a semi-structured interview, which involved more open questions and allowed respondents to express their responses. The first step in thematic analysis is to examine the data for broad themes. The researchers assign codes to data related to specific themes. The code provided must be consistent and can be clearly explained.

Once the data is coded, the researchers can analyze the data based on the codes that have been determined and determine the themes that emerge from the data. Once the themes have been determined, the researchers check and test the themes with the data that has been analyzed. The results of the analysis are presented clearly in the form of narratives. Table 1 portrays the details of critical informants for this study.

Table 1**Key Informants Profile**

No.	Informant Code	Age	Business Orientation	Business Duration
1	W1	30	Full-time	>5 years
2	W2	41	Full-time	>5 years
3	W3	45	Full-time	>5 years
4	W4	36	Full-time	>5 years
5	W5	44	Part-time	>5 years
6	W6	32	Full-time	≤5 years
7	W7	33	Full-time	>5 years
8	W8	32	Full-time	≤5 years
9	W9	45	Part-time	>5 years
10	W10	44	Full-time	≤5 years
11	W11	41	Full-time	>5 years
12	W12	40	Full-time	>5 years
13	W13	37	Full-time	>5 years
14	W14	35	Part-time	≤5 years
15	W15	35	Full-time	>5 years
16	W16	33	Full-time	>5 years
17	W17	46	Full-time	>5 years
18	W18	43	Full-time	>5 years
19	W19	40	Full-time	>5 years
20	W20	47	Full-time	>5 years

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

An understanding of efficiency in small business can support the development of competency and further affect the growth of an effective business. The concept of recent entrepreneurship needs more than a good idea. Entrepreneurs should have an exceptional personality and certain quality in attitude, skills, and knowledge. The business field is one of the challenging fields and requires an entrepreneur who can control emotions, is disciplined, and has high self-reliance skills (Aly et al., 2021). The study first found that most informants need more business management competencies. Among the verbatim quotes are the following:

"I have only been managing a business for a year. For me, the competition is very fierce. I sell popcorn, and many people sell it. My business income has never been more than RM2000 a month. Maybe because I am not good at finding customers and running the marketing process. I also only use plain and normal packaging" (W2).

"I can honestly say that I am not very good at managing business matters, especially finances, and many of my skills are still weak. I am illiterate and cannot read well. It was also difficult, and I had to ask for help from my daughter, who is still in school" (W3).

"We are a very clever small business. As far as using business WhatsApp with Instagram only. The innovation chapter knows nothing. I sell cakes, and I saw people selling cakes for a good price at the Kerinchi morning market. However, many people will buy it because her cake is beautiful. I am not very good at decorating cakes" (W10).

The findings also have categorized the main competencies needed into seven main themes, namely, 1) communication, 2) strategic management, 3) financial

management, 4) product innovation, 5) ICT skills, 6) time management, and 7) customer relationship management.

4.1. THEME 1: Communication

Good communication can initiate trust in venture capitalist, supplier, customers, staff, and the community. Failing to communicate is one of the keys to breakdown in leading a business. This skill is highlighted by informants, and among the verbatim quotes are as follows:

"I am not very good at communication. Sometimes, when I want to do a live on TikTok, I'm timid" (W20).

"I am not good at communicating with customers and outsiders. I am shy, and I am not good at speaking English. I was not even good at copywriting until I asked my son to write. I am not the talkative type. I like to cook" (W4).

The field of entrepreneurship needs an individual who can connect well to highlight his/her business. Communication skills for an entrepreneur are very important because they have a direct impact on the satisfaction of customers, suppliers, employees, business partners, and the public, which in turn has a great impact on the reputation and profits of the business.

4.2. THEME 2: Business Management

Skills are an important aspect to hone talent and generate energy into entrepreneurial action in achieving business success. Skills are one of the keys to most successful entrepreneurs. Basic knowledge about entrepreneurship is very important to master, especially knowledge related to accounting, marketing, business law, human resource management, and business management. Every entrepreneur has the same desire to build and develop business through entrepreneurial talent and entrepreneurial activities. Wise entrepreneurs will focus on important work such as strategic planning, creating new products, finding investors, and making decisions that increase profits. This skill is highlighted by informants, and among the verbatim quotes are as follows:

"I always hope that my sales products can penetrate the market to other states. My product is sold around PPR Kerinci and Lembah Pantai only because I do not have a transporter. So, I use the COD system. However, it is hard because my home area is full and crowded. The car is hard to stop. Sometimes customers ask me to deliver. I had to take the grab. I need training on going out to a wide market and competing with the same product" (W12).

"I need marketing strategy training because my business often changes and is difficult to stay in. For example, I used to sell desserts but stopped due to declining demand, then cookies, but only for a short time. I take orders for food packs such as chicken rice, Briyani rice, and the like. Only, nothing I do ever lasts" (W1).

4.3. THEME 3: Financial Management

Financial management plays a major role for every individual, as well as for an entrepreneur. As an entrepreneur who owns a business, financial management is important to launch the journey of a business. Poor financial management will cause problems, such as financial leakage, embezzlement, and financial instability. This will have a bad impact on the business (Singla & Mallik, 2021). Mismanagement of finances will cause the firm to experience bankruptcy or loss. Entrepreneurs and potential entrepreneurs should equip themselves with the relevant knowledge aspects of financial management to decrease the probability of failure. Among the verbatim quotes are the following:

"Due to the small size of the business, it is difficult to manage business finances. I use only one personal account. That is the money I use for business, and that is the money I use for personal matters" (W18).

"I still sell my cakes at a cheap price. I know the price of raw materials has increased, but I am afraid to raise the price. Later, my client ran away. So, I do not generate much profit even doing business. I need help with cost calculation" (W7).

"I have never recorded any sales. Enough as far as the phone. Sometimes, I delete the message and forget the order amount, so I must message the customer again. I do not monitor money in and out. Because of that, I have a hard time getting a bank loan. They said my business financial management is fragile" (W6).

4.4. THEME 4: Product Innovation

The business world is closely related to creativity and innovation. Without creativity and innovation, the business world will remain static without any renewal and change. Thus, entrepreneurs who cultivate creativity and innovation in their business model, will be more advanced and successful than entrepreneurs who remain with the traditional business model, who are only concerned with sales (Shkabatur et al., 2022). Creativity and innovation in the business world can be done in many ways. Among them through products, services, brands, business models, and marketing (Karlsson et al., 2021). The key informants believe that innovation is no longer an option but a necessity. Even businesses in Malaysia are aware that their ability to pioneer innovation has driven their business performance and resilience. Among the verbatim quotes are the following:

"I would like to get a home-based certificate so that my product can enter a wider market, such as gas stations or large canteens. However, that is why the labelling and packaging are still not good. I only use regular jars to sell cookies. Although my cake is made from premium ingredients, the packaging is not attractive" (W13).

"If possible, I would like to learn how to apply elements of innovation in my food preparation, such as long-lasting products that do not break easily or durable packaging during delivery. I will come to study and pay if the workshop is near my home. I do not want a workshop so far away" (W2).

The government should introduce modules or courses that emphasize creative thinking, product development, and innovation processes in a business context. It can be done through the development of an entrepreneurship research platform to provide opportunities for entrepreneurs to collaborate with the industry and learning institutions to conduct research related to entrepreneurship. In addition, organizing competitions or entrepreneurial innovation award programs will encourage women entrepreneurs to create new answers and relate them in their business projects.

4.5. THEME 5: Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Skill

Today's communication environment relies heavily on information and communication technology (ICT). This has become essential in various aspects of society's life, economy, and society (Marashdeh et al., 2023). Communication is no longer just face-to-face but continues vigorously through mediums and various ICT applications. This also includes business activities in the digital age. The difficulty of mastering new technologies has a huge impact on the smoothness of a business's digital transformation. Most social media platforms now offer features that allow entrepreneurs to conduct business directly. In addition to Shopee, many small business owners are increasingly passionate about making sales over live broadcasts such as Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok accounts. As a small entrepreneur who is used to dealing with buying and selling manually, will face difficulties in understanding the functions of software and computerized systems (Kumar et al., 2023). Among the verbatim quotes are the following:

"I only know how to use business WhatsApp, Instagram, and TikTok. I do not understand how to use e-commerce. Understand that I do business on a small scale only. I need training such

as using business apps and websites and creating online copywriting and online business strategies” (W18).

“My friends use apps to manage their accounts and various business matters. If possible, I want to learn how technology can help my business. For example, how do I get followers and ensure my product appeals on social media” (W9).

Global trends such as changes in the international market and the boom in digital technology affect the business sector giving fierce competition due to easier access to products and services on a global scale. It demands the entrepreneurs to always aware and ready to change in terms of patterns and business models and marketing techniques, including using e-commerce and social commerce platforms. The use of artificial intelligence technology (AI), enterprise resource planning (ERP), and big data analysis is not only able to improve business operational capabilities but also reduce operating costs, speed up business output, and increase profits.

4.6. THEME 6: Time Management

Time management skills mean entrepreneurs can use the available time to generate more ideas and innovations to produce better products and meet consumer tastes (Sainz et al., 2019). They need to use time optimally. The time will only be suitable for those who have a different time. Among the verbatim quotes are the following:

“I am so busy that sometimes my business suffers. It is not that I do not want to be serious, but I have a disabled husband, and the children are still in school. I am in business alone. I must sacrifice much time” (W16).

“It is hard to divide time as a mother and an entrepreneur. I am a single mother and must manage the household alone. My business sometimes must close temporarily. I also minimize the number of orders” (W5).

Time management skills include the ability to ensure that more important tasks are completed before less important tasks. Effectively prioritizing the tasks requires a solid understanding of how long it will take to complete tasks. Moreover, being able to analyse tasks and prepare schedules is important. Good time management needs robust planning skills to ensure the entrepreneurs can exploit and use an organized understanding of duties when building the job schedule.

4.7. THEME 7: Customer Relationship Management

Knowledge associated to customer service management is essential because it gives positive impressions on experience. The positive experience received will foster customers to continue to buy the products. If opposing impacts and experiences occur, the business will lose customers, who are the source that drives sales, revenue, and performance. The informants agree upon these skills, and among the verbatim quotes are as follows:

I admit I am not very good at managing customers, especially when managing many orders. Sometimes, I am so busy that I miss reading customer messages. Some customers are discouraged when I take orders late’ (W13).

“I need advice on customer management, including order management, testimonial recording, customer attraction, and complaint management” (W4).

Informal entrepreneurs usually need to improve their entrepreneurial skills, which often leads to them not being eligible for grants and aid businesses from the government and not competing in the market (Rahman et al., 2023). Therefore, the targeted development approach is required to develop informal entrepreneurs. This holistic approach enables them to increase the chances of business survival to improve living standards and economic benefits. The development of informal entrepreneurs needs the support of public and private cooperation to deliver a structured curriculum

for developing entrepreneurial competencies (Mohd Noor et al., 2023). Entrepreneurs need to use IR4.0 (technology). Otherwise, they will need to catch up in terms of improvement and production of new products compared to entrepreneurs who are already using this technology. They need to learn and look at developing countries that already use technology in their production. Business competitiveness could be increased using machines and technology to increase productivity, reduce costs, and ensure consistency of product quality (Hruskova, 2024). In addition, specific resources and funds are needed to refine the development process. Providing special programs and customized support such as platforms, coaching, grants, and mentoring for informal entrepreneurs' needs can help improve capacity and productivity (Wadichar et al., 2024).

Productive entrepreneurs is a source of the motivation to many people regardless of their age. Society is more interested in following and emulating popular individuals. Thus, to provide high enthusiasm and determination for informal entrepreneurs, the government must introduce more coaching and business seminars for successful informal entrepreneurs (Stam & Van de Ven, 2021). For example, Khairul Aming is an informal start-up founder who used to be a content creator by cooking simple recipes. He has become a formal entrepreneur and has owned a factory. To support informal women entrepreneurs, the government and relevant agencies must provide spaces and activities such as discussions, discourses, involvement in business exhibitions, and networking. The effectiveness of the agency that provides entrepreneurship training programs and packages, especially those that train entrepreneurs, must be updated and evaluated. The implementation of training in terms of delivery methods should be shaped towards experiential and action oriented. Entrepreneur development need to focus on the formation of excellent entrepreneurial practices, values, and culture among entrepreneurs. Training and courses provided need to improve the skills and knowledge of entrepreneurs in the fields of financial management, marketing, corporate governance, time management, innovation, and general management.

To increase efforts to improve the entrepreneurs' knowledge, attitude, and personality, special consideration of institutional context is essential for success (Mohd Noor et al., 2024). The government and entrepreneurship bodies must plan and implement self-development programs that include leadership development, and problem solving and interpersonal skills to support the holistic development of the entrepreneurs. Mentorship programs must be encouraged where women entrepreneurs can get guidance from experienced entrepreneurs. With continuous efforts, a series of sharing sessions with successful entrepreneurs could provide practical insight and inspiration. Industry exposure and practical opportunities for potential and new entrepreneurs through organizing industry exposure programs that involve visits to local and international companies, industry seminars, or business exhibitions will provide a deeper understanding of real business operations. Through experiential learning that involves extensive industry exposure and valuable practical opportunities, women entrepreneurs will be able to develop a profound thoughtful of the business world and acquire the practical skills needed to succeed in their entrepreneurial careers. The mental health and internal emotional well-being program is an effort that deserves attention because it provides psychosocial support to help women entrepreneurs to manage stress and achieve emotional balance. By encouraging positive mental and emotional readiness, it can help them to become more resilient and adaptive in facing challenges and run their businesses successfully

V. CONCLUSION

Women and careers are essential in helping to ease the family's financial burden. Women are considered to have an essential role in the development of an economy. Women no longer depend on their husbands to meet the family's economic needs. This study suggests that the responsible parties prioritize women's entrepreneurship and give full support to ensure that the quality of women's entrepreneurship is improved more comprehensively and efficiently. The results of this study showed that women entrepreneurs need to arm themselves with up-to-date skills and knowledge to adapt to environmental and economic changes. Having the skills needed to succeed can help the entrepreneurs in running their business effectively. If entrepreneurs lack key skills, they can feel overwhelmed, stressed, and stuck where they are. The ups and downs that an entrepreneur goes through are inevitable. An entrepreneur needs a high learning capacity and a desire to keep learning. Failure can help improve one's knowledge and understanding of a subject. By using effective communication skills, sales skills, deep focus, and high learning ability, an entrepreneur can learn how to apply business strategies along the way. Further research must be done to help policymakers and agencies devise a new strategy for women entrepreneurship in the informal economy. The study encourages future studies to widen the study context to the formal economy and employ other methods such as observation, narrative study, survey study, and others to widen a deeper understanding of the topic.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors would like to acknowledge the support of the Ungku Aziz Centre for Development Studies, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, for providing funding under the Concept Paper Poverty Research Lab@UAC Grant (Grant No. UM.0000694/HGA.GV & UM.0000685/HGA.GV). The researchers are thankful to the participants involved in this study.

REFERENCES

- Abdul Nasir, N. N. (2024). A Bibliometric Review of The B40 Households Group in Malaysia. *Journal of Social Transformation and Regional Development*, 6(1), 64–72. <https://doi.org/10.30880/jstard.2024.06.01.008>
- Aftab, J., Veneziani, M., Sarwar, H., & Ishaq, M. I. (2022). Entrepreneurial orientation, entrepreneurial competencies, innovation, and performances in SMEs of Pakistan: Moderating role of social ties. *Business Ethics, Environment and Responsibility*, 31(2), 419–437. <https://doi.org/10.1111/beer.12415>
- Aly, M., Audretsch, D. B., & Grimm, H. (2021). Emotional skills for entrepreneurial success: the promise of entrepreneurship education and policy. *Journal of Technology Transfer*, 46(5), 1611–1629. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10961-021-09866-1>
- Al Koliby, I. S., Mehat, N. A. B., Al-Swidi, A. K., & Al-Hakimi, M. A. (2024). Is knowledge management a missing link? Linking entrepreneurial competencies and sustainable performance of manufacturing SMEs. *Bottom Line*, 37(1), 71–97. <https://doi.org/10.1108/BL-07-2023-0230>
- Al Mamun, A., Subramaniam, E. A., Binti Che Nawi, N., & Binti Zainol, N. R. (2016). Entrepreneurial Competencies and Performance of Informal Micro-Enterprises in Malaysia. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 7(3), 273–281. <https://doi.org/10.5901/mjss.2016.v7n3p273>
- Al Matroushi, H., Jabeen, F., Farouk, S. and Al Nahyan, M.T. (2021), Entrepreneurship and Innovation Emancipation among Women Entrepreneurs in Developing Countries, Rezaei, S., Li, J., Ashourizadeh, S., Ramadani, V. and Gërguri-Rashiti, S. (Ed.) *The Emerald Handbook of Women and Entrepreneurship in Developing Economies*,

- Emerald Publishing Limited, Leeds, pp. 13-34. <https://doi.org/10.1108/978-1-80071-326-020211002>
- Amini Sedeh, A., Pezeshkan, A., & Caiazza, R. (2022). Innovative entrepreneurship in emerging and developing economies: the effects of entrepreneurial competencies and institutional voids. *Journal of Technology Transfer*, 47(4), 1198–1223. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10961-021-09874-1>
- Anshika, Singla, A., & Mallik, G. (2021). Determinants of financial literacy: Empirical evidence from micro and small enterprises in India. *Asia Pacific Management Review*, 26(4), 248–255. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.apmr.2021.03.001>
- Ataei, P., Karimi, H., Ghadermarzi, H., & Norouzi, A. (2020). A conceptual model of entrepreneurial competencies and their impacts on rural youth's intention to launch SMEs. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 75, 185–195. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrurstud.2020.01.023>
- Baqutayan, S. M. S. (2020). Women Empowerment is needed to Boost Gender Equality in Malaysia. *Current Research Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 3(1), 95–107. <https://doi.org/10.12944/crjssh.3.1.09>
- Barney, J. (2015). Firm resources and sustained competitive advantage. *International Business Strategy: Theory and Practice*, 17, 283–301. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780199277681.003.0003>
- Cardella, G. M., Hernández-Sánchez, B. R., & Sánchez-García, J. C. (2020). Women Entrepreneurship: A Systematic Review to Outline the Boundaries of Scientific Literature. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 11, 536630. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.01557>
- Davis, S. N. (2020). The work–family interface in a gendered cultural context: Cross-national analysis of work stress. *International Journal of Cross Cultural Management*, 20(1), 53–69. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1470595820904111>
- Dell'Anno, R. (2022). Theories and definitions of the informal economy: A survey. *Journal of Economic Surveys*, 36(5), 1610–1643. <https://doi.org/10.1111/joes.12487>
- Department Statistics Malaysia. (n.d.). Media statement statistics on informal sector and informal employment. Malaysia. [https://v1.dosm.gov.my/v1/uploads/files/5_Gallery/2_Media/4_Stats%40media/4-Press_Statement/2022/12. DISEMBER/STATISTIK SEKTOR INFORMAL DAN PEKERJAAN INFORMAL%2C MALAYSIA%2C 2021-COMBINE.pdf](https://v1.dosm.gov.my/v1/uploads/files/5_Gallery/2_Media/4_Stats%40media/4-Press_Statement/2022/12.%20DISEMBER/STATISTIK%20SEKTOR%20INFORMAL%20DAN%20PEKERJAAN%20INFORMAL%20MALAYSIA%202021-COMBINE.pdf)
- Hruskova, M. (2024). Ecosystem pipelines: Collective action in entrepreneurial ecosystems. *International Small Business Journal: Researching Entrepreneurship*, 42(1), 39–66. <https://doi.org/10.1177/02662426231178381>
- Ibidunni, A. S., Ogundana, O. M., & Okonkwo, A. (2021). Entrepreneurial Competencies and the Performance of Informal SMEs: The Contingent Role of Business Environment. *Journal of African Business*, 22(4), 468–490. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15228916.2021.1874784>
- Karlsson, C., Rickardsson, J., & Wincent, J. (2021). Diversity, innovation and entrepreneurship: where are we and where should we go in future studies? *Small Business Economics*, 56(2), 759–772. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11187-019-00267-1>
- Khan, M. A., Zubair, S. S., Rathore, K., Ijaz, M., Khalil, S., & Khalil, M. (2021). Impact of Entrepreneurial Orientation Dimensions on Performance of Small Enterprises: Do Entrepreneurial Competencies Matter? *Cogent Business & Management*, 8(1), 1943241. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311975.2021.1943241>

- Khuong, N. V., Shabbir, M. S., Sial, M. S., & Khanh, T. H. T. (2021). Does informal economy impede economic growth? Evidence from an emerging economy. *Journal of Sustainable Finance and Investment*, 11(2), 103–122. <https://doi.org/10.1080/20430795.2020.1711501>
- Kumar, V., Verma, P., Mittal, A., Tuesta Panduro, J. A., Singh, S., Paliwal, M., & Sharma, N. K. (2023). Adoption of ICTs as an emergent business strategy during and following COVID-19 crisis: evidence from Indian MSMEs. *Benchmarking*, 30(6), 1850–1883. <https://doi.org/10.1108/BIJ-11-2021-0685>
- Lyons, T. S., Lyons, J. S., & Jolley, G. J. (2020). Entrepreneurial skill-building in rural ecosystems: A framework for applying the Readiness Inventory for Successful Entrepreneurship (RISE). *Journal of Entrepreneurship and Public Policy*, 9(1), 112–136. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JEPP-09-2019-0075>
- Marashdeh, H., Mertzanis, C., Khoury, R. El, Atayah, O., & Dhiaf, M. (2023). The impact of digital services through ICT on business creation around the world. *Journal of Strategic Marketing*, 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0965254X.2023.2216699>
- Mohd Noor, N. H., Mohamad Fuzi, A., & El Ashfahany, A. (2023). Institutional support and self-efficacy as catalysts for new venture performance: a study of iGen entrepreneurs. *Journal of Entrepreneurship and Public Policy*, 12(3–4), 173–196. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JEPP-02-2023-0015>
- Mohd Noor, N. H., Yaacob, M. A., & Omar, N. (2024). Do knowledge and personality traits influence women entrepreneurs' e-commerce venture? Testing on the multiple mediation model. *Journal of Entrepreneurship in Emerging Economies*, 16(1), 231–256. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JEEE-01-2023-0023>
- Mohd Noor, N. H., & Omar, N. (n.d.). Addressing gender inequality in entrepreneurship: Challenges of women entrepreneurs from low-income groups (B40). *Sains Insani*, 9(1), 34–46.
- Mokbel Al Koliby, I. S., Abdullah, H. H., & Mohd Suki, N. (2024). Linking entrepreneurial competencies, innovation and sustainable performance of manufacturing SMEs. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Business Administration*, 16(1), 21–40. <https://doi.org/10.1108/APJBA-09-2021-0480>
- Nor, R. M., Nor, S., Mayan, A., Binti, R., Nor, M., & Samat, N. (2017). Challenges To the Household Income Class B40 Increase in Developed Country Towards 2020 Case Study: Penang. *International Journal of Environment, Society and Space*, 5(2), 35–41. Retrieved from <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/328063706>
- Oggero, N., Rossi, M. C., & Ughetto, E. (2020). Entrepreneurial spirits in women and men. The role of financial literacy and digital skills. *Small Business Economics*, 55(2), 313–327. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11187-019-00299-7>
- Ogundana, O. M., Simba, A., Dana, L. P., & Liguori, E. (2021). Women entrepreneurship in developing economies: A gender-based growth model. *Journal of Small Business Management*, 59(sup1), S42–S72. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00472778.2021.1938098>
- Pennetta, S., Anglani, F., & Mathews, S. (2024). Navigating through entrepreneurial skills, competencies and capabilities: a systematic literature review and the development of the entrepreneurial ability model. *Journal of Entrepreneurship in Emerging Economies*, 16(4), 1144–1182. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JEEE-09-2022-0257>
- Polas, M. R. H., Raju, V., Muhibullah, M., & Tabash, M. I. (2022). Rural women characteristics and sustainable entrepreneurial intention: a road to economic growth in Bangladesh. *Journal of Enterprising Communities*, 16(3), 421–449. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JEC-10-2020-0183>

- Rahman, M., Isa, C. R., Masud, M. M., Sarker, M., & Chowdhury, N. T. (2021). The role of financial behaviour, financial literacy, and financial stress in explaining the financial well-being of B40 group in Malaysia. *Future Business Journal*, 7(1), 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s43093-021-00099-0>
- Rahman, M. M., Dana, L. P., Moral, I. H., Anjum, N., & Rahaman, M. S. (2023). Challenges of rural women entrepreneurs in Bangladesh to survive their family entrepreneurship: a narrative inquiry through storytelling. *Journal of Family Business Management*, 13(3), 645–664. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JFBM-04-2022-0054>
- Sainz, M. Alvarez, Ferrero, A. M., & Ugidos, A. (2019). Time management: skills to learn and put into practice. *Education and Training*, 61(5), 635–648. <https://doi.org/10.1108/ET-01-2018-0027>
- Sharma, R.R., Chawla, S., & M. Karam, C. (2021). Global Gender Gap Index: World Economic Forum perspective. In *Handbook on Diversity and Inclusion Indices* (pp. 150–163). Edward Elgar Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781788975728.00017>
- Shahzad, M. F., Khan, K. I., Saleem, S., & Rashid, T. (2021). What factors affect the entrepreneurial intention to start-ups? The role of entrepreneurial skills, propensity to take risks, and innovativeness in open business models. *Journal of Open Innovation: Technology, Market, and Complexity*, 7(3), 173. <https://doi.org/10.3390/JOITMC7030173>
- Shkabatur, J., Bar-El, R., & Schwartz, D. (2022). Innovation and entrepreneurship for sustainable development: Lessons from Ethiopia. *Progress in Planning*, 160, 100599. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.progress.2021.100599>
- Stam, E., & van de Ven, A. (2021). Entrepreneurial ecosystem elements. *Small Business Economics*, 56(2), 809–832. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11187-019-00270-6>
- Sultana, N., Rahman, M. M., & Murad, S. M. W. (2024). Asymmetric role of the informal sector on economic growth: Empirical investigation on a developing country. *Structural Change and Economic Dynamics*, 69, 96–107. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.strueco.2023.11.015>
- Sweileh, W. (2024). Gender equality and women's empowerment in Arab countries: a bibliometric review of the literature on SDG 5. *Global Knowledge, Memory and Communication*, 172, 114442. <https://doi.org/10.1108/GKMC-01-2024-0010>
- Ubfal, D., Arráiz, I., Beuermann, D. W., Frese, M., Maffioli, A., & Verch, D. (2022). The impact of soft-skills training for entrepreneurs in Jamaica. *World Development*, 152, 105787. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2021.105787>
- Wadichar, R. K., & Manusmare, P. (2022). Entrepreneurial Ecosystem: A Systematic Literature Review Entrepreneurial Ecosystem: A Systematic Literature Review. *Vision*, 28(May), 143–156.
- Yadav, V., Jacob, S. (2023). Informalized Workforce of Women Domestic Workers: Case of Bengaluru Metropolitan Region. In: Cirella, G.T., Dahiya, B. (eds), *City Responses to Disruptions in 2020. Advances in 21st Century Human Settlements*. Springer, Singapore. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-99-7988-2_5